

janata

Vol. 74 No. 37
October 6, 2019

**Romila Thapar on Bhagat Singh's
112th Birth Anniversary**

**How Labour's Radical Agenda was
Built from the Ground Up**
Laurie Macfarlane

**Several Reasons Why West
Papua Should Get Its Freedom...**
Immediately!
Andre Vltchek

**The Root Problem is the
Capitalist System**

**National Mahatma Gandhi Award
of MP Government:
Acceptance Speech**
Neeraj Jain

**The Human Cost Of Apple's
iPhone Manufacturing Process**

Editor : G. G. Parikh

Associate Editor : Neeraj Jain

Managing Editor : Guddi

Editorial Board :
B. Vivekanandan, Qurban Ali
Anil Nauriya, Sonal Shah
Amarendra Dhaneshwar,
Sandeep Pandey

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : janataweekly@gmail.com
Website: www.janataweekly.org

Mahatma Gandhi – The Great Communicator

Nikhil Chakravartty

The following is the text of the Gandhi Peace Foundation Lecture 1995 delivered by Nikhil Chakravartty in New Delhi on January 30, 1995. It first appeared in Mainstream (October 3, 1998) after N.C.'s demise.

I am deeply touched by having been asked to deliver this year's Gandhi Peace Foundation Lecture. Nobody is more conscious than I am about my inadequacy in speaking on this sacred occasion, the day of the martyrdom of the greatest son of my country. Perhaps my only qualification to talk about him is that I belong to the generation that was witness to the historic transition from subjection to freedom of our great motherland, and as a young reporter I cherish the memory of the exciting moments in the presence of Gandhi.

I am no scholar of the study of Gandhiji's great life, rather I spent my activist youth as an impudent critic of the elders in our national movement for independence. Having spent over half-a-century as a journalist, I have chosen as the subject of this presentation: 'Mahatma Gandhi—the Great Communicator'. This is a very subjective endeavour—a string of cursory thoughts—based largely on my personal reflections on our struggle for freedom and how it

acquired its unique characteristic from the way Gandhiji built and guided it.

Our freedom struggle needs to be assessed in a historical perspective. Its dominant characteristic that marks it out from other great revolutions in history was its tremendous sweep. No other revolution in history set in motion so many millions of people. This is no idle boast but the plain statement of a historical reality which is often missed by our academics and politicians alike.

In late eighteenth century France, the objective conditions of mass discontent and disenchantment with the ancient regime no doubt prevailed, but the actual revolutionary action involved a small number of a few thousand, mostly in Paris: once the fuse was lighted, the revolution flared up in different parts of France without any coherent leadership. It was largely a spontaneous upsurge, even the leadership at the core could not hold its own and it changed hands fast so that even those who led it at the beginning were soon either left by the wayside or liquidated, giving rise to the classic phrase that the revolution had devoured its own children.

The Russian Revolution had a more organised leadership than those

who had led the French Revolution, but it was a small band of determined militant revolutionaries under a leader who had an uncanny sense of the configuration of forces ranged in a decadent imperial system. So, when the Czarist system itself cracked up with the fiasco of defeat in the First World War, Lenin gave the call for capture of power which the Bolsheviks swiftly carried out. In terms of moving millions into revolutionary action, the Bolshevik Revolution was mostly the handiwork of small groups of determined revolutionaries who, everywhere, first captured the key points of power and then sought to redesign the social structure in the interest of the common people as they thought fit. In a sense it was a sort of managerial revolution led by a party which concentrated on the means of capturing power, and power alone.

The Chinese Revolution was also similar to the Russian Revolution in its broad historical sweep. In this case also, it was a small group of a few thousand led by a remarkable leader, Mao Zedong, steeled in the Long March which was a sort of armed padayatra—a decade-old campaign to rouse the peasantry in some pockets of the vast sprawling domain of China with the administrative system itself having broken down and replaced by an ineffective regime under the Kuomintang. It was the specialisation of the guerrilla war approach which enabled Mao to spread his network taking advantage of the Japanese occupation of most of the mainland. Unlike the Russian Revolution, which relied more on the working class, the Chinese Revolution targeted largely the peasantry. Here too, the number of people actively engaged in mass

action was small—the same reliance on a determined band. The form of action was essentially armed guerrilla forays which harassed the enemy and finally overpowered it. This way the authority of the state was subverted until the final citadel of power was captured, and thereby the guerrilla bands of yesterday were joined together to form the victorious People's Liberation Army.

Compare these three great landmarks in modern history with what happened in our country in the first half of the twentieth century. Stage by stage, the premier nationalist organisation, committed to the struggle for independence, fully involved larger and larger sections of the people into the vortex of struggle for power. This way, the only weapon for winning power was to organise larger and larger sections of India's unarmed humanity into mass action. By the time independence actually came, the Congress commanded much larger sections of the people than anybody had so far done in history.

The main feature of the Indian struggle for freedom has been that it throughout depended almost wholly on activating the masses by injecting into them the urge for independence by emphasising the strength of the Indian people vis-a-vis the colonial rulers, and thereby set them free from the fear of the ruler. The non-violence, as it was practised, emphasised on the strength of the Indian people in relation to the ruler who had to depend on the gun for establishing his authority. The fact that through the Arms Act the Indian people were denied the right to defend themselves was turned into a symbol of strength, that the people would depend on their conscious strength to ward off the foreign ruler. This meant constant effort on the part

of the leaders of the independence movement to raise the consciousness of the vast masses of common people—not just a small section of determined revolutionaries as had been the case of the other great revolutions. The fact that the Indian people were not permitted to bear arms under the British Raj was not allowed to dampen or demoralise the millions. Rather, a new form of strength was instilled into their consciousness.

This aspect of the Indian Revolution marks it out as distinct from the other revolutions in modern times. Nowhere was the question of the gun permitted to be of supreme or decisive importance in the mainstream of our national struggle for independence. This does not mean that the sacrifice of those revolutionaries who unwaveringly gave their lives by taking up arms against the foreign ruler was of no consequence. From Aurobindo Ghosh and Savarkar to Bhagat Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad to Subhas Chandra Bose, they all made the finest contributions to the struggle for freedom, but the successive waves of mass upheavals that decisively brought down the British rule in India did not depend on the wielding of arms by a small minority of dedicated revolutionaries, but essentially on the raising of the level of consciousness of the broad masses of the people.

This precisely was the unique contribution of Gandhiji. When historians and publicists talk of Gandhi having taken politics from the monopoly of the intelligentsia to the wider world of the common humanity, it was not just a question of broadening the base of the movement for freedom. This was not merely a question of quantitative increase in the number of participants in

the movement, but qualitatively a different type of movement emerged with its essentially distinct hallmark.

How was this achieved, what was the weapon by which the mass consciousness was raised? How was the message of the freedom struggle conveyed to the common people? Herein comes Gandhi's role as a great communicator. For, he depended solely on communicating the message of freedom to the masses and thereby sought to lift their consciousness. That message was not just a mere exhortation for rousing the emotional urge of a nation to be free—however important might have been that task for welding the sense of unity among the people. This had been done in a limited area during the Bengal anti-partition movement of 1905—which in a particular region had assumed the character of a mass movement and had been successful in forcing the British rulers to abandon their plan to vivisection one of the militant pockets of the national movement.

Gandhiji's movement, on the other hand, was much more comprehensive: it tried to activate all the diverse sectors of the national spectrum. From the affluent classes to the impoverished, from the intelligentsia to the unlettered—nobody was left out. It was not just confined to tending only the grassroots level as a multitude of activist groups are doing nowadays. No doubt these are bringing some relief to the people at the bottom. By their endeavour these activist groups have certainly been educating and activating the uncared-for sections of society to stand on their own legs. What distinguished Gandhi's movement for independence was that it was not only much more comprehensive but it sought to open the eyes of the millions left in

darkness about the limited capacity of the foreign ruler and the great opening for the country's advance once the foreign ruler was forced to quit through the demonstration of strength by the people.

Gandhiji ran the pilot project of his new technique in South Africa against the hated rule of apartheid. There too he did not advocate the taking up of arms but sought to instil in the common people a realisation of their own strength in blocking and muzzling the White ruler's oppressive rule. From that apprenticeship abroad, when he came back to India in 1915, political activity in the country was afflicted with stagnation and political forces, mostly confined to the intelligentsia, were in disarray. The tour he undertook—his Bharat Darshan—enabled him to understand the urges of the common people and one of his first acts was the Champaran satyagraha, a form of struggle so unfamiliar to both the Indian politician and the British ruler of the day. Drawing upon his South African experience, he made a special effort at cultivating the minority Muslim community and from then onwards came his interest and subsequent compact with the Khilafat agitation. The Rowlatt stayagraha and the Khilafat were his earlier excursions before his first major national campaign in the form of the non-cooperation of 1920. For the first time in the annals of the national movement, a countrywide campaign involving the common masses was initiated.

It is not the purpose of this presentation to trace the history of the freedom struggle—what is relevant for the purpose is Gandhiji's role as a communicator. He left out no means, no technique, to rouse the consciousness of the people—instil

in them the imperative of their active participation in the movement. To enable him to do so, he took up a wide range of activities pertaining to all sections of the people—from education to village welfare, from the spinning wheel to cattle protection. His effort at total identification with the village poor made him design even his personal attire and way of living. Since he looked upon public activity as having an element of moral purpose, he regarded the entire crusade for independence as an experiment with truth. For him the freedom of the country was part of the struggle for truth—an approach which was perhaps easier for the unlettered villager, steeped in the tradition of customs, to grasp than the Western educated liberal intelligentsia of the city.

This is an aspect of Gandhiji's movement which was not easy to understand for the educated intelligentsia and in this controversy arose the intense debate over the question of linking ends with means. From the Marxists to the radicalists of all hues, the linking of ends and means could not possibly be part of the domain of politics, where the supremacy of the objective of power became of paramount consideration, and hence there could be no organised link between ends and means. In the early thirties, when Aldous Huxley reopened the question in his book, *Ends and Means*, the Indian Marxist response was *Ends are Means*. This is where Gandhiji's insistence on politics and morality being inseparable demarcated him from the Western educated liberals and helped him in a large measure to be attuned to the philosophical base of very large sections of the corpus of India's socio-cultural heritage. This also denoted that for him politics—

the struggle for independence—could not be compartmentalised from the totality of the human condition. In his scheme of things, the struggle for independence was but the manifestation of the wider struggle for the regeneration of the entire society.

As a communicator, Gandhiji, like most of our great leaders, used the medium of the press apart from the spoken word. In the midst of all his multitude of activities, Indian Opinion, Young India and Harijan came out regularly—a one-man endeavour—conveying his message to his countrymen. The importance that was attached to the written word by Gandhiji and other national leaders reflected their urge to reach out their message to as wide a section of the people as possible. The means to convey that message were often primitive, but no medium available at the time was left out. From traditional interpersonal means—including the travelling bards—the bauls of Bengal, for instance—to the educated student going out on literacy-cum-swadeshi missions, the composing of patriotic songs and setting up of choirs in villages, mohallas and bustees, to the immortal ‘magic lantern’—there was no video at that time—nothing was left out. It was a gigantic operation, sustained through the ups and downs of the freedom struggle, and later on followed by handwritten posters and graffiti.

How true to his convictions Gandhiji was in his actual functioning as a journalist could be gathered from many of his writings. Here is a passage from Young India (July 2, 1925) about how he strove to serve as a true communicator:

To be true to my faith therefore, I may not write in anger or malice. I may not write idly. I may not write

merely to excite passion. The reader can have no idea of the restraint I have to exercise from week to week in the choice of topics and my vocabulary. It is training for me. It enables me to peep into myself and to make discoveries of my weaknesses. Often my vanity dictates a smart expression or my anger a harsh adjective. It is a terrible ordeal but a fine exercise to remove these weeds.

As a communicator, Gandhiji was aware of the need to take into account the level of awareness of his target reader or listener. This can be seen in the very naming of each of the great upsurges. None of these were just spontaneous upsurges, but each one was preceded by meticulous preparations. By the correct standards of a communicator, Gandhiji chose the form of struggle, the target and even the language of every campaign in keeping with the level of consciousness of the common people. In the first round it was Non-Cooperation (1920). Ten years later, it was more assertive—Civil Disobedience (1930–32). And a decade later, having taken into account both the internal and the external circumstances, it was Quit India (1942). With every stage, the tempo was raised higher, mass involvement more intense and widespread than before, until the finale was reached with the battle cry of Do-or-Die. Here was the remarkable manifestation of the acute sensitivity of a great communicator.

It may be worthwhile to refer briefly to a couple of specific instances of how Gandhiji operated as a communicator. Before he undertook the Dandi March for the Salt Satyagraha in 1930, there was careful consultation within the leadership; it was not just the product

of the brainwave of one individual leader. Recent research on the subject by a very perceptive scholar in social communication at Ahmedabad has brought out significant details about it (“What Moves the Masses? Salt Satyagraha as Case-Study”, by Suchitra, Mainstream, January 28, 1995). After the pledge to achieve complete independence, taken on the banks of the Ravi at Lahore on December 31, 1929, first came the Independence Day declaration of January 26, 1930 which catalogued the injustices of the British Raj. Next came Gandhiji’s letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin, in which eleven demands were raised, including the abolition of the salt tax. Meanwhile, the leaders discussed the form of civil disobedience to be launched. Pandit Nehru and Subhas Bose suggested the setting up of a parallel government while Sardar Patel proposed a march to Delhi or alternatively a countrywide breaking of land laws. Gandhiji envisaged a long drawn-out movement in which the masses would have to be drawn in. He felt the British Government would pounce upon the setting up of a parallel government or a march to Delhi. Gandhiji felt his target audience was the Indian society to be unified and he was conscious of the need to cultivate public opinion abroad. So, the defiance of the salt law was taken up as the initial item of civil disobedience. Resentment at the salt law had a long history. As early as 1844, there were disturbances protesting against this impost which touched even the poorest of the poor. The Congress, at its inaugural session in 1885, had referred to it. During the 1905 swadeshi movement in Bengal, the call was given for the boycott of Manchester cloth and salt imported from Liverpool. At

the same time, focusing on this iniquitous tax, Gandhiji expected to mobilise international support, at least to expose the exploitation of the Indian people under the British Raj. In his own hand he wrote out for the press: "I want world sympathy in this battle of Right against Might."

Then the form of the struggle. A march from Ahmedabad to the seashore at Dandi passing through villages would provide sufficient space for non-stop propaganda for weeks against the Raj and mobilise villagers along the route, whose publicisation would bestir other volunteers in other parts of the country, and thereby propagate the vision of Purna Swaraj. The march was undertaken by 80 persons including Gandhiji himself. The other 79 were chosen to represent all the provinces in India, and they were drawn from all communities—Muslims, Christians and Hindus, both upper caste and the depressed. Abbas Tyabji and Sarojini Naidu were chosen as leaders in the event of his own arrest—symbolically representing the Muslims and the womanhood of the country. And he sent his letter to the Viceroy notifying his decision to break the salt law, through an Englishman, Reginald Reynolds, who later recalled:

I realise that Gandhi's use of me was symbolic—it was to show that this was not a matter of Indians versus British but of principles.

The whole nation was electrified by this new form of mass action—totally peaceful and non-violent even when facing police brutality as the satyagrahis tried to enter the salt factory at Dharasana.

In this campaign—the first truly nationwide mass campaign against the Raj—Gandhi often used the religious idioms as the best means of arousing the rural masses familiar

with religious lore. Incidentally, Gandhiji drew the correct lesson from the poor response to the repeat performance of the Dandi March exactly two years later, in 1932—after the failure of the Gandhi–Irwin pact. From this the lesson was drawn that the repetition of a specific form of campaign does not fetch the same results. This is a lesson which many of our political parties and mass organisation activists need to keep in mind today.

Ten years after the Civil Disobedience movement, I had a personal experience of Gandhiji's remarkable style of communication at the Ramgarh Congress session in 1940. The Congress nagar had come up in a rural setting with bamboo and local shrubs. During his early morning walk, Gandhiji noticed a red flag fluttering at a corner of the enclosure reserved for the leaders' camp. It appeared that the fraternal delegation from Burma's Dobama party was put up there and so they hoisted their party flag. Panditji was sent for and he tried to explain to Gandhiji that this red flag, being the party flag of the Burmese delegation, should not be taken as a defiant rival to the Congress tricolour. But Gandhiji was adamant, and so Panditji quietly managed to shift the Burmese delegation to the nearby Dak Bungalow outside the Congress nagar. The matter betrayed an attitude of intolerance on the part of Gandhiji, some of us thought.

In the afternoon of the same day, the Subjects Committee was scheduled to meet. In those days, the Congress as a unique national platform included within its fold different ideological and political formations from the Congress Socialist Party and the banned Communist Party (functioning as the National Front group after the

name of its legal journal) as also the so-called Nationalist Congressmen representing by and large the point of view of Hindu orthodoxy. There were arrest warrants against the Communist leaders, including the notification of handsome police reward for their capture. The Communists had sent one of their leaders, Bharadwaj, to participate in the Congress session. With an arrest warrant against him and the police and their informers hovering all over the place, it was difficult for him to come out of his undisclosed shelter in the Congress nagar and place the National Front point of view before the Subjects Committee. The Communists approached Panditji for advice on how Bharadwaj could come to the Subjects Committee session. Panditji promptly went to Gandhiji for advice. Remembering the morning incident, we were almost sure that Gandhiji would be far from helpful. In a few minutes Panditji came out of Gandhiji's camp and told us that Bharadwaj would go to the Subjects Committee pandal with Gandhiji himself in his car. We were literally taken aback when we found the car carrying Gandhiji going right at the back of the platform, and out came Bharadwaj trailing behind Gandhiji, and then sat on the dais greeting the leaders from Maulana Azad, Rajen Babu, Sardar Patel and Panditji to JP and all the others. Sardar Patel moved the official resolution, followed by JP who placed the CSP point of view. Then Bharadwaj placed the National Front point of view. Discussions went on, and at the end Sardar Patel replying to the debate tore the CSP and the National Front amendments to pieces and carried the day. Meanwhile, unnoticed by many, Bharadwaj slipped out, helped by Panditji and Dr Lohia.

This indeed was an amazing experience. How could one reconcile Gandhiji's morning allergy to the red flag and the very same afternoon, sheltering a 'wanted' Communist leader to come before the party forum and place his point of view? I have thought over this incident many times since. By his conduct, Gandhiji was transmitting two messages. First, by insisting on the removal of the red flag Gandhiji wanted to convey the message to all, that within the national platform which the Congress represented in the struggle against the foreign power, there could be but one leadership, one flag—no question of any ambiguity. At the same time, he wanted to convey the clear message to the British Raj that in its confrontation with the Congress, no party would be on its side, that all were behind the Congress. Subsequently, it was the breach of this commitment in 1942, when the Communists went against the Quit India upheaval, that they invited upon themselves the anger of Congressmen and were thrown out of the Congress.

The protracted negotiations over the transfer of power and the Muslim League's insistence on Pakistan finally led to the Mountbatten Award of June 3, 1947, by which the country was partitioned. As was well known at the time, Gandhiji was opposed to the partition. The difference between him and the leaders of the Congress flowed out of his premonition about the future. As a great communicator, Gandhiji could not only transmit but perceive as well what was in store. This is borne out by a very penetrating passage in Tendulkar's biography, Mahatma. Two days before the Mountbatten Award, that is, on June 1, 1947, Gandhiji had woken up in

the morning earlier than usual and spent the time before the prayer in musing:

Today I find myself all alone. Even the Sardar and Jawaharlal think that my reading of the political situation is wrong and peace is sure to return if partition is agreed upon. They did not like my telling the Viceroy that even if there was to be partition, it should not be through British intervention or under the British rule. They wonder, if I have not deteriorated with age. Nevertheless, I must speak as I feel, if I am to prove a true, loyal friend to the Congress and to the British people, as I claim to be, regardless of whether my advice is appreciated or not. I see clearly that we are setting about this business the wrong way. We may not feel the full effect immediately, but I can see clearly that the future of independence gained at this price is going to be dark.

Then after a pause, he pondered:

I shall, perhaps, not be alive to witness it, but should the evil I apprehend overtake India and her independence be imperilled, let posterity know what agony this old soul went through thinking of it. Let it not be said that Gandhi was party to India's vivisection. But everybody is today impatient for independence. Therefore, there is no other help.

Here is a seer who could communicate his premonition. For those of us who were fortunate in watching him in person, those last days of his life—with his mind heavy with the unleashing of Hindu-Muslim clashes even when the foreign power had left—were perhaps the most momentous. On the one hand came the realisation of his goal—the independence of the country—while at the same time, the menace of communal hatred was

vitiating that newly won freedom. It was the hour of fulfilment tinged with a horrendous tragedy. For him, therefore, there was no moment of rest with the achievement of independence: the struggle had to go on. Since he could not avert the partitioning of the country, he had to meet the challenge of its sombre aftermath—how to put out the hell-fire of communal animosity. And so he set out on this, his final crusade—how to turn the millions of common humanity that he had served to mould all his life and make each one of them his brother's keeper. In the midst of blood and fire, he strove—Noakhali, Beliaghata, Bihar and Delhi—until he fell a martyr to the cause which is yet to be redeemed by his heirs and successors. Till the last drop of life ebbed out of that frail body, the great communicator never ceased for a moment to transmit his message—the message which remains a sacred injunction even to this day forty-seven years after.

Today, this country needs a Gandhi to bring about the regeneration of our democracy. As morality is being banished from our politics and public life getting corroded all around, this country has the need of the Mahatma, the Great Communicator today more than at any time in the past. Seventy years ago, Mahatma Gandhi had said:

Real swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused.

This commandment alone can enthrone social justice in this great land of ours.

[Nikhil Chakravarty (1913–88) was a famed journalist and the founder-editor of the respected current affairs weekly Mainstream.]

Romila Thapar on Bhagat Singh's 112th Birth Anniversary

September 28, 2019 was the 112th birth anniversary of freedom fighter and iconic youth leader, Bhagat Singh. On this occasion, a book, 'The Bhagat Singh Reader', edited by professor Chaman Lal, was released at the Jawaharlal Nehru University on September 25. Professor Romila Thapar, professor emeritus of the university, sent this message for the programme:

Bhagat Singh has a very special place in our lives, reflecting as he does, a significant aspect of our anti-colonial movement for independence, a movement that ensured our ceasing to be a colony and becoming an independent nation. It was a movement that saw an intense concern with debating and discussing the meaning of nationalism, as well as the methods of attaining freedom from an oppressive government. To this debate Bhagat Singh made his own contribution. He was part of a large number of others, equally effective nationalists, committed to creating a recognizably secular democratic state under the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru.

We applaud Bhagat Singh today, not only for being a nationalist but also, and sometimes more so, for being a person who read widely, reflected on what he had read, and then worked out his ideas on how we might create the nation that we aspired to be. This was not exceptional. This was normal in those days not only to those who spoke about nationalism and the state, but who were directly involved in the making of such a state. Having decided on a democratic state they also discussed what was inherent to

democracy. In this secularism had a major role.

The definition of secularism did not stop with just proclaiming the co-existence of all religions. It went much further. It was seen as an essential component of democratic functioning. Today this debate is marginal in the public space and seems not to reach those crafting the state.

Nationalism was not intended to cease once the nation-state had come into being. What is equally crucial is that the emerging state be one that ensures and protects the basic rights of every citizen. This meant establishing the equal status of every citizen, not just in law but in practice as well. In the last seventy years, we have succeeded in establishing an acknowledged independent state, after having been a colony.

We have still to become the secular democratic state that is universally recognized as such, and one that ensures the guarantee of human rights for all its citizens. Had Bhagat Singh lived he would have had a stellar role in making this a reality.

* * *

The editor of the book, Chaman Lal, in his comments, made a reading of two letters of Bhagat Singh.

Message to the Punjab Students Conference, 19 October 1929

Bhagat Singh sent a message for the Punjab Students Conference, which was held on 19 October 1929 at Lahore with Netaji Subhas Bose as the chair. This letter was read out in the conference and was later published in 'The Tribune' on 22 October 1929.

Comrades,

Today, we cannot ask the youth to take to pistols and bombs. Today, students are confronted with a far more important assignment. In the coming Lahore Session the Congress is to give call for a fierce fight for the independence of the country. The youth will have to bear a great burden in this difficult time in the history of the nation. It is true that students have faced death at the forward positions of the struggle for independence. Will they hesitate this time in proving their same staunchness and self-confidence? The youth will have to spread this revolutionary message to the far corner of the country. They have to awaken crores of slum-dwellers of the industrial areas and villagers living in worn-out cottages, so that we will be independent and the exploitation of man by man will become impossibility. Punjab is considered politically backward even otherwise. This is also the responsibility of the youth. Taking inspiration from the martyr YatindraNath Das and with boundless reverence for the country, they must prove that they can fight with steadfast resolve in this struggle for independence.

Letter to the Editor, *Modern Review*, 22 December 1929

Ramanand Chatterjee, editor of the 'Modern Review', ridiculed the slogan of 'Long Live Revolution' in one of his editorials. Bhagat Singh wrote a reply to the note and handed it over to the trying magistrate to be sent to the 'Modern Review'. The reply was subsequently published in 'The Tribune' on 24 December 1929.

Ramanand Chatterjee wrote the following in his editorial:

According to a free press message, at a meeting of the Naujawan Sabha (Youth League) of Gujranwala in the Punjab, a resolution was passed protesting against the arrest of students on the ground of their shouting "Long Live Revolution" and "Down with Imperialism", before the Court of the Special Magistrate of Lahore. The resolution states that everyone has the right to utter these cries. It is difficult for laymen to say what cries are or are not legal, when even High Court judges have differed in their interpretation of the law of sedition. But young enthusiasts will pardon an old cynical journalist for confessing that the cry of "Long Live Revolution" has sometimes appeared to him to be a bit funny. A revolution may now and then have been a necessity in the world history, and we should personally like an early non-violent social, economic and political revolution in India. But, what is the exact meaning of "Long Live Revolution"? To be at work is a sign of life. When a desire is expressed for revolution to live long, is it desired that the revolutionary process should be at work every hour, day, week, month and year of our lives? In other words, are we to have a revolution as often as possible? Such ceaseless revolution may make for change, but scarcely for progress, improvement and enlightenment. What one revolution offered must have time to settle down and take root and bear fruit. A ceaseless revolutionary process would make India like what James Russel Lowell called "the Catherine-while republics of South America", of his day. No doubt, no revolution can produce a final

state of improvement; there must be changes even after a revolution. But these should be brought about by evolution. There may again be a revolution after several generations, if not centuries, have passed. But that is not what is implied in the shout "Long Live Revolution".

Bhagat Singh wrote the following reply:

To, The Editor, Modern Review

You have, in the December (1929) issue of your esteemed magazine, written a note under the caption "Long Live Revolution", and have pointed out the meaninglessness of this phrase. It would be impertinent on our part to try to refute or contradict the statement of such an old, experienced and renowned journalist as your noble self, for whom every enlightened India has profound admiration. Still we feel it our duty to explain what we desire to convey by the said phrase, as in a way it fell to our lot to give these "cries" a publicity in this country at this stage.

We are not the originators of this cry. The same cry had been used in Russian revolutionary movements. Upton Sinclair, the well-known socialist writer, has, in his recent novels "Boston" and "Oil", used this cry through some of the anarchist revolutionary characters. The phrase never means that the sanguinary strife should ever continue, or that nothing should ever be stationary even for a short while. By long usage this cry achieves a significance which may not be quite justifiable from the grammatical or the etymological point of view, but nevertheless we cannot abstract from that the association of ideas connected with that. All such shouts denote a general sense which is partly acquired and

partly inherent in them. For instance, when we shout "Long Live Jatin Das", we cannot and do not mean by that shout is that the noble ideal of his life, the indomitable spirit which enabled that great martyr to bear such untold suffering and to make the extreme sacrifice for that ideal, should ever live. By raising this cry we wish that we may show the same unfailing courage in pursuance of our ideal. It is that spirit that we allude to.

Similarly, one should not interpret the word "revolution" in its literal sense. Various meanings and significances are attributed to this word attributed to this word, according to the interests of those who use or misuse it. For the established agencies of exploitation it conjures up a feeling of blood-stained horror. To the revolutionaries it is a sacred phrase. We tried to clear in our statement before the Sessions Judge, Delhi, in our trial in the Assembly Bomb Case, what we mean by the word "Revolution".

We started therein that Revolution did not necessarily involve sanguinary strife. It was not a cult of bomb and pistol. They may sometimes be mere means for its achievement. No doubt they play a prominent part in some movements, but they do not—for that very reason—become one and the same thing. A rebellion is not a revolution. It may ultimately lead to that end.

The sense, in which the word 'Revolution' is used in that phrase, is the spirit, the longing for a change for the better. The people generally get accustomed to the established order of things and begin to tremble at the very idea of a change. It is this lethargical spirit that needs to be replaced by the revolutionary spirit. Otherwise degeneration gains the

upper hand and the whole humanity is led astray by the reactionary forces. Such a state of affairs leads to stagnation and paralysis in human progress. The spirit of Revolution should always permeate the soul of humanity, so that the reactionary forces may not accumulate (strength) to check its eternal onward march. Old order should change, always and ever, yielding place to new, so that one "good" order may not corrupt the world. It is in this sense that we raise the shout "Long Live Revolution."

Yours Sincerely,

(Sd.) Bhagat Singh, B.K. Dutt

Courtesy: Sabrang India

Articles Put on Janata Blog Last Week (Sept 29)

1. Bharat Dogra, Jagmohan Singh, Madhu Dogra, "Shahid Bhagat Singh"
2. Nishikant Kolge, "The Politician: A Response to Arundhati Roy's 'The Doctor and The Saint'"
3. Romila Thapar, "The Presence of the Other: Religion and Society in Early North India"
4. Interview with S'bu Zikode, "The Story of Shack-Dwellers Movement in S. Africa"
5. Arun Kumar, "Today's Imperative: Gandhian Values"
6. Prof Michel Chossudovsky interviewed by Bonnie Faulkner, "US Foreign Policy in Shambles: NATO and the Middle East: How Do You Wage War Without Allies?"

How Labour's Radical Agenda was Built from the Ground Up

Laurie Macfarlane

A common criticism of left-wing politics is that activists always know what they are against, but struggle to articulate what they are for. After this week's Labour Party conference in Brighton, this taunt can safely be retired.

Labour delegates backed a range of radical policies including the introduction of a four-day week with no loss of pay within a decade; a Green New Deal that commits to reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2030; the abolition of private schools; a radical shakeup of the pharmaceutical industry; free personal care for the elderly; a host of radical housing policies including the right to requisition empty homes; the extension of free movement; and the closure of all detention centres.

These policies build on an already ambitious policy platform that includes worker ownership funds; plans to double the size of the co-operative sector; a new public banking network; a National Transformation Fund and the nationalisation of key utilities. Taken together, Labour's agenda amounts to the most radical political-economic transformation for a generation.

Not everyone is convinced, however. The *Financial Times* has described the new suite of policies as "half-baked", warning that Labour "is not offering a reform of the capitalist economy" but instead a "full-scale reorganisation of the economy."

Last week the *Financial Times* published its own 'new agenda', launched under the strapline of

"Capitalism: time for a reset". Citing the need to "reform in order to preserve", the editor called on business leaders to "protect the future of free enterprise and wealth creation by pursuing profit with purpose." Despite the heretical overtones, it's clear that the newspaper's aim is to preserve the status quo, not replace it.

But at a time when the scientific community is calling for a "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society", many feel that a full-scale reorganisation is precisely what is needed. And while it is true that the ideas debated in Brighton have not been given much space in the pages of the mainstream financial press, it is wrong to assume they are "half-baked".

For many decades the boundaries of what is politically possible have been policed by a closed network of politicians, advisors, corporate lobbyists, think tanks and journalists. But in recent years, this cosy club has consistently failed to acknowledge the scale of the challenges we face, or engage in a serious debate about how our economy needs to change to overcome them. As a result, a new wave of campaign groups, organisers, think tanks and party members have stepped into the void—energised by a Labour Party leadership that is willing to listen to them.

The wave of radical policies passed at this week's Labour conference did not come from PR lobbyists or the scribbles of special advisors. Instead, they came from the blood, sweat and tears of thousands of thinkers, doers and

campaigners from all across the country and beyond.

The four-day week would not have become policy without the research and advocacy of organisations such as Autonomy, the New Economics Foundation, the 4 Day Week Campaign and the Communication Workers Union (CWU). The Green New Deal would not have become a reality without the tireless work of activists from Labour for a Green New Deal, sections of the trade union community, Common Wealth and a host of other academics and grass roots organisations. Labour's bold plans for the pharmaceutical industry draw on research undertaken by the UCL Institute for Innovation and

Public Purpose, Global Justice Now, STOPAIDS and the campaign group Just Treatment. The housing motion backed by delegates is packed with ideas from various groups including Land for the Many, Young Labour and the Labour Campaign for Council Housing. The vote to abolish private schools was primarily the result of an effective campaign spearheaded by the activists behind Labour Against Private Schools. The list goes on.

During his leadership campaign in 2015, Jeremy Corbyn talked about the need for "a new type of politics", including in the way that the Labour Party makes policy. The era "when you elect some all-knowing all-seeing celebrity who sends it down

the food chain" will come to an end, he declared. This year, for the first time, this vision has started to become a reality (although concerns have since been raised about whether some of the policies will in fact become official policy).

Corbyn himself will not be around forever. But the tide of people-power unleashed under his leadership is not going away anytime soon—and it is this that may ultimately prove to be his most important legacy.

(Laurie Macfarlane is economics editor at openDemocracy, and a research associate at the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose.)

Several Reasons Why West Papua Should Get Its Freedom... Immediately!

Andre Vltchek

More than ten years ago, in Nadi, Fiji, during a UN conference, I was approached by the Minister of Education of Papua New Guinea (PNG).

He was deeply shaken, troubled, his eyes full of tears: "Please help our children," he kept repeating:

"Indonesian army, TNI, is kidnapping our little girls in the villages, raping them, and then... in the most sadistic way cutting off their nipples and clitorises. And if they speak, entire villages get burned down in retribution. Many already have been. Some children managed to escape; to cross the border, from West Papua to PNG. Now they are staying in our refugee camps, but our country is poor; we are hardly coping. Please come to Papua, and we will take you to the border region... please tell the story to the world..."

What followed, I described in detail in my book, *Oceania*. In brief, I managed to scramble some money for my trip from Samoa back to PNG, I found the Minister of Education, but he refused to take me to the camps. I contacted his subordinates as well as local journalists, and was told the same thing:

"Nothing has changed; nothing improved; but the Minister was bribed and intimidated by the omnipresent Indonesian embassy."

* * *

Now even the mainstream media in Java, including the generally pro-regime English-language daily *The Jakarta Post*, has had to react to the terrible events which are taking place on the occupied territory of West Papua. On August 19, 2019, Evi Mariani, wrote:

"Papuanians are said to have endured racial discrimination from

the majority Javanese. A political activist from Papua, Filep Karma, wrote in 2014 in his book, *Seakan Kitorang Setengah Binatang: Rasialisme Indonesia di Tanah Papua (As If We Are Half Animal: Indonesia's Racism in Papua Land)*, that he experienced racism when he studied in a state university in Surakarta, Central Java. He often heard his friends calling Papuans 'monkeys', he said in the book.

"The book speaks volumes of the crimes against humanity facing Papuans on their own land."

But what really is happening in West Papua? Of course, foreign journalists are banned from entering and reporting freely from there. Only official Indonesian journalists, basically lackeys of the regime, are regularly flown to the most devastated and oppressed areas. Their lies and twisted 'reporting'

are the only things that the world is 'allowed to see'.

Working for years in South Pacific (Oceania), I visited on several occasions both Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Vanuatu, where the West Papuan resistance has been regrouping. I also have some 25 years of experience of working in Indonesia itself. And I used to cooperate with a late professor from Sydney University, Peter King, a man who basically dedicated his life to the plight of West Papua. I spoke at Sydney University, side by side with him, recalling my experience from East Timor; from the Indonesian occupation, where 30–40% of the population lost their life, and where I, myself, was savagely tortured in 1996, for trying to expose the systematic gang rapes committed by the Indonesian military, TNI.

While living in Oceania, I spent days discussing the occupation with the West Papuan refugees, who resided outside Port Moresby, the capital of PNG.

I managed to enter West Papua only once, illegally, in 1999, as a 'side-trip' while covering the horrific sectarian conflict in Ambon.

From the information and testimonies that I have amassed so far, I can clearly see that the occupation of West Papua is, together with the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which is being plundered by both Rwanda and Uganda on behalf of Western corporations and governments and where approximately 8 million people have already lost their lives, perhaps the most horrendous genocide taking place on our planet.

But in the region of the Great Lakes of Africa I managed to make my big documentary film, *Rwanda Gambit*. While in West Papua, I

would never be allowed to film, photograph or even openly talk to people. I would never be allowed to enter those monstrous mines controlled by Freeport and other corporations; mines that are being 'protected' by the corrupt and murderous Indonesian military.

Prof. Peter King and Prof. John Wing wrote in the Executive Summary to their report "Genocide in West Papua?" (Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, The University of Sydney, 2005):

"The report details a series of concerns which, if not acted upon, may pose serious threats to the survival of the indigenous people of the Indonesian province of Papua. It covers the threats posed by the Indonesian military to the province's stability, the recent increase in large scale military campaigns which are decimating highland tribal communities, the HIV/AIDS explosion and persistent Papuan underdevelopment in the face of a rapid and threatening demographic transition in which the Papuans face becoming a minority in their own land.

"A 'culture of impunity' exists in Indonesia which sees its highest manifestation currently in Papua and Aceh. Military operations have led to thousands of deaths in Papua and continue to cost lives, yet the Republic's armed forces act as a law unto themselves with no real accountability for crimes against the Papuan population. The report discusses a number of areas of Indonesian security forces involvement, including: illegal logging and corrupt infrastructure and construction work; destabilization and manipulation of local politics, and orchestration of attacks blamed on pro-Papuan independence groups;

the introduction of illegal arms and militia training and recruitment; and prostitution and the spread of HIV/AIDS.

"The report concludes with a number of urgent recommendations to the Indonesian and Australian governments, the United Nations and other involved parties."

Since 2005, not much has improved. Actually, things have deteriorated even further.

Eliza Egret and Tom Anderson reported on August 31, 2017 in their essay "West Papua's Silent Genocide":

"The occupation of West Papua receives little attention in the UK. This is, in no small part, due to Indonesia's ban on foreign journalists and its outlawing of West Papuan social movements who try to speak out internationally. However, West Papua has not been forgotten by international corporations, including companies from the UK. For them, Indonesia's brutal occupation of West Papua provides lucrative opportunities for profit.

"Mining companies exploit the country's vast wealth of minerals, with security for their operations provided by the Indonesian military. International arms companies profit from selling Indonesia the weapons it needs to maintain the occupation. The UK government, which gives financial support and training to Indonesian police forces, is also complicit in the repression in West Papua.

"West Papuans have called on people in the UK to help stop what they describe as the silent genocide in West Papua."

The 'Free West Papua Campaign' states:

"Over 500,000 civilians have been killed in a genocide against the

indigenous population. Thousands more have been raped, tortured, imprisoned or ‘disappeared’ after being detained. Basic human rights such as freedom of speech are denied and Papuans live in a constant state of fear and intimidation.”

In a series of the official reports, fingers were being pointed at Indonesia and its genocidal behavior in the occupied West Papua. From the United Nations to human rights organizations, a gruesome picture has been emerging.

As mentioned by the ‘Free West Papua Campaign’:

“Sexual assault and rape have been repeatedly used as a weapon by the Indonesian military and police.”

In a public report to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1999, the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women concluded that the Indonesian security forces used rape “as an instrument of torture and intimidation” in West Papua, and “torture of women detained by the Indonesian security forces was widespread”.

The Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Centre for Human Rights prepared a full report on “Rape and Other Human Rights Abuses by the Indonesian Military in Irian Jaya (West Papua), Indonesia”.

Even the otherwise ‘timid’ Amnesty International (timid when it comes to the West’s allies) admits that torture, killings and other grave human rights abuses, are regularly taking place in the Indonesia-controlled territory, in its reports on West Papua.

Information about sexual assaults and rapes highlighted in the above-mentioned UN report, is consistent with the behavior of the Indonesian military during and after the 1965–66 military coup, and later,

during the occupation and genocide committed in East Timor.

It is important to point out that the Indonesian military and police are enjoying unprecedented impunity. After presiding over the murder of approximately 2 million Communists, intellectuals, teachers and members of the Chinese minority in 1965–66, no culprit has ever been sent to prison. Acts of killing are still being celebrated, publicly. Generals and officers who openly participated in the East Timor genocide, as well as in the ongoing genocide in West Papua, have been holding high positions in the Indonesian governments, including the present one.

The monstrous brutality is well documented (even some mainstream media outlets like Al-Jazeera are regularly releasing footage of torture committed by the Indonesian troops), but Indonesia is never dragged through the international courts of justice. It is because Jakarta is a well-tested and greatly reliable ally of Western companies and governments. For instance, it allows many local and Western mining companies to plunder West Papua. The Indonesian President, “Jokowi”, actually flies around the world, asking for “more investment”, promising tax holidays, “reforms” of already pathetic labour laws, and other pro-big-business concessions.

All this is brilliantly exposed in an Australian short (2:39 minute) satirical film “Honest Government Ad/Visit West Papua”.

But the world prefers to stay idle. As least for now. No mass-protest movements, like those in support of the Palestinian cause, or even the Kurdish cause.

Why is all this happening?

My close friend, the renowned

Australian historian, Geoffrey Gunn, Professor Emeritus at Nagasaki University, wrote for this essay:

“The crimes committed by the Indonesian military in Papua today appear very similar to East Timor under Indonesian military occupation between 1975–1999 and with some of the same Indonesian officials involved. That would include General Wiranto, the butcher of East Timor in 1999 who, far from being brought before an international tribunal Rwanda-style, enjoys cabinet-level appointment in the Jokowi government. But even when Suharto-era crimes could no longer be covered up in East Timor thanks to the courage of crusading journalists and others, so incredibly does the avowedly democratic regime in Jakarta today disallow the entry of humanitarian workers much less foreign media into Papua. If the Western-backed cover up of crimes committed in East Timor was itself a crime of complicity then Western—especially Australian—silence over the agony of the Papuan people over an even longer time frame is a crime of a special order, and with mining company, oil company interests in the fore as if this was the heart of Africa under Leopold II of Belgium.”

We saw the same chilling indifference when 30% to 40% of East Timorese were slaughtered by Indonesia. Again, and again, I was managing to illegally penetrate that then Indonesian colony, which was screaming in pain, shedding thousands and thousands of people every month. And again, and again, my stories were being rejected; no interest whatsoever shown by the mass media outlets.

Then and now. East Timor and West Papua.

And in Indonesia itself, chilling, horrifying defiance. Silence. Almost no activism, and hardly any awareness. The country lives in total denial. Like in the case of 1965–66, like in the case of East Timor: total rejection of the truth. There is near zero chance that the barbarity will stop because of the pressure ‘from within’. Indonesia has proven, again and again, that after being conditioned by decades of extreme fascist ideology, fundamentalist religions, and grotesque individualism, it has no mercy, and no sympathy for its own victims. After mass killings and consistent conditioning, it is now in a serious mental, pathological state.

The government of President Jokowi is nowhere near being deep in thought, considering a referendum on independence for West Papuans. On the contrary: it is ‘investing in infrastructure’ in order to bring even more ‘investment’ from abroad, and to extract even more natural resources.

According to investigation conducted by Eliza Egret and Tom Anderson:

“The Indonesian occupation of West Papua is directly related to corporate interests. US company Freeport-McMoRan operates the Grasberg mine in Papua—the largest gold mine and the third largest copper mine in the world. Freeport’s third largest shareholder, Carl Icahn, happens to be a Special Advisor to Donald Trump.”

According to the ‘Free West Papua Campaign’:

“Freeport is Indonesia’s biggest taxpayer, making billions of dollars for the Indonesian government every year. Freeport reportedly pays the Indonesian military around US \$3 million every year in ‘protection

money’, ensuring that local West Papuans are kept out of the area.”

Time states that “In 2015 alone, Freeport mined some \$3.1 billion worth of gold and copper here. In addition, Papua boasts timber resources worth an estimated \$78 billion.”

Amos explained the history behind Freeport’s mining in West Papua: “A contract was signed for Freeport to operate in West Papua before we were even part of Indonesia.” With the help of Henry Kissinger, Freeport was awarded the rights to pillage West Papua. Kissinger later became a Freeport board member.”

Australian–British corporation Rio Tinto holds an interest in Freeport’s Grasberg mine, which entitles it to 40% of production over specified levels until 2021, and 40% of all production after 2021.

Meanwhile, British company BP continues to profit from the occupation through its massive liquified natural gas fields in Tangguh. Kugi told us: “BP’s biggest operation in Southeast Asia is in West Papua, and Papuan communities are also being pushed from their land for palm oil.” According to CorpWatch, an indigenous community in West Papua filed a complaint against Sri Lankan company Goodhope Asia for taking over their land to create a palm plantation.”

In the meantime, the government of Indonesia has been turning the pristine waters of Papuan Raja Ampat into a luxury diving destination, charging horrendous airfares and lodging prices, and making the mainly Western tourist live in a bubble.

And Westerners are now coming there, indifferent to the fact that they are actually funding

genocide, legitimizing occupation. A boycotting Raja Ampat campaign is unheard of.

Now the Papuan people are rising. Their Morning Star flag, the symbol of resistance, is waving again, all over the island.

The world should support the Papuan people. They have been suffering for decades. Their nation lost hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. Torture, rape and humiliation have been widespread ever since the beginning of the occupation. Religion has been brutally forced down the throats of the robbed people, in many areas of West Papua: ‘You either embrace Islam, or you will starve to death, after we have looted you of all that you used to possess.’

Here, Java and its Western handlers have managed to re-define colonialism, bringing it to a monstrous extreme.

It is a “Freedom or Death” situation, now. Either freedom, or, the total destruction of the nation. The Indonesian President Jokowi is on a selling spree. He is flying all over the world, offering what is left of both Indonesia, and its ‘dependencies’, to the multi-national corporations, for an extremely low price, and often tax free. Papua is not his, and he is well aware of the fact that it may soon find a way to break free from the torture chamber and the horror of Indonesian occupation. That is why he is accelerating his business activities: trying to trade as quickly as possible with what is not his to touch.

(Andre Vltchek is a philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist, who presently resides in East Asia and the Middle East, and continues to work around the world.)

The Root Problem is the Capitalist System

Evo Morales

Text of Bolivian President Evo Morales' speech to the United Nations General Assembly, September 24, 2019.

Brother President of the United Nations General Assembly, Tijjani Muhammad Bande.

Brother Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres.

Sisters and brothers Presidents, Chancellors and Delegates

Sisters and brothers of the International Organizations and all the peoples of the world:

Once again we meet in the most important multilateral organization of humanity, to reflect and analyze collectively on the global problems that concern the peoples of the world.

We note with concern the deterioration of the multilateral system, product of unilateral measures promoted by some states which have decided to ignore the commitments, good faith and global structures built for a healthy coexistence between states, within the framework of international law and the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

We meet in this forum to discuss and find solutions to the serious threats facing humanity and life on the planet.

The Threat to Mother Earth

Our house, Mother Earth, is our only home and is irreplaceable. It increasingly suffers more fires, more floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts and other catastrophes.

Each year is hotter than the previous one, the thaws are greater, the level of the oceans grows. Every

day we suffer the disappearance of species, soil erosion, desertification and deforestation.

Sisters and brothers, we are warned that if we follow this course of action, by the year 2100 we will reach an increase of 3 degrees Celsius. That would imply massive and devastating changes.

The consequences of climate change will condemn, according to data from our organization [the United Nations], millions of people to poverty, hunger, no potable water, losing their homes, forced displacement, more refugee crises and new armed conflicts.

Sisters and brothers, in recent weeks we have been surprised by the forest fires that have been unleashed in different parts of the planet: in the Amazon, in Oceania and Africa, affecting flora, fauna and biodiversity.

In recent weeks, fires have broken out in Bolivia, which we have been fighting against using our financial, technical and human resources. To date, our country has spent more than \$15 million to mitigate fires.

We thank the International Community for their timely cooperation in our fight against the fires, as well as their commitment to participate in post-fire actions.

Military Spending and World Poverty

Sisters, brothers and the peoples of the world:

The arms race, military spending, technology at the service of death and the unscrupulous arms trade have increased.

The financial system remains undemocratic, inequitable and unstable, which privileges tax havens and the banking secrecy that subjects weak countries to accept conditions that perpetuate their dependence.

We note with sadness that the great social asymmetries continue. According to Oxfam, today 1.3 billion people live in poverty, while 1% of the richest kept 82% of the world's wealth in 2017.

Inequality, hunger, poverty, the migration crisis, epidemic diseases, unemployment, are not just local problems, they are global problems.

On the other hand, the creative capacity of humanity, every day surprises us with new inventions and new technological applications. They have offered great solutions to very complex problems. Technology has meant a qualitative leap for humanity. However, it is necessary that from this multilateral body agreements on the matter be established with the participation of all States.

The Root Problem: The Capitalist System

Sisters and brothers, it is essential to talk about the structural causes of the different crises.

Transnational companies control food, water, non-renewable resources, weapons, technology and our personal data. They intend to commercialize everything, to accumulate more capital.

The world is being controlled by a global oligarchy, only a handful of billionaires define the political and economic destiny of humanity.

26 people have the same wealth

as 3.8 billion people. That is unfair, that is immoral, that is inadmissible.

The underlying problem lies in the model of production and consumerism, in the ownership of natural resources and in the unequal distribution of wealth. Let's say it very clearly: the root of the problem is in the capitalist system.

That is why the United Nations is more relevant and important than ever. Individual efforts are insufficient and only joint action and unity will give us an opportunity to overcome them.

As we have already said, the responsibility of our generation is to give the next a fairer and more human world.

That will only be achieved if we work together to consolidate a multipolar world, with common rules, defending multilateralism and the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and International Law.

Bolivia's Achievements

Sisters and brothers, in Bolivia we have taken very important steps:

We are the country with the highest economic growth in South America, with an average of 4.9% in the last six years.

Between 2005 and 2019, the Gross Domestic Product increased from \$9.574 billion to \$40.885 billion.

We have the lowest unemployment in the region. It fell from 8.1% in 2005 to 4.2% in 2018.

Extreme poverty fell from 38.2% to 15.2% in 13 years.

Life expectancy increased by 9 years.

The minimum wage rose from \$60 to \$310.

The gender gap in land titling for women was reduced. 138,788

women received land in 2005 and 1,011,249 up to 2018.

Bolivia ranks third country in the world with the highest participation of women in Parliament. More than 50% of Parliament is made up of women.

Bolivia was declared a territory free of illiteracy in 2008.

School dropout rate fell from 4.5% to 1.5% between 2005 and 2018.

The infant mortality rate was reduced by 56%.

We are in the process of implementing the Universal Health System, which will guarantee that 100% of Bolivians access a free, dignified service, with quality and warmth.

We passed a law to provide free health care for cancer patients.

The above data are part of the achievements of our democratic and cultural revolution, which have given Bolivia political, economic and social stability.

Sisters and brothers:

How do we achieve these achievements in such a short time? How is it that Bolivia has taken the path to defeat poverty and underdevelopment?

Thanks to the conscience of the people, of the social movements, of indigenous, peasants, workers, professionals, of men and women of the countryside and of the cities.

We nationalized our natural resources and our strategic companies. We have taken control of our destiny.

We are building a Community and Productive Social Economic Model, which recognizes basic services (water, electricity, telecommunications) as a human right.

Today we can say with pride and optimism that Bolivia has a future.

Sisters and brothers, our countries face diverse and conflicting situations, which must be approached in a sovereign manner and solutions must be found through dialogue and negotiation, in favor of the interests of the people.

Bolivia, in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations, ratifies its rejection of the economic and financial blockade imposed against Cuba, which violates all human rights.

Finally, sisters and brothers, I take this opportunity to thank all member countries for their support in the various initiatives promoted by Bolivia.

This year: The International Year of Indigenous Languages, The Declaration of the Rights of Peasants and the Declaration of June 21 as International Solstice Day.

To conclude, we ratify our commitment to consolidate a new world order of peace with social justice, in harmony with Mother Earth to Live Well, respecting the dignity and identity of the peoples.

Thank you.

The Unemployment Crisis: Reasons and Solutions

Contribution Rs. 25/-

Published by
Janata Trust & Lokayat
D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Grant Road (W),
Mumbai 400 007

National Mahatma Gandhi Award of MP Government: Acceptance Speech

Neeraj Jain

The Madhya Pradesh Government recently conferred the prestigious National Mahatma Gandhi Award for 2018 to Lokayat. The award has been given in recognition of the exemplary work done by Lokayat in spreading the message and values of Mahatma Gandhi among the youth. As a part of this, the recipient institution is honoured with a commendation plaque and a cash award of Rs 10 lakh. The award was given to Alka Joshi and Neeraj Jain, convenors of Lokayat, at a function held in Bhopal by the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Kamal Nath, on October 2, 2019. We are giving below the acceptance speech by Neeraj Jain while accepting the award on behalf of Lokayat.

On behalf of Lokayat, both of us would like to thank the Madhya Pradesh Government for honouring our work by bestowing upon our organisation the National Mahatma Gandhi Award.

Today is the perfect occasion for remembering the father of our nation, not just because it is his 150th Birth Anniversary, but also because his message, his values and ideals, are all the more relevant today—as they illuminate the path that should be followed by our country to tackle the most important problems being faced by it, some of which appear to be almost intractable—which also implies that we have forgotten his teachings.

While laying the foundations for and transforming the Indian freedom struggle into a mass movement, Gandhiji's vision of the freedom movement was that it must not remain

confined to being only a political movement, but simultaneously, must also transform the people. And so, along with the political movement, he also laid great stress on building a social movement to bring the people out of their age-old caste and gender prejudices. One of the biggest myths about Gandhiji is that he was a supporter of the caste system. But that he did not believe in caste and untouchability is best seen from the practices followed in all the ashrams he founded, where no caste restrictions were observed. As the freedom struggle moved towards its victory, Gandhiji publicly announced that he would attend only those marriages which were inter-caste marriages and where one partner was a Dalit.

Another issue that was very close to Gandhi's heart was Hindu-Muslim unity. By the time Gandhiji took over the reins of the freedom struggle in the country, the British had succeeded in sowing the seeds of communalism among the people in order to divide the people along communal lines and thus weaken our freedom struggle. Gandhiji tried his best to build a unified freedom struggle. But he failed in his efforts to prevent the partition of the country. He then strove to douse the communal fires that engulfed northern India and was planning to do the same in Pakistan - but his life was cut short in a fit of anger by a fellow countryman. Today, seventy one years after the martyrdom of Gandhiji, the cause for which the father of our nation sacrificed his life has been forgotten, and the

monster of communalism, which should more appropriately be called majoritarianism, is raising its ugly head once again.

Even in the sphere of development, Gandhiji's economic ideas are more relevant than ever before. The inequitous development model being followed in the country has made our country one of the most unequal in the world, pushing it into a deep economic and unemployment crisis. At such a critical time, we need to revisit Gandhiji's economic philosophy. His insistence on focussing on development of the rural economy and decentralised development, are the real solutions to the economic crisis facing the country.

Today, on the 150th birth anniversary of the greatest son that India has produced, the need is to take Gandhiji's message to the masses, raise their consciousness in the true Gandhian way, and inspire them to stand up against all injustice; in this process of struggle, they will also transform themselves into truly human beings.

This regeneration of our democracy through the teachings and practice of Mahatma Gandhi—is precisely what the activists of Lokayat are striving to do, through the innumerable activities that we take up. As Mahatma Gandhi had said, seventy years ago:

Real swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused.

Thank you.

The Human Cost Of Apple's iPhone Manufacturing Process

It is not sufficient to know that workers are exploited, or to demand higher wages within a capitalist system: it is necessary to have a framework to understand more deeply the injustices that we see in places like Foxconn factories, where long workdays and unsafe working conditions are the norm.

This framework is provided by the concept of 'rate of exploitation'—one of the most essential concepts in Marx's theory. Its measurement allows us to show how much the worker contributes to the increase of value in the production process. It shows that even if the worker is paid more, by the special magic of mechanisation and of efficient management of the production process, the rate of exploitation increases.

Recently, Tricontinental brought out a report that used Marx's rate of exploitation on the iPhone manufacturing process to show quantitatively the contradictory interests of the capitalists and of the workers. It enables workers to see how much of the share of the value produced is appropriated from them by the capitalists, and to therefore make the case for a different way to organise production and to end exploitation.

Here is a brief summary from the report:

- If the iPhone were made in the United States, it would cost at least \$30,000 per phone.
- In order to purchase one iPhone for \$30,000, a minimum wage worker in India would have to work for 15.5 years, each day. A minimum wage worker in South

Africa would need to work for 14.5 years for one phone.

- Each time an iPhone X is sold for \$999, Apple receives \$603.56 of surplus value in money form. In other words, every time an iPhone is purchased for \$999, Apple keeps \$603.56.
- The rate of exploitation of the iPhone is 2458%. This is 25 times the rates of exploitation that are gleaned from Marx's examples in Capital, published in 1867. Workers who make the iPhone in the 21st century, in other words, are 25 times more exploited than textile workers in England in the 19th century.
- What does this number—2458%—tell us? It tells us that an infinitesimal part of the working day is devoted to the value needed by the workers as wages. The bulk of the day is spent by the worker producing goods that enhance the wealth of the capitalist. The higher the rate of exploitation, the greater the enhancement of the capital's wealth by the worker's labor.

Tricontinental:
Institute for Social Research

Spectre of Fascism

Contribution Rs. 20/-

Published by
Janata Trust & Lokayat
D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Grant Road (W), Mumbai 400 007

Janata

is available at
www.lohiatoday.com

Janata Subscription

Annual Rs. : 260/-

Three Years : 750/-

Demand Draft /

Cheque

on

Mumbai Bank

in favour of

JANATA TRUST

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Grant Road (W),
Mumbai 400 007.

Madhu Dandavate

By

B. Vivekanandan

Price: Rs. 20/-

Janata Trust

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Grant Road (W),
Mumbai 400 007.



MUMBAI KAMGAR MADHYAWARTI GRAHAK SAHAKARI SANSTHA MARYADIT
(Multistate Consumer Co-operative Society)

APNA BAZAR™

CD-OP

106-A, Govindaji Keni Road, Naigaon, Dadar (E), Mumbai - 400 014.
Tel :- 24195200, Fax :- 24157497
(ISO 9001-2015 Certified)

Quality and Trustworthiness means 'Apna Bazar'

Our Features

- ◆ 69 years-old proud feeling customer service
- ◆ All Departments & Branches are Computerized.
- ◆ The multi-state consumer co-operative organization in India
- ◆ Customer service in Maharashtra and Gujarat
- ◆ 7 Department Stores and 15 food stores and 1 medical store
- ◆ Annual Turnover of Rs.141 Crore
- ◆ 30 million loyal customers
- ◆ Four Times winner of 'Jamnalal Bajaj Uchit Vyavahar Puraskar' (1989, 2001, 2013 & 2016)
- ◆ 'Global Achievers Award for Business Leadership' awarded by Economic Development Forum (2012)
- ◆ 'Award of Excellence' awarded by National Cooperative Union of India (2013)
- ◆ 'Sahakar Gaurav Puraskar' Awarded by Mumbai District Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. (2015)

Health service :

- ◆ Dadasaheb Sarfare Health Center and Clinical Laboratory at Apna Bazar Naigaon

Social Service :

- ◆ 10% Discount to Customers on purchase of Medical items (Drugs)
- ◆ Festival wise various schemes for the customers
- ◆ Special programme for women
- ◆ Various programme for customer awareness

Apna Bazar for All :

- 1) Various concessions (discount) on purchases
- 2) The place 'of surety for quality goods
- 3) Saving time and money
- 4) Special discounts in festivals
- 5) Free Home Delivery Service
- 6) 'Apna Gift Voucher' to present the Gift.
- 7) 'A.C. Banquet Hall' at Apna Bazar Naigaon & Apna Bazar Charkop
- 8) Shopping by Sodexo Pass coupons, Ticket Restaurant coupons and Bank Cards

Apna Bazar - Means Adorable, Pleasant, Noble and Affectionate services

Chairman
Anil Gangar

Vice Chairman
Shripad Phatak

Yours in Co-operation
Dnyandeo Dalvi, Santosh Sarfare
Nandini Gawde, Rajendra Angre

Chief Executive
S. T. Kajale

Executive Committee Members
Bharati Shirsat, Shivaji Gawand, Vishwanath Malushte, Ashwin Upadhyay,
Anjana Sawant, Narendra Kadam, Ramakant Salunkhe, Bala Rawool, Nilesh Vaidya,
Narendra Bhurke, Umesh Phatak, Manisha Duble, Nitin Anerao, Jagdish Nalawade



"We are, what we repeatedly do,
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Aristotle



Taj Palace & Towers - Mumbai



Bombay Stock Exchange - Fort, Mumbai



Forum Atmosphere - Kolkata



J.K. House (Raymond)
Breach Candy, Mumbai

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING /
REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF :

- ✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)
- ✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)
- ✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.

Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi

janata

Vol. 74 No. 38
October 13, 2019

**Gandhiji and Lohia:
An Intimate and Fruitful
Relationship – Part 1**
Prem Singh

**A Frontal Attack on Labour
in the Shadow of Hindutva**
Prabhat Patnaik

Option off the Table
Zia Mian, Abdul H. Nayyar,
Sandeep Pandey, M. V. Ramana

**In the Idea of an 'All India NRC',
Echoes of Reich Citizenship Law**
Nizam Pasha

Capitalism and Mental Health
David Matthews

There is But One Race: Human
Richard C. Gross

Editor : G. G. Parikh

Associate Editor : Neeraj Jain

Managing Editor : Guddi

Editorial Board :
B. Vivekanandan, Qurban Ali
Anil Nauriya, Sonal Shah
Amarendra Dhaneshwar,
Sandeep Pandey

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : janataweekly@gmail.com
Website: www.janataweekly.org

Sedition Case for Open Letter: Over 1389 Personalities Endorse Statement, Condemn Charges

On October 3, an FIR was lodged against the 49 celebrities for raising concern in late July over the growing incidents of mob lynching. The FIR was lodged under several sections of the Indian Penal Code, including sedition. This is despite the Supreme Court's stance that sedition charges cannot be invoked for criticism of the government. Supreme Court Justice Deepak Gupta also recently advocated the dilution—if not complete abolition—of the sedition law.

In response to the filing of this FIR, more than 1389 cultural and literary personalities have condemned the charges and endorsed the original letter. The full text of their statement is as below:

An FIR has been lodged against forty-nine of our colleagues in the cultural community, simply because they performed their duty as respected members of civil society. They wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister, expressing concern about mob lynching in our country.

Can this be called an act of sedition? Or is harassment by misusing the courts a ploy to silence citizens' voices?

All of us, as members of the Indian cultural community, as

citizens of conscience, condemn such harassment. We do more: we endorse every word of the letter our colleagues wrote to the Prime Minister. This is why we share their letter here once again, and appeal to the cultural, academic and legal communities to do the same. This is why more of us will speak every day. Against mob lynching. Against the silencing of people's voices. Against the misuse of courts to harass citizens.

Full text of open letter written to Prime Minister Modi on 23 July 2019 by 49 eminent citizens:

We, as peace loving and proud Indians, are deeply concerned about a number of tragic events that have been happening in recent times in our beloved country.

Our Constitution describes India as a secular socialist democratic republic where citizens of all religions, ethnicities, gender and castes are equal. Hence, to ensure that every citizen enjoys the rights given to her/him by the Constitution, our submission is:

1. The lynching of Muslims, Dalits and other minorities must be stopped immediately. We were shocked to learn from the NCRB

(National Crime Records Bureau) reports that there have been no less than 840 instances of atrocities against Dalits in the year 2016, and a definite decline in the percentage of convictions.

Further, 254 religious identity-based hate crimes were reported between January 1, 2009, and October 29, 2018, where at least 91 persons were killed and 579 were injured (FactChecker.in database, October 30, 2018). The Citizen's Religious Hate-Crime Watch recorded that Muslims, (14% of India's population) were the victims in 62% for cases, and Christians (2% of the population), in 14% cases. About 90% of these attacks were reported after May 2014, when your Government assumed power nationally.

You have criticized such lynchings in Parliament Mr. Prime Minister, but that is not enough! What action has actually been taken against the perpetrators? We strongly feel that such offences should be declared non-bailable, and that exemplary punishment should be meted out swiftly and surely. If life imprisonment without parole can be the sentence in cases of murder, why not for lynchings, which are even more heinous? No citizen should have to live in fear in his/her own country!

Regrettably "Jai Sri Ram" has become a provocative 'war-cry' today that leads to law and order problems, and many lynchings take place in its name. It is shocking to see so much violence perpetrated in the name of religion! These are not the Middle Ages! The name of Ram is sacred to many in the majority community of India. As the highest Executive of this country, you must put a stop to the name of Ram being

defiled in this manner.

2. There is no democracy without dissent. People should not be branded 'anti-national' or 'urban Naxal' and incarcerated because of dissent against the Government. Article 19 of the Constitution of India protects freedom of speech and expression of which dissent is an integral part.

Criticising the ruling party does not imply criticising the nation. No ruling party is synonymous with the country where it is in power. It is

only one of the political parties of that country. Hence anti-government stands cannot be equated with anti-national sentiments. An open environment where dissent is not crushed, only makes for a stronger nation.

We hope our suggestions will be taken in the spirit that they are meant—as Indians genuinely concerned with, and anxious about, the fate of our nation.

—India Cultural Forum

Note by Editors: On October 10, the newspapers reported that the Bihar police has ordered that the case of sedition against the 49 celebrities be closed and that it has decided to prosecute the complainant Sudhir Ojha for filing a false case.

Gandhiji and Lohia: An Intimate and Fruitful Relationship – Part 1

Prem Singh

The relationship between M.K. Gandhi (1869–1948) and Ram Manohar Lohia (1910–1967) was unique in many ways. One can perceive this as equilibrium of opposites. When Lohia came in direct contact with Gandhiji, he was merely twenty-three years old where as Gandhiji, with his vast wealth of experience and ideas, was already sixty four. First of all, it was a relationship between a believer (*Ishwarwadi*) and a non-believer (*Anishwarwadi*). Lohia did not ever agree with Gandhiji's religious invocation, his prayers, his support of the *Varna* system, his views on celibacy, etc. In his entire crusade, Gandhiji maintained cordial feelings towards his opponents, including the British, whereas Lohia usually adopted an aggressive posture towards his opponents, using intolerant and sharp language. Lohia

used this kind of language even in his conversations with Gandhiji. Lohia was not in total agreement with all the Gandhian ideas on socio-political subjects. Thus, there was a contrast between them not just in terms of temperament but also in terms of ideas. Despite all this, an intimate relationship developed between them. Lohia's biographer Indumati Kelkar terms Gandhiji as the *Manas Pita* and *Guru* of Lohia. She also mentions that Lohia became an 'orphan' for the second time after Gandhiji's assassination. In fact in his last few years, Gandhiji came very close to the socialists, particularly to Lohia. Among the crowd of Gandhians, Lohia saw himself as an heretic. Scholars have called him an extension of Gandhiji. A little later we shall discuss Lohia's critique of Gandhiji's ideas and methods of intervention.

To delineate the personal relationship between Gandhiji and Lohia, the main source could be an essay by Lohia himself in which he narrates the 'story' of their relationship. The title of the essay is 'Anecdotes of Mahatma Gandhi', based on his speech delivered at Hyderabad in 1952. (1) Lohia's first personal contact with Gandhiji took place at the time of the Non-Cooperation Movement when, at the age of nine or ten, he went to see Gandhiji with his father, who himself was a congressman. Lohia writes, "I touched his feet and he touched my back. I am proud of that, and on one occasion when Gandhiji asked me when I had first seen him, I related the incident. He said, 'Yes, of course, you would remember but I don't remember it....' I may here add that I never touched anybody else's feet outside of the family, and that too when very young." (2)

His first "live contact" with Gandhiji as an adult was established when he returned to India in 1933 from his studies in Germany. There was a meeting between Gandhiji and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya. Lohia could reach there with the help of Prabhavati Devi. He did not disclose his identity to Gandhiji on that occasion, using Prabhavati Devi as his shield. During the conversation between these two Congress leaders he was impressed by Gandhiji's reaction to Malviyaji on the question of sending a Congress delegation to England to plead the case of India. Gandhiji made his comment on the subject "in a very calm persuasive and yet very firm tone": "What are you talking about? Have we not come to that stage when it is no longer possible to think in terms of a deputation of the Congress Party going out to England to plead

India's cause?" (3) Lohia was in full agreement with Gandhiji's understanding of the situation. Perhaps Lohia could see the strength of Gandhiji during the phase of "national depression". After a few days Lohia met Gandhiji through Mr. Jamnalal Bajaj who had perhaps already told Gandhiji about Lohia's intention of joining politics as a full time vocation. Gandhiji's direct question to Lohia was "Are you well off?" When Jamnalal Bajaj assured him on that account he felt relieved and said, "Then it is all right, we shall meet again." After that, the "whole thing was dismissed." (4) Such a "rude" question in the very first meeting, Lohia recollects, did not strike him as being wrong because it came from a person like Gandhiji. In fact, to Lohia, it showed his caring concern towards political activists.

After the formation of Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in 1934, Lohia was appointed the editor of its weekly journal. He wrote an article in the weekly, criticising Gandhi's 'constructive program' which started after the failure of 1932-33 movement. The 'young' Lohia was very harsh with 'old' Gandhiji's program. A copy of the journal was sent to Gandhiji for his comment. Lohia says that it was the only occasion when Gandhiji was really angry with him. Gandhiji wrote to Lohia, "You must never expect me to write because I find that you have not the slightest patience with your opponent's view point." Irritated by this answer Lohia wrote back to Gandhiji saying probably he was a little careless in the use of his phrases, but then Gandhiji should have tried to get at his meaning. This time Lohia received a sweet answer from Gandhiji. Lohia was impressed

by that letter and recognised that "if one may not find it easy to accept the view point of an opponent, one should at least listen to it carefully and understand what he has to say and that is a faculty which we are singularly losing in the modern world." (5) Till the end Lohia was accused of being intolerant towards his opponents. Madhu Limaye has noted at one point : "Gandhiji's soft spokenness and his cordial and gentle behaviour with his opponents was a unique and fascinating quality. Lohia was greatly influenced by Gandhiji. But despite possessing a brilliant and impressive personality, Lohia's language was very sharp. While attacking his colleagues, he did not particularly care about their feelings. He made many enemies because of his piercing words. In fact, sharp words seem to be in vogue with us who belong to the left. The level of the debates even between Tilak and Agarkar could not remain of a very high standard. It would have been good if Lohia had adopted Gandhiji's new mode of debate. Gandhiji had proved that cordial feelings for an opponent was not an indication of one's weakness." (6) Indumati Kelkar also maintains that Lohia "did not possess any signs of the gentle and controlled language of his *manas Pita* and *Guru*. This was an unpleasant aspect of a personality which happened to be attractive in other matters." (7) Even with Gandhiji, Lohia often used, in his own words, "all the violent, rough, and sharp language."

Passing over "other occasions of an intimate character", Lohia mentions about the AICC session held a little before the Second World War broke out. In this session of AICC, a resolution drafted by

Gandhiji himself about the passive resistance of 'British Indians' in South Africa came up for discussion. Lohia moved his amendments to Gandhiji's resolution on two points and the same were passed. When Gandhiji came to know of the development he got very angry and demanded that "he would have the AICC pass his resolution or none at all." At the insistence of Gandhiji the AICC passed the withdrawal of the amendments suggested by Lohia and "the resolution was passed in its original form except that nobody tried to suggest that Indians should be called British Indians. At least that much was accepted without any debate." Lohia had suggested in one of his amendments "that Indians had better be called Indians, whether they lived in South Africa or India, and not British Indians." (8)

Lohia narrates another episode when he got angry with Gandhiji. It was over Gandhiji's 'tearful' statements, some months after the beginning of the Second World War, about the threatened destruction of Westminster Abbey. Lohia felt that by making such statements Gandhiji detracted "from his role as a world leader, because he had shown preference for one people over another." Lohia's reaction was based on the edited version of Gandhiji's statement on AIR. When he read it in full in the print media, his anger subsided somewhat. He gave a patient thought to Gandhiji's meaning and came up with the interpretation that 'while embracing a person we embraced a representative of the whole human race.' Lohia realised that "when he [Gandhiji] talked about the destruction of Westminster Abbey he was trying to embrace the whole mankind ..." To Lohia's joy, "Gandhiji immediately

wrote out another statement for the *Harijan* saying it was so ..." (9) When Lohia later met Gandhiji, he gave him perfect freedom to express his views on his statements on national or international issues related to the war. During the war Lohia could press upon Gandhiji his idea of declaring all the Indian cities as open by the British Government. The idea was directed towards the full freedom of India. In this regard Gandhiji wrote a clear letter to Viceroy Linlithgow in which he mentioned Lohia as "a socialist with pronounced leanings towards nonviolence." (10) Somehow the letter was not sent to the Viceroy with the fear that the British Police will arrest Lohia after receiving such a letter.

Again Lohia tried to persuade Gandhiji to approach the various world governments "with a scheme of setting up the foundations on which the new world could be built." Lohia outlined four principles on this issue : "1. Cancellation of all past investments by one country in another; 2. Unobstructed passage and right of settlement to everybody all the world over; 3. Political freedom for all the peoples and nations of the world and constituent assemblies; 4. Some kind of a world citizenship." (11) Perhaps Gandhiji found the idea of writing a letter to the world governments somewhat impractical, but he reproduced Lohia's ideas in full in the *Harijan*.

It is worth mentioning that by this time, despite ideological differences between these two great personalities, a mutual faith building had taken place. In fact, the most intimate moments of the relationship between Gandhiji and Lohia came after the war when communal riots

broke out in the country just before and during the partition. It was the time when Lord Mountbatten proposed his theory of partition resulting in communal riots all over the country. Lohia was in Goa at that time and "had done something there." Gandhiji, without confirming the facts from Lohia, immediately issued a statement supporting his action. Lohia writes, "He had begun to like me, and he assumed that my acts would be more good than evil. That put me under some kind of an obligation, and so when he insisted upon my staying on in Calcutta, I first resisted, knowing fully well that I was incapable of doing anything whatsoever with regard to the bloody riots between Hindus and Muslims, but on the third or fourth day I succumbed ..." (12) At the end of the essay, Lohia gives a detailed account of his efforts to check the communal riots. He worked day and night in communally hit areas of the country with Gandhiji and without him, at times putting his life at a great risk. Once he saved the life of Gandhiji from communalists.

Lohia wrote that Gandhiji, at this juncture, tried to explore the strength of the socialists so that he could rely upon them "in order to combat both the British Authority, and his own Working Committee." He further elaborated, "I must say that we must have been an unsatisfactory lot because he seems finally to have concluded that he could do nothing about it.... On one occasion Sardar Patel asked me forget all this talk about what will happen to India after the partition. He would talk to Mr. Jinnah in the language of the *Danda*." (13) According to Lohia, Nehru was also equally furious on this issue, saying that "we were obsessed with the view of Mr. Jinnah

and were arguing with him all the time. What is the use of calling people brothers who are flying at each other's throat?" Astonished at this 'understanding' of Nehru, Lohia gave the example of America which had a civil war killing "300 thousand or 400 thousand persons or may be more on both sides, but they did not cease to be brothers." (14)

The relationship between Gandhiji and Lohia further matured to the extent that in a meeting held in solitude, Gandhiji, putting his hands on Lohia's shoulders, expressed his concern about his over indulgence in cigarettes and in drinking coffee and tea, cautioning him against the ruinous effects of these on one's health. It came to Lohia as a "surprise." He had not expected that "after 13 years of rather long and intimate conversations" he would listen to Gandhiji's "private talk on cigarettes." Apart from health, Gandhiji further linked the issue with socialism. Lohia writes : "He said that as a socialist I must identify myself with the people, that I must become their spokesman, so it was a process of identification and spokespersonship, the two together. Then he asked me on what grounds I could possibly justify my cigarette smoking in India, which debarred me from completing this process of identification with and spokespersonship of my countrymen, the mass of the hungry and poverty-stricken." (15) In this solitary meeting between Gandhiji and Lohia, only Gandhiji did the speaking, and that too for a long time. He twice insisted that Lohia say something on the issue. Lohia kept mum. Then Gandhiji asked him if he wanted him to stop. An embarrassed Lohia asked him to continue. Gandhiji contemplated the

issue further and raised the question of public and private life. He asked Lohia if he wanted him to confine himself only to his (Lohia's) public life. Lohia said that he did not draw a watertight distinction between private and public life and would certainly allow Gandhiji to ask questions on the former. As far as the habit of cigarette smoking was concerned, Lohia did not reply to the queries of Gandhiji that day but promised an answer very soon. After two months or so he informed Gandhiji that he had given up the habit of smoking. He later said that he did not "smoke again until the day Gandhiji was assassinated." However he did smoke that day. He felt betrayed by Gandhiji. The pain of Gandhiji's assassination was so deep that he contemplated at length the impression Gandhiji left on him even at the time of his death. He simultaneously experienced contradictory feelings: the feeling of imposing and practicing self-discipline in life and the feeling of complete freedom to do whatever he liked. In fact, "the problem of self-discipline, of character and knowledge" in human life struck him now in real depth and meaning. Adding a postscript to the affect Gandhiji's assassination had on him, Lohia gave an account of a conversation twelve years earlier when Gandhiji praised him not only for bravery and intelligence but also his endurance of character—sheel. Lohia however viewed Gandhiji's estimate of him differently : "Gandhiji sometimes made mistakes in his estimate of men. I sometimes fear that his affection for me and lack of full information about me may have vitiated his judgment, but, if what he said is true, I am deeply happy. Not bravery so much,

not even intelligence or learning, but continuity in character is the abiding human value." (16) Beside endurance of character, the quality Gandhiji liked most in Lohia was his commitment to non-violence.

Lohia narrated an episode concerned with the question of violence–nonviolence. The Nagpur secret police made a report that Lohia "had recommended an underground campaign against the Indian Government and their assassination in the Aung-san fashion." In Burma, Prime Minister Aung-san was assassinated together with most of his cabinet members. Home Minister Sardar Patel went to Gandhiji and complained about the 'plan' of Lohia. Gandhiji asked Lohia if those were his views. Lohia, saying that during 1942 movement he had not indulged in the killing of even British soldiers, replied in the negative. But at the same time he descended very harshly on the present Indian Government. He described the government as "incompetent, inefficient, stupid, and without use or reason." (17) In full agreement with Lohia, Gandhiji asked him to write a letter to the Home Minister stating that he would not 'assassinate' his government. Ever ready to go to jail, Lohia refused to do so. Finally he agreed to write a letter to Gandhiji.

In his last days Gandhiji asked Lohia if he believed in God and if not, he could not be a good satyagrahi. Lohia replied in negative but at the same time he emphasised that he might best achieve his satyagrah without God. Gandhiji dropped the subject and never raised it again. Lohia ends the essay in the hope that he will be able to tell the stories of Gandhiji some other day. He also said that in the process of editing the

speech made eight years back "a lot has ... been left out than brought in." It means that the account of personal interaction and relationship between Gandhiji and Lohia presented in this essay is a tip of the iceberg. Lohia could not tell the story of Gandhiji again. But the given account could form enough basis to understand the nature of intimacy of their personal relationship.

One can see the basis on which an intimate and trustful relationship between Gandhiji and Lohia became possible. Lohia was attracted to Gandhiji's immense concern for mankind by his people-oriented philosophy of life and most of all by his socio-political activism completely devoid of any desire for political power. Gandhiji too could see Lohia's genuine and selfless concern for the people. It may be remembered that with the strengthening of his relationship with Gandhiji, Lohia's relationship with Nehru went through a

corresponding decline, with the result that eventually he remained wholly and solely with Gandhiji. Lohia was thirty-seven at the time of India's independence. In expressing his concern for Lohia's health, in saying that he should identify himself with the people and become their spokesman, and in praising his power of endurance, Gandhiji apparently voiced his desire to see Lohia as his political-philosophical heir after the Nehru-Patel generation. Lohia too responded, as it were, to Gandhiji's hope and sentiments. Gandhiji had given India the treasure of his unique personality, ideas and method of intervention, which most of the Left thinkers not only left unexplored but also dismissed as reactionary. Lohia, on his part, interpreted the Gandhian ideas in his own way and also sought to revolutionise them.

(The author teaches Hindi at the University of Delhi.)

References:

1. Lohia, Rammanohar, *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*, (Hyderabad, Samata Vidyalaya Nyasa, 1963), p. 139.
2. Ibid., p. 140.
3. Ibid., p. 142.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 144.
6. Harish Chandra, (ed.), *Lohia ki Kahani : Unake Sathiyon ki Jubani*, (New Delhi, Noida News, 1991), pp. 12–13.
7. Kelkar, Indumati, *Rammanohar Lohia*, (New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1996), p. 9.
8. *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*, op.cit., pp. 145–47.
9. Ibid., pp. 149–50.
10. Ibid., p. 152.
11. Ibid., pp. 152–53.
12. Ibid., pp. 158–59.
13. Ibid., p. 164.
14. Ibid., pp. 164–65.
15. Ibid., pp. 166–67.
16. Ibid., p. 169.
17. Ibid., pp. 170–71.

A Frontal Attack on Labour in the Shadow of Hindutva

Prabhat Patnaik

The class function of Hindutva is becoming clearer by the day. In the lee of Hindutva, the Modi government is embarking on a massive programme of privatisation of the public sector, and of attack on the working class. Such a programme could not have been launched under the "normal" circumstances of capitalist rule; it would have aroused stiff opposition. But the government feels emboldened to attempt it when the nation is being divided in the name of Hindutva, when the combination of fear of the "other", and hatred in consequence of it, are being inculcated among the majority.

Fear creates the need for a "saviour"; and if the so-called "saviour" is also doing the privatisation, then people are less strident in their opposition to it. They are too distracted by the Hindutva discourse to mount any challenge to the class agenda of the corporate-financial oligarchy in which such privatisation figures prominently. Hindutva, in short, brings about a discourse shift that works in the interests of the corporate-financial oligarchy.

Privatisation is being introduced in diverse ways. Some public sector enterprises are earmarked for

outright sale, not just loss-making ones, but even those which make handsome profits. In others, the government intends to reduce its own share of equity below 51% through disinvestment. In still others, the idea is to break up the total activity into several different individual activities and to privatise some individual activities by divesting the public sector of those; this last route is what is being followed with regard to the Railways.

In addition to these ways of privatising the existing public sector, there is also an effort to bypass the public sector where it exists, to

reduce its scope as much as possible. In a sphere like coal mining, which had been hitherto kept more or less exclusively for the public sector, even foreign capital is now being invited to participate. In railway components, such as locomotives, imports from foreign firms are being resorted to, and domestic production in the public sector is being correspondingly curtailed; this is but a prelude to running down the public sector units to extinction.

Likewise, legislation to “reform” existing labour laws, that would make the sacking of workers easier, is likely to be introduced in the coming Lok Sabha session. In fact, only about 4% of the total workforce in the country is covered by whatever protection the existing labour laws provide, since even in the “organised sector”, casualisation of the workforce has proceeded remarkably fast. The real objective of the proposed change in labour laws, therefore, is to make trade unions impossible, since anyone unionising the workers would be sacked forthwith.

Privatising the public sector will have an exactly similar consequence. All over the world, workers in the private sector are less unionised than in the public sector. In the US, for instance, while only about 7% of private sector workers are unionised, the corresponding ratio in the public sector (including education) is 33%. The shift of a unit from the domain of the public sector to that of the private sector, therefore, will have a deleterious effect on unionisation.

The Narendra Modi government’s real objective, therefore, is a frontal attack on the working class, something which the corporate–financial oligarchy would dearly love, but which had not been easy to launch earlier. In the shadow

of Hindutva this is being sought to be achieved.

The corporate gain in the shadow of Hindutva is by no means accidental. In fact, the economic ideology of the votaries of Hindutva is unblinkingly and unashamedly pro-corporate. This fact was expressed in the clearest possible terms by Modi himself when he said that the capitalists were the “wealth creators” for the country, which even capitalist economics would not claim.

Standard textbooks of capitalist economics mention four “factors of production”—land, labour, capital and enterprise—as coming together to undertake production, upon which the creation of wealth depends. This eclecticism on their part is suggestive of the fact that they want to show capital which the capitalists “contribute” as being no less important than labour in the process of wealth creation: the capitalists, in other words, far from being exploiters, as the socialists argue, are co-contributors to the creation of wealth.

The Hindu Right, however, has gone even further than standard bourgeois textbooks. It has eliminated labour completely from the list of wealth creators. It sees the capitalists not just as co-contributors alongside labour to the process of wealth creation, as capitalist textbooks do; it sees them as the lone creators of wealth. A more craven apologia for the capitalists, and hence in today’s world for the corporates, can scarcely be imagined.

In fact, going beyond capitalist textbooks, we can say that human labour acting upon nature is the source of all things, or use-values. Some of these things are used in the process of man’s acting upon nature, as instruments of labour (capital

stock). A group of persons, namely, the capitalists, make themselves the owners of these instruments of labour and, therefore, claim a part of the things produced without performing any labour themselves. They consume a part of what they appropriate, and use the other part to add to the stock of instruments of labour.

Let us, generously, interpret Modi as lauding the capitalists because they add to the stock of instruments of labour. Even then, to call them “wealth-creators”, because they do not consume everything they appropriate but also add to the instruments of labour, is to show complete ignorance of this total process.

Even greater ignorance is displayed by Modi in his remark that the tax concession amounting to Rs 1.45 lakh crore, which his government has just given to the corporates, is for the benefit of all; it represents, he claims, a “win-win situation” for 120 crore Indians!

Here Modi has gone even beyond his own view of capitalists being “wealth creators”. Even if corporates simply hoard the entire Rs 1.45 lakh crore without adding an iota to the stock of instruments of labour (which incidentally would produce massive unemployment because of a reduction in aggregate demand), even then it apparently constitutes a “win-win situation”!

It is clear that the Hindutva view of economics is a simple one: the more money is handed over to the corporates, the better it is for society. The limit to what can be handed over, however, is set by what must be given to the working people; hence, the Hindutva view would suggest that the less given to the working people, the better it is for society! The Hindutva view, in

short, is not just anti-minority, anti-Dalit, anti-tribal, anti-women, as is well-known; it is essentially and fundamentally anti-working people as well.

There is a vicious dialectic at work here. Hindutva's solution to the economic crisis currently engulfing the country is to further increase the amount of money in the hands of corporates; in fact, given its economics, it can have no other conception. To do this, however, it will have to bring about an even more aggressive discourse shift, by engaging in even more "shock and awe" operations, like "one nation-one-language", the National Register of Citizens, and the Citizenship Amendment Bill. Each of these will have a devastating effect on the lives of the people and the unity of the nation.

But additionally, since putting more money into the hands of the corporates, far from overcoming the crisis, will only have the effect of worsening it, the Hindutva government, instead of desisting from such dangerous measures, will only intensify them further. In other words, as the crisis deepens, and as the pro-corporate measures escalate in a futile bid to alleviate it, the communal assault on the hapless minorities, will also escalate.

While the Hindutva–corporate axis, which is built around this particular class understanding imbibed by Hindutva, unleashes this vicious dialectic, its Achilles heel consists in the fact that through this dialectic the crisis will only intensify, ultimately calling forth resistance that will overwhelm it.

(Prabhat Patnaik is Professor Emeritus at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.)

India, Pakistan, Kashmir: Taking the War Option off the Table

Zia Mian, Abdul H. Nayyar, Sandeep Pandey, M. V. Ramana

There is great concern about the increasingly hostile relationship between India and Pakistan. At the heart of the matter is the more than 70-year-old dispute that has led the two countries, born out of the partition of British India in 1947, to lay claim to and eventually divide, occupy, and dominate the people and land of Kashmir. The feud over Kashmir led them to war in 1947, 1965, and 1999, and war has been in the air again this year.

The situation in India, Kashmir, and Pakistan seems primed for a hostile action and reaction cycle, resulting in escalating confrontation driven by contested nationalisms, bitter shared histories, and exclusive visions of the future. Indian repression drives Kashmiri resistance fueled by a long-standing demand for freedom that has given rise to both peaceful protests and armed militant factions. Pakistan claims Kashmir and Kashmiris for itself, while restricting the liberties and rights of the Kashmiris it rules, and seeks to punish India for past sins. It now faces unrest from a nascent "growing independence movement" in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. As South Asian scholar and activist Eqbal Ahmad observed grimly, "New Delhi's moral isolation from the Kashmiri people is total and irreversible.... [while] Pakistan's governments and politicians have pursued policies which have all but disregarded the history, culture, and aspirations of Kashmir's people."

There is an urgent need for ways to prevent any eruption of armed conflict. One option is to resurrect

an old idea proposed at various times by both India and Pakistan but never fully agreed: a binding commitment never to resort to war to settle their disputes.

Drifting to war. The immediate path to the present crisis can be traced to a fraught 14-day period earlier this year. As part of a renewed and increasingly home-grown Kashmiri insurgency, a suicide attack in late February by a young Kashmiri militant killed over 40 Indian paramilitary personnel in the town of Pulwama in India-administered Kashmir. India, then preparing for a general election, responded with an airstrike across the border in Pakistan. The target in the town of Balakot was said to be a training camp for the militant group that claimed responsibility for the Pulwama attack.

In retaliation, the Pakistan Air Force targeted an Indian site across the Line of Control that has divided Kashmir since 1948, shooting down an Indian fighter plane in the resulting dogfight and capturing its pilot inside Pakistani territory. The Indian pilot was soon released, and a further escalation was averted.

Using its forcefulness in this crisis as a campaign issue, in May, Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won a decisive victory in the general election on a hard-line platform, returning to power with a larger majority in parliament. In August, in a surprise move, under the pretext of protecting Hindu devotees on a pilgrimage, the new government moved an additional 38,000 troops

into Kashmir and asked the pilgrims to leave. Parliament, acting on a BJP campaign promise, then abrogated Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution. These articles, largely overridden in practice, had been intended to confer special autonomous status to Kashmir as part of an agreement in 1949.

The new measure by the Modi government divided the state into two units and put them under direct control of the national government. To forestall protest, the Indian government took the extraordinary step of cutting off all communication links within Kashmir and imposing a blanket curfew that left Kashmiris “besieged, confused, frightened and furious”; the curfew has not yet been fully lifted, even a month later. This step has harshly reinforced an earlier image of Kashmir as “the country without a post office” offered by the late Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali from a time when repression and violence led to all the post offices there being closed for seven months.

It was in this heated environment that on August 16, Indian defense minister Rajnath Singh indicated that India may review its long-standing pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons in any confrontation, declaring that “India has strictly adhered to this [no-first-use] doctrine. What happens in future depends on the circumstances.” Many in Pakistan took this statement to be a clear sign of what the Pakistani foreign minister called “India’s irresponsible and belligerent behaviour.”

Some Kashmiri militant groups, which have long found in Pakistan a diplomatic champion for their cause and a source of covert military support, now see an opportunity for a war that will finally put matters

to rest. Syed Salahuddin, a militant leader who heads an alliance of over a dozen groups fighting Indian rule in Kashmir, said in early September, “It’s binding upon the armed forces of Pakistan, the first Islamic nuclear power, to enter India-occupied Kashmir to militarily help the people of the territory.”

Imran Khan offered one measure of the current peril in a recent New York Times op-ed, where he threatened, “If the world does nothing to stop the Indian assault on Kashmir and its people, there will be consequences for the whole world as two nuclear-armed states get ever closer to a direct military confrontation.”

In a subsequent interview Khan raised the spectre of a fifth and perhaps final war with India, declaring, “If say Pakistan, God forbid, we are fighting a conventional war, we are losing, and if a country is stuck between the choice: either you surrender or you fight ‘til death for your freedom, I know Pakistanis will fight to death for their freedom. So when a nuclear-armed country fights to the end, to the death, it has consequences.” These consequences, left unspoken, would be catastrophic not only for the people of India, Pakistan, and Kashmir, but for the entire world because of the long-range, long-term environmental consequences of the smoke from South Asian cities set ablaze by nuclear attacks.

A no-war pact. The possibility of a treaty rejecting war as an option between India and Pakistan has a long and surprising history, one full of missed opportunities. The notion is in fact almost as old as the two countries themselves.

After Pakistan’s first attempt to seize Kashmir by force in 1947

failed, ending in a cease-fire, a forced division of Kashmir, and a search for some kind of negotiated settlement, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, in 1949, offered Pakistan a no-war declaration. Pakistan’s Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan accepted, provided there was a timetable for settling all outstanding disputes through negotiation and arbitration. No timetable was forthcoming, and no arbitration was agreeable to India.

The two subsequent wars between India and Pakistan also resulted in promises that are in line with the ideas that might underlie a No War agreement. The first of these wars took place in 1965, when beefed up by US military aid and weapons and training, and feeling secure in its patron, Pakistan was ready to try again to force a resolution of the Kashmir issue. It sent in soldiers under cover as insurgents to try to instigate an uprising among Kashmiris against Indian rule. The plan failed and Indian troops invaded Pakistan in reprisal.

The war lasted only 17 days, and both countries looked for arbitration which was provided by the Soviet Union, and led in January 1966 to India and Pakistan signing the Tashkent Declaration, declaring that they would “settle their disputes through peaceful means,” commit to “the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of each other,” and “discourage any propaganda directed against the other country.” It was all for naught.

A few years later, in 1971, there was the third India-Pakistan war, the only one that has not been about Kashmir. This war resulted in a humiliating defeat for Pakistan and the independence of the former East Pakistan as the new

state of Bangladesh. In the Simla Agreement ending that conflict, India and Pakistan again agreed to settle differences peacefully through bilateral talks or any other mutually agreed-upon means. With India feeling victorious and dominant, there were no talks, and they could not agree on other means.

Having failed in war and with no prospect of negotiations on Kashmir, Pakistan resorted to supporting militant movements both in Kashmir and elsewhere in India. This option came into its own in the late-1980s after the Indian government rigged the state-level elections in Kashmir in favour of its allies. As frustrated Kashmiris protested and were terrorized by Indian forces, some became more militant and turned to armed struggle, creating an insurgency. Pakistan saw an opportunity.

Pakistan's weapon of choice was to redeploy the Islamist militants who, with active US support, had fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. Once unleashed on Kashmir, the Islamists changed the nature of the struggle there, making it increasingly violent and brutal. Since then India has suffered attacks on numerous civilian targets, including the hijacking of a commercial airliner, an attack on its parliament, carnage in Mumbai, and deadly attacks on military camps and civilians. India started to pay back in the same coin by supporting militant movements in Pakistan, especially in Balochistan and in the Pakhtun tribal region adjacent to Afghanistan.

Amidst all this, the no-war pact surfaced again in 1981. Pakistan's ruler General Zia-ul Haq, who had taken power in a coup in 1977, made the offer "to enter into immediate consultations with

India for the purpose of exchanging mutual guarantees of nonaggression and non-use of force." The two sides exchanged detailed position papers but the process soon stalled over Kashmir. Still, India's prime minister, Indira Gandhi, declared that even without a no-war pact, India would not attack Pakistan first. In 1984, the two countries tried again to explore this option, but no agreement could be reached.

In the aftermath of the nuclear tests in 1998, to show that they were capable of acting responsibly, the leaders of India and Pakistan agreed as part of the Lahore Declaration of February 1999 to intensify their efforts to resolve all issues. This was to include settling the issue of Kashmir, refraining from intervention and interference in each other's internal affairs, and combating the menace of terrorism in all its manifestations. These intentions were to prove short-lived as the two countries went to war in mid-1999 in the Kargil area of Indian-administered Kashmir.

The no-war pact proposal was put back on the table by Pakistan's General Pervez Musharraf at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000. Once again, India declined. Coming so soon after the Kargil war, India's reluctance was to be expected; Indians thought that such an agreement would provide Pakistan a shield behind which to run its proxy wars in Kashmir without fear of large-scale reprisal. Musharraf, after all, was the architect of the Kargil war.

Things have changed radically since then, however. Pakistan has recognized that in a nuclear-armed subcontinent, Kashmir cannot be wrested from India by force. In addition to having suffered blowback

from promoting Islamist militants as proxies, it also understands that no state can now be seen to support Islamist guerrillas without eliciting international censure. In fact, Pakistan is currently under scrutiny by the international Financial Action Task Force, which was formed to fight terrorist financing and money laundering. Such scrutiny puts Pakistan at risk of sanctions, which it can ill afford given its severe economic crisis.

India's leaders seek desperately to focus on economic growth to give substance to their ambitions of being an emerging great power on a par with China and as a path to gaining public support to consolidate their hold on power. This was a key issue in helping bring Narendra Modi to power in 2014 and in his re-election in 2019. This effort has faltered as India suffers the worst rate of unemployment in 45 years and a slide in its economic growth rate to a six year low. Such nationalist and economic dreams are bound to stumble on the realities of an alienated population in Kashmir (and elsewhere in India), periodic bouts of civil unrest and insurgency, and proxy wars from across the border. This is no path to a robust social peace.

Time to try again. Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India and Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan should take a careful look at the idea of a no-war agreement to calm India-Pakistan relations for the long term.

The key to a viable no-war pact will be agreement on the definition of what would constitute an act of war. Making public the full record of earlier India-Pakistan discussions on a war pact would help set the table for trying again. Past experience and

current conditions suggest an initial list of prohibited acts under such an agreement might include:

- using or threatening the use of armed forces and weapons of war against the other country,
- invading the territory of the other country,
- supporting armed insurrectionary groups in the other country,
- committing or helping to commit acts of sabotage and disruption of civil life in the territory of the other country,
- blockading or obstructing in any way land, sea, or air access routes of the other country to the outside world,
- disrupting the flow of river water to the other country,
- disseminating or helping to disseminate hostile propaganda against the other country,
- joining trade wars waged by a third party against the other country,
- meddling in or exacerbating any internal dispute in the other country,
- entering into strategic alliance with any world power against the other party,
- any other action mutually agreed as constituting an act of war.

Since some of these are general categories and may be open to interpretation, so a no-war pact may need to include an adjudication commission for settling disputes over possible violations. Its rulings would have to be binding. The commission might include Indian and Pakistani officials, prominent members of civil society, and representatives from regional and international organizations. The two countries could also agree to accept the International Court of Justice as the arbitrator.

