

# frontier

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## *Starvation Haunts Gaza*

**W**ITH GAZA REDUCED TO RUBBLE, LIVELIHOODS HAVE virtually evaporated in the besieged strip, and supplies from the outside are dwindling because of blockade by Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). It's a deliberate policy of starvation. Deliveries of food aid to the whole of Gaza are falling far short of what is needed, and the problem is worse in the north because the only crossings where Israel allows trucks to pass are in the south. Some aid trucks have been seized by desperate crowds before they reach. The sense of despair and helplessness seems to have gripped the entire Gaza population that is on the verge of mass hunger. As Gaza's hunger crisis worsens, emaciated children are dying in hundreds. It's a man-made famine.

Since October 7th IDF has restricted aid to Gaza to a trickle, with February seeing an average of only 96 trucks per day entering the enclave, a far cry from the 500-600 that used to enter daily. Israel has also made it harder for aid organisations to purchase items and attacked aid convoys, all of which has contributed to a reality in which 576,000 people—more than a quarter of Gaza's population, are literally starving. This is not because of a lack of available food. The UN's World Food Programme has said there is enough food waiting outside Gaza to feed "the entire population" but 2000 trucks are said to be sitting idle on the otherside of the Egypt-Gaza border, awaiting entry.

Meanwhile, US President Joe Biden announced during his State of the Union Address on 7th March that the United States would establish a temporary, floating sea pier through which to deliver humanitarian supplies to Palestinians in the Gaza strip, an increasing number of whom are starving. But two days later the Pentagon said this process would take several weeks, likely up to 60 days and require over 1000 US marines to monitor the operation. In other words in addition to occupying Israeli forces, now American troops too are stationed in Gaza in the name of helping aid work. In truth US plan to boost relief work is a glaring distraction from the real problem. US initiatives to airdrop and ship aid to Gaza are all logistical workarounds to a political problem while allowing Israel to continue its ruthless military campaign unabated.

It is not that just the military stops the trucks. For months, a growing group of Israelis has been protesting at the crossings in order to prevent aid trucks from entering Gaza while police and security forces just look on. The

situation is so horrible that Gazans—there are approximately 300,000 still living there—in sheer desperation, have reportedly resorted to eating animal feed and weeds. This is the reason for a large number of deaths from malnutrition.

In the absence of international pressure on Israel to change its policy of 'burn all, kill all', the human catastrophe in Gaza is likely to continue worsening as a growing num-

ber of Palestinians succumb to starvation.

Israeli soldiers shot at hungry Palestinians on February 29 which is now widely dubbed 'Flour Massacre' across the world. And it was followed by two subsequent killings by IDF personnel of hungry Palestinians scrambling for aid. This only adds to the mounting death toll among the uncounted and malnourished thousands battling the first signs of starvation.

Today, for Gazans who are still there braving all odds, every small thing is a struggle: getting medication for even the simplest disease. One can see the toll on faces as shown in the media, particularly in electronic media. They have lost weight, they are anaemic and pale. After five months of genocide, Palestinians feel betrayed. They have lost confidence in everyone around them. □□□

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## COMMENT

### Allahabad is Prayagraj

ALLAHABAD IS NOT BANARAS, redolent with the odour of sanctity, nor even Lucknow, embalmed forever in the memory of its brief, nawabi efflorescence. Agra has its grand Mughal monuments, the Taj Mahal and Sikandra, the ghostly, haunted and haunting magnificence of Fatehpur Sikri. Allahabad has Akbar's imposing fort all right, but one that has been bastardised by the army and subjected to mundane purposes.

After all, Allahabad was the capital from where the British Raj, in the post-Mutiny age, ruled the vast expanse of north India. Indeed, Allahabad was the place from where the colonial power started the fight back against the rebellious natives in 1857, and inaugurated the great colonial project of 'civilisation' by festooning the trees with the bodies of hanged Indians.

In 2018, the Bharatiya Janata Party government of Uttar Pradesh under the leadership of Yogi Adityanath, decreed that Allahabad would no longer be known as Allahabad. It would 'revert' to its

allegedly 'original' name, Prayagraj.

The renaming of places is a larger national pattern in Indian politics. After all, many cities have been renamed. Bombay has become Mumbai, Calcutta Kolkata, Madras Chennai...it is a long list. The phenomenon illustrates, at an immediate level, the angst that inevitably informs the postcolonial relationship with history. The past, identified with humiliation and defeat, with cultural dispossession, is sought to be erased, even as it is embodied, quite literally, in the people who seek that erasure. After all, the stain and torsion of time works at much deeper levels than the surfaces that can be covered over with fresh paint.

However, the particular motivations that are at play in particular instances vary from situation to situation and need to be understood in their local specificity. Thus, Prayagraj is claimed to be the original name of the city, and since the 'history' in which the original name got replaced by the name Allahabad is experienced as a history of shame, of defeat, the renaming is a symbolic way of transcending that history.

It is true that the name Prayag-'confluence'-antedates the city of Allahabad. But Prayag is merely a place; it is the river bank where the

Ganga and the Yamuna meet. This confluence has been sacred to Hindus from ancient times. They come here for some of their most significant ritual purposes; most crucially, for the final act of the funerary ritual, the immersion of the ashes of the dead in the sacred river. People-Hindus-go to great lengths to try and meet this demand. For this reason, the river bank has probably been home to a kind of morbid service industry, populated by grieving pilgrims and the pandas, the officiants who minister to them and prey on them, for longer than anyone can remember.

But the river bank is not a city, and it is certainly not the city. The city is the settlement that came up on the floodplain between the Ganga and the Yamuna, upstream from the confluence. And it was named Allahabad—a place where holiness dwells—in recognition of the traditional sacred status of the confluence, the prayag—and not as the insult of a conqueror, as is alleged by the necessary narrative of humiliation that underpins all such attempts at cultural 'reclamation'. The floodplain itself became available for settlement after the construction of a massive embankment. This embankment—the bandh—is identified, even today, even in Prayag, with the emperor Akbar, who constructed the massive fort.

□□□

[Contributed by Alok Rai of 'India Forum']

For Frontier Contact

**DHYANBINDU**

COLLEGE SQUARE

## NOTE

## How to Protect the Planet

*Bharat Dogra writes:*

**T**HIS IS A TIME WHEN SENIOR scientists have been warning increasingly that threats to the life-nurturing conditions of the planet due to climate change, other environmental problems and very dangerous and destructive weapons have been escalating, and yet, despite these warnings, several of the world's top leaders have gone ahead and created the conditions for several new and high-risk wars to start and escalate, so much so that the talk of the third world war and a nuclear war breaking out has been heard more during the last two years than during the last two decades. At the time of writing Russian President Vladimir Putin issued fresh warning that he would use nuclear weapons 'if sovereignty is threatened'.

In early 2024, with thousands of people dying in most painful ways on daily basis in dangerous wars and other man-made disasters, and in addition the possibility of all this is rising further due to the world leadership being too busy in escalation of risks rather than in remedial actions. Anyone who doubts this should merely look up the information on how fast the military-industrial complex is growing, how other high-risk and high-hazard industries are growing, how decisions jeopardising human life are being taken for monetary gains and how a small number of persons are accumulating increasing power which they unhesitatingly exercise in ways which increase their power and wealth further but also increasingly endanger the life of this and future generations.

