

THE RADICAL HUMANIST



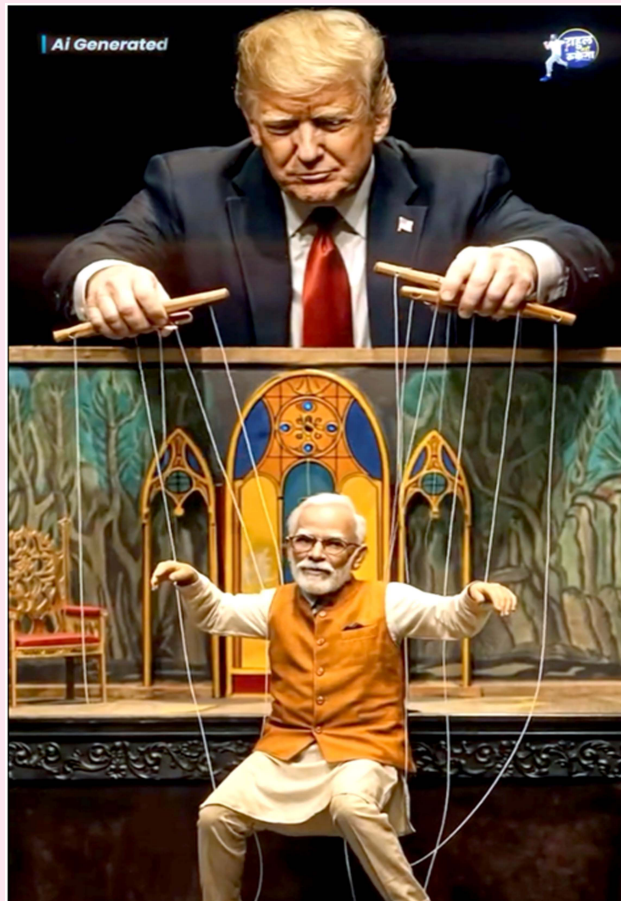
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Compromised PM

673

A photograph of Bernie Sanders, an older man with white hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and blue tie. He is holding a white paper and appears to be speaking at a podium. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. In the top left corner of the image, there is a white logo that reads "meawww".

meawww

'The American people were lied to about Vietnam. The American people were lied to about Iraq. The American people are being lied to again today – and once again, it is ordinary people who will pay the price.'

— BERNIE SANDERS

THE RADICAL HUMANIST

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The Modi Government's Surrender and the Sycophancy of "Godi Media"

Pratap Saharan

The new war that has erupted in West Asia has once again destabilized global politics. Amid this controversial military campaign initiated by the United States and Israel, an incident occurred that shook the entire world. In this conflict, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, along with several senior frontline commanders, was reportedly killed.

Many countries around the world expressed grief and concern over this incident. Even several nations influenced by the United States formally registered their reactions.

But the government of India remained unusually silent.

This is the same India whose government and media, until just a few months ago, proudly projected India's friendship with Iran, particularly the Chabahar Port project, as a historic example of strategic partnership. From the studios of "Godi media," viewers were told that the India-Iran relationship was creating a new geopolitical axis.

But when that same Iran became the target of an unprecedented military attack, a deep silence descended over the corridors of power in New Delhi.

Within the country, the opposition and several political analysts raised sharp questions about this silence. The Modi government was accused of speaking the language of strategic partnerships only in favorable times, but lacking the courage to stand with its friends during moments of crisis. The criticism became so intense that the government eventually had to issue a formal gesture of condolence after five days.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri visited the

Iranian embassy and expressed condolences. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar spoke with Iran's Foreign Minister over the phone.

But one important thing is still missing — there has been no clear public statement from the Government of India or the Prime Minister regarding the incident.

This is precisely where the question arises:

Has "strategic autonomy" in India's foreign policy now been replaced by "strategic silence"?

The Iranian Warship Incident: Diplomacy or Embarrassment?

Amid this entire crisis, another incident surfaced that further complicated India's position. Reports emerged that an Iranian warship was targeted in an American military action near India's maritime region.

The United States is presenting it as a military success, but for India it has become a matter of diplomatic discomfort.

It is noteworthy that this warship had come to participate in the naval exercise "MILAN 2026", organized on India's invitation. During the event held from 15 to 25 February, the warship was formally introduced in the presence of the President of India. Its capabilities were displayed and it was portrayed as a symbol of military cooperation among friendly nations.

Indian families took photographs with Iranian sailors. The media presented it as an example of friendship and cooperation.

But when the warship was returning, reports emerged that it was attacked in the Indian Ocean. According to the U.S. government itself, the ship was targeted by a

torpedo fired from an American submarine, reportedly causing heavy casualties among the soldiers on board.

Some sailors were later rescued by the Sri Lankan Navy.

This was not merely a military action but also raises questions about India's diplomatic credibility. Critics argue that if a friendly country had arrived on India's invitation and such an incident occurred afterward, India should at least have issued a clear diplomatic response. Notably, this incident took place in the Indian Ocean within India's maritime surveillance zone.

Yet New Delhi remains silent.

War, Confusion, and Changing Statements

Meanwhile, reports of retaliatory attacks by Iran on American military bases and allied interests have pushed the region closer to a wider war. Several countries have closed their embassies, and the scope of the conflict continues to expand.

In this crisis, the statements of the United States, Israel, and their allies often appear inconsistent with one another. The remarks of U.S. President *Donald Trump*, his Secretary of State, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have frequently shown clear contradictions. Trump himself has changed his statements several times.

The world is being pushed toward war, yet the declared objective of this conflict remains shrouded in uncertainty.

At the same time, Iran has surprised many countries with relatively inexpensive yet effective drones and missiles. This has further complicated the security situation in West Asia.

But one of the most painful truths of this war receives very little attention — the deaths of ordinary civilians.

Reports emerged that nearly 160 schoolgirls were killed in an attack on a school building in Tehran. Yet this tragedy received

neither significant political attention globally nor any serious debate in television studios.

War and the Spectacle of “Godi Media”

Amid this conflict, a large section of Indian television media appeared to transform less into journalism and more into a war-mongering entertainment industry.

Reporting on international conflicts is one of the most difficult tests of journalism. It requires fact verification, balanced language, and an understanding of complex geopolitics.

But several Indian TV channels seemed to present the war almost like a video game.

Constant “war graphics,” explosion sound effects, and aggressive anchoring turned the conflict into a sensational spectacle.

Headlines included:

- “The End of Iran”
- “The End of the Mullah Regime”
- “The Final Strike on Tehran”

This is not the language of journalism but the language of war propaganda.

The problem is not just the tone. In the early days of the conflict, several reports were aired that were later not confirmed. Some channels claimed attacks in Cyprus, while others declared that the Iranian navy had been completely destroyed.

Some channels even showed carelessness with visual content. One video was presented as footage from Dubai, while fact-checking platforms later clarified that it was actually from Bahrain.

In a sensitive situation like war, this is not merely a technical mistake but a betrayal of the fundamental principles of journalism.

The TRP Addiction and the Propaganda Industry

Today, a large portion of the media industry is trapped in the race for TRPs and digital clicks. Social media algorithms amplify sensational and emotional content.

As a result, several channels have begun presenting war like a real-time thriller.

Every hour brings announcements of “the final strike,” “massive destruction,” and “Iran’s end.”

The consequence is that viewers fail to understand the real situation. Complex issues such as war diplomacy, regional balance, and humanitarian crises disappear from public discussion.

Journalism or Court Propaganda?

Over the past ten years, a large section of Indian television media has almost abandoned its tradition of questioning power. Instead of demanding answers from the government, it appears more engaged in creating an environment favorable to it.

The duty of journalism is to hold a mirror to power. But when the media itself turns into a propaganda mechanism for the ruling establishment, the information system of democracy begins to weaken.

A Warning for Viewers

From this entire episode, an important

lesson emerges not only for the media but also for viewers.

Today, the crisis of information arises less from censorship and more from the excess of misleading information and propaganda. When audiences accept every television debate and sensational headline without questioning it, they unknowingly become part of that propaganda system.

To understand any international crisis, relying solely on television studio debates is not sufficient. It is necessary to seek information from international media, independent analysts, and fact-checking platforms.

Otherwise, we will see only what TRPs, political propaganda, and studio spectacle want to show us — not what is actually happening in the world.

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DECADE AFTER JNU SEDITION CASE:

Why has the JNU sedition case gone nowhere in a decade?

The trial cannot begin until the Supreme Court decides upon the validity of the sedition provision, which is pending before a constitutional bench.

Ratna Singh

In February 2016, Jawaharlal Nehru University became the epicentre of one of India's most polarising debates on nationalism, dissent, and free speech after a campus event triggered a sedition case against Kanhaiya Kumar, the head of the students' union, and nine other students.

A decade later, the matter is in a legal stalemate.

The Delhi Police has filed a chargesheet against the accused but the trial cannot begin until the Supreme Court decides whether the offence of sedition remains on the statute book.

Introduced by British colonialists, sedition criminalises attempts to excite disaffection towards the government established by law. The provision has long been criticised for its vague and expansive wording, which critics argue enables its misuse against dissent and political speech.

In the JNU sedition case, for instance, the Delhi Police's chargesheet states that the accused shouted slogans that supported the secession of Kashmir, criticised the Indian state, and expressed solidarity with Afzal Guru, who had been convicted in the 2001 Parliament attack case.

But in submissions to a trial court in Delhi, lawyers representing the accused have disputed the authenticity of the video clips and the witness statements the police have relied on. They have

also argued that even if some slogans were shouted, they do not amount to sedition.

Here, the lawyers relied on past judgements such as in the Kedar Nath Singh case in 1962, in which the Supreme Court held that sedition applies only when there is incitement to violence or public disorder, and the Balwant Singh case in 1995, where shouting pro-Khalistan slogans was held not to be seditious because it did not lead to any violence or disturbance.



A protest demanding the release of Kanhaiya Kumar, in New Delhi in February 2016. Credit: Reuters.

While these arguments remain in abeyance until the Supreme Court decides the future of the sedition law, the prolonged uncertainty has taken a toll on the accused.

Anirban Bhattacharya, one of the accused who is currently working with a research and advocacy organisation, said he had to renew his passports every two years. Anyone facing a criminal case is issued a passport valid only for

two years, instead of the standard 10 years.

“Every time I had to travel – for instance, to attend a workshop – it became a major hassle. I had to arrange a surety, find someone willing to pledge around Rs 5 lakh, and then return the passport after coming back.”

Kumar’s lawyer Chinmay Kanojia told *Scroll* that there has been “no real movement in the case and that it is unlikely to progress in the near future”.

Since 2022, when the Supreme Court stayed the sedition provision, the trial court has listed the matter at least 14 times, the most recent being on January 13, 2026. The matter was adjourned and posted for the next hearing April 16.

Campus protest to criminal prosecution

On February 9, 2016, an event was organised at Sabarmati Dhaba, in the JNU campus. Initially proposed as a poetry reading titled “The Country Without A Post Office”, the programme had been granted permission by the university authorities.

After posters in circulation indicated that the event was being organised to mark the anniversary of Afzal Guru’s execution, the university withdrew permission. But the event went ahead despite the cancellation, says the chargesheet. Soon after, television news channels aired videos that they claimed showed students shouting “anti-India” slogans.

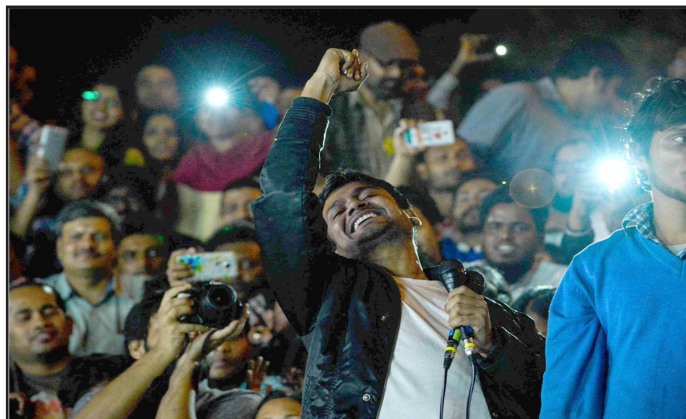
On February 11, the Delhi Police registered a first information report under Section 124A for sedition of the Indian Penal Code against unknown persons.

The FIR was based on complaints lodged by Bharatiya Janata Party MP Maheish Girri, JNU Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad leader Saurabh Sharma, and videos and television news

footage claiming to show that anti-India slogans were shouted during the event on campus.

The next day, on February 12, the Delhi Police arrested Kanhaiya Kumar, who was then the president of the JNU Students’ Union. The police later named doctoral students Umar Khalid and Anirban Bhattacharya as accused in the FIR. Both of them surrendered to the police and were arrested on February 23.

During the bail hearing before the Delhi High Court on February 29, the police told the court that it did not have video evidence showing that Kumar had shouted “anti-India” slogans.



Kanhaiya Kumar at Jawahar Lal Nehru University in New Delhi in March 2016, after he was granted interim bail and released from prison. Credit: AFP

On March 2, the Delhi High Court granted Kumar interim bail for six months, while criticising him as well as others who participated in the campus event for misusing free speech. The judge told Kumar that he had the freedom to raise “anti-national slogans” only because India’s borders are “guarded by our armed and paramilitary forces”.

Days later, on March 18, Khalid and Bhattacharya, who were in judicial custody, were granted six-month interim bail by a Delhi trial court. They were released from Tihar jail after furnishing personal bonds and sureties, with restrictions on travel and a requirement to cooperate with the investigation.

