

# THE RADICAL HUMANIST



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**“When Nehru became PM, India had nothing; we were struggling for food, our budget was only ₹500 Cr Still, he built ISRO, IITs, IIMs & the entire India from scratch There can never be a second Nehru”**

**— Major Gen CS Dhawan**

**672**

# THE RADICAL HUMANIST

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**Editorial :**

# **Is electoral Democracy Failing the Country?**

**Mahi Pal Singh**

Almost everyday a new scam of the Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar, is being exposed alleging removal of lakhs of valid voters from the voters' lists and inclusion of invalid voters to favour the Bharatiya Janata Party in the election and in the just concluded Bihar assembly election the National Democratic Alliance was shown as the winner with a thumping majority. All this began with the Maharashtra Assembly election and then went on with the Haryana Assembly election and the Delhi Assembly election in all of which the BJP or its allies went on to win the election although during the election campaigns they seemed to be losing the election very badly. But that did not happen, thanks to Gyanesh Kumar, who seems to have taken the contract from Narendra Modi and Amit Shah to manipulate the electoral rolls and through them the whole election process and get them unprecedented success in the elections.

Why would he not do so when he knows well that it were they who had made arrangements to appoint him first as an Election Commissioner and then the Chief Election Commissioner by bringing in an amendment to the law to remove the Chief Justice of India from the three member Selection Panel who appoints the ECs and the CEC. Again it were they who passed the law that the CEC would enjoy an absolute and life-long immunity from prosecution, arrest or jail for anything done by him while acting as the CEC, thereby giving him the absolute authority to indulge in all kinds of illegalities fearlessly to help them in winning elections after elections. He was bestowed with the Devil's powers and he is acting like the Devil personified and fulfilling all the wishes and diktats of his masters-duo.

The Supreme Court has neither the desire, the will nor the guts to repeal the whole election even in the face not only of glaring negligence in conducting the election in a fair and impartial manner but even indulging in a criminal conspiracy by the Election Commission under the direct guidance of the Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar, to rig the whole election process to favour a particular political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in winning the election with a thumping mandate in complete reversal of the will of the people as reflected during the pre-poll election campaign of various political parties where rallies of opposition leaders like Rahul Gandhi and Tejashwi Yadav were being attended by tens of thousands of audience and the rallies of even the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, had only a few hundred audience and black flags were being shown not only to the BJP candidates but even to the Prime Minister.

As all the institutions of democratic governance, including the mainstream media, which is now called the '*godia media*', best translated as the '*lap-dog media*' by the intellectual and freedom loving class, have been high-jacked by the BJP and its top leadership. They indulge in all kinds of corruption and manipulation to win and retain political power. To recount them now would be over-repetition. If voter lists are manipulated and elections conducted in a highly biased manner, the people become hopeless on seeing the results of elections going diametrically opposite to the highly manifest will of the people. The judiciary becomes the only institution from which they hope to get justice. But when even CJIs after CJIs seem to be most willing to go and sit in the lap of the PM and Benches after Benches go

on adjourning the hearings on important electoral matters thereby permitting and perpetuating wrong electoral outcomes resulting in the death of democracy in the country, people do not understand where else to go for the defence of their rights and the democracy.

Such is the stage where the country and its democracy have reached. There is no hope from the executive which also controls the legislature. Judiciary, which is the custodian of the Constitution and the democracy, too has become a tool in the hands of the ruling party and its leaders, as manifest from its conduct during the last decade. We have seen many compliant judges after judges, even the CJIs,

getting favourable appointments from the government in return for their pro-government judgements. There are undeserving judges sitting in highly respectable chairs and through their wrong and biased judgements they only malign the seats of justice. At the same time they also dash the hopes of the people in fairness, truth and justice.

In such a situation, it is the people themselves who have to get together, muster all their courage and strength and oppose the wrong-doers and support those who may be fewer in numbers but who are known for the strength of their character and courage of conviction. 🌈

### FORM - IV

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**Sheoraj Singh**, Publisher,  
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– **Mahi Pal Singh**

Articles and Features :

## **Indian judiciary is letting citizens down. When liberty is in danger, judges are looking away**

*If you are charged with a crime for which there is not a single scrap of evidence the judge will still send you to jail.*

*(‘The judicial system is so clogged up that it will take years to come to trial. At that eventual stage, we know, the prosecution’s case will be thrown out for lack of evidence. But by then our lives will have been ruined. Hours will have been spent dealing with policemen and other authorities. Lakhs will have been spent on lawyers. Our reputations will have suffered. Many of us will have lost our jobs or large portions of our incomes.*



**Vir Sanghvi**

*This was not the situation the framers of our Constitution intended. The presumption of innocence was implicit in nearly every law they devised and having faced colonial persecution, the last thing they wanted was to replace a repressive imperial state with a homegrown autocratic government....And yet, in some ways, that is exactly what we have become.*

*Judging by the interest that the Umar Khalid case has generated and the level of public outrage, the people of India are now saying that enough is enough. Innocent citizens fear the government in a way that no citizens in a democracy ever should. Faith in the police and the revenue agencies is at worrying low; levels not seen since the Emergency.’)*

Why do people live in such fear of the government in India? Why do we fear what vengeful—or corrupt—authorities can do to us?

And more to the point: Why does this fear exist even when we know that we have done nothing wrong? When we know that there is not a shred of evidence against us?

The short answer is that we recognise that in India the process is the punishment. The judicial system is so clogged up that it will take years to come to trial. At that eventual stage,

we know, the prosecution’s case will be thrown out for lack of evidence. But by then our lives will have been ruined. Hours will have been spent dealing with policemen and other authorities. Lakhs will have been spent on lawyers. Our reputations will have suffered. Many of us will have lost our jobs or large portions of our incomes.

The system is so powerfully tilted against the citizen and so favourable to the malign or corrupt police or revenue officials that innocent

people really don't stand a chance.

A key component of the repressive power of the state is its ability to put people in jail long before they have been convicted by any court of law; if indeed they are ever found guilty or if the case even gets to the courts.

This was not the situation the framers of

almost meaningless.

Of course, politicians from the current ruling establishment are to blame. But even the Congress and other parties were only too willing to toss the presumption of innocence aside when they were in power. The reasons then offered sounded suitably high minded. The repressive laws were meant to safeguard national security. India had to act against money launderers. And so on.

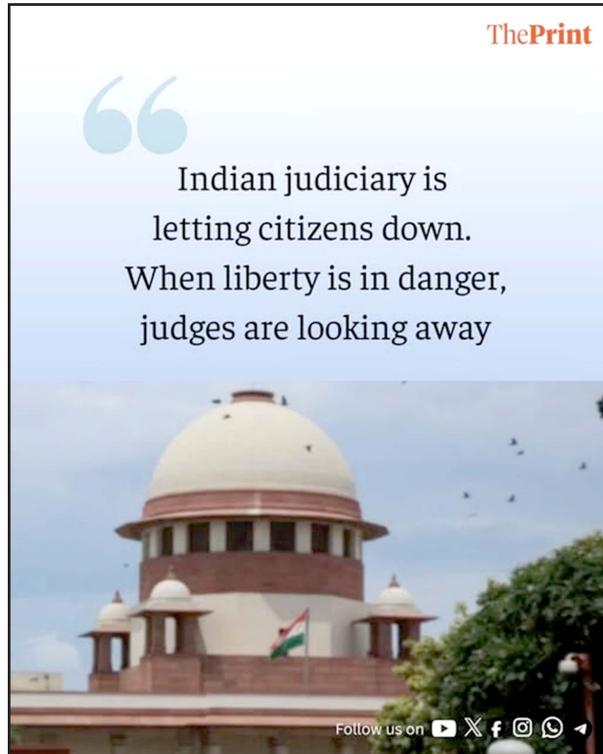
In retrospect, many of us should have protested more strongly when these laws were mooted. A well-meaning politician is like a benign dictator. No dictator stays benign for long. And all politicians put their own interests ahead of the nation's. So it should have been clear from the start that these laws would be misused.

But one reason why we were less worried than we should have been was because we had faith in the judiciary. Judges would act to protect our freedoms, we believed, and would put citizens first.

That notion now seems so quaint as to be laughable; the sort of fable favoured by children who read fairy tales.

All too often the judiciary lets down the average citizen and sides with the persecutors. If you are charged with a crime for which there is not a single scrap of evidence the judge will still send you to jail. If the prosecution's case is an absurd concoction, the judge will take it seriously anyway and still lock you up.

Judges are not supposed to do this, in theory anyway. They are supposed to give you bail till the case comes to court. There are circumstances that could lead to the denial of bail: The fear that you could commit another crime unless you were incarcerated; fear of flight; the danger that you might tamper with evidence or intimidate witnesses, etc. But unless it can be proven that these circumstances exist, bail is part of your right to liberty.



our Constitution intended. The presumption of innocence was implicit in nearly every law they devised and having faced colonial persecution, the last thing they wanted was to replace a repressive imperial state with a homegrown autocratic government.

And yet, in some ways, that is exactly what we have become.

### **Jail is the rule?**

Apart from the people who do the actual raiding/arresting there are two sets of people who have reduced us to this state.

The first are the politicians who cheerfully pass laws that abridge the principle of the presumption of innocence so severely that it is

A few days ago at the Jaipur Literary Festival, I asked the former Chief Justice DY Chandrachud why things had reached such a sorry pass. He argued, with some justification, that his Supreme Court had given bail more often than was recognised. He gave the examples of cases involving Pawan Khera and Teesta Setalvad where the Supreme Court had intervened.

But, I asked him, what about Umar Khalid?

Isn't there something wrong with a situation where a man has been in jail for five years with no trial in sight? Where the Supreme Court denies him bail and suggests that the poor man should remain imprisoned for another year before even considering bail again?

Chandrachud said that he was reluctant to criticise the judgments of a Court that he had led till two years ago but made it clear that he disagreed with the decision to deny bail to Umar Khalid. (*The whole conversation was reported by ThePrint*)

His statement made headlines all over India because he left us in no doubt that he would have given Khalid bail if the matter had come before him. (It also led to a controversy over why, in that case, during his tenure as CJI, he had first assigned the matter to a judge who would almost certainly have denied bail had the case been fully heard by the SC.)

#### **A corrupt judiciary**

But consider the facts: A man has been locked up for five years without any trial. I lack the judicial acumen of the judges who have let Khalid remain in jail but I have to say, with great respect, that the evidence against Khalid is not just far from convincing but is also utterly pathetic.

It is entirely possible that I am wrong, but in that case why hasn't the trial begun? Show us the evidence. Give him a chance to defend himself. As Chandrachud pointed out such delays not only violate the right to freedom but also the right to a speedy trial.

Not only do they hamper the rule of law, they shame the Constitutional guarantees given to citizens and harm the Supreme Court's reputation for fairness. Though, of course, they benefit the government.

But let's not restrict ourselves to the top court. What about the lower judiciary, which will obligingly lock up anyone the government and the authorities bring before it?

Chandrachud accepted that the lower judiciary was often too unwilling to grant bail. But he argued in its defence—judges and magistrates were concerned that it might be said that they had been bribed to grant bail so they preferred to let the decision go up to a higher court. This may be a reasonable explanation but it does not explain why, in that case, similar considerations of embarrassment did not prevent obviously corrupt judgments from being delivered.

Though, to be fair, Chandrachud conceded that corruption in the judiciary was a serious problem.

Judging by the interest that the Umar Khalid case has generated and the level of public outrage, the people of India are now saying that enough is enough. Innocent citizens fear the government in a way that no citizens in a democracy ever should. Faith in the police and the revenue agencies is at worrying low; levels not seen since the Emergency.

Politicians may be happy to live with a terrified citizenry. But what about the judiciary? It has long been regarded by Indian citizens as our last functioning link to the spirit of the Constitution.

Are our judges not concerned that when history is written, it will record that when justice and liberty were in danger they looked away?

*Vir Sanghvi is a print and television journalist and talk show host. He tweets @virsanghvi. Views are personal.*

(Edited by Theres Sudeep)

Courtesy **The Print**, 22 January, 2026. 

# The Crisis Looming Over Our Republic

Dr. Suresh Khairnar

Today marks 76 years since our country began celebrating Republic Day. Parliamentary democracy in India formally began with the first parliamentary session on May 13, 1952, following the completion of the first general elections in 1951–52. Over these 74 years, the country has faced serious challenges to its parliamentary democracy, most notably during the Emergency period (June 25, 1975 – March 21, 1977), which lasted 21 months. That crisis, however, was resolved with the defeat of the Congress government in the 1977 elections.

But since the BJP government assumed power on May 26, 2014, under the influence of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh’s (RSS) principle of *Ek Chalak Anuvartitva* (leadership and control by one person), the country has been moving towards what resembles an undeclared Emergency. Over the past 12 years, the government has steadily altered the Constitution—ranging from attempts to remove the words “socialist” and “secular” from the Preamble to changing the process of appointing members of the Election Commission of India (ECI), a key institution for democratic governance, to suit its political convenience.

In December 2023, during the winter session of Parliament, more than 100 opposition MPs were suspended from the Lok Sabha, and over 20 parliamentary bills were passed in haste. This moment appeared to mark the beginning of a parliamentary system run according to the whims of the ruling party. By amending the ECI selection process—originally established in 1991 with a committee comprising the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Chief Justice of India—the Chief Justice was

removed and replaced with a Cabinet Minister, giving the ruling party a majority on the committee. Furthermore, through amendments in the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023 (CEC & EC Act, 2023), provisions were introduced requiring presidential permission for legal action against ECI members, effectively shielding them from accountability during their tenure.