After the pact has been negotiated and entered into force, governments in India or Pakistan may find themselves still facing political strife, protest, militancy and insurgency. It will be for the Adjudication Commission to conclude whether or not these movements are inspired from across the border or reflect a home-grown failure of governance. No longer credibly able to blame resistance to their injustices on a foreign hand, leaders in India and Pakistan will need to find a way to deal with domestic unrest through democracy and politics.

A no-war pact as outlined here is not meant as a panacea. Rather, it offers a stable and secure security framework that can enable India and Pakistan to develop more peaceful and constructive relations with confidence.

It is possible that, with war taken off the table, the fears and misgivings India and Pakistan have nurtured for

decades would begin to diminish. This would allow their arms race to subside. Economy, politics, and culture could begin to move away from a focus on mutual hostility and confrontation to accommodation and cooperation. The poor in both countries could hope to benefit from the peace dividend.

(Zia Mian is co-director of Princeton University's Program on Science and Global Security, where he also directs the Project on Peace and Security in South Asia. Abdul H. Nayyar is a physicist and a founder and former president of the Pakistan Peace Coalition, a national network of peace and justice groups. Sandeep Pandey is an Indian peace activist; he received his doctorate in mechanical engineering at the University of California, Berkeley. M. V. Ramana is the Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada.)

In the Idea of an 'All India NRC', Echoes of Reich Citizenship Law

Nizam Pasha

The Ministry of Home Affairs issued a notification on July 31, 2019, stating that the Central government has decided to prepare and update the population register in the rest of India other than the state of Assam. Meaning that the exercise to update the National Citizenship Register (NRC) in Assam will now be implemented throughout the country.

Much has been written about the flaws inherent in the NRC process. The very idea that every person who was born in the country and has lived

here all of her or his life should be able to furnish documentary proof of residence and familial relations emanates from a privileged notion of home and family life.

For one, it does not accommodate the homeless. Assam, for instance, is a flood-prone state where every year, during the monsoons, the Brahmaputra and its distributaries flood the riparian areas. Each year, many who do not live in pucca houses lose all their possessions and escape with their lives to start afresh.

These persons are now required

to produce papers to establish their residence before March 24, 1971, or their relationship with parents or grandparents who can so establish residence. If they fail to do so, they will be declared illegal immigrants. Similarly, the process does not take into account orphans, abandoned children or youngsters who ran away from home to escape abuse and built their lives elsewhere.

The idea that for every citizen, there is a loving parent who has maintained birth records is deeply flawed. Therefore, the NRC, at every stage, excludes the most underprivileged. While the process excludes persons without reference to their religion (although going by the Sachar Committee report, there is a disproportionate representation of Muslims in the weakest economic classes), the government is, in parallel, pursuing the Citizenship Amendment Bill, which amends the Citizenship Act, 1955 to make undocumented migrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan—basically anyone who is not a Muslim—eligible for citizenship.

Putting the two together, the overall effect is that Muslims who are unable to establish citizenship will be declared illegal immigrants. And going by the spate of laws recently passed by the Rajya Sabha, not much stands in the way of the Bill becoming law.

In a recent development, the Supreme Court on August 13 passed an order clarifying certain queries raised by the state coordinator of the NRC and dismissing a batch of applications filed by affected persons on the same issue. The question before the court was regarding the

status of children born in India after December 3, 2004, one of whose parents was a “doubtful voter” or “declared foreigner” or whose case was pending before the Foreigners Tribunal or some other court, though the other parent was validly included in the NRC.

Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, speaking for the Supreme Court, held that even if one of the parents of such children was unable to establish citizenship in the NRC process, the child would not be entitled to have his or her name included in the NRC. The court noted that these very questions were pending before the constitution bench and would be decided in that case. Meanwhile, the state coordinator could proceed based on the above understanding for purposes of the NRC exercise for the present.

Parallels with the Third Reich

The entire NRC process, and particularly the August 13 order, is eerily reminiscent of the Reich Citizenship Laws passed by the Nazi government in 1935. Historians mark the passing of the ‘Nuremberg Laws’ on citizenship as the beginning of the series of events now known as the holocaust. The Reich Citizenship Law defined a citizen of the Reich as “that subject only who is of German or kindred blood”.

The status of a citizen was acquired by the granting of citizenship papers by the government of the Third Reich. All political rights were available only to citizens granted papers under this law. The regulations that followed these laws struggled to define who a ‘German’ was and differently classified individuals of mixed Jewish and German parentage.

To begin with, persons with

one or two Jewish grandparents were classified as German while individuals with three or four Jewish grandparents were classified as full Jews. Gradually, the laws moved on to become less and less tolerant of persons of mixed parentage, termed ‘Mischling’, and demanded purity of blood.

Children and grandchildren of Jews who had married Germans and in some cases had even converted to Christianity and who thus far had seen themselves as German found themselves unable to pass the test and were denied citizenship.

Under these laws, an *Ahnennpass* (literally, ancestor pass) was issued to those found to be of “Aryan blood”, which was a record of the family tree of the individual and entitled the holder to citizenship rights. This again bears a striking similarity to the NRC process, where the family tree of each individual is being constructed, which will be reflected in the NRC extract, and will show that the ancestors of the holder have been verified to be ‘of Indian origin’. This will then entitle the holder to rights available to a citizen under the constitution.

In Nazi Germany, since the question of who qualified as a German came to depend on religion (Jewish or Christian), the Nazis had to rely on birth, baptismal, marriage and death certificates for issuance of citizenship papers. People scrambled to obtain these certificates typically maintained in churches and government offices, to establish their relationship with German (meaning Christian) grandparents.

With the NRC in progress in Assam and now with the issuance of the notification by the Ministry of Home Affairs for implementation of a population register throughout

the country, as people scramble to collect birth certificates, ration cards and other documents establishing their connection with Indian parents and grandparents, one cannot help but sense a glimmer of past events.

The only difference being that the Indian NRC does not identify persons 'of Indian origin' based on religion or ethnicity. However, as mentioned above, if the Citizenship Amendment Bill in its present form comes to be passed, those who are denied citizenship will solely be Muslims and all others will be granted refugee status and allowed to remain in the country.

What is most inexplicable about how the Supreme Court has conducted these proceedings is that—as the court itself mentions in the August 13 order—questions that form the very basis of the NRC process have been referred to a constitution bench and are still pending adjudication.

Lack of judicial urgency

The fixing of March 24, 1971, as the reference date for the exercise of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act is itself the major plank of the challenge before the constitution bench. So someday, after the entire population of the state is asked to demonstrate that they came to India prior to March 24, 1971 in an exercise that has taken years and hundreds of crores of the public exchequer and in which lakhs of people are likely to be declared stateless, the Supreme Court will sit to decide, in hindsight, whether that date had any constitutional basis.

Another question to be decided is whether, after over 40 years of living in India, a person can be displaced even if found to be an illegal immigrant. The constitutional

validity of Sections 3(1)(b) and (c) of the Citizenship Act which form the basis of the August 13 order is itself under challenge in another writ petition and has again been referred to a constitution bench, which again has not yet been constituted.

To put the court's sense of urgency around the formation of that bench into perspective, of the many cases referred to five-judge benches of the Supreme Court, two cases, in particular, were jostling for a hearing in the summer of 2017. The Supreme Court decided that while the constitutional basis for the NRC exercise could await its turn, the practice of triple talaq that persisted for 1400 years could not be tolerated for another summer and the issue of the constitutional validity of the practice required the immediate attention of the court.

And so, that challenge was listed for hearing before a specially constituted 5-judge bench that held hearings over the summer vacations and pronounced the well-known Shayara Bano judgement that is now part of our recent constitutional history. Meanwhile, the NRC exercise—which is likely to render lakhs of people stateless—was allowed to go on without any examination of its constitutional basis.

The upshot of the above discussion is that the very basis on which the NRC exercise is proceeding is still to be adjudicated upon. Further, there is no clarity on what will happen to persons declared as illegal immigrants in this exercise. At present, there is no scope of deporting them since there is no existing agreement with Bangladesh to accept immigrants, nor is Bangladesh likely to suddenly accept lakhs of persons, that it has

no record of—most of whom were born in India.

The Supreme Court is considering this question in a separate petition filed by activist Harsh Mander and meanwhile has asked the state of Assam to submit a report on the number of its detention centres and their capacity. These detention centres again remind one of concentration camps.

The homes of Jews who were taken away to concentration camps were looted and often occupied by their 'German' neighbours. Would the same not happen to persons who are declared illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and removed to detention centres? Should not an adjudication on the question of the consequences of exclusion from the NRC, therefore, be the focus of attention of the Supreme Court before declaring lakhs of people as non-citizens and visiting the social consequences of statelessness on them?

Instead of discharging this judicial function, why is the court expending its energies in issuing day-to-day directions regarding the implementation of the process like an administrative authority? Unfortunately, these questions cannot be asked of the court, because while it may have taken upon itself to discharge executive functions, it is still not answerable to the people.

(Nizam Pasha is a lawyer practising in the Supreme Court and has appeared in the NRC matter.)

Janata
is available at
www.lohiatoday.com

Capitalism and Mental Health

David Matthews

A mental-health crisis is sweeping the globe. Recent estimates by the World Health Organisation suggest that more than three hundred million people suffer from depression worldwide. Furthermore, twenty-three million are said to experience symptoms of schizophrenia, while approximately eight hundred thousand individuals commit suicide each year.

Within the monopoly-capitalist nations, mental-health disorders are the leading cause of life expectancy decline behind cardiovascular disease and cancer. In the European Union, 27.0 percent of the adult population between the ages of 18–65 are said to have experienced mental-health complications.

In capitalist society, biological explanations dominate understandings of mental health—such as theory of chemical imbalances in brain. Such an approach—which not only dominates the medical profession but has also infused public awareness, is largely unsupported—but is being propagated because it benefits pharma companies manufacturing anti-depressants. Another popular effort is to identify genetic abnormalities as another cause of mental-health disorders—this may explain particular cases, but cannot give a broad explanation for the widespread mental-health problems.

In all this, what is obscured is the fact that it is the social, political, and economic organisation of society that is a significant contributor to people's mental health, with certain social structures being more advantageous to the emergence of

mental well-being than others. At the root of the widespread mental-health problems today is the capitalist society. As professor of social work and social policy Iain Ferguson, a well-known socialist, has argued, the alleviation of mental distress is only possible “in a society without exploitation and oppression.”

In what follows, I briefly sketch the state of mental health in advanced capitalism, using Britain as an example and utilising the psychoanalytical framework of Erich Fromm, a German democratic socialist, which emphasises that all humans have certain needs that must be fulfilled in order to ensure optimal mental health. I argue that capitalism is crucial to determining the experience and prevalence of mental well-being, as its operations are incompatible with true human need.

Mental Health and Monopoly Capitalism

As Baran and Sweezy have argued in *Monopoly Capital*, the monopoly capitalist system fails “to provide the foundations of a society capable of promoting the healthy and happy development of its members”. For the majority, work is a thoroughly unsatisfactory experience, and leisure too becomes boring. Instead of fulfilling passions, it has become synonymous with idleness—with books, television, and films inducing a state of passive enjoyment rather than demanding intellectual energies. Moreover, leisure has largely coalesced around increasing consumption—as it is used by corporations as an

opportunity to promote the sale of their products. With consumption basically becoming reduced to a competition to establish one's social position, the acquisition of products also soon becomes meaningless.

With both work and leisure losing their inner content and meaning, and with the working class movements not powerful enough to challenge the system, the result is that the system continues to decay, leading to spread of psychic disorders. Modern monopoly-capitalist society continues to be characterised by an incompatibility between, on the one hand, capitalism's ruthless pursuit of profit and, on the other, the essential needs of people. As a result, the conditions required for optimum mental health are violently undermined, with monopoly-capitalist society plagued by neuroses and more severe mental-health problems.

Fromm constructed his theory of psychoanalysis based on Marx's theory of alienation—which says that alienation is the estrangement people feel both from themselves and the world around them, including fellow humans. Capitalism creates a distinction between human essence and existence; humans become divorced from their own nature—this is at root of mental problems.

Human nature, Marx argued, consists of dual qualities and we “must first deal with human nature in general, and then with human nature as modified in each historical epoch.” There are needs that are fixed, such as hunger and sexual desires, and then there are relative desires that originate from the historical and

cultural organisation of society. While basic biological needs, such as hunger, sleep, and sexual desires, are important aspects of human nature that must be satisfied before all else, nonetheless, as humans evolve from animals to human beings, they found it increasingly easier to satisfy their basic biological needs, largely as a result of their mastery over nature. Therefore, the urgency of their satisfaction gradually became less important, with the evolutionary process allowing for the development of more complex intellectual and emotional capacities.

Fromm identified five central characteristics of the human condition:

- i) Relatedness: Aware of being alone in the world, humans strenuously endeavor to establish ties of unity. Without this, it is intolerable to exist as an individual.
- ii) The dominance of humans over nature allows for an easier satisfaction of biological needs and for the emergence of human aptitudes, contributing to the development of creativity – this now develops into a core human characteristic that requires fulfillment.
- iii) Humans, psychologically, require a sense of belonging – which can only be achieved in a society built on solidarity.
- iv) Humans crucially desire and develop a sense of identity. All individuals must establish a sense of self and an awareness of being a specific person.
- v) It is psychologically necessary for humans to develop a framework through which to make sense of the world and their own experiences.

According to Fromm, the satisfaction of these drives is essential for the mental well-being of the individual. Rejecting a psychoanalytical understanding that emphasises the satisfaction of the libido and other biological drives, Fromm stated that mental health is inherently associated with the satisfaction of needs considered uniquely human. Under capitalism, however, the full satisfaction of the human psyche is thwarted.

Work and Creativity

Human beings have an instinctual desire to be creative, and this can best be expressed through work. Therefore, labor should be a fulfilling experience, allowing individuals to be freely expressive, both physically and intellectually. This requires that workers should be able to relate to the products of their labor as meaningful expressions of their essence and inner creativity. But under capitalism, workers are alienated from their labour; in the word of Marx: “labour is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being ... therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies (subdues/crushes) his body and ruins his mind.”

For Fromm, the realisation of creative needs are essential to being mentally healthy. Having been endowed with reason and imagination, humans cannot exist as passive beings, but must act as creators. However, under capitalism, work only leads to general unhappiness, dissatisfaction, and despondency—and therefore it causes mental problems, such as stress, depression, and anxiety.

In Britain, there is widespread dissatisfaction with work. A recent survey in early 2018 found that 47 percent were thinking of looking for a new job during the coming year. Among the reasons given for this were: paucity of opportunities for career advancement, not enjoying work, and the feeling that they were not needed in their jobs. All this is only an expression of their alienation from work, for all these people, work had little meaning, it provided them few opportunities for personal fulfillment and expression.

In 2017–18, this discontentment with work constituted 44 percent of all work-related ill health in Britain, and 57 percent of all workdays lost to ill health. An additional study in 2017 estimated that 60 percent of British employees had suffered work-related poor mental health in the past year, with depression and anxiety being some of the most common manifestations.

With more than half the workforce suffering from mental health problems due to work, it has now become normalised, it is no longer considered as an illness.

Loneliness

There exists a close relationship between positive mental health, meaningful personal relationships in the form of both love and friendship, and expressions of solidarity. As mentioned above, building meaningful relationships to escape loneliness is a fundamental human characteristic, but under capitalism, this becomes difficult. And under monopoly capitalism, much of social interaction is typified by superficial conversation and a falsity of pleasantness.

As a mild mental disease, loneliness has debilitating

consequences. Individuals may resort to alcohol and drug abuse to numb their misery, while persistent experience increases blood pressure and stress, as well as negatively impacts cardiovascular and immune-system functioning. While it is a mental health problem in its own right, loneliness leads to other mental-health problems too, and is often the root cause of depression.

In 2017, it was estimated that 13 percent of individuals in Britain had no close friends, and a further 17 percent said they had poor quality friends—meaning an essential 30 percent did not really have friends. No wonder that 18 percent people said they frequently felt lonely, and 45 percent said they felt lonely at least once in the past two weeks. Even though a loving relationship acts as a barrier to loneliness, 47 percent of people living with a partner said they felt lonely at least some of the time and 16 percent often.

Loneliness has become such a major public-health concern, that the British Government in 2018 established a Minister for Loneliness.

For capitalism, the principle of individualism has always been supreme. The notion of individual has its origins during the time when nascent capitalism was fighting the feudal mode of production, and its emphasis on greater collectivist methods of labor—such as within the family or village; in contrast to this, capitalism put forth the principle of individuals who had to be free to sell their labour power on the market. The celebration of individuality led to members of society feeling more and more lonely. Another principle of capitalism is competition; competition divides and isolates

individuals—other members of society are not considered as sources of support, but rather obstacles to personal advancement; ties of social unity are therefore greatly weakened. This further exacerbates loneliness. Finally, another factor increasing loneliness is when the socialist alternative arose in opposition to capitalism; capitalism strongly opposed the ideals of collectivity and solidarity put forth by socialism. Thus, loneliness is embedded within the structure of any capitalist society as an inevitable outcome of its value system.

Consumerism

For monopoly capitalism, promoting consumption is vital for surplus absorption, and this has expanded to such an extent today that along with work, consumption can be said to have become integral to life under capitalism.

With consumer goods valued for their conspicuity rather than their intended function, people have gone from consuming use values to symbolic values. Under monopoly capitalism, consumerism is no longer about satisfying inherent biological and psychological needs, but is all about constructing a personal identity, ‘showing off’. To quote Fromm, “consumption should be a concrete human act in which our senses, bodily needs, our aesthetic taste ... are involved: the act of consumption should be a meaningful ... experience. In our culture, there is little of that. Consuming is essentially the satisfaction of artificially stimulated phantasies.”

And in this competition of showing off, there is no limit, therefore, the desire to consume becomes insatiable, it can never be

satisfied. Therefore, the monopoly capitalist society, despite all its affluence, breeds widespread dissatisfaction—and also contributes to neurosis.

Resistance as Class Struggle

While not denying the existence of biological causes, the structural organisation of society must be recognised as having serious repercussions on people’s mental health. Monopoly capitalism functions to prevent many from experiencing mental well-being. Yet, despite this, the medical model continues to dominate, reinforcing an individualistic conception of mental health and obscuring the detrimental effects of the present mode of production.

Aware of their oppressed status, users and survivors of mental-health services are now challenging the ideological dominance of the medical model and its obfuscation of capitalism’s psychological impact. They are increasingly coalescing around and putting forward as an alternative the need to accept the socialism-inspired social model of mental health.

In 2017 in Britain, the mental-health action group National Survivor User Network unequivocally rejected the medical model and planted social justice at the heart of its campaign. As part of its call for a social approach to mental health, the group explicitly denounces neoliberalism, arguing that austerity and cuts to social security have contributed to the increasing prevalence of individuals who suffer from poor mental health as well as to the exacerbation of existing mental-health issues among the population. The action group Recovery in the Bin positions

itself and the wider mental-health movement within the class struggle, pushing for a social model that recognises capitalism as a significant determinant of poor mental health. Representing ethnic minorities, Kindred Minds vigorously campaigns on an understanding that mental distress is less a result of biological characteristics and more a consequence of social problems such as racism, sexism, and economic inequality “pathologised as mental illness.” For Kindred Minds, the catalyst for deteriorating mental health is oppression and discrimination, with ethnic minorities having to suffer greater levels of social and economic inequality and prejudice.

Capitalism can never offer the conditions most conducive to achieving mental health. Oppression, exploitation, and inequality greatly repress the true realisation of what it means to be human. Opposing the brutality of capitalism’s impact on mental well-being must be central to the class struggle as the fight for socialism is never just one for increased material equality, but also for humanity and a society in which all human needs, including psychological ones, are satisfied. All members of society are affected by the inhumane nature of capitalism, but, slowly and determinedly, the fight is being led most explicitly by the most oppressed and exploited. The challenge posed must be viewed as part of the wider class struggle, as being one front of many in the fight for social justice, economic equality, dignity, and respect.

(David Matthews is a lecturer in sociology and social policy at Coleg Llandrillo, Wales, and the leader of its degree program in health and social care.)

There is But One Race: Human

Richard C. Gross

Want to blame something for differences in skin color, blame the sun. It’s all in the melanin.

The concept of different races is a farce, largely concocted as “scientific racism” by an American physician before the Civil War, as noted in a fascinating special April 2018 issue of the *National Geographic*, “Black and White.” It is devoted solely to the variety of shades of the human skin, which are caused by gene mutation and evolution, all dependent on where one lived.

There is but one race: the human one, *Homo sapiens*.

When the results of the first complete human genome were unveiled in 2000 during the presidency of Barack Obama, Craig Venter, a pioneer of the sequencing of DNA, the microscopic code of life, said, “The concept of race has no genetic or scientific basis.” He was quoted in the *Geographic*’s lead article, “Skin Deep,” by noted journalist, author and staffer at *The New Yorker*, Elizabeth Kolbert.

The publication appeared during the Trump administration’s barring of Muslims and restricting people of colour from entering the United States in a bid to appeal to the president’s base of white supremacists and others opposed to diluting the country’s majority white-skinned population, which the Census projects will become a minority in 2045. President Trump made it abundantly clear this year that he is a racist.

Kolbert’s piece deserves to be highlighted at a time when the ugly polarization of America has

been heightened by unfounded racist animosity promulgated by an ignorant president and a sycophantic Republican-led Senate that has no interest in uniting a widely diverse nation, once the leader of the free world.

Kolbert says that the ideology of scientific racism can be traced back to an American scientist named Samuel Morton. Samuel Morton, born in Philadelphia in 1799, collected skulls from around the world, measured them and believed they represented five different races, with Caucasians, or whites, being superior to the others. Then came East Asians, Southeast Asians, Native Americans and blacks (“Ethiopians”).

So was the thinking of one doctor when the knowledge of medicine was limited compared to today. But those who defended slavery adopted Morton’s ideas. When Morton died in 1851, the *South Carolina Charleston Medical Journal* lauded him for “giving to the negro his true position as an inferior race”. We live with this absurd nonsense today, all based on lies.

What is true based on genetic research, when people today can trace their origin through DNA, is that humans are more closely related than chimps and that, as Kolbert wrote, “in a very real sense, all people alive today are Africans.” Yes, all of our ancient ancestors once were black.

Eumelanin, a type of melanin, is what darkens skin, as in a suntan among lighter skinned people. Black skin evolved among humans in Africa about 1.2 million years ago

to compensate for the loss of body hair, which increased the harmful effects of the sun's ultraviolet rays on bare skin. Migration out of Africa between 80,000 and 50,000 years ago led to interbreeding with other human species (Neanderthals and Denisovans), now nonexistent, as people moved into Europe and Asia.

Once in those cooler climes, eumelanin production in the body decreased because the sun's radiation was less intense. People's skin became lighter. "This eventually produced the current range of human skin color," according to a Wikipedia chapter on melanin.

There are more differences among Africans than on all other continents combined because modern humans lived there the longest, giving them more time to develop genetic diversity, including skin color.

"Near the Equator," Kolbert wrote, "lots of sunlight makes

dark skin a useful shield against ultraviolet radiation; toward the poles, where the problem is too little sun, paler skin promotes the production of vitamin D. Several genes work together to determine skin tone."

Mutations in a particular gene, 370A, gave Native Americans and East Asians thicker hair. Another gene, SLC24A5, gave Europeans lighter skin.

Anita Foeman, who directs the DNA Discussion Project at West Chester University in Pennsylvania, told Kolbert several interesting stories about the latest participants in the project. One young woman, whose family had lived in India as far back as anyone could recall, was shocked to discover some of her ancestry was Irish. Another young woman, who had grown up believing one of her grandparents was Native American, was disappointed to learn that this wasn't so. A young man who identified as biracial was angry to

discover his background was, in fact, almost entirely European. Several students who had been raised in Christian households were surprised to learn some of their ancestors were Jewish. Even Foeman, who identifies as African-American, was caught off guard by her results. They showed that some of her ancestors were from Ghana, others from Scandinavia.

"I grew up in the 1960s, when light skin was really a big deal," Foeman told Kolbert. "So I think of myself as pretty brown-skinned. I was surprised that a quarter of my background was European. It really brought home this idea that we make race up."

(Richard C. Gross, a longtime journalist, is a former op-ed editor of The Baltimore Sun. We are also publishing Kolbert's article in the National Geographic in the Janata Blog.)

Janata Subscription

Annual Rs. : 260/-

Three Years : 750/-

Demand Draft /

Cheque

on

Mumbai Bank

in favour of

JANATA TRUST

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Grant Road (W),
Mumbai 400 007.

समाजवादी विचार संकल्प बदलाव का समाजवादी समागम

१२-१३ जुलाई, २०१९, दिल्ली
के अवसर पर प्रकाशित

संपादक : कुरबान अली

प्रकाशक : रमाशंकर सिंह

लागत मूल्य :
२०० रुपये में उपलब्ध।

संपर्क : जनता ट्रस्ट - ७७३८०८२१७०
(पोस्ट का खर्च अलग)

Footprints of A Crusader (The Life Story of Mrunal Gore)

by

Rohini Gawankar

Published by
Kamalakar Subhedar

Secretary,
Samata Shikshan Sanstha,
Pareira Wadi,
Mohili Village,
Sakinaka, Ghatkopar (W),
Mumbai 400 072.
Mobile : 9820092255
Contribution : Rs. 300+



"We are, what we repeatedly do,
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Aristotle



Taj Palace & Towers - Mumbai



Bombay Stock Exchange - Fort, Mumbai



Forum Atmosphere - Kolkata



J.K. House (Raymond)
Breach Candy, Mumbai

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING /
REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF :

- ✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)
- ✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)
- ✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.

Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi

Relevance of Gandhiji's Message Today

Ecuador's People Win a Huge Victory

Neeraj Jain

Gandhiji and Lohia: An Intimate and Fruitful Relationship – Part 2

Prem Singh

Under Modi Rule, Ambani, Adani Have Doubled Their Wealth

Subodh Varma

Hands off Greta Thunberg!

Daniel Tanuro

Greed of 'Border-Industrial Complex' Fuelling Militarisation

Eoin Higgins

The Knowledge of a Better World

Michael A. Lebowitz

Editor : G. G. Parikh

Associate Editor : Neeraj Jain

Managing Editor : **Guddi**

Editorial Board :
B. Vivekanandan, Qurban Ali
Anil Nauriya, Sonal Shah
Amarendra Dhaneshwar,
Sandeep Pandey

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : janataweekly@gmail.com
Website: www.janataweekly.org

On October 2 this year India is celebrating the hundred and twentyfifth birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The Government of India has set up a special committee studded with VIPs of different denominations and is chalking out an extensive programme of functions which will spread over a whole year.

The Congress party is holding a meeting of its highest organ, the Working Committee, the very same week at Belgaum, at the border of Karnataka and Maharashtra—this again to mark the Gandhi homage festival as it was at this very city that the Congress session was held in 1922 over which Gandhiji had presided. No doubt there will be functions galore in the months ahead which will pay fulsome allegiance to the memory of the one who had steered the freedom struggle to victory and thereby rightfully earned the love and gratitude of his countrymen for which they called him the Father of the Nation.

Leaving aside all the glittering functions to mark the sacred occasion, this is the time for reflections—to ponder over in our mind how relevant is Gandhi today for our country beset as it is with a

thousand problems—some of them are intractable and almost seem to defy any solution while others are formidable enough to baffle even the tallest of our national leadership, not to speak of the hollow men who strut about today claiming to be his political heirs.

To begin with, Gandhiji had strong objections to the partition of India. Although he had never sharply criticised the decision of the Congress High Command of those days to accept the Mountbatten Plan of partitioning India as a concomitant condition to the transfer of power from the British to Indian hands, he had no doubt that the partitioning of India would create more problems than solving any. In fact, two days before the announcement of the Mountbatten Plan in June 1947, Gandhiji noted in his own diary that both Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru were unhappy that he had gone and told the Viceroy that he was opposed to the partition, particularly under the aegis and control of a third party (that is, the British). He noted that he could foresee dark forbidding clouds gathering, but both Patel and Nehru thought that the partition would bring peace, tranquillity and well-being of all. As it turned out, Gandhiji was

This essay was first published in Mainstream, October 1, 1994.

proved right when the blood-soaked victims of the partition crossed the border on both sides. While he could not avert the partition, Gandhiji tried to minimise its fall-out as far as he could by undertaking that hazardous crusade for communal amity into the distant corners of Noakhali and was planning to do the same in Pakistan. But his life was cut short in a fit of anger by a fellow-countryman who did not spare Gandhiji.

What is important to bear in mind is the fact that Gandhiji understood the real implications of the partition—that it could perpetuate mutual hostility between the Hindus and Muslims as the gift of the partition. Because, the minority community in both the neighbouring countries—the Hindus in Pakistan and the Muslims in India—became suspect in the eyes of their respective majority communities—the Muslims in Pakistan and the Hindus in India. It is this factor which has kept up the accursed communal divide even to this day. Fortyseven long years after Mountbatten's partition was accepted by the national leaders, the question of repudiating it does not arise, but that communal antipathy could be brought down by fostering good and friendly relations between India and Pakistan. In the brief few weeks that he survived after independence, he devoted himself to this question. It is worth recalling in this context that one of his last political acts was to direct Nehru and Patel not to withhold the financial dues of Pakistan even though the Pak-sponsored tribal invaders were devastating the Kashmir Valley.

Today when communal hatred between Hindus and Muslims has been widely conceded even by the ruling establishment, it would certainly be wise to pay heed to

Gandhiji's prophetic warning—that the Hindu-Muslim problem would always beset us so long as we do not trace its origin to the partition, and find its solution by cementing Indo-Pak goodwill.

In many other spheres of our national life, Gandhiji's relevance abides even today. He understood the baneful impact of the caste system on our social life. Although he did not denounce the caste system as such in the style of a modern-day rationalist, he took up the most inequitable feature of the caste system—oppression of the untouchables—and carried on a tireless campaign to rectify such vicious aspects as the ban on temple entry. He understood the inequity and suppression in public life of the so-called backward communities. Hence came the provision for reservation in our Constitution.

Gandhiji seriously believed that it would not be correct to whip up caste antipathy as that would destabilise the entire social structure, but was concerned how to rouse the whole society and act as a trust for a better deal for the underprivileged. Here lies the difference between Gandhi's line and that of other leaders who have been campaigning for the promotion of the backward castes and the untouchables. Gandhiji did not live to see his endeavours come true, while the others who have taken up the cause of the underprivileged castes and communities are realising today the dangerously sensitive nature of the problem which threatens to create bitter antipathy and virtual anarchy in the social and political set-up.

In the sphere of economic rebuilding, Gandhiji's views were widely known. His insistence was on expanding the domestic

market by large-scale promotion of khadi and village industries to meet the demands of the huge rural market. He then did not really oppose the introduction of heavy machine and heavy engineering based industries, but stood for the harmonious blending of the two streams of economic thinking. However, in our enthusiasm to build a strong economy befitting a powerful country, Gandhiji's mandate of strengthening and expanding the village industries was nearly forgotten with emphasis on giant machines both for the production of heavy industries and the major consumer goods.

As this approach of a mixed economy is today nearly forgotten, the country is in the excitement of a free-market dispensation reducing the role of the state in economic activity to the minimum. Gandhiji's prescription for the vast rural economy becomes all the more valid for a country like ours. With the introduction of new technology and the enthronement of the ideology of the market, our country faces the prospect of an affluent elite at the top and a vast ocean of the underprivileged at the base. This will increase disparities—social and economic—and that in turn will accentuate social tension which is likely to threaten the very foundations of political stability. It is in this context that one has to take into account the validity of Gandhiji's economics for the vast rural hinterland. It is not that Gandhiji glorified poverty and condemned the rich. He himself used to camp in Birla's mansions and had no hesitation in persuading the rich to donate openly for the causes he espoused. The culture that he promoted upheld the self-respect of

the humblest citizen of independent India.

In Gandhiji's design for a good society, the poor are to inherit the earth and the rich to hold their affluence as a trust to society. In the culture shock that the so-called globalisation is bringing to our society, the need for Gandhiji's message has become all the more relevant and imperative if India has to retain its identity as a great country with a rich culture. If anything, Gandhiji is remembered today by his countrymen more insistently than at any time since his final departure fortysix years ago.

[Nikhil Chakravarty (1913–88) was a famed journalist and the founder–editor of the respected current affairs weekly Mainstream.]

Janata

is available at

www.lohiatoday.com

Janata Subscription

Annual Rs. : 260/-

Three Years : 750/-

Demand Draft /

Cheque on

Mumbai Bank

in favour of

JANATA TRUST

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Grant Road (W),
Mumbai 400 007.

Ecuador's People Win a Huge Victory

Neeraj Jain

On the night of Sunday, October 12, the people of Ecuador were out on the streets, celebrating a major victory after 11 days of continuous protests in which hundreds of thousands of people had participated, despite massive police repression. The celebrations followed an announcement by the government of President Lenin Moreno that it was withdrawing Decree 883 under which it had imposed a deeply unpopular package of neoliberal reforms. These reforms were a part of a \$4.2 billion loan agreement with the IMF. The withdrawal of the decree took place following talks between representatives of Indigenous movements and organizations and the government team, which included Moreno himself.

Of course, the people have only won Round One against the Moreno government, as the government is definitely going to implement more reforms in the coming days, backed by the IMF and the US-led imperialist powers. This is obvious from the fact that soon after making the concession, the government arrested key leaders of Citizen Revolution, a group founded by former president of Ecuador Rafael Correa and which is one the groups leading the mass protests in Ecuador. The government has accused them of causing violence during the protests. The arrests are an obvious attempt to divide the masses taking part in the protests, as both the indigenous people of Ecuador led by CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador), an organisation

representing Ecuador's Indigenous nationalities and peoples, and Citizen Revolution have jointly led the protests, and Moreno has sought to divide the movement by appearing soft towards the indigenous people. Moreno claimed that he has "always respected Indigenous people" and "treated them with care" but then went on to say that the rest of the people protesting are violent and bad, those that "created chaos and an apocalyptic situation". Moreno even resorted to the tired tropes of accusing the 'violent' protesters of having links to drug trafficking, being foreigners and employing tactics used by guerrilla groups in Colombia. He also reiterated the claim that they were instigated by Rafael Correa and his followers. The president of CONAIE, Jaime Vargas, immediately denounced the arrests, criticised the government for seeking to divide the protesters, and highlighted the unity on the streets.

The latest explosion of mass protests in Ecuador began after the government's announcement on October 1 of a series of new economic measures to reduce "wasteful" public spending and further balance the budget. The most controversial measure was the complete elimination of fuel and petrol subsidies, in place since the 1970s, directly contributing to a 123% rise in the price of diesel and similar increases for other fuels.

Furthermore, the package introduced a 20% cut in public employee salaries and the initiation of plans to privatise pensions and remove safeguards for workers' conditions and job security.

Foreseeing the likelihood and magnitude of protests against his government, Moreno declared a “national state of emergency” and deployed the police and military against protests in the capital, Quito, and other areas.

But the people did not bow before this repression, and right from the very next day, October 2, tens of thousands were out on the streets, defying the emergency. Leading the protests were former president Rafael Correa’s Citizen Revolution Movement (MRC), the Popular Front (FP) political party, and social and trade union organisations, such as the United Workers’ Front (FUT) and the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE).

The next day, October 3, both transport workers’ unions and the taxi drivers’ associations announced strike action, bringing several cities around the country to halt, among them Quito and Cuenca.

Tens of thousands of workers, students, Indigenous people, peasants, Afro-descendant people, women and citizens came down from all over Ecuador and took over the streets of Quito, Ecuador’s capital city. So intense were the mobilisations that President Moreno fled the capital and shifted the seat of government to Guayaquil.

Similar mobilisations took place in several provincial cities. The province of Pichincha was converted into the epicentre of popular struggle, with more than 10,000 people taking part in the strike and protests.

The MRC criticised the state of emergency as being unconstitutional, as it lacked any specific parameters regarding proportionality, legality, temporality, territoriality and rationality (as mandated in the constitution). The people realised that it was only a measure to prevent

a repeat of the mass uprisings in major cities that overthrew the neoliberal governments of Jamil Mahuad in 2000 and Lucio Gutiérrez in 2005. Moreno was following down the same path.

Moreno has attempted to consistently discredit previous President Correa’s highly successful and popular economic strategy of combining increased social spending with public investment in major infrastructure and energy projects, and the diversification of the economy away from oil.

Instead, his government has pursued an IMF-mandated package of reforms, including the dismissal of thousands of public sector employees, reducing the size of the public sector, initiating privatisation (particularly the public banking services) and cuts to education and healthcare.

Consequently, levels of poverty and inequality have significantly risen under Moreno’s government. According to official figures, structural poverty rose from 23.1% in June 2017 to 25.5% in June this year, with some economists projecting that it will reach 30% by the end of the year, if the new economic measures are enacted.

Extreme poverty has risen from 8.4% to 9.5% during the same period. Furthermore, the Gini coefficient for economic inequality has risen from 0.462 in June 2017 to 0.478 in June this year, reflecting Moreno’s policy of reducing social spending principally to benefit the rich.

The country has witnessed a continuous breakdown of constitutional law, such as the persecution of the former vice-president Jorge Glas on dubious charges, the censorship of critical media, the “INA Papers” scandal and discovery of secret off-shore

bank accounts linked to Moreno’s family. The newly elected Council of Citizens’ Participation and Social Control was dismissed and Ecuador also withdrew from the Union of South American Nations and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

There has also been a political witch-hunt against Correa and other leaders of the MRC, such as former foreign minister Ricardo Patiño and former deputy Sofia Espin.

Moreno had won the Presidential elections in Ecuador in 2017 as a close supporter of Rafael Correa. But after coming to power, he made a complete U-turn and began implementing neoliberal economic policies. Ever since then, the country has been on a boil, with people protesting the reversal of all the gains made by them during the ten years of Correa’s presidency. The latest package of neoliberal reforms was the last straw that broke the camel’s back, and saw people all over the country rising in defiance.

On October 8, 2,000 protesters from different Indigenous, peasant and social organizations and trade unions occupied the Ecuadorian Assembly and held a People’s Assembly. They too were brutally repressed by the national security forces, who threw tear gas and shot rubber bullets at the demonstrators. Several dozens who participated in this action were arrested and processed.

Unable to quell the protests, the police began using live ammunition against the protesters, leading to several deaths. Thousands were injured, and the police made several thousand arrests. Yet the protests did not stop, finally forcing President Moreno to backdown and begin negotiations, leading to the withdrawal of Decree 883.

Gandhiji and Lohia: An Intimate and Fruitful Relationship – Part 2

Prem Singh

Lohia's critique of Gandhiji has been a significant contribution to Gandhian studies in the post-Gandhi era. Lohia as a heretic Gandhian makes perhaps the most revolutionary interpretation of Gandhiji's philosophy and modes of action. He left incomplete his long essay "Economics After Marx", that he had begun in 1943–44 (the essay is compiled in *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*), but later took fresh initiatives for the construction of his own kind of socialist philosophy and politics. In his construction, or to use his own word "integration", of the new philosophy he found more useful material in the ideas, life and actions of Gandhiji. According to him, the new socialist philosophy, opposed to communism and capitalism both, will be the basis of a new civilisation. Lohia accepted the fact that he was influenced by the great personality of Gandhiji but was never blinded, intimidated or sentimental about it. After keeping Marx aside he embarks upon a serious interpretation of Gandhiji. Lohia's interpretation of Gandhiji is an integral part of his serious philosophical venture. But at the same time it is not aimed at proposing some sort of a separate creed of Gandhism.

In Indian politics Lohia is known as a socialist thinker and leader. His intellectual and political activism was aimed at socialist revolution in India as well as in the rest of the world. He wrote in this connection, "Capitalism and communism are almost fully elaborated systems, and the whole world is in their grip, the result is poverty and war and fear. The third idea is also making

itself felt on the world stage. It is still inadequate, and it has not been fully elaborated, but it is open. In an open system there is still some chance of truth and progress, while a closed system does violence to facts and wishes them away in order to prove their meaninglessness. Open systems live in accordance with the facts, and in any case we expect such systems to revitalise themselves with obstinate or changing situations. This idea is the socialist idea." (18)

It is obvious that in the twentieth century, the idea of socialist revolution is mainly linked to Karl Marx. Lohia accepted the place of Marx in his tradition but at the same time he said "this talk of being a Marxist or an anti-Marxist is futile and irrelevant. What is relevant is correct thinking and integrated approach. Our mind must be on a quest, a quest for the essence that lies under Gandhiji's or Marx's thoughts. Quest and not entanglement with tradition can help us to do this." (19) There is a prevalent belief that Lohia tries to mix Gandhi and Marx. Lohia himself refuted this : "Socialism need not proclaim itself as Gandhian or Marxist on the one hand and as anti-Gandhian or anti-Marxist on the other, for this would only substitute thought by a charm." (20) It is not possible to present a detailed description of Lohia's doctrine of socialism but here it is important to mention that it is a left doctrine; it is rooted basically in the Indian and Asian situations; it is committed to "leftism from below" instead of "leftism from top"; and to make it viable, Lohia proposed a package of "seven revolutions".

Lohia was not a Gandhian of the Marxist blend, nor a Marxist of the Gandhian variety, but an individual thinker in his own right. Besides Gandhi and Marx, Lohia made it a point to give due consideration to other thinkers and philosophers. He also seriously tried to understand ancient Indian philosophy, concepts, myths and symbols. Only after a serious contemplation of all this did he embark upon his ideas about the "new integrations" required in the making of a new civilisation: "Nevertheless, as between a person who is arrogantly and pompously an adherent of any existing philosophy and another who has gone through the gamut of all philosophies and has come to the stage when he rejects them outright, I would prefer the latter, if it were the singular good luck of anybody to achieve a still newer integration, there could be nothing better." (21)

In this way, Lohia broke the myth of dogmatic commitment to a particular philosophy or ideology and at the same time also broke the myth of the purity and originality of a particular philosophy or ideology. He wrote, "it is not the fault of Marx that people stay put at Marxism." Lohia criticises the Gandhians in a similar manner : "The Gandhi doctrine has proved a little more inadequate. It will be countered that what prevails in the country today is not the Gandhi doctrine but a somewhat inferior brew of Gandhism and Marxism. That is substantially correct, but it confirms the weakness of Gandhism in so far as Marxism forces it to mix and also that the best in it is unable to burst

forth." (22) He spoke of two types of Gandhism after Gandhiji's death: governmental Gandhism (*sarkari gandhivad*) and monastic or priestly Gandhism (*mathi gandhivad*). In the first category come Gandhiji's political successors and in the second one, the lot engaged in various institutions, established in the name of Gandhiji and funded by the government. Lohia found them both ineffectual: "These governmental and monastic wings together comprise what is authoritatively accepted as Gandhism.... Authoritative Gandhism has proved after victory to be a mousy doctrine. All its teeth are out, giving rise to the doubt if it ever had any. Monastic Gandhism is wholly dependent for its being on governmental Gandhism. Governmental Gandhism does nothing except to chase the pale shadow of limited public sector planning. Both live a merry, contented, smug life, not devoid of luxury of a hierarchic kind." (23)

It can be argued that despite influences coming from various sources, Lohia was closest to Gandhiji. Lohia did not reject Gandhiji's ideas on truth, time, history, progress and development like the Marxists and capitalists. Gandhiji's vision of life was cyclic. Lohia also talked of the "cyclic view of history." (24) In the modern civilisation the linear view of the driving forces of history has come to be accepted as the gospel truth. Gandhiji and Lohia refused outright to ride the chariot of that 'history' which raced ahead only for a small section of the world's total population. However, in comparison to Gandhiji, Lohia gave more importance to the driving forces of history, yet he also placed equal significance on the universal values inherent in epics, myths and symbols situated beyond

the boundaries of history. Thus, the most important contribution of Lohia to Gandhism was his critique of the dominant paradigms of development, which used the experience of the lower castes. All the Dalit and lower caste radicals had endorsed the project of modernity totally; leaders like Ambedkar were at the forefront of this endorsement. His hostility towards Gandhiji may possibly be located in this context. But Lohia developed Gandhian sociology in terms of its analysis of the relationship between the caste system and capitalism. Lohia had understood that in India capitalism and its positive aspects were hijacked by upper castes, and they had made it a project of caste elites. Gandhiji had developed his own critique of the project of modernity in his *Hind Swaraj*; Lohia's entire political economy can be treated as an imaginative restatement of *Hind Swaraj*. Lohia combined the radical social philosophy of the lower caste radicals with Gandhian economics.

Gandhiji was most deeply concerned with *Dharma*. Many scholars accept him as a totally religious individual and a prophet. Gandhiji himself believed that his politics is steeped in *Dharma* and his life motivated by the desire to see God or attain *moksha*. Gandhiji, in fact, upturned the entire modernist project itself, which placed man rather than God in its core. In Gandhiji's scheme of things, God assumed a stronger hold on life's core centre. Lohia was not religious like Gandhiji but he viewed "politics as a short term religion and religion as a long term politics." Although like the modernist-secularists, he did not see religion as meaningless for the past, present and future civilisations, nevertheless, Lohia was harsher than

Gandhiji in his dissection of the Hindu religion. Lohia called himself a religious radical. He did not see politics as a religious matter, instead he approached religion as a political matter. He stated, "After all it is not God who has created man. It is man who has created God." Therefore, while Lohia's concern with religion and God was basically cultural in its content, Gandhiji's concern with it was spiritual in its nature.

Lohia seemed to find Gandhiji's emphasis on the purity of ends and also on the purity of means an attractive proposition, although he interpreted this differently. He relates this to Gandhiji's idea of the change of heart: "And there with hangs the whole story of change of heart, which is a phrase that has very often been abused not only by critics of Mahatma Gandhi but also by his admirers and followers. If some have looked upon it as an instrument to deny the revolution, others have actually used it so that it has checkmated the revolution. In both cases, admirers as well as critics have reduced the phrase 'change of heart' to such mimic proportions that it bears no relationship whatsoever to Mahatma Gandhi's own conception of life.... Gandhiji spent just about a year of his life changing the heart of Smuts, Irvin and Birla, while he devoted over forty years to putting courage into and thereby changing the hearts of tens of millions of people all over the world.... What stands out in all this is Gandhiji's assumption that man can be good, even though he is almost certain to be bad in some situations." (25)

Lohia gave utmost importance to the human factor in the foundation of the new civilisation. Lohia's argument was that the essence and justification of each deed should be embedded in the deed itself. It

should not become necessary for man to make prefatory or post-script justifications for his deed whereby misdeeds like lies, deceit and bloodshed might be explained away. In his emphasis on the "principle of immediacy", the best illustration of which he found in the myth of *Shiva*, one can also see the clear influence of Gandhiji. In fact an important reading of Gandhiji by Lohia rests on the merger of radical energy and ethics. Lohia was able to see that its monastic followers reduced Gandhism to harmless and pious ethical doctrine of vegetarianism and nonviolence. Lohia sought to integrate the politics of immediacy with the larger ethical conduct in politics. In other words, the oppositional content that Gandhians had lost was restored by Lohia.

It is a well-known fact that before plunging into Indian politics Gandhiji undertook the task of understanding the conditions in the country. Lohia too agreed with Gandhiji on this score: "Conditions must be studied before they can be improved upon. There is often no effort in human mind to investigate the real conditions but a frequent attempt to advise, exhort and give moral precepts. One should never identify what is with what ought to be." (26)

In addition to this Lohia was also in agreement with the manner in which Gandhiji proceeded from the 'local' to the 'universal'. It will be a repetition to say that Gandhiji, though grounded in India, responded to the whole universe. This is a unique feature of Lohia's thought that any idea or mode he suggested to revolutionise the "Indian mind" also held good for the rest of the world.

The last and most important point is that Lohia accepted in

totality Gandhiji's method of civil disobedience (*civil nafarmani*) against injustice, "enabling the individual to resist oppression by himself and without any support", which fact was, to his mind, "the greatest quality of Mahatma Gandhi's action and life." He further elaborated the point: "The greatest revolution of our time is, therefore, a procedural revolution, removal of injustice through a mode of action characterised by justice. The question here is not so much the contents of justice as the mode to achieve it. Constitutional and orderly processes are often not enough. They are then transgressed by the use of weapons. In order that this should not happen and that man should not ever get thrown around between ballet and bullet, this procedural revolution of civil disobedience has emerged. At the head of all revolutions of our time stands this revolution of *satyagraha* against weapons although it has in actual effect made only a faltering appearance to date." (27)

Lohia analysed the ideological and institutional basis of modern civilisation in more concrete terms. Consequently, the alternatives suggested by him were also more concrete, in his own word, *sagun*. Lohia theorised in general terms the specifics of Gandhiji's ideas, images and actions in support of the socialist system. For example, analysing the spinning wheel he wrote, "The spinning wheel is ephemeral and so is nature cure sectional, although not entirely of the moment. Gandhiji's concrete image, so vital for immediate action, must be made to deliver its abstraction equally vital for continued action. Man must have tools, which he can command in more senses than one. His immediate habitat must be self-sufficient and he

must govern it in direct democracy. The message of the spinning wheel is controllable technology and village government." (28)

Lohia's interpretations of the various ideas of Gandhiji, which could be elaborated at length, is a matter involving details, whereas the basic theme underlying such interpretations remains the same, viz these interpretations are made for the "new integration" of the socialist philosophy. Thus, this is not interpretation for interpretation's sake but an extension of Gandhiji's ideas and actions in the direction of the socialist system: the extension of spinning wheel into controllable machine (through the notion of controllable technology he paved the way for building of a new form of ecological socialism); the village government as a part of a four pillar state, and decentralisation of economic and political power in the four limbs of the four pillar state; and so on.

(The author teaches Hindi at Delhi University.)

References

18. Lohia, Rammanohar, *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism* (Hyderabad, Samata Vidyalaya Nyasa, 1963), pp. 120-21.
19. Ibid., p. 366.
20. Ibid., p. 427.
21. Ibid., p. 186.
22. Ibid., p. xii.
23. Ibid., p. xii.
24. Lohia, Rammanohar, *Wheel of History*, Navahind Prakashan, 1963.
25. Lohia, Rammanohar, *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*, op.cit., pp. 155-56.
26. Ibid., 210.
27. Ibid., pp. xxxi-ii.
28. Ibid., xiii.

Under Modi Rule, Ambani, Adani Have Doubled Their Wealth

Subodh Varma

The release of richest people's lists is usually a signal for much back-slapping and triumphalism in the corporate world and its hangers on in the media. It is seen as some kind of symptom that India is doing well, people are getting wealthier, *achhe din* (good days) are here, although such lists are only for a 100 people (as in the case of the Forbes India list) or perhaps more (as in IIFL Hurun list), in a country of 1.3 billion people.

But these lists also reveal another side of the super wealthy corporates of the country. A comparison between the Forbes India richest people's lists of 2014 and 2019 reveals which of the corporate honchos have flourished under Narendra Modi's rule and which have not done so well.

Before going into the individuals, it should be noted that the total wealth of the top 100 richest Indian corporate heads increased from about Rs 25 lakh crore to over Rs 32 lakh crore between 2014 and 2019. That's a 31% increase. The wealth of just these 100 people in 2019 is about 6% of the country's GDP (gross domestic product). This is a measure of the high degree of inequality in the country that just 100 people own so much wealth while the vast bulk of India's people have only a very small fraction of it.

Who has Flourished Under Modi?

Coming now to the rather curious case of individual growth among corporates, it turns out that the richest person in India, Mukesh Ambani, has more than doubled his wealth. It has increased by 118%, to be precise, from Rs 1.68 lakh crore

to Rs 3.65 lakh crore between 2014 and 2019. [See chart below for top 10 sourced from the Forbes India lists]

In Gautam Adani's case, the rise has been better. His wealth zoomed up by 121% from Rs 50.4 thousand crore in 2014 to a breath-taking Rs 1.1 lakh crore in 2019. He climbed up from the 11th place in the 2014 rankings to becoming the second richest man in India in 2019.

Both these illustrious men are known to be quite friendly with Prime Minister Modi and the ruling dispensation. Modi had even appeared in a full-page advertisement for the launch of Jio, the Reliance telecom service, which has, in three years, the largest subscriber base in India.

Adani's association with Modi dates back to the days when Modi was the chief minister of Gujarat.

But, it was Modi's elevation to New Delhi that marked a phenomenal upswing in Adani's fortunes.

A look at the chart above, shows that only two other people exhibit a marked growth in their wealth—Uday Kotak, owner of Kotak Mahindra Bank and other financial services, and Radhakishan Damani, who owns the DMart chain of hypermarkets in India, promoted by Damani-owned Avenue Supermarts Ltd., a company that had revenues of \$2.7 billion in 2018–19. Damani's rise is also dramatic, but remember that he owned just Rs 7,100 crore back in 2014. So, the percentage increase is from a very small beginning. He ranked 100th in 2014, and now he is at number 7.

Uday Kotak is another blue-eyed boy of the current government, and was appointed last year to head the government-controlled board of the

Table: Top Ten Corporate Heads and Change in Net Worth, 2014–19

	Name	Group	Net Worth (in \$bn)		% Change
			2019	2014	
1	Mukesh Ambani	Reliance Industries	51.4	23.6	118
2	Gautam Adani	Adani Ports and SEZ	15.7	7.1	121
3	Hinduja brothers	Ashok Leyland	15.6	13.3	17
4	Pallonji Mistry	Shapoorji Pallonji Group	15	15.9	– 6
5	Uday Kotak	Kotak Mahindra Bank	14.8	6.1	143
6	Shiv Nadar	HCL Technologies	14.4	12.5	15
7	Radhakishan Damani	Avenue Supermarts	14.3	1	1330
8	Godrej family	Godrej Group	12	11.6	3
9	Lakshmi Mittal	Arcelor Mittal	10.5	15.8	– 34
10	Kumarmangalam Birla	Aditya Birla Group	9.6	9.2	4

(Source: Forbes India Richest List, 2014 and 2019)

collapsed infrastructure financing group, IL&FS.

All the other corporate bigwigs among the top 10 are doing well but only just. Pallonji Mistry, owner of construction behemoth, Shapoorji Pallonji, saw a 6% decline in wealth, as did UK-based Lakshmi Mittal, owner of steel giant Arcelor Mittal (by 34%). Kumarmangalam Birla, an old-timer in the rich list, grew his wealth by just 4%, the Godrej family increased its wealth by 3% and Shiv Nadar of HCL Technologies by 15% in five years.

Many notable rich families do not figure here because this is a list of rich men or brothers (mostly). Groups like Tata Sons have distributed wealth though each of their individual components are giants in their own right. But they do not make it to the top 10. Others like Wipro Chairman Azim Premji have ‘donated’ substantial chunks of their wealth to run charities or educational trusts and have thus fallen off the list, though they continue to be super rich.

Corporate–RSS Bonhomie

A noteworthy trend that has emerged in recent years—which may have some relevance to wealth creation—is the growing bonhomie between the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (which is the mentor of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party) and corporate bigwigs. Only a few days ago, Shiv Nadar of HCL was the chief guest at the Foundation Day of RSS at Nagpur. A few days before that, Azim Premji visited the RSS headquarters and met Sangh supremo Mohan Bhagwat. In April, Ratan Tata had visited the RSS headquarters to meet Bhagwat. In fact, last year, Tata Trusts donated Rs 100 crore to Nagpur’s

National Cancer Institute run by an RSS-affiliated trust named after Dr Aabaji Thatte, the personal assistant of second RSS chief M S Golwalkar. In 2017, ONGC, a premier public sector undertaking too donated Rs 100 crore to the hospital. Last month, Rahul Bajaj visited Smruti Mandir to pay tributes at the memorial of RSS founder K B Hedgewar at Nagpur.

Corporate India doesn’t kowtow to anybody unless they envisage some benefit. This increasing closeness of corporate honchos to the RSS, so much so that they have been making a beeline to Nagpur to pay respects to the founder and to confabulate with the current chief, is their way of extending support to the Modi government and generally be in its good books.

The nexus that has emerged—some call it the corporate–Hindutva alliance—also explains why the RSS supremo was all praise for the Modi government’s openly pro-corporate policies. In his *Vijay Dashami* speech, Bhagwat praised disinvestment of public sector units, justified foreign direct investment and talked down the “useless discussion” on economic slowdown. Remember: the Modi government had recently given corporate houses a big gift by slashing corporate tax rates from 30% to 25%, a move that would cost the government over Rs 1.45 lakh crore. Small wonder then that corporates are a happy lot—and the rich list is growing by leaps and bounds.

(Subodh Varma is a senior journalist.)

Who’s Afraid of the Word ‘Dalit’?

Following a Central government ‘directive’ last year asking all state governments to refrain from using the word ‘Dalit’ in official communication, the Devendra Phadnavis-led Maharashtra government has asked all its departments not to use the word “Dalit” in “all official transactions, matters, dealings and certificates and instead use Scheduled Caste or its appropriate translation in other national language(s)”. A notification issued by the joint secretary of the social justice department D.R. Dingle says in keeping with directives issued by the Centre’s social justice ministry, the word “Dalit” should be replaced with “Schedule Caste or Anusuchit Jati (in Marathi)”.

Justification of this overtly political play is a judicial decision of the MP High Court in 2018.

This court order had invited sharp criticism last year. A reading of the Court’s order in question, however, shows it only wanted the Centre “to consider the question of issuing such direction to the media and take suitable decision upon it.” The court had not gone into the merits of using the term. After it was brought to its notice that the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment had issued a directive to use only the term ‘Scheduled Castes’ in all official matters, the court merely noted that since media institutions were not a party before it, the I&B Ministry could consider the question of issuing a similar direction to the media. The I&B Ministry’s advisory had come across as confusing as it uses the words “for all official transactions, matters”, though the media’s references to the community

are usually beyond official contexts.

However, Dalit groups have vociferously criticised the 'ban' of the use of the term Dalit over the past year and have asserted that the word conveys a sense of identity and is of political significance.

The debate over the appropriateness of using the term 'Dalit' to refer to members of the Scheduled Castes is neither recent nor new. Merely a decade ago, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes had not favoured the use of 'Dalit', which it felt was 'unconstitutional'. This is because belonging to a 'Scheduled Caste' is a legal status conferred on members of castes named in a list notified by the President under Article 341 of the Constitution. Therefore, some believe, 'Scheduled Caste' may be the appropriate way to refer to this class of people in official communications and documents.

However, the debate seems to be beyond the usage of the term in official documents. "Dalit" literally translates into "broken" or downtrodden." Dr. Anand Teltumbde says, "Ambedkar used 'Dalit' as a quasi-class term; included within its ambit were the downtrodden and poor. This gave character to the germinating anti-caste movement at the time."

Rumi, a Mumbai based artist, sculptor and an independent researcher who has been interrogating the subject of identity politics and Dalit visual art practices, taking the discourse forward, "The term Dalit is an Assertive Anti-caste position, and is important for researchers, writers, artists and ethnographers of the Dalit consciousness movement, which is a rising phenomena right now."

Rumi also shines a light on

the historical usage of the term. She adds, "The term is especially important because Jyotiba Phule used it first, and later B.R. Ambedkar did. It was further popularised and mobilised by the Dalit literary movement of the 60's, especially by Dalit Panthers. It's a term of assertion and is not derogatory in any ways. How can it be, if Babasaheb and Phule used it to locate caste oppression."

The focus of the government to keep indulging in the matters of nomenclature when it comes to the several other issues that communities face at large could also be a case of misplaced priorities, as highlighted by the former Mumbai University Vice-Chancellor, Bhalchandra Mungekar who said that instead of changing nomenclature, the government should implement policies for the welfare of Dalits. "The term Dalit has acquired worldwide acceptance because it denotes not only the former so called 'untouchables' but a vast majority of disadvantaged sections. Instead, policies drafted for welfare of Dalits should be implemented and Dalits must feel the government is working for them," he said.

After the I&B Ministry's advisory to media on the issue last year, The Press Council of India too had said there could not be a ban on the word 'Dalit.'

Gangadhar Pantawane, a Dalit writer from Maharashtra defines Dalit as a notion of change and revolution. The Dalits belief was humanism instead of sacred books, heaven and hell as it made them a slave to other castes. "What is Dalit. To me, Dalit is not a caste. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution. The Dalit believes in humanism.... Dalitness is a matter of appreciating

the potential of one's total being.

Rumi says, "The new constitutional term cannot be made mandatory, as Dalit is the preferred and accepted term of the literary writers, artist's, ethnographers from the Dalit consciousness movement, they should speak up at this point, and assert the term Dalit."

The term Dalit has evolved over a period of time and has come to symbolise different meanings. Some of these are: self-respect, assertion, solidarity and opposition to caste based exploitation. In the past Dalits have been forced to lead an undignified life full of shame, trauma and atrocities. Dalits have been referred as 'untouchables' but the official term used by the British was 'depressed classes'. Mahatma Gandhi referred to Dalits as 'Harijans' which was rejected by the community which saw the word as patronising and sanctimonious. Moreover, Gandhi wanted to keep Dalits within the sphere of Hinduism and hence he chose the term which first figured in the hymn *Vaishnava jana* by Narsinh Mehta.

However, such usage led to a debate between Gandhi and Ambedkar who wanted to represent Dalits as a separate community.

After Ambedkar's death, the first Dalit movement that revolutionised the discourse on Dalit politics was the Dalit Panthers Party founded in the 1970s in Maharashtra's then Bombay. Its method of fixing instant accountability with the upper castes caught the imagination of Dalits in Maharashtra who were facing atrocities despite the Constitution outlawing inequality and caste-based discrimination.

The Dalit Panthers manifesto was published in 1973 and gave a new definition to the term 'Dalit':

"Dalits are members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Neo-Buddhists, the working people, landless and poor peasants, women, and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion."

A close aide of the Dalit-Ambedkarite group Bhim Army, Kush, says, "Scheduled Caste is a limiting term. In the past, we have been abused using the term 'Dalit' but this hatred united us under one umbrella, which has now become our collective identity. This is the reason why the term Dalit is being removed from books, or sometimes this sort of propaganda is done in the name, but the truth is that the government is afraid of our unity."

Rumi also believes that the removal of the term from official documents is an attempt to curb the

rising public Dalit consciousness and that voices must be raised against this from all quarters, especially the ones making and amending laws. She says that this kind of neutralisation in the public consciousness isn't a "good thing".

Several scholars in the past year too, have questioned the need for this 'word-play'. Social scientist Satish Deshpande had asked, "To prohibit or even ban insulting terms etc. is understandable, but why do this for a self-chosen word/name? The only reason I can think of is that word brings to mind the antagonistic relationship between caste Hindu society and the so called 'out-castes', the discrimination and oppression still practiced by the dominant sections of society."

Over the past couple of years, if any people's movement

has self-organised and resisted government's atrocious policies, it is the Dalit movement with its several strands and colours, especially the Ambedkarites.

Whether it was the struggle for social justice after the scholar Rohith Vemula's institutional murder or the resistance after Bhima Koregaon, a vibrant Dalit movement has time and again posed vast challenges for the government in terms of asking to be accountable for its actions. While grave issues such as manual scavenging still persist in the Indian society even after seven decades of independence, the government chooses time and again to indulge in word-play which may be unnecessary or even suited to its own majoritarian agenda.

Courtesy: Sabrangindia

Hands off Greta Thunberg!

Daniel Tanuro

The young Swedish woman Greta Thunberg has faced an exceptional outpouring of hatred, expressed as the most vile macho attacks, the most sordid insinuations about her mental health, the lowest calumnies about her autonomy, and even barely veiled death threats.

You don't have to look far to find the source of these ever-growing waves of hatred. They flow from the national-populist, climate denying, sexist, racist and antisemitic extreme right-wing, which is spreading like a cancer, especially since Trump's election, Brexit, and the successes of the German AfD, the French FN/RN and the Italian Lega, among others. The photoshop montages showing Greta alongside financier Georges Soros or a fighter of the Islamic State clearly show the anti-semitic

or Islamophobic intentions of these circles.

The links of the extreme right with fossil capital are proven, in particular through the European Institute for Climate and Energy (EIKE), which collaborates with the Heartland Institute, a US climate denying think tank funded by the oil sector and the violently climate denying Koch Group, the most powerful private company in the US, active in the fossil fuel sector and chemicals.

If we dig a little deeper, we find in the campaign against Greta Thunberg the whole galaxy of collaborators in reactionary think tanks and other climate denying "institutes" funded by Exxon and Chevron. Notably the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) from

which came Myron Ebell, a member of the Trump transition team at the head of the EPA, Breitbart News, etc.

The main themes of the attacks on Greta Thunberg are the same on both sides of the Atlantic: that she should go back to school to learn what she doesn't know; that she is a puppet in the hands of Al Gore and green capitalism; that those who pull the strings are using a disabled child to impose an emotional dictatorship; that her call for a strike is totalitarian; that the poor girl is a fanatic, a sick woman, etc. Most of these elements were present in the comments made by Jordan Bardella (a leader of the French far right party National Rally) during Greta's visit to the French National Assembly.

But climate denial does not explain it all, far from it. Hatred

against Greta Thunberg is all the more vicious because the target is a woman, a young woman. A young woman who is not afraid to accept herself as she is, with, as she herself says, her different personality.

A brave, determined, intelligent, sensitive young woman who knows what she's talking about. A young woman who expresses herself very clearly, in the name of youth, in the name of the future, and does not hesitate to face the powerful with cheerful insolence. In a word: a witch.

When it comes to attacking women, what some call the "tradition of liberty" often makes France, unfortunately, the place where the most pestilential unpleasant smells are released. Those from Bernard Pivot (a left leaning French intellectual) exceed everything. Given this character's academic distinctions, this is an opportunity to recall a historical phrase: "Sir, you're just a piece of shit in a silk stocking." He brings to mind this political reality: sexism and machismo always build a bridge to the far right.

At first, the representatives of capital focused on co-opting Greta Thunberg and using her to neutralise the youth. Hence the invitations to Davos, the European Parliament, the National Assembly and many other official venues. Since she called for the unity of all against the threat, in the name of science, politicians thought they would put her in their pockets and show her that they were doing their best, etc.

But Greta Thunberg wasn't fooled. In the European Parliament, after Juncker (President of the European Parliament) kissed her on the hand(!), she said:

We know that most politicians don't want to talk to us. Good. We don't want to talk to them either.

It is important to tell the whole truth and the truth, in this case, is that a significant part of the left and the ecological community are howling with the wolves. Under the most diverse pretexts: "Greta is not anti-capitalist," "Greta is not against growth," "Greta is a star," "It is not by chance that she is invited here or there," "Greta plays the green capitalism game," etc. Not to mention the purveyors of cheap psychiatry.

What they don't mention is the real source of their anger: they are outraged at being shown up by a fifteen-year-old girl, out of nowhere, who has done more in one year to change the climate (no pun intended) than many supposedly militant organisations in thirty years.

Today, there is no doubt about it: after Greta's performance at the UN, the rulers are changing their tactics. She pilloried them all without hesitation ("How dare you? You only talk about money!") and her message had maximum impact worldwide. After the summit failed, she again called for strikes. As a result, the attempts to co-opt her are over. They aren't smiling now.

The turning point is clearly visible in France: Macron blames Greta Thunberg for "antagonising our societies," advises young people to act as "citizens" rather than strike, or to go to Poland to demonstrate against the climate denier Duda. As for LVMH's (the world's largest luxury-goods company) CEO, Bernard Arnault, he led the attack by blaming the young Swedish woman for "demoralising youth" (same argument as Bardella) by denying the bright prospects of green capitalism. "How dare he?" Does this individual believe that the fortune he has made in the luxury industry for the rich "gives hope" to anyone?

Incredible as it may seem, given the context, powerful people are concerned, even worried. They fear a total break between youth and the old world. Their world of politics in the service of the rich, of competition between nations, of capitalism that destroys nature and life.

They fear that the global youth movement, as it grows, will involve other layers: peasants, exploited people, indigenous people whose forests are sacked, the oppressed in general. Impossible? Who knows? Who knows? The call of the Greta generation resonates deeply, because the 99% do not like the idea that our children's world will be worse than ours.

Since the youth refuse to fall into line, the the 1% who are responsible for the disaster will use all possible methods to discredit the symbol of the movement, Greta Thunberg. The media that carried her to the top will drag her through the mud, the politicians who tried to use her will hand her to the executioner for witchcraft, and the far right will offer to do the job.

The hatred against this young woman is an expression of the struggle of the dominators to maintain their domination. Their fight is against youth and women, of course. But it also against employees, peasants, racialised people, indigenous peoples, different people, and the living in general. This is the class struggle in the Anthropocene.

Whatever Greta Thunberg's limitations, our place is at her side, in the struggle she has constantly promoted and which it is now a matter of democratically organising. It is the place of both the left and of any ecology worthy of the name.

(Daniel Tanuro is a socialist and ecology activist in Belgium.)

Greed of 'Border-Industrial Complex' Fuelling Militarisation

Eoin Higgins

A new report detailing the ways US corporations are profiting off of President Donald Trump's war on immigrants calls the partnership between security firms and the federal government a "powerful border-industrial complex," the existence of which presents a major barrier to reform, and explains that making money off of the border is nothing new.

"More Than a Wall," the report from the Transnational Institute, "looks at the history of US border control and the strong political consensus—both Republican and Democrat—in support of border militarisation that long pre-dates the Trump administration.

The report lays out how both Democratic and Republican administrations have regularly increased the budget for border enforcement since the 1980s, and how the constant flow of cash has created a powerful industrial and political force interested in

maintaining the oppressive policies which have contributed to the Trump-era immigration detention crisis.

Just 14 companies are considered the power players in the industry: Accenture, Boeing, Elbit, Flir Systems, G4S, General Atomics, General Dynamics, IBM, L3 Technologies, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, PAE, Raytheon and UNISYS. But, as the report explains, it's not just corporations—research centers and universities are making money off border security as well.

Universities and research institutes have also cashed in through nine Centers of Excellence (COEs) on Borders, Trade, & Immigration that in 2017 received \$10 million directly, with another \$90 million dedicated to research and development (R&D). The University of Houston, University of Arizona, the University of Texas El Paso, University of Virginia,

West Virginia University, University of North Carolina, University of Minnesota, Texas A&M, Rutgers University, American University, the Middlebury Institute of International Studies and the Migration Policy Institute all receive DHS funding.

Without addressing the profit motive, says the report, there's little chance of making real change.

"Any strategy to change the direction of US policy on migration will require confronting this border-industrial complex and removing its influence over politics and policy," the report says. "For while those corporations who profit from the suffering of migrants remain embedded in positions of power within government and society, it will be a huge challenge to forge a new approach that puts the lives and dignity of migrants first."

(Eoin Higgins is senior editor and staff writer for Common Dreams.)

The Knowledge of a Better World

Michael A. Lebowitz

There is an old saying that if you don't know where you want to go, then any road will take you there. I think that recent years, years of neoliberalism, imperialist outrages, and the virtual destruction of almost every effort to create an alternative, have disproved this saying. Our experience tells us that if you don't know where you want to go, then no

road will take you there.

Our greatest failing is that we have lost sight of an alternative. And, because we have no grand conception of an alternative (indeed, we are told that we should have no grand conceptions), then the response to the neoliberal mantra of TINA, that there is no alternative, has been: let's preserve health care,

let's not attack education, and let's try for a little more equality and a little more preservation of the environment. Because of our failure to envision an alternative as a whole, we have many small pieces, many small noes; indeed, the only feasible alternative to barbarism proposed has been barbarism with a human face.

This essay was originally presented as a talk on December 3, 2004, at the World Encounter of Intellectuals and Artists in Defense of Humanity, in Caracas, Venezuela.

Let us think about a real alternative to barbarism, a grand conception but yet a very simple one. I have in mind a simple idea expressed by Karl Marx in 1844 (but which runs throughout his work)—the unity of human beings based upon recognition of their differences. That is a conception which begins from the recognition that people are different—that they have differing needs and differing capabilities—and that they are interdependent.

Whether we act upon the basis of this understanding of our interdependence or not, we cannot deny that we produce for each other, that as beings within society, there is a chain of human activity that links us. We produce inputs for each other, and the ultimate result of our activity is the reproduction of human beings within society. We can think of this as the activity of a collective worker, as that of the human family, or as that of the family of workers; but, this chain of human activity exists whether we consciously produce on this basis or not—whether we understand our unity or not.

In fact, as we know only too well, outside of little oases (some societies, some families), in this society we do not consciously produce for the needs of others, and we do not understand our productive activity as our contribution to this chain of human activity. Instead of valuing our relationship as human beings, we produce commodities, we value commodities; instead of understanding this chain of human activity as our bond and our power, we understand only that we need these commodities, that we are dominated by them.

The Knowledge of Commodities

This, as is well-known, is what Marx called the “fetishism of commodities” in the first chapter of *Capital*. It is a powerful concept. In my view, no one has ever communicated this idea better than an artist—Wallace Shawn, an actor and playwright from the United States. In his play *The Fever*, Shawn’s protagonist at one point finds a copy of *Capital* and begins to read it at night. He thinks about the anger in this book, and then he goes back to the beginning, which he had initially found to be impenetrable. Here I’ll quote a long passage from Wallace Shawn:

I came to a phrase that I’d heard before, a strange, upsetting, sort of ugly phrase: this was the section on “commodity fetishism,” “the fetishism of commodities.” I wanted to understand that weird-sounding phrase, but I could tell that, to understand it, your whole life would probably have to change.

His explanation was very elusive. He used the example that people say, “Twenty yards of linen are worth two pounds.” People say that about every thing that it has a certain value. This is worth that. This coat, this sweater; this cup of coffee: each thing worth some quantity of money, or some number of other things—one coat, worth three sweaters, or so much money—as if that coat, suddenly appearing on the earth, contained somewhere inside itself an amount of value, like an inner soul, as if the coat were a fetish, a physical object that contains a living spirit. But what really determines the value of a coat? The coat’s price comes from its history, the history of all the people involved in making it and selling it and all the particular relationships they had. And if we buy

the coat, we, too, form relationships with all those people, and yet we hide those relationships from our own awareness by pretending we live in a world where coats have no history but just fall down from heaven with prices marked inside. “I like this coat,” we say, “It’s not expensive,” as if that were a fact about the coat and not the end of a story about all the people who made it and sold it. “I like the pictures in this magazine.”

A naked woman leans over a fence. A man buys a magazine and stares at her picture. The destinies of these two are linked. The man has paid the woman to take off her clothes, to lean over the fence. The photograph contains its history—the moment the woman unbuttoned her shirt, how she felt, what the photographer said. The price of the magazine is a code that describes the relationships between all these people—the woman, the man, the publisher, the photographer—who commanded, who obeyed. The cup of coffee contains the history of the peasants who picked the beans, how some of them fainted in the heat of the sun, some were beaten, some were kicked.

For two days I could see the fetishism of commodities everywhere around me. It was a strange feeling. Then on the third day I lost it, it was gone, I couldn’t see it anymore.

In this quotation from Wallace Shawn a certain type of knowledge is described—price. Price is the form in which that chain of human activity and human relationships appears to us. This knowledge comes in monetary units. We know the prices of the things we need. We know the price we have ourselves received. And, now we must take that knowledge and make individual

rational decisions ... as consumers, as capitalists—we're all the same, maximisers on the basis of the knowledge we have, maximisers on the basis of money.

Think about the knowledge we do not have in this world where money is the medium of knowledge. We know nothing about all that that does not come to us with a price—the natural environment around us; our own needs for the development of our potential; we know nothing about the lives of all those people who have produced the things we purchase, all those people with whom we have entered into a relationship by buying the results of their activity. Our situation is one of social ignorance, and that very ignorance is what permits us to be divided, turned against each other, and exploited by the owners of commodities, the owners of the chain of human activity.

When our knowledge is the price of things, how can we avoid being divided? When we don't recognise our unity, how can we avoid competing against each other to the benefit of the owners of knowledge?

Another Kind of Knowledge

Think about another kind of knowledge—a knowledge based upon recognition of our unity, knowledge based upon a concept of solidarity. It is a different knowledge when we are aware of who produces for us and how, when we understand the conditions of life of others and the needs they have for what we can contribute. Knowledge of this type immediately places us as beings within society, provides an understanding of the basis of all our lives. It is immediately direct social knowledge because it cannot be

communicated through the indirect medium of money.

Knowledge of our needs and capacities is radical because it goes to the root, to human beings. And, when it is obtained because we recognise our unity, it is knowledge which differs qualitatively and quantitatively from the knowledge we have under the dominant social relations. It is quantitatively different because existing relations no longer make its monopolisation and restriction a source of private gain. It is inherent in knowledge that it is a public good. Knowledge can be reproduced at almost no cost, and unlike scarce commodities, I do not have less knowledge if I give you some of mine. In a rational society, knowledge should be shared without any restriction.

The existence of institutions which make knowledge property and a source of private gain, then, are contrary to the concept and ethos of knowledge and demonstrate the social irrationality of those institutions. Take the grading mechanism in many universities, for example. It is a common practice for professors in North America to grade according to a normal statistical curve—so many As, Bs, Cs, Ds, and Fs—regardless of overall student performance. What kind of behavior does this make rational for those who function within such a structure? Clearly, it is to keep knowledge to themselves (or to a small subset of friends). The more other students know, the lower are one's own chances for a good grade. (In fact, it makes rational giving other students false information.) The structure in this case puts students in competition—a situation that Robert Wyatt, the British singer, once sang about with

the line, "How can I rise, if you don't fall?" This artificially created structure produces a zero-sum game in the case of knowledge which, by its very nature, is not zero-sum. Thus, whereas ideally a university might be viewed as an environment dedicated to the fullest possible development and dissemination of knowledge—something which a collective learning process would encourage—we can see that the creation of an environment which rewards private ownership of knowledge is contrary to the idealised concept of the university.

In many respects, this can be seen as a parable of intellectual property rights. What intellectual property rights do is to attempt to create an artificial scarcity that will compel people to pay more for knowledge than its actual cost of reproduction. Their purpose is to make what Marx called the products of the social brain a source of private enrichment. In a society, on the other hand, which begins from the recognition of the needs of all its members, the logical and rational impulse is to make knowledge available to all at its true cost of reproduction—zero.

Where our social relations and institutions are not such as to lead us to view our knowledge as property, there is another kind of knowledge that could be expanded easily, but does not expand. Much knowledge—especially about how we work—is not codified; it is "tacit knowledge"—knowledge, for example, of how work could be done better, knowledge of how it could be easier. Within antagonistic productive relations, especially in the situation where there is wage labour, this is knowledge to be kept to oneself—in order to ensure that it is not used against you. This

knowledge is wealth which would flow naturally in a society which is based upon the recognition of our interdependence.

Tacit knowledge is an example of a type of knowledge available freely under a different set of social relations. It is not, however, the only difference in the knowledge which would be available. When we begin from the conception of an alternative society, it becomes clear that a certain type of knowledge is hidden from us under our existing relations. The knowledge that is not communicated in a commodity economy is that which has no price in the market. The natural environment in which we live, the air we breathe, the sights we see, the sounds we hear, the water we drink (ah, once the water we drank) has no price and thus does not enter into our monetary calculus. And, without that price, it is invisible when we as atomistic maximisers make our decisions. It means that these decisions, based upon partial knowledge, are inherently biased. If we were able to place an appropriate price upon clean air, our actions as calculating producers and consumers would produce different decisions—ones more likely to ensure the maintenance of clean air. Hypothetically, too, if we were able to place a price upon the full development of human potential or upon the ability to live in a just society, faced with this altered set of prices, our individual decisions would differ (as would the decisions of those who currently purchase our abilities without the need to consider their real price).

But, how, in the absence of commodity exchanges, can such information which takes into account what Marx called “the worker’s own

need for development” be generated? If we share Marx’s emphasis upon the importance of the rich human being, “the totally developed individual,” then certainly we must concern ourselves with the mechanisms by which the knowledge of needs and capabilities can be produced.

The Accumulation of Knowledge for Human Development

Those who are here to discuss ways to defend humanity against the barbarism it currently faces begin from certain values. These values are embodied in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela—in the goal described in Article 299 of “ensuring overall human development,” in the declaration of Article 20 that “everyone has the right to the free development of his or her own personality,” and in the focus of Article 102 upon “developing the creative potential of every human being and the full exercise of his or her personality in a democratic society.”

That Constitution also is quite specific on how this human development occurs—participation. Much like Marx’s stress upon human activity as the way people transform both circumstances and themselves, Article 62 of the Bolivarian Constitution declares that participation by people is “the necessary way of achieving their involvement to ensure their complete development, both individual and collective.” Human development, in short, does not drop from the sky—it is the result of a process, of many processes, in which people transform themselves. It is the product of a society which is “democratic, participatory and protagonistic” (to quote the Constitution once again).

Through social forms (as set

out in Article 70) such as “self-management, co-management, cooperatives in all forms,” through democratic planning and participatory budgeting at all levels of society, people develop their capabilities and capacities. This process of transformative activity, though, is precisely the process of developing the knowledge required for this alternative society. That information cannot come from markets, from surveys nor negotiations at the top—it comes neither from the fetishism of commodities nor the fetishism of the plan. It is through democratic discussions and decisions at every level that we can identify our needs and our capabilities. The creation of democratic institutions is precisely the way in which we expand the quality and quantity of knowledge that can make a society based upon unity and the recognition of difference work. How else can we understand the needs of others except by hearing their voices? How else can we consciously insert ourselves in the chain of human activity? The knowledge needed to build and sustain an alternative society, a society based upon human bonds, is necessarily “democratic, participatory and protagonistic.”

The Battle of Ideas

Knowing where we want to go is a necessity if we want to build an alternative. But, it is not the same as being there. We live in a world dominated by global capital, a world in which capital divides us, setting the people of each country against each other to see who can produce more cheaply by driving wages, working conditions, and environmental standards to the lowest level in order to survive in

the war of all against all. We know, too, that any country that would challenge neoliberalism faces the assorted weapons of international capital—foremost among them the IMF, the World Bank, and imperialist power (in various forms including the US National Endowment for Democracy and other forces of subversion).

The most immediate obstacle, though, is the belief in TINA, i.e., that there is no alternative. Without the vision of a better world, every crisis of capitalism (such as the one upon us) can bring in the end only a painful restructuring—with the pain felt by those already exploited and excluded. The concept of an alternative, of a society based upon solidarity, is an essential weapon in defense of humanity. We need to recognise the possibility of a world in which the products of the social brain and the social hand are common property and the basis for our self-development—the possibility in Marx's words of “a society of free individuality, based on the universal development of individuals and on their subordination of their communal, social productivity as their social wealth” (*Grundrisse*). For this reason, the battle of ideas is essential.

That battle can be fought in many ways. For one, it points to the importance of the deepening of the real process in societies where the beginnings of an alternative have been made. The glimpses of a better world that they provide—even in the midst of concerted attacks by imperialism—are an inspiration for struggles everywhere around the world, a demonstration that there is an alternative.

But, it is only in those struggles themselves that we spread an

understanding of that alternative. These are struggles which start from people's needs, from their discontent over the gap between what society promises them and what they are able to obtain. The battle of ideas begins here by communicating knowledge of the nature of capitalism—by demonstrating that poverty is not the fault of the poor, that exclusion is not the fault of the excluded, that wealth is the result of the chain of human activity.

These struggles, too, are explicitly about knowledge—the struggles against property rights that deny free access to the intellectual accomplishments of humanity. They are struggles against commodification, against the invasion of money and price into all aspects of life. But, they are also struggles for new democratic forms that are a means of tapping the wealth in the heads of all people and of communicating all our needs and capacities. They are struggles, in short, for a democratic, participatory and protagonistic alternative.

In this era of capitalist globalisation and neoliberalism, however, it is obvious that more than local democratic institutions are needed. How can we understand the needs and capacities of people who are geographically distant but intimately close as parts of the human chain of activity? How can we see other limbs of the collective worker as human beings with needs rather than as competitors? We develop our understanding of our unity and interdependence with those who capitalist globalisation has assembled around the world through solidarity with those people—not only with their specific struggles as workers or citizens but also by linking up with them directly on the

basis of community to community.

To build a world based upon solidarity, we must practice solidarity—and in that way transform both circumstances and ourselves. If we know where we want to go and we know what is necessary to get there, we have begun the battle to defend humanity against barbarism.

Finally, to take up a theme introduced last night by President Chávez and Pablo González Casanova about the need to make real changes in the world, let me close by paraphrasing Marx, using the language appropriate to this conference: the idea of human society is sufficient to defeat the idea of barbarism. But, it takes real human action to defeat real barbarism.

(Michael A. Lebowitz is professor emeritus of economics at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada.)

समाजवादी विचार संकल्प बदलाव का समाजवादी समागम

१२-१३ जुलाई, २०१९, दिल्ली
के अवसर पर प्रकाशित

संपादक : कुरबान अली
प्रकाशक : रमाशंकर सिंह

लागत मूल्य :
२०० रुपये में उपलब्ध।

संपर्क :
जनता ट्रस्ट - ७७३८०८२१७०
(पोस्ट का खर्च अलग)

MUMBAI KAMGAR MADHYAWARTI GRAHAK SAHAKARI SANSTHA MARYADIT
(Multistate Consumer Co-operative Society)

APNA BAZARTM
CO-OP

106-A, Govindaji Keni Road, Naigaon, Dadar (E), Mumbai - 400 014.

Tel. :- 24195200, Fax :- 24157497

(ISO 9001-2015 Certified)

Quality and Trustworthiness means 'Apna Bazar'

Our Features

- ◆ 70 years-old proud feeling customer service
- ◆ All Departments & Branches are Computerized.
- ◆ The multi-state consumer co-operative organization in India
- ◆ Customer service in Maharashtra and Gujarat
- ◆ 8 Department Stores and 15 food stores and 1 medical store
- ◆ Annual Turnover of Rs.115 Crore
- ◆ 30 million loyal customers
- ◆ Four Times winner of 'Jamnalal Bajaj Uchit Vyavahar Puraskar' (1989, 2001, 2013 & 2016)
- ◆ 'Global Achievers Award for Business Leadership' awarded by Economic Development Forum (2012)
- ◆ 'Award of Excellence' awarded by National Cooperative Union of India (2013)
- ◆ 'Sahakar Gaurav Puraskar' Awarded by Mumbai District Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. (2015)

Health service :

- ◆ Dadasaheb Sarfare Health Center and Clinical Laboratory at Apna Bazar Naigaon

Social Service :

- ◆ 10% Discount to Customers on purchase of Medical items (Drugs)
- ◆ Festivals wise various schemes for the customers
- ◆ Special programme for women
- ◆ Various programme for customer awareness

Apna Bazar for All :

- 1) Various concessions (discount) on purchases
- 2) The place 'of surety for quality goods
- 3) Saving time and money
- 4) Special discounts in festivals
- 5) Free Home Delivery Service
- 6) 'Apna Gift Voucher' to present the Gift.
- 7) 'A.C. Banquet Hall' at Apna Bazar Naigaon & Apna Bazar Charkop
- 8) Shopping by Sodexo Pass coupons, Ticket Restaurant coupons, Bank Cards, PayTM, Mobikwik etc.

Apna Bazar - Means Adorable, Pleasant, Noble and Affectionate services

Yours in Co-operation

Shripad Phatak

Anil Gangar

Dnyandeo Dalvi, Santosh Sarfare

S. T. Kajale

Vishwanath Malushte, Sandhya Kawali

Chairman

Vice Chairman

Executive Committee Members

Chief Executive

Directors :- Ashwin Upadhyay, Nilesh Vaidya, Narendra Bhurke, Nitin Anerao, Jagdish Nalawade, Pandurang Salvi, Chandrakant Sogale, Lavkumar Bande, Anil Thakur, Sharad Phatak, Sarika Salunke, Amul Birwatkar, Renuka Savant, Bhimsen Acharekar



"We are, what we repeatedly do,
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Aristotle



Taj Palace & Towers - Mumbai



Bombay Stock Exchange - Fort, Mumbai



Forum Atmosphere - Kolka



J.K. House (Raymond)
Breach Candy, Mumbai

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING /
REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF :

- ✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)
- ✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)
- ✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.

Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi

janata

Vol. 74 No. 40
October 27, 2019

**The Monk Who Shaped
India's Secularism**
Rahul Mukherji

Gandhi for the Post-Truth Age
Pankaj Mishra

**Ho Chi Minh: Remembering
the King and the Saint**
Archishman Raju

**John Lennon vs.
the Deep State**
John W. Whitehead

**Food Scandals and
Agrochemicals**
Colin Todhunter

Editor : G. G. Parikh

Associate Editor : Neeraj Jain

Managing Editor : Guddi

Editorial Board :
B. Vivekanandan, Qurban Ali
Anil Nauriya, Sonal Shah
Amarendra Dhaneshwar,
Sandeep Pandey

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : janataweekly@gmail.com
Website: www.janataweekly.org

The Republic and the Kashmir Valley: From Federalism to “Internal Colonisation”

Neera Chandhoke

In the 18th and 19th centuries, colonial powers justified the conquest of large parts of Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of an almost divine mission. The mission compelled them to bring “development” and “civilisation” to the territories that had been colonised. The justification was, but a cloak, for more nefarious purposes. The colonised lost control of their land, resources, and labour. These were yoked to the project of garnering economic profits for the imperial power.

Colonies were treated as a piece of real estate that could be plundered at will. The claim that colonialism would bring development to the inhabitants—childlike at best, savages at worst, but certainly heathens who were inept, inefficient and ineffective—was deeply offensive. It generated a backlash in the form of a struggle for freedom. The leaders of the freedom struggle had to re-establish political control over their own land. They also had to reclaim their identity as people who mattered. They had to establish that they were capable of ruling their own country.

Seventy-two years after Indians wrested their freedom from the

British, the central government has imposed what can be termed “internal colonialism” in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The script of establishing control over the state coheres closely to the colonial project. Consider that the terminology of bringing “development” to the people of J&K has been summoned as a legitimising device. The economist Jean Drèze has established that indices of social development in the state are higher than in many other states, including Gujarat. But this does not seem to matter to the ruling class. The people of the state have been stripped of their dignity by the downgrading of, and the bifurcation of, their state into two Union Territories in a completely arbitrary fashion.

Recollect that the frontiers of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa had been drawn by imperial power. Armed with a pencil they drew lines on a map of the continent at a meeting in Berlin in 1885. They called these lines boundaries of states. Much like the colonised were deprived of basic rights, the people of J&K have been divested of their constitutional rights. This, they are told, is for their own good.

What is more worrying is the reaction of other Indians to the

internal colonisation of J&K. Except for a few notable exceptions, our fellow citizens have celebrated the erosion of the status of the state. No one seems to want to understand that the relationship of J&K to the central government is complex. No one recalls that the former princely state had acceded to India in October 1947 on certain terms and conditions, and that these were codified in Article 370 of the Constitution. No one bothers to remember that the people of the state had been promised a plebiscite and that this did not take place. And everyone prefers to forget that successive governments in Delhi have seriously violated democratic norms in J&K, whether these pertained to elections or to civil liberties.

Over the last five and a half years we seem to have mislaid our capacity for informed and reasoned debate. We see surges of emotions that hail every decision of the leadership. We live amidst the politics of din, the terminology of abuse and vicious trolling. We witness with great dismay the waylaying of democratic norms, and of the right of citizens to hold the government accountable. We seem to have lost our ability to stand up for fellow citizens whose rights have been infringed. It is time to raise a question that is central to our democratic life and federalism. Why not Article 370? Why not regional autonomy for groups that wish to protect and preserve their distinctive culture and language? Why do we fail to realise that a diverse society needs different policies for different groups within the country? Why have we forgotten the arguments that stress the importance of federalism?

The defence of federalism is located in at least three sets of

arguments. One, in large societies, decentralisation of power enables citizens to access state and local governments, and hold elected leaders responsible. Two, decentralisation is indispensable for administrative and financial efficiency. Three, decentralisation allows elected representatives to gauge the needs of people in far-flung areas and design appropriate policies. For these and other reasons, federalism has been seen as appropriate for large and complex societies.

The debate on federalism acquired new urgency with the end of the Cold War that followed the collapse of actually existing socialism and the outburst of conflicts and civil war over identities. Groups struggle for resources, but these struggles can be resolved given some imagination, a great deal of generosity and some capacity for negotiation. Identity conflicts have proved infinitely more difficult to resolve; they are simply intractable. Some groups demand a share in the resources of the country, others demand regional autonomy and still others wish to secede. Civil wars have led to thousands of deaths, massive displacements and suffering. "Each new morn" says Macduff of war in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, "New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows strike heaven on the face, that it resounds".

With the explosion of identity wars in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, a fourth argument was added to the defence of federalism. Federal arrangements might help to contain combustible politics of identity. The acceptance of identity politics did not come easily to democratic theorists. Many scholars were uncomfortable with linguistic, religious and ethnic identities. They followed John Stuart Mill who

in 1861 wrote on the issue in his famous work *Considerations on Representative Government*. Free institutions, he wrote, are practically impossible in a country made up of different nationalities. People speaking different languages cannot develop fellow feeling. Nor can they generate a united public opinion that is necessary for the working of representative government.

In the opening years of the 1990s, the upsurge of hyper-nationalist identity politics, conflict and war forced democratic theorists to recognise the importance of, and the power of, identity. People are willing to kill and die for their religion, their language and their ethnic identity. This led to the break-up of countries, for example, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, and secession in other countries. It has been calculated that the increase in the membership of the United Nations from the original 52 members in 1945 to 149 in 1984 was due to decolonisation. The growth thereafter from 151 in 1990 to 193 at present is largely the result of secession.

Democratic theorists had to, in effect, address a new political predicament—how can identity wars that have proved inflexible and resistant to mediation be contained? Though the literature on federalism as the preferred solution to identity struggles is divided, on balance, federalism, regional autonomy and the creation of federal units on the basis of linguistic, ethnic and religious identities is considered a better option than unitary government. Elites temper their demands and their intransigence the moment they are granted a state of their own. From resisters they become stakeholders. And anxieties

about religious and linguistic identities are assuaged.

Much before the western world confronted the issue, India had understood the significance of protecting and safeguarding languages and the culture it embodies. Jawaharlal Nehru acknowledged this in April 1963. Intervening in the debate on the Official Languages Bill in the Lok Sabha, he remarked that in matters of language one has to be very careful. We have to be as liberal as possible and not try to suppress a language. "Whenever an attempt has been made to suppress a popular language or coerce the people into using some other language, there has been trouble." Nehru spoke from experience: a rampant conflict over the national language and the demand for linguistic states, both of which came up in the first decade of the 20th century.

In the mid-1960s, a movement appeared on the political scene that held that Hindi should be the national language. The Hindi movement, which quickly acquired communal overtones because it positioned itself against Urdu, was hotly contested by Tamil nationalists. Repeated anti-Hindi agitations by the Dravidian leadership right until 1965 resisted what was called Brahmanical domination. Tamil nationalists threatened to secede.

Dr B.R. Ambedkar had remarked that no provision in the Constitution bred as much anger as that of the national language in the Constituent Assembly. The Assembly, therefore, postponed the adoption of Hindi as the national language to 1965. As the date drew near, Madras city was shaken by agitations; portions of the Constitution that dealt with the language issue, books written in Hindi and government documents

were burnt on the streets. The central government decided that it was safer to compromise. The Official Amendment Act of 1967 adopted the three-language formulae. Major languages have been included in the Eighth Schedule.

Today we cannot imagine the anger and the passion that was expended on the issue of the national language. What is significant is that the government of the day accepted that language was important for people. Which language we speak determines what opportunities we have access to. Language is also important for us because language is culture, it shapes our worldview. To take away language is to diminish human beings.

The second issue that rocked the country was the conflict around linguistic states. The demand had erupted after Bengal was divided in 1905. The Indian National Congress agreed that after India became an independent country, states would be reorganised on the basis of linguistic identities. But when the time came, the Congress government hesitated and prevaricated. After the shock of Partition, which was legitimised by the two-nation theory, the new government could not reconcile with the linguistic reorganisation of states. It might have balkanised the country further.

However, the issue could not be swept away from the centre stage of politics. History has shown us that identity politics acquire a dangerous trajectory; they become independent of economic sops such as "development", "integration" into the country, or more "opportunities". In October 1952, Potti Sriramulu, a respected freedom fighter, went on a fast-unto-death for a separate state for Telugu-speaking people.

By December of that year discontent erupted in the Andhra region. Sriramulu's health deteriorated, and he died on 15 December 1952. Telugu speaking areas were wracked by riots. On 19 December, Nehru was forced to concede the new state of Andhra Pradesh. The state was carved out of Madras state, excluding Madras city. Telangana was incorporated into Andhra Pradesh.

The decision propelled other movements for linguistic states and Nehru appointed a States Reorganisation Committee on 22 December 1953. The Commission received and considered over 150,000 documents for and against linguistic states. The first round of state formation during 1956-1966 was based on language. Subsequent rounds, the formation of states in the Northeast, and the creation of Uttarakhand, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand were justified on other grounds such as economic backwardness. In 2014, Telangana was constituted as a separate state again on the basis of language and shared cultural traditions.

India's political experiment added another bow to the argument for federalism, the need to accommodate identity issues. That experiment has worked well, defusing tensions and allaying fears. The recognition of identity is in keeping with the best tradition of contemporary political theory, that there is no such thing as an abstract individual. Individuals are social beings. They realise their sociable nature through membership of associations in civil society, ranging from bird watching clubs, to book reading groups, to literary societies, to theatre-going associations, to cricket clubs, to civil liberties unions that keep

watch on acts of omission and commission of the government to even film fan clubs. Yet, undeniably, we are intimately attached to the community we are born into. Our community teaches us a language that allows us to make sense of the world, of our own place in the world, and our relationships with others. It follows that an individual should be assured secure access to her community. This is an essential precondition for being human.

The case of Jammu and Kashmir was different. It came into existence in 1846. When the Maharaja of Kashmir acceded to India in October 1947, he insisted on regional autonomy. For Jawaharlal Nehru the inclusion of J&K in India was important. It validated the doctrine of pluralism and secularism, notably that the country has place for all religious groups and that they will be treated equally by the state. If the inhabitants of a state form a minority and for that reason are vulnerable to majoritarianism, if they fear that their religion, their culture and their language is threatened, they should be accorded special protection in the form of regional autonomy. This commitment was incorporated in the Constitution in the form of Article 370. Nehru knew that the people of J&K could only be a part of India if they were assured of their identity and if the state protected their distinctive culture. This reasoning has also been applied to parts of the Northeast that possess a well-defined culture and language.