Later that year, on August 26, the Delhi trial court granted Kumar, Khalid, and Bhattacharya regular bail. The police did not oppose the plea, stating that the accused had complied with bail conditions and cooperated with the investigation.

Meanwhile, a high-level inquiry committee set up by JNU had submitted its report to the university administration on March 16, 2016. The committee concluded that a group of masked outsiders had raised provocative slogans at the event, including “Bharat ko ragda do” and “Pakistan zindabad.”

Some witnesses claimed that slogans such as “Bharat ki barbadi tak jung rahegi” were also shouted, but the committee noted that there was no video evidence to substantiate this allegation.

No trial in 10 years

For three years after the first arrests, the case remained under police investigation. The accused appeared in court periodically to mark their presence, attend routine hearings where the court reviewed the status of the investigation and comply with bail conditions.

On January 14, 2019, the Delhi Police filed a chargesheet in court against 10 accused, including Kumar, Khalid and Bhattacharya. The names of the six other students emerged during the course of the police investigation.

Apart from sedition, the police invoked other penal provisions of the Indian Penal Code such as 120B for criminal conspiracy, 34 for common intention, 147 for rioting and 149 for unlawful assembly.

Then there was further delay.

For a case of sedition, the police must seek permission from the government, in this case the Home Department of the Delhi government then ruled by the Aam Aadmi Party. Without government sanction, courts cannot proceed with the trial. In July 2019, an *Indian Express* report, quoting unnamed sources, said that the Delhi government’s legal officer had opposed granting sanction.

Nearly a year later, the Delhi government’s

Home Department granted sanction to the police on February 27, 2020.

In February 2021, a Delhi court took cognisance of the police’s final report, which included the chargesheet, technical documents and the government sanction for prosecution. The judge’s order summoned the accused for trial on March 15.

Beginning the process of framing charges, the court in March 2021 directed the Delhi Police to supply copies of the chargesheet to the accused.

But a development in the Supreme Court would soon put off the trial.

Sedition law

In February 2021, two journalists filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court challenging the constitutional validity of Section 124A for sedition.

Kishorechandra Wangkhemcha and Kanhaiya Lal Shukla contended that the formulation of Section 124A allows for arbitrary application and that it is routinely invoked to silence criticism of those in power. Nine other petitions were subsequently tagged to it.

Meanwhile, the JNU sedition case was proceeding slowly with hearings repeatedly adjourned for reasons such as delay in supplying documents to the accused and securing the presence of those witnesses. The judiciary was also struggling with an administrative slowdown following the Covid-19 pandemic.

In May 2022, the Supreme Court directed that all trials, appeals, and proceedings under Section 124A be kept in abeyance. In its order, it said “no coercive action” should be taken in pending sedition cases. A year later, the Supreme Court referred the constitutional challenge to a larger bench in.

In August 2025, the Supreme Court expanded the scope of scrutiny further by agreeing to also examine Section 152 of the *Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita* alongside the challenge to sedition. Section 152 mirrors the

language of sedition provision in the Indian Penal Code. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita replaced the Indian Penal Code in July 2024.

Lives in limbo

The lives of the 10 students named in the FIR have taken markedly different trajectories.



A student prepares a banner before the start of a rally to protest against the arrest of JNU students, inside the Jadavpur University campus in Kolkata on February 16, 2016. Credit: Reuters.

Deep freeze

The Supreme Court’s 2022 order had an immediate impact on the JNU sedition case.

In July 2022, while hearing the matter, a Delhi trial court recorded submissions from defence counsel citing the Supreme Court ruling putting all proceedings under Section 124A in abeyance.

Accepting the submission, the court stayed the trial, observing that “although other penal provisions were involved, allowing the proceedings to continue could prejudice the accused while the constitutional validity of sedition remained under consideration”.

Advocate Sahil Ghai, who represents Khalid and Bhattacharya said, “each successive judge hearing the case – the matter is now before its third judge – has followed the same course and after noting the Supreme Court’s order staying sedition proceedings, the court has simply adjourned the case.”

Kanhaiya’s lawyer Chinmay Kanojia said the bail conditions imposed in 2016 continue to remain in force. “Similar conditions were imposed on the other accused as well, but life has moved on for them, some have even gone abroad to pursue postgraduate studies.”

Kanhaiya Kumar joined the Congress in 2021, contesting elections and doing organisational work. Umar Khalid has been in jail since 2020 in connection with the alleged larger conspiracy behind the 2019 Delhi riots. Anirban Bhattacharya is now working as a director of campaigns and team lead, National Finance Team at Centre for Financial Accountability. Yet, the sedition case continues to hover over them.

Referring to the routine appearances in court every three to four months, Bhattacharya said, “All of this looks routine now, but the case never actually moves.”

Courtesy [Scroll.in](https://scroll.in), 17 February 2026. 🌈

DECADE AFTER JNU SEDITION CASE:

Umar Khalid's five years of incarceration: 'Do I even know the world any more?'

A decade after the JNU sedition case, we trace the trajectories taken by four student-activists – and what that reveals about political life in India.

Anant Gupta



Design | Vidhi Awasthi

Umar Khalid was uncharacteristically laconic in his response to questions about his life in prison.

It has been more than five years since the former student-activist from the Jawaharlal Nehru University was arrested and imprisoned for his alleged involvement in the 2020 Delhi riots. The trial is yet to begin.

In January, the Supreme Court denied Khalid bail. Days later, *Scroll* interviewed him through one of his JNU friends who regularly visits him in Tihar Jail.

Khalid, 38, said his first couple of years “away from social media” in Tihar were “good”. Over time, the detachment with which he approached the experience gave way to “restlessness”. And as his bail pleas snailed through the corridors of

Indian courts, that restive feeling “metamorphosed to resignation”.

Today, he feels “disconnected” from reality. “Do I even know the world any more?” he asked.

A national storm erupted in February 2016 when the Modi government ordered a police crackdown against students of the Jawaharlal Nehru University for slogans raised at a campus event. Three students were arrested on charges of sedition, sparking a debate on nationalism and democratic freedoms.

Ten years later, we revisit the legacy of that moment by tracing the trajectories of four student-activists – the choices they made, the outcomes that followed, and what that reveals

about political life in India.

Before his prolonged incarceration, Khalid used to believe that he knew the world quite well. In fact, in 2016, this confidence landed him in trouble.

Television crews had swarmed JNU the day after Khalid and nine others organised a controversial event on campus that February. At that time, most students were amused by the media frenzy over a gathering that they saw as ordinary. Some of them even engaged the visiting journalists in all earnest.

That day, Khalid volunteered for what, in hindsight, turned out to be risky assignments – he went on the primetime shows of establishment-friendly television channels where anchors like Arnab Goswami of *Times Now* shouted him down.

“That is when he realised that we were like frogs in a well,” said Apeksha Priyadarshini, his friend from JNU. “He understood that there were many people out there who did not wish to listen to him and that the world was nothing like the campus.”

Other television channels went one step further, singling out Khalid for his Muslim identity and labelling him a terrorist sympathiser.

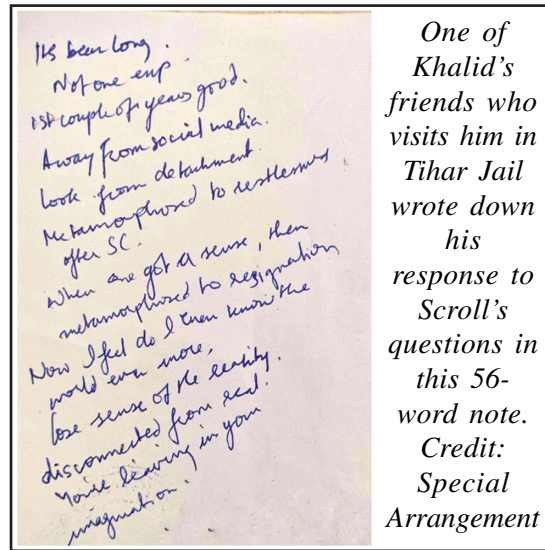
He was researching his PhD at the time of his arrest. His doctoral thesis had nothing to do with the social milieu he came from, and instead focused on how the historical experience of colonialism disrupted the lives of Adivasis in Jharkhand.

Coming into his own

Born in 1987, Khalid grew up in Delhi and is the eldest of six siblings. His middle-class parents made sure to provide him and his sisters the best education that they could.

His father was steeped in Muslim politics, but as early as 2009, Khalid told the makers of a student documentary that he was “hardly a Muslim”. He was a student of history at Delhi University’s Kirori Mal College then.

Later, as a postgraduate student in JNU, he



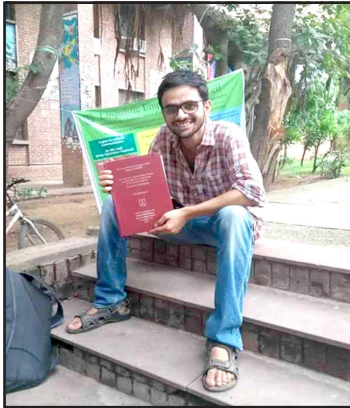
immersed himself in Left politics and began professing atheism. He first became a member of the Democratic Students’ Union, a hard Left campus outfit that was severely critical of India’s mainstream communist parties.

But he fell out with the organisation over disagreements with its approach to gender justice, and along with a few others, floated the Bhagat Singh Ambedkar Students Organisation in 2016. The group aspired to integrate the “struggle against caste system and patriarchy” within the Left’s class politics.

Political sparring, however, never came in the way of making friends. On campus, Khalid was known for his affability.

A professor who met him while he was still writing his PhD recounted an anecdote about his love for conversation. She knew him to be a charismatic speaker but it was when she debated a range of social issues with him one-on-one in her home that she discovered his keenness to listen, his openness to being contradicted, and also his verbosity.

“Hours into the chat, he got up to step out for a smoke, saying he would be back shortly,” the professor recalled. “I told him, ‘Don’t come back. It is quite late.’ But he wanted to keep talking.”



Khalid posing with his PhD thesis in the JNU campus. Credit: @Umar Khalid JNU/X

A question of faith

Beneath the geniality, though, Khalid was experiencing inner turmoil. As Hindutva assertion pushed Muslims into a corner, he started thinking deeply about faith-based discrimination.

His artist friend Shuddhabrata Sengupta, who first met him at a 2012 convention in Delhi on the rights of political prisoners, said the lynching of Mohammad Akhlaq in 2015 triggered the churn.

Around that time, the two had a long conversation about the philosopher Hannah Arendt exhorting those oppressed as Jews to respond as Jews. The young scholar was moved by the text, and even wanted to set up a reading circle to explore the potential for justice and freedom “within an Islamic framework”.

During the 2016 sedition controversy, television channels had labelled Khalid a “terrorist”. While he had publicly taken them on, the impact lingered – he could no longer take the metro or go anywhere alone because of the fear of an attack, said one of his friends.

These fears came true in August 2018, when two men from Haryana made an unsuccessful attempt on his life. At that time, he had just completed his PhD and was busy with United Against Hate, the campaign that he had co-founded with the intention of tackling hate crimes.

“After the assassination attempt, he would always keep looking over his shoulder,” his friend Anirban Bhattacharya recalled. “If anybody stared at him for more than three seconds, he

would get uncomfortable.”

The incident prompted Khalid’s return to Jamia Nagar, the predominantly Muslim neighbourhood in southeast Delhi where he had grown up. His friend Nabiya Khan, who also lived in the area then, said she saw him develop deeper roots within the community as he organised medical camps and took part in other local initiatives in those months.

“The major change I noticed in him was that he went from theory to practice,” she said. “His engagement deepened and he became more grounded in the community. His days and nights were spent among the people of Jamia Nagar.”

Khalid put up this post on social media the day two men from Haryana had made a failed attempt on his life.

A reluctant leader

In December 2019, Parliament passed the Citizenship Amendment Act, which for the first time introduced a religious criteria for Indian citizenship.

Khalid emerged as one of the most vocal critics of the new law, which many saw as an instrument of discrimination against Muslims. For months, he criss-crossed the length and breadth of the country as protesters, largely Muslim, sought him out for his speech-making.

An activist who shared the dais with him at one of the many protests against CAA in those days recalled feeling uneasy at Khalid being introduced as “the new leader of Indian Muslims”. Khalid, to this activist’s great surprise, did not object to the use of this descriptor.

Was the newfound popularity making him embrace identity politics? His friend, journalist Kaushik Raj, said Khalid had little time to think about such questions then. He was clear that the opposition to CAA must be broad-based and not merely driven by identity.

“If you are against attacks on the Constitution, you can speak up against it as a Muslim, a Hindu, a Sikh or even an atheist,” Raj recalled Khalid once telling him.

In public, too, Khalid stressed on the “socio-economic demands” of the Muslim community more than its religious grievances, drawing on his long-held leftist frameworks. Privately, though, he was growing tired of repeating himself at one anti-CAA protest after another.

“I don’t want to do all this,” Khalid said to a friend who used to accompany him on these trips then and requested not to be identified. The two were headed to a protest in Kerala, but got stuck in Bengaluru airport because of a flight delay. Khalid, his friend recollected, had been silently ruminating for a long time before he spoke.

“I just want to go to a village in Jharkhand or Chhattisgarh and be there with people in greater need,” he said to his friend.



Khalid addressing an anti-CAA protest in Bhiwandi, Maharashtra. Credit: @UmarKhalidJNU/X

Arrest and incarceration

Eventually, it was a speech he made at an anti-CAA protest in Amravati, Maharashtra, that led to his arrest in the Delhi riots conspiracy case in September 2020.