In light of these developments, it appears that future elections may become a mere formality. The “Republic of India” is being transformed from a constitutional democracy into a party-centric system, eroding its democratic essence. But what is the justification for retaining the Leader of the Opposition in this one-sided committee? It risks becoming a token presence in the RSS’s long-standing project of governance based on *Ek Chalak Anuvartitva*.

Why did opposition leaders fail to mount a stronger resistance to these unilateral changes that created an overwhelmingly powerful Election Commission? Subsequently, the opposition’s repeated slogan of “vote theft” in response to the hurried Special Intensive Revision (SIR) by this controversial ECI appears hollow—like being a “fool at someone else’s wedding.” Fundamentally, the RSS, the ideological parent of the BJP, has never fully accepted the Indian Constitution.

When Dr. B. R. Ambedkar presented the Constitution to the nation on November 26, 1949, the RSS’s English-language mouthpiece *Organiser* rejected it in an editorial. It argued that long before Spartacus and Solon, Rishi Manu had authored the *Manusmriti*,

described as a superior constitution. It dismissed the newly adopted Constitution as a “patchwork quilt” copied from foreign sources and lacking Indianness. It also criticized the tricolour national flag as inauspicious and demanded the saffron flag in its place.

The BJP, the political arm of the RSS, formed the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC) under Justice M. N. Venkatachaliah on February 1, 2000, during Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s tenure as Prime Minister. Although the commission was asked to submit its recommendations within a year, it delivered its two-volume, 1,979-page report only on March 31, 2002, after three extensions. Law Minister Arun Jaitley accepted the report, but due to strong opposition protests, Vajpayee refrained from implementing it.

The current government has begun altering the Constitution through incremental amendments—like a mouse slowly gnawing at its foundations. Changes have been introduced across diverse domains: criminal law, forest laws, agriculture, labour, environmental protection, land acquisition, employment guarantees, health, education, and the appointment process of the ECI. These interventions serve to reshape the Constitution in favour of crony capitalism.

The parliamentary democracy entrusted by Dr. Ambedkar on November 26, 1949, is being transformed into the RSS’s vision of *Ek Chalak Anuvartitva*. The motives behind altering the ECI selection process became evident during recent assembly and local body elections in Maharashtra and Bihar, and similar patterns are likely to emerge in upcoming elections in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and elsewhere.

One of the gravest concerns relates to tribal rights protected under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution. The RSS

rejects the term “Adivasi” (original inhabitants) and prefers “Vanvasi” (forest dwellers). These constitutional provisions safeguard the rights of nearly 10% of India’s tribal population over land, forests, and water (*jal, jangal, zameen*). Yet, under the Forest Conservation Act (amended in 2023) and the Biodiversity Act, the BJP government is transferring forests to favoured corporate interests—like coating poison with sugar syrup. By dismantling protections established since the 1980 Forest Act, it undermines tribal rights while ignoring warnings from Madhav Gadgil and hundreds of global scientists about climate change, melting glaciers, rising temperatures, and ecological disasters. Instead, the government blindly pursues a hollow narrative of “development” and economic supremacy.

Stopping this systematic alteration of the Constitution would be the true tribute to our country’s 76th Republic Day. On January 26, 1950, when India was declared a democratic republic, the Constitution pledged justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity for all citizens. That commitment is the reason Republic Day has been celebrated continuously for 76 years.

The Preamble to the Constitution of India articulates its guiding purpose, principles, and philosophy. Adopted on November 26, 1949, and enforced on January 26, 1950, it declares India a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic committed to justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Do the actions, character, and conduct of the current government truly reflect the Constitution handed down by its framers 76 years ago?

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

**Dr. Suresh Khairnar** is the ex-president of Rashtra Seva Dal

Courtesy **Countercurrents.org**, 26 January, 2026. 

# EC using ‘very restrictive’ software tools unable to fathom ‘natural differences’, says Supreme Court

*Top court asks poll body to extend claims-objections phase deadline by a week from February 14, directs West Bengal DGP to file a personal affidavit on allegations of violence, burning of documents*

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**

The Supreme Court on Monday (February 9, 2026) said the Election Commission (EC) is using “very restrictive” software tools, at least in the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise in West Bengal, with scant tolerance for “natural” differences and inconsistencies commonly found in India, including Bengali households.

“Tools applied by you in your software appear to be very restrictive tools. They are eliminating natural differences. Surnames are of various forms — ‘Roy’, ‘Ray’... There is a common practice of ‘Kumar’ being a middle name in Bengali households. Now, if there is an omission of ‘Kumar’, notice is given?” Justice Joymalya Bagchi asked the EC’s counsel, senior advocate Dama Seshadri Naidu.

## **Highlights of Supreme Court’s hearing on SIR**

The exchange came before the Bench, headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant, asked the EC to extend the deadline for the claims-and-objections phase of the West Bengal SIR for a week beyond the current deadline of February 14.

The Bench further directed the State’s Director General of Police to file a personal affidavit, responding to allegations of orchestrated violence and burning of documents at SIR verification centres.

### **‘Deploy new officials’**

The court asked the EC to temporarily deploy a fresh batch of 8,505 personnel provided by the West Bengal government, on

the basis of an assurance given to the Bench personally by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during her personal appearance before it on the February 4 hearing, for SIR work.

The court said the EC could deploy suitable officers among the fresh batch for duties as Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs). The remaining could be made to work along with micro-observers to assist in the scrutiny of documents.

The court clarified that micro-observers would only assist the EROs. It would be solely up to the EROs to take a final decision on whether an elector should be included or excluded from the electoral roll of the State.

The hearing commenced with the West Bengal Chief Minister’s counsel, senior advocate Shyam Divan, submitting that micro-observers were superseding EROs and AEROs to decide the fate of electors on the voters’ list. Senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, for the West Bengal government, said micro-observers were drawn from Central government services and public sector undertakings with no ground knowledge of West Bengal or its idiosyncrasies.

### **On ‘logical discrepancies’**

Mr. Divan submitted that of the nearly 1.4 crore people who came under the “logical discrepancies” category, 70 lakh were called to explain minor disparities in their names or even surnames. “Logical discrepancies” included name mismatches, inconsistencies in

the age gaps of their parents and grandparents and even persons with six children were called for hearing. He said all these electors were issued hearing notices despite being mapped, that is, they could be traced to the 2002 electoral roll.

“They just ran a computer programme... There have been mass exclusions in the name of logical discrepancies. Here, the computer has become a tyrant, deciding with the use of some software, who remains and who has to be purged,” Mr. Divan submitted.

Mr. Naidu, for the EC, remarked orally that the petitioners — State of West Bengal, its Chief Minister and leaders of the ruling Trinamool Congress Party — were making a “mountain out of a molehill”.

But Justice Bagchi agreed with Mr. Divan that even those mapped had been called for presentation of documents to verify citizenship. The judge said the programme used by the EC in certain cases has created a “policy challenge” without understanding the ground realities, resulting in notices going

out to a “wider net of people”.

Mr. Naidu said the court was only seeing the “tip of the iceberg”. He illustrated that the EC scrutiny of the electoral roll had instances of 200 people being linked to a single parent.

“Is that possible?” he asked the Bench. Mr. Naidu denied sending notices to persons mapped to the 2002 rolls. “No questions were asked, My Lords,” he stressed.

“But questions were asked, Sir. Notices were sent to mapped people,” Justice Bagchi persisted.

Mr. Naidu changed tack to submit that then those names may have been “mapped incorrectly”. He insisted that no clarification had been sought from electors whose particulars “synced perfectly”.

“You definitely have a right to send a hearing notice to people found with 50 grandchildren. But you are issuing notice to even persons with five or six children,” Justice Bagchi responded.

Courtesy **The Hindu**, February 09, 2026. 🌈

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## NOT A NORMAL ELECTION:

# In Assam, ‘forged’ forms aimed at deleting thousands of Muslim voters ring alarm bells

*In several cases, Scroll found bulk objections had been filed without the knowledge of those who had signed off on the forms.*

**Rokibuz Zaman**

On January 19, Sumona Rahman Choudhury and 14 other booth level officers in Assam’s Sribhumi district were called for a training session as part of the ongoing “special revision” of electoral rolls ahead of the Assembly elections this year.

The first draft of the state’s voter roll was published on December 27, after a door-to-door verification by booth level officers led to 10 lakh voter names being marked out for deletion. As is the norm, the Election Commission then invited claims and objections to further vet the draft roll for accuracy.

Any voter can file an objection if he believes someone has been wrongly included in the constituency’s electoral roll, using Form 7.

When Choudhary turned up for the session, she said that district officials handed her several objection forms, challenging the inclusion of 133 voters in her booth in Srimanta Kanishail village in Karimganj North assembly segment. The forms were “half-printed and half-handwritten”, she said.

All the objections had been filed by one person, who claimed that the 133 voters, all of them Muslims, had either permanently shifted from the village or were being enrolled twice.

But Choudhary, a teacher at the village government school, knew that to be false. “During the house-to-house enumeration, I found them at their residence and collected their signatures,” she said. “They have not shifted. They are genuine voters. The document of the Election commission that they signed is proof.”

Choudhary added: “Among the names was the headmaster of my school. Some of them are parents of my students. How could I ask them to come to a hearing to prove they are genuine voters?”

### **Who filed the objections?**

Even more curiously, the list of 133 names included the complainant, Salim Ahmed, and his relatives. “This means Salim had filed an objection against his own inclusion,” Choudhary said.

She then called Ahmed to ask him if he had indeed filed the objections. “He denied it altogether,” she said. “He said he was not insane to have complained against himself, his brother and sister-in-law. “

When *Scroll* contacted Ahmed, he had reached the Sribhumi district election office to file a complaint against the misuse of his name and voter identity card. “I have not filed any objections,” he said. “Do you think I will file a complaint seeking deletion of my own name?”

The Election Commission decided to exempt Assam, for now, from the controversial Special Intensive Revision that is being carried out in several states. But the ongoing special revision, which involves door-to-door verification of voters, has also led to widespread fears of disenfranchisement of minority voters – especially during the claims and objections process.

In several Muslim-majority districts and areas of Assam, bulk objections have been filed against voters, seeking to strike their names off

the electoral roll. Thousands of voters are being called to hearings to prove that they are not dead or “permanently shifted” as the objections claim, triggering panic and anxiety among Bengal-origin Muslims.

As Choudhary discovered, the process is open to manipulation.

*Scroll* found six other instances in addition to Ahmed where people said their names, voter identity cards and phone numbers had been used without their consent or knowledge to file objections against hundreds of electors in several constituencies.

Complaints have been filed in several districts, alleging that voters were sought to be deleted in bulk in order to influence the electoral process. In Nagaon district, the hearing process has been suspended in three Assembly constituencies after complaints of fake Form 7 applications.

Any voter of an Assembly constituency can fill out a Form 7, seeking the deletion of names of other voters from the same constituency or raise an objection to their inclusion in the electoral rolls if they have died or if they have shifted out.

Videos have also emerged of Hindu voters, declaring that their names have been wrongfully used to seek deletion of other voters. The Lakhimpur and Morigaon district administrations have put out public notices, warning people from filing such dubious complaints.

Opposition parties and minority leaders have accused the BJP of pressuring the Election Commission officials to delete voters, especially Muslims. They pointed to recent statements by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma calling for “illegal Miyas” to be deleted from the voter list.

Miya Muslims is a pejorative term used for Bengal-origin Muslims in Assam, who are often vilified as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh despite having roots in Assam that go back before Independence.

Similar allegations had surfaced in Karnataka’s Aland assembly constituency last year, where the names of 5,994 voters were sought to be deleted ahead of the 2023 state election through fake objection forms.

An FIR was registered on the alleged voter fraud based on a complaint filed by the Returning Officer. The police investigation revealed that a former Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Subhash Guttedar from Aland and his son Harshananda Guttedar allegedly hired a private firm to target voters and delete their names through forged Form 7s.

*Scroll* contacted the Election Commission, asking about allegations that there was a conspiracy to delete voters in bulk, and if forged Form 7 applications were being used for the purpose. The story will be updated if they respond.

#### **‘One person filed over 100 objections’**

A senior Election Commission official in Guwahati told *Scroll* that a voter can submit any number of such objections. “However, to prevent misuse of the process, if a person files more than five objections, an electoral registration officer will review the complaints individually,” the official said.

Once the Form 7 objections are filed, they are sent to BLOs for an on-ground verification, after which they are processed. However, in most cases, BLOs blindly accept the applications without verification and summon the voters for hearing, local political leaders told *Scroll*.

In Sribhumi, however, Choudhary and the other BLOs objected to the instructions from the district officials and the bulk objections. “In several cases, one person had filed over 100 forms,” Choudhary said.

She added: “We asked how we could initiate Form 7 against genuine voters. But the officials reiterated that we should go ahead.”

However, Choudhary stuck to her stance and returned the forms to the district election office.

Sribhumi district commissioner Pradeep Kumar Dwivedi, however, told *Scroll* that district officials were only following the procedure.

“It is the job of the BLO to verify whether an objection form is genuine or the objector authentic,” he said. “Based on that, they can summon people for hearing. Based on the outcome of the hearing, the ERO takes the decision. No name is deleted by bypassing the procedure. The process is being followed.”

He added that even if a complaint has been filed with malafide intentions against legitimate voters, a hearing is necessary to establish the truth.

The scale of objections and summons has led several observers to draw parallels with the re-verification process during the process to update the National Register of Citizens in 2019, in which people were given – like with the special revision process – 24 hours to attend the hearings.

A senior Election Commission official quoted

above told *Scroll* that about 56,000 objections have been rejected as of January 19. The claims and objections process had begun on December 27.

Advocate Masud Zaman claimed that election officials had told him that over 26,000 objections had been filed in five constituencies of Dhubri district, which is a Muslim-majority area.