It is regrettable that over the years successive governments in Delhi have violated the basic terms of the contract with J&K. Yet the people of the state were willing to give democracy a chance. Discontent with the systemic violations of

Article 370 and of all democratic norms burst into flames in 1990. Since then the people of the state have lived with violence that is unleashed on them from all sides. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government has tried to contain this violence militarily. But political wars cannot be fought militarily. There is no evidence that violence has abated under the iron hand of the central government. Though all forms of violence are condemnable, state violence that terrorises the citizens of the country is sickening. It contravenes democracy, it leads to trauma.

The very people we voted for, the very people we entrusted our country to, have betrayed us. What could be more traumatic? The poet Umair Bhat gives us an indication of this trauma in his poem *The Siege*:

*In the streets, filled
with impenetrable smoke,
Kashmir is burning again,
so are tyres, rubber
and logs. The houses
are burning. Fire
runs in waves. The air,
heavy with soot, murmurs
death overhead....*

*Each evening
on the dinner tables
we prepare for our little wars
we will fight in the morning.*

This is but a part of the story of violence that runs rampant in Kashmir. Thousands have been killed, thousands have been detained, thousands have disappeared, young children have been radicalised and several thousand have been tortured. The people of Kashmir are caught between the Charybdis of Indian security forces and the Scylla of armed groups that have been active in the Valley since the late 1980s. Terrible forms of violence

have engulfed minds and crippled imaginations, forbidden people to think of the future, compelled them to concentrate only on holding minds and bodies together. Violence has painted the history and the present of Kashmir in blood and has blurred the future by the smoke that curls upwards from burning homes and villages. Violence has begotten only violence and led to multiple tragedies of epic proportions.

The tale of the Kashmir tragedy could have been foretold. The Government of India, desperate to prevent further Balkanisation of the country, embroiled in a war that was not of its own making with Pakistan in 1947–48, pilloried in the United Nations by major western powers that had turned against India, and pressurised by right wing forces to integrate Kashmir into the country, was to later adopt extremely short-sighted policies in the Kashmir case. In retrospect it is surprising that the government did not realise that it was not dealing with a population that had been rendered acquiescent under princely rule.

The Government of India was dealing with a people who had mobilised against the misrule of the monarch since the 1930s. This politically aware population witnessed a series of cataclysmic events in the aftermath of 1947, the terror and the atrocities inflicted by raiders from Pakistan in 1947, the disruption that followed the war between India and Pakistan on Kashmiri soil, and the partition of the community and of the homeland between two, and then three countries. Above all, this population bore witness to the breach of contractual and constitutional obligations by the Government of India. Yet the Kashmiri people

were prepared to give democracy a chance. But it was precisely democracy that was compromised and denied to them.

Seventy-two years after J&K acceded to India, the Government of India has erased the state from the map of India. We do not know what the consequences will be because the people are shut off not only from the world, but also from their own kith and kin. A sense of foreboding, however, permeates the atmosphere. When Maharaja Hari Singh acceded to India in 1947, the country was poised to be a democracy. The status of the former princely state was fixed by making it a part of the federal structure and granting it regional autonomy so that the distinctive culture and identity of the people could be protected against marauders.

The hope that the Indian state could deliver to the people of the state protection, democracy and justice frittered away by the end of the 1980s. Thereafter the Valley has seen little but discontent and the politicisation of the people. Upon a deeply politicised people the Indian government has imposed humiliation. This is worrying. Thomas Hobbes wrote, "Though nothing can be immortal, which mortals make; yet, if men had the use of reason they pretend to, their Common-wealths might be secured, at least, from perishing by internal diseases." But reason is not a constitutive aspect of the Kashmir policy of the Government of India. Can the Commonwealth be properly secured? Can rulers throw internal colonialism into the dustbin of history?

(Neera Chandhoke is a former Professor of Political Science in Delhi University.)

The Monk Who Shaped India's Secularism

Rahul Mukherji

Has Indian nationalism turned utterly exclusivist? What would one of the icons of nationalism, Swami Vivekananda, have to say about this shift? Nationalism, after all, is a battle for the myths that create a nation.

The practice of Indian secularism, despite its pitfalls, has distinguished the country from many of its neighbours. India is the nation with the third-highest number of Muslims in the world. Its ability to consolidate democracy amidst unprecedented diversity could teach a lesson or two even to advanced industrial economies that have operated along the lines of a classic monocultural nation. The country's secular ideals have their roots in its Constitution, promulgated by its people, a majority of whom are Hindus. Would this state of affairs change because a different morality, Hindu nationalism, has surreptitiously overtaken India's tryst with secular nationalism?

Indian secularism has always attempted, however imperfectly, to respect the credo of *sarva dharma samabhava* (all religions lead to the same goal), which translates to an equal respect for all religions. However, the early-day Hindu nationalists were clearly at odds with the idea. This was the reason Nathuram Godse assassinated one of its strongest proponents, Mahatma Gandhi.

Hindu nationalism today

For the likes of Godse, a corollary of the two-nation theory was that independent India was primarily a land for Hindus. More than 70 years

after Independence, this notion has gained prominence as never before in India's post-colonial history. This is evident when the Central government says it will consider all Hindus in neighbouring countries as potential Indian citizens. The most recent example of this is the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir, the country's only Muslim-majority State, into two Union Territories, with all special provisions taken away from the erstwhile State's residents.

Not only were Kashmiris not consulted, they were made to suffer an information blackout. Does this kind of Hindu nationalism align with the cosmopolitan nature of India's millennial traditions?

Another question that needs to be asked is: Is it fair to appropriate Swami Vivekananda, another follower of the *sarva dharma samabhava* philosophy whom Prime Minister Narendra Modi keeps citing, as a Hindutva icon?

Here, it is necessary to understand what Vivekananda's life and worldview said about Indian nationalism. His Chicago lectures (1893) marked the beginning of a mission that would interpret India's millennial tradition in order to reform it. He later spent about two years in New York, establishing the first Vedanta Society in 1894. He travelled widely across Europe and engaged Indologists such as Max Mueller and Paul Deussen. He even debated with eminent scientists such as Nicola Tesla before embarking on his reformist mission in India.

One of the key elements of his message, based on the experiments of

his spiritual mentor Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, was that all religions lead to the same goal. Paramahansa is unique in the annals of mysticism as one whose spiritual practices reflect the belief that the ideas of personal god and that of an impersonal god as well as spiritual practices in Christianity and in Islam all lead to the same realisation.

While in Chicago, Vivekananda stressed three important and novel facets of Hindu life. First, he said that Indian tradition believed “not only in toleration” but in acceptance of “all religions as true”. Second, he stressed in no uncertain terms that Hinduism was incomplete without Buddhism, and vice versa.

Finally, in his last meeting there, he proclaimed: “If anybody dreams [of] the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: ‘Help and not fight’; ‘Assimilation and not destruction’, and ‘Harmony and peace and not dissension’.”

Religion and rationality

Vivekananda’s interpretation of India’s past was radical and when he returned from the West, he had with him a large number of American and European followers. These women and men stood behind his project of establishing the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897.

Vivekananda emphasised that India needed to trade Indian spirituality for the West’s material and modern culture and he was all for India’s scientific modernisation. He supported Jagadish Chandra Bose’s scientific projects. In fact, Vivekananda’s American disciple

Sara Bull helped patent Bose’s discoveries in the USA. He also invited Irish teacher Margaret Noble, whom he rechristened ‘Sister Nivedita’, to help uplift the condition of Indian women. When she inaugurated a girls’ school in Calcutta, Vivekananda even requested his friends to send their girls to this school.

Vivekananda also inspired Jamsetji Tata to establish the Indian Institute of Science and the Tata Iron and Steel Company. India needed a secular monastery from where scientific and technological development would uplift India’s material conditions, for which his ideals provided a source of inspiration.

Influence on Gandhi, Nehru

Vivekananda made a remarkable impact on the makers of modern India, who later challenged the two-nation theory, including Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. He used the term ‘Daridra Narayan’ to imply that ‘service to the poor is service

to god’, many years before Gandhiji addressed the socially oppressed as ‘Harijan’ (children of god). The Mahatma in fact opined that his love for India grew thousandfold after reading Vivekananda.

It is for these reasons that Vivekananda’s birthday was declared as the National Youth Day by the Government of India.

Was Vivekananda then a proponent of Hindutva or of the millennial traditions that have survived many an invasion and endured to teach the world both “toleration and universal acceptance”? Should Hindu nationalism take his name but forget his fiery modern spirit that rediscovered and reformed India’s past? And shouldn’t India’s secular nationalism also acknowledge its deeply spiritual roots in the beliefs of pioneers like the reformer Swami Vivekananda?

(Rahul Mukherji is Professor, South Asia Institute, at the Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies, Heidelberg University.)

Gandhi for the Post-Truth Age

Pankaj Mishra

In 2015, in South Africa, where Mohandas Gandhi lived from 1893 to 1914, a statue of him was defaced by protesters. The following year, the University of Ghana agreed to remove Gandhi’s statue from its campus, after an online campaign with the (misspelled) hashtag #Ghandimustfall charged the Indian leader with racism against black Africans.

Even some left-leaning writers have recently argued that Gandhi must fall. In “The South African Gandhi” (2015), Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed depict him as a pro-British lawyer, who worked within the country’s white-supremacist politics to promote his Indian compatriots at the expense of black South Africans. The Marxist critic Perry Anderson, in his scathing

This article has been edited by us for reasons of space. The full article can be read on Janata blog.)

account of Indian nationalism, “The Indian Ideology” (2012), charges that Gandhi’s “intellectual development” was “arrested by intense religious belief”.

While it is not the task of this essay to respond to these criticisms, one point we wish to make is that what many of these critics forget is that Gandhi was responding to an unprecedentedly violent and unstable period in human history, beginning with the intensification of imperialism and globalisation in the late nineteenth century and continuing through two world wars. “Politics encircle us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries,” Gandhi once said. “I wish therefore to wrestle with the snake.” His prolific writings in that turbulent era inspired thinkers as disparate as W.E.B. Du Bois and Reinhold Niebuhr.

The fact is, Gandhi’s thought continues to be very relevant in today’s world, seventy years after his death. In recent years, many scholars have asserted that he has much to say about the issues that make our present moment so volatile: inequality, resentment, the rise of demagoguery, and the breakdown of democratic governance. In several pioneering books and articles, the Indian thinker Ashis Nandy has presented Gandhi as boldly confronting the “hyper-masculine” political culture of his time, which sanctified “institutionalised violence and ruthless social Darwinism.” Writers such as Ajay Skaria, Shruti Kapila, Uday S. Mehta, Karuna Mantena, and Faisal Devji present a radical figure, who, diverging from the dominant ideologies of liberalism, nationalism and Marxism, insisted on the need for self-transformation,

moral persuasion and sacrifice.

Ramachandra Guha has written a two-volume biography of Gandhi, that offers a more conventional account. The first volume talks of Gandhi’s early life and his South African sojourn, where he worked as a lawyer and a community organiser for the country’s Indian population. The second and concluding volume, “Gandhi: The Years That Changed the World, 1914–1948”, covers the most widely known part of Gandhi’s life—when he returned to India and emerged as the leader of the Indian freedom movement. Known as the Mahatma, he became famous worldwide as a practitioner of nonviolent resistance.

Gandhi, in Guha’s account, appears as a symbol of India’s imperilled secular nationalism, whose “ideas on religious pluralism and interfaith harmony speak directly to the world we live and labour in.” This bland do-gooder has little of the “sublime madness” that Niebuhr identified in the man who wrestled with the snake of politics.

Guha goes on to argue that Gandhi “is still relevant on account of the method of social protest he pioneered.” This is undoubtedly true, attested by the ubiquity of boycotts, strikes, collective vigils and other techniques that Gandhi pioneered, or practiced, with world-historical results. Activists fighting for the environment, for refugees’ and immigrants’ rights, and against racial discrimination and violence continue to be inspired by satyagraha, Gandhi’s neologism meaning nonviolent direct action. The aim of satyagraha was to arouse the conscience of oppressors and invigorate their victims with a sense of moral agency. Gandhi’s unique mode of defiance, Niebuhr

observed as early as 1932, not only works to “rob the opponent of the moral conceit by which he identifies his interests with the peace and order of society.” It also purges the victim’s resentment of the “egoistic element,” producing a purer “vehicle of justice.”

Certainly, Gandhi, the resourceful activist, the impresario of nonviolent resistance, cannot be expunged from history as briskly as his statues. But there is also a case, which Guha does not make, for seeing Gandhi as far more intellectually ingenious. In “The Impossible Indian” (2012), Faisal Devji, the most stimulating of recent writers on Gandhian thought, calls him “one of the great political thinkers of our times”—an assessment not cancelled out by the stringent account of Gandhi’s fads, follies and absurdities frequently offered by his critics. Far from being a paragon of virtue, the Mahatma remained until his death a restless work in progress. Prone to committing what he called “Himalayan blunders,” he did not lose his capacity to learn from them, and to enlist his opponents in his search for a mutually satisfactory truth.

Satyagraha, literally translated as “holding fast to truth,” obliged protesters to “always keep an open mind and be ever ready to find that what we believed to be truth was, after all, untruth.” Gandhi recognised early on that societies with diverse populations inhabit a post-truth age. “We will never all think alike and we shall always see truth in fragments and from different angles of vision,” he wrote. And even Gandhi’s harshest detractors do not deny that he steadfastly defended, and eventually sacrificed his life for, many values under

assault today—fellow-feeling for the weak, and solidarity and sympathy between people of different nations, religions, and races.

No one would be less surprised than Gandhi by neo-Fascist upsurges in what he called “nominal” Western democracies, which in his view were merely better at concealing their foundations of violence and exploitation than explicitly Fascist nations were. He thought that democracy in the West was “clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists,” and as long as legislators act like a “prostitute”—his infamous term for the British Parliament—and voters “take their cue from their newspapers which are often dishonest.”

True democracy, or *swaraj*, involved much more participation from citizens, he believed; it required them to combine self-rule with self-restraint, politics with ethics. Turning his back on his middle-class origins, he brought millions of peasants into political life. To him, the age of democracy—“this age of awakening of the poorest of the poor”—was a cause for celebration, and he conceived of democracy as something that “gives the weak the same chance as the strong,” in which “inequalities based on possession and non-possession, colour, race, creed or sex vanish.”

People in the West, Gandhi argued, merely “imagine they have a voice in their own government”; instead, they were “being exploited by the ruling class or caste under the sacred name of democracy.” Moreover, a regime in which “the weakest go to the wall” and a “few capitalist owners” thrive “cannot be sustained except by violence, veiled if not open.” This is why, Gandhi

predicted, even “the states that are today nominally democratic” are likely to “become frankly totalitarian.”

Many other anti-colonial activists and thinkers also saw Fascism and imperialism as “the two faces” of a “decaying capitalism,” in the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhi’s close associate and India’s first Prime Minister. Gandhi’s critique of Western-style politics, however, extended to its underpinnings of political and economic liberalism, and its central assumption: that material progress and industrial expansion could continue without devastating political and environmental consequences.

“Industrialism,” he argued in 1931, “depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors.” But intensified competition from Asian and African countries could change everything, he warned presciently, decades before the rise of China as a capitalist economy plunged once powerful nations of the West into irreversible economic decline and political crisis. Unlike Nehru and many post-colonial leaders, Gandhi derived no satisfaction from the prospect of heavily centralised Asian and African states industrialising and catching up with their Western overlords. He calculated early on the environmental costs of industrial progress by populous countries: in 1928, he wrote, “If an entire nation of 300 millions”—India’s population at the time—“took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.”

For these reasons and others, Gandhi thought that it was not enough to demand liberation from “exploitation and degradation,” as

socialists tended to do. In 1925, in an article titled “What of the West?,” he argued that those who wished to “shun the evils of capital” would have to do nothing less than wholly “revise the view point of capital,” achieving an outlook in which “the multiplicity of material wants will not be the aim of life.” Indeed, Gandhi’s critique of modern civilisation hinged on what he saw as its refusal to recognise limits. To a civilisation shaped by unappeasable human will and ambition Gandhi counterposed a civilisation organised around self-limitation and ethical conduct. “We shall cease to think of getting what we can, but we shall decline to receive what all cannot get,” he wrote. “The only real, dignified, human doctrine is the greatest good of all, and this can only be achieved by uttermost self-sacrifice.”

Gandhi baffled many of his colleagues in addition to his enemies, as Guha relates. His unabashed invocation of quasi-religious values in politics and his key value of self-sacrifice are also likely to disconcert many readers today. Such assertions as “Just as one must learn the art of killing in the training for violence, so one must learn the art of dying in the training for non-violence” set him in stark opposition to the utility-maximising premises of Western political economy. But Gandhi’s radically different conception of the human being, and its relationship with others, gives his ideas an inner coherence. Asked in 1947 by the director-general of UNESCO to contribute to the then new and growing discourse surrounding human rights, Gandhi retorted that he had “learnt from my illiterate but wise mother that all rights to be deserved and preserved came from duty well done.... The very right to

live accrues to us only when we do the duty of citizenship of the world.”

At every point, Gandhi still upends modern assumptions, insisting on the primacy of self-sacrifice over self-interest, individual obligations over individual rights, renunciation over consumption, and dying over killing. What were the sources of Gandhi’s relentlessly counterintuitive thought, and what makes it resonate in our time?

Gandhi’s devout Hinduism, his vow of celibacy, and his penchant for wearing a loincloth and spinning cotton made him seem like an Indian mendicant—“a fakir of a type well known in the east,” in Winston Churchill’s contemptuous judgment. In fact, Gandhi, a devoted reader of the Bible, was, as Pope John Paul II once said, “much more of a Christian than many people who say they are Christians,” and the deepest influences on him were largely European and American. Immersed in an Anglo-American countercultural tradition, he counted Emerson, Thoreau and John Ruskin as his gurus, borrowing from Ruskin the notion of the dignity of manual labor. His emphasis on duty came from Giuseppe Mazzini. Gandhi closely read the gay socialist Edward Carpenter, who stressed the ethical and spiritual dimension of democracy while distrusting its institutional apparatus, especially the centralised bureaucratic state. Living in South Africa, Gandhi corresponded with Tolstoy, who called him his “spiritual heir.” Guha described in his first volume how the Catholic writer G.K. Chesterton helped inspire Gandhi’s main contribution to political theory, “Hind Swaraj” (1909). Gandhi absorbed many ideas osmotically during an era when a range of artists and thinkers, from

William Morris to D.H. Lawrence, deplored the condition of human beings in industrial production and their entrapment in the cash nexus, and emphasised interdependence over individualism.

Tim Rogan’s book, “The Moral Economists: R.H. Tawney, Karl Polanyi, E.P. Thompson, and the Critique of Capitalism” (2017), ably reconstructs the first extensive crisis of liberalism, during which Gandhi began to explore how to “revise the viewpoint of capital.” In the late nineteenth century, the process of globalisation was as disruptive as it is today. It had started to become clear that, as Rogan writes, “mutual utility—rational, self-interested actors meeting in markets overseen by a night watchman state—was not a sufficient basis for social order.” The social contract was breaking down across Europe, and those disaffected with the “social philosophy of laissez-faire” became vulnerable to authoritarian figures and “conceptions of a strong, unifying state.” Gandhi was thoroughly alert to this dangerous shift, eerily familiar in our own age of polarised, sectarian politics. “The violence of private ownership,” he once said, “is less injurious than the violence of the State.”

The moral economists argued against the political philosophy of liberalism, which saw the protection of life and property as the main impulse of social and political life. R.H. Tawney, a religious socialist, belittled the concept of economic man, and argued for a more exalted notion of human motives. Karl Polanyi, a refugee from Fascist Europe, became convinced that Fascism, “the most obvious failure of our civilisation,” was the consequence of subordinating human

needs to the market, and he called for “freedom from economics.” Gandhi likewise argued that, “at every crucial moment, these new-fangled economic laws have broken down in practice. And nations or individuals who accept them as guiding maxims must perish.”

Gandhi was obsessed with the dangers to human freedom from hyperorganised states, economic calculus and technocracies, and he anticipated the many mid-century American and European intellectuals who grappled with the most obvious failure of their civilisation: the eruption of barbarism in the heart of the modern West. Gandhi saw the link between European imperialism in Asia and Africa and totalitarianism in Europe decades before Hannah Arendt elaborated on it in “The Origins of Totalitarianism” (1951). He also recognised, well before such Catholic thinkers as Simone Weil and Jacques Maritain, that new conceptions of social interdependence, individual agency and cosmopolitan responsibility were needed to save the world from the delusions of individualism and collectivism. But, then, Gandhi had a broader experience of the world than the moral economists, the Christian humanists, or even the German refugees from Nazism; he had been forced to assess modern Western democracies very early in the twentieth century, and from the vantage point of their profoundly undemocratic Asian and African outposts.

Most important, he devised a mode of resistance that skillfully infused mass politics with a moral imperative—to end the vicious cycle of violent antagonism and to prepare the ground for mutual toleration. Satyagraha, which

presumed a basic commitment to dialogue on all sides, was likely to be impotent against Nazism or any other genocidal ideology. But it remains a matchless political means to reconcile clashing interests in diverse and fractious societies, largely because it accommodates Gandhi's proto-postmodern view that truths in politics are invariably partial and contingent. A satyagrahi ought to give "his opponent the same independence and feelings of liberty that he reserves to himself and he will fight by inflicting injuries on his own person." Maritain correctly described satyagraha as "spiritual warfare." Gandhi claimed that those engaged in satyagraha were "true warriors," fearless enough to never resort to arms—as opposed to the cowards driven by fear to violence.

This was a new way of achieving moral agency in the most oppressive circumstances. Yet, as Faisal Devji writes, Gandhi was no humanitarian, concerned above all with ameliorating suffering. Rather, "tempting violence in order to convert it by the force of suffering into something quite unexpected" was at the core of his politics. "Mere appeal to reason does not answer where prejudices are age-long," Gandhi pointed out. "The penetration of the heart comes from suffering."

All this seems far removed from the rational debates and discussions that we assume are the way to build public consensus and inform government policy in democracies. But Gandhi realised that democratic politics, as the philosopher Martha Nussbaum has pointed out, "must learn how to cultivate the inner world of human beings, equipping each citizen to contend against the passion for domination and to

accept the reality, and the equality, of others." Moreover, a profound philosophical conviction lay behind the communal endurance of pain and the refusal to retaliate. Gandhi believed that society is much more than a social contract between self-seeking individuals underpinned by the rule of law and structured by institutions; it is actually founded upon sacrificial relationships, whether between lovers, friends, or parents and children.

Gandhi could see that public life organised around a morally neutral conception of private interests is always likely to degenerate into ferocious competition and violent coercion. "Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle," he warned. It undermines social cohesion, and, finally, creates the conditions for what the social contract is meant to preclude: a war of all against all.

As Trump's trade wars, travel bans, deportations and denaturalisations demonstrate, an obsession with preserving what one has can quickly lead to depriving others of their human dignity. Gandhi would have recognised immediately that the source of Trump's power lies in stoking people's fear that the material interests of their nation, race or class will not survive unless ruthless measures are taken. He worked for much of his life in precisely such an inferno of existential terrors and predatory fantasies, when cruelty in the name of self-preservation received singularly wide sanction.

It was a man of the far right, consumed by survivalist anxieties about the "Hindu nation," who shot Gandhi three times in the chest and the abdomen on the evening of January 30, 1948. Gandhi, who

built an entire world view based on the nonviolent imperative of self-sacrifice, had looked forward to his assassination. Having survived a previous attempt on his life that same month, he made no effort to improve his security and, the night before his murder, told a close confidant of his wish to receive a "bullet in my bare chest." His executioner failed to realise that he was merely helping Gandhi to perfect the "art of dying" and to consummate his cosmopolitan duty as a citizen of the world—the sacrifice of oneself for others. Many more of Gandhi's statues may fall in the present climate of furious revisionism. But the Mahatma will remain, in his sublime madness, a consistently illuminating guide through the labyrinth of rational self-interest, and through our own decaying landscapes of liberalism and democracy.

(Pankaj Mishra is a well-known Indian essayist and novelist.)

Articles Put on Janata Blog Last Week (Oct 20)

1. John Bellamy Foster, "Absolute Capitalism"
2. David Barsamian, "Big Lies"
3. Daniel Kent-Carrasco, "A Battle Over Meanings: Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia and the Trajectories of Socialism in Early Independent India"
4. Subhash Gatade, "RSS to Start Sainik School in India"
5. Elizabeth Kolbert, "There's No Scientific Basis for Race—It's a Made-Up Label"
6. Fred Magdoff and John Bellamy Foster, "What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism"

Ho Chi Minh: Remembering the King and the Saint

Archishman Raju

In February 1958, when Ho Chi Minh visited India, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru welcomed him as “a great revolutionary and an almost legendary hero”. September 2019 marked the 50th anniversary of the death of “one of the most remarkable men of our times”, and serves as an occasion to remember what created him and made him such a legendary figure.

Ho Chi Minh was born in 1890, at a time when European powers were engaged in a “scramble for Africa”, partitioning and colonising the continent, and had consolidated their hold over Asia. He was born in a small Vietnamese village, and was exposed at a young age to patriotic activities and peasant revolts against French rule. He also saw the extraordinary cruelty of the French, which he was to later document in great detail.

He seemed to have a continuous desire to acquire knowledge that would help liberate his people, and left Vietnam at the age of 21 by finding work on a steamer ship as a cook’s helper. His life story is so unique that it reads almost like magical realism. He wandered around the world, changed his name several times and was in a restless search for direction that could lead to freedom for his country. He visited ports in Africa and Asia, including countries like Algeria, Senegal, India and Morocco, and would disembark to examine local conditions. Seeing the commonality of colonial oppression in these countries had a deep impact on his views.

Eventually coming to live in

France, Ho Chi Minh took up various odd jobs and joined the French Socialist Party. Here, he interacted with the French Left, a significant faction of which was talking about socialism domestically, and showed sympathy with him personally, but was half-hearted in its condemnation of French colonialism. Ho Chi Minh distributed leaflets exposing the nature of French colonialism, and also attacking the concrete manifestation of the so-called ideals of the French revolution with sharp irony. In one of these leaflets, he said,

“It is bitterly ironic to find that civilisation—symbolised in its various forms, viz. liberty, justice, etc., by the gentle image of woman, and run by a category of men well known to be champions of gallantry—inflicts on its living emblem the most ignoble treatment and afflicts her shamefully in her manners, her modesty, and even her life.... Colonialism is unbelievably widespread and cruel.”

Ho Chi Minh would develop this critique of European civilisation in a later article on *Civilisation That Kills*, subtitled ‘How the whites have been civilising the blacks. Some deeds not mentioned in history textbooks’. The article began:

“If lynching—inflicted upon Negroes by the American rabble—is an inhuman practice, I do not know what to call the collective murders committed in the name of civilisation by Europeans on African peoples.”

He observed that the Black continent has been “drenched in blood” with murders “blessed by

the Church” and “conscientiously perpetrated” by “today’s colonial administrators”. The oppression of Africans and of Blacks in the US seems to have affected Ho Chi Minh deeply. He said:

“It is well known that the black race is the most oppressed and the most exploited of the human family. It is well known that the spread of capitalism and the discovery of the New World had as an immediate result the rebirth of slavery which was, for centuries, a scourge for the Negroes and a bitter disgrace for mankind.”

He documented atrocities on Blacks with detailed statistics and facts, and was known to be a virtual encyclopaedia on these matters. It is not insignificant that his development was shaped by the conditions in Africa, and its particular position in the world at the beginning of the 20th century.

Lenin and Gandhi

Ho Chi Minh has been variously compared to two other world leaders, Gandhi and Lenin. These comparisons reflect a deeper truth. Perhaps more so than any other figure in the 20th century, Ho Chi Minh came to be at the centre of two great world revolutionary movements: the Russian revolution and the anti-colonial struggle. Gandhi was less of a direct influence on him, though he was well known for his strong emphasis on morality and simplicity.

He was, of course, well aware of English colonisation and the Indian anti-colonial struggle, and he reportedly said once in a conversation comparing the Indian

to the Vietnamese situation. "There you had Mahatma Gandhi, here I am the Mahatma Gandhi." On another occasion, he said, "I and others may be revolutionaries, but we are disciples of Mahatma Gandhi, directly or indirectly, nothing more, nothing less".

Lenin had much more of a direct influence on Ho Chi Minh. In 1920, the Second Congress of the Comintern had published Lenin's views on the national question. There, Lenin articulated how and why communists should seek to support all national revolutionary movements in the East. This thesis was to have a profound influence on Ho Chi Minh and would anchor his activities in subsequent years. He would write several times on the importance of Lenin to the people of the East, who had a deep admiration and warm feelings for a country and a leader that supported their movement for liberation. He said:

"Lenin was the first man determinedly to denounce all prejudices against colonial peoples, which have been deeply implanted in the minds of many European and American workers."

This pushed Ho Chi Minh towards Leninism, and he conceptualised the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle as an important step towards a transition to socialism and communism. He would go to Moscow in 1923 and then work for the Comintern. In Moscow, he met and interacted with the Indian revolutionary M.N. Roy, who had debated with Lenin at the Second Congress on the national and colonial question. Both worked together in the Society of Oppressed Peoples of Asia in Moscow. This was an early instance of the commonality expressed in the struggles of Vietnam and India.

American imperialism and anti-colonial solidarity

Several other such instances of solidarity abound. In January 1947, before India's independence, the All India Student Federation had declared a day to be Vietnam Day. There was a huge strike in Calcutta, which was met with police repression and firing. Two students died and one student, Ranamitra Sen, was shot in the leg.

This support for Vietnam in India was also reflected in the Indian leadership. Nehru was one of the first foreign dignitaries to visit Vietnam in 1954, after the victory of the Vietnamese over the French in Dien Bien Phu and the signing of the Geneva accords.

Ho Chi Minh had written a poem for Nehru capturing their common dilemma during their respective struggles:

*You are in jail, I am in prison...
We communicate without words,
Shared ideas link you and me.*

Subsequently, Ho Chi Minh participated in the Bandung conference in 1955 and visited India in 1958. He interacted with a wide range of people, with a delightful informality. On learning that Ranamitra Sen was in the audience at one of his gatherings, he got off the stage and went to greet and embrace him.

During the time of the Vietnam War, large demonstrations were held in India. In Calcutta in particular, the renaming of a street as Ho Chi Minh Sarani, the popularity of Ho Chi Minh sandals and the slogan "Amar Nam Tomar Naam Vietnam" were symbolic of the huge popularity that Ho Chi Minh had.

The Vietnamese cause had earlier been given poetic expression in a touching tribute to Ho Chi Minh

by Amrita Pritam, who met him when he visited India in 1958:

Who is this King, Who is this Saint?...

*From the land of Vietnam, today
a wind has come to ask*

*Who dried the tears from the
eyes of my History?*

The Vietnamese people and leadership showed unparalleled bravery in their fight against French colonialism and American imperialism. The Americans ruthlessly bombed Vietnam and experimented with chemical weapons. Their conduct would not have surprised Ho Chi Minh, who had visited the US and was familiar with the reality of "American civilisation", as he had termed it earlier. He was well aware of how African-Americans were treated in the US. The irony of the Vietnam war was captured beautifully in a speech by Martin Luther King Jr., offering a fierce indictment:

"We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem."

Today, the presumed stability of world capitalism under US dominance has come to an end. Many are restless and searching for direction as the world faces huge challenges. To them, Ho Chi Minh shines as a light whose relevance stretches far beyond Vietnam and offers a challenge equally grand in scope: to seek out and create a new civilisation.

(Archishman Raju is a research fellow in physics and biology at Rockefeller University.)

John Lennon vs. the Deep State

John W. Whitehead

John Lennon, born 79 years ago on October 9, 1940, was a musical genius and pop cultural icon.

He was also a vocal peace protester and anti-war activist and a high-profile example of the lengths to which the Deep State will go to persecute those who dare to challenge its authority.

Long before Julian Assange, Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning were being castigated for blowing the whistle on the government's war crimes and the National Security Agency's abuse of its surveillance powers, it was Lennon who was being singled out for daring to speak truth to power about the government's warmongering, his phone calls monitored and data files illegally collected on his activities and associations.

For a while, at least, Lennon became enemy number one in the eyes of the US government.

Years after Lennon's assassination it would be revealed that the FBI had collected 281 pages of files on him, including song lyrics. J. Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI at the time, directed the agency to spy on the musician. There were also various written orders calling on government agents to frame Lennon for a drug bust. "The FBI's files on Lennon ... read like the writings of a paranoid goody-two-shoes," observed reporter Jonathan Curiel.

As the *New York Times* notes, "Critics of today's domestic surveillance object largely on privacy grounds. They have focused far less on how easily government surveillance can become an instrument for the people in power

to try to hold on to power. 'The US vs. John Lennon' ... is the story not only of one man being harassed, but of a democracy being undermined."

Indeed, all of the many complaints we have about government today—surveillance, militarism, corruption, harassment, SWAT team raids, political persecution, spying, overcriminalisation, etc.—were present in Lennon's day and formed the basis of his call for social justice, peace and a populist revolution.

For all of these reasons, the US government was obsessed with Lennon, who had learned early on that rock music could serve a political end by proclaiming a radical message. More importantly, Lennon saw that his music could mobilise the public and help to bring about change. Lennon believed in the power of the people. Unfortunately, as Lennon recognised: "The trouble with government as it is, is that it doesn't represent the people. It controls them."

However, as Martin Lewis writing for *Time* notes: "John Lennon was not God. But he earned the love and admiration of his generation by creating a huge body of work that inspired and led. The appreciation for him deepened because he then instinctively decided to use his celebrity as a bully pulpit for causes greater than his own enrichment or self-aggrandisement."

For instance, in December 1971 at a concert in Ann Arbor, Mich., Lennon took to the stage and in his usual confrontational style belted out "John Sinclair," a song he had written about a man sentenced to 10 years in prison for possessing

two marijuana cigarettes. Within days of Lennon's call for action, the Michigan Supreme Court ordered Sinclair released.

What Lennon did not know at the time was that government officials had been keeping strict tabs on the ex-Beatle they referred to as "Mr. Lennon." Incredibly, FBI agents were in the audience at the Ann Arbor concert, "taking notes on everything from the attendance (15,000) to the artistic merits of his new song."

The US government, steeped in paranoia, was spying on Lennon.

By March 1971, when his "Power to the People" single was released, it was clear where Lennon stood. Having moved to New York City that same year, Lennon was ready to participate in political activism against the US government, the "monster" that was financing the war in Vietnam.

The release of Lennon's *Sometime in New York City* album, which contained a radical anti-government message in virtually every song and depicted President Richard Nixon and Chinese Chairman Mao Tse-tung dancing together nude on the cover, only fanned the flames of the conflict to come.

The official US war against Lennon began in earnest in 1972 after rumours surfaced that Lennon planned to embark on a US concert tour that would combine rock music with antiwar organising and voter registration. Nixon, fearing Lennon's influence on about 11 million new voters (1972 was the first year that 18-year-olds could vote), had the

ex-Beatle served with deportation orders “in an effort to silence him as a voice of the peace movement.”

The FBI has had a long history of persecuting, prosecuting and generally harassing activists, politicians and cultural figures. Most notably among the latter are such celebrated names as folk singer Pete Seeger, painter Pablo Picasso, comic actor and filmmaker Charlie Chaplin, comedian Lenny Bruce and poet Allen Ginsberg.

Among those most closely watched by the FBI was Martin Luther King Jr., a man labeled by the FBI as “the most dangerous and effective Negro leader in the country.” With wiretaps and electronic bugs planted in his home and office, King was kept under constant surveillance by the FBI with the aim of “neutralising” him. He even received letters written by FBI agents suggesting that he either commit suicide or the details of his private life would be revealed to the public. The FBI kept up its pursuit of King until he was felled by a hollow-point bullet to the head in 1968.

While Lennon was not—as far as we know—being blackmailed into suicide, he was the subject of a four-year campaign of surveillance and harassment by the US government (spearheaded by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover), including an attempt by President Richard Nixon to have him “neutralised” and deported. As Adam Cohen of the *New York Times* points out, “The FBI’s surveillance of Lennon is a reminder of how easily domestic spying can become unmoored from any legitimate law enforcement purpose. What is more surprising, and ultimately more unsettling, is the degree to which the surveillance turns out to have been intertwined with electoral politics.”

As Lennon’s FBI file shows, memos and reports about the FBI’s surveillance of the anti-war activist had been flying back and forth between Hoover, the Nixon White House, various senators, the FBI and the US Immigration Office.

Nixon’s pursuit of Lennon was relentless and in large part based on the misperception that Lennon and his comrades were planning to disrupt the 1972 Republican National Convention. The government’s paranoia, however, was misplaced.

Left-wing activists who were on government watch lists and who shared an interest in bringing down the Nixon Administration had been congregating at Lennon’s New York apartment. But when they revealed that they were planning to cause a riot, Lennon balked. As he recounted in a 1980 interview, “We said, We ain’t buying this. We’re not going to draw children into a situation to create violence so you can overthrow what? And replace it with what? ... It was all based on this illusion, that you can create violence and overthrow what is, and get communism or get some right-wing lunatic or a left-wing lunatic. They’re all lunatics.”

Despite the fact that Lennon was not part of the “lunatic” plot, the government persisted in its efforts to have him deported. Equally determined to resist, Lennon dug in and fought back. Every time he was ordered out of the country, his lawyers delayed the process by filing an appeal. Finally, in 1976, Lennon won the battle to stay in the country when he was granted a green card. As he said afterwards, “I have a love for this country.... This is where the action is. I think we’ll just go home, open a tea bag, and look at each other.”

Lennon’s time of repose didn’t last long, however. By 1980, he had re-emerged with a new album and plans to become politically active again.

The old radical was back and ready to cause trouble. In his final interview on December 8, 1980, Lennon mused, “The whole map’s changed and we’re going into an unknown future, but we’re still all here, and while there’s life there’s hope.”

The Deep State has a way of dealing with troublemakers, unfortunately. On December 8, 1980, Mark David Chapman was waiting in the shadows when Lennon returned to his New York apartment building. As Lennon stepped outside the car to greet the fans congregating outside, Chapman, in an eerie echo of the FBI’s moniker for Lennon, called out, “Mr. Lennon!”

Lennon turned and was met with a barrage of gunfire as Chapman—dropping into a two-handed combat stance—emptied his .38-caliber pistol and pumped four hollow-point bullets into his back and left arm. Lennon stumbled, staggered forward and, with blood pouring from his mouth and chest, collapsed to the ground.

John Lennon was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital. He had finally been “neutralised.”

Yet where those who neutralised the likes of John Lennon, Martin Luther King Jr., John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Robert Kennedy and others go wrong is in believing that you can murder a movement with a bullet and a madman.

Thankfully, Lennon’s legacy lives on in his words, his music and his efforts to speak truth to power. As Yoko Ono shared in a 2014 letter to the parole board

tasked with determining whether Chapman should be released: "A man of humble origin, [John Lennon] brought light and hope to the whole world with his words and music. He tried to be a good power for the world, and he was. He gave encouragement, inspiration and dreams to people regardless of their race, creed and gender."

Sadly, not much has changed for the better in the world since Lennon walked among us.

Peace remains out of reach. Activism and whistleblowers continue to be prosecuted for challenging the government's authority. Militarism is on the rise; the governmental war machine continues to wreak havoc on innocent lives across the globe. Just recently, for example, US military forces carried out drone strikes in Afghanistan that killed 30 pine nut farmers.

For those of us who joined with John Lennon to imagine a world of peace, it's getting harder to reconcile that dream with the reality of the American police state.

Meanwhile, as I point out in my book *Battlefield America: The*

War on the American People, those who dare to speak up are labeled dissidents, troublemakers, terrorists, lunatics, or mentally ill and tagged for surveillance, censorship, involuntary detention or, worse, even shot and killed in their own homes by militarised police.

As Lennon shared in a 1968 interview:

"I think all our society is run by insane people for insane objectives.... I think we're being run by maniacs for maniacal means. If anybody can put on paper what our government and the American government and the Russian... Chinese... what they are actually trying to do, and what they think they're doing, I'd be very pleased to know what they think they're doing. I think they're all insane. But I'm liable to be put away as insane for expressing that. That's what's insane about it."

So what's the answer?

Lennon had a multitude of suggestions.

"If everyone demanded peace instead of another television set, then there'd be peace."

"War is over if you want it."

"Produce your own dream....

It's quite possible to do anything, but not to put it on the leaders.... You have to do it yourself. That's what the great masters and mistresses have been saying ever since time began. They can point the way, leave signposts and little instructions in various books that are now called holy and worshipped for the cover of the book and not for what it says, but the instructions are all there for all to see, have always been and always will be. There's nothing new under the sun. All the roads lead to Rome. And people cannot provide it for you. I can't wake you up. You can wake you up. I can't cure you. You can cure you."

"Peace is not something you wish for; It's something you make, Something you do, Something you are, And something you give away."

"If you want peace, you won't get it with violence."

And my favorite advice of all: "Say you want a revolution / We better get on right away / Well you get on your feet / And out on the street / Singing power to the people."

(John W. Whitehead is the president of The Rutherford Institute.)

Food Scandals and Agrochemicals

Colin Todhunter

Mad cow disease is a fatal epidemic neurological syndrome created by the agricultural industry, farmers and food processors.

In 1987, an epidemic of a fatal neurological disease in cows suddenly appeared in Britain. Cows became uncoordinated, staggered around, collapsed and finally died. The disease was called Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)

because there were holes in the brain where prion protein cells became folded, had linked up and then split to cover the surface of the brain. There were more than 1,300 cases of BSE spread over 6,000 farms.

For at least 40 years, infected slaughterhouse carcasses had been rendered down and recycled into animal feed. Not wanting to waste anything, pressure cooking of the

spinal cord and brain produced a sludge known as 'mechanically-recovered meat'. The regulators allowed it to go into meat products. This processed meat and bone meal was turned into a coarse powder and was fed back to cows. Cows are herbivores and this way they were turned into cannibals.

By 1990, BSE had spread into 14 other species, including cats.

Politicians, the food industry, media, the government, farmers and vets said BSE couldn't jump species to affect humans and it was safe to eat beef. Advertisements were taken out in newspapers and politicians were shown eating steak tartare in the Houses of Parliament to boost the sales of beef. At an agricultural show, the Agriculture Minister John Gummer was seen offering a beef burger to his daughter.

In 1995, the first human under 40 contracted what became known as new variant Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease (new vCJD, related to BSE and belonging to the same family of diseases). By March 1996, there were five cases and the government was forced to alter its advice. Kevin Maguire, a journalist, was lunching with someone in Westminster who said that scientists had discovered that 'mad cow disease' could jump species and had been found in humans.

Maguire said that it was a scandal in an effort to get every penny out of a carcass. His newspaper, *The Mirror*, was the first to break the news to the public, saying that humans could catch mad cow disease from eating infected beef and that the government was about to do a U-turn by finally accepting that the brain wasting disease may have been passed to people. This U-turn by ministers—who for 10 years had insisted it was impossible—was a devastating indictment of the British government and probably one of the worst examples of government since the war.

During 1996, 10 more cases of new vCJD in people under 40 were diagnosed. All died within 13 months and there was no cure. In 2005, the authorities thought the disease was over, but in 2009, a

case was discovered in a 30-year-old man. Another case appeared four years later. Today, people are living with uncertainty, not knowing if they are incubating new vCJD.

The parents of children who had died from new vCJD said "We trusted government advice." Each Christmas one mother had sent an e-mail to those she thought responsible with a photograph of her daughter and said your actions have deprived me of my daughter. Another parent from Scotland who had lost his 30-year-old son to the disease had tattooed on his arm the name of his son followed by: 'murdered by greed and corruption'.

In the documentary *Mad Cow Disease: The Great British Beef Scandal*, first broadcast on BBC 2 on 11 July 2019, Tim Lang, professor of food policy at City University London, said:

"New Variant CJD is not a natural disease. It is an epidemic we have created. If the agricultural industry hadn't decided to feed cattle with meat and bone meal, if the food processors hadn't decided to scrape every last bit of flesh off the carcass, and if MAFF [govt ministry] hadn't prioritised farming over food safety, all of the people who died would still be alive. This is the tragedy."

The following is taken from a publication compiled by the European Environment Agency, *Late lessons from early warnings* (authored by Patrick van Zwanenberg and Erik Millstone):

"Many of the UK policy makers who were directly responsible for taking policy decisions on Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) prior to March 1996 claim that, at the time, their approach exemplified the application of an ultra-precautionary approach and of rigorous science-

based policy-making. We argue that these claims are not convincing because government policies were not genuinely precautionary and did not properly take into account the implications of the available scientific evidence.

"... It is, however, essential to appreciate that UK public policy making was handicapped by a fundamental tension. The department responsible for dealing with BSE has been the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), and it was expected simultaneously to promote the economic interests of farmers and the food industry whilst also protecting public health from food-borne hazards. The evidence cited here suggests that because MAFF was expected simultaneously to meet two contradictory objectives, it failed to meet either."

The UK introduced legislation banning the use of contaminated ruminant protein for use in ruminant feed in 1988. By then, a million cows had entered the food chain. At the height of the scandal, British beef had lost around 60% of sales. Prior to the ban, microbiologist Stephen Dealler challenged the government's claim over safety and was moved from his research lab.

However, Britain continued to export meat and bone meal to Europe. The European Commission asked the UK to introduce an export ban on feedstuffs, but the UK refused to do so. It was not until 1996 that the EC banned these exports.

From mad cows to GMOs and pesticides

Where glyphosate (and other agrochemicals) and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are concerned, we again see commercial interests being prioritised and the public interest sidelined. Monsanto's

glyphosate-based Roundup was originally sprayed on crops in 1980 and on grazing land in 1985 (recommended by Monsanto scientists). GMOs entered the commercial market in the US in the 1990s.

Heavily compromised industry-funded scientists and other lobbyists say the science is decided on GM and that glyphosate is safe. They say anyone who rejects this is anti-science and doesn't care about world hunger because we can only feed the world by rolling out more GM crops and more agrochemicals. But this is little more than propaganda and emotional blackmail, part of an industry strategy designed to tug at the heartstrings of public opinion and sway the policy agenda. The fact of the matter is, key scientists have long been cautioning against both agrochemicals and GM crops.

We need to turn to author Andre Leu who has outlined major deficiencies in pesticide safety protocols. He offers a more realistic appraisal:

"It is a gross misrepresentation to say that any of the current published toxicology studies can be used to say that any of the thousands of pesticide products used in the world do not cause cancer or other diseases ... there is no evidence that pesticides are safe."

Washington State University researchers recently found a variety of diseases and other health problems in the second- and third-generation offspring of rats exposed to glyphosate. In the first study of its kind, the researchers saw descendants of exposed rats developing prostate, kidney and ovarian diseases, obesity and birth abnormalities. The study's authors say:

"The ability of glyphosate and other environmental toxicants to impact our future generations needs to be considered and is potentially as important as the direct exposure toxicology done today for risk assessment."

And where GMOs are concerned, they are little more than a flawed technological panacea that ignores the structural causes of malnutrition and hunger. GM food crops are regarded as the second coming of the Green Revolution. But just how successful was that?

We must look no further than the poisoning of Punjab (the cradle of the Green Revolution in India) and its sustained use of chemical pesticides, insecticides and fertilisers, which has continued unchecked; and despite claims about the Green Revolution having increasing productivity and saved countless lives, emerging evidence shows that in India it saved zero lives and that food productivity per capita showed no increase or actually went down.

An increasing number of prominent reports and voices are now arguing that we do not need toxic chemicals to feed the world and that if we maintain our economic and agricultural course we are headed for disaster. FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva recently called for healthier and more sustainable food systems and said agroecology can contribute to such a transformation.

Moreover, the new report from the UN High Level Panel of Food Experts on Food Security and Nutrition—Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition—argues that food systems are at a crossroads

and profound transformation is needed. Many high-profile reports and figures have been saying similar things for years.

Mad cow disease did not just suddenly appear from nowhere. It was created by humans, particularly the farming industry and food processors. The British government kept on maintaining that eating beef was perfectly safe. A scientist who spoke out was silenced. The interests of the beef industry were paramount.

Evidence suggests there could soon be a second wave of cases affecting humans. It will be among people with a genetic predisposition towards longer incubation periods than the first patients had. This genetic predisposition is shared by half the British population. Over 200 have contracted and died of vCJD.

But that number is dwarfed when it comes to the spiralling rates of certain diseases and conditions that we now see across the world. This too hasn't happened for no reason. It is in large part a consequence of a globalised neoliberal food regime that relies on unhealthy food processing practices and inputs and a chemical-intensive model of farming that has seen a narrowing down of the range of crops consumed by humans.

It is disconcerting that various governments seem oblivious to the need of the hour and remain intent on pursuing an obsolete neoliberal, water-polluting, soil degrading, health destroying, unsustainable model of food and agriculture.

And all for what? Not to feed the public but to feed the profit motives of corporate interests.

(Colin Todhunter is an independent writer.)



MUMBAI KAMGAR MADHYAWARTI GRAHAK SAHAKARI SANSTHA MARYADIT
(Multistate Consumer Co-operative Society)

APNA BAZARTM

CD-OP

106-A, Govindaji Keni Road, Naigaon, Dadar (E), Mumbai - 400 014.
Tel. :- 24195200, Fax :- 24157497
(ISO 9001-2015 Certified)

Quality and Trustworthiness means 'Apna Bazar'

Our Features

- ◆ 70 years-old proud feeling customer service
- ◆ All Departments & Branches are Computerized.
- ◆ The multi-state consumer co-operative organization in India
- ◆ Customer service in Maharashtra and Gujarat
- ◆ 8 Department Stores and 15 food stores and 1 medical store
- ◆ Annual Turnover of Rs.115 Crore
- ◆ 30 million loyal customers
- ◆ Four Times winner of 'Jamnalal Bajaj Uchit Vyavahar Puraskar' (1989, 2001, 2013 & 2016)
- ◆ 'Global Achievers Award for Business Leadership' awarded by Economic Development Forum (2012)
- ◆ 'Award of Excellence' awarded by National Cooperative Union of India (2013)
- ◆ 'Sahakar Gaurav Puraskar' Awarded by Mumbai District Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. (2015)

Health service :

- ◆ Dadasaheb Sarfare Health Center and Clinical Laboratory at Apna Bazar Naigaon

Social Service :

- ◆ 10% Discount to Customers on purchase of Medical items (Drugs)
- ◆ Festivals wise various schemes for the customers
- ◆ Special programme for women
- ◆ Various programme for customer awareness

Apna Bazar for All :

- 1) Various concessions (discount) on purchases
- 2) The place 'of surety for quality goods
- 3) Saving time and money
- 4) Special discounts in festivals
- 5) Free Home Delivery Service
- 6) 'Apna Gift Voucher' to present the Gift.
- 7) 'A.C. Banquet Hall' at Apna Bazar Naigaon & Apna Bazar Charkop
- 8) Shopping by Sodexo Pass coupons, Ticket Restaurant coupons, Bank Cards, PayTM, Mobikwik etc.

Apna Bazar - Means Adorable, Pleasant, Noble and Affectionate services

Yours in Co-operation

Shripad Phatak	Anil Gangar	Dnyandeo Dalvi, Santosh Sarfare	S. T. Kajale
		Vishwanath Malushte, Sandhya Kawali	
Chairman	Vice Chairman	Executive Committee Members	Chief Executive
Directors :- Ashwin Upadhyay, Nilesh Vaidya, Narendra Bhurke, Nitin Anerao, Jagdish Nalawade, Pandurang Salvi, Chandrakant Sogale, Lavkumar Bande, Anil Thakur, Sharad Phatak, Sarika Salunke, Amul Birwatkar, Renuka Savant, Bhimsen Acharekar			



"We are, what we repeatedly do,
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Aristotle



Taj Palace & Towers - Mumbai



Bombay Stock Exchange - Fort, Mumbai



Forum Atmosphere - Kolkata



J.K. House (Raymond)
Breach Candy, Mumbai

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING /
REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF :

- ✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)
- ✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)
- ✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.

Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi

Vol. 74 No. 41
November 3, 2019

Gandhi's Idea of Cleanliness and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

Sandeep Pandey

The Return of Fascism in Contemporary Capitalism

Samir Amin

Remembering Maulana Azad: A Votary of Hindu–Muslim Unity

Firoz Bakht Ahmed

On October 2, 1947, Why Did Gandhi Say He Was Ashamed That He Was Still Alive?

Impoverished Economics?
Unpacking the Economics Nobel Prize
Ingrid Harvold Kvangraven

FDI in Coal: Why Our Mineral Resources Should Remain in Public Hands

Grassroots Communication Fights Back!

A Conversation with Jessica Pernia

Cira Pascual Marquina

Recalling the Million+ Victims of America's Endless 'War on Terror'

Dave Lindorff

Editor : G. G. Parikh

Associate Editor : **Neeraj Jain**

Managing Editor : **Guddi**

Editorial Board :
B. Vivekanandan, Qurban Ali
Anil Nauriya, Sonal Shah
Amarendra Dhaneshwar,
Sandeep Pandey

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : janataweekly@gmail.com
Website: www.janataweekly.org

Participatory Evolution

Robert Koehler

The big black pickup truck plunged into the protesters blocking the parking lot and I cringed, viscerally, as though I could feel it myself—this merciless crush of steel against flesh.

I was recovering from a bicycle injury when I watched the event on the news last week, as members of the Never Again movement stood their ground to shut down the Wyatt Detention Facility, in Central Falls, R.I. I had fallen a few days earlier; my face hit the sidewalk. I was far too close to my own trauma not to feel a horrified empathy as I watched the video.

Ever since then I've been thinking about the paradoxical courage of nonviolent resistance, nonviolent demand for change and the cessation of "legal" wrongs—from Jim Crow to colonial exploitation to the maintenance of concentration camps (in Germany, in the United States). The core paradox of nonviolent protest against such legally sanctioned immoralities is that, if you block a driveway with your body or simply cross a bridge, you're depending on the humanity of those you confront, who are armed with the weapons they hold or the vehicles they are driving, to keep them from acting on their anger and harming or killing you.

Is this not the essence of courage? You are bringing nothing but yourself, empowered solely by the force of moral compassion—the way the world should be—to a confrontational demand for change. This doesn't even compute as rational in a win-lose world. You are not setting your cause for justice and fairness aside as you engage the enemy in an armed shootout, with the plan to implement new social rules after you win. You are creating a new reality as you fight for it. Nonviolent protest is a confrontation between parallel universes: love vs. hate. This is, perhaps, the definition of evolution.

And it doesn't come without pain.

Thus, on the evening of August 14, some 500 Never Again protesters stood outside the Wyatt Detention Facility, a privately owned prison under contract with ICE, which was holding over 100 immigrant detainees, who were being denied needed medical care and enduring other inhumane conditions. Around 9 pm, there was a shift change at the facility and some of the protesters placed themselves at the entrance to the main parking lot. This was indeed directly confrontational; they wanted to temporarily disrupt prison operations.

A short while later, the employee in the black pickup truck turned into the lot, blaring his horn at the protesters. As they pounded on the hood of his truck he gunned forward into the protesters, two of whom wound up being hospitalised (one man suffering a broken leg and internal bleeding). A short while later, half a dozen officers marched resolutely out of the facility and blasted the crowd with pepper spray, causing three more protesters, including a woman in her 70s, to be hospitalised.

That was it, except for the viral video and the news coverage. Even though the officers and the facility “won,” dispersing the crowd and clearing the parking lot, the driver who impulsively rammed the protesters was placed on administrative leave and shortly thereafter “resigned.”

The Rhode Island American Civil Liberties Union later declared, in a statement, that the facility’s response to the protest was “an attempt to chill the exercise of First Amendment rights by hundreds of peaceful protesters.” It was also “completely unacceptable uses of force.”

Maybe so, but I would add that it is also much, much more than that. The protesters were not standing outside the Wyatt Detention Facility out of some random desire to exercise a First Amendment right, but because of outrage at the facility’s relationship with ICE and the American government’s detention of immigrants. Whether they were acting within a constitutional right or utterly outside of their legal rights was irrelevant. They were claiming, in the moment, the right to interrupt the nation’s establishment of concentration camps and its indefinite detention of primarily

Latin American asylum seekers—people fleeing, often with their children, desperate conditions in their native countries, partially caused by US actions over the last six or seven decades.

They were, once again, crossing Edmund Pettus Bridge (*the site of the brutal Bloody Sunday beatings of civil rights marchers during the first march for voting rights in the USA - Editor*), walking unarmed into a confrontation with a domestic army of club-wielding police. They were walking with Martin Luther King, with Mahatma Gandhi, with Nelson Mandela.

“Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind,” Gandhi said. “It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man.”

With these words in mind, I revisit my painful viewing of the pickup truck confrontation at the private prison. For a moment, as I watched the video and felt the pain being inflicted, I imagined Tiananmen Square—government forces breaking up a nonviolent protest with rifles and tanks, killing hundreds or maybe thousands in their determination to maintain dominance.

How is nonviolence more powerful than the weapons of war? It may not appear to be the case in the moment, but in the long run, the weapon-wielders lose. The opposite of nonviolence isn’t violence. The opposite is ignorance.

“As Jews, we’ve been taught to never let anything like the Holocaust happen again. This crisis isn’t happening just at the border. It’s happening in our communities all around the country.” Thus reads a Never Again Is Now recruitment declaration.

“At our protest in August, a guard at the Wyatt drove his truck through a line of peaceful protesters blocking a parking lot. Shortly after, more guards came out and pepper-sprayed the crowd. These tactics were used to scare us away and make us give up, but instead we’re more determined than ever to shut down these systems of state-sanctioned violence. We need anyone and everyone to throw themselves into the gears of the system. We need our politicians to take drastic action to shut down ICE immediately and ensure safety for people fleeing to the United States. Until they do, we’re going to make it impossible for ICE to do business as usual. We refuse to wait and see what happens next.”

I would add: This is participatory evolution.

(Robert C. Koehler, a Chicago reporter and editor for over 30 years, proudly calls himself a peace journalist.)

Articles Put on Janata Blog Last Week (Oct 27)

1. John Bellamy Foster, “The Crisis of Capital”
2. Bolívar and Zamora Revolutionary Current, “Ecuador is Fighting for All of Latin America”
3. Pankaj Mishra, “Gandhi for the Post-Truth Age”
4. Cecilia Nowell, “‘Green Tide’ Reaches Mexico as Oaxaca Decriminalises Abortion”
5. Jonathan White, “Precarious Work and Contemporary Capitalism”
6. Shilpa Paralkar, “What the ABVP doesn’t want you to read: ‘Maniben alias Bibijaan’”

Gandhi's Idea of Cleanliness and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

Sandeep Pandey

Mahatma Gandhi's spectacles are being used as an emblem for Government of India's sanitation campaign Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA). Even though Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, the ideological parent of ruling Bhartiya Janata Party, abhors Gandhi's ideology, yet Narendra Modi has decided to use Gandhi as a symbol for his drive for cleanliness. First, he knows that Gandhi is the only truly mass leader that India has produced in recent times who holds national as well as international appeal. Second, he probably does not want people to remember Gandhi for his other ideas like truth, non-violence, Swadeshi or communal harmony because they are antithetical to his and his organisation's thinking. It would be much convenient for his brand of politics if future generations of Indians were to associate Gandhi only with the sanitation programme and none of his other ideals.

But even as regards sanitation, Modi is making a mockery of Gandhi's views on this. For Gandhi sanitation was not just picking up a broom and cleaning for a photo opportunity, which is what SBA has been reduced to. When a new person would come to Gandhi's ashrams with a desire to work with him, the first thing s(he) would be required to do was to clean a toilet. This was Gandhi's way of testing people's resolve and commitment to social or public cause. Gandhi closely identified himself with the community of sanitation workers and even said that in his future birth, he would like to be born in that community.

The people who are engaged in cleaning of human excreta are called manual scavengers. This practice is a blot on the name of humanity. According to the Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011, 1,80,657 households earn their livelihood through manual scavenging. However, this number is actually much higher because the government's definition of manual scavengers doesn't include sanitation workers cleaning sewer lines, septic tanks or railway tracks. The 'Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993' did not see a single case being registered and therefore 'The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013' was promulgated twenty years later. But the result is no better.

Under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan Gramin, 9.16 crores toilets have been constructed during the last five years which has increased the sanitation coverage from 38.7% to 98% during this period. India's 601 districts out of 752 and 5,50,151 villages out of 6,40,867 have been declared open defecation free. The above statistics would have created a real problem for us if they were true. Firstly, we would require an equally huge number of manual scavengers to clean the soak pits in which the human excreta gets stored underground when they are filled. Secondly, the soak pit design in areas of the country like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where the water table is very high, especially in rural areas where these toilets have mainly been built, would have posed

a threat of contamination of ground water. Both these problems have not emerged on a big scale, indicating either that the toilets have not been constructed on the scale mentioned by the government due to corruption, or that the toilets are not being used because of faulty or incomplete construction.

Not once during the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan do we find a mention of manual scavengers or their problems, all of whom incidentally come from a particular caste called Valmiki in North India, which belongs to the Dalit community. Prime Minister Narendra Modi famously washed the feet of five sanitation workers on 24 February, 2019 during the Ardh Kumbh at Prayagraj as a mark of respect for their contribution to ensuring cleanliness during the month and a half long event. However, the need to undertake this exercise probably arose because there was a protest going on of sanitation workers during the event itself, demanding minimum wages and better working conditions. A well known activist-poet from Allahabad, Anshu Malviya, was arrested on 8 February by the Police Crime Branch and threatened with imposition of National Security Act on him because he was at the forefront of organising the sanitation workers. After a protest by activists and sanitation workers, he was finally released after midnight from a local police station. Sanitation workers were getting Rs 295 per day as daily wages whereas they were demanding Rs 600, in accordance with the monthly minimum wage

of Rs 18,000 being demanded by national level trade unions.

Meanwhile, sanitation workers continue to die while inside sewer lines and septic tanks. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment informed the Lok Sabha in 2017 that 300 deaths by asphyxiation had taken place that year of workers involved in underground cleaning operations. On November 10, 2018, Dinesh Paswan and Vikas Paswan died in an accident inside a sewer line in Chowkaghat locality of Varanasi while Satyendra Paswan suffered a leg fracture. The district administration and the government did not take responsibility and instead the contractor Pankaj Srivastava was made to pay the compensation. The police only filed an accident case at the Chetganj Police Station, and not under the 2013 Act. On June 15, 2019, seven workers died inside a septic tank of a hotel, 30 kms from Vadodara in Gujarat, but again no case was registered under the 2013 Act. Had the cases been registered under 'The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013', family members of the deceased or the survivor would have been rehabilitated in an alternative occupation.

The act of Narendra Modi washing the feet of sanitation workers overwhelmed and pushed into the background the basic demands of sanitation workers—a respectable income, safe working conditions, education for their children, health care for their families, an insurance against accidents and solution to health hazards faced by manual scavengers.

Mahatma Gandhi was opposed to machinery. But one machine that he would not have opposed

would have been a machine to clean sewer lines and septic tanks, as it would have liberated the manual scavengers from an ignominious plight. It is a shame that we have machines in the modern world which

can perform surgery without cutting open the human body, but we don't have readily available machines to clean the sewers and septic tanks.

(Sandeep Pandey is a social activist.)

The Return of Fascism in Contemporary Capitalism

Samir Amin

It is not by chance that the very title of this contribution links the return of fascism on the political scene with the crisis of contemporary capitalism. Fascism is not synonymous with an authoritarian police regime that rejects the uncertainties of parliamentary electoral democracy. Fascism is a particular political response to the challenges with which the management of capitalist society may be confronted in specific circumstances.

Unity and Diversity of Fascism

Political movements that can rightly be called fascist were in the forefront and exercised power in a number of European countries, particularly during the 1930s up to 1945. These included Italy's Benito Mussolini, Germany's Adolf Hitler, Spain's Francisco Franco, Portugal's António de Oliveira Salazar, France's Philippe Pétain, Hungary's Miklós Horthy, Romania's Ion Antonescu, and Croatia's Ante Pavelic. The diversity of societies that were the victims of fascism—both major developed capitalist societies and minor dominated capitalist societies, some connected with a victorious war, others the product of defeat—should prevent us from lumping them all together. Yet, beyond this

diversity, all these fascist regimes had two characteristics in common:

(1) In the circumstances, they were all willing to manage the government and society in such a way as not to call the fundamental principles of capitalism into question, specifically private capitalist property, including that of modern monopoly capitalism. That is why I call these different forms of fascism particular ways of managing capitalism and not political forms that challenge the latter's legitimacy, even if "capitalism" or "plutocracies" were subject to long diatribes in the rhetoric of fascist speeches. It remains the case that the fascist choice is not the only response to the challenges confronting the political management of a capitalist society. It is only in certain conjunctures of violent and deep crisis that the fascist solution appears to be the best one for dominant capital, or sometimes even the only possible one. The analysis must, then, focus on these crises.

(2) The fascist choice for managing a capitalist society in crisis is always based on the categorical rejection of "democracy." Fascism always replaces the general principles on which the theories and practices of modern democracies are based—recognition of a diversity of opinions,

recourse to electoral procedures to determine a majority, guarantee of the rights of the minority, etc.—with the opposed values of submission to the requirements of collective discipline and the authority of the supreme leader and his main agents. This reversal of values is then always accompanied by a return of backward-looking ideas, which are able to provide an apparent legitimacy to the procedures of submission that are implemented. The proclamation of the supposed necessity of returning to the (“medieval”) past, of submitting to the state religion or to some supposed characteristic of the “race” or the (ethnic) “nation” make up the panoply of ideological discourses deployed by the fascist powers.

The diverse forms of fascism found in modern European history share these two characteristics and fall into one of the following four categories:

(1) The fascism of the major “developed” capitalist powers that aspired to become dominant hegemonic powers in the world, or at least in the regional, capitalist system.

Nazism is the model of this type of fascism. Germany became a major industrial power beginning in the 1870s and a competitor of the hegemonic powers of the era (Great Britain and, secondarily, France) and of the country that aspired to become hegemonic (the United States). After the 1918 defeat, it had to deal with the consequences of its failure to achieve its hegemonic aspirations. Hitler clearly formulated his plan: to establish over Europe, including Russia and maybe beyond, the hegemonic domination of “Germany,” i.e., the capitalism of

the monopolies that had supported the rise of Nazism.

Japanese fascism belongs to the same category. Since 1895, modern capitalist Japan aspired to impose its domination over all of East Asia. Here the slide was made “softly” from the “imperial” form of managing a rising national capitalism—based on apparently “liberal” institutions (an elected Diet), but in fact completely controlled by the Emperor and the aristocracy transformed by modernisation—to a brutal form, managed directly by the military High Command.

(2) The fascism of second rank capitalist powers.

Italy’s Mussolini (the inventor of fascism, including its name) is the prime example. Mussolinism was the response of the Italian right (the old aristocracy, new bourgeoisie, middle classes) to the crisis of the 1920s and the growing communist threat. But neither Italian capitalism nor its political instrument, Mussolini’s fascism, had the ambition to dominate Europe, let alone the world. Mussolini understood that the stability of his system rested on his alliance—as a subaltern—either with Great Britain (master of the Mediterranean) or Nazi Germany. Hesitation between the two possible alliances continued right up to the eve of the Second World War.

The fascism of Salazar and Franco belong to this same type. They were both dictators installed by the right and the Catholic Church in response to the dangers of republican liberals or socialist republicans. The two were never, for this reason, ostracised for their anti-democratic violence (under the pretext of anti-communism) by the major

imperialist powers. Washington rehabilitated them after 1945 (Salazar was a founding member of NATO and Spain consented to U.S. military bases).

(3) The fascism of defeated powers.

These include France’s Vichy government, as well as Belgium’s Léon Degrelle and the “Flemish” pseudo-government supported by the Nazis. In France, the upper class chose “Hitler rather than the Popular Front”. This type of fascism, connected with defeat and submission to “German Europe,” was forced to retreat into the background following the defeat of the Nazis.

(4) Fascism in the dependent societies of Eastern Europe.

We move down several degrees more when we come to examine the capitalist societies of Eastern Europe (Poland, the Baltic states, Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Greece, and western Ukraine during the Polish era). We should here speak of backward and, consequently, dependent capitalism. In the interwar period, the reactionary ruling classes of these countries supported Nazi Germany. It is, nevertheless, necessary to examine on a case-by-case basis their political articulation with Hitler’s project.

In Poland, the old hostility to Russian domination (Tsarist Russia), which became hostility to the communist Soviet Union, encouraged by the popularity of the Catholic Papacy, would normally have made this country into Germany’s vassal, on the Vichy model. But Hitler did not understand it that way: the Poles, like the Russians, Ukrainians, and

Serbs, were people destined for extermination, along with Jews, the Roma, and several others. There was, then, no place for a Polish fascism allied with Berlin.

Horthy's Hungary and Antonescu's Romania were, in contrast, treated as subaltern allies of Nazi Germany. Fascism in these two countries was itself the result of social crises specific to each of them: fear of "communism" after the Béla Kun period in Hungary and the national chauvinist mobilisation against Hungarians and Ruthenians in Romania.

In Yugoslavia, Hitler's Germany (followed by Mussolini's Italy) supported an "independent" Croatia, entrusted to the management of the anti-Serb Ustashi with the decisive support of the Catholic Church, while the Serbs were marked for extermination.

The Western Right's Complaisant View of Past and Present Fascism

The right in European parliaments between the two world wars was always complaisant about fascism and even about the more repugnant Nazism. Churchill himself, regardless of his extreme "Britishness," never hid his sympathy for Mussolini. US presidents, and the establishment Democratic and Republican parties, only discovered belatedly the danger presented by Hitler's Germany and, above all, imperial/fascist Japan. With all the cynicism characteristic of the US establishment, Truman openly avowed what others thought quietly: allow the war to wear out its protagonists—Germany, Soviet Russia, and the defeated Europeans—and intervene as late as possible to reap the benefits. That is not at all the expression of

a principled anti-fascist position. No hesitation was shown in the rehabilitation of Salazar and Franco in 1945. Furthermore, connivance with European fascism was a constant in the policy of the Catholic Church. It would not strain credibility to describe Pius XII as a collaborator with Mussolini and Hitler.

Hitler's anti-Semitism itself aroused opprobrium only much later, when it reached the ultimate stage of its murderous insanity. The emphasis on hate for "Judeo-Bolshevism" stirred up by Hitler's speeches was common to many politicians. It was only after the defeat of Nazism that it was necessary to condemn anti-Semitism in principle. The task was made easier because the self-proclaimed heirs to the title of "victims of the Shoah" had become the Zionists of Israel, allies of Western imperialism against the Palestinians and the Arab people—who, however, had never been involved in the horrors of European anti-Semitism!

Obviously, the collapse of the Nazis and Mussolini's Italy obliged rightist political forces in Western Europe to distinguish themselves from those who—within their own groups—had been accomplices and allies of fascism. Yet, fascist movements were only forced to retreat into the background and hide behind the scenes, without really disappearing.

In West Germany, in the name of "reconciliation," the local government and its patrons (the United States, and secondarily Great Britain and France) left in place nearly all those who had committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. In France, legal proceedings were initiated against the Resistance for "abusive executions

for collaboration" when the Vichyists reappeared on the political scene with Antoine Pinay. In Italy, fascism became silent, but was still present in the ranks of Christian Democracy and the Catholic Church. In Spain, the "reconciliation" compromise imposed in 1980 by the European Community (which later became the European Union) purely and simply prohibited any reminder of Francoist crimes.

The support of the socialist and social-democratic parties of Western and Central Europe for the anti-communist campaigns undertaken by the conservative right shares responsibility for the later return of fascism. These parties of the "moderate" left had, however, been authentically and resolutely anti-fascist. Yet all of that was forgotten. With the conversion of these parties to social liberalism, their unconditional support for European construction and their no less unconditional submission to US hegemony (through NATO, among other means), a reactionary bloc combining the classic right and the social liberals has been consolidated; one that could, if necessary, accommodate the new extreme right.

Subsequently, the rehabilitation of East European fascism was quickly undertaken beginning in 1990. All of the fascist movements of the countries concerned had been faithful allies or collaborators to varying degrees with Hitlerism. With the approaching defeat, a large number of their active leaders had been redeployed to the West and could, consequently, "surrender" to the US armed forces. None of them were returned to Soviet, Yugoslav, or other governments in the new people's democracies to be tried for

their crimes (in violation of Allied agreements). They all found refuge in the United States and Canada. And they were all pampered by the authorities for their fierce anti-communism!

Undoubtedly, the fascist danger might still appear today to be no threat to the “democratic” order in the United States and Europe west of the old “Curtain.” The collusion between the classic parliamentary right and the social liberals makes it unnecessary for dominant capital to resort to the services of an extreme right that follows in the wake of the historical fascist movements. But then what should we conclude about the electoral successes of the extreme right over the last decade? Europeans are clearly also victims of the spread of generalised monopoly capitalism. We can see why, then, when confronted with collusion between the right and the so-called socialist left, they take refuge in electoral abstention or in voting for the extreme right. The responsibility of the potentially radical left is, in this context, huge: if this left had the audacity to propose real advances beyond current capitalism, it would gain the credibility that it lacks. An audacious radical left is necessary to provide the coherence that the current piecemeal protest movements and defensive struggles still lack. The “movement” could, then, reverse the social balance of power in favor of the working classes and make progressive advances possible. The successes won by the popular movements in South America are proof of that.

One last observation about fascist movements: they seem unable to know when and how to stop making their demands. The cult of the leader and blind obedience, the

acritical and supreme valorisation of pseudo-ethnic or pseudo-religious mythological constructions that convey fanaticism, and the recruitment of militias for violent actions make fascism into a force that is difficult to control. Mistakes, even beyond irrational deviations from the viewpoint of the social interests served by the fascists, are inevitable. Hitler was a truly mentally ill person, yet he could force the big capitalists who had put him in power to follow him to the end of his madness and even gained the support of a very large portion of the population. Although that is only an extreme case, and Mussolini, Franco, Salazar, and Pétain were not mentally ill, a large number of their associates and henchmen did not hesitate to perpetrate criminal acts.

Fascism in the Contemporary South

The integration of Latin America into globalised capitalism in the nineteenth century was based on the exploitation of peasants reduced to the status of “peons” and their subjection to the savage practices of large landowners. The system of Porfirio Diaz in Mexico is a good example. The furtherance of this integration in the twentieth century produced the “modernisation of poverty.” The rapid rural exodus, more pronounced and earlier in Latin America than in Asia and Africa, led to new forms of poverty in the contemporary urban favelas, which came to replace older forms of rural poverty. Concurrently, forms of political control of the masses were “modernised” by establishing dictatorships, abolishing electoral democracy, prohibiting parties and trade unions, and conferring on “modern” secret services all

rights to arrest and torture through their intelligence techniques. The dictatorships of twentieth-century Latin America served the local reactionary bloc (large landowners, comprador capitalist classes, and sometimes middle classes that benefited from this type of lumpen development), but above all, they served dominant foreign capital, specifically that of the United States, which, for this reason, supported these dictatorships up to their reversal by the recent explosion of popular movements. The power of these movements and the social and democratic advances that they have imposed exclude—at least in the short term—the return of para-fascist dictatorships. But the future is uncertain: the conflict between the movement of the working classes and local and world capitalism has only begun.

Beginning in the 1980s, the lumpen development characteristic of the spread of generalised monopoly capitalism took over from the national populist systems of the Bandung era (1955–1980) in Asia and Africa. This lumpen development also produced forms akin both to the modernisation of poverty and modernisation of repressive violence. We should not lump together the national populist regimes of the Bandung era and those of their successors, which jumped on the bandwagon of globalised neoliberalism, because they were both “non-democratic.” The Bandung regimes, despite their autocratic political practices, benefited from some popular legitimacy both because of their actual achievements, which benefited the majority of workers, and their anti-imperialist positions. The dictatorships that followed

lost this legitimacy as soon as they accepted subjection to the globalised neoliberal model and accompanying lumpen development. Popular and national authority, although not democratic, gave way to police violence as such, in service of the neoliberal, anti-popular, and anti-national project.

The recent popular uprisings, beginning in 2011, have called into question the dictatorships. But the dictatorships have only been called into question. An alternative will only find the means to achieve stability if it succeeds in combining the three objectives around which the revolts have been mobilised: continuation of the democratisation of society and politics, progressive social advances, and the affirmation of national sovereignty.

We are still far from that. That is why there are multiple alternatives possible in the visible short term. Can there be a possible return to the national popular model of the Bandung era, maybe with a hint of democracy? Or a more pronounced crystallisation of a democratic, popular, and national front? Or a plunge into a backward-looking illusion that, in this context, takes

on the form of an “Islamisation” of politics and society?

In the conflict over—in much confusion—these three possible responses to the challenge, the Western powers (the United States and its subaltern European allies) have made their choice: they have given preferential support to the Muslim Brotherhood and/or other “Salafist” organisations of political Islam. The reason for that is simple and obvious: these reactionary political forces accept exercising their power within globalised neoliberalism (and thus abandoning any prospect for social justice and national independence). That is the sole objective pursued by the imperialist powers.

Consequently, political Islam’s program belongs to the type of fascism found in dependent societies. In fact, it shares with all forms of fascism two fundamental characteristics: (1) the absence of a challenge to the essential aspects of the capitalist order; and (2) the choice of anti-democratic, police-state forms of political management (such as the prohibition of parties and organisations, and forced Islamisation of morals).

Similar developments and choices are found outside of the Arab-Muslim world, such as Hindu India, for example. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which just won the elections in India, is a reactionary Hindu religious party that accepts the inclusion of its government into globalised neoliberalism. It is the guarantor that India, under its government, will retreat from its project to be an emerging power. Describing it as fascist, then, is not really straining credibility too much.

In conclusion, fascism has returned to the West, East, and South; and this return is naturally connected with the spread of the systemic crisis of generalised, financialised, and globalised monopoly capitalism. Actual or even potential recourse to the services of the fascist movement by the dominant centers of this hard-pressed system calls for the greatest vigilance on our part. This crisis is destined to grow worse and, consequently, the threat of resorting to fascist solutions will become a real danger.

[Samir Amin (1931–2018) was an Egyptian–French socialist economist, political scientist and world-systems analyst.]

Remembering Maulana Azad: A Votary of Hindu–Muslim Unity

Firoz Bakht Ahmed

In the Shahjahanabadi old city of Delhi, between the Jama Masjid and the Red Fort, both monuments reminding of the Mughal pristine glory, a green and glossy patch covers an area where once stood the houses of the Muslim nobility. They were leveled after the Indian revolt against the British in 1857.

Near the mosque, and above the level of the crowded new bazaar, a

red sandstone wall encloses a garden in which a tomb of simple dignity marks the resting place of the man born in Mecca on November 11, 1888 and who died in New Delhi on February 22, 1958—Mohiuddin Ahmed, better known as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

The location is appropriate, a grave amidst the relics of past history, in a domain wrested by the

British from the Mughals, and then freed again at great cost. The other leading figures of the great freedom struggle, Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru, were cremated not far away, along the banks of the river Jamuna, beyond the battlements of the Red Fort. But Azad, in death as in life, is alone.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad is, by any reckoning, a major figure

in twentieth-century Indian history. He was a scholar thoroughly trained in the traditional Islamic sciences, with great intellectual abilities and eloquence of pen and speech. He had, in addition, a remarkable openness to modern western knowledge even as he opposed the western rule over India.

Azad made a lasting contribution to Urdu prose literature with his translation and interpretation of the Qur'an—Tarjuman-ul-Quran. The intellectual history of Islam in India has long been described in terms of two contrasting currents: the one tending towards confrontation, the other towards assimilation, with the Hindu milieu.

This dichotomy is, of course, an oversimplification, for separatist and syncretist represent extreme points on a spectrum of possible intellectual responses by Muslims to the Indian scene.

In his youth, Azad had been totally inexperienced in politics. After entering the freedom struggle, he proved that his religious faith could guide him in the area of general principles, and give him strength for the difficulties he had to face.

Maulana Azad earned a reputation for 'absolute impartiality' and 'unimpeachable integrity' which served him well, particularly in the years after independence.

The major concern of Azad's life was the revival and reform of the Indian Muslims in all spheres of life, and his political hopes for them were within this context. For any such reform, he realised the key position of the ulema and of the traditional educational system which produces them. This was why he pinned his early hopes on the Nadwat ul-Ulema under the leadership of Shibli.

Such was Azad's vision concerning matters internal to the Muslim community.

As far as relations with others were concerned, we have seen that Azad never questioned the fact that being a Muslim in India meant living with non-Muslims in common citizenship. He never contemplated any other political possibility, and when incidents of communal strife in the 1920s threatened Hindu-Muslim unity, and then in the 1930s and 40s the Pakistan movement gathered strength, his spirit rebelled against those trends.

In his presidential address to the Congress in 1923, he said that the ability of Hindus and Muslims "to live together was essential to primary principles of humanity within ourselves."

Almost twenty years later, when he again addressed Congress from the presidential chair, he repeated this absolutely fundamental premise:

On October 2, 1947, Why Did Gandhi Say He Was Ashamed That He Was Still Alive?

The plans to officially mark Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary are on course. At the ground level, however, the ugly face of communalism continues to rear its head in one virulent incident after another. It was an issue which agitated Gandhi until his dying breath and, in fact, was uppermost in his mind during his prayer discourse on October 2, 1947, in Delhi, on the day of his 79th birthday, just one-and-a-half months after independence and Partition.

Here is a short excerpt from Gandhi's prayer discourse of October

"I am a Muslim and profoundly conscious of the fact that I have inherited Islam's glorious tradition of the last thirteen hundred years.

"I am not prepared to lose even a small part of that legacy. The history and teachings of Islam, its art and letters, its culture and civilisation are part of my wealth and it is my duty to cherish and guard them... But, with all these feelings, I have another equally deep realisation born out of my life's experience, which is strengthened and not hindered by the Islamic spirit.

"I am equally proud of the fact that I am an Indian, an essential part of the indivisible unity of Indian nationhood, a vital factor in its total makeup, without which this noble edifice will remain incomplete. I can never give up this sincere claim..."

(The author is Chancellor, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, and a grandnephew of Maulana Azad.)

2, 1947, from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Volume 89, as published online by the Gandhi Heritage Portal.

Today is my birthday... For me today is [a] day of mourning. I am surprised and also ashamed that I am still alive. I am the same person whose word was honoured by... millions [in] the country. But today nobody listens to me. You want only the Hindus to remain in India and say that none else should be left behind. You may kill the Muslims today; but what will you do tomorrow?

At present we have some Muslims in our midst who belong to us. If we are ready to kill them, let me tell you that I am not for it. Ever since I came to India, I have made it my profession to work for communal harmony, and I wish that though our religions are different we may live in amity, like brothers. But today we seem to have become enemies. We assert that there can never be an honest Muslim. A Muslim always remains a worthless fellow.

In such a situation, what place do I have in India and what is the point of my being alive? I have now stopped thinking about living for 125 years. I have stopped thinking in terms of 100 or even 90 years. I am entering my 79th year today; but even that pains me. I would tell those who understand me—and there are quite a few who do understand—that we should give up such bestiality.

I am not worried about what the Muslims do in Pakistan. It is not that the Muslims become great by killing the Hindus; they only become brutes. But does it mean that I should also become a beast, a barbarian, insensitive? I would stoutly refuse to do any such thing and I must ask you too not to do so.

If you really want to celebrate my birthday, it is your duty not to let anyone be possessed by madness and if there is any anger in your hearts you must remove it.... If you remember this much, I would consider it a good act on your part. This is all I wish to tell you.

Courtesy: The Wire

Impoverished Economics? Unpacking the Economics Nobel Prize

Ingrid Harvold Kvangraven

This week it was announced that Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer won the Economics Nobel Prize (or more accurately: the ‘Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel’). The trio of economists were awarded the prize for “their experimental approach to alleviating global poverty”.

On social media and in mainstream newspapers, there was an exceptional level of praise for the laureates, reflecting their existing rockstar status within development economics. The *Financial Times* even claimed that the Nobel “will help restore [the] profession’s relevance”. However, the widespread calls for celebration need to be considered with a cautionary counterweight.

The experimental approach to poverty alleviation relies on so-called Randomised Control Trials (RCTs). Inspired by studies in medicine, the approach targets specific interventions to a randomly selected group (schools, classes, mothers, etc), and then compares how specific outcomes change in the recipient group versus those who did not receive the treatment. As the groups are assumed to be otherwise similar, the difference in outcomes can be causally attributed to the intervention.

While the laureates first pioneered this work in the 1990s in Kenyan schools, the approach is now widely considered the new “gold standard” in development economics, also sometimes simply called “New Economics”. The

approach has become enormously influential among governments, international agencies and NGOs. The body of work pioneered by the laureates, or the randomistas as they are sometimes called, is meant to alleviate poverty through simple interventions such as combating teacher absenteeism, through cash transfers, and through stimulating positive thinking among the people living in poverty. Sounds good so far?

While the laureates’ approach to poverty research and policy may seem harmless, if not laudable, there are many reasons for concern. Both heterodox and mainstream economists as well as other social scientists have long provided a thorough critique of the turn towards RCTs in economics, on philosophical, epistemological, political and methodological grounds. The concerns with the approach can be roughly grouped into questions of focus, theory and methodology.

Focus: tackling symptoms and thinking small

The approach that is being promoted is concerned with poverty, not development, and is thus a part of the larger trend in development economics that is moving away from development as structural transformation to development as poverty alleviation. This movement towards “thinking small” is a part of a broader trend, which has squeezed out questions related to global economic institutions, trade,

Janata
is available at
www.lohiatoday.com

agricultural, industrial and fiscal policy, and the role of political dynamics, in favour of the best ways to make smaller technical interventions.

The interventions considered by the Nobel laureates tend to be removed from analyses of power and wider social change. In fact, the Nobel committee specifically gave the Nobel to Banerjee, Duflo and Kremer for addressing “smaller, more manageable questions,” rather than big ideas. While such small interventions might generate positive results at the micro-level, they do little to challenge the systems that produce the problems.

For example, rather than challenging the cuts to the school systems that are forced by austerity, the focus of the randomistas directs our attention to absenteeism of teachers and the effects of school meals and the number of teachers in the classroom on learning. Meanwhile, their lack of challenge to the existing economic order is perhaps also precisely one of the secrets to media and donor appeal, and ultimately also their success.

The lack of engagement with the conditions that create poverty has led many critics to question as to what extent RCTs will actually be able to significantly reduce global poverty.

Theory: methodological individualism lives on

In a 2017 speech, Duflo famously likened economists to plumbers. In her view the role of an economist is to solve real world problems in specific situations. This is a dangerous assertion, as it suggests that the “plumbing” the randomistas are doing is purely technical, and not guided by theory or values. However, the randomistas’ approach

to economics is neither objective and value-neutral, nor pragmatic, but rather, rooted in a particular theoretical framework and world view—neoclassical microeconomic theory and methodological individualism.

The experiments’ grounding has implications for how experiments are designed and the underlying assumptions about individual and collective behavior that are made. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is that the laureates often argue that specific aspects of poverty can be solved by correcting cognitive biases. Unsurprisingly, there is much overlap between the work of randomistas and the mainstream behavioral economists, including a focus on nudges that may facilitate better choices on the part of people living in poverty.

Another example is Duflo’s analysis of women empowerment. Naila Kabeer argues that it employs an understanding of human behavior “uncritically informed by neoclassical microeconomic theory.” Since all behavior can allegedly be explained as manifestations of individual maximising behavior, alternative explanations are dispensed with. Because of this, Duflo fails to understand a series of other important factors related to women’s empowerment, such as the role of sustained struggle by women’s organisations for rights or the need to address unfair distribution of unpaid work that limits women’s ability to participate in the community.

Note that there is nothing embedded in RCTs that forces randomistas to assume individuals are rational optimising agents. These assumptions come from the economics tradition. This is

therefore not a critique of RCTs per se, but of the way RCTs are employed in the laureates’ work and in most of mainstream economics.

Method: If you didn’t randomise it, is it really knowledge?

While understanding causal processes is important in development economics, as in other social science disciplines, RCTs do so in a very limited way. The causal model underlying RCTs focuses on causal effects rather than causal mechanisms. Not only do RCTs not tell us exactly what mechanisms are involved when something works, they also do not tell us whether the policy in question can be reliably implemented elsewhere. In order to make such a judgement, a broader assessment of economic and social realities is unavoidable.

Assuming that interventions are valid across geographies and scale suggests that micro results are independent of their macroeconomic environment. However, while “effects” on individuals and households are not separate from the societies in which they exist, randomistas give little acknowledgement to other ways of knowing about the world that might help us better understand individual motivations and socio-economic situations. As it is difficult to achieve truly random sampling in human communities, it is perhaps not surprising that when RCTs are replicated, they may come to substantially different results than the original.

Not only do RCTs rarely have external validity, but the specific circumstances needed to understand the extent to which the experiments may have external validity are usually inadequately reported. This

has led even critics within the mainstream to argue that there are misunderstandings about what RCTs are capable of accomplishing. A deeper epistemological critique involves the problematic underlying assumption that there is one specific true impact that can be uncovered through experiments.

Recent research has found that alternative attempts to assess the success of programs transferring assets to women in extreme poverty in West Bengal and Sindh have been far superior to RCTs, which provide very limited explanations for the patterns of outcomes observed. The research concludes that it is unlikely that RCTs will be able to acknowledge the central role of human agency in project success if they confine themselves to quantitative methods alone.

There are also serious ethical problems at stake. Among these are issues such as lying, instrumentalising people, the role of consent, accountability and foreign intervention, in addition to the choice of who gets treatment. While ethical concerns regarding potential harm to groups is discussed extensively in the medical literature, it receives less attention in economics, despite the many ethically dubious experimental studies (e.g. allowing bribes for people to get their drivers' licences in India or incentivising Hong Kong university students into participation in an anti-authoritarian protest). Finally, the colonial dimensions of US-based researchers intervening to estimate what is best for people in the Global South cannot be ignored.

Why it matters: limits to knowledge and policy-making

There will always be research that is more or less relevant for

development, so why does it matter what the randomistas do? Well, as the Nobel Committee stated, their “experimental research methods now entirely dominate development economics”. A serious epistemological problem arises when the definition of what rigour and evidence means gets narrowed down to one single approach that has so many limitations. This shift has taken place over the past couple of decades in development economics, and is now strengthened by the 2019 Nobel Prize. As both Banerjee and Duflo acknowledged in interviews after the prize was announced, this is not just a prize for them, but a prize for the entire movement.

The discipline has not always been this way. The history of thought on development economics is rich with debates about how capital accumulation differs across space, the role of institutions in shaping behavior and economic development, the legacies of colonialism and imperialism, unequal exchange, the global governance of technology, the role of fiscal policy, and the relationship between agriculture and industry. The larger questions have since been pushed out of the discipline, in favour of debates about smaller interventions.

The rise of the randomistas also matters because the randomistas are committed to provoke results, not just provide an understanding of the situations in which people living in poverty find themselves. In fact, it is one of their stated goals to produce a “better integration between theory and empirical practice”. A key argument by the randomistas is that “all too often development policy is based on fads, and randomised evaluations could allow it to be based on evidence”.

However, the narrowness of the randomised trials is impractical for most forms of policies. While RCTs tend to test at most a couple of variations of a policy, in the real world of development, interventions are overlapping and synergistic. This reality recently led 15 leading economists to call to “evaluate whole public policies” rather than assess “short-term impacts of micro-projects,” given that what is needed is systems-level thinking to tackle the scale of overlapping crises. Furthermore, the value of experimentation in policy-making, rather than promoting pre-prescribed policies, should not be neglected.

The concept of “evidence-based policy” associated with the randomistas needs some unpacking. It is important to note that policies are informed by reflections on values and objectives, which economists are not necessarily well-suited to intervene in. Of course, evidence should be a part of a policy-making process, but the pursuit of ineffective policies is often driven by political priorities rather than lack of evidence.

While randomistas might respond to this by arguing that their trials are precisely meant to depoliticise public policy, this is not necessarily a desirable step. Policy decisions are political in nature, and shielding these value judgements from public scrutiny and debate does little to strengthen democratic decision making. Suggesting that policy-making can be depoliticised is dangerous and it belittles the agency and participation of people in policy-making. After all, why should a policy that has been proven effective through an RCT carry more weight than, for example, policies driven by people's demands and political and social mobilisation?

FDI in Coal: Why Our Mineral Resources Should Remain in Public Hands

While the Nobel Prize does leave those of us concerned with broader political economy challenges in the world anxious, not everything is doom and gloom. Firstly, the Nobel directs attention to the persistence of poverty in the world and the need to do something about it. What we as critical development economists now need to do is to challenge the fact that the Prize also legitimises a prescriptive view of how to find solutions to global problems.

Secondly, the fact that a woman and a person of colour were awarded a prize that is usually reserved for white men is a step forward for a more open and inclusive field. Duflo herself recognises that the gender imbalance among Nobel Prize winners reflects a "structural" problem in the economics profession and that her profession lacks ethnic diversity.

However, it is obvious that to challenge racism, sexism and Eurocentrism in economics, it is not enough to simply be more inclusive of women and people of colour among those who are firmly placed at the top of the narrow, Eurocentric mainstream. To truly achieve a more open and democratic science it is necessary to push for a field that is welcoming of a plurality of viewpoints, methodologies, theoretical frameworks, forms of knowledge and perspectives.

This is a massive challenge, but the systemic, global crises we face require broad, interdisciplinary engagement in debates about possible solutions.

(Ingrid Harvold Kvangraven is a Lecturer in International Development at the University of York.)

Joan Robinson, the well-known economist, had drawn attention to a fundamental difference between foreign direct investment (FDI) in the manufacturing sector and in a sector that extracted an exhaustible resource, such as a mineral product. This difference can be illustrated with an example.

Suppose in both sectors profits worth Rs 100 are earned and repatriated abroad each year by the foreign company; and suppose the life of a mine is 10 years. Then at the end of 10 years, during each of which Rs 100 would have been repatriated abroad, there would still be the manufacturing unit left intact in the host country; but at the end of 10 years, each of which would witness profit repatriation worth Rs 100, there would be no more of the mineral resource left in the country.

This is not to say that FDI in manufacturing should always be welcomed; not at all. This is just to say that while there may be situations where it could be allowed in manufacturing (when, for instance, it is a net foreign exchange earner), there is never a situation where a country should choose to allow foreign direct investment into a sector producing a mineral resource.

This is also an argument for keeping the extraction of all exhaustible resources within the public sector. Precisely because these resources are exhaustible, not only is there a question of ensuring an optimum rate of extraction of such resources, but every ounce of such resources must be used for purposes which are considered

socially desirable. This requires social control over these resources, a necessary condition for which is keeping them within the public sector.

This is an idea which had for quite some time informed India's policy with regard to FDI into the coal sector. True, there had been relaxations in this policy with regard to captive coal production for power plants and for units producing iron and steel and cement, but such captive collieries could not sell coal in the open market. But this has now changed, with the Narendra Modi government announcing that henceforth, not just private investment but 100% FDI through the automatic route will be allowed in the coal sector, which means that the virtual monopoly of the public sector unit, Coal India Limited (CIL), which accounts for about 83% of the total coal production of the country, will end.

All kinds of specious arguments are being advanced to justify this move. There are first of all ludicrous arguments like "it will help us reach the goal of being a \$5 trillion economy": to set oneself a goal and then to set about achieving it by hook or by crook can hardly be adduced as a justification for the "hook or crook" measures.

Then there is the argument that it will increase "competitiveness" within the coal sector. How exactly the absence of "competitiveness" has impacted adversely on the people of the country is never explained by those who advance this argument. Coal India after all is a public sector company: it does not resort to any

exorbitant pricing because of its monopoly position; so, what does increasing “competitiveness” mean?

A third argument linked to this is that it would bring about greater “efficiency”. No index of “efficiency”, in terms, for instance, of any physical indicators such as inputs per unit of coal output, is provided on the basis of which this claim can be judged. Only some vague reference is made to the cost of production per unit of coal; but a lower cost of production per unit of coal is not indicative of greater efficiency. In fact, in the coal sector, where wage costs are a major part of the total unit cost, any observed lower cost in private production is on account of two main factors: lower wages, sometimes estimated to be as low as a third of the wages paid by CIL for similar work, and less concern for miners’ safety.

In fact, CIL has a safety record, which no doubt can and must be improved, but which is far better than what one observes in other countries which have gone into private coal mining, including even China. In fact, the average fatality rate per million tonnes of coal production is much lower in India than in China and Indonesia, two other large producers which allow private mining. Achieving “cost reduction” at the expense of human lives is hardly something we should be aiming at.

This basically brings us to the two most cited arguments. One is that FDI will bring in better technology into India’s coal mining sector. Even if this argument is accepted, we have to ask why technological upgradation of coal production by CIL itself cannot be effected by simply acquiring better technology, and why it becomes necessary to actually open up the sector to 100%

FDI. In fact, there is no evidence of the government ever having made serious efforts to acquire technology through other means than by opening up to 100% FDI.

The second oft-repeated argument is that India has been importing coal of late, with the magnitude of imports going up over time because domestic production is insufficient to meet the domestic consumption requirements. Domestic production, therefore, has to be augmented rapidly, for which we need to involve private players, including foreign ones. The problem with this argument is that it never explains why CIL should not be able to increase production to the extent required. CIL, it is recognised, performed very well in 2018–19 by adding 40 million tonnes of incremental output. Why it should not be asked to keep doing so in the next few years so that imports could be eliminated altogether, is never explained.

The suggestion is often made that CIL is “over-stretched”. What exactly this means is again not clear. It is a characteristic feature of large companies that they have the wherewithal to grow even larger whenever there is sufficient demand for their output; why this should not be the case for CIL, defies reason. And if perchance there is some constraint on CIL’s growth, then the government could easily set up another public sector company to increase the country’s coal producing capacity, instead of inviting foreign multinationals into our coal sector.

Much is made in this context of the fact that “precious foreign exchange” will be saved if we augment domestic production by inviting foreign multinationals. But there is never any recognition of the fact that such invitation will

also lead to a substantial outflow of “precious foreign exchange” on account of profit repatriation by these multinationals.

Ironically, the same sources that argue that foreign multinationals should be invited because CIL is “over-stretched”, immediately add that foreign multinationals will not come, given the difficulties that currently exist on land acquisition, on the pricing of coal and on having to bid for coal blocks. The suggestion, therefore, is that all these restrictions must go in order to facilitate the entry of foreign multinationals. In other words, not only must foreign multinationals be allowed into coal production but they must be provided with a red carpet and the country’s entire policy regime must be made subservient to their demands; and all because of some unspecified “over-stretching” on the part of CIL.