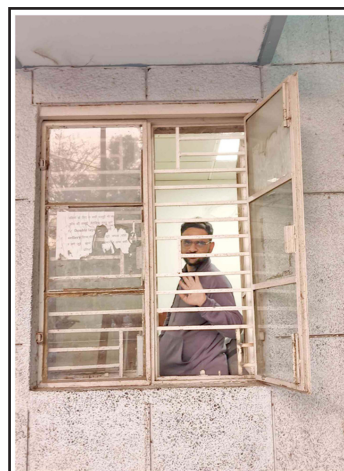
In the speech, Khalid had invoked Mahatma Gandhi and called for non-violent protests to coincide with the upcoming visit of the United States President Donald Trump in February that year. But Delhi Police blamed the violence that erupted during Trump’s visit on Khalid and other activists, holding up the Amravati speech as evidence of a “premeditated” conspiracy.

A professor who was with Khalid on the day he was called in for questioning by the Delhi

Police, and later arrested, was struck by how composed he was: “He was not stressed at all.”

His friends insist that he has not changed much in the five years and five months that have lapsed since then. Sometimes, his spirits drop, especially after he returns to jail after having spent a few days outside on interim bail. But he somehow manages to pull himself out of these low phases, a close friend said.

He also continues to read voraciously and write with more or less the same academic rigour.



Khalid returning to Tihar last December after spending a few days out on interim bail. Credit: Anirban Bhattacharya/ Facebook

One source of frustration that Khalid has expressed in recent meetings with close friends is “the language” of those vowing support for him. As one friend put it, he is tired of being “pigeonholed” as an atheist while he and other political prisoners are “persecuted” on the basis of their faith.

Another friend of over 12 years recalled talking to Khalid about the “transformation” in how he sees himself when he was out on interim bail last December.

“A communist does not believe in these identities, but can you really escape them?” she asked. “Many elite Muslims like Javed Akhtar are uncomfortable with their identity. The other trap is getting caught up in identity politics.”

Khalid, she said, “has been dealing with this question”.

Courtesy **Scroll.in**, Feb 16, 2026. 🌈

Why the US-Iran war will hurt India more than China

Both are vulnerable to shortages in oil from West Asia, but China's electrification push and diversified supply have made it more secure, experts say.

Vaishnavi Rathore



Cargo ships and tankers in the Strait of Hormuz, off the coast of the city of Fujairah, part of the United Arab Emirates. | Giuseppe Cacace/AFP

On February 28, as the conflict in West Asia escalated with missile strikes, Iran announced the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a key global shipping trade route. The strait is the only opening from the Persian Gulf to the open sea. This makes it the easiest channel for the movement of goods from countries situated along the gulf, such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, to other parts of the world.

Key among these commodities are natural gas and crude oil. Between 20% and 25% of global crude oil supply passes through the strait, as does 20% of the global supply of liquified natural gas.

As a consequence of the closure, prices have escalated. Crude oil rose sharply from \$65 per barrel on February 26, a day before the outbreak of the conflict, to \$75.92 by March 3. The price of liquified natural gas rose from \$2.8 to \$3.06 per million British thermal units in the same period.

Asia is expected to be severely hurt by the crisis – 75% of the oil and 59% of the liquified natural gas through this chokepoint flows to China, India, Japan and South Korea. Of these countries, China and India are likely to be most affected – 38% of crude oil from the strait goes to China, and 15% to India, while 20% of the

natural gas goes to China and 25% to India.

In such a situation, the extent of the countries' dependence on imported oil and liquified natural gas is a key factor in their energy security. *Scroll* spoke to experts to understand how India and China were positioned in this respect.

"China is definitely in a strong position, while not completely protected from oil price rises," said Vibhuti Garg, South Asia director at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis. "Most of their sectors, like transport and power, rely less on oil and gas. They have electrified and built renewable energy chains and refined critical minerals."

This is reflected in the fact that in 2024, China's crude oil imports fell by 2%. In 2025 the International Energy Agency had estimated that the country's diesel demand could drop by 40,000 barrels a day that year.

A key factor in this reduction is the massive electrification push the country has seen in the last decade, which has relied largely on coal, as well as, to a growing extent, on renewable energy.

India's reliance on imported oil, meanwhile, has increased slightly in recent years: while 83.8% of its supply was imported in the 2019 financial year, 88.5% was imported in the first ten months of the 2026 financial year.

As a result, in contrast to China, "India's reliance on oil imports does make us more prone to these risks", Garg said.

Shifting from oil to electricity

In recent years, China has rapidly electrified various sectors, including transport, construction and manufacturing. From 2015 to 2023, the share of electricity in the country's overall energy consumption rose by around 1% each year, to reach 32%, much higher than the proportions in the United States and Europe, according to the London-based energy think tank Ember.

The two major sectors that saw massive

electrification were manufacturing and transport. Specifically, in the former, heating needed for factories was increasingly provided by electric sources. In the latter sector, China has emerged as the world's largest exporter and manufacturer of electric vehicles, even as adoption within the country also saw a major spike.

"Electric vehicles and trucks in China have displaced a significant portion of diesel demand," Elif Binici, an energy analyst at Kpler, told *Scroll*. Kpler is a data analytics company that tracks several commodities including oil.

But Binici added that this did not mean the country faced no risk of oil shocks at all. Most significantly, she noted, China had a high demand for crude oil that industries need to make refined products, including "light ends", which refers to fractions like ethane and naphtha, both crucial in the manufacture of plastics and chemicals.

She noted that, in fact, Kpler estimated China's crude oil use would grow in 2026. "For China, we are expecting a growth of more than 220,000 barrels per day for refined products," said Binici.

In India, meanwhile, many sectors rely primarily on oil and natural gas as sources of energy. For instance, the transport sector in India has only seen limited electrification – as of the second financial quarter of 2025, sales of electric vehicles comprised around 10% of the total automobile sales. As of 2023, the sector used almost 50% of India's oil.

This dependence persists despite a major shift in the railways. "Railways in India have more or less reduced their diesel consumption to zero and electrified it. So in that sense, they have been able to insulate train freight from oil shocks," said Om Prakash, an advisor with the Centre for Financial Accountability. "But the larger transport sector, especially trucks and buses, apart from CNG in a few cities, is still based on oil. There is no insulation there."

Industries too, remain heavily dependent on oil and liquified natural gas – the sector is responsible for 11.5% of India’s total oil consumption.

“There is tremendous scope for electrification in the Indian economy as a whole in the future,” said Vaibhav Chaturvedi, a senior fellow at the Council for Energy, Environment and Water. He added that “70%-75% of industrial use can be electrified. Right now it is at around 20%”. A key reason for this, he added, is that electricity for industrial use is expensive at present, while fossil fuels are cheaper.

Chaturvedi added that to make this shift, it would be crucial to “produce this electricity using low carbon sources like renewable energy or nuclear energy, or even coal with carbon capture and storage, if that technology becomes technologically and economically feasible”.

Further, like in China, in India, too, other sectors too continue to be dependent on oil – for instance, the residential sector is responsible for 13% of the country’s oil consumption.

Diversifying to other oil suppliers

China also has a significantly larger buffer stock of oil, experts observed. Since March 2025, Binica said, it had “built a huge inventory of 1.2 billion barrels”. In contrast, India has a stock of around 100 million barrels, Kpler estimated.

One strategy China has used to build this buffer has been to import oil from beyond West Asia. In effect, it has been “building a cushion” in the short term, said Binica.

This is reflected in the fact that while India depends on West Asian countries for more than 50% of its crude oil, China depends on them for around 45% of its supply.

According to China’s General Administration of Customs, as of 2025, China’s highest oil imports, representing 18% of the total oil imports, were from Russia,

followed by Saudi Arabia and Malaysia.

One report indicated that China had made a clear shift towards Russian sources. The report, published in an Iranian newspaper in February, noted that China discharged about 115,000 barrels per day less Iranian oil than in January, and that Russian crude oil filled the gap in its requirement. The report suggested that although Iran was offering China discounts of between \$10 and \$11 per barrel on light crude, China was “prioritising supply stability over marginal price differences, given Iran’s uncertain trajectory amid ongoing nuclear talks and the shadow of potential military escalation”.

Binica noted that China had also been importing oil from Venezuela in recent years. These diversified sources had allowed it to remain “an oil-dependent economy” she said, at relatively low import prices. However, Binica added that if the conflict continues for more than a month, China will face significant pressures.

Meanwhile, Kpler has estimated that India’s stock can last between 40 and 45 days.

To strengthen its position, experts suggest that India should consider importing more crude from other countries. “India will have to think about getting oil from Russia or even Venezuela,” said Garg.

But she noted that in the current situation, countries supplying the oil will have an upper hand in dictating prices. “Supply will come, but India might be getting this supply at increased prices,” due to supply chain challenges, she said. “As a result, it is possible that increased prices of oil imports from other countries might impact inflation, since it will impact oil in terms of transport and other sectors.”

Overall, the “the risk of the current conflict for China will only be in the medium term,” said Binica. “For India, it is a short-term oil price risk.”

Courtesy **Scroll.in**, Mar 06, 2026. 

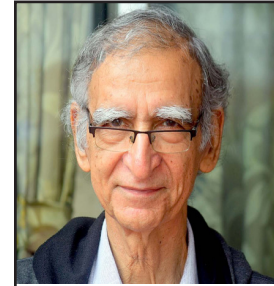
Evaluating Indian Kings: Tipu Sultan

Tipu Sultan has been in the news quite often particularly in Karnataka, more so on the occasions of state sponsored celebrations of his birth anniversary. There, BJP regularly creates obstacles to these celebrations and ruckus is usually the result. This time around he is in the news from Maharashtra, Malegaon. As the newly elected deputy mayor of Malegaon Shan-e-Hind Nihal Ahmad had put up the portrait of Tipu Sultan in her office, the Shiv Sainiks noticed that. They got it removed through the intervention of authorities. Some protests were also held. Following this the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committees President Harshvardhan Sapkal expressed his opinion against removal of this portrait saying that the contributions of Tipu Sultan to Mysore are equivalent to that of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Maharashtra. This statement was opposed by the state Chief minister Devendra Fadnavis. Fadnavis said that comparing Tipu to Shivaji Maharaj is an insult to Maharaj. Following this Congress office was stoned by BJP workers and nearly 7 people were injured in the mayhem created by this.

The objection of BJP to Sapkal's statement is that Tipu was a mass murderer of Hindus, he tried to convert Hindus to Islam. There are many other charges put against Tipu by the Hindu Nationalists. Most of these try to project Tipu as Anti-Hindu and a cruel king. This is far from the truth. Lots of these myths are part of communal narrative accentuated by the British Narratives which are harsher against Tipu in particular. This is due to the fact that he was one of the kings who fought against the British. Tipu had asked Nizam and Peshwas to oppose the armies of East India Company. He foresaw the dangers of British power entrenching in India.

His administration was a mixed one with many top officers being Hindus. Purnaiah

served him as the *Mir Miran* (head of a department) and was crucial to his administration. Krishna Rao was his treasurer. Shamaiya Iyengar held a high-ranking ministerial position and Narsimha Iyengar held



Ram Puniyani

a position in the postal department. Tipu Sultan reportedly provided grants to the Sringeri Shankaracharya, including for the rebuilding of the temple and the installation of the goddess Sharada. He granted land and endowments to various temples throughout his kingdom. During his reign, the ten-day Dussehra celebrations were an integral part of the social life of Mysore.

In 1791, Maratha forces led by Raghunath Rao Patwardhan attacked and plundered the historic Sringeri Sharada Peetham, causing the Shankaracharya to flee. Upon learning of this, Tipu Sultan expressed deep anger, stating that those who committed such acts would face consequences, and promptly sent funds, gifts, and letters to restore the temple and reconsecrate the idol. The raid was part of the Third Anglo-Mysore War, during which Maratha forces caused significant destruction to the temple complex, including killing or wounding people and looting property. Tipu Sultan, who frequently corresponded with the Sringeri Jagadguru and addressed him with high respect, immediately ordered the Mysore administration to assist in the restoration, demonstrating his patronage of certain Hindu institutions. Evidence of this restoration is found in several letters in Kannada, preserved in the Sringeri monastery records, where Tipu requested the Jagadguru to pray for the prosperity of his kingdom.

He was a staunch opponent of the British.

There is an accusation against him that he persecuted some Hindu and Christian communities. The reason for this persecution however was purely political not religious. About these persecutions historian Kate Brittlebank says that “This was not a religious policy but one of chastisement”. The communities targeted by him were seen as disloyal to the state. The communities he targeted did not belong only to Hindu stream. He also acted against some Muslim communities like the Mahdavis. The reason was that these communities were in support of the British and were employed as horsemen in the East India Company’s armies. Another historian Susan Bayly says that his attack on Hindus and Christians outside his state is to be seen on political grounds as at the same time he had developed close relations with these communities within Mysore.

Sarfaraz Shaikh in his book ‘Sultan-E-Khudad’ has reproduced the ‘Manifesto of Tipu Sultan’ in which he declares that he would not discriminate on religious grounds and would protect his empire until his last breath. He had great interest in Rocket technology. This finds appreciative mention in A.P. J Abdul Kalam’s book ‘Wings of fire’.