The most important issue of

present times is that the basic life-nurturing conditions of the planet are badly threatened and this threat should be checked with a sense of the utmost urgency. Briefly, this threat comes from two sides—firstly, various environmental crises and secondly, weapons of mass destruction. To check these, the most obvious first step is to minimise the possibility of war, to eliminate (or curb in various significant ways) all weapons of mass destruction and check the overall arms race as well.

Ideally, the most powerful countries including the permanent members of the UN Security Council can get together and put their collective strength into securing a no-wars future for the world. With no international wars and the weapons race curbed, the creative energies of the world's people can be devoted to checking the environmental crisis while meeting the basic needs of all people. People display amazing creativity once the goals and tasks are set out clearly, the dos and don'ts are clear and a system of encouragements and discouragements is in place too. There should be the political will to check powerful polluters, and in addition people should be motivated and educated enough to avoid luxurious, polluting lifestyles.

This would be the ideal situation, but this does not appear to be on the horizon at all just now, and with new wars breaking out the already dangerously perched world appears to be moving further and further away from the real solutions, with agencies like the United Nations looking on more or less helplessly.

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Environment protection is being promoted in some ways but there is more rhetoric than reality, more lip service than real change, so that the basic factors which cause environmental ruin remain in place or may even be becoming stronger in some ways.

For one thing there must be greater role of people's non-violent mobilisation and actions for meeting this greatest challenge of present times, and of the next generations, although of course there will be constant need for engaging with the political leadership and world organisations like the United Nations, creating conditions in which they are sometimes encouraged, sometimes compelled to take bigger decisions for protecting the planet. □

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CAA

## Burying Democratic Secular Constitution

*Shamsul Islam*

**T**HE CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) Act, 2019 (CAA) that promises to open the door for Indian nationality to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians and Parsis who got into India (on or before December 31, 2014) from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, facing religious persecution, was introduced in the Lok Sabha by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah on December 9, 2019. This bill transgressing the fundamental soul of the democratic-secular polity of the country was passed in less than 8 hours due to RSS/BJP rulers enjoying brute majority in Lok Sabha. Sadly, it happened on the eve of International Human Rights Day, the 10th December. It replaced the Citizenship Act, 1955 which made no such discrimination. It was passed by Rajya Sabha on December 12. It was with the same hurricane speed that President of India gave her assent to make it into a law the same day.

However, a law which took birth and became a reality within 4 days (December 9 to 12) as if the Heavens would fall if this law did not exist was kept in the cold storage for 4 years and 9 months without being notified. It was enforced on March 11, 2024 when 2024 parliamentary elections are few weeks away. The plight of the persecuted non-Muslim minorities in India's neighbourhood was abandoned to ensure that it was resurrected only when PM Modi needed this polarising law to his advantage.

It is not difficult to understand that it is the first step in the direction of bringing in a more monstrous law for scrutinizing citizenship of all

existing Indian citizens. The NRC exercise is going to play havoc with crores of Indians specially marginalised and Muslims.

Shah while piloting the Bill in Lok Sabha had declared that it was in accordance with the Indian Constitution as "the Constitution is our religion." PM who abstained from the House due to election engagement in Jharkhand reposed full faith in Amit Shah by declaring that "This bill is in line with India's centuries old ethos of assimilation and belief in humanitarian values.

These were shameless lies. This Act, first of its kind in independent India, sanctions blatant violation of the secular Constitution of India. Secularism has been declared as one of the 'basic' structures by the Supreme Court of India. The Hindutva rulers claim that it was an amendment to the existing citizenship law, Citizenship Act of 1955. However, it is in total disregard of the 1955 Act under which Indian citizenship could be acquired by birth, descent, registration, naturalisation or incorporation of territory. Thus the CAA violates the secular character of the Indian Constitution which was declared to be one of the four inviolable pillars of the polity.

### ***It is part of global anti-Muslim polarising agenda of RSS***

Amit Shah while presenting this bill declared that it was not against minorities. According to him, "under PM Narendra Modi no minority needs to be afraid".

He seemed to be a large hearted home minister who would welcome all "Those who come here due to persecution, to save their religion

and honour of the women of their family..." [Ibid] The benevolent Amit Shah argued "If minorities are getting persecuted in neighbouring countries, we cannot be mute spectators. We have to ensure their safety and dignity".

However, this claim is absolutely hollow like any other claim of his when one goes through the Act. Persecuted Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians and Parsis in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh are welcome but persecuted Muslims like Shias, Ahmediyas and Sufis not eligible for this offer. According to RSS/BJP rulers persecuted Muslims were not considered because they did not constitute a minority but were all Muslims. Even illiterates know that in the three countries these above mentioned sects have been declared as non-Muslims.

Amit Shah highly worried about religious persecution in three Muslim countries is not bothered about the persecution of Muslim rationalist, liberal and atheist writers, poets, bloggers and activists who in hundreds have been killed by religious vigilante groups in these countries. For long time India has been denouncing ethnic cleansing of Baloch nationalists. Thousands of them have been killed by the Pakistani armed forces and hundreds remain missing. Since they are Muslims they will not be welcome despite their continuous ethnic cleansing by the Pakistan Army!

And what about persecuted Uyghur Muslim minority in China? According to a UN committee more than one million Uyghur Muslims and other Muslim groups had been detained in concentration camps in the western Xinjiang region, where they were said to be undergoing "re-education" programmes. Recently, US Congress overwhelmingly approved a bill aimed at pressuring China over a brutal mass crack-

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down on ethnic Muslims in the far west of the country.

Amit Shah's argument for not allowing persecuted Muslims from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan is that they are not minorities in their respective countries. But persecuted Uyghur Muslims are a religious minority in China. Denial to take refuge to them under the CAA 2019 only shows hatred for Muslims and kowtowing to the Chinese rulers.

Tragedy is soon to unfold for Afghans who in hundreds, many of them women, migrated to India due to excesses of Talibans. Since CAA has been notified all these Afghan refugees are going to be forced back into a theocratic Afghanistan ruled by the Taliban.

#### ***Farcical love for persecuted Christians***

The love for Christians in the neighbouring countries is more puzzling as after Muslims, this community has faced the maximum violence at the hands of RSS goons in India. Modi started his first term as PM of India on May 26, 2014. One of the first decisions he made was about celebrating December 25, (X-MAS) as 'good-governance day' every year. It continues till date. What fate awaited Christians in India was made clear by one of the most decorated police officers of India, Julio Ribeiro, on completion of almost nine months of Modi's government, in the following words: "Today, in my 86th year, I feel threatened, not wanted, reduced to a stranger in my own country. The same category of citizens who had put their trust in me to rescue them from a force they could not comprehend have now come out of the woodwork to condemn me for practising a religion that is different from theirs. I am not an Indian anymore, at least in the eyes of the proponents of the Hindu Rashtra.

"Is it coincidence or a well-thought-out plan that the systematic targeting of a small and peaceful community should begin only after the BJP government of Narendra Modi came to power last May? 'Ghar wapsi', the declaration of Christmas as 'Good Governance Day', the attack on Christian churches and schools in Delhi, all added to a sense of siege that now afflicts these peaceful people." Such attacks on Christians and their religious-educational institutions have since taken a pan-Indian diabolic character.