The conclusion is inescapable: that there is no pressing objective reason for this policy of opening up the coal sector to foreign multinationals; this policy is not dictated by any necessity but entirely because having foreign capital per se is considered desirable, even if in the process the price of coal goes up, and even if rampant primitive accumulation of capital at the expense of the tribal population of the country is carried out (which after all is the meaning of “easing” land acquisition).

It is ironic that a government which proclaims its “nationalism” so vociferously, and which locks up people for being “anti-national” at the slightest excuse, is so keen to hand over control over the nation’s resources to foreign multinationals by reversing all previous policy.

Grassroots Communication Fights Back! A Conversation with Jessica Pernia

Cira Pascual Marquina

Tatuy TV was born twelve years ago, at the height of the community television movement and in a context where Chavez was assuming the role of society's great communicator and pedagogue. Since then, that remarkably democratic movement of community media has disappeared. Instead, we have an institutionalised media that is useful in the anti-imperialist struggle but has big limitations when it comes to telling the story of popular struggles. Can we talk about this process, beginning with the fascinating early wave of popular communication and going up to the present?

Indeed, there was a boom in community media beginning around 2003 that was encouraged in part by a legal framework that promoted popular communication. Those laws, together with public financing mechanisms, generated an exponential growth of media and fostered new efforts in popular communication. However, it must be acknowledged that this boom did not bring about progress in a qualitative sense. That is to say, many community media outlets were created, and they had access to resources, but their impact on popular subjectivity and social organisation left much to be desired.

Comandante Chavez was very discerning with regard to this issue, and he tried to promote a revolutionary communication system, but it didn't take off.

At the risk of being too hard on ourselves, I would say that the present situation constitutes incontrovertible proof that the rentier

mentality also penetrated the spheres of popular communication. On the one hand, many of the community media projects became dependent on institutional leadership and financing. On the other hand, the rentier attitude expressed itself in the perverse practice of consuming more resources than those produced. This happened with community media, where a community radio station might end up broadcasting another radio station all day, without producing its own content, and without accompanying processes of popular organisation (meanwhile receiving funds, which sometimes ended up in the pockets of the person in charge of the station.)

I don't think that institutional financing is bad in itself, but if it ends up sterilising popular processes then it should be criticised. After all, the disappearance of a good part of the community media is unfortunately due to their no longer being able to capture income. We still have a lot to do!

There was a lot of money, and a great deal of equipment was distributed. There were also some important advances in developing legislation [for community media], and especially a lot of enthusiasm. But more was needed. It's difficult to admit, but we have to face it.

After twelve years—and I'm going to be self-critical—Tatuy TV has its share of responsibility in the waning of the community television movement, and the movement of popular and alternative media in general. However, we shouldn't forget the responsibility, too, of

the many institutions, directing boards and coordinating bodies that Chavez created in the government, as well as that of the political parties, the [Great] Patriotic Pole, and the untold number of other mechanisms of integration, attention, and organisation of the revolution's communicational project.

That a revolutionary process would [now] devote such a marginal, even minuscule role to popular media and such a trivial role to public media—while permitting private channels to be so aggressive—speaks for itself.

The Bolivarian revolution once had a sweeping grassroots communication movement, but today Tatuy TV is the only community television station that is still standing. Tatuy TV produces an impressive series of shorts called Chavez, the Radical, and it also works to give voice the struggles of the popular movement and people involved in the communes. Can you tell us about how Tatuy TV conceives of its role in communication?

I am not totally sure that we are the only television station standing or what it means to remain standing in the middle of this crisis. A case in point is that for more than four years we have been out of the radioelectric spectrum, off the air. It could be that other community TVs are still transmitting. What has disappeared, without a doubt, is the organisation around community media and their contribution to the battle of ideas.

The truth is that as far as Tatuy is concerned, we have tried to survive without losing sight of the

Jessica Pernia is a founding member of Tatuy TV, a community television station in the Venezuelan city of Merida. The Tatuy TV team, which is committed to defending Chavez's communal project, produces a variety of audiovisual and written reports on the struggles of working-class Venezuelans. In this interview Pernia, also a journalism professor at the Bolivarian University, takes a critical look at the history of alternative communication in the Bolivarian Process and reflects on Tatuy's efforts to address Venezuela's current multi-crisis.

horizon. Since we can't transmit on the radioelectric spectrum—because we don't have the equipment—we migrated to the electronic format, to social networks. Since there is no funding available to support our initiatives, then we look for donations, we take on odd jobs, we organise ourselves so that there is no lack of food for all of us... and when there is no electricity, then we engage in conversation and debate, we sing, we play sports, we practice photography... and yes, people are leaving the country, that is true, but we are staying put here!

We have debated a great deal about what to do in the midst of the economic, social, and political crisis that we are facing, and we have reached the conclusion that our worst enemy is neither the crisis itself, nor the opposition, nor the government—even though they all have their share of responsibility. Our worst enemy is depoliticisation.

Dammit! When a revolutionary organisation perceives that there is no interest in education, debate, political organisation, that is really scary!

What comes after the loss of faith? Fascism! For that reason, we have to throw ourselves into the project of re-politicisation, and that means recovering the spaces of struggle and organisation that we abandoned. That's what we've collectively decided! Let's go back in time! What's the problem? If it is necessary to make cinema forums, then we will do them. If it's time to do poetry festivals, then it will be festivals. And yes, of course, we will organise workshops and more workshops.

However, the most important thing is to never abandon the people who are themselves struggling. That should never happen. It would be unforgivable. It is now the time to be there first, on the spot even before the protagonists arrive, so that we can turn on the videocamera (lights, camera, action!). Representing reality with a view to transforming

it—that's our mantra and our praxis.

For us, it's important to be in the trenches as a people, to accompany the class' struggles, to show the sacrifices that are being made, to raise morale during combat... and that must always be done by pointing to the strategic horizon: the project that Chavez developed.

For us, it's vital to turn Tatuy into a communication tool in the service of socialism and the communal state. We put our all into accompanying campesino, working-class, communal, feminist, and student struggles, and to making their voices heard in the ideological battle that is being waged.

Chavez, the Radical is extremely important in this battle because it allows us to put emphasis on the strategic horizon while reflecting on tactics. It also helps us to point out deviations in the revolutionary process. Chavez, for his part, was radically clear.

In any revolutionary process, there is an internal class struggle. In the Bolivarian Revolution, this struggle was particularly intense in the early years, but in recent times it has erupted again. Today the main struggle is between a strong sector within the government that is pushing for a neoliberal capitalist restoration while the people are in constant resistance against imperialist aggressions and the liberalisation of the economy. How do you, as communicators, address these kinds of struggles?

Look, we know that Chavismo is not uniform. There are forces in conflict within it, and we understand that reformism has made headway and assumed leadership positions that are putting at risk not only the socialist project, but also the very existence of the people who are having to pay, as always, for the consequences of the crisis.

We are thus struggling on two fronts. First, there is a battle against reformism, which is pushing us into the neoliberal abyss,

sacrificing the people while doing lip service to Chavista discourse. Then, and simultaneously, there is a battle against the bourgeoisie and imperialism, which have both screwed us up over the course of history.

A little while ago, together with Venezuelanalysis, we made an audiovisual investigation into the imperial aggressions we are suffering: more than 150 unilateral sanctions against our nation! This is no game, and we demand that they end, but one thing cannot serve as a ploy to [distract us from] the other, so we have to fight on both flanks.

Tatuy is not only a media project committed to popular power, but it is also a political organisation. Can you say something about how a communication project like Tatuy ends up becoming a unit of political organisation?

The channel was just an excuse for organisation and political work! In the beginning, when Tatuy was a traveling cinema club, our slogan was: agitate, inform, organise! We always considered Tatuy TV, the television station, as what it is: un medio [Spanish word meaning both communication medium and means]. We never considered it an end in itself. Maybe that was also what helped us to adapt quickly to the new circumstances.

The goal is socialism. Everything else—including the collective discovery of reality, the new forms of solidarity that are emerging, the grasping of new ideas and the multiplication of that knowledge, and the making of knowledge into a tool for social organisation—all that is the mission that, in terms of socialist communication, a collective like us must carry out. It's the pedagogical project of revolutionaries. That's all. *(Cira Pascual Marquina is Political Science Professor at the Universidad de Bolivariana de Venezuela in Caracas and is staff writer for Venezuelanalysis.com.)*

Recalling the Million+ Victims of America's Endless 'War on Terror'

Dave Lindorff

September 17, 2019: Now that the flags are back, waving from the tops of flagpoles across the country, and the maudlin paeans to the close to 3,000 lives lost in the airplane attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, it's time we gave a thought to the dead who were ignored.

According to very conservative estimates, as reported by the "Costs of War" project of Brown University's Watson Institute on International and Public Affairs, nearly 250,000 civilians have been killed during the 18 years since September 2001 in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan in wars or attacks that were instigated by the United States.

Those are very conservative figures carefully compiled by organizations like Iraq Body Count and the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies. These numbers are of people known to have died in the violence of war, mostly as so-called "collateral damage," but often deliberately, as when the US bombs a hospital, a wedding or a private housing compound in order to kill some targeted individual considered an "enemy combatant," unconcerned about the others in the area, often women and children, who are almost certain to die or suffer serious injury as the result of the strike.

The numbers do not include the other deaths that also stem from America's post 9-11 wars—from things like starvation, deaths from lack of medical care, and especially deaths from diseases like typhus or dysentery caused by lack of access to clean water or adequate sanitation facilities.

It is scandalous that the US government does not publish accurate information about the mayhem and slaughter that its wars have caused, especially because

it is precisely because of the US extensive use of airpower, including remotely piloted drones as a means of keeping politically dangerous US military casualties in the so-called "War on Terror" at a minimum, that produce so many civilian casualties.

Reporters who want to learn about civilian casualties from these US wars must either take the dangerous step of going to the battle zones without US official backing (what is called embedding with American forces—a set-up that keeps the military in control of access and message), or rely on reports from NGOs that monitor such things.

According to some accounts, civilian deaths caused by America's permanent war in the Middle East since 2001 could exceed one million. And remember, none of those deaths, occurring in places ruled by dictators, authoritarian governments or armed groups in the case of Pakistan's border region with Afghanistan, had any involvement in attacks on the US. Their deaths, whether caused directly or indirectly by the US military, can in no way be construed as "retribution" for the attacks of 9-11.

Add to that the other uncomfortable reality that many of the combatant deaths caused by US forces in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, border areas of Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and Syria are of fighters who are not terrorists at all, but rather, like the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces as well as the Pathet Lao in Laos, who fought and ultimately defeated US forces in the decade-long Indochina War of the '60 and '70s, are actually "freedom fighters" who have been defending their countries from a US invasion and occupation.

Of course, if we were to acknowledge that the "War on Terror" launched by the Bush/Cheney administration against Afghanistan and later Iraq—two countries none of whose people had anything to do with the 9-11 attacks—had resulted in so many murdered civilians, it would not just tarnish the reputation of our country, but also those "heroes" in uniform who followed orders and did all the slaughtering.

Folks in Iraq Veterans Against the war and Veterans for Peace will readily explain that the high rates of traumatic stress suffered by returning US veterans of these undeclared and clearly illegal invasions and occupations by the US, like those among returning Vietnam War vets of a prior generation of US war, and the current high rate of suicide among veterans has much to do with the mission, which many troops admit has nothing to do with "defending America" or "defending freedom," and everything to do with projecting power and with seeking US global dominance in a world where the US is increasingly being challenged as the "sole power" envisioned by George H.W. Bush's "New World Order" in the wake of the 1991 US-launched Gulf War against Iraq.

It's time we as a nation gave some thought to and did some penance for all those civilian deaths and combatant deaths as we remember 9-11.

We might also bow our heads in mourning for the freedoms that we have surrendered to the national security state since that terrible day.

(Dave Lindorff is an Investigative journalist and the founding editor of the news collective ThisCantBeHappening.net.)

MUMBAI KAMGAR MADHYAWARTI GRAHAK SAHAKARI SANSTHA MARYADIT
(Multistate Consumer Co-operative Society)

APNA BAZARTM
CO-OP

106-A, Govindaji Keni Road, Naigaon, Dadar (E), Mumbai - 400 014.

Tel. :- 24195200, Fax :- 24157497

(ISO 9001-2015 Certified)

Quality and Trustworthiness means 'Apna Bazar'

Our Features

- ◆ 70 years-old proud feeling customer service
- ◆ All Departments & Branches are Computerized.
- ◆ The multi-state consumer co-operative organization in India
- ◆ Customer service in Maharashtra and Gujarat
- ◆ 8 Department Stores and 15 food stores and 1 medical store
- ◆ Annual Turnover of Rs.115 Crore
- ◆ 30 million loyal customers
- ◆ Four Times winner of 'Jamnalal Bajaj Uchit Vyavahar Puraskar' (1989, 2001, 2013 & 2016)
- ◆ 'Global Achievers Award for Business Leadership' awarded by Economic Development Forum (2012)
- ◆ 'Award of Excellence' awarded by National Cooperative Union of India (2013)
- ◆ 'Sahakar Gaurav Puraskar' Awarded by Mumbai District Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. (2015)

Health service :

- ◆ Dadasaheb Sarfare Health Center and Clinical Laboratory at Apna Bazar Naigaon

Social Service :

- ◆ 10% Discount to Customers on purchase of Medical items (Drugs)
- ◆ Festivals wise various schemes for the customers
- ◆ Special programme for women
- ◆ Various programme for customer awareness

Apna Bazar for All :

- 1) Various concessions (discount) on purchases
- 2) The place 'of surety for quality goods
- 3) Saving time and money
- 4) Special discounts in festivals
- 5) Free Home Delivery Service
- 6) 'Apna Gift Voucher' to present the Gift.
- 7) 'A.C. Banquet Hall' at Apna Bazar Naigaon & Apna Bazar Charkop
- 8) Shopping by Sodexo Pass coupons, Ticket Restaurant coupons, Bank Cards, PayTM, Mobikwik etc.

Apna Bazar - Means Adorable, Pleasant, Noble and Affectionate services

Yours in Co-operation

Shripad Phatak

Anil Gangar

Dnyandeo Dalvi, Santosh Sarfare

S. T. Kajale

Vishwanath Malushte, Sandhya Kawali

Chairman

Vice Chairman

Executive Committee Members

Chief Executive

Directors :- Ashwin Upadhyay, Nilesh Vaidya, Narendra Bhurke, Nitin Anerao, Jagdish Nalawade, Pandurang Salvi, Chandrakant Sogale, Lavkumar Bande, Anil Thakur, Sharad Phatak, Sarika Salunke, Amul Birwatkar, Renuka Savant, Bhimsen Acharekar



“We are, what we repeatedly do,
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”

Aristotle



Taj Palace & Towers - Mumbai



Bombay Stock Exchange - Fort, Mumbai



Forum Atmosphere - Kolkata



J.K. House (Raymond)
Breach Candy, Mumbai

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING /
REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF :

- ✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)
- ✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)
- ✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.

Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi

As the rich withdrew from taxation, governments—of a variety of political persuasions—struggled to fund their own borrowing and the social spending won by the workers. Multilateral organisations—such as the IMF—and ratings agencies punished countries that had high deficits; this is why many countries passed balanced budget amendments that prevented borrowing to pay for social spending. A combination

of the tax strike by the rich and the balanced budget amendment squeezed government spending.

To raise funds, governments did at least five things:

1. Privatised public assets—such as public banks, public utilities, and public lands.

2. Commodified areas of social life. Governments allowed private firms to charge money for the delivery of goods that had previously been seen as social and whose delivery was not for a fee—such as water and electricity.

3. Deregulated business enterprises. Governments eliminated regulations that protected the public from the excesses of profit-making—such as environmental pollution.

4. Gave subsidies to big corporations. To attract big corporations to their jurisdictions, governments began to provide massive subsidies to them—subsidies that were often larger than the funds laid out toward social services.

5. Cut social spending. Austerity budgets became the norm, with States cutting social security, education, health care, and elder care.

This remains the core of neoliberalism. It has wrecked the world. It is why they are saying “never again” to neoliberalism in the ballot box and on the streets of South America.

Exit From Neoliberalism

The new government in Argentina has pledged to abandon the road of austerity, to robustly fund the social commitments of the government, and to adopt a national development strategy. How it will do so with the massive debt overhang

and the expected pressure from the creditors and the multilateral organisations is to be seen.

In Argentina, debates around the exit from neoliberalism have been ongoing. Among steps that the new government can take include suspending all subsidies to corporations, ordering an audit of each of these subsidies, and taking steps to seize money held by Argentinians in tax havens abroad. If subsidies to corporations are suspended and if taxes are collected, there should be enough money to finance not only food sovereignty schemes that tackle endemic hunger, but also cooperative production for food and goods.

We are in a period of transition.

Bolivia: Morales Officially Wins Presidency

On October 24, after counting 99.9% of votes, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Bolivia (TSE) declared Evo Morales as the official winner of the presidential elections held in the country on October 20.

Morales, of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS), received 47.07% of votes and a lead of 10.56% over the second runner, Carlos Mesa of Citizen Community (CC), a center-right political coalition, who secured 36.51% of votes.

These results gave him the necessary winning margin over the second most voted candidate, established under Bolivian election law, to avoid a second round of voting and have an outright victory in the elections. For a candidate to be declared winner, Bolivia's electoral law requires 50% or more of the votes plus one, or more than 40% of the votes with a 10 percent advantage over the second placed

There is no doubt that the ruling classes have no idea how to solve the problems posed by capitalism—massive wealth, massive inequality, climate catastrophe, and war. Neoliberalism, their policy framework of the past 40 years, is now in serious crisis. No full alternative is available. We have glimmers of the future; experiments need to be tried. Argentina's government will be under pressure to test an exit to neoliberalism. There will be excluded workers and feminists in the streets making sure that it does not betray their hopes.

(Vijay Prashad is an Indian historian, editor and journalist. This article has been edited by us.)

candidate.

The TSE clarified that 0.01% of votes, which had been voided in the region of Beni with new voting scheduled for November, would not be enough to change the outcome of the election.

With this victory, President Morales democratically wins Bolivia's presidency for the fourth consecutive time and becomes Latin America's longest serving president.

In third place is the Presbyterian pastor of Korean origin Chi Hyun Chung, of the Christian Democratic Party who took away 8.78 percent of the vote.

Courtesy: Telesur

Janata
is available at
www.lohiatoday.com

Bolivian Right-Wing Activates 'Electoral Fraud' Contingency Plan Against Morales

Zoe PC

Tensions have been rising in Bolivia following the general elections conducted on October 20. The right-wing opposition has refused to recognise the results which saw president Evo Morales of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) win 47.07% of the votes cast to clinch a first-round victory over Carlos Mesa of the Citizen Community alliance who won 36.52%. Opposition sectors have claimed that as initial results indicated that a run-off election would be necessary, electoral fraud was committed in order to give Morales the 10-point margin he needed to win in the first round.

However, since then, the already divided opposition has been fumbling to arrive at a united position and demands with regards to the elections. Their lack of coherency has illustrated that the true intentions of the opposition is not to defend Bolivian democracy and democratic institutions, but to push for regime change and engender chaos.

For example, in response to growing tensions with regard to the results, the Bolivian government invited the Organisation of American States (OAS) to carry out an audit of the electoral process in order to verify the validity and legitimacy of the results. This audit began on October 31. Though the OAS had spoken out the day after the elections on October 21 and called for a second round of polls, showing a clear bias against Morales, several sectors of the opposition declared that they reject this audit.

Initially, presidential candidate Carlos Mesa accepted the OAS audit as his position has consistently been to insist on holding run-off elections. However, after meeting with Fernando Camacho, the leader of the opposition in Santa Cruz, which is the stronghold of anti-Morales forces, Mesa announced that he rejected the audit by the OAS. If they really believed that fraud was committed, why would they reject the audit, especially when the auditor is anything but pro-Morales?

In the meantime, opposition sectors across the country have been escalating pressure on the streets to support their demands for the annulment of the results. Juan Ramón Quintana, the minister of the presidency in Bolivia, told Marco Teruggi of *Sputnik News* that "What we are seeing is a path to a coup that is being unveiled in an intense way and at different speeds in all of the national territory."

The night after the elections, violent opposition "shock" groups burned the offices of the electoral authority in Potosi, Sucre and Tarija. In the city of Santa Cruz, the office of the electoral authority office was burned down on October 22 and since then, the city has seen consistent violent mobilisations, other actions of sabotage, and a national strike.

Small-scale protests have also been held in other cities, and recently, the capital, La Paz, has become the epicenter of the opposition protests.

However, it is not just the right-wing that has been mobilising. Several massive mobilisations have

been carried out in support of Evo Morales and his victory in the latest elections, and to denounce the ongoing coup effort. On October 28, thousands of people from peasant movements, youth movements, miners' unions, and Indigenous movements took to the streets in El Alto, a largely Indigenous, working-class city neighboring La Paz and a historic base of MAS, to defend their votes and the results.

Thousands of miners mobilised in La Paz on October 29 and one of the central chants—"Mesa, thief, we won't forget October"—refers to the massacre which occurred in El Alto on October 11, 2003 during the "gas war," while Mesa was vice-president, and more than 80 people were killed and hundreds injured.

On October 30, an even larger mobilisation was carried out and thousands of miners, Indigenous people, neighborhood organisations, youth activists and citizens marched from El Alto down to La Paz in support of Evo Morales. The chant "Evo you are not alone dammit!" was the central cry of the people.

The following day, on October 31, thousands arrived at La Paz from different parts of the country to join mobilisations in support of Evo Morales. In light of the growing attacks from the opposition, participants of the mobilisation decided to stay overnight in a vigil at Plaza Murillo which is the center of political life in the capital and where the presidential palace and the National Congress of Bolivia are located.

Later in the day, sectors of the opposition in La Paz gathered to hold a ‘cabildo’ or an open meeting where several resolutions regarding their position and demands were approved. These included the demand that the elections be annulled, the resignation of Evo Morales, the rejection of the audit of the OAS, a call for new elections, the creation of a new Supreme Electoral Tribunal, and to “radicalise the pressure mechanisms.”

Following the cabildo, opposition protesters decided to march towards Plaza Murillo and attempted to violently break through the line of police protecting the MAS supporters and miners who had camped there overnight. The violent clashes involving explosions of dynamite and fireworks set off by opposition protesters lasted until midnight.

Government authorities and people’s movements in Bolivia have warned that tensions are escalating every day and it is nearing a coup-like scenario. Both Evo Morales and vice-president Álvaro García Linera have denounced the intentions of the right-wing opposition to engender chaos and destabilise the country with violent protests and strikes.

Juan Ramón Quintan told Teruggi that “There is no doubt that it is a coup financed by the United States, they have learned to move their pieces well, especially to sustain a narrative against the government.” He added that “Bolivia will convert into a great battlefield, a modern Vietnam because here the social organisations have found a horizon to reaffirm their autonomy, sovereignty, identity.”

Internationally, people’s movements and political leaders

have also rallied behind Evo Morales and in defense of Bolivian democracy. On October 31, a Twitter storm was held with the trending hashtag #EvoPresidenteLegítimo (Evo Legitimate President) and people from across the world joined to lend their support to Morales and the process of change in the

country and to reject the ongoing coup attempts.

(Zoe PC is a journalist and reports on people’s movements in Latin America. She is also associated with Congreso de los Pueblos in Colombia.)

Argentina Says: ‘Bye Macri!’

Center-left candidate Alberto Fernández and his vice president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of the Frente de Todos (The Front for All) coalition defeated the neoliberal president Mauricio Macri in the general elections held in Argentina on October 27. After counting 97% of the votes, the Fernández ticket received 48.1% of the votes, while Macri received 40.4%, giving the progressive leaders the necessary margin to avoid a second round of election.

According to Argentine constitution, in order to have an outright victory, a candidate needs more than 45% of the votes or more than 40% with a 10% lead over the second-place runner.

The new president thanked the people for their support and vowed to build a better Argentina. “Thanks again to all the people who accompanied and supported us during these months. Now, it is time for us to work together to build the Argentina we dream of. An Argentina for everyone. An Argentina on its own feet,” tweeted Fernández.

The incumbent president, Mauricio Macri, recognised the election results and congratulated his political rival and the new president of the country. Fernández

will assume office as the president of Argentina on December 10 for a four-year term.

Leaders from several Latin American countries, including Bolivia, Venezuela, Cuba and Mexico, and from across the globe, congratulated the newly elected president of Argentina after his victory in the general elections, and highlighted the symbolic importance of the defeat of the neoliberal, right-wing in Argentina.

Another key defeat of Macrismo was given in the Buenos Aires provincial elections where Axel Kicillof of Frente de Todos defeated incumbent María Eugenia Vidal of the Juntos por el Cambio coalition.

Over 33.8 million Argentinians had the opportunity to vote in the general elections to elect the president and vice president, 24 senators and 130 representatives to the Chamber of Deputies.

Tens of thousands of people celebrated the defeat of Macrismo and approached the campaign bunker of Fernández on Sunday night, where they were addressed by the new president, new vice president and the new governor of Buenos Aires province.

“I want to thank all the Argentine people on this historic day for democracy,” said Alberto Fernández.

“The only thing that matters is that the Argentinians stop suffering once and for all,” he added.

“I want to thank the hundreds of thousands of anonymous citizens who have resisted” and because of which “Today, Alberto is the president of all Argentinians,” said Cristina Kirchner in her speech at the bunker.

“The panorama we have after the government of Macri and Vidal is of scorched earth,” said governor Kicillof. He announced that “a stage of reconstruction of the province is coming” and promised “we will govern with everyone and for everyone.”

The triumph of Fernández represents the triumph of the

progressive, pro-people, anti-neoliberal, and anti-imperialist tendency against the neoliberal, militaristic, racist, xenophobic, pro-US imperialist and anti-Venezuelan tendency represented by Macri in Argentina, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Piñera in Chile, Moreno in Ecuador, and Duque in Colombia.

Fernández comes to the government in a difficult scenario nationally and regionally. Macrism has been democratically thrown out of power, but it has left the country in a serious economic crisis. Over 40% of the Argentine population lives below the poverty line, unemployment has increased by more than 10%, the Argentine peso devalued 566% since Macri took office in December

2015, and the country is under the dark shadow of the loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The public institutions of Argentina as well as government ministries and departments have also been gutted and dismantled, as per IMF diktats to cut costs. As such, the new government faces a tough challenge of stabilising and structurally reforming a country in a deep institutional, political, social and economic crisis.

(People's Dispatch is an international media organisation whose mission is to highlight voices from people's movements and organisations across the globe.)

Courtesy: People's Dispatch

A New Progressive Movement Scores Landslide Local Victories in Colombia

Will Freeman

Editorial note: In October 2019, Colombia held its first local and regional elections since the 2016 signing of the peace deal between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which ended a gruesome half century of civil war. The right wing suffered significant defeats in the local elections. Among the important victories won by progressive forces was the election of Claudia López as the mayor of Bogotá city. Claudia López is the first woman, the first gay woman, the first gay woman from the Green Party to win the post. The mayor of Bogotá is considered to be the second most important person in Colombia after the country's president. López's election to office marks a significant moment for the women and girls of Colombia.

Decades of conflict have subjected Colombian women and girls to gross human rights abuses, including murder, displacement, physical, emotional and sexual harassment and rape.

In the town of Turbaco, near Cartagena, a former guerrilla from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)—Guillermo Torres or “Julian Conrado”, won the mayor's post. This is the first time that FARC—which had been in an armed struggle for over half a century—won such a significant election.

But the most significant of these gains came in the most unlikely of all places ...

On October 27, Colombians went to the polls to elect new governors and mayors in what many see as a

referendum on the administration of right-wing president Iván Duque and the powerful regional political families that support him. In major cities like Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali, voters rejected politics as usual and put alternative candidates like Claudia López and Jorge Iván Ospina in office.

However, one of the most significant progressive gains came in the least likely of places: the coastal department of Magdalena. There, a growing political movement, Fuerza Ciudadana, held onto the capital city, Santa Marta, while also winning control of the governorship for the first time—in both cases defeating their establishment rivals by almost two-to-one margins.

The triumph of Magdalena's governor-elect and leader of Fuerza

Ciudadana, Carlos Caicedo, marks a radical break with the past in Colombia's Caribbean coast: a region where a small handful of traditional politicians ruled hand in hand with paramilitaries through the mid-2000s, all but eliminating the organised left. Indeed, across Colombia, alternative politicians have rarely gained control of both departmental governments and their capital cities.

As surprising as Fuerza Ciudadana's victories might seem, they didn't materialise overnight. Instead, they come as the culmination of nearly two decades of grassroots movement-building. If Colombia's recent election results are any indication, progressives may have a new lease on life at the local level. But to build support and eventually govern, they will need to overcome legal and extra-legal battles every bit as daunting as the ones Caicedo and his allies have faced in Magdalena. The story of Fuerza Ciudadana shows how local oppositions can emerge against the odds, and the challenges they should be prepared to face.

Opposition Against the Odds

Twenty years ago, if a political expert were to guess where the Colombian Left might one day establish a local stronghold, the city of Santa Marta would fall at the bottom of the list. From Colombia's colonial era to the passage of its 1991 constitution, a small handful of traditional families held a virtual monopoly on political power in the city and department, trading control of the governorship and various city halls while building vast fortunes. While the advent of local elections put alternative mayors in office in cities like Bogotá, Pasto, and

even neighbouring Barranquilla, politics in Santa Marta barely changed at all.

To make matters worse, from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, the local Left also faced violent suppression by paramilitary groups. The *parapolítica* scandal—an investigation into ties between paramilitary leaders and right-wing politicians that broke in 2008—implicated more members of Congress from Magdalena than from any other department.

Faced with elite-run political machines and paramilitary violence, by the early 2000s Magdalena's local progressive organisations had largely disappeared. "People made themselves invisible to protect themselves," explained Fabian Bolaño, a veteran Fuerza Ciudadana campaign strategist. However, at the University of Magdalena, Carlos Caicedo began to lay the foundation for a new political movement.

Caicedo, a lawyer and left-wing activist from rural Magdalena, became rector of the department's bankrupt public university in 1996. In just a few years, he won the praise of the Ministry of Education for turning it into one of the country's best. At the same time, he also transformed the university into an enclave of opposition. As Fuerza Ciudadana leader Carlos Payares described, the university "became like an island" where students and faculty could speak out against Magdalena's increasingly violent and undemocratic politics.

After leading a protest vote against Magdalena's paramilitary-sponsored governor—Trino Luna—Caicedo and a group of opposition-minded students began to meet regularly, adopting the name "Fuerza Ciudadana." "We

were the only opposition," Caicedo explained. Opposing Magdalena's traditional political class came with its consequences. In 2007, Governor Luna pressured the local comptroller's office to investigate Caicedo for corruption, placing him under house arrest.

It would take almost five years for a Bogotá appeals court to clear Caicedo's name, eventually ruling that he had been wrongfully convicted. But those years did not go to waste. From his home, Caicedo began to plan an ambitious agenda of reforms for Santa Marta. Shortly after his release, he entered the running for the 2011 mayoral election with the slogan, "If we did it in the University, we can do it in Santa Marta." Then he took his campaigns to the streets, walking Santa Marta's marginalised barrios every day to listen to voters' grievances and explain his reform agenda.

Esteban Hernandez, another leader in the movement, recalls that on election day, few—even among Fuerza's ranks—expected Caicedo could win: "We had seven or eight taxis that drivers lent us to bring voters to the polls, and we were watching the other side with buses and vans full of people." Yet even though Caicedo's establishment rival monopolised media coverage and engaged in widespread vote buying, Caicedo came out ahead by an impressive margin.

Most credit the election victory to a protest vote against the city's traditional politicians, who let public services collapse and infrastructure crumble. As Payares explained, "We benefited from people's disenchantment. But that doesn't mean the next part was easy for us." For Caicedo and his allies, winning

office was just the beginning. To carry out their proposed reforms, they would have to overcome a daunting series of obstacles to governance one by one.

Reforming Santa Marta and the Reaction

From his first month in office, Caicedo faced an all-out attempt by existing powers to block his ability to govern. While the recently elected city council—dominated by establishment politicians—refused to approve any budget proposal he put forward, an organised crime syndicate Caicedo had pledged to combat, the Urabeños, carried out an armed strike that shut down the main avenues of the city.

On top of these problems, the city had contracted out its basic public services and tax collection years before to private companies, tying the hands of any new administration. "The department was captured by mafias," Caicedo summed up, "and we didn't have the council members or the public administration at our service."

Nonetheless, Caicedo and his team used a set of innovative strategies to achieve governability. First, although the city council continued to stonewall Caicedo's access to the municipal budget, he launched and won a legal battle to take back control of local tax collection. At the same time, his administration organised dozens of public works committees. By bringing together neighbours to help plan small projects like roads and parks, these groups both kickstarted infrastructure projects and generated bottom-up pressure on city council members: either go along with Caicedo's popular proposals, or risk getting voted out by increasingly

well-organised constituents.

As the 2015 local elections approached, electoral pressure on city council members kicked in and Fuerza Ciudadana finally assembled the majority support necessary to govern. What followed was an explosion of public works and new social programs, from dozens of new parks, roads, schools, and property titles to "Equity Fairs" that brought health and education services directly to low-income residents. Campaigning on the promise to continue with the reforms, Caicedo's successor, Rafael Martínez, won a second term for Fuerza Ciudadana with the highest vote in the city's history.

As mayor, Martínez completed many of the public works and programs Caicedo had started, becoming the third-most popular mayor in Colombia. At the same time, Caicedo built Fuerza Ciudadana's presence on a regional—and then national—scale, organising support for the 2016 peace agreement referendum and later for his 2018 presidential bid. As the movement's national profile rose, however, its battles at home only intensified.

Colombia's institutions of public control are set up to investigate and punish administrative wrongdoing. Perhaps because at the local level they are appointed by department and city elected officials, however, these accountability institutions have tended to bias their investigations toward alternative local politicians, sometimes leading to their removal from office. Magdalena is no exception. In 2018, the Attorney General's office opened an investigation targeting Martínez on suspicion of irregular public contracting that placed him under house arrest in March of this

year. Although Fuerza Ciudadana was entitled to submit a shortlist of interim mayors from its own ranks, President Iván Duque exploited a loophole in the law to temporarily install an appointee of his own: ironically, his National Secretary of Transparency, Andrés Rugeles.

As soon as he arrived to the city hall, Rugeles dismissed almost all members of Fuerza Ciudadana's cabinet and led the National Directorate of Intelligence on an exhaustive search of city records for evidence of wrongdoing. The takeover, falling just months before local campaigns were to begin, delivered a serious blow to Fuerza Ciudadana. While none of its leaders have been convicted of corruption, some worried that losing city hall might shake their constituents' confidence in the integrity of the movement.

In the end, the intervention from Bogotá produced the opposite effect. In July, a judge revoked Martínez's house arrest sentence and returned him to office, leading many in the city to celebrate what they saw as an end to unfair outside meddling. At the same time, Fuerza Ciudadana launched its candidates: movement leader Virna Johnson for mayor of Santa Marta and Caicedo for governor.

If retaining Santa Marta's city hall began to seem increasingly likely, winning the governorship looked like a longshot. As several movement strategists commented, campaigning in rural Magdalena came with its own set of challenges, from entrenched patterns of vote-buying to intimidation by ex-paramilitaries. Regardless, in the months leading up to the October vote, Caicedo and his caravan

appeared in a different municipality of the department almost every day. As Payares explained, "What we have learned is that you can't leave politics up to fate."

On October 27, as votes came in, the results quickly became clear. While Johnson won in Santa Marta with the city's highest ever vote count, Caicedo captured nearly sixty percent of votes in the department and came out ahead in 26 of Magdalena's 32 municipalities. Barring the very real threat that Magdalena's traditional politicians may find a way to push forward open investigations against Caicedo, he and Johnson will become the first alternative politicians to hold both posts in any department on the Caribbean coast: positions that will allow them collaborate to carry their inclusive model of governance beyond Santa Marta's city limits.

Colombia's latest local elections paint a mixed picture for progressive forces. Traditional politics prevailed in many departments, and by any standard Magdalena figures as an outlier. Still, if the polls serve as any indicator, elite-controlled regional machines might be starting to break down, opening up space for new progressive movements. Whether or not such movements can take advantage of these opportunities and survive is uncertain. To the extent they follow Fuerza Ciudadana's playbook, they may stand a good chance.

(Will Freeman is a Politics PhD candidate at Princeton University, where he studies local democracy and political opposition in Latin America.)

Chile and Her History of Western Interference

Peter Koenig

Chile is experiencing the largest and most serious political crisis and public unrest throughout Santiago and the country's major cities, since the return to 'democracy' in 1990. A weeklong of fire, teargas and police brutality, left at least 20 people dead, thousands arrested and injured. More than 1.2 million people protested on October 25 in the Streets of Chile's capital, Santiago, not just against the 4% hike in metro-fares. That was the drop that brought the glass to overflow. Years, decades of neoliberal policies, brought hardship and poverty—and inequality to Chileans. Chile is the country with the world's third largest inequality in wealth, with a Gini coefficient of close to 0.50 (zero = everybody has the same, 1.0 = one person possesses everything).

Important for Chileans to understand is not to believe President Sebastian Piñera's smooth talk and compromising words. Whatever he says and apparently does in term of backtracking from his neoliberal policies is sheer deviation propaganda. Many of these policies he already initiated during his first term (2010–14). They were kept alive by Madame Michelle Bachelet (2014–18) under pressure from the Chilean financial system which remains closely linked (and funded) by Wall Street—and, of course, by her IMF advisers. Continuing Piñera's job, she helped further dollarise Chile to the tune of 70%, meaning that Chilean's banks finance themselves on the US dollar markets, mostly in New York and London, rather than on the local peso market.

A healthy economy finances itself largely from nationally earned and accumulated capital. But more often than not, national oligarchs who possess this capital earned locally invest it outside their countries, as they trust more in foreign markets than in their own country. This is classic in many developing countries and particularly in Latin America, where the elite still—or again, after a brief democratic center-left respite in the 1990s and early 2000—looks for success and capital gains to the northern masters in Washington.

Madame Bachelet was effectively bought by the system. A former socialist—having seen her father suffer under the Pinochet regime—she has become a sad turncoat. She demonstrated her 'conversion' once again more recently by her recent report on Venezuela's Human Rights—which was a travesty of the truth—a sham, full of lies and omissions.

Since 2018, it's again President Piñera, who is hellbent to complete his neoliberal project. Sebastian Piñera is one of the richest people in Latin America with a net worth of close to 3 billion dollars. How could he even remotely imagine what it is, having to take the subway every day to go to work, depending on pensions which are gradually reduced under his austerity programs, having to pay school tuition for a public service which is free in most countries and being subject to privatised health services—let alone, steadily depressed salaries and rising unemployment. Mr. Piñera has no clue.

Only 24 hours before the mass-protests started about a week ago throughout Chile, Piñera prided himself in public of leading the politically and economically most stable and secure country, the world's largest copper producer, where foreign investors were keen to place their money, a "paradise island", he called Chile, adding the country was a model for all of Latin America.

Did he really not sense what was happening? How his austerity measures—plus privatising everything—was hurting and infuriating his compatriots to the point of no return? Or did he simply ignore it, thinking it may go away, people will continue swallowing economic tightening as they have done before?

As Piñera's popularity has slumped to an all-time low of 14%, and protests erupted every day to a higher level, he started using people-friendly language and tone, promising increasing minimum wages, pensions and unemployment benefits. In a move to court the working class, on Monday 28 October he reshuffled his cabinet, replacing 8 of his Ministers with more "people-friendly" officials—but it was too little too late.

He addressed the people in a televised speech from the Presidential Palace, La Moneda, saying, "Chile has changed, and the government must change with it to confront these new challenges". Nobody seemed to take these empty words seriously, as the masses assembled in front of La Moneda asking for Piñera's resignation. The UN is sending a team to investigate Human Rights abuses by police and military. While Argentinians waited for regular general elections (27

October 2019) to oust their western-imposed neoliberal lynchpin president Macri, it is not likely that Chileans will have the patience to wait until 2022.

Ever increasing inequality and skyrocketing cost of living reached a point of anger that can hardly be appeased with Piñera's apparent promises for change. For at least 80% of the people these conciliatory words are not enough—they don't believe in a system led by a neoliberal multi-billionaire who has no idea on how common people have to make a living. They don't believe in change from this government. It is highly possible, they won't let go until Piñera is gone. They see what was happening in neighbouring Argentina and don't want to face the same fate.

Let's just look at a bit of history. Going way back to the War of the Pacific, also known as the Saltpeter War confronting Chile with the Bolivian-Peruvian alliance, Chile counted with strong support from the UK—supplying war ships, weaponry and military advice. The war lasted from 1879 to 1884 and centered on Chilean claims of Bolivian's coastal territories, part of the Atacama Desert, rich in saltpeter, coveted by the Brits. Thanks to the British military and logistics support, Chile won the war and Bolivia lost her access to the Pacific, making her a landlocked country. The Government of Evo Morales today is still fighting for Pacific Sea access in The Hague. Peru lost also part of her resources-rich coast line, Arica and Tarapacá.

Fast forward to 11 September 1973—the Chilean 9/11—instigated by the West, again. To be precise by Washington. In the driver's seat of this fatal coup that changed Chile

as of this day—and counting—if Piñera is not stopped—was Henry Kissinger. At the time leading up to the CIA instigated coup, and during the coup, Kissinger was US National Security Advisor. Kissinger was sworn in a Secretary of State 11 days after the coup—22 September 1973; a decent reward for who is today the biggest war criminal still alive.

The murderous coup, followed by almost 20 years of brutal military rule by Augusto Pinochet (1973 to 1990), with torture, killings, human rights abuses left and right—was accompanied by an atrocious economic regime imposed by Washington hired so-called "Chicago Boys"—ruining the country, privatising social services, national infrastructures and natural resources—except for Chile's and the world's largest copper mine, CODELCO which was not privatised during the Pinochet years. The military would not allow it—for reasons of "national security".

The large majority of the population was put under constant surveillance and threat of punishment / abuse if they would protest and not "behave" as Pinochet ordered. Pinochet, along with the western directed financial sector turned Chile into a largely impoverished, complacent population.

The British empire, and later the American empire, was always influential in Chile, expanding its influence and exploitation mechanism to Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela. But then, in the late 1990s and early 2000, Latin America stood up, democratically electing her own leaders, most of them left / center-left, a thorn in the eye of Washington.

How could American's "Backyard" become independent? Impossible! Hence the renewal of the Monroe Doctrine—which emanated from President James Monroe (1817–1825), forbidding Europeans to interfere in any American territory. The Monroe principle has now been expanded to not allowing any foreign nation to even do business with Latin America, let alone forming political alliances.

While within a few years of the early 2000s, most of Latin America has been converted into puppets of the United States, Venezuela and Cuba stand tall. They are the cornerstones, not to fall. They will be the pillars from where a new sovereign Latin America will rise. The Monroe Doctrine will not hold for a falling US empire. Meanwhile, peace seeking Russia and China are closely associating with South America, commercially as well as militarily, helping to rebuild and defend its sovereignty.

In addition, people living under neoliberal regimes, under western financial and IMF-imposed killer austerity programs, are waking up, demonstrating and protesting in Ecuador and Argentina—in the latter country, they have recently disposed of the US-imposed neoliberal despot, President Mauricio Macri, in democratic elections. Now, Chile's population is angry. Their patience is collapsing, their fear is gone. They want justice. They want to choose their leader freely—and it is not Sebastian Piñera.

Chileans' fury is not just directed at Piñera's latest distasteful economic and financial austerity measures. They still suffer from measures dating back to the Pinochet

area—measures that did not change even under the so-called socialist Madame Bachelet. The Pinochet Constitution of 1980, under pressure from Chicago-educated advisors, the IMF and the dollar-based banking system, imposed a culture of economic neoliberalism and ideological conservatism. These key parameters, remnants from that epoch, are still valid as of this day:

Education: Chile has the most privatised and segregated education system of the 65 countries that use the OECD student evaluation standard, PISA (Program for International Student Assessment). In Chile higher education (university level) is not a right. In 1981 Pinochet privatised most of the higher education institutions, giving access mainly to students from privileged families.

Health: In 1979 Pinochet created the Preventive Health Institutions, administered by private financial institutions, providing services that most Chileans cannot afford, replacing the former publicly financed health system.

Public Transportation: Chile has one of the most expensive public transport systems in all of Latin America. It's run by private for-profit concessionaries. In Chile a metro ride costs the equivalent of \$1.13, in Brazil \$0.99, in Colombia \$0.67, in Argentina \$0.43. Mr. Piñera's recent 4% tariff increase was just the trigger for a much larger discontent.

Abortion: Since 1939 voluntary and secure abortion was possible in Chile. In 1989 Pinochet made abortion under whatever circumstances a criminal delict.

Pensions: In 1980 Pinochet

abandoned the old public system based on solidarity among pensioned adults and handed the accumulated funds to newly created and privately run AFPs (Administrations of Pension Funds), groups of private administrators of funds accumulated entirely by workers (no contributions by employers).

"Carabineros" (Chilean Police Officers): Under Pinochet, Carabineros have been given powers with military characteristics. They have constantly and with impunity violated human rights. For years civil society groups have requested successive governments to change this to regular police officers, who respect human dignity and human rights. So far to no avail, as demonstrated by police interference in the most recent protests.

These Pinochet leftovers will no longer be accepted and tolerated by Chileans. Chile's population, and in particular, the more than 1.2 million protesting in Santiago last Friday, are requesting nothing less than Piñera's resignation and a people's elected Constitutional Assembly to build a new country with less, much less inequality, more social justice—and, especially without any remaining "Pinochetismo"—which today is still very present under Sebastian Piñera, who sent the military to control the mass demonstrations in Santiago and other large cities. Chileans are clearly saying, these days are over: we want our country back—we reclaim our national political and economic sovereignty—no more western interference.

(Peter Koenig is an economist and geopolitical analyst, who lectures at universities in the US, Europe and South America.)

Haitians Commemorate Liberator Dessalines with Huge Mobilisations

Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets across Haiti on October 17 to commemorate the national revolutionary and liberator Jean-Jacques Dessalines and to demand the resignation of United States-backed president Jovenel Moïse.

Several huge mobilisations occurred across the country demanding an end to Moïse's anti-people, corrupt and neoliberal government.

Starting early in the morning, important roads and highways in the capital Port-au-Prince and other departments were blocked by the protesters with barricades and burning tyres. Almost all civil, commercial, governmental and transportation activities were paralysed.

Large-scale demonstrations were held in the entire metropolitan region of Port-au-Prince, with the [communes] of Delmas, Petionville, Tabarre and Croix-des-Bouquets being some of the hottest points. At the airport crossing on Delmas Avenue, hundreds of people gathered to pay tribute to the victims of police repression in the last four weeks of protests. They placed photos of the victims on a wall and held a religious voodoo ceremony in their honour.

Another huge demonstration was held in the capital of the Northwest Department [state], Port-de-Paix, called for by the Patriotic Forum, which brings together more than 60 peasants, workers, women, students, youth and human rights organisations. Similar mobilisations were organised in all ten departments across the country.

The day of huge national mobilisation coincided with the 213th anniversary of the assassination of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, an important leader of the 1804 Haitian Revolution and considered the

"Father of the Nation". Every year, hundreds of thousands of people mobilise on this day to commemorate his life and revolutionary contribution to the country.

The uninterrupted anti-government protests, triggered by a fuel shortage in the country, are in their fifth week now. Since September 16, Haitians have been on the streets daily, demanding that Moïse resign. They see him as one of the principal actors responsible for plunging the country into deep social, political and economic crisis as well as for embezzling US\$3.8 billion in PetroCaribe funds, offered to Haiti by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to finance its economic and social development.

Fuel crisis

The fuel crisis has worsened and led to a humanitarian crisis in regions where water and food supplies are not reaching the people.

On October 16, after a month of demonstrations against his misgovernance, Moïse broke his silence and addressed the nation. Surprisingly, he took responsibility for the crisis facing the country, but refused to step down. "It would be irresponsible of me to resign," he said.

In response, both sectors of the opposition, the social movements and trade unions strengthened their calls for people to continue mobilising and demanding Moïse's resignation.

On October 17, four of the seven members of the Dialogue Commission resigned. The government commission was recently created to engage in dialogue with the opposition, to find a solution to the crisis. The members said that one of the conditions of the commission was that everything, including the president's resignation,

would be raised at the negotiating table. However, they claimed that Moïse's speech invalidated the work undertaken by the commission.

In the past month of intense protests, more than 20 people have been killed and more than 200 injured by heavy police repression. According to the National Network in Defense of Human Rights, more than 77 people have been killed this year during anti-government protests, excluding those in recent weeks.

Many incidents of police repression were registered on October 17 as well. The social movements denounced this aggression and reiterated their call for the establishment of a transitional government that would implement economic reforms according to the needs of the population.

UN interference

On October 17, the United Nations Integrated Office (BINUH) also began its one-year mandate in Haiti. The new political mission aims to help the government and police in their efforts to maintain law and order in the country. It was established by the UN Security Council through a resolution passed in June this year. The office is said to be the replacement for the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH).

The UN's intervention in Haiti began in 2004 when the Security Council approved the Stabilisation Mission (MINUSTAH) to deal with political violence, impunity and proliferation of crime, following the second coup against the democratically-elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. This was replaced in 2017 by the MINUJUSTH, with the aim of strengthening the institutions of the Caribbean country. Both the

MINUSTAH and the MINUJUSTH have been accused of committing atrocious human rights violations. The BINUH is nothing but a new face of international interference.

Thousands of protesters marched to the headquarters of the UN, located next to the Toussaint Louverture International Airport in the capital, on October 4, to denounce its support for the current government—which came into power after the fraudulent elections of November 2016.

The government is also supported by the US and the Core Group, made up of the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative, the Ambassadors of Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, the European Union and the US, and the Special Representative of the Organisation of American States.

Haiti is the most impoverished and unequal country in Latin America and the Caribbean. More than 80% of the country's population live below the poverty line and unemployment is presently more than 70%. Years of dictatorship, foreign military occupation, political instability, systematic corruption and racism towards the nation, harsh international sanctions and the devastating 2010 earthquake have systematically aggravated the crisis.

However, the courageous and determined people of Haiti have refused to give in. Since July 2018, the poor and dispossessed of Haiti have been organising and mobilising against the widespread corruption in the political system, the imposition of neoliberal measures in accordance with International Monetary Fund policies and the allegiance of the Haitian government to imperial interests.

(Green Left Weekly is an Australian socialist news magazine.)

Courtesy: Green Left Weekly

Beirut is Burning: Rebellion Against the Elites has Begun

Andre Vltchek

Tires are burning, smoke is rising towards the sky. It is October, the 18th day of the month; the capital city of Lebanon, in the past known as the “Paris of the East”, is covered in smoke.

For years I was warning that the country governed by corrupt, indifferent elites, could not hold together, indefinitely.

For all those five years when I was calling Beirut home, things were going down the drain. Nothing was improving: almost no public transportation, electricity shortages, contaminated and erratic water supply. Periodically, garbage has been piling up along the streets and suburban roads. Once an airplane lands and the doors open, the terrible stench of garbage welcomes us, residents of Beirut, back home.

Almost everyone knew that all this could not continue like this, forever.

The city was suffering from 4th World diseases, while simultaneously being flooded with Land Rover SUVs, Maserati and Porsche sports cars, and Armani suits.

Beirut has almost collapsed to Jakarta levels, although, one has to admit, with extremely smart, highly educated and sophisticated elites, capable of conversing simultaneously in three world languages: French, Arabic and English. Also, with first rate art galleries, art cinemas, posh bars and nightclubs. With lavish marinas and the best bookstores in the entire Middle East.

Some say that Beirut has always been in possession of brain and guts,

but something happened to its heart.

Nothing really works here. But if you have millions of dollars, it does not really matter; you can buy anything here. If you are poor, destitute—abandon all hope. And the majority of the people here are now miserably poor. And no one even knows precisely how many are destitute, as a census is forbidden, in order ‘not to disturb religious balance’ (it was, for years, somehow agreed on, that it is better not to know how many Christians or Muslims are residing in the country).

It is certain that most of people are not rich. And now, outraged by their rulers, corrupt politicians and so-called elites, they are shouting, loudly and clearly: “Enough!”, Halas, down with the regime!”

* * *

The government decided to impose a tax on WhatsApp calls. Not a big deal, some would say. But it was, it is, it suddenly became a big deal. “The last drop”, perhaps.

The city exploded. Barricades were erected. Tires were set on fire. Everywhere: in the poorest as well as in the richest neighborhoods.

“Revolution!” people began shouting.

Lebanon has a history of left-wing, even Communist insurgencies. It also has its fair share of religious, right-wing fanaticism. Which one will win? Which one will be decisive, during this national rebellion?

The Communist Party is now behind several marches. But Hezbollah, until now the most solid social force in the country, is not yet convinced that the government of Saad al Hariri should simply resign.

According to *Reuters*:

“Lebanon’s Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said ... that the group was not demanding the government’s resignation amid widespread national protests. Nasrallah said in a televised speech that he supported the government, but called for a new agenda and ‘new spirit’, adding that ongoing protests showed the way forward was not new taxes. Any tax imposed on the poor would push him to call supporters to go take to the streets, Nasrallah added.”

So far, the rebellion has left countless people injured, while two Syrian immigrants lost their lives. Some local analysts say that this is the most serious uprising since the one in 2015 (which included the “You Stink!” campaign, reacting to the appalling garbage crises in Beirut and to the worsening social disaster), but others, including this author, are convinced that this is actually the most serious political catastrophe Lebanon has been facing since the 1980s.

One hears anger, on every corner of the capital, in cafes and local stores:

“Trust is broken!”

Even those who used to be far from any political activities are now supporting protesters. Ms. Jehan, a local staff member at a UN office in Beirut, is one of those who found herself on the side of the rebellion: “What is happening to Beirut and all over in Lebanon is good. It is about time we stood up. I will go too. This has nothing to do with religions. It is about our shattered lives.”

* * *

Reading Western mainstream media, one could begin to believe that Lebanon’s main problems are issues like foreign debt (Lebanon is, on a per capita basis, the third most indebted country on earth; the

debt stands at 150% of its GDP), miniscule real reserves (US\$ 10 billion), and the way the country interacts with the donors and lenders. IMF and its “advice” are constantly mentioned.

But even news agencies like *Reuters* have to admit that the entire mess is far from just about structural problems. “As dollars have dried up, banks have effectively stopped lending and can no longer make basic foreign-exchange transactions for clients,” one banker said. “The whole role of banks is to pour money into the central bank to finance the government and protect the currency,” he said. “Nothing is being done on the fiscal deficit because doing something will disrupt the systems of corruption.”

Here is the key word: “Corruption!”

Lebanon’s elites are shamelessly corrupt. Only such countries like Indonesia are able to compete with the Lebanese troglodyte clans, when it comes to stripping the entire nation of its riches.

Almost nothing is clean, or pure in Lebanon, and that is also why there aren’t any statistics available.

Money comes from the monstrous and ruthless exploitation of natural resources in West Africa. Everybody knows it, but it is never addressed, publicly. I worked in West Africa, and I know what the racist Lebanese ‘business people’ are doing there. But money stolen from the Africans does not enrich Lebanon and its people. It ends up in the Lebanese banks, and is spent on lavish yachts, tacky and overpriced European sports cars, and inside bizarre private clubs in and around the capital. While many Lebanese people are near starvation, airplanes flying to Nice, Venice or Greek Islands are constantly packed with *la dolce vita* seekers.

Lebanon makes billions of dollars from narcotics, particularly those cultivated and refined in the Beqaa Valley. They get exported mainly to Saudi Arabia, for the consumption of the rich, or injected into the battlefields in Yemen and Syria, so-called combat drugs. Again, everyone knows it, but nothing is done to stop it. Hundreds of families, from farmers to politicians, got filthy rich on that trade. This adds a few more super-yachts at the proverbial Beirut marinas.

Then, there is ‘foreign aid’, ‘European investment into infrastructure’, Saudi and Qatari money. Most of it goes, directly, into the pockets of corrupt officials, to the so-called ‘government’, and to its buddies, contractors. Almost nothing is built, but the money is gone. Lebanon has railroad employees who are getting their monthly paychecks, but no railways anymore. Train stations have been converted into vodka bars. Lebanon begs for money so it can host refugees from all over the region, but much of the money ends up in a few deep pockets. Very little goes to the refugees themselves, or to the poor Lebanese people who have to compete for low-paying jobs with the desperate Syrians or Palestinians.

The poor are getting poorer. Yet, Ethiopian, Philippine and Kenyan maids are dragging the groceries of the rich, wiping spit off the faces of babies born into elite families, and cleaning toilets. Some get tortured by their masters, many commit suicide. Lebanon is a tough place, for those who do not look Phoenician or European.

And the slums in the south of Beirut are growing. And some Lebanese cities, like Tripoli in the north, look like tremendous slums, altogether.

According to various estimates, Lebanon may collapse as early as in February 2020. No more money can be looted. The end game is approaching.

If it does collapse, the rich will have their golden parachutes. They have their families abroad: in Australia, Brazil, France. Some have two passports, others have houses in the most desirable parts of the world.

The poor will be left with absolutely nothing: with a carcass of a country, previously looted by its own elites. There will be rotting, ageing Ferraris everywhere, but

one cannot eat carcasses of cars. There will be lavish but abandoned swimming pools, right next to polluted and destroyed beaches.

People know it, and they have had enough.

Mohamed, a worker at a Starbucks cafe in Beirut is determined:

“This is terrible but it is about time. We can take no more. We need to change the country, drastically. This time things are different. Not about who we worship but about our daily lives.”

Lebanon, in comparison to other

shamelessly-capitalist countries, is well-educated. People here cannot be fooled.

The rebellion against the elites has just begun. People want to take back their country.

Editor's note: Finally, on October 29, the Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri announced that he and his entire cabinet are resigning.

(Andre Vltchek is a philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist.)

Protests in Iraq Gain Momentum

The latest round of protests in Iraq entered its fifth day on Monday, October 28. This round began on October 24 when thousands of Iraqis, mostly young men and women, took to the streets of the capital city of Baghdad and other cities to demand an overhaul of the political system of the country.

Students from several schools and universities joined the protests on Monday. The demonstrators have organised a sit-in in Tahrir Square and have blocked the bridge to the Green Zone, the political center of the city. The security forces have used heavy force to disperse such blockades and prevent a section of the protesters from destroying public buildings. Some of the protesters are also demanding the resignation of the prime minister, Adel Abdul Mahdi, too. At least 74 people have died in this round of protests.

The current round of protests is a continuation of agitations in the first week of October. The protests were called over the failure of the successive Iraqi governments to tackle the issues of unemployment, poor service delivery and deep-

rooted corruption. They have not subsided despite the announcement of reforms by prime minister Adel Abdul Mahdi's government.

Prime Minister Mahdi had responded to earlier rounds of protests by announcing several policy changes and fresh initiatives, including pensions for all the families without an income, distribution of residential plots to the poor and loans to the youth. He also announced a policy of 50% reservation for the local youth in all future contracts.

Iraq's economy is recovering from decades of sanctions and wars. Since the defeat of the Islamic State or Daesh (IS) in 2017, the country has relatively been at peace. However, the political classes in the country, most of them without any popular roots, have failed to deliver on the economic front. The second largest producer of oil among all OPEC members has around 23% of its population living below the official poverty line and the unemployment rate among the youth is more than 25%. The post-war generation, mostly the young, fail

to get employment after graduating from universities.

The current government was formed last year with the support of the Sairoon Alliance or the Alliance Towards Reforms. The alliance is made of Sadarist Integrity Party and Iraqi Communist Party and is the largest block in parliament.

Most of the protesters are not convinced by promises of reform and think the only solution is a complete overhaul of the current Iraqi system. This cynicism is a result of almost two decades of external interference and inability of the political class to create a pan-Iraqi support base. The current political system was created under the US occupation of the country in 2005 without any real grassroots support.

It is no wonder that the Iraqi constitution, under which four general elections (2005, 2010, 2014 and 2018) have been held only caters to sectarian divides among the political leadership in the country and has no real agenda to create a pan-Iraqi polity acceptable to all sections of the society. This has led to complete alienation of the

common masses from the electoral system. A majority of voters have remained apathetic.

The current round of protests has so far not shown any sectarian character and has been centered around the secular issues of jobs and poor service delivery and alleged corruption. The popular pressure has led the largest political block in the Iraqi Parliament to come out in support of the protests. Sairoon

gave a call for an indefinite sit-in from October 26. Two members of parliament belonging to the communist party, along with two other MPs, resigned from their seats on October 27 in support of the protesters.

The internal inquiry committee, appointed after the allegations of massive repression by the security personnel during the first round of protests, has confirmed that 149

people were killed. This led the government to sack most of the officers responsible. However, the protesters have not been satisfied with the move.

(People's Dispatch is an international media organisation whose mission is to highlight voices from people's movements and organisations across the globe.)

Courtesy: Peoples Dispatch

British Elections: 'Real Change is Coming' Says Corbyn

Susan Price

Following the European Union's agreement to grant Boris Johnson's government until next January to exit the EU, the House of Commons voted to hold a snap election on December 12. At the time of writing the election bill has yet to pass the House of Lords, but looks a certainty.

Labour voted to support the early election proposal after initially having abstained on the vote because of internal disagreement.

During debate, the opposition attempted to amend the bill to allow 16 and 17 year olds and EU nationals residing in Britain to vote, but this was rejected.

Labour can now take its plan to tackle climate change by transitioning to clean energy to an election.

Rebecca Long-Bailey, the Labour MP who drove this policy, wrote in *Tribune Magazine* on October 30: "The question facing us now is how to deliver a Green Industrial Revolution that is equivalent to the scale of the challenge.

"To have any chance of success, it will need to push aside the tradition of incremental policy making. We need a rapid and far-reaching transformation of the UK's

infrastructure, from our homes to our transport and energy systems.

"Delivering a Green Industrial Revolution will require taking on powerful corporations and individuals who have amassed obscene wealth by wrecking the climate, and who will stake everything on delaying action and watering down environmental protections until it is too late.

"We also need to talk about jobs. The Green Industrial Revolution will need a clear and properly-funded plan for workers affected by decarbonisation, one that puts workers themselves and their trade unions at the heart of delivering the transition."

British Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn launched Labour's election campaign on October 31 in South London.

"We stand for the many," Corbyn said. "Boris Johnson's born-to-rule Conservatives protect the privileged few. They've slashed taxes for the richest and vital services and support for everyone else.

"But real change is coming. We will end the Conservatives' great rip-off by putting rail, mail and water into public ownership so they work for everyone, not just Tory donors

and shareholders in tax havens.

"We will invest in every nation and region, rebuild our public services and give our NHS [National Health Service], schools and police the money they need by taxing those at the top to properly fund services for everyone.

"This election is a once-in-a-generation chance to transform our country, take on the vested interests holding people back and ensure that no community is left behind."

"You know what really scares the elite?

"What they're actually afraid of is paying their taxes. So in this election they'll fight harder and dirtier than ever before. They'll throw everything at us because they know we're not afraid to take them on.

"So we're going after the tax dodgers. We're going after the dodgy landlords. We're going after the bad bosses. We're going after the big polluters. Because we know whose side we're on.

"Are you on the side of the tax dodgers, who are taking us all for a ride? People who think it is OK to rip people off, hide their money in tax havens so they can have a new super yacht. Or the children with special

educational needs who aren't getting the support they deserve because of Tory and Lib Dem government cuts?

"Whose side are you on? The dodgy landlords, like the Duke of Westminster, Britain's youngest billionaire, who tried to evict whole blocks of families, to make way for luxury apartments? Or the millions of tenants in Britain who struggle to pay their rent each month?

"Whose side are you on? The bad bosses like Mike Ashley, the billionaire who won't pay his staff properly and is running Newcastle United [football club] into the ground? Or his exploited workforce, like the woman who was reportedly forced to give birth in a warehouse toilet because she was terrified of missing her shift?

"Whose side are you on? The big polluters like Jim Ratcliffe, Britain's richest man who makes his money by polluting the environment? Or the children growing up in our cities with reduced lung capacity because of choking pollution?

"Whose side are you on? The greedy bankers like Crispin Odey, who makes millions betting against our country and on other people's misery and donated huge sums to Johnson and the Conservative Party? Or are you on the side of working people, the people who create the wealth that's then squirreled away in tax havens?

"And whose side are you on? The billionaire media barons like Rupert Murdoch, whose empire pumps out propaganda to support a

rigged system. Or the overwhelming majority who want to live in a decent, fair, diverse and prosperous society?

"Boris Johnson thought he was being smart holding this election in a dark and cold December. He thinks you won't go out to vote. He thinks you won't go out to campaign.

"Even if the rivers freeze over, we're going out to bring about real change for the many not the few. All we need to keep us warm is the thought of removing Boris Johnson's Conservatives from government—and the chance to rebuild and transform our country."

(Susan Price is an activist with the Socialist Alliance, a socialist political party of Australia.)

Haste and Brinkmanship Inadvisable in Reaching a Naga Accord

Sandeep Pandey, Babloo Loitongbam and Meera Sanghamitra

Thuingaleng Muivah, the supreme leader of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) says that Nagaland may be weaker in material sense but it is strong in politics. No wonder, the organisation which started off as an insurgent group was able to engage the Government of India in a process of dialogue for 22 long years after a ceasefire agreement in 1997, now as a parallel government of which Muivah is the Ato Kilonser or Prime Minister. Even after the aspirations of people of Jammu and Kashmir of maintaining a certain degree of autonomy with a separate Constitution and a flag have been quashed by the Narendra Modi government by its decision on 5th August, 2019, Muivah continues to keep alive his vision for a shared sovereignty and enduring relationship of peaceful co-existence with India, inked in the framework

agreement signed on 3rd August, 2015 in the presence of Narendra Modi. He has good reasons to be hopeful. Unlike J&K no instrument of accession was signed by then popular Naga rebel leader Angami Zapu Phizo with the Government of India. Nagaland was first made part of Assam by British and then by independent India by brute force. Nagas resisted both times and there was much violence from all sides. But Nagas never surrendered and believe that the ongoing dialogue will result in a political solution. Muivah asserts that Nagaland has never been under any foreign rule either by consent or by conquest. Nagas had told the British that they should not be left to the mercy of independent India, a sentiment that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had interestingly expressed related to the Dalits, at the time of India's independence.

Nehru sent the army into

Nagaland, against the wishes of Mahatma Gandhi, which faced resistance by Nagas armed initially with only bows, arrows, spears and some rifles left behind by the receding Japanese forces during World War II. According to Muivah, Nehru never respected the Nagas as human beings. It was much later when P.V. Narsimha Rao met with Isak and Muivah in Paris, that he agreed that dialogue will be held without any pre-condition, at the highest level of PM and outside India. He also acknowledged the unique history of Nagas. Subsequently, Indian PM Deve Gowda met Isak and Muivah in Bangkok. He wanted Nagas to accept the Indian Constitution, which was not agreeable to them and Muivah suggested that the two parties should go their own separate ways. Two years later the Government of India admitted that Nagas were never formally under Indian rule and a

unique solution to their problem was required. It was only after this that the concept of shared sovereignty was floated. After talks with PM Atal Behari Vajpayee in Amsterdam, the NSCN (IM) leadership decided to move back to India and continue the process of dialogue with Manmohan Singh government. Narendra Modi government declared with much fanfare that an agreement had been reached with NSCN (IM) leadership only to encounter the roadblock of demand for a separate Constitution and flag for Nagaland. Having taken away the Constitution of J&K, which incidentally mentioned that J&K was integral part of India, and its flag as part of the narrative of One Nation, One Constitution, the Bhartiya Janata Party led government is in a bind with respect to the Naga demand. But Muivah is resolute about the demand for a separate constitution and flag which he describes as core issues.

The response of the interlocutor in the dialogue process, now Governor of Nagaland, R.N. Ravi has been to bring on board another stakeholder since 2017, Naga National Political Groups, a conglomerate of seven organisations. This is an attempt to counterbalance NSCN (IM), which incidentally was the only Naga group with which he signed the framework agreement in 2015. He should learn from history that when the government reached an agreement with Naga People's Convention leaving out the Naga National Council of Phizo, it didn't resolve the issue then. If NSCN (IM) is cold shoulderd, the chances are that it'll slip back into insurgency with a good possibility that NSCN (Khaplang), presently dormant in Myanmar, may also get reactivated. From the J&K experience, even though the government is still not willing to admit its mistake, it should know that imposing any decision against the wishes of people will not help solve any problem. Contrary

to government's claim of total integration of J&K with India, the alienation is now complete.

The J&K kind of solution is untenable. The violence by the state, imposition of Armed Forces Special Powers Act and counter-violence by the insurgent groups is an unequal terrain, which has been a site for major and incessant human rights violations, as Northeast has a direct experience of it. This is a cost we can ill-afford.

Instead of making a separate constitution and a flag a prestige or ideological issue, it'll be better if the government concentrated on thrashing out the intricacies of the constitution which NSCN (IM) has worked out in detail. NSCN (IM) envisions a governance structure in the form of a pan Naga apex tribal body Hoho for a period of six years with representatives from each village and Regional Territorial Councils for Naga areas in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, having realised that it may not be possible to integrate Naga inhabited areas in these three states with present Nagaland into a greater Nagalim. Already, Coordination Committee on Manipur Integrity has given a call to people of Manipur to resist a final Naga Accord if it challenges the territorial integrity, economy, cultural practices and administrative setup of Manipur.

The government should not rush into a solution by declaring deadlines to ensnare itself like in J&K but should patiently involve all stakeholders from within and outside the state of Nagaland without marginalizing NSCN (IM) and evolve towards a solution with peaceful dialogue process to the satisfaction of all. NSCN (IM) must acknowledge that even though it may have been the only force to reckon with in the beginning, there are now others whose sensitivities will have to be kept in mind. For example, Kukis, another tribe,

engaged in fierce tussle with Nagas in Manipur hills are unlikely to accept Naga dominance over their areas. Lammingthang Kipgen, President of an organisation of Thodous, a Kuki community, has expressed his apprehension to the interlocutor for Indo-Kuki talks.

While it is likely that groups within and outside Nagaland are being projected at this time by the government to blunt the edge of NSCN (IM) demands, it is also a fact that societies like Manipur are an ethnically plural society which have withstood the test of time for many millennia. They are unlikely to acquiesce to any arrangement to part with their resources and polity at the exclusion of other stakeholders in their society. The government and NSCN (IM) must be completely transparent in their approach and must take into confidence all genuine political formations, civil society and ethnic groups co-habiting the geographical area in which a collective polity has evolved over time.

There was a time when Naga leaders were impatient and were willing to go back to Europe leaving the dialogue process open ended and now the Government seems to be in some kind of urgency. Narendra Modi government would do well to resist the temptation of self-congratulatory preposterous grandeur in deciding the fate of Nagaland without culmination of proper consultations. In the name of an accord if the fragile ethnic balance of the region, which has a history of violence, is not handled sensitively it can potentially lead to an ethnic implosion.

(Sandeep Pandey is associated with the Socialist Party (India). Meera Sanghamitra is with the National Alliance of People's Movements. Babloo Loitongbam is a human rights activist from Manipur.)

MUMBAI KAMGAR MADHYAWARTI GRAHAK SAHAKARI SANSTHA MARYADIT
(Multistate Consumer Co-operative Society)

APNA BAZARTM
CO-OP

106-A, Govindaji Keni Road, Naigaon, Dadar (E), Mumbai - 400 014.

Tel. :- 24195200, Fax :- 24157497

(ISO 9001-2015 Certified)

Quality and Trustworthiness means 'Apna Bazar'

Our Features

- ◆ 70 years-old proud feeling customer service
- ◆ All Departments & Branches are Computerized.
- ◆ The multi-state consumer co-operative organization in India
- ◆ Customer service in Maharashtra and Gujarat
- ◆ 8 Department Stores and 15 food stores and 1 medical store
- ◆ Annual Turnover of Rs.115 Crore
- ◆ 30 million loyal customers
- ◆ Four Times winner of 'Jamnalal Bajaj Uchit Vyavahar Puraskar' (1989, 2001, 2013 & 2016)
- ◆ 'Global Achievers Award for Business Leadership' awarded by Economic Development Forum (2012)
- ◆ 'Award of Excellence' awarded by National Cooperative Union of India (2013)
- ◆ 'Sahakar Gaurav Puraskar' Awarded by Mumbai District Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. (2015)

Health service :

- ◆ Dadasaheb Sarfare Health Center and Clinical Laboratory at Apna Bazar Naigaon

Social Service :

- ◆ 10% Discount to Customers on purchase of Medical items (Drugs)
- ◆ Festivals wise various schemes for the customers
- ◆ Special programme for women
- ◆ Various programme for customer awareness

Apna Bazar for All :

- 1) Various concessions (discount) on purchases
- 2) The place 'of surety for quality goods
- 3) Saving time and money
- 4) Special discounts in festivals
- 5) Free Home Delivery Service
- 6) 'Apna Gift Voucher' to present the Gift.
- 7) 'A.C. Banquet Hall' at Apna Bazar Naigaon & Apna Bazar Charkop
- 8) Shopping by Sodexo Pass coupons, Ticket Restaurant coupons, Bank Cards, PayTM, Mobikwik etc.

Apna Bazar - Means Adorable, Pleasant, Noble and Affectionate services

Yours in Co-operation

Shripad Phatak

Anil Gangar

Dnyandeo Dalvi, Santosh Sarfare

S. T. Kajale

Vishwanath Malushte, Sandhya Kawali

Chairman

Vice Chairman

Executive Committee Members

Chief Executive

Directors :- Ashwin Upadhyay, Nilesh Vaidya, Narendra Bhurke, Nitin Anerao, Jagdish Nalawade, Pandurang Salvi, Chandrakant Sogale, Lavkumar Bande, Anil Thakur, Sharad Phatak, Sarika Salunke, Amul Birwatkar, Renuka Savant, Bhimsen Acharekar



“We are, what we repeatedly do,
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”

Aristotle



Taj Palace & Towers - Mumbai



Bombay Stock Exchange - Fort, Mumbai



Forum Atmosphere - Kolka



J.K. House (Raymond)
Breach Candy, Mumbai

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING /
REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF :

- ✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)
- ✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)
- ✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.

Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi

Vol. 74 No. 43
November 17, 2019

**What the Ayodhya Judgment Means
for the Future of the Republic**
Siddharth Varadarajan

**9 Million Jobs Lost in 6 Years,
a First in Indian History**
Sinking MGNREGA
Subodh Varma

Dangerous Agreement to Sign
Prabhat Patnaik

**Thiruvalluvar in Saffron, Strong
Backlash in Tamil Nadu**
Bharathy Singaravel

The Coup in Bolivia: Five Lessons
Atilio Borón

**After Evo, the Lithium Question
Looms Large in Bolivia**
Vijay Prashad

**Lula is Free: Can Socialism Be
Restored?**

Ana Paula Vargas and Vijay Prashad

**The Greatest Scam in History: How
the Energy Companies Took Us All**
Naomi Oreskes

Editor : G. G. Parikh

Associate Editor : Neeraj Jain

Managing Editor : Guddi

Editorial Board :
B. Vivekanandan, Qurban Ali
Anil Nauriya, Sonal Shah
Amarendra Dhaneshwar,
Sandeep Pandey

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : janataweekly@gmail.com
Website: www.janataweekly.org

Ayodhya Verdict: Judges Missed Chance to Speak With Courage

Apoorvanand

That unanimity hurt. It did. One had hoped, or wished to have a hope, that there would be a chink in the armour somewhere. An ambiguity. The absence of it—the full glare of a “unanimous” majoritarianism—came like a stab in the heart of the idea of India.

To be frank, there was not much expectation from the top court after it had sped up the NRC process and delayed the hearing of petitions over the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir’s special status. When we saw the spirit behind a habeas corpus petition extinguished before our eyes, we should have realised that not much could be expected.

Yet, people kept thinking that there would be a voice within, which would represent that “little voice” of the Mahatma. With the courage to speak gently to noise. That would be the lifeline which India’s drowning secularism would hold on to. We were mistaken.

Unanimously, it was decided that whatever the facts are, when it comes to the “balance of probabilities”, the Hindu side should win. Notwithstanding the fact that it could not prove its exclusive possession of the land, that the existence of mosque was indisputable, that

Muslims had continued to offer namaz at the mosque till 1949, that the mosque was desecrated by an illegal act that year in which idols of Hindu deities were smuggled into its innermost part, that the mosque was demolished through a violent and illegal act in 1992.

Notwithstanding all that, which the learned bench itself records, it felt compelled, when it came to the “balance of probabilities”, to make a choice. And that was made. To do that, the court asked the Muslims what were they doing before 1857. Though they opined that there was a mosque there, and the court also accepts this, the five judges declared that the Muslims could not provide them conclusive evidence of their exclusive possession of the inner courtyard before 1857.

All we need do is read this part of the 1,045 page judgment to understand what the court is arguing:

The Hindus and the Muslims have contested claims to the offering worship within the three domed structure in the inner courtyard. The assertion by the Hindus of their entitlement to offer worship inside has been contested by the Muslims.

As regards the inner courtyard, there is evidence on a preponderance

of probabilities to establish worship by the Hindus prior to the annexation of Oudh by the British in 1857. The Muslims have offered no evidence to indicate that they were in exclusive possession of the inner structure prior to 1857 since the date of the construction in the sixteenth century.

After the setting up of the grill-brick wall, the structure of the mosque continued to exist and there is evidence to indicate that namaz was offered within its precincts. The report of the Waqf Inspector of December 1949 indicates that Muslims were being obstructed from free and unimpeded access to the mosque for the purposes of offering namaz. However, there is evidence to show that namaz was offered in the structure of the mosque and the last Friday namaz performed was on 16 December 1949. The exclusion of the Muslims from worship and possession took place on the intervening night.

“Preponderance of probabilities” vs a standing mosque. What would you decide? Muslims are asked to furnish proof of “exclusive possession”, but the Hindu claim is accepted on the basis of “preponderance of probabilities”.

When we say probability, the other words that immediately flash before us are chance, likelihood, possible. So, when does a probability turn into certainty?

Muslims need to be precise, exact, indisputable and unambiguous, whereas in the case of Hindus, probability—that too a “preponderance” of it—would suffice.

When a mosque is there, how is it usually used? When you accept that I continue to use it till 1949 for my worship, why do you ask me

to prove whether I had “exclusive possession” of the inner courtyard “before 1857” or not?

As a retired Supreme Court judge, Justice A.K. Ganguly, has rightly observed, the court had no business to turn its head so hard into the far recesses of history. That is the land of probabilities, conjectures, where courts should not venture. There is no conclusive evidence there.

But we all know that it was difficult for the court to adjudicate the matter in any other manner, given the political circumstances. So we see our commentators sympathising

with the burden on the bench. That it is impossible to maintain balance under such heavy strain and that the balance has to tilt one way or the other. They ask for understanding.

Even in these times of balancing, the choice before us is to either live a lie or to step out of the web of lies. When a consensus is being crafted, even one voice can break it. The fact that we could not hear this voice in the court does not mean we will not hear it elsewhere. It is there that India will live, hopefully.

(Apoorvanand teaches at Delhi University.)

What the Ayodhya Judgment Means for the Future of the Republic

Siddharth Varadarajan

The Supreme Court’s verdict in the Ayodhya matter has settled the ‘title suit’ in favour of the main Hindu plaintiff—essentially the Vishwa Hindu Parishad—but it is clear that there is much more at stake for the country than the ownership of 2.77 acres of land on which a mosque stood for 470 years until it was demolished in an act of political vandalism unparalleled in the modern world.

The Supreme Court has undone some of the dangerous ‘faith-based’ logic of the high court and acknowledged the manner in which Ram idols were planted in the mosque was illegal and that the mosque’s demolition in 1992 was “an egregious violation of the rule of law”. Yet, the forces responsible for the demolition now find themselves in legal possession of the land. The site will be managed by a trust that the government will set up. And the

government and ruling party have in their ranks individuals who have actually been chargesheeted for conspiring to demolish the mosque.

For more than a quarter of a century, ‘Ayodhya’ has served as a metaphor for the politics of revanchism—one which combines the deployment of a manufactured mythology around the figure of Rama, with mob violence, majoritarianism and a spectacular contempt for the rule of law.

The aim of this politics is to upend the republic with its premise of equality for all citizens and replace it with a system in which India’s religious minorities, to begin with, and then other marginalised sections of the population, are forced to live in perpetual insecurity.

If India’s democratic institutions had been robust, the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992 should have permanently

ended this politics instead of merely marking the end of its first phase. Today, that politics has reached a new high water mark, presumably not its final one given the fillip a large section of the national media and now the Supreme Court have given it. Armed with the court's imprimatur, the Sangh parivar will do its best to erase the taint of mob justice—which has been the strength but also the weakness of its movement. In August, BJP leaders boasted of how they had used Article 370 to kill Article 370. Now they hope to use law to kill justice.

We can pretend all we like that the Supreme Court was only adjudicating a civil dispute. In reality, there was nothing 'civil' about what a judge on the bench had called "one of the most important cases in the world". The dispute cannot be divorced from the politics which has driven it.

The title suit in the Babri Masjid matter has been going on in one form or the other since 1949, mainly in the local courts of Faizabad, where Ayodhya is located. It took on national salience in the 1980s, thanks to the cynical politics of Lal Krishna Advani, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Rajiv Gandhi and now forgotten villains like Vir Bahadur Singh and Arun Nehru.

BJP leaders conspired to demolish the mosque on December 6, 1992 and a Congress prime minister, Narasimha Rao, allowed them to get away with the crime. So did the Supreme Court judges of the day. Twenty-seven years later, the demolition case continues to linger. Even when all the evidence is recorded and arguments made, the outcome is uncertain since it is no secret that the prosecuting agency—the Central Bureau of

Investigation—has wilfully dropped the ball.

Justice S.A. Bobde was right in observing in his interview to *India Today*—shortly after being named as the next Chief Justice of India—that there have been governments of all political persuasions in power at the Centre since the Ayodhya case first emerged in 1949. Yet the fact that the case ended up being fast-tracked at a time when the party in power today is one which openly asserts its partisanship on Ayodhya should be reason enough to worry us about happens next to the Republic. We already have a draft citizenship law which explicitly excludes Muslim refugees. A law has been passed that criminalises the abandonment of wives by Muslim men but not men of other religions. It is not a coincidence that the only part of India where the constitutional protections of liberty and free speech do not apply is a Muslim majority region, Kashmir.

Possible scenarios

While legal analysts had expected the five-judge bench to deliver a nuanced verdict that would not lend itself to shrill triumphalism by either side to the dispute, the clarity of the court's ruling in favour of the temple will boost the morale of the Sangh parivar.

The fact that the ruling party—and hence the government—is committed to the construction of a Ram temple at the site of the Babri Masjid means the path is now clear for speedy implementation of the project. The court has asked for the government to constitute a board but apart from insisting on the inclusion of a representative of the Nirmohi Akhara—the third claimant to the title suit—it does not appear

to have even sought the exclusion of individuals and organisations implicated in the 1992 demolition.

Even before the verdict, when there was a chance that court might uphold the Sunni Waqf Board's claim, there was never any question of the Babri Masjid being rebuilt at the same site. Had they won, there would have been enormous pressure on the plaintiffs to give up their claim to the land. Indeed, in the fag hours of the Supreme Court hearings, the Waqf board chairman signed on to a controversial 'mediation' proposal under which he consented to the withdrawal of the appeal against the high court judgment in exchange for assurances that no other Muslim places of worship would be taken over thereafter. The other Muslim plaintiffs immediately cried foul. The fact that the main 'Hindu' plaintiffs—essentially the Vishwa Hindu Parishad—were not even prepared to sign on to such an assurance is a sure sign that this "most important case in the world" will likely be followed by others.

The Supreme Court has asked the government to allocate five acres for the construction of a mosque at a suitable place in Ayodhya, forgetting that the case's significance was not about the availability of a mosque but whether it is permissible for anyone in India to use violence to dispossess a person or a community. Sadly, that question now appears to have been answered, implicitly, in the affirmative. Worse, the dispossession is acknowledged and 'compensated' with five acres elsewhere but those who did the dispossessing are still allowed to enjoy the benefits of their crime.

Bizarrely, the court has declared that while there was some evidence of Hindus worshipping

at the disputed site, there is no documentary evidence of namaz prior to 1857 so hence by the “balance of probabilities” it is giving the land to the Hindu side. It should be readily apparent that this logic can also be applied to other mosques which the Hindutva organisations claim. Once the Ayodhya temple has been milked of all political mileage, the Sangh will up the ante elsewhere.

None of this should surprise us since we were never dealing with a civil dispute between litigants operating on a level playing field but a naked power play. One in which the political agenda of the ‘cultural’ Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is not hidden and the biases of the Uttar Pradesh and Central governments are on open display. That is also why

the Supreme Court’s insistence on mediation was so misplaced.

Fate of criminal case

Although the apex court chose to prioritise the title suit, fast tracking it to conclusion, it is not clear how the bench intends to firewall the demolition case from its verdict on the ‘property dispute’.

In his interview to India Today, Justice Bobde denied the court was attempting to legislate on matters of faith. He agreed with the suggestion that it is a “title dispute” but added: “The only thing is, what is the character of that structure, that is one of the issues. But even that structure doesn’t exist any more.”

Shouldn’t one of the issues then also have been why “that structure”—i.e. the Babri Masjid—

“doesn’t exist any more”?

The main beneficiaries of the Supreme Court’s verdict on Saturday are organically linked to the main accused in the crime of demolishing the mosque. If the Ayodhya case is really one of the most important cases in the world, it is so because of the violence it is associated with. Can this case really be settled, then, without punishing the leaders responsible for that violence?

The five-judge bench represented an impressive array of judicial wisdom. Sadly, their judgment offers no pointers on this fundamental question.

(Siddharth Varadarajan is journalist, political analyst and academic. He is a Founding Editor of The Wire. He was earlier the Editor of The Hindu.)

9 Million Jobs Lost in 6 Years, a First in Indian History

A recent working paper published by the Centre for Sustainable Employment, Azim Premji University has contested official claims on employment, showing an “unprecedented” fall in total employment from 2011–12 to 2017–18.

Written by Santosh Mehrotra and Jajati K. Parida, the study says employment dropped by 9 million between these years—“for the first time in India’s history”.

While these are not new observations, this is perhaps the first such formal study to establish through official data that total employment is declining and a reserve army of unemployed youth (both openly unemployed and disheartened) is rising “massively”. The study also shows a trend of increasing contractualisation in both

government and private jobs.

Though the share of regular and formal employment increased marginally overall, most jobs are still being generated by micro and small units of the unorganised and private sectors (68% of the total non-farm employment during 2017–18), the study found. The share of informal jobs has increased in the public sector as well, indicating a lack of decent government jobs.

Sector-wise decline

The agricultural sector registered a decline in employment at the rate of 4.5 million per annum (about 27 million in total) during 2011–12 and 2017–18. The share of employment in the agricultural and allied sector declined from 49 to about 44%.

The labour-intensive manufacturing sector registered

a decline of 3.5 million jobs. The share of manufacturing in total employment has thus gone down from 12.6 to 12.1%—in fact, manufacturing jobs have fallen for the first time in India’s history. It’s not just a decline in growth rate but in absolute numbers too.

The authors note that, “falling manufacturing jobs is the opposite of the goal of ‘Make in India’, and the opposite of what is desirable if the process of structural transformation is to be sustained”.

There’s a slowdown in construction job growth. Non-manufacturing jobs (mostly construction) which created about 4 million jobs every year from 2004–05 to 2011–12 created only about 0.6 million per annum during 2011–12 and 2017–18.

The only sector to witness

sustained job growth (3 million per annum) was services. There has been a 17.3 million rise in regular salaried workers in this sector during 2011–12 and 2017–18. However, the quality of jobs in this sector are mostly poor.

The study says:

“While falling total and youth employment in agriculture is good news from the structural transformation point of view, falling manufacturing employment and decelerating construction employment growth are bad news for the economy, which moved up to lower middle income status just over a decade ago. To sustain the growth of income, improve standard of living, and to reduce poverty, employment opportunities in manufacturing and construction (although a transitory sector) is necessary. Because this would not only sustain the structural transformation process, it would also help sustain growth of GDP over the long run.”

Speaking to *The Wire*, Mehrotra said that the number of entrants into the labour force has been increasing since 2011–12. It was very small between 2004–05 and 2011–12 (only 2 million per annum); after that, the number has risen in the last six years to roughly 5 million per annum. At the same time, non-agricultural job growth has declined. When these facts are combined, it indicates that there is an increase in the open unemployment rate. The supply of labour is increasing while the demand for it is decreasing.

According to *The Indian Express*, this result is “in stark contrast to the recent study by Laveesh Bhandari and Amaresh Dubey, which was commissioned by the Economic Advisory Council to

the prime minister”. This study had claimed that total employment grew from 433 million in 2011–12 to 457 million in 2017–18.

The latest study by Mehrotra and Parida, however, says that employment fell from 474 million in 2011–12 to 465 million in 2017–18.

A major reason for this difference could be because the estimates for 2004–05 and 2011–12 in the study by Bhandari and Dubey (412 million and 433 million respectively) are much lower than that in Mehrotra and Parida (459 and 474). Mehrotra believes that it’s almost certainly because they have used only Usual Principal Status (UPS) and not Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status (UPSS) in their calculations.

Under UPS, a person is considered part of the labour force if s/he works for 183 days or more in a year. Under UPSS, a person who has worked even for 30 days in a year is considered employed.

However, for the 2017–18 figure, both the studies seem to have used both principal and subsidiary status as the results are very close (457 and 465 respectively).

Real wages, which were increasing from 2004–05 to 2011–12 because of job growth (Mehrotra says 7.5 million new non-agricultural jobs were being created at a time when fewer people were entering the labour force), have stagnated or fell. “We have gone back to the period of 1996–2004 in terms of real wages, they’re flat or they’ve fallen,” Mehrotra says.

Though the final conclusion can only be arrived at when the consumer expenditure survey is out, the authors’ inference is that poverty has not declined in the last six years.

Even though the latest official consumption survey is not out yet,

Himanshu, associate professor at JNU’s Centre for Economic Studies and Planning compared two Periodic Labour Force Surveys in 2014–15 and 2017–18 and found that the consumption expenditure of rural and urban Indian households has been falling. “We know from macro data that private consumption as a proportion of the GDP has actually fallen in the last 6 years, and household savings have fallen very sharply. When you put that together, it is very clear that stagnation in real wages is showing up in declining expenditure and a fall in household savings,” Mehrotra says.

The study also shows that there has been some improvement in the share of informal workers in the total workforce—it has gone down from 93% to 90.7%. Informal workers are defined as those who have no death and disability insurance and old age pension. The reasons for his decline could be due to factors like the government paying the workers’ share of EPFO contributions for three years and increase in registration of firms due under GST (which could have encouraged EPFO registration as well).

Within the organised sector, however, there is an interesting paradox—the share of those who have social security has increased in the organised sector, reversing an erstwhile trend, but the number of workers with short term contracts has also gone up.

In conclusion, the authors suggest a comprehensive employment policy combined with an industrial policy “to address agrarian transformation, boost real wages in rural areas, ensure industrial development, taking skill issues into consideration”.

Sinking MGNREGA

Subodh Varma

It would have seemed natural—indeed, imperative—that, as India grapples with a deadly slowdown, with agricultural economy growing only at around 2% and rural joblessness hovering at a shocking 8%, the government would infuse some energy in the implementation of the rural jobs guarantee scheme (MGNREGA). This would put more money in the hands of rural poor and not only help them survive this crisis but it would also give a fillip to the economy as a whole.

However, quite the reverse seems to be happening. Latest data available on the official MGNREGA website shows that till October this year, a staggering 2.51 crore households were refused work under the scheme despite having demanded it. That means 19%, or about one in five of all those who came looking for work in the scheme, were turned back. Over 13.2 crore households demanded work (which is a record in itself) as per official records while

10.71 crore were provided work.

This is the highest rate of refusal in recent years, as can be seen in the accompanying chart. In fact, the sharp increase in refusals in the current year is striking. It is almost a 33% increase over last year.

A state by state analysis shows that Andhra Pradesh (AP) and Telangana lead all other states in refusing work. In AP, some 61 lakh households were turned back, that is, 35% of all who applied. In Telangana, nearly 24 lakh refusals are recorded, 32% of all applicants.

Other states with such significant turn-backs include Haryana (28%), Bihar (26%), Karnataka (21%), Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh (20% each), Punjab (24%) and Gujarat and Rajasthan (18% each).

Funding Collapse

While Central fund releases are slightly less than usual till this time of the year, this squeeze has

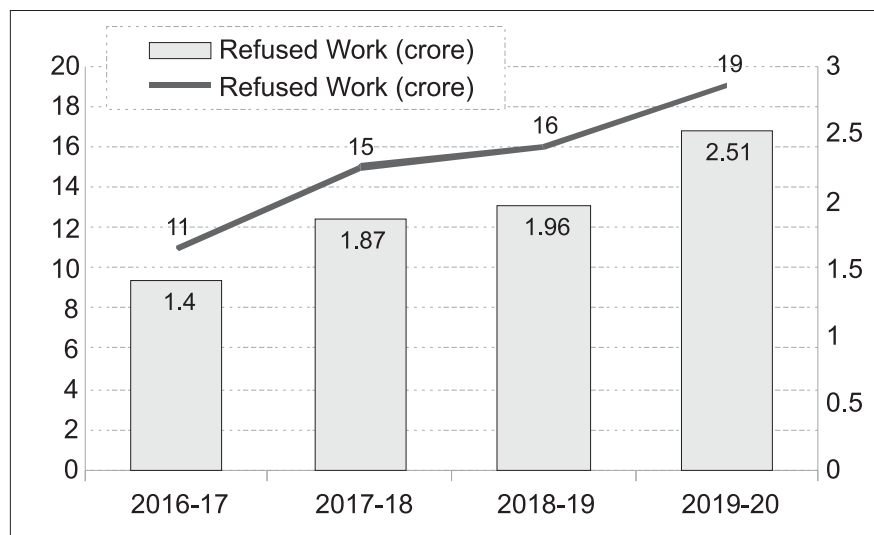
been aggravated by low releases from state governments which contribute 10% of the funds. This year, the Centre had released Rs 51,950 crore till date out of the total Central allocation of Rs 60,000 crore for MGNREGA in the Union Budget. That's about 86% of the total budget kept for the scheme. Another five months are left in the year and how the scheme is going to be implemented henceforth is anybody's guess. Remember that this year's MGNREGA allocation was Rs 1000 crore less than last year's Revised Estimate of spending. So, this year, the scheme was handicapped from the start.

But the worrying part in the financial statement till date is this: states seem to have released much less than would be expected and till date, no opening balance is being shown for any of the states. All are starting off with zero opening balance.

Last year had ended with states together in the red for about Rs 3716 crore. That means liabilities or dues amounting to that much were pending last year. This happens every year because of the tight-fisted policy of the Central government. So, this amount too would have been settled first from this year's releases, whether Central or State.

But 'zero' opening balance (OB) is bizarre. Last year, the aggregate opening balance for all states put together was a hefty Rs 2064 crore. Either there is some accounting issue, like non-submission of utilisation certificates or some other imbroglio.

Chart: Households Refused Work Under MNREGA (till Oct each year)



Unspent Funds & Pending Payments

But the real reason why money is not being spent—which is reflected in high refusal rates—seems to be that states are holding on to funds due to a general funds crunch emanating from the economic slowdown. This could be because the Centre has advised them to be tight fisted, or it could be their own thinking.

Whatever be the case, all states put together have an unspent balance of over Rs 12,546 crore and pending dues of Rs 5428 crore till date. Clearly, spending is being very tightly restricted. And, this is happening whether it's a BJP government or a Congress government or even one of the regional party's government at the state's helm.

This unfortunate state of affairs should be seen in the context of the fact that this year, precisely because of the slowdown, demand for work has increased much more. Recent floods and destruction of crops has also caused a spike in demand for MNGREGA work. Yet the govt. is failing to step up. In fact, motivated by the neoliberal dogma of squeezing government funding, less funds are being spent. This means more misery and distress for common people—and the situation will worsen in the coming months.

(Subodh Varma is a senior Indian journalist.)

Janata

is available at

www.lohiatoday.com

Dangerous Agreement to Sign

Prabhat Patnaik

On October 24–25, there were widespread peasant protests all over the country against the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) involving sixteen nations which India is currently negotiating. As negotiations near completion, such protests are escalating, with the All India Kisan Sabha planning to organise a nation-wide protest on November 4, just before the RCEP agreement is due to be signed. And the Kerala government too is organising a protest.

The sixteen nations involved in the RCEP comprise the ten ASEAN countries, and six others with each of whom the ASEAN has separate Free Trade Agreements, namely Japan, China, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and India. These sixteen countries account for nearly half of the world's population, 40 per cent of the world's production and 30 per cent of the world's trade. If the agreement is signed it will be one of the biggest such agreements. This very fact makes the “hush-hush” manner in which it is being negotiated all the more reprehensible.

Indeed the undemocratic manner of its planned genesis is quite staggering. Negotiations are being conducted in utmost secrecy; and sometime in early November, if the governments agree, then the FTA will be signed, and will become a fait accompli. The people of all these countries, including India, will not have any say whatsoever on what

befalls them on account of it.

In India's case, quite apart from the utterly undemocratic manner in which the government is taking the country into this FTA, there is an additional factor. Under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, which demarcates the domains of jurisdiction of the centre and the states, agriculture belongs to the states' domain. The RCEP, indeed any FTA of its kind, necessarily impinges on agriculture; and yet the states are not even consulted about its terms. It is a blatant and fundamental violation of the Constitutional rights of the states that the centre acts unilaterally in a sphere belonging to the states' domain.

In the United States, any such international agreement has to obtain Congressional approval, even after it has been signed by the executive, before it becomes effective; but in India, even though there is a strong legal opinion that the Indian Constitution too demands such a course, successive central governments have simply gone ahead and signed FTAs without submitting them for parliamentary approval.

In fact the FTA with the ASEAN itself had been signed by the UPA-II government in an entirely unilateral manner. The government of Kerala had major concerns then about the effect of that FTA on the producers of edible oils in the state, and an official delegation led by V.S. Achuthanandan, the chief minister at that time, had come to Delhi

This article was written before the Indian government announced that it was not joining the RCEP. It continues to be relevant, as there is enormous pressure on the government to join the trade agreement— Editor.

to express those concerns to the central government. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who met the delegation along with several of his cabinet colleagues, had given his personal assurance that Kerala would be consulted before the agreement was finally signed. Yet when the delegation arrived back in the state capital, it heard that the FTA had already been signed! The BJP government, which has scant regard for federalism anyway, has simply carried this wilful violation of the constitutional rights of the states further forward.