It is interesting to note in the RSS series for children on Indian History, they had published a book on Tipu in the 1970s. BJP’s Yeddyurappa had adorned Tipu’s headgear to solicit votes in 2010 elections in Karnataka. Indian President Ramnath Kovind sent a eulogising message on the occasion of Tipu Jayanti (2017). He has an RSS background. He praised Tipu by saying that “Tipu Sultan died a heroic death fighting the

British. He was also a pioneer in the development and use of Mysore rockets in warfare.” Tipu’s photo adorns our Constitution (Original handwritten copy signed by the framers) in part XVI page 144 along with Rani Laxmibai as those who fought against British.

Due to his policies, he was popular among the people of Mysore. There are many folk songs, sung in villages, praising him. It is for this reason that one of our greatest playwrights Girish Karnad said that had Tipu been a Hindu, he would have the same status that Shivaji Maharaj has in Maharashtra. This is very close to what Sapkal stated, nothing extra.

This whole incident of opposing the portrait of Tipu, in Deputy mayors’ office is one more instance of communal forces latching on to divisive politics. Kings should not be seen just by their religion, their policies towards people of different religions and people’s welfare should be the major criterion for evaluating them. Tipu stands very tall in this scale of religious tolerance. The half-baked propaganda of the communal forces is trying to divide communities.

The major tribute to Tipu was paid by Subhash Chandra Bose. He adopted Tipu’s ‘springing tiger’ as the insignia of Azad Hind Fauz, which fought against the British. The major contribution of Tipu was to forewarn the Indian Kings about the advancing threat of the East India Company, the British. It was for this that he bravely fought against the British and laid down his life in the fourth Anglo Mysore War. The communal forces who are out to demonise Tipu belong to the ideology which did not even a little finger against British rule. 🌈

The Radical Humanist on Website

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

– Mahi Pal Singh

The Implications of Removing the Mughal Period from NCERT Textbooks: History, Memory, and Democratic Education

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

The debate surrounding the removal or substantial reduction of the Mughal period from school textbooks published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is not merely a pedagogical matter. It is a deeply political and intellectual question concerning the nature of historical knowledge, the construction of national identity, and the future of democratic citizenship in India. In a country where school curricula shape the historical consciousness of millions, the selective editing of the past carries consequences that extend well beyond classroom instruction. The Mughal period, spanning roughly from the early sixteenth century to the eighteenth century, has long been regarded by professional historians as a foundational era in the making of early modern India. Its removal therefore invites critical reflection on historiography, secularism, pluralism, and the politics of memory.

The Mughal Empire began with the conquest of North India by Babur in 1526 and reached administrative and territorial consolidation under Akbar. Over nearly three centuries, Mughal rule shaped institutions, culture, economy, and statecraft in ways that continue to influence Indian society. The imperial administrative system, including the *mansabdari* framework and sophisticated revenue mechanisms, laid foundations for centralized governance that later informed both colonial and postcolonial administrative practices. The agrarian system, monetization of revenue, and expansion of long-distance trade connected the subcontinent to wider Asian and global commercial circuits. Urban centres such as Agra, Delhi, and Lahore flourished as cosmopolitan hubs of commerce,

art, and intellectual exchange.

Removing or minimizing this period risks disrupting historical continuity. Indian history is not a sequence of isolated civilizational compartments but an evolving process shaped by multiple interactions, conflicts, and syntheses. The Mughal era provides the crucial bridge between ancient and medieval polities on the one hand and colonial modernity on the other. Without it, students may encounter a distorted timeline in which the medieval period appears as an interruption rather than an integral stage in the subcontinent's development. Such fragmentation impoverishes historical understanding and reduces the analytical depth available to learners.

One of the most significant implications of this curricular shift lies in its impact on secular and pluralist imagination. The Mughal period represents a complex terrain of negotiation between power and diversity. While it included episodes of warfare and coercion—as all empires do—it also witnessed experiments in accommodation and governance across religious and cultural lines. Under Akbar, policies such as *sulh-i-kul* (universal peace) aimed at fostering imperial stability through religious tolerance and administrative inclusion. Debates about his abolition of the *jizya* tax or his patronage of interfaith dialogues reveal a layered political environment rather than a simple narrative of domination. Even under later rulers such as Aurangzeb, whose reign remains controversial among historians, the empire functioned through pragmatic alliances with diverse social groups. Reducing this complexity to a unidimensional portrayal—or omitting it altogether—risks reinforcing communal binaries in public

imagination.

Cultural synthesis during the Mughal era remains visible in India's artistic and architectural landscape. The reign of Shah Jahan produced monuments such as the Taj Mahal, now a global symbol of Indian heritage. The Red Fort and the Jama Masjid continue to anchor the spatial and ceremonial life of the nation, including the annual Independence Day address from the Red Fort. Linguistic and literary developments, particularly the evolution of Hindustani and later Urdu poetic traditions, were nurtured within Mughal urban cultures. Culinary practices, music, miniature painting, and garden architecture all reflect layered exchanges rather than civilizational isolation. To omit the Mughal period from textbooks is to sever students from the historical roots of these living traditions.

Beyond cultural considerations, the removal of the Mughal period raises concerns about democratic education. Textbooks are instruments of civic formation. They do not simply transmit facts; they shape interpretive frameworks. When history is curated in a way that marginalizes communities or eras associated with them, the result is a narrowing of national identity. Democratic citizenship requires engagement with complexity, contradiction, and plurality. A pedagogy that simplifies the past into homogenized narratives risks cultivating conformity rather than critical thought.

It is important to recognize that curricular revision is not inherently problematic. Historical scholarship evolves, and textbooks must reflect new research, methodological advances, and pedagogical priorities. However, the credibility of revision depends on transparent scholarly criteria rather than ideological preference. If the Mughal period is reduced while other periods are expanded without clear academic justification, questions about selective memory naturally arise. History, when shaped primarily by contemporary political objectives, ceases to function as disciplined inquiry and becomes instead a tool of

identity consolidation.

Internationally, the Mughal Empire occupies a recognized place among the great early modern "gunpowder empires," alongside the Ottomans and Safavids. Comparative global history situates Mughal India within transregional networks of trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. Removing the Mughal narrative from Indian textbooks risks isolating students from these comparative frameworks and weakening their ability to participate in global scholarly conversations. The study of early modern state formation, fiscal regimes, and imperial cosmopolitanism loses a critical case when Mughal India is sidelined.

The symbolic politics of memory also deserves attention. Historical erasure does not remove material legacies. Monuments, vocabulary, administrative terminology, and artistic forms persist in everyday life. When official narratives diminish their historical context, a disconnect emerges between lived cultural reality and institutional instruction. Such disjunction can create confusion and open space for mythologization. Societies that suppress parts of their past often find those suppressed histories resurfacing in distorted or polemical forms.

In the long term, educational narrowing may contribute to communal polarization. A generation unfamiliar with the complexities of medieval Indian history may be more susceptible to reductive interpretations that portray the period exclusively through the lens of conquest or victimhood. Conversely, a historically informed citizenry is better equipped to differentiate between scholarly debate and political rhetoric. Democratic resilience depends upon this capacity for discernment.

Ultimately, the issue is not whether the Mughal Empire should be celebrated or criticized; it is whether it should be studied. All historical epochs contain violence and creativity, exclusion and innovation.

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

To reclaim the Indian republic, we need a shared language and humility

Question the world you must. Question its words if you must. But don't quarrel with the alphabet." Sitting at the feet of the Mahatma in Sevagram, I recalled this warning of my Marxist teacher to a group of young rebellious students. He was drawing our attention to a profound truth of communication: It is only by using a shared language, metaphors and symbols that we can hope to create new meanings and a new world.

I asked myself: Have we made the mistake that our teacher had warned us against? Are the liberal, progressive and secular Indians engaged in a futile quarrel with the alphabet of Indian society? We speak or think in English. We flinch at the mention of nationalism. Our alacrity in denouncing everything that our civilisation must be ashamed of is never matched by remembering things that we have reasons to be proud of. We are happy to name our adversary "Hindu nationalists". We participate in public spectacles to question the existence of God. We take pains to distance ourselves from anything religious, especially Hindu. And then we wonder why the people of this country do not listen to us.

Sitting in Sevagram Ashram, Gandhiji's home till the end, the message was unmistakable: Be the change you wish to see. If we want the state of affairs to change, we must begin by changing ourselves. We must radically change the way we think, communicate and act. This was my takeaway from a conversation among friends from diverse ideological traditions — Gandhian, Ambedkarite, socialist, Marxist, feminist and non-ideological — who gathered to reflect on how we can reclaim the republic in the face of the current onslaught.

The first lesson was surprisingly simple: Be positive. There is a stark difference between what people hear from the destroyers and from the defenders of the republic today. Those who

are out to dismantle the republic speak in a deceptively positive language of new India, *aatmanirbharta*, integration, national unity and national resurgence. Sadly, those who seek to defend the idea of India speak a language



Yogendra Yadav

of fear, shame, and doom. Our first challenge, thus, is to articulate and amplify the underlying hope in our vision of India.

There is so much to discover and celebrate in our civilisational heritage that we must not lose sight of in naming and shaming its rotten aspects. Civilisations are like rivers that bring stones, sand, and trash with fresh water. We filter it, but we do not refuse to drink its water. The same holds for our civilisation. Instead of focusing on all that is or has been wrong about our heritage, we must create new icons and be the carriers of historical memories and contemporary practices that infuse positivity. The second lesson is that our constitutional values, the bedrock of the idea of India, need cultural anchors. We must enchant and re-enchant these values for each generation. This is something we have failed to do for the last 75 years. Reading the Preamble or waving the little red book becomes a sacred ritual only if we connect the constitutional ideals with the moral language of an ordinary citizen. Liberty must be infused with the fervour of *azadi*. Secularism must recall the idea of *maitri*. Socialism can draw its strength from the concept of *karuna* and *raham*. Democracy can be traced back to the *Vinaya Pitaka* and the idea of *adal* or *maslah*. And federalism can be grounded in the idea of *deshachar*, *urf* and the acceptance of

customary laws. The svadharm of our republic is an umbrella concept that offers cultural anchors to our constitutional values.

The third lesson is about reclaiming Indian nationalism. We must not carry the vicarious guilt of German nationalism and its siblings in the creed of othering that passes for nationalism in Europe. We are heirs to a positive creed, an ideology of belonging. Those who copy European nationalism carry out hate-mongering against our neighbours and search for enemies within.

Our nationalism must involve strengthening the bonds of belonging, defusing internal tensions, especially in the border regions with a history of alienation. Our national unity is not uniformity; it is articulated in and through our deep cultural diversities. Our nationalism must be expressed by addressing the concerns of those who fear exclusion, the linguistic concerns of non-Hindi speakers, by anticipating the regional imbalance that may result from the forthcoming delimitation and by an honest conversation about national security concerns from across the borders. Communal bigotry is antithetical to Indian nationalism; it must not be glorified by calling it “Hindu nationalism”.

The fourth lesson is not turning our back to the multiple religious traditions that continue to shape ethical ideas and practices for an overwhelming proportion of Indian citizens. Secularism does not require citizens to give up their faith or set their religious beliefs aside in thinking about public affairs. We are particularly fortunate that India is home to multiple religions, multiple streams within each religion and multiple syncretic traditions. This vast ocean of ideas and practices offers us more than adequate resources to take on all the ills associated with organised religions, institutional hierarchies, unjust social practices and bigotry. Religion is like a language — you can use it for love, poetry, or for vile abuses. This is how we must approach our religious traditions, including Hinduism. The idea that hatred against non-Hindus or oppression of

non-savarnas is sanctified by Hinduism must be contested. Such practices must not be given respect by calling them “Hindutva”.

These are not strategic lessons about communicative practices. These are ethical lessons in cognitive humility. Democracy is not just about respecting the voting choice of the people. It must also be about respecting their beliefs, their culture, their traditions. We can and are often called upon to disagree with their choices and opinions. But we must have the humility to speak to them in their language.

Was it the vicinity of Bapu Kutir that made this idea look self-evident?

Yogendra Yadav, author most recently of *Ganarajya ka Svadharm* (Setu Prakashan, 2026), is member, Swaraj India, and national convener, Bharat Jodo Abhiyaan.

Courtesy **The Indian Express**, 17 February 2026. 🌈

Contd. from page - (21)

The Implications of ...

The Mughal period is no exception. Its administrative experiments, cultural syntheses, architectural achievements, and political contradictions form an indispensable chapter in India’s historical trajectory. To remove or marginalize it is to reshape national memory in ways that extend beyond the classroom. A mature democracy does not fear complexity in its past. It recognizes that national identity is enriched, not diminished, by acknowledging layered inheritances. The Mughal era, with all its ambiguities, remains central to understanding India’s evolution as a plural society. Its study fosters analytical rigor, cultural literacy, and civic maturity. In this sense, the debate over its place in textbooks is fundamentally a debate about the kind of republic India aspires to be—one grounded in selective remembrance or one committed to comprehensive historical inquiry.

3 March 2026. 🌈

Don't force us to sing Vande Mataram. Our nationalism must encompass the believer, the dissenter and the quiet observer

*Those who feel comfortable singing the latter verses should be encouraged to do so.
Simultaneously, the state must explicitly assure those with
conscientious or religious objections, whether they are Muslims,
Christians, or atheists, that they are excused from singing the verses that trouble them.*

Shashi Tharoor



*In a free society, the strength of a national symbol lies
in the voluntary reverence it inspires, not the
compliance it coerces. Patriotism is a sentiment of the
heart; it cannot be legislated on to the tongue.*

(Illustration: C.R. Sasikumar)

The historical journey of ‘Vande Mataram’, from a stirring cry for freedom to a point of modern contention, reflects the broader complexities of our Indian identity. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s famous hymn to the motherland served as the primary emotional fuel for the early nationalist movement. It was the song that emboldened Satyagrahis to face lathis and the chant that echoed in the hearts of revolutionaries approaching the gallows. Yet, as we navigate the mandates of a contemporary secular republic, the resurgence of controversy requires us to examine anew the delicate balance between state symbols and individual conscience.