The number was confirmed by Dhubri election officer Sugata Siddhartha Goswami. “Before calling people for a hearing, we will verify whether the forms are genuine or not,” Goswami said. “Both the objector and the person against whom the complaint has been filed will be called for hearing.”

Zaman pointed out that even if the complainants do not turn up or turn out to be fake, there is little redress for the voters being harassed. “I asked the election officials if legal action could be taken against those complainants who do not turn up. They had no reply.”

Courtesy **Scroll.in**, Jan 23, 2026 · 🌈

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## PMO directive on PM CARES: What questions can Lok Sabha ask?

*Questions are asked in the House to hold the government accountable on matters of public interest. What are the criteria to decide what questions are admissible in Lok Sabha? And who takes that decision?*

Yashee

The Prime Minister’s Office has recently told the Lok Sabha Secretariat that **questions related to PM CARES Fund**, the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund (PMNRF), and the National Defence Fund (NDF) are inadmissible in Lok Sabha.

The PMO’s reasoning is that these funds are made up of voluntary public contributions and not from allocations from the Consolidated Fund of India. This has led to criticism, with some accusing the government of blocking transparency. “It is deeply concerning how PMO is dictating the business of the Lok Sabha, which should operate independently so that the government is held

accountable by the people’s representatives,” Congress MP KC Venugopal posted on X.

**Who decides what questions can be asked in Lok Sabha?**

Questions are asked in the House to hold the government accountable on matters of public interest. The criteria for admissible questions is laid down in Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha. Questions are first sent to the Lok Sabha Secretariat, which is guided by the rulebook in deciding admissibility. The final decision rests with the Speaker.

Courtesy **The Indian Express**, Feb 10, 2026. 🌈

# Democratic Backsliding in India: An Ambedkarite Constitutional Analysis

S.R. Darapuri I.P.S. (Retd)

This paper examines the contemporary condition of democratic governance, constitutional rights, secularism, and judicial independence in India through an Ambedkarite–constitutionalist lens. It argues that while India formally retains the institutional architecture of a constitutional democracy, its substantive democratic content has been progressively eroded by the rise of majoritarian nationalism, executive centralization, and the weakening of constitutional morality. Drawing on B.R. Ambedkar’s conception of democracy as a social and moral system rather than merely an electoral mechanism, the paper situates India’s current trajectory within broader debates on democratic backsliding and authoritarian populism. It contends that India is witnessing not the collapse but the hollowing out of constitutional democracy, with grave implications for marginalized communities and the future of the republic.

## 1. Introduction

India’s Constitution envisaged a transformative democratic project aimed at dismantling entrenched hierarchies of caste, religion, and gender, while guaranteeing political liberty, social justice, and equality. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Constitution, consistently warned that constitutional democracy in India would remain fragile unless supported by constitutional morality and social democracy. In recent years, concerns have intensified regarding the erosion of democratic norms, the dilution of constitutional rights, the decline of secularism, and the growing constraints on judicial independence.

This paper seeks to analyse these developments from an Ambedkarite

constitutionalist perspective. Rather than treating democracy as synonymous with elections or majoritarian rule, it foregrounds Ambedkar’s insistence on substantive equality, minority rights, and institutional accountability as the core of democratic life. The central argument advanced here is that India today represents a case of democratic backsliding characterized by the persistence of electoral procedures alongside the systematic weakening of constitutional restraints on power.

## 2. Ambedkar’s Conception of Constitutional Democracy

Ambedkar rejected the minimalist view of democracy as periodic elections. For him, democracy was a form of “associated living” grounded in liberty, equality, and fraternity. He emphasized that political democracy without social democracy would be inherently unstable. Central to this vision was the idea of *constitutional morality*, defined as respect for constitutional values, limitations on power, and the ethical commitment of institutions and citizens to uphold the spirit of the Constitution.

Ambedkar also viewed the Indian social order—structured by caste and graded inequality—as fundamentally anti-democratic. Consequently, he regarded constitutional safeguards, fundamental rights, and independent institutions as essential correctives against majoritarian domination. His apprehension that Hindu majoritarianism could subvert democracy through the misuse of numerical strength has acquired renewed relevance in contemporary India.

## 3. Democratic Governance and Executive Centralization

India continues to conduct regular elections

with high voter participation, sustaining the formal appearance of democracy. However, democratic governance has increasingly come to be marked by executive dominance and institutional marginalization. Parliament's deliberative role has been weakened through reduced sittings, limited debate on major legislation, and the growing reliance on ordinances and money bills.

From an Ambedkarite perspective, this concentration of power undermines the constitutional balance envisioned by the framers. Ambedkar consistently argued that unchecked executive authority posed a grave threat to liberty, particularly in societies marked by deep social inequalities. The deployment of investigative and regulatory agencies against political opponents further erodes the conditions for fair political competition, pushing India toward what comparative political theory describes as competitive authoritarianism.

#### **4. Constitutional Rights and the Crisis of Substantive Equality**

While the text of fundamental rights remains intact, their practical realization has been increasingly constrained. The frequent use of sedition laws, anti-terror legislation, and preventive detention has curtailed freedoms of speech, association, and personal liberty. Prolonged incarceration without trial has become a defining feature of the contemporary legal landscape.

Ambedkar viewed fundamental rights not as abstract guarantees but as instruments of social emancipation, particularly for historically oppressed communities. The selective enforcement of laws and the differential treatment of minorities, Dalits, Adivasis, and dissenters represent a retreat from the constitutional promise of equality before law. This shift reflects a transition from rights-based constitutionalism to a governance paradigm centered on order, security, and majoritarian sentiment.

#### **5. Secularism and the Rise of Majoritarian Nationalism**

Secularism constitutes a basic feature of the Indian Constitution, rooted in the principle of equal respect for all religions. Contemporary political practice, however, has increasingly departed from this constitutional commitment. State neutrality toward religion has been replaced by overt or implicit endorsement of majoritarian cultural nationalism.

Ambedkar regarded the fusion of religion and politics as antithetical to democracy, particularly in a society where religious identity overlapped with social hierarchy. The normalization of communal polarization, selective responses to hate speech, and the differential application of law during episodes of communal violence signify the erosion of secular constitutionalism. In this context, minorities are progressively transformed from equal citizens into conditional subjects of state power.

#### **6. Judicial Independence and Constitutional Adjudication**

The judiciary occupies a central position in Ambedkar's constitutional design as the guardian of fundamental rights and the arbiter of constitutional limits. Although the Indian judiciary formally retains its independence, its contemporary functioning reveals significant constraints. Delays in adjudicating politically sensitive cases, selective prioritization of matters, and increasing deference to the executive on questions of national security and majoritarian policy have weakened judicial oversight.

Rather than overt judicial capture, the present condition may be better described as judicial restraint bordering on abdication. This has profound implications for constitutional democracy, as the absence of timely judicial intervention enables the gradual normalization of unconstitutional practices.

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

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## Ganga Jamuni Tehjeeb: Myth or Reality

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What is Indian Culture? Is it Hindu culture or a mixed one? Many such questions have been floating in the air. Those belonging to Hindu right wing, the proponents of 'Hindutva: Hindu Rashtra' claim that it is a Hindu culture which was attacked by the Muslim aggressors, while Hindu culture resisted it with full energy. While some converts from Hinduism to Islam have not overcome their Hindu past while adapting to Islam. This point came to one's mind yet again as the debate on 'Hinduism needs protection from Hindutva' held in Kolkata recently.

As such Hindutva ideologues have been arguing this for quite some time. J. Sai Deepak one of those who also participate in Kolkata debate has been arguing that "Post-independence, the deification of this creature Ganga-Jamuna Tehzeeb must be laid at the door of distortion of history under Jawaharlal Nehru and the Marxist-Nehruvian coterie of historians that he put together." As such he traces this phenomenon's rise between 1916 and 1923.

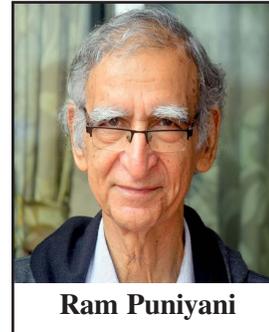
What is Ganga Jamuna Tehjeeb? It is synonymous with the development of mixed culture between Hindus and Muslims over a long period of time, close to a millennium, roughly speaking. As the advent of Islam began in the seventh century 'Hindu-Muslim' interaction began right then and flowered in the medieval period of India. The aim of Sultanate rulers or Mughal rulers was not to wipe out the local culture, primarily they were here for wealth and power, and ruled large part of this land, it is during this period that many of these syncretic traditions developed here and many of them are continuing in many parts of this country even now despite intimidating impositions of Hindu Nationalist

politics.

This mixed culture begins with the rule of Muslim kings particularly in North India, in Ganga-Yamuna and adjacent areas, so this nomenclature. This was underlined by many leaders of the freedom movement. Those who remained aloof from the freedom movement, Muslim Nationalists and Hindu Nationalists did not appreciate the intermingling of Hindus and Muslims. This Hindu Muslim interaction in all areas of the social life, flowered particularly in mediaeval India and continues even today, though in muted form at some places.

Scholar B.N. Pandey summarizes it very well, "Islam and Hinduism which appeared at the start so antithetical, at last intermingled, each one stirred the profoundest depth of the other and from their synthesis grew the religion of Bhakti and Tasawwaf, the religion of love and devotion, which swept the hearts of millions following different religions and sects in India. The current of Islamic Sufism and Hindu Bhakti combined into a mighty stream which fertilised old desolate tracts and changed the face of the country... and created those monuments of art, literature, painting, music and poetry and love inspired religion which are the heritage of Indian History, during the Middle Ages".

Due to the interaction of the Muslim kings, Islam and local culture there developed a whole stream of synthetic culture in all walks of life, in music khayal, ghazal and thumri are outstanding contributions of this interaction. North Indian classical music as



**Ram Puniyani**

known today, is a thorough blend of Hindu and Muslim elements achieved over 500 years. Ibrahim second Adil shah of Bijapur (1580-1626) had 300 Hindu singers in his court. To popularise this music among Muslims he himself composed Kitab-e-Naurang in Urdu (a book containing 59 poems) and of those the first one is an invocation of goddess Saraswati). Chaitanya Maha prabhu and most of the Vaishnav saint poets influenced many Muslims to write in their idiom. Rahim and Raskhan are among the very popular Hindi poets who have written in Brij-bhasha in praise of Lord Krishna. Syed Wazid Shah wrote 'Hir and Ranja' the great classic of medieval times. Sheikh Mohammed has greatly contributed to Marathi literature.

Mixture of Persian dialect with Western Hindi spoken in and around Delhi produced a new language which later on came to be called Urdu. There were great Hindu scholars who took to Urdu not only as an administrative language but also wrote and contributed to Urdu literature. Hindu architecture was enriched by profusion of intricate sculptured detail from Islamic architecture. The fusion of the two manifested in different architectural marvels which came up during this phase. This fusion is seen in Jodhabai's palace in Agra fort, in Fatehpur Sikri, and in arches of Kuwat-ul-Islam Mosque. The influence of this mixture is discernible far and wide in the haveli's of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh and the Indo-Saracenic architecture of Jodhpur, Bikaner and Jaisalmer. Similarly fusion of Persian techniques and brilliant Hindu colours resulted in the type of miniature painting marked by beauty and lyricism.

The observing of festivals was a profound social phenomenon to the extent that Hindu festivals like Diwali were celebrated as *Jashn-e-Charagan*, Holi as *Jashn-e-Gulabi*. The Dushara festival of Mysore,

when Tipu Sultan was the king, was celebrated for ten days under the patronage of the King. The Tazia procession was also part of the community.

These traditions are very much alive, researcher-activist Irfan Engineer recently was part of Maharashtra's Warkari Dindi. As per him, "When the wari (Part of Warkari Pilgrimage). passes through a Muslim area on Eid or other festivals, the Muslim community defers their celebrations, or includes warkaris in their celebrations by sharing food. Many Muslims also join the wari" We very well know about the Hindu navratnas of Akbar, Birbal and Todarmal. As per Professor Athar Ali Aurangzeb Court 33% of Court official were Hindus, like Raja Jaising and Raja Raghunath Bahadur. Maratha King Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had many Muslim commanders. These examples abound in fields of our social life.

Commenting on our culture, Jawaharlal Nehru in his classic 'Discovery of India' underlined the word Ganga Jamuni Tehzeeb, this was not a motivated comment but a part of our past and present. In our freedom movement, people from all religions participated with equal enthusiasm except of course those who are opposed to pluralism and democracy. Nehru elaborated our past in an excellent manner, for him India is like an ancient palimpsest "where new layers of history, culture, and thought (like Mughal, British, modern) were inscribed over older ones, but without completely erasing the past, creating a continuous, complex civilization with deep unity amidst diversity, emphasizing synthesis and absorption rather than obliteration, a vision he sought to build a modern, democratic nation upon."

In present times where hate is promoting violence for sectarian nationalism, there is all the need to uphold the values of our Ganga Jamuni Tehjeeb. 🌈

# My Lord vs. Speaker Saheb:

## The Troubled Relationship between the Judiciary and the Legislature: Sarat Bose Lecture by Justice Dr. S. Muralidhar

*Is the majority with the government, and logic with the opposition?*

The Tenth Schedule has resulted in power being shifted away from the individual legislator to the leadership of political parties. As one legal scholar notes, it has brought about a shift from a candidate-centric to party-centric model of representation. With the whip in place the ruling party legislator has to simply toe the line. Either he is disruptive in the house to attract attention or has to shift his activity from the legislative arena to the election arena. With the MPLADS in place the legislator is likely to focus on spending those funds to publicise himself or herself as a servant of the people. Also, in terms of the law election spending, there is a greater control through law on individual candidates rather than on parties. An individual candidate has to depend on his own sources and therefore the tendency to accumulate illicit wealth. The loss of character is inevitable.