The most prominent ideologue of RSS declared Indian Christians as 'Internal threat number 2' after Muslims who were declared as 'Internal threat number 1'. [MS Golwalkar, Bunch of Thoughts, Sahitya Sindhu, Bangalore, 1996, p. 193.] How much Christians are loved by Amit Shah was made clear when Indian Parliament passed the 104th Constitutional Act in 2019 itself. It did away with the nomination of Anglo-Indian members to the Lok Sabha and state legislatures from January 25, 2020. Nomination to Anglo-Indians was provisioned in the Constitution in order to give representation to a section of Christians who were incapable of getting elected any member of their community due to small number. In fact, despite this provision in force in the 17th Lok Sabha the Modi government did not nominate any member from the Anglo-Indian community to the House. The regime which is bothered about the persecution of Christians across the borders is working over-time to deprive them of all the rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

#### ***Love for Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists who are decreed as Hindus in India by RSS***

RSS-BJP rulers love for Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan is puz-

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zling. BJP rulers as members of RSS do not accord the status of independent religion to the above mentioned religions. The most prominent ideologue of RSS, Guru Golwalkar declared that Hindus should not be divided into Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains, "the Buddhists, the Jain, the Sikh are all included in that one comprehensive 'word' Hindu". [MS Golwalkar, The Spotlights, Sahitya Sindhu, Bangalore, 1974, p. 171.]

#### ***Mysterious cut-off date***

The cut-off date for seeking refuge in India by the persecuted communities has been fixed on or before December 31, 2014. It means that there has been no persecution of Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians and Parsis in the three countries after December 31, 2014. It only shows complete disregard of the present reality in India's neighbourhood. The cut-off date was tailor made to assuage the mounting anger of more than fifteen lakh Hindus who have been declared foreigners in Assam. But it has opened the old wounds in Assam where organisations fighting for the Assamese identity have risen in revolt against CAA.

#### ***Persecuted Tamil Hindus of Sri Lanka left in the lurch***

CAA is silent on Sri Lanka where large scale massacre of Hindu

Tamilians took place. The fascist Buddhist organisations in Sri Lanka have been demanding Sri Lanka for Sinhalese Buddhists only. Amit Shah and his Hindutva government have brazenly betrayed the persecuted Hindu Tamilians of Sri Lanka who were forced to migrate to India during the civil war or still facing persecution there. More than 150000 (one and half lakh) are languishing in miserable camps with no rights. Shockingly, CAA sacrifices safety of even Hindus in the neighbourhood.

***Persecuted minorities and ethnic groups in Myanmar left to die***

Indian home ministry under Amit Shah has ordered to erect a fence on 1643 kilometre long India-Myanmar borders. It is being done to stop the religious minorities and ethnic groups like the Rohingya people, Kachins (The Baptists) and the Arakan Army which are facing brutal persecution of the Military rulers. Since they took refuge in India to save themselves from the killing gangs of the Myanmar Army now with this fence they would be at the mercy of Myanmar rulers.

***Amit Shah's hypocrisy on 'one nation, one legislation'***

RSS/BJP rulers have been pro-active on the demand that India is one nation and should have one law on each issue.

Interestingly, prior to the CAA

India had one single citizenship law but with the enforcement of CAA India would have multiple citizenship laws. The CAA exempts the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram, almost the whole of Meghalaya, and parts of Assam and Tripura, but keeps all of Manipur under its ambit which may also be made an exception. Thus citizenship will be governed by plethora of laws bidding good-bye to the goal of 'one nation, one legislation'.

***CAA 2019 was scripted by the Guru of Hate Golwalkar in 1939***

CAA 2019 is the resurrection of what the most important ideologue of RSS, Golwalkar decreed in his 1939 book *We or Our Nationhood Defined* about the character of Indian nation. According to him it was, it is and will remain an exclusive Hindu nation. The reality is that it is not only against the minorities but against democratic-secular Constitution of India. The RSS has been allergic to the idea of an all-inclusive India since its birth in 1925.

Golwalkar declared that in, "Hindusthan, the land of the Hindus, lives and should live the Hindu Nation...Consequently only those movements are truly 'National' as aim at rebuilding, re-vitalising and emancipating from its present stupor, the Hindu Notion". [MS

Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, Bharat Publication, Nagpur, 1939, p. 43]

He went to the extent of declaring that all those who did not believe in establishing the Hindu nation "are either traitors and enemies to the National cause, or, to take a charitable view, idiots". [MS Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, Bharat Publication, Nagpur, 1939, p. 44.]

It is important to note that even when CAA was not there India led by PM Nehru had allowed refuge to likes of the Dalai Lama with his retinue (April 1959). At the end of 1970s thousands of East Pakistanis who were persecuted by Islamists and Pakistan army were provided shelter in India. CAA is a ploy of RSS/BJP rulers led by diehard Hindu nationalists like Modi and Amit Shah to convert democratic-secular India into a Hindutva theocracy. It was facilitated by a capitulated Parliament. Indian judiciary, specially the Supreme Court could have averted this tragedy by timely intervention. But despite more than 200 petitions challenging the constitutionality of the CAA pending before the highest court of justice since 2020 it continues to dither from hearing the petitions. Now the only hope is that people of India would resist this undoing of democratic-secular India. □□□ *March 12, 2024*

**A TRIBUTE**

## Sketch of a Rebel

***Mihir Chakraborty***

**N**OTED STUDENT LEADER of the seventies, political activist and one of the founders of the Association for Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR), Subhas Chandra Ganguly passed away on November 6, 2023. He is survived by his wife and lifelong Comrade Bharati Ganguly.

Subhas was born in 1947 in a village of Kumilla district of present Bangladesh, a few months before the partition of India. His father Rishikesh Ganguly and mother Lila Ganguly both were in the Government service in the R R Department and had to move from one place to

another. Subhas was brought up in the family of his uncle who resided in a place near Halisahar of the present North 24 Parganas district. He received his early education at Jetia High School from where he passed the school final examination. He got admitted to the Pre-University course at Moulana Azad College, Kolkata and stayed in the Hindu Hostel which played a key role in shaping the famous students' movement of Presidency College in

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subsequent years. After finishing Pre-University course Subhas enrolled himself as a B.Sc. student in the Statistics Department of Presidency College and continued to stay in the Hindu Hostel. During this period the campus-shaking student movement took place which was initiated in August, 1966 by the hunger strike of the inmates of the hostel demanding resignation of the then hostel superintendent professor Haraprasad Mitra. The movement got momentum and wide support after expulsion of seven students for providing leadership in the agitation. Subhas, though not at the centre of the stir, got involved as a young man with sensibility and this involvement gave him the first lessons of mass movement, rebellion and exposure to the nature of collusion between the ruling elites in the society – between college authority, education administration, media and state government. To him the much highlighted elitist portrayal of Presidency College as the centre of excellence and the notion of ‘so called academic excellence per se’ got shattered and the real picture behind the illuminated façade was revealed. Subhas wrote a memoir in the Bengali magazine ‘Anustup’ on this episode which is an excellent analytical report.