To understand the current friction, one must recall its origins. During the struggle for Independence, the Indian National Congress sang ‘Vande Mataram’ as a quintessential expression of patriotism. However, as Independence approached, the leadership was acutely aware of the need for a national anthem that could unite a religiously diverse population. While ‘Jana Gana Mana’ was ultimately chosen for its inclusive and rhythmic appeal, the Constituent Assembly accorded ‘Vande Mataram’ an “equal status” as the national song, recognising its indispensable role in the freedom struggle.

This was a deliberate compromise intended

to honour nationalist history, without alienating those for whom the song’s later imagery posed a theological dilemma. The genius behind it was Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. Despite being the first to set the poem to music and perform it at the 1896 Congress session, in 1937, Tagore recommended that only the first two verses be sung in public settings. His reasoning was both aesthetic and empathetic. The first two stanzas are a lyrical salutation to a personified, bounteous motherland: The “Mother” the song hails is the soil, the water, and the fruit-bearing trees of India, beautiful and eternal — imagery both universal and metaphorical. However, the subsequent verses explicitly identify the motherland with Hindu iconography, specifically invoking the goddesses Durga and Lakshmi. Tagore, a man of profound spiritual and pluralistic vision, understood that while these verses were beautiful as literature, they could not be expected to be recited by those whose faiths forbade the deification of anything other than the Creator.

This remains the crux of the objection voiced by many Indian Muslims. The core tenet of Islamic faith is Tawhid, the absolute oneness of God, which precludes bowing before or worshipping any entity, even one’s own nation, in a manner that mimics religious devotion. For many,

the first two verses are acceptable as a secular tribute to the land. But the later verses, which have now been officially mandated by government order, shift the tone from a patriotic greeting to a religious invocation. To force some citizens to recite verses that conflict with their fundamental religious tenets creates a choice between faith and state — a dilemma that a secular democracy, by definition, should seek to avoid, rather than impose.

The argument used by proponents of mandating the full song is that it is a symbol of national unity and that refusal to sing it is a sign of diminished patriotism. However, this perspective overlooks the fact that in a free society, the strength of a national symbol lies in the voluntary reverence it inspires, not the compliance it coerces. Patriotism is a sentiment of the heart; it cannot be legislated onto the tongue. When the state uses its power to demand a specific verbal performance of loyalty, it risks hollowing out the very sentiment it seeks to promote.

At the root of the problem lies the hoary question of what Tagore called “the idea of India”. Is India an ancient palimpsest on which people of varying faiths and ethnicities have inscribed their contributions, or a glorious Hindu civilisation into which people of other faiths have interposed themselves? Our nationalist leaders chose the former idea, enshrining a civic nationalism in our Constitution that considers all citizens equal. Our present rulers implicitly hew to the latter idea, insisting that minorities have to adjust themselves to the dominant Hindu ethos.

The most elegant and constitutionally sound solution to this impasse lies in our own judicial history, specifically the landmark “Jehovah’s Witness case”. In 1986, three students were expelled from school for refusing to sing the national anthem on the grounds that it conflicted with their religious beliefs. They did not disrupt the proceedings; they stood respectfully while the anthem was played, but remained silent. The Supreme Court reinstated the students, delivering

a judgment that remains a beacon of Indian pluralism. Justice Chinnappa Reddy, famously observing that our tradition, philosophy, and Constitution all preach and practice tolerance, ruled that as long as a person stands respectfully while the anthem is played, refusal to sing it does not constitute a violation of the law or a lack of patriotism.

We should apply this model to the current ‘Vande Mataram’ controversy. Those who feel comfortable singing the later verses should be encouraged to do so, celebrating the historical and cultural richness they represent. Simultaneously, the state must explicitly assure those with conscientious or religious objections, whether they are Muslims, Christians, or atheists, that they are excused from singing the verses that trouble them. As long as they stand in silent, dignified respect during the rendition, they should be deemed to have fulfilled their civic duty.

Crucially, this policy must be backed by an assurance that no citizen will face prosecution, institutional punishment, or social ostracisation for exercising this right to silence. By protecting the right not to sing, the state actually strengthens the sanctity of the song. It transforms the act from a mandated drill into a genuine expression of love for the country. In a republic as vast and varied as ours, the melody of unity is not found in a single, forced note, but in the harmonious coexistence of many voices — and sometimes, the respectful silence of a few. Our nationalism must be large-hearted enough to encompass the believer, the dissenter, and the quiet observer alike, ensuring that the motherland remains a home for all her children.

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Courtesy **The Indian Express**, Feb 19, 2026. 

Legal Article :

Courts Should Avoid Undue Leniency While Sentencing Those Found Guilty In Criminal Cases: SC

Sanjeev Sirohi

It is definitely entirely in the fitness of things that the Supreme Court in a most learned, laudable, landmark, logical and latest judgment titled *Parameshwari v. State of Tamil Nadu & Ors* in Criminal Appeal of 2026 (Arising out of SLP (Criminal) No. 7495 of 2021) and cited in Neutral Citation No.: 2026 INSC 164 that was pronounced most recently on February 17, 2026 in the exercise of its criminal appellate jurisdiction has cautioned that courts should avoid undue leniency while sentencing those found guilty in criminal cases. It must be laid bare that a Bench of Apex Court comprising of Hon'ble Mr Justice Vijay Bishnoi and Hon'ble Mr Justice Rajesh Bindal were dealing with a case where the Madras High Court had reduced a convict's jail sentence in an attempt-to-murder case, while enhancing the fine payable by him. We need to note that the Apex Court Bench expressed its profound concern in courts displaying undue leniency and said that some courts do not understand this, and instead, mechanically reduce prison sentences, while treating compensation as a form of alternative punishment.

At the very outset, this robust, rational, remarkable and recent judgment authored by Hon'ble Mr Justice Vijay Bishnoi for a Bench of Apex Court comprising of Hon'ble Mr Justice Rajesh Bindal and himself sets the ball in motion by first and foremost putting forth in para 1 that, "The supreme objective of law is the protection of society and creating a deterrence against crime by imposing adequate punishment. Leave Granted."

As we see, the Bench then lays bare the purpose of the appeal specifying and stating

in para 2 that, "This appeal has been preferred by the Appellant challenging the Judgment dated 18.12.2020 (hereinafter referred to as "impugned judgment") passed in CrI. R.C. (MD) No. 121 of 2016 by the High Court of Judicature at Madras, Madurai Bench (hereinafter referred to as "the High Court") wherein the criminal revision filed by the Respondent No. 2 and Respondent No. 3 (hereinafter referred to as "Private Respondents") was allowed by the High Court. The High Court upheld the conviction of Private Respondents for the offences punishable under Section 307, 326 and 324 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (hereinafter referred to as "IPC"), but it modified the sentence awarded to them from three years rigorous imprisonment along with a fine of Rs 5,000/- each (totalling to Rs 10,000/-) to period already undergone with an enhanced fine of Rs 50,000/- each (totalling to Rs 1,00,000/-)."

To put things in perspective, the Bench envisages in para 3 while elaborating on the factual matrix stating that, "As per the prosecution story, Crime No. 142/2009 was registered at Thiruppachethi Police Station, wherein it was alleged that there was previous enmity between the victim and the Private Respondents. On 06.06.2009 at about 03.00 PM, the Private Respondents came with knives, while the other two accused persons came with sticks.

The Private Respondents stabbed the victim with knives on the left side of the chest, in the left rib, abdomen, and on the right hand palm. The other accused persons attacked the victim with sticks, causing minor injuries.

Further, it was also alleged that the Private Respondents, along with the other accused persons, have used abusive language against the victim.”

Do note, the Bench notes in para 4 that, “During the investigation, the Private Respondents and the other accused persons were arrested, and based on the confessional statement of one of the other accused persons, the knives used for committing the offence were discovered. Further, the Police recorded the statements of the victim and other witnesses. After completion of the investigation, a charge sheet dated 25.06.2009 was filed under Sections 294(b), 323, 324, 326, and 307 of IPC against all the accused persons (including the Private Respondents) before the Addl. District Munsif cum Judicial Magistrate Court, Manamadurai.”

Do further note, the Bench then notes in para 5 that, “Subsequently, the Addl. District Munsif cum Judicial Magistrate Court, Manamadurai, committed the case to the District and Sessions Court, Sivagangai, which framed charges under Sections 294(b), 326, and 307 of the IPC against Respondent No 2 and under Sections 294(b), 324, and 307 of the IPC against Respondent No 3, and under Sections 294(b) and 323 of the IPC against the other accused persons. Thereafter, the case was transferred by the District and Sessions Court, Sivagangai, to the Chief Judicial Magistrate cum Subordinate Court/ Assistant Sessions Judge, Sivagangai (hereinafter referred to as “Trial Court”).”

It cannot be glossed over that the Bench observes in para 6 that, “During the trial, the complainant Rajendran (hereinafter referred to as “PW1”), deposed that he knew the accused persons, including the Private Respondents, as they belonged to his village. Further, PW1 reiterated the complaint and stated that he took the victim to the Thiruppachethi Police Station and lodged the

complaint. Further, the Appellant herein was examined as PW3, and the victim was examined as PW2. Additionally, Dr. Prabhakaran, who was examined as PW9, identified that the victim had sustained four stab injuries, and that these types of injuries, if not immediately treated, could be life-threatening.”

Most significantly and most remarkably, the Bench then encapsulates in para 34 what constitutes the cornerstone of this notable judgment postulating precisely that, “The misplaced understanding of various courts in treating compensation as a substitute of sentence is both a matter of concern and a practice which should be condemned. We have observed a trend amongst various High Courts wherein the sentences awarded to the accused persons by the Trial Court are reduced capriciously and mechanically, without any visible application of judicial mind. Considering the gravity of the situation as thus, we have culled out certain basic factors, which are to be kept in mind by the courts while dealing with imposition of sentence, in line with the view taken by this Court in the aforementioned cases. The said factors are enunciated as below:

A. Proportionality: Adherence to the principle of “just deserts” ought to be the primary duty of the courts. There should be proportionality between the crime committed and the punishment awarded, keeping in consideration the gravity of the offence.

B. Consideration to Facts and Circumstances: Due consideration must be given to the facts and circumstances of the case, including the allegations, evidence and the findings of the trial court.

C. Impact on Society: While imposing sentences, the courts shall bear in mind that crimes essentially impair the social fabric of the society (of which the victim(s) is/are an indispensable part) and erodes public trust.

The sentence should be adequate to maintain the public trust in law and administration, however, caution should also be taken, and the Court shall not be swayed by the outrage or emotions of the public and must decide the question independently.

D. Aggravating and Mitigating Factors: The courts, while deciding the sentence or modifying the sentence, must weigh the circumstances in which the crime was committed, and while doing so, the court must strike a fair balance between the aggravating and the mitigating factors.”

Be it noted, the Bench notes in para 35 that, “In the present case, the testimonies on record of the PW1 (the complainant), PW2 (the victim), and PW3 (the Appellant herein), when taken conjointly, clearly establishes existence of prior enmity between the victim and the Private Respondents herein who had caused injuries to the victim. Further, these testimonies have been corroborated by the statements of PW9 (Doctor), who had stated that the victim suffered 4 stab injuries, which were grievous in nature to the extent that, if not given immediate care, could have been life-threatening.”

It is worth noting that the Bench notes in para 36 that, “We have carefully considered the decisions of the Trial Court, and are of the view that the Trial Court rightly convicted the Private Respondents under Sections 307, 324 and 326 of the IPC as the injuries were grievous and life-threatening. This decision was further affirmed, correctly so, by the District and Sessions Fast Track Mahila Court, Sivagangai.”


Most forthrightly, the Bench then propounds in para 37 holding that, “Thereafter, the High Court, while exercising its revisionary powers, very ignominiously reduced the sentence of the Private Respondents to the period already undergone. The High Court was so undesirous to even

glance through the fact that the Trial Court had already taken into consideration all the relevant factors while imposing the sentence and showed adequate leniency while awarding sentence of rigorous imprisonment for three years only, whereas the maximum punishment permissible for the offence under Section 307 of the IPC is ten years. Additionally, the undue sympathy shown by the High Court herein was totally unwarranted, and such displays of overt sentiments risk undermining the administration of justice, as it is imperative that justice is not merely done but also seen to be done.”

It would be instructive to note that as a corollary, the Bench then directs and holds in para 38 that, “In light of the above discussion, we are of the view that the impugned judgment warrants interference and is, therefore, set aside. Further, the judgment of conviction and sentence dated 28.11.2013 passed by the Chief Judicial Magistrate/ Assistant Sessions Judge, Sivagangai and later confirmed by the District Sessions Fast Track Mahila Court, Sivagangai, are affirmed. The appeal stands allowed.”

Finally, the Bench then concludes by directing and holding in para 40 that, “Pending application(s), if any, shall stand disposed of.”