Even though the exact terms of the agreement are shrouded in secrecy, the peasantry has every reason to oppose it, because any such free trade agreement which has agriculture within its ambit will be necessarily anti-peasant. The prospect of subsidised dairy exports from Australia and New Zealand undercutting Indian producers has already attracted attention; and so has the prospect of cheap edible oil exports from Indonesia and Malaysia which will particularly hurt producers in Kerala.

True, the Indo-ASEAN FTA already allows such exports of edible oils into India but it also permits the imposition of tariffs; under the proposed RCEP there will be little scope for that. In fact, precisely for this reason, the prospects of other crop imports like wheat and cotton also loom large, which will have a pervasive impact on the Indian agricultural sector.

Since the agricultural sector employs nearly half the total workforce in the country, and has already been witnessing a severe crisis, which has arisen because of neoliberalism but which has been compounded by the BJP government's follies,

like demonetisation, the RCEP's potential for damaging the economy is immense.

But that is not all. There is an insistence reportedly under the RCEP on an IPR regime which will not only make it more restrictive but also make it impossible for peasants to use their own seeds without inviting legal action. The greater restrictiveness of the patent regime will certainly affect the pharmaceutical sector and makes drugs more expensive for consumers.

Such a prospect contradicts the argument usually advanced in favour of the RCEP, that it would result in a cheapening of goods to the benefit of consumers, owing to cheaper imports. Besides, this argument is exactly similar to the one advanced by the colonial regime during the days of the British Raj to justify the deindustrialisation that had occurred in India in that period. The emergence of mass unemployment and mass poverty, which had been caused by the import of cheap machine-made manufactured goods at that time had been sought to be justified by the claim that such cheap imports improved the living standards of the consumers of such goods.

But it is not just a question of asserting that as against the mass unemployment and destitution caused by cheap imports, the fact that some people will have a better living standard as a result of such cheap imports is quite inconsequential. There is a more subtle point involved here.

The destitution of the peasantry that cheap imports will bring about, will swell the reserve army of labour which will adversely affect the entire working people, by reducing their wage-bargaining strength. In

addition, it will also compound the recession that the economy is rapidly plunging into, via the multiplier effects of the reduced incomes of the peasantry and the other working people.

Those who are supposed to become better off because of cheap imports, must be persons whose money incomes remain unchanged despite the destitution of the peasantry. But if the destitution of the peasantry is going to affect the entire economy, then there will be hardly anybody among the working people with unchanged incomes. The fate of the peasantry in other words affects the people's fate at large, and its destitution affects a very wide segment of society.

True, this fact may get camouflaged under certain circumstances by other phenomena, such as the boom in the economy engendered by asset-price bubbles. Indeed it has remained camouflaged until now as the agrarian crisis has hardly impinged on the middle class; but in the current situation when the boom is over, no such camouflaging is possible, so that any further agrarian destitution will now have a pervasive effect on society, with very few being left solely as beneficiaries of cheap imports.

The RCEP moreover will affect not just the agricultural sector, but also manufacturing, where India will be flooded by imports from East Asia. Iron and steel, marine products, chemical products, electronic products and even textiles, are sectors that are worried about the effect of tariff reductions under the RCEP.

But then, some may say, if India is so uncompetitive across the spectrum, wouldn't it be better to have a shake-down by closing all

these inefficient units anyway? This question however betrays a lack of understanding of economics. If the goods produced by any society, no matter how “expensive” in terms of resources they may be, are all used by that society, then there will be a high level of employment and consumption within it. But if the people in that society demand goods other than what is produced within it, then not only will employment and output fall (unless offset by an equivalent amount of exports), but so

will consumption, with no necessary prospects of any revival. The “free trade” and “efficiency” arguments in other words are a pure ideological legacy of capitalist economics which have no general validity; the sooner we forget them the better.

So far we have only seen the unemployment-causing or destitution-causing effects of RCEP. Alongside such destitution however there will be a widening of the country’s current account deficit (which in fact is a reflection of this

destitution). The Indo–ASEAN FTA has already widened our current deficit with the ASEAN bloc; this will widen further under the RCEP, as will our deficit with China. Signing the RCEP in short will mean borrowing a larger amount (to pay for the wider current deficit) purely for the sake of causing destitution in the country!

(Prabhat Patnaik is Professor Emeritus at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.)

Thiruvalluvar in Saffron, Strong Backlash in Tamil Nadu

Bharathy Singaravel

On Saturday, November 2, the Tamil Nadu BJP posted a couplet by the legendary Tamil poet, Thiruvalluvar. The chosen verse was taken from the Kadavul Vazhthu (In Praise of the Creator) chapter of Valluvar's *Tirukkural*—the famed compilation of 1330 *kurals* (as the couplets are known). Gopalkrishna Gandhi in his 2015 translations of the text “The Tirukkural – A New English Version” interprets the verse: “Your learning’s idle, incomplete. If you haven’t placed it at the source’s feet”. The TN BJP’s Twitter handle along with quoting the original Tamil text added that the “education of those who profess atheism and spurn the faithful is pointless”. Further, it claimed that the Dravida Kazhagam (DK), the DMK and the CPI (M) were the sort of forces that Valluvar had warned against. Lastly, attached to the tweet was a picture of Valluvar dressed in saffron robes, holy ash smeared on his forehead and wearing rudraksha beads.

This is not the first time the BJP has attempted to appropriate

Tamil culture. Perhaps because of the thorough routing the party faced in Tamil Nadu during the General Elections and the unpopularity of the Prime Minister, evidenced in the black-flag protests and #GoBackModi that erupts during his visits to the state, the BJP appears to be making attempts to change their regional approach. Modi met the Chinese President Xi Jinping in Mamallapuram clad in a white veshti and shirt. He quoted the Tirukkural in Thailand. These overtures do not seem to be making much of an impression on the people.

Unsurprisingly, the tweet set off a storm of backlash. #BJPInsultsThiruvalluvar was used over 10,000 times. Thiruvalluvar has conventionally been depicted in an ascetic white robe and with no religious markings on his body. The celebrated poet who probably lived and wrote sometime between 2 BCE and 5 CE has long been a towering icon of Tamil culture. In the 1970s, Valluvar Kottam commemorating the poet was commissioned by then Chief Minister and DMK Leader,

M. Karunanidhi. Under the DMK’s auspices, the 133ft tall Thiruvalluvar Statue at Kanyakumari was finally unveiled in 2000.

Thiruvalluvar’s couplets continue to be memorised in Tamil Nadu schools. They cover a wide range of topics from the divine to love to advise for rulers. In Tamil culture, he is hardly viewed as a religious figure.

Speaking to the Indian Cultural Forum, political analyst and writer Arunan Kathiresa called the BJP’s representation “ideological fraud”. “Firstly, it needs to be noted that in Thiruvalluvar’s time, Hinduism, as we know it today, did not even exist. Jainism, Buddhism and Vedic doctrines existed” he said. “The Tirukkural was a direct opposition to Vedic doctrine. It opposes the varna system. Those in the BJP who are quoting portions to suit their representation, need to read the text and understand its essence properly.” He added, “the BJP is trying to co-opt Thiruvalluvar. They are trying to forcibly convert him to their religion. They have no great leaders

of their own, so they co-opt Sardar Patel, a Congress leader. They have no great literary figures or thinkers of their own, so they try to co-opt

Thiruvalluvar. We must speak out against this betrayal of rationality and historical evidence.”

(Bharathy Singaravel is a member of the Editorial Collective of the Indian Writers Forum and a writer.)

The Coup in Bolivia: Five Lessons

Atilio Borón

The Bolivian tragedy eloquently teaches several lessons that our peoples and popular social and political forces must learn and record in their consciences forever. Here, a brief enumeration.

First, no matter how much the economy is managed in an exemplary way as the Evo government did, growth, redistribution, flow of investments are guaranteed and all macro and microeconomic indicators are improved, the right and imperialism will never accept a government that does not serve its interests.

Second, we must study the manuals published by various US agencies and their spokesmen disguised as academics or journalists to be able to perceive the offensive signals in time. These writings invariably highlight the need to destroy the reputation of the popular leader, which in specialised jargon is called character assassination as a thief, corrupt, dictator or ignorant. This is the task entrusted to social communicators, self-proclaimed as “independent journalists”, who in favor of their quasi-monopoly control of the media drill the brains of the population with such defamations, accompanied, in the case at hand, by messages of hate directed against native peoples and the poor in general.

Third, once the above has come, it is the turn of the political leadership and the economic elites claiming “a change”, ending Evo’s “dictatorship”

that, as the unrepresentable Vargas Llosa wrote a few days ago, that is a “demagogue who wants eternalise in power.” I suppose he will be toasting with champagne in Madrid seeing the images of the fascist hordes looting, burning, chaining journalists to a post, shaving a woman mayor and painting her in red and destroying the minutes of the last election to fulfill the gift mandate Mario and free Bolivia from an evil demagogue. I mention his case because it has been and is the immoral standard bearer of this vile attack, of this limitless felony that crucifies popular leaderships,

Fourth: the “security forces” enter the scene. In this case we are talking about institutions controlled by numerous agencies, military and civil, of the United States government. They train them, arm them, do joint exercises and educate them politically. I had the opportunity to verify it when, at the invitation of Evo, I inaugurated a course on “Anti-imperialism” for senior officers of the three forces. On that occasion I was embarrassed by the degree of penetration of the most reactionary American slogans inherited from the Cold War era and by the undisputed irritation caused by the fact that an indigenous was president of his country. What those “security forces” did was to withdraw from the scene and leave the field free for the uncontrolled performance of the fascist hordes—such as those that

acted in Ukraine, in Libya, in Iraq, in Syria to overthrow, or try to do so in the latter case, annoying leaders for the empire—and thus intimidate the population, the militancy and the government figures themselves. That is, a new socio-political figure: military coup “by omission”, letting the reactionary gangs, recruited and financed by the right, impose their law. Once the terror reigns and before the defenselessness of the government the outcome was inevitable.

Fifth, security and public order should never have been entrusted in Bolivia to institutions such as the police and the army, colonised by imperialism and its lackeys of the indigenous right. When the offensive against Evo was launched, a policy of appeasement and not responding to the provocations of the fascists was chosen. This served to embolden them and increase the bet: first, demand ballot; later, fraud and new elections; next, elections but without Evo (as in Brazil, without Lula); later, resignation of Evo; finally, given his reluctance to accept blackmail, sow terror with the complicity of police and military and force Evo to resign. From manual, all from manual. Will we learn these lessons?

(Atilio A. Borón is a researcher and writer on politics, economics, international relations and imperialism, with a primary focus on Latin America and the Caribbean.)

After Evo, the Lithium Question Looms Large in Bolivia

Vijay Prashad

Bolivia's President Evo Morales was overthrown in a military coup on November 10. He is now in Mexico. Before he left office, Morales had been involved in a long project to bring economic and social democracy to his long-exploited country. It is important to recall that Bolivia has suffered a series of coups, often conducted by the military and the oligarchy on behalf of transnational mining companies. Initially, these were tin firms, but tin is no longer the main target in Bolivia. The main target is its massive deposits of lithium, crucial for the electric car.

Over the past 13 years, Morales has tried to build a different relationship between his country and its resources. He has not wanted the resources to benefit the transnational mining firms, but rather to benefit his own population. Part of that promise was met as Bolivia's poverty rate has declined, and as Bolivia's population was able to improve its social indicators. Nationalisation of resources combined with the use of its income to fund social development has played a role. The attitude of the Morales government toward the transnational firms produced a harsh response from them, many of them taking Bolivia to court.

Over the course of the past few years, Bolivia has struggled to raise investment to develop the lithium reserves in a way that brings the wealth back into the country for its people. Morales' Vice President Álvaro García Linera had said that lithium is the "fuel that will feed the world." Bolivia was unable to make deals with Western transnational firms; it decided to partner with Chinese firms. This made the

Morales government vulnerable. It had walked into the new Cold War between the West and China. The coup against Morales cannot be understood without a glance at this clash.

Clash with Transnational Firms

When Evo Morales and the Movement for Socialism took power in 2006, the government immediately sought to undo decades of theft by transnational mining firms. Morales' government seized several of the mining operations of the most powerful firms, such as Glencore, Jindal Steel & Power, Anglo-Argentine Pan American Energy, and South American Silver (now TriMetals Mining). It sent a message that business as usual was not going to continue.

Nonetheless, these large firms continued their operations—based on older contracts—in some areas of the country. For example, the Canadian transnational firm South American Silver had created a company in 2003—before Morales came to power—to mine the Malku Khota for silver and indium (a rare earth metal used in flat-screen televisions). South American Silver then began to extend its reach into its concessions. The land that it claimed was inhabited by indigenous Bolivians, who argued that the company was destroying its sacred spaces as well as promoting an atmosphere of violence.

On August 1, 2012, the Morales government—by Supreme Decree no. 1308—annulled the contract with South American Silver (TriMetals Mining), which then sought international arbitration and compensation. Canada's

government of Justin Trudeau—as part of a broader push on behalf of Canadian mining companies in South America—put an immense amount of pressure on Bolivia. In August 2019, TriMetals struck a deal with the Bolivian government for \$25.8 million, about a tenth of what it had earlier demanded as compensation.

Jindal Steel, an Indian transnational corporation, had an old contract to mine iron ore from Bolivia's El Mutún, a contract that was put on hold by the Morales government in 2007. In July 2012, Jindal Steel terminated the contract and sought international arbitration and compensation for its investment. In 2014, it won \$22.5 million from Bolivia in a ruling from Paris-based International Chamber of Commerce. For another case against Bolivia, Jindal Steel demanded \$100 million in compensation.

The Morales government seized three facilities from the Swiss-based transnational mining firm Glencore; these included a tin and zinc mine as well as two smelters. The mine's expropriation took place after Glencore's subsidiary clashed violently with miners.

Most aggressively, Pan American sued the Bolivian government for \$1.5 billion for the expropriation of the Anglo-Argentinian company's stake in natural gas producer Chaco by the state. Bolivia settled for \$357 million in 2014.

The scale of these payouts is enormous. It was estimated in 2014 that the public and private payments made for nationalisation of these key sectors amounted to at least \$1.9 billion (Bolivia's GDP was at that time \$28 billion).

In 2014, even the *Financial Times* agreed that Morales' strategy was not entirely inappropriate. "Proof of the success of Morales's economic model is that since coming to power he has tripled the size of the economy while ramping up record foreign reserves."

Lithium

Bolivia's key reserves are in lithium, which is essential for the electric car. Bolivia claims to have 70 percent of the world's lithium reserves, mostly in the Salar de Uyuni salt flats. The complexity of the mining and processing has meant that Bolivia has not been able to develop the lithium industry on its own. It requires capital, and it requires expertise.

The salt flat is about 12,000 feet (3,600 meters) above sea level, and it receives high rainfall. This makes it difficult to use sun-based evaporation. Such simpler solutions are available to Chile's Atacama Desert and in Argentina's Hombre

Muerto. More technical solutions are needed for Bolivia, which means that more investment is needed.

The nationalisation policy of the Morales government and the geographical complexity of Salar de Uyuni chased away several transnational mining firms. Eramet (France), FMC (United States) and Posco (South Korea) could not make deals with Bolivia, so they now operate in Argentina.

Morales made it clear that any development of the lithium had to be done with Bolivia's Comibol—its national mining company—and Yacimientos de Litio Bolivianos (YLB)—its national lithium company—as equal partners.

Last year, Germany's ACI Systems agreed to a deal with Bolivia. After protests from residents in the Salar de Uyuni region, Morales canceled that deal on November 4, 2019.

Chinese firms—such as TBEA Group and China Machinery Engineering—made a deal with

YLB. It was being said that China's Tianqi Lithium Group, which operates in Argentina, was going to make a deal with YLB. Both Chinese investment and the Bolivian lithium company were experimenting with new ways to both mine the lithium and to share the profits of the lithium. The idea that there might be a new social compact for the lithium was unacceptable to the main transnational mining companies.

Tesla (United States) and Pure Energy Minerals (Canada) both showed great interest in having a direct stake in Bolivian lithium. But they could not make a deal that would take into consideration the parameters set by the Morales government. Morales himself was a direct impediment to the takeover of the lithium fields by the non-Chinese transnational firms. He had to go.

After the coup, Tesla's stock rose astronomically.

(Vijay Prashad is an Indian historian, editor and journalist.)

Survival Crisis As the Most Critical Issue of Our Times

Recent Books (2019) by Bharat Dogra on Survival Crisis

1. Protecting Earth for Children - Crucial Role of Next Decade - Social Change Papers, Pages 216, Price Indian Rs. 550.
2. Earth Without Borders - One World for Protecting All, Pages 88, Rs. 250.
3. Survival Crisis - Planet in Peril - People's Response Only Way Forward – Vitasta, Hardbound, Pages 270, Rs. 850
4. Man Over Machine—A Path Towards Peace (Gandhian Perspective on this Issue)-Vitasta—Paperback, 315 pages, Rs. 495
5. Hindi book--Dharti Ki Raksha Ke Liye Nirnayak Hoga Agla Dashak, Pages 232, Rs. 350.

Earlier Books

6. One Decade to Protect Life- Justice, Equality and Peace Based Path for Resolving Urgent Survival Issues – 2015, pages 112, Rs. 220.
7. Earth History And The Next Century (Including A Plan To Link Reduction of GHG Emissions With Meeting The Basic Needs of All) – 2010, Pages 112, Rs. 100.

These books also provide the base for **Campaign for Protecting Earth Now and Its Save the Earth Decade (SED) 2020-30 Demand** (see web-site bharatdogra.in for campaign statement and catalogue of over 350 books and booklets) **E-mail-**bharatdogra1956@gmail.com **Postal address** C-27 Raksha Kunj Paschim Vihar N.Delhi-110063, India. **Phone** 011-25255303.

Other 2019 books by the author in Hindi—

8. Kathin Daur Mein Ummeed (Collection of poems and songs)- Rs.100
9. Behtar Duniya Ke Liye Azadi Ke Deewano Ki Kahani-Profiles of freedom fighters by team of four writers, Vitasta—Rs.395

Lula is Free: Can Socialism Be Restored?

Ana Paula Vargas and Vijay Prashad

Just before 5 p.m. on Friday the 8th of November, Brazil's former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva walked out of his prison in Curitiba, Brazil. Lula went to prison in April last year on a 12-year sentence. Five-hundred and eighty days of prison are now over, as the Federal Supreme Court ruled that inmates who have not yet exhausted their appeals should not be held in prison.

In addition to Lula, about 5,000 Brazilians—mostly poor and black—can be released based on the Supreme Court's decision. Many of them have not been previously afforded the presumption of innocence, and large numbers of them have been in prison without proper legal defense.

The Supreme Court verdict was not directed at Lula, but at the undemocratic nature of the judicial system that had held people in prison before they had exhausted their appeals. Lula's situation mirrored that of these thousands of other prisoners. It was as part of a judicial criticism of the unjust system that Lula was able to be free.

But as Lula walked out of his cell and into the Free Lula encampment across the road from the prison, he signaled the importance of the Free Lula (Lula Livre) campaign of international solidarity that went from Curitiba across Latin America, and indeed across the world. From the Free Lula encampment opposite his prison, comrades would hold vigils and wish him thrice a day greetings of "good morning," "good afternoon," and "good evening." On November 8, Lula was able to be

greeted not by shouts of solidarity, but in person.

The solidarity campaign drew in jurists and intellectuals, politicians and celebrities, a range of people who felt that the imprisonment of Lula was unjust. What had become very clear was that the legal mechanisms had become a political instrument of the elite to attack the left politicians and left movements. The collaboration between the government prosecutor and Judge Sérgio Moro indicates that there was a weaponisation of the law—what is known as lawfare—to prevent the Workers' Party from winning elections, and to make sure that the Brazilian elites hold power. What "Free Lula" meant was not only the freedom of Lula, but also an end to lawfare as an instrument against the people.

Lula walked out of his cell, but the case against him—a case with little evidence—remains. Popular pressure will continue to completely annul this persecution of Lula. There is little doubt the Free Lula campaign will continue to mobilise support so that the courts declare that Lula is innocent and allow him his full political rights. The Operation Lava Jato (Operation Car Wash) was not just used to put Lula in prison, but to make sure that he—who is supremely popular in Brazil—cannot run for office again.

Lula emerged as a central figure of the Brazilian people during the historic strikes of 1978 and 1979, which played a key role in ending the military dictatorship in Brazil. Lula's popularity comes

both from the positive aspects of his presidency (when his government abolished poverty and expanded educational opportunities) and from his leadership against the neoliberal and neofascist governments of Michel Temer and Jair Bolsonaro. Out of prison, Lula's voice will once more sharply turn on the hideous politics of Bolsonaro.

Over the course of the Free Lula struggle, it became clear that Lula was bigger than his political party—the Workers' Party (PT)—and even bigger than Brazil's left. He represents the Brazilian people—the people who are now struggling to maintain their homes in the favelas and in the encampments and in the settlements, struggling to hold onto the Amazon, struggling to study and heal, eat and smile.

It must be chilling for Bolsonaro to watch the television and see Lula walk confidently out of his prison and into the political domain. Elections have brought the left back to power in Argentina. The left retained power in Bolivian elections, only to be overthrown by a coup, but the people are fighting back. Even in Colombia, the left has made significant gains. Mass protests in Chile and Ecuador suggest the tide has turned in those two countries. Bolsonaro must know that the turn to the left in Brazil is imminent. The left now has its champion out on the streets.

(Ana Paula Vargas works at the Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research. Vijay Prashad is an Indian historian, editor and journalist.)

The Greatest Scam in History: How the Energy Companies Took Us All

Naomi Oreskes

It's a tale for all time. What might be the greatest scam in history or, at least, the one that threatens to take history down with it. Think of it as the climate-change scam that beat science, big time.

Scientists have been seriously investigating the subject of human-made climate change since the late 1950s and political leaders have been discussing it for nearly as long. In 1961, Alvin Weinberg, the director of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, called carbon dioxide one of the “big problems” of the world “on whose solution the entire future of the human race depends.” Fast-forward nearly 30 years and, in 1992, President George H.W. Bush signed the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), promising “concrete action to protect the planet.”

Today, with Puerto Rico still recovering from Hurricane Maria and fires burning across California, we know that did not happen. Despite hundreds of scientific reports and assessments, tens of thousands of peer-reviewed scientific papers, and countless conferences on the issue, man-made climate change is now a living crisis on this planet. Universities, foundations, churches, and individuals have indeed divested from fossil fuel companies and, led by a 16-year-old Swedish girl, citizens across the globe have taken to the streets to express their outrage. Children have refused to go to school on Fridays to protest the potential loss of their future. And if you need a measure of how long some of us have been at this, in December, the Conference of Parties to the

UNFCCC will meet for the 25th time.

Scientists working on the issue have often told me that, once upon a time, they assumed, if they did their jobs, politicians would act upon the information. That, of course, hasn't happened. Anything but, across much of the planet. Worse yet, science failed to have the necessary impact in significant part because of disinformation promoted by the major fossil-fuel companies, which have succeeded in diverting attention from climate change and successfully blocking meaningful action.

Making Climate Change Go Away

Much focus has been put on ExxonMobil's history of disseminating disinformation, partly because of the documented discrepancies between what that company said in public about climate change and what its officials said (and funded) in private. Recently, a trial began in New York City accusing the company of misleading its investors, while Massachusetts is prosecuting ExxonMobil for misleading consumers as well.

If only it had just been that one company, but for more than 30 years, the fossil-fuel industry and its allies have denied the truth about anthropogenic global warming. They have systematically misled the American people and so purposely contributed to endless delays in dealing with the issue by, among other things, discounting and disparaging climate science, mispresenting scientific findings, and attempting to discredit climate

scientists. These activities are documented in great detail in *How Americans Were Deliberately Misled about Climate Change*, a report I recently co-authored, as well as in my 2010 book and 2014 film, *Merchants of Doubt*.

A key aspect of the fossil-fuel industry's disinformation campaign was the mobilisation of “third-party allies”: organisations and groups with which it would collaborate and that, in some cases, it would be responsible for creating.

In the 1990s, these allied outfits included the Global Climate Coalition, the Cooler Heads Coalition, Informed Citizens for the Environment and the Greening Earth Society. Like ExxonMobil, such groups endlessly promoted a public message of denial and doubt: that we weren't really sure if climate change was happening; that the science wasn't settled; that humanity could, in any case, readily adapt at a later date to any changes that did occur; and that addressing climate change directly would wreck the American economy. Two of these groups—Informed Citizens for the Environment and the Greening Earth Society—were, in fact, AstroTurf organisations, created and funded by a coal industry trade association but dressed up to look like grassroots citizens' action organisations.

Similar messaging was pursued by a network of think-tanks promoting free market solutions to social problems, many with ties to the fossil-fuel industry. These included the George C. Marshall Institute, the Cato Institute, the Competitive Enterprise Institute,

the American Enterprise Institute and the Heartland Institute. Often their politically motivated contrarian claims were presented in formats that make them look like the scientific reports whose findings they were contradicting.

In 2009, for instance, the Cato Institute issued a report that precisely mimicked the format, layout and structure of the government's US National Climate Assessment. Of course, it made claims thoroughly at odds with the actual report's science. The industry also promoted disinformation through its trade associations, including the American Legislative Exchange Council, the American Petroleum Institute, the US Chamber of Commerce, the National Black Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers.

Both think-tanks and trade organisations have been involved in personal attacks on the reputations of scientists. One of the earliest documented was on climate scientist Benjamin Santer at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory who showed that the observed increase in global temperatures could not be attributed to increased solar radiation. He served as the lead author of the Second Assessment Report of the UN's prestigious Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, responsible for the 1995 conclusion that "the balance of evidence suggests a discernible human impact on the climate system." Santer became the target of a vicious, arguably defamatory attack by physicists from the George C. Marshall Institute and the Global Climate Coalition, who accused him of fraud. Other climate scientists, including Michael Mann, Jonathan Overpeck, Malcolm

Hughes, Ray Bradley, Katharine Hayhoe and, I should note, myself, have been subject to harassment, investigation, hacked emails, and politically motivated freedom-of-information attacks.

How to Play Climate Change for a Fool

When it came to industry disinformation, the role of third-party allies was on full display at the House Committee on Oversight hearings on climate change in late October. As their sole witness, the Republicans on that committee invited Mandy Gunasekera, the founder and president of Energy45, a group whose purpose, in its own words, is to "support the Trump energy agenda."

Energy45 is part of a group known, bluntly enough, as the CO2 Coalition and is a perfect example of what I've long thought of as zombie denialism in which older players spouting industry arguments suddenly reappear in new forms. In this case, in the 1990s and early 2000s, the George C. Marshall Institute was a leader in climate-change disinformation. From 1974–1999, its director, William O'Keefe, had also been the executive vice president and later CEO of the American Petroleum Institute. The Marshall Institute itself closed in 2015, only to re-emerge a few years later as the CO2 Coalition.

The comments of Republican committee members offer a sense of just how deeply the climate-change disinformation campaign is now lodged in the heart of the Trump administration and congressional Republicans as 2019 draws to an end and the planet visibly heats. Consider just six of their "facts":

1) *The misleading claim that climate change will be "mild and manageable."* There is no scientific evidence to support this. On the contrary, literally hundreds of scientific reports over the past few decades, including those US National Climate Assessments, have affirmed that any warming above 2 degrees Centigrade will lead to grave and perhaps catastrophic effects on "health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth." The UN's IPCC has recently noted that avoiding the worst impacts of global warming will "require rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy... infrastructure... and industrial systems."

Recent events surrounding Hurricanes Sandy, Michael, Harvey, Maria and Dorian, as well as the devastating wildfire at the ironically named town of Paradise, California, in 2018 and the fires across much of that state this fall, have shown that the impacts of climate change are already part of our lives and becoming unmanageable. Or if you want another sign of where this country is at this moment, consider a new report from the Army War College indicating that "the Department of Defense (DoD) is precariously unprepared for the national security implications of climate change-induced global security challenges." And if the Pentagon isn't prepared to manage climate change, it's hard to imagine any part of the US government that might be.

2) *The misleading claim that global prosperity is actually being driven by fossil fuels.* No one denies that fossil fuels drove the Industrial Revolution and, in doing so, contributed substantively to

rising living standards for hundreds of millions of people in Europe, North America and parts of Asia. But the claim that fossil fuels are the essence of global prosperity today is, at best, a half-truth because what is at stake here isn't the past but the future. Disruptive climate change fueled by greenhouse gas emissions from the use of oil, coal and natural gas now threatens both the prosperity that parts of this planet have already achieved and future economic growth of just about any sort.

3) A misleading claim that fossil fuels represent “cheap energy.” Fossil fuels are not cheap. When their external costs are included—that is, not just the price of extracting, distributing and profiting from them, but what it will cost in all our lives once you add in the fires, extreme storms, flooding, health effects and everything else that their carbon emissions into the atmosphere will bring about—they couldn't be more expensive. The International Monetary Fund estimates that the cost to consumers above and beyond what we pay at the pump or in our electricity bills already comes to more than \$5 trillion dollars annually. That's trillion, not billion. Put another way, we are all paying a massive, largely unnoticed subsidy to the oil, gas and coal industry to destroy our civilisation. Among other things, those subsidies already “damage the environment, cause... premature deaths through local air pollution, and exacerbate congestion and other adverse side effects of vehicle use.”

4) A misleading claim about poverty and fossil fuels. That fossil fuels are the solution to the energy needs of the world's poor

is a tale being heavily promoted by ExxonMobil, among others. The idea that ExxonMobil is suddenly concerned about the plight of the global poor is, of course, laughable or its executives wouldn't be planning (as they are) for significant increases in fossil-fuel production between now and 2030, while downplaying the threat of climate change. As Pope Francis, global justice leader Mary Robinson and former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon—as well as countless scientists and advocates of poverty reduction and global justice—have repeatedly emphasised, climate change will, above all, hurt the poor. It is they who will first be uprooted from their homes (and homelands); it is they who will be migrating into an increasingly hostile and walled-in world; it is they who will truly feel the heat, literal and figurative, of it all. A fossil-fuel company that cared about the poor would obviously not be committed, above all else, to pursuing a business model based on oil and gas exploration and development. The cynicism of this argument is truly astonishing.

Moreover, while it's true that the poor need affordable energy, it is not true that they need fossil fuels. More than a billion people worldwide lack access (or, at least, reliable access) to electricity, but many of them also lack access to an electricity grid, which means fossil fuels are of little use to them. For such communities, solar and wind power are the only reasonable ways to go, the only ones that could rapidly and affordably be put in place and made available.

5) Misleading assertions about the costs of renewable energy. The cheap fossil fuel narrative is regularly coupled with misleading

assertions about the allegedly high costs of renewable energy. According to *Bloomberg News*, however, in two-thirds of the world, solar is already the cheapest form of newly installed electricity generation, cheaper than nuclear, natural gas or coal. Improvements in energy storage are needed to maximise the penetration of renewables, particularly in developed countries, but such improvements are happening quickly. Between 2010 and 2017, the price of battery storage decreased a startling 79% and most experts believe that, in the near future, many of the storage problems can and will be solved.

Science Isn't Enough

And by the way, when it comes to the oil companies, that's just to start down a far longer list of misinformation and false claims they've been peddling for years. In our 2010 book, *Merchants of Doubt*, Erik Conway and I showed that the strategies and tactics used by Big Energy to deny the harm of fossil-fuel use were, in many cases, remarkably similar to those long used by the tobacco industry to deny the harm of tobacco use—and this was no coincidence. Many of the same PR firms, advertising agencies and institutions were involved in both cases.

The tobacco industry was finally prosecuted by the Department of Justice, in part because of the ways in which the individual companies coordinated with each other and with third-party allies to present false information to consumers. Through congressional hearings and legal discovery, the industry was pegged with a wide range of activities it funded to mislead the American people. Something similar

has occurred with Big Energy and the harm fossil fuels are doing to our lives, our civilisation, our planet.

Still, a crucial question about the fossil-fuel industry remains to be fully explored: Which of its companies have funded the activities of the trade organisations and other third-party allies who deny the facts about climate change? In some cases, we already know the answers. In 2006, for instance, the Royal Society of the United Kingdom documented ExxonMobil's funding of 39 organisations that promoted "inaccurate and misleading" views of climate science. The Society was able to identify \$2.9 million spent to that end by that company in the year 2005 alone. That, of course, was just one year and clearly anything but the whole story.

Nearly all of these third-party allies are incorporated as 501(c)(3) institutions, which means they must be non-profit and nonpartisan. Often they claim to be involved in education (though mis-education would be the more accurate term). But they are clearly also involved in supporting an industry—Big Energy—that couldn't be more for-profit and they have done many things to support what could only be called a partisan political agenda as well. After all, by its own admission, Energy45, to take just one example, exists to support the "Trump Energy Agenda."

I'm an educator, not a lawyer, but as one I can say with confidence that the activities of these organisations are the opposite of educational. Typically, the Heartland Institute, for instance, has explicitly targeted schoolteachers with disinformation. In 2017, the institute sent a booklet to more than 200,000 of them,

repeating the oft-cited contrarian claims that climate science is still a highly unsettled subject and that, even if climate change were occurring, it "would probably not be harmful." Of this booklet, the director of the National Center for Science Education said, "It's not science, but it's dressed up to look like science. It's clearly intended to confuse teachers." The National Science Teaching Association has called it "propaganda" and advised teachers to place their copies in the recycling bin.

Yet, as much as we know about the activities of Heartland and other third-party allies of the fossil-fuel industry, because of loopholes in our laws we still lack basic information about who has funded and sustained them. Much of the funding at the moment still qualifies as "dark money." Isn't it time for citizens to demand that Congress investigate this network, as it and the Department of Justice once investigated the tobacco industry and its networks?

ExxonMobil loves to accuse me of being "an activist." I am, in fact, a teacher and a scholar. Most of the time, I'd rather be home working on my next book, but that increasingly seems like less of an option when Big Energy's climate-change scam is ongoing and our civilisation is, quite literally, at stake. When citizens are inactive, democracy fails—and this time, if democracy fails, as burning California shows, so much else could fail as well. Science isn't enough. The rest of us are needed. And we are needed now.

(Naomi Oreskes is professor of the history of science and affiliated professor of earth and planetary sciences at Harvard University.)

Janata Subscription

Annual Rs. : 260/-

Three Years : 750/-

Demand Draft /

Cheque

on

Mumbai Bank

in favour of

JANATA TRUST

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Grant Road (W),
Mumbai 400 007.

समाजवादी विचार संकल्प बदलाव का समाजवादी समागम

१२-१३ जुलाई, २०१९, दिल्ली
के अवसर पर प्रकाशित

संपादक : कुरबान अली

प्रकाशक : रमाशंकर सिंह

लागत मूल्य : २०० रुपये में उपलब्ध।

संपर्क : जनता ट्रस्ट - ७७३८०८२१७०

(पोस्ट का खर्च अलग)

Spectre of Fascism

Contribution Rs. 20/-

Published by

Janata Trust & Lokayat

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Grant Road (W), Mumbai 400 007



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

Ahmedabad, Hyderabad,
Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi



MKCL
Creating a Knowledge Lit World
www.mkcl.org

MS-CIT

Syllabus Available in Two Options

Job Readiness

IT Awareness



Job Readiness

Improve your
employability
and IT skills



IT Awareness

Update your digital
skills in fast
growing IT world

Gateway to New Careers

MS-CIT

Maharashtra State-Certificate In
Information Technology

www.mkcl.org/mscit

Enroll today at your nearest Authorized MKCL Center or ☎ 8411960005

Postal Registration No. MCW/275/2018-2020.

License to Post without prepayment WPP License No. MR/Tech/WPP-210/West/2019

Published on Sunday, November 17, 2019 & Posted on Wednesday, November 20, 2019 at Mumbai Patrika Channel, Mumbai GPO-1



"We are, what we repeatedly do,
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Aristotle



Taj Palace & Towers - Mumbai



Bombay Stock Exchange - Fort, Mumbai



Forum Atmosphere - Kolka



J.K. House (Raymond)
Breach Candy, Mumbai

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING /
REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF :

- ✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)
- ✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)
- ✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.

Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com

Evo Morales Overthrown, But Bolivian Socialism Will Be Victorious!

Andre Vltchek

They pledged to do it, and they did—Bolivian feudal lords, mass media magnates and other treasonous “elites”—they overthrew the government, broke hope and interrupted an extremely successful socialist process in what was once one of the poorest countries in South America.

El Alto, until recently a place of hope, with its playgrounds for children and elegant cable cars connecting the once dirt-poor communities, is now beginning to lose its native sons and daughters. Battles are raging. People are charging against the oppressors, carrying flags, dying.

One day, they will be cursed by their own nation. One day they will stand trial for sedition. One day, they will have to reveal who trained them, who employed them, who turned them into spineless beasts. One day! Hopefully soon.

A civil war, or more precisely, a war for the survival of socialism, a war against imperialism, for social justice, for indigenous people. A war against racism. A war for Bolivia, for its tremendous pre-colonial culture, for life; life as it is being perceived in the Andes, or deep in the South American rainforest, not as it is seen in Paris, Washington or Madrid.

* * *

But now, Evo Morales, legitimate President of Bolivia, elected again and again by his people, is leaving his beloved country. He is crossing the Andes, flying far, to fraternal Mexico, which extended her beautiful hand, and offered him political asylum.

This is now. The striking streets of La Paz are covered by smoke, full of soldiers, stained with blood. People are disappearing. They are being detained, beaten, and tortured. Photos of indigenous men and women, kneeling, facing walls, hands tied behind their backs, are beginning to circulate on social media.

The legacy of Evo Morales is tangible, and simple to understand.

During almost 14 years in power, all the social indicators of Bolivia went sky-high. Millions were pulled out of poverty. Millions have been benefiting from free medical care, free education, subsidised housing, improved infrastructure, a relatively high minimum wage, but also, from pride that was given back to the indigenous population, which forms the majority in this historically feudal country governed by corrupt,

Editorial Board :
B. Vivekanandan, Qurban Ali
Anil Nauriya, Sonal Shah
Amarendra Dhaneshwar,
Sandeep Pandey

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : janataweekly@gmail.com
Website: www.janataweekly.org

ruthless ‘elites’—descendants of Spanish conquistadors and European ‘gold-diggers’.

Evo Morales made the Aymara and Quechua languages official, on par with Spanish. He made people who communicate in these languages, equal to those who use the tongue of the conquerors. He elevated the great indigenous culture high, to where it belongs—making it the symbol of Bolivia, and of the entire region.

Gone was the Christian cross-kissing (look at the crosses reappearing again, all around the oh so European-looking Jeanine Añez who has grabbed power, ‘temporarily’ but still thoroughly illegally). Instead, Evo used to travel, at least once a year, to Tiwanaku, “the capital of the powerful pre-Hispanic empire that dominated a large area of the southern Andes and beyond, reached its apogee between 500 and 900 AD”, according to UNESCO. That is where he used to search for spiritual peace. That is where his identity came from.

Gone was the veneration of the Western colonialist and imperialist culture, of savage capitalism.

This was a new world, with ancient, deep roots. This is where South America has been regrouping. Here, and in Correa’s Ecuador, before Correa and his beliefs were purged and ousted by the treacherous Moreno.

And what is more: before the coup, Bolivia was not suffering from economic downfall; it was doing well, extremely well. It was growing, stable, reliable, confident.

Even the owners of big Bolivian companies, if they were to care one bit for Bolivia and its people, had countless reasons to rejoice.

* * *

But the Bolivian business community, as in so many other Latin American countries, is obsessed with the one and only ‘indicator’: “how much higher, how much above the average citizens it can get”. This is the old mentality of the colonialists; a feudal, fascist mentality.

Years ago, I was invited, in La Paz, for dinner by an old family of senators and mass media owners. With no shame, no fear, openly, they spoke, despite knowing who I was:

“We will get rid of this Indigenous bastard. Who does he think he is? If we lose millions of dollars in the process, as we did in 1973 Chile and now in Venezuela, we will still do it. Restoring our order is the priority.”

There is absolutely no way to reason with these people. They cannot be appeased, only crushed; defeated. In Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador or in Bolivia. They are like rats, like disease, proverbial symbols of fascism as in the novel *The Plague*, written by Albert Camus. They can hide, but they never fully disappear. They are always ready to invade, with zero notice, some happy city.

They are always ready to join forces with the West, because their roots are in the West. They think precisely like the European conquerors, like North American imperialists. They have double nationalities and homes scattered all over the world. Latin America for them is just a place to live, and to plunder natural resources, exploit labor. They rob here, and spend money elsewhere; educate their children elsewhere, get their surgeries done (plastic and real) elsewhere. They go to opera houses in Paris but never mingle with indigenous people at home. Even if,

by some miracle, they join the Left, it is the Western, anarcho-syndicalist Left of North America and Europe, never the real, anti-imperialist, revolutionary Left of non-European countries.

They don’t need the success of the nation. They don’t want a great, prosperous Bolivia; Bolivia for all of its citizens.

They only want prosperous corporations. They want money, profit; for themselves, for their families and clans, for their bandit group of people. They want to be revered, considered ‘exceptional’, superior. They cannot live without that gap—the great gap between them and those ‘dirty Indians’, as they call the indigenous people, when no one hears them!

* * *

And that is why, Bolivia should fight, defend itself, as it is beginning to do so right now.

If this, what is happening to Evo and his government, is “the end”, then Bolivia will be set back by decades. Entire generations will again rot alive, in desperation, in rural shacks made of clay, without water and electricity, and without hope.

The ‘elites’ are now talking about ‘peace’. Peace for whom? For them! Peace, as it was before Evo; ‘peace’ so the rich can play golf and fly for shopping to their beloved Miami and Madrid, while 90% of the population was getting kicked, humiliated, insulted. I remember that ‘peace’. The Bolivian people remember it even better.

I covered the civil war in neighboring Peru, for several years, in the 90’s, and I often crossed over into Bolivia. I wrote an entire novel about it—“Point of No Return”. It was an absolute horror. I could not

even take my local photographers to a concert or for a cup of coffee in a decent place, because they were cholos, indigenous. Nobodies in their own countries. It was apartheid. And if socialism does not return, it will be apartheid once again.

Last time I went to Bolivia, few months ago, it was totally different country. Free, confident. Stunning.

Remembering what I saw in Bolivia and Peru, quarter of a century ago, I declare, clearly and decisively: "To hell with such 'peace', proposed by elites"!!

* * *

In Paris, on the 10th November, in the middle of the Place de la Republique, a huge crowd of treasonous Bolivians gathered, demanding the resignation of Evo. I filmed and photographed these people. I wanted to have this footage in my possession, for posterity.

They live in France, and their allegiances are towards the West. Some are even of European stock, although others are indigenous.

There are millions of Cubans, Venezuelans, Brazilians, living in the US and Europe, working tirelessly for the destruction of their former motherlands. They do it in order to please their new masters, to make profit, as well as various other reasons.

It is not peace. This is terrible, brutal war, which has already taken millions of lives, in Latin America alone.

This continent has the most unequally distributed wealth on earth. Hundreds of millions are living in misery. While others, sons and daughters or Bolivian feudal scum, are attending Sorbonne and Cambridge, to get intellectually conditioned, in order to serve the West.

Each time, and I repeat each time, a decent, honest government is voted in, democratically, by the people, each time there is someone who has invented a brilliant solution and solid plan to improve this dire situation, the clock begins ticking. The years (sometimes even months) of the leader are numbered. He or she will either be killed, or ousted, or humiliated and forced out of power.

The country then goes back to, literally, shit, as has happened just recently to Ecuador (under Moreno), Argentina (under Macri) and Brazil (under Bolsonaro). The brutal status quo is preserved. The lives of tens of millions are ruined. "Peace" returns. For the Western regime and its lackeys.

Then, as a raped country screams in pain, countless international NGOs, UN agencies and funding organisations, descend upon it, suddenly determined to 'help refugees', to keep children in classrooms, to 'empower women', or to fight malnutrition and hunger.

None of this would be needed, if the elected governments which are serving their people were to be left alone; left in real peace!

Enough is enough!

Latin America is, once again, waking up. The people are outraged. The coup in Bolivia will be resisted. Macri's regime has fallen. Mexico is marching in a cautiously socialist direction. Chile wants its socialist country back; a country which was crushed by military boots in 1973.

In the name of the people, in the name of the great indigenous culture, and in the name of the entire continent, Bolivian citizens are now resisting, struggling, confronting the fascist, pro-Western forces.

Revolutionary language is once

again being used. It may be out of fashion in Paris or London, but not in South America. And that is what matters—here!

Evo did not lose. He won. His country has won. Under his leadership, it became a wonderful country; a country full of hope, a country that offered great prospects to hundreds of millions all over *La Patria Grande*. Everyone south of the Rio Grande knows it. Marvelous Mexico, which has given him asylum, knows it, too.

Evo has won. And then, he was forced out by the treasonous military, by treasonous business thugs, feudal land owners, and by Washington. Evo and his family and comrades have been brutalised by that extreme right-wing paramilitary leader—Luis Fernando Camacho—who is calling himself a Christian; brutalised by him and by his men and women.

Bolivia will fight. It will bring back its legitimate President where he belongs; to the Presidential Palace.

The plane which is taking Evo to Mexico, north, is actually taking him home, back to Bolivia. It is a big, big detour. Thousands of kilometers, and months, perhaps even years... But from the moment the airplane took off, the tremendous, epic journey back to La Paz began.

The people of Bolivia will never abandon their President.

And Evo is, forever, tied to his People.

And Long Live Bolivia, Damn It!

(Andre Vltchek is a philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist. He has covered wars and conflicts in dozens of countries. He presently resides in East Asia and the Middle East.)

The Ayodhya Verdict is Based on a Strange Feat of Logic

Markandey Katju

The recent Ayodhya verdict of the Supreme Court will go down in the annals of Indian legal history in the same category as its 1975 decision in *ADM Jabalpur vs Shivakant Shukla*—except that unlike the latter, in this one there is not a single courageous dissent.

In substance, the court has said that might is right, and has laid down a dangerous precedent sanctifying aggression.

As Pratik Sinha noted on Twitter, it is like a bully snatching a child's sandwich in school, and the teacher giving a 'balanced judgment' by allowing the bully to keep the sandwich, and giving the child a slice of dry bread as 'restitution'.

One need not go into the correctness or otherwise of the court's suggestion that the Babri Masjid was built by one of Babur's generals on a site where a non-Islamic structure pre-existed and may have been destroyed. It is true that many Hindu temples were destroyed by Muslim invaders, and mosques built on their sites, sometimes even using the material of the temple. For example, the Quwwat ul Islam mosque near the Qutub Minar in Delhi has pillars with Hindu carvings, or the Gyanvapi Masjid in Varanasi whose rear wall has Hindu carvings, or the Atala Devi Masjid in Jaunpur. But is India to move forward, or backward?

It would be a different matter if a Hindu temple is illegally demolished today and converted into a mosque. But where this was done allegedly 500 years ago, does it carry any sense to go about restoring the

structure to its Hindu original? This kind of revanchism, which is what the Vishwa Hindu Parishad sought, will be stupid, and can only polarise society, serving the political agenda of some people who wish to keep the communal fires burning for getting votes.

In paragraphs 786 and 798 of its judgment, the court has observed that the Muslim side adduced no evidence to show that from 1528, when the mosque was constructed, to 1857, it was in possession of Muslims who offered namaz there. But what evidence could possibly be adduced? There cannot be any eyewitnesses alive belonging to that period, and it is well known that in the 1857 war of independence, almost all records in Avadh were destroyed. In any case, it is common sense that when a house of worship, whether a temple, mosque, church or gurdwara is built, it is built for use, and not just for decoration.

In para 798 of the judgment it is stated, "The exclusion of Muslims from worship and possession took place on the intervening night between 22/23.12.1949 when the mosque was desecrated by installation of Hindu idols. Ouster of Muslims was not through lawful authority, and Muslims have been wrongly deprived of a mosque that had been constructed well over 450 years ago."

Despite this clear finding, the court has handed over the site to Hindus by a strange feat of logic!

In this vein, it is foolish to think that the Ayodhya verdict will bring about communal peace. Appeasement, like the Munich pact

of 1938, only whets the appetite of the aggressor. Cries of "*Abhi to yeh jhaanki hai, Kashi Mathura baaqi hai*" were heard soon after the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6th December 1992, threatening a move on Muslim sites in Varanasi and Mathura, and are bound to be repeated soon. BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj has said that the Jama Masjid in Delhi was built on a Hindu temple, which should be restored. A similar claim has been made about the Taj Mahal by BJP hot heads. Where will all this end?

To say that Ram was born at a particular spot is ridiculous. Even if he was a historical, not mythical, figure, how can anyone say where a person was born thousands of years ago?

India is passing through a terrible economic crisis, with GDP growth languishing, manufacturing and business in steep decline, unemployment at a record height (even according to the government's own National Sample Survey), an appalling level of child malnourishment (every second Indian child is malnourished according to the Global Hunger Index), 50% of Indian women anaemic, farmers suicides continuing unabated, healthcare and good education for the masses in a pitiable state, etc.

Evidently our leaders have no clue how to solve these huge problems, so to divert attention from them they must resort to gimmicks like Yoga Day, cow protection, Swachhata Abhiyan, abrogation of Article 370, etc. It should be obvious that building a Ram Mandir

in Ayodhya is in the same category.

After the partition of 1947, the demolition of the Babri Masjid by political vandals was India's greatest tragedy. The Ayodhya verdict says this demolition was illegal, but in the same breath sanctifies it. Well done, My Lords!

(Markandey Katju is a former judge of the Supreme Court of India.)

समाजवादी विचार संकल्प बदलाव का समाजवादी समागम

१२-१३ जुलाई, २०१९, दिल्ली
के अवसर पर प्रकाशित

संपादक : कुरबान अली

प्रकाशक : रमाशंकर सिंह

लागत मूल्य : २०० रुपये में उपलब्ध।

संपर्क : जनता ट्रस्ट - ७७३८०८२१७०

(पोस्ट का खर्च अलग)

Articles Put on Janata Blog Last Week (Nov. 17, 2019)

1. Bharat Dogra, "A Blueprint for Protecting and Improving Health in Critical Times"
2. Sandeep Pandey, Yugal Kishore Shashtri and Lubna Sarwath, "Does the Appeal for Peace & Harmony Apply to Hindutva Brigade as Well for Future?"
3. Akash Bhattacharya, Debaditya Bhattacharya and Swati Moitra, "Draft National Education Policy 2019 – Critique"
4. B. Arjun, "Modi's Misplaced Priorities: Auctioning Assets to Meet Defence Needs"
5. Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, "Resource Sovereignty: The Agenda for Africa's Exit from the State of Plunder"
6. Fred Magdoff, "Twenty-First-Century Land Grabs: Accumulation by Agricultural Dispossession"

Has Supreme Court Caved in to Hindutva?

Ajaz Ashraf

The Supreme Court's majority decision to club the issue of women's entry into the Sabarimala temple with pending matters of similar nature and refer all these to a larger, seven-member bench for consideration echoes, even though subliminally, the Hindu Right's arguments and cribs against religious reforms.

These pending matters include whether Muslim women can enter a mosque/dargah (mausoleum), whether Parsi women married to non-Parsis are allowed to go into a fire temple, and whether the practice of female genital mutilation in the Dawoodi Bohra community should be banned.

Justice RF Nariman and Justice DY Chandrachud dissented with the majority opinion. Their argument was that the pending matters were not raised in over 50 petitions requesting the Supreme Court to review its 2018 judgement on the Sabarimala temple, which allowed entry to women of all ages.

The Supreme Court's decision to group together myriad matters pertaining to religious reforms addresses the fundamental crib of orthodox Hindu leaders—that the Indian state's zeal to reform their religious customs and practices does not extend to those of religious minorities.

The duality of approach to reform, according to orthodox Hindu leaders, is because of the Westernised elite's grip over the Indian state. Neither steeped in the Hindu tradition nor religious, they seek to reform Hindus regardless of their sentiments. In contrast, religious minorities are not subjected to the elite's modernising project.

This line of argument surfaced during the ferocious debate over the Hindu Code Bill in the 1940s, and then after India's Independence. It became an article of faith for the Hindu Right when the Congress government, in 1985–86, overturned the Supreme Court judgement ordering that Shah Bano, a Muslim, was entitled to maintenance allowance from her husband who had divorced her.

As recently as last year, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat referred to the 'duality' of approach to reform in his customary Vijaya Dashami speech.

Referring to the unrest triggered by the Supreme Court's judgement allowing women of all ages to enter the Sabarimala temple, Bhagwat said, "The questions such as why only the Hindu society experiences such repeated and brazen onslaughts on its faith, obviously rise in the public mind and lead to unrest. The situation is not at all conducive for the peace and healthiness of the society."

By clubbing the issue of gender-based exclusion of Hindu, Muslim and Parsi women from their places of worship, the Supreme Court seems to have heeded Bhagwat's criticism. The future ruling of the seven-member bench could always have a different bearing on each of the three religious groups.

Yet the Supreme Court will be simultaneously examining the tenets of Hinduism, Islam and Zoroastrianism. This is a significant victory for the Hindu Right. Its ideology now frames the dispensing of justice and conduct of politics.

The grievance of orthodox

Hindu leaders that only their religion is singled out for reform, dates back to 1941, when the Hindu Law Committee, under Justice B.N. Rau, was appointed to modernise Hindu laws that govern marriage and inheritance. On the basis of its report, a Hindu Code Bill, in two parts, was prepared and circulated for discussion. The first part of the Bill, dealing with succession, was said to have been framed by Sir Sultan Ahmed and was introduced in 1943 in the Central Legislative Assembly.

Orthodox Hindu leaders were severe in their criticism of the Bill. Among those leading the charge against it was the *Gita Press*, which represented the worldview of the Hindu Right. Journalist and independent researcher, Akshaya Mukul, in his book, *Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India*, writes, “*Gita Press* realised that its arguments against the Hindu Code Bill would have even greater resonance in the orthodox world if they were articulated through the Hindu–Muslim prism...”

Thus, the provision in the Bill giving a daughter the right to inherit her father’s property, was projected as an instance of imposing Muslim law on the Hindus. “Since the bill is the brainwave of Sir Sultan Ahmed it is natural such a provision has been made,” wrote *Kalyan*, a *Gita Press* publication. “The battle between bhai-bhai (brothers) would now become a battle between bhai-behen (brother and sister). Daughters would get rights from their fathers but would have to give away similar right to their nanads (husband’s sister)... The peace and tranquility of our homes would be gone.”

The Bill, however, lapsed and was subsequently reintroduced in the Constituent Assembly. It was

referred to a Select Committee under the chairmanship of Law Minister B.R. Ambedkar. The Select Committee’s report was discussed in the Constituent Assembly, where the Hindu Right now changed the tack of its attacks. From projecting the Bill as a Muslim conspiracy, its leaders now taunted the government that its zeal for secularism was confined to reforming Hindu laws and interfering in their religion.

Their line of criticism was palpable from the intervention of orthodox Hindu leaders, many of whom were in the Congress party. Outside the Assembly, the attack on the Bill was launched by the RSS, which, as Ramachandra Guha writes in his book, *India After Gandhi*, “They brought batches of volunteers into New Delhi, to shout slogans against the Hindu Code Bill and court arrest. Among their larger aims were the dismemberment of Pakistan and the unseating of Jawaharlal Nehru as prime minister”—as they shouted, ‘Pakistan tod do’, ‘Nehru hukumat chhod do’ [Break Pakistan, Nehru quit ruling].”

Academician Chitra Sinha in her paper, ‘Rhetoric, Reason and Representation: Four Narratives in the Hindu Code Bill’, cites the Hindu Mahasabha’s Chennai wing describing the Hindu Code Bill as a “suicidal folly”. Why? This was because, the Mahasabha argued, the new Hindu code “based on monogamy may get the credit of having converted the whole of India into a vast Pakistan where the surviving Hindus will be treated as strangers in their own fatherland.”

In the Constituent Assembly, the Hindu Right was not quite as illogical. Its preferred mode of attack was to wonder why the Hindus were being reformed, not other religious communities. They were

not convinced by the government’s explanation that a secular India, with an overwhelming Hindu majority, will not interfere in the religious affairs of religious minorities.

For instance, Seth Govind Das, a Hindu Right leader in the Congress, told the Constituent Assembly, “Today when we call our country a ‘secular state’... Dr Ambedkar should have presented to this House such a Bill which would have concerned not the Hindus alone, but would have been made applicable to all citizens of this country. While admitting this country as a ‘secular state’, the idea of introducing a Hindu Code Bill seems to me quite inappropriate.”

The government had not brought in a universal civil code because it did not dare to touch the Muslims, said Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra, who had been elected from West Bengal. “But you know that Hindu society today is in such a bad way that you can venture to do anything with it. Only a few ultra-modern persons, who are vocal, but have no real support in the country, are interested in this Bill,” he said.

Maitra also thought the Bill reeked of “un-Hindu ideas: a spirit of supreme contempt for anything Hindu permeates the whole Bill from the beginning to end.”

The remarks of H.V. Pataskar, who was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 1963, sounded as paranoid as that of an RSS *pracharak* (propagandist) today. A uniform code would have taken away certain privileges that Muslims enjoy because of their personal law. Pataskar said, “By the present Bill also you are giving the exclusive right to a Muslim to have as many wives as he likes or at any rate up to four. Now what happens, if a man—a very wealthy man—wants to marry

another wife, he can get himself converted into a Muslim and he can have as many wives as he likes.”

Then there was Gokulbhai Daulatram Bhatt, awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1971, who said, “I must say that it is the Hindu community alone which would quietly take whatever blows you might give it. Look at the Muslim community. Did anyone have the courage to draw up a code for them? Why not unite the Shia and Sunni schools of thought? Could you just dare meddle with the law of the Christians? Or could you dare tackle the Parsis? This poor community alone must stand everything.”

Bhatt said the Bill was an outcome of Ambedkar’s inferiority complex.

Ambedkar, however, saw the demand for a uniform code as a strategy to sabotage the Hindu Code Bill. Guha writes, “As Dr Ambedkar put it, ‘those who until yesterday were the greatest opponents of this [Hindu] Code and the greatest champions of the archaic Hindu Law as it exists today’, now claimed that they were ‘prepared for an All-India Civil Code.’ This was because they hoped that while it had already taken four or five years to draft the Hindu Code it will probably take ten years

to draft the Civil Code.”

In clubbing the religious issues of Hindus, Muslims and Parsis, RSS leader Bhagwat cannot crib or wonder why “only the Hindu society experiences such repeated and brazen onslaughts on its symbols of faith.”

For the public, though, the Supreme Court’s majority decision in the Sabarimala case will seem a testament to the judges succumbing to pressure from Hindutva forces.

(Ajaz Ashraf is a freelance journalist.)

Restoration Of Democracy: March From Jammu To Srinagar

26 November To 1 December, 2019

A march (part by vehicle and part by feet) has been planned from Jammu to Srinagar from 26 November to 1 December, 2019 to demand restoration of democracy in Jammu & Kashmir. We believe that the decision taken by central government in August regarding J&K is undemocratic and if the government thinks what it has done is in the interest of J&K, then it must get it endorsed by the people of J&K. But the manner in which curbs have been imposed on fundamental rights of people of freedom of expression and others, it is analogous to giving a bitter pill to a child saying that it is in the interest of the child while not even allowing the child to cry after that. This is not how decisions are taken in any democracy. While the central government is engaged in a process of dialogue with Nagas and Bodos to resolve their political issues in accordance with their wishes, it did not consider it worth to consult even a single Kashmiri

before taking a decision which will significantly impact the lives of citizens of J&K adversely. The entire state of J&K cannot be punished in the name of separatists or terrorists whose number is not more than a few hundred. Worse, even political parties, local or national, are not being allowed to function. It is ironical that the courts when allowing opposition political leaders’ entry in J&K are making it a condition that they should not indulge in political activities when Bhartiya Janata Party’s act has been a part of the political agenda of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh for a long time. Will BJP be the only party allowed to carry on with its political agenda of dividing the society on communal grounds, curbing civil liberties and disrupting peace, and activities of all other organizations be banned? Is its narrative of one nation, one constitution, one language, etc. moving towards a one party rule in the country?

We are accepting this challenge of BJP to finish democracy from this country and declaring this march with the objective of bringing back democratic norms and culture in this country. We request the individuals and organizations that stand for maintaining communal harmony, defending civil liberties and preserving peace to support us in this endeavor.

To participate in the march please contact any of the following and reach Jammu latest by 26 November, 2019 morning. Also, please help us raise resources for this march by contributing or organizing donations. We expect an expenditure of about Rs 60,000 for this endeavour with Rs 40,000 for the bus alone. If you wish to contribute, please contact us and we shall send you the required account number.

- I.D. Khajuria, J&K Forum for Peace and Territorial Integrity, 9419152093, idkhajuria@gmail.com

- Sheikh Abdul Rehman, Bangladesh Bharat Pakistan People's Forum, 9419148654
- Faisal Khan, Khudai Khidmatgar, 9999746196, faisalkj2002@yahoo.co.in
- Meera Sanghamitra, National Alliance of People's Movements, 7337478993, meeraengages@gmail.com
- Feroze Mithiborwala, Bharat Bachao Andolan, 9029277751, feroze.moses777@gmail.com
- Dr. Sunilam, Samajwadi Samagam, 9425109770, samajwadisunilam@gmail.com
- Sandeep Pandey, Socialist Party (India), 0522 2355978, ashaashram@yahoo.com

The Nehru That India Cannot Forget

Sushil Aaron

Narendra Modi does not agree but the world has never hesitated in recognising Jawaharlal Nehru as a historical figure who left a mark on India and the world. When Nehru died in 1964, the *New York Times* plainly referred to him as the “maker of modern India”; the *Economist* ran a cover story titled “World without Nehru”. It recalled his “almost magical grip” on the masses and regretted that the world stage would be poorer without the “great man”.

There has been a considerable shift in opinion about Nehru in India. He was idolised by the public while he lived but nowadays there is a tendency to try and actively forget him or diminish his role. Now Prime Minister Modi has told parliament that “India did not get democracy due to Pandit Nehru, as Congress wants us to believe.” Nehru has been dropped from school textbooks of Class VIII in the state of Rajasthan. He did not find a mention in a National Archives exhibition on the Quit India movement. The Ministry of Culture has decided to convert the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library at Nehru's official residence “into a complex showcasing [the] lives of all Indian prime ministers.” This is a mystifying form of equal opportunity eminence that perhaps

has few parallels. Imagine if the Lincoln Memorial were to suddenly sprout statues of other luminaries.

There are several reasons why Nehru has become a target. The RSS has long despised him for banning the organisation after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination and it vehemently disagrees with the form of secularism that he instituted as state practice. It has been easy to rouse public sentiment against Nehru by invoking the humiliating defeat in the 1962 war against China. Nehru's foreign policy of nonalignment and his faith in state planning have also been questioned. Many also resent his prominence in public life—for the way the Congress has appropriated him politically with statues, roads and government programmes named after him, the numerous advertisements in newspapers bearing his image and so on. In some ways, his ubiquity has obscured the detail that makes Nehru great.

Rise to greatness

Nehru's life is worth recalling to get a sense as to what he meant to India then and what he offers to the country now. There are fewer biographies of Nehru than he deserves. Part of the reason may have to do with the difficulty in taking on

his daunting oeuvre, given how much he wrote and said by way of books, articles, private correspondence and speeches. Historian Judith M. Brown's excellent 2003 biography, *Nehru: A Political Life*, is very helpful in that regard. Drawing on existing material and Nehru's post-1947 papers made available to her by Sonia Gandhi, Brown offers a fascinating, even-handed assessment of his career.

Born into a privileged home with a wealthy lawyer and political leader for a father in Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal grew up around the time when colonial rule was, to paraphrase Brown, challenging India's religious and social conventions while affording material and political opportunities for educated Indians. Nehru's political opinions were shaped by his education at Harrow and Cambridge, where he developed a strong distaste for imperialism. After a few desultory years on return, Nehru is drawn to politics, inspired by Gandhi and the protests around 1919–20. The nationalist movement then is marked by debates between moderates and radicals over tactics and strategy, over the use of non-cooperation, questions over pushing for full independence or being content with gradualist approaches.

In this fractious climate, Nehru stands by Gandhi and sees him as being central to India's path to independence, even if the Mahatma's political approaches and emphasis on moral transformation often frustrate him. Nehru's outlook is shaped by other factors as well. One, that he grew up in a household marked by Hindu-Muslim cultural mingling; Motilal's early education from a Muslim tutor was only in Arabic and Persian and being a Kashmiri family in Allahabad, the Nehrus could never really be considered locals and were not prone to narrow, provincial loyalties. Nehru was in some ways always a perennial outsider—a fierce nationalist who admired Britain culturally, he felt deeply about India's subjugation under foreign rule but disapproved of its beliefs and customs.

Nehru soon became preoccupied with politics and Congress matters. He also read voraciously. Being in prison a lot helped. In the 23 years from 1921 to 1945 he was sent to jail for nine terms in periods ranging from 12 days to 1041, a total of 3,259 days—which was nearly nine years of his life. He acclimatised to prison life and wrote of the friendships and hobbies he developed and the irritations of lacking privacy. "His greatest solace was reading", Brown writes. He read on politics, economics, science, literature and contemporary affairs. "Solid reading is a necessity in prison; without it the mind stagnates and rots," he was to say. In one phase, between February 1934 and September 1935, he read 188 books, averaging 15–20 volumes a month.

This no doubt shaped his ownability to produce magical prose, as seen through his own writings in *Autobiography* and the

Discovery of India and the deeply evocative letters and speeches he wrote. Through his years in India and Britain and his travels to Europe and interactions with leaders from other countries, Nehru developed strong convictions about colonial rule, equality within and between nations, the need for land reform and state intervention in the economy and society, the place for science in a nation's life (as opposed to faith, which he was dismissive of), the need for a greater role for women in nation-building and on India's place in the world.

This form of intellectual development was critical to India's future as Nehru was to attain prominence in the Congress in the 1930s, including as president of the party, and as the nationalist movement wound through phases of agitation, accommodation, factional division and stasis. Gandhi was ceasing to be a "serious political leader" in the decade and was focusing his energies on the condition of the "untouchables" instead. Around 1936, Gandhi was "publicly proclaiming that Nehru was his heir, and felt that Nehru with his many gifts and total commitment to India rather than to any sectional cause or personal concern was the one who could be relied upon" to achieve unity in the Congress. Nehru was at this stage not only a key player in party deliberations but also a mass leader attracting a good deal of public adulation.

As is well-known, Nehru went on head an interim government in 1946 and was the central figure in the negotiations leading up to Partition and independence alongside Lord Mountbatten and M.A. Jinnah. Nehru, who insisted on full independence for India long before

Gandhi was prepared to agitate for it, was to vehemently oppose Mountbatten's proposal to devolve power to the provinces before transferring power—as that would amount to the Balkanisation of India. Mountbatten recanted but Nehru and his colleagues were to face a range of challenges in the weeks leading to independence, including, as Brown writes, raging communal violence, provincial choices about joining India or Pakistan, the future of the Indian princes, the division of assets of British India and so on. Nehru also had to deal with the crisis in Kashmir soon after—and the assassination of Gandhi within six months of independence.

Three important legacies

Nehru owes much of his reputation to his post-1946 career. He made at least three decisive interventions that have made India the republic it has become.

First, he ensured that his vision of India was inscribed in the Constitution. He drafted and moved in the Constituent Assembly a resolution that set out its objectives, which included the declaration of India as an independent republic in which all power was derived from the people. Everyone was to be guaranteed "social, economic and political justice, equality of status and opportunity, and freedom of thought, religion and association." There were to be safeguards for minorities, backward and tribal areas. All of this was not a given. The 1937 provincial elections were limited by property ownership and had given the vote to only about 30 million Indians. There were, by contrast, 173 million eligible voters in the 1951 elections in independent India. Historian Ramachandra Guha

writes in *Patriots and Partisans* that “Nehru was without question the chief architect of our democracy. It was he, more than any other nationalist, who promoted universal franchise and the multi-party system.”

Brown writes that “at the heart of Nehru’s vision of India was the conviction that it was a composite nation, born of a civilisation which over centuries had drawn from and assimilated the many religious and cultural traditions present on the subcontinent.” Nehru also worked in a context when India as an independent nation emerged as a political compact where units like princely states and other communities were open to alternative political futures. The Indian Union could hold together based on guaranteed fundamental rights to all, secularism and a state policy that addressed social inequalities and divisions. Nehru instinctively understood the utility of a constitutional democracy for a people with disparate identities; India was also lucky to have a generation of other gifted leaders like B.R. Ambedkar, Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Azad and C. Rajagopalachari and together they crafted a political framework for Indians to coexist and evolve a shared imagination of the nation while preserving specific identities.

Second, Nehru’s impact on world politics is widely acknowledged. He emerged as an authoritative voice and critic of racism, imperialism and an advocate of Asian unity, Afro-Asian solidarity and world peace. He presciently crafted the policy of Non-Alignment to steer clear of power blocs in order to benefit from contacts with both sides, and as Guha points out, it also enabled India to emerge as a mediator between nations and as a leader

of developing countries. Nehru’s conduct of foreign affairs had, as Brown puts it, “created for his country a distinctive, independent international identity.”

Third, Nehru was also focused on domestic social change and saw state planning as a driver of growth and an agent for addressing inequality. This socialist mode of governance with a measure of mixed economy has been discredited in recent years but such policies did not lack support then—Indian industrialists, for example, also wanted protection from competition. Brown writes that in this, Nehru was impressed by the pace of Soviet industrialisation and wanted to replicate it in India without the attendant violence. It’s worth noting where India was setting out from: it’s literacy rate at independence, for instance, stood at 14% and poverty levels were high; state intervention was indeed necessary in several sectors and yielded significant results in several areas.

Mistakes and failures too

Of course, Nehru had many failures. He completely misread China’s intentions and didn’t expect Mao to launch an offensive in 1962. Worse, he allowed his assumption to affect India’s defence preparedness. Nehru’s failure to delegate undermined the development of political talent and cost India dearly in inestimable ways. Many of his aspirations on the domestic front like land reform were thwarted by state level leaders who had ties to rural landed elites. As Guha has written, the Right thinks he was too statist, some on the Left think he wasn’t interventionist enough. The big dams that he initiated have displaced indigenous communities. Kashmir’s alienation with India in

some part began with the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah for long periods. In turn, Nehru often found himself at odds with his countrymen: he was frustrated with administrative incompetence, communal rhetoric, venality in the Congress, and narrow provincial and casteist outlooks that were out of step with the spirit of nation-building.

The scale of his achievement, however, remains. Guha cites a telling tribute by Nirad Chaudhuri who once wrote that Nehru’s leadership was “the most important moral force behind the unity of India.” He said properly speaking there could not be a successor to Nehru, “but only successors to the different elements of his composite leadership.” In some ways that speaks of the range of his influence.

Gandhi is understood to be a sage but Nehru was no less a counsellor to India, constantly drawing attention to the principles and direction of its politics and society. He inspired, he cajoled, he rebuked. He also failed. He worked tirelessly to the point of exhaustion several times in his career. Guha recalls the Australian diplomat Walter Crocker writing that the “great bulk of the people sensed, and they never lost the sense, that Nehru wanted only to help them and wanted nothing for himself...”

His was truly a full life lived for India—and there is scarcely any public institution or aspect of the republic that Nehru did not shape or influence. There is plenty in his legacy to both celebrate and contest. Belittling his role—or worse, forgetting him—only betrays India’s degradation, even if it cannot alter Nehru’s place in history.

(Sushil Aaron is an independent journalist.)

Bhopal Gas Tragedy: Erased from Memory?

Sabrangindia

Do you know what happened in 1984? A Google search may help, but will it really? The first page of the results will show you only the most talked about incident – the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the anti-Sikh riots that followed. What it doesn't show you are the photos of more than 10,000 people who died and more than 5 lakh afflicted in Bhopal in the country's worst industrial disaster.

35 years on Bhopal seems to have been struck with two tragedies—the one that happened immediately and the other that unfolded in the years that followed.

What Happened Then

On the night of December 2, 1984, millions in Bhopal took their last breath when the chemical methyl isocyanate (MIC) spilled out from Union Carbide India Ltd's (UCIL's) pesticide factory turning the city into a gas chamber. Vomiting and dying, people ran out on the streets. As the cloud of gas hit the town, people woke from their sleep choking, gasping, and vomiting. Many were immediately affected, their skin burning and lungs failing. The US-based multinational company, Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) which owned the plant through its subsidiary UCIL, did nothing to help alleviate the human tragedy.

35 years later, the people who survived the tragedy and their innocent children are still fighting for justice. And what has been the State's response to their misery? Nothing but callous.

Even today, the victims and survivors are battling extreme

insensitivity and being shortchanged by incoming and outgoing governments. Not only has the ghastly incident taken a toll on their lives as well as their next of kin's, the survivors till today are paying the price of what happened that night.

The Victims End Up Paying the Damages

Physical Trauma

Because Union Carbide used trade secrecy to withhold information with regards to the exact composition of the leaked gases, nobody knew about the toxin that leaked out of the factory on the ill-fated night of December 2, 1984. Nobody knew about the antidote either. While over 300 toxic chemicals are said to have been released during the leak, research has been carried out only to check the toxicity of pure MIC.

While a few weeks later, while some claimed that the worst was over, till date nobody knows the impacts of MIC or how to treat patients exposed to it. Furthermore, it is not just the victims present at the site who suffered. It is all those children born after the incident who bore exposure to the deadly gas in their mother's wombs and people living there today exposed to the chemical wastes dumped in and around the UCIL factory that have contaminated drinking water.

Treatment of patients has only been symptomatic. Even though evidence of people suffering from cyanide poisoning came to the fore and the injections of sodium thiosulphate seemed to have been working, they were stopped,

apparently under pressure from UCC and its lawyers.

Uninspired research from the government did not yield much. Independent studies pointed out to serious crises from birth defects to cancer to mental problems.

Over the past five years, the Canadian researcher Shree Mulay and volunteers working with Sambhavana, a nonprofit clinic set up by activists, have been collecting data on mortality, birth defects, fertility, cancer and many other aspects of people's health. With about 5,000 families in each group, the study includes 100,000 people in all. Mulay's team is still analyzing the data, but preliminary results indicate that people exposed to the gas or the water or both have a higher incidence of cancer, tuberculosis and paralysis than those exposed to neither. They also suggest that gas-exposed people have 10 times the rate of cancer, particularly liver, lung, abdominal, throat and oral cancers, compared to the other groups.

Mental Trauma

The Bhopal Gas Tragedy was the first disaster in India to be studied systematically for mental health effects by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Even though the vastness of the disastrous emotional and mental trauma was established within a fortnight of the incident, the involvement of psychiatrists / neurologists did not begin until 8 weeks after the incident as none of the five medical colleges in MP had a psychiatrist on the staff.

The dead may have not been

so unlucky after all. Their end, though horrible, had been brief. The survivors though, will never get relief so quickly. Amid convulsions, screams, fainting spells and fear of the dark—men, women and children are left to their resources to fight the ghosts of those memories that keep coming back to haunt them.

Environmental Impact

A 1982 safety audit by US engineers had noted the filthy, neglected condition of the plant, identified 61 hazards, 30 critical, of which 11 were in the dangerous MIC/phosgene units. The audit warned of the danger of a major toxic release.

It's not just MCI that UCIL was manufacturing. The factory used to manufacture three pesticides: carbaryl (trade name Sevin), aldicarb (trade name Temik) and a formulation of carbaryl and gamma hexachlorocyclohexane (g-HCH) sold under the trade name Sevidol. Till 15 years after the disaster, the factory dumped by-products, process wastes, solvents and polluted water at dump sites outside the plant. In addition to that, there is another 350 tonnes of waste kept at a leaking shed at the site.

In August 2009, samples of water from handpumps in the area were analysed by a Greenpeace laboratory in the UK. Carbon tetrachloride was found at 4,880 times the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) limit.

All of these chemicals take hundreds of years to degrade and even the decontamination and cleaning of the dump site has run into legal wrangles over who should pay for its clearing—the State, Centre, incineration companies or non-profits.

The toxic waste and poisoned water have now become a legacy for the people of Bhopal.

The Culprits that Got Away

Union Carbide, the American chemical company that became infamous for the world's worst industrial disaster, is now a wholly owned subsidiary of Dow Chemical Company. Warren Anderson, the then CEO of Union Carbide who was declared an absconder and a fugitive lived in anonymity and seclusion in Long Island, New York before his death on September 29, 2014.

Both Dow Chemicals and UCC washed their hands off the disaster. UCC said that it was not subject to jurisdiction of the Indian court as it wasn't involved in the operation of the plant for it was operated by the Indian arm of the company.

Anderson kept a stoic silence on the issue for more than two decades, avoided social contact and hid from media and activists who have fought tooth and nail to bring him to justice. Warren Anderson did not appear for any of the judicial proceedings conducted by either the District Court, Bhopal or the Supreme Court of India.

The Indian government has never been very serious about pursuing the case against Dow Chemicals and UCC. Documents available in the public domain, including on the internet, show how maintaining future FDI and Indo-US relations took precedence over holding culprits accountable for their actions.

Promises – Just Promises

With physical relief came the need of economic rehabilitation and today, three decades after the

incident, the government has to still secure Rs 61.72 crore for 3,629 cases which are pending approval. The Centre has still not acted on their request.

In the meantime, the number of eligible survivors who should be compensated has increased—many of whom have moved the appellate court in Bhopal to hear their appeals. More than 200 new cases of permanent and partial disability have been granted approval for compensation but are still awaiting their payments.

Nearly 50,000 survivors have been compensated since the tragedy in 1984, but around 48,000 claimants are yet to receive their payments—more than three decades after the tragedy occurred.

In 2018, an RTI revealed that The Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Vishwas Sarang misused 60 per cent of the funds allocated by the Government of India for the economical rehabilitation and construction of 2,500 homes of the gas victims living in the vicinity of the Union Carbide Factory.

Out of Rs 272.75 crore allocated by the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers in 2010, only Rs 129.50 crore was used by the government till 2018. Rs 85.87 crore was diverted from the remaining Rs 143.25 crore to fund different government schemes.

At the time of the incident, UCC settled in 1989 for \$470 million in damages, with each patient getting Rs 25,000 (roughly \$2,200 at the time). The International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB) has since been fighting for a higher compensation and to get the site cleaned up, but to no avail. This, even when Dow merged with DuPont

in 2017 on a contract of \$130 billion.

In June, at a review meeting the Centre thought of utilizing the corpus fund of around Rs 891 crores of the Bhopal Memorial Hospital Trust (BMHT). There were also talks of the BMHT being merged with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), but that too is pending necessary approvals. Till then, all the payments to claimants have been frozen.

The government, which alleviated some public outcry by paying an additional sum of taxpayers' money to victims and their families in 2010, has now filed what's known in India as a "curative petition" to the Supreme Court, urging it to reconsider its ruling and compel Union Carbide to pay more. The SC earlier dismissed the curative petition by the government calling for Dow to pay \$1.2 billion. Activists and survivors are fighting for a figure of close to \$8 billion keeping in mind the widespread health impacts on thousands in the city.

Activist Rachna Dhingra of ICJB recalled the fine of \$21 billion paid by Union Carbide over the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. She said that the issue of race played a very important role in this matter. The victims of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy were considered lesser human beings.

Will Bhopal Ever Get Justice?

For pushing political agendas, for treating humans like pawns in a game, for usurping everything what the afflicted deserved and yet leaving them to suffer—will the people of Bhopal ever get justice? Only time will tell.

Police Brutally Attack JNU Students

Thousands of students from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi, India, who were marching to parliament to protest the massive hike in hostel fees were detained and baton-charged, leaving some of them grievously injured yesterday. The students continued their march but were stopped at many places. The protesters said they would not relent until the government withdrew the fee hike. Officer-bearers of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students Union (JNUSU) were detained and taken to an undisclosed location.

There was massive police deployment near the university in a bid to prevent the students from marching.

"Twelve of us have been put in a bus and been taken to unknown location because we were peacefully marching for our right to education," Aishe Ghosh, president of JNUSU posted on Facebook.

Meanwhile, the JNU Teachers Association (JNUTA), in a statement, expressed deep concern over the massive deployment of police and barricading of campus gates.

"Any such measure to thwart the exercise of constitutionally guaranteed democratic rights and to impede the students from peacefully taking the voice beyond the campus would be extremely unfortunate," it said in a statement.

Hundreds of students from JNU have been protesting for nearly three weeks against the draft hostel manual, which has provisions for a hostel fee hike, dress code and curfew timings. The manual increased hostel fee by nearly 1000%, in addition to imposing

regressive restrictions on students, such as curfews. Some students belonging to extremely marginalized sections have expressed fear that they may have to abandon their studies if the fee hike was not rolled back. Following intense protests, the administration claimed it had rolled back a portion of the hike but the students pointed out that it was a minor step and sought the complete withdrawal of the hike.

Initially, the barricades outside JNU's gates were removed and the students were allowed to march. The police later stopped the march around 500 meters from the varsity's gates.

Former JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) president N. Sai Balaji said, "Delhi Police stops JNU students peaceful march to parliamentarians! The MHRD is fooling students by forming committee. Why didn't the committee suspend fee hike till dialogue is happening? We are demanding a rollback of the fee hike."

Priyanka, another student said, "We are being given a lollipop in terms of the partial rollback. I am the first from my family to reach university. There are many others like me. Education is not the birthright of a privileged few."

Students took out the march carrying banners which read "save public education", fees must fall" and "ensure affordable hostels for all".

Another student, who did not wish to be identified, said, "We haven't seen our vice-chancellor in a long time. It's time that he comes out and talks to us. Instead of appealing to us through teachers and other methods, he should initiate

a dialogue with us,” the *PTI* report said.

On November 11 too, the police had brutally attacked the students who were protesting the fee hike and other measures at the convocation of the university.

JNU is one of India’s most

renowned universities and its affordable fee has enabled thousands of students from marginalized backgrounds to access higher education. According to the university’s data, 40% of the students come from economically backward backgrounds. The university is

also a bastion of left-wing politics. The assault on JNU is part of the far-right wing Narendra Modi’s government’s measures against both public education and left-wing politics in India.

Courtesy: Countercurrents Collective

The Coup in Bolivia and Your Computer / TV Screen

Vijay Prashad

When you look at your computer screen, or the screen on your smartphone or the screen of your television set, it is a liquid crystal display (LCD). An important component of the LCD screen is indium, a rare metallic element that is processed out of zinc concentrate.

The two largest sources of indium can be found in eastern Canada (Mount Pleasant) and in Bolivia (Malku Khota). Canada’s deposits have the potential to produce 38.5 tons of indium per year, while Bolivia’s considerable mines would be able to produce 80 tons per year.

Canada’s South American Silver Corporation—now TriMetals Mining—had signed a concession to explore and eventually mine Malku Khota. Work began in 2003, two years before Evo Morales and the Movement for Socialism (MAS) won their first presidential election in Bolivia. South American Silver conducted several studies of the region, all of which found substantial deposits that were poised to make this Canadian firm one of the major players in the mining industry.

A study done by Allan Armitage and others for South American Silver, and delivered to the company in 2011, showed that the Malku Khota

mine would produce substantial amounts of silver, indium, lead, zinc, copper and gallium. “The indium and gallium,” the study noted, “are regarded as strategic metals that give the project future upside potential.” Gallium is used for thermometers and barometers, as well as in the testing side of the pharmaceutical industry. There is Fort Knox level treasure to be made from these minerals.

Resource Nationalism

Evo Morales rode to victory in 2006 with the promise of a new day for Bolivia. Key to his agenda was to take control of the country’s resources and use them to improve the quality of life of Bolivia’s deprived populations. One of the great tragedies of Bolivia has been that since the mid-16th century, the indigenous populations have had to work to remove precious wealth from underneath their lands and send that wealth to enrich the people of Europe and later North America. They did not benefit from those riches.

Millions died in the mines of Potosí to bring the silver, and later tin, out of the ground. For the indigenous people who live near and on the hill, everything is upside down—one of the most lucrative

hills is known as Cerro Rico (Rich Hill), while in Spanish there is a phrase that toys with the idea that wealth is equivalent to Potosí (*vale un Potosí*). Morales’ message during his campaign was framed around the concept of resource nationalism—use our resources to better the lives of those who live in deprivation and indignity.

Morales first went after the oil and gas industry. It is important to recall that his opponent in this year’s election—Carlos Mesa—was the president right before Morales won the election in December 2005. Mesa had come to power when his predecessor Sánchez de Lozada resigned in disgrace over the mass demonstrations in 2003 when Bolivians demanded more control over their gas reserves (the state repression was severe, with at least 70 people killed in the demonstrations). In May 2006—just over three months after being sworn in as president—Morales announced that the oil and gas industry had been nationalised. It is important to recall that his approval rating was well above 80 percent.

Nationalisation was not easy, since the Bolivian government could not expropriate assets but only raise taxes and renegotiate contracts. Even here, the government faced

problems since it lacked enough technical skills to understand the opaque energy sector. Furthermore, the problem with the energy sector is that even nationalised oil and gas must be sold to the transnational firms that then process them and market them; they remain in control of the value chain. What Morales' government was able to do was to ensure that the State controlled 51 percent of all private energy firms that operated in Bolivia, which allowed the State's coffers to fill rapidly. It was this money that was invested to go after poverty, hunger, and illiteracy.

Revenge of the Mining Companies

Canada's Fraser Institute—a libertarian think tank that is heavily funded by the energy and mining sector—publishes an annual survey of mining companies. This survey is conducted by asking mining executives their opinions on a range of issues. The 2007–08 survey said that Bolivia is the second-worst country for investment; the worst was Ecuador. In 2010, the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index rated Bolivia at 161 of 183 countries. Heads of mining firms—from Barrick's Peter Munk to Repsol's Antonio Brufau—made disparaging comments about the nationalisation program. "If Bolivia keeps on this path," a Wall Street banker told me at that time, "these companies will make sure that Bolivian natural gas remains underground." Bolivia might be embargoed; Morales might be assassinated.

Pressure mounted daily on the MAS government, which began a process to write a new Constitution that would both protect nature and insist on resource wealth being used for the people. There was an immediate contradiction here: if the

MAS government was going to undo centuries of deprivation, it would have to mine the earth to bring out the wealth. A tragic choice befell the government—it could not both conserve nature and transform the wretched conditions of everyday life at the same level of caution. At the same time, to get its minerals and energy to market, it had to continue to negotiate with these transnational firms; no immediate alternative was present.

Nationalisation

Despite the constraints on it, the MAS government continued to nationalise resources, and insist on State firms being partners in resource extraction. Transnational firms immediately took Bolivia to the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), a part of the World Bank system. The ICSID—formed in 1966—is based in Washington, D.C., and shares an outlook toward business that mirrors that of the US Treasury Department.

On April 29, 2007, the leaders of Bolivia (Evo Morales), Cuba (Carlos Lage), Nicaragua (Daniel Ortega) and Venezuela (Hugo Chávez) signed a declaration to create an alternative to the investor-government system institutionalised in the ICSID. Bolivia and Ecuador formally withdrew from this US-dominated system, while Venezuela's Supreme Court declared that it did not have the power to intervene in Venezuelan sovereign affairs.

On July 10, 2012, Morales' government nationalised the Malku Khota property of South American Silver. South American Silver's shares dropped immediately; it had been trading at \$1.02 on July 6, and it fell to \$0.37 on July 11.

South American Silver took

the Bolivian government to the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague. In November last year, the Court ordered Bolivia to pay South American Silver \$27.7 million rather than the \$385.7 million that TriMetals (the new name for South American Silver) had demanded.

Coup

In July 2007, US Ambassador Philip Goldberg sent a cable to Washington in which he pointed out that US mining firms had approached his embassy to ask about the investment climate in Bolivia. Goldberg felt that the situation for mining firms was not good. When asked if he could organise a meeting with Vice President Álvaro García Linera, he said, "Sadly, without dynamite in the streets, it is uncertain whether the Embassy or the international mining companies will be able to attain even this minimal goal."

"Without dynamite in the streets" is a phrase worth dwelling upon. A year later, Morales expelled Goldberg from Bolivia, accusing him of aiding the protests in the town of Santa Cruz. Just over a decade later, it was the "dynamite" that removed Morales from power.

Resource nationalism is no longer on the agenda in Bolivia. The fate of Malku Khota is unknown. The fate of your screen is guaranteed—it will be replaced with indium from the Potosí deposits. And the benefits of that sale will not go to improving the well-being of Bolivia's indigenous population; they will enrich the transnational firms and the old oligarchy of Bolivia.

(Vijay Prashad is an Indian historian, editor and journalist, and the director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research.)

The Media's Anti-Bernie Bias

Alan MacLeod

Bernie Sanders has certainly ruffled many feathers during his presidential campaign run. The Vermont Senator is very much still an outsider in Democratic politics, but he has managed to build a huge groundswell of support around key ideas like Medicare for All, a Green New Deal, a federal jobs guarantee and free public colleges for America.

Sanders formally declared his candidacy in February 2019, raising a record \$6 million in 24 hours from nearly a quarter-million donors. His supporters tend to come from backgrounds that do not traditionally involve themselves in politics; among the most common professions that donated to his campaign are teachers, nurses, drivers and servers. Starbucks, Amazon and Wal-Mart are the most common employers of his backers, and the average donation to his campaign is only around \$27.

This is in complete contrast to many other top candidates. Joe Biden, for instance, began his campaign with an event with 100 or so extremely wealthy donors in Manhattan claiming that billionaires like them were being unfairly “demonised” and promising “nothing would fundamentally change” under his presidency. “I am not Bernie Sanders”, he emphasised to the elite audience, “I need you very badly.

Media Malpractice

Even in 2016, Sanders’ campaign was treated by the mainstream press as an unwelcome incursion into the cozy world of elite politics where Hillary Clinton was considered

the rightful president-in-waiting. The *Washington Post*, for example, ran 16 anti-Bernie stories in a 16-hour stretch in March, while major cable networks, including *CNN*, *MSNBC* and *Fox News* cut away from Sanders’ speech discussing issues affecting ordinary Americans to show an empty Trump podium.

But the media’s generalised hostility towards the progressive wave threatening to sweep over the Democratic Party has reached new heights in 2019. An unusually frank example of this was when MSNBC analyst Mimi Roach declared Sanders “made her skin crawl,” claiming he is not a “pro-women candidate”. This despite the fact that Sanders draws the support of a higher proportion of women than any other Presidential hopeful.

Fact-Checking as a Weapon

Media have also been more subtle in their attacks on Sanders. One method has been to attempt to fact-check him into oblivion, constantly challenging his every pronouncement. However, they have been unable to catch him out on much, often resulting in bizarre, self-contradicting nitpicking. The *Washington Post* insinuated that he was misrepresenting a booming economy claiming his comment that “millions of Americans are forced to work two or three jobs” was “misleading” because, despite agreeing that 8 million Americans do work multiple jobs, some were only “part time”—as if Sanders were claiming that millions of people have 120-hour workweeks—and that 8 million only amounts to 5% of the

workforce. To be a remotely accurate factcheck, one has to believe that 8 million does not count as “millions,” and part-time jobs are not real jobs.

The *Post* also gave Bernie’s statement that six people (one of whom is its owner, Jeff Bezos) have as much wealth as the bottom half of the world’s population three Pinocchios, the classification just below the most blatant lie. Despite finding that it was completely true, it argued that most of the wealth of the world’s richest was tied up in stocks, which are likely to fluctuate. How this was meant to disprove Sanders’ statement was not explained.

It also attacked the idea that the Vermont Senator was supported by an army of mass donations from ordinary people. The title, headline, “Bernie Sanders Keeps Saying His Average Donation is \$27, but His Own Numbers Contradict That,” calculated that the average donation was actually \$27.89. What a contradiction! However, the majority of people do not read past the headline, meaning most of those who saw the well-shared article would have no idea how weak the charge was.

CNN has also tried to use fact-checking as a weapon against Sanders, excoriating him for making “the same false claim about health spending for ten years.” It used his quote that said that the US spends twice as much on healthcare as any other country, noting that there were a handful of European states that spent (slightly) more than half of what the US spends (it did not note that those states have vastly better health outcomes). After

an outcry on social media, CNN amended the story, conceding that it is indeed accurate to say that the US spends over twice as much as other economically advanced countries, thus walking back their “factcheck” to a minor technicality.

Worse still, earlier this year CNN itself ran a news piece titled “US Spends Twice as Much on Healthcare as Its Peers,” which accurately described the US as an “outlier,” spending vastly more than others due to the higher cost of drugs, more expensive treatment and exorbitant administration fees. Thus, in its attempts to go after Bernie, it accidentally undermined its own reporting.

Visual Tricks

Meanwhile, the Democrat-aligned network *MSNBC* has developed a bad habit of forgetting how numbers work—when it comes to Sanders, that is. In July, its graphics team decided Sanders’ 49% support was lower than Kamala Harris and Elizabeth Warren’s 48%, placing him fourth in a list of Presidential hopefuls. This is far from an isolated incident: one week later it did almost exactly the same thing. It also reported that Sanders’ support had dropped 5 points when, in fact, it had risen the same amount. And when polls show Sanders to be in the lead, media has simply awarded extra support to others to overtake him, or switch Sanders’ numbers with another candidate, ensuring the same outcome on screen. CNN was only slightly less deceitful when it accurately showed Bernie leading Warren by 3 points, but their headline read that there was “no clear leader” and Sanders and Warren were “neck and neck.”

The media has also made a great

deal of Sanders’ health problems, constantly emphasising his age and fragility. It was in that context that CNN stands accused of fiddling with their color scale to present his face as a ludicrously dark shade of red-purple (suggesting serious ill-health) when he was discussing his surgery. This “Beetroot Bernie” shade jars with other images and videos from the event, including from the *Associated Press*.

From Bernie Baiting to Bernie Blackout

In recent weeks, corporate media seem to have moved from anger to denial, appearing to collectively decide Sanders does not exist. The *Hill*, for example, published the results of an Emerson College survey with the headline “Trump beats Warren, Biden in Iowa Matchups.” But, as many pointed out, the most important news from the poll (buried in the report) was that Sanders was leading Trump in that state. There was no mention of Bernie in a recent *New York Times* article on the frontrunners. Likewise, the coverage of his enormous New York rally, where he was formally endorsed by rising Democratic star Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and other members of “The Squad” was sparse, to say the least.

A new University of North Florida (UNF) poll took the Bernie Blackout to new levels, however. In a poll of Democratic candidates vs. Donald Trump and/or Mike Pence, the UNF did not even include Sanders, despite featuring candidates with far less support, such as Kamala Harris and Pete Buttigieg. When asked why this was, its Faculty Director, Michael Binder, claimed that it was for reasons of “diversity.” Why the Jewish socialist is any

less “diverse” than, for instance, Buttigieg, was not explained.

A woman in the lab who ran the test received a very different answer from Binder. When she insisted Sanders was at least a top 3 candidate, he allegedly replied: “not for long.” Thus, those in power have pre-emptively decided Bernie is not a serious candidate and a Buttigieg-Pence election (following a Republican Senate impeachment of Trump) is a more likely scenario than Sanders, one of the most popular and by far the most donated-to candidate, winning the Democratic nomination.

On press bias, Bernie claimed that corporate media’s billionaire owners might be swaying the coverage of his campaign to an overly negative tone. This assertion was indignantly described as “ridiculous” by CNN’s Chris Cillizza and a “conspiracy theory” by *Washington Post* Executive Editor Marty Baron. Yet the public is far more skeptical. Trust in media has been falling since the 1970s, and particularly in the last few years to the point where less than one-third trust the news media, even most of the time and nearly three-quarters of Americans agree that traditional media consistently report false or purposefully misleading stories. Therefore they are likely ready for the media hysteria to be ramped up to new levels the closer Sanders gets to power.

(Alan MacLeod is a *MintPress* contributor as well as an academic and writer for *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting*.)

Janata
is available at
www.lohiatoday.com



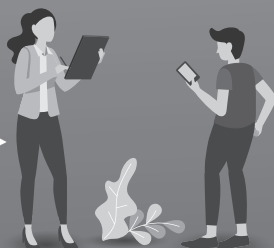
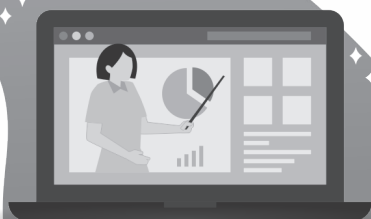
MKCL
Creating a Knowledge Lit World
www.mkcl.org

MS-CIT

Syllabus Available in Two Options

Job Readiness

IT Awareness



Job Readiness

Improve your
employability
and IT skills



IT Awareness

Update your digital
skills in fast
growing IT world

Gateway to New Careers

MS-CIT

Maharashtra State-Certificate In
Information Technology

www.mkcl.org/mscit

Enroll today at your nearest Authorized MKCL Center or ☎ 8411960005



"We are, what we repeatedly do,
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Aristotle



Taj Palace & Towers - Mumbai



Bombay Stock Exchange - Fort, Mumbai



Forum Atmosphere - Kolkata



J.K. House (Raymond)
Breach Candy, Mumbai

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING /
REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF :

- ✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)
- ✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)
- ✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.

Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

**Ahmedabad, Hyderabad,
Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi**

janata

Vol. 74 No. 45
December 1, 2019
The Constitution as a Living Document
Nandini Sundar

How Far Have We Deviated From the Ideology of Our Constitution?
S.V. Narayanan

Finance Ministry Rejected RBI's Dissent on Electoral Bonds
Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar

What Policies Can India's Corporates Buy With Half a Billion Dollars?
Raghu Karnad

Pathetic State of Economy: Modi Govt Hides Data
Prabhat Patnaik

Jharkhand: Where Is the Mineral Wealth Going?
Subodh Varma

Global Climate Disaster: Science is Screaming
Jake Johnson

Capitalism versus Life on Earth
Ian Angus

Editor : G. G. Parikh
Associate Editor : Neeraj Jain
Managing Editor : Guddi
Editorial Board :
B. Vivekanandan, Qurban Ali,
Anil Nauriya, Sonal Shah,
Amarendra Dhaneshwar,
Sandeep Pandey

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : janataweekly@gmail.com
Website:www.janataweekly.org

Amit Shah's NRC Plan Decoded

Siddharth Varadarajan

In speech after speech, Union home minister Amit Shah and other Sangh Parivar leaders like Mohan Bhagwat have been insisting that no Hindu will ever be deported from India when their plan to create a National Register of Citizens (NRC) is enforced across the country.