After Presidency College Subhas took admission in the department of statistics of the University of Calcutta which was located at Ballygunge Circular Road, the Campus of CU being popularly known as Ballygunge Science College. Here he met Timir Basu, a former student of Geology and others who had been running a students’ outfit called PGSF--Post Graduate Students’ Federation. Subhas joined PGSF and within a short time emerged as a popular student leader. His past experience in Presidency College was instrumental in making him a mature activist. He also studied Marxist Lit-

erature quite seriously and gradually became an ideologue in the communist revolutionary camp. He was one of the main contributors in the organ of National Liberation and Democratic Front (NLDF), the political organisation to which PGSF had been linked at one point of time. It was here at Ballygunge Science College that Subhas met Bharati Chatterjee, a student of Zoology Department. In course of time she also joined PGSF. Both Subhas and Bharati got involved in Calcutta University students’ movement, particularly in Ballygunge Science College campus. They became life-partners formally later in 1974.

Bharati hailed from an urban family of South Calcutta. Her father Khetrugopal Chattopadhyay was a professor and her mother was Mukti. PGSF primarily organised movements on campus issues. Subhas was the General Secretary of the students’ union during 1968-’69 and Bharati was elected to the same post during 1969 - ’70. However, that was a period of great political upheaval, not only in Bengal but in other parts of India as well as in the international arena. In 1967, the Congress regime was overthrown by a coalition government of which the leftist parties formed a major partner. Vietnam was fighting its final battle against the US occupation. Students and workers together were on the streets fighting with the establishment all over Europe. Among the Indian Marxists fierce debate was taking place as regards the proper path to overthrow the ruling class in favour of people at large, the working class in particular. Under this situation students cannot keep themselves confined to the local narrow demands only. PGSF also debated on the general larger issues and at one point of time established strong link with the political group NLDF which was working under the leader-

ship of Parimal Bhattacharya and his associates, mainly Sanjay Mitra and Yogin Sengupta.

All political activities virtually came to a halt in 1970 when Subhas, Timir and Sanjay were arrested. After about one year Subhas and Timir came out of the jail when their political organisation was in total disarray. Sanjay was released one year later. Given the changed political atmosphere of those days they looked for different ways to continue their political identities. Subhas and Sanjay engaged themselves in the movement for the release of political prisoners and civil liberty leading ultimately to the formation of APDR while Timir engaged himself in labour organising, trade union movement and freelance journalism.

The early period of formation of APDR has been narrated in an article by Subhas under the title ‘এপিডিআর শুরুত দিনগুলি (১৯৭২-৭৭)’ [The Early Days of APDR (1972-77)], published in 1991 and republished on November 30, 2023 by APDR to pay homage to Subhas. This booklet is an

## WOMEN AND CYCLE IN INDIA

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excellent account of the terror-stricken time in West Bengal under the rule of S S Roy which, however, started much earlier during the regime of the united front government. It also portrays the outstanding role played by some elderly personalities such as freedom fighter Sushil Banerjee (popularly known as Dadu), Kapil Bhattacharya, Kalyani Bhattacharya (Das), Pramode Ranjan Sengupta and others. Younger persons namely Sanjay Mitra, Dilip Choudhury and Amal Bose took the responsibilities of Joint Assistant General Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Subhas (along with Bharati) got deeply involved in organising the association in that extremely hostile situation. Due to the relentless efforts by these few pioneers APDR was getting its ground in Kolkata, West Bengal and elsewhere. Two most significant events in which Subhas had a major role in organising a demonstration of women whose near ones were suffering in jails and second, publication of the book 'ভারতীয় গণতন্ত্রের স্বরূপ' [The Real Face of Indian Democracy]. The demonstration was organised on February 12, 1973. About 35 elderly women—mothers, wives, sisters of political prisoners—belonging to middle class and lower middle class families most of whom first time in life on the street in a rally, guarded by police vans in the front and the rear—it was a unique scene in Calcutta otherwise known as a city of rallies. Subhas and Sanjay, perhaps the only two male participants, distributed leaflets to the passersby. A delegation led by Jayasree Rana, wife of well known naxalite leader Santosh Rana met the chief minister S S Roy who, however, did not show any positive attitude.

The book mentioned was almost entirely written by Subhas. The main donors for the publication were Dr Amiya Bose and Kalyani Bhattacharya. But Dr Bose passed away before the book came to light

for which Subhas expressed his grief in his booklet on the early days of APDR. At one point of time, under the initiative of APDR and Legal Aid Committee, mothers, wives and sisters of political prisoners staged a sit-in demonstration in Esplanade East along with relay fasting in support of the continued fasting of prisoners inside the jails. It was quite successful in that at the request of APDR a team of 10 political parties including CPI(M), Forward Bloc, Workers Party, SUCI, and RSP met the then Governor expressing support to the hunger strikers in the jails and outside. In 1976 Indira Gandhi Government clamped internal emergency when APDR was banned. Subhas and Sanjay had to go underground. After the lifting of emergency in 1977, APDR started functioning again. Meanwhile some important personalities such as Dadu, Kapil Bhattacharya and Pramode Sengupta passed away, among the young activists, Debashis Bhattacharya took charge of the joint secretary replacing Sanjay Mitra. A new phase of APDR began.

Subhas wanted to devote more time in studies. He did not complete the Masters Degree and never entered a regular job. Bharati was employed in AG Bengal and hence Subhas could afford to engage himself in the pursuit of knowledge. Subhas entered deep into varied subjects like statistics, mathematics, Marxism, human civilisation, philosophy, human rights, education system, psychology, quantum mechanics etc. It seems that he was in a sense reorganising his entire understanding of Marxist perception of society and revolution. But he never dissociated himself from mass movement. He was seen with Ratikanta Hazra by the side of the workers on hunger strike at the gate of Kanoria Jute Mill. He was also present by the side of the struggling peasants in Nandigram

when nobody else who later usurped their movement was noticed around. Hazra was a political whole-timer owing allegiance to 'Bhitti' Group. However, he was mainly reading, writing and helping privately some students in academic matters.

In 1993 Subhas published a detailed report in the Frontier on the Archana Guha case in which the infamous police officer Runu Guha Neogi and his associate Santosh Dey, were convicted for torturing three women Archana Guha, Latika Guha and Gauri Chatterjee in the police custody. This report was prototypical example of honest, objective, justified and at the same time humanely reporting of a heinous socio-political event. PUCL (Peoples' Union for Civil Liberties) selected Subhas for the 16th PUCL 'Journalism for Human Rights' award for the above article. It would be worthwhile to quote from the citation in this context which runs as follows.

*"The present article is about the notorious case of arrest and torture of three women by the Calcutta police on 18th July 1974. Involved in the arrest were Ranajit (Alias Runu) Guha Neogi, a police officer and Santosh Dey, a constable... The three women who were arrested were Archana Guha, the Head Mistress of a Junior High School, Latika Guha, her sister-in-law, and Gauri Chatterjee, another young relative from their residence in a suburb of north-eastern Calcutta. They were illegally detained for more than 24 hours before being taken to the Court... They were confined to police custody for 27 days... The torture led to complete paralysis of the lower limbs of Archana. Later, much later, the medical group of Amnesty International in Denmark got Archana treated medically at the Copenhagen Rehabilitation Centre for torture victims."*

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FRONTIER

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It is also important to mention that of the award money of Rs 20,000, Subhas donated Rs 18,000 to Frontier and Rs 2,000 to Saumen Guha (brother of Archana Guha) as assistance. True, Subhas was no longer active in APDR but he was very much with the cause as a writer-activist.