In conclusion, the Apex Court has very rightly underscored that compensation to victims cannot replace custodial punishment. This was held so while setting aside the Madras High Court’s reduction of a three-year jail sentence in an attempt to murder case. There has to be zero tolerance for crimes and any leniency sends a very wrong and dangerous message that, “In India you can get away even after committing most heinous crimes”. This leading case definitely deserves to be emulated strictly in all such similar cases by all courts! No denying or disputing it!

Sanjeev Sirohi is an Advocate. 

The Self-Imposed Cocoon

He Wan

Abstract

Philosophy, the foundational discipline guiding human development, has been overly complicated and marginalized in an era of material prosperity, trapping humanity in the evolutionary cycle of “change in adversity, stagnation in comfort”. This paper argues that the root of all human predicaments lies in the lack of a complete and practical philosophical system—pioneering human-centric thoughts such as Protagoras’ doctrine and Mohism were historically suppressed, while deceptive ideologies of the rule of god, man and law were perpetuated by elites to manipulate the masses. This study redefines philosophy as the practical truth of human survival, constructs a human-centric ontology by complementing and upgrading Locke’s theoretical framework, and further proposes the Rule by Principle social system that transcends the traditional three governance models. By critically analyzing the philosophical decline and institutional predicament of Western society, the paper identifies India as the ideal experimental ground for this new theory, given its preserved Enlightenment spirit, rich revolutionary heritage, and demographic advantages. It is argued that the Rule by Principle system can be initially established in India within a decade and globalized subsequently, ultimately liberating humanity from self-imposed cognitive and institutional cocoon and building an eternal and harmonious social order.

Keywords: Human-centric ontology; Rule by Principle; Indian political transformation; Western philosophy critique; evolutionary trap of civilization

Philosophy is such an exhausting pursuit! It can be refreshingly simple or overwhelmingly convoluted, and the divide lies merely in a shift of perspective. That is to say: when we

overcomplicate inherently straightforward truths, we end up making ourselves far more foolish than beasts. Today, humanity appears to be hurtling toward unprecedented prosperity, yet philosophy is on a steady decline—lost in the fog, it is drifting down a path of self-destruction. The root cause of this predicament is none other than the recurrence of an age-old natural law: adversity spurs change; prosperity breeds complacency—an evolutionary trap, if you will. Should philosophy continue its descent into irrelevance, it will signal the impending demise of human society. This is akin to a dinosaur charging forward without guidance—its path inevitably leads to a colossal abyss. The world we inhabit today is a chaotic, unruly, and unregulated “dinosaur era,” teetering on the brink of extinction. The only difference? Dinosaurs fell victim to the whims of nature, while humans now wield high technology to annihilate one another—possessing the power to destroy everything we have built. In short, without philosophy to steer our course, the modern world will succumb to the most perilous technological trap imaginable!

Humanity boasts a 5,000-year civilization. Especially since the triumph of modern bourgeois revolutions, we have witnessed an explosion of scientific and technological progress. Yet beneath this veneer of prosperity, we remain ensnared by a terrifying curse: as soon as a regime consolidates its power and society settles into stability, philosophy is condemned to die. And with the death of philosophy, society plunges headlong into chaos, conflict, and crisis—at which point philosophy is resurrected to spearhead a new wave of revolution! How can we break this vicious cycle? The answer is clear: it has nothing to do with science. No matter how advanced science becomes, it can only address material challenges; it is powerless to resolve the crisis of

spiritual order. Modern humans are nothing but winged dinosaurs—endowed with greater power, yet our thinking remains stagnant. We still cling to the law of the jungle, merely replacing blatant violence with insidious deception. This narrow-minded mode of survival is far more terrifying than animalistic aggression, for it is infinitely harder to expose and eradicate! Yet this predicament is also a matter of perspective. As the saying goes, He who tied the bell must be the one to untie it. Ultimately, our struggles stem from the absence of a comprehensive, correct philosophical theory. In this sense, we are all blinded by trivialities! To put it plainly: once the truth is laid bare, we will attain epiphany, ascend to clarity, and reach the summit; but if we remain trapped in our own delusions, we will be doomed to perpetual confusion, despair and abyss!

In fact, the philosophy of Protagoras more than two thousand years ago was already very close to the standard answer, especially his assertion that “Man is the measure of all things; of things that are, that they are; of things that are not, that they are not.” This can be said to have revealed the ultimate truth at one stroke. Yet barely ten years after Pericles’ death, his entire theoretical system collapsed. He was not only exiled, but all his works were burned to ashes. One can’t help but sigh: how could such a great school of Sophists end up so fragile and vulnerable! Coincidentally, the Mohist school in China around the same period was once a prominent and thriving school of thought during the Warring States period. But after Qin Shi Huang unified China, the school itself and all its writings immediately vanished without a trace. It was not until modern times that people began to excavate and research some fragments that luckily survived. From this, we cannot help but notice such a pattern: the more outstanding an achievement is, the harder it is for it to find a foothold; the more delusional and worthless a doctrine is, the more it is idolized and exalted. For the ruling elites throughout history, could they

really fail to see the universal value, profound significance and extensive applicability of such excellent governance theories as those proposed by Protagoras, Mozi and Feuerbach? Clearly, they could never have missed them! But they were far more keenly aware of the instrumental value, practical significance and immediate effects of theology (the rule of god), Confucianism (the rule of man) and jurisprudence (the rule of law). Thus, all such delusional garbage was treated like hot property, being promoted vigorously and perpetuated endlessly. Of course, the intricate hidden agendas behind all this are definitely beyond the ken of the general public. They possess almost no discernment whatsoever, so they are inevitably led by the nose, falling into the bottomless abyss of being deceived, blinded and fooled generation after generation. And thus, the real core issue emerges — how can this phenomenon be changed? It is utterly unrealistic and impossible to expect the general public to spontaneously develop a high level of discernment, let alone to formulate a complete and correct theoretical system on their own. In fact, it would be more than enough if just one person could create such a theory! And with the advent of this theory, the ruling class would naturally abandon their outdated methods. After all, who wouldn’t prefer a perfect solution that benefits everyone and brings about the greatest and ultimate interests? Alas — I have to say this: heaven and hell are but a single thought apart! With a truly correct theory in hand, all problems will be resolved in an instant. But without it, the world will be trapped in a massive web of its own making. It will never take the initiative to absorb and refine those earlier theories that achieved fundamental breakthroughs yet remained incomplete, thus inevitably heading down a vicious cycle leading to a dead end! In the final analysis, the core task now is to present this truly correct and thoroughly complete theory to the world!

For thousands of years, philosophy has been

in a state of chaos. What is philosophy? What is man? What is the world? What is society? None of these most fundamental propositions has ever been clearly figured out!

First and foremost, philosophy is the way of human survival and development. The core of this way is to find the ultimate truth, so that people can follow the correct and eternal path under its guidance. Conversely, under the influence of wrong guidance or with no guidance at all, the world is bound to fall into disaster and chaos, filled with delusions and confusion. The spiritual realm will be devoid of any genuine knowledge, forming a massive web of self-imposed fetters from which no one can break free or escape. Therefore, how to provide concrete truth is the essence of all scholarship! Yet this truth can actually be summed up in one simple sentence: Everything is for the sake of interests, and when there is no such thing as taking advantage of others in this world, it will become a perfect society!

In fact, the primary mission of philosophy is to cultivate people's awareness of foresightedness. Such foresightedness is the most direct embodiment of this way, and more importantly, it is the strategy and method to realize a world free from taking advantage of others. Hence, all those so-called concepts like God, wisdom, soul, love, goodness, benevolence and so on are nothing but irrelevant delusions. Precisely these delusions have woven the largest cognitive cocoon for humanity, becoming the biggest self-imposed obstacle that prevents humans from breaking through the predicament of natural laws, and ultimately turning into the best tool for some people to seize extreme private interests. In short, when you truly possess the awareness of foresightedness, you have mastered philosophy thoroughly. This is exactly why I hold Locke in high esteem—even though he still couldn't escape the shackles of God.

Secondly, man is everything — that is to say, man is the noumenon of all things in the universe.

This is precisely the source of all truth. If one cannot even recognize this fundamental source, all doctrines are inevitably nonsense! Yet the problem is, no one has truly grasped it. Whether it is theocentrism (encompassing various theological doctrines), natural-centrism (including materialism, rationalism, scientism, and other naturalistic worldviews), or mind-centrism (covering all forms of irrationalism) — none of them can perceive the decisive role of human consciousness. It is the conceptual symbolization of consciousness that endows the world with its existence. Therefore, it can also be said that the world is nothing more than a human idea. And precisely because of its unique function — reason — consciousness is in fact the sole means to measure everything and transform everything. In other words: everything is centered on human beings, and everything exists for the sake of human beings.

Only by establishing human beings as the ontological foundation of the universe can we understand the purpose of human existence. We do not live for the soul, for nature, or for God—we live for ourselves, for the tangible, living self. To put it bluntly: those who reject empty fantasies live for themselves; those who embrace them live for others. In short: Without delusion, there can be no deception. With the ontology of humanism as our foundation, we fill the greatest gap in Locke's theory, thus forming a comprehensive philosophical system. Only then can we realize the ultimate vision of a principle-governed society, ensuring that humanity will never again be trapped in a vicious cycle of revolution and counter-revolution. This means that while Locke's theory of foresight was revolutionary in its time, it was confined to the era of revolution itself. Once the revolution succeeded and the regime stabilized, the new ruling class would quickly collude with religious institutions, and Locke's foresight would be reduced to vulgar utilitarianism in the eyes of the masses. Therefore, only when the theory of

foresight is anchored in a solid ontological foundation can it find its true purpose and direction. This will enable us to construct a complete ideological system that can dismantle and replace religious theocracy, and further establish a new political system and social model of our own. Only in this way can we seal the loopholes that lead to revolutionary betrayal, preventing humanity from slipping back into old patterns of oppression. Of course, this conclusion is not arbitrary—it is grounded firmly in empirical fact!

Furthermore, the universe is a living, breathing entity. The universe is not a mere physical phenomenon; it is a living organism with an inherent spiritual purpose, constantly evolving and developing toward a state of perfect harmony. The universe's inner spirit is like its "factory setting"—the fundamental law and value orientation that drives the creation, evolution, and operation of all things. Quarks (the material cause), activity (the formal cause), environment (the efficient cause), and desire (the final cause) are its tangible manifestations. And human beings are its ultimate expression—through us, the universe comes to know itself, to develop itself, and to fulfill its destiny. In short: human beings are the universe's ultimate self—we are both its product and its creator.

The key insight here is that human beings, through the power of rational consciousness, can rewrite the original laws of nature and transform the existing order, establishing new forms, rules, and systems that lead to an eternal state of perfection. In truth, human potential is infinite—we have barely begun to tap into our true capabilities. Yet the reality is that we are trapped in a cycle of self-deception, self-destruction, and internal conflict, squandering our time and lives on petty squabbles. Nothing could be more foolish! Thus, rationality is a double-edged sword: it can elevate us to godlike heights, or reduce us to something lower than beasts.

Finally, society is a set of man-made rules. The social structures of animals are based on

instinct and simple survival imperatives—devoid of deception. For example, in the competition for alpha status among lions, might makes right; there is no generational entrenchment of power through fraud or nepotism. Human social rules, however, are an entirely different matter. Under the manipulation of rule of god, rule of man and rule of law, family and class solidification are inevitable—fairness is nowhere to be found. The social system is an invisible cage, and it is nearly impossible for ordinary people to climb the social ladder unless they are exceptional geniuses. Hence, the so-called "common prosperity" is nothing but a hollow slogan. This means that the fate of the masses is predetermined—no matter how hard they struggle, they are doomed to be tools serving the interests of others. Ultimately, the most important thing is not how hard you work, but how you change the system!

Of course, to change the system, you must first change people's minds. Only by establishing the correct ideology can we hope to build the corresponding correct system—the principle-governed society. For thousands of years, the absence of a comprehensive, correct ideology has led to the rise and fall of the god-governed society, the man-governed society and the law-governed society—each system serving only the interests of a small elite. This is the root cause of all human suffering. What is even more terrifying is that in such systems, only a tiny fraction of humanity can realize their true potential; the vast majority are forced to toil merely to survive. This is not only a colossal waste of human resources, but also a profound violation of the sanctity of life. Foresight! Foresight! Foresight! Fair distribution of benefits is the highest form of foresight. Only in such an environment can every individual's potential be fully unleashed. In this state, material wealth will be so abundant that it will be as worthless as dirt—no one will fight over it, and distribution according to need will be a natural reality. In short: real knowledge is the specific path and the ultimate answer. The petty

cunning of seizing material gain through deception is completely unnecessary and meaningless. In fact, the true meaning of life lies in exploring the cosmos and transforming the universe—to achieve the ultimate state of perfection and build an eternal home for humanity!

Having said all this, it is time to turn our attention to practical matters. That is: what is the path to breaking free from this self-imposed prison?

It is clear that Western society today is firmly trapped in the evolutionary trap—impervious to reason or reform. Even though my theory is correct, powerful, and comprehensive, I have no choice but to seek an alternative path—I cannot afford to waste any more time. The West has foolishly abandoned the traditional constructive approach to philosophy—the very paradigm established by the great thinkers of the past—and has embarked on a path of irreversible decline. The most terrifying prospect is that if this trend continues, the next generation of Westerners will become philosophical idiots! This will condemn the masses to a state of mindless confusion, reduce philosophy to a mere tool of politics, and ultimately lead to the collapse of Western civilization. The role of contemporary Western philosophy is no different from that of medieval scholasticism—a servant of power. The root cause of this tragedy is that the West has failed to use its so-called rationality to break free from the natural law: adversity spurs change; prosperity breeds complacency. The older generation of revolutionaries lived in an era of hardship and deprivation, so they were pragmatic, curious, and driven to progress. But the current generation lives in an era of unprecedented prosperity, so they are complacent, deceitful, and content to muddle along. In India, however, the situation is the exact opposite. Many thinkers there continue to build on the legacy of the great minds of the past—inheriting, developing, and perfecting their work—thus avoiding the intellectual rupture that has befallen the West.