At a political rally in Kolkata on October 1, Shah said, "I want to assure all Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist and Christian refugees that you will not be forced to leave India by the Centre. Don't believe rumours. Before NRC, we will bring the Citizenship Amendment Bill, which will ensure these people get Indian citizenship."

Now, if—like me—you were brought up on the values of the Indian Constitution, you would likely be scratching your head and asking how on earth a minister could speak like this. Granted, he is talking about refugees and not Indians, but by what canon of morality, law or tradition is it okay for the home minister to say India will welcome any and every kind of refugee as long as they are not Muslim?

The fact is that all this talk of refugees and immigrants is classic dog-whistle politics, and is an integral part of the Narendra Modi government's overarching strategy

of dividing the Indian people on the basis of religion.

That is why leaders like Amit Shah are trying to scare Muslim citizens and make them feel insecure about their place in their own country, while telling Hindus that this country really belongs to them and reassuring them that they will never have to fear their citizenship or devotion to the country being questioned.

This kind of politics goes against not just the letter and spirit of the Constitution but marks a potentially dangerous turn—even by the violent track record of Hindutva organisations. But beyond that, Shah's reassurance to Hindu refugees, and those who care only for them, rests on a gigantic fib.

Ever since the 2014 Lok Sabha election, when Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) first began playing dangerous communal politics over India's laws governing foreigners and citizenship, the government has moved swiftly to segment and eventually even segregate the country's residents on the basis of religion. Let us be very clear about this monstrous reality: if we take Amit Shah's words at face value, the only people without the requisite documentation who will

actually face deportation once an NRC-type exercise is run across India will be Muslims.

India has more than 1.3 billion residents, the overwhelming majority of whom are citizens. A tiny, tiny fraction of the country's population comprises foreigners. Most of them are probably long-term residents and it is safe to assume the majority do not have proper entry or residence documents because successive governments simply never bothered to create a rational migration and refugee policy. Of these, the largest single group are of Bangladeshi origin, but there are also people from Tibet, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Pakistan, most of whom have been living in India for years and have children who are full-fledged Indian citizens.

Labour migration is a fact of life, in South Asia and around the world, and is a product of underlying economic dynamics in which labour shortages are actually transmitted from region to region. For example, economic opportunities in North America lead to Punjabis migrating out of India. Biharis then come to Punjab to work the farms. But this means there are less Biharis available to work in West Bengal and Delhi, which pulls workers in from Bangladesh. Like Indians, Bangladeshis also migrate to the West, leading to skill shortages back home. A few years ago, the World Bank published data that Indians working in Bangladesh had remitted \$3.7 billion back home that year—roughly half the amount that Bangladeshi workers in India send home each year.

Now India and the Indian people are very sensitive to the mistreatment of Indian migrants worldwide—

rightly so—including those who are undocumented. Yet when it comes to the fate of undocumented migrants in India, we behave just as horribly as the worst racists in the West. Just look at the language that the government, the media and even the courts use to describe undocumented migrants: we call them “infiltrators”.

An infiltrator conjures up the image of a man with a gun coming to kill people. But an undocumented migrant is someone who crosses a border in order to make an honest day's wage. Now, we have Amit Shah calling Bangladeshi migrants ‘termites’ and promising to drive them out of India. It is not clear where he intends to send those whom his government is able to identify; into the Bay of Bengal perhaps? Because Bangladesh has said repeatedly that it does not believe the people India wants to deport are Bangladeshis and thus will not accept them. That is why Modi has been forced to reassure Sheikh Hasina that she need not worry about the NRC and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has said the consequences of the exercise is and will remain an internal matter for India.

The NRC process has already turned 1.9 million into virtually stateless people. Now Shah wants to compound the problem that has arisen in Assam by replicating this dangerous exercise in West Bengal and other parts of India. Since many Hindus have also ended up in this excluded list, the home minister is busy reassuring Hindus in Bengal and elsewhere who fail to produce the proper papers that their Indianness will not be in doubt. This assurance is a blatant violation of his oath of office that obliges him to “do right to all manner of people

in accordance with the Constitution and the law, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will.”

Shah's plan hinges on communalism, fear and division but also on a lie. This is because the government's plan to accommodate Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain and Christian refugees from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan has a cut-off date and that date is December 31, 2014.

In 2015 and 2016, the government amended the Passport (Entry into India) Rules and the Foreigners Act rules to declare that migrants belonging to those specific religions from these three countries would never be considered “illegal immigrants” in law provided they came to India before December 31, 2014. The proposed Citizenship Amendment Bill will make it easier for these same groups to acquire Indian citizenship, but again provided they came in before December 2014.

The carve-out for all religions except Islam, the limited geographic scope of the move and the cut-off date are proof of not just the government's communalism but total insincerity and dishonesty as well.

If India wants to adopt a genuinely humanitarian policy towards refugees from neighbouring countries, it should open its doors to all victims of religious persecution and not just non-Muslims. This means Hindus from Bangladesh or Pakistan should be welcomed, but so should Ahmadiyas, Hazaras or anyone else.

Second, either you have a policy for the neighbourhood or you don't. Why are Modi and Shah being humane to the religiously persecuted from just Bangladesh, Afghanistan

and Pakistan? Why not Myanmar and Sri Lanka? By what logic is the government excluding Rohingya Muslims fleeing persecution in Myanmar, or Tamil Muslims and Hindus fleeing violence or persecution in Sri Lanka, should the situation (heavens forbid) ever worsen there?

Now Shah and his apologists will likely scoff at these objections because—as their guru Mohan Bhagwat reminded us recently—India is a ‘Hindu Rashtra’ and must therefore open its doors to Hindus who have nowhere else to go, while Muslim refugees have dozens of Muslim countries to seek refuge in. This is, of course, idiotic but if their heart really bleeds for Hindu refugees, why do they have a 2014 cut-off date?

Why is there no space in their

new citizenship amendment for Hindus persecuted in Pakistan or Bangladesh since 2015 who fled to—or want to flee to—India?

The reason Narendra Modi and Amit Shah have no place for them is because they love power more than they love refugees, even Hindu ones. They know that if they were to scrap the cut-off date—which already violates the 1971 cut-off date stipulated in the Assam Accord—voters in Assam will surely throw the BJP out of power there.

So how do you “appease” Assamese sentiment while also appealing to Hindu sentiments in the rest of India? Modi and Shah calculated that the 2014 cut-off date would help them strike a balance between appealing to Assamese sentiment—which is fiercely against giving Indian citizenship to any

Bangladeshi, even Hindu ones—and using the citizenship and NRC process to polarise the whole country and consolidate their Hindu vote bank.

This is the ugly politics which Shah is engaging in; it should surprise us that this politics requires the use of ugly, vulgar words like ‘infiltrator’ and ‘termites’. Depending on how desperate the BJP is to divert the attention of voters away from the real issues, the NRC exercise could be used to polarise India in ways we cannot even imagine.

Sadly, as of today, no one—not even the Supreme Court—seems willing to stop them.

(Siddharth Varadarajan is journalist, political analyst and academic. He is a Founding Editor of The Wire. He was earlier the Editor of The Hindu.)

The Constitution as a Living Document

Nandini Sundar

The republic has never felt more endangered than it does at 69. When Union minister Anant Kumar Hegde let slip the public secret that the BJP/RSS government is here to change the constitution, the problem is not that the constitution cannot and should not be changed, but what direction that change will take, and whether it will destroy the very basis of the republic or strengthen it.

Justice, liberty, equality, fraternity—these progressive values in the constitution are the last defence of the republic. It is clear, however, that these are not values shared by the RSS from the moment of its inception and that indeed, the RSS regards these as an obstacle to realising its own vision of the country.

In the last couple of years, the ABVP, supported by pliant university authorities, has stopped several campus events which explicitly set out to celebrate the constitution or Indian democracy, such as one at the Delhi School of Economics in August 2017 and another at Allahabad in September 2017, titled Jashn-e-Samvidhan. It is only an organisation which is itself deeply anti-national and anti-democratic that can object to others celebrating the constitution or democracy.

If people are to be reduced to their caste or religious identity, as Hegde, the Karni Sena, and various other fronts of the RSS want, it is not only the term secularism which will go, but equality, liberty and

fraternity as well. For secularism is nothing but the equality of all religions in the public sphere and fraternity across religions and caste as practiced by individuals in their public and personal capacities.

Authoring the constitution

The constitution has never been a frozen document, and it has always had multiple authors. Notwithstanding the sterling role played by the drafting committee and Babasaheb Ambedkar, the constitution as it exists today is a product of interactions between three elements: the text, the courts and above all, ‘the people’.

Even at the time it was framed, the text was not a closed document. There were at least

four elements that informed the making of the constitution—existing administrative provisions such as those embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935, internationally accepted constitutional principles, the ideals of the freedom struggle, including universal adult suffrage, and the events that were taking place in a country slowly emerging out of World War II, famine and above all, Partition. As the chronicler of the constitution, Granville Austin, famously wrote, “Fundamental rights were to be framed among the carnage of fundamental wrongs.”

At one level, the similarities with the 1935 Act make the constitution appear almost pre-ordained. But the final product came out of sometimes deeply-contested arguments between deeply-opposed individuals. Not every shade of opinion was equally represented, especially the Communists, and the franchise on the basis of which members were elected was less than 30% of the adult population.

Chauvinism was rife, for instance, when Shri R.V. Dhulekar declared that he would only speak in Hindi as “People who do not know Hindustani have no right to stay in India” or when Muslim members were heckled, for example, on their demand for proportional representation. The great adivasi leader Jaipal Singh was taunted about his elite lifestyle, and simultaneously accused of being parochial, forcing him to list the multiple languages he could speak and the tribal areas he had visited. Women like Sarojini Naidu were courteously infantilised, but also managed to turn the tables on their male colleagues.

In all, the constituent assembly was just as much as a space of conflict and collegiality, as many

current assemblies, and its hallowed status in the country’s history should not blind us to the fact that real individuals and not mythic heroes populated it.

The final shape the constitution took was often weaker than it could have been, and this is very visible in the 5th Schedule, where the original proposal gave far more power to the Tribes Advisory Council than it currently has (where the council can only consider matters referred to it by the governor). In response to Jaipal Singh’s demand that the powers of the Tribes Advisory Councils be preserved, K.M. Munshi declared that the tribes could not be allowed to advise on questions of law and order or forests.

But those are precisely the issues that have subsequently agitated adivasi movements. Had Jaipal Singh’s suggestion to use the term adivasi in the constitution not been rejected, we would not have had absurd judgments like the one in *Prem Mardhi vs Union of India*, 2015, where the judge rejected the demand to ban MSG 2 for glorifying the killing of *adivasis* on the grounds that the constitution did not mention the term adivasi anywhere.

The constitution makers had much to answer for, including the neglect of villages. But what is equally amazing is how much they got right, especially in terms of fundamental rights, universal suffrage and a host of other features.

And where they missed out, the citizenry has intervened to expand the constitution in meaningful directions.

The courts

Much of the work on the Constitution, such as Granville Austin’s *Working a Democratic*

Constitution or the *Oxford Handbook of the Indian Constitution*, has focused on the landmark judgments by which the courts have interpreted and extended the constitution.

In particular, we recall with a sense of relief and gratitude the outcome of the 13-judge bench which decided Kesavanand Bharati upholding a ‘basic structure’ to the constitution, or the several PILs which have extended the Right to Life to life with dignity. But the constitutional statements of the courts, as we all know, are themselves a medley of factors.

The most important, perhaps, is the text of the constitution itself, which in principle at least, shapes judicial activism. The caste, class and gender backgrounds of the judges matter, even though in India we have relatively little information on how these influence their judgments, at all levels of the judiciary, not just the Supreme Court. At the same time, there is a certain kind of common habitus that professional training develops in them. The text of the constitution and a certain professional fidelity to interpreting its spirit means that judges often go beyond their background in remarkable ways.

The recent judges’ press conference was such a remarkable event, precisely because of the psychological hurdles that judicial professionalism imposes. If judges who are trained to be silent start speaking, we must assume that things are seriously amiss for them to have taken this step. Finally, the court’s contribution to shaping the constitution depends heavily on the kind of cases that are brought before them, even though there are also many instances of lawyers (and even judges) mobilising petitioners when

they want certain principles argued.

And this is where the people come in—for without petitioners to bring a complaint against Aadhaar, against Section 377, for the right to food, or for the freedom of expression, the judges would have no occasion to exercise their craft. Rohit De's work on the early years of the Supreme Court provides a fascinating glimpse into how people engaged with the constitution and transformed it. It is true that often the courts are closed off to the poor, but citizens have a responsibility to try and force the judiciary and legislature to attend to sections of the public or take up issues that they would not otherwise have cared about.

The people

The role of 'the people' in preserving and extending the constitution, however, goes far beyond bringing cases to court, or electing representatives once every five years. While the ideologies and programmes of successive governments are clearly important to the functioning of the constitution, through the various amendments they have brought in (land reform, abolition of privy purses, 73rd and 74th amendment etc.), in the end, they seek legitimacy for their changes in the name of public opinion.

The 'public' is clearly not homogenous, and while corporates can quietly get an SEZ act passed, other citizens have to struggle for years to get an act on the Right to Information, or the Right to Education. Some states are almost handed over to their elites on a platter like Chhattisgarh, while others like Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Telangana have been long in

the making.

When Dalit groups memorialise their caste histories as in Bhima Koregaon, youth are rounded up and arrested for having taken part, compared to the kid gloves with which dominant castes are treated. When it comes to the constitution, however, it is important to remember that the goal of Dalit or adivasi mobilisation is usually towards greater equality.

On the other hand, when traditionally dominant communities take umbrage at imagined slights or demand reservation for themselves, they do so in order to perpetuate inequality. Not all mobilisations are, therefore, in keeping with the values of the constitution, but the constitution has grown because all of these issues have been debated. In some respects like the Citizenship Act, which now makes citizenship conditional on having an Indian parent, rather than on birth alone, the constitution has actually shrunk from the vision of its founders.

As Ranabir Samadhar points out in an essay titled "Sovereignty and the dialogic subject", when governments say that they will talk to insurgents in the Northeast or Kashmir only "within the framework of the constitution" they tend to forget that the constitution is not just a set of administrative provisions but also embodies the spirit of dialogue. The year 1950 cannot and does not represent a closure on what can or cannot be discussed, since the constitution is a living document.

Ultimately, the only thing that is not negotiable in the constitution is the hope for justice, equality, liberty and fraternity. A party or a government which comes to power swearing on the constitution but does not share this vision, and which believes in the supremacy of one religion or one language, is not only committing perjury, but is profoundly anti-republic.

(Nandini Sundar is a Delhi-based sociologist.)

How Far Have We Deviated From the Ideology of Our Constitution?

S.V. Narayanan

Constitution day on November 26, similar to other days of national importance, has become another day of ritualistic celebration without much critical introspection.

The significance of constitution day is not in the explicit ritualistic reverence to the supreme legal document, but in critical introspection of our progress in fulfilling the basic ideology of our constitution. The constitution makers' clarity of thought in creating a just society is clearly reflected in the founding philosophy of our constitution.

The Constituent-Assembly debates show the commitment of its members in giving life to the idea of India in an inclusive manner based on the principles of social justice and democracy. The unique nature of Indian nationalism, as highlighted by historian Ramachandra Guha, is not based on any single religion or language, as in European counterparts. That shows the inclusive nature of Indian nationalism overcoming the conflicting social identities to create a political citizenship for the overall

development of the nation. The constitution and its ideology have laid a strong foundation for such an inclusive nation respecting the differences and strengthening social justice in the newly independent nation.

Ideology of the Indian constitution

Ideology could be defined as a set of ideals or beliefs, which forms the basis of the economic or political system. Ideological beliefs not only give hope for a better society, but also recognise/accept the existing inequalities in society for its people to introspect about their progress in the future.

Even though our constitution is a lengthy document, its ideology is well entrenched in its preamble, revealing the nature of the newly independent nation. The ideology in the preamble not only declares our freedom, but lays a strong foundation for a society based on equality, justice and liberty. The Objective Resolution moved by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1946, which was adopted by the Constituent Assembly in 1947, is almost reflected in the preamble of the Indian constitution. It clearly lays down the path to be taken by the future Indian state to create a strong, united and inclusive country, eliminating all forms of discrimination.

The principles of justice, equality and liberty, along with secularism, form the core components of the ideology of the Indian Constitution. The founding fathers of our constitution envisaged an egalitarian society based on such ideal principles, but does our contemporary reality really reflect these values?

Reality check

The founding principles of our constitutional ideology are mutually interdependent, making it indivisible

and inalienable rights of every citizen. Justice—social, economic and political—lays the foundation for other principles of equality and liberty to be realised in an effective manner. Justice not only gives equal opportunities but also means positively treating unequals in an unequal manner to create equality. This basic social liberal ideology laid a strong foundation for all positive discrimination intervention by the government. The protection of individual rights along with social justice can be understood clearly from the preamble of constitution.

Inequality

Persistent and increasing inequality in a society shows that the principle of economic justice failed to realise its objectives. Further, the denial of economic justice extends its influence in denying justice in the political and social domain as we witness in our contemporary India.

According to Thomas Piketty and Lucas Chancel in their research paper titled ‘Indian income inequality, 1922–2014: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj?’ income inequality is at its highest in the last 100 years in India. The top 1% had around 21% of total income in 1930s, which reduced to 6% in 1980s and again reached 22% by 2014—reaching the highest level. The period after the 1980s, when we started adopting a neoliberal political economy (officially in 1991), the income share of the bottom 50% reduced considerably and the top 1% increased consequently.

Further, according to Anand and Thampi, in ‘Recent trends in Wealth Inequality in India’, the top 1% of India had 28% of the country’s wealth by 2012, which was an increase of 11 percentage points since 1991. The same period saw the decline of the share of the bottom

40% from 5% to less than 4%.

The Report on Fifth Annual Employment-Unemployment Survey (2015–16) by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, showed that at the all-India level, around 77% of households did not have a single regular/salaried person. More than 67% of households had an average monthly earning that did not exceed Rs 10,000. Within the labour force, more than 71% were not eligible for any social security benefits. Only 1.8% of labour force in India earned more than Rs 50,000 a month and 0.2% earned more than Rs 1,00,000 a month. This data shows the vulnerability and inequality among the working population of India.

Global Hunger Index

India occupied the 100th position in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2017, out of 119 countries. In Asia, only Afghanistan and Pakistan are behind us. The report further stated:

“At 31.4, India’s 2017 GHI score is at the high end of the ‘serious’ category, and is one of the main factors pushing South Asia to the category of worst performing region on the GHI this year, followed closely by Africa South of the Sahara.”

The shocking aspect of the hunger index is that we were at the 55th position in 2014 and now we are at the 100th position within three years. The worrying aspect is that the totalitarian regime of North Korea and war-ravaged Iraq are ahead of India in the index. The high malnutrition level among children, women and other vulnerable groups contribute towards our declining position in the GHI. This further shows how economic and social justice is being denied to a majority of the population, violating the basic ideology of our constitution.

Discrimination against minorities

The Sachar Committee report (2006) on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community in India revealed the institutional discrimination Muslims face in India. The literacy rate of Muslims was far below the national average and only one out of 25 in undergraduate and one out of 50 in postgraduate courses in ‘premier colleges’ were found to be Muslim. Muslim representation in Civil Services was around only 3%. Muslim children are in greater risk of being underweight or stunted compared to other communities.

Banks in Muslim areas are marked as ‘negative’ or ‘red’ zones indicating that giving loans is not advisable—limiting their institutional support. Poverty among Muslims is high and even basic facilities like post offices were not operational in Muslim areas. Such institutional discrimination has kept the Muslim community vulnerable, causing them to turn to religious support systems.

The professor Amitabh Kundu committee, formed in 2014 to review the implementation of Sachar Committee recommendations, did not find much improvement in

the institutional support system for Muslims. This is against the foundational ideology of justice in the Indian constitution.

Privatisation of educational institutions

The constitutional ideology mixing social justice with individual liberties came under threat after we formally adopted the neoliberal political economy in 1991. The state slowly started moving away from positive intervention through the creation of support systems for vulnerable groups. Privatisation of the public sector has excluded the hitherto deprived communities from the benefits of social justice.

Table 1 shows the surge in private institutions of higher learning in India between 2011 and 2017. Since private educational institutions do not follow the system of reservations, a majority of minority, SC/ST and Muslim students are excluded from any meaningful participation, thus defeating the whole ideology of social justice as envisaged in the Constitution.

Need for course correction

The founding ideology of the constitution, combining liberalism

and social justice in the form of social liberalism, is slowly being defeated as we have already deviated from it considerably. The ‘justice’, ‘liberty’ and ‘equality’ in the preamble are slowly losing relevance and have become mere ritualistic words for the ruling class during times of celebrations like constitution day. Critical introspection clearly shows how we have failed miserably to live up to the expectations of our founding fathers. The further weakening of constitutional values is going to threaten the idea of India that evolved from a complex mix of cultures, religions, regions etc, with social justice, secularism, liberty and equality as its core principles.

(S.V. Narayanan is an independent policy analyst.)

Articles Put on Janata Blog Last Week (Nov. 24, 2019)

1. P.C. Joshi, “Gandhi-Nehru Tradition and Indian Secularism”
2. Arjun Sengupta, “Nehru and Indian Socialism”
3. Harsh Mander, “The Ayodhya Judgment in India’s Enveloping Darkness”
4. Nishrin Jafri Hussain, “Bless Us, Abba!”
5. Abhishek Kumar and Harshvardhan, “Phool Walon Ki Sair: A Festival of Communal Harmony among Hindus and Muslims”
6. Bharat Dogra, Madhu Dogra and Reshma Bharti, “Women Who Sacrificed Their Life In The Freedom Movement”
7. Nino Pagliccia, “Bolivia and Venezuela: Two Countries, But Same Hybrid War”
8. Zoe PC, “Bolivians Bravely Fight Back Against Coup: “We Are Going to Resist Until the Last”

Table 1: Percentage of Private Institutions of Higher Education – All India

Year	University	Colleges / Recognised institutes	Stand-alone institutes	All institutions
2011-12	29.25	72.58	78.73	60.19
2012-13	31.86	73.77	76.91	60.85
2013-14	33.19	74.59	75.66	61.15
2014-15	35.36	76.09	75.07	62.17
2015-16	36.47	76.69	75.18	62.78
2016-17	38.74	76.86	74.44	63.35

Source: All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) – 2011 to 2017

Finance Ministry Rejected RBI's Dissent on Electoral Bonds

Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) repeated warnings on the electoral bond scheme in bearer form having the potential to increase black money circulation, money laundering, cross-border counterfeiting and forgery were ignored by the Centre as it was more keen on protecting the identity of donors, the Ministry of Finance's responses to right to information queries has revealed.

In response to applications around the electoral bond scheme filed by RTI activist Anjali Bhardwaj, the ministry has released the correspondence between the RBI and the Centre. These clearly show how the Centre went ahead with a "bearer" electoral bond scheme, as announced in the Union Budget 2017-18, regardless of the concerns raised.

While *HuffPost India* broke the story of how the RBI objected to the electoral bonds scheme earlier this week, documents provided by Bhardwaj give further details on the back-and-forth that took place.

RBI: Electoral bonds will promote money laundering

A look at the communication between then RBI governor Patel and then finance minister Arun Jaitley reveals that the government repeatedly ignored concerns raised by the central bank around the scheme.

On September 14, 2017, Patel in a letter to Jaitley clearly spelt out his concerns. He wrote:

"We are concerned that the issue of EBs as bearer instruments in the manner currently contemplated

has the possibility of misuse, more particularly through use of shell companies. This can subject the RBI to a serious reputational risk of facilitating money laundering transactions."

The RBI governor also stated that "given that the major objective of the EB Scheme is to provide anonymity to persons making a contribution to political parties, we believe that this can be better achieved if EBs are issued in electronic form (demat form), with the Reserve Bank as the depository, rather than as a physical scrip."

He said, "apart from avoiding the use of EBs for money laundering, this arrangement will be more secure and will also reduce the cost, as the need for printing security features is obviated. Moreover, this will be in the fitness of things given the larger objective of digitalisation that the government is pursuing."

On the need to issue electoral bonds in demat form, Patel further explained that these "will be akin to a central-bank floated 'digital currency' that would obviate the need for any other entity to issue such instruments. At a later state, and if so desired, such EBs can pave the way for fully transparent electoral funding, viz., Reserve Bank as the custodian would record the payer of money in the transaction, who is the effective contributor to electoral funding."

However, Patel's concerns and advice clearly failed to move the government.

Govt: Bearer bonds will ensure secrecy of donor

In his response to the governor's letter on September 24, 2017, secretary of the Department of Economic Affairs in the finance minister, Subhash Chandra Garg, wrote, "RBI's suggestion on issuance of EBs in electronic (demat) format only with the bond holders sharing unique identifier with the political party may take away a key feature of the scheme to protect the identity of the donor from the political parties. The donors may apprehend that the system may not be able to ensure secrecy of identity of the donor."

Conveying the Centre's intent, the secretary added, "the Government, therefore, considers that issuing bonds in physical bearer bond form, as approved earlier, needs to be the mode of issuance of electoral bonds." He also urged the RBI governor to "urgently send" the draft notifications of the Electoral Bond Scheme as per the structure forwarded to RBI on August 30, 2017.

Thus, it is clear that the contours of the scheme had been firmed up by the Centre earlier itself.

RBI: Increased risk of forgery, cross-border counterfeiting

In a follow-up letter, dated September 27, 2017, Patel again wrote to Jaitley asking that the government "revisit its stance on issuing EBs in scrip form". He also conveyed to the minister that the Committee of the Central Board (of the RBI) suggested that the bank "advise the central government, in our fiduciary capacity, to reconsider the idea of issuing EBs in the form of physical scrips in view of the

likely unintended consequences that it could result in”.

Patel noted that the Committee flagged certain issues. It felt that “issue of EBs in scrip form is fraught with serious risk of money laundering as consideration for transfer of scrips from the original subscriber to a transferee and thereafter, till it is eventually given to a political party for encashment, will be paid in cash.”

The panel cautioned that “this will leave no trail of the transactions and in the process of providing anonymity to the contributor to the political party, anonymity will be provided to several others in the chain of transfer of the EBs” and that “this can render the scheme to abuse by unscrupulous elements.”

Another major concern raised by the RBI committee pertained to national security. It cautioned that “EBs in scrip form could also be exposed to the risk of forgery and cross-border counterfeiting besides offering a convenient vehicle for abuse by ‘aggregators’.”

In this regard, the panel said, “one of the major positives arising out of the demonetisation was that cash lying outside the formal economy has been brought into the banking system”.

But, it said, while “public at large endured serious physical and other kinds of inconveniences only because they saw this as a concerted effort to deal with the black money hoarders,” the EB scheme could undo the good. “The moment the proposed scheme of EBs in scrip form is operationalised, the possibility of that helping black money to be laundered will surely be highlighted in various quarters.”

The panel also cautioned that

“this would expose the government and RBI to adverse public criticism and consequent loss of goodwill for both.”

Despite the concerns and red flags raised, the Centre stood its ground. On October 5, 2017, Garg wrote to the RBI governor saying, “it has been decided that issuance of such bonds would be in the form of physical bearer bond form only. Your views and suggestions have been duly considered and this is the final decision of the Government.”

Editor’s Note: In another article published in the Wire, Gaurav Bhatnagar notes that the Election Commission too had raised concerns regarding the electoral bond scheme. He writes:

“The Election Commission had in 2017 filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court in which it criticised the electoral bond scheme. Its argument was that electoral bond project and removal of caps on the extent of corporate funding

would have ‘serious repercussions/ impact on the transparency aspect of political finance/funding of political parties’.

“The Commission had then termed the scheme a ‘retrograde step’ and argued that non-disclosure of donor identity and clauses would allow for shell companies and foreign entities to fund and influence Indian political parties and elections.

“Then, in April this year, the EC also told the apex court that it was opposed to the veil of anonymity associated with such bonds. The Election Commission maintained that it wanted transparency in political funding and that disclosure of the identity of the funders as well as the recipients was essential for democracy. ‘People have the right to know about the antecedents of their representatives and the political party that candidate represents,’ it submitted.

(Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar is Deputy Editor at The Wire.)

What Policies Can India's Corporates Buy With Half a Billion Dollars?

Raghu Karnad

Between the years 2005 and 2018, the world’s five largest tech firms—Amazon, Apple, Google, Facebook and Microsoft—grew to dominate global business and media, and firmed their grip on global markets and on lawmakers. According to Forbes, the ‘Big Five’ collectively “spent half a billion dollars lobbying [the US] Congress” over those 13 years.

In India, anonymous political donors spent a similar amount—Rs 3,622 crore, or \$514 million—in just two months, March and April 2019.

On May 5, the State Bank of India responded to a Right to Information request from activist Vihar Durve, disclosing the value of electoral bonds issued just prior to the general election.

In March and April of 2019, respectively, Rs 1365.68 crore and Rs 2256.37 crore were transferred to political parties, with no taxes levied.

Since 2017, electoral bonds have allowed donors—including subsidiaries of foreign firms—to remain anonymous, regardless of the

scale of their donation.

Finance minister Arun Jaitley recently argued that electoral bonds allow citizens to support a party or candidate, using white money, and without fear of repercussions. But the trade-off for this freedom is the loss of any public oversight of who is funding elected leaders.

In Jaitley's view, donations have to be enabled as democratic freedom. But evidence suggests that these donors are not regular citizens. In a prior period, 99.8% of the value of electoral bonds were issued in denominations of Rs 10 lakh or one crore, according to the Association for Democratic Reform. Large donations usually represent lobbying, *quid pro quos* or a transaction within a cycle of institutionalised corruption.

Data is not yet available on who received what share of the half-billion-dollar deluge just before the election. But in a prior period, FY 2017–18, 98% of the value of all electoral bonds issued went to the ruling BJP.

So how much is half a billion dollars worth, in political terms? We have seen that it is comparable to 13 years worth of US lobbying by the 'Big Five' in tech.

Here are a few other revealing comparisons in the US, about the scale of corporate influence and control sought in exchange for half a billion dollars:

- Between 1999 and 2009, the combined lobbying expenditure of the 50 largest US agro and food patent-holding firms, plus top biotechnology and agrochemical trade associations, was \$572 million—over the full decade. This estimate was published in a report by the NGO Food and Water Watch. This

was a period when genetically-modified crops loomed large in US policy debates.

- Between 1998 and 2008, half a billion dollars was the average annual lobbying spend by the entire US financial services sector, according to a consumer report. Only one third was in actual political contributions; the other two-thirds were spent on paid lobbyists. This was a period when banks and financial firms defeated regulations and oversight, maintaining a free run of illegal or unethical practices, which culminated in the 2008 financial crisis and global recession.
- Between 2012 and 2014, six hundred companies with interests in US food and agribiz—including Exxon, DuPont and Monsanto, as well as banks and the US Chamber of Commerce—collectively spent half a billion dollars to influence the US Farm Bill (which sets food and agriculture policy and dictates a trillion dollars in government spending).
- The largest telecom firms in the US—Comcast, Verizon,

AT&T and the National Cable & Telecommunications Association (NCTA)—collectively spent \$572 million on lobbying over the nine years leading up to 2017. This was during the height of the States-side political debate on regulatory oversight and net neutrality.

In all these cases, massive lobbies—comprising the largest corporations in the world—have poured money into political coffers, over a course of years, to reach a total spend in the range of half a billion dollars.

In India, however, entities have deluged politicians with funds on this scale over just two months. And Indian citizens are denied the right to know who those entities are, or to understand what they are hoping to get in return.

(See also: Divya Guha, "India's Shadow Lobbies: How Business Captured the Government", published in Janata Blog this week - Editor.)

(Raghu Karnad is a Contributing Editor at the Wire.)

Pathetic State of Economy: Modi Govt Hides Data

Prabhat Patnaik

The National Statistical Office (NSO) has decided not to release the quinquennial survey data on consumer expenditure for 2017–18. This is because these data, leaked by The Business Standard (November 15) show a drop of 3.7 per cent in real per capita consumer expenditure between 2011–12 and 2017–18, from Rs 1,501 per month to Rs 1,446

per month (at 2009–10 prices).

An actual drop in per capita consumer expenditure is an extremely serious matter. Such a drop has occurred for the first time in over four decades; the previous occasion when a drop had occurred was in 1972–73, when a poor harvest had combined with the first oil shock by OPEC to push up inflation

and to squeeze drastically the real purchasing power in the hands of the people. Those however had been erratic disturbances: either external factors (OPEC price-hike) or episodic factors (poor harvest) for which the government could not be held responsible, though it could of course be faulted for the way it handled these disturbances.

In 2017–18 there are no such erratic disturbances outside of the government's control. The only disturbances that had shaken the economy during the 2017–18 survey period were the demonetisation of currency notes and the rolling out of the Goods and Services Tax, for both of which the Modi government was solely responsible.

To be sure, these disastrous decisions alone cannot explain the fall in per capita consumer expenditure. The incidence of the fall has been particularly sharp in rural India where per capita expenditure has declined by 8.8 per cent between 2011–12 and 2017–18, compared to a rise, though by a mere 2 per cent, in urban India between these dates. And in rural India signs of distress had been visible for quite some time, quite apart from demonetisation and GST. The latter in short acted on an already distressing situation to make it more distressing; but it is not as if the situation was tolerable otherwise.

The clearest proof of this comes from production data. The government is claiming that production data run contrary to the data on consumer expenditure, but this is a false claim. If we take the current price net value added in “agriculture and allied activities”, which is the source of all incomes derived within this sector, and divide it by the agriculture-dependent population (estimated by assuming

that its ratio in total population did change over a short period), then we find that, deflated by the consumer price index for rural India, the per capita real income of the agriculture-dependent population declined slightly between 2013–14 and 2017–18. Since the agriculture-dependent population also includes the landlords and the agricultural capitalists, who have a large share despite being few in number and whose incomes could be safely assumed not to have fallen over this period, the decline for the bulk of the rural population, the working people of rural India, must have declined even more sharply. (And even if the ratio of the agriculture-dependent population in total population is assumed to have fallen over this period, the fall could not have been large enough to negate this conclusion). The same conclusion holds if we change the terminal date from 2017–18 to 2016–17, i.e., before demonetisation could have had any impact. It follows that whatever impact demonetisation (and the GST) had was superimposed upon an agrarian economy already in distress because of the neo-liberal policies being pursued by successive governments, and pursued with particularly ruthless single-mindedness by the Modi government.

The decline in food expenditure has been especially sharp, by as much as 10 per cent in per capita terms between 2011–12 and 2017–18 in rural India. This must have increased the magnitude of poverty quite significantly. Contrary to official claims, the magnitude of poverty which is defined with respect to a calorie norm in India had been rising both in urban and in rural areas over the period of neo-

liberal policies. This is evident if we compare the figures for 1993–94 and 2011–12 (both quinquennial survey years). This magnitude must have got a further sharp upward push in 2017–18.

It is typical of the Modi government to suppress these data on consumer expenditure, which it finds uncomfortable. It had done the same with employment data before the Lok Sabha elections, which had shown an unemployment rate higher than ever before in the last 45 years; but these data at least were officially released afterwards. With regard to the consumer expenditure data however it has decided not to release them at all. It will wait till 2021–22 for the next quinquennial survey, by which time it would have suitably modified the method of data collection to ensure that it gets a prettier picture, before it comes out with any figures on consumer expenditure.

The argument it has advanced for suppressing the consumer expenditure data are quite absurd: the “data quality” according to it is poor. But this is a matter that could have been left to the researchers and the public at large, instead of being decided by a set of bureaucrats and hand-picked “experts”. The government could have just released the data and taken the stand that not much should be read into them because of poor “data quality”.

In fact when the quinquennial survey on consumer expenditure in 2009–10 showed a substantial increase in poverty compared to 2004–05, the government of that time ordered a fresh large sample survey in 2011–12. The argument advanced was that the 2009–10 survey could not be taken seriously because it had been carried out

during a drought year; but that did not prevent the government of the time from releasing the data for 2009–10. And indeed 2011–12, which was a good crop year, showed a substantial increase in per capita consumer expenditure compared to 2009–10, though it did not negate the conclusion about a rising trend of poverty (in terms of calorie deprivation) in the neo-liberal period.

In fact this is the first time that the data thrown up by an official statistical survey have been entirely suppressed, with all the expenditure undertaken for the survey going down the drain. For a government to waste so much of the nation's resources, by commissioning a survey whose results are then suppressed, just because it does not want its hype about 'acchhe din' destroyed, shows a level of megalomania that is unimaginable.

What is even more worrying is that its megalomania would destroy

the statistical system that the country had built up so painstakingly under the leadership of Professor P.C. Mahalanobis, when Jawaharlal Nehru was the Prime Minister. The National Sample Survey that Mahalanobis had set up was the largest sample survey in the world, a source of information unparalleled anywhere in the third world, a matter of pride for the country, and an immensely valuable input for research. To muck about with it, to destroy this valuable source just so that the hollowness of the government's claims about its "achievements" is not exposed, constitutes an instance of criminal callousness.

The government argues that the consumer expenditure data are not in keeping with other official indicators, and that this is the basis of its argument that the "data quality" is poor. But these data are completely in conformity with what one gleans from all other sources. They are in

conformity with the unemployment data mentioned above. They are in conformity with the agricultural income figures mentioned above. They are in conformity with the massive downturn that the economy is experiencing at present, when not a day passes without some fresh news appearing about its miserable performance. The fact that the sales of even simple consumer items like biscuits have been falling of late is in conformity with the absolute decline in per capita consumer expenditure.

When the nation is in the grip of a severe economic crisis, instead of using every bit of available information to understand the crisis, the Modi government is suppressing valuable information. This is the measure of its seriousness in overcoming the crisis.

(Prabhat Patnaik is Professor Emeritus at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.)

Jharkhand: Where Is the Mineral Wealth Going?

Subodh Varma

According to various estimates, Jharkhand has 40% of the country's mineral resources. It has 27.3 per cent of India's coal reserves, 26 per cent of iron ore, 18.5 per cent copper ore, besides having deposits of uranium, mica, bauxite, granite, limestone, silver, graphite, magnetite and dolomite. It also has large quantities of stone, limestone and sand. Almost 20% of the state's revenue arises from mining activities.

But despite this abundance, and despite mining having started as far back as the first decade of the 20th century, Jharkhand continues to be one of the poorest states in

the country ranking low on various economic and social indicators. It was thought that after the state was carved out of Bihar in 2000, development will take place. But that also doesn't seem to have happened. Why?

Disastrous Model

The main reason for this is that mineral resources were seen by the political rulers as something that has to be appropriated, or rather seized, and sold off. The people living on those lands were mostly seen as encumbrances—obstacles that had to be duped or coerced into giving

way for big mining companies. Thus mining became an activity that was hostile to the people. They were evicted, turned into serfs, forced to migrate, or survive in inhuman conditions. This naturally led to resistance to mining and all the problems that follow.

Besides this, the other major fault in policy lay in handing over mines to private entities. The contradiction with people intensified as 3,963 lessees and 6,647 dealers took over mining and trading operations in the state. These were unscrupulous operators with only one objective—to make profit, come what may. As a

result, the distance between mineral resources and people became even greater and the relations even more fraught.

Some may argue that the state government does earn royalties and fees from leasing out the mines, so what is wrong with this model? The answer is very simple: the state government (this one and previous ones) has fixed the game in such a way that only a small amount of royalties and other fees finally accrue to it, leaving the operators with huge profits. As it is, royalty rates are low and mostly levied on pit mouth prices or even cost of production prices for captive mines. Even the CAG has castigated the Jharkhand state government for non- or short levy of royalties by applying incorrect rates, under-estimating production, not penalising late payments etc.

As a result, the richest mineral state is earning a paltry sum from various fees it charges from companies that are exploiting the minerals and selling them off for big profits. According to the latest Budget presented by the BJP ministry that rules Jharkhand, in 2018–19, Rs 6,783 crore was the revenue (revised estimate) accruing to the Mines Department from various fees and rents. In 2019–20, the Budget hoped to collect Rs 8,042 crore. In addition, sand extraction yielded revenue of Rs 299 crore in 2018–19 and was expected to yield Rs 362 crore in the current year.

These are paltry sums, nowhere near the actual final sale value of minerals that are being relentlessly extracted from the land in Jharkhand. Partly, they reflect the clout of mining industrialists who keep such rates low by pressurising the government. But partly they also

result from the rather low level of mineral extraction because of not taking the people in confidence and hence facing resistance to mining.

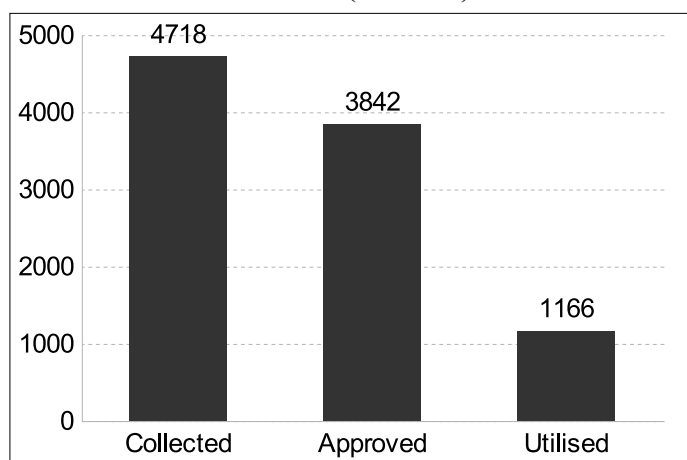
District Mineral Fund Sham

In 2016, the Modi government announced that in order to plough back some of the profits that mining activities generate, the mining operators will have to pay 10% of the royalties to a trust set up in each district. It was called the District Minerals Foundation (DMF). The funds thus collected would be used for such development work like providing piped water supply to communities, building roads and toilets, and so on.

The chart reveals the fate of this program—called Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana or PM Mining Sector Welfare Programme. Remember, the state has been ruled by BJP since 2014, so there is complete political convergence with the BJP led central government in Delhi. No questions of any dissonance. As you can see, just 24% of the funds thus collected have been used for the ‘developmental work’.

Clearly, the whole thing has turned into a macabre joke. It seems

Chart: Jharkhand: District Mineral Foundation Fund, 2016–19 (Rs crore)



all the projects sanctioned till date in Jharkhand—some 25,000 odd—are still in progress! In three years not a single one has been completed.

Meanwhile the state’s inhabitants continue to get ground down in abject poverty, face joblessness and the state has reported some of the most shocking numbers in terms of malnutrition, even starvation deaths. The coming elections may see the BJP state government dislodged, going by the widespread discontent, but a deeper relook is necessary at the mining and mineral policy if the people are ever to get the benefit of these resources.

(Subodh Varma is a senior journalist.)

Janata Subscription

Annual Rs. : 260/-

Three Years : 750/-

Demand Draft / Cheque
on Mumbai Bank
in favour of

JANATA TRUST

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Grant Road (W), Mumbai 400 007.

Global Climate Disaster: Science is Screaming

Jake Johnson

An alarming United Nations report released this week said global temperatures are on track to rise as much as 3.2°C by the end of the century, meaning only drastic and unprecedented emissions reductions can stave off the most devastating consequences of the climate crisis.

The annual Emissions Gap report from the UN Environmental Program (UNEP) warns that nations' commitments under the Paris climate accord—from which US President Donald Trump began formally withdrawing this month—are not

nearly sufficient to bring about the widespread changes needed to avert climate catastrophe.

According to the report, produced by an international team of leading scientists and researchers, greenhouse gas emissions must begin falling 7.6 percent annually by 2020 to prevent global temperatures from rising more than 1.5°C by 2030.

"Our collective failure to act early and hard on climate change means we now must deliver deep cuts to emissions," Inger Andersen,

UNEP's executive director, said in a statement. "This shows that countries simply cannot wait until the end of 2020, when new climate commitments are due, to step up action. They—and every city, region, business, and individual—need to act now."

Anderson added that only "major transformations of economies and societies" will be enough.

(Jake Johnson is a staff writer for Common Dreams, a nonprofit, US-based, news website.)

Capitalism versus Life on Earth

Ian Angus

These sentences are from a recent report on the consequences of climate change:

Sea level rise, changes in water and food security, and more frequent extreme weather events are likely to result in the migration of large segments of the population. Rising seas will displace tens (if not hundreds) of millions of people, creating massive, enduring instability.... Salt water intrusion into coastal areas and changing weather patterns will also compromise or eliminate fresh water supplies in many parts of the world.... A warming trend will also increase the range of insects that are vectors of infectious tropical diseases. This, coupled with large scale human migration from tropical nations, will increase the spread of infectious disease.

Many reports have made such points. What makes this one significant is that it was commissioned by the Pentagon, by the General who is now chair of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff. The authors are senior officials of the U.S. Army, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and NASA, and it was published by the United States Army War College.

Their report recommends strengthening the U.S. military, already the biggest war machine on Earth, to protect the U.S. empire from the consequences of the environmental chaos. They call for a "campaign-plan-like approach to proactively prepare for likely conflict and mitigate the impacts." As we know, when the U.S. military embarks on a campaign, the result is always devastation and destruction for the poor and oppressed.

As this report shows, the U.S. Army, unlike the U.S. president, knows that climate change is real, and that the consequences may be catastrophic. The generals recognize that something has gone terribly wrong in the relationship between human society and the Earth.

Planetary Boundaries

Climate change is the most extreme example of the crisis, but it is not the only one. Earth System scientists have identified nine *planetary boundaries*—global environmental conditions that define "a safe operating space for humanity." Crossing any one of those thresholds could have deleterious or even disastrous consequences for civilization. *Seven of the nine critical planetary boundaries are close to or already in the danger zone.*

Such research leads irresistibly to the conclusion that modest reforms and policy shifts are not enough. We confront not individual problems that can be tackled separately, but *an interlocked set of disruptions of Earth's life support systems*. Fundamental natural processes that have evolved over millions of years are being shattered in just a few decades.

Radical remedies are obviously required, but we won't find a cure

unless we identify the underlying cause, the systemic disease that is attacking our planet.

Why Growth?

Many environmentalists identify the underlying problem simply as growth. And indeed, as many books and articles show, the drive to extract, produce and grow ever more stuff is filling our rivers with poison and our air with pollution. Oceans are dying, species are disappearing at unprecedented rates, water is running short, and soil is eroding faster than it can be replaced—but the growth machines push on.

Corporate executives, economists, bureaucrats and politicians all agree that growth is good and non-growth is bad. Unending material expansion is a deliberate policy promoted by ideologues of every political stripe, from social democrats to conservatives. When the G20 met in Toronto they unanimously agreed that their highest priority was to “lay the foundation for strong, sustainable, and balanced growth.” The word growth appeared 29 times in their final declaration.

Uncontrolled growth is clearly a central issue, but that raises a further question—why does it continue? Why, in the face of massive evidence that expanded production and resource extraction is killing us, do governments and corporations keep shoveling coal for the runaway growth train?

In most environmental writing, one of two explanations is offered—it’s human nature, or it’s a mistake.

The human nature argument is central to mainstream economics, which assumes that human beings always want more, so economic growth is just capitalism’s way of meeting human desires. For our species, enough is never enough. That view often leads its proponents

to conclude that the only way to slow or reverse the pillaging of Mother Earth is to slow or reverse population growth. More people equals more stuff; so fewer people would equal less stuff.

That claim is fatally undermined by fact that the countries with the highest birth rates have the lowest standard of living, own the least stuff, and produce the least pollution. If the poorest 3 billion people on the planet somehow disappeared tomorrow, there would be virtually no reduction in ongoing environmental destruction.

The other common explanation for the constant promotion of growth is that we have been seduced by a false ideology. The drive for growth has been described as a fetish, an obsession, an addiction, or even a spell. Greens often use the term growthmania.

Such accounts present the drive for growth as a choice that politicians and investors make, under the influence of a bizarre obsession. As British socialist Fawzi Ibrahim says, this

“must be the first time in history that a necessity has been described as a fetish. You might as well describe fish having a fetish for water as capitalism having a fetish for growth. Growth is as essential to capitalism as is water to fish. As fish would die without water, so would capitalism drown without growth.”

Growth ideology doesn’t cause perpetual accumulation—it justifies it. Uncontrolled growth is not the root cause of the global crisis—it is the inevitable result of the profit system, of capitalism’s inherent drive to accumulate ever more capital.

Personifications of capital

As individuals, the people who run the giant polluters undoubtedly want their children

and grandchildren to live in a clean, environmentally sustainable world. But as major shareholders and executives and top managers they act, in Marx’s wonderful phrase, as “personifications of capital.” Regardless of how they behave at home or with their children, at work they are capital in human form, and the imperatives of capital take precedence over all other needs and values. When it comes to a choice between protecting humanity’s future and maximizing profit, they choose profit.

As a case in point, consider the nitrogen oxide gases, nitrogen monoxide and nitrogen dioxide, which are produced by burning petroleum fuels, especially by diesel engines. They don’t get as much media attention as carbon dioxide, but they are powerful greenhouse gases, and they are directly harmful to human health. They cause throat and lung diseases, and they increase the severity of diseases such as asthma.

In 2009, regulators in Europe and North America introduced strict limits on automobile nitrogen oxide emissions. All automakers had to submit their cars for testing. That was a big problem for the world’s second largest automobile company, Volkswagen, because much of their profit came from vehicles with diesel engines that did not meet the new standards.

But, as we are often told, capitalism encourages innovation. Just in time, VW announced that its engineers had solved the problem. They had invented technology that fully met or exceeded the new standards. They promoted it very heavily under the slogan “Clean Diesel,” and it was hugely successful. Between 2009 and 2016 Volkswagen sold over 11 million Clean Diesel cars worldwide.

That’s pretty impressive—a

giant corporation was doing well by doing good, making huge profits while protecting the environment and human health.

Or so it seemed.

In 2016, thanks to investigations by some dedicated engineers, we learned that Clean Diesel was a hoax. Volkswagen had not invented new emissions technology. Volkswagen had invented software that cheated on the tests. When the software detected that a test was being conducted, it reduced the engine's power and performance. Under laboratory conditions, VW's Clean Diesel cars met the emission regulations. On the road, they emitted up to 40 times more nitrogen oxide than the legal limit.

Senior executives have been fired and the company has paid heavy fines, but that's after the fact. Seven years of Volkswagen pollution and seven years of big Volkswagen sales illustrate two fundamental characteristics of capitalism—short-term gains are always more important than long-term losses, and profit is always more important than protecting human health.

Volkswagen's owners and executives are personifications of capital, and capital must grow, no matter who gets hurt.

Machines for accumulation

The reason is very simple, although its implications are complex and profound. Big banks and money funds and multimillionaires invest in corporations like Volkswagen in order to get more money back. They really don't care if Volkswagen makes cars or clothes and candy bars, so long as they get a return on their investment.

Corporations are giant social machines for turning capital into more capital. That's what shareholders expect and want, and that's what managers and executives

must deliver.

A person who is unwilling to put the needs of capital first is not likely to become a major corporate executive. If the screening process fails, or if a CEO has an inconvenient attack of conscience, he or she will not last long in that position. It has been called the ecological tyranny of the bottom line. When protecting humanity and planet might reduce profits, corporations will always put profits first.

Capital has only one measure of success. How much more profit was made in this quarter than in the previous quarter? How much more today than yesterday? It doesn't matter if the sales include products spread disease, destroy forests, demolish ecosystems, and treat our water, air, and soil as sewers. It all contributes to the growth of capital, and that is what counts.

Each corporation seeks to ensure that its products produce an attractive profit on invested capital. A corporation with lower costs or more attractive products can drive its competitors out of business. There is constant pressure to expand physically, financially and geographically.

If nothing stops it, capital will try to expand infinitely, but Earth is not infinite. The atmosphere and oceans and forests are finite, limited resources, and capitalism is now pressing against those limits.

Capital must grow. A zero-growth capitalist economy simply cannot exist. As Marx wrote, the historical mission of the bourgeoisie is "accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake.... production on a constantly increasing scale."

Of course, the fact that capital needs to grow does not mean that it always can grow. On the contrary, the drive to grow periodically leads to situations in which more

commodities are produced than can be sold. The result is a crisis in which immense amounts of wealth are destroyed. Individual corporations can and do go out of business in such situations, but over the long term, the drive for profit, to accumulate ever more capital, always reasserts itself.

That is the defining feature of the capitalist system and the root cause of the global environmental crisis. Mass opposition and public pressure can slow down or hinder the drive to expand more and faster, but it will always reassert itself in some form.

Metabolic rifts

The anti-ecological results of such a system were first analyzed in the nineteenth century, when the productivity of English agriculture was in decline.

In the mid-1800s, the German scientist Justus von Liebig showed that in its natural state, soil provides the essential nutrients that allows plants to grow, and replenishes nutrients from plant and animal waste. But when crops are produced for distant markets, as they increasingly were in 19th Century England, soil fertility suffers because food waste and excrement do not return to the soil. Liebig called this a robbery system, because nutrients were being stolen from the soil and not returned.

Karl Marx studied Liebig's work carefully. He seized upon the then-new scientific concept of metabolism, of biological and physical cycles that are essential to life, and made it central to his analysis of the relationship between humanity and nature. He viewed the shift away from using human manure as an important example of capitalist society's alienation from the natural world on which human life depends.

Marx integrated Liebig's

explanation of the soil exhaustion crisis into his historical and social analysis of capitalism, concluding that “a rational agriculture is incompatible with the capitalist system,” because the imperatives of capitalist growth inevitably conflict with the laws of nature.

He described the separation of humans from food production, this break in an age-old nutrient cycle as “an irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism, a metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life itself.”

Marx’s analysis of nineteenth-century British agriculture provides the theoretical starting point for what is now known as *metabolic rift theory*, which is used by many radical ecologists to analyze and understand modern environmental crises.

The concept of metabolic rift expresses society’s simultaneous dependence on and separation from the rest of nature. Like an autoimmune disease that attacks the body it dwells in, capitalism is both part of the natural world and at war with it. It simultaneously depends upon and undermines the Earth’s life support systems.

An incurably short-term horizon

Capital’s ecologically destructive impacts are driven not just by its need to grow, but by its need to grow faster. The circuit from investment to profit to reinvestment requires time to complete, and the longer it takes, the less total return investors receive. Competition for investment produces constant pressure to speed up the cycle, to go from investment to production to sale ever more quickly.

That’s why it took sixteen weeks to raise a two-and-a-half pound chicken in 1925, while today chickens twice that big are raised in six weeks. Selective breeding,

hormones, and chemical feed have enabled factory farms to produce not just more meat, but more meat faster. The suffering of the animals and the quality of the food are secondary concerns, if they are considered at all.

But most natural processes cannot be manipulated that way. Nature’s cycles operate at speeds that have evolved over many millennia—forcing them in any way inevitably destabilizes the cycle and produces unpleasant results.

Fertile land is destroyed, forests are clear-cut, and fish populations collapse, all because of what Istvan Mészáros calls the *incurably short-term horizon of the capital system*. There is an insuperable conflict between nature’s time and capital’s time—between cyclical processes that have developed over hundreds of millions of years, and capital’s need for rapid production, sale, and profit.

The metabolic rifts that Liebig and Marx knew of and wrote about were initially local or regional, but they have grown along with capitalism. Colonialism extended the damage by transporting products and nutrients from distant places.

Since the middle of the 20th century, capitalism has caused unprecedented changes in the entire biosphere, Earth’s lands, forests, water, and air. In its endless search for profits, it is massively disrupting and destroying Earth’s life support systems—the natural processes and cycles that make life itself possible. Metabolic rifts have become metabolic chasms.

Ecosocialist revolution

That’s why the environmental crisis can’t be just a talking point for socialists—it’s a *planetary emergency* that we must treat as a top priority. We need to initiate and join struggles for immediate environmental aims. We need to

participate, not as sideline critics, but as activists, builders and leaders. And at the same time, we need to find the best ways to patiently explain how those struggles relate to the larger fight to save the world from capitalist ecocide.

As Simon Butler and I wrote in *Too Many People?*,

“in every country, we need governments that break with the existing order, that are answerable only to working people, farmers, the poor, indigenous communities, and immigrants—in a word, to the victims of ecocidal capitalism, not its beneficiaries and representatives.”

Such governments will have two fundamental and inseparable characteristics.

First, they will be committed to grassroots democracy, to radical egalitarianism, and to social justice. They will be based on collective ownership of the means of production, and they will work actively to eliminate exploitation, profit and accumulation as the driving forces of our economy.

Second, they will base their decisions and actions on the best ecological principles, giving top priority to stopping anti-environmental practices, to restoring damaged ecosystems, and to reestablishing agriculture and industry on ecologically sound principles.

Such a profound transformation will not just happen. In fact, it will not happen at all unless ecology has a central place in socialist theory, in the socialist program, and in the activity of the socialist movement.

In short, in the 21st century, socialists and greens must be ecosocialists, and humanity needs an ecosocialist revolution.

(Ian Angus is a socialist and ecosocialist activist in Canada. He is editor of the ecosocialist journal Climate & Capitalism.)



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

Ahmedabad, Hyderabad,
Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi



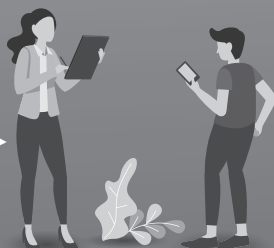
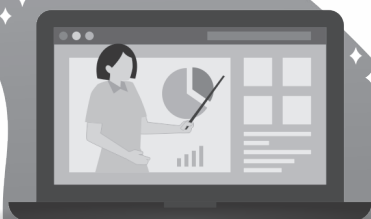
MKCL
Creating a Knowledge Lit World
www.mkcl.org

MS-CIT

Syllabus Available in Two Options

Job Readiness

IT Awareness



Job Readiness

Improve your
employability
and IT skills



IT Awareness

Update your digital
skills in fast
growing IT world

Gateway to New Careers

MS-CIT

Maharashtra State-Certificate In
Information Technology

www.mkcl.org/mscit

Enroll today at your nearest Authorized MKCL Center or ☎ 8411960005

Postal Registration No. MCW/275/2018-2020.

License to Post without prepayment WPP License No. MR/Tech/WPP-210/West/2019

Published on Sunday, December 1, 2019 & Posted on Wednesday, December 4, 2019 at Mumbai Patrika Channel, Mumbai GPO-1



"We are, what we repeatedly do,
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Aristotle



Taj Palace & Towers - Mumbai



Bombay Stock Exchange - Fort, Mumbai



Forum Atmosphere - Kolka



J.K. House (Raymond)
Breach Candy, Mumbai

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING /
REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF :

- ✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)
- ✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)
- ✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.

Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com

Vol. 74 No. 46
December 8, 2019

Ambedkar For Our Times

Subhash Gatade

Our Demands on the 35th Anniversary
New Industrial Relations Law: Farewell to
Job Security
Subodh Varma

New IR Code Bill: Another Nail in the Coffin
Ronak Chhabra

Despite Hurdles, Jammu–Srinagar March
Succeeds
Sandeep Pandey, Rajendran Narayanan

Protests Against Firoz Khan: Undoing
India's Glorious Tradition
Minakshi Rajdev

Historic Students' March in Pakistan
V. Arun Kumar

Palestine: We Thought the House Was
Empty
Vijay Prashad

One Year of López Obrador's Mexico
Katu Arkonada

The Realism of Bernie Sanders' Climate
Policy
Naomi Klein, Sivan Kartha

UK: Labour's General Election Manifesto
Kenneth Surin

Editor : G. G. Parikh

Associate Editor : Neeraj Jain

Managing Editor : Guddi

Editorial Board :
B. Vivekanandan, Qurban Ali,
Anil Nauriya, Sonal Shah,
Amarendra Dhaneshwar,
Sandeep Pandey

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : janataweekly@gmail.com
Website:www.janataweekly.org

At a time when we are witnessing a concerted attempt from the powers that be to water down Ambedkar's legacy and appropriate his name to peddle an agenda which essentially hinges around political and social reaction, we need to understand how during his more than three decade long political career he put forward a "variety of political and social ideas that fertilised Indian thinking" (as per late President K R Narayanan) which contributed to the rulers of the newly independent nation's decision to adopt the parliamentary form of democracy. Perhaps more important would be to understand his differentiation between what he called 'political democracy'—which he defined as 'one man one vote' and 'social democracy'—which according to him was one man with one value and his caution that political democracy built on the divisions, asymmetries, inequalities and exclusions of traditional Indian society would be like 'a palace built on cow dung'.

We also need to take a look at the unfolding scenario in the country and also see for oneself whether there is a growing dissonance or resonance between what and how Dr Ambedkar envisaged democracy and

the actual situation on the ground and how should we see our role in confronting the challenges which lie before it.

* *

Let us first try and understand whether the image of Ambedkar which has been taught to us through textbooks and popularised by the ever expanding media matches with his actual contributions as a great leader, scholar and renaissance thinker, all put together.

This image would include: 'Dalit leader', 'Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution', 'fought for the rights of Scheduled Castes', and 'embraced Buddhism with lakhs of followers'. The image of Ambedkar in people's minds normally does not transcend these limits.

The imagery does not include the historic Mahad Satyagraha which was organised under his leadership way back in 1927 at the Chawdar Talab (lake) nor does it include the burning of Manusmriti in the second phase of this Satyagraha, which was compared to the French revolution by Ambedkar in his speech. It also does not include details of the first political party

This article has been edited by us for reasons of space. The full article is available on Janata blog.)

formed under his leadership called Independent Labour Party, role of many non-dalits or even upper castes in the movement led by him or the historic march to Bombay assembly against the 'Khot pratha' in which communists had participated in equal strength. His historic speech to the railway workers in Manmad wherein he asked them to fight the twin enemies of 'Brahminism' and 'Capitalism' (late thirties) or his struggle for Hindu Code Bill, which ultimately became the cause of his resignation from Nehru cabinet, all these details of his stormy life, never get mention in the imagery. One can add many other important interventions under his leadership which definitely do not 'suit' his image of a 'dalit messiah'.

Is it not surprising that most of us know so little of him, which is definitely not the case with other great leaders who emerged during the anti-colonial movement?

This selective amnesia about Ambedkar is largely due to the way in which the ruling classes then—dominated by the upper caste elite—tried to belittle his image in a very surreptitious manner. Undoubtedly people or formations involved in the work of broader social transformation, which also include organisations claiming to be his legatees, cannot escape blame for the critical silences around his image.

Any student of politics of the oppressed would vouch that this is a bane of most of the leaders of the exploited and oppressed. In fact, we have been witness to a similar process which unfolded itself in the USA itself where a very sanitised image of Martin Luther King has been made popular. Instead of MLK who opposed Vietnam War, looked at capitalism as source of all evils,

who equally struggled for workers rights, we have before us an image of King which seems more amenable to the ruling classes there.

* *

Coming to his ideas on democracy, it can definitely be said that future of Indian democracy depends to a great deal upon revival of Ambedkar's visionary conception of democracy. Of course, this would need to be enlarged and updated in the light of the recent experience.

But before taking up this aspect it would be opportune to know from Ambedkar himself how he looked at the idea of democracy. Perhaps his speech on the 'Voice of America' radio (20th May 1956) which he gave few months before his death could best summarise his ideas around the concept.

The first point which he makes is that 'Democracy is quite different from a Republic as well as from Parliamentary Government.' According to him:

"The roots of democracy lie not in the form of Government, Parliamentary or otherwise. A democracy is more than a form of Government. It is primarily a mode of associated living. The roots of Democracy are to be searched in the social relationship, in the terms of associated life between the people who form a society."

Next he comes to define the word 'society' itself. For him a society is united by its very nature and "the qualities which accompany this unity are praiseworthy community of purpose and desire for welfare, loyalty to public ends and mutuality of sympathy and co-operation."

Interrogating Indian society, he asks whether "these ideals are found in Indian society?" Elaborating on the Indian society which is nothing

but "an innumerable collection of castes which are exclusive in their life and have no common experience to share and have no bond of sympathy", he concludes that:

"The existence of the Caste System is a standing denial of the existence of those ideals of society and therefore of democracy."

He discusses how "Indian Society is so embedded in the Caste System that everything is organised on the basis of caste." He shares examples from daily life of individuals revolving around the twin concepts of purity and pollution, then moves to how the caste system operates in the social-political arena and wryly concludes that "there is no room for the downtrodden and the outcastes in politics, in industry, in commerce and in education."

He discusses other special of the caste system and focusses on what is called "Graded Inequality" where "Castes are not equal in their status" but rather 'are standing one above another' and form "an ascending scale of hatred and descending scale of contempt" which has the most pernicious consequences as "it destroys willing and helpful co-operation."

He then takes up the manner in which one caste is bound to one occupation which "cuts at the very roots of democracy." He goes on to say that a democratic society "should open a way to use all the capacities of the individual. Stratification is stunting of the growth of the individual and deliberate stunting is a deliberate denial of democracy."

In the concluding part of his speech he discusses obstacles in the way of ending the caste system. He says that the first obstacle is the "system of graded inequality which is the soul of the Caste System."

The second obstacle is that “the Indians Society is disabled by unity in action by not being able to know what is its common good” as “the mind of the Indians is distracted and misled by false valuations and false perspectives.” He ends his speech by emphasising that mere education cannot destroy the caste system, it would require education to be given to the right strata of society, it would require education to be given “to the lowest strata of Indian Society which is interested in blowing up the Caste System.” Giving education to those “who want to keep up the Caste System” is not going “to improve the prospect of Democracy in India” but rather would “put our Democracy in India in greater jeopardy.”

* *

Ambedkar believed that democracy is “a form and a method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed.” The conditions for that are as follows:

“(1) there should not be glaring inequalities in society, that is, privilege for one class; (2) the existence of an opposition; (3) equality in law and administration; (4) observance of constitutional morality; (5) no tyranny of the majority; (6) moral order of society; and (7) public conscience.” (See: Shyam Chand, Dr Ambedkar on Democracy, *Mainstream*, Vol XLV, No 51.)

In his speech to the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949 he also elucidated three devices that he stated were essential to maintain democracy: “(i) constitutional methods: (ii) not to lay liberties at the feet of a great man: (iii) make a political democracy a social democracy.”

Looking at the fact that India happens to be a multi-denominational society where the common denominator could be secularism which is understood as one of the pillars on which the superstructure of our democracy rests and is a unifying force of our associated life, he emphasised :

“The conception of a secular state is derived from the liberal democratic tradition of the West. No institution which is maintained wholly out of state funds shall be used for the purpose of religious instruction irrespective of the question whether the religious instruction is given by the state or by any other body.”

In a debate in Parliament, he also underlined:

“It (secular state) does not mean that we shall not take into consideration the religious sentiments of the people. All that a secular state means that this Parliament shall not be competent to impose any particular religion upon the rest of the people. That is the only limitation that the Constitution recognises.”

Taking into consideration the possibility that a minority can become victim of the tyranny of the majority, he suggested enough safeguards for their protection :

“The State should guarantee to its citizens the liberty of conscience and the free exercise of his religion including the right to profess, to preach and to convert within limits compatible with public order and morality.”

Prof Jean Dreze, in an article “Dr Ambedkar and Future of Indian Democracy”, brings forth an important point wherein he underlines how “Ambedkar’s passion for democracy was closely related to his commitment to rationality

and the scientific outlook.” In this connection he quotes from one of his last speeches, “Buddha or Karl Marx”, wherein summarising the essential teachings of Buddha, Ambedkar elaborates :

“Everyone has a right to learn. Learning is as necessary for man to live as food is ... Nothing is infallible. Nothing is binding forever. Everything is subject to inquiry and examination.”

According to Prof Dreze, raising this issue has become particularly important today considering the recent threats to Indian democracy which often involve a concerted attack on rationality and the scientific spirit.

* *

Let us now go beyond Ambedkar’s understanding of democracy to take a look at another danger to democracy in the unfolding situation in India today.

What is the *sine qua non* of democracy?

It is the understanding that minority voices will be allowed to flourish and they will not be bulldozed.

On the surface, majoritarianism—rule by majority—appears to be very similar to democracy but it essentially stands democracy on its head. For real democracy to thrive, it is essential that ideas and principles of secularism are at its core. The idea that there will be a clear separation between state and religion and there won’t be any discrimination on the basis of religion has to be its guiding principle.

Majoritarianism thus clearly defeats democracy in idea as well as practice.

While democracy’s metamorphosis into majoritarianism

is a real danger, under the rule of capital— especially its present phase of neoliberalism—another lurking danger is its evolution into what can be called as plutocracy—government by the rich.

This has been brought out in considerable detail in a recent book by Thomas Picketty, *Capitalism in the 21st Century*. This convincingly demonstrates that the twentieth century exhibited a secular tendency towards continuous and widening inequality, with disproportionate concentration of income at the top, and that this can be seen in India too, which too is a relatively high inequality country.

In such an unfolding situation, where on the one hand, we are faced with the danger of democracy metamorphosing into majoritarianism, and on the other hand, democracy becoming an oligarchy, the question arises: what needs to be done ?

Jean Dreze, in the above mentioned article, suggests a course of action which merits attention:

“The best course of action may be to revive the Directive Principles of the Constitution, and to reassert that these principles are “fundamental in the governance of the country” (Article 37).

Indeed, in spite of much official hostility to these principles today, there are unprecedented opportunities for asserting the economic and social rights discussed in the constitution—the right to education, the right to information, the right to food, the right to work, and the right to equality, among others. For this, Dr. Ambedkar’s advice to “educate, organise and agitate” is more relevant than ever.

(The author is a social activist and writer.)

International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal, Press Release
November 27, 2019

Our Demands on the 35th Anniversary

For over three decades, several survivor led organisations have been fighting for justice and a life of dignity (proper health care, economic and social rehabilitation and safe living conditions). On the 35th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Disaster, the survivors have specific demands of the Governments of Indian and USA and Dow Chemical.

1. **Compensation:** Union Carbide / Dow Chemical must pay a minimum of 8 thousand US dollars to each Bhopal survivor as additional compensation for personal injuries as claimed in the Supreme Court of India. The Indian government must make Union Carbide / Dow Chemical pay compensation for health and environmental damage caused by contamination of soil and groundwater.
2. **Criminal punishment:** The US government must serve the summons from the Bhopal District Court upon Dow Chemical without delay. The Indian government must ensure that the criminal trial of accused Indian corporate executives is concluded within the next six months.
3. **Health care and research:** The Indian government must ensure that standardised treatment protocols are developed for gas exposure related chronic diseases. The Indian government must establish a population based registry for all deaths, births and congenital malformations in the gas exposed families. The Indian government must ensure that NIREH (National Institute

for Research on Environmental Health) fulfil its commitment to the Bhopal survivors by generating scientific information on the long term health damage by the gas disaster and most effective means of ameliorating them. The Madhya Pradesh state government must ensure that free medical care is available to residents who drank contaminated groundwater for six months or more.

4. **Rehabilitation:** The Indian and MP state governments must ensure that a monthly pension of Rs 3,000/- is paid to all women widowed by the disaster and all those left without means to support themselves as a consequence of gas exposure.
5. **Clean up:** Indian government must ensure comprehensive scientific assessment of the depth, spread and nature of soil and groundwater contamination in an around the abandoned pesticide factory. Union Carbide / Dow Chemical must pay for the clean-up of the soil and groundwater up to international standards. The state government must cease and desist from covering up the contamination by building a memorial to the disaster on top of the contaminated lands.

Janata
is available at
www.lohiatoday.com

New Industrial Relations Law: Farewell to Job Security

Subodh Varma

Silently, indeed clandestinely, a major change has been brought about in the relations between employers and employees. This will affect not just crores of employees of all types—private or public sector, in industries or in services—but also future generations. Jobs are no longer going to be the same again, ever.

On November 28, the Narendra Modi government introduced a new draft Industrial Relations Code, 2019, (IRC) in the Lok Sabha. An earlier version of the draft Code was made public in 2017 and created a storm of protest for its anti-labour provisions. The new draft was never made public. It came as a surprise to not just Parliament members but to trade unions and workers/employees across the country. That's the clandestine part.

The IRC replaces three key existing labour laws—Trade Unions Act, 1926; Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946; and Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. The first of these dealt with how trade unions are to be formed, while the second and third deal with relations between employers and employees.

After being introduced, it obviously came under public scrutiny. And its provisions have caused a fresh round of outrage. Trade unions have again roundly condemned it. All the central trade unions have already called for a massive two-day nation-wide strike on January 8–9, 2020 to protest against the other labour laws that have been either passed or are in the pipeline. The new Industrial Relations Code, too, will face similar protest.

One part of the IRC deals with new and more restrictive provisions for forming trade unions. This is meant to prevent workers getting empowered through forming a collective body to fight for their rights. Another article in this issue of Janata looks at these provisions. Let us look at another key provision.

Bye-Bye Job Security

The IRC provision that completely changes the landscape of employer–employee relationship is contained in a small definition given in Section 2 clause (l), which says:

(l) "fixed term employment" means the engagement of a worker on the basis of a written contract of employment for a fixed period:

Provided that—

(a) his hours of work, wages, allowances and other benefits shall not be less than that of a permanent workman doing the same work or work of similar nature; and

(b) he shall be eligible for all statutory benefits available to a permanent workman proportionately according to the period of service rendered by him even if his period of employment does not extend to the qualifying period of employment required in the statute;

What does this mean? It means that the employer can engage workers/employees for a fixed period of time, say, one year or two years, or whatever. Such workers will have all the same conditions of service, wages etc. and all the same statutory benefits as a 'permanent workman'. The only difference would be that a 'fixed term'

employee will automatically cease to be an employee when his or her term finishes.

A Pliable Workforce

What this means is that the fixed term employee will be at the mercy of the employer. He/she will know that the job is only for, say, one year. In that one year, if any problem arises, if any benefit is denied, if any harassment or humiliation takes place, he/she will not dare to utter a word. Otherwise, the job will not be renewed.

Also, all terms and conditions will have to be accepted by the worker. If the employer dislikes trade unions, then the hapless fixed term employee will have to steer clear on unions.

And if the employer declares that his/her job performance is not satisfactory, that productivity is low, that the josh is not suitably high, the fixed term employee will have to pull up socks and produce more.

And, ultimately, despite all the best efforts of employees, if the employer finds himself in financial trouble due to stiff competition or any other reason, he will simply allow the term of employment to end. So, bye-bye employee, look for another job.

What this means is that a fixed term employee will never be able to settle down, plan a future, invest in anything. Because, who knows when the job will go!

Through this one fell stroke of the pen, so to speak, the entire lives of crores of workers, current and future, have been unimaginably changed—for the worse.

Shifting the Power

It may be argued—and many do argue—that the employer cannot be responsible for all employees. He has to run a business not a charitable outfit!

But enterprises were running before this change was invented. It was not as if employees were sitting idle in factories and other establishments. In fact, if you look at the data from the Annual Survey of Industries, it shows that per worker productivity has been steadily growing over the years. In most industries, workers were working overtime indicating that there was a lot of work to be done. Factory output also has been growing constantly, except in recent months when the slowdown has ruined many industries.

So, this change is not about running industries better. It is more about keeping workers on a tight leash, hiring and firing them according to management needs and forcing them to be more pliable and meek—in short, turning them into modern slaves.

(Subodh Varma is a senior Indian journalist.)

Janata Subscription

Annual Rs. : 260/-
Three Years : 750/-
Demand Draft / Cheque
on Mumbai Bank
in favour of

JANATA TRUST

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Grant Road (W),
Mumbai 400 007.

New IR Code Bill: Another Nail in the Coffin

Ronak Chhabra

After introducing starvation-level wages and removing protections available to the workers, the next target of the labour law codification is the trade unions and the industrial action. To tame the former and dismantle almost every possibility of the latter seems to be the objective of the reforms. This is how Prime Minister Narendra Modi is ensuring the ‘new India’ to further jump the ranks of ‘ease of doing business’.

On Thursday, the Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2019—the third one out of the four labour codes—was presented in the Lok Sabha by the Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar. The Bill proposes changes to the provisions relating to the membership and registration of the trade unions—the representatives of the workers—giving too much flexibility to the employers to toy with.

The government strikes the first blow by further fettering the registration process of a trade union. The IR code provides a minimum number of workers—at least 10% of the total strength or 100 workers, whichever is lesser—in an establishment to be the members of the union which seeks registration. The existing Trade Unions Act of 1926—which the code subsumes—requires only seven members of the union for the same.

Further, for a trade union to be recognised as a ‘negotiating body’ by the employer in times of labour dispute, the workers’ front requires a formal support of 75%, or more workers on the muster

roll of the industrial establishment. In case of no union securing the stipulated support, a council is to be formed consisting of different representatives.

The introduction of such a requirement must be read as giving too much room to the employers to wriggle with, as their refusal to recognise a union becomes the triggering point of many of the industrial dispute. Recent example being the labour distress in Kerala caused by Muthoot’s management or the struggle of Motherson workers in Tamil Nadu.

Considering the “repressive” nature of the proposed provisions, both were opposed by the workers’ bodies in 2015 when the code was first put on table for a discussion. This time, however, even the ‘formality’ of a consultation with the trade union representatives was done away and inclusion of both the provisions in the 2019 draft—despite strong criticism—further verifies the “killing of tripartism” under the Modi rule.

In India, getting a trade union registered was never easy. Workers get threatened by the management to withdraw their support to the union and in some cases even get transferred. Therefore, workers’ bodies had demanded that union registration be made a time-bound process. This finds no mention in the proposed code.

Moreover, the code restricts outsiders to an establishment from holding an office bearer position in the trade union.

The other overriding concern is that the clauses surrounding industrial actions and conciliations will translate to an apparent ban on workers raising any demands.

This has been achieved, at first, by restricting the workers to go on a strike during the conciliation process, which usually follows the strike notice. What's more, provision to submit the strike notice 14 days prior has been extended to all industrial establishments, which was earlier only applicable to 'public utility services' under The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.

Another problem is the changing of the definition of the strike which now includes 'casual leaves' of the employees. Earlier, workers used to put pressure on the management by using their leaves to register their absence; however, now that provision has been taken away. As per the proposed code, strike also includes 'concerted casual leave' by 50% or more workers in an establishment. Going by this definition, a strike notice will be required prior to the 'mass leaves' of workers and if not, an action can be taken against them.

If these were not enough, the IR code also cements contractualisation of the labour by introducing 'fixed term employment' and provides executive powers to the state governments to ease the retrenchment norms.

What this means is that, if the code is passed, another nail will have been hammered by the Modi Government into the coffin of the labour laws in the country.

(Ronak Chhabra is a Bengaluru based reporter.)

Despite Hurdles, Jammu–Srinagar March Succeeds

Sandeep Pandey, Rajendran Narayanan

A 'Restoration of Democracy' march, part on feet and part on vehicles, was planned from Jammu to Srinagar between 26 November and 1 December, 2019 in Jammu and Kashmir after the decision of Government of India earlier on 5 August to abrogate Articles 370 and 35A and divide and downgrade the state into two Union Territories, J&K and Laddakh. When the march started on 26 November from Press Club, Jammu with over fifty people, the police stopped it just before it reached a main road and told us that we could not proceed on feet. They, however, allowed it to go on vehicles. The marchers then assembled at a nearby Gurudwara and about 30 of them went ahead in five vehicles. Prominent among the marchers were Sheikh Abdul Rehman, former Member of Parliament from J&K and two times Member of Legislative Assembly from Madhya Pradesh, Dr. Sunilam. The group reached Udhampur, its destination for the day, and distributed a pamphlet prepared for the march while taking out a procession through the market. The next morning, however, the police prevented the group from holding a press conference. The march then proceeded towards its destination for the second day, Ramban. Local political leader Amrit Varsha received the march with much fanfare. Slogans were raised for restoring the pre-5 August status and a press conference was immediately held. On 28 November morning distribution of pamphlets took place at the local bus stand and market. Small group discussions also took place with people while pamphlets were being distributed.

However, after a public meeting held inside a hall during the day, the police arrived and threatened the journalists not to further cover the march and on the pretext that route ahead to Srinagar was closed due to land-slides asked the march to return to Jammu. The police vehicles followed the march and ensured that they crossed the Ramban district border on the way back to Jammu.

However, six marchers, including the two writers, decided to make an attempt to directly reach Srinagar by shared taxi and were successful on the second attempt on 29 November. In Srinagar, the group met Communist Party of India leader Ghulam Mohammad Mizrab in his village Poshpora in Shopian district and activists of J&K Coalition of Civil Society and Haq Insaf Party in Srinagar besides common citizens. The group also interacted with security personnel deployed at short distances from each other on stringent long duty hours for long stretches extending from several months to years.

Common sentiments expressed by people ranged from disappointment to anger at the way the Union Government has handled the situation. G.M. Mizrab said that earlier there were three kinds of people in J&K, one who had accepted being part of India, second who aspired for independence from India and Pakistan both and third who looked towards Pakistan with some hope, although the latter two segments had realised over a period of time that their dreams were not practical and had shrunk in size. For example, the total number of militants presently in J&K, according

to government's own figures, is not more than 300, for whom 8 lakhs security personnel have been deployed and the government incurs an extra expenditure, other than salaries and upkeep, of Rs 3 crore daily. Most Kashmiri families now have some connection with India, either their children are studying in some educational institutions or they have business interests elsewhere in India. But after the 5 August decision of the government, when even the most pro-India leader Dr. Farooq Abdullah was put under house arrest, majority in Kashmir have now turned against India. Mizrab says that even though he would prefer to be with India, he has been deeply hurt by the decision as he thinks it is taking away his identity in a way. A college teacher put it more succinctly: Articles 370 and 35A were like nikah-nama, document of marriage, between India and J&K, and the Indian government by abrogating these Articles has annulled the marriage. The link between India and J&K has been severed and the alienation is now complete. Another college teacher said previously they were not so conscious of Indians coming to J&K but now they view them with suspicion. It is what the British rule was for India. Khurram Parvez of JKCCS informed that about 3.5 to 5 lakh migrant labourers have also been sent back to India before 5 August just like the tourists, whose departure was publicised, and it may not be a surprise that after some time Kashmiris may be blamed for this just like they are blamed for driving out the Kashmiri Pandits, even though they were evacuated then, initially only for several months, on the pretext of some planned action against militants, both of which have now prolonged. The group of

marchers also saw vacant houses belonging to Kashmiri Pandits on the border of Shopian district and Pulwama, keeping the option for them to return open, in addition to a colony established for Hindu government employees here. It doesn't appear that there is any problem in common Kashmiris belonging to any religion living together as they emphasise that their culture is Kashmiriyat and the variety of Islam practised here is Sufi.

The economic life seems to be limping back to normalcy from external appearance, with business and economic activity going on for several hours during the day, but the fact is that the four month long clampdown has broken the back of the economy which was further compounded by bad weather. The apple industry suffered the worst. The producers could not meet the demands of buyers due to lack of labourers and restriction in transportation and trees have been damaged due to early snow which will take about a decade to re-grow. It is being claimed that Jammu region, especially the larger Hindu population is happy with government's decision, but the fact is that economy of this region is tied with Kashmir and has also suffered badly. People in Kashmir now want to bypass Jammu and want to do business with other regions of the country.

When one of the marchers Amit Maurya took photograph of an empty classroom in a school in Haval on 30 November, 2019, the teachers present panicked. They would not let him leave until he deleted the photograph from his mobile phone. In spite of the claims being made by the Home Minister, the fact is that except for the Board examinations,

the questions papers were taken by teachers to homes of students of all other classes and answers brought back to the school. The parents of children are forced to engage the same teachers at home for tuition classes at monthly charges upto Rs. 5,000 for a child of class VI or VII.

It is not clear when the economy or education will return to normalcy but the most serious damage that the government has done is to politics. There is no sign of revival of political process. While the Bhartiya Janata Party has realised the political agenda of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh in J&K, it is preventing other Parties from carrying out their activities. There is a ban on political activity, especially related to Articles 370 and 35A. Government employees have been made to sign an agreement to be part of one of the two Union Territories. The people who were arrested are being released after 10-15 community members are made to sign bonds guaranteeing that the person being released will not take part in any activity opposing the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A. The government doesn't want any other voice than its own. Most newspapers are carrying government advertisements or reporting government and apolitical events. The media is totally censored. The bureaucracy and security establishment is dominating the politics. There doesn't seem to be any hope for restoration of democracy yet. Senior activist of JKCCS Pervez Imroz asks how can there be democracy in a situation of occupation, either before 5 August or after that?

(Sandeep is a social-political activist and Rajendran teaches at Azmi Premji Univeristy.)

Protests Against Firoz Khan: Undoing India's Glorious Tradition

Minakshi Rajdev

Who is Firoz Khan? What is his identity in Indian society? How did he develop an interest in learning the Sanskrit language? Is it because of something beyond the narrow peripheries of religion but a reason which is deeply rooted in the culture of India?

Firoz Khan, the newly appointed assistant professor in the Banaras Hindu University belongs to the Dhadhi, Hindu-Islamic community of Rajasthan. Dhadhis are traditional bards, musicians and genealogists living in northern parts of India like Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Agricultural Hindus and tribes like Jasts, Rayaka-Rabari, Bishnoi, Khatri and Chhippas are their traditional patrons.

According to the Marwar Census Report of Rajasthan in 1891, Dadhis are followers of both Islam and Hinduism who trace their origin to Rajput families from the time of Ram. The Report records a popular couplet or doha which is still evoked by the community,

*Dasrath ke ghar ram janamiya
has dadhan mukh boli,
Athara kiror le chawk meliya
kaam karan ko chhori*

(‘Ram was born in the house of Dashrath, said a dhadhi woman

Leaving all work aside, she started singing songs of his birth.’)

From the popular origin story of yore to the present times where a singular religious identity dominates, Dadhis have preserved the century-long tradition of a composite, syncretic culture of India. Their identity is testament to an order where Hinduism and Islam are not antagonistic to each other.

When it comes to Firoz Khan’s

appointment as Sanskrit professor, it is imperative to answer questions posed by the protesting students of the University and supporters of the protests at large.

Why should a Muslim be allowed to teach Sanskrit at an institute with Hindu religious precedence?

Dr. Firoz Khan was appointed faculty of the Sanskrit Vidya Dharma Vijnan. Protesters said that in the same way that a Hindu cannot attain the education to become a maulavi, or imam or even a Christian priest, a Muslim or ‘non-Hindu’ can have no right to become a professor of Sanskrit, especially at a place where Sanskrit is taught to produce future shastris and perform rituals.

This question, however, lacks in basic reasoning.

Unlike priests or imams of other religious orders, a professor of Sanskrit at BHU would play a role in the preservation and development of ancient and traditional knowledge by keeping pace with modern patterns of learning. His role would not be limited to producing mere machines of rituals which are considered to come under the paradigm of Hinduism.

Besides, Firoz Khan was appointed to the department of literature which has no direct hold over ritual practices.

What about the Hindu calendar published by BHU?

The second major concern raised by the protesters is that the Faculty of Vidya Dharma Vijnan publishes the *Vishwa Hindu Pnachangam* which is the Hindu calendar, based on Vedic astrology.

Its authenticity would be affected, protesters argue.

The major point of ire raised here is that it would set precedence for the appointment of more non-Hindu faculty members in the department of Sanskrit.

The ‘fear’ expressed here is that many more Muslims would find a way to the Sanskrit department and would gather strength to raise qualms on of authority of the Hindu calendar, which allegedly affects the larger Hindu population across the world.

The right wing politics of ‘sentiments’ develops upon the field of ‘fear’ of losing the integrity of ‘faith’ with the inclusion of non-Hindus in the teaching-learning practices of Sanskrit.

Sanskrit, however, is not the religion but one of the mediums of languages in which Hindu religious scriptures are written.

Teaching Sanskrit literature and making the Hindu calendar are separate functions. More importantly, the Hindu calendar is not made by the divine insight of Brahmins, but instead is designed on the basis of the lunar month and weather of India.

Thus the ‘politics of sentiment’ and the ‘politics of hurt’ is a right wing narrative imposed on BHU to polarise students of the campus on communal lines, establish political advantage of the ‘Hindu’ faith over any other religion living in India, and distract the protests of students over a fee hike.

A cultural attack?

Can it be believed that the future of Hindu ancient religious practices

depends upon the appointment of teachers in the modern university space for one of the oldest languages of the world? And can Brahmanism be considered the saviour of this alleged cultural attack by Muslims on the BHU Sanskrit department?

Periyar once said that between a snake and Brahmanism, Brahmanism is more poisonous. It is not a 'cultural attack' in the way it is being propagated, but it is a Brahmanical attack on peaceful coexistence of religions in India.

Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan gave special attention to the development of the language and it would be unjust to not include Aurangzeb in the list. Shayasta Khan, maternal uncle of Aurangzeb, was noted poet of Sanskrit language who even wrote a treatise called *Rasakalpadruma*. Other noted Sanskrit poets of the time like Devdatta, author of *Gurjarishakatham*, acknowledged Aurangzeb and his son Azam Shah in the opening lines of the treatise.

Mohammed Hanif Khan Shastri is the most recent example of a Muslim Sanskrit scholar who was awarded with fourth highest civilian award of the country, Padma Shri (literature and education) in 2019 by President Ramnath Kovind for his immeasurable service to the nation as professor of Sanskrit at the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan. He also won the National Communal Harmony Award in 2009.

The politics of language replaces language with religion to create anxiety over fragile identity politics driven by a 'politics of hurt'.

Does cultural Hinduism strengthen political Hindutva?

The invented 'precariousness' of the Hindu religion tries to establish

a direct link between 'cultural Hinduism' and the political ideology of 'Hindutva' nurtured by VHP and RSS.

It is this soft communalism or cultural Hindutva which reaches a wider section of the society and sows the seeds for spreading stronger communal hatred.

The narrative constructed by the protestors of BHU are based on soft Hindutva ideology, but is essentially based on the popular communal ideas according to which Islam, 'a religion of violence' and Hinduism, a religion of peace can never share the same place. Besides, the appointment of a non-Hindu would dismantle the predominance of Brahmins in the working of the Sanskrit department.

Was Hindutva the fundamental idea behind the Banaras Hindu University?

It is also important to delve into the history of the Banaras Hindu University where 'H' doesn't represent the politically driven perspective of Hinduism. BHU stands on the southern outskirts of Banaras at the bank of the Ganges.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, with the vision of spreading scientific education and rationality, left his legal practice and focused upon the development of the university which he formally announced at the 21st session of Indian National Congress in December 1905.

On November 22, 1911, the Hindu University Society was registered by Malviya with the support of Annie Besant. He spent a few years to raise funds for the actual foundation of the university.

With persistence, he could wield the support of few princely states and nobles such as Kashi Naresh Prabhu Narayan who gave land at

the southern outskirts of the present day Varanasi; the Raja of Darbhanga state, Maharaja Sir Rameshwar Singh Thakur; and the last Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Osman Ali Khan who donated Rs 1 lakh for the construction of the university.

The foundation stone of the university was laid by the Sikh saint of the time, Baba Attar Singh ji of Punjab in 1914.

I now come back to the original matter of discussion. A university which was constructed with a vision and contribution of various personalities of the time comes to a point where religion is evoked for the appointment of an assistant professor.

If religion is the deciding factor of the country's education system and language becomes the battle ground of communal battle against identities, I believe that even gods can't save the people of this country.

Looking at the increasing saffronisation of educational institutes, the repercussions are not just limited to the destruction of the liberal structures of the societies, but it is the threat to the century-old composite traditions of India or South Asia at large where variegated religious, ethnic and linguistic identities have lived with each other and developed a distinct cultural field of shared heritage.

Several syncretic identity groups like Dadhis, Mirasis, Manganiyars and Langas who have carried this tradition through generations are now under constant attack from dominant political narratives of religions.

An anonymous poet from the same community expressed the dilemma.

Vahid tang nazar ne mujhe kafir mana,

*Kafir samajhte hain ki musalman
hu mai*

(‘The narrow sight of the world
labelled me a Muslim

And the Muslims treated me as
Hindu’)

Retrospectively, the Indian
education system and philosophy

is based on the secular notions
of learning, and therefore the
development of the institutions of
learning are based on inclusivity of
various caste, creed, religion, gender
or class.

Protests against the appointment
of the Dr Firoz Khan at Banaras

Hindu University not only exhibits
right wing political propaganda for
further polarisation but is also an
attack on composite culture.

*(Minakshi Rajdev is a PhD scholar
at the Centre for Historical Studies,
Jawaharlal Nehru University.)*

Historic Students’ March in Pakistan

V. Arun Kumar

*“Sarfaroshi ki tamanna ab
hamare dil mein hai, Dekhna hai zor
kitna baazu-e-qatil mein hai”* [The
desire for revolution is in our hearts,
we shall see how much strength lies
in the arms of the enemy]. On Friday,
November 29, the whole of Pakistan
reverberated with this revolutionary
poem written by Bismal Azimabadi
in 1921, as students marched across
the country for their rights.

The call for students solidarity
march was given last month
by leftist student organisations
including the Progressive Students
Collective (PSC), the Progressive
Students Federation (PRSF) and the
Revolutionary Students Front (RSF).
The organisations demand the repeal
of a three-decade-old ban on student
unions in universities and an end to
the privatisation of education.

Their call to mobilisation was
adopted on a national level, and
many more students organisations,
trade unions, and civil society
members began extending their
solidarity with the students march.

A young student, Sahar from
Karachi speaking to Peoples
Dispatch said that she participated
in the march because “private
universities keep on increasing their
fees and the government is doing
nothing but suppressing the voices
of students who speak against it.”

The participation in the students’

march on Friday was unprecedented,
not only in terms of numbers but the
expansiveness. In the most remote
corners of Pakistan, university
students participated in the Students
Solidarity March. Activists report
that mobilisations were held in more
than 40 cities.

Students across the world
have been on the front lines of
mobilisations against neoliberalism
and the rise of the right. In the capital
city of Islamabad, one banner read,
“Students of the world unite, you
have nothing to lose but debts, loans
and privatisations.”

Suppressing students’ voices

The ban on student unions was
imposed in 1984 by Pakistan’s
military dictator Zia-Ul-Haq in
an attempt to suppress resistance
against the dictatorship. Students
and workers were in the forefront
of struggle against the brutal regime
of Zia-Ul-Haq. This ban was briefly
lifted in 1988 by prime minister
Benazir Bhutto but the Supreme
Court re-imposed the ban in 1993.
Successive governments have used
this ban to repress students’ voices
demanding education for all, but
today, students are rising up.

One participant in Friday’s
mobilisation said that to them,
student unions are nurseries which
equip students with the ability

to think critically and to develop
opinions. The violence that occurs
on campuses is not because of the
political activities organised by
students, but due to the presence of
regressive ideologies that believe in
suppressing critical thinking.

Workers and students united

Hundreds of people from the
education sector, trade unions,
professional organisations and
members of civil society joined the
march calling for ‘Azaadi’ [freedom]
from fees hike and privatisation.

“We, the students and workers
are united against the system of
privatisation, and we will see how
they [elities] will stop our rage,”
said Waqar, member of student wing
of Mazdoor Kisan Party (MKP)
speaking to Peoples Dispatch.

“One day this wave of students
and workers will drown the rich and
the elites and establish a world of
working class and poor,” said Waqar.

The students are also demanding
the allocation of at least 5% of the
total GDP for education and the end
of the militarisation of campuses.
Pakistan’s intelligence agencies are
notoriously known for kidnapping
students and activists who express
their dissent against the policies of
the government and military.

Students note that education
in Pakistan has always been for

the rich, but the policies of the new government of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have exacerbated the situation and higher education is even more inaccessible for the poor. In a budget announced

on June 11, 2019, the government imposed a massive cut of 37% to the higher education development budget.

(V. Arun Kumar is a journalist

with *People's Dispatch*. *People's Dispatch* is an international media organisation whose mission is to highlight voices from people's movements and organisations across the globe.)

Palestine: We Thought the House Was Empty

Vijay Prashad

On 13 November 2019, as part of its deadly attack on the people of Gaza, Israeli armed forces bombed a building in the Deir al-Balah neighbourhood of Gaza City. That strike killed eight people: Rasmi Abu Malhous (age 45), Miriam Asoarka (age 45), Yoseri Asoarka (age 39), Sim Mohamed Asoarka (age 13), Mohand Malhous (age 12), Moad Mohamed Asoarka (age 7), and two unnamed toddlers. Israel's armed forces said that it had targeted an Islamic Jihad commander, although everyone in the neighbourhood said that no such commander lived either in the building or in the area. 'This was a very simple, poor family, who lives from hand to mouth in a tin shack, with no water or electricity', said a neighbour. 'They lived off herding sheep'. Israeli officials said that they thought the house was empty.

What happened on that day has become routine in Gaza, which is a ruin populated by nearly two million people. A garrotted sliver of land that sits on the Mediterranean Sea, Gaza cannot import goods to survive, let alone to reconstruct the damage caused by Israeli attacks. In 2012, the UN's Palestinian Agency (UNRWA) argued that it would take 'herculean efforts' in the areas of health, education, energy, water, and sanitation to make Gaza a liveable place. Three years later, the UN's Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) suggested

that the constant Israeli bombardment of Gaza's infrastructure, and the Israeli embargo of Gaza, would make the territory 'unliveable by 2020'. No attempt has been made to reverse the direction.

Last year, the United States cut off funding for UNRWA, which now limps on with no expectation that it will raise the funds needed to staff for schools, clinics, emergency services, relief and social services—key support for Palestinians whose families have been in refugee camps or in exile for five generations. UNRWA plays a major role for Palestinians, especially in Gaza. During the Israeli bombing in mid-November, at least 34 Palestinians were killed. Amongst them was Ameer Rafat Ayad, a Class II student in UNRWA's Zaitoon Elementary School.

For six decades, the people of Palestine have been denied rights of statehood and rights of citizenship. They have been reduced by the cruelty of history to being refugees and an occupied people. The promise of a two-state solution is now largely eviscerated. Settlements in the West Bank, the attrition of East Jerusalem, and the incarceration of Gaza have made the sovereignty—and even existence—of any Palestinian state on these territories impossible. Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's longest serving prime minister, has talked about the full-scale annexation of the West Bank; now

the US government has openly said that Israel can claim the settlements as part of its territory, which means that the West Bank can be seized. That is the contempt shown by the Israeli state—and its US enablers—towards the two-state solution. They want a three-state solution—to expel Palestinians to the three states of Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt. That is why the Israeli regime so systematically and callously humiliates the Palestinian population on a daily basis.