A similar instance is his involvement and concern in opposing the death sentence of Dhananjay Chatterjee, a poor security guard of a multi-story housing. He was charged for raping and killing of a teenager girl Hetal Parekh. Dhananjay had been languishing in jail for past 14 years. In spite of protests, appeals and demonstrations by citizens, the death sentence was executed on August 14, 2004. Surprisingly, Mira Bhattacharya, wife of the then Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya took unprecedented initiative in fomenting hatred among common people on Dhananjay—the reason of such unusual act on the part of Smt Bhattacharya however, was and still is in darkness. In truth, the issue of abolishment of death sentence and the method of its execution came down to the public domain. Everybody in West Bengal at least, was highly disturbed and debated on it. Subhas went a step further by writing an appeal to the then President of India, Prof. Dr A Kalam Azad under the title “Against Death Sentence—An Appeal To The President of India”. The appeal begun with the following sentence: “As an Indian Citizen totally opposed to death penalty, I appeal with all the sincerity at my command to you to rescind the death sentence on Dhananjay Chatterjee of Calcutta, and four peasants in Bihar and on any other person whose last petition may be lying before you, thus paving the way for ultimate abolition of the provision from our statute book.” This sentence makes clear Subhas’s stance on this issue

which was and is the position of many others not only in West Bengal but all over the world. The important point here is that Subhas could not sit idle and drafted the mind of many and presented that to the President. Dr Kalam, however, did not comply with the appeal. Subhas then sent another letter to him on August 6, 2004 that ended with following few sentences:

*“There is not much point in writing this letter of course, except to communicate the sense of deep anguish at the impending cold-blooded slaughter of a human being to a fellow citizen who was in a position to prevent this whole sordid business. I am not even sure that this message will reach you at all, given the popular impression about the nature of atmosphere that supposedly surrounds the dignitaries of the state of India. In deep anguish and with regards—”*

These two letters may be considered as instances of expression of democratic values, cry of humanity, exposure of a deaf state-system and of literary excellence. These were published (with Bengali translations) in the little magazine ‘বিজ্ঞান ও বিজ্ঞানকর্মী’ (BOB, 2004).

If one looks into Subhas’s literary engagements, there are at least the following testimonies: translation in Bengali of Romila Thapar’s book “Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas” (K.P. Bagchi & Co, Kolkata), Hundred Songs of Rabindranath Tagore (Papyrus, Kolkata), ‘সাগরযেরা আন্দামান ও নিকোবর দ্বীপমালার পথে পথে’ [Enroute to the Sea-bound Andaman and Nicobar Islands] (Ruby Publishers, Kolkata). One can see how variedly he had distributed himself! Of these what attracts this writer most is the translation of Tagore songs. What caused this? Why was Subhas pulled so

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much in this direction? One learns from the preface of his book that it all started with the spontaneous translation of two songs heard from a record by noted singer Kanika Bandyopadhyay when he and Bharati were in the Andaman and Nicobar islands in 2003. Bharati went there on an official tour. As stated by Subhas himself, the “green islands coupled with inviting sounds from the lashing sea waves” brought out the first two translations and then out of his “inner journeys through the originals” other translations “surfaced in bunches from time to time”. A Bengali reader will be amazed to notice the selection of songs he has translated. Besides his ‘inner journey’ according to Subhas again “Different external factors at different times contributed towards selection”.

Besides “the wonderful, bewitching and humbling experience of the surrounding nature” during Subhas’s visit to the islands, he also had “some sad/painful realisations”. One can find them in his abovementioned book, the travelogue. This book is not an ordinary travelogue. On the title page, quite unusually, the writer declares a few poetry-like sentences that are translated below:

About one and a half decade ago (2003-04) arrived suddenly a traveller, trounced, enchanted as well as pain-struck, a few portrayals of pictures drawn in his eyes, mind and heart, some thoughts and feelings and realisations. Natural environment making our head to bow down, the cruel touch of ‘civilisation’ on ‘uncivilised’ tribal people (জনজাতি). The book is dedicated to the sea-surrounded islands, creeks, forests, animals, birds and above all to primi-

tive people, who have been made foreigners by ‘modern civilisation’ in their own land since pre-historic time—with all humbleness and humility.

However, below are mentioned the contents of this small book of about 90 pages:

#### *Preface*

*An addition in advance (on Andaman Trunk Road or ATR) Letters from Car Nicobar and Andaman:*

*(The main contents of the book, 10 letters written by Subhas to friends,*

*Sibu, Rabin and Surasree)*

*Candure Gangaforing (a poem)*

*The “Ferocious” Jaroa of*

*Andaman—Role of the Govern-ment and Silence of newspapers.*

Within the main part is included an outstanding letter of Bharati written to the Tribal Council of Nicobar on Sea-beach Pollution as regards the misuse of the stretch of sea-shore from Malacca jetty running along the Rajib Gandhi Park as open PUBLIC TOILET by a group of people. Subhas himself was deeply concerned about environmental issues and wrote articles relating them with the prevailing tradition (see for example BOB, 2009, Calcutta Book Fair issue). He extensively quoted Tagore and Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay in this connection.

He published a 300-page-book on Science, Science Education and Science Activism in the year 2018. After the decline of radical Marxist political movement, at least in West Bengal came up various science clubs and popular science journals apparently with the objective to arouse science-awareness, scientific attitude among the masses and as a consequence eradicating superstition especially generated from religious practices. There was perhaps a belief that if people thought scientifically (which was equated with rationality), they would be drawn towards Marxism or scientific materi-

alism which was considered in fact true. (Marxism is true since it is based on science). It was a phenomenon of the eighties that former political activists found refuge in popular science activism that mushroomed in hundreds all over West Bengal. Subhas made a critique of this type of activity by persons having so-called ‘scientific temper’ who “attempt, from a self-assumed role/air of superior wisdom, to spread through what is usually termed as ‘People’s Science Movement’, their such understanding of ‘Science’ to ‘enlighten’ those, supposedly under the spell of ‘Religion’, identified with major part of existing social evils and prejudices”. In fact he went through the writings of great masters like Einstein, Infield, Heisenberg, Feynman, Oppenheimer, Hawking, Eddington etcetera to understand the basic philosophy and methods of science and arrived at the realisation that what was being done under the name of ‘people’s science movement’ was not the essence of science. Not only the activists of science organisations, he criticised science-education in general as was in vogue in the academic institutions, since this education system generally does not expose the learner to the great awe, wonder and mystery prevailing in the universe surrounding the society. The basic criticism is explained in the following quote:

*“Schools, universities...they all go on forcing you to become knowledgeable....The more you know the less you wonder...a right kind of education will never do this. It will give you knowledge, but it will not destroy your wonder... on the contrary knowledge can make you more wondering.”*

As a consequence of his extensive studies, Subhas was questioning the scientific basis of so-called Marxist practices that were going on around him of which he himself was once a participant. □□□

**For Frontier Contact**

**PATIRAM BOOK STALL**

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## FROM ART GALLERY

## Achin Patua's 41st Annual Exhibition

*Atanu Basu*

IT WAS IN THE YEAR 1982, A group of young artists, assembled near Gurudwar Park, Chetla and hanged a couple of paintings in the railings of the park. The group was later known as "Achin Patua". Muktangon, an open air theatre used to provide them open space for their art exhibition. Muktangon apart, there were other open spaces in south Kolkata, where they regularly displayed their art work. This year, their 41st Annual Exhibition, was held in Birla Academy. The idea of such an unorthodox endeavour was mooted in the eighties of the last century. It received enthusiastic patronage of noted artists like Paritosh Sen, Sunil Das, Shyamal Dutta Roy and others. From 1985 onwards, they shifted their venue from open air to equipped art gallery. When they switched to galley for their exhibition, in those early days, artists like Paritosh Sen, Sunil Das and Shyamal Dutta Roy used to send their paintings to their exhibitions. In the course of time, Sanu Lahiri, Wasim Kapoor, Bijan Chowdhury, Asit Paul also started joining Achin Patua's exhibitions. This group had organic link with many persons engaged in cultural movements and wanted to create art aware-

ness among the common people. This latest exhibition by various artists displayed seriousness of their efforts, they are imaginative, full of contemplation and touched the audience by provoking them to introspection and thought.