This is an invaluable asset in today's world. Not only can India continue the unfinished work of the Enlightenment, but it also possesses the vitality, discernment, and courage to drive meaningful change. This is truly humanity's greatest fortune!

Thus, the practical path forward is clear: India is undoubtedly the best soil for revolution. This theory of Rule by Principle is highly compatible with India's parliamentary democratic system and grassroots governance structure, and can be gradually implemented from India's local self-governance institutions, avoiding conflicts with the existing political framework. It is in a stage similar to the European Enlightenment or the Republic of China era—a period of intense ideological competition, where the social model has not yet been fixed. Moreover, since its independence movement, India has produced no shortage of prominent revolutionaries—figures such as Tagore, Gandhi, and Roy. In winning national independence, India also inherited a rich legacy of revolutionary thought. This provides an enormous opportunity for the introduction of new theories today. In contrast, Western countries will block me at this critical stage of theory promotion, making it the most formidable bottleneck for me to overcome. But this also means that as long as this problem is resolved, success will be all but guaranteed. However, unlike Western countries, India has no shortage of revolutionary organizations or practical enthusiasm, and it lacks only the right theoretical guidance. In other words: India has strong practical capabilities, but its theoretical research is weak. Theory has always been the bottleneck holding India back. Therefore, India is in desperate need of a new theory—and this is where my work fills the gap, forming a perfect synergy between theory and practice. Of course, India also enjoys unique advantages: its independence and demographic dividend eliminate the objective barriers to implementing a new theory, allowing it to soar to new heights and become a global leader in human progress. At that point, the West's self-imposed prison will

collapse on its own, and the world will soon embrace the ultimate perfect society!

Although philosophy is the oldest and greatest discipline of all, it is also the freshest and most arduous one. It is fresh because it has always existed in chaos—there are “far too many” mysteries, so much so that humanity has never even established a basic framework for understanding it. This leads to a cacophony of conflicting opinions and a lack of consensus, leaving enormous room for creative breakthroughs. But the truth is, philosophy is really just a few basic tricks at its core. It is arduous precisely because the more “stable” the times, the harder philosophy struggles to advance. Researchers have no choice but to face the dual trials of a harsh objective environment and the need for profound self-transformation—truly, one wrong move, and a lifetime of effort goes down the drain! In fact, for thousands of years, when it comes down to it, the purpose of philosophy has never been more than to construct an optimal set of “game rules.” And once these rules are in place, humanity will be set for good—meaning, all problems will naturally resolve themselves! Clearly, whether it be slave societies, feudal societies, or today’s capitalist society, their game rules all suffer from a fatal flaw: their narrow essence of serving only a small minority has never changed. Since these rules are designed to benefit just a few, it is easy to imagine where the greatest difficulty lies when someone tries to change them. And as long as ordinary people still have food on the table, these rules become unshakable—impossible for anyone to overthrow. Of course, throughout history, there has never been a shortage of progressive individuals who could see the drawbacks of these rules and yearned to eliminate them and institute reforms. However, their so-called reforms were no more than patchwork adjustments; they could never bring themselves to seek answers from the very foundations of rule. And when the fundamental solution is laid out before them, they instead

become hesitant and timid—usually neither openly opposing it nor accepting it immediately, but choosing to wait and see. It is precisely this hesitation that has left me stuck—becoming the biggest bottleneck I have encountered. I had naively thought they would be ecstatic with joy upon seeing the truth. But regardless, given the current situation, this no longer matters!

(To be continued....)

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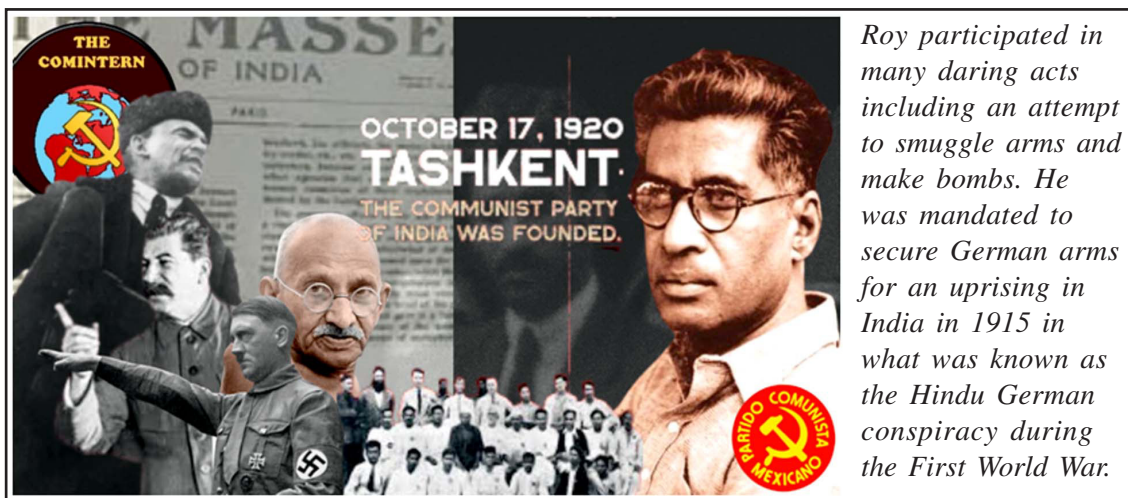
4. Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

5. He Wan (born Xingshan Huang, February 21, 1979) is an independent scholar and poet from the Chinese grassroots. A self-taught English learner, his work spans philosophical inquiry and poetic creation. He has developed a unique philosophical framework which he terms “Human-Centricism (Human-Centric Doctrine)”, positing it as a practical and streamlined approach to contemporary thought. His poetry, often concise and ironic, explores themes of society, history, and human nature. 🌈

Mexico's Communist Party Has Its Origin In Bengal: Manabendra Nath Roy, The Man Who Challenged Lenin

Comrade Manabendra Nath Roy: The Indian Revolutionary Who Founded Communist Parties in Mexico and India and Directly Challenged Lenin at the Comintern

Samannay Biswas



Roy participated in many daring acts including an attempt to smuggle arms and make bombs. He was mandated to secure German arms for an uprising in India in 1915 in what was known as the Hindu German conspiracy during the First World War.

Manabendra Nath Roy (formerly known as Narendra Nath Bhattacharya) was born on March 21, 1887, and passed away on January 25, 1954. He is one of the most path-breaking revolutionary figures of the 20th century whose impact is often overlooked.

Among his accomplishments are the founding of the Communist Party of Mexico (it was the first communist party outside Russia)

and the Communist Party of India (Tashkent group).

He rose to the top of the Communist international ('Comintern'), debating the colonial question with Vladimir Lenin.

Disillusioned with Stalinism, he later returned to India, where he pioneered the philosophy of Radical Humanism.

Early Life and Revolutionary Beginnings in India (1887–1915)

Narendra Nath Bhattacharya was born in a Brahmin family in the village of Arbelia, which is situated in the 24 Parganas district of Bengal. He was a school headmaster. He joined revolutionary underground as a teenager. During the Swadeshi movement against the Bengal partition (1905–07). Later he joined the Jugantar Group, which advocated a more militant form of revolution.



Jugantar (Left) Anushilan Samiti (Right)



Founded by M.N. Roy, the Communist Party of Mexico (Spanish: Partido Comunista de México, PCM) is a communist party in Mexico. It advocates internationalism of the proletariat, Leninist organizational theory based on democratic centralism, and Marxism-Leninism

The Communist Party of Mexico

In 1919, with the help of Mikhail Borodin (a Bolshevik emissary who stayed with the Roys), Roy formally founded the Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM) – the Communist Party of Mexico. This was the first-ever communism political party formed outside the Soviet Russia.

Roy served as its first general secretary and used German funds (originally meant for Indian revolution) to support the party’s newspaper and activities.

Arrival in Soviet Russia and Meetings with Lenin (1920)

In late 1919, Lenin invited Roy who was a delegate of the Mexican Communist party to the Second Congress of the Communist International in Moscow. Roy and Evelyn arrived in Moscow in May–June 1920.



Roy with participants in the 4th World Congress including Sen Katayama, Ho Chi Minh, Tan Malaka, and others (Source: Revolution’s Newsstand)

Roy had several private meetings with Lenin. The two leaders discussed the strategy for revolution in colonial countries. Lenin’s original draft these emphasised supporting bourgeois-nationalist movements in the colonies as a stepping stone to socialism. Roy strongly disagreed.



This is the logo of the Comintern which was also known as the Communist International or the Third International. The Comintern existed from 1919-1943 when it was ended by Stalin so as to not antagonize Britain or the United States during World War II.

The Comintern Logo

The Historic Debate: Roy’s Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Question

At the Second Comintern Congress (July–August 1920), Roy presented his Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Question. In them, he argued:

- In colonial countries like India, the bourgeoisie was too weak and too tied up with the system to really lead a true anti-imperialist revolution.
- The working class and peasantry must

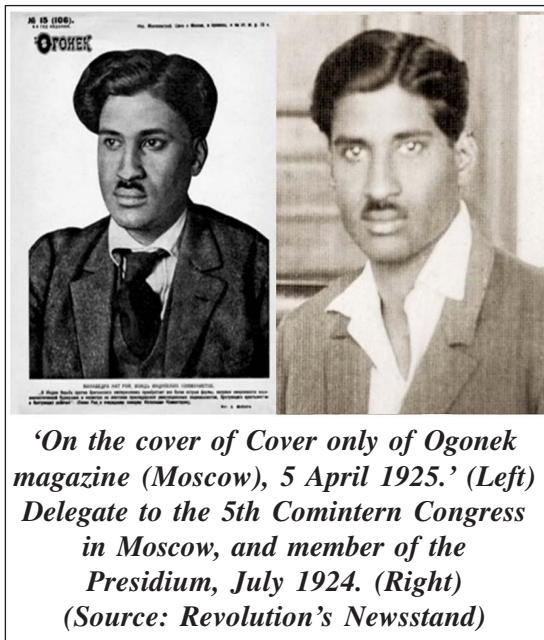


M.N Roy the founder of Communist party of India and Mexican Communist party with Lenin and Gorky,1919 (Source: Reddit)

lead the struggle directly.

- Communists should form independent proletarian parties rather than blindly following nationalist leaders like Gandhi.
- The fate of the world revolution would be decided in Asia, not just Europe.

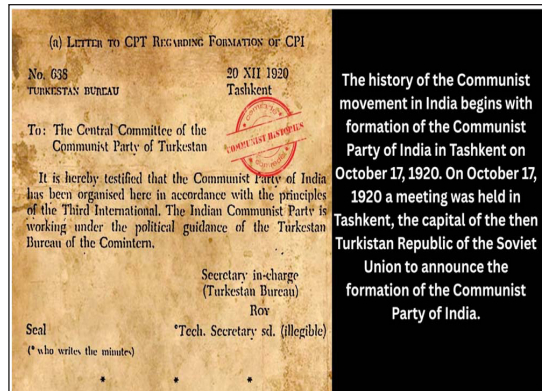
Lenin initially resisted but, after intense debate in the commission, accepted many of Roy's points. The final Comintern theses incorporated elements of both Lenin's and Roy's drafts. Roy's intervention marked the first major theoretical contribution by a non-European to Comintern policy and established him as a leading voice on colonial affairs.



'On the cover of Cover only of Ogonek magazine (Moscow), 5 April 1925.' (Left) Delegate to the 5th Comintern Congress in Moscow, and member of the Presidium, July 1924. (Right) (Source: *Revolution's Newsstand*)

Founding the Communist Party of India and Global Role

While in Moscow, Roy was tasked by Lenin with preparing the Indian revolution. In October 1920, in Tashkent, which was part of Soviet Turkestan at the time, Roy started the Communist Party of India (the Tashkent group) with a few Indian revolutionaries, like Abani Mukherji and Mohammad Shafiq. This was the first organised communist formation for India.



The history of the Communist movement in India begins with formation of the Communist Party of India in Tashkent on October 17, 1920. On October 17, 1920 a meeting was held in Tashkent, the capital of the then Turkistan Republic of the Soviet Union to announce the formation of the Communist Party of India.

The meeting was attended by Comrades M.N. Roy, Evelyn Trent-Roy, Abani Mukherjee, Rosa Fitingov, Mohd Ali, Mohd Shafiq and MPBT Acharya. Mohd Shafiq was elected the secretary of the Party. The inaugural meeting also adopted the principles proclaimed by the Comintern and decided to work out the programme of the CPI 'suited to the conditions of India'.

Roy rose rapidly in the Comintern hierarchy. He served on the Executive Committee, edited journals for the East, and was sent on missions to China (1927). While in China, he participated with Borodin in the failed revolution. He remained a Comintern top leader until 1929, when he was expelled for opposing Stalin's ultra-left line.

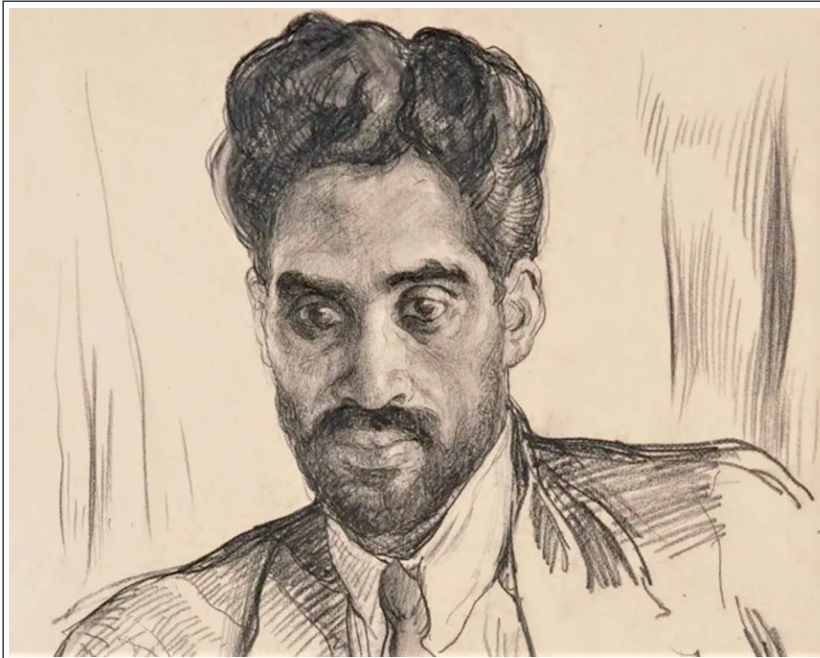
Later Life: Return to India and Radical Humanism (1930–1954)

Roy returned secretly to India in 1930 under the alias "Dr Mahmud". He was arrested in 1931, put on trial for the Kanpur Conspiracy Case, and sentenced to 12 years in prison, though the sentence was later shortened. He joined the Indian National Congress in 1936 but left soon after because he didn't agree with Gandhi and Nehru's decision to support Britain during World War II.

Roy then formed the Radical Democratic Party (1940) and later Radical Humanist Movement (1948), both of which he strongly

disapproved of communism and nationalism. He dismissed materialism and dictatorship of proletariat in Marxism and proposed a philosophy based on reason, individual freedom, and secular humanism.

M.N. Roy was an internationalist to the core. M.N. Roy was a true internationalist, having founded two communist parties on two different continents, influencing Comintern colonial policy directly in debates with Lenin, and then becoming



M.N. Roy by I. Brodsky, 1920. (Source: Revolution's Newsstand)

one of the left's earliest and deepest critics of Stalinism. His transformation from an armed revolutionary to a radical humanist continues to inspire those who believe in reason, freedom and anti-authoritarianism.

“Today Roy is remembered in Mexico (where a famous night club in Mexico City is named for him), in Russia as a pioneer of the Comintern and in India as one of the most original thinkers of the independence movement.” His life

Roy suffered cerebral thrombosis in 1952 and died of a heart attack on 25 January 1954 in Dehradun at age sixty-six.

continues to serve as a reminder that the struggle for human emancipation is a borderless struggle.

Courtesy **Times Now**, Feb 25, 2026. 🌐

Articles/Reports for The Radical Humanist

Dear Friends,

Please mail your articles/reports for publication in the RH to:- theradicalhumanist@gmail.com or mahipalsinghrh@gmail.com or post them to:- Mahi Pal Singh, Raghav Vihar Phase-3, Prem Nagar, Dehradun, 248007 (Uttarakhand)

Please send your digital passport size photograph and your brief resume if it is being sent for the first time to the RH.

A note whether it has also been published elsewhere or is being sent exclusively for the RH should also be attached with it.

- Mahi Pal Singh,
Editor, The Radical Humanist

The Humanist Frame

An Education for Humanity

H. L. Elvin

(Summarized by : **Vinod Jain**)

It is still difficult to think of human civilization without thinking of a series of particular civilizations, each in his own time and place. Up to the stage of recorded history we now tend to see Man as a single evolving species, but we are only just reaching the point where we can see civilized man in comprehensive and unified terms. This is because civilizations until now have necessarily been local.

People living in the great civilizations of the past naturally supposed that to be civilized was to organize social life as they did, to behave according to their norms, to hold the beliefs that all right-thinking people held in their time and place. Yet, since the Stoics [people enduring pain and hardship without showing one's feelings or complaining] at least, to be civilized has implied a feeling that transcends local limitations, something that belongs to humanity as a whole. We ourselves feel this common humanity in the works of the different great civilizations, especially through the arts.

There is really a double shift taking place in our attitude to the past civilizations. On the one hand we feel we have to see them as more local than we used to think necessary.

On the other hand, because of growth of comparative studies and because of the shrinking of the world through modern Communications, we think of these differing civilizations as less local, as simply differing forms of something common to mankind. In a scholarly sense this realization of community may be limited to comparatively few people, but in terms of general sympathies it is increasingly a sign of our age. It has to be, as a condition of our living and working together.

It has developed enough for us to feel that we are on the way to a culture that will rightly retain local forms but that should be more broadly and consciously human in its outlook than any civilization of the past.

Here we meet the great cultural dialectic of our time. On the one hand, threatened by a cosmopolitanism that washes away local roots under a flood of mass production, we cry out for preservation of local variety. On the other hand, since humanity must now be one society for many of the most important purposes of our lives, we feel that any picture of the civilized man that imprisons him in a local framework is inadequate.

Two features of the present stage of history reinforce the movement towards a view of humanity as a whole and lead us to ask which local characteristics of civilization we should try to retain and which we must redefine in larger terms lest the present stage of human development end in disaster. The first of these features is political, though it comes in turn from material and technical advances. We begin to see pretty plainly that we cannot preserve peace without controlling the use of ultimate force, and that for this no unit smaller than mankind will do. And since political plans are of no use if they do not sink deep into men's consciousness we realize that the educational and cultural means at our disposal cannot remain geared to an earlier stage of human society. In the second place, through the progress of comparative studies, the different idea-systems by which men have explained the universe to themselves begin to look much less exclusively true at the expense of all the others.

The major cultural shift of our time follows the working of forces that may be identified in broad terms. But it is not only a question of forces operating upon us. The role of our own ideas may be decisive. We can decide—indeed have to decide — what form the ultimate resolution of forces shall take. All the forces that are making us into ‘one world’ will not take us into one happy world unless we will reasonably handle both the end and the means. Among the means themselves there is choice, for instance between a monolithic solution and one that is politically and culturally federal, leaving a rich diversity within the unity. To some extent we have it in our power to control our own evolution. To some extent we have it in our power to control our own evolution. Since man now has such immense powers in his hands it is not too much to say that he ought to regard himself as custodian for the future of all life on this planet.

It has been noted that men are being forced to consider closer association. These are not only reasons of protection from annihilation. There are also reasons connected with a desire for a common prosperity. The idea that the technically developed countries owe some help to the less developed is increasingly winning acceptance. There is a sense of common need. We have to co-operate in health measures because diseases ignore passports. In our transport, planes are over frontiers in no time. These activities are already modifying our habits and our view of mankind.

The economic, social and political forces which have produced an embryonic world order are gaining support from what is happening in the world of scholarship and ideas. Through the growth of comparative studies of all kinds we are being impelled to think more and more of humanity as a whole. The sense of the musician and the artist that national boundaries were irrelevant to their

work, and especially the sense of the scientist that his professional community was world-wide, have been reinforced by the students of comparative sociology, comparative religion and social psychology. Whereas even fifty years ago, for instance, it would have been natural for an adherent of one religion to say to an adherent of another religion, ‘We worship different gods’, he would now almost certainly say ‘We worship God in different ways’. That is a considerable improvement. Indeed, if one travels about the globe now one must feel how odd it was that people should have oppressed, killed and ‘converted’ one another with such zeal on the ground of differences between their religious creeds and practices when they were obviously much more like one another than they were different.

To the Humanist it seems a natural step to move from these comparative studies to a realization that the invocation of supernatural powers, in all its varied forms, belongs to an earlier stage of human development. It does not really explain anything, and it darkens understanding more than it helps it. However that may be — and the Humanist is content to leave it to the free play of thought, so long as thought IS kept free.

What kind of education would be appropriate to the present age? In answering this question it would be well to recall that our educational predecessors are by no means to be written off as foolish. Some of them were wise and enlightened men and women and what they did often served their own societies well. When innovation is in the air it is worth remembering that there are perennial purposes in education, however form and method may be adapted to different times and places. The important thing is to reinterpret these purposes according to a changing society and a changing climate.

We are concerned with basic knowledge, and for two reasons: first, because it is

necessary for further technical advance; and second, because without it we cannot understand either ourselves or the universe we inhabit. This leads us to the apparent paradox that in the age of rapid technical change what we need most is a revitalized general education, with a better command of the basic skills of reading writing and calculation, a good understanding of fundamental scientific principles, facts and methods, and a sense of individual and social values without which their application is sterile.

Our search for knowledge to understand ourselves and the universe better is something that a member of a primitive tribe could hardly conceive. But here too we have come to a point where serious consideration of what to include in our teaching and what to leave out is very necessary. In recent years in many subjects developments have been so rapid that we cannot just go on adding new matter to the syllabus as it used to be taught. The additions are too many; and some of them have seriously modified the whole shape of thought in a given study.

This is especially important for us because we are educating for change. For this, shaping a mind is more important than stuffing it. We need to sit back and think through each syllabus freshly, so as to bring forward the key concepts that will continue to work vitally when the particular applications of today belong to the past. We have to educate so that young people will think of man as an evolving species in an environment that he himself is changing and should change only with consciousness of what he does

It is here that the imparting of technical skills link up with the broader purposes of education, especially with the desire for knowledge for its own sake and with the 'world view' that is suitable to our stage of history. In other words technical education must become part of a humane education. We

depend far too much on technical skills for the antithesis between liberal and technical to persist with its old divisive force. The antithesis is useful only in so far as it may remind us that techniques are a means, not an end.

For us, as for any African tribe, the change has to be in our mental as well as our physical boundaries. This has obvious implications for our teaching, especially of history and geography, and the need is greater in history. For some reason, while it has always been thought proper to teach world geography, it has not been thought respectable to teach world history. Why? Whatever the shortcomings of H.G. Wells as a historian he performed an immense service when he wrote his "Outline of History". For the first time we saw biological evolution and human history as a continuum; and when Wells came on to recorded history he saw it as that of humanity as a whole. Now we are in need of a more authoritative basis for teaching world history in the schools, and the 'Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind' that UNESCO is preparing should give an agreed basis for school books.

We have now reached a point where these tentative recognitions of the oneness of mankind must be given force. So profound a change in our laws and our habits of mind cannot be introduced overnight. Yet we must set ourselves now to break down the attitude that there cannot be a common and enforced law over Capitalist and Communist alike. We must break down the assumption that there are either lesser breeds without the law, or higher breeds, ourselves, that can flourish with impunity. To accomplish this it is necessary to widen and deepen the understanding of different ways of life, of different religions and philosophies, and of different social systems; and above all to bring understanding of what the different peoples have in common.

I suggested that the third of the perennial purposes of education was to give the rising generation a 'world view'. This is the one whose reinterpretation for our own time is likely to cause most controversy. By a world view I mean a view of Man and his nature, of the earth and its history, and of the universe of which it is a minute part. I mean also a total response, at once scientific and imaginative and in a sense also moral, to what we know and to what we are unlikely ever to know.

Now it is really of importance that the different elements in this response to the universe (the scientific, the imaginative, the moral) should not fight each other but should fuse in a total personal synthesis. The intellectual framework of such a worldview should be sound, being based on the best knowledge that we have. It is the contention of Humanists that the leading concepts as to the nature of things handed down to us through religious dogmas do not afford us elements for a world view that we can regard as satisfactory for our own period of human history. It is here of course that the Humanist parts company with many of those who up to this point would have gone along with him happily enough in discussion of the kind of education we need.

Religious and moral and education are commonly associated. But it is wrong to suppose that they are the same thing. They are no more identical than theology and ethics are identical, for the simple reason that whatever else it includes, religious education must include the inculcation of some religious beliefs....

It is important that there should be a framework of leading ideas that will really help young people to see life steadily and see it whole. It must be one that does sort with our present knowledge, incomplete though that may be and incomplete though it will remain. What should these leading ideas be?

What the young need to know as soon as they pass from the earliest years of childhood is what they are, what mankind is, and how mankind fits into the universe around us. The leading idea here should surely be the continuing story of humanity, continuing back into the past through the history of evolution of life to the story of evolution of the universe, and continuing forward towards the idea of one humanity conscious of its unity and of its collective responsibility for life on this planet. Both in going back and in going forward scientific knowledge and imaginative response should meet in the wonder of what we know and the mystery of what lies beyond knowledge.

If one were to work this general concept out in terms of school subjects one would see it as implying a general background of science, drawing on astronomy and physics, then on geology and biology, and leading on naturally to social studies like history, geography and international affairs. And man's response to his situation would be felt, with no conflict between the sciences and the humanities, in literature and the arts.

We have gradually emerged from the closed, traditional, patriarchal sort of society when our lives were governed almost entirely by external unquestionable authorities. Science and morality are two of the most important manifestations of this stage. And they are connected not because the scientist is a new authority to replace old ones, but because they are both "anti-authoritarian" in character.

What the Humanist asks for is an education which, in what it teaches as knowledge, in its moral and imaginative response to life, and above all in its leading theme of the evolution of mankind, is seen to be appropriate to the twentieth century (or let us say to our times). 🌈

(To be continued....)

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