This systematic humiliation comes in the searches, the insults and the imprisonment; in the devastation of olive groves; in the apartheid wall that encircles both the West Bank and Gaza; and it comes at the checkpoints where Palestinians routinely endure denigration. The group 'Stop the Wall' has just published an online collection of essays, *Build Resistance Not Walls*, where the Palestinian feminist and legal scholar Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian writes of the steadfastness of young Palestinian children who refuse to accept the fact of the colonial occupation.

A wall only exists if you do not challenge it. If you stand up to it, the wall is merely earth which can crumble. If you resist, you are not standing behind a wall. It is those who are inhumane who are held by the wall. They are hiding behind the wall. It is their wall. It is not our wall. We live in a world without walls.

A one-state solution, the position with the most possibility, is rejected by the Israeli state and large sections of Israeli society on the basis that it would no longer permit the existence of a Jewish state. Palestinians would be a near majority, and such democracy would be unacceptable in an ethno-nationalist state. So, what Israel is saying is that it is content with being an apartheid state and with the annexation of five million Palestinians in the occupied territory who will become second-class residents inside Greater Israel. That is apartheid, as a United Nations report put it two years ago. It is the situation we are confronted with. It is a situation encouraged by the US government. It is the current reality.

At the United Nations a few days ago, Andrew Gilmour, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights noted that nothing can ‘justify the frequent targeting by [Israeli] snipers who know exactly what they are doing and are aiming with immense accuracy—sometimes to kill, more often to injure but with life-changing injuries, including loss of sight and amputation of limbs—at thousands of Palestinian children and on a far too frequent basis’. ‘Taken as a whole’, Gilmour said, ‘it is a massive injustice and a systematic example of discrimination and humiliation’.

As Gilmour made his presentation, Israeli forces targeted journalists in Surif, near Hebron, in the West Bank. Muath Amarneh, a Palestinian photographer, was shot in the left eye while he reported on the seizure of Palestinian lands by the Israeli military. ‘The eyes of truth will never be blinded’, chanted his colleagues at a demonstration in Bethlehem. For journalists, this shooting brings back memories of the killing of Yaser Murtaja as he reported from the Gaza fence last year.

Five thousand and fifty Palestinians are currently in Israeli jails, many of them under arbitrary and illegal ‘administrative detention’. Amongst them is Khalida Jarrar of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, who has previously been arrested in 2015 and 2017, last released on 28 February 2019. She was arrested again on 31 October 2019. This language is farcical—arrest, judge, court, law. None of it is real, since Jarrar is being held outside all legal provisions and is being tortured in an Israeli jail.

The thread of viciousness runs from the Israeli jails to the homes of militants of the Movement for Socialism in Bolivia, where the violence incited by the illegal coup and its leaders has intensified. Whether it is the Israeli government or the neo-fascist racist evangelical political forces in South America, they prefer violence to humanity. No surprise that the new ‘government’

in Bolivia hastily expelled the Cuban medical brigade, preferring death squads over doctors.

Despite the inhuman repression, the Palestinians and the Bolivians will continue to take to the streets with Brecht’s words from *In Praise of Dialectics* (1951) in their ears,

*When the rulers have already spoken,
Then the ruled will start to speak.*

Who dares say ‘never’?

*Who’s to blame if oppression
remains? We are.*

Who can break its thrall? We can.

*Whoever has been beaten down must
rise up!*

Whoever is lost must fight back!

*Whoever has recognised his
condition – how can anyone stop
him?*

*Because the vanquished of today will
be tomorrow’s victors!*

*(Vijay Prashad is an Indian
historian, editor and journalist,
and the director of Tricontinental:
Institute for Social Research.)*

One Year of López Obrador’s Mexico

Katu Arkonada

After the speech of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) in the Zócalo (name of the main square in central Mexico City), 12 months after December 1, 2018, this is a good moment to take stock of his first year in office.

Perhaps one of the first things AMLO has learned is that getting into government is not the same as having power. He won the presidency of the government on July 1, 2018 for a lifelong struggle in defense of the social majorities, but the year since December 1, 2018 has served to teach that the government is only one part of a beast called the State, and that the political and economic elites that governed

Mexico for years have lost political power, but continue to control a part of the country’s economy, while entrenching themselves in media and judicial power.

But despite the difficulties, it is undeniable that the country has changed. The image of AMLO a year ago while he was heading to the inauguration in his white Jetta, when a cyclist beside him says “You do not have the right to fail us”, is the image of a country full of hope, but above all, tremendously politicised.

There is hope, because AMLO has been able to channel the discontent with the neoliberal model, incapable of guaranteeing dignified living conditions for a

majority of the population, towards a transformation of Mexico, by explaining to the people that in order to leave this neoliberal model behind, it is necessary to build a new, post-neoliberal, model, while attacking at the root one of the main evils of the State: corruption.

1 year of government, 12 months of pending tasks

AMLO said in his speech in the Zócalo: “How much time will we need to consolidate the transformation? I think that in one more year; that is to say, by December 2020, the foundations for the construction of a new homeland will be established. By then, under any circumstances, it will be practically impossible to return to the era of abuse that the neoliberal period meant.”

It is clear that there has been a lot of symbolism in the first year of the AMLO government, from the disappearance of the Presidential General Staff to the opening to the public of Los Pinos (the opulent presidential residence from 1934 to 2018, till AMLO decided to convert it into a public museum), passing through AMLO's trips in commercial airplanes.

But, although the symbolism is crucial for challenging the cultural hegemony of neoliberalism, the transformation taking place in Mexico will ultimately be measured in two material and concrete issues:

First, the reduction of poverty and inequality. In a country where 41% of the population lives in poverty, and 16% more in extreme poverty, the commitment of AMLO to reduce these levels of poverty will be measured by the implementation of a process of redistribution through different social programs. This redistribution will allow consumption and internal demand

to be stimulated in order to generate growth (and this is Keynes, not Marx). If this is accompanied by a commitment to (re)industrialisation (with the recovery of Pemex, the Mexican state oil company, at the head) and development of major infrastructure works, such as the Mayan Train, the social indicators (which do not always go hand in hand with the economic ones) should improve.

Second, the commitment to a new security strategy. Mexico has been suffering from a real internal war, as its statistics of violence bear out. AMLO has promised to bring this under control. As 2019 comes to a close, the media is going to start bombarding him, pointing out that the number of deaths due to violence is the highest in history. But the reality is that the increase with respect to 2018 is only 2%, while the year-on-year growth during the two previous six-year periods was 25-30%, implying that some success has been achieved. If we are able to achieve a reduction in the number of deaths by 2020, however small this percentage may be, it will indicate that AMLO has been able to initiate a strategic shift.

12 months of government, 5 years of challenges ahead

If the reduction of poverty, inequality and violence are the main indicators to evaluate the transformation taking place in Mexico in the short term, the success or failure of López Obrador's government in the remaining 5 years of his term can be evaluated on the basis of the following 5 indicators.

In the first place, it is urgent and necessary to build a party that pushes to the left a government that by inertia will always tend to push towards the center. That is all the more important as mid-term elections to the Mexican Congress

are due in 2021 and AMLO will need to again win a clear majority if constitutional reforms are to be made.

Likewise, the politicisation of society is essential. What happened in Bolivia is the best example of how the inclusion and redistribution of wealth are useless if you create a depoliticised middle class of consumers. Or, more accurately, politicised by the media. The millions of people who are going to see their material living conditions improve should know that this is due to specific social and economic policies of the López Obrador government.

It is urgent and necessary that those responsible for the looting of the country during the previous governments be tried and imprisoned. AMLO has taken a tactical decision of not pushing for the prosecution of previous presidents so as not to open new battle fronts. But sooner or later, he will have to take measures to attack structural corruption.

This looting has only been possible through creating an atmosphere of terror in Mexico, with the help a criminal economy protected by narco-politics, which has transformed Mexico into a cemetery, or worse, into a large mass grave. AMLO's human rights policy, such as uncovering the truth and ensuring justice in the case of the 43 Ayotzinapa students who were forcibly disappeared five years ago, will be another of the pillars by which to measure the success or failure of the ongoing transformation.

And finally, since people do not subsist on ideology, the redistribution of wealth and the country's growth, especially in a context of global recession like the one we are entering, must be accompanied by fiscal reform and getting the rich to pay more. That is the only way to sustain the transformation

process. More will have to be paid by those who have the most as a way of structurally improving a G-20 country that has among the highest poverty and inequality rates in the OECD.

If all of the above is faced with courage, the entire lifelong struggle of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and millions of others, will have achieved some success at the end of his six-year term in laying the

foundations of a long-term radical transformation of Mexico.

(Katu Arkonada is a Basque political analyst and journalist.)

The Realism of Bernie Sanders' Climate Policy

Naomi Klein, Sivan Kartha

As Bernie Sanders brings his plans for a Green New Deal to Iowa, one part is proving most resonant: the idea that, as our economy rapidly shifts to renewable energy, power companies should be publicly owned and controlled, and the biggest polluters should help underwrite the costs.

Interestingly, this is the part of the Sanders plan, which builds on the resolution introduced by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts, that has received the most pushback from media commentators—who have been quick to dismiss public ownership over renewables as impractical and radical.

Yet for many Iowans, it is precisely these parts of the Sanders plan that make it most exciting.

Plenty of Iowans support renewable power and feel a tremendous sense of urgency about the climate crisis—after all, their communities are facing historic flooding, and their crops are dying as a result of both record-setting heat and cold. But like most of us, Iowans also have a keen sense of fairness. And they know from hard experience that when for-profit companies own the wind farms that dot their rolling hills, consumers and working people get a raw deal.

For instance, Alliant Energy, one of two major investor-owned utilities serving the state, raised rates in 2017

and 2018 and then sought to hike the average consumer's monthly bill by yet another \$20 this year (an effort that has been unsuccessful so far). Even as Alliant collected \$500 million in profits last year, showered money on shareholders, and paid its CEO over \$6 million, it blamed the rate increases on the cost of new wind investments.

For the thousands of Iowans who have been packing Sanders rallies over the last few weeks, it's experiences like this that have made the senator's climate plans so resonant. They understand that at a time of tremendous economic inequality and injustice, only a plan firmly rooted in both fairness and boldness has a hope of building the support necessary to take on the big polluters and win transformative climate action.

The boldness of Sanders' plan is not in question. He is proposing to spend an astounding \$16.3 trillion to get our economy off fossil fuels, an exponentially greater investment than any other candidate, one that actually meets the scale and urgency of the climate crisis. And yet it is how he is proposing both to raise and spend that money that is the true game-changer.

More than a decade of so-called market-based climate policies have expected workers and consumers to foot most of the bill for climate action. The result is often fierce backlash: in Chile, an increase in

public transit fees sparked the recent uprising, and in France, an increase in fuel costs did the same. As in Iowa, it's not that people are opposed to climate action. They are simply so overburdened by stagnant wages, job losses and cutbacks to social services that they can't accept getting stuck with the bill for the climate crisis.

Sanders' Green New Deal plan doesn't ask them to. Instead, it calls for polluters and the rich to pay their fair share, using a range of tools from progressive taxes to litigation and ending fossil fuel subsidies. And rather than watching the profits from a renewable energy revolution flow into the pockets of shareholders and executives, publicly owned utilities would keep the profits in communities, where they can help pay for badly needed services. Not only would the entire plan create an estimated 20 million jobs, but through investments in green public housing, health care and child care, the people who are under the most economic stress would see their lives directly improved.

Far from an unrealistic fairy tale, this approach—which fuses climate action with a battle to end poverty and close stubborn inequalities—may well be the only way to build mass support for an economic shift on this scale.

Another area where Bernie's plan stands apart is in its insistence that fairness is not only owed to people in places like Iowa, but to

people living on the other side of the planet.

Here are the hard facts: Even if we stopped emitting greenhouse gases tomorrow, the United States would continue to warm because of the rest of the world's emissions. In other words, the reason to rapidly decarbonise is in large part to motivate other countries to quickly do the same. But how do we do that?

Once again, fairness is key. The United States has contributed the most to the problem, spewing the largest share of the greenhouse gases that over time have accumulated in the atmosphere and now threaten to smother our planet. And, we're a technologically advanced country that gets the greatest share of the world's total annual income and thus can contribute the most to solving the problem. In this fundamentally global crisis, America bears the largest share of ethical duty. Which means that if we hope to catalyse the world into action, we'll need to take the biggest steps—cutting domestic emissions at a breakneck pace while helping poorer countries to do the same.

Sanders' plan takes the idea of fair shares seriously. On top of its massive low-carbon mobilisation in the United States, it commits to a huge push to collaborate with poorer countries to support their transitions.

Accordingly, the plan puts a game-changing sum on the table: a \$200 billion contribution to the United Nations' Green Climate Fund, which supports projects across the global South to reduce emissions and cope with climate impacts. (The Obama administration pledged a mere \$3 billion, delivering only one-third before payments were scrapped by Trump.)

The Sanders campaign also recognises that, in some cases, no amount of money can keep people

on parched or flooded land. And so, on the campaign trail, the senator's newly released immigration platform includes, among other measures, a call to accept at least 50,000 global climate refugees during his first year as president.

If implemented, all of this would set an entirely new tone in international climate discussions. After decades of finger-pointing and broken promises, the United States would finally be acting from the obvious truth that we are all in this crisis together.

Sanders also makes the common-sense (if politically risky) argument that since the United States spends a fortune protecting oil and gas infrastructure around the world, over a trillion dollars should be cut from military spending and reinvested in his Green New Deal. No single institution on the planet consumes more petroleum than the Pentagon—itsself a bigger greenhouse gas emitter than many countries—so this is yet another way that the Sanders platform is demanding that big polluters, and not regular people, pay the steepest costs of the transition.

The persistent refusal by the United States to fulfill its international climate commitments—especially to help finance a just transition in poor countries—has emboldened political figures worldwide who claim it's now their turn to light the fires of climate disruption.

UK: Labour's General Election Manifesto

Kenneth Surin

Those of us who attended the Labour Party annual conference in September knew from the resolutions passed there that the party's manifesto for the next election would offer a vision of socialism not seen since the immediate postwar Labour government.

President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, for example, has declared that international action to protect the Amazon, one of the planet's most important carbon sinks, is tantamount to treating his country as a "colony." He is far from alone: Governments who want to continue with pollution-as-usual have consistently used the continuing failures of richer nations as their excuse. But if the United States does its fair share, as it would under Sanders' plan, we would strip those polluters of this potent argument while showing the world that a post-fossil fuel future is indeed possible.

It's easy to dismiss all of this as unrealistic, as campaign pundits will continue to do. But the message, from Iowa to Chile, is clear: fairness matters. Not only because it's good to be fair; it matters because fairness is needed to win the kind of widespread buy-in that stands a chance of getting the job done.

Alone among candidates, Sanders gets that. And that makes his Green New Deal the most realistic by far.

(Naomi Klein is Senior Correspondent at The Intercept and the inaugural Gloria Steinem Chair of Media, Culture and Feminist Studies at Rutgers University. Sivan Kartha is a scientist specialising in climate risks.)

While not all conference resolutions find their way into the manifesto, there was enough at the conference to indicate that the party was going to repudiate the 40 years of neoliberalism prevailing since Thatcher took office in 1979, and continuing to the present day even

though New Labour was in office from 1997 to 2010.

A politico-economic structure that has been in place for decades can't be overturned by a party's single term in office, so ideally Labour has embarked on a project that will require it to be in power for at least 3 full parliamentary terms, that is, 15 years. Labour's manifesto seems to be predicated on this timeframe.

□ Labour, once in office, will discard the Tory deal and negotiate a new deal within 3 months. This deal will be put to the public in a referendum, with Remain as an option, within 6 months.

- Labour will sponsor a “green industrial revolution”, creating a million jobs and 800,000 apprenticeships in the ecological and energy sectors. Included in this plan will be offshore wind and carbon capture schemes, and a nationwide plan to upgrade and insulate homes.
- Labour will construct up to 100,000 new council houses and apartments every year, as well as 50,000 “genuinely affordable” new homes a year with open-ended tenancies. There will be a tax on holiday homes, a cap on rents with payments linked to inflation. New “renters’ unions” will be created so tenants can defend their rights. Rough sleeping will be ended within 5 years. The finance minister John McDonnell has earmarked £75bn / \$87bn to fulfil these commitments.
- The NHS budget will increase by 4.3% every year. Privatisation will end, free annual dental care check-ups will be provided, and there will be a £1.6bn / \$1.86-a-year increase in the budget for mental health services. Labour will introduce free personal care for the elderly and impose a “lifetime cap” on payments for social care.
- The NHS would not be part of any trade deal negotiation with the US.
- University tuition fees will be scrapped, maintenance grants for students will be reintroduced, and the running of schools will be returned to councils and headteachers instead of the private sector academies. There will 30 hours of free childcare for all pre-school aged children, and a Sure Start centre will be put in every community.
- Labour will scrap the cruel Tory Universal Credit welfare system, the 2-child limit for benefits and the welfare cap, and introduce a “minimum living wage” of at least £10 / \$11.60 an hour, while ending zero hours contracts that are the basis of the gig economy, strengthening trade union rights, and introduce an immediate 5% increase in pay for public sector workers, followed by annual above-inflation pay increases.
- Labour will also not implement the Tory-imposed sudden increase in the female pension age to 66.
- In an ambitious renationalisation programme, Labour will return rail, mail, water and energy to public ownership, and provide free full-fibre broadband via a publicly owned company.
- 22,000 more police officers will be recruited, legal advice aid restored, and protections for victims of revenge porn will be introduced. A national refuge fund to support rape crisis centres and a commissioner for

violence against women and girls will be created, and the Domestic Abuse Bill, shelved by the Tories, will be reintroduced.

Labour will finance these pledges with additional income tax paid by those earning more than £80,000 / \$93,000 and a surcharge on those classified as “super-rich”, that is, those more than £125,000 / \$145,000, which will bring in £5.4bn / \$6.3bn, and corporation tax, upped from 19% to 26%, will raise approximately £24bn / \$30bn.

Other measures, including as reversing Tory tax cuts, curbing tax evasion, and ending the absurd “charitable” status granted to private schools, would bring the revenue chest up to the required £83bn / \$97bn.

Labour is also proposing an £11bn / \$13bn windfall tax on oil companies.

Ukanian mainstream media got into a froth over how these ambitious plans were going to be financed, and the rightwing-trash-tabloids predictably yelled “Cuba”, “Venezuela”, at these pledges, with BoJo Johnson joining in the chorus, as was to be expected.

Better informed and less biased commentators noted that Labour's plans have more in common with Scandinavian socialism than anything approximating to Bolivarism (not that the latter resembles in any respect its massively distorted depiction in the Ukanian tabloids).

Labour has been behind in the opinion polls since BoJo called the general election, and this brave attempt at overturning decades of neoliberalism could be what brings True Labour (as against Blair's ersatz New Labour) into office.

(Kenneth Surin teaches at Duke University, North Carolina.)



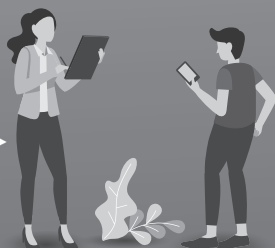
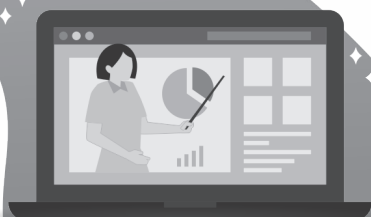
MKCL
Creating a Knowledge Lit World
www.mkcl.org

MS-CIT

Syllabus Available in Two Options

Job Readiness

IT Awareness



Job Readiness

Improve your
employability
and IT skills



IT Awareness

Update your digital
skills in fast
growing IT world

Gateway to New Careers

MS-CIT

Maharashtra State-Certificate In
Information Technology

www.mkcl.org/mscit

Enroll today at your nearest Authorized MKCL Center or ☎ 8411960005



"We are, what we repeatedly do,
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Aristotle



Taj Palace & Towers - Mumbai



Bombay Stock Exchange - Fort, Mumbai



Forum Atmosphere - Kolkata



J.K. House (Raymond)
Breach Candy, Mumbai

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING /
REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF :

- ✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)
- ✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)
- ✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.

Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

**Ahmedabad, Hyderabad,
Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi**

janata

Vol. 74 No. 47
December 15, 2019

Ayodhya Letter

**CAB and NRC: Why Both are
Terrible Ideas**

Ujjwal K. Chowdhury

Modi's India & Hitler's Third Reich

Neo-Liberal Regime's Perversity

Prabhat Patnaik

Telecom: License-to-Loot Raj

Prabir Purkayastha

**Why is the 'Israel Model' Bad for
India**

Siddharth Varadarajan

**Venezuela's Civilian Militia Reaches
3.3 Million Members**

Paul Dobson

**French Unions and Yellow Vests
Converge, Launch General Strike**

Richard Greeman

**Raja Dhale: A Renaissance Figure
in Dalit Literature and Art**

Yogesh Maitreya

Editor : G. G. Parikh

Associate Editor : Neeraj Jain

Managing Editor : Guddi

Editorial Board :

**B. Vivekanandan, Qurban Ali,
Anil Nauriya, Sonal Shah,
Amarendra Dhaneshwar,
Sandeep Pandey**

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : janataweekly@gmail.com
Website: www.janataweekly.org

“Don't Betray the Constitution. Withdraw CAB 2019.”

More than 600 artists, writers, academicians, ex-judges and former bureaucrats have released an open letter asking the Narendra Modi-led government to withdraw the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, terming it is "discriminatory, divisive", and violative of the secular principles enshrined in the Constitution. Here is the full text of the letter.

Since independence, Indian citizenship has been firmly rooted in the Constitution. In its citizenship provisions, the Constitution insists on the fundamentals of equality, regardless of gender, caste, religion, class, community or language.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 tears to shreds the inclusive, composite vision of India that guided our freedom struggle. In the amendments it introduces to the Citizenship Act of 1955, the new Bill violates every single one of these fundamentals of the Constitution. In fact, it is not a mere change in statute. It is a Bill that will alter, fundamentally, the character of the Indian republic.

For the first time since the founding of our free and secular republic, the Bill makes religion the key to citizenship. The Bill seeks to amend the Citizenship Act 1955 so that non-Muslims

from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan can be offered an expedited path to citizenship. For the first time there is a statutory attempt to offer privileges to certain faiths. For the first time, there is an attempt, by statute, to exclude Muslims from the possibility of amnesty and citizenship—for no reason other than their religion. In fact, nowhere, under the successive reigns this country has had through millennia, is it possible to find the articulation of an official position that has denied migrants or refugees a place on the basis of religion.

The CAB has to be viewed along with the proposed nation-wide implementation of the National Register of Citizens. Already the NRC exercise in Assam has shown us the terrible human costs of dividing people and linking citizenship to papers and detention centres and tribunals, especially among those who already lead a precarious existence. Death, families torn apart; detention camps and foreigners' tribunals; fear, the confusion of statelessness—this is what the common people, especially minorities, women, children and the poor have had to suffer and continue to suffer. The Citizenship Bill, as well as a nation-wide NRC, will unleash widespread division and

suffering among people across the country—rather than address the critical needs of the people, from food security and employment to the annihilation of discrimination based on caste, community and gender, to the freedom to speak, worship, and live as our diverse people choose.

The Bill states that non-Muslims from three Muslim-majority countries will be granted citizenship if they have faced religious persecution in their countries; or if they migrated to India fearing such persecution. Why leave out refugees such as Rohingyas from Myanmar or Tamils from Sri Lanka or Ahmadiyyas from Pakistan? Why focus on only three countries as if these constitute the only possible sources of asylum-seekers? The Bill shows us, sharply, that India needs a refugee policy in line with international law, not a law dictated by an ideology that makes use of religion for political gains.

Indian citizenship flows from the Constitution. The Citizenship Amendment Bill's blatant exclusion of a community is discriminatory and divisive. It violates the secular principles enshrined in the Constitution—including Articles 14, 15, 16 and 21 which guarantee the right to equality; equality before the law; and non-discriminatory treatment by the Indian state. The Bill threatens the federal framework provided by the Constitution. It has ignored the need for debate in Parliament as well as open and widespread public debate in a constitutional democracy.

All of us from the cultural and academic communities condemn this Bill as divisive, discriminatory and unconstitutional. It will, along with a nationwide NRC,

bring untold suffering to people across the country. It will damage, fundamentally and irreparably, the nature of the Indian republic. This is why we demand that the government withdraw the Bill. This is why we

demand that the government not betray the Constitution. We call on all people of conscience to insist that the Constitutional commitment to an equal and secular citizenry be honoured.

Ayodhya Letter

On 6 December 2019, 46 former civil servants, most having held positions of great prominence during their careers, wrote an open letter addressed to the people of India expressing deep concern on where the nation stands today, 27 years since the Babri Masjid was demolished by Hindu activists on December 6, 1992. The signatories to the letter are members of the Constitutional Conduct Group, an organisation that advocates the constitutional spirit of pluralism and non-violence. The letter is reproduced in full below.

We, a collective of retired civil servants deeply committed to the values and guarantees of the Indian constitution, share with our fellow Indians our extreme grief and deep concern about where India stands today, 27 years after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 6 December, 1992.

1. We recall that 6 December is also the anniversary of the day on which the man who led the creation of one of the finest constitutions in the world, Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, left this world. The battle for the land on which the medieval mosque in Ayodhya stood was at its core a battle for the defence of the highest values of this constitution.
2. This was not simply a title dispute over a tiny piece of land in a dusty small town. It

was not even a contest between a medieval mosque, now razed, with a grand temple, still imagined. It was a dispute about what kind of country this is and will be in the future, to who does it belong, and on what terms must people of different identities and beliefs live together in this vast and teeming land.

3. We feel intense anguish because 27 years after the mosque was demolished, those who were responsible for this crime which tore India apart and led to the highest levels of communal bloodletting after the Partition riots, have still not been punished, even though the Supreme Court directed that this criminal case be heard on a day-to-day basis. Instead, many of those who led and participated in this assault not just on a mosque but on India's constitutional morality, have held some of the highest offices in this country.
4. We worry also that the recent judgment of the Supreme Court of India in effect rewards this grave crime. It also creates a false and illusory notion that a verdict favouring those who claim to speak for the majority community can result in peace and reconciliation and everyone should move on, injustice notwithstanding.

5. In this deeply troubling moment in the journey of this country which we love, we contest resolutely the message that it seems to convey to India's religious minorities that their claim to this country and its democratic institutions is subordinate to anyone. We would like to recall the famous dictum "Freedom is the outcome of the tranquillity of peace and peace emanates from justice." Freedom and justice are the soul of our constitution.
6. This is a time when every Indian should recall Mahatma Gandhi's last fast, two weeks before he was assassinated. One of his three demands was that the mosques and dargahs in Delhi in which Hindu idols had been inserted should be returned respectfully to the Muslims. Hinduism, he said, would be emptied for him of meaning if a single place of worship of another faith was desecrated in the name of the Hindu faith.
7. We who sign this letter to the Indian people include a Jain, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, atheists and agnostics. We are together convinced that true religion never teaches violence and hate of another. Therefore, on 6 December, we first express our collective agony and atonement that a place of worship was pulled down with such hate. We also pledge that we will not allow our great Constitution to be emptied of its soul.

Constitutional Conduct Group

Press Release

AIKSCC's Call for Grameen Bharat Bandh on 8 January 2020

The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), a platform of more than 250 farmer organisations, at its national convention in Delhi on 29–30 November 2019 gave a call for a Grameen Bharat Bandh on January 8, 2020, to protest the anti-farmer policies being adopted by governments.

Demands of Farmers

We call upon the Parliament of India to immediately hold a Special Session to pass and enact the two Kisan Mukti Bills that are of, by and for the farmers of India namely,

1. The Farmers' Freedom from Indebtedness Bill, 2018; and
 2. The Farmers' Right to Guaranteed Remunerative Minimum Support Prices for Agricultural Commodities Bill, 2018
- and to hold a special discussion on the grave and unprecedented agrarian crisis in our country and its related aspects.

and demand that the Government of India must immediately:

3. Increase the number of guaranteed employment days under MGNREGS to 200 days per family, ensure wage payment at par with legal minimum wages for unskilled farm labour, and ensure that all pending payments are made immediately;
4. Reduce the cost of inputs including seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, water, diesel and electricity for farmers;
5. Provide universal comprehensive

social security for all farm households including pension of at least Rs. 5,000 per month per farmer above the age of 60 and health coverage;

6. Universalise the Public Distribution System with providing cereals, pulses, oils and sugar and stop its linkage with Aadhaar and the biometric system;
7. Address the menace of stray animals by removing all legal and vigilante-imposed restrictions on cattle trade;
8. Stop land acquisition without informed consent, Social and Environment Impact Assessment, acquisition of agricultural land for commercial land development and Stop bypassing or diluting The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 at all levels including by state governments;
9. Make payment of cane dues mandatory within 15 days of opening of the mill, maintain recovery rate at 9.5%; and introduce SAP for cane throughout the country;
10. Withdraw pesticides that have been banned elsewhere and not approve GM seeds without a comprehensive needs, alternatives and impact assessment;
11. Disallow Foreign Investment in seeds, agriculture and foods processing.
12. Stop uprooting Adivasi farmers

in the name of big dams, mining, SEZs, afforestation, ensure strict implementation of Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, and prevent dilution of Forests Rights Act 2006 and ensure its stringent implementation all over the country.

13. Provide land and livelihood rights to the landless, including on agricultural land and in water for fishing, mining of minor minerals etc.;
14. Implement a comprehensive crop insurance scheme to cover all types of risks for all crops and for all farmers, with farm as the unit of damage assessment; ensure benefit to farmers and not corporate insurance companies;
15. Build assured protective irrigation through sustainable means for farmers, especially in the rainfed areas;
16. Ensure remunerative guaranteed prices for milk;
17. Waive off all outstanding agricultural loans of farmers from suicide affected families and provide special opportunities to women and children of such families;
18. Protect farmers from corporate plunder in the name of contract farming;
19. Invest in farmers' collectives to create Farmer Producer Organisations and Peasant Cooperatives instead of corporatisation of agriculture and takeover by MNCs; and
20. Promote an agro-ecology paradigm that is based on suitable cropping patterns and local seed diversity revival, so as to build economic viability, ecologically sustainable, autonomous and climate resilient agriculture.

CAB and NRC: Why Both are Terrible Ideas

Ujjwal K. Chowdhury

The Citizenship Amendment Bill has passed in the Lok Sabha, after a marathon discussion on 9 December. This proposal was a part of the manifesto of BJP in the last 2019 general elections.

What does it basically entail?

The Bill provides for persecuted minorities professing to be Hindu, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain and Parsi, from three neighbouring nations, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh and who have been staying in India since December 31, 2014 or earlier to apply for Indian citizenship. India, under this law, shall accord them the status of citizens. The Bill clearly excludes Muslims, noting that they are the majority in these three nations.

Several questions have been raised on these proposals, and rightly so.

If this law is about trying to be large-hearted and compassionate, then why leave out persecuted Muslims in India's neighbouring nations, such as the Rohingya of Burma or the Ahmadiya and Baluch people in Pakistan? Why should India leave out Sri Lanka's persecuted Tamil population? Or the discriminated-against madheshis of Nepal? What about the Gorkhas, who have shifted from Nepal to India, or have worked in India for long?

Next, why is religion the basis of determining whether someone is persecuted, when there can be a variety of other sources of ill-treatment and oppression? There can be persecution on the basis of belief; for instance, the writer Taslima Nasreen had to leave Bangladesh; or due to war as seen in Syria, due

to economic hardship, as were many marginalised Nepalese and Bangladeshis who once migrated to India, and due to political belief, as happened with the Dalai Lama and his followers. Even extremes of climate can, and does, trigger migration.

Article 14 of India's Constitution states that the state "shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India" and Article 15 prohibits "discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth". Article 14 says "persons" rather than "citizens", which is significant for it means that Indian nationals and foreigners in India have alike rights to equal treatment. Therefore, the provision of citizenship on grounds of religion, as in the new Bill, violates the spirit of the Indian Constitution.

The Supreme Court has held in a case dealing with applicability of Article 14, *Chiranjit Lal Chowdhury vs Union of India*, that the law would not fall afoul of the equality principle when it deals in a similar way with "all of a certain class", but such a classification should never be arbitrary.

Arguably, CAB has made an arbitrary classification based on religion, because some Muslim sects also face serious threat and maltreatment in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, arising from their faith. Similarly, Tamils in Sri Lanka have been a persecuted minority—but India's Bill excludes the country.

CAB is not the first time that India has extended protection to

minorities from neighbouring countries. In 2015, the Centre issued two notifications in the Official Gazette under the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 and the Foreigners Act of 1946. Through these, India allowed Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian immigrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh to enter India even without valid documents.

Importantly, these notifications permitted them to enter and stay in India without valid documents, though it did not grant citizenship.

A significant official document dealing with refugees/illegal immigrants was the Assam Accord of 1985. According to the central government, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) gives effect to that Accord, which the Centre, the Assam government, the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) had signed.

In the Accord, it was settled that immigrants who came to Assam before 1 January 1966 would be given citizenship. Those who entered Assam between 1 January 1966 and 24 March 1971 would be “detected in accordance with the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order 1964.” Thereafter, they would remain disenfranchised for ten years. Lastly, those who came to Assam after 24 March 1971, would be detected and expelled.

The connection between NRC in Assam and CAB

The CAB has to be viewed along with the NRC, which, in Assam, has already excluded 19 lakh people, of whom 13 lakh are Hindu. This is now being touted by Union Home Minister Amit Shah as a template

to be applied across India. To be considered citizens, NRC calls for documents as old as seven decades, and proof that a person, and their three generations, have been living in India.

The BJP was initially very enthusiastic about the NRC, but now it is in a Catch 22 situation, since a large number of Hindus, mainly Bengali-speaking people, have been excluded in Assam. Hence, CAB is being brought in to allow the left out non-Muslims to apply for citizenship.

But the 13 lakh excluded Hindus have already claimed that they are Indians, and they have submitted documents to prove their claims, which were rejected. How would these people now move to a different claim, that they are not Indian but Bangladeshi—and persecuted ones at that—and seek Indian citizenship?

How legally tenable is this sort of somersault?

If we deny citizenship even to those who were born in India and own valid Aadhaar cards, PAN cards, voter cards and in many cases passports of India—as happened to many in Assam—millions of Indian-origin citizens or migrants in the United States, United Kingdom, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and other nations may be denied citizenship as India is denying citizenship based on religious considerations despite these documents.

These two laws together, NRC and CAB, if applied nationally, will serve to make India an international pariah.

More questions

Why has an arbitrary cut-off date of 31 December 2014 been picked? Why exclude any persecuted

person who has shifted to India from a neighbouring nation anytime in the recent past? Why certain states of Northeast are being left out of its purview? The fear of people coming from elsewhere and swamping Northeastern states is looking real in Tripura; where the indigenous Tripuri tribal population is 12 lakh, while the Bengali migrant population is at 28 lakh.

The Intelligence Bureau has noted that only 31,313 non-Muslims have so far applied for long-term visas under the Gazette notification of 2015, which makes this brouhaha about persecuted non-Muslim immigrants a minor issue in reality. The IB also notes that in order to apply for Indian citizenship, one has to provide the reasons for persecution at the point of entry. However, the deadline of 31 December 2014 under the CAB is long gone: those who had to enter India on that date have already done so. Then why push for such a major change in the law which violates the Constitution?

Further, it is not clear that what happens to all those people (now predominantly Muslims) who are kept out of citizenship or identified as foreigners, in Assam or elsewhere. Are they to be pushed into the three neighbouring nations? No country will accept this and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has assured Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina that India would not resort to such tactics. What then—are people to be segregated from the rest of society and kept in detention camps?

Already, many such camps are under construction in Assam and some are in squalid conditions.

India is creating concentration camps through these detention camps. Detained persons will be

pulled out of their economically-productive engagement with society and dumped in prison-like camps that are being constructed, and will be run, by the Indian state. Each detenu will be fed and monitored by the Indian state, at tax-payers' expense. The state and the people of India will pour money into these camps, simply waiting for the detainees to die. With their departure from the labour market, costs will go up and the economy will suffer.

Does any of this sound like a

21st-century prescription to a vexed demographic issue?

Deliberate division

Like the Ayodhya issue, that lasted a quarter-century, NRC-CAB will divide Hindus and Muslims. They will keep the nation engaged in endless debate and action; in which each individual will have to prove his citizenship. This can lead to Hindu polarisation, which brings in electoral benefits to the ruling BJP. This is the foremost reason why

NRC and CAB are being upheld.

Second, the debate on religion-based citizenship helps take attention away from the flailing economy, rising joblessness, growing farm distress, falling value of rupee, and deliberate dismantling of the fundamentals of the Indian economy, which is now growing at the slowest pace in South and Southeast Asia.

(The author is the Pro Vice Chancellor of Kolkata based Adamas University.)

Modi's India & Hitler's Third Reich

In the 1930s after a sweep to power, the Reichstag passed a slew of laws that discriminated against its Jews, Romans, Blacks and dissenters. Called the Law for Protection of German Blood & German Honour, the world watched as 'othering' became the German way.

Back home, in the India of 2019, are there similarities? M.S. Golwalkar (*Bunch of Thoughts and We, or Our Nationhood Defined*) and B.S. Moonje's diary were both equally awestruck by not just Hitler's Germany's discriminatory laws and policies (vis a vis Jews) but committed also to fascist Italy's violent, militaristic mode to achieve its goals.

Hitler

Moved by the understanding that purity of German blood is the essential condition for the continued existence of the German people, and inspired by the inflexible determination to ensure the existence of the German nation for all time, the Reichstag unanimously adopted a law that was discriminatory. India by excluding Muslim migrants from equal rights to claim citizenship by

naturalisation is going down this same, dangerous path.

It was in 1920 that the Nazi Party's 25-point programme spelt out their objective of segregating Jews from 'Aryan' society and ending their economic, social and political rights. After storming to power in 1933, the Nazis started moving quickly towards this objective by bringing in laws and regulations to isolate Jews. It is estimated that nearly 2,000 such statutory changes were ordered at all levels, from national to provincial to local. Some of these anti-Semitic laws are listed below.

Before that, a timeline of events. Is India going the same way ?

What Happened in Nazi Germany

1933: New laws to remove Jews from government service; forbidding Jews to become lawyers; limiting number of Jewish students in public schools; revoke citizenship of naturalised Jews and "undesirables"; banning them from editorial posts; banning 'Kosher' (ritual slaughter of animals).

1934: Jewish students forbidden from appearing in exams for

medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and law; Jews excluded from military service.

1935: Infamous Nuremberg Laws: exclude German Jews from Reich citizenship and lose voting rights; prohibit them from marrying or having sexual relations with persons of "German or German-related blood."

1935-36: Jews banned from parks, restaurants and swimming pools; not allowed use of electrical/optical equipment, bicycles, typewriters or records; Jewish students removed from German schools and universities; Jewish teachers banned from government schools.

1938: Special identity cards issued to Jews; excluded from cinema, theatre, concerts, exhibitions, beaches and holiday resorts; forced to add the names 'Sarah' or 'Israel' to their own; Jews' passports stamped with a red letter 'J'.

November 9-10 night (called Kristallnacht or Night of Broken Glass): Countrywide violence against Jews, synagogues burnt and shops destroyed.

1939: Many Jews evicted

from their homes; Jews' radios confiscated; Jews told to hand over all gold, silver, diamonds and other valuables to the state without compensation; curfew for Jews.

1940: Jews' telephones confiscated; war-time ration cards for clothes stopped.

1941: Jews forbidden use of public telephones; forbidden to keep pets; forbidden to leave the country.

1942: Fur coats and woollen items of all Jews confiscated; not allowed to receive eggs or milk.

This is only the story of some of the legal changes. In life, Jews along with Roma people, sexual minorities, trade unionists, communists and social democrats, blacks—all 'Non-Aryans'—were systematically isolated, tortured and killed in the most horrendous ways. Often, these laws were used as pretext for violence. The Nazi storm troopers implemented these policies, which were fully sanctioned by the fascist rulers and its Fuhrer, Adolf Hitler.

What did the Nuremberg Laws say?

The Nuremberg Laws were exclusivist, anti-Semitic and racist. Enacted by the German Parliament on September 15, 1935, the two laws were the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, which forbade marriages and extramarital intercourse between Jews and Germans; and the employment of German females under 45 in Jewish households, and the Reich Citizenship Law, which declared that only those of German or related blood were eligible to be Reich citizens. The remainder were classed as state subjects without any citizenship rights. The laws were expanded on November 26,

1935 to include Romani people and Blacks. This supplementary decree defined Romanis as "enemies of the race-based state", the same category as Jews.

Out of sly foreign policy concerns, prosecutions under the two laws did not commence until after the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Books considered un-German, including those by Jewish authors, were destroyed in a nationwide bookburning. Jewish citizens were harassed and subjected to violent attacks. They were actively suppressed, stripped of their citizenship and civil rights, and eventually completely removed from German society.

The Nuremberg Laws had a crippling economic and social impact on the Jewish community. Persons convicted of violating the marriage laws were imprisoned and (subsequent to March 8, 1938) upon completing their sentences were re-arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Germany's notorious concentration camps. Non-Jews gradually stopped socialising with Jews or shopping in Jewish-owned stores, many of which closed due to lack of customers. As Jews were no longer permitted to work in the civil service or government-regulated professions such as medicine and education, many middle class business owners and professionals were forced to take menial employment.

Similarities with CAB–NRC

Will CAB and Nationwide NRC set the base for systemic discrimination?

The ideological underpinnings of the present regime are there for all to see. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has been clear in the past of its support to discriminatory

citizenship. It has also lauded what the Nazis did. RSS supremo and chief ideologue M.S. Golwalkar has this to say in his famed book *We, or Our Nationhood Defined*:

"Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic Races—the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by." (p. 87–88)

Golwalkar goes on to define the Hindu Nation and asserts that "All those not belonging to the national i.e. Hindu Race, Religion, Culture and Language, naturally fall out of the pale of real 'National' life." (p.99) He advises that such people would be considered foreigners if they "maintain their racial, religious and cultural differences." (p. 101)

The RSS ideologue then puts it out in crystal clear terms:

"The foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment—not even citizen's rights." (p. 105)

Besides discrimination, violence, fear and intimidation have been the RSS way. As India heads into the new year, violence and conflict are likely to follow this brazen abrogation of rights.

Courtesy: Sabrangindia

Neo-Liberal Regime's Perversity

Prabhat Patnaik

When income growth slows down in an economy, so does the growth of tax revenue within the given tax regime. Since the government has certain expenditure obligations, to meet these obligations it has to either impose additional taxes or expand its fiscal deficit.

Enlarging the fiscal deficit in such a situation, which was the typical response everywhere under post-war capitalist dirigisme, has the additional effect of ensuring that one component of demand, namely, that arising from government spending, remains unchanged, even as the economy is otherwise slowing down, thereby checking this slowdown itself. This was referred to in economics textbooks as the economy's having an "automatic stabiliser": government expenditure under these circumstances acted as an "automatic stabiliser" and served to restrict the downturn.

All this was under the earlier dirigiste regime. Under neo-liberalism, however, matters are completely different. When tax revenue collections under the neo-liberal regime slow down because of the slowing down of the economy, the government can neither impose additional taxes on the capitalists (imposing additional taxes on the working people to finance its expenditure does not add to aggregate demand and hence does nothing to arrest the downturn), nor expand the fiscal deficit. This is because both these measures will be opposed by international finance capital which would start a capital flight within the liberalised regime, causing a hurtful financial crisis.

In fact, since virtually all countries with the exception of the United States have adopted laws restricting their fiscal deficits to 3% of gross domestic product or GDP (in India the Centre and the states have each a limit of 3%), with the slowing down of the economy there has to be a slowing down not only in the growth of the tax revenue but also in the fiscal deficit and hence in the total public expenditure.

Within a neo-liberal regime, therefore, public expenditure does not act as an automatic stabiliser, as it had done earlier. When the growth of the economy slows down, so does the growth of public expenditure, thereby further contributing to the slowing down of the economy. This is the crux of the perversity of the fiscal regime under neo-liberalism, namely, that it removes what otherwise would have been a bulwark against the slowing down of the economy, by enjoining so-called "fiscal responsibility" upon all governments; it thereby compounds the process of slowing down.

Against this basic background, governments, of course, resort to all manner of subterfuges to wriggle out of the predicament in which they find themselves. We are currently witnessing in India two such efforts. One is the Central government squeezing the states, passing on the burden of its own fiscal crisis on to the shoulders of the state governments, even violating its constitutional obligations; the other is its mad rush to privatise the public sector, in an utterly reprehensible short-sighted bid to get some money

within the constraints of a neo-liberal economy. Let us look at each of these seriatim.

One way in which the Centre is trying to squeeze the states, by off-loading a part of defence expenditure on to their shoulders. Defence is exclusively in the "Union List" of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, which means that the Centre has exclusive responsibility to spend on defence and to decide on all defence matters. But the Central government has asked the 15th Finance Commission to deduct defence expenditure from the divisible pool, which means that the state governments are being asked to bear a part of this burden, even though the constitutional arrangement with regard to the Seventh Schedule remains unchanged and all decisions regarding defence will continue to be taken by the Centre alone.

But this at least remains a threat until now. In another area, however, the Centre has already squeezed the states, and this relates to GST compensation. When the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced, in order to persuade the states to agree to it, the Centre had promised to compensate them for a period of five years for any revenue loss that they may face. The revenue loss was to be calculated by taking a base revenue level and applying to it a 14% annual rate of growth in nominal terms; whatever was the shortfall from the revenue estimated in this manner was to be compensated by the Central government. This was to happen every two months and a Compensation Cess Fund was set up for this purpose into which the

revenue from certain taxes was supposed to go.

But the Central government has stopped making any such compensation payments August onward. Its argument is that there is not enough money in the Compensation Cess Fund. The states, however, point out, very correctly, that the promise to pay compensation to the state governments was not linked in any way to the size of the Compensation Fund; it was a stipulation contained in the Constitution Amendment Bill. If there is no money in the Compensation Fund, or not enough, then the Centre should pay compensation out of its own share of the GST revenue.

It is well known that there has been a substantial revenue shortfall on account of the GST, with the monthly revenue falling below Rs 1 lakh crore for most months of the current financial year. This shortfall is both because of the flawed nature of GST itself and also because of the slowing down of the economy. The fact that GST collections for November, which falls within the festive season, were marginally in excess of Rs 1 lakh crore, is because GST revenue is closely related to the magnitude of business turnover, and hence to the level of activity in the economy.

Faced with this revenue loss, the Central government is squeezing the states, going back on its own promise of making good their revenue shortfall, in a bid to keep its own head above the water. In addition, out of the Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) collections, which are to be shared between the Centre and states, the Centre has kept the lion's share for itself.

Because of this double squeeze,

states are in utterly dire straits. Since much of the welfare expenditure going toward the poor comes out of state revenues, a shrinking of such revenues has a direct effect on welfare expenditure, including on healthcare, and education.

All this could have been avoided if the Central government had not squeezed the states, but had stuck to its promise of making good the revenue shortfall for the states, and enlarged the fiscal deficit for this purpose (the fact that it never had the gumption to tax capitalists is amply shown by its recent measure to actually give them tax concessions). An enlargement of the fiscal deficit would have boosted aggregate demand and hence employment and output, without having any inflationary consequences.

But such an enlargement of the

fiscal deficit would be unacceptable to international finance capital; and the Narendra Modi government, with all its bluster against hapless minorities within the country, and with all its pretensions to machismo, has no stomach for standing up to finance capital. It would rather squeeze state governments, it would rather see a cut in welfare expenditure directed towards the poor, than take measures frowned upon by international finance capital. It is a mere conduit through which the dictates of finance capital are made to impinge on the economy, and the perversity of the neo-liberal regime makes itself felt.

(Prabhat Patnaik is Professor Emeritus at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.)

Telecom: License-to-Loot Raj

Prabir Purkayastha

The major private operators in the telecom sector, along with the state-run ones, are currently reeling under a three-year price war with Reliance Jio. This has hit their profitability hard, with Jio buying its entry into the market with very low call and data charges, what others have termed as predatory pricing. This has been compounded—in the case of the private operators—by their not honouring the obligations of paying their license fees as a percentage of their revenue and the recent Supreme Court order.

The Supreme Court has ordered private operators to pay Rs 92,000 crore as license fees, creating a crisis for these companies. This is apart from spectrum usage charges, another Rs 41,000 crore,

compounding their crisis.

The business papers are awash with tears for the plight of the poor telecom private players, who are now being forced to shell out these huge amounts when they are already in deep financial trouble. What they forget to mention is that the amounts over which these disputes arose were initially much smaller. The original amount was only Rs 23,000 crore, the rest of the Rs 92,000 crore being penalties and interest charges on the unpaid amount.

Even this Rs 23,000 crore accumulated over decades by not paying a small fraction of their revenue as license fees every year. This was trying to use clever—now shown to be too clever by half—accounting tricks with which the

Department of Telecom (DoT) did not agree, leading to the dispute.

Instead of resolving this issue quickly, the private players first went to the Telecom Dispute Settlement Tribunal, then to high courts, and finally to the Supreme Court. All of this over what constitutes the Adjusted Gross Revenue or AGR, of which they had to shell out a small percentage.

From an accounting standpoint, the telecom players did something worse. They made no provisions in their balance sheets for these disputed amounts, meaning that they deliberately included the unpaid (or disputed amounts) in their profits, so that when they float shares in the stock market, they would look much more attractive. So a big part of their dazzling success story was built on deliberately withholding legitimate dues on account of license fees, and hiding these obligations from their shareholders.

Of course, as it always happens, if private players get in trouble, it is always the people who have to bail them out. The money is often siphoned off by private players through over-invoicing for capital goods, and the difference is transferred abroad into tax havens; services taken from the “founders” of other companies; and a variety of “smart” accounting practices. If the proverbial shit then hits the fan, the only losers are the banks and the general shareholders. And of course the subscribers of Airtel and Idea-Vodafone, the two major private players whose services are all but collapsing now.

Just to put these figures in perspective, it is widely being discussed that the telecom sector loans from the banks are of the order of Rs 7 lakh crore, a significant part of which will turn into non-

performing assets or NPAs if the government does not bail out the telecom companies. Therefore, a high-powered committee has been set up by the government to bail out these companies.

Not that there are no winners from this telecom crisis, even if it is largely self-inflicted. Reliance Jio entered the telecom business late, and had the advantage of leap-frogging technology. It went straight to data as the primary telecom business of the future, which would subsume voice as well as messaging, which are clearly legacy businesses. Today we can carry voice and messages as mobile data, while the reverse—using voice services for mobile data—is much less efficient.

Second, Jio has huge profits and accumulated capital from its petroleum and gas business. It is this capital it has used to fund its initial foray into telecommunications. As a consequence, the share of accumulated dues that Jio has to pay due to the Supreme Court verdict is a measly Rs 13 crore, as against Airtel’s and Vodafone’s about Rs 22,000 crore and Rs 20,000 crore respectively. And it has very little loans, as the infrastructure has been largely created by or transferred to other Reliance companies.

The telecom mess has been a long time in the making. The revenue-sharing scheme, the cause of the current mess, started during former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s tenure. In 1998, after losing its majority, his caretaker government introduced this revenue share scheme. This allowed private players to pay a share of their revenue as license fee, instead of the lump-sum license fees that they had agreed to pay during the auction of licenses in 1994.

The Delhi Science Forum—

through this author—had challenged this decision of the government in the Delhi High Court. We had argued that the private players had secured their licenses with the full intention of not paying the license fees, and then holding the government to ransom, thereby diluting the license terms. The court gave only an interim order, and never a final verdict on this case, and it must be languishing still, in some judicial vault for such near-dead cases.

The issue of high initial license fees was “resolved” by the government by first fixing the license fee as 15% of AGR, then bringing it down to 12%, 10% and 8% for A, B and C-type circles respectively. It was later reduced to 8% for all circles. Having tasted blood—that the license-permit Raj had now become license-to-loot Raj—the telecom companies started a dispute over what should be included in the ‘adjusted’ part of their gross revenues, when they compute their AGR. They started this dispute even though the licenses issued by DoT had clearly stated what would, and would not, be included in AGR.

The Supreme Court’s verdict simply points out that a license issued and accepted by the company is a contract, and one party cannot ex post facto—after the fact—reinterpret the terms of the contract. The verdict reiterates that the adjustments as defined in the license have to be fulfilled and anything explicitly included as part of the AGR in the license has to be paid as license fee.

What now for the telecom sector? It is clear that the price war in the sector is over and we now have a clear cartel of three major private players operating together to jack up prices. They have raised the price of calls in tandem for both voice

and data after this judgement, while the government ponders over what further relaxations they will require to survive their self-imposed wound of non-payment of full license fees.

The announcements by all the private players have come on the same day; and though there are some differences in tariffs, they are all of the same order. This is clearly collusive behaviour. Jio has now emerged as the market leader with its share of subscribers overtaking Airtel and Idea-Vodafone. With its financial clout, it will now set the terms for the other two private players.

BSNL and MTNL, the state-run companies are in deep financial trouble with this government—after successive governments—running them to the ground and forcing them to offer benefits to private players. But if they also fold up, or follow the path of Air India, the people will have no protection from the new telecom cartel that has emerged after the price wars.

Jio's telecom business model has been to use its huge cash reserves from other activities to create a new monopoly. It is banking not just on telecom subscribers but on other businesses that it wants to build on this infrastructure. It is planning to leverage its telecom infrastructure to create a new data and entertainment monopoly—think Netflix meets Amazon and Google. This will be a new data monopoly, built on its underlying telecom monopoly. This is the threat it poses to our future; that all our interactions with the outside world will pass through Jio. We will increasingly live through Jio. But that is a story for another day.

(Prabir Purkayastha is an activist for science and the Free Software movement.)

Why is the 'Israel Model' Bad for India

Siddharth Varadarajan

So deep does national sentiment in favour of the rights of the Palestinians run that regardless of which party is in power, the Indian government has so far remained formally committed to the cause of an independent, secure Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

India has excellent relations with Israel too, but that has not come in the way of the country taking a stand against Israel's violations of international law.

Against this backdrop it is not hard to understand why the videotaped remarks of the Indian consul general in New York celebrating the so-called 'Israel Model' have proved so controversial.

Perhaps as a form of damage control, the Ministry of External Affairs quickly released an advance copy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement marking the International Day for Solidarity with the Palestinians. Yet, the question remained—could it be that Modi's letter of support for the Palestinians was just public posture and that what the senior Indian diplomat was caught saying on camera represented the real thinking of the Indian government? Or had the diplomat mis-spoken?

So far, the MEA has not clarified matters. The diplomat's claim that his remarks have been taken "out of context" is not helpful since it was the context in which he was speaking which made his words so shocking. He was addressing a gathering of Kashmiri Pandits (KPs), lakhs of whom were driven from their homes in the Kashmir Valley following the onset of the armed insurgency in 1990. How could he or anyone

imagine that the Israel Model—which is based on the eviction of the Palestinian people from their homes and the annexation of their land—can offer a solution to the plight of the KPs?

Either way, it is evident that the diplomat in question, like many people in India and around the world, is a victim of ignorance and disinformation about what exactly the 'Israel Model' is. So here, in 10 easy-to-understand facts, is a quick guide to this model.

1. Occupy the sovereign territory of others and turn them into refugees

The United Nations created Israel and Palestine on November 29, 1948 as two equal, sovereign states. Today, Israel is in occupation of Palestine. It has annexed East Jerusalem. It has blockaded the Gaza strip and filled the West Bank with its own outposts of settlers, and refuses to abide by the terms of either UN resolutions or negotiated accords it has signed to end this illegal occupation of Palestinian land. As part of this occupation, Israel also steals the water resources of the Palestinians, and will not allow the refugees who were forcibly driven from their land to return home.

2. Impose collective punishment on the occupied people

When the occupied people exercise their inalienable and legitimate right to resist, the Israel Model involves subjecting the entire civilian population of the Palestinian territories to collective punishment using such methods as a territorial blockade, mass arrests

and detentions, travel restrictions that can turn even the shortest of journeys into a nightmare lasting hours, the demolition of homes, fiscal pressure, the use of civilians and even children as human shields.

3. Illegally convert occupied territory into your own land

The third feature of the Israel Model is the conversion of Occupied Territory into Israeli land, first by building illegal settlements, then a massive wall (ostensibly to 'protect' the occupiers from the occupied but actually to grab more land), then roads to connect these illegal settlements. Israel has grabbed so much land already that the West Bank resembles a piece of Swiss cheese, full of holes. David Shulman, the noted Israeli academic, one of the world's leading scholars of Telugu and Tamil, has been chronicling the hundreds of crimes, small and big, that are an integral part of the 'Israel model'. Each story of the theft of land and water will break your heart.

4. Discriminate against your own citizens on the basis of religion or ethnicity

The Israel Model involves not just robbing the Palestinians of their land but also turning a section of Israel's own citizens—especially those who are Palestinian—into second-class citizens. Reactionary politicians like Benjamin Netanyahu regularly speak of Arab Israelis and their representatives as if they are national enemies. Arabs are one-fifth of Israel's population yet suffer from discrimination when it comes to the right to lease land, reunite their families, or the right to residency in Jerusalem.

5. Turn your courts into a rubber-stamp for the occupation

Fifth, the Israeli model requires

that the judicial system, which is otherwise quite independent of the executive, serve as a rubber-stamp for the illegal occupation and for the violation of human rights by the Israeli security apparatus and military.

Palestinians whose homes are taken over illegally have tried in vain to get the Israeli courts to intervene on the side of justice, yet judgment after judgment has confirmed what the Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem has said, that "those under occupation cannot seek justice in the occupier's courts."

6. Regularly attack your neighbours

The sixth element of the Israel Model is to regularly attack your neighbours—especially Lebanon—and breed violence and insecurity in the borderlands of all its neighbours. Israel has formally annexed the Golan Heights from Syria and for years had turned southern Lebanon into a hell-hole.

7. Violate international humanitarian law whenever you wage war

It is impossible to think of the Israel Model without its seventh element—the violation of international humanitarian law whenever the Israeli Defence Forces wage war. Even if we leave aside aggression as a war crime by itself, the actual conduct of military operations by the IDF, especially in Gaza in 2014 and most recently in 2018, and in Southern Lebanon, has involved war crimes such as the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force, and the killing and maiming of civilians. All of this has been well documented by international human rights agencies but also by the United Nations.

8. Label your critics 'terrorists', 'terror sympathisers', 'anti-semites' and anti-nationals

An integral part of the Israel Model is also the demonisation of critics as terrorists or terror sympathisers. Reactionary Israeli politicians and officials are quick to label the critics of Israeli policies towards the Palestinians as 'anti-semitic' or, if they are Jews or Israelis, as unpatriotic and anti-national.

9. Dishonour the memory of the Jewish victims of the Nazi Holocaust

The ninth element of the Israel model is the tendency of some politicians to dishonor the memory of the Jewish victims of the Nazi Holocaust by invoking their suffering to somehow justify what the Israeli state is doing to the Palestinian people. Using the suffering of one people to justify committing crimes against others is one of the most atrocious things a politician can do, and regrettably this has now become a tactic that is frequently resorted to.

10. Use war and the threat of terror for domestic political gains

The tenth element of the Israel model is one which has come into starker relief these days, given Benjamin Netanyahu's failure to form a coalition government in the face of the challenge from Benny Gantz in the September 2019 election to the Knesset.

Israel's attorney general managed to block Netanyahu's plans to launch an intensive bombing campaign against Gaza just before those elections but as Israel prepares for a third election early next year, the Palestinian territory has emerged as a convenient punching bag.

Over 30 Palestinian civilians

were killed in Israeli bombings in Gaza last month and the fear is that there will be more aggression as Netanyahu seeks to push a reluctant electorate into giving him a majority.

Emulate at your own risk

So there, in a nutshell, is the Israel Model, in 10 atrocious parts. I cannot think of a single redeeming feature of this model. It is a curse for the people of Palestine, of course, but it is also a curse for the people of Israel, who are condemned by this model to live lives of perpetual insecurity, enmeshed in conflict and injustice. Anyone who thinks Israel can serve as a guide for India is either ignorant, or mad.

(Siddharth Varadarajan is journalist, political analyst and academic. He is a Founding Editor of The Wire. He was earlier the Editor of The Hindu.)

Articles Put on Janata Blog (December 1, 2019)

1. John Pilger, "The Lies About Assange Must Stop Now"
2. Tricontinental: "Latin America and the Caribbean: Between the Neoliberal Offensive and New Resistances"
3. Fiona Edwards, "The Clear US Role in Bolivia's Tragic Hard-Right Coup"
4. Maya Ajchura Chipana, "500 Years of Resistance, Colonization, and Coups in Bolivia"
5. Parvin Sultana, "Assam's Syncretic Culture Is Under Threat"
6. Countercurrents Collective, "India Should Not Go The Nazi Way ..."
7. WSS, "NRC and Assam: Fact-Finding Report"
8. POSCO to Jindal: A Fact Finding Report
9. Shabina Akhtar, "Welcome to Bengal, Where Thirty Muslim Professors Teach Sanskrit"
10. Divya Guha, "India's Shadow Lobbies: How Business Captured the Government"

Venezuela's Civilian Militia Reaches 3.3 Million Members

Paul Dobson

"Venezuela's Bolivarian Militia has grown to 3.3 million men and women, surpassing the target for 2019. The body is due to be legally incorporated into the Armed Forces as a 'combat unit'."

This announcement was made during activities held over the weekend for the Day of Loyalty, which commemorates the last public speech given by late President Hugo Chavez in 2012 before he passed away from cancer in 2013.

Speaking from La Guaira State on Sunday, with 30,000 militia members in attendance, President Nicolas Maduro told the country that 2020's goal has been established at four million enlisted members.

"Today is a day of victory, the Day of Loyalty and love towards Chavez," Maduro said in a televised address, adding that the 3.3 million members had expressed their pride and patriotism by joining the militia.

During the event, the President also informed that his government has prepared a reform to the 2008 Law of the Bolivarian Armed Forces, which will see the Militia formally incorporated as a "combat unit" into the Armed Force and will have constitutional recognition. The militia is currently classed as an "auxiliary" branch of the Armed Forces.

"The Bolivarian National Militia is the people in arms, it is the genuine expression of civic-military union," Maduro explained upon unveiling the document.

The activity also saw Maduro swear in thousands of new militia members, as well as awarding

numerous decorations and promotions.

Similarly, Militia members and workers of the heavy industries of Venezuela's eastern region gifted him a 7.62 mm Mosin-Nagant rifle.

Venezuela's Bolivarian Militia was formed in 2005 and granted autonomy in 2008 by Hugo Chavez. During the successive governments of Maduro and under growing foreign military threats against the country, it has expanded rapidly both in numbers, scope, and importance, attracting millions of civilians. During 2019, it has been granted a number of new tasks and responsibilities.

According to the president, the Bolivarian Militia is now conformed of 1,141 territorial Popular Defence Groups (ADI's) and operates out of 14,383 Popular Bases of Integral Defence.

According to statements made in November, the organisation possess 321,433 firearms. However, Maduro indicated on Sunday that he will increase this amount, pledging that every militia member should be assigned a weapon.

Last month, 6,950 militiamen and women were deployed to safeguard electrical installations following government claims of "sabotage." The militia members were also charged with cleaning, maintenance, and forest fire prevention in areas around the installations as Venezuela enters its dry season.

The government likewise announced that thousands of militia members would be deployed on the streets until December 31 to "keep the peace" alongside forces from the

police and the Bolivarian National Guard during the holiday period.

Likewise in November, Maduro ordered Militia members be incorporated to the Armed Forces' Bolivarian Military University, as well as the creation of an "Anti-Imperialist School" for all of the country's militia members to train them as "professionals."

The militia was also incorporated

into the CLAP subsidised food distribution program in May as part of efforts to crack down on corruption, distributive irregularities, and reselling of the subsidies food products. The CLAP program benefits over six million Venezuelan families and has been targeted by US sanctions.

Apart from its military responsibilities, including training

and education, the organisation is also carrying out a National Population and Housing Census, working alongside the Productive Workers' Councils, and embarking on a series of agricultural projects to grow fruit and vegetables.

(Paul Dobson is from Britain. He has lived in Venezuela since 2006, and writes for Venezuelanalysis.com.)

French Unions and Yellow Vests Converge, Launch General Strike

Richard Greeman

On the eve of an "unlimited" (open-ended) General Strike called for December 5, more and more unions and protest groups are pledging join it.

Two things are unusual about this strike. The first is that it is open-ended, rather than the usual one-day of ritualistic protest marches, and may be prolonged from day to day by workers' assemblies. The second is that the Yellow Vests, the self-organized, horizontal, social movement that sprung up spontaneously just over a year ago and is still popular despite severe repression, have decided to converge with the strike, and that the CGT's Martinez, who had originally spurned the Yellow Vests, immediately welcomed them, making for a heady mix. For the union leaders, who try to control their followers tightly, the Yellow Vests are like a loose canon on the deck of a ship. Who knows what may result?

The nation-wide strike was originally proposed by Philippe Martinez, Secretary General of CGT, France's largest union federation, in response to the Macron Governments' proposed neoliberal "reform" of the France retirement system. Macron's

reform would essentially gut France's solidarity-based retirement system. Even more than U.S. Social Security, which even Trump and the Republicans don't dare touch, retirement over here is a sacred cow. It was established at the end of WWII when the Resistance and the Communists were influential and the business class was in disgrace, having collaborated with the Nazis. Under Macron's proposed new 'point' system, many will lose up to 30% according to estimates, and future governments could arbitrarily decide how much money each point is worth!

The Camel's Back

This latest, and most sweeping of Macron's two years' string of neo-liberal attacks on social welfare may prove to be the straw that breaks the camel's back; and camels are dangerously irascible animals known to bite or kick their masters to death when mistreated.

The French were already in an angry mood in the Spring of 2018 when Macron started pushing through his reforms, but they were disappointed when the CGT and other union leaders imposed only stop-and-go, limited, local

strikes and failed utterly to counter-attack. It was on the grave of those defeats that the spontaneous Yellow Vest movements sprung up like mushrooms all over France last November, supported by over 70% of the French.

Although justifiably suspicious of unions, especially of the union leaders, the Yellow Vests, after suffering a year of police brutality and prejudiced media coverage, came around to the need for convergence. Thus, at our fourth national Assembly of Assemblies on November 3, 2019, we voted to join and "be at the heart" of the December 5 movement in the hope that "a defeat for the government would open the road to other victories for our camp."

Will the union leaders like Martinez stay the course? If they try to settle with Macron piecemeal and divide the movement as they have in the past, will the workers' assemblies be able to stop them? Will the strike over retirement benefits develop along broad social revolutionary lines like similar horizontal movements in South America, the Middle East and elsewhere? Will these international movements finally connect, as the

Yellow Vests' Assembly of Assembly proposed when it dedicated our first anniversary to social movements around the world?

The following leaflet, developed by the Yellow Vests of Uzès and Montpellier, expresses the hopes and fears of the Yellow Vests on the eve of this open-ended struggle.

* * *

“One for all and all for one !”

For the past two years, a government of the rich has been imposing “reforms” designed to deprive the French people of all the advantages won by several generations of workers. For the past two years, Macron, “President of the rich,” following the rules laid down by the European Union of bankers and in defiance of the people, has been using police-state methods to increase the inequality of an already unequal society for the benefit of his Stock Market cronies through tax advantages and privatizations.

Today, by attacking their retirements, this would-be Jupiter has succeeded in uniting the French people—against him ! United, we have the power to make him withdraw his so called « reform » of our pensions. That's obvious. But we must not stop there. We must stick together and make use of our united strength to impose all our demands: wages, unemployment benefits, public services, hospitals, schools, agricultural lands, ecological justice, fiscal justice ...

Macron has sowed the wind.

On December 5 he will harvest the whirlwind:

An Unlimited General Strike to take back our France

Don't let them divide us ! Let no branch, no trade, no sector return to work until **everyone's** demands have

been satisfied. Let us stick together, for we all depend on one another. Leave no one behind !

The **nurses and doctors** of the emergency rooms and hospitals are struggling for all of us. They are demanding more beds, more personnel, more materials and of course decent salaries and breaks. They just made a pact with the **firefighters**: a fine example of solidarity between respected professionals. These are the people who look after us when we are most vulnerable. Should we leave them behind ?

Working women earn only 4/5 of the wages of men doing the same work, and they do 4/5 of the unpaid labour of homemaking, cooking and child-rearing. They are the true basis of civilization, yet many women are beaten, murdered, raped or trafficked in France—all too often with impunity. They are asking for justice. Should we leave them behind ?

The majority of **working people** have long been financially insecure. Even when they work full time or do extra jobs. Although the productivity of their labour and the profits of their bosses have not stopped increasing, the men and women who create this wealth live in fear of the end of the month, in permanent worry of unemployment, anxious about their employers closing shop and moving to poor countries where labor is cheaper. The workers are fighting for decent wages and stable employment. Should we leave them behind ?

Students and teachers are demanding less over-crowded classrooms, aids and assistance for handicapped and special students, the right to participate in developing curriculums that correspond to the needs of the young and not to the

demands of employers. They are our children. Should we leave them behind ?

Small farmers work hard to feed us and get back only 2–3% of the price their produce sells for at Carrefour. Young people who want to raise organic crops and develop permaculture are unable to find agricultural lands to buy or rent, while real-estate speculators are paving over fertile soils. On the other hand, our government is subsidizing big land-owners and agro-businesses who stuff us with chemicals and Frankenfoods. Obesity is on the rise. The French peasantry, the salt of the earth, is in crisis. Should we leave them behind ?

Macron wants to privatize the French National Railways (SNCF) for the benefit of his cronies, who have already taken over the National Highway System which we had already paid for tenfold. Today, trains are more and more expensive and less and less on time. The government is closing smaller stations, isolating the people in the countryside and forcing everyone to buy cars. The **railway workers** are defending these public goods on which we all depend. Should we leave them behind ?

The planet is on the brink of climate catastrophe, while the government goes on subsidizing the oil, coal and chemical companies that are raking in billions. We must immediately cut these gifts to the rich and use that money for ecological purposes, for example helping the inhabitants of Rouen who have been poisoned by industry. Should we leave them behind ?

Immigrants and ethnic minorities do the most grueling work in France without enjoying the rights of citizens, while French imperialist companies are getting

richer pillaging their native lands and making them unlivable. They are being discriminated, deported, brutally repressed by the police. They are demanding liberty, equality and fraternity. Should we leave them behind ?

The Yellow Vests come from all these underprivileged and exploited groups. They are the glue that holds all these elements together in the struggle. For more than a year they have been brutally repressed while fighting for dignity, fiscal justice, equality and participatory democracy. They have kept Macron on the defensive at great cost. Should we leave them behind ?

An Injury to One is an Injury to All!

So, beginning December 5, let us join together in solidarity with each other and throw all our strength into the struggle.

Let us stick together to the end. Let no sector defect. The strike will end when everyone is satisfied. If we all pitch in together, the strike will not have to last long. Our demands are reasonable. If Monsieur Macron can't fulfill them, he could be replaced by someone more reasonable. So could the system that puts profits before the well-being of the people and the planet!

Like the representatives of the Third Estate in 1789, let us swear an oath not to separate until we have all had satisfaction.

Block Everything! Change Everything!

Unlimited General Strike! Unlimited General Dream!

[**Editor's Note:** That was written on December 4. On December 5, more than a million people took part in rallies across France, bringing

public transport in much of the country to a standstill. It was a reminder of the 1995 strikes against pension overhauls that paralysed France for three weeks (Nov-Dec), ultimately forcing the government to back down. This time, on December 5, there were more demonstrators in the streets than on the first day of demonstrations on 24 November 1995. The government had hoped that like in the past, it would be a one-day strike ritual, but it was quickly disappointed. The strike wave has continued, and reports on

the internet say that as on December 10, the sixth day of the strike, massive demonstrations continued across France with lakhs participating.

Read also: Léon Crémieux, France has Once Again Entered a Phase of Large-Scale Social Confrontation – on Janata blog]

(Richard Greeman is a socialist scholar long active in human rights, anti-war, anti-nuclear, environmental and labor struggles in the U.S., Latin America, France, and Russia.)

Raja Dhale: A Renaissance Figure in Dalit Literature and Art

Yogesh Maitreya

If there is one man who deserves to be called a renaissance figure in dalit literature and art, it is Raja Dhale. Many may have heard of him only recently, when he passed away in July, 2019. Dhale was a remarkable poet; an occasional but refined translator; a fiery yet incisive critic of the subject at hand; a radical Buddhist philosopher; and a ruthless advocate of ethical politics. But most people know him as a co-founder of the Dalit Panthers, formed in 1972. They also know him as the author of “Kala Swatantrya Din” (Black Independence Day, 1972), the article that sent shivers down the spine of the brahminical literary circle in Maharashtra. But Dhale needs to be remembered for much more.

J.V. Pawar, eminent historian and co-founder of the Dalit Panthers, says: “If Dhale had not been at the forefront when dalit literature emerged, if he had not stood there with a naked sword in his hand, dalit literature would have been killed in

its infancy. Even ‘experts’ on dalit literature agree on this.” Dhale’s collected works were compiled for the first time by J.V. Pawar; and in 1990, on Dhale’s 50th birthday, the collection was published in a book entitled *Astitwachya Resha* (The Lines of Existence). This significant book provides insights into Dhale’s meticulous understanding of various subjects, and introduces us to the many unexplored aspects of his personality—the writer, the artist, the literary theorist and the political visionary.

Literary renaissance has one crucial requirement. Old literary values need to be refuted; and new values—that connect to contemporary society and advocate justice in social life, have to be vehemently propagated. For this to happen, an understanding of the relationship between society and literature is essential. Raja Dhale not only had this understanding; he also had the vision to develop it.

Just as “literature is a part of our personality,” says Dhale, “it is part of our existence. This means (that) as literature shapes our existence, our existence shapes our literature.” Dhale captured the objective of literature at the theoretical level. But he did more. He developed the objective into a literary framework to resolve the tussle between Marxism and Ambedkarism. He spoke of this as early as 1976 in a speech delivered at a convention of dalit literature. This speech also marked the arrival of revivalist understanding of dalit literatures, inspired by the thoughts, teachings and literary vision of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. Dhale’s speech shed light on literary aspects which had, till then, been matters of confusion and conflict in Indian literary spheres:

“The concept of ‘Marxist literature’ originated from a theoretical understanding of society. But the concept of dalit literature originated directly from lived experience.

“Today there are writings which can be said to be inspired by Marxian thought. But there is nothing that can be described as Marxist literature. Because of this, literature inspired by Marxian thought attempts to seize the field of ‘dalit literature’. Therefore, dalit literature should be called the literature of *Ambedkar Pranalee* (Ambedkarite ideology).

“Till now, our literature has been that of Ambedkari (Ambedkarite) ideology. Because dalit literature emerges from life itself, it acquires social significance—which manifests as dalit social consciousness. This social consciousness of dalit life is shaped by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and his battles. Hence the social significance of dalit literature, is Ambedkari.

“The vision of dalit literature is infused with its social consciousness—this is why dalit literature acquires social significance. But ‘Marxist literature’ has neither social consciousness nor significance; it has a theoretical significance. Just as its origin is theory, its eventual form too is theoretical, not social. The names Marxist literature goes by underline this. ‘Progressive literature’, for example: which social group does this literature refer to? Where exactly does it lead? Towards the social or the theoretical? Another example is ‘parallel literature’. The term does not clarify which social group and which social consciousness it is ‘parallel to’.

“When we call ourselves litterateurs of Ambedkari ideology, and when we describe our literature as the literature of Ambedkari ideology, our objective of social revolution becomes clear. Likewise, our ‘place of work’ is also clear; it is the dalit community ...”

A skillful artisan gives shape to his artefacts, stroke after stroke, with persistence and patience. Like that artisan, Dhale’s meticulous study of literature and his understanding of theories of art and aesthetics shaped the discourse of dalit literature—which he preferred to call the *literature of Ambedkar ideology*—and the dimensions of its theory. Whether he was writing his literary essays, articles, stories or his few but significant poems, logic was never absent from his words. For example, in his poem “*Eka Panther Che Manogat*”, he says:

*Each man is the last one. If he sees that clearly,
why should he not fight each battle
as if it is the last one.*

*I don't understand it—because the end is decided.
Either the battle will come to an end
Or we will die.*

If death is certain, why shouldn't the battle for equality be certain?

As part of social movements, Dhale’s words and actions were directed by his commitment to truth, justice and the creation of a casteless society, whether in the realm of the imagination or in the real world. His life showed that he never bowed down before power. His literary and artistic talents gained strength from his unique imagination, which, in turn, was fed by Ambedkar’s thoughts and vision. This is why he found his reference in social history, the history of his community and in the vision of Ambedkar, rather than foreign theories on art, literature and movements. His contributions to literature and art are unparalleled in the legacy of dalit literature. He wrote short stories, literary essays, critical reviews, songs for adults and children and introductions to books. What he chose to translate is also telling: he translated Zen short stories, Egyptian poems and poems by African American poets such as Langston Hughes, Samuel Allen and Robert Hayden into Marathi. As for his art, its idea of beauty is not sensual, but charged with sense, with sensibility. His illustrations reveal an artistic sensibility that suggest future directions for the anti-caste struggle. They also indicate why the appreciation of beauty requires the creation of a just and equal world.

(Yogesh Maitreya is a poet, translator and founder of Panther's Paw Publication, an anti-caste publishing house.)



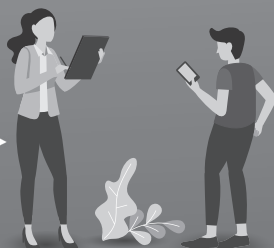
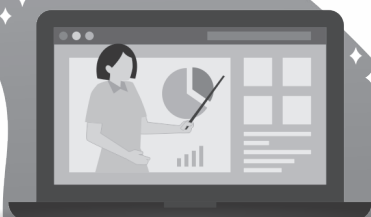
MKCL
Creating a Knowledge Lit World
www.mkcl.org

MS-CIT

Syllabus Available in Two Options

Job Readiness

IT Awareness



Job Readiness

Improve your
employability
and IT skills



IT Awareness

Update your digital
skills in fast
growing IT world

Gateway to New Careers

MS-CIT

Maharashtra State-Certificate In
Information Technology

www.mkcl.org/mscit

Enroll today at your nearest Authorized MKCL Center or ☎ 8411960005



"We are, what we repeatedly do,
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Aristotle



Taj Palace & Towers - Mumbai



Bombay Stock Exchange - Fort, Mumbai



Forum Atmosphere - Kolkata



J.K. House (Raymond)
Breach Candy, Mumbai

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING /
REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF :

- ✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)
- ✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)
- ✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.

Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

**Ahmedabad, Hyderabad,
Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi**

Established 1946

Pages 20

1
Price : Rupees Five

janata

Vol. 74 No. 48
December 22, 2019

Stand Up for the Constitution!
Scrap CAA! No NRC!
Citizens for Justice and Peace

Partition Lies and Amit Shah's
Theatre of the Absurd
Prem Shankar Jha

The Spectre of Jamia:
Violation of a Safe Space
Ushosee Pal & Sanchari Basu Chaudhuri

If a Private Player Can Revive
a PSU, Why Can't Govt?
Prabhat Patnaik

How Did Savarkar, a Staunch
Supporter of British Colonialism,
Come to Be Known as 'Veer'?
Pavan Kulkarni

We Will Continue to Work for a
More Just and Sustainable World
Jeremy Corbyn

Misleading Narratives on Labour's
Defeat Have a Purpose
Gawain Little

Editor : G. G. Parikh

Associate Editor : Neeraj Jain

Managing Editor : Guddi

Editorial Board :
B. Vivekanandan, Qurban Ali,
Anil Nauriya, Sonal Shah,
Amarendra Dhaneshwar,
Sandeep Pandey

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : janataweekly@gmail.com

Website: www.janataweekly.org

Editorial

Unite – To Fight the Nefarious Schemes of the Modi-Shah Government

G.G. Parikh, Neeraj Jain

Being a citizen is the supremest identity that a person has; in contrast, being declared non-citizen (or a foreigner) effectively means the person becomes stateless, which condemns him/her to civil death—a person becomes deprived of almost all his civil rights. The Indian Constitution granted citizenship by birth to all people; after 1987, exceptions were introduced, and the citizenship status of the parents also became important.

Secularism is one of the foundations of the Indian republic. Hence, religion was never the basis of citizenship. Citizenship rules in India were equalising—whatever be the religion, caste, community, gender or social status of a person, all had equal citizenship.

Now, this is being completely overturned by the Modi government. Using brute majority, it has got the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha to pass the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) within just three days. The CAA, together with the National Register of Citizens, strikes at the very roots of secularism in India.

This subversion of the Constitution by the BJP is not

surprising. The BJP is only implementing one of the key agendas of the RSS, its parent organisation—the RSS does not believe in secularism and secular nationalism and instead believes in religious nationalism.

On December 13, soon after the President of India gave his assent to the CAA, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights released a powerful statement that criticised India's new citizenship law. The UN said that not only does this law violate India's obligations to conventions, treaties and compacts that it has signed at the global level, but also that it is in violation of its own Constitution.

People are not taking this assault on the fundamental values of the Indian Constitution lying down. From Assam to Delhi and Kerala, people, especially the students and youth, are out on the streets, protesting in tens of thousands.

Journalist Prem Shankar Jha writes that it is only the second time since Independence that virtually the entire political opposition has joined in the defence of the two core values of the Indian state: secularism

and equality before the law. Seven state governments—Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Kerala, West Bengal and Bihar—have announced that they will not implement the CAA. Chief Minister Baghel of Chhattisgarh has declared that if the NRC is implemented, then he will not to sign it. In Tamil Nadu, the opposition DMK is leading protests against the law, and they are likely to spread because the 3,04,000 Tamil refugees who have been living as stateless citizens in India for as long as 36 years have not been included in the Act. In Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena is vacillating—it had voted for the Bill in the Lok Sabha, but boycotted the voting in the Rajya Sabha; and now, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has come out with a strong statement condemning police action on Jamia Millia students, comparing it to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

The BJP, as is only to be expected, is painting these protests in communal colours. This is being led from the front by the Prime Minister himself. Speaking at a rally in Jharkhand, in a speech which was relayed all over the country on TV, he stated, “Bhaiyo aur beheno, you can tell who the rioters are by the clothes they are wearing.” While Modi has made oblique remarks against Muslims in recent years, this is probably the first time the head of government in a democratic country has directly pointed fingers at a single community so blatantly. Home Minister Amit Shah has been even more openly communal in his statements criticising the protests—in a latest statement, he challenged those opposing the CAA to say publicly that they are ready to welcome ‘all Muslims to India’. BJP-friendly media and BJP social

media have also been ridiculing these protests as ‘Muslim’ and ‘anti-Hindu’, including through the circulation of fake or misleading videos. It is also no coincidence that the police was particularly ruthless against student protests at two major universities Jamia Millia Islamia (New Delhi) and Aligarh Muslim University (Aligarh), both historically Muslim universities.

Indians have seen through this venal grand scheme of the BJP–RSS and are unitedly coming out to fight this assault on our country’s founding principles. For the present, these protests are continuing, growing and spreading.

But while all of this is heartening, it is not enough.

We not only need to fight this assault on our Constitutional fabric, we need to combine it with fighting against the other nefarious agenda of the Modi Government—the naked implementation of neoliberal policies that is resulting in the corporatisation of the entire economy. The entire wealth of the country, including our mineral wealth, our navratna public sector corporations and even our financial institutions, is being transferred to the hands of giant foreign and domestic corporations, which are controlled by some of the richest people of the world. Even the tax money collected by the government is being transferred to the coffers of these richie rich, under all kinds of guises. Simultaneously, the government has been squeezing its welfare expenditures on the poor, which have pushed our public health, education, ration, nutrition and pension systems into deep crisis. For the first time since independence, job creation in the economy has come to a complete standstill, pushing unemployment to record levels.

This is the real agenda of the Modi Government and the BJP–RSS combine ruling the country. Its push for a ‘Hindu Rashtra’ is only a cover—to delude the people into supporting it during elections, while it implements policies to impoverish the people and plunder public wealth and transfer it to the coffers of the country’s corporate elite, policies which have transformed India into one of the most unequal countries in the world. During just the first four years of the Modi regime, the number of billionaires in the country has more than doubled—from 56 in 2014 to 119 in 2018; the corporate houses have been able to indulge in such wanton profiteering that the wealth of the country’s billionaires increased by more than 35% in just one year (2017 to 2018).

We need to realise this real agenda of the Modi Government. We need to see through its schemes of dividing the country along communal lines, and build a united movement of all the people of the country across religion–caste–gender, and challenge the neoliberal model of development being implemented in the country. We need to come together and fight for a new India, which will genuinely uphold Constitutional values of secularism and equality and fraternity, and at the same time, which will ensure the implementation of the economic policies enshrined in the Directive Principles of the Constitution: that call upon the State to direct its policy towards securing adequate means of livelihood for all citizens, wherein the conditions of work are such that all citizens can enjoy a decent standard of living and have full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities.

Stand Up for the Constitution! Scrap CAA! No NRC!

Citizens for Justice and Peace

We, the people of India, protest against the move to question our citizenship. We believe that this is an attempt to divide India on religious lines. Our citizenship has been granted to us by law and constitution and we will defend it till our last breath.

Over the past six years, there are clear political moves to fundamentally assault and redefine this Constitutional basis of both Indian nationhood and citizenship. Especially now, with the just passed Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019, together with a hurried, and not thoroughly debated, all India-level National Population Register (NPR) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) process. The NRC was first experimented with in Assam. The people of Assam have been reeling under this assault on their citizenship for years. As a result of the NRC in Assam, 19 lakh people have been declared as non-citizens in the state. Now, the government is using the CAA 2019 to assure one set of Indians in Assam that they will be “saved” from exclusion from the NRC! Clearly the target is another set of Indians in Assam—the Muslims. Furthermore, the government has announced its intention to extend this process to all over India.

The fact is, once the exercise begins, no one (not even the Hindus) will be spared the trauma and hassle. India’s migrant labour, small farmer, Adivasi and forest dweller, the Dalit–Bahujan masses, all will fall victim to an unconstitutional process. Hundreds of thousands of India’s urban population, living after being

displaced through displacement (project-related migration), man-made tragedies (like riots, pogroms) and natural disasters (floods, fires, earthquakes and worse) do not possess the birth-related or land/home registration documents to “satisfy” such an ill-thought out move.

We need to say: **#Scrap CAA 2019 #NoNRC NOW!**

What is CAA 2019?

The Citizenship Act, 1955 enacted under Article 11 of the Constitution grants citizenship by *birth*, *naturalisation*, *registration* and *annexation*. For a person to be an Indian citizen by birth: i) he/she must be born in India between 1950 to 1987; ii) if he/she is born in India between 1987 and 2004, one of his parents must be an Indian citizen; iii) if he/she is born after 2004, in addition to one of the parents being born here, the other should not be an illegal migrant.

The 2019 amendment to the Citizenship Act (CAA 2019) makes a promise to entertain requests for refuge and citizenship to all the ‘persecuted minorities’ from three Islamic countries, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh who reached India before 2014. The amendment specifies that this special privilege is being extended only to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jain, Parsis and Christians from these three countries, and thus it singles out Muslims for exclusion. For example, neither the Ahmadiyas or Sufis, or mere political dissenters, who are also undoubtedly persecuted in Pakistan, find a mention in

the amendment. Nor do political dissenters or possible asylum seekers like the Rohingyas from Myanmar or Tamils from Sri Lanka have any place in it.

For the first time, there is a statutory attempt to not just privilege people from some faiths but at the same time relegate another, Muslims, to second-rate status. The CAA 2019 violates Constitutional secular principles and is a violation of Articles 13, 14, 15, 16 and 21 which guarantee the right to equality, equality before law and non-discriminatory treatment by the Indian State.

The government is implying that CAA 2019 will automatically offer citizenship to Hindus. But it is lying—even under CAA 2019, how can it offer citizenship to Hindus who are Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati or Tamil speaking since how can they justify that they have migrated from Pakistan, Afghanistan or Bangladesh?

The NRC in Assam

NRC is a document first prepared in Assam in 1951 on the basis of that year’s general census. For decades, Assam’s linguistic and religious minorities lived under the threat of being labeled “outsiders”, “foreigners”, “and illegal migrants.” The “outsider” problem in Assam is over a hundred-years-old and started when the British started bringing in poor Bengali labourers to cut forests and cultivate land in Assam. It was compounded by the British themselves who stoked the fires of division and violence in Assam under their policy of divide and rule.

This led to mass movements against outsiders, widespread violence and riots which culminated in parallel, often conflicting official processes to detect foreigners.

After years of violence in which thousands of people were killed, the Assam accord signed in 1985 paved way for a register of citizens to be prepared and the NRC to be updated. It was seen as a document that will bring peace to Assam and once and for all end the question of who is an Indian and who is an outsider in Assam. Under the Supreme Court's monitoring, the NRC was perhaps the only process that had the widest public support. This was achieved by involving all stakeholders—students unions, citizen's groups and political parties—in deciding the modalities of NRC, i.e., what documents will be used and how.

And yet, the final NRC seems to have made everyone unhappy. Far from being “fair and inclusive”, the process has led the people of Assam to trauma and impoverishment. This list took five long years to complete, cost about Rs 1,220 crore and excluded—in the final list released on August 31, 2019—about 19 lakh people. Before that, at different stages, out of the 3.2 crore who applied, first 1.2 crore and thereafter 44 lakh were excluded. Despite detailed modalities prepared with different stake holders, as political winds changed the process was manipulated, so that documents agreed upon were rejected and hundreds of thousands of Indians—Bengali Hindus, Gorkhas, Hindi speaking peoples, Rajbanshis, Muslims—all today face the threat of being declared as non-citizens!

An All India NRC

Despite these terrible

consequences, the government has now announced that it going to extend the NRC to all over the country. We need to oppose the NRC because it violates fundamental tenets of the Indian Constitution, that guarantees citizenship for *all* people, provided they meet certain criteria, irrespective of religion. Through CAA 2019 and the forthcoming NRC, the political aim is similar to the policy adopted by the British during the colonial days of ‘divide and rule’.

What will the all India NRC look like and why is it being done?

1. What is the need for an All India NRC?

There has not been a single comprehensive study by the government to determine the number of illegal immigrants living in India. In the absence of official numbers, what is NRC being based on? We already have the AADHAR card, before that the ration-cards. Why then are Indians being put through one more such exercise?

2. What documents will be required?

In a country where only 58 percent births are registered, 20 percent children are never enrolled in school and 30 percent of the population has migrated internally for work, documents are a privilege. How will all these people prove their birth and the presence of their ancestors from 40-50 years ago? The lack of documents proving unbroken lineage is particularly difficult for married women. Imagine the nightmarish scenario of a hundreds of millions Indians queuing outside Government offices, hospitals, district centres in order to obtain the required documents. The government will be doing nothing

else for years. Like what happened in Assam, all of us will only be queuing up for documents!

3. What is the cut-off date going to be?

The cut-off date is the date before which you or your ancestor's presence on the Indian soil needs to be proved. In Assam and Assam alone (due to the Assam Accord) the date was 1971. In the rest of India, will it be 1987 or 1950? Imagine looking for forty or seventy-year-old documents!

4. What is the cost going to be?

Remember that we are discussing this in 2019 when India is in the middle of a full-blown economic crisis. In Assam, the cost of examining the citizenship of 3.2 crore human beings came to Rs 1,220 crore *for the state alone!* Apart from this, those individuals who did not have the necessary documents often had to spend several thousand rupees to obtain the necessary documents, and in the process many have become economically crippled.

India has a population of 134 crore! This means that the government of India will spend no less than Rs 51,000 crore for examining the citizenship of all the people in the country. To put that in perspective—the Central Government's budgetary allocation for the Ministry of Health and Family welfare is Rs 65,000 crore. *Can India afford an All India NRC?*

5. Can the government question our citizenship?

To grant a government, any government, the right to examine the citizenship of 134 crore human beings on the basis of a few documents is to grant it extraordinary

and undemocratic power, especially if there are no checks and balances. In Assam the modalities of implementing the NRC were discussed with ALL stakeholders (political parties, eminent citizens, students' unions, citizen groups) and only then the process was started. Yet manipulations and perversions crept in. Can an all India process begin without transparent public consultations? Are we not living in a democracy?

6. Is the government competent enough to question our citizenship?

Who amongst us has our correct name written in all government identity documents? Which government department in India functions with empathy? In a country whose bureaucracy and government office system is known for its leakages, corruption and incompetence, how is the sensitive task of proving citizenship being left to the mercies of the 'sarkari' system? In Assam, Saken Ali was sent to a detention camp simply because an additional 'h' was added to his name in a few government documents. He spent 5 years inside. Several people have died inside foreigner detention camps in Assam while fighting their exclusion from the NRC in courts. The family of India's fifth president, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, was excluded from the NRC. Former Indian army officer and Kargil war veteran, Mohd. Sanaulah, was also sent to a detention camp before he was released on bail.

7. What happens if you are excluded from the All India NRC?

The only way to answer these questions is to look at the experience of Assam. In Assam suspected

'foreigners' and those left out of the NRC have to go through a punishing legal process that begins with quasi-judicial bodies called 'Foreigner Tribunals'. These tribunals are closed to public and journalistic scrutiny and their functioning is opaque. How these FTs declare someone or the other a 'Foreigner' is often arbitrary. Cases can drag on for years or be decided in a jiffy. Once declared a foreigner, you can be sent to a Detention Camp. The situation in these detention camps, where families are separated and living conditions are subhuman, is nightmarish. *The question is, do you deserve such a treatment even if you are a foreigner?*

National Population Register (NPR)

The Government of India has declared that it will conduct a door to door survey to determine the usual residents of India from April 2020 to September 2020. Harmless as that may sound, the NPR is expected to become the basis on which the All India NRC will be drawn up. At the end of the door to door survey, a list of people who have made it to the list will be declared. People whose names do not appear in NPR will have to appeal against it and present relevant documents to the district registrar who will then take a decision whether the said person is a citizen or not. So what documents will these 'sarkari' officers ask of us when they come to our doorstep? What documents will satisfy the registrar?

As is its style, this government has not yet notified what modalities will this door to door enumeration use? What documents will be asked for? What documents will work and what won't? How will such a

significant exercise take place? What criteria will be used?

Who is an Indian?

Does the possession of a few pieces of paper make us Indian? Does being born in a particular religion make us Indian? Does our belief in one political ideology more than others make us Indian? Who decides who is an Indian?

Narrow definitions indeed for a people who take pride in being an ancient civilisation, where tongues and colours and tastes change completely every few miles, where some of the greatest philosophies of this world have been born and debated for a millennia. No single idea can lay claim to being the idea of India. No single definition exists that decides who is an Indian and who is not.

[Citizens For Justice and Peace (cjp.org.in) has been involved in a two-year-long volunteer led movement in Assam where it helped people fill out over 10 lakh NRC forms, got people released from detention camps, and filed intervention applications in the Supreme Court. Now it is conducting trainings all over the country on the countrywide NPR-NRC. For details, contact info@cjp.org.in.]

Janata Subscription

Annual Rs. : 260/-
Three Years : 750/-
Demand Draft / Cheque on
Mumbai Bank in favour of

JANATA TRUST

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Grant Road (W),
Mumbai 400 007.

Partition Lies and Amit Shah's Theatre of the Absurd

Prem Shankar Jha

During the Lok Sabha debate on the Bill amending the Citizenship Act, Union home minister Amit Shah suddenly lost his temper and blurted: “Is desh ka vibhajan agar dharma ke aadhar par Congress na kari hoti to is Bill ka kaam nahin hota (Had the Congress not partitioned this country on the basis of religion, there would have been no need for this Bill).”

His remark sent a shock wave through the Lok Sabha, provoking responses which were echoed within hours by civil society. But Shah, the master tactician, had got what he wanted—he had once again put India’s secular intelligentsia and the increasingly befuddled Congress party on the defensive. And that might have been just the extra edge the BJP needed to get this monstrous Bill through the Rajya Sabha.

Shah’s obvious purpose always was to hustle it through, as he did with the Unlawful Activities Act Amendment Bill before the opposition had time to muster its full strength. And he did it with great aplomb.

What is depressing is the fact that even 48 hours after he made this outrageous claim, no one in the Congress, or for that matter the rest of the opposition and civil society, has pinned down the outrageous lie that Shah spoke in the august halls of Parliament on a Bill that, by changing the very basis of the Union of India, has begun the process of tearing it apart.

All have defended the Congress by saying that while it accepted the creation of two nations, it did not do so on the basis of the two-nation

theory. To the vast majority of Indians, born well after Partition, this must sound like sheer sophistry. That is what Shah (who is only 55 years old) was almost certainly banking upon. It was up to the present leaders of the Congress party to checkmate Shah’s strategy. But that required an immediate command of history that Sonia Gandhi, who was sitting in the front opposition benches, did not have. So, in a manner with which we have grown wearily familiar, she stayed seated and remained silent.

It has therefore fallen to this 81-year-old former journalist to set the record straight. For what I know about the tumultuous last days of the British Raj and the first months of independence is not second-hand but living, first-hand knowledge. So Shah, whose knowledge is also necessarily second hand, may be able to fool others but he cannot fool me.

The Congress party’s resolution of 1947 accepting Partition gave a full explanation of why the party had felt itself left with no option. It restated in pain-filled detail why it had accepted Partition as the lesser of the two evils the country faced at the time (early 1947) despite its staunch and continuing opposition to the two-nation theory. Its reason was the urgent and imperative need to prevent the “poison of communalism” from spreading further and “tearing apart the social fabric of the country”.

The resolution reflects its leaders’ awareness that they were surrendering their own most cherished principle, but felt compelled to accept the lesser evil

in order to avert a much greater one.

To understand why it felt this, it is necessary to go back in time to May 1946, when Viceroy of India Lord Wavell announced the Cabinet Mission Plan. The ‘communal poison’ to which the Congress was referring was the Muslim League’s ‘direct action’ plan following this announcement to deliberately inflame Hindu-Muslim animosity in order to garner support for its demand for partition. This had begun with the planned killing of Hindus in Calcutta of August 1946 that went on for two days, before the Hindu reaction engulfed Bihar in a bloodbath.

This was followed by a planned pogrom of Hindus and Sikhs in what was then the North West Frontier Province (now Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa) in December 1946. This was a Muslim League conspiracy in the most evil sense of the term, because it occurred in a province ruled by the Khudai Khidmatgars (also dubbed the Frontier Congress) which had been stoutly opposing partition ever since it was mooted in 1940. The two minorities made up only 6% of the province’s population, but they were the richest 6%, consisting of traders, moneylenders and rich landowners. The pogrom was therefore aimed both at seizing the assets of the Hindus and Sikhs and simultaneously de-legitimising the Khudai Khidmatgars. (This was a pogrom that the British government had tacitly supported and enabled. The evidence is in the *Transfer of Power Documents*, Volume 12.)