We also have to try and understand why there are friction points between the courts and the legislators. Judges do have adjustment issues when it comes to both caste and class and a sense of superiority in terms of learning and experience *vis-a-vis* legislators who are people's representatives. In the rarified atmosphere in which they function, and in the circles in which they socialise, they are naturally removed from the rough and tumble of daily life.

It should not be surprising that some of them give a distinct impression of being out of touch with ground realities. In this scenario, it is difficult to imagine judges considering legislators as co-equals who occupy positions in another constitutional organ of co-equal weight. When Speakers are therefore entrusted with adjudicatory functions, judges are easily inclined to act as their appellate authorities.

All this could possibly explain why the legislator today commands little respect either among the

general populace or among judges. Even judges too realise that their standing is not what it used to be four or five decades ago. This is not to say that all legislators and all judges are of the same ilk. There are fine exemplars among them too and hopefully they will be the role models for those that follow. In fact, I personally am of the view that there are many politicians and many judges, as there have been in the past, who take their tasks seriously, adhere to the constitutional values and try and give their best. They are to be admired that in the midst of the general morass of an amoral political class and a general regression in societal values, they have the courage and the conviction to hold their own. They need to be identified and encouraged so that they may inspire the next generation of aspirants.

In the end we must live in the hope of a better tomorrow. It might be useful to sign off by recalling these words from the advisory opinion of the Supreme Court way back in 1964:

“It is necessary to remember that the status, dignity and importance of the two institutions, the Legislature and the Judicature, are derived primarily from the status, dignity and importance of the respective causes that are assigned to their charge by the Constitution. These two bodies as well as the executive which is another important constituent of a democratic State, must function not in antinomy nor in a spirit of hostility, but rationally, harmoniously and in a spirit of understanding within their respective spheres, for such harmonious working of the three constituents of the democratic State alone will help the peaceful development, growth and stabilization of the democratic way of life in this Country.”

**Justice Dr. S. Muralidhar**, *Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India and the 32nd Chief Justice of Orissa High Court delivered the lecture at Netaji Bhavan, Kolkata, on 10th January, 2026.* 🌈

# Trump Decides, Modi Executes: A Dangerous Deal Pushing India's Economy Towards Suicide

Pratap Saharan

This is not a diplomatic success. This is not a “win-win deal.”

This is a decision imposed on India's economy, one that India did not choose, but one that Trump decided and Modi accepted.

The India-US trade deal announced in February 2026, which the Modi government is celebrating as a “historic achievement,” is in reality a political deception and an economic crime. This deal is not only against India's farmers, industry, and energy security, it clearly shows that India's policies are no longer being decided in Delhi, but in Washington.

## **First Truth: This is not a trade agreement, it is economic suicide**

India is being projected as importing more than 500 billion dollars worth of goods from the United States. This is not a small amount.

It is almost equal to India's entire annual national budget.

What does this directly mean?

## **Spending on education, healthcare, employment, and social security will be cut**

India's trade deficit will reach explosive levels

The rupee will weaken

Inflation will rise

There will be a direct attack on the common consumer's pocket

## **And all this for what?**

So that Trump can boast in his election speeches that he imposed “America First” on India.

The Modi government is hiding the truth that India is being pushed toward becoming a colonial market for the United States, where American goods will enter tariff-free while

Indian production collapses.

## **Second Truth: For farmers, this is a death warrant**

The US Agriculture Secretary is openly celebrating this deal as a “big opportunity” for American farmers.

This statement itself is a confession.

America gives massive subsidies to its farmers.

India's farmer fights debt, weather, and the market all at once.

## **Now imagine:**

American grain

American dairy products

American agricultural commodities

If these enter India without tariffs, how will the Indian farmer survive?

The Modi government has done what it had never done before.

## **It has opened a sensitive sector like agriculture under American pressure.**

This is not Self-Reliant India.

This is Surrendered India.

## **Third Truth: The oil deal will break the back of the common people**

The decision to abandon cheap Russian oil was not taken in India's interest.

This decision was taken on Trump's orders.

Now India will buy expensive oil from the United States and Venezuela.

## **Where will the impact be felt?**

Petrol and diesel prices will rise

Transportation will become costlier

Daily essentials will become expensive

Inflation will choke the common citizen

This is not just geopolitics.

This is an attack on the economy of every household.

The Modi government knows this decision is unpopular, which is why it is running away from discussion in Parliament.

**Fourth Truth: India's decisions are now being taken by Trump**

This is the most shameful aspect.

Trump announces the trade deal

Trump dictates oil policy

Trump decides what tariffs will be

And India's Parliament, India's people, and India's media are informed later.

**What kind of sovereignty is this?**

What kind of democracy is this, where the country learns about its own government's decisions first from the President of the United States?

When the opposition raises questions in Parliament, no answers are given.

**The demand for debate is rejected.**

Why? Because debate will expose the truth.

And the truth is that the Modi government is helpless before Trump.

What is this helplessness?

**Every citizen must ask this question.**

Is this helplessness economic?

Is this helplessness political?

Or is it helplessness to protect power at any cost?

When a government is confident, it does not fear Parliament.

When a government is honest, it does not need to buy the media.

Today, the opposite is happening in India.

**Fifth Truth: Tame media and the celebration of lies**

The lapdog media is portraying this deal as "Modi's diplomatic victory."

**They will not tell you:**

What India has lost

What farmers will lose

What consumers will have to pay

**They will only show this:**

"Tariffs reduced from 25 percent to 18 percent."

But they will not tell you that

India has reduced its tariffs on the United States to zero.

This is not inequality.

This is slavery.

**This is not just a deal, it is a warning**

**This deal signals that:**

India's economy is no longer independent

India's policy is no longer in public interest

India's government is no longer accountable

If questions are not raised today

If farmers, consumers, and youth do not speak today

Then tomorrow this model will expand further

Today oil

Tomorrow defence

The day after education and data.

**Conclusion: This is Trump's victory, India's defeat**

This deal does not make India stronger.

It makes India dependent.

This is not development.

This is a roadmap to destruction.

And history will remember that when India's economy was being sold the government was celebrating and the media was clapping.

**But now the people must think:**

Is this India's government?

Is this India's media?

And they must decide whether they will remain silent spectators to this economic suicide or resist it.

**Because a country that allows others to write its decisions**

It does not remain a country.

It becomes a market.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1CCREbyBit/?mibextid=wwXIfr> 

## India-US trade deal seals farmers' slide - provider to poor relative

A passing reference in the Budget speech signalled a paradigm shift in the Indian state's relationship with farmers. The decision to include agriculture in the Indo-US deal confirms this transformation. This was not an overnight shift. It has been a long journey for the Indian farmer — from being the provider of the family to being a distant and poor relative. The understanding of what is their due has also shifted — from a fair share in the national resources to some compensation or a discount to now just a dole. It's now a patron-client relationship: The state offers discretionary support for bare survival and the farmer offers loyalty, silence and votes. For the Indian state, farmers are now expendable, except as voters.

In her budget speech this year, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced this departure with a loud silence. She did away with the ritual of paying homage to the kisan and announcing grand-sounding but token schemes for the farmers. This year, the fleeting reference to the farmers in her Budget speech was in enunciating the third "kartavya" where farmers, people from the Northeast and those with physical and mental disabilities were bunched together. Don't ask me for the FM's economic rationale. But note the shift in tone: From "annadata", the farmers are now "bechara".

The budgetary allocations reflect this reading. The share of the Centre's actual expenditure on "Agriculture and Allied Activities" as a percentage of its total expenditure has fallen consistently from 4.19 per cent in 2019-20 to 3.06 per cent in 2025-26 (revised estimate) and is budgeted at 3.04 per cent this year. If you take out the Kisan

Samman Nidhi, the expenditure on all other agriculture-related budget heads has fallen from 2.73 per cent in 2018-19 to 1.78 per cent last year (budgeted at 1.85 per cent this year).

As agricultural scientist G.V. Ramanjaneyulu has pointed out, the Budget was "curiously disconnected" from what the government identifies as the immediate and long-term challenges of Indian agriculture — low income, high indebtedness and poor irrigation, besides soil degradation, groundwater depletion and climate change. In "new" India, farmers are not partners in growth and development. They are, at best, shock absorbers in managing food security and inflation. Otherwise, they are a burden, a cost centre to be minimised.

The decision to trade away farmers' interests in the India-US trade deal is yet another confirmation of the place of farmers in the new scheme of things. While some ground was conceded in the free trade agreements with Australia and the European Union, especially on wines and processed food, the deal with the US involves a fundamental departure from the established policy of keeping food and farm produce out of international trade treaties. The US had little interest in the long list of agricultural products rattled off by our ministers that are not included in this deal. It has managed to push the Indian government to get what it wanted — a big chunk of India's fast-growing animal feed market that could



**Yogendra Yadav**

substitute China's reduced import of corn and soyabean from the US.

The corn from the US, mostly genetically modified, will find its way in the form of dried distillery grain and solubles (DDGS). And genetically modified soyabean will be allowed as soya oil. Now we learn that "some pulses" are also part of the deal. Much more could follow. Sharp observers of Indian agriculture such as Harish Damodaran in this paper and Harvir Singh of the portal Rural Voice anticipate that this deal would seriously hurt makka (maize) and soyabean farmers across the country who are already selling their crops much below the official MSP. The implications of this deal go far beyond what is visible in the joint statement, as it includes a provision to provide "deeper access" in the final agreement and a commitment by India to "address non-tariff barriers to the trade in US food and agricultural products". The Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture (ASHA-Swaraj) has expressed deep concern that this deal is "opening doors for import of a much larger spectrum of GM crops and food products".

It would be unfair to blame just the present regime or the BJP for turning their back on farmers. The new scheme of things is not so new. The post-Independence Indian state has never had a forward-looking vision for the farming community. Barring short-lived attention in the first Five Year Plan or a lone voice like Chaudhary Charan Singh, the farmer has been an afterthought in India's developmental planning. Policymakers have followed a borrowed and lazy belief that India would replicate the history of "developed" economies and most of the population would shift away from agriculture. In this vision, farmers are but a residue of the past. So, the best way to help a farmer is to help him to not remain a

farmer.

This residual perspective has shaped the Indian state's unwritten contract with the farmers, a coercive contract based on the farmers' lack of alternative livelihoods and bargaining power. The state was focused on the quantum of agricultural production, not on the producer's well-being. The price of staple food products was determined by the consumer's need for cheap food grains and not by the farmers' requirement of fair prices. Producers were made to subsidise consumers. Initially, the farmers were exhorted to produce more for the sake of the nation. Post Green Revolution, this gave way to a selective bargain: You produce more, we ensure remunerative prices. The contract held only for a few regions and a handful of crops. Once the farmers began protesting in the 1980s against unremunerative prices, the contract was modified: You grow more, we offer subsidies. Instead of fair prices, the Indian state offered cheap electricity, free irrigation and subsidised fertilisers, and pushed the farmers into permanent dependency. This was enough to stigmatise the farmer over environmental pollution, electricity theft and freebies. We are witnessing the logical culmination of this process. Now the state is telling the farmer: You do what you like, we cannot wait for you. At most we can give you a dole, provided you give us votes.

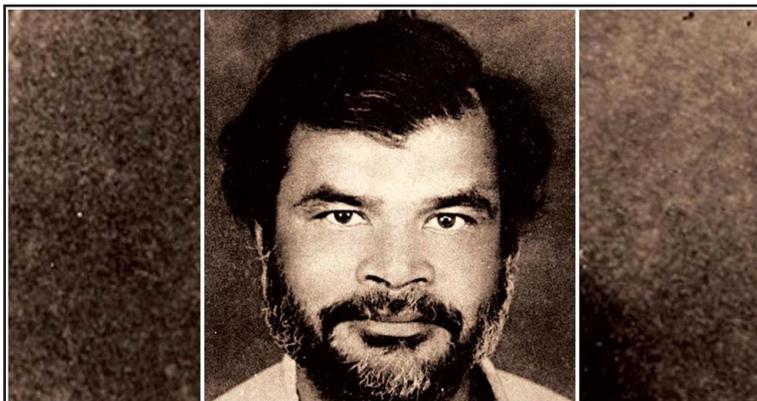
This contract is unsustainable and unacceptable. Covid reminded us that farmers are not dispensable. The agitation against the farm laws reminded us that farmers are not helpless. Many alternative experiments in agriculture all over the country remind us that they can have a different future. The challenge for the farmers is to weave a new politics with a different policy and an alternative perspective.

Courtesy **The Indian Express**, 11 February 2026. 

# How the murder of trade union leader Shankar Guha Niyogi hurt India

*He was killed in 1991 by thugs hired by businessmen angered that he had given workers self-respect and infused them with the spirit of equality.*

Ramachandra Guha



*Shankar Guha Niyogi. | @Dipankar\_cpiml via X*

The history of independent India is peppered with the violent deaths of prominent politicians. Indira Gandhi was murdered in her late sixties, Rajiv Gandhi in his mid-forties, Pramod Mahajan in his mid-fifties. Now add those whose lives were cut off in mid-stream by plane or road accidents – Sanjay Gandhi, Rajesh Pilot, Madhavrao Scindia, YS Rajasekhara Reddy. How might their subsequent careers have turned out had they lived another 20 years?

In my view, the premature death of the remarkable thinker and trade union leader, Shankar Guha Niyogi, arguably hurt India more than any of the deaths of the politicians mentioned in the previous paragraph. It dealt a body blow to the civil society movement in India, from which it has perhaps not yet recovered. Guha Niyogi was murdered in 1991, when he was still in his forties, killed by hired goons of the capitalists who hated him for giving workers self-respect and the belief that they

could be equal citizens of the land.

I have written an anecdotal piece about Guha Niyogi before. I must now write about him again, and in a more analytical vein. This is because the sociologist, Radhika Krishnan, has just published a fine book about what his life and work once meant and might still mean. Entitled *Shankar Guha Niyogi: A Politics in Red and Green*, the book draws extensively on personal interviews as well as on fugitive sources in Hindi.

Born in 1943 in a Bengali home, Guha Niyogi arrived at the age of 19 to work in the Bhilai Steel Plant, that iconic marker of India's road to modernity. He soon left paid employment to embrace full-time activism. He married an Adivasi lady and started organising mineworkers. He also became interested in issues of environmental justice, seeking to make state water and forest policies more responsive to the needs of local peasant and tribal communities instead of catering narrowly to

commercial and industrial interests.

In 1977, Guha Niyogi helped found the Chhattisgarh Mines Shramik Sangh, its name signalling its primary concern with the rights of mineworkers. Two years later, he catalysed the formation of a more broad-based organisation, the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha. Apart from the trade union, CMSS, the CMM had a women's wing, a youth wing, and a cultural wing. It also came to run a pioneering hospital funded by mineworkers.

From then till Guha Niyogi's murder, the CMM and the CMSS worked tirelessly on behalf of workers' rights, social reform, and environmental sustainability. A stream of idealistic middle-class Indian youths gave up the prospect of comfortable professional careers to join Niyogi and work with his organisations. They included such well-known names as Binayak Sen, a graduate of the Christian Medical College in Vellore, and Sudha Bharadwaj, a graduate of the equally prestigious Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur.

#### **An original thinker**

Notably, Guha Niyogi and the CMM went well beyond the traditional trade union focus on fair wages, decent working conditions, adequate leave and provision of provident fund facilities, though, of course, they made sure that these were properly taken care of too. One key concern was occupational health and safety. The organisation took the help of socially conscious scientists and engineers to set up a laboratory to measure pollution and safety measures at the workplace.

Though Guha Niyogi was a highly original thinker, the conditions of his life meant that he rarely had time to put pen to paper. One of the few extended pieces of writing that he left behind was called *Hamara Paryavaran (Our Environment)*. It has been sensitively translated from Hindi by Rajni Bakshi.

Here is a representative passage:

"We have no right to destroy the air which our ancestors breathed and the crystal-clear waters with which they quenched their thirst. This river, this air, this mountain, this jungle, these chirping birds – this is our land. We will take the help of science to move our world forward, but we will also ensure that the rivers remain clean and flow freely and there is pure invigorating air. We will always need to hear the melodies of birds which kept our ancestors one with nature."

In her book, Krishnan informs us that in the CMM's policy documents there is much attention to the damage to human life and livelihoods caused by water and air pollution, soil degradation, and overexploitation of natural resources by large industries wanting to make super-normal profits. This environmental abuse was externalised by public and private sector factories, leaving farmers, labourers, women and children to bear the costs.

Guha Niyogi had a keen interest in technologies of production that were better suited to Indian conditions. He recognised that the unthinking import of large machines from Europe and North America would further polarise society on lines of class and gender. As Krishnan observes, "the CMM also realised through its experiences that the brunt of mechanisation was inevitably borne by women. ... In the manual mines of Dalli, women constituted at least half of the workforce, and yet in the fully mechanised mines they were deemed 'unskilled' and not competent enough to be employed... The CMM saw this loss of employment and economic independence as a systematic assault on the dignity of women."

Guha Niyogi and his organisation were working to nurture "an alternative model of production, wherein the emphasis would be on safeguarding livelihoods, cashing in on labour power, and building the purchasing power of labour in order to sustain a thriving economy."

Krishnan also quotes Guha Niyogi as

writing: “The Chipko movement enthuses us and we recognize it as a revolutionary movement.” Reading her book, I was struck by the parallels between Guha Niyogi and the great Chipko leader, Chandi Prasad Bhatt. Guha Niyogi was a green Marxist, Bhatt (who is happily still with us), a left-wing Gandhian. Both made it their life’s work to blend ecology and equity. Both were true grassroots intellectuals, who immersed themselves among workers and peasants, while simultaneously articulating a wider vision for their country and the world.

Krishnan reproduces a CMM song, originally in Chhattisgarhi, which is evocative enough in translation:

*“Where there is water to slake every parched throat,*

*Where every field is irrigated and green,*

*Where every hand gets work to do,*

*Where the farmer gets a fair price for his produce,*

*Where every village has a hospital,*

*Where every child gets a good education,*

*Where none is deprived of land and home,*

*All trace of poverty, oppression, and capitalism removed,*

*O when will such a Chhattisgarh be?*

*Where the peasant and worker will rule!”*

Guha Niyogi was murdered more than 30 years ago. Yet in at least five major ways his life and work speak powerfully to the India of today:

First, it highlights the precarious plight of unorganised labour (so visible now especially in the construction sector and the gig economy);

Second, it underlines the vital role in sustaining democracy of independent civil society organisations. The need for such organisations is keenly felt in India today, when the Bharatiya Janata Party intimidates and persecutes civil society groups that do not

conform to their own Hindutva ideology;

Third, it shows the vital importance of integrating environmental sustainability in the development process. The alarming air pollution in our cities, the depletion of aquifers and the pollution of our rivers, the savage attacks on the Himalaya, the Western Ghats, and the Aravallis by infrastructure and mining corporations close to politicians in power – all show how costly it is for present and future generations to ignore the warnings of Shankar Guha Niyogi (and of Chandi Prasad Bhatt too);

Fourth, Guha Niyogi’s work offers a pathway for a more meaningful, that is to say, less exploitative and less destructive, development model for smaller, resource-rich states, such as Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand;

Fifth, it warns us not to have an excessively rosy view of the long-term impacts of the ‘latest’ technologies. Automation and Artificial Intelligence may render millions of Indians jobless, the males then turning to watching porn or hate videos on their phones. Guha Niyogi understood, far better than the boosters of Silicon Valley or Bengaluru, that new technologies, while increasing productivity and profit for private firms on the one hand, could have dangerously divisive and harmful effects for society and nature on the other.

This column is being published on the eve of Republic Day. The timing is not accidental. For few Indians in the history of our Republic have embodied the values of liberty, equality and (especially) fraternity as admirably as Shankar Guha Niyogi.

*This article first appeared in The Telegraph.*

*Ramachandra Guha’s latest book, Speaking with Nature: The Origins of Indian Environmentalism, is now in stores. His email address is ramachandraguha@yahoo.in.*

Courtesy **Scroll.in**, Jan 25, 2026. 

# Marxism Applied to India from Abroad

G.P. Bhattacharjee

## Chapter - IV

### HUMANIST PHILOSOPHY

Pp 65-97

Humanism is an old philosophy and Roy qualified his Humanism by the words ‘New’, ‘Radical’, ‘Scientific’, etc. because he claimed that “it is humanism enriched, reinforced and elaborated by scientific knowledge and social experience gained during the centuries of modern civilization”<sup>1</sup>. The main study of the humanist philosophy is man. Roy tried to interpret man in the light of scientific knowledge, traced all social progress to his ideas and aspirations. and visualised a new social order conducive to the welfare and freedom of the individual. He was a full-blooded materialist and maintained that life came out of inanimate matter and man is the highest product of the process of organic evolution. He held that experimentally life cannot be proved to be anything but a phenomenon of matter in a specific state of physico-chemical organisation.<sup>2</sup> According to him all the attributes of man including his intelligence and emotion have a physical basis and can be traced back to the lowest form of organic matter.

Roy tried to meet the challenge of the modern “revolution” in science which had blasted the Newtonian outlook dominating the, scientific world for nearly two hundred years. The Theory of Relativity, the Quantum Theory, the electrical structure of matter, Heisenberg’s principle of Indeterminacy-all these have revolutionized the traditional concepts of science. The philosophical consequences of the new developments of science are of profound significance. The materiality of matter, the law of causality, the concept of determinism-all have been placed in a melting pot. From these developments some renowned scientists like Eddington and Jeans have

come to the conclusion that the ultimate nature of the universe is mental. Scientists like Eddington and Schrödinger think that determinism must be definitely abandoned while another group including **Einstein** and **Max Planck** is of opinion that strict causality would ultimately be restored in physics. Roy tried to face the challenge of the new development of science and sought to prove that they ultimately have strengthened rather than blasted the foundation of materialism. He wrote: “It won’t do simply to dismiss authoritative scientific opinion, and the neo-mysticism claiming its sanction from it as ideological efforts to bolster up the tottering bourgeois social order and its cultural super-structure. That is only avoiding the issue.... The more convincing method will be to show that the philosophical consequences of the post-Marxian scientific research can be fitted into the materialist view of nature and life. The fallacies of the Newtonian natural philosophy should be admitted; Materialism should be freed from those fallacies and restated in terms which would harmonise with the latest scientific knowledge about the anatomy and physiology’ of nature, inanimate as well as living”<sup>3</sup>. With profound scholarship unusual in a political leader Roy tried to establish that in spite of the recent developments of science, the physical reality remains, though the old concept of matter was no longer tenable. The old dichotomy between Materialism and Idealism, he believed, was still valid in the metaphysical field and maintained that “as a negation of Materialism, idealist philosophy is logically associated with a mystic metaphysics of supernaturalism”<sup>4</sup>. The philosophical systems which prefer to take up an intermediate position

were condemned by Roy as the ultra-modern scientific scholasticism. In the Jail Volumes we find Roy's most serious attempt to reconcile materialism with the latest scientific knowledge. In the humanist period he fully subscribed to the ideas elaborated by him in these volumes about the philosophical consequences of modern science, though he now gave up the assumption of any direct relation between the advocacy of Spiritualism or Idealism with the desire to maintain the present class domination.<sup>5</sup>

Roy was, however, not happy with the term 'Materialism' and preferred the expression "Physical Realism". He candidly admitted that the term 'Materialism' has lost its meaning and makes a wrong impression<sup>6</sup> but he firmly held that the ultimate reality of the universe was a physical substance. He wrote: "... Materialism must be dissociated from certain notions which have been rendered untenable by the latest discoveries of science. Physics has discarded the old conception of matter, but it has not dissolved the physical universe into nothingness or the fantasy of disembodied minds. The world is not made of indivisible atoms—"the hard lumps of reality" of the Newtonian natural philosophy. But at the same time, physics cannot do without the concept of substance—the substratum of the world of experience. The field is not an abstract mathematical construction, it is measurable; therefore, it is a physical entity."<sup>7</sup> Roy therefore concluded that all really scientific objections to Materialism could be overcome if the expression "Physical Realism" was used.

Roy held that in the last analysis materialism was also a hypothesis, but he considered it a better hypothesis than a meta-physical non-material spiritual force<sup>8</sup> mainly for two reasons. First, the hypothesis of materialism can be made within the limits of rational thought and scientific knowledge providing a stimulus for its further expansion.<sup>9</sup> If materialism is accepted, man's urge to explain phenomena hitherto considered inexplicable would grow, but the assumption of a

metaphysical non-material force would place man at the tender mercies of an inscrutable providence which would consequently retard the expansion of human knowledge. Secondly, freedom of man, Roy thought, is inconsistent with the faith in the omnipotence of God. He wrote: "The restoration of God, in one form or another, will necessarily deprive man of his sovereignty. Surrendering spiritual freedom, he will naturally doubt his power, and forego his right to remake the world."<sup>10</sup> Faith in God, Roy maintained, is inconsistent with the view that man is the maker of his own destiny, because, religion reduces man simply as the means for the manifestation of God's grace. Roy proclaimed that the Radical Humanist philosophy, therefore, deposed God because, as he said, "unless we can depose God, (it is) no use fighting for freedom".<sup>11</sup>

Though he accepted materialism as an explanation of the origin of the world, inorganic as well as organic, Roy never accepted what we may call social materialism. Human nature, according to the philosophy of New Humanism, is determined more by physical and biological rather than by social and environmental factors. The experience of the Russian Revolution had undermined Roy's faith in the supremacy of the social environment over the nature of man. The main problem before him was to discover in human nature a sanction for a harmonious social order as well as the basic incentive to all social progress. The first he discovered in human reason and the second in man's urge for freedom which was also ultimately rooted in human reason or intelligence. Roy's assumption of the rational man and his political philosophy based upon it revived the tradition of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment secularised the old concept of the "law of nature" which was at first propounded by the Greek thinkers.<sup>12</sup> By natural law they understood an intuition of the human heart about what is morally just. The Stoic philosophers and the mediaeval schoolman equated natural law with reason, and their concept of reason was still

associated with divine revelation. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, natural laws were understood more or less in the same sense as laws of science. In science, the laws of physical nature are deduced rationally from the observed facts about the nature of matter. From this it was concluded that the laws of human nature could also be deduced from an observation of the supposed facts of human nature. Once the laws of human nature were established scientifically it was assumed that man would conform to them just as matter conformed to the physical law of nature. Man must therefore be made conscious of his own nature. Education or enlightenment was the only way to human regeneration. In his philosophy of New Humanism Roy carried the tradition of the Law of Nature understood in the rational and secular sense and tried to explain the basis of human reason more fully.

As a materialist Roy tried to trace the roots of human nature to physical and biological factors. Man is the product of a long process of evolution—physical and biological and the nature of man is determined by this process. First, subject to an evolutionary process, human nature, Roy maintained, cannot be an immutable category. He took up an evolutionary view of human nature and wrote: “It is a hackneyed saying that human nature never changes. The truth however is just the contrary: to change is human nature. Otherwise there is no sense in regarding the history of civilization as an evolutionary process”.<sup>13</sup> But in spite of the evolution and changes there are, Roy maintained, some constant factors in human nature and the origin of these factors were traced by him to this process of evolution itself. Roy recognised the uniqueness of the individual but as human beings they all have some factors in common which form the foundation of human nature.

In the philosophy of Radical Humanism two basic traits of human nature are emphasised. One is the rationality of man and the other is the human

urge for freedom. Roy tried to trace the origin of these two basic traits of human nature to the physical universe and to the pre-human biological evolution without postulating anywhere a transcendental category. He, in other words, tried to interpret human nature in physical and naturalistic terms.

It is an old assumption of political philosophy that man is a rational animal. Roy tried to discover the root of human rationality to the law-governed physical universe. He wrote: “Rising out of the background of the law governed physical nature, the human being is essentially rational”.<sup>14</sup> There is strict uniformity in physical nature and all its phenomena are regulated by inexorable laws. Man with his highly developed brain and nervous system serving as the means of inter-relations between the organism and its environment becomes conscious of the law-governed character of the universe.” “The mind,” Roy wrote, “becomes conscious of the environments, the radius of which gradually expands until the entire nature is embraced. It being consciousness of a law-governed system, human mind is necessarily rational in essence”.<sup>15</sup> In the physical world man finds that nothing happens arbitrarily. Every phenomenon in nature is connected with some other phenomenon or phenomena. From this experience man concludes that nothing can happen in nature without some cause. This makes him rational, and he begins to think in terms of cause and effect. Explaining the rise of human reason he wrote: “Reason is the simple, instinctive notion that every object of experience is connected with some other object or objects which may or may not have been already experienced; but because of the belief in the connection, which holds the world of experience together, their existence is assumed.”<sup>16</sup> The reason in man, in the words of Roy, is thus an echo of the harmony of the universe.<sup>17</sup> He pointed out that reason did not appear suddenly in man, but in a rudimentary form it is present even among animals though their activities still

remained on the instinctive level. And an instinctive act, he pointed out, presupposes consciousness, and results from the automatic operation of intelligence".<sup>18</sup> Human rationality, according to Roy is a developed form of instinctive rationality present in the animal kingdom. Man, he maintained, inherited mental and emotional equipment of the animals as the basis of "humanness".<sup>19</sup>

Roy thus traced the origin of human rationality to "the rational foundation of the objective physical world".<sup>20</sup> In his philosophy "reason has, as it were", as Dr. J. P. Van Praag has put it, "emancipated itself in man from living nature".<sup>21</sup> The process of emancipation began with the pre-human biological organisms and reached the culmination in man. Roy thus found a secular foundation of human rationality and made it independent of any transcendental significance. His main purpose was to integrate materialist philosophy with human reason, and he said that "unless we can trace reason to the common denominator of monistic Materialism, rationalism has no meaning for me".<sup>22</sup> Trying to secularise the concept of human reason Roy observed: "Reason is not a metaphysical category. It is the consciousness of the harmony of nature, and as such an empirical reality. Rationality is a biological function, which is microcosmic echo of the rhythm of the cosmos".<sup>23</sup> Reason is an empirical reality because it is represented by physical nature itself ("Physical determinism is reason in nature"),<sup>24</sup> and it is a biological function because man becomes conscious of it owing to his highly developed brain which he has inherited from his animal ancestry.

It is interesting to note here that in the *Jail Volumes* there is a passage very similar to the ideas explained above. Roy wrote: "Rationalism is the mental p.71 reflex of physical causality... Causality is reason in nature. If nature were irrational, that is to say, if causality were not an objective reality, an ontological category, rationalist thought would be impossible. Intelligence is a

biological function, and, as such, is a part of physical nature. Reason is born of intelligence. It is the consciousness of causality in nature."<sup>25</sup> Explaining the secular character of human reason he observed: "In the light of the demonstrated fact that causality is an objective reality and an ontological category, reason ceases to be a metaphysical mystery. Reason derives its authority from the objective physical laws, which, in the last analysis, are but generalised statements of causal relations."<sup>26</sup>

It should be pointed out here that by describing man as rational, Roy oversimplified the problem of human nature. The dynamism of non-rational factors of the human mind has not been taken fully into consideration in his philosophy. Roy did not, it is true, exclude emotions and will from the concept of human nature, but he maintained that they could be reconciled with reason. "Reason being a biological property, it is not the antithesis of will. Intelligence and emotion can be reduced to a common biological denominator".<sup>27</sup> He explained his point thus: "(Man) rose out of the background of the physical universe, through the long process of biological evolution. The umbilical cord was never broken; man, with his mind, intelligence, will remain an integral part of the physical universe. The latter is a cosmos—a law-governed system. Therefore, man's being and becoming, his emotions, will, ideas are also determined; man is essentially rational".<sup>28</sup> Man's will and emotions are also determined in the sense that they are caused by physical factors. They are rational in so far as they are not mysterious categories. Understood in this light, Roy's assertion that "will is not an irrational impulse"<sup>29</sup> may be accepted. But there is no denying the fact that human will and emotion sometimes tend to go against rational consideration. Roy was not quite oblivious of this aspect of human nature. He wrote— although in a different context—that "most emotional acts are voluntary but not rational result of free thinking. Will often defies reason".<sup>30</sup>

The presence of will having a tendency to defy reason is a specific feature of man's character, and it makes human nature an extremely complex phenomenon. The physical nature follows a set of laws mechanically which makes the physical system law-governed. The lower animals also follow their instinct without having any tendency contrary to it within themselves. But on the human level the problem becomes complex by the presence of a conflict between different tendencies within man. Roy could not ignore this problem and he wrote: "The universe is a physical system. Having grown out of that background, the human being is also a physical system. But there is a great difference: The physical Universe is law-governed, the laws being inherent in itself, whereas man possesses will and can choose. Between the world of man and the world of inanimate matter, there lies the vast world of biological evolution. The latter has its own specific laws which, however, can be referred back to the general laws of the world of dead matter; consciousness appears at a much later stage. Therefore human will cannot be directly related to the laws of the physical universe".<sup>31</sup> Admitting this peculiar feature of man, Roy asserted that "inasmuch as the entire process of biological evolution takes place in the context of the world of dead matter, human will cannot be an antithesis to the law-governedness of the physical universe. Reason harmonises the two".<sup>32</sup> In plain language it means that it is possible for man to direct his will and control his emotion with his rational faculty.

It may however be conceded that man's emotions, will, ideas etc. are determined and can be explained by physical factors and therefore are rational (as opposed to mysterious) categories. But does this functional rationality of the human organism guarantee rational thinking of the human mind? In man's mind passions, emotions and feelings play a dominant role and very often they tend to go counter to the rational thinking. This conflict between passion and reason

within the human mind is a common experience of man. The development of psychoanalysis has rendered the problem of human nature all the more complex. The assumption of the "Unconscious" determining the large part of human behaviour has challenged the concept of rational man. The "libido" theory indicates that man's activities are largely determined by impulses rather than by rational calculation. The development of art, science, social reform etc. was explained by **Freud** as "sublimation of the thwarted libido. The 'libido' has been interpreted differently by different writers, **Jung** does not share Freud's view of Pan-sexualism. According to him the 'libido' is an undifferentiated primal life force which takes the form of various instincts. **Adler** came to the conclusion that the driving force of life is the Will to Power and the urge to exercise superiority over others. Along with psycho-analysis there developed another school of thought throwing doubts on the assumption that man is rational. This trend of thought is known as anti-intellectualism though the name is a misleading one. The so-called "anti-intellectual" are not against reason or intelligence. After much observation they have come to the conclusion that human thought and conduct are more often than not determined by appetites, passion, prejudices, conditional reflexes etc. **Graham Wallas** in his book *Human Nature in Politics* pointed out after a study of British politics that the voters did not consider the issues logically and rationally, not even by intelligent self-interest, but were mostly influenced by prejudices, flattery, good looks of the candidates and many other minor and negligible factors. **Pareto** and many others also came to the same conclusion. Referring to the development of psycho-analysis, Roy pointed out that it has only a limited scope and can deal only with psycho-pathological cases and all its theories which claim a wider application were considered by him as "far-fetched".<sup>33</sup> The doctrine of psycho-analysis may not be wholly true but it has raised an important problem,

namely, the role of passion and blind urges in shaping man's conduct and behaviour. While analysing the concept of human nature Roy did not take this aspect of the problem seriously into consideration though he recognised that the psychological factors must be given proper place in social dynamics.<sup>34</sup> The concept of human nature should be based upon a more thorough

analysis of human instincts and emotion. These points are mentioned not to establish the irrational character of man but only to emphasise the complexity of his nature. Different thinkers have judged men from different stand-points and all views are only partially true. Man, in the words of Max. C. Otto "escapes the neat formulas in which the unimaginative would capture him".<sup>35</sup>

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

### **References:**

1. M. N. Roy, *New Humanism*, p. 37.
2. *The Marxian Way II*, p. 69,
3. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
4. M. N. Roy, *Reason Romanticism and Revolution II*, p. 266.
5. In the *Jail Volumes* he wrote: "The fashionable mysticism of our day is not the result of any absolute inadequacy of scientific knowledge. It is the symptom of a social disease. It reflects the striving for a decayed ruling class to restrain the forces of social progress, antagonistic to the established order". *Jail Volumes*, IV, p. 23(a).
- While discussing the views of Jeans and Eddington he pointed out that they "philosophically cannot free themselves from the traditions of the ideology of class domination and therefore entertain philosophical views, which directly or indirectly support spiritualism, contradicting their own scientific theories." *Jail Volumes*, III, p. 109(a).
6. M. N. Roy, *Beyond Communism*, p. 43.
7. M. N. Roy, *Reason Romanticism and Revolution II*, p. 302.
8. *The Marxian Way II*, p. 366.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 367.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.
11. M. N. Roy, *Beyond Communism*, p. 43.
12. See Chapter "The Natural Law", *Reason Romanticism and Revolution I*, pp. 132-160.
13. M. N. Roy, *Reason Romanticism and Revolution I*, p. 19.
14. Principle No. 4. Principle refers to the
- Twenty Two principles of Radical Democracy formulated by M. N. Roy, See Appendix.
15. M. N. Roy, *Reason Romanticism and Revolution I*, p. 20.
16. *Ibid.*
17. M. N. Roy, *New Humanism*, p. 36.
18. *The Marxian Way*, Vol. II, p. 68.
19. M. N. Roy, *Reason Romanticism and Revolution I*, p. 18.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
21. Dr. J. P. Van Praag, *Humanism (International Humanist and Ethical Union)* p. 11.
22. M. N. Roy, *Beyond Communism*, p. 66.
23. M. N. Roy. *The Rhythm of the Cosmos (Inaugural address at the second All India Rationalist Conference held at Tanali in February 1962 and published in the form of a pamphlet)*. p. 17.
24. M. N. Roy, *Reason Romanticism and Revolution II*, p. 257.
25. *Jail Volumes*, VII, pp. 101(b)-102(a).
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 102 (b)-103 (a).
27. Principle No. 4. See n. 14.
28. M. N. Roy, *New Humanism*, pp. 35-36.
29. M. N. Roy, *Reason Romanticism and Revolution I*, p. 40.
30. *The Humanist Way V*. p. 66.
31. M. N. Roy, *Radical Humanism*, p. 16.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *The Marxian Way*, Vol. 1, p. 271.
34. *Ibid.* II, p. 183.
35. Max C. Otto, *Science and Moral Life*, p. 38. 

# Celebrating science, outside the classroom

Vivek Wadhwa

I spent last weekend in Pune at the India Science Festival and left with real confidence in the country's future. The event brought together students, scientists, teachers, policymakers, and families in a buzzing atmosphere of ideas and discovery. Young people from across the country, including children from the poorest villages, were talking about AI, sensors, and quantum computing, and proudly demonstrating their projects. They spoke openly about failed experiments, what they had learned and what they would try next. This was learning by doing, not memorising; they were celebrating, tinkering, and thinking like builders.

This is exactly what India needs more of to inspire the next generation. For the first time in history, children in remote villages have access to the same knowledge and technologies as students in the West.

Their schools may lack resources and their teachers may not always show up, but that hasn't stopped them from learning or building. They may be poor, but they are digitally fluent. They use smartphones to watch tutorials, search for answers, join online communities, and increasingly explore with AI. They don't wait to be taught, they teach themselves - and in today's world, that may be the most important skill of all.

Meanwhile, as happens too often to education and policy circles, I found myself in rooms with well-meaning academics from India, the US, and Canada reminiscing about Jawaharlal Nehru and calling for more government control and more government funding. Some even argue that Indian children can't innovate without top-down reform. It was clear they hadn't stepped outside. They were out of touch with the quiet revolution already underway, led not by institutions, but by young

people who are learning, building, and solving problems on their own.

This shift is easy to miss if you are looking through outdated foreign lenses. But it is happening all over India, and it is moving faster than most people realise.

That became painfully clear in one of the more heated moments of the weekend, during a closed-door session with a professor from the University of Toronto. He insisted that by every global benchmark, India could not possibly be considered innovative - too few patents, too few academic publications, and too many applications to his university from India (as if the next generation was trying to escape the country).

The subtext - and superiority complex - was unmistakable.

We argued, because what he, and so many others, fail to understand is that these benchmarks were built around Western institutions, publishing systems, and funding models. They measure academic output, not actual learning. They capture invention in formal labs, not grassroots problem solving. They completely miss the raw distributed innovation I saw at the festival - and the Indian way of *jugaad*.

If the benchmark were digital fluency, India ranks #1 in the world. Nearly everyone has a smartphone; UPI is the default for daily transactions; people troubleshoot on WhatsApp, learn on YouTube, and increasingly ask AI - often in their own languages.

One of my taxi drivers in Delhi casually pulled out ChatGPT, in Hindi, to answer a question I'd asked. That's what innovation looks like in the real world.

India doesn't need to wait for institutions to catch up or take cues from western gatekeepers. The next generation is already

innovating – and is not asking for permission. They're learning, building, and solving with what they have, where they are.

The festival reflected the depth and range of India's scientific ecosystem. Children and first-time builders shared space with senior scientists and leaders like Nobel laureate Venki Ramakrishnan, astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla, AI pioneer Ashish Vaswani, astrophysicist Nikku Madhusudan, and former principal scientific adviser to the government of India, K Vijay Radhavan. They weren't behind velvet ropes; they walked the grounds, spoke with students, and answered questions. That proximity matters. For many young attendees, it was the first time they saw science practised by people who looked like them, spoke like them, and took their ideas seriously.

That openness is central to the festival's DNA. Its founder Varun Aggarwal, saw the need for a space where science could come alive for everyone, not just researchers or elites. A tech entrepreneur himself, he wanted to bridge the gap between science and society. When he launched the festival in 2020, he called Indian science a sleeping giant and set

out to wake it up. That vision has taken hold. The 2024 edition drew more than 36,000 attendees, and it's only growing.

Yes, India has a lot of work to do. Its schools need fixing and it needs to support its innovators. The education system that the British imposed on India still trains for obedience more than creativity. Quality varies wildly and inequality is real. But the most hopeful sign is that learning is no longer waiting for all of that to be solved. It's already happening, driven by curiosity, and enabled by access. The hunger is there, the tools are there, and the spark is already lit.

The India Science Festival is exactly the kind of platform India needs to unleash the potential of its young population and leap into the future. It underscored what is possible when children are trusted to explore, when science is made accessible, and when knowledge is treated not as a privilege, but as a shared resource.

**Vivek Wadhwa** is CEO, Vionix Bioscience. *The views expressed are personal.*

Courtesy **Hindustan Times**, 17 January, 2026. 🌈

**Contd. from page - (16)**

## **Democratic Backsliding in India: An Ambedkarite...**

### **7. Conclusion: Constitutional Democracy at a Crossroads**

This paper has argued that India is experiencing a process of democratic hollowing rather than outright authoritarian rupture. Electoral competition persists, but the substantive content of constitutional democracy—rights, secularism, institutional accountability, and judicial independence—has been progressively undermined. From an Ambedkarite perspective, this trajectory reflects the resurgence of social and political forces that the Constitution sought to restrain.

Ambedkar's warning that democracy in India would be endangered in the absence of constitutional morality resonates with renewed urgency today. The future of the Indian republic depends not merely on the survival of electoral mechanisms, but on the revitalization of constitutional ethics, social democracy, and the struggle against graded inequality. Without this, constitutional democracy risks being reduced to a formal shell, increasingly detached from the emancipatory aspirations that informed its founding.

Courtesy: **ChatGPT** 🌈

# The Humanist Frame

## Humanist Economics

Robin Marris

(Summarized by : **Vinod Jain**)

Man's economic environment is largely of his own making. The majority of significant economic 'laws' express the behaviour of man-made institutions and are not unchangeable. If we choose to regard an economic system as a rigid framework, and suffer thereby, it is our own fault—the product of conservative ideology rather than scientific analysis.

This proposition is fundamental to the Humanist position. For, as medieval religious sentiment inhibited [hindered or prevented] experiment in natural science, modern political sentiment often inhibits experiment in economic organization. The Humanist believes in purposive social evolution: therefore he cannot agree to treat the behaviour and development of economic systems as passive, mechanical processes: he is bound to visualise these matters as problems of deliberate collective choice.

As a matter of fact professional economics was never as dismal as its image. The 'classical' writers did not believe in unchangeable economic laws, nor did they base their 'science' on purely a priori reasoning. They observed the institutions and behaviour of capitalism, they deduced theorems, and often expressed overt political approval. Some did not approve: Marx was one of the classical writers and John Stuart Mill has authoritatively been described as a socialist. Neither Adam Smith nor Malthus believed that man's economic chains were unbreakable. Smith set out to discover how the wealth of nations may be increased; Malthus, influenced by contemporary population statistics, deduced his theorem from a reasonable interpretation of their implications, then searched for ways in which the 'law' might be prevented from operating.

Adam Smith, faced with only the rudiments of industrial Capitalism, concluded that decentralisation and the Invisible Hand would best encourage the growth of wealth. This was a pragmatic argument. He did not say that economic institutions were natural phenomena with immutable laws: he said that the institutional structure implied in the doctrine of *laissez-faire* was a desirable structure, on account of inherent properties which, he believed, favoured prosperity. In other words, Adam Smith's advocacy of *laissez-faire* was just as conscious as is, for example, the Socialist advocacy of alternative systems today. Both, in principle, are consistent with the Humanist tradition.

Nevertheless, the popular impact of classical economics was indeed dismal. Whatever the classical writers may or may not have intended, all (except Marx) contributed to a middle-class ideology of institutional conservatism.

Introspection suggests that people like to be rich. How then should businessman behave, we may reasonably ask, if they wish to maximize their profits over a finite period? On the single assumption, treated as an axiom, that the aim of business is profit maximization, the analyst can erect an extensive deductive framework — extensive, sophisticated and difficult to test.

Modern economics is more empirical than classical and post-classical economics.

Can we indicate precisely a specifically Humanist approach to economics? I believe we can, and suggest that it could be summarized in three principles, which I would call the principle of involvement, the principle of logical realism, and the principle of scientific integrity.

We have seen that although the classical writers did not believe social institutions to be

unchangeable, the effect of their work was to rationalize middle-class conservatism. Furthermore, not only classical economics proper, but also post-classical and much of modern economics is fundamentally utilitarian — utilitarian and rationalist, but not necessarily Humanist. People's 'wants and desires' are to be accepted as given data, and the only problems of economics are those of satisfying them. Modern economists, to do them justice, do not deny the possibility of changing wants, but they tend to define their subject in such a way that these questions lie outside it.

This raises two fundamental objections. The first is the scientific objection that the psychological and sociological assumptions are often bad ones, based on inadequate consideration of individual psychology on the one hand and of general sociology on the other. The second, more specifically Humanist objection is that the effect is to suppress discussion of deliberate social change, of the question 'How should man mould his institutions in order to improve his evolution? When economists suggest policies to governments their prescriptions generally relate to a given set of institutions (Capitalist or Communist as the case may be); they seldom propose new ones.

Humanist Economics, by contrast, because of the Humanist's concern with psychosocial evolution, will be especially interested in institutional and behavioral development. In this field, Humanist Economics will inevitably be tinged with socialism in a very broad sense. Humanist Economics, in contrast with purely utilitarian economics, may share something with the doctrines of certain minority religions. The Humanist cannot regard the economic system as outside the sphere of ethics. It is this that distinguishes Humanist Economics from mere logic, and may be summed up in the principle I have described as 'involvement'.

The principle of involvement carries a corollary [a logical proposition that follows from

one already proved]. The conscious development of social institutions is impossible without conscious social experiment. At the present time (roughly 1960), social experiment is usually regarded in the West as rather shocking. In practice, large-scale social experiments have mainly occurred under dictatorship, but even here the policies have seldom been overtly admitted to be experimental....for the Humanist, this time should already have arrived.

The principle of logical realism means no more than that Humanist thinking should always be both logical and realistic. Because we know that by moulding their institutions and behaviour men and women can determine their future, we must not fall into the error of assuming that any particular future has only to be striven for to happen, or that any plausible solution will do. 'Formal' economic and social theory is an essential weapon in the armoury of the Humanist social scientist, and the Humanist economist must be as vigilant against wooliness, unrealism or naivete as any other. But in being realistic we do not say 'human nature can't be changed'; we try to find out scientifically and logically the ways in which behaviour can be changed usefully. It follows, among other things, that Humanist Economics should pay more attention to psychology than Economics has hitherto done.

Finally, the principle of scientific integrity. In all social science this requires particular emphasis. Our typical subject-matter has three characteristics which, in combination, create unique difficulties: social systems are structurally complex, structurally unstable, and not readily susceptible to experiment in the laboratory sense.....In social science, experiment is inhibited not only by the political objections of the potential subjects, but also, more than in any other field, by the fact that even if subjects agree to participate, the experimenter cannot avoid interference: people who know they are subjects of experiments tend to behave unnaturally.

Economics is bound to be mainly an observational and analytic discipline. And, almost self-evidently, the observations are mainly statistics, and will need to be interpreted by statistical methods. The statistical methods of testing hypotheses have been very successful where the causal relations under study are simple or, if complex, are comprehensively understood.

In economics, because of the evident political implications of economic theory, the desire to rationalize whole ideologies has been even more compelling. The position has some similarity to that of natural philosophy before the age of reason; lacking the empirical facts and technique for explaining phenomena, people turned to religion: the modern social scientist is not usually religious, but almost as bad, he is often implicitly ideological.

The alternative offence against scientific integrity is an exaggerated reaction to the first, and it too has some affinity to religious evils.....Men created theologies because they could not understand the natural world. Today, many people do not want to understand social phenomena for fear of what they may learn; they escape by denying the validity of all types of probabilistic reasoning.

Humanist economics, following the principle

of scientific integrity, must attempt the difficult task of steering a true course in a sea strewn with dangers from bad theory, phoney experimentation and exaggerated scepticism. Such a course does not involve the rejection of political value- judgments; indeed, it must often employ these, but the political values must be frank and open, and not, as is frequently the case, concealed in deductive apparatus. Humanist Economics will fully employ mathematics, but will not restrict their application to models based on the assumption that institutions and behaviour can be treated as given, and therefore exogenous to the problem. For Humanist economics must observe above all others the principle of involvement, and will accept the duty to investigate desirable directions in which institutions and behaviour may be changed.

It will be obvious that we have been describing Humanist Economic principles against the background of thought and organization of industrial Capitalism. Much of what we have been saying might appear to have little application elsewhere: it is difficult to decide whether this impression is correct. Clearly the Humanist economic sermon is of great importance in the uncommitted, undeveloped countries. 🌍

(To be continued .....

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**- Mahi Pal Singh,**  
Editor, The Radical Humanist

From M.N. Roy's Writings:

## DECENTRALISATION OF POWER\*

M.N. Roy

The central problem of all modern democracies is that of concentration of power in the hands of the State which has increased in a phenomenal manner in the course of the last five or six decades. What is power? Power can be defined as the ability to do things. As such, power will always have a place in human society. But the usefulness of power is eclipsed by abuses when it is concentrated to such an extent that the community as a whole becomes totally powerless. Secondly, the concept of the State has also to be defined. Because, power is associated with the function of the State, some political theoreticians of recent times have defined the State as an organ of coercion, an instrument created by a certain class or section of society with the purpose of exercising its domination over the rest. The corollary to this definition is that a just and fair social order is impossible so long as the State exists. Therefore, thinking out their thoughts consistently, these political theorists came to the conclusion that in an ideal society the State must wither away. The anarchist denial of the very necessity of the State is only an exaggerated version of what may be called the communist Utopia.

The ideal of a stateless society is an obvious absurdity. The most outstanding feature of the communist social organisation is greater and greater concentration of power, political as well as economic. It is very difficult to see how dictatorships or other autocratic forms of government, or one of the two processes can ever annul the other. The establishment of a communist society presupposes a highly centralised political power. Such unrealistic Utopian ideas about the future naturally result from the equally unrealistic, empirically

unverifiable, doctrines that society is divided into irreconcilable classes, and the history of civilisation has been a history of class struggle. The division of society into classes with diverse interests is a historical fact. But it is equally true that cohesive forces are also inherent in society. The centrifugal tendency is counteracted by a centripetal tendency. In the history of social evolution, an equilibrium between the two created stability, whereas discord and disharmony led either to the establishment of dictatorships or other autocratic forms of government or to social disintegration.

If there was no cohesive force in society, then mankind would have continued in a state governed by the laws of the jungle. The entire history of society shows that the cohesive force has always been more or less in operation; otherwise, there could be no history of civilisation. Ancient civilisations broke down because the forces of social cohesion and harmony were overwhelmed by strong centrifugal tendencies. Mediaeval and modern history has also been punctuated from time to time by wars and revolutions. But reaching higher and higher levels of social evolution, civilisation survived those recurring vicissitudes and regained equilibrium of the conflicting forces.

It is possible to visualise an idealised State when the contradictory forces will disappear, and society be a homogenous-organism. Then, there would be no classes, one trying to dominate all others. Yet, society will be there; it will not be a primitive community, but a much more complicated organisation with greatly diversified fields of activities. Such a society cannot possibly do without a central organisation. It need not be a Leviathan, as the State has

been described, but only a coordinating factor, one of the various social institutions, the function of which will be to harmonise the functions of the various other institutions.

Primitive communities organised themselves politically much later than their original formation, primarily with the purpose of self-defence and struggle for existence. In the intervening period, progressive human development added to the original functions of society, which was departmentalised according to vocations and professions. Eventually, the State arose to coordinate and harmonise the diverse departments of social activities so as to promote the welfare of the community as a whole. It was not superimposed on society, nor given any totalitarian significance. It was created as the instrument of public administration to maintain order, to make laws and enforce them, so that the diverse forms of social activities could be carried on peacefully. The State rose as one of the several other social institutions, all equally autonomous — economic, educational, cultural.

There was a time when the government did not interfere in the economic life of society. The requirements of the community were met by the peasants, artisans and traders, applying human labour to natural resources either individually or organized in guilds. Individual freedom and institutional autonomy in educational or cultural fields were particularly beyond the jurisdiction of the State.

The economic advantages of the politically centralized modern society are a doubtful blessing. We can therefore visualise a time when the State will again cease to be the Leviathan which it has become today, without dreaming of the absurd Utopia of a stateless society, a society without public administration. But we shall have to search for ways and means to reduce the functions of the State to the minimum; in other words, restore to the native function of an instrument for public administration, to co-

ordinate the various functions of other autonomous social institutions.

There are social philosophers who advocate what is called a pluralistic society, composed of autonomous institutions, the State being one of them, with no other function than to regulate and co-ordinate their diverse activities. This view of social organisation was stated in the nineteenth century liberal dictum that that government is the best which governs the least. Since then, the tendency for concentration of power has gained ground: as a result, it is not an exaggeration to say that the State has become an engine of coercion. But the point is that it is so not because of power as such, but because of concentration of power. So, ultimately, the problem of democratic political practice is that of decentralisation. Politically, it may not be a baffling problem. It is aggravated by the centralisation of economy, immensely reinforcing the power of the State. In the last analysis, the problem, therefore, is: Can the economy of a modern society be decentralised? And in consequence thereof, also the political power? This is the problem of our time, and it will not do to blink over it by arguing that, since it has been so for centuries, how can it be otherwise? The fatalistic view that human ingenuity has, been exhausted and the last word of wisdom pronounced, implies that mankind is nearly its journey's end, and that the perspective is not promising; it is moving towards a social breakdown. With such a negation of human potentiality to evolve, progress and create endlessly, "might is right" will not be only the legal but also the moral law. One can imagine what life will be like in a society ruled by such law, the law of the jungle.

If human freedom is not to be sacrificed in the scramble for power, we shall have to explore the possibility of political practice without the interference of political parties. Because it is through the instrumentality of political parties that power is concentrated in

the hands of minorities, to be abused and misused on false pretences. The desired decentralisation of power is conditional upon the disappearance of the instrument of centralisation. It must be replaced by another instrument, which can guarantee that the sovereignty of the people will always remain with the people. So long as political parties are believed to be essential for democratic practice, power will be inevitably concentrated in the hands of a few men. Therefore, under the party system, benevolent dictatorship is the best one can reasonably expect; and one also may idealise benevolent dictatorship; but the fact is that it has never existed in the world.

There are people who are above corruption. But politics as it is practised today repels them. They stay out of the scramble for power because it might corrupt even the best of men. Nevertheless, they are not necessarily unconcerned with public affairs. They try to do small things in their quiet manner, and the cumulative effect of their silent endeavour may keep the morale of society from a complete collapse. To raise politics above corruption, it must be free from the lust for power. A constitutional structure based upon an even distribution of power alone can purify politics, and such a genuine democratic system is possible if the individual is restored to his place of primacy.

Democracy has been discredited firstly because of the fallacious theory which made for deceptive practice; and secondly, the practice did not allow that a solid foundation of the democratic State was laid. It placed a premium on demagogy. Those who are dreaming of a better world in which politics will be free from corruption and concomitant evils, must apply themselves to the task of laying the foundation of a democratic society. Individual men and women must be conscious of their individuality, conscious of their ability to judge intelligently and discriminatingly all

moral and political issues confronting them, so that in course of time politicians will not be able to sway them by appeals to base instincts and unbridled emotions, when a growing number of electors will be able to examine the promises made to them by parties at election time and find out whether they are genuine or false. They will be building democracy from the bottom. That is the proper approach to the baffling problem of democratic practice in the modern world: the problem of practising direct democracy in large States with huge populations. Genuine democracy must be direct democracy. Indirect democracy means delegation of power. And delegation of power means surrender of sovereignty. Unless the democratic State is based on the foundation, not of helpless atomised individuals, but on the foundation of a network of locally organized democracies, democracy will never be real.

Decentralisation of democracy will prevent centralization of power, and the function of the State will be reduced to coordination of the activities of the other autonomous. This process may take a long time. That is the common objection against it. But once we make the choice and begin moving in the new direction, it is not really such a long way as it appears to be. The precondition is to discard the traditional notion of human nature, and to know that it is neither evil nor divine, but that man is essentially rational; that, given the opportunity, every human being is capable of thinking for himself, judging right and wrong, making judgements and acting accordingly. Unless by his own nature, as a biological being, man was capable of thinking rationally and behaving morally, it would be a vain dream to visualise a free, just and harmonious social order. For the time being, it is true that the common people are illiterate; they may not be able to govern country. But at the same time, is it not a fact, that left to themselves, even the most ignorant peasants can manage their affairs better than

our present government? The distrust for the ability of the common people to think for themselves and take care of themselves is only a pretext for seizing power in their name and abusing that power to suppress their liberty.

At election times, all parties go to the people and make promises; they all know that not half of their promises can be fulfilled; but they rely on the fact that the voters cannot understand, and therefore, can be duped. Can that state of affairs not be changed? It can be. To change this state of affairs is the first necessity, the biggest task for anybody who wishes to participate in politics—not for selfish ends. One need not go to the people only to catch their votes; to help them cast their votes-intelligently, would be an immensely more important work. The electorate should be asked to examine the programmes of all the parties, to see if the promises can be fulfilled or, if fulfilled will really improve matters. But this new political practice presupposes a radical change in the idea of human nature. It is an appeal to reason, which presupposes the belief that man is a rational being. Political practice is guided by the notion that the ordinary man cannot think for himself; therefore he must be persuaded to follow parties and politicians. Since this unnatural relation between the people, the parties and politicians constitutes the foundation of what is called party politics, the latter prevents the people even to think for themselves. Politics is not only a scramble for power, but competition in all manner of questionable practices.

The position may appear to be a vicious circle. But there is a way out, which party politicians would not take, because that would mean the end of their days. Appeal to reason is the way out. And modern science indicates the way. Science teaches that human nature is not to believe, but to enquire, that human nature is rational. It is true that the rational nature of man has been buried very deep. But,

being the essence of human nature, it can be recovered. Let some people have the conviction and the courage to act accordingly. Let them raise political practice on the level of reason and intelligence. I have no doubt the appeal to reason will find a response. The new politics will bear fruit sooner than one dares imagine; only, the measure of success will not be power, but gradual disappearance of that evil. Even a few people can lay down a solid foundation of democracy and freedom, if they forego the quest for power, do not participate in the scramble; do not ask for the vote of the people to rule in their name; but, on the contrary, remind the voters of their human dignity, capacity to think and to act creatively.

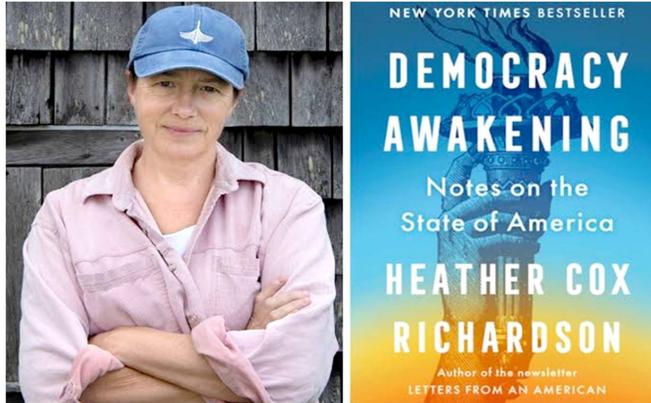
Thus, the electorate will gradually become critical and discriminating; the time will come when the voters of a locality will tell candidates of all parties to leave them alone; amongst themselves they will find men in whom they can have confidence and who will remain responsible to them between two elections. Once that happens, the end of the party system will begin, and with the parties, the main cause for concentration of power will disappear. In the process, we shall already have laid down the foundation of a decentralised State of local republics, which will combine all functions of the State as they affect the local life. National culture, national economy and national political institutions will be cast on the pattern of the functions of these local republics; power will remain with them, to be wielded directly by the individual members of small communities. Being thus reared upon a broad foundation of direct democracies, the State will be really democratic. Usurpation of power will be out of the question. Thus, a pluralistic modern society can be built up at the same time while doing away with centralisation of power, political and economic.

\*Editorial in **The Radical Humanist**, dated 30th August, 1953. 

Book's message:

# Democracy Awakening

S.R. Darapuri



Heather Cox Richardson (born October 8, 1962) is an American historian and a professor of history at Boston College. She teaches courses on the American Civil War, the Reconstruction era, the American West, and the Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains. In her book *Democracy Awakening*, what she writes about American democracy is also true in the Indian context.

**Below is message we can draw from this book**

It is true that history often gives its warnings only after the damage has already been done. When we look back, major disasters seem obvious and inevitable, and we wonder why people did not act earlier—why fear crushed principles and why comfort defeated courage. But the past is set in stone; it can not be changed. What truly matters is that the future is still open, shaped not by fate but by our choices.

Every generation faces its own tests, and they arrive quietly. They do not come as loud alarms of danger, but as ordinary moments—small decisions, small compromises, pressure to stay silent, or the habit of looking away. At the time, these things seem insignificant, but over time, they shape the direction of society.

Democracies rarely collapse in a single sudden moment. More often, they slowly wear down: when rules are broken, safeguards weakened, lies repeated again and again, or warnings ignored simply because they feel inconvenient. One step alone may not seem harmful, but together, they decide the future.

Those who lived through history's darkest periods did not see themselves as villains. They acted out of fear, loyalty, exhaustion, or hope—just as people do today. What mattered was not only what they believed, but what they tolerated, which wrongs they justified, and what they chose to protect—or allowed to disappear.

But history is not only a story of failure. It also teaches us that renewal is possible. Institutions can be rebuilt. Trust returns when people stop being indifferent, come together, take responsibility, and choose courage over comfort. No tragedy was inevitable until people allowed it to happen, just as no victory was certain until people fought for it.

We cannot change what has already happened, but we are writing what comes next every moment. History is not watching us as fate—it is watching us as possibility. Every generation faces the same question: what do we want to write now? 🌈

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than 1,136 cities of the world**

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**Editor, ‘The Radical Humanist’**

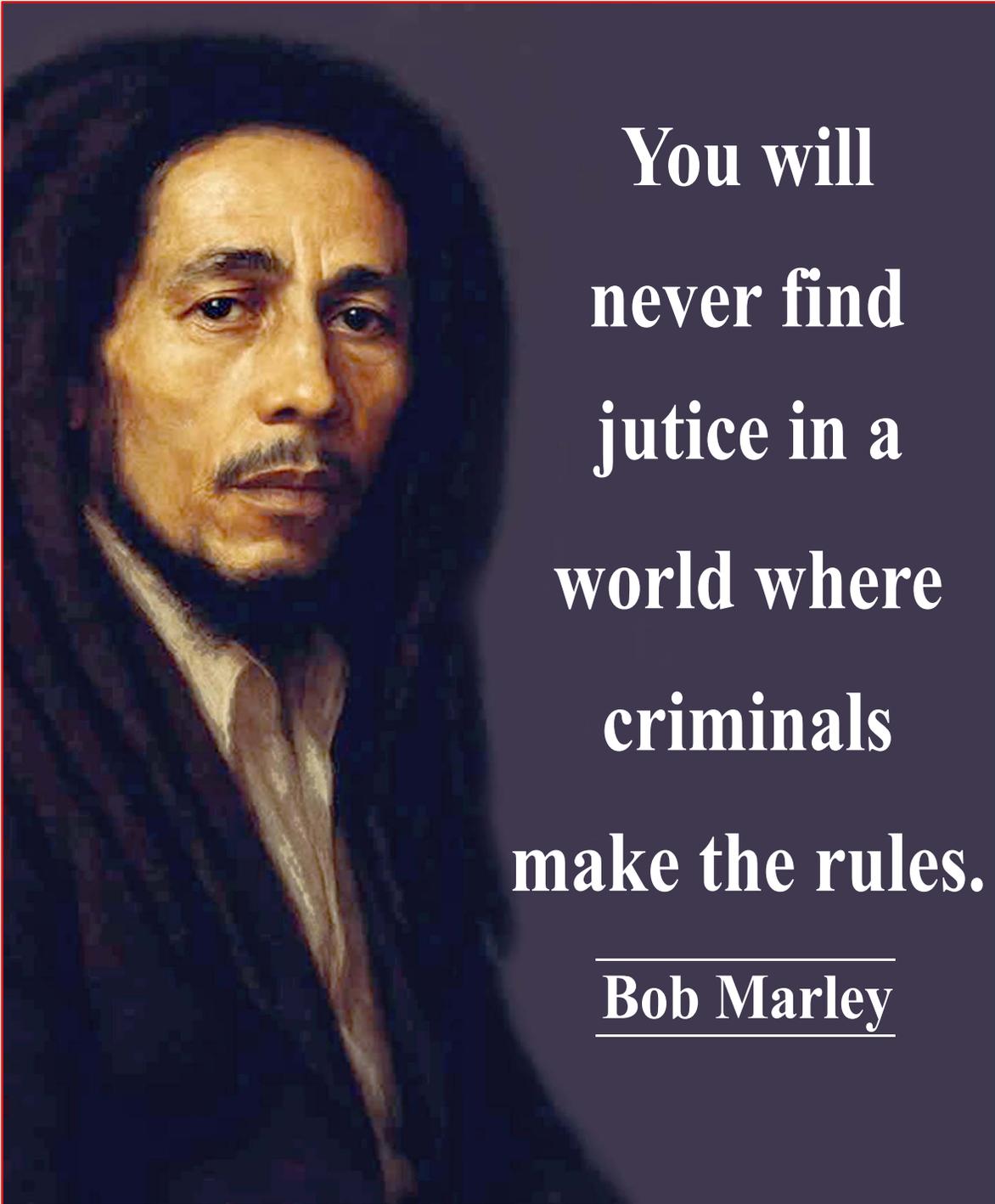
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