Ashish Gupta's exhibits were Pen and Ink and acrylic on canvas. In both the media, the intense textural quality with fine expression is simply marvelous. His three series had two different aspects in store for the viewers. While his series "Faces" is thought provoking, his other two "The Battle" and "Chorus" are full of dramatic twists and turns.

Sabyasachi Sengupta's vertical sculpture displayed a sort of tribal mythical design. One may possibly be able to locate strong relic of Mexican tribal element in those works. He is equally at ease with wood, metal and other materials. His works, "Durga" and "Dharma-chakra" were very much attractive. His work, "Mother and Child" in aluminium is nice.

Swapan Kumar Ghosh presented a series on acrylic, named "Those Donkeys". They are presented in a geometric, architectural and dimensional fashion. The proportion and

measurements deserve a ton of praise.

Indrajit Narayan's work also centered on geometric presentation. His "God Embraced" and "The Conversation" are good works in Relief painting in mix media. He presented a part of a face from different perspectives and used colour and texture in a very delicate manner; he composed them in a modernistic way—not too abstract.

Sumarthya Dutta created a mystic-romantic environment in blackish blue colour in acrylic which pervades the viewers' imagination with an amazing effect. His two major paintings were "valley I" and "Valley II". His composition, "All on a Sudden", done in colour is distinguished for its treatment, style and mood.

Chilika Kanika's presentation on paper in water colour wash, particularly "Fear", is attractive for its treatment, transparency and composition.

Supriyo Sahoo excelled in black and white and colour in mixed media while Rupali Roy's theme was Face. One would be up against a twist when one views Soma Maji's painting, because of quality and composition. Her pieces, "Nature" and "Rhythm of Nature" are both done in mixed media and deserve a special mention.

The exhibits displayed by "Achin Patua" is a mixed bag of big and small success, some are moderate ones but none are outright failure. □□

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‘YOUTURNED OUT TO BE EXACTLY LIKE US’

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## Fahmida Riaz-the Voice of Resistance

*Saif Mahmood*

IN A SLOW-PACED STYLE, Fahmida would recite her fiery poetry, interspersed with typical Hindi expressions, exhorting her audience to march on even in the darkest of times.

For Fahmida, personal freedom and Constitutional democracy were

inherently intertwined with the idea of justice, and at the heart of her fight for justice was the question of gender equality. Asked once if she was a feminist, Fahmida had responded: "What feminism means to me is simply that women, like men, are complete human beings with lim-

itless possibilities"; and this brand of feminism runs across her works like a golden thread. When General Zia-ul-Haq issued orders forcing Pakistani women to cover themselves with a black chador, she tore into his autocratic diktat, advising him to cover his own misdeeds with the same chador:

*Huzur! main is siyaah chaadar ka kya karoongi?*

*Ye aap kyon mujh ko ba?hshte haiñ basad inaayat?*

Na sog mein hoon ki us ko o? hoon  
Gham-o-alam? halq ko dikhaaon  
Na rog hoon main ki is ki  
taarekiyon mein? hiffat se Doob  
jaaon

Na main gunahgaar hoon na  
mujrim

Ke is syaahi ki mohr apni jabeen  
pe har haal mein lagaaon  
Agar na gustaa? h mujh ko  
samjhein

Agar main jaañ ki amaan paaon  
Tou dast-basta karoon guzaarish  
Ke banda-parvar

Huzur ke hujra-e-mu'attar mein  
ek laasha pa? a hua hai

Na jaane kab ka gala sa? a hai

Ye aap se rahm chahta hai

Huzur! itna karam tou keje

Siyaaah chaadar mujhe na deje

Siyaaah chaadar se apne hujre ki  
be-kafan laash Dhaaap dejiye

[My Lord! what will I do with this  
black chador?

Why do you bestow it upon me so  
kindly?

I'm not in mourning,  
don't have to announce my grief  
to the world

Neither am I a dreadful disease to  
be drowned in its darkness

Nor a sinner or a criminal obliged  
to stamp her forehead with its  
blackness

Pardon my audacity but, with  
folded hands, I have a request to  
make:

My Lord! In your sweet-smelling  
chamber lies a naked body, de-  
cayed and rotten for, God knows,  
how long!

It pleads for your mercy

My Lord! Show at least this bit of  
kindness—

Don't give me this black chador

Use it to cover this naked body  
lying in your chamber]

Fahmida's poetry is inherently po-  
lemical. In a patriarchal socio-politi-  
cal system presided over by conde-  
scending men—and women—she does  
not hesitate to publicly call out those  
who try to patronise her:

Inqilaab ke raaj singhaasan par  
biraajte gunvaano!

Tum kya do ge gyaan mujhe!

Mujhko seedhi raah dikhaane  
waalo!

Itna pehchaano

Tum kursi par baithe hue ho

Aur main dharti par khadi hui  
hoon

[O ye worthy, who sit on the royal  
throne of revolution!

Will you lecture me now?

O ye, who show me the right  
path!

You must realise

While you sit on a chair, I stand  
on the ground]

Her voice is the voice of resistance,  
the voice of those voiceless millions  
who want to be heard but are not,  
not just in her own country—Paki-  
stan—but the world over. Deeply con-  
vinced that injustice anywhere con-  
tributes to an unjust world, she con-  
cerns herself with global issues: the  
Palestinian question, the Afghan civil  
war, and hate politics in India—all  
find a place in her works. But to say  
that Fahmida's resistance is only  
political would not just be terribly  
untrue, it would also slight her rather  
wide and eclectic canvas. Right from  
the publication of her collection *Badan  
Dareedah* (Torn-Bodied) in the 1970s  
to what was, perhaps, her last poem,  
“Inquilabi Aurat” (Revolutionary  
Woman) published in 2018, she chal-

lenges orthodoxy, questions the ste-  
reotype, defies norms, concerns her-  
self with complexities of relationships  
and the imperfection of humans, and  
treats women's sexuality with bold-  
ness and sensitivity. Accusing her lover  
of loving only her body, she reminds  
him that the body will change.

Fahmida and her husband were  
charged with sedition in Pakistan for  
their writings. She fled to Delhi where,  
on the recommendation of her friend,  
the legendary Amrita Pritam, Prime  
Minister Indira Gandhi offered her  
asylum. She stayed in Delhi for seven  
years, some of which she spent as  
Poet in Residence at Jamia Millia  
Islamia and Visiting Researcher at  
JNU. In her poem, “Dilli teri chaanv  
badi qehri” [Delhi, your devastating  
shade], she bids an emotional fare-  
well to the city, referring to it as her  
mother.

Fearless in dissent, unafraid in life  
and belligerent in love, Fahmida held  
the promise of hope even in the  
darkest of times. But heartbreaks are  
hard even for the strong. Her com-  
plaint about India turning out like her  
own country—tum bilkul hum jaise  
nikle—stems from a bad heartbreak—  
the kind one suffers when someone  
breaks her/his trust. Among the wrecks  
and ruins of Delhi's ganga-jamuni  
tehzeeb, the city's distraught, heart-  
broken daughter deserves a diverse  
and much wider readership. All those  
who still cherish the values of liberty,  
freedom, equality, secularism and jus-  
tice need her. They must read her. □□

(Saif Mahmood writes and speaks on Urdu  
poetry and its cultural heritage. The second  
edition of his book *Beloved Delhi: A Mughal  
City and Her Greatest Poets* is now available.  
Courtesy: Scroll.in.)

## SARAL SARKAR'S WRITINGS

### Eco-Socialism or “Green” Capitalism?

**Farooque Chowdhury**

**E**CO-SOCIALISM OR “Green”  
Capitalism? Collected Writings  
of Saral Sarkar, Explanations,  
Elaborations and Interventions, Vols.

I and II present most of Saral Sarkar's  
political and political-economic essays  
and articles written in the personal  
computer age.

The book introduces itself in the  
following way:

“After the ignominious fall of the  
classical Soviet model of ‘socialism’  
in the early 1990s, socialists, commu-  
nists, and all other kinds of Leftists  
had felt to have been left in the lurch.  
With his book *Eco-Socialism or Eco-  
Capitalism? A Critical Analysis of*

Humanity's Fundamental Choices (1999), Saral Sarkar presented and laid the theoretical foundation of a new conception of socialism, which convinced because it organically synthesised the newly arisen imperative of ecological sustainability and the old ideal of equality among members of humanity.

"On their part, all opponents of any kind of socialism have also been trying to somehow accommodate the inexorable insights into and demands of true ecological sustainability in extant conceptions of capitalism. What they have achieved is not a synthesis, but merely a fake and self-contradictory phrase that does not deserve the prefix 'Eco-', and should properly be called 'Green' Capitalism. But they succeeded in hoodwinking millions of worried human beings all over the world."

Sarkar, over the last thirty years, "has been relentlessly trying through speeches and writings to counter their misconceptions of the ecological and social imperatives. In the present two volumes of his Collected Writings, readers will find some of the fruits of his endeavor."

The volume I's chapter 1, "Political-Autobiographical Essays", describes Sarkar's journey through the history of socialism—from the traditional Marxist socialism to his variety of eco-socialism. The narration tells "his difficulties in fully accepting the Marxian and Marxist positions".

This position—difficulty in fully accepting Marxist position—is not unique now-a-days, as a group of scholars vehemently not only deny, but also oppose Marxist position. This group of scholars carries on the "search" for truth by cherry pick words, sentences and statements from Marxist literature, quote Marx and his comrades in an isolated fashion, deny considering perspective, and engage in "analysis"—a dishonest and unscientific practice to

distort a theory. They deny searching truth with a scientific approach; don't look into the entire process of socio-economic formation, and don't continue their quest for truth on the basis of materialist understanding of history, social character of labour and the contradiction between the social character of production and the private appropriation of its results. Consequently, this group of scholars determined to deny contradiction between the exploited and the exploiters, don't search facts and truth in the matrix of contradictions between classes, and fail to find essential questions related to political power, that, ultimately, leads them to idealism.

Saral Sarkar's essays also tell the way he "first, already as a child, discovered the population problem and, through it, later the essence of the ecology problem, viz. existence of the Entropy Law, a universal law of nature."

In chapter 2, "Essays and Interventions on the Renewable Energies Question", Sarkar "takes a critical look at the claims of most energy thinkers that in near future not only would a hundred percent transition to renewable energies be possible, but that it would also be much cheaper than burning fossil fuels." Sarkar, as the book claims, "falsifies" those "claims by advancing arguments based on the Second Law of Thermodynamics and citing many concrete cases and examples."

In chapter 3, "The Recent Economic Crises", Sarkar "presents his analysis of the economic crises of 2008 and the following years." He "approaches the issue with his theory of eco-socialism, namely by arguing that at the root of all serious present-day economic crises lies the fact that there are limits to growth." He "also shows the pointlessness of trying to understand the present-day crises through the lens of Marxist,

Keynesian and Schumpeterian economic theories, because they, though profound, are today obsolete."

In chapter 4, "More on Socialism, Eco-Socialism, Leftism", he "elaborates and explains his variety of (eco-) socialism in contradistinction to (eco-) anarchism and other varieties of (eco-) socialism. He does so also by referring to concrete cases (in India, Cuba and Vietnam)."

Volume II of Sarkar's works carries chapter 5: On Population Growth and Unwelcome Mass Immigration; chapter 6: On Fascism, Secessionism, Identity Politics and Other "Reactionary" Trends; chapter 7: Futility of Activism without Analysis; and chapter 8: Concluding essays.

Sarkar "forcefully argues in chapter 5: "[E]co-activists in general, and eco-socialists in particular, must not ignore world population growth while concentrating on fighting against global capitalism." Sarkar's position: "[P]opulation growth and economic growth favored by capitalism are the two main drivers of global ecological collapse. Moreover, the two drivers are causing, together and also separately, a seemingly unending flow of illegal and unwelcome migrants from poor Third World countries into the industrialised countries and/or sparsely populated land-rich areas. In the local populations, this allegedly unbearable situation is also favouring growth of xenophobic, racist and fascist forces."

In the following chapter he discusses a number of fundamental questions related to, as he claims, "human nature." He presents "examples of concrete cases such as the resurgence of fascism and right-radicalism in Europe, hostility toward immigrants and asylum seekers bordering on racism and xenophobia, and dominance of ethnic, national and religious identity politics—manifested e.g. in secessionist movements in existing states [...], in

Trump's electioneering slogans in 2016 [...], in religious-sectarian fights [...], etc. He raises questions: "[A]re average humans at all capable of overcoming narrowness of vision and thinking in terms of us-versus-them? Are they at all capable of feeling empathy for all humans?"

It's a serious question related to the "average humans". It's also a serious skepticism.

A search through history of people's struggle for a better world, for a rationale world, for a humane world over centuries will help him find answer to his serious question. It's the average humans who repeatedly overcame narrowness of vision, thought in terms of us-versus-them. It is found not only in proletarian revolutionary struggles, but also in stages the bourgeoisie mobilised the average humans against feudal foes. No doubt, the average humans were misinformed, mis-taught, misled and mismanaged repeatedly. Nothing to deny the average humans' efforts experienced failures and setbacks. But, it's the average humans who all the time dreamed, aspired, struggled and sacrificed for all—all in a land, many in a continent, multitude in a world. While the half-fed, half-naked poor peasantry, poor workers, the "average humans", in this sub-continent rose for an independent land, that was for a freedom which would bring betterment to all in the land. It was the crook, shrewd, satanic Rupee-waalaas who had the narrow vision—'only I shall reap gains of independence, only my class shall pocket derivatives of independence, this land shall be mine and of my class'.

The Chapter 7 "levels a serious criticism against ecological movements and groups, namely they do not care about having a deep understanding of facts and realities before plunging into organising rallies and demonstrations, expressing wishful

thoughts, and making all sorts of more or less unfounded statements and demands." Sarkar "levels this criticism not only against the school-going youth of Fridays for Future, but also against grown-ups who advise them, such as professors, scientists, NGO-leaders, etc."

In the last chapter, he "goes into the probability of collapse of our global industrial civilisation. Optimists are not worried, or they hope mankind can avert the collapse."

Sarkar "is pessimistic, for different reasons—ecological, economic, but also political." He finds: "This collapse is not merely a future probability; in some parts of the world it is already taking place [...] in the form of failing states." Sarkar has more questions: "Can liberal democracy and liberal global capitalism survive when the crunch comes? Can mankind, as individuals and as societies, give up the pursuit of ever more wealth and, instead, set itself the goal of increasing Gross Domestic Happiness, as the people of Bhutan claim to have done?"

Saral Sarkar's works, interesting no doubt, raise a number of fundamental questions related to world view/approach he follows, and the problems/issues he deals with while analysing:

[1] society, its constituents, contradictions within society, sources and trajectory of these contradictions; and

[2] mode of production—dialectical unity of productive forces and relations of production, two interdependent entities.

A few of his examples are not only confusing, but also erroneous. For example, he finds signals of probability of a collapse in/of society in failing states. It's completely wrong, as a state's failure originates in failure of a ruling class(es)/its part(s), as it fails to either [1] make compromise(s) between competing interests, or [2] organise regimes/

institutions/arrangements for ruling a society; and a new ruling machine may be organised after collapse of a failed state. Even, new societies may crop up over grave of a collapsed society; and that has happened in lands.

Similarly, his defining of a certain political system is wrong; as for example, "liberal democracy" and "liberal global capitalism".

There're nothing like "liberal democracy" and "liberal global capitalism", although a section of establishment scholars try to categorise bourgeois democracy as "liberal democracy" or "illiberal democracy", and some more categorisation according to the section's likings.

But, essentially, and really, "democracy" that serves the bourgeoisie is bourgeois democracy, and that's autocracy/dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, a minority class, over the majority—the exploited mass. It's democracy for the bourgeoisie and autocracy/dictatorship over the mass of the exploited. Bourgeois democracy turns "liberal" when circumstances permit it, and turns "illiberal" when circumstances don't allow it. The circumstance is or depends upon

[1] power of the exploiting/ruling class(es) to [1.1] control the ruled, [1.2] accommodate competing interests, [1.3] absorb shocks, etc., or

[2] lack of power leading to failure to [2.1] control the ruled, [2.2] accommodate competing interests, [2.3] absorb shocks, etc. by hiding claws in velvet gloves.

Bourgeois democracy appearing "liberal" practices/implements "illiberal" measures when the system feels necessary for its survival, or, simultaneously practices "liberal" and "illiberal" measures in two different areas; and, the academia and media the system controls never show this reality of "liberal-illiberal" approach. In countries, irrespective of

type like advanced bourgeois democracy, neo-colony, lumpenocracy, etc., but exploitative in character, the practice of “liberal”-“illiberal” is present simultaneously at times. This is found in the areas of legislation, judiciary and executive work. One law appears “liberal”—allows a lot of space to a certain class interest—while another law muzzles down another class interest, which is definitely opposed to the interest having a lot of space. A serious dissection, instead of a casual look, of reality gives evidences of this face of “liberal” democracy.

There’s nothing like “liberal global capitalism”, as Saral Sarkar finds. What’s found is “global capitalism, which behaves “liberally” when it comes to the interest of capital, especially imperialist capital, and it turns “illiberal” or strict or ruthless when the imperialist capital faces competitor, opposition, faces obstacles in gaining momentum in areas. Evidences are in abundance in the areas of flow of capital/investment/profit, taxation/tariff, trade regime. Global capital’s character doesn’t change in terms of “liberal” and “illiberal”. Finding “liberal” global capital leads to confusion with capital, appeasement with capital. Saral Sarkar, probably, forgets that this is imperialist global order, and it’s imperialist-imperialist in character, imperialist in action. The term

“liberal global capitalism” appears a laughingstock to anyone aware of capitalism’s destructive, dictatorial and deadly character, the character capitalism is inherently incapable to change.

Saral Sarkar’s position on “illegal and unwelcome migrants from poor Third World countries into the industrialised countries” is also confusing, as this migrant flow is result of not only population and economic growth. This migration flow also grows from [1] imperialist intervention/war, [2] exploitation/inequality. His position demands serious scrutiny if he really means migrants as “unwelcome”. Migration of labour is welcome to capital, whenever capital can capitalise it, profit is facilitated, labour can be subdued, wage can be kept depressed; and it turns unwelcome whenever commanding capital finds it difficult to engage labour to generate profit. So, the question is: “welcome” and “unwelcome” to who and when? From the point of view of migrants, a huge population turned victim of exploitation, onslaught, war, and destruction by capitalism/imperialism, migration to suitable lands is always welcome. If capital can demand its free flow to all lands, why shall not labour demand its free movement to all suitable lands with the hope of a better wage and better living condition?

“Saral Sarkar was born in 1936 in a village of West Bengal, India. [...] From 1966 to 1981, he was lecturer in German at the Goethe Institute in Hyderabad, India.

“Since 1982, he has been living in Cologne, Germany, where he has been active in the Green Movement, Anti-Globalisation Movement, and all kinds of ecological and leftist movements. He was member of the Green Party of Germany from 1982 to 1987, but left the party in deep disappointment.”

“His basal theoretical work Eco-Socialism or Eco-Capitalism? A Critical Analysis of Humanity’s Fundamental Choices (1999, London) has also been published in German, French (in internet), Chinese and Japanese languages.

“His other major works are: Green-Alternative Politics in West Germany, Vol. I & II (1993, 1994, Tokyo), and The Crises of Capitalism—A Different Study of Political Economy (2012, Berkeley), which was originally published in German (2010, Neu-Ulm).”

The books can be ordered through distribution channels including Amazon, internet platforms, or bookstores. The books e-version is also available. □□□

*[This is a modified version of the original article, first posted in Countercurrents; and all quotes in the article are from parts of Saral Sarkar’s book.]*

## LETTERS

### ‘The Enigma of Hindi’

There is a vigorous opposition to Hindi in South India. It goes under the name, ‘Imposition of Hindi’. On the other hand, it is an undoubted fact that more people in India have access to Hindi than to any other language. North Indians are puzzled to see that so many people in Hyderabad, Bangalore, Bidar and Gulbarga speak among themselves in some kind of Hindi and still Hindi is opposed in the South! The enigma of

the widespread prevalence of Hindi in South India and the opposition to its imposition deserves serious attention against the backdrop of anti-Hindi agitation in the South. For a detailed report see the article by the the author in the latest issue of countercurrents.org.

**T Vijayendra**

### Chennai Pen Show

Pen is mightier than sword. The recent Chennai Pen Show was not just an event for pen enthusiasts, but a

celebration of creativity, craftsmanship, and the art of writing. As pens of all shapes, sizes, and designs filled the venue, it was a reminder of the power of words to inspire, connect, and express. From vintage fountain pens to modern gel pens, each writing instrument tells a unique story. It’s nice to continue to embrace the elegance and beauty of writing. The Chennai Pen Show was a reminder that every stroke of a pen has the potential to make a lasting impact.

**T S Karthik, Chennai**

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