Those who escaped fled to

Rawalpindi, where they received little sympathy or support, and to Muzaffarabad where the Muslim inhabitants, despite the communal hysteria of those times, received them with open arms. But by then the Muslim League National Guard (modelled, like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, on Germany's SA) had the bit between its teeth.

In January 1947, the League turned its attention to Punjab, where as in the NWFP, the Sikhs numbered 18% of its population but owned 30% of all the farmland and paid 50% of the land revenue to the British. Lahore, Amritsar and other cities were dominated by Hindu traders and moneylenders. So here too, the League used the lure of stolen wealth to start a series of communal riots and pogroms.

Like the NWFP, Punjab was also against the partition of India. It was ruled by the Unionist party, a party composed in more or less equal parts by Muslim, Sikh and Hindu feudals, under the prime ministership of Sikander Hayat Khan and after his death in 1942, by Sir Khizar Hayat Khan. Khizar Hayat Khan also opposed Partition but lacked the strength of his predecessor. As a result, the Unionist alliance had begun to fray at the edges when the Muslim League launched its communal riots in January 1947, following his resignation.

This brought the danger to the freedom movement posed by the poison of communal polarisation to the Congress's doorstep. For Punjab stretched then from the Kabul river at the foothills of the Hindu Kush range till Delhi. If the capital went up in flames, then not only would freedom get indefinitely postponed, but the dream of a single independent country would be

destroyed in the scramble by the rest of the country to prevent the poison from spreading into it.

It was to avoid this dire fate that the Congress accepted Partition. It reasoned that three quarters of a secular, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country was better than none. It was to save an inheritance of secularism that stretched from Gautama Buddha till Akbar and the Din-e-Ilahi, and embraced Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Parsis and Jews, in addition to Muslims, that it decided to cut that glorious India's losses and accept Partition.

And while the Congress was fighting this epic battle for an ideal, what was the RSS doing? From the Dandi Salt March in 1929 till Gandhi's Quit India call in 1940, the RSS stoutly opposed every attempt to secure freedom through satyagraha and even offered its cohorts to the government to act as civil guards to quell the unrest that

Gandhi's call would generate. It maintained a monumental silence on the Muslim League's direct action programme and while it may not have instructed Nathuram Godse to assassinate Mahatma Gandhi, according to Pyarelal, Gandhi's secretary, "Members of the RSS at some places had been instructed beforehand to tune in to their radio sets on the fateful Friday for the 'good news'."

For the RSS to claim that it is amending the Citizenship Act to complete the work that was left undone by the Congress is beyond calumny; it is sick comedy. Unfortunately, as Nagaland's extension of the requirement to obtain an Inner Line Permit to the whole of Dimapur district has just shown, it is comedy that could turn in a flash into tragedy.

(Prem Shankar Jha is a Delhi-based journalist and writer.)

The Spectre of Jamia: Violation of a Safe Space

Ushosee Pal & Sanchari Basu Chaudhuri

Time and again, students have shown the way to dissent peacefully and demand change. And, Friday, the 13th of December, 2019, was no different.

Three to four teachers were giving a speech about NRC and CAB inside the campus while a number of students (around fifty) listened. It was peaceful inside the campus on that rainy December afternoon. We heard that there was going to be a non-violent protest against CAB inside the campus followed by a long march. Some scholars joined them. Meanwhile some of us went to our departments

to carry out our examination hall duties. As the students wrote their exams, blasts were heard. In a few minutes, the classroom started filling up with an acidic smell burning our eyes, noses and throats. Many of us started coughing and gasping. While we were flummoxed by these noises and gases, it was the Kashmiri students who pointed out to us that tear gas shells were being blasted outside. We realised that the cops had already entered the campus to stop the unarmed march with weapons.

The staff members, the faculty present and the invigilating scholars

sprang into action. We first closed the windows of the exam hall and shifted the more affected students to relatively safer air. We closed the gates of the department, manned continuously by staff members who decided not to allow groups inside to avoid any situation which may endanger the students by putting them at the receiving end of the frenzied mob. At the same time, affected persons were helped out with a continuous supply of drinking water. Also, some heavily affected individuals were brought inside despite the risk because, for us, in that moment, humanity came before safety.

While students were writing their exams, we could hear tear gas being shelled. We were terrified. The uncontrollable tears and the shaking hands of some students who resolutely managed to finish their paper in a panic-ridden state are the images that one experiences in a siege. These images remain elusive amongst the visuals of abject brutalities which surface and are played on loop on primetime media. The spectacle often makes up for dinnertime entertainment.

But not all Jamia students were out on the streets protesting. Many students, up until Friday, earnestly believed that education can give them entry into the system for an opportunity to bring about positive changes from within. And there were so many who continued to do their jobs despite the situation outside. The university and its scholars did not stop functioning when the police came in on Friday. It was forced to postpone exams after Friday because the cops came in.

In the recent times, many progressive, educated voices have questioned the need for a university

catering specifically to minority groups. Some of us non-Muslim students, when we mention Jamia as our alma mater, notice faint change in the facial expressions of even the most progressive and politically correct individuals. No amount of argument convinces them that minority institutions such as JMI provide a space to the marginalised to feel at ease in their pursuit of knowledge. This is very relevant in a country where the dominant groups are steeped in prejudice, bigotry, suspicion and vitriolic hatred towards the minorities.

The JMI campus, up until Friday, was a safe space for its students. Many students from remote villages and marginalised sections are enrolled in the university, who aspire for socio-economic mobility. It provides a safe space to its female scholars from diverse sections without placing restrictions on their movement, day or night. In the context of minorities, a safe space is the cornerstone for their representation and facilitates communication, critical dialogue and sharing of learning experiences. Critical thinking and speech raises difficult questions and a university is supposed to provide space for diverse dialogue through which such questions can be addressed. A by-product is the ability to quickly identify socio-political undercurrents which shape state policies. Naturally, student protests are the vehicles through which these alternative thoughts have any chance of reaching the masses. These protests (which are largely peaceful and constitutional) become the medium for communicating dissent.

Jamia, on account of its minority status, also voices the concerns of the repeatedly silenced and marginalised groups. Its contribution to India's

commitment to secularism and inclusivity cannot be overlooked. Moreover, it also provides a platform for students from these communities who want to engage in purely academic endeavours but have limited access and resources to enter the mainstream academia otherwise. On Friday, the 13th, it was the violation of this safe space which shocked the academic community.

Is this what new India looks like for us students? Why terrorise students out of education and critical thinking? The current crisis in our safe space has left us shattered. How, then, do we assure students that their safe space will be restored. Moreover, how do we continue with our tradition of inclusivity without feeling threatened?

The role of a university goes beyond education; it is also a conscience keeper. And the library is at the heart of it. It is representative of a meditative space where students can escape to, for the pleasure of reading. Vandalising the library, thus, symbolises an attack on students' safe space. Seemingly, all of a sudden, the library has become a greater threat than protestors on the street.

(Ushosee Pal is a doctoral scholar and a UGC fellow at the Department of sociology, Jamia Millia Islamia. Sanchari Basu Chaudhuri is a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.)

Janata

is available at

www.lohiatoday.com

If a Private Player Can Revive a PSU, Why Can't Govt?

Prabhat Patnaik

Apart from defrauding the states of their legitimate share of resources, the second way in which the Centre is attempting to cope with the fiscal squeeze, which it has become subject to under the neo-liberal regime, is by privatising a whole range of public sector enterprises.

Not a day passes without the government announcing some measure of privatisation. Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Puri claims that public sector Air India has to close down if it is not privatised—a remarkable statement by a senior government functionary for two reasons. First, if the private buyer is supposed to be able to revive the company (for otherwise why should anyone be buying it), then why can't the government do the same?

Second, even if one accepts for argument's sake that what Puri says is correct, his saying so is most bizarre because it amounts to a signal to potential buyers to scale down their bids for it.

A large number of public sector enterprises in the Asansol–Durgapur belt of West Bengal are being sought to be privatised, riding roughshod over the demands of the trade unions. Public sector telecom major BSNL's employees are being more or less forced to accept voluntary retirement, so that the company can no longer remain viable and would have to be sold off. Such examples can be multiplied.

Of course, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, with its total lack of understanding of the

significance of the public sector and also with its closeness to the corporate–financial oligarchy, is prone to dismantling the public sector anyway. But now it feels an added urgency for doing so in order to cope with the fiscal squeeze that the economic downturn has brought in its wake.

To stimulate privatisation, international finance capital (and its leading institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) have resorted to a fiddle, namely, to exclude the proceeds from the sale of public sector assets from the fiscal deficit; the government can, therefore, show a smaller fiscal deficit figure, one conforming to the “Fiscal Responsibility” target, by selling public sector assets. This is a completely illegitimate practice, but it is done for ideological reasons, for effecting privatisation.

The reason why it is illegitimate is quite simple. A fiscal deficit of course has none of the ill-effects on the economy that spokesmen of finance capital claim it has, in a demand-constrained economy, i.e. in an economy where there is unemployment and unutilised capacity: it neither leads to any “crowding out” of private investment (since there is no “fixed pool” of savings from which the private sector gets less because of the fiscal deficit, as savings themselves increase with the rise in income that occurs in response to the rise in aggregate demand that is generated by the fiscal deficit); nor does it lead to any inflation, since the economy

is characterised by unemployed resources so that a rise in aggregate demand causes an output increase rather than a price-level increase. But even assuming for a moment that a fiscal deficit has all the ill-effects that spokesmen for finance claim it has, the proceeds from privatisation do not eliminate those ill-effects.

If, for instance, there were indeed a “fixed pool” of savings, from which, if the government borrowed more to finance a fiscal deficit, less would be left for the private investors, leading to a “crowding out”, this “fixed pool” will not increase an iota by the privatisation of public sector assets.

Likewise, suppose the fiscal deficit would indeed be causing inflation by creating excess demand, then privatising public sector assets would not reduce this excess demand an iota, since the buyers of these assets would not be skimping on their demand for goods and services for purchasing public sector assets.

Thus, the sale of public sector assets does not actually close any fiscal deficit; and yet finance capital, which vigorously opposes a fiscal deficit, is perfectly willing to accept the sale of public sector assets as a means of closing it, i.e. as being on a par with taxation.

Put differently, there is a distinction in economics between “flows” and “stocks”. A fiscal deficit, which is the difference between the government's income (a “flow”) and expenditure (another “flow”), is itself a “flow” item; it can be closed through some “flow” adjustment,

This is the second part of an article on the perversity of the neo-liberal fiscal regime. The first part of this article was published in the previous issue of Janata.

either larger tax revenue (a “flow”) or reduced “flow” of expenditure.

On the other side, the sale of public sector assets refers to a “stock” transaction, involving a property transfer and hence balance sheet adjustments all around, which does not impinge on any “flows”, and, therefore, cannot possibly mitigate any ill-effects of a fiscal deficit.

The fact that IMF and other institutions of finance capital accept the sale of public sector assets as a supposedly legitimate means of closing a fiscal deficit only shows their bad faith, the fact that their intellectual position is dictated not by any scientific considerations, but rather by an opportunistic desire to push the ideological agenda of privatisation.

The intellectual dishonesty does not end there. When a private company buys public sector assets, it does so not with resources raised through skimping on its expenditure, like some petty shop-keeper, but through borrowing or through foregoing the purchase of some other assets, all of which amount to balance sheet adjustments.

Now, if the government has a fiscal deficit of Rs 100, then it would be borrowing this sum from, say, a bank to finance this deficit. But if it privatises public sector assets to the same extent, then the private buyer of these assets would instead be borrowing Rs 100 from the bank to purchase these assets.

To say that a fiscal deficit is “bad” for the economy but the sale of public sector assets is “okay”, amounts therefore to saying that expenditure financed by the government’s borrowing Rs 100 from the bank is “bad” but the same expenditure financed by a private entity borrowing from the bank is

“okay”! This is totally without any economic rationale whatsoever.

The matter can be looked at in yet another way. A fiscal deficit entails an increase in government debt; it is financed by selling IOUs by the government. Privatisation of public sector assets entails selling government equity to private entities. To say that privatisation is harmless but a fiscal deficit is not, amounts, therefore, to saying that selling government equity is harmless while selling government bonds (IOUs) is not, which again is totally without any justification, a mere ideological ploy to effect privatisation.

The public sector was set up as a bulwark against the hegemony of metropolitan capital. It was a part of the agenda of unshackling the economy from imperialist domination. Under the neo-liberal dispensation, of course, governments go wooing metropolitan capital; nonetheless the public sector can still play a role by way of putting a limit to the extent to which metropolitan capital and the domestic corporate-financial oligarchy utilise their monopoly position to fleece the country.

A government concerned with the interests of the nation, even when it gets caught in the web of neo-liberalism, would nurture the public sector to defend national interests against the depredations of foreign and domestic monopoly capital; but not so our Hindutva votaries who denounce all their critics as “anti-national” but hold dear the interests of precisely these monopolists, against the nation. They have no compunctions about dismantling the public sector built up with such effort in the teeth of fierce opposition from imperialism.

The modus operandi of neo-liberal fiscal policy is clear from all

this. Neo-liberalism makes fiscal policy “pro-cyclical” rather than “anti-cyclical”. Revenues drop when the economy experiences a downturn. And to maintain its expenditure, the Central government can neither tax capitalists (even though doing so would not hurt post-tax profits one iota compared with what it would otherwise have been if government expenditure had been cut), nor enlarge the fiscal deficit; it resorts to squeezing the states, with dangerous consequences for federalism, and to privatising the public sector which makes the nation further vulnerable to the depredations of foreign and domestic monopoly capital.

(Prabhat Patnaik is Professor Emeritus at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.)

Articles Put on Janata Blog (December 8, 2019)

1. Subhash Gatade, “Ambedkar For Our Times!” (full article)
2. Countercurrents Collective, “Argentina’s President Fernandez Rejects Remaining IMF Money”
3. Tanya Wadhwa, “Colombian National Strike Continues”
4. Fabio Resmini, “The Long Coup in Ecuador”
5. Alison Bodine, “The Rising Fight Against Neo-Liberalism in Chile”
6. Fr. Cedric Prakash, “Have We Really Done Away with Our Constitution?”
7. Wire Staff, “Fact-Checking Amit Shah’s Response to Rahul Bajaj”
8. Prabhir Vishnu Poruthiyil, “The Spectre Haunting Hindutva: An Assertive Dalit Woman”
9. Ian Angus, “Superbugs in the Anthropocene: A Profit-Driven Plague”

How Did Savarkar, a Staunch Supporter of British Colonialism, Come to Be Known as 'Veer'?

Pavan Kulkarni

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883–1966)—mythologised in popular imagination as ‘Veer Savarkar’—not only refrained from participating in the freedom struggle after the British released him from prison on account of his relentless pleas for mercy, but also actively collaborated with the English rulers to whom he had declared his loyalty.

At the time when Subhas Chandra Bose was raising his Indian National Army to confront the British in India, Savarkar helped the colonial government recruit lakhs of Indians into its armed forces. He further destabilised the freedom movement by pushing his Hindutva ideology, which deepened the communal divide at a time when a united front against colonial rule was needed. Post independence, Savarkar was also implicated in Mahatma Gandhi’s murder.

Such is the man who was declared by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to be “the true son of Mother India and inspiration for many people”, in his Twitter salutation to Savarkar on his birth anniversary on May 28 last year. In 2015, commemorating Savarkar on his 132nd birth anniversary, the prime minister bowed before a portrait of the Hindutva icon in remembrance of “his indomitable spirit and invaluable contribution to India’s history”.

And somewhere in the stream of Twitter accolades from numerous BJP ministers that followed, the TV anchor Rajdeep Sardesai joined the chorus, albeit with a caveat. While he disagreed “with his ideology”, Sardesai said he honoured Savarkar’s

“spirit as freedom fighter”.

A freedom fighter he definitely was, for a certain period in the first decade of the previous century, long before he’d begun articulating the notion of Hindutva. Savarkar was then an atheist and a rationalist, who had started out on a revolutionary road to rid India of her colonial yoke. On sailing to England to study law in 1906, Savarkar founded the Free India Society to organise Indian students studying in England to fight for independence. In a famous declaration before the society, he said:

“We must stop complaining about this British officer or that officer, this law or that law. There would be no end to that. Our movement must not be limited to being against any particular law, but it must be for acquiring the authority to make laws itself. In other words, we want absolute independence.”

However, when the time came to pay the price for being a revolutionary under an oppressive colonial government, Savarkar found himself converted and transformed into “the staunchest advocate of loyalty to the English government”, to use his own words. This was after he was arrested and sentenced to serve 50 years in the infamous Cellular Jail on the Andaman islands after he was found guilty of supplying the pistol that a member of the Abhinav Bharat Society used to assassinate the then collector of Nasik, A.M.T. Jackson, in 1909.

‘Veer’ Savarkar pleading with the British for mercy

Barely a month into the hardships of prison, Savarkar wrote his first mercy petition, which was rejected in 1911. In the second mercy petition, which he wrote in 1913, he confesses that he was misguided into taking the revolutionary road because of the “excited and hopeless situation of India in 1906–1907.” He concluded his November 14, 1913 petition by assuring the British of his conscientious conversion. “If the government in their manifold beneficence and mercy release me,” he wrote, “I for one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of... loyalty to the English government.”

“Moreover,” he went on to say, making an offer which few freedom fighters could even think of making, “my conversion to the constitutional line would bring back all those misled young men in India and abroad who were once looking up to me as their guide. I am ready to serve the Government in any capacity they like, for as my conversion is conscientious. The Mighty alone can afford to be merciful and therefore where else can the prodigal son return but to the paternal doors of the government?”

In his fourth mercy petition, dated March 30, 1920, Savarkar told the British that under the threat of an invasion from the north by the “fanatic hordes of Asia” who were posing as “friends”, he was convinced that “every intelligent lover of India would heartily and loyally co-operate with the British people in the interests of India herself.”

After reassuring the colonial

government that he was trying his “humble best to render the hands of the British dominion a bond of love and respect,” Savarkar went on to exalt the English empire: “Such an Empire as is foreshadowed in the Proclamation, wins my hearty adherence”. “But”, he added:

“if the Government wants a further security from me then I and my brother are perfectly willing to give a pledge of not participating in politics for a definite and reasonable period that the Government would indicate... This or any pledge, e.g., of remaining in a particular province or reporting our movements to the police for a definite period after our release—any such reasonable conditions meant genuinely to ensure the safety of the State would be gladly accepted by me and my brother.”

Finally, after spending ten years in the cellular jail and writing many mercy petitions, Savarkar, along with his brother, was shifted to a prison in Ratnagiri in 1921, before his subsequent release in 1924 on the condition of the confinement of his movements to the Ratnagiri district and his non-participation in political activities. These restrictions were lifted only in 1937.

Self-glorification of a defeated man

One might have argued in 1924 that the promises he made about his love and loyalty to the British, about his readiness to serve the government in any capacity required and so on were a part of a tactical ploy employed to make his way out of prison so that he could continue his freedom struggle. However, history has proven him to be a man of ‘honour’, who stood by the promise he made to the colonial government. How then, one might

wonder, did Savarkar acquire the title ‘Veer’?

A book titled *Life of Barrister Savarkar* authored by Chitragupta was the first biography of Savarkar, published in 1926. Savarkar was glorified in this book for his courage and deemed a hero. And two decades after Savarkar’s death, when the second edition of this book was released in 1987 by the Veer Savarkar Prakashan, the official publisher of Savarkar’s writings, Ravindra Ramdas, revealed in its preface that “Chitragupta is none other than Veer Savarkar”.

In this autobiography masquerading as a biography written by a different author, Savarkar assures the reader that:

“Savarkar is born hero, he could almost despise those who shirked duty for fear of consequences. If once he rightly or wrongly believed that a certain system of Government was iniquitous, he felt no scruples in devising means to eradicate the evil.”

Without mincing words in the name of modesty or moderating the use of adjectives in the name of literary minimalism, Savarkar wrote that Savarkar “seemed to possess no few distinctive marks of character, such as an amazing presence of mind, indomitable courage, unconquerable confidence in his capability to achieve great things”. “Who,” he asked about himself, “could help admiring his courage and presence of mind?”

Perhaps in polite society, we ought to quietly look the other way with an embarrassed smile when an ex-revolutionist, after breaking down in prison, indulges in self-glorification under the cover of a pen name after his release. And, indeed, no one who did not suffer the conditions the inmates of that

infamous prison on the Andaman islands had to endure, can claim the right to castigate Savarkar for refusing to contribute to the freedom movement after he was released from jail.

But his purporting of an ideology which destabilised the freedom movement by deepening the divisions along sectarian lines and his active rendering of support to the British government—which was determined to subdue the anti-colonial struggle—was a betrayal that must be hard to forgive, especially for a ‘patriot’ and a ‘nationalist’.

Derailing the freedom movement with his Hindutva ideology

The sectarian mindset, which eventually culminated into the articulation of Hindutva ideology, was evident—as Jyotirmaya Sharma has demonstrated in *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism*—in the early Savarkar, that too from a tender age. Only a boy of 12, Savarkar, leading a pack of his schoolmates, attacked a mosque in the aftermath of the Hindu–Muslim riots in Bombay and Pune in 1894–95. Holding back the Muslim boys of the village using “knives, pins and foot rulers”, Savarkar and his friends mounted their attack, “showering stones on the mosque, shattering its windows and tiles”. Recollecting the incident, Savarkar later wrote, “We vandalised the mosque to our heart’s content and raised the flag of our bravery on it.” When the news of Hindus killing Muslims in the riots and its aftermath reached him, little Savarkar and his friends “would dance with joy”.

While the seeds of communalism had been sown in his mind at a very young age, the poison fruit of Hindutva ideology was to blossom

only in his late 20s, after Savarkar's will to fight the British had been defeated during his imprisonment. It was during his last few years of imprisonment that Savarkar first articulated the concept of Hindutva in his book, *Essentials of Hindutva*, which was published in 1923 and reprinted as *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* in 1928. This ideology was a deeply divisive one which had the potential to distract attention from the British and cast it on Muslims instead.

While he was careful to specify that Hindutva, or 'Hinduness', was different from Hinduism and encompassed a wide range of cultures including, among others, the "Sanatanists, Satnamis, Sikhs, Aryas, Anaryas, Marathas and Madrasis, Brahmins and Panchamas", he nonetheless made it a point to warn that it "would be straining the usage of words too much—we fear, to the point of breaking—if we call a Mohammedan a Hindu because of his being a resident of India."

"Mohammedan or Christian communities", he argued, "possess all the essential qualifications of Hindutva but one and that is that they do not look upon India as their Holyland." A cohesive nation, according to Savarkar, can ideally be built only by those people who inhabit a country which is not only the land of their forefathers, but "also the land of their Gods and Angels, of Seers and Prophets; the scenes of whose history are also the scenes of their mythology."

The love and loyalty of Muslims, he warned, "is, and must necessarily be divided between the land of their birth and the land of their Prophets... Mohammedans would naturally set the interests of their Holyland above those of their Motherland." One might wonder whether this line

of reasoning implies that Muslims cannot be nationals of Pakistan or Afghanistan either, because they would place the interests of Saudi Arabia, wherein lie Mecca and Madina, above the interests of their own country.

Back in the 1920s, the damage that could be done to the freedom movement by his ideology did not fail to come to the notice of the colonial government. Even though Savarkar was released on condition that he should not participate in political activities, he was allowed by the British to organise the Ratnagiri Mahasabha, which undertook what in today's lingo is called "Ghar Wapsi" and played music in front of mosques while prayers were on.

He was also allowed to meet K.B. Hedgewar, a disillusioned Congressman, who, inspired by his ideology of Hindutva, intended to discuss with him a strategy for creating a Hindu Rashtra. A few months after this meeting, in September 1925, Hedgewar founded the RSS, a communal organisation which, like Savarkar, remained subservient to the British.

In spite of the blanket ban on political participation, Shamsul Islam, in his book *Religious Dimensions of Indian Nationalism: A Study of RSS* points out:

"The British rulers naturally overlooked these political activities as the future of colonial rule in India rested on the communal divide and Savarkar was leaving no stone unturned in aggravating the Hindu-Muslim divide."

Collaboration with the colonial government

Savarkar was elected as the president of Hindu Mahasabha in 1937, the year when the Indian National Congress won a landslide

victory in the provincial elections, decimating both the Hindu Mahasabha and the other communal party, the Muslim League, which failed to form a government even in Muslim-majority regions. But just two years later, the Congress relinquished power in protest when, at the outbreak of the Second World War, the viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, declared India to be at war with Germany without any consultation.

In September 1939, the working committee of the Congress declared that it would render support to Britain's war efforts in her time of crisis only if the colonial government recognised India's independence and "the right of her people to frame their constitution through a constituent assembly". When dominion status was the last concession Linlithgow was willing to grant to India, the ministers of the Congress resigned in protest.

Quick to grab the opportunity, the very next month, Savarkar, in his capacity as president of the Hindu Mahasabha, met Linlithgow. In the report about the meeting sent to secretary of state, Linlithgow wrote:

"The situation, he [Savarkar] said, was that His Majesty's government must now turn to the Hindus and work with their support.... Our interests were now the same and we must therefore work together... Our interests are so closely bound together, the essential thing is for Hinduism and Great Britain to be friends and the old antagonism was no longer necessary. The Hindu Mahasabha he went on to say favoured an unambiguous undertaking of Dominion status at the end of the war."

Two months later, addressing the Mahasabha's Calcutta session, Savarkar urged all universities, colleges and schools to "secure entry

into military forces for youths in any and every way.” When Gandhi had launched his individual satyagraha the following year, Savarkar, at the Mahasabha session held in December 1940 in Madura, encouraged Hindu men to enlist in “various branches of British armed forces en masse.”

In 1941, taking advantage of the World War, Bose had begun raising an army to fight the British by recruiting Indian prisoners of war from the British army held by the Axis powers—efforts which eventually culminated in his invasion of British India with the help of the Japanese military. During this period, addressing the Hindu Mahasabha session at Bhagalpur in 1941, Savarkar told his followers:

“..it must be noted that Japan’s entry into the war has exposed us directly and immediately to the attack by Britain’s enemies... Hindu Mahasabhaite must, therefore, rouse Hindus especially in the provinces of Bengal and Assam as effectively as possible to enter the military forces of all arms without losing a single minute.”

In one year alone, Savarkar had boasted in Madura, one lakh Hindus were recruited into the British armed forces as a result of the Mahasabha’s efforts.

In reciprocation, the British commander-in-chief, “expressed his grateful appreciation of the lead given by Barrister Savarkar in exhorting the Hindus to join the forces of the land with a view to defend India from enemy attacks,” according to Hindu Mahasabha archives perused by Shamsul Islam.

In response to the Quit India Movement launched in August 1942, Savarkar instructed Hindu Sabhaite who were “members of municipalities, local bodies, legislatures or those serving in the

army... to stick to their posts,” across the country.

In coalition with the Muslim League when Pakistan resolution was passed

That Savarkar and the Hindu Mahasabha actively collaborated with the British may not be difficult to comprehend, since it is widely known that the Hindutva groups regarded Muslims, and not the British, as their primary enemies. What is likely to raise more eyebrows today is the collaboration of the Hindu Mahasabha with the Muslim League.

When the Congress leaders were arrested during the Quit India movement, the Hindu Mahasabha, still presided over by Savarkar, entered into a coalition with the Muslim League to run the governments in Sindh and Bengal—a move Savarkar justified as “practical politics” which calls for “advance through reasonable compromises”.

After all, in spite of the deeply-held conviction by Savarkar and his party that the Muslims—whose holy land lies in a foreign country—cannot be regarded as Indian nationals, the Hindu Mahasabha nevertheless had a great deal in common with the Muslim League. Both parties made no contribution to the struggle for independence from the colonising empire and both were communal parties whose ideologies antagonised the prospects of India remaining undivided after independence.

Even after the Sindh Assembly passed a resolution in 1943 demanding that Pakistan be carved out of India as a separate state for the Muslims, the Mahasabha ministers continued to hold their positions in the coalition government. Not entirely surprising, given that

Savarkar had put forth his two-nation theory “a clear sixteen years before the Muslim League embraced the idea of the Hindus and the Muslims as two distinctive nations and demanded the division of India.” And when India was eventually partitioned, Savarkar blamed Gandhi for allowing Pakistan to break away from India, an accusation that stoked the fires of hatred against Gandhi among many of his close devotees, including his ‘lieutenant’—Nathuram Godse.

(Note: For sources of all quotations given in the above article, see the original article published in thewire.in dated 28 May 2019 - Editor.)

(Pavan Kulkarni is a freelance journalist.)

Articles Put on Janata Blog (December 15, 2019)

1. Valay Singh, “Ayodhya's Forgotten Mahant and His Message of Peace”
2. Ishmeet Nagpal, “Ludhiana is Where the Heart Still Beats, Simple Tales of Humanity and Brotherhood”
3. Peter Koenig, “China Breaks the Western Debt Stranglehold on the World”
4. Léon Crémieux, “France has Once Again Entered a Phase of Large-Scale Social Confrontation”
5. Jacky Muniello and Soy Migrant interview Prabhat Patnaik, “The Imperialism of Finance Capital and ‘Trade Wars’”
6. John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark and Hannah Holleman, “Capitalism and Robbery: The Expropriation of Land, Labor, and Corporeal Life”
7. Rebecca Gordon, “What’s Wrong With the Republicans? Fruits of the Twin Roots of Evil: Slavery and Imperial Expansion”
8. Nick Alexandrov, “Murder Like It’s 1495: U.S.-Backed Counterinsurgency in the Philippines”

We Will Continue to Work for a More Just and Sustainable World

Jeremy Corbyn

We are living in highly volatile times. Two-and-a-half years ago, in the first general election I contested as Labour leader, our party increased its share of the popular vote by 10 percentage points. On Thursday, on a desperately disappointing night, we fell back eight points.

I have called for a period of reflection in the party, and there is no shortage of things to consider. I don't believe these two contrasting election results can be understood in isolation.

The last few years have seen a series of political upheavals: the Scottish independence campaign, Labour's transformation, Brexit, the Labour electoral surge, and now Johnson's "Get Brexit Done" victory. None of that is a coincidence.

The political system is volatile because it is failing to generate stable support for the status quo following the financial crash of 2008. As Labour leader I've made a point of travelling to all parts of our country and listening to people, and I've been continually struck how far trust has broken down in politics.

The gap between the richest and the rest has widened. Everyone can see that the economic and political system is not fair, does not deliver justice, and is stacked against the majority.

That has provided an opening for a more radical and hopeful politics that insists it doesn't have to be like this, and that another world is possible. But it has also fuelled cynicism among many people who know things aren't working for them, but don't believe that can change.

I saw that most clearly in the former industrial areas of England and Wales where the wilful destruction of jobs and communities over 40 years has taken a heavy toll. It is no wonder that these areas provided the strongest backlash in the 2016 referendum and, regrettably for Labour, in the general election on Thursday.

In towns where the steelworks have closed, politics as a whole wasn't trusted, but Boris Johnson's promise to "get Brexit done"—sold as a blow to the system—was. Sadly that slogan will soon be exposed for the falsehood it is, shattering trust even further.

Despite our best efforts, and our attempts to make clear this would be a turning point for the whole direction of our country, the election became mainly about Brexit.

A Conservative party prepared to exploit divisions capitalised on the frustration created by its own failure to deliver on the referendum result—to the cost of a Labour party seeking to bring our country together to face the future.

The polarisation in the country over Brexit made it more difficult for a party with strong electoral support on both sides. I believe we paid a price for being seen by some as trying to straddle that divide or re-run the referendum.

We now need to listen to the voices of those in Stoke and Scunthorpe, Blyth and Bridgend, Grimsby and Glasgow, who didn't support Labour. Our country has fundamentally changed since the financial crash and any political project that pretends otherwise is an

indulgence.

Progress does not come in a simple straight line. Even though we lost seats heavily on Thursday, I believe the manifesto of 2019 and the movement behind it will be seen as historically important—a real attempt at building a force powerful enough to transform society for the many, not the few. For the first time in decades, many people have had hope for a better future.

That experience, shared by hundreds of thousands of people, cannot be erased. Our task as a movement, and a party that has more than doubled in size, is not over: it now has the urgent task of defending the communities that will come under sustained assault from Boris Johnson's government and the toxic deal he wants with Donald Trump.

And it must set about ensuring that sense of hope spreads and deepens. As socialists we seek to raise people's expectations. People in our country deserve so much more—and they can have it, if we work together to achieve it.

I am proud that on austerity, on corporate power, on inequality and on the climate emergency we have won the arguments and rewritten the terms of political debate. But I regret that we did not succeed in converting that into a parliamentary majority for change.

There is no doubt that our policies are popular, from public ownership of rail and key utilities to a massive house-building programme and a pay rise for millions. The question is, how can we succeed in future where we didn't this time?

There is no quick fix to

overcome the distrust of many voters. Patronising them will not win them over. Labour has to earn their trust. That means the patient work of listening and standing with communities, especially as the government steps up its assault. And it means ensuring that the working class, in all its diversity, is the driving force within our party.

The media attacks on the Labour party for the last four and a half years were more ferocious than ever—and of course that has an impact on the outcome of elections. Anyone who stands up for real change will be met by the full force of media opposition.

The party needs a more robust strategy to meet this billionaire-owned and influenced hostility head-on and, where possible, turn it to our advantage.

We have suffered a heavy defeat, and I take my responsibility for it. Labour will soon have a new leader. But whoever that will be, our movement will continue to work for a more equal and just society, and a sustainable and peaceful world.

I've spent my life campaigning for those goals, and will continue to do so. The politics of hope must prevail.

(Jeremy Corbyn is a democratic socialist serving as the leader of the British Labour Party.)

Misleading Narratives on Labour's Defeat Have a Purpose

Gawain Little

Last night, Labour suffered a stunning election defeat, losing seats in its traditional heartlands and handing a substantial majority to a hard-right Tory government.

Cue the multitude of voices clamouring for Jeremy Corbyn to resign, holding him solely responsible for the result, calling for a shift to the back to the “centre ground” (for which read the dominant narrative that only neoliberal market solutions and mass privatisations can gain any traction with the electorate) and for a new leader from the liberal-right Remain wing of the party.

The problem with this analysis is that the facts of the election simply don't support what effectively amounts to a call for more self-harm by the Labour Party.

Labour's defeat was fundamentally about Brexit—and if you don't believe me, just look at the seats Labour lost and the marginals it failed to gain in the Midlands, in Wales, in northern England. And for anyone arguing that there was a drop in the Labour vote in Remain-supporting constituencies as well, albeit a less pronounced one, yes, there are Leave voters in these constituencies too!

The fact is that working-class Leave voters (by no means all of the working class, as many also voted remain in 2016, but a significant section none the less) felt entirely ignored and betrayed by Labour's position on the EU. These are people whose communities have been destroyed by 40 years of rampant neoliberalism, while for most of that time, the Labour Party simply stood

by and said there was no alternative to the market and progress must run its driven course.

Rightly, they hold the European Union partly responsible for this, as an integral element of the neoliberal framework that enforced privatisation, the export of jobs and the financialisation of economy, which destroyed Britain's mining and industrial sectors.

Finally presented with a Labour leadership which claimed to stand for the many, not the few, which put forward a radical programme to rebuild Britain in the interests of working people, they expected to be listened to. And they weren't.

Many former MPs in Leave-voting constituencies argued that the gradual shift from respecting the result of the referendum to eventually calling for a second vote would cost the party dearly. They were proved right and, in a cruel twist of fate, many of them lost their seats as a result.

The blame for this lies squarely with the liberal-right of the party, who forced the left leadership, against their will, to adopt a stance closer and closer to Remain, culminating in the conference motion which tied Labour to a second referendum, and yet these are the very people now calling for Jeremy's head. At the time, Jeremy and the left were criticised for being unwilling to adopt a Remain policy, for being out of step with the membership; now they are being blamed for the results of that policy.

This is not an accident, or merely a move to shift the blame

समाजवादी विचार संकल्प बदलाव का समाजवादी समागम

१२-१३ जुलाई, २०१९, दिल्ली
के अवसर पर प्रकाशित

संपादक : कुरबान अली

प्रकाशक : रमाशंकर सिंह

लागत मूल्य : २०० रुपये में उपलब्ध।

संपर्क : जनता ट्रस्ट - ७७३८०८२१७०

(पोस्ट का खर्च अलग)

for a misguided policy. It is a deliberate attempt to use the crisis to reverse Labour's shift to the left, to undermine the radical programme put forward at this election.

It should be clear to all that the overt aim of the Remain campaign, led by Alastair Campbell and other remnants of Blair's cronies, is a dead end, but it must not be allowed to succeed in its other objective—to smash the Labour left and return Labour to the centre-right policies of New Labour.

However, Brexit was clearly not the only factor in this election. From the moment Corbyn became leader, every element of the state, the media, and the entire political edifice has been involved in an unrelenting war to try to destroy "Corbynism" and the shift to the left in Labour.

We have had senior military personnel threatening "mutiny" in the event of a Corbyn victory, threats of foreign intervention by the U.S. government, anti-Corbyn briefings by civil servants, Labour MPs and Labour Party staff, and constant newspaper smears, including false accusations that Corbyn condones anti-semitism and/or supports terrorism.

Yet the scale of media manipulation and lies in the few weeks of the 2019 election has been unprecedented, from false websites and social media accounts spreading deliberate falsehoods to multiple cases of prime-time news footage being manipulated to advantage the Conservative Party.

This is an important reminder of the limited, distorted and precarious nature of our capitalist democracy. As Lenin argued almost 100 years ago to the day, how can freedom of assembly and freedom of the press truly be democratic rights when the capitalists, exploiters, landowners

and profiteers own the meeting halls and the printing presses? "Freedom of assembly and of the press is false and hypocritical [under capitalist 'democracy'], because in fact it is freedom for the rich to buy and bribe the press, freedom for the rich to befuddle the people with the venomous lies of the capitalist press, freedom for the rich to keep as their 'property' the landowners mansions, the best buildings etc."

Our job, argues Lenin, is to "emancipate humanity from the oppression of capital, from the lies, falsehood and hypocrisy of capitalist democracy—democracy for the rich—and establish democracy for the poor, that is, make the blessings of democracy really accessible to the workers."

So what conclusions can we draw for the future?

Firstly, the immediate battle within the Labour Party will be the battle to retain Labour's transformative manifesto, which provides an alternative to the rule of the market and puts society before profit, whilst resisting an attempt to continue or deepen the Remain line within the party. If Labour is to re-engage working class voters, it needs to start by listening to them, by offering a transformative programme which they have ownership of and which takes account of their priorities, including the result of the 2016 referendum.

Secondly, we must acknowledge that the sustained attacks the party faced from the media and the state were not specific to Corbyn, they were not a reflection of a weakness of personality or an inability to lead.

Quite the opposite, they were a recognition of the danger a radical Labour programme posed to the status quo of neoliberal capitalism.

Any leader of the Labour Party committed to a similar transformative programme would face the same.

The rich and powerful in our society think that, by attacking Corbyn, they can neutralise the movement but, as Jeremy himself has said, "It is not me they fear, it's you!" We must prove that correct by defending the leftward shift in Labour and ensuring that any leadership transition is a managed process of succession, not a lurch to the right.

Finally, we need to recognise that the electoral arena is only one part of the class struggle. Engaging with working-class communities to build a transformative programme is not something that should simply be done by the Labour Party at election time. We need a much broader movement, with much deeper roots in our diverse communities, and the struggle needs to continue all year round.

We need to be building effective union and political groups in workplaces and communities right across Britain, led by workplace and community reps who see their role as bringing together workers to build power, both to win the defensive battles we will need to fight against the Tory onslaught, and to extend their rights and their control over their workplaces and their communities.

We need a return to whole worker organising, across workplaces and communities, to build an integrated movement, not based simply on a core of politicised activists but on deep roots within the class which can mobilise organised workers, in elections and on the streets, to defend their communities.

(Gawain Little is a British socialist and trade unionist.)



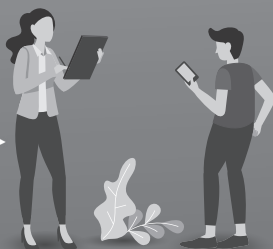
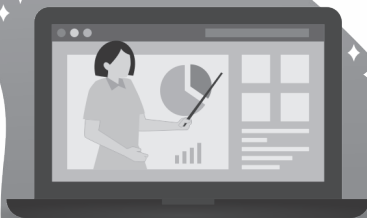
MKCL
Creating a Knowledge Lit World
www.mkcl.org

MS-CIT

Syllabus Available in Two Options

Job Readiness

IT Awareness



Job Readiness

Improve your
employability
and IT skills



IT Awareness

Update your digital
skills in fast
growing IT world

Gateway to New Careers

MS-CIT

*Maharashtra State-Certificate In
Information Technology*

www.mkcl.org/mscit

Enroll today at your nearest Authorized MKCL Center or ☎ 8411960005



“We are, what we repeatedly do,
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”

Aristotle



Taj Palace & Towers - Mumbai



Bombay Stock Exchange - Fort, Mumbai



Forum Atmosphere - Kolkata



J.K. House (Raymond)
Breach Candy, Mumbai

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING /
REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF :

- ✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)
- ✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)
- ✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.

Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

**Ahmedabad, Hyderabad,
Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi**

wrote later in his monumental book *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*.

Nazi ideology was already spreading and was to reach its full bloom a few years later, when new history books were introduced in school, youth groups were formed and a massive exercise of purging any renegade intellectual, artist or academic was under way. Jews were being demonised and laws were being enacted to exclude them from public and economic life. The Nuremberg laws of 1935 deprived them of citizenship, turning them into citizenship. It forbade marriage between Jews and 'Aryans'. By 1936, "when the Germany which was host to the Olympic games was enchanting the visitors from the West, the Jews had been excluded either by law or by Nazi terror—the latter often preceded the former—from public and private employment to such an extent that at least one half of them were without means of livelihood," Shirer writes.

These policies came to a head in November 1938, when the Nazis unleashed waves of violence against Jews all over Germany and recently annexed territories in Austria and Czechoslovakia. Triggered ostensibly by the assassination of a German diplomat in Paris by a Polish Jew—whose parents were among the many Polish Jews expelled from their longtime homes in Germany—the violence was led by Nazi storm troopers and Hitler Youth.

Over two days, the storm troopers, wearing civilian clothes, destroyed businesses and homes owned by Jews, burnt down synagogues. Jews were attacked in their homes and humiliated. Over 90 people were killed, hundreds were injured, and 30,000 Jewish men

were arrested and put in detention centres. It was the first time Jews were incarcerated on such a massive, organised scale. Insurance payouts to the Jews were confiscated and Hermann Göring blamed the Jews themselves for the violence and imposed a massive fine on the community.

The pogrom, which came to be known as Kristallnacht (night of broken glass), because of the shattered shards on the street, made headlines around the world. Countries and leaders which had largely ignored the rise of Nazism in Germany, were jolted into action. US President Franklin D Roosevelt denounced the attacks on Jews and recalled its ambassador.

Kristallnacht was the first step that led to the Holocaust and the Final Solution. A combination of laws, terror, social ostracisation and economic boycott ensured that the Jews were not just reduced to second class status, but were simply eliminated. By the time the war was over, six million Jews were killed in the concentration camps, mainly in the gas chambers that were set up.

Germans went about their daily routine, many of them supportive of Hitler's policies, others keeping their heads down, and still others preferring not to speak up. Many (non-Jew) Germans fled to other countries, mainly the US—a few died on the way. There was no active resistance to Nazi terror, and many perfectly ordinary and decent citizens were ready to do the state's bidding—they were 'just following orders'.

Echoes of that horrible past are now being heard in our own country. Prejudice at the ground level against Muslims is common and in the aftermath of the mass killings in

Gujarat in 2002, the more rabid Hindutva organisations openly called for not selling property to Muslims. Narendra Modi, during his election campaigns in the state used to make several snide references to Muslims and has continued the tradition during his prime ministership, unmindful of his constitutional duty to be secular. His colleagues in the BJP are more direct, declaring that they will drive away Muslims from the country. And now the CAA–NRC will institutionalise that process.

What should immediately concern us is the events in the last few days in Uttar Pradesh where Muslims are being targeted by the forces of the Adityanath government. Adityanath is one of the most rabid and polarising figures in the Hindutva pantheon, and undoubtedly elevated to the chief ministership for those very traits. Since he has assumed office, he has systematically gone about not just marginalising Muslims but also initiating a number of symbolic gestures—renaming towns with Hinduised names—to show Muslims their place. The idea is to beat them into submission and at the same time hope they retaliate, which will give the perfect excuse to go after them even more violently.

The anti-CAA–NRC protests have given him the opportunity to unleash his forces on Muslims. People (in some case not even protestors), have been beaten up, Muslim properties have been destroyed, and at least 18 people, including an eight-year-old boy have been killed. Eyewitnesses have said that not just the police, many in plain clothes too participated in the violence and looting. Adityanath's government has 'auctioned'

properties of those who took part in the protests. A systematic plan is in motion to terrorise the Muslims of UP.

This has to be seen in the wider background of the CAA-NRC which will effectively marginalise Indian Muslims. Those who will not be called ‘*ghuspetiyas*’ (infiltrators)—and that could be anybody—will find themselves reduced to second class citizens. Debating whether Narendra Modi contradicted his home minister Amit Shah on the roll out of the NRC is a pointless distraction. The government is merely buying time. The construction of the detention centres is already underway.

The massive protests all over the country are heartening and show that the secular conscience of this country is still a living, breathing thing—it has not been deadened even by the hate mongering of the past few years. Indeed, this hate may have even breathed new life into it. The blatantly communal CAA–NRC exercise may have been the trigger, but the protestors who came out on the streets were expressing their pent up anger at the Modi dispensation and all that it has brought with it—bigotry, intolerance and narrow-mindedness. All this and poor economic management too.

The government may not admit it, but this upsurge of collective fury is a sign that the Hindutva project has gone too far. With a combination of repression, double speak and propaganda, the Modi government may think it will ride out this storm, but it will not have it easy from now on. And that is an encouraging sign.

In these modern times, a Holocaust may not be possible, but that’s no reason to be complacent. The world’s knowledge of the horrors of

Nazism did not prevent the killings in Cambodia or Rwanda. Other massacres have happened before the global community has stepped in. India still evokes respect for its democratic traditions—besides, the lure of business opportunities always trumps human rights concerns. Nor can we simply wish away the vocal—and silent—support this government may have. The world will move on to other things and protestors too will get busy with

their lives. The international outrage over Kristallnacht in 1938 did not stop the Nazis from achieving their evil goals. An Adityanath cares not a whit about what anyone thinks, and his bosses like him for that. The next phase of achieving Hindu rashtra has begun and only sustained resistance can stop it.

(Sidharth Bhatia is a journalist and writer based in Mumbai and is a Founding Editor of The Wire.)

With CAA, India Mirrors Israel

On Monday, 9th December, around midnight, the Lok Sabha passed the Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019, and two days later, the Rajya Sabha too gave its approval, setting into action the Sangh Parivar vision of apartheid. This bill fundamentally changes the Citizenship Act 1955 to expedite the process of naturalisation for non-Muslim “minorities” from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan i.e. “Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians”. The exclusion of Muslims from this along with simultaneous plans of extending the National Register Citizenship to all of India forebodes the realisation of this regime’s ideology, built upon overturning the constitutional values of equality and secularism. The only parallel to such a supremacist definition of citizenship is Israel.

In 1948, Israel passed the Nation State Law, a Basic Law with constitutional status, which pronounces that “Israel is the historic homeland of the Jewish people and they have an exclusive right to national self-determination in it”. Anybody belonging to the

Jewish faith can become a citizen of Israel, while Christian and Muslim Palestinians as well as other non-Jewish minorities in Israel have a second-class status. This goes along with the occupation and colonisation of occupied Palestinian territories. Palestinians and their descendants who were forcibly displaced to establish the state on Israel in 1948 are denied their fundamental right of return.

India’s proximity to Israel does not only translate into trade and arms deals, but in mirroring Israel’s policies and methodologies. We saw this earlier this year in Kashmir, with the removal of Article 370, and now in the Citizenship Amendment Bill. As people rise up in protest and are being met with state’s might, we share here a part of the dissent note of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) to the bill, submitted by Lok Sabha Member of Parliament, Mohd. Salim on January 3, 2019, when it was first put up for debate and was stopped in Rajya Sabha even though it was cleared in Lok Sabha.

Point Five: Regime Unhappy with Rejection of India's Rejection

of Two Nation Theory

The proposed Amendments will do nothing short of foment Political, Religion, Linguistic and Ethnic Divisions. Those of this dominating persuasion are unhappy with the Indian Constitution's unequivocal rejection of the two-nation theory. Today, based on the fundamentals of equality and non-discrimination within the constitution, Indian law cannot distinguish between Hindu and Muslim arrivals from Pakistan and Bangladesh. The real purpose of the citizenship amendment bill seems to be to introduce this distinction into India's citizenship laws.

The BJP's 2014 manifesto rather crudely states that "India shall remain a natural home for persecuted Hindus and they shall be welcome to seek refuge here." Such a statement mimics the policy of only one other country, Israel—which sees itself as a sanctuary for Jews who are given an automatic right to enter the country and earn citizenship.

In February 2014, Prime Minister Modi (then on an election campaign) infamously said, "We have a responsibility towards Hindus who are harassed and suffer in other countries. India is the only place for them." Israel, it is well known, has a dismal track record not just on the human rights of other peoples in general but of the Palestinians at the West Bank, in particular.

Courtesy: Indian Cultural Forum

Janata
is available at
www.lohiatoday.com

Government Lying on NPR being Different from NRC

On December 22, PM Narendra Modi, addressing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) election rally in Delhi, stated that there has been no discussion around the word NRC ever since the formation of his government in 2014. As per records, this again isn't true. "We did not make it, it hasn't been tabled in Parliament, it hasn't been discussed in the Cabinet, no laws have been formed. Would we come up with a communal and divisive law when we have rolled out development projects which do not ask for the religious identities of the beneficiaries?" he asked, feigning innocence.

After a Cabinet Meeting on December 24, Prakash Javadekar stated in a Press Conference that the National Population Register (NPR) is only a population register and not a citizens' register, and that the NPR has nothing to do with NRC.

Modi and Javdekar are lying. According to the revisions made in the Citizenship Act in 2003, the NRC process begins with the compilation of the National Population Register (NPR). The NPR is, indeed, the first stage of the NRC. This has been admitted in Parliament by Kiren Rijju when he was Minister of State for Home Affairs. Replying to B.K. Hariprasad in Rajya Sabha on 23 July 2014, he said, "The government has now decided to create the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) based on the information collected under the scheme of NPR by verifying the citizenship status of all individuals in the country." He again reiterated

this in Rajya Sabha in response to a question by Dr T.N. Seema on 26 November 2014: "The NPR is the first step towards creation of National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) by verifying the citizenship status of every usual residents." This point is also clearly stated in a 21 April 2015: A press release by Ministry of Home Affairs on 21 April 2015: "It has been decided that National Population Register (NPR) should be completed and taken to its logical conclusion, which is the creation of National Register of Indian Citizen (NRIC) and National Identity Cards would be issued to citizens by verification of citizenship status of every usual resident in the NPR. The proposals for the same are under consideration of the Government."

The first step in the NRC process has already been taken by issuing the notification on NPR. The Cabinet decision on the NPR on 24th December is only to sanction the money—Rs 8,500 crore for the NPR.

The Gazette notification to prepare and update the NPR was issued by the Registrar General of Citizen Registration on July 31, 2019. The Census organisation has already stated on its website that house to house enumeration will be conducted throughout the country (except in Assam) for "collection of information relating to all persons who are usually residing within the jurisdiction of the Local Registrar". This enumeration will be undertaken between the first day of April 2020 and September 30, 2020.

Based on articles by Prabir Purkayastha, Sushovan Sircar and Yogesh S.

According to Javadekar, the NPR is a part of the Census. The Census authorities undertake both the Census enumeration and the NPR. The NPR is being updated along with the Census enumeration for 2021. They are, nevertheless, two separate things.

It is obvious from the Rules framed by the Home Ministry in 2003 that the NPR is directly linked to the NRC. Section 3 of the Notification on 10th December 2003 called The Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003 details the National Register of Indian Citizens. It states, in Clause (5):

“The Local Register of Indian citizens shall contain details of persons after due verification made from the Population Register.”

It also states in Section 4, Clause (3):

“For the purposes of preparation and inclusion in the Local Register of Indian Citizens, the particulars collected of every family and individual in the Population Register shall be verified and scrutinized by the Local Registrar, who may be assisted by one or more persons as specified by the Registrar General of Citizen Registration.”

In other words, the Local Population Register is incorporated into the NRC. It gets its data from the Population Register. These Rules make it clear that the NPR is indeed the first step towards the NRC. The house-to-house enumeration for the National Population Register is indeed the first step towards NRC.

Residents will be asked 15 questions in the NPR survey. These include questions on the place of birth, the date of birth, and the name of the father and mother and the details of Aadhaar. This information

will then be crosschecked with the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to verify the individual's biometrics.

The Rules quoted above also have a clause to identify doubtful citizenship from the Population Register. This is in Section 3, Clause 4:

“During the verification process, particulars of such individuals, whose Citizenship is doubtful, shall be entered by the Local Registrar with appropriate remark in the Population Register for further enquiry and in case of doubtful Citizenship, the individual or the family shall be informed in a specified proforma immediately after the verification process is over.”

The only question in the Rules related to citizenship is one on the nationality of the resident. No other question or proof of citizenship is asked in the NPR enumeration. But though no documents regarding citizenship will be asked during the enumeration and the verification process, particulars of such individuals whose citizenship is deemed to be “doubtful” will be entered by the local Registrar with appropriate remarks in the Population Register for further enquiry. The Rules do not say on what basis “doubtful” citizenship can be deduced during a process of enumeration that has no provision to examine any document related to a resident's citizenship.

As Prakash Karat has pointed out, “*It is at the verification stage that communal profiling will take place*,” in line with what the Home Minister had declared—the purpose of the NRC is to eliminate ‘infiltrators’ as against the Hindu refugees who will become eligible for citizenship under the CAA.

Those summoned as ‘doubtful citizens’ will have to go through the tortuous process of submitting proof of their citizenship.”

Former Supreme Court Judge Madan Lokur has said the proviso to the definition of illegal immigrant in the amended citizenship act is unconstitutional. There is a twin requirement of a rational and a reasonable nexus to pass the test of Article 14 in defining who is an illegal immigrant. According Justice Lokur, the amended act does not pass the test that all persons have to be treated equally before law.

The “doubtful citizens” in the NPR–NRC to the illegal immigrant in the CAA 2019, is a quick hop, skip and jump. The three are tied together with an umbilical chord. We already know of detention camps and 19 lakh citizens who have been left out of the NRC in Assam. How many are going to be excluded from an all India Register?

Janata Subscription

Annual Rs. : 260/-

Three Years : 750/-

Demand Draft /

Cheque

on

Mumbai Bank

in favour of

JANATA TRUST

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Grant Road (W),
Mumbai 400 007.

India's Muslims are Asserting their Citizenship

Apoorvanand

‘The protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act at Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University have given the Bharatiya Janata Party something it always wanted. Now it has become easier for them to term the opposition to the Act as sectarian, communal and essentially Muslim.’ This is the lament of many well-wishers of Muslims and critics of the CAA. Their fear is that the protests will now become a prisoner of the Hindu–Muslim binary, thereby doing a disservice to the cause itself.

The prime minister is at his vicious worst. First he said that the protestors can be identified by their clothes and then dared the Congress to declare that it would give citizenship to all Pakistanis. As happens in India, the Muslims can get easily dubbed Pakistanis and that is sufficient to delegitimise anything they say or do.

What do Muslims do then? Should Jamia and AMU have kept silent, or the protestors of Seelampur or Purnia kept themselves confined to their daily chores since their ‘visibility’ would weaken the argument against the CAA? Whenever the ‘Muslimness’ of the protest gets pronounced, a fear grips their well-wishers that the movement will ultimately fall in the hands of the orthodox, retrograde Muslim leadership and get ghettoised.

There were stray instances of violence. But we witnessed violence in Assam too. Why is it that the Assam violence, even if unacceptable, does not arouse as much concern? Why is it that a senior central minister immediately

invoked the spectre of Jihad after the protest at Jamia and AMU?

Who would deny that the Muslims have genuine anxieties after the enactment of the CAA. It isolates them by omitting their religion from the text of the Act. It is only for the Muslims to feel this loneliness.

When they come out on the streets, they lay their claim over their nation, India. They act as citizens. They are not making any sectarian demand. They are only emphasising that they have equal rights in India. Not only that but also that Muslimness is as naturally Indian as Hinduness. The CAA makes a contrary argument. If non-Muslims have a right to enter and enjoy the hospitality of India, Muslims also have the same rights. The Muslims of India are making this point by criticising the Act though their protests.

Muslims are often advised to be secular and work under secular leadership. This is a strange argument. No secular party thought it necessary (if you leave the Trinamool Congress, which is treated as more Muslim than Muslims themselves, aside) to mobilise people or public opinion against the Act. The students of these two universities came out and they included non-Muslims as well.

Muslims waited for the secular parties to take a stand on the injustice inbuilt in the Ayodhya judgment. They were disappointed. The secular parties vied with each other to look more Hindu. The outcome of the case was not seen as communal or sectarian but an ‘acknowledgment

of the sentiments of the people of India’.

The Ayodhya judgment was a precursor to the CAA. Treating the Hindu claim, even if without any evidence, as weightier than the Muslim claim created a hierarchy in which Muslims were inferior. The CAA does the same. Are Muslims wrong in feeling that this is an attempt to further marginalise them in the project of nation making?

If the secular political class is reluctant to give voice to this anxiety of Muslims, what are they supposed to do? They did not come out when individual Muslims were being killed. They did not come out when the top leadership of the country was demonising them. No secular party spoke out firmly against the vilification of Jamia and the AMU in these past six years. No secular party spoke out when Muslims were pushed out of the mixed localities by the use of the Disturbed Areas Act in Baroda.

It did not disturb the political class when the Muslimness of India was being erased bit by bit. The process started long back. As early as 1949, Indira Gandhi had noticed it when she wrote to Nehru:

“I hope Farrukhabad was not too dusty and tiring. I hear Tandonji wants to change its name and that of every town which ends in ‘bad’ into ‘nagar’. If this sort of thing goes on much longer I shall be provoked into calling myself ‘Zohra Begum’ or some such thing!”

That sort of clarity and resolve have gone, even in her party. The Hinduisation of India is seen as natural.

The Muslims have long borne the burden of partition. Seventy years have passed and new generations of Muslims are still asked to account for it. They are reminded of the wounds that the Hindus and Sikhs carry, displaced from their homes, but we never talk about the massacre of Muslims in what is now India! Do Muslims who decided to live in India despite witnessing this atrocity still need to give repeated tests of loyalty to India?

Muslims tied their fate with the secular polity of India. But they were never accepted as worthy of representing the collective will of India. Muslim leaders are destined to remain only Muslim leaders, like the dalit leaders who are never recognised as universal voices.

It is not for the Muslims to ensure that they do not get ghettoised. As it is not for dalits to not be special. Remember, the April 2 protest called by them in 2018 did not see the participation of the Caste Hindus. The dalit anxiety was not imaginary. But it was not shared by the non-dalits.

Dalits are in a far better situation than the Muslims because they are never called sectarian when they protest as dalits. Political parties compete with each other to be on their side. Muslims have no such luck.

This time, Muslims have decided to say that they reject their marginalisation. That their language should be considered as representative and as democratic and as Indian as any other.

Muslims have nothing to prove to India. This time it is for the rest of us non-Muslims to stand by India's Muslims and prove to them that we qualify as co-citizens. After all what is a citizen if not the Vaishnav Jan

of the old man? And how can one be a Vaishnav Jan without sharing and knowing the pain of others? The Muslims' pain must be allowed the dignity of speaking for itself;

others should prove their humanity by walking alongside them.

(The writer teaches at Delhi University.)

Kakori Martyrs Also Symbols of Communal Harmony

Bharat Dogra

The week December 16–22 has a very special significance in the history of the freedom movement in India. During this week in 1927, four extremely brave and exceptionally talented revolutionary freedom fighters were executed by the colonial government.

Ramprasad Bismil was hanged in Gorakhpur, Ashfaqullah Khan in Faizabad, Rajindernath Lahiri in Gonda and Roshan Singh in Allahabad. All of these places are in the eastern part of present-day Uttar Pradesh. All four of them were accused in the Kakori case in which a government treasure box being carried in a train was plundered at Kakori, a station near Lucknow, in August 1924 to raise badly needed resources for the activities of revolutionary freedom fighters.

The Kakori case and freedom fighters involved in this deserve much wider recognition than they have received so far. This is a good time to recall their contribution.

A vacuum had arisen in the country after the sudden withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement by Mahatma Gandhi following violence at Chauri Chaura. Taking advantage of this, communal forces, aided and abetted by the colonial government were spreading rapidly. It is at this critical juncture that some

revolutionaries decided to attract the youth with their courageous activities and in the process also helped to check the drift towards communalism.

In particular, the legendary friendship of Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaqullah Khan became an important rallying point for the forces of communal harmony. They were the closest of friends and planned several daring ventures till they were arrested in the Kakori case.

Both of them were also poets of very high calibre and their poems and songs remained popular with freedom fighters for a long time. The fact that these poems are still quoted and these songs are still sung testifies to their enduring appeal. In fact, all the Kakori martyrs had very strong and attractive personalities.

Bhagat Singh, who as a 19-year-old youth was fast emerging as a leading revolutionary at the time of the execution of the four Kakori revolutionaries, paid rich tributes to them in his articles he wrote at the time.

Rajindernath Lahiri was a very brave M.A. student who had been imprisoned in another freedom movement case too and showed exceptional courage in facing the death sentence. Similar was the case with Roshan Singh, who had also

worked in the farmers' movement. Bhagat Singh describes Ashfaqullah Khan as an exceptionally handsome poet who behaved very well and spoke words of great courage till his last day in the death cell. Ram Prasad is described by Bhagat Singh as the leader of this group of revolutionaries, a potential commander-in-chief, and a great poet at the same time.

It is important to recall what these fighters left behind as their last message to their country and its people they loved so dearly. Ram Prasad Bismil said in his last message, "My request to people of my country is that if they really want to pay homage to us then somehow establish Hindi-Muslim unity—this is our last will and this is how you should preserve our memory."

Ashfaqullah Khan said in his last message, "Hindustani brothers, no matter what religion you belong to, please be one in the country's work and do not fight."

Ram Prasad and Ashfaqullah Khan were both devoted to their own religions but also worked and pleaded very hard for unity and harmony of these two communities.

Ram Prasad was very devoted to his mother and after his death sentence was announced she came out very bravely to stand by him and his principles. In earlier days Ram Prasad had given her a pledge that he would never kill anyone. As the leader of the revolutionary group which executed the Kakori train robbery of government treasure, he had given strict instructions not to kill any passenger but one passenger got caught in accidental fire and died.

There was hardly any case for awarding death sentences to four youths of outstanding character. The trial was badly manipulated as the colonial government was bent on giving death sentences. To bring out the injustice of the legal system, the accused petitioned at high levels

and they made written statements explaining that the reason was to expose the hollowness of the system.

Within jail, they also observed prolonged protest fasts to improve conditions of political prisoners and oppose various injustices. When the death sentence was passed against four of them and even before, there was a surge of public sympathy. As one example of this, Sushila Didi, a young girl who was to later emerge as an important comrade of Bhagat Singh, had given away the jewellery left by her mother for her wedding, as a contribution for their legal expenses. If the Congress had started a big movement against this death sentence (and more generally against death sentence for any freedom fighter), this would have strengthened the freedom movement as well as communal harmony.

(Bharat Dogra is a freelance journalist who has been involved with several social movements.)

I Will Give My Blood

Chandrasekhar Azad Ravan

"Jai Bhim! This is a bigger fight. CAA and NRC will break this country and we are standing with this nation. This fight is not just of the Muslims, this is a fight for everyone, and we will not let it weaken. I'm surrendering to the government, but I say this, the government will have to repeal this Act. I request my friends and comrades, don't let this revolution weaken, make it grow. Because we are the biggest democracy in the world and that should never weaken.

Our unity is our strength. Protest peacefully, do not give them an

opportunity to use their guns and lathis. With non-violence, we will be able to defeat the enemy. I firmly say this to my fellow Indians, come out onto the streets, this is not just a matter of religion or faith, it is a matter of the entire nation.

There seems to be a conspiracy to destroy our country. There seem to be preparations to take away the rights of Dalits, Adivasis and the oppressed, the meaning of their votes, reservation, government benefits, savings. I understood their game, I was fighting but... He who's sitting there, Amit

Shah, I want to tell him that if he wants Chandrasekhar at any cost, then I will go to him myself. But remember this, Ambedkarites do not back down. I'm Babasaheb's son, I will give my life but I will not go back on my word that if the sweat of our Muslim brothers fall, I will give my blood. For that I'm ready to sacrifice anything. Thank you my friends. Keep this revolution alive after I go to jail. Jai Bhim!"

(Chandrasekhar Azad Ravan is Bhim Army chief.)

2019 Latin America in Review: Year of the Revolt of the Dispossessed

Roger Harris

A year ago, John Bolton, Trump's short-lived national security advisor, invoked the 1823 Monroe Doctrine making explicit what has long been painfully implicit: the dominions south of the Rio Grande are the empire's "backyard." Yet 2019 was a year best characterized as the revolt of the dispossessed for a better world against the barbarism of neoliberalism. As Rafael Correa points out, Latin America today is in dispute. What follows is a briefing on this crossroads.

Andean Nations

Venezuela, the leader for regional integration and 21st century socialism, continued to be ground zero in the clash between the empire and those nations pursuing post-neoliberal alternatives and a multipolar world.

On the evening of January 22, trained US security asset and head of the suspended Venezuelan National Assembly Juan Guaidó received a call from US Vice President Pence, giving Guaidó the green light to declare himself president of Venezuela. The next day, Guaidó proclaimed his presidency on a Caracas street corner. Within minutes Trump recognized the self-appointment, later followed by some fifty US allies. Still most nations in the world did not recognize Guaidó, and the United Nations continues to recognize Maduro as the constitutional president of Venezuela.

Guaidó called for harsher US sanctions on his own people and even the US "military option." Gone was the pretext that sanctions

targeted only the government. The former US Ambassador to Venezuela William Brownfield boasted that these measures "would have an impact on everyone... to accelerate the collapse." From President Barack Obama's sanctions in 2015, Trump progressively ratcheted up the pain to the current blockade. This illegal collective punishment had already caused over 40,000 deaths by the beginning of the year according to the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), in a war by economic means, denying the Venezuelan people vital food and medicine.

Yet Guaidó failed to come to power. His publicity stunt on February 23 to bring "humanitarian aid" from Colombia fizzled. To make things worse, envoys of Guaidó in Colombia were caught embezzling some of the very funds slated for humanitarian assistance. Soon after this debacle, a staged coup on April 30 by Guaidó and a few military officers on an overpass in eastern Caracas aborted. In November, Guaidó made an even more pathetic coup attempt. His ability to garner support atrophied, drawing the ire even of some hardline opposition who formerly backed him, while the Maduro government continued to rally substantial popular demonstrations and signed a peaceful coexistence agreement with some moderate opposition parties in September.

Despite attempts by Washington to incite ruptures within the Venezuelan security forces, the "civic-military union" built by Chavez and continued under Maduro

held firm, and the ranks of the militias continue to grow. And despite heavy lobbying by the Trump administration, Venezuela was voted onto the UN Human Rights Council on October 27.

In a bid to compensate for the diminished stature of the anti-Venezuela Lima Group, on December 3, Colombia convened a summit for the activation of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR) against Venezuela, to ratchet up sanctions even further and keep the military option on the table. By the end of 2019, even the Wall Street Journal conceded, "Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro, once thought ripe for ouster, looks firmly in place."

In Washington, North American solidarity activists defended the Venezuelan embassy from being taken over by Guaidó collaborators (April – May 2019). With the permission of the Venezuelan government and pursuant to international law, the Embassy Protectors held out for 37 days until expelled by the Secret Service. The four last defenders – Margaret Flowers, Kevin Zeese, Adrienne Pine, David Paul – will go to trial, facing possible stiff penalties. On October 25, journalist Max Blumenthal was also arrested and charged (subsequently dropped), as the US government cracks down on dissent both at home and abroad.

Colombia is the chief regional US client state, distinguished by being the largest recipient of US military aid in the hemisphere. Hillary Clinton called Plan Colombia a model for Latin America. Yet this model leads the world in extra-judicial killings of journalists, union

leaders, and environmentalists. Meanwhile, Colombia continues to be the planet's largest supplier of illicit cocaine.

A 2016 peace agreement saw the guerrilla FARC lay down their arms, but the government has honored the agreement mainly in the breach. Death squad activity continued in 2019, targeting former FARC militants. A faction of the FARC returned to the guerrilla path.

In a sign of growing disaffection with the hardline right-wing influence of former Colombian President Álvaro Uribe and his protégé and current President Iván Duque, the far right suffered significant losses in the October regional and municipal elections. Left-leaning Claudia López became the first woman and first lesbian to be mayor of the capital city of Bogotá. By year-end, Colombia experienced massive general strikes opposed to government austerity policies dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Bolivia. Evo Morales was the first indigenous president of this largely indigenous country. Under the 14 years of his Movement for Socialism party (MAS), Bolivia had the highest economic growth rate and the greatest poverty reduction in the Western Hemisphere. Bolivia became a world champion for indigenous and poor people, aligning with the progressive governments of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua.

Morales was fairly re-elected president on October 20. Because the US-backed candidate lost, the US called his election "fraudulent." A compliant Organization of American States (OAS) disseminated misleading information on the validity of the election. Thus, the stage was set for the November 10 coup, when Morales was forced to

"resign" by the military.

Thirteen US members of Congress sent a "dear colleague" letter condemning the "Administration's support for [the] military-backed regime and silence on violent repression [which] contributes to spiraling crisis." This letter stands in stark contrast to the close association of key figures behind the coup with allies in Washington, the OAS Secretary General's embrace of coup leader Luis Fernando Camacho, and the endorsement of the coup by the right-wing neighbors. President Trump "applauded" the Bolivian military despite its well documented systematic violations of human rights.

The self-proclaimed President Jeanine Áñez smeared indigenous communities as "satanic" in tweets, later deleted. Morales is now in exile, and the indigenous and other poor continue to protest in the face of lethal, racist repression. At this writing, Morales, the MAS, and most of the popular sectors have agreed to new elections but efforts are underway by backers of the de facto government to disqualify the MAS from participating in an eventual election.

Ecuador. Speaking of reversals, Ecuador's President Lenín Moreno took the prize. Moreno had served as vice president in a previous leftist government headed by Rafael Correa, who had campaigned for Moreno. Upon assuming the presidency in 2017, Moreno inexplicably and unexpectedly betrayed the platform, the voters, and the party that put him in office. He jailed his vice president and later other leaders of his former party and put out an arrest warrant for Correa, who is now in exile. On April 11, Moreno handed Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, who had been in asylum in the Ecuadorian

embassy in London, to the British police.

Moreno withdrew Ecuador from ALBA, the leftist regional organization of Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and some Caribbean nations. Last January, he recognized the US puppet Guaidó as president of Venezuela. By mid-year, Moreno gave the US an airbase on the Galápagos.

Moreno forgave some \$4.5 billion in fines and debt by major corporations and oligarchs and then papered it over by an IMF loan. With the loan came austerity measures, *el paquetazo*, including removing fuel subsidies. The mass protest of the dispossessed, led by the indigenous CONAIE organization, was so overwhelming that Moreno was temporarily forced to flee the capital city of Quito and rescind some elements of the *paquetazo*. Moreno continues to push IMF stipulated austerity measures, while repressing his former party's elected representatives.

Peru is in crisis, wracked with corruption scandals. In April 2019, former President Alan García shot himself as the police were preparing to arrest him for corruption, while fellow former President Alberto Fujimori is in jail on corruption accusations and human rights violations. Former President Alejandro Toledo also faces corruption accusations and is fighting against extradition from the US. Pedro Pablo Kuczynski was the last directly elected president of Peru. Formerly a US citizen and an IMF and World Bank official, he was forced to resign for corruption in March 2018 shortly before he was slated to host a meeting of the anti-Venezuela Lima Group to expose Venezuela for corruption.

Ever since, the presidency of

Peru has been disputed. The current moderate-right President Martín Vizcarra dissolved the congress; the congress controlled by the far-right Keiko Fujimori (free after a year in detention for corruption) impeached the executive, although Vizcarra recovered the presidency. In the context of this dog fight among the elites have been massive anti-corruption mobilizations from below.

The Southern Cone

Brazil. New Year 2019 marked the inauguration of Jair Bolsonaro as president of Brazil. The election of hard-right Bolsonaro – called the “Trump of Brazil” by friends and foes alike – was a major reversal from the previous left-leaning Workers Party governments.

Brazil has by far the biggest economy in Latin America and the eighth in the world and is part of the BRICS bloc including Russia, India, China, and South Africa. With a sycophant of Trump heading Brazil, both hemispheric and world geopolitics suffer the loss of a countervailing element to US hegemony. Brazil voted with the US and Israel for continuing the US blockade on Cuba and against 187 other UN members.

Former left-leaning President Lula da Silva would have easily beaten Bolsonaro, if the polls were any indication, but corrupt judge Sergio Moro sent Lula to prison on evidenceless charges. The judge was rewarded by ironically being made minister of justice in the new Bolsonaro government. Similarly, Dilma Rousseff, who was Lula’s left-leaning successor as president of Brazil, had been deposed on a technicality by the right-leaning congress in what amounted to a parliamentary coup in 2016.

An international campaign to free Lula finally succeeded in November, but far too late for him to run against Bolsonaro. Lula is free and fighting now, but could be incarcerated again.

Bolsonaro went about dismantling social welfare measures, firing government workers, and rewarding multinational corporations, while the Amazon burned. Predictably the popular sectors arose leading to an uncertain political situation in Brazil.

Chile. The Chilean people launched a general strike against austerity with slogans such as “neoliberalism was born in Chile and will die here.” Reacting to the “privatization of everything,” the uprising this fall has been truly from the grassroots with the established political parties sprinting to catch up with the popular revolt of the dispossessed.

Over a million protestors have taken to the streets in a country with a population of only 19 million. Many have remained there for weeks despite severe repression by the state, leaving numerous killed by live ammunition and rubber bullets. According to official state data, more than 8,000 have been jailed, almost 3,000 injured, and over 200 suffered ocular damage. Hundreds of lawsuits for police brutality have been filed, including sexual abuses. The right-wing billionaire President Sebastián Piñera suspended some constitutional rights, declaring a “state of emergency” in a country still under the constitution created by the dictator Pinochet.

Argentina. After right-wing President Mauricio Macri imposed textbook perfect neoliberal economic reforms, the Argentine economy spectacularly and predictably failed with rampant inflation, food

shortages, currency free-fall, and capital flight. Even the middle class protested in the streets in enormous uprisings of the dispossessed.

On October 27, the center-left ticket of Alberto Fernández as president and Cristina Fernández as VP won and announced Argentina will leave the regional anti-Venezuela Lima Group. They will also have to deal with Macri’s record breaking \$50.1 billion IMF loan, saddling the people with austerity measures in a country that is broke and again at the edge of default.

Uruguay. The ruling left-center Frente Amplio’s candidate, Daniel Martínez, won in the first round of Uruguay’s presidential elections on October 27, but by a too narrow margin to avoid a runoff election. He faced a united right-wing in the November 24 runoff against Luis Lacalle Pou, which ended his party’s 15-year rule.

The Caribbean

Cuba. The US embargo of Cuba, initiated by US President Kennedy and now a blockade, along with covert regime-change operations and occupation of Guantánamo have continued in an unbroken policy of aggression through Democratic and Republican administrations alike. Most recently Trump resurrected Title III of the Clinton-era Helms-Burton Act to intensify the blockade. The Cuban people show no sign of capitulating.

Cubans welcomed a new president, as Miguel Díaz-Canel succeeded Raúl Castro. On April 10, they ratified a new constitution, after an extensive consultative process, engaging some 9 million people, 780,000 suggestions, 9,600 proposals, and 133,000 citizen meetings.

Puerto Rico and Cuba were the

spoils of the first imperialist war, the 1898 Spanish-American War. Unlike free Cuba, Puerto Rico is still a neglected colonial possession of the US. And that political fact has never been clearer with Puerto Rico still not fully recovered from Hurricane María and still not governing itself to solve its own problems.

Puerto Rico experienced mass protests and a general strike in 2019. Governor Ricardo A. Rosselló was forced to resign on July 22. Puerto Rican liberation hero Oscar López Rivera observed: “Even before the governor announced his resignation, the fact is that he was not governing Puerto Rico.”

Haiti. After the harsh 29-year US-backed Duvalier dictatorships and the subsequent “military transition,” a brief flourishing of democracy ended in Haiti when the US brazenly kidnapped President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and flew him into exile in 2004. Since then, a series of dubiously elected presidents – some literally installed and all propped up by the US – have produced human rights and social welfare conditions worse than under the dictatorships.

Billions in relief after the 2010 earthquake and in Petrocaribe funds from Venezuela have largely “disappeared” into the pockets of corrupt politicians. In response, the ever-restive Haitian populace has yet intensified the uprising of the dispossessed throughout the country. The newly formed Patriotic Forum united 62 social movements, who call not only for the resignation of President Jovenel Moïse, but a complete dismantling of the “system of exclusion” and for a new republic of justice, transparency, and participation. They demanded *chavire chodyè a* (overturn the cauldron).

Central America and Mexico

Honduras. The designation of Honduras as a narco-state is supported by the October 18 conviction in US federal court of President Juan Orlando Hernández’s (JOH) brother Tony for cocaine smuggling. JOH, the latest of a line of corrupt presidents since the 2009 US-backed coup, is identified as co-conspirator by the prosecutors. Testimony in the US court revealed that the notorious Mexican drug lord known as El Chapo gave JOH \$1 million to help him rig the presidential election in 2013.

The US continued to prop up the tottering JOH regime staggering in the face of huge waves of popular protests including a prolonged national strike this summer. And those not opposing the government in the streets headed for asylum in the US, fleeing from gang violence and government malfeasance.

Guatemala. Right-wing comedian Jimmy Morales became president of Guatemala in August. In response to the revolt of dispossessed against his neoliberal rule, he declared a state of siege in five departments. Tens of thousands marched on Guatemala City, including the indigenous Xinkas, while many more Guatemalans fled the violence and everyday oppression seeking asylum at the US border.

The wounds of the US-backed genocidal dirty war of the 1980s against the largely indigenous population, taking some 200,000 lives, have not been healed but continue to be reinforced by harsh neoliberal measures and a regime of impunity fueling the exodus to the north. While lamenting the plight of these migrants, the corporate press in the US failed to recognize the made-in-America causes of their evacuation.

El Salvador. Likewise, El Salvador, another former victim of the US-backed dirty wars, added to the stream of Honduran and Guatemalan migrants seeking asylum in the US from the conditions created in large part by the country of their intended refuge.

Businessman Nayib Bukele, formerly associated with the left FMLN party and now turned right, was elected under the banner of the right-wing GANA party. He assumed the presidency on June 1, replacing Salvador Sánchez Ceren of the FMLN. Bukele has fallen in line with Washington’s drive to curtail emigration from the Northern Triangle countries (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador) and has reversed his nation’s foreign policy to accord with the Lima Group’s drive for regime change in Venezuela.

Nicaragua. 2019 was a year of hopeful recovery in Nicaragua, healing from successfully repulsing a US-backed coup the previous year. The domestic perpetrators were granted amnesty by leftist President Daniel Ortega, and social welfare indices were again on the ascent. Although the poorest country in Central America, Nicaraguans were for the most part not fleeing for the US but were rebuilding their homeland.

Mexico is the second largest economy in Latin American and the eleventh in the world. After decades of right-wing rule, left-of-center Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) assumed the presidency last December and his new MORENA party swept local and regional offices with the expectation that corruption, inequality, and other long festering economic injustices would be addressed. AMLO dissented from the anti-Venezuelan Lima Group

and instituted a series of progressive domestic reforms.

Trump forced AMLO to contain the Central American immigrants massing on the US southern border or face tariff increases and other measures that would wreck the Mexican economy. As nineteenth century Mexican President Porfirio Díaz famously lamented: “Poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the United States.”

A New Year’s message

2019 has not been an entirely bullish year for US imperialism, notwithstanding the hard turns to the right in Brazil, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Powerful winds against neoliberalism are gusting in Brazil, Ecuador, Chile, Peru, Argentina, Haiti, Honduras, Guatemala, and even in the US “Commonwealth” of Puerto Rico. Regime-change operations failed in Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua. US-preferred candidates suffered losses in Mexico, Colombia, and Bolivia (later reversed by a coup). And the hegemon is challenged in its own “backyard” by the increased influence of Russia and especially China, now the second largest trading partner with Latin America and the Caribbean.

Recently Cuban President Díaz-Canel addressed the 120-state Non-aligned Movement (a third of which are sanctioned by Washington) with this perceptive thought for a multi-polar world: “There are more of us. Let us do more.”

(Roger Harris is with the Task Force on the Americas and the Campaign to End US/Canada Sanctions Against Venezuela.)

Assange and Manning Being Persecuted for Speaking Truth to Power

Leonard C. Goodman

The most important stories of the year for those who care about a free press involve the arrest of Julian Assange from the Ecuadorian embassy at the request of the US government, and the rearrest of the whistleblower Chelsea Manning.

Assange is the founder of WikiLeaks, a website that publishes official documents exposing the crimes and lies of world leaders. Before publishing, WikiLeaks verifies that the evidence submitted is authentic. Of the millions of items published by WikiLeaks, not one has been shown to be fraudulent or untruthful.

Chelsea Manning is a former Army intelligence officer who leaked hundreds of thousands of classified documents to WikiLeaks that exposed war crimes and official lies relating to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Manning confessed to her crimes and was sentenced to 35 years of incarceration. But her sentence was commuted after seven years by President Barack Obama, who conceded that she had acted out of a sense of duty to expose wrongdoing.

For at least three decades, our national government has primarily served the interests of the 1 percent—the major donors to the Democratic and Republican parties. To carry on in such an undemocratic fashion in a country that still requires leaders to stand for election, our leaders need to lie with impunity, especially about matters of war. To get away with this, they classify as secret every official document that has the potential to embarrass them or enlighten the

people.

Of course, Assange is not the first publisher to expose government crimes. What makes Assange such a threat, and so hated, is that he publishes official government documents in real time that are impossible to dispute or discredit.

To grasp the power of WikiLeaks, imagine it had existed in 2002 during the run-up to the Iraq War. At that time, the administration of George W. Bush was telling the nation that we faced a grave threat from Iraq and its president, Saddam Hussein, who we were told had reconstituted his nuclear weapons program and had amassed large, clandestine stockpiles of deadly VX, sarin, and mustard gas. The situation was said to be so dangerous that we couldn’t even wait a couple of months to allow a team of international weapons inspectors to finish their job. Then-National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice warned that the smoking gun in Iraq may “be a mushroom cloud.”

Of course, our leaders produced no actual evidence to support their claims about Hussein and Iraq. All of the evidence was classified. The American people—who were called upon to pay for the war in blood and treasure—were not entitled to see any of the actual evidence for war. The mainstream press, including the New York Times and NPR, repeated the evidence-free assertions by our public officials as if they were proven fact. The American people were given no choice but to fall in line.

Years later, after it was too late to do any good, the actual intelligence

reports were leaked. They showed that nearly everything we were told by the Bush administration about its evidence for war was a lie. The wild claims about chemical weapons were all based on the stories of a known fabricator named Curveball, and on tales invented under torture by a CIA prisoner named al-Libi. The dire warnings about a “mushroom cloud” were based on a forged document that pretended to show Hussein purchasing uranium from Africa, together with a bogus report that ordinary aluminum tubes purchased by Iraq might be used to enrich uranium.

Had WikiLeaks existed in 2002, a patriotic officer like Manning might have leaked the official intelligence reports exposing the lies our leaders were telling to get us to go along with the war. Hundreds of thousands of lives could have been saved, and the trillions of dollars spent on the Iraq War could have been used instead to give every American free health care, free college, and a Green New Deal.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has been publicly threatening Assange since Pompeo was CIA chief. But there is concern among Assange’s foes that a fair-minded judge might recognize that Assange’s actions were no different than the actions of the New York Times and the Guardian, which also published the leaked material from Manning. If these establishment papers were protected by the First Amendment, then why aren’t Assange and WikiLeaks?

This explains why the US government has put Manning back in jail. They need her to testify that Assange helped her steal classified documents, something the government almost certainly knows is untrue. The Obama Justice

Department spent years trying to find evidence to justify a claim that Assange did more than act as a publisher but found nothing to justify that accusation. Besides, if the Trump Justice Department had any evidence that Assange participated in the theft of classified documents, it wouldn’t need to force Manning to say it.

This holiday season, Assange is locked away in the Belmarsh high-security prison in London, awaiting extradition to the US, while

Manning is back in jail in Virginia. Our government believes that any person with the courage and integrity to expose the misuse of power must be eliminated. I am sending these words of encouragement to Assange and Manning. May they continue to find the strength to resist a ruthless foe and help save our democracy.

(Leonard C. Goodman is a Chicago criminal defense attorney and co-owner of the newly independent Reader.)

A Note on the Communist Manifesto

Harry Magdoff

Probably the passage in the *Communist Manifesto* most frequently cited these days is a portrayal of the global spread of capitalism:

“All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands. We have universal interdependence of nations.... All nations, on pain of extinction, [are compelled] to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In a word, it creates a world after its own image.”

Certainly, the history of the past half-century has more than confirmed that the trend described 150 years ago is still in operation. There is, however, an integral feature of the capitalist penetration just described that is missing from the *Manifesto*. While capitalism by its very nature lives by accumulation and geographic expansion, it does so in a most unequal fashion. Even though nothing in economics follows strict mathematical rules, there are notable tendencies that are produced by the inner springs of capitalism. An outstanding example of such a tendency is found in the distinct and marked widening of the gap between a handful of rich nations and the rest of the world. The accelerating globalization of our times demonstrates this polarization in no uncertain terms.

A recent study of the income distribution of the world from 1965 to 1990, summarized in the accompanying table, shows that in our day 20 percent of the world’s population lives in countries that produce and benefit from over 83 percent of the world’s output of

Table 1. Shares of the World Income 1965–1990

Population	Percent of Total World Income			
	1965	1970	1980	1990
Poorest 20%	2.3	2.2	1.7	1.4
Second 20%	2.9	2.8	2.2	1.8
Third 20%	4.2	3.9	3.5	2.1
Fourth 20%	21.2	21.3	18.3	11.3
Richest 20%	69.5	70.0	75.4	83.4

[Source: Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz and Timothy Patrick Moran, “World-Economic Trends in the Distribution of Income, 1965–1992,” *American Journal of Sociology* 102, no. 4 (January 1997).]

goods and services (the share of the top 10 percent of world population came to 56 percent) while the share of global output of the poorest 20 percent of the world’s people is 1.4 percent. Now look at the difference in the trends in income distribution between the 20 percent in the richest countries and the rest of the world. The share of the world’s income in each one of the four lowest (income) groups of countries declined steadily from 1965 to 1990. On the other hand, the share of the richest 20 percent steadily increased from about 70 to over 83 percent. All this took place when, for most of the period, the rich countries were in a stage of stagnation and when evermore capital was flowing from

the rich into the poor countries, presumably to develop new industries and develop financial and other services. (An examination of similar data available in World Bank reports for later years indicates that the polarization continued in full force during the 1990s.)

Thus, at the end of centuries of capitalist expansion, here is how things stand: 60 percent of the world’s population has 5.3 percent of the world output and income, while more than 83 percent (see last column of table) is in the hands of the richest 20 percent.

Relevant to this commentary is another oft-cited sentence from the *Manifesto*: “The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together.” As with so much more in the *Manifesto*, this point can be made with even more emphasis 150 years later. And yet once again we need to recognize how incredibly uneven

is the distribution of the productive forces from region to region. On the one hand, the miracles of electronics; on the other hand, according to the latest United Nations *Human Development Report*, over a billion people do not have access to safe water. The list of absent productive and collateral forces needed to meet the basic needs of 80 percent of the world’s people is a long and miserable one.

There is much talk these days in radical circles about the need for a socialist vision. Too often that vision is strongly influenced by the material achievements of the rich capitalist nations and the living standards of the advantaged sectors. However, in view of the way capitalism has spread throughout the world as well as in the most advanced nations of the world, it is essential that the vision of socialism focus on a social transformation that will put first and foremost: the empowerment and meeting the basic human needs of the poorest, the most oppressed, and disadvantaged.

(Harry Magdoff was the editor of *Monthly Review*, the renowned socialist magazine, from 1969 until his death in 2006. This article was first published in *Monthly Review*, May 1998.)

Commune Pancha Vásquez

Katrina Kozarek

Another issue that the commune must take on is a commerce which is different from capitalist trade, a popular, fair, solidary commercial activity, one that doesn't rob our neighbours, or the people. Because capitalism is a savage commerce, which inflates everything. No. You have to set a fair, solidarity prices... a new trading system; a new productive system and the means of production or the land, the machinery for the raw material... knowledge in the hands of society, in this case in the hands of the commune.

– Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, June 11, 2009

The municipality of Rómulo Gallegos in Apure state in Venezuela is home to Elorza, a town famous

for its multitudinous festival of traditional Venezuelan music and dance. Chávez is said to have

developed his leadership and militancy in Elorza during his early days of political organising

in the 1980s. Apart from Elorza's rich history and culture, the rural areas of the Rómulo Gallegos municipality are also some of the leading Venezuelan lands for cattle and dairy production.

In 2014, fourteen communal councils spread along the banks of the Arauca River joined together to form the Pancha Vásquez Commune. This commune has brought together more than 938 families, 900 family owned farms, and extends over more than 100,000 hectares of the Rómulo Gallegos municipality, as well as part of the neighboring municipality of Muñoz.

Although this area is highly productive, the local inhabitants also require access to industrialised products which are produced elsewhere, such as rice, sugar and flour. The proximity of the commune to the Colombian border has contributed to unaffordable prices and scarcity of these basic staples.

The wave of massive speculation, hoarding and smuggling in 2015 had a profound impact on the residents of the Pancha Vásquez Commune. One of the first challenges taken on by the commune was to confront this situation through a network of communally controlled distribution channels.

The experience of the Popular Food Committee strengthened the Pancha Vásquez Commune politically and quickly led to more complex and dynamic experiences of distribution.

The lack of paved roads deeply affects the capacity of the commune's farmers to distribute their products. This has left them at the mercy of intermediaries who pay extremely low prices, and then re-sell food for huge profits in urban centers.

In order to tackle this problem, the Pancha Vásquez Commune has

created a new combined system which guarantees the direct distribution of local in exchange for processed food products. The commune does not possess collective lands as do some other rural communes,, but it does have a strong relationship of trust with the farmers in their territory. This relationship has allowed for the exchange of locally produced meat and cheese products for industrialised staples with other communes as well as trade unions and workers in state-owned and mixed companies on a national level.

Not all the farms in the territory of Pancha Vásquez have the conditions to raise cattle, but they are not left out of the distribution system. When the products are exchanged, all families in the communal territory, as well as neighboring communes, have the possibility to purchase them. This expression of solidarity has played an important role in promoting the revolutionary spirit as well as dedication to the commune and popular power as the model of socialist development in the territory.

The Pancha Vásquez Commune has also created other local solutions to the problem of intermediaries. Since 2014, the commune has established a communal open air market for small scale farmers. Every Saturday without fail, the local farmers flock to the market, mostly in canoes on the Arauca River, to sell their products directly to consumers in Elorza.

A council, made up of the local farmers from the Pancha Vásquez Commune and nearby territories, meets on a regular basis to collectively analyse costs in order to guarantee uniform and fair prices for the producers and consumers.

The capacity of the Pancha Vásquez Commune to control the distribution of food in such an

important area for agricultural production is no small feat. This has earned them powerful enemies, some even within the state, who have on occasion looked to sabotage their advances.

The commune has not let these obstacles dampen their revolutionary fervor. Spokesperson Juan Fernández recalls that Chávez has warned that this kind of "political pettiness" could occur, but that "the communes cannot be appendices of mayor's offices or political parties... the communes belong to the people, to the organised popular power..."

The meticulous transparency, extensive solidarity and tireless labor of the Pancha Vásquez Commune has allowed the communards to continue growing despite the odds. They are currently developing projects for paved roads and a communal bank, which instead of lending and saving money, lends farm machinery and agricultural products. They are also preparing to take over nearby unproductive lands in order to consolidate their communal economy with collective agricultural production.

Just five years after taking shape, the Pancha Vásquez Commune has shown to be a true force for the advance of a communal economy and the communal state. It has become a reference point during these times of crisis, showing that the commune is a space of organisation and accountability which can advance at leaps and bounds both in terms of improving living conditions as well as laying the building blocks for the construction of socialism.

(Katrina Kozarek, a documentary maker from the United States, is presently on the staff of Venezuelanalysis, Venezuela's only independent, 100% reader-funded English media outlet.)

Urban Farming: Cuba's Response to Climate-Driven Food Crises

Paul Brown

When countries run short of food, they need to find solutions fast, and one answer can be urban farming.

That was the remedy Cuba seized with both hands 30 years ago when it was confronted with the dilemma of an end to its vital food imports. And what worked then for Cuba could have lessons today for the wider world, as it faces growing hunger in the face of the climate crisis.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in the 1990s, most of Cuba's food supplies went with it. To stave off severe malnutrition the people of the capital, Havana, found an imaginative answer: urban gardening. That's now seen as a possible blueprint for the survival of city populations in a warming world.

The Rapid Transition Alliance has published a longer account of Cuba's very fast move towards self-sufficiency as part of its series *Stories of Change*, which describes cases of large-scale, rapid transformation that can seem difficult to achieve but which have often worked before.

The problem of hunger for the Cubans arose because during the Cold War they had stopped producing food of their own and turned over most of their farmland to sugarcane plantations to supply the Soviet Union. In return for these mountains of sugar Moscow provided Cuba with food, chemical fertilizers and fuel oil for its cars and tractors.

The Soviet collapse brought the breakdown of this trade, and food rationing for city dwellers. And Cuba lost its main food supply while it was still coping with strict US sanctions. Reverting to conventional farming would have taken time and was in any case difficult because the

Soviet fertilizers, fuel and pesticides had also dried up.

So the highly-educated urban citizens, faced with rationing which reduced the average Cuban's daily calorie intake from 2,600 in 1986 to 1,000-1,500 in 1993, organised themselves to grow their own food in improvised urban allotments.

At first, struggling with little know-how and without fertilizers, their yields were low, but by producing compost and other organic growing mediums, plus introducing drip-fed irrigation, they began to see improvements.

Short of chemicals, the gardeners resorted to biological controls like marigolds (where opinions today are mixed) to deter harmful insects.

By 1995 Havana alone had 25,000 allotments tended by families and urban cooperatives. The government, realizing the potential benefits, encouraged the movement.

Soil quality was improved with a mixture of crop residues, household wastes and animal manure to create more compost and soil conditioners. The extra fresh vegetables and fruit this provided quickly improved urban dwellers' calorie intake and saved many from malnutrition.

In the Cuban climate, with irrigation changes and soils undergoing constant improvement from added organic matter, the allotments could produce vegetables all year round. Lettuce, chard, radish, beans, cucumber, tomatoes, spinach and peppers were grown and traded.

There is evidence as well that the extra exercise which these urban gardeners got from tending their allotments, plus the time they spent outdoors in the open air, benefited their health.

Eventually, realizing that self-

sufficiency was the only way to feed the population, the government banned sugarcane growing altogether. Lacking fertilizer, many former plantations were turned over to organic agriculture. The shortage of oil for tractors meant oxen were used for plowing.

Cuba's experience of urban agriculture inspired many environmentalists to believe that this is at least part of the solution to the food shortages threatened by climate change. By 2008 food gardens, despite their small scale, made up 8% of the land in Havana, and 3.4% of all urban land in Cuba, producing 90% of all the fruit and vegetables consumed.

As a result the calorie intake of the average Cuban quickly rose to match that of Europeans, relying on a diet composed mainly of rice, beans, potatoes and other vegetables – a low-fat diet making obesity rare.

Because of the climate, though, wheat does not grow well in Cuba, and the island still has to import large quantities of grain for bread. Meat is in short supply and also has to be mainly imported.

Despite this, Cuba's experience since the Cold War ended in the 1990s shows that large quantities of fresh food can be grown in cities and that urban agriculture is sustainable over decades.

For other countries vulnerable to sudden loss of food supplies, Cuba's experience suggests that urban farming can be one way of staving off potential famine when imports are restricted, expensive or simply unobtainable.

(Paul Brown, a founding editor of Climate News Network, is a former environment correspondent of The Guardian newspaper.)



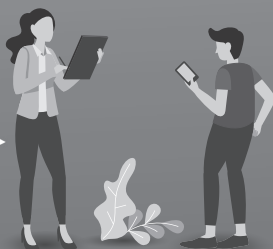
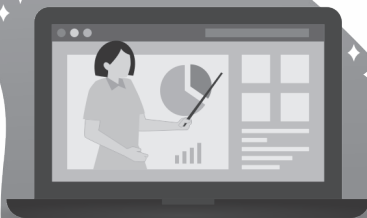
MKCL
Creating a Knowledge Lit World
www.mkcl.org

MS-CIT

Syllabus Available in Two Options

Job Readiness

IT Awareness



Job Readiness

Improve your
employability
and IT skills



IT Awareness

Update your digital
skills in fast
growing IT world

Gateway to New Careers

MS-CIT

*Maharashtra State-Certificate In
Information Technology*

www.mkcl.org/mscit

Enroll today at your nearest Authorized MKCL Center or  **8411960005**



“We are, what we repeatedly do,
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”

Aristotle



Taj Palace & Towers - Mumbai



Bombay Stock Exchange - Fort, Mumbai



Forum Atmosphere - Kolkata



J.K. House (Raymond)
Breach Candy, Mumbai

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING /
REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF :

- ✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)
- ✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)
- ✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.

Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

**Ahmedabad, Hyderabad,
Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi**