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More of the Same

THE DECLINE OF COMMUNIST LEFT SEEMS IRREVERSIBLE. THE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT IN parliamentary politics initially paid them dividends and they enjoyed privileges otherwise reserved for the ruling elites. Having failed to challenge the status quo they now find it increasingly difficult to regain what they have lost completely--pro-poor image. The mass base they once created through arduous anti-establishment struggles and sacrifices is gone. People are rebelling here and there somewhat spontaneously but they are just on-lookers. For one thing spontaneous popular outburst despite its severity and militancy cannot be translated into lasting action against the persons in authority; it is bound to fizzle out after some time. How they failed to motivate the historic peasant upsurge illustrates among other things that they are in no position to organise masses in their millions because toilers have no faith in them. These days the oppressed are more interested in independent political initiatives, not partisan movements. Then they lack appropriate slogans and action- programme to influence masses in the changed context. They don't practise what they preach in their official documents. Theory and practice need each other. 'Without theory, practice is blind and without practice theory is impotent'.

That communist parties throughout the world are facing survival crisis is a hard fact. The way they are reacting to the on-going Russia-Ukraine war speaks volumes about ideological bankruptcy they have been in for long. Even in India communists have no specific stand on the Russia-Ukraine war. Indian communist parties used to derive comfort from being called pro-Soviet or pro-Chinese in the yester years and they were totally dependent on Moscow or Beijing for ideological guidance. Soviet Russia is dead. Today's Russia is a capitalist enterprise with geo-strategic expansionist outlook towards its neighbours while China is happily building capitalism with 'Chinese characteristics' competing with America and Europe. As a result they have nowhere else to go for solace; they are ideological orphans. Communist parties in India irrespective of their degree of shades never really asserted themselves independently. The Chinese party at one stage engineered split after split in the international communist movement, dubbing the Soviet party revisionist or social-imperialist, creating ML factions in a number of countries only to abandon them at the time of severe crisis theorising and defending their withdrawal strategy in an opportunistic way. Even today when China looks more like America in terms of market grabbing and capital export, a section of far left, better known as maoist continues to draw heavily from pre-liberation China and Chinese Party's experience in highlighting their revolutionary project. They think India is in a stage of what China was in the 1920s. The Chinese party once used to describe former Soviet Union as social-imperialist but they are now a right candidate to get that tag, particularly after the Sri Lankan fiasco. Sri Lankans are in a debt trap, thanks to Chinese benevolence. The same thing may happen to Pakistan as the recent reports suggest. China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) scheme is actually aimed at capturing global market. It is sheer expansionism under the garb of 'win-win' situation. The so-called pro-Chinese communists have nothing to say about it.

They are still in a dilemma as to how to evaluate the Ukrainian situation when the war, after more than six months shows no sign of ending in the immediate future. They are not in a position to take side in the war because they cannot categorise the dominant capitalist morality as the 'Aggressor' and the other as the 'Aggressed' or vice versa. The working class doesn't show neutrality towards any of its exploiters who confront each other in the re-distribution of their market shares, but on the contrary, it expresses its deep solidarity with all the sectors that are undergoing the multiple assaults of one or the other of its historical enemies. Ukrainian toilers are facing Russian aggression but they are equally oppressed by Ukrainian oligarchs who are earning huge profits through their trade deals with America, more precisely with the American military-industrial complex with a view to prolonging the war though ordinary Ukrainians are dying daily. The war is impacting the global economy badly and equally badly India's home market as well. With every passing day the situation is drifting towards chaos sending shivers down the spines of the wage earners, mainly in third world countries. The point at issue is how to push the revolutionary dynamic to its ultimate consequences, how to expropriate the possessing class and re-appropriate means of existence. Communists in India have no answer. They are going the Euro-communist way to commit suicide in the end. □□□

[30-08-2022]

LOOKING BACK

Letter to Ranajit Guha

Sumanta Banerjee

Dear Ranajit da

DO YOU REMEMBER ME? I was your student for a brief while in 1953 on the eve of my I.A. (Arts) Intermediate Arts examination at the then Central Calcutta College. You came to teach us history, and replaced Tapan Ray Chaudhury who had left for Oxford for further research.

But even before listening to your lectures in the classroom, I had been your admirer from a distance. Since ours was a Communist family, your name often cropped up in discussions among elders. I heard about you being a dedicated young leader who was chosen by the CPI leadership to represent the party at the World Federation of Democratic Youth in 1945. That assignment took you to Warsaw (if I remember right). After several years of active involvement with the international youth movement, you returned to Calcutta in 1953. As far as I remember, you took up residence in Dover Lane—which was near our house in Ekdalia Road in South Calcutta. You were accompanied by your wife Martha, a brave Polish lady who was a survivor of the notorious Warsaw Ghetto, where she was imprisoned during the Nazi occupation of Poland. Your own experiences abroad and Martha's struggles, lent an aura of heroism around both of you. To us youngsters you were an ideal Communist couple.

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I met you occasionally after leaving college, at some meeting or social gathering. But I lost touch after you left Calcutta in 1959, and joined the University of Sussex. It was again in 1970/71 that we renewed our acquaintanceship. Those were tumultuous years—following the peasant rebellion in Naxalbari. You visited India, and came to Delhi where I was working as a journalist with *The Statesman* newspaper. You and your partner Mechthild (another wonderful woman! You've always been lucky in your relationships, Ranajit da) put up at Maiden's Hotel in old Delhi, where one evening you invited me and my wife Bizeth. We spent a delightful time, discussing international politics and the Naxalite movement. You disagreed with me on my views about the activities of the Chinese Red Guards, whom I had criticised (in an article in *FRONTIER*) for their depredations during the Cultural Revolution. You were in favour of them. But both shared our common admiration of the peasant warriors and the student activists of the Naxalite movement. During your brief stay in Delhi, you addressed the students of the Delhi University in a meeting, where you urged them to come forward in support of the movement.

The next time I met you was sometime in 1979, when during my short stay in London, our mutual friend Gagan Dutta along with his wife Krishna and little daughter, drove me down to your home in Sussex, where you were teaching then. We had a fantastic lunch, spread out by Mechthild, and talked about old times. You told us about

your current research project. You narrated how your interest in the Naxalite movement had prompted you to try to understand the peasant psyche. This had led you to explore the historical roots of anti-British peasant rebellions in India in the past.

A few years after my return to India, in 1983, I received a copy of your book *'Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India'*. This seminal book was the outcome of your research about which you talked that afternoon in your Sussex home. I had the privilege of reviewing it in *Economic and Political Weekly*.

Your insatiable urge to probe further into the subject led you to come up with the concept of the 'subaltern,' and soon with the help of your students and ardent followers, you established the Subaltern School of Studies. It opened up a new vista in the academic world. I met you both in Calcutta and Delhi during seminars held on the subject—although I expressed reservations about some of the conclusions made by the historians of the Subaltern School.

The last time I met you was, may be some time in late 1990s or early 2000s at a group discussion in Delhi's Nehru Memorial Museum library. You were as youthful as ever, brimming with new ideas, and at your best argumentative self. In 2009, I discovered your new Bengali book *'Kobi'r Naam O Sarbanaam'*—yet again another extraordinary work, throwing a new light on Rabindranath.

Ranajit da—looking forward to wishing you a happy birthday on May 23, 2023, when you will turn a centenarian.

Warmest regards
Sumanta Banerjee

DIRECTION IS CHANGING

India: Quo Vadis?

Anup Sinha

DURING THE PAST 30 years the Indian economy, polity and society have been undergoing fundamental changes, the likes of which the nation has not witnessed since independence. The economy has been sluggish with unemployment, relative poverty and inequalities in wealth and income reaching unprecedented levels. Indian society is becoming more and more intolerant and backward looking. National institutions are becoming tools of political influence and control. The government of the land has become cruel and callous as far as minorities are concerned. There is a shift towards a majoritarianism marked by hyper-nationalism and xenophobia. What appears to be a randomness in rules and actions of the legislature and the judiciary, is actually a slow and sure move towards totalitarianism. Citizens are either indifferent to these changes hoping that their silence will buy them safety from dictates of the state, or they firmly believe that this totalitarianism is good for India. A small minority tries to raise their voice in opposition, but they fear wrath of the state. What is emerging is a new idea of a Hindu India where religious practices set the norms of state culture and a glorification of a mythical past. Economic problems have been germane to India's development. The new political and cultural changes are compounding the economic ones. The nation is changing direction.

One way of capturing the changes taking place in contemporary India is to take a look at international rankings of various aspects of the nation's economy

and society. This is not to suggest that these rankings use a perfect methodology for computation. However, the same method used repeatedly gives one an idea of how the rank has changed over time and the relative position of India. India has declined in recent times in the Human Development Index of the UNDP standing at 131 out of 189 nations ranked. This considers income, education and health parameters. On a ranking of Global Food Security Index India stands at 71 out of 116 nations. On the Global Hunger Index India stands at 101 out of 116 countries ranked. On the Human Freedom Index India slipped from 94 in 2019 to 111 in 2020. On the Press Freedom Index India fell from a low 142 to a lower 150 rank between 2021 and 2022. The total number of nations ranked by this index is 180. The nation is in the bottom half of the ranks by Economic Freedom Index. India ranks 85 in Corruption Perception Index out of 180 countries. As far as environmental performance was concerned, India ranks in the bottom 5 out of 180 nations that were ranked. It was only in the Ease of Doing Business rankings that India improved its position in recent years. It rose by 25 positions. The ranking was constructed by the World Bank. Soon after its publication, the ranking list was withdrawn to investigate an allegation that data were fudged in some cases.

It may be worth noting that these indices are constructed by different agencies, using different methodologies and data. India's position is persistently low and more often than not, declining over time. These

ranks reveal three important aspects of the state of affairs in contemporary India. The first pertains to the low quality of life in the nation as a whole. In the international community of nation states, India's standing is poor, despite political muscle-flexing as to its aspirations to be a global or at least a superpower. The second aspect is that these national level rankings hide the skewed nature of development and growth—astonishingly widening chasm between the haves and the have nots. The third aspect is that the ranks indicate a trend worth noting. A country whose rank is not improving, or even deteriorating, implies that the overall political and economic climate of the nation is becoming worse.

Ever since the economic reforms of 1991, the political system, across the spectrum of different political parties, have attached their hopes and their strategies on a belief that market-friendly reforms would take the economy forward. From the Congress to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), along with the myriad regional parties have asserted their belief in the resurgence of faith in markets. The Left have often made noises about the economic dangers of market economies, without having been able to come up with any clear-cut alternative. The underlying philosophy of market friendly reforms is the core of neo-liberalism. This core was summarised in what came to be known as the Washing-

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ton Consensus. The Consensus consisted of four elements that were supposed to be the foundations of a market based global economy. The elements were: open, unrestricted markets, free international trade, a conservative monetary policy with inflation targeting as its main concern, and finally a prudent fiscal policy reflecting a small government and a declining fiscal deficit. This was attempted to be followed in India with varying degrees of success since 1991. However, what the World Bank- IMF philosophy of neo-liberalism did not consider, was the historical fact that, in history, markets economies had done reasonably well only with a lot of state support in terms of fiscal handouts, and a social spending on human development and physical infrastructure. Materially affluent market economies are also invariably characterised by strong social safety nets that cushion the effects of the inevitably fluctuating fortunes of a market economy.

Markets, left to their own devices, seldom provide stability or economic assurances to the participants. Incomes and employment opportunities appear seemingly random, being shoved and pushed by unanticipated shocks. Also, any individual (worker or a potential entrepreneur) willing to avail of opportunities that markets might throw up, has to have certain skills and human resources that are acquired through education, social capital, and of course good health. None of these opportunities are adequately thrown up by markets. India's public expenditure on health, education and physical infrastructure has been wanting since independence, both in terms of the quantum of spending as well as its quality. On the other hand, private capital has been given a lot of opportunities in more liberalised markets, fiscal support,

and easy credit. As a result, the sphere of capital has expanded considerably compared to the opportunities available for the labour force. Capitalists have found labour-saving processes and technologies. The organised working class and its political voice has weakened beyond recognition. The formal employment sector has not increased, the informal sector has expanded a lot, and within this informal sector, casual employment has expanded the most. As a result of which, the bonanza of growth that the Indian economy enjoyed from the early 1990s to around 2015, has accrued to the top 20 percent of the Indian population at the most. During the last 25 to 30 years economic inequality in terms of wages, wealth and incomes have grown to alarming and unacceptable levels.

INEQUALITIES

In terms of economic inequality, India ranked 147 out of 157 countries in 2018, according to Oxfam. Over the last three decades India has witnessed a 108 percent increase in the number of billionaires while 30 million more Indians have slipped below the poverty line. Several sectors are still plagued by low productivity and disguised unemployment like agriculture which houses 50 percent of jobs while contributing 17 percent to national GDP. The sector also houses 93 percent of the informal jobs. Over the last decade the technical measures of inequality have deteriorated for income, wealth and consumption. These estimates were made prior to the pandemic. Any current revision would very likely worsen the estimates. Between 1980 and 2014 the income of the bottom 50 percent rose by 89 percent. The average income grew by 187 percent. The top 10 percent experienced an increase of 750 percent. The top 0.1 percent saw their incomes rise by

1138 percent. The incomes of the super-rich 0.001 percent increased by 2726 percent. Assuming the current population to be around 1350 million the top one percent would be 13.5 million people.

Coming to an Oxfam estimate, in 2018-19 the richest 1 percent held more than 4 times the wealth held by the bottom 70 percent of the population. The total wealth of all billionaires was bigger than the size of the Union Budget for 2018-19. Obviously, these estimates depend on official figures and do not consider any wealth stashed away illegally in Swiss banks. In another measure it was estimated that the top 10 percent rich in India held about 63 percent of wealth while the remaining 90 percent held 37 percent.

The labour market inequalities have grown considerably too, with the gradual informalisation of the labour force and a serious erosion of the working class's organisational power and bargaining strengths. For regular workers (less than 10 percent of the total labour force) with benefits and some degree of job security, the public sector is the largest reservoir accounting for 35 percent of the regular jobs, the private formal sector accounting for 17 percent and the private informal sector accounting for the residual 48 percent. For casual workers, the private informal sector accounts for a whopping 91 percent of employment. These workers have neither work-related benefits, hardly any rights, no organisational strength, and no retirement benefits.

According to an Oxfam report, during the period 1985 to 2015 managerial compensations grew by more than double the rate at which workers' compensations increased. In 2011-12 GDP per worker (including the self-employed) was Rs 175539 per year while the average

for a wage earner was less than half, at Rs 81819. It implies that incomes from profits, rents and other incomes from capital are rising at a rate much faster than that of the incomes of the working class.

THE TOP 20 PERCENT

The top 20 percent of India's population has done well due to economic reforms. However, even within this band, the gains have been terribly unevenly distributed. The gains of the top 10 percent was more than the next 10 percent. The top 1 percent did even better, while the largest gains have been concentrated in the hands of the 0.1 and 0.01 percent of the population. Yet the absolute size of the market is very large for a circuit of capital to prosper and flourish. The market is almost as big as that of the US market. Capital looks for a critical mass. Once that mass is reached further expansion could be weak or sketchy without affecting the economy of the top 20 percent. Hence, seemingly, the market for luxury goods such as cars, televisions, washing machines, top end smart phones, refrigerators, air-conditioners are all flourishing. There has developed a good second-hand market for these goods too which help satisfy demand at a lower price articulated by the next 10 percent or so. Most well-to-do families have multiple cars, television sets, air-conditioners and individuals have multiple phones and laptops. Hence, the shopping malls in big urban centres look shiny and are stocked with goods that could well have been seen in a developed nation's shopping mall. Expensive cars on Indian streets are no longer rare: Mercedes, BMW or even the fancier cars like Lamborghinis are frequently visible. All popular foreign brands are available for high-end consumer goods: Apple, Microsoft, Sony, LG, Samsung, Honda, Hyundai, and

Panasonic to name only a random few.

This economic enclave of the rich and famous is self-perpetuating. Its links with the rest of the larger economy is weak and of low value. For instance, the service people catering to the top 20 percent certainly come from the bottom half of the economy, or the disposal of used consumer goods imply that these reach the population below the top 20 percent. Similarly, when availing of public services like railroads, or post offices, the rich and famous do touch the lives of the invisible. This enclave is also well connected and networked with the rest of the world. Economic transactions in terms of buying goods and services, tourism, business travel, and higher education abroad for their children are usually of an international nature. Finally, this enclave economy's savings and investments are often parked abroad.

It is enough for capital to thrive on this 20 percent. The working class gets attached loosely and peripherally to this circuit. The absolute market is very large even for giant multinationals. For them, there are good private schools and universities, hospitals, hotels and resorts which are hugely expensive and out of the reach of ordinary mortals. The top 20 percent live in their own world which, in terms of quality, is close to that enjoyed by those living in the affluent developed economies.

Economic inequality hardens other forms of inequalities in political voice and influence, social mobility and opportunities, and cultural practices and recognition. Rising inequalities also increase inter-generational gaps. The first effect is often economic. The size of the market grows but at a diminishing pace. The ability of the market to grow and expand domestically is

limited by lack of purchasing power of the bottom 80 or 70 percent of the population. There is also higher competition within the rich enclave that continuously concentrates market shares in the hands of a few large corporations. With the bulk of the monopolising corporations foreign in origin, their investment opportunities are not restricted by Indian opportunities alone. Indian capital finds increasingly limited opportunities unless directly supported by the state like the Ambani companies or the Adani group. Hence, market size limits the amount of investment. Growth continues but at a decelerating pace. This is exactly what people are witnessing now in India.

The second problem that too much inequality triggers is, in the use of environmental resources that are scarce and non-renewable. The very poor often have to depend upon ecological services of Nature just to survive. They overwork the land, they are forced to use more ground water, and over-harvest fish beyond sustainable limits. It is not that the poor are unaware of the importance of environmental resources and the knowledge of how to preserve them, but short-term compulsions make them violate those norms. Tonight's dinner is much more important than having adequate fish in the rivers and oceans 5 years from now. On the other hand, the very rich have access to much more natural resources than they require. Hence, they can easily waste much of it, without the next two or three generations ever feeling the pinch. Environmental sustainability takes a backseat in their lifestyles.

The third problem is that of the build-up of dissent, frustrated aspirations, political impotency and anger. Too much inequality leads to crimes of desperation or the rise of

organized crime that can prove to be a threat to private property. All these together have larger and long-term social and political ramifications that each historical context throws up with different outcomes. The possibilities lie in the options that the ruling elite has in controlling the frustration and anger into something less harmful for private property and capital. It could lie in the elite adopting a left-wing populist policy within an authoritarian framework of power to retain control over the bottom 70 percent. Alternatively, the ruling elite could use propaganda and lies to build up a belief system based on religion and mythology. The full control depends on beliefs as well as on channelising the anger towards an explicit enemy. That is why, the second option is more attractive. In the first option the obvious culprit would be the super-rich. The second alternative can create an enemy in either a neighbouring country, a foreign power or a domestic minority. India is on the second path and the rise of the BJP and its political agenda is a clear indication of the use of ultra-nationalism and targeted hatred for minorities.

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HINDU NATIONALISM

Nation states are imagined communities. They are neither given in Nature nor are they purely based on ethnicity, religion or language. There is variety. India, with its rich diversity, has been referred to as a sub-continent. Out of this diversity a nation was carved through a prolonged struggle against imperial forces. The imagination that fired the founding fathers of India was one of secularism, diversity, democracy, and a sense of equal opportunities for all citizens. India made a hesitant start into the world of other nation states. There was economic development but the first four decades saw a gradual strengthening of the capitalist class. The state supported this class through various plans, public funding of infrastructure and gradual easing of control. Then came the spate of liberalisation and market-friendly reforms.

Reforms came as a bonanza for national capitalists and the aspiring middle class. Profit opportunities and consumption opportunities both grew for these segments of the population. Inequalities increased and to prevent social upheavals the ruling class had to divert the attention of the deprived and unemployed to things not related to material living. Religion provided the perfect foil. Hindu nationalism found a taker in mass populism. The BJP found the fertile ground to organise and take control of the dominant narrative of what the nation of India stands for. People are in the midst of a rising trend of popular hatred and anger focussed on religious minorities, a glorification of a mythical past as real history, and the propagation of Hindu cultural practices as the national way of life. Dissent is heavily discouraged. Human rights are put on the back burner. Corruption is allowed with state protection. Institutions of national importance are

controlled with a mix of carrots and sticks. The attempt to build a secular, socialistic, democratic, plural India since independence had succeeded but only partially. Now it is being replaced by a less tolerant, less free, less secular, more authoritative India.

Since 1991, India's society has changed more fundamentally than its economy. The complex forces of neo-liberal policies, coupled with the shrill narrative of intolerance has led to a consolidation of the forces that look increasingly fascist. Most citizens do not understand the trend. Those who do are afraid to articulate their concerns. A handful who express dissent are sent strong signals of disapproval by the state. As things look now the country is headed for a prolonged period of economic decline and social disruptions. Everyday life will also change in terms of what is officially valued and what is officially disallowed—the content of education, diet, culture practices, whom people socialise with, whom we marry, who we consider the new national heroes, and above all, who we are taught to hate. Two things might occur in the next two or three decades. First, history teaches that right-wing authoritarian regimes do not last forever. They can be brought down, but usually with a major social cost in terms of lives and liberties. The second possibility comes from the future. The hubris and callousness of the ruling powers force them to neglect the natural environment. Some catastrophe from climate change or bio-diversity loss might come as a wake-up call that will force the rulers to do things differently. Neither of the two possibilities is guaranteed. In the meantime, the death-knell of the Indian National Congress is being heard loud and clear. With it the India dreamt of in 1947 is dying without even an audible whimper. □□□

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NEHRU'S INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECHES

History, Nationalism and Gandhi

Himanshu Roy

[This paper analyses Nehru's addresses to the nation on Independence Day, since 1947 to 1963, from the rampart of the Red Fort in Delhi. For 17 years, his addresses contained five recurring themes that wove together a framework of thought that gave a boost to liberalism, and has also become reference markers of public discourse: these were (1) the history of India (2) issue of communalism (3) ideals of anti-colonial movement (4) paradigm of development and (5) reference to Gandhi. The addresses were in Hindustani beginning with brothers and sisters (bhaiyon aur bahino) and ended with Jay Hind. The addresses were in simple general words, in the manner of explaining a point to the audience.]

IT WAS NEVER A PREPARED draft, neither was there any specific policy announcement or any proposed directive to the administration. In passing references, he used to refer about five year plans, development of agriculture, issue of linguistic states, election of Lok Sabha, removal of unemployment and casteism, issues with Pakistan, China, Korea, etc. His tone and tenor and the manner of speaking indicated that he shared these developments of time as pieces of information with the public. Their opinion in the decision-making was not sought. The most melancholic voice was in 1963 when Nehru seemed to be a broken man, sapped of energy. The loss of war and territory to China in 1962 had impacted him badly. Patel's public speeches, till 1950, in contrast, were straight, in the manner of explaining a point, suggesting a way out, giving directives, and seeking opinion. It was a matter of fact, categorical, and never circumspect. Nehru was circumspect, woolly. Even when he was cheated, such example as on Kashmir and Akshai Chin he never named the cheaters.

Usually, the Prime Ministers' addresses on Independence Day are considered as policy statements of their governments that reflect their priorities towards citizens. In the foundational years of democracy, Nehru's speeches reflected more of

India's history and of its civilisational values. As the partition of India had jolted the nation, one can understand the need for building up emotional integration among the citizens. But the irony of it was that it was the business and political elite who had mutually agreed to the idea of partition for their interests. The Muslims as a *kaum* were pushed into the vortex of separation by their elite under the banner of Islam. It was propagated that Islam was in danger and that Muslims needed social Justice. The Muslim electorate had voted for Muslim League candidates in the provincial election of 1945-46 that gave a boost to the partition process. It suited the colonial administration that fostered the idea of separation and propelled the partition of the country. Nehru had the tendency to use rhetoric to cover up the actual problem. The reference of Gandhi and communalism fitted into his scheme. Patel in contrast was forth-coming. His speeches in the constituent assembly and in the public addresses in Independent India were different from Nehru in form and content. Nehru also frowned upon any protest movement of citizens, for example for the linguistic state, as a threat to democracy and a boost to the disintegration of India. It was looked at as disruptive to the developmental process in nation-building. In his speeches, he referred

to some of such protests. A major part of his speeches were of the generic nature of the time. Only a tiny part, as referred to earlier, mentioned any specific issue such for example as the Korean crisis, Panchsheel, agricultural development, planned development, the 1962 war, etc. There was never any focused policy statement on any issue of development like on the water, environment, industrial development, housing construction, roads, electricity, airports, railways, etc. His first address in 1947 was the shortest in which he had stated that 'I am the first servant of Hindustan' (main Hindustan ki jantaka Pratham Sevak Hun). And in his last address, in 1963, he talked of a New India (Naya Bharat).

Nehru was nominated as Congress president by Gandhi in 1946, by-passing Patel who was elected to be the Congress president. The Congress president was to be appointed as the prime minister. As Nehru was declared by Gandhi to be his political heir, it was obvious that he would be handed over the reign of the government. From his younger days in politics, he would share the podium with Gandhi in public meetings, reading newspapers or discussing a point of his politics. It was training in leadership while simultaneously being groomed to cultivate a symbiotic relationship with the youth. Gandhi had stated to him in a letter, "to put you in office was an attempt to find you in power, quicker than you could otherwise had been" (Gandhi to Nehru, 15th July 1936). Groomed in power relation, imbued in liberalism but speaking the language of left in the Hindustani sprinkled with Persian-Arabic words, Nehru fostered the development of capitalism in India in the incremental form under the rhetoric of being socialist and demo-

cratic, “the final goal... might will be communism”. He attempted to motivate the citizens to participate in the nation-building, but was short of specifics. He felt that being in minority Muslims felt insecure and it was the responsibility of the Hindus to make them comfortable. He knew very well that the Muslim electorate had voted for the Muslim League which had sought partition of India; Nehru as the Vice-President of the Interim government and as the president of the Congress had agreed to partition the country.

He talked about Hindustan in a civilisational term, *hazaron baras purani* (thousands of years old), of *Bharat Mata Ki Jai* (Long live the motherland), 1948 (of its immortality, of politics, of making of the policy; but the government he wanted was to be in prime ministerial form with a grand PMO moulded in the manner of Viceroy’s secretariat, and the cabinet was to function as his executive council. His letters to Gandhi, and Mountbatten’s report on Nehru, amply indicated his thought. He wanted unrestricted freedom and liberty of direction to “intervene in the functioning of every ministry”. He felt that ‘the prime minister is the boss. Patel, and his cabinet colleagues felt that it could be the end of the cabinet government. By the time Nehru died he had already dented the functioning of the cabinet Government, the collegial functioning had already declined. Cabinet ministers including Nehru were bypassing the collegial functioning. The cabinet was largely reduced to complete the legal-procedural part.

In 1953, he referred to the developments in Kashmir, but did not mention the name of Sheikh Abdullah. The point he referred to was about the role of Kashmiris in the integration of Kashmir in India (*ye bilkul hamare saamnetay*

sudabaathai ki jo Kashmir kafais-laakhir main hoga vohvahanke log hi karsaktehain), of their elected legislative assembly and their local constituent assembly. Only Kashmir had its local constituent assembly. Abdullah was removed from the chief ministership because he was conspiring to secede from India. A new government was formed. Nehru mentioned his *rung* (angst) and felt that Abdullah had instigated (*bhadkaaya*) the Kashmiris. He was also critical of Jan Sangh which was against the special treatment being meted out to Kashmir. Nehru referred Kashmir as a special case (*Kashmir kiekkhajasagahhai. Uskiqajahain Hindustan kekhaandan mein Kashmir aaya.*) But few moments earlier in his speech he had positioned Kashmir differently (*hamare jo sidhaant Hindustan ke liye rahevohharek Hindustan ke hisseke liye hainvoh Kashmir keliyehai*). This inconsistency was always in Nehru. For himself, he always sorted a separate parameter; for others, there was to be a universal yardstick. Nehru, originally a *kaul*, was promoted by his father; Nehru promoted his daughter and sister. He took away Jammu and Kashmir from the purview of Patel and brought it under his jurisdiction. The issue of Kashmir could have been settled through India’s military victory in 1948. But naively, he took the case to the United Nations General Assembly and lost the plot. The rest is history. Interestingly, Nehru did not mention Kashmir; but he did mention about Pakistan at length in 1951 when he gave his longest speech from the Red Fort. (*Hamenafshoshuaki Hindustan ka tukda alaghua, lekin hamareaa khirme in manjoori se hua, hamari razamandi se hua*). His love for Pakistan continued despite the war in 1948. (*Pakistan... hamaredi laurbaazooketukdehain.*)

It was also the year when he was to face his first Lok Sabha election with the universal franchise of 17-18 crores of the electorate without Gandhi and Patel. Everybody knows that it was Patel who had commanded the Congress election machinery: the selection of the candidates, funding of the election, the selection of the chief ministers and ministers in the provinces, etc. Patel was asked by Gandhi to look after this electoral works of Congress.

Nehru used to ask people to take up works of local development on their own, not to expect and be dependent on the government for every small work which they can do it collectively on their own (*apnimehnat se sadkebanaye... makaan banaye, panchayat gharbnaye, kahin-kahinchoti-chotinahrekhode, khainchote school-vidyaalaya banaye.... eestarah se aajkal chin kamul kbadhrahahai*). He was critical of the functioning of the administration. (*hamared aftrnomein bade-bade file banteaur us par bade-bade note likhejaate, lekin vohsad ke aur vidyaalaya wonahi banteyaa arse baadbante, yehtarikahai, government jarahalkechaltihai*). It was equally cajoling and encouraging the citizen and administration to perform. (*padosi ki nukktachinitoh sab kar sakte hain, lekin khud kya akrskte hain*). It was also indicative of the developments in India and abroad with which he kept his countrymen updated and also expressed his views whether it was on the Korean Crisis, the Chinese revolution or on

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the arrival of 15-16 lakhs of refugees from Pakistan. An interesting part of Nehru's speeches were about asking countrymen to learn from the armed forces on discipline while simultaneously briefing them about military preparedness for any potential conflict with Pakistan (*hum mulkko taiyaar karen kyon kijo log taiyaar nahi hote unke upar ham lehotelain*). Civil servants like H M Patel who was defence secretary, however, has argued that after 1950-52 Nehru neglected the preparedness of the armed forces.

His frequent references to Indian history to inculcate a feeling of pride, to generate a feeling of nationalism to transcend the barriers of caste, religion and provincialism is laudable. But it was bereft of realities of the time. Or the government was just acting contrary to what Nehru was preaching to the people who were fighting the government for linguistic states which the Nehru government was initially not ready to grant. Nehru was calling it provincialism and was against it. Congress, on the contrary, was fostering caste for its electoral victory from

1937 election onwards which continued in 1945-46, 1952, 1957 elections and afterwards. Candidates in the constituencies were selected on the basis of their castes. The other political parties followed the lead. Such political mobilisation had its cascading impact on the social life. It led to fragmentation in society and violence to retain/change the power relations. A Similar impact was felt with the communal conflicts in the constituencies where minorities lived changing the religious democracy of a locality, leading to migrations, sale off properties, breakdown of traditional social relationships.

In 1955, Nehru talked of colonial Goa at length, wanted its merger with India but did not show any urgency for its liberation. He was not in favour of sending the army; rather he wanted the local Goan satygarhi to self-emancipate themselves with the assistance from the Indian satyagarhis who were willing to go to Goa for its liberation. Six years later the army was sent and within hours Goa was liberated. Patel was willing to send the army in 1948 but know-

ing the nature of Nehru he did not pursue the matter further; his prediction of liberating Goa from Portuguese in couple of hours turned out to be prophetic in 1961.

In 1963, the RSS was invited to be the part of the Republic Day parade. On the insistence of Nehru, Patel had banned the organisation in 1948 after the killing of Gandhi. When Patel had sought for evidence from Nehru, he had none except for stating that there was no written constitution of the Sangh/ RSS. Once the constitution was drafted and adopted in 1949 by the RSS, the ban was lifted. His last speech in 1963 was of a tired man. He died in May, 1964.

For seventeen long years, he was the Prime Minister of the country who had propelled the expansion and deepening of capitalism and liberalism but termed it as socialistic pattern of development. The CPI, then, had called him as the lackey of American imperialism. A mass leader of his time, he was the master of rhetoric. His assistant, Mathai ranked him as one of the top five best draftsmen of the world. □□□

NIGHTMARCH

'Walking with the Comrades'

Bernard D'Mello

[This essay is a review of *NIGHTMARCH: AMONG INDIA'S REVOLUTIONARY GUERRILLAS* by Alpa Shah, London: C. Hurst & Co. 2018; Harper Collins Publishers India, 2018, pp. xxii+320. A different version of the review first appeared in the *Journal of Agrarian Change*, Vol. 19, Issue 4, October 2019, pp. 734-738.]

NIGHTMARCH IS A BOOK which tries to understand an Adivasi community in the Indian state of Jharkhand and its process of involvement with Maoist-communist revolutionaries (Naxalites). The author, Alpa Shah, a social anthropologist at the London School of Economics and Political Science, has done considerable field-work as a "participant observer," being and living with Adivasi com-

munities in Jharkhand, including in a Naxalite guerrilla stronghold. A committed independent observer and researcher, this experience has endowed her with a genuine understanding of the Naxalite revolutionaries and the people whom they have mobilised and move with.

The book's title *NIGHTMARCH* refers to a seven-night trek Shah undertook with a Naxalite guerrilla platoon in 2010—at a time when

the Indian state's counterinsurgency operations were in full gear—from a revolutionary stronghold in the state of Bihar to one in Jharkhand, covering 250 kilometres. In the book, description of the trek is interspersed with numerous discussions centred on one or other of the various contradictions besetting the revolutionary struggle for a more egalitarian and democratic future.

The literary genre reminds this reviewer of Robert Pirsig's best-selling fictionalised autobiography, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (ZAMM) which covers the trek of a father and son from Minneapolis, over the Rocky Mountains, to the Pacific coast. In ZAMM there are two journeys, the one by motor-

cycle across the heartland of the United States of America, and the other metaphorical journey via enlightening talk and conversations that take one into the heart of a contemporary fear of technology. This latter “journey” takes the narrator into a philosophical discourse (accessible, edifying and enlightening, what Pirsig refers to as a Chautauqua) about discovering a genuinely meaningful synthesis between the “classical” (i.e., rational-scientific) and the “romantic” (poetic-intuitive) attitudes towards the world, both of which, when played out, one without the other, leads to immense psychological stress and ultimately, breakdown.

So also, in *NIGHTMARCH*’s narrative—albeit unlike Pirsig’s, a work of non-fiction—the one journey with Shah “dressed as a man in an olive-green uniform” undertaking the trek from one Maoist heartland to the other as part of a Naxalite guerrilla platoon, the other metaphorical one that takes one to the heart of what has been undermining the revolutionary project. This latter “wandering” is interspersed and punctuated with the actual journey. It is set in the argumentative conversations with a senior Maoist intellectual-revolutionary, Gyanji, and Shah’s consequent reflections over the points of contention. This intellectual discourse makes up Shah’s Chautauqua (for want of another word for it) about the contradictions confronting the revolutionary struggle for a better world and how the problems these contradictions give rise to might be resolved.

What are these “contradictions”—internal conflicts over theory and practice leading to discord in what is a functionally united revolutionary struggle—that Shah thinks are the Naxalite movement’s main obstacles to the realisation of their revolutionary project? The first stems

from the very process of creation of new egalitarian and democratic communities necessarily requiring reliance on the agencies of individuals and organisations within existing communities whose values conflict with the imagined ones of the future. Moreover, the Naxalites have no other option but to engage in “dirty” commerce with the capitalist economy on its terms, this to fund and sustain the revolutionary struggle. A second contradiction emanates from the Maoist characterisation of Indian society and economy as semi-feudal even as the livelihoods of the Adivasis, who are a constituent of the Naxalites’ “mass base”, involve forced migration in search of wage work, exposing them to capitalist exploitation of the worst kind, a problem that remains unaddressed by the Naxalite leadership.

Thirdly, insufficient thought given to the “Indigenous (Adivasi) question” in relation to class struggle has led to the Naxalites not providing adequate attention to the relatively egalitarian institutions and values already in place amongst the tribal people they are living with. The various Adivasis—distinct tribes, for instance, Gonds in Bastar in the province of Chhattisgarh, or Santhals and Oraons in Jharkhand and the adjoining parts of Paschim Banga and Odisha—are distinct communities of people, with their own dialects, customs, culture, and rules which structure how they act towards and in regard to each other. What distinguishes them from mainstream society, whether Bengali, Bihari, Odiya, or Telugu, is internal social relations based much more on kinship bonds, frequent cooperation to achieve common goals, and maintenance of a certain distance from the state and mainstream society because there is a historical memory of such contact—with state

officials, traders, usurers, and contractors—as having brought oppression, exploitation, and degradation. Ethnic identity and semi-proletarian class character intertwined with each other engender an egalitarian consciousness, which one can sense in the way the oppressed Adivasis come together to cope with deprivation. All that is required is for the Naxalites to bring the Adivasi peasantry into alliance with the rest of India’s poor and landless peasants in the struggle for socialism. But, of course, this is easier said than done.

Fourthly, Naxalite armed resistance has brought on brutal state repression necessitating further fortification of armed resistance, but the latter has come at the expense of neglect of the task of collaborating with the people on the emancipatory political project. Five, the latter project is led mainly by Naxalite men from elite backgrounds, invariably leading to failure to nurture lower-caste, Adivasi, and women leaders, thus undermining the struggle to create casteless, classless, anti-patriarchal communities.

The central characters in *Nightmarch* are real. Of course, the names of the characters are pseudonyms. The central characters “represent archetypal figures” (p. vii) in the Naxalite movement. There is Gyanji, the upper caste-class, highly-educated, Shelly-reciting mathematician turned Maoist intellectual-revolutionary leader, with whom Shah engages in argumentative conversations that make her Chautauqua so meaningful. And Prashant, who comes from a family of cattle-herding peasants living in mud huts, first attracted to the cultural wing of the movement, and then becoming an enthusiastic, committed guerrilla. Kohli, an Adivasi youth who found in the Maoist guerrilla army a home away from home, and who learned

to read and write there. Vikas, the one heading the platoon which took Shah on her Nightmarch, but who turned out to be the opposite of the revolutionary the Naxalites were trying to nurture, or indeed even of the Adivasi community he came from, amassing wealth for his own private purposes, indulging in treachery and betrayal, and ultimately metamorphosing into a “Frankenstein’s monster”.

There are also characters not on Shah’s trek but who figure nevertheless in her Chautauqua. Seema, a remarkable revolutionary, “constrained by the movement’s middle-class, caste-based assumptions of what it meant to be a ‘good woman’,” and, most likely “inhibited from experiencing the gender relations, kinship and family structures, as they existed amongst the Adivasi communities” she lived amidst (p. 214). And Somwari, an Adivasi woman who was independent and autonomous from her partner with whom she had chosen to cohabit and who was the father of their children. She makes *badia* (rice beer) and mahua wine and enjoys drinking it in the company of other Adivasi men and women after a hard day’s collective labour.

Almost all the characters are perplexing and, in some respects, contradictory. The respect and dignity with which the revolutionaries treat the Adivasis, sharing food and eating often from the same plate with them; joking and teasing the Adivasi villagers “with the ease of familiarity”; the tone of voice when addressing people; sitting on the floor with everyone else—these were the “small things that enabled the guerrillas to win the local people’s hearts and minds” (p. 137).

Let me then get back to some of “the contradictions” that Shah is concerned about, empathising as she does with the Adivasis and the revolutionaries whom she is study-

ing and who are her “informants.” First, the one related to the “corruption” of some among the Naxalites whom the Maoist Party has deputed to transact “commerce” in the capitalist economy, which for the Naxalites is a necessary evil that must be engaged in to fund and sustain the revolutionary struggle. It is here that the Vikases—deputed to strike deals with the contractor–politician–state official combines doing business in the guerrilla zones, in the process of gaining access and acceptance in these elite social circles—get “corrupted” and siphon off part of the money into their own personal coffers.

Like the good Maoist, with reference to Vikas, Gyanji laments the lack of careful and painstaking political and “ideological” education that should be imparted to every budding revolutionary. For one thing even with the best of such education, the power of capital alongside the mystification of money and the worship of gold that have been a part of ruling cultures over the longue durée, may, in some instances, prove too robust to resist.

Shah’s criticism of the Maoist leadership’s flawed handling of gender issues with respect to Adivasi women is correct. There is a huge gap between Naxalite assumptions of Adivasi women’s subordination and actual patriarchal gender relations in the home. It is usual for Adivasi girls and boys to choose their own partners (p.217). It is common for Adivasi men to help with the cooking, washing, and other household chores, and “share the domestic tasks of reproductive labour with the women”. Adivasi women are on a “far more equal footing” than women in middle-class, middle- and upper-caste families (p. 215). They do not wear the veil and are bold enough to “flirt and flaunt their sexuality in public places out-

side the domestic confines of their homes” (p. 216). And, like Somwari, they love consuming alcohol in the company of other Adivasi men and women. Verrier Elwin was similarly attracted by the way the Gonds, a distinct Adivasi community, expressed their sexuality, openly, honestly, and uninhibitedly, and seemed to be peeved by followers of M K Gandhi who (like the Naxalites in this respect, as Shah also thinks) were uptight and narrow-minded in these matters. (Regarding Elwin, the reader may refer to Ramachandra Guha’s 1999 book *Savaging the Civilized: Verrier Elwin, His Tribals, and India*).

There is another important issue that deserves attention, given that the Maoist practice of “people’s war” has brought on the Indian state’s full-scale counterinsurgency operations that have in turn forced the Maoist movement to recede over the last two decades from the plains in the countryside to zones and regions where the terrain is more favourable to the practice of guerrilla warfare. These zones and regions happen to be the forested and hilly areas inhabited mainly by Adivasis. The latter have been mobilised by the Maoists in their mass organisations and in their guerrilla army. It is in this context that one might legitimately pose the question as to how much of the revolutionary movement’s solidarity in the Adivasi areas derives from mobilisation of the Adivasi peasantry based on class struggle and how much of the solidarity stems from a common tribal-ethnic identity.

The solidarity within the revolutionary movement in the Adivasi areas stems from both the Adivasi participants engaged in a common struggle against their oppressors, and exploiters, and from the fact of their common tribal-ethnic identity. Shah’s eagerness to highlight the class character of the Maoist move-

ment in the tribal areas should not lead people to underestimate the affinity deriving from shared tribal-ethnic identity. The two, class and shared tribal-ethnic affinity, taken together, have determined the movement's overall character. Well, this is in response to Shah demarcating/contrasting the "politics of communism" and/or the "politics of indigeneity" (p. 136).

The dispossession of Adivasis from the lands, forests, and other natural resources of their habitats, a violation of their collective, customary rights over this resource base, and the appropriation of these resources by corporations is part of what David Harvey would call a process of "accumulation by dispossession" (A Brief History of Neoliberalism, 2007, p. 159), and the Maoist movement's resistance to this is, at its heart, a class struggle. The fact that the solidarity of the dispossessed Adivasis also derives from their common tribal-ethnic affinity does not define the character of the Maoist movement.

In other words, the tribal-ethnic identity of the struggle's main participants cannot, per se, define the movement's character, which is what Arundhati Roy (in her 2011 book, *Broken Republic*) does. However, unity of the dispossessed in the struggle would depend both on the depth of the class consciousness of the movement's participants and the degree of cultural homogeneity that comes from their common tribal-ethnic identity. But the latter cannot be a substitute for the class consciousness of the dispossessed, which is a necessary condition for unity in the struggle against the capitalist process of "accumulation by dispossession."

In concluding, Shah might be among the very few social anthropologists studying a Maoist revolutionary movement who does not assume that Maoism is bad and unviable. Just as well, for such an assumption invariably leads to a distortion of both theory and fact. Indeed, in *Frontier* itself, a Marxist philosopher has gone all out to blur

and smear the Maoist record in India, his diatribe stemming from a hysterical form of anti-Maoism and anti-Stalinism. Here comes Trotsky after 1927 when he was living in exile, no longer having to manage Soviet state and party organisations, constantly asserting socialist principles while finding fault with his former comrades, who were then directly involved in transforming post-revolutionary Soviet society, mainly to catch-up in the economic and military realms and thus be ready to take on the coming imperialist-fascist onslaughts. But, of course, Trotsky did not go overboard in his berating of the "Stalinists." Here Marxist philosopher considers the Maoist phenomenon a "disease" and likens the "mindless violence" of the Maoists to fascist brutality, which he claims to be one of a piece of the "same type of brutality by the Maoists." He and his ilk have something to learn from the social anthropologist Alpa Shah who is deeply attentive to the challenges confronting the Maoists/Naxalites in India. □

সাংস্কৃতিক সমসময়

অক্টোবর ২০২২

বিশেষ সংখ্যা

এই সংখ্যার বিষয়সূচী

প্রবন্ধ : বদরুদ্দিন উমর সৌরেন বসু সব্যসাচী দেব অশোক চট্টোপাধ্যায় সন্দীপ রায় অভিজিৎ সেনগুপ্ত
প্রীতিলতা বিশ্বাস মিলি মুখার্জি

ধারাবাহিক : অলকরঞ্জন বসুচৌধুরী দেবশিস চক্রবর্তী নির্মল নাগ তরুণকুমার দে

গল্প : দেবশ্রী দে মলয়কুমার নন্দী ব্রতী মুখোপাধ্যায় রঞ্জিম ইসলাম রমেন চক্রবর্তী রাজেশ কুমার
বাপ্পাদিত্য জানা অর্জুন ভট্টাচার্য

কবিতা : মণিদিপা বিশ্বাস কীর্তিনিয়া অজয় নাগ মৃন্ময় চক্রবর্তী আশিস হালদার শীলা দাস সুশীল পাঁজা
দুলালেন্দু সরকার নীলাদ্রি ভোমিক পলাশ দাস জি এম আনসার প্রমুখ

প্রকাশিত হবে সেপ্টেম্বরের প্রথম সপ্তাহে

সম্ভাব্য দাস ১৩৫ টাকা

যোগাযোগ : ৯৪৩৩৫৮৮৬৩২ / ৮২৭৪৮২৬৬৩০

THE UNITY QUESTION

An Open Call to Communist Revolutionaries

Arup Baisya

THE FUNDAMENTAL PREMISE for unity of communist revolutionaries is definitely Marxism. Marxism is a guide to action. So it is the action that guides the path to unity of communist revolutionaries. The communists are not the historians who strive to know what and how such and such things appeared in the past, but discover the past in its present to formulate an action for the future. Communists dwell on the present to know and influence the future trajectory of society through their action. So it is the action that guides the future. The question of unity is such an action that gives rise to a guide for new action. Why unity is to be achieved is more important than how it should be achieved. Communists are not moral foot-soldiers; they are the actors, the role of which is determined by the social conflict. They have a vision for the future and a mental theory to act radically. This determined action is dialectically intertwined with multifaceted indeterminations. Can the social conflict within a social relation of production be fully determined? If it is not, does it mean that communist revolutionaries should wait for their programme to be experimentally proven and vindicated by the society in their actions? The maximalist stand of doing nothing and waiting for the opportune moment for vindication of programmatic line, and minimalist approach of emphasising on only doing something are both counter-productive and end in status-quoist quagmire.

Gramsci raised the “Southern Question” in Italy and his proposi-

tion was that Italian programme for radical change, and united front and communist unity against fascism cannot be resolved without addressing the “Southern Question”. He was right in its essence, but he visualised it within the framework of centre-periphery relation, the relation between developed capitalist region and backward feudal region. Communist revolutionaries in India conceptualised the idea of revolution mostly from Chinese experience of backward feudal region and this legacy is still continuing. In Indian context, one cannot delineate the issue as western or northern question. The Russian experience had not helped communists much in understanding the Indian social contour in the backdrop of a global capitalism as a system. The Russian revolution took place in a different global context and internal social dynamics of developed capitalist region with proletarian presence and region of peasant commune with Russian specificities and largely undisturbed by capital penetration. It is true that the legacy emanated from Naxalbari peasant uprising and carried forward by the communist revolutionaries in India could not settle the question of later development of intermingling and overlapping social territorial spaces in its entirety within a global capitalist system. The great Indian mode of production debate in the 1970s could not also settle the question in either side of the two camps. The mode of production debate is never-ending and it cannot be settled through experiences and studies because experiences are varied and studies are always incomplete. But

all practising Marxists can realise from their practice that there are certain changes in social relations of production. In addition to the land reform in ownership pattern, the co-operation of peasantry in production and struggle against corporate domination has been emerging as important agenda as big land-holding class is numerically not significant in proportion to small peasant community. If this question of characterisation of Indian society cannot be settled through debate and discussion, how can this be the basis for the unity of communist revolutionaries? One who argues that the unity is fragile without settling this debate actually puts the question of revolutionary seizure of power in backburner and cannot be considered as revolutionary. The revolutionary party formulates a programme for revolution in a given social condition, but the implementation of programme itself is always in a flux as the given situation is always in a flux and in constant motion. The theory and practice is a dialectical relation, and it is very difficult to justify one’s praxis in consonance with theoretical formulations in a mechanistic format. If there is always a mismatch between the theory and practice, why the question of unity should not be addressed from practical situation? Before dwelling briefly on what practical situation actually means, this writer would like to mention that revolutionary praxis based on Marxism as a guide to action is not like natural science where one can wait decades after decades for laboratory experiments to validate the once formulated theory for being compatible with observations or wait for a moment of paradigm shift when the large number of observations becomes incompatible with the theory. In Marxian sense, commu-

nists have an agenda for revolution or seizure of power which is not determined by theory and praxis alone, but by the society in change and in motion. This places them in a position where concrete analysis of concrete situation, unlike natural science, becomes a continuous process for formulating the concrete task. The task of achieving the revolutionary unity is dictated by such concrete analysis of concrete conditions, otherwise apparently moral standpoint of achieving programmatic unity is actually a reformist standpoint. It is a practical question.

What Lenin said about revolution in *State and Revolution* is true, though in its entirety, the content of the book should not be considered as Gospel and Lenin himself changed his position at a later stage on various issues. Lenin said, "Revolution can never be forecast; it cannot be foretold, it comes of itself. Revolution is brewing and is bound to flare up". He further said, "To the Marxist it is indisputable that a revolution is impossible without a revolutionary situation; furthermore, it is not every revolutionary situation that leads to revolution."

It won't be wrong if one dogmatically adheres to Lenin's definition of revolutionary situation. Lenin emphasised three criteria for assessment of revolutionary situation.

One, "when it is impossible for the ruling classes to maintain their rule without any change, when there is a crisis, in one form or another, among the upper classes, a crisis in the policy of the ruling class, leading to a fissure through which the discontent and indignation of the classes burst forth". Almost all the revolutionary formations agree that Indian ruling class is treading the path to change the character of the Indian state to fascism or authoritarianism. What else does it

mean if it is not the indication that both upper and lower classes are unable to rule and willing to be ruled in old way. Can one not see the fissures emerging within the ruling dispensation?

Two, "when the suffering and want of the oppressed classes have grown more acute than usual". Is there anyone in Communist camp who denies this fact? The answer is in the negative.

Three, "when, as a consequence of the above causes there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses, when uncomplainingly allow themselves to be robbed in "peace time", but in turbulent times, are drawn both by all the circumstances of the crisis and by the upper classes themselves into independent historical action". Any keen social observer can observe the deepening restlessness hitherto absent within the north Indian society which has always been the pivot of hegemonic control of Indian system by the Indian ruling classes. Is not the policy shift of Indian Government towards aggressive pan-Indian statist drive of evacuating and displacing the people

from prime land and installations to support both the corporate market forces with property and cheap labour and simultaneously promoting rentier neo-feudalist class are marked by the crisis situation and upper class action?

As Gramsci underlined the importance of "Southern Question" in Italy, the great legacy of Naxalbari peasant uprising should not be a barrier for the communist revolutionaries to take stock of the pan-Indian situation as well as the changes in northern heartland of Indian ruling system. The emphasis on programmatic unity evades the real question of concrete analysis of concrete situation and becomes a reformist standpoint at its core. In the backdrop of deepening systemic crisis and people's rising anger, the revolutionaries should and must rise above all small or big party sectarianism and narrow vision from the experience gathered from a limited space, and take genuine, sincere and visible effort for unity which will give a boost to the morale of workers-peasants and section of disillusioned middle class. □□□

‘পূর্বাশা এখন’
বিশেষ শারদীয়া সংখ্যা
 প্রবন্ধ, গল্প, কবিতা, উপন্যাস,
 ভ্রমণ কাহিনী প্রভৃতিতে সমৃদ্ধ
 এবারের পূজাসংখ্যা জমজমাট

যাঁদের লেখায় এবারের সংখ্যা সমৃদ্ধ ঃ
 বুদ্ধদেব গুহ, শীর্ষেন্দু মুখোপাধ্যায়, সমরেশ মজুমদার,
 শঙ্খ ঘোষ, শামসুর রহমান, নির্মলেন্দু গুণ,
 অমর মিত্র, স্বপ্নময় চক্রবর্তী, ডাঃ বিভাত মন্ডল,
 অশোক চ্যাটার্জী, ডাঃ তিমির বরণ চক্রবর্তী,
 রমজান আলি, নির্মল ব্রহ্মচারী, প্রেমাংশু বশিষ্ঠ,
 ডাঃ পার্থ প্রতিম পাঁজা, ডাঃ সুগত মুখার্জী,
 তসলিমা নাসরিন, বিদিশা সিনহা,
 মোঃ নুরুদ্দিন, মোঃ সাদউদ্দিন, শুক্লা গাঙ্গুলী।

এছাড়াও নানা দেশ-বিদেশের কবি ও লেখকবৃন্দ।

War and the Left

Marcello Musto*

WHILE POLITICAL SCIENCE has probed the ideological, political, economic and even psychological motivations behind the drive to war, socialist theory has made one of its most compelling contributions by highlighting the nexus between the development of capitalism and the spread of wars.

In the debates of the First International, César de Paepe, one of its principal leaders, formulated what would become the classical position of the workers' movement on the question: namely, that wars are inevitable under the regime of capitalist production. In contemporary society, they are brought about not by the ambitions of monarchs or other individuals but by the dominant social-economic model. The lesson in civilisation for the workers' movement came from the belief that any war should be considered "a civil war", a ferocious clash between workers that deprived them of the means necessary for their survival.

Karl Marx did not develop in any of his writings his views—fragmentary and sometimes contradictory—on war, nor did he put forward guidelines for the correct attitude to be taken towards it. In *Capital* he argued that violence was an economic force, "the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one". But he did not think of war as a crucial shortcut for the revolutionary transformation of society, and a major aim of his political activity was to commit workers to the principle of international solidarity.

War was such an important question for Friedrich Engels that he devoted one of his last writings to

it. In "Can Europe Disarm?", he noted that in the previous twenty-five years every major power had tried to outdo its rivals militarily and in terms of war preparations. This had involved unprecedented levels of arms production and brought the Old Continent closer to "a war of destruction such as the world has never seen". According to Engels, "The system of standing armies has been carried to such extremes throughout Europe that it must either bring economic ruin to the peoples on account of the military burden, or else degenerate into a general war of extermination". In his analysis, Engels did not forget to highlight that standing armies were maintained chiefly for internal political as much as external military purposes. They were intended "to provide protection not so much against the external enemy as the internal one", by strengthening the forces to repress the proletariat and workers' struggles. As popular layers paid more than anyone else the costs of war, through taxes and the provision of troops to the state, the workers' movement should fight for "the gradual reduction of the term of [military] service by international treaty" and for disarmament as the only effective "guarantee of peace".

TESTS AND COLLAPSE

It was not long before a peacetime theoretical debate turned into the foremost political issue of the age, when the workers' movement had to face real situations in which their representatives initially opposed any support for war. In the Franco-Prussian conflict of 1870 (which preceded the Paris Commune), the Social Democrat deputies Wilhelm

Liebknecht and August Bebel condemned the annexationist objectives of Bismarck's Germany and voted against war credits. Their decision to "reject the bill for additional funding to continue the war" earned them a two-year prison sentence for high treason, but it helped to show the working class an alternative way to build on the crisis.

As the major European powers kept up their imperialist expansion, the controversy on war acquired ever greater weight in the debates of the Second International. A resolution adopted at its founding congress had enshrined peace as "the indispensable precondition of any emancipation of the workers". As the Weltpolitik—the aggressive policy of Imperial Germany to extend its power in the international arena—changed the geopolitical setting, antimilitarist principles sank deeper roots in the workers' movement and influenced the discussions on armed conflicts. War was no longer seen only as opening up revolutionary opportunities and hastening the breakdown of the system (an idea on the Left going back to Maximilien Robespierre's "no revolution without revolution"). It was now viewed as a danger because of its grievous consequences for the proletariat in the shape of hunger, destitution and unemployment.

The resolution "On Militarism and International Conflicts", adopted by the Second International at its Stuttgart Congress in 1907, recapitulated all the key points that had become the common heritage of the workers' movement. Among these were: a vote against budgets that increased military spending, antipathy to standing armies and a preference for a system of people's militias. As the years passed, the Second International committed itself less and less to a policy of

action in favour of peace and the majority of European socialist parties ended up supporting the First World War. This course had disastrous consequences. With the idea that the “benefits of progress” should not be monopolised by the capitalists, the workers’ movement came to share the expansionist aims of the ruling classes and was swamped by nationalist ideology. The Second International proved completely impotent in the face of the war, failing in one of its main objectives: the preservation of peace.

Rosa Luxemburg and Vladimir Lenin were the two most vigorous opponents of the war. Luxemburg extended the theoretical understanding of the Left and showed how militarism was a key vertebra of the state. Displaying a conviction and effectiveness with few equals among other communist leaders, she argued that the “War on war!” slogan should become “the cornerstone of working-class politics”. As she wrote in *The Crisis of Social Democracy*, the Second International had imploded because it failed “to achieve a common tactic and action by the proletariat in all countries”. From then on, the “main goal” of the proletariat should therefore be “fighting imperialism and preventing wars, in peace as in war”.

In *Socialism and the War* and many other writings during the First World War, Lenin’s great merit was to identify two fundamental questions. The first concerned the “historical falsification” whenever the bourgeoisie tried to attribute a “progressive sense of national liberation” to what were in reality wars of “plunder”, waged with the sole aim of deciding which belligerents were this time to oppress the most foreign peoples and to increase the inequalities of capitalism. The second was the masking of contradictions by the social reformists who

had replaced the class struggle with a claim on “morsels of the profits obtained by their national bourgeoisie through the looting of other countries”. The most celebrated thesis of this pamphlet—that revolutionaries should seek to “turn imperialist war into civil war”—implied that those who really wanted a “lasting democratic peace” had to wage “civil war against their governments and the bourgeoisie”. Lenin was convinced of what history would later show to be imprecise: that any class struggle consistently waged in time of war would “inevitably” create a revolutionary spirit among the masses.

LINES OF DEMARCATION

The First World War produced divisions not only in the Second International but also in the anarchist movement. In an article published shortly after the outbreak of the conflict, Pëtr Kropotkin wrote that “the task of any person holding dear the idea of human progress is to squash the German invasion in Western Europe”. In a reply to Kropotkin, the Italian anarchist Enrico Malatesta argued that “a German victory would certainly spell the triumph of militarism, but also that a triumph for the Allies would mean Russian-British domination in Europe and Asia.”

In the *Manifesto of the Sixteen*, Kropotkin upheld the need “to resist an aggressor who represents the destruction of all our hopes of liberation”. Victory for the Triple Entente against Germany would be the lesser evil and do less to undermine the existing liberties. On the other side, Malatesta and his fellow-signatories of The Anarchist International Anti-War Manifesto declared: “No distinction is possible between offensive and defensive wars”. Moreover, they added that “None of the belligerents has any right to lay claim to civilization,

just as none of them is entitled to claim legitimate self-defence”.

Attitudes to the war also aroused debate in the feminist movement. The need for women to replace conscripted men in jobs that had long been a male monopoly encouraged the spread of chauvinist ideology in a sizeable part of the newborn suffragette movement. Exposure of duplicitous governments—which, in evoking the enemy at the gates, used the war to roll back fundamental social reforms—was one of the most important achievements of Rosa Luxemburg and the communist feminists of the time. They were the first to embark lucidly and courageously on the path that would show successive generations how the struggle against militarism was essential to the struggle against patriarchy. Later, the rejection of war became a distinctive part of International Women’s Day, and opposition to war budgets on the outbreak of any new conflict featured prominently in many platforms of the international feminist movement.

The escalating violence of the Nazi-Fascist front, at home as well as abroad, and the outbreak of the Second World War created an even more nefarious scenario than the 1914-18 war. After Hitler’s troops attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, the Great Patriotic War that ended with the defeat of Nazism became such a central element in Russian national unity that it survived the fall of the Berlin Wall and has lasted until our own days.

With the post-war division of the world into two blocs, Joseph Stalin taught that the main task of the international Communist movement was to safeguard the Soviet Union. The creation of a buffer zone of eight countries in Eastern Europe was a central pillar of this policy. From 1961, under the leadership of

Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet Union began a new political course that came to be known as “peaceful coexistence”. However, this attempt at constructive cooperation was geared only to the USA, not the countries of “actually existing socialism”. In 1956, the Soviet Union had already brutally crushed the Hungarian Revolution. Similar events took place in 1968 in Czechoslovakia. Faced with demands for democratisation during the “Prague Spring”, the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union decided unanimously to send in half a million soldiers and thousands of tanks. Leonid Brezhnev explained the action by referring to what he called the “limited sovereignty” of Warsaw Pact countries: “When forces that are hostile to socialism try to turn the development of some so-

cialist country towards capitalism, it becomes not only a problem of the country concerned, but a common problem and concern of all socialist countries.” According to this anti-democratic logic, the definition of what was and was not “socialism” naturally fell to the arbitrary decision of the Soviet leaders.

With the invasion of Afghanistan, in 1979, the Red Army again became a major instrument of Moscow’s foreign policy, which continued to claim the right to intervene in what it described as its own “security zone”. These military interventions not only worked against a general arms reduction but served to discredit and globally weaken socialism. The Soviet Union was increasingly seen as an imperial power acting in ways not unlike those of the United States, which, since the onset of the Cold War, had more or less secretly backed coups d’état and helped to overthrow democratically elected governments in more than twenty countries around the world.

TO BE ON THE LEFT IS TO BE AGAINST WAR

The end of the Cold War did not lessen the amount of interference in other countries’ affairs, nor did it increase the freedom of every people to choose the political regime under which it lives. The Russian-Ukrainian war has again faced the Left with the dilemma of how to react when a country’s sovereignty is under attack. The failure to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is a political mistake on the part of the government of Venezuela, and it makes denunciations of possible future acts of aggression committed by the United States appear less credible.

Recalling Lenin’s words in *The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination*: “The fact that the struggle for national liberation against one imperialist power

may, under certain circumstances, be utilised by another “Great” Power in its equally imperialist interests should have no more weight in inducing Social Democracy to renounce its recognition of the right of nations to self-determination”. Beyond the geopolitical interests and intrigues that are usually also in play, the forces of the Left have historically supported the principle of national self-determination and defended the right of individual states to establish their frontiers on the basis of the express will of the population. In ‘Results of the Discussion on Self-Determination’, Lenin wrote: “If the socialist revolution were to be victorious in Petrograd, Berlin and Warsaw, the Polish socialist government, like the Russian and German socialist governments, would renounce the ‘forcible retention’ of, say, the Ukrainians within the frontiers of the Polish state”. Why suggest, then, that anything different should be conceded to the nationalist government led by Vladimir Putin?

On the other hand, all too many on the Left have yielded to the temptation to become—directly or indirectly—co-belligerents, fuelling a new union sacrée. Such a position today serves increasingly to blur the distinction between Atlanticism and pacifism. History shows that, when they do not oppose war, progressive forces lose an essential part of their reason for existence and end up swallowing the ideology of the opposite camp. This happens whenever parties of the Left make their presence in government the fundamental way of measuring their political action—as the Italian Communists did in supporting the NATO interventions in Kosovo and Afghanistan, or today’s majority of Unidas Podemos, which joins its voice to the unanimous chorus of the entire Spanish parliamentary arch, in favour of sending weapons to the Ukrainian army.

URGENT APPEAL

This unique world law fortnightly—perhaps the only law journal in India which regularly publishes important foreign and international courts’ decisions—as also provides copious information regarding the socio-economic/political conditions of various countries the world over and invites/publishes thought provoking articles on the pressing problems and crises faced by the people of the world in various spheres—is running on heavy losses and is IN DANGER OF BEING CLOSED DOWN SOON unless subscribers, admirers/well-wishers rise to the occasion and render crucial help in the form of causing many more subscriptions, advertisements (Rs 15,000 or more) and donations at the earliest and regularly. Hope and request all such sympathetic persons/institutions would chip in with their precious aid.

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BONAPARTE IS NOT DEMOCRACY

When Marx on the Crimean War, in 1854, he wrote, in opposition to liberal democrats who exalted the anti-Russian coalition: "It is a mistake to describe the war against Russia as a war between liberty and despotism. Apart from the fact that if such be the case, liberty would be for the nonce represented by a Bonaparte, the whole avowed object of the war is the maintenance?...? of the Vienna treaties—those very treaties which annul the liberty and independence of nations". If one replaces Bonaparte with the United States of America and the Vienna treaties with NATO, these observations seem as if written for today.

The thinking of those who oppose both Russian and Ukrainian nationalism, as well as the expansion

sion of NATO, does not show proof of political indecision or theoretical ambiguity. In recent weeks, a number of experts have provided explanations of the roots of the conflict (which in no way reduce the barbarity of the Russian invasion), and the position of those who propose a policy of non-alignment is the most effective way of ending the war as soon as possible and ensuring the smallest number of victims. It is necessary to pursue ceaseless diplomatic activity based on two firm points: de-escalation and the neutrality of independent Ukraine.

Despite the increased support for NATO following the Russian moves, it is necessary to work harder to ensure that public opinion does not see the largest and most aggressive war machine in the world—NATO—as the solution to the problems of

global security. It must be shown that it is a dangerous and ineffectual organisation, which, in its drive for expansion and unipolar domination, serves to fuel tensions leading to war in the world.

For the Left, war cannot be "the continuation of politics by other means", to quote Clausewitz's famous dictum. In reality, it merely certifies the failure of politics. If the Left wishes to return hegemonic and to show itself capable of using its history for the tasks of today, it needs to write indelibly on its banners the words "anti-militarism" and "No to war!" □□□

[* Marcello Musto is Professor of Sociology at York University (Toronto—Canada) and is an expert of Socialist thought and history of the labour movement. His writings—available at www.marcellomusto.org—have been published worldwide in twenty-five languages.]

EQUALITY VS INEQUALITY

An Alternative Path for India

Bharat Dogra

INDIA IN THE 75TH YEAR OF its independence today stands at a very important juncture of history, faced with very serious problems and critical challenges, and at the same time also with significant opportunities if only these can be grasped. The choice people make between various paths of development, for example the path of equality and harmony versus the path of increasing inequalities and polarisation, will be very important for deciding whether the problems get accentuated or the opportunities get utilised optimally.

The two most important features of the present day world are (i) the deepening of a many sided ecological crisis in critical ways so that it has now become a survival crisis threatening the life of countless species and endangering even

humanity, and (ii) the continuation of many conflicts, invasions and wars in a situation of more and more destructive arms race including huge arsenals of weapons of mass destruction which can destroy the entire world.

These two problems may appear separate but are related in significant ways, not the least because the kind of international effort needed to resolve the first listed survival issues will simply not be possible in a situation of conflicts and wars.

In the context of this wider situation of the world, India must pioneer a path which, while solving India's basic problems of poverty and deprivation, should at the same time show the way forward for resolving the most threatening problems of the world.

For such an achievement to be possible, India should try to establish broad consensus on three overwhelming priorities—(i) very significant, durable reduction of poverty and inequalities, ensuring basic needs of all, (ii) protection of environment with special emphasis on checking survival threatening problems such as climate change, water depletion and loss of bio-diversity and (iii) peace and social harmony at all levels while ending all discrimination.

With 2 per cent of the world's land, 1 per cent (or less) of oil and gas resources but 17 per cent of the world's population, India's quest for meeting the basic needs of its people and providing them satisfactory livelihood on a sustainable basis is a huge challenge. If this can be met while also protecting environment and keeping down GHG emissions, this will truly be a very commendable achievement.

India is a nuclear weapons power which shares borders with two other

nuclear weapons powers. India has been extremely prone to terrorist attacks from across its borders. It has already fought five wars with neighbouring countries, with aggression generally coming from the other side of the borders. It has coped with several secessionist movements and insurgencies. India has seven major religions (plus many more religious sects and religions with smaller number of believers), around 6400 castes and 1600 languages.

The much-discussed idea of India is that despite all these outward differences, all people can live without discrimination in India with security and equal opportunities. If anything governance reforms including significant reduction of corruption and crimes (and related criminalisation of politics) and improved transparency are essential preconditions for success of this agenda based on justice, equality, harmony and protection of environment.

But what has been happening in recent times is a far removed from the real needs of the country. Today India has a system of crony capitalism tied closely to inequality and injustice based globalisation, with a big role also for some of the most infamous multinational companies and institutions. Highly favoured are those MNCs which are known to be very aggressive in trying to dominate food and seeds sector, using very hazardous technologies. To pave the way for such corporate led growth, the Planning Commission has been shut down arbitrarily. The environment is threatened more than ever before with aggressively marketed and ecologically destructive projects of big corporate interests.

In such adverse circumstances it is all the more important to hold high the banner that another path exists- a path that can make India a pioneer in reducing poverty, inequalities, environment ruin and

GHG emissions, while promoting peace and harmony at all levels.

In several critical areas of the economy the public sector should continue to play an important role. The private sector obviously should also have an important role but subject to the condition that no industrialist or company can dominate the economy, its one or more important sectors, to acquire excessive power and interfere unduly in the functioning of democratic system and its policy making mechanisms.

Corporate sector should be regulated carefully for responsibilities relating to environment, workers, consumers (or other end-users of their products) and to the wider society. Multinational and foreign companies should be regulated very carefully. Cooperative sector should be reformed and strengthened to accept increasing responsibilities. Certain products and areas can be reserved for small-scale and cottage-scale entrepreneurs, cooperatives, small farmer groups and self-help groups, particularly of women, with emphasis on meeting basic needs of villages and small towns as well as generation of more diverse livelihoods there.

Economic planning should retain an important role in ensuring the availability of goods and services which meet the basic needs of people, reducing inequalities, protecting livelihoods, keeping unemployment and inflation at low levels, providing essential infra-structure and avoiding foreign indebtedness. The Planning Commission (including state planning organisations) should be re-established with some important reforms to strengthen it and the process of five-year plans (including state plans) should be re-started.

In foreign trade imports of all non-essentials including luxury goods and gold should be minimised. Steps which reduce excessive dependence

on imports in meeting essential needs (in terms of consumption goods as well as capital goods and intermediates) should be emphasised, while the sovereign government's powers to reduce or stop those imports which are harmful for health, livelihoods or other vital interests should be reaffirmed. Similarly patent laws should be in line with national interests. India should play an important role in reform of the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF with the aim to make them more transparent and responsive to the real and economic justice based needs of world.

There should be a relentless campaign against the substantial 'black' part of the economy so that illegally held money can be recovered and used for constructive development tasks. This includes efforts to bring back black money deposited abroad using various secretive devices.

High priority should be given to rural areas. The distorted thinking which necessarily equates development with very rapid urbanisation and migration of displaced villagers to mega-cities should be rejected. Villages should be the main base of India's development. Even though land availability per family is declining with the passage of time, more diverse livelihoods can be provided in rural and semi-rural areas by encouraging village and cottage industries, including khadi, and protecting artisans' livelihoods.

Ecologically protective, low-cost, location-specific technology which seeks to make best use of local resources and conditions should be emphasised, an approach which includes organic farming, protection of traditional seeds and biodiversity, soil and water conservation, increasing green cover and forests. Organic farming should avoid the pitfall of avoidable expenses like costly certification and should be based on

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self-reliance and low costs, including mutual certification by farmers of each other's crops. Farmers' seed rights should be well-protected and seed-banks of traditional diverse seeds should be set up with the close involvement of farmers including elderly farmers and women.

Water conservation as well as protection/regeneration of greenery provides the base for survival in the form of meeting basic needs of life and supporting basic rural livelihoods. Some existing provisions like rural employment guarantee can be strengthened for this. In terms of resource use, concentrating attention on smaller watershed programmes as well as proper maintenance of existing canals will yield much better results instead of various new big and medium projects of dams and canals. Of course this will also be ecologically much safer and will help to avoid a lot of displacement.

Protection and regeneration of natural mixed forests should get very high priority. The practice of raising monoculture plantations of commercial species of trees in place of natural forests should be given up forever.

Animal husbandry should be encouraged with special emphasis on regeneration of pastures and fodder trees as well as protection of indigenous species of farm animals. Protection of indigenous breeds of cows and bullocks should get special attention. Availability of essential food items in public distribution network should be linked to strengthening of small and medium farmers in all rural areas.

Steps should be taken to free various kinds of produce from the grip of a few big traders and speculators so that farmers get justice and sudden escalations in price for consumers are also avoided.

The country should aim, to the

extent possible and practical, for self-reliance to a significant extent in all essential consumer and capital goods.

While private, public and cooperative sectors all have important roles, domination by any single industrialist or use of unfair means to surge ahead of others in one or more sectors should not be allowed. Public sector should be strengthened and reformed to fulfill its wider social responsibility while maintaining high standards of efficiency and entrepreneurial ability.

The important role of nationalised or public sector banks and insurance companies (mainly Life Insurance Corporation of India) should continue. These should be reformed and strengthened to improve their efficiency, basic financial soundness and social responsibility and to minimise the possibilities of corruption and irregularities.

Public sector companies should continue to have an important role in creation of strong and adequate infra-structure for development of country. While infra-structure should be adequate, unnecessarily expensive and grand projects should be avoided. Care should be taken to minimise the problems relating to environment and displacement.

Special care should be taken to reconcile development and environment protection objectives in the area of energy, as both are important. For rural areas in particular decentralised mixed renewable energy systems can play an important role.

Mineral wealth should be used in the wider interests of people with special emphasis on the rights and welfare of communities living in mineral rich areas.

A strong foundation of good health can only be established by good nutrition and fulfillment of other basic needs. In addition essential health services, medicines,

vaccines and investigations should be accessible to all. Adequate budgetary provisions should be provided for this. To utilise this properly, tendencies of extracting very high and unethical profits in the supply of medicines and medical care (including investigations) should be strictly curbed, or else the higher budget can be gobbled by profiteers. Important changes in medicines policy are needed to make available all essential medicines at a fair price, with special emphasis on supply of generic medicines, while those medicines and vaccines with high risks and side-effects should be discarded. The public sector should fulfill an important role in this. The government should accept the responsibility of health care, medicines and vaccines. As far as possible, all medicines should be provided free in primary health centres and all government hospitals.

While emphasising right to education for all, the education budget should be increased significantly. At the same time the tendencies of rapid privatisation and extraction of high profits should be checked. Improvement of government schools should get the highest priority, while those schools which aim to sincerely pursue important educational objectives should also be encouraged. Children of weakest and vulnerable households (like migrant workers and nomadic groups) should also be included with a system of evening schools/bridge courses and later integration with the mainstream.

Tendencies towards communalisation of education (or linking it to the dominance of one faith or religion) should be curbed. Instead a secular approach to moral/ethical education should be introduced with emphasis on universal values such as not causing distress to anyone, equality of all human beings, rejection

tion of all kinds of discrimination, compassion for all forms of life, honesty, hard-work and a spirit of service.

Child labour and all forms of exploitation of children should be eliminated. Trafficking of children should be curbed strongly and missing children should be traced with a sense of urgency. Trafficked and exploited children when rescued should be rehabilitated properly.

Progress in science and technology should be linked closely to the country's real needs. Technical skills not only in institutions of higher learning but also in rural areas, in farms and workshops and factories should be recognised, encouraged and provided adequate avenues.

Senior citizens should have a place of respect and dignity and to facilitate this better social security particularly pensions are very necessary. Extensive pension reforms should be taken up to create a system of universal and adequate pensions.

All forms of discrimination based on caste, religion, gender, colour, ethnicity etc. should be curbed strictly in keeping with the constitutional precepts. Apart from implementing legal provisions this should also be taken up as public campaigns.

Continuing efforts should be made, and not just at the time of tensions, to maintain communal harmony or inter-faith harmony.

The existing reservations should continue till real equality in all important respects is not achieved. A big effort should be made to provide some land to the large number of Dalit (or other) landless farm workers and provide other assistance to help them to emerge as small farmers cultivating their own land. The ban on manual scavenging must be backed by adequate rehabilitation opportunities. Artisan work re-

lating to bamboo, leather etc. should be improved so that new opportunities emerge and better, cleaner work-conditions are available.

Land rights of tribal communities should be carefully protected and land allocated earlier illegally should be restored under the due process of law. The implementation of recent Forest Rights Act needs to be substantially improved and any possibilities of large-scale displacement should be checked.

Nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes and groups deserve sympathetic understanding. Both options of improving their present life pattern and satisfactory rehabilitation are open.

In all categories the most oppressed and neglected groups deserve special attention and help. Particularly among OBCs there is a need to be careful that the genuinely oppressed, left-out and neglected castes get more help.

Hard-won rights of workers and trade unions should be protected. Reforms or codification should not be used as a pretext to reduce or undermine these rights. Occupational health and safety need much more attention. The rights of unorganised sector workers deserve more attention and funds. Social security of these workers should be ensured in a big way. Women workers deserve special attention in terms of protection and care. Existing laws which protect rights of workers should be implemented in the right spirit. Within the organised sector also the rights of contractual workers deserve more attention.

Protection of environment is of the highest importance not only for preparing the base of sustainable development but increasingly for sheer survival of various life-forms including human beings. Protection of environment and reduction of pollution should get priority at all

levels, including reduction of air and water pollution, soil and water conservation, protection of forests, reducing the spread of various toxic products and wastes etc. New forms of pollution such as threat from radiation of nuclear plants, or the threat from mobile phone towers, or the irreversible risk of genetic pollution should be given adequate importance in the environment protection agenda. Protection of rivers should learn from past failures and concepts of ecologically adequate river flows as well as free river flows should get more appreciation in policy, along with adverse impacts of dams and barrages.

Long pending police reforms should not be delayed any longer. These reforms should be aimed at not only increasing the efficiency of the police but also their sensitivity and humanity. Dignity of policemen at lower levels should be protected.

Reducing crimes should have a multi-dimensional approach with special emphasis on reducing the social causes of crimes as well as breaking the nexus between crime and corruption and political power at higher levels.

The justice system is breaking down particularly in rural areas because of long pending cases and repeated visits to courts from long distances which only lead to further dates. Therefore rural decentralisation should include some judicial provisions for settling disputes locally but with suitable safeguards.

Jails need extensive reforms to create more human conditions, with special provisions firmly in place for recognition and human treatment of political prisoners. □□□

[This is a shortened version of a longish article written by the author for social activists who are trying to organise masses in the context of destructive policies pursued by the successive governments irrespective of their colour to allow the corporates to loot the country.]

AT THE EXPENSE OF THE POOR

Climate Expropriation—a Political Question

Farooque Chowdhury

CLIMATE IS BEING EXPROPRIATED by the rich and the powerful while the poor people are paying with their life. This fact is also evident in the case of rich and poor countries—the rich countries gain while the poor countries suffer. The issue is a political question related to struggle for democracy.

With its carbon footprint from 1990 to 2014, a recent study finds, the US caused nearly \$2 trillion in damages to other countries.

The colossal amount of greenhouse gases (GHG) released by the US over the period cited above has led to disasters and damages resulting in \$1.9 trillion in lost income globally, found the recent study.

The study report was published in the journal *Climatic Change* on July 12, 2022 (Callahan, C.W., Mankin, J.S. “National attribution of historical climate damages”, *Climatic Change* 172, 40 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-022-03387-y>).

It's not strange that the study report has been mostly ignored by the MSM. But, it's strange that the report has also been ignored by a section of the outlets including online journal, e-magazine, etc. that claim to be alternative to the MSM, that claim to be standing for climate, people and the poor.

GHG emissions from high-emitting countries, said the study report, have caused substantial economic losses in low-income, tropical parts of the world and economic gains in high-income, midlatitude regions.

Discourse on climate liability is narrow due to lack of scientific evidence of causal linkages between countries' emissions and its impact.

The report said: Global income changes attributable to the US and China's emissions over 1990–2014 each exceed US \$1.8 trillion in both losses and benefits; losses and benefits induced by Russia, India, and Brazil each individually exceed US \$500 billion. The US \$6 trillion in cumulative losses attributable to these five countries is comparable both to some 14% of annual world GDP and to the economic losses associated with warming the planet to 2°C rather than 1.5°C.

The study finds: The most northern countries are reaping tangible benefits from climate change; and the disproportionate harm befalling poorer and warmer countries is likely even more skewed. When emissions created by international trade are taken into account the US is placed even more starkly in the lead regarding climate-induced damages, responsible for 18%.

In poor and poorer countries, the impact of climate expropriation is deadly: hundreds die, thousands turn destitute and migrants, millions face uncertainty in terms of livelihood, shelter, health and education; and it's the poor, the most vulnerable segment of society that suffers the most.

Large emitters, the report said, make disproportionate contributions to climate damages. The top 10 most damaging countries are responsible for more than 67% of losses and 70% of benefits. The US contributes the most, responsible for 16.5% of losses and 18% of benefits, followed by China, responsible for 15.8% of losses and 16.8% of benefits; every other country individually contributes less than 10%.

Under consumption-based accounting attributable damages increase by 1.5% for the US, increase by 10–20% for some European countries, and decrease by 15% for Russia and 9% for China, expanding the gap in responsibility between the US and all other countries, said the report.

The report said: Emissions released early in the twentieth century may have more severe effects because of the longer time period over which the growth effects of such emissions accumulate; at the same time, carbon sinks are stronger at lower emissions levels and the growth effects of warming are milder when baseline temperatures are cooler, so the opposite could be true.

Developing countries' attributable damages and benefits, according to the report, only increase modestly while many countries in Europe experience > 400% increases, given their large shares of pre-1990 emissions.

It said: Countries that lose income are warmer and poorer than the global average, generally located in the tropics; countries that gain income are cooler and wealthier than the global average, generally located in the midlatitudes; and global warming to date has amplified, and will continue to amplify, this extant pattern of global economic inequality.

The study report said: The results provide an additional dimension to this globally unequal pattern: The cool, relatively wealthy countries that have gained from anthropogenic warming are also those that (1) have emitted the most and (2) caused the most damage to other countries from their emissions. Nearly all the high-emitting nations in North America and Eurasia are in the top two GDP per

capita income quintiles over 1990–2014, though China, India, and Indonesia are exceptions. These top several income quintiles have caused income losses in the poorest two quintiles, while they have caused income gains for themselves that exceed those losses in magnitude.

It said: Countries in the lowest income quintile, primarily in Africa and central and south Asia, have caused nearly zero effects on other countries while suffering the greatest disadvantages from the emissions of larger economies.

The report said: The study results are consistent with previous work that shows increases in global inequality from historical warming. The study findings emphasise: The culpability for warming rests primarily with a handful of major emitters, and that this warming has resulted in the emitters' enrichment at the expense of the poorest people in the world.

The anthropogenic warming, the report said, constitutes a substantial international wealth transfer from the poor to the wealthy.

The report said: These harms can be assigned to individual emitters in a way that rigorously accounts for the compounding uncertainties at each step of the causal chain from emissions to local impact.

It notes that the study approach can be generalised to other actors including individual firms, or to other harms, such as the farmers' economic losses. These results contribute to resolving a major obstacle to climate liability efforts and advance critical discussions.

The report said: Quantifying which nations are culpable for the economic impacts of anthropogenic warming is central to informing climate litigation and restitution claims for climate damages. For countries seeking legal redress, the magnitude

of economic losses from warming attributable to individual emitters is not known, undermining their standing for climate liability claims. Uncertainties compound at each step from emissions to GHG concentrations, GHG concentrations to global temperature changes, global temperature changes to country-level temperature changes, and country-level temperature changes to economic losses, providing emitters with plausible deniability for damage claims.

The study, claim the scientists, lifts the veil of deniability, and helps quantify each country's culpability for historical temperature-driven income changes in every other country.

The scientists claim their "framework shows such linkages can be quantified"; and they can "process-trace exactly who has caused economic losses from their emissions, and how much."

The study findings, the scientists claim, could provide a basis for poorer countries to sue for climate-related harms.

The study report said: Previous efforts have been hamstrung by a lack of scientific evidence linking individual carbon emitters to "the downstream impacts of warming." These countries now will be able to take legal action. Such methods of placing blame for climate harms can also be applied to corporations.

Damages and thus potential liabilities, the report said, depend on when emissions accounting begins and on what emissions are considered. These choices are ultimately political.

The analysis provides a quantitative grounding to inform these political choices.

This year, another study (Beusch, L., Nauels, A., Gudmundsson, L. et al., "Responsibility of major emitters for country-level warming and

extreme hot years", *Communications Earth & Environment*, 3, 7, January 6, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-021-00320-6>) quantified contributions of the five largest emitters—China, US, EU-27, India, Russia—to project 2030 country-level warming and extreme hot years with respect to pre-industrial climate.

The study report said: The US is the largest per capita emitter, followed by Russia, China, EU-27, and India.

It said: The top five emitters are playing a major role in driving global and regional warming and are increasing the probability for extreme hot years.

"Recent studies", said the study report, "have highlighted the relevance of assigning climate change responsibility to major emitters, in order to better quantify the contributions of individual countries to human-induced global warming and its consequences. This has gained importance with the bottom-up approach to mitigation that was introduced as part of the Paris Agreement".

The issue was also found in many other studies.

A 2012-study (Wei T, Yang S, Moore JC, Shi P, Cui X, Duan Q, Xu B, Dai Y, Yuan W, Wei X et al (2012), "Developed and developing world responsibilities for historical climate change and CO2 mitigation", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 109 (32) <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1203282109>) said: Negotiations on emission reduction among countries are increasingly fraught with difficulty, partly because of arguments about the responsibility for the ongoing temperature rise. Simulations with two earth-system models demonstrate that developed countries had contributed about 60-80%, developing

countries about 20-40%, to the global temperature rise, upper ocean warming, and sea-ice reduction by 2005.

Seven years later, another study (Differbaugh NS, Burke M (2019), "Global warming has increased global economic inequality", *Proc Natl Acad Sci*, 116(20) PMID: 31010922, PMCID: PMC6525504, DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1816020116) said: Understanding the causes of economic inequality is critical for achieving equitable economic development.

The study found: Very high likelihood that anthropogenic climate forcing has increased economic inequality between countries.

As example, the study cited the following facts:

(1) Per capita GDP has been reduced 17-31% at the poorest four deciles of the population-weighted country-level per capita GDP distribution, yielding a ratio between the top and bottom deciles that is 25% larger than in a world without global warming.

(2) In addition to not sharing equally in the direct benefits of fossil fuel use, many poor countries have been significantly harmed by the warming arising from wealthy countries' energy consumption.

This climate-reality found in the above mentioned studies is climate plunder, and this plunder is nothing but expropriation of the climate. This expropriation goes on in addition to appropriation of surplus labor the world around; and entire global population pays the toll for capitals' climate plunder.

The findings of the studies also help identify contradictions related to climate and the world capitalist system: climate-expropriating capital against people. Considering the issues, the studies cited above are significant as climate expropriation by capital is crime against humanity, and this should be in the

programme for struggle for democracy.

Plaintiffs' claim is an important part in this issue.

Rupert F. Stuart-Smith, et al (Stuart-Smith, R.F., Otto, F.E.L., Saad, A.I. et al, "Filling the evidentiary gap in climate litigation", *Nature Climate Change*, 11, 651-655 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-021-01086-7>) found: Lawsuits concerning the impacts of climate change make causal claims about the effect of defendants' GHG emissions on plaintiffs. Plaintiffs have sought, inter alia, compensation for climate-related losses and to compel governments to reduce their GHG emissions. So far, most of these claims have been unsuccessful.

The study assessed 73 lawsuits, and found the evidence submitted and referenced in these cases lags considerably behind the state-of-the-art in climate science, impeding causation claims.

The researchers' conclusion: Greater appreciation and exploitation of existing methodologies in attribution science could address obstacles to causation and improve the prospects of litigation as a route to compensation for losses, regulatory action and emission reductions by defendants seeking to limit legal liability.

So, comes the question of climate justice, an issue in discussion and demand since long.

The study by David Schlosberg and Lisette B. Collins ("From environmental to climate justice: climate change and the discourse of environmental justice", February 22, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.275>) said: Environmental justice is a major movement and organising discourse in the environmental politics, and both the movement and the idea have had a large influence on the way that climate

justice has been conceptualised. While most discussions of climate justice in the academic literature focus on ideal conceptions and normative arguments of justice theory, or on the pragmatic policy of the more elite environmental nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), a distinct discourse has developed out of the grassroots. In these movement articulations of climate justice, the concerns and principles of environmental justice are clear and consistent. Climate justice focuses on local impacts and experience, inequitable vulnerabilities, importance of community voice, and demands for community sovereignty and functioning.

Vanuatu now stands as an example, to many extents, in this area.

Vanuatu, said a Time report ("Pacific Island Nations Are Bringing Their Climate Justice Fight to the World's Highest Court", July 18, 2022, <https://time.com/6197027/pacific-island-nations-vanuatu-climate-change/>), is trying to build a coalition to get the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to issue a legal statement, or an advisory opinion, on climate change. On July 18, 2022, more than a dozen countries and territories in the Pacific region including Australia and New Zealand extended support to Vanuatu's effort. Vanuatu is hoping to have an opinion of the ICJ on the obligations countries have to protect the rights of "present and future generations" from the harmful impacts of climate change. Vanuatu needs a simple majority at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) to give the ICJ a mandate to act. While an ICJ opinion isn't binding, it could go a long way in holding countries accountable for protecting human rights, from the right to food to the right to life itself, which are becoming increasingly vulnerable as climate change worsens.

The idea to get the ICJ in The Hague to issue an advisory opinion on climate change was conceived in 2019 by more than 20 students at the University of South Pacific in Vanuatu, a country that in 2015 experienced Cyclone Pam causing \$450 million in economic losses, wiping out 64% of the country's GDP. Bob Loughman, the Prime Minister of Vanuatu announced in September 2021 that he would build a coalition of countries to take the push forward. (ibid.)

The list of countries supporting the movement has been steadily growing. In March, the Caribbean Community, a group of 14 Caribbean nations and dependencies, said they supported Vanuatu. The Organisation of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States, a 79-country bloc, said in June that it endorses Vanuatu's initiative. About 1,500 civil society groups also support the campaign. Pacific Island Forum members, like Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea, and Samoa, endorsed Vanuatu's move. So did Australia — one of the world's largest exporters of fossil fuels. Adding number of countries supporting the initiative adds moral weight to the initiative. (ibid.)

The UNGA can request the ICJ to give an advisory opinion on any legal question of concern to the international community. Although advisory opinions aren't legally binding, they carry "great legal weight and moral authority." An advisory opinion could have a big impact on large emitters. Tim Stephens, a professor of international law at the University of Sydney Law School, tells *Time* that "even if the [ICJ] deals with wider legal issues such as the general obligations of states to protect the rights of future generations against the adverse effects of climate change it will carry implications for all governments that con-

tinue to make a significant contribution to the climate crisis". An advisory opinion that strongly says that countries have concrete duties under existing law to take urgent action, or that historic polluters are liable for the loss and damage suffered by the rest of the world could be "a big blow to politics as usual," says Douglas Guilfoyle, a professor of international law and security at the University of New South Wales' Canberra campus. (ibid.)

Over the last few years, as the *Time* report said, there's been an increase in cases of domestic litigation, and in interest in trying to leverage international courts to address the climate crisis. For example, the Commission of Small Island States (COSIS) on Climate Change and International Law, aims to be the first to bring a case to the UN International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea to help determine the obligations of countries under international law and hold polluters accountable. Wealthy countries have failed to provide poorer countries \$100 billion a year to help them deal with climate change. In June, rich countries blocked the inclusion of "loss and damages"—or, compensation from historically high-emitting countries for the harm caused by the resulting carbon pollution—from the agenda of the COP27 climate meetings in November. (ibid.)

The Vanuatu case shows the political aspect of the issue.

There's no scope today to confine the climate crisis issue within the narrow "climate-only" and "destruction-only" discussions, if the findings cited above are considered from people's, especially the poor, the working people's perspective. The issue is not also to be handled only by NGOS.

Rather, the issue should be

handled by political organisations/parties, because,

- (i) capitals are involved,
- (ii) capitals' conflict with people,
- (iii) it's political, and
- (iv) this involves political decision.

These make the issue of climate one of the major and immediate tasks of political organisations/parties, especially, the political organisations of people, especially the poor. Even, the mainstream academia tells that the issue is political. Ignoring this aspect—political—is making a backward march, or passing days by sleeping. It's unquestionable that political issues should be handled politically.

The findings, etc. of the study by Callahan and Mankin are significant, as these show that movements on/of climate, poor peasants and agricultural labour, working class, rights, anti-imperialism, these are parts of democratic movement; even, rich farmers have ground to raise climate related demands; and the demands are political. The politics of the exploited classes have no scope to ignore the issue of climate, to be exact, climate expropriation, as the exploited classes suffer/pay most in this crisis. □□□

Notes:

1. This is the modified version of an earlier article (Countercurrents, "Climate expropriation: US caused nearly \$2 trillion damages to other countries from 1990 to 2014" July 13, 2022, <https://countercurrents.org/2022/07/climate-expropriation-us-caused-nearly-2-trillion-damages-to-other-countries-from-1990-to-2014/>).
2. Almost all quotes, direct/indirect, are from the study/media reports cited.

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THE RISE OF BROWN SAHIBS

Influence of Colonial Modernity on Indian Intelligentsia

Aloke Mukherjee

EVEN BY 1853 MARX observed the differences in objectives of the British rulers. According to him, "The ruling classes of Great Britain have had, till now, but an accidental, transitory and exceptional interest in the progress of India. The aristocracy wanted to conquer it, the moneyocracy to plunder it, and the millocracy to undersell it. But now the tables are turned. The millocracy have discovered that the transformation of India into a reproductive country has become of vital importance to them, and that, to that end, it is necessary, above all, to gift her with means of irrigation and of internal communication. "[The Future Results of the British Rule in India, Karl Marx, *The First Indian War of Independence 1857-1859*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p 30-31]

That was how Marx envisaged India to step into modernity. At the same time he was also doubtful that the colonial rule would not allow India to achieve it.

So Marx did warn: "The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindus (Marx meant the Indians—author) themselves shall have been grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke all together."

Colonialists all over the world also were afraid of such revolutionary development, so as a counter-move they developed an elite section replicating the European elite.

Marx's observation was in 1853. But much before that East India Company created their social props by using the traders and fortune seekers of upper crust of the upper caste Hindu society. Those people became close with the British traders to establish themselves as banians and compradors (mut-suddis), while most of the Muslim traders and landlords were opposing the British rule and British rulers were also trying to utilise the policy of divide et impera. They amassed huge property which they had to accumulate, even after living luxurious lives, except a meagre few, their origin kept them away from developing industries. The Permanent Settlement lured them to invest that idle money when the land tenure became secured.

Although the Permanent Settlement was introduced by Cornwallis it "was a predetermined plan of the Court of Directors with a cautious delay" (WW Hunter). The British rulers gained through this in two ways: the capital accumulated in the hand of native Indians changed hands to the British and they extended their social prop to the rural areas. It further extended its root since the Permanent Settlement landlords in their turn started collecting taxes through number of intermediaries whom they distributed the land under their control. So a new class of landlords appeared who amassed huge wealth through exorbitant taxes collected by bleeding the direct producers white.

Question may arise how does it connect with colonial modernity. The

answer is very simple. As social props these people had close relationship with the rulers and became acquainted with their culture. Often the Europeans were treated by them at different occasions. So a section of them were attracted towards English education as fortune seekers. Moreover, the British needed a large number of native youth for the extension and expansion of the arms of the state around the country. From the beginning they wanted to divide the Indians based on religion and caste. They readily found their allies (to be true, servitors) among the upper caste elites in India.

Victor Jacquemont, a famous French botanist, received a letter in 1828 from an Indian elite saying: "Indians are fortunately placed by Providence under the protection of the whole British nation". In that letter he thanked "the Supreme Disposer of the Universe for having unexpectedly delivered this country from long continued tyranny of the former rulers and placed it under the Government of Englishmen, a nation who not only are blessed with enjoyment of civil and political liberty, but also interest themselves in promoting liberty and social happiness as well as free inquiry into literary and religious subjects among those nations to which that influence extends". (Leaders of Nationalist Movement, Vidya Dhar Mahajan, p-4). Elsewhere the same person published his Second appeal to the Native Indians in 1821 describing him "labouring in the promulgation of Christianity".

This clarifies how deep was the epistemological influence of the colonial modernity in the early days of nineteenth century. It is a well-known fact that from the beginning the British did everything to drive wedge between the large religious communities as their policy of divide et

impera. Ironically the person was none other than Raja Rammohan Roy.

Before the above statements British rulers founded Hindu College in Kolkata in 1817, which according to Gopal Halder well-known as a Marxist intellectual, "brought into existence a new and dynamic force, the urban middle-class intelligentsia..." But this was not enough for the proponents of colonial modernity. So when the British started the Sanskrit College to further education Raja Rammohan wrote to Amherst in 1823 : "When this seminary of learning was proposed...we were filled with sanguine hopes that [it would employ] European gentlemen(sic) of talent and education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful sciences,... "This was written 6 years after the establishment of Hindu College.

Rammohan Roy's opinions were not accidental. It was part of an ongoing debate in India and Britain after the Act of Parliament, 1813, which had not only established the Crown's sovereignty over India cutting to a large degree the power of the East India Company but also had changed the policy on missionaries and education in India. It allotted funds and permitted Christian missionaries to preach religion and propagate English language. At the same time financial provisions were also made to encourage revival of Indian literature and for promotion of sciences.

The Orientalists supporting the need for revival of Indian literature Sanskrit, Arabic/Persian etc along with promotion of sciences lost to the class of elites like Rammohan Roy. Finally Thomas Babington Macaulay had his way. He was clear to declare : "I feel that it is impossible for us, with our limited means,

to attempt to educate the body of people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and millions whom we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." (Macaulay Minute on Education, 1885).

Thus the British developed a class of elite intelligentsia which will be at its service to govern the people being epistemologically imbibed with the ideas, morals and intellect as taught by the colonialist masters.

Within a few years Macaulay was proved to be correct. These elites rejoice when in the 1830s, the Reforms bills were introduced in the House of Commons in England as if the victory of middle classes in England was their own. But when Santals along with the lower caste people rose in Revolt in 1855, they stood by the side of the British. The Zemindar of Hetampur in Birbhum raised a private army to help the British soldiers fighting the rebels. On 2nd October, 1955 A W Rupen acknowledged "the public spirit evinced by Babu Bipracharan Chukerborty, in raising a force at his own expense, from among his dependents to aid the military with suppression of the Sonthal insurrection. (Letter to I Richardson, Collector of Birbhum). Not a single voice was heard in support of the rebels from those who rejoiced on the Reforms Bill.

Within two years, the First War of Independence, which the British tried to pass as Sepoy Mutiny, broke out in 1857. Karl Marx quoting extensively from Disraeli's speech on 27 July, 1857 night agreed with his "conclusion that the present Indian disturbance is not a military mutiny, but a national revolt, of which the Sepoys are acting instruments only" [The Indian Question, Karl Marx The First Indian War of

Independence, 1857-1859, p 47]. Again the educated middle-class intelligentsia along with the Permanent Settlement Landlords stood steadfast by the side of the colonial rulers opposing what by the argument of Disraeli "a national revolt".

They rejoiced calling the prajahs to dance holding both hands high to celebrate the capture of Delhi Fort. (Sangbad Bhaskar) Almost 2500 Rajahs, big and small landlords of the undivided Bengal province (Bengal-Bihar-Orissa and certain parts of Assam) wrote a letter on December 1857, to the then Governor General : "We, the undersigned Rajahs, Zeminders, Talookders, Merchants and other natives of the province of Bengal take the earliest opportunity on the retaking of Delhi, to offer your Lordship in council our warmest congratulation on the signal success which has attended the British arms, under circumstances unparalleled in the annals of British India..."

After the suppression of the revolt at Gopal Mullik's garden in Calcutta (Kolkata) under the leadership of Radhakanta Dev, a gathering of 'Indians' declared their loyalty to the Queen.

The epistemological influence was eloquently put forward by Lt-Governor Halliday in his speech at the distribution of diplomas to students of Medical College Calcutta, on April 1, 1858: "Those who have imbibed the greatest share of English ideas and knowledge have taken the least part in the recent troubles and atrocities...I know scarcely one authenticated instance of a really educated native—I will not say joining but even sympathizing with the rebels." [Benoy Ghose, The Bengali Intelligentsia and the Revolt, in REBELLION 1857, edited by P C Joshi, p.125]

There are abundant examples of the British as a policy of maintain-

ing their rule had been utilising all opportunities to keep the social divisions among Hindus intact and spread and extend divisions between religious communities as much as possible. Examples have already been given how Rammohan Roy or Ishwarchandra Gupta, the poet, and others' actions helped the British. It was mostly a part of administrative method to keep the people away from the erstwhile rulers and divide the people to rule them. But what was covert, yet widely understood affair became open policy to inject in the minds of the young educated persons after 1857 when divisions based on religion and caste disappeared amongst the fighters for independence to a large extent. Official British records show that a well-planned policy of education was undertaken after 1857. In 1863, Charles Wood, famous for his educational dispatch, wrote to Lord Elgin on March 1862 : "We have maintained our power in India when by playing off one part against the other and we must continue to do so. Do all you can, therefore, to prevent all having a common feeling".

It started with Marshman's colonialist and anti-Islamic tirade in

his book on history of Bengal. Interestingly Vidyasagar in his book in Bengali *Banglar Itihas* "just translated" the last nine sections of Marshman's book. Some feel that British education was scientific and modern search for knowledge. For them George Francis Hamilton's letter to Curzon would be an eye-opener. On 26 March 1888, the Secretary of State for India, Hamilton wrote to Curzon: "I think the real danger to our rule in India not now but say 50 years hence is the gradual adoption and extension of Western ideas of agitation, and, if we could break educated Indians into two sections holding widely different views, we should, by such a division, strengthen our position against the subtle and continuous attack which the spread of education must make upon our system of government. We should so plan the educational text books that the differences between community and community are further strengthened. [Quoted in Islam and Indian Culture, B N Pande, Khuda Bakhsh, Oriental Public Library, Patna p.31]

Epistemology, like morality, is not value neutral. Epistemology as the theory of knowledge based on reality. But what is reality to the

weavers of Bengal was just opposite to that of the British traders. On the other hand, modernism develops with a concrete development of productive forces and production relations. But if the development is mitigated by some external influence, modernism also becomes influenced by that external force. That is colonial modernity. It has its effect on the knowledge and understanding of reality. This is what happened in case of two of the stalwarts of Indian intelligentsia from Bengal on the plight and ruination of weavers of Bengal after large-scale import of cotton textiles from England. But Vidyasagar's reaction was that muslins used to be 'sold at high price in Europe', the weavers lost that market because of their 'lack of knowledge and initiative'. Another stalwart's reaction was that even if the weavers lost their age-old occupation why did they not start cultivation. Both were burdened with the knowledge and understanding of reality as propagated by their colonial educators.

Even today epistemological influence of colonial modernity burdens the thought process of the Indian intelligentsia to a large extent, if not the majority. □□□

250 YEARS LATER

Rediscovering and Rehabilitating Rammohan Roy

Asok Chattopadhyay

THIS YEAR 22ND MAY BEING the 250th birth anniversary of Raja Rammohan Roy has got up almost the blue azure from a section of Indian revolutionary left. It has been iterated that Raja Rammohan was 'one of the earliest and greatest campaigners' for the 'modern' India.

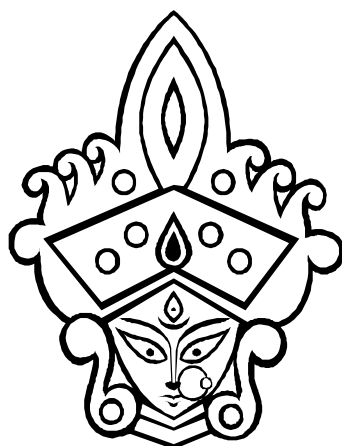
It has been said that the Raja is

'best remembered' because of his 'historic contribution' towards the abolition of the inhuman sati system prevalent in the then Bengal. It has been averred that owing to Raja's 'spirited, bold and persuasive campaign' against the inhuman and infamous sati system, the then Governor General Lord Bentinck was 'forced' to 'outlaw' such a truculent

practice in 1829. The Raja indeed did have agitprop against the cruel system but when Lord Bentinck was about to outlaw such a system, the Raja objected and said that such a practice 'might be suppressed quietly and unobservedly'. The Raja opined that such an enactment would 'give rise to general apprehension'. The reason he argued was as follows:

"While the English were contending for power they deemed it politic to allow universal toleration and to respect our religion, but having obtained the supremacy their first act is a viola-

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tion of their profession, and the next will probably be, like the Muhammadan conquerors, to force upon us their own religion". But Lord Bentinck paid not much heed to Rammohan's objection and promulgated on December 4, 1929 that 'hereceforth whether such a case of sati burning following the death of her husband be occurred 'voluntarily on her part or not, shall be deemed guilty of culpable homicide and shall be liable to punishment'.

One more contribution of the Raja appears to have been emphatically up-roared. Oft-quoted saying is found reloaded to the effect that far before the struggle for India's independence in the first half of the twentieth century Bengal, the Raja 'was deeply influenced by the emancipatory ideas' of the French Revolution happened in late eighties of the eighteenth century and found him to have 'felt greatly elated by the attainment of independence by the countries of South America from Spanish colonialism'! But this very Raja was quiet unconcerned of his own country from the fetters of the English colonialists! He considered the English rule in India to be just blessings for these countrymen! He wrote:

"Thanks to the supreme disposer of the events of Universe for having unexpectedly delivered this country from the long-continued tyranny of its former Rulers, and placed it under the government of the English—a nation who not only are blessed with the enjoyment of civil and political liberty, but also interest themselves in promoting liberty and social happiness, as well as free enquiry into literary and religious subjects, among those nations to which their influence extends".

So why the Raja would be eager to favour independence from the fet-

ters of such a deliverer? He found his entire wishful firmament under the oneness of the British rule. To the consideration of the Raja the union of India with the England should have been bound 'for an unlimited period' to reap the best harvest in the common interest of the countrymen! He pleaded for free trade and colonisation of the English in the country, stood by the permanent settlement done by Lord Cornwallis in 1793 and even supported the indigo plantation despite the indescribable distress of the cultivators. On December 15, 1829 at Calcutta Town Hall Rammohan delivered his speech in support of colonisation and free trade. In his deliverance the Raja said:

"From personal experience, I am imposed with the conviction that the great our intercourse with European gentlemen, the greater will be our improvement in literary, social and political affairs, a fact which can be easily proved by comparing the conditions of those of my countrymen who have enjoyed this advantage with those who unfortunately have not had that opportunity; ... As to the indigo planters, I beg to observe that I have travelled through several districts in Bengal and Bihar, and I found the natives residing in the neighbourhood of indigo plantations evidently better-clothed and better-conditioned than those who lived at a distance from such stations. There may be some partial injury done by the indigo-planters; but on the whole, they have performed more good to the generality of the natives of this country than any other class of Europeans whether is or out of the service".

What sort of 'modern India' the Raja hailed as some revolutionary left outfits venture to prop needs

much explanation? Emotion commanding over political views cannot but invite disaster to ideological stands.

Fifty-five years have passed after the massacre of the 'protesting peasantry' in Bangaijote under Naxalbari in the third week of May 1967. At the behest of a 'communist' home minister police fired and killed 'eleven people, including eight women, two of them with children strapped on their backs'. And then arose the 'Spring Thunder' and the then Bengal, Bihar and rest of India woke like an angry lion awoken from prolonged sleep. According to Ilina Sen, 'the peasant revolution' flared up, emboldened 'with the support of many dissident communist cadres'. She stepped up further to say:

"Internationally, this was a time when the students and youth came on to the streets to express their anger against the ruling classes and governance system—against the cold war, the Vietnam death factory, the archaic education system, and the simple lack of political will among the rulers to solve basic existential issues. In Bengal, all of this culminated in the expulsion from the CPI (M) of dissident leaders like Charu Mazumdar, Sushital Roy Chowdhury and Saroj Dutta. Since they no longer had access to the pages of the *Desh Hitaishi*, a new paper, the *Deshabrati* was launched. Articles covering movements in North Bihar, Bengal and Telengana published in the *Deshabrati* were hugely popular".

Following this historical peasants uprising a new horizon of thought and culture came into being. A relook, revisit of the colonial history brought forth a sharp contrast on the fore. The nineteenth century Bengal renaissance came under the fury of rethinking. The colonial hang-over gradually came dropping down

and a new war field relating to intellectual domain evaporated. And even anarchy came up following behind. The great sociologist and Marxist intellectual Benoy Ghose revisited his *Banglar Nabajagriti* and branded it a 'hoax'. Saroj Dutta, a renowned poet, essayist, translator, journalist and overall a Naxalite theoretician did have ventured to exceed the excess. Anarchy ruled him over. He theorised that 'a new culture could only emerge if the old was forcibly destroyed.' And this seeded bane trees that worked the worst. Ilna Sen described it in the following lines:

"The murti bhanga andolan (breaking of statues of reformist leaders), boycott of classes doing out bourgeois education by students in schools and colleges, and violent killings of political opponents led to a general chaos, and brutal state repression killed many youth and jailed and tortured thousands of others. Several leaders like Sushital Roy Chowdhury opposed the slide into anarchy in writing. SD opposed this publication on record, on the ground that the youth's enthusiasm and energy would be impeded by these debates".

Saroj Dutta was murdered by the Calcutta police in the late mid-night of August 4 (1971), beheaded and left in the Calcutta Maidan. And before passing a complete year of Saroj Dutta's assassination, the indomitable Naxalite leader Charu Majumdar was murdered in the Lalbazar police custody on July 28, 1972. And thereafter the third Communist Party (CPIML) splintered into groups. But the regeneration of the new world outlook that emerged from the Naxalite movement stayed working in the intellectual arena and in the political domain also. But the main legacy-claimer of the mainstream of the Naxalite movement

appears to somersault by degrees to right rather than left. They now seem to prefer get back mainstream constitutional politics to vote out the fascist force from the political power and to capture it by the peaceful politics of alliance with the official lefts and even the rightist ones. And this transformation needs change of ideological stance and practice too. Now the class concept diminishes, caste concept expands to its full extent. Once turned enemies now have become dearer friends.

What Charu Majumdar, the invincible leader of Naxalbari and CPIML, wrote in 1971 in the *Liberation* (July 1971-January 1972 issue) is quote- worthy:

"Naxalbari lives and will live. ... We know that as we move forward we shall face many obstacles, many difficulties, many acts of betrayal and there will be many setbacks. But Naxalbari will not die ... When Naxalbari receives congratulations from the heroes in the rubber plantations of Malaya who have been engaged in struggle for 20 years, when congratulations are sent by Japanese comrades who have been fighting against the revisionist leadership of their own Party, when such congratulations come from the Australian revolutionaries, when the comrades of the armed forces of great China send their greetings, we feel the significance of that immortal call, 'Workers of the World, Unite', we have a feeling of oneness and our conviction becomes more strong and firm that we have our dear relations in all lands. Naxalbari has not died and it will never die".

These sayings perhaps now sound not so much as it rang fifty-one years ago. Now the question of a new Charu Majumdar and a new

Saroj Dutta has arisen! The obstinate old are now felt hopeless to make advancement towards the new path of ideological practices in the making. Now the remembrance of the 25th May is pale enough under the sharp sunshine, it is not just more than a mere date of calendar and not a fresh oath taking pledge! Despite many wrong-doings, mis-carriage of practices and even Himalayan blunders committed—the bacon it collocated in order to view and review the social movements have not lost its relevance on to the way ahead. But now people have got out of the track and have anchored far from the dreamy red east. The new world view that the Naxalite movement got people enough to unmask the real facet of the Bengal Renaissance of the nineteenth century Bengal and the colonial delusion has now been rejected by degrees. As a result a sea change in respect of measure sticks of the role of the nineteenth century intellectuals, writers and social workers doing their job under the yoke of the colonial hangover! Now a section of the revolutionary left of the Naxalite family appears crazy to pay tribute to the Raja Rammohan Roy in a manner quiet unforeseen. The question of the main contradiction in the colonial India has, so to say, been rejected. Being the saviour of the constitution and being the roader to constitutional movement—an un-thought of change of ideological frame-up and practices has taken a different pathway quiet free from that of the bloody seventies happened fifty-five years ago. The revolutionary political philosophy of the Naxalites in the fiery seventies of five decades back, is left with a shady reference. The questions of class orientation, class concept and class struggle, as Karl Marx iterated, appear to be off the shore and chant another hymn for

a dawn! Now almost all the renowned intellectuals, writers, social activists of the cultural arena, including those decried for their anti-people activities, are now being welcomed and rehabilitated. And the effulgence shrouding Raja Rammohan Roy on his 250th birth anniversary, in question of fray with the hindutvawadi BJP fascism, is somehow a 'spontaneous overflow of emotion' and nothing more.

Rammohan was silent of the heroic struggle waged by the peasant leader Titumir who wanted the Bengal peasantry to have been free of zamindari-tyranny and British oppression. The Bengal renaissance men kept this struggle out of their syllabus. During his permanent-stay at Calcutta, the Raja never was concerned of the inhuman distress of the serf and slaves having had to undergo in their everyday life. Sale of a female child happened at Burdwan at Rs 150 only in 1825. An incident of the sale of a domestic wife of a person happened in Burdwan at the cost of a few rupees! It happened in the year 1828. The newspapers of the time did have reported such much news frequently. B B Majumdar wrote in his *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas* that 'Bengal and the southern part of Bengal presidency had also a considerable number of slaves.' He even lamented :

"If there was some demand for the abolition of the Sati from the Hindu society, there was none at all for the abolition of slavery in India".

The distress of the widow women in respect of the sati system i.e widow-burning touched the Raja deep in his heart and he moved to get the satis unfettered from such a truculent system. Indeed it's a very positive response the Raja did to get this system off the track. But at the same time the sensitive Raja fought

shy of the slave trade which frequently happened in Calcutta during this time. But the then Urasian poet Henry Louis Vivian Derozio registered his sensitive concern to this effect and wrote a poem entitled *Freedom to the Slave* in 1827. He wrote:

How felt he when he first was told

A slave he ceased to be;

How proudly beat his heart, when first

He knew that he was free!—

In the end he pleaded for the slave to have been enunciated of all serfdom he had to undergo and wrote:

Blest be the generous hand that breaks

The chain a tyrant gave,

And, feeling for degraded man,

Gives freedom to the slave.

Was the Raja unfamiliar with this concern of Derozio, a left leader of the then Bengal of Hindu College? Certainly not. He fought shy of it and invested all his efforts to the cause of the ill-fated widows.

The East India Company was fond of branding the slave trade as free labour as a tame name! British parliament passed the abolition of the slavery act in 1833 in Britain and the English ruler at last outlawed this trade in India in 1843.

A de novo effort is now witnessed to find out a gross acceptance of the so-called renaissance men of the nineteenth century Bengal against their almost negligible negativity! A fresh individual-cult, in this 'land of lotus', against the iconoclasm is in the making. And this has somehow been welcomed by a section of the revolutionary left in their political agenda and in the arena of the social science also. And thus the Raja is being rehabilitated with his positive epoch keeping the dark at bay in the year of his 250th birth anniversary. If his move for the emancipation of the

wretched widowed women to get rid of an age-old feudal social system (actually pertaining to land and property) is the best job the Raja did in his life, then it has to be acknowledged that he was disinclined to have these widows remarried. Armed with the logic having had from the yellow pages of religious books,

he proceeded to his way on. Scientific arguments appeared to have no reference he opted to use for the purpose. So did Vidyasagar too in later years. Rammohan translated the upanishads into English from Sanskrit. The upanishads he translated in English were the Moonduk Upanishad, the Kenopanishad, the Kathopanishad, the Isopanishad and an abridgement of the Vedantas. In the introduction to Kenopanishad, the Raja wrote that he was not inclined to invest his best effort to 'surrender completely' in the hands of shastras. And just after that he wrote:

"To illumine the reasoning faculty and knowledge of morality by their light and then to depend upon the beneficence of the Almighty God".

How such a man could have been a 'campaigner' of a 'modern India' as envisaged by the helmsman of a revolutionary left remains far from having a gate-pass to the argumentative arena of revolutionary culture. In the mid-sixties Keshab Chandra Sen, one of the stalwart of Brahmo Samaj movement, opined that the Raja's 'creed' was just but a 'standing mystery' and 'the world seems to be hopelessly disagreed as to what his real convictions were'. He was said to be sick of the Muslim oppression in the Mughal regime and eulogised the British to get this country rid of those dark days! And perhaps to this context the helmsman of a revolutionary left wrote that the East India Company had 'grabbed Ben-

gal by defeating Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah in the battle of Palashi' and had got India under their control. The Palashi-conspiracy between the then feudal landlords, Zemindars, capitalists like the Sheths and the East India Company appears here to have no rooms. Was there at all a war happened at Palashi between

the Nawab of Bengal and the East India Company? A political conspiracy of the then traitors and quislings seem to have been rubbed off from the history and brand it a mere war and defeat game that paved the Company way for their hegemonic rule over the country! It's a concocted view of history, a

sharp departure from ideological stance. And this way the view of the so-called renaissance men of the nineteenth century Calcutta has been shared and a bye off process to the new thought of the stormy years five decades back nears to take a complete gesture.

□□□

BALANCING IS NO JUSTICE

Defending the Indefensible

Shamsul Islam

FAIZAN MUSTAFA, A PROFESSOR of law and vice-chancellor of National Academy of Legal Studies and Research (NALSAR University of Law Hyderabad established by Legislative Assembly of Telangana) in a recent write-up ('Muslims and Judiciary: We do not have Muslim or non-Muslim judges in India', the Indian Express, July 8, 2022) disclosed that in 1997 he refused to undertake a project on the role of Muslim judges as it was against the ingrained ethos of Indian judiciary; the non-partisan character.

Faizan stressed that "Judges have been not only fair but also sensitive to Muslim causes". It is a problematic statement. Are Muslim causes not also Indian causes? To take few contemporary examples: Are Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case, indefinite incarceration of hundreds of youth/intellectuals/journalists under terror laws, protests against CAA and subsequent repression of the activists, bulldozing of residences and protests against abrogation of the Article 370 only Muslim issues? These issues much maligned as 'Muslim' issues, in fact, test Indian polity's constitutional commitment towards democracy, social-political-religious equality, secularism, federalism, Rule of Law (even Rule by Law) and independent judiciary.

Faizan's defence of the SC started with the defence of Justice D Y Chandrachud whom he described as a "scholar judge". Faizan stated: "On June 20 [2022], Justice D Y Chandrachud was asked about the judiciary's treatment of Muslims at King's College London. Justice Chandrachud didn't take offence to the question but answered it politely... our judges do not have the litigant's religious identity in mind while dispensing justice."

As another proof of the non-partisan character of the SC he referred to the 2019 SC judgment in Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case, which included Justice D Y Chandrachud as member of the bench which delivered the judgment. According to Faizan, in this case SC, "Termed the installation of idols in 1949 and the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 as 'egregious wrongs' [and said] the Babri Masjid was not constructed after the demolition of a Ram temple and pointed out that the Archaeological Survey of India report had not found any evidence of such a demolition. It had also observed that the Places of Worship Act, 1991, protects and secures the fundamental values of the Constitution".

However, for reasons known to the Professor only, he did not elaborate

why despite all these glaring facts and proofs even corroborated by the Honourable non-partisan Justices it was decreed by the non-partisan highest court of India that due to the "faith and belief of Hindus...that Janmaasthan of Lord Ram is the place where Babri Mosque has been constructed"; a Ram Temple must be built there. It is important to note that Babri mosque-Ramjanam Bhoomi case was not a Hindu-Muslim issue which was made out by Hindutva organisations and later SC falling for it.

Babri Mosque was demolished on December 6, 1992 by an illegal assembly of Hindutva zealots gathered in Ayodhya by the RSS and its fraternal organisations. It was not an issue between Hindus and Muslims but between Hindutva organisations and democratic-secular Indian polity. The mosque was demolished despite orders of the SC, assurances by the RSS/BJP leaders to Indian Parliament and the then PM Narsimha Rao. Rao gave solemn promise both to the Parliament and Indian nation (from the ramparts of Red Fort on August 15, 1993) that wrong would be undone and the demolished Mosque would be built at its original site.

As if it was not enough, SC allowed the same organisations (Vishwa Hindu Parishad, an appendage of RSS) to construct Ram Temple which had admitted playing leading role in demolition of the Mosque. Thus what Hindutva juggernaut could not accomplish on

December 6, 1992 was facilitated by SC.

Faizan kept silent on how later Justice Chandrachud violated unanimous judgment in Babri mosque-Ramjanam Bhoomi case in which he was part of the bench. Renowned political analyst, Ashutosh stated that 1991 judgment was expected to put at rest the Hindutva project of demolition of innumerable mosques. On the contrary,

“While hearing the Gyanvapi petition, Justice Chandrachud opined that the 1991 Act does not stop the ‘ascertainment of the religious character of the place’...Now anyone can go to court and put a question mark over the veracity of any mosque or temple or Gurudwara or church or a synagogue and request to change its status...Therefore the Supreme Court has practically made every religious place in the country suspect and disputed. Would it be correct to say that the Supreme Court in its deliberation has, mistakenly, been impacted by the majoritarian thought process?”

Faizan praised Supreme Court Justices Surya Kant and Justice J B Pardiwala [July 1, 2022] for making,

“scathing observations against ex-BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma for speaking against the Prophet. Justice Surya Kant blamed her for the tragic killing in Udaipur”.

The Justices deserved thanks for this gesture. However, Faizan forgot to deliberate on what the Supreme Court bench comprising Justices AM Khanwilkar, Dinesh Maheshwari and CT Ravikumar did to renowned human rights’ activist, Teesta Setalvad and a senior much decorated police officer, Sreekumar. Minimum, he should have read what former SC Justice Madan B Lokur (who happens to be a member of

both academic and general councils of the law university headed by Faizan) wrote on this issue. He stated that Teesta was “Condemned by Innuendo” of the Gujarat police prosecutors and,

“It is tragic that the Supreme Court has taken upon itself to unilaterally decide who should be arrested and why? That is certainly not the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, as we know it, except in the case of contempt of court. And, even in a case of contempt, the Supreme Court hears the alleged contempt not before judgment and arrest.”

It is sad that Faizan who happens to be VC of a University (whose Chancellor is chief justice of Telangana High Court) and known as expert on legal/judicial issues can be so untruthful. He admits “that many [meaning countless] young Muslims had been arrested on terror charges under successive governments” but resorted to a grave lie when stated that “the accused in many such cases were acquitted clearly demonstrates that ordinary Muslim litigants have been getting justice from our judges”. In truth these are not countless Muslims only but countless Hindus, Christians, Sikhs and Dalits who have been languishing in jails under terror laws without hearings, grant of bails or any kind of judicial intervention. Faizan as a researcher of Indian judiciary should have read tribal and human rights’ activist Jesuit Fr Stan Swamy’s factual report on the pathetic condition of incarcerated youth in jails, most of them hailing from Dalit and minority stocks. Does Faizan need to be reminded that Fr Swamy was the oldest prisoner [83 years old] incarcerated under terror laws on October 8, 2020 and was given interim bail only on May 28, 2021 for treatment when there was no chance of his survival? He died on July 5, 2021.

Faizan Mustafa refuses to admit

that Indian higher judiciary delivers two kinds of justices which not only affect Muslims but other minorities, Dalits and women too. Whenever the country witnesses the large-scale violence against minorities and Dalits, the search for perpetrators continues endlessly and criminals rarely punished. Major incidents of violence against minorities like Nellie massacre (1983), Sikh massacre (1984), Hashimpura custodial massacre of Muslim youth (1987), pre/post-Ayodhya mosque demolition violence against Muslims (1990-92), Gujarat carnage (2002) and Kandhmal cleansing of Christians (2008) are testimony to this reality.

The status of anti-Dalit violence is no different. The major incidents of persecution and massacre of Dalits; 1968 Kilvenmani massacre, 1997 Melavalavu massacre, 2013 Marakkanam anti-Dalit violence, 2012 Dharmapuri anti-Dalit violence (all in Tamil Nadu), 1985 Karamchedu massacre, 1991 Tsundur massacre (all in AP), 1996 Bathani Tola Massacre, 1997 Laxmanpur Bathe massacre (all in Bihar), 1997 Ramabai killings, Mumbai, 2006 Khairlanji massacre, 2014 Javkheda Hatyakand, (all in Maharashtra), 2000 Caste persecution in (Karnataka), 5 Dalits beaten/burnt to death for skinning a dead cow 2006, 2011 killings of Dalits in Mirchpur (all in Haryana), 2015 anti-Dalit violence in Dangawas (Rajasthan) are some of the thousands of incidents of the Dalit persecution. In almost all these cases perpetrators are yet to be identified. Even if identified the prosecution rate never exceeded 20%.

On the other hand, the Dalit and minority ‘perpetrators’ of violence are efficiently put on trial by constituting special investigation teams and punished by fast track courts. In order to meet the end of justice and national security they are hanged and jailed. But when the victims are Dalits or

minorities no such urgency is shown. In such cases Indian State is fond of playing commission-commission Existential Crisis.

Faizan as a legal luminary must understand that justice is not an art of balancing but requires honesty to call spade a spade. It would be

travesty of justice if examination of independence of higher judiciary is shackled by the binary; SC versus Muslims. SC has not been able to expedite its scrutiny of terror laws, use of Pegasus for snooping on journalists, activists, constitutionality of CAA, political bonds and

Article 370, anti-working class laws, hate mongering to name a few. This judicial inertia is prolonging the misery (of being incarcerated) of hundreds of political activists, journalists, lawyers, human rights activists and trade unionists. □□□

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ESSENTIAL CRISIS

Shiv Sena: Limits of Political Opportunism

Paranjy Guha Thakurta

[The Shiv Sena has gone through an unprecedented existential crisis. If, how and till when the party will survive the crisis remains to be seen. Barely two and half years after Uddhav Thackeray became Chief Minister of Maharashtra, thanks to Sharad Pawar's manoeuvring, he had to resign. After propagating a parochial and anti-Muslim agenda for decades under its founder Balasaheb Thackeray, the Shiv Sena is today at a crossroads. Having reached the limits of its political opportunism the party will find it difficult to move forward from here as the Bharatiya Janata Party has lasciviously grabbed the spoils of power in India's most industrialised state.]

AFTER COMING INTO EXISTENCE in June 1966, the Shiv Sena, set up by cartoonist Balasaheb Thackeray, experienced electoral success for the first time when its candidates won a majority of seats in the Bombay (now Mumbai) Municipal Corporation, the wealthiest civic body of its kind in the country. The party's victory was aided by factionalism within the Congress on the issue of the creation of the new state of Maharashtra from the erstwhile Bombay Presidency province. It played an active role in the movement to include the Dharwar and Belgaum districts in Maharashtra and consolidated its base in Mumbai and adjoining industrial areas like Thane.

Through the late-1960s and the 1970s, the Shiv Sena was used by owners of textile mills to counter the influence of Left unions among workers. The Sena's strident rhetoric against non-Maharashtrian "outsiders," notably migrants from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Tamil Nadu, and in favour of "sons of the soil" or Marathimanoos, divided textile industry workers and helped the

party build a strong political base, especially in and around Greater Mumbai.

From the 1980s onwards, the public persona of the Sena became increasingly anti-Muslim. Balasaheb proudly took credit for the fact that his Sainiks were active participants in the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992. He spewed venom on so-called Bangladeshi immigrants and was one of the few politicians on the planet who unabashedly expressed his great admiration for German dictator Adolf Hitler. For around six years between December 1995 and December 2001, Balasaheb was disenfranchised (that is, barred from voting) after he was held guilty of delivering hateful speeches and writing articles considered communally incendiary. But the snarling tiger—the party's symbol—was not tamed.

After forming the state government in 1994 in alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Shiv Sena spared no effort in preventing the smooth functioning of the B N Srikrishna commission of inquiry into the communal violence in Mumbai

in December 1992 and January 1993 that was targeted largely at the Muslims. The presentation of the commission's report was sought to be delayed and, predictably, the Maharashtra government then headed by Manohar Joshi rejected its findings and recommendations calling for punitive legal action against Shiv Sainiks.

When the Congress government led by Vilasrao Deshmukh threatened to arrest Balasaheb, the Shiv Sena ministers in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government in Delhi, including Suresh Prabhu and Balasaheb Vikhe Patil, resigned. Balasaheb was eventually not arrested, and the Sena continued to vie with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in presenting itself as the more radical exponent of Hindutva among the alliance partners.

The then Shiv Sena chief not only wanted India to send its forces to occupy Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, Balasaheb also wanted cricket matches between the two countries to be stopped. His supporters opposed a performance by popular ghazal singer Mehdi Hasan and attacked actor Dilip Kumar's residence when he received the highest civilian award from the government of Pakistan. The Sena's cultural policing also included imposing a "ban" on Mira Nair's film "Fire" for depicting a lesbian relationship.

Even as the Sena vied with the BJP to expand its political support base across Maharashtra, the party faced internal dissensions that led to the departure of leaders like

Sanjay Nirupam, Narayan Rane and Chhagan Bhujbal. The party was able to cut its losses after Balasaheb anointed his son Uddhav, and not his nephew Raj, as his successor. Raj Thackeray went on to form his own political outfit the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena.

These instances of factionalism have paled into insignificance when compared with the revolt in the party led by Eknath Shinde, who is the current Chief Minister. Former Chief Minister Devendra Phadnavis—who was never reconciled to the way Sharad Pawar outsmarted him and his supporters by forming a coalition government with the Sena, the Nationalist Congress Party and the Indian National Congress—has been forced by the BJP “high command” to play second fiddle and become Shinde’s deputy.

After becoming Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had made all the right noises. He said that politics and religion should be kept apart. He emphasised that not a single tree would be cut in the Aarey forest to build a railway shed. He said that what Mumbai needed was an improvement in its suburban railway system, not the bullet train to Ahmedabad. He portrayed an image of himself that was distinct from his father. Not surprisingly, these are the very first decisions that have been overturned by Shinde after he was sworn in Chief Minister. As for Uddhav, he has already buckled and announced his support for the BJP’s candidate for the post of President of India, Droupadi Murmu.

The right-wing, communal, and parochial ideological glue that bound

many Shiv Sainiks did not come unstuck easily. Given the history of the Sena, Shinde and the erstwhile rebels are now portraying themselves as the “true” legatees of Balasheb, and not his son Uddhav. Opportunistic politics reached its limits. The BJP had waited for this time. With no dearth of resources, the ruling regime in New Delhi decided to move in for the kill with Shinde as its willing collaborator. The fight against the Modi government has weakened considerably with the BJP returning to power in a state that sends the largest number of MPs to the Lok Sabha after Uttar Pradesh. □

[A different version of this article was published by the News Click portal on 27 June 2022 when Uddhav Thackeray was still the Chief Minister of Maharashtra: <https://www.newsclick.in/Shiv-Sena-Limits-Political-Opportunism>]

‘SOCIALISM OR BARBARISM’

How Much Average Healthy Human Life is Possible?

Chaman Lal

WAS IT OR IS IT POSSIBLE to have a rise in average healthy human life? The reply is yes; it was possible by this time itself that average healthy human life could have easily been raised to a hundred years, had the October Socialist Revolution of 1917 in Russia spread all over the world, at least imperialist form to which Lenin described as the highest stage of capitalism or now a days called crony form of capitalism had been kept under some form of social control. If there has been no division of one percent have-alls and 99% have-nots in recent terminology developed in many countries of the world. If the world had not passed through second world war and various international

wars for capitalists’ interests, the interests of weapon producing industry, whose basic aim is to have wars, if not happening, then create massive lies like WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction) to attack Iraq by Bush and Blair duo of imperialists, which got exposed only after destroying Iraq and later Libya. Had the Soviet Union despite all its ills of growing capitalism, which China in its height of revolutionary arrogance used to describe as ‘social imperialism’, which is one of the factors behind Russian-Ukrainian war, has not broken up into fifteen countries, it was possible to have an average healthy life of human beings raised to a hundred years even at this point of time! Rahul Sankartayan, a Hindi Marxist writer

in one of his highly scientifically imaginative prose—*Baisivin Sadi* (Twenty second Century) has created such a utopia of human life, which could have proved true and actual, if in twentieth century and continuing twenty first century all these wars fought due to neo colonial and neo imperial crony capitalist interests had not disturbed the flow of history towards the humanist dream of Marx or even earlier idealist philosophers. In Rahul’s imagination the working hours and days of human societies would have been radically decreased, very harsh working conditions changed through scientific mechanical innovations, (as the robots have already come up) and the multiple and wholesome hours of entertainment, highest level of cultural development, with no crime in society and the level of happiness among human beings would have increased immensely.

If all these trillions or more of money which had been spent on nuclear bombs, weapons and other

forms of capitalist profits world over, had been invested into health and education. The newly liberated or freed countries of Asia and Africa had not indulged in fratricidal killings like India and Pakistan or some other countries had, and the focus had more been on human development in totality. It is not absurd to foresee the dream creation of Rahul's *Baisivin Sadi*, based on Marx's concept of socialism or even beyond that of communism, coming closer. It was and is possible even without full-fledged socialism coming into practice, as Thomas Piketty like writers etc had shown in their recent books.

It was possible to achieve one hundred percent literacy by now in all countries, even in so-called most backward much exploited ex-colonised countries of Africa, without socialist revolution. And it was possible to find treatment to most common old age or even earlier age diseases relating to cardiology, ortho or prostate or sugar related diseases etc. Even during the worst attack of present pandemic Covid-19, the multiple countries have been able to develop vaccination for the deadly killer disease, which still continues. The issue of environment pollution, rising of temperatures in climate world over, even so-called cold countries of Europe and Americans being burnt by same profit motivated industries which are using human damaging gases and other products, could not have reached at this stage, if some kind of social control had been kept on profits at the cost of human life.

How the social system affects human life can be seen from continuing Covid-19 pandemic throughout the world. There is a qualitative difference between the countries with different socio-political system to handle the pandemic. On one side there are few countries like Cuba,

Vietnam, China and North Korea, where the human life loss is minimum, less than thousands in number. On the other side there are countries like USA, Brazil, India, UK and many more, where loss of human life is in millions. While USA and European countries have provided food and shelter to unemployed and poor people in some dignified manner, India like countries have treated poor and people, who lost employment due to Covid-19 in a most ruthless and pitiless manner and reduced them to the status of beggars, who got minimal level of raw food from state funds, but shown as personal gift of rulers with photographs and votes sought for this 'pity' shown to them!. The way lakhs of Indian working people returning to their villages by walk, cycling, buses and trains due to getting no work and wages with no support from state, and got crushed under trains, road vehicles, died by hunger and exhaustion. People have been left to die like insects and their dead bodies got most horrible treatment, seen by the whole world on electronic media. The second round of Covid-19 during April-May 2021, was the most horrible even for much influential middle classes, when in Delhi like capital city of second largest populated country of the world saw the naked death dance due to lack of gas supply to hospitals and even richer patients dying in front of cameras, was such a horrifying spectacle, which would have made the rulers of any country hung their head in shame and would have required resignation and apology as are demanded from ex-colonial countries like England and US for their crimes and rightly so. Yet rather than any sense of guilt, the rulers of country shamelessly speak of dealing with pandemic as 'best' in the world and claim to be 'Vishavaguru'! Those few in media

showed the reality on ground have been targeted or under the close watch of 'big brother', who have claims to be the 'largest democracy' in the world!

Socialist or ex socialist countries like Cuba, Vietnam or China have preferred to save human lives, even with certain strict and harsh measures than keep on earning profits for the business and capitalists. It was economic and financial crisis with the complete closure of economic activities and the workers of those places had lost jobs and wages, but the state had ensured their lives to be saved with restrictions but helping them with food and other needs. China is blamed by western world for causing Covid-19 from its laboratories, but same China did not allow its largest population among the whole world, to die like American people, who accuse China for spreading Covid-19. Why America or Brazil or India did not try to save their population from dying in millions? And why China and North Korea termed as authoritarian and dictatorial countries saved its citizens by taking harsh measures like shutting people in their homes, stopping all economic activities?

Cuba and Vietnam did not take much harsh measures, yet their health system has been so advanced and pro-people that the human lives were not lost in such massive manners as in other countries, whose economic system is pro-corporates. Is it not an irony of the situation that as more people died in pandemic, the profits and coffers of biggest billionaires of the world increased manifold, including those of Adanis and Ambanies in India which joined the club of ten richest people in the world! Death and destruction of human life and increase in corporates coffers seems to be inter-related, that is what

pandemic in 2019-22 has proved and showed to the world people like a mirror! But the mirror does not make them rise in anger and throw away such system as Bhagat Singh had asked people to do long back.

As about average longevity of human life, Covid-19 has definitely negatively impacted, but if one takes examples not from much older past—Nirad C Chaudhary, the renowned author of 'The Autobiography of an unknown Indian', lived up to 102 years, while his last novel—*Three Horsemen of the New Apocalypse* published at the age of 100 years! He was fit and active till hundred years of his life. Baba Bhagat Singh Bilga, the renowned Ghadarite revolutionary, to whom this writer had the chance to meet many times, lived up to same age 102 years and at the age of hundred years, his standing straight speech was so loud and stirring that even young people could not make such stirring speech. English authors Mulk Raj Anand and Khushwant Singh both lived up to 99 years of life and remained actively writing till last! Two athletes from Punjab Fauja Singh and Mrs

Maan Kaur had participated in running competition at the age of hundred years, just recently 94 years old woman from Haryana won some medal in running.

Most of the persons mentioned above lived in relatively comfortable conditions which provided them with social and financial security and they could avail Medicare with ease. If the same conditions could be provided to society at large, the longevity of average human being could definitely reach 90 years plus active life.

The more important factor is sense of financial and social security of the citizens in society. With these securities, a large number of populations would otherwise be saved from diseases, which are caused by tensions and stress and environmental pollution. There is a term lumpen proletariat, which is a negative term and used for those criminals, who come from poor and working-class background population. Why they turn lumpen? Because of lack of jobs and positive absorption in society. When people say and see with their own eyes that capitalist system produces an army of unemployed people to keep working class in control with limited wage structure, as whenever working-class fights for wage rise, they are threatened with dismissals and replaced with even lesser waged people engaged from unemployed population, who are ready to work at much less wage. Some part of these lumpens turn into hardened criminals-gangsters, rapists and murderers!

What is happening in India today? Qualified teachers and other professionals are ready to work and do work at pitiable wages. Why India and more countries are facing increased serious crimes of murder and rapes with much brutality, because it is crony capitalist system which gives birth to most heinous

crimes. Those countries have lesser crime rate, which have more social securities, more equality in gender matters, apart from socialist countries, which theoretically if not practically follow these principles. Some European or Nordic and some of Latin American countries have lesser crime of rape, than other countries, because in their systems women participate in socio-cultural set up of those countries at equal level and sex among men and women is neither taboo nor suppressed, so the mutual consent becomes a major factor among men-women relations. Norway like country does not execute or lynch barbaric murderer of seventy plus kids as the country like hundred plus more countries have abolished death sentence or capital punishment, but in countries like India which have deadly combination of feudal religious fundamentalism with crony capitalism, not criminals, but innocent people are lynched on the base of their particular religious faith or eating habits and the those lynching murderers are honoured by leaders of majoritarian religious fundamentalist ruling parties.

Only if people in the world could realise that social control over money production is in their own interests. Creating a wedge between and one and Ninety nine percent is the root cause of all crimes, all health-related problems. Had the Socialist revolution in Russia kept advancing as it was till Vietnam liberation in 1975, the world human society would have been much more kind, humane and full of empathy. Advancement of socialism, even some social control over capitalism would have brought much cheer to society. In a fuller socialist transformation of the world, which is at present is not even a dream, average human life could have increased to 150 years and all other

গডালিকা প্রবাহ থেকে

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things imagined by Rahul Sankartayyan in his book—*Baisivin Sadi* (twenty second century)!

But the present situation is such, especially after pandemic and wars, that the world is moving towards the dangerous path of fascism and could end up in even more destruction, along with the warming up of climate. Rosa Luxemburg had rightly warned before her brutal assassination, that world has to choose-So-

cialism or Barbarism. There are little signs of world moving towards Socialism and dangerously sliding downwards to barbarism. Would there be a stop or break to this slide, it will not be less than a miracle, if it happens. But this miracle would not happen at supernatural level, only exploited, oppressed and suffering humanity can bring about this stop, through their sustained struggles, as Indian farm-

ers struggled during 2020-21 facing all kinds of oppressive state machinery tactics, sacrificing more than seven hundred farmers lives in the process, had for a while stopped it or Sri Lankan people are trying to stop, some countries in Latin America are also proving a bulwark against barbarism. The hope lies in such people and their mass struggles! [The writer is ex Dean, faculty of Languages at Panjab University Chandigarh.]

WANDERING IN WILDERNESS

Rise and Fall of Trade Union Movements

Asis Sengupta

THE EARLIEST TRADE Union in India was formed in Bombay Textile Mills, as early as 1851. Shorabji Shapuri Bengali and C P Mazumdar were the pioneers of labour organising in India. Saroyan Meghaji Lokhande formed 'Bombay Millhands Association', and with a membership strength of 5300 workers, submitted a memorandum to the 'Factory Commission' in 1884, and Lokhande emerged as the first Union leader in India, who organised a mass rally of 10000 workers, where two women workers demanded Sunday as weekly off, and the Mill Owners' Association, accepted the demand. That was recognised as the first Trade Union victory in the country.

Encouraged by this instance, some other organisations like Ahmedabad Weavers (1895), Jute mill Workers, Calcutta (1896), Bombay Mill Workers (1897) got unionised. Notable strikes that took place were, Madras Press Workers (1903), Printers Union, Calcutta (1905), Bombay Postal Union (1907). Though the Madras Labour Union was formed by B P Wadia in 1918, the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills Strike (1921), under the leadership of V K Mudaliar, was considered at par with the 'Great

Steel Workers' strike 'in the same year in US. At this point, T U movements in India gained momentum, following the growth of unions in time of First World War, and the success of Russian revolution, 1000 Industrial strikes were recorded between 1920 and 1924. The waves of strikes boiled over with the arrest of prominent leaders and Trade Unionists who were accused of attempting communist revolution to overthrow the British Government. Another important figure in TU movement was N M Joshi, who persuaded the government in 1921 for the registration and protection of Unions. Thus the Trade Union Act was enacted in 1926.

International Labour Organisation (ILO) was formed in 1919, after the first world war, and that was instrumental in formation of All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) in 1920, in which nationalist leader Lala Lajpat Rai, was the first President, who also attended the first ILO conference in Geneva in 1926. Thus in 1947, there were 2766 unions registered, with a combined membership strength of 1.66 million. Prior to that, M K Gandhi started his political career in India, after coming back from South Af-

rica, with TU movement in Surat. It was estimated that in 1924, there were 167 unions under the leadership of Gandhi. The 'Spinners and Weavers Union' was established in Ahmedabad under his leadership. Several important labour laws were passed during this time, following multiple court cases fought by T U bodies in different parts of the country. Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923, Trade Union Act 1926, Trade Disputes Act 1929, Payment of Wages Act 1936 were passed.

AITUC split up many a time, and such organisations as National Trade Union Federation (NTUF), All India Red Trade Union Congress (AIRTUC) were formed, but those later merged with AITUC, for the purpose of unity. N M Joshi, B T Randive, M N Roy parted with AITUC at different points of time, and again federated with AITUC later. As AITUC came to be dominated by communists since 1935, Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) was formed by Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel in 1947 and Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) was formed under the banner of Praja Socialist Party in 1948, and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) was formed by Jana Sangh (now BJP) in 1955, thus paving the way for the disunity and weakness of workers under different banners on the basis of political affiliations. India also witnessed different Trade Unions coming to-

gether for a common cause, burying political identities, these include the crippling and historic Railway strike in 1974, and Great Bombay textile workers' strike in 1982.

In independent India the Constitution guaranteed the right to form associations under Article 19 C. After the passing of Industrial Disputes Act Dec 1947, the TU movements gained strength, and at this point, some Congress leaders fed up with communist ways, formed a new Trade Union INTUC (Indian National Trade Union Congress). Further, the left wing socialists who were dissatisfied with socialist policies, parted with HMS and formed UTUC (United Trade Union Congress) in 1949, some members of AITUC also joined this platform. In 1970, AITUC, which was the biggest organisation along with INTUC divided themselves, in line with division of party between CPI and CPI (M), and CITU (Centre of Indian Trade Unions) was born. INTUC also suffered a rift when Indira Congress retained INTUC, and Organisation Congress formed National Labour Organisation (NLO), the parent INTUC again split when INTUF (Indian National Trade Union Federation) was formed later.

During the transition period of independence, transfer of power, and adoption of new Constitution, many movements were going on. Among them, the Bank Employees struggle (Lloyds Bank agitation), and Textile workers' agitations in Calcutta and Mumbai, were important, Bank Employees movement became stronger, and in the process of multiple court cases, several Dispute settlement commissions and Tribunals were instituted, and Awards meted out by those, marked the victory and improvement of working conditions. In all these struggles, Communist leadership played a guiding role.

In Calcutta and Mumbai, as

well as in other Industrial centers like, Kanpur, Madras or Mysore and Andhra, Unions inspired by communist ideology were in the lead, and the leadership set the inspiring examples of integrity, sacrifice and militancy. In the Public Sector Undertakings created by Govt of India --- Steel Plants, Coal Mining, Power Generation and Distribution, and traditional Govt sectors like, Postal, Telecom and Railways ---- Leftist Unions were major players, though there were presence of govt backed Unions like INTUC ; Left Unions, in many cases could form a united forum to fight the causes of workers. With the spurt of Nationalisation under the Congress regime since 1969, when all the major Banks, Insurance Companies came under govt ownership, and expanded like anything, the leftist unions grew in leaps and bounds in a short period of a couple of decades.

Despite the historic uprising of Naxalbari, and in following years, the true radicals, failed to utilise the opportunity, as the leadership strongly opposed the participation in mass movements and formation of mass organisations. This self-imposed isolation, resulted in the detachment from true Trade Union Movement, which is essentially a mass movement. In the first place, the division of AITUC by creation of CITU, and the following rivalry for capture of space, and in the second place, the abstention of communist revolutionaries from mass movement, substantially weakened the radical Trade Union agitation in India. Naxalbari was a mass upheaval, but option for secret organisation and shunning the path of mass movement, as a whole, was against the very spirit of Trade Unionism.

A section of revolutionaries, who were originally inspired by Naxalbari ideology, but chose to part ways

with the practice of secret violence, tactics of sudden actions, and moving away in the name of Guerilla warfare, tasted success in proper TU activity. Among such experiments, the Calcutta Electric Supply Contract Workers Union (CESC Contractors' Mazdoor Samity) led by Timir Basu, the Editor, Frontier, was acclaimed all over India. But the most glaring Example was that of Dalhi Rajhara Mining Workers' organisation, under the able leadership of Late Shankar Guha Neogi. In 1977 Late Neogi formed "Chhattisgarh Mines Shramik Sangha" and that movement proved immensely successful. It brought under one umbrella all the labourers working in different mines, launched militant mass movements and wrested democratic rights from the Mine owners ensuring improvement of working conditions of working community, across the castes and tribals as well as non-tribals. Not stopping there he formed Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha, to espouse the cause of working class in various platforms. A Sramajivi Hospital was also founded to take care of health hazards of workers and their families. This was a unique example of institutionalising collective bargaining power graduating into political power, uplift of life quality, and democratisation of work space as well as society. This classic experiment, unfortunately suffered setback as a result of assassination of Guha Neogi by Mining Mafias and Liquor Barons, whose spines were broken by his anti-liquor consumption drives, that gained popularity. There were / are still in existence such fruitful experiments, in pockets and belts, but those suffer and fail to last and mature into considerable factor, for the want of central and coordinating leadership.

From the '70s to the '90s, the left TU leadership kept themselves

confined to the comfort zone of Public sectors and other organised white or blue collar jobs sectors. But from 2000 onwards, the paradigm shift in economy from welfare to market economy, and gradual dilution of traditional domestic sectors in manufacturing or ancillary units, made the situation difficult for workers. The introduction of Computers, Mechanisation, Automation etc, and the opening of market for foreign players in consumer goods sectors, posed threat to Production and marketing. With that the law for Special Economic Zone (SEZ), helped corporate sectors to shift to particular Zones where no Labour Law was/ is valid. The huge outsourcing of software jobs to India by US and Europe, and establishments of SEZs, posed existential threat to TUs. The new flourishing sector of Software services, created a new generation of slaves, at times highly paid, though not always, but without any security, and falling victims of whimsical hire and fire policy, being ever at the mercy of blood sucking employers.

Not only that, with the target of profit maximisation in the pretext of competitiveness and reduction in cost, more and more emphasis was on outsourcing and contractual labour forces, who were without any job security and adequate wages, and that made the task of unionisation, really difficult. To make the situation worse, draconian repressive measures were / are being adopted by employers to scare the

workers away from unionisation. Example is the notorious incident in Maruti, Manesar, Gurgaon plant. In 2012, a bloody clash between the ill-paid factory workers and the shop floor Managers broke out, in which one executive lost his life, and left 100 injured. Nearly 200 were arrested and put behind bars. In 2017, 31 of the accused were convicted, and 117 acquitted. Such is the picture of strained industrial relations situation in India today. In a very recent case study, one independent reporter Rupesh Singh was arrested by police on 17th July 2022, for reporting the abysmal working conditions of villagers and workers in Sponge and Iron Factories situated in Giridih, Jharkhand. In fact, the pollution emitted has made the life of villagers miserable, and the labourers, brought from outside, are kept in Ghettos, under sub human living conditions, without nutrition, health care and at minimal wages. This is comparable to the state of labour force in Jute Mill or Tea Plantation sectors in W Bengal and Assam. So this is the horrendous situation of cheap labour force squeezed by the so-called development demons of new emerging India.

With the advent of Neo liberal economics, the traditional work place set up and concept of Factory or office, underwent sea changes, with that the ideology of trade unionism needed change. Change means, not only in organisation and structure, but also in modes of struggle and agitation. But unfortunately, world-wide trade union movement has failed to rise to the occasion, and stuck in conventionality. In Britain, the birthplace of TUs, in 1984-85, the famous Coal Mines strike, was shattered by the atrocious methods adopted by Margaret Thatcher, the notorious Conservative PM, which the miners could not resist. And that was a big set-

back for worldwide Trade Union movements. In India too, the famous Bombay Textile workers strike in 1982, that continued for a year, finally succumbed to the negative tactics of Mill owners who never reopened the mills. The influence of left trade unions had already slipped into decay, as the leadership no longer enjoyed trust of the workers. Late Datta Samanta who was originally a Congress man, but a popular organiser, led the movement, that ended up in despair and fruitlessness. Despite such odds, the trade union activity remained alive for one decade, but finally died down with the assassination of Datta Samanta in 1997. The historic Railway strike in 1974, that shook the nation and world, failed to reap the gains and leave a lasting impact, due to leadership shortcomings. Finally the heroic organisation was captured by Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), which is the satellite of Jana Sangh, that later became present day BJP. Such awkward degenerations marked the end of the era of glorious Trade Union movements in India.

Taking advantage of this situation of depressed economy, uncertain labour market, acute unemployment among educated youth, absence of proper mass leadership, the far right ideology of replacing class struggle with communal conflicts, has been successfully crafted by Hindutwa Fascists. As such, the enactment of Labour Code 2022, dealt a big blow to the formation and registration of unions which are rendered next to impossible, let alone conducting of activities.

Taking for granted all these turn of the grave situation and bleak prospects, it is time for introspection, self-assessment and pin-point the drawbacks and shortcomings responsible for this decay and decadence, in order to overcome those. □□□

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SHRINKING JOB MARKET

Impact of Covid-19 on Informal Sector Workers

Nityananda Ghosh

WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL sector are the worst sufferers during the post-COVID-19 period throughout India in general and Bengal in particular. A majority of them lost their livelihood due to COVID-19 pandemic. They are domestic workers, agricultural wage labourers, integrated child development scheme (ICDS) workers, other workers engaged in brick-kilns, eateries (including dhabas and street hotels), sanitation, sweeping, goldsmith establishments, restaurants, bigbazzars, shop establishments, small factories, lathe units, leather complexes, tanneries, vendors to name a few. Migrant workers generally move from their native places to different states cities/towns, 500 to 1500 km away from their homes and work mainly in building construction, goldsmith and diamond polishing establishments, restaurants etc. All unskilled manual labour! It is needless to mention the deplorable condition of the migrant workers just after the Prime Minister Modi's sudden unplanned declaration of lockdown in the country due to outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The second wave in 2021 too had a tremendous toll on the migrant workers. One popular theory of spreading the COVID-19 across the world is the conspiracy of the big business, particularly the corporate lobby. After all they have multiplied their profits enormously from the COVID-19 crisis. The workers of the informal sector continue to face tremendous hardships; they have nowhere else to go in the post-COVID-19 period. For one thing

female workers in the informal sector are more vulnerable than their male counterparts.

A joint survey conducted by 'UN Women' and 'ILO' on the workers of 189 countries who are either parents having a six-year-old child or single mother or single father shows their engagement in jobs had declined. It declined before pandemic to 55 per cent from total women participation (i.e. 62%) which is again much less than men's participation (97.1%). The gender discrimination is also seen in pay structure (female workers get less pay than male workers), social security (pregnant women workers deprived of maternal benefits, women workers do not have separate toilets—they have to use common toilets). Besides the pertinent question of harassment at work places, particularly sexual harassment is everyday's occurrence for which they have to sacrifice their jobs for lodging complaints against the culprits who obviously are either employers or managerial staff.

The joblessness among women workers was rampant during post-COVID-19 period. They lost their jobs in institutions like schools, colleges, universities which were closed for more than two years since March 2020. There was the same scenario in private institutions as well. More or less 1,130 lakh women within the age group of 25 to 54, having six-year-old single child lost job during the pandemic. During this period their male partners numbering 130 lakh also lost their jobs. Before pandemic there was slow increase in number of women workers hav-

ing single child with their life partners but suddenly the situation deteriorated dramatically.

No doubt women workers were the worst sufferers during the pandemic. Although men workers had suffered due to fall in economic activities during pandemic, women workers relatively lost more jobs significantly than men.

In India, pandemic has its maximum toll on women workers and their participation in job market is gradually shrinking. According to a World Bank report women participation in job in India had declined from 26% in 2005 to 20.3% in 2019. During the hard hit lockdown period of April to June 2020 in the tri-monthly period the unemployment rate was 15.5%, in July–September it was 16.1% where women

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unemployment was 15.6% and men's was 12.6% respectively. The recently published Centre for Monitoring of Indian Economy (CMIE) report shows that during last 5 years 1.25 crore women workers have lost their jobs. The situation has not been changed much during 2022 too. The 'UN Women' survey entitled 'The rapid gender assessment' has revealed the gradual deterioration of women workers' mental health and sensitivity than the men workers. Twenty two countries reveal this feature among the 33 countries surveyed by 'UN Women', managing domestic work which is a thankless job and without pay also. Women become mentally upset 1.6 times more than the male who do not help them in domestic work and child care.

Workers engaged in informal sector, particularly women workers have to face domestic violence as well as violence in the workplace, physically and mentally. The respective state governments and the central government have no policies to look after the interest of the women workers. As if to face violence is the fait accompli of the women workers. The much vaunted women empowerment by the Modi government, *Beti bachao Beti Pado* (save daughter, teach daughter) or gender equality is still a far cry. The present central government led by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is out and out anti-women. They are patriarchal and feudal in outlook.

A section of migrant workers who were engaged in construction work lost their jobs during the post-COVID-19 period as real estate business slowed down. COVID-19 and the disruption induced by the pandemic hampered the process of building construction in different parts of the country and the migrant workers have to face the consequences. Real estate developers in

the cities like Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat and Rajkot (all are in Gujarat)—registered fewer projects with the Gujarat Real Estate Regulatory Authority in the fiscal year 2020-2021.

The number of real estate projects—residential, commercial, mixed development and plotted schemes—registered with GRERA declined by 22.8% to 1,346 in 2020-21 from 1,745 projects in 2019-20 (data available on the website of the state real estate regulator). Decline in real estate projects due to pandemic definitely curtailed the workforce i.e. the number of workers (migrant workers in particular). The picture of migrant workers working in other states, particularly AP and Tamil Nadu is no different.

Inflation and unemployment are the two major problems encountered by the Indian economy at the moment. The report published by CMIE is awesome. According to this report job loss in the month of June 2022 is 1.3 crore whereas unemployment rate increases to 7.8% from May's 7.1%. In the month of June 30 lakh became unemployed according to this report.

In West Bengal several thousands mid-day meal workers (Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak told this correspondent why Bengal Government or other governments call it mid-day meal—it is actually lunch—meal supplied at noon) get paltry amount of Rs 1500/- per month since 2013 which is much less than what is paid in other states. In this scheme the centre and the state's share is 75:25 but at present it is 60:40 which is unbearable for the states. The 45th and 46th workers' conference have recommended pay hike, social security for these workers. The kitchen employees deserve worker status. Mid-day meal workers of other states are getting much higher remuneration. In Kerala it is

Rs 7,600, in Puducherry Rs 6458; AP, Odisha, and Maharashtra pay Rs 3000. Jharkhand pays Rs 2000 and in Bihar it is Rs 1650 per month. Here in Bengal there are 2.5 lakh mid-day meal workers. The sanitary workers also do not get minimum wages which is less than what is prevalent in other states. Other unorganised workers i.e. workers belonging to other informal sectors face the same fate and they are deprived of minimum wages stipulated by the central government. In agriculture the labourers are employed contractually. They are not absorbed in jobs throughout the year; rather they get a lump sum amount during sowing and harvesting seasons within a stipulated period. The workers employed in hundred days works i.e. MGNREGS have been deprived of their dues for months. As per the state government's version the central government's team is visiting different districts of Bengal without informing them. The central team's main allegation in this regard is that the Bengal government is not submitting audited accounts of MGNREGS. They also allege that bills submitted by West Bengal Government are fake e.g. money has been sanctioned under MGNREGS without any work done. The central government did not sanction the proposed Rs 3,000 crore 'labour budget' this year. As a result the rural workers in Bengal are not getting job. They are demonstrating in different districts to receive their legitimate dues. The central government is unwilling to sanction money on MGNREGS alleging that Bengal Government has been involved in corruption in this scheme. Not only that, the main opposition of the state BJP is also shouting and complaining regularly to the central government not to sanction money on MGNREGS in Bengal. The workers

of informal sector are really facing tough time in this state and they survive precariously. It is a matter of pity that there is nobody to voice their agony.

In a recently held (02-08-2022) round table meeting organised by Nagarik Mancha (a Kolkata based organisation) in Kolkata Prof Biswajit Dhar of JNU (Jawaharlal Nehru University) disclosed an interesting

fact saying that informal sector workers have been made formal by the Labour Ministry of the Government of India. As per the Union Labour Ministry's e-portal a vast section of informal sector workers' names have been put in that portal to diminish their numbers. Informal sector workers who constitute 50% of the total workers have now come down to 20% as told by Prof. Dhar.

The Labour Ministry of Government of India is desperate to cut down the figure of informal sector workers in a bid to avoid controversies which were raised during the lockdown period where migrant workers had to face deplorable condition as they have not been enlisted either in the Government of India's Labour department or in the provinces' labour department. □□□

RECYCLING WAR SCRAP

Indian Labour in Iraqi Kurdistan

Arup Kumar Sen

GLOBALISATION HAS opened up new frontiers of capitalist exploitation on a world scale. A recent ethnographic study (Umut Kuruuzum, *Building from Scrap: War, Recycling, and Labour in Iraqi Kurdistan*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022) bears testimony to it. To put it in the words of the author: "This book is ethnographically rooted in the fragmented landscape of Iraq and engaged with the relationality of capital in the twenty-first century". (p.7)

Kuruuzum has situated his study in the perspective of war-ravaged Iraq: "Not only the ruins from the Iran-Iraq war between 1980 and 1988, the Gulf War between 1990 and 1991, and the Iraq War in 2003 and the subsequent US invasion and occupation until 2011, but also the continuing Syrian Civil War and the rise and fall of ISIS between 2012 and 2017 turned the region into a haven for dumping various kinds of coveted war scrap, which is rich in copper, such as broken down tanks, armoured vehicles, and anti-aircraft shells... Simply, the book is about the social after-life of war scrap as a commodity highly valued and desired in the frontier of scrap recycling in Iraqi Kurdistan". (pp.4, 20)

A new paradigm of capitalism was born in the soil of Iraqi Kurdistan based on recycling of war scrap: "...Iraqi Kurdistan emerged as the new lucrative frontier of scrap recycling for the world's steel business, providing relative security for industrial manufacturing compared to the rest of free-falling Iraq while being close to abundant scrap metal resources created during the intermittent wars and destruction over the last 30 years. Unsurprisingly, in this socio-economic context, the total production of steel exploded from virtually zero in 2006 to five million tons per year in 2016, which created a billion-dollar scrap recycling industry...". (p.5)

Kuruuzum located new sources of cheap labour for industries in the war zone: "...war and violent conflicts in the wider region have uprooted people from their social and material means of livelihood..., generating a large vulnerable, malleable labour reserve for industrial manufacturing... In Iraqi Kurdistan, the bulk of the refugee men left their families behind in tent settlements and moved to cities and industrial districts to pursue employment opportunities". (p.112-13) The precarious employment status of refugee labour was recorded in the ethno-

graphic narrative of the author: "Of these unskilled refugee men recruited, none had a contract. They were monthly labourers who lived in temporary accommodation and were in fact constantly moving house like modern hunter-gatherers". (p.116)

Globalisation also opened up opportunities for engaging migrant labour in the war economy of Iraqi Kurdistan, mostly from Indonesia, Ghana, India, Nepal, Philippines, Georgia, Sierra Leona, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania. (p.119)

Umut Kuruuzum made an in-depth study of labour employed at the Frontier Steel Mill, many of whom were migrant workers from India: "The Frontier Steel Mill had the highest proportion of the workforce engaged in steelwork in Iraqi Kurdistan—in total around 750 workers, of whom 650 came from abroad. Of these 650 workers, around 400 of them were skilled or semi-skilled Indian migrant steel labourers, most of them from the south and southeast of New Delhi, towns such as Agra, Budain, Rampur, Varanasi, Chhapra, Mairwa, Gorakpur, Gopalganj, and Jaunpur. Due to their skills and work experience in the Indian steel sector, these workers are extremely valuable to the global steel industry and its subcontracting practices for cheap production, which takes advantage of cheap scrap reserves and recycling in several parts of the world". (p.120)

The Indian migrant steel workers in Iraqi Kurdistan recruited through an Indian subcontracting firm were found to be living precarious lives: "The Indian labourers were employed for lower wages compared to the regional skilled labour force,

such as from Turkey or Iran, and contracted to live in the labour camps for periods of about two years. Indeed, keeping an Indian worker on the shop floor was as cheap as using unskilled refugee labour". (pp. 120-21)

The above narrative of capitalist development in the war zone of Iraqi Kurdistan testifies that workers have become footloose and more vulnerable in the forward march of Capital under neoliberalism.

□□□

A GREAT VISIONARY

Nirmal Kumar Bose : A Nationalist Anthropologist

Abhijit Guha

NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE (1901-1972) was a versatile personality in Indian anthropology. His multifaceted interest ranged from temple architecture and prehistory to transformations in tribal life under the impact of Hinduism and modernisation. Bose was a professor at the University of Calcutta, Director of the Anthropological Survey of India and Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Government of India, and he was also a dedicated social worker, a Gandhian political activist, and above all a prolific writer in Bengali and English on diverse topics in professional journals, popular magazines and newspapers. Baidyanath Saraswati viewed Nirmal Kumar Bose as the 'Gandhian anthropologist' (Saraswati 2003:1-26) while R S Negi in his 7th N K Bose memorial lecture at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts mentioned that Raj Mohan Gandhi described Bose as a 'left leaning anthropologist' (Negi 2013:1).

Bose was a Gandhian nationalist unlike his predecessor Sarat Chandra Roy and contemporary Tarak Chandra Das. The anthropologist successors of Bose, like Surajit Chandra Sinha and André Béteille missed this contradiction in Bose's personality. The real challenges like famine, partition and

development caused displacement encountered by the people and the policy makers of the new nation in the post-colonial period did not find an important place in the anthropology of this great anthropologist of India, although Bose was a committed social worker and non-violent political activist (he acted as the personal secretary to Mahatma Gandhi in the mid-1940s) dedicated towards the upliftment of the untouchable castes and maintenance of communal harmony (Guha 2022).

At the end of his career Bose advocated the crucial importance of the application of anthropology in solving the problems of nation building and here lies the historical significance of re-evaluating the works of the other pioneering anthropologists of India who made solid and inspiring contributions toward nation building in the newly independent country.

The colonial connection of anthropology, particularly British social anthropology virtually began with the publication of the famous book, *Anthropology & the Colonial Encounter*, edited by Talal Asad, in 1973. Asad noted that 'social anthropology emerged as a distinctive discipline at the beginning of the colonial era', although most of the professional anthropologists showed a 'strange reluctance' to study the

colonial connection of social anthropology (Asad 1973: 14-15). More than a decade later, an Indian social anthropologist and sociologist, Jagannath Pathy, in his article published in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, critiqued anthropology, in general, and third world development anthropology, in particular, for serving the colonial and imperial powers (Pathy 1981: 623-7). In this context, it would be interesting to note that in India the critical assessment of the colonial legacy of anthropology by the anthropologists had an older beginning than that advanced by Talal Asad and Jagannath Pathy.

Virtually no discussion is found on the role of anthropologists in the writings and commentaries of the scholars on the rise and development of nationalism and nationalist thought in India. Interestingly, Bose wrote an article entitled 'Social Sciences: Their Role and Scope' published in the *Economic Weekly* in 1959 in which he just suggested that social scientists are well equipped not only to provide information on the 'social attitudes' for and against planned development in India but also to evaluate the success and failures of development programmes (Bose 1959:141-144). In one of his significant articles published in the 'Bulletin of the Anthropological Survey of India' in 1962 Bose discussed briefly on some problems and solutions of national integration without mentioning the role and responsibilities of the anthropologists in the task. In the final section of the article Bose offered

the 'Gandhian formula' of decentralisation through local governments as the ideal solution towards achieving national integration against provincialism and all kinds of sectarianism (Bose 1962b: 57-61). At the end of his life N K Bose in his posthumous article spoke out on the role of anthropologists in nation building in unequivocal terms:

An anthropologist does not merely play the part of an observer in a game of chess. He has a greater and deeper commitment, namely, that in India he has to draw a lesson from what he observes, so that he can utilise his knowledge in the attainment of the egalitarian ideal which our nation has set before itself as its goal. If he also accepts this ideal, then, with his superior analytical apparatus, and the use of comparisons and synthetic thinking, he can suggest many modifications in the ways in which the government or leaders of society are trying to bring about justice where injustice prevails today. And this is where anthropology has a very significant role to play and a heavy responsibility to bear (Bose 1974: iv).

Bose wrote an exhaustive article entitled 'Progress of Anthropology and Archaeology' published by the Indian Science Congress Association in 1963. In his address, Bose did not deal with the role of anthropology in nation building. After reviewing the then literature on the three subfields of anthropology he instead dealt more with the possibilities of building an analytical and theoretical anthropology in the Indian context (Bose 1963:1-48).

As early as 1952, Nirmal Kumar Bose, in a significant article entitled 'Current research projects in Indian anthropology', published in *Man in India* enumerated the research

projects undertaken by the department of Anthropology, Government of India (the former name of the Anthropological Survey of India) and the anthropology departments at Calcutta, Madras, Lucknow, Delhi, Gauhati and Osmania Universities. Bose's investigation was exhaustive and based on written replies from the heads of the aforementioned institutions. After reviewing the overall scenario, he concluded:

There does not seem to be any problem which Indian anthropologists have made peculiarly their own. Anthropologists in our country have, on the whole, followed the tracks beaten by anthropologists in the more powerful countries of the West. What they do, we generally try to repeat on the Indian soil (Bose 1952: 133)

Bose, however, ended with the positive note that there were exceptions to the above generalisation and, if Indian anthropologists could work independently on Indian problems, there was still sign of hope. Just 10 years later, N K Bose published another article, 'Researches in Indian anthropology', in the same journal in which he turned the attention of the readers from applied to 'certain fundamental problems in anthropology' and mentioned about the researches done by social anthropologists on the persistence of the caste system. Along with this, Bose mentioned the anthropometric surveys carried out by physical anthropologists at the all-India level as another type of fundamental research and he found young anthropologists at the Anthropological Survey of India to be 'first-class workers' (Bose 1962a: 179).

PEASANT LIFE IN INDIA

Although, Bose did not write on the notable contributions of anthropologists in dealing with the challenges of nation building in independent India, his own works at the Anthro-

logical Survey of India bear testimony to putting anthropology towards the service of the nation. His position was in order to contribute towards nation building one has to know the country first and one should realise that the greater part of the country lived in the villages. Just after joining the Anthropological Survey of India in 1959 as Director Bose involved all researchers in a mega project to collect data on the socio-economic and cultural aspects of villages covering 311 districts of India out of 322 and the results of this survey was published in a volume entitled *Peasant life in India: A Study in Indian Unity and Diversity in 1961*. The plethora of data on the material and ideological aspects of rural India contained in the book is one of the best works done by the anthropologists in the government department. This is a book which has tremendous contemporary policy relevance at least for three important reasons. First, this book revealed with empirical information that peasant life in India cannot be improved without understanding its material diversity. Second, it showed the real value of collecting first hand information from the peasants, which should be the guiding principle behind planning and policy formulation from below, not from the top. Third, peasant life in India has an underlying cultural unity of non-competitive tolerance and peaceful coexistence, which shaped the ambition and aspiration of the peasants throughout the centuries. Can one forget these three lessons even today when the government frames its policies towards the development of rural India?

NORTHEAST INDIA

N K Bose's famous report on the problems of North-East India, written as the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was published in 1968-69. After

reviewing the situation in the north-east as an anthropologist as well as a policymaker Bose lucidly formulated the governmental policy for the newly independent nation, which was summarised by Surajit Sinha in his 1st N K Bose memorial lecture delivered at IGNCA in 1993. Here is a quote from Sinha's paper:

- (a) The main emphasis should be on building up an economy of unexploitative interdependence between the hills and the plains.
- (b) The cultural policy should be extremely permissive and tolerant, providing facilities for autonomous development from the home base of specific tribes or related cluster of tribes.
- (c) Demand for cessation should not be negotiable and this should be firmly and unequivocally communicated to those leaders who may be involved in such anti-national demands (Sinha 1993:15).

According to Surajit Sinha,

'...this is perhaps the clearest and most sensible overall policy guideline which has been so far formulated about the unique mountainous tribal regions located at the international frontier of North-east India'. (Sinha ibid)

For one thing the situation in the northeast of the country since Bose's formulation of the aforementioned policy guidelines has not improved much but that does not mean that those guidelines have lost their relevance today. With the entry of the cash economy and rapid destruction of forests and the increasing pressure of population both in the hills and the plains the economic inequality between the hills and the plains have increased and the anti-national activities are also on the rise. Has the government been able to formulate any new policy after Nirmal Kumar Bose? Should one not relook at those policy guidelines

of Bose in dealing with the problems of Northeast India?

TRIBAL WELFARE

In his sectional Chairman's speech delivered at the Third Annual Session of the Indian Conference of Social Work on 5th December 1953 Bose did not hesitate to criticise the higher caste Hindu view of assigning a low status to the Adibasis, which resulted in the conversion of the latter to Christianity in many places and thereby gave rise to anti-national and separatist attitudes. In the same article, Bose also expressed his scepticism towards the governmental approach of merely giving economic and educational benefits to the tribals. He stated,

The best course would be to try and build up a caste-free new India, where no occupation is high and none low, and this with the help of those who are within the caste organisation as well as those who stand outside it (Bose 1953: 218).

Bose with his characteristic way of explaining complex problems in a simple and straight forward manner questioned the colonial mentality towards the management of forests in the abovementioned lecture article, which is relevant till today.


In the hills of Orissa, there lives a tribe known as the Kharias. There is another who are known as the 'Monkey-eating Kols' or Birhors. These tribes live by collecting honey and wax or the manufacture of ropes, and by selling them to the agricultural population who, live nearby. The members of these tribes have no fear of the jungle; they live in the jungle, and are trained to take care of themselves even when they wander for days on end in the forest territory. In India there are large forests, and men have to be employed in taking care of those forests. Why should one not take advantage of the acquired aptitudes of these Birhors and Kharias; and

instead of driving them into the position of settled cultivators living in a crowded environment, why can one not recruit foresters from among those who are in love with the forests? (Bose 1953:218)

A VALIANT BOSE

It is true that Nirmal Kumar Bose being a great visionary of Indian anthropology, who held important governmental and university positions in post-independent India and was a personal secretary to M K Gandhi did not narrate the specific contributions and role of anthropologists on nation building in independent India in his two important books entitled *Problems of National Integration* (1967) and *Problems of Indian Nationalism* (1969) but in these books he treated nation building from a brave perspective. For example, in the second book, which was originally a lecture delivered by Bose in the A N Sinha Institute of Social Studies at Patna, he spoke unequivocally against all kinds of separatist tendencies which was growing in the country. Bose was of the opinion that the greatest danger of nation building lurks behind the policy of reservation:

....[T]he administrative machinery of many of our States will have to be reformed so that men of all States can function with freedom and equality anywhere in India in order to render the best services possible to the 'masses', in Gandhi's sense of the term. The present concern for somehow securing maximum benefits to the 'Sons of the Soil' (sometimes nicknamed as the sos) and their protection from open competition, must be replaced before we can turn the corner. Those who are backward may be given every facility for education, if they have been denied this on account of social suppression or poverty in the




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past. But while seeking employment they must be encouraged, not to seek protection but face competition in the open market (Bose 1969:41).

Bose viewed the problems of nation building in a critical and constructive manner. While admitting the failures of Five Year Plans he recognised the fact that the shortcomings had also been realised by the planners and he came forward with his warnings and suggestions. While welcoming the government's decision to entrust the community development programmes to locally elected bodies, he cautioned that these bodies might also be successful in manipulating the local organisations to remain entrenched in power (Bose 1967:71-72). What then is the remedy? A committed follower of Gandhi and an anthropologist influenced by British and American anthropology, Bose at the end of his book *Problems of National Integration* did not hesitate to state his recommendation towards nation building by duly acknowledging the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky:

The supreme task is to turn the country's mind to the promotion of the interests of those who toil and produce the nation's wealth. All others can and should exist if they sub-serve the interests of the toiling millions. And the beginnings of this adventure will lie in little things well done, rather than in great things done in an inefficient manner (Bose 1967:73).

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CONCLUSION

Nirmal Kumar Bose's anthropological contributions towards nation building in independent India have not been adequately explored by the doyens of Indian anthropology. Despite his methodological limitations in propounding the famous idea on the assimilation of the Juang tribe of Odisha into the caste fold Bose made sincere attempts to put anthropology for the service of the nation from a Gandhian perspective of going to the grassroots and putting the poor and the underprivileged first in the task of nation building. □□□

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THE MAKING OF A NATION

Tamil Nationalism

Solomon Victus

THE CONCEPT OF THE 'nation' was propagated by E V Ramasamy (EVR), later affectionately called Periyar, a Tamil man who perennially carried the appellation of an 'anti-national.' Freed from the mainstream nationalist binary of nationalism vs. colonialism, anchored in history and nationalism as progress, and troubled all the time about citizenship, E V Ramasamy's concept of the nation denied its origin in the classical Indian/Tamil past and envisaged it fully in the anticipatory. Further, it constantly violated any certitude about boundaries, identities or agents of change and went beyond the territoriality of the nation. In tracing the contours of E V Ramasamy's 'nation', Aloysius' attempt is not only to explore the relationship between the nation and the past, but also to recover one of the marginalised discourses on the nation, which has been fossilised in Indian nationalist historiography as belonging to the 'other' of the nation, that, is, 'anti-national'. Such attempts at recovering alternate concepts of the nation seem pertinent and urgent as the official 'nation' has become one of the most important sources of legitimacy for the state in India as well as for a range of political formations varying from the Hindu communalists to the leftists.

E V Ramasamy's sojourn in the Indian National Congress was brief, a mere five years in an active political career spanning over half a century. After a series of experiments within the Congress, which may be termed as experiments on the question of citizenship in the nation, he finally broke with the Congress in November 1925 when two of his

resolutions favouring 'communal representation' were disallowed in the Kancheepuram Conference of the Tamil Nadu Congress. Therefore, he declared his political agenda to be: "no god; no religion; no Gandhi; no Congress; and no Brahmins." Within the non-Brahmin movement of the South, the idea that nation and nationality meant comradeship based on equality of recognition and acceptance runs through as a steady undercurrent. The most crucial episode in EV Ramasamy's early public life was the Gurukulam untouchability incident at Cheranmahadevi and the controversies surrounding it. The general position of the cultural nationalists—Congress and Gandhi—on the practice of untouchability in the ashram made Periyar turn away from them, and begin a long militant career of political nationalism.

The identity that E V Ramasamy established between god, religion, Gandhi, Congress and the Brahmins was based on his understanding that all of them stood in the way of different subordinate social groups such as the Shudras, the Dalits, and women, attaining free and equal citizenship in the nation-in-the-making. His political career then onwards was more or less an unwavering journey through the Self-Respect Movement (founded in 1925) and the Dravidar Kazhagam (founded in 1944) in search of substantive, as opposed to formal, citizenship as constitutive of the nation, and this is more than evident from the way he assessed and combated the nationalist concept of 'Swaraj' and the manner in which he responded to the British Raj.

Such foregrounding of substantive citizenship of the subordinate social groups as the principal constitutive element of the nation place EV Ramasamy outside of mainstream Indian nationalism as well as the incomplete modernity of the British in the colonial context. In other words, he was free from the need to set the nation in opposition to the coloniser.

During the course of the anti-Hindi agitation which contested the compulsory introduction of Hindi in schools by the Congress government in 1937, EV Ramasamy began airing his demand for a separate Tamil Nadu, which evolved over time into a demand for a separate Dravida Nadu. Till the end of his life, he, more or less steadfastly, denied legitimacy to India as one nation and kept his demand alive. In this context, he did differentiate the Tamil past as more equitable compared to the pan-Indian past. Basing his arguments on ancient Tamil literary texts, he claimed that both the caste system which degraded the non-Brahmins and the current marriage customs which emphasised women's subordination were alien to the Tamil past. Beyond that, his position on the Tamil past was not different from that on the Indian past, that is, he 'denationalised' the Tamil past too. Interestingly, even in contexts where he favourably referred to the equitable Tamil past, he simultaneously discounted it and claimed that one would not benefit by harping back to the past.

In attacking Brahminism and Hinduism, he did not show any mercy and he popularised a 'golden

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saying' for the Dravidian Rationalist Movement:

There is no God.

There is no God.

There is no God at all.

The inventor of God is a fool.

The propagator of God is a scoundrel.

The worshipper of God is a barbarian.

Coming down heavily on the Congress brand of nationalism which sought to restore to dominance all forms of religious superstition, Periyar indicated in his inimitable popular style the kind of nationalism he had in mind: "If we consider, on what must depend the nationalism of a nation, minimally, the people of a nation, without having to sell or bargain their mind or conscience, should be able to eke out their livelihood. More than this there are several other nationalisms: knowledge should grow; education is needed; equality is needed; unity is needed; self-effort is needed; genuine feelings are needed; cheating

one another for a livelihood should not be there; lazy people should not be there; slaves should not be there; untouchables and those who cannot walk on public streets should not be there; like these several more things should be done". Periyar celebrated Independence in 1947 with a black flag demonstration.

Even after Independence the tension between Hindu nationalism and Tamil nationalism to some extent has existed in a nuanced way. Every year with the Navaratri coming to a close for the year, Hindus look forward to the culmination of the festivities, which is Ravan Dahan on Dussehra. Vijaydashmi is celebrated on the 10th day of Navaratri and marks the victory of good over evil. While the Ravan Dahan or the burning of Ravan's effigy is seen all across India, this festivity is more popularly hosted up in the North with grand fervour. The effigies of Ravana are burnt on the day of Dussehra, which is the day after the end of Navaratri. This burning of the effigies of Ravana is always seen as offensive to the Dravidians. The followers of EV Periyar, i.e., Periyarists, have long felt that this is very humiliating, since long time.

Therefore, the Periyarists started protesting Ramayana's 'racist portrayal' of 'Dravidians as demons.' As announced, about 40 members of the Thanthai Periyar Dravida Kazhagam (TPDK) landed at the Sanskrit College at Mylapore in Chennai on Wednesday to burn effigies of Ram, Sita and Lakshmanan. Amidst tight security, and all efforts of the police to stall the event, the members of the fringe group did manage to burn a few effigies, including that of Lord Ram. S Kumaran, a member of the TPDK, said: "As per our plan we broke the police chain around us and burned the effigy. Eleven persons who were involved in burning

effigies have been remanded by police". Condemning Ramayana's 'racist portrayal' of 'Dravidians as demons', the TPDK said that the Ravanan Leela was their way of protesting against Hindu cultural hegemony.

"It does not matter that 'Ram Leela' is not celebrated in Tamil Nadu. In Delhi, effigies of Ravanan and his two brothers are burnt; we believe they are Dravidians, and that burning their effigies is mocking us. So to stop that, we have decided to celebrate 'Ravanan Leela' in which we will be burning the effigies of Ram, Sita and Laksh-man". S Kumaran also added that they had written a letter to the Prime Minister asking him to stop Ram Leela in Delhi, but they did not get any response from his office.

MT Saju writes that in the 1970s too Periyarists conducted Ravanan Leelas. He reminds people that after Periyar died, his wife Maniymmai burnt the effigy of Ram at Periyar Thidal in 1974. But since then it has not been a popular event. Emotional discussions on Ram Leela and Ravanan Leela have not yet died out in Tamil Nadu, and every year one can find the smoke from those events. Tamil nationalism is shooting up here and there, not just based on the Tamil language, but as a counter-culture of the Dravidians to the Aryan-Brahmin-Baniya supremacism.

The past thus was bereft of anything worth appropriating for the national agenda. The nation could arrive only after a break from it. In short, the past stood 'denationalised' in EV Ramasamy's discourse on the nation. The nation, freed from the past, located in the anticipatory and framed by notions of 'modernity from below' was a metaphor: one which stood for ever-fluid, free, and equal citizenship. Its success can be assessed in terms of its continuing

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ability to inspire diverse subordinate social groups in present-day Tamil Nadu to question the Indian nation-state for its failings, and to imagine nations of equity and freedom lying in the future. The Hindutva nationalists have recently been involved in vandalising Periyar statues, busts, pictures, and in scripts, and have been attacking Periyarist group campaigns. This shows that Hindu nationalists find the Dravidian move-

ment and its ideology a real threat to their growth in Tamil Nadu. □□□

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BURMA FOR BURMANS

Plight of the Rohingya

Pranjali Bandhu

POST-COLONIAL MYANMAR political history with long years of rule by repressive and exploitative military ruling regimes intermittently interspersed with phases of some concessions to limited electoral democracy has given rise to a large number of refugees, who try to find safe havens in neighbouring countries. Myanmar is dominated by the Burman nationality ruling through the military, while over 100 other ethnic nationalities are still struggling for equal rights and self-determination/autonomy in their own territories and for genuine federalism or even independence, and are against any kind of assimilation process in the interest of the dominant group. Fanatic Buddhist majoritarianism is being used to integrate the multi-ethnic, multi-religious country and priority is given to national unity under a proposed "one country, one law" Act, rather than by means of a pluralistic democracy. The majority religion functions de facto as the state religion.

It will be pertinent to provide a few details regarding the history of the national question in Myanmar. The dominant Bamar/Burmans are a fusion of tribes from different regions of South-East Asia and Ti-

bet who had settled down in the Irrawady Valley around the twelfth century. Ahoms were a Shan tribe that originally hailed from ancient China and travelled through South-east Asia. They had entered the Brahmaputra Valley and established the Ahom Empire, which Burmans under the expansionist Konbaung dynasty invaded and tried to overthrow in 1821-22. They also waged campaigns against Manipur and Arakan. Arakan was a multi-civilisational independent region and kingdom (comprising Muslims, Buddhists, Christians and Hindus), which later came under the domination of the Mughals. It included the Chittagong Hill Tracts area and Tripura and was inhabited by various ethnic groups including the Rakhines and Chakmas. They were militarily defeated by invading Burman Buddhist troops in 1785. At that time many fled to East Bengal, then under the British. The Rohingya (derived from the name Rohang which was the early Muslim name for Arakan), an ethnic Muslim majority group inhabiting the Arakan region, claimed a thousand-year inhabitation of the region having been converted from Buddhism to Islam by Arab traders between the

7th and 9th centuries, who also intermarried here like on the Malabar Coast.

It was the threat from the Bamar, and French competition in the region, that led the British colonialists to fight three Anglo-Burmese wars over a period of 60 years (1824-26, 1852-3, and 1885) for the conquest of the territory that became incorporated as a province in British India. It included territories of the Kachin and Karen and other ethnic groups who had not been under direct Burman rule before. Some of these ethnic groups majorly or partially converted to Christianity under the influence of Baptist missionaries as the Nagas and others in the North-East of India. The Civil Services were mostly manned by Indians (Bengali Babus largely); there was a large Indian population in Rangoon. The British made no efforts to train Burmese in skilled labour and did not invest properly in their modern education. In agriculture, migrants had been encouraged to come in from India by the colonial government to develop the rice fields of the Irrawady Delta. The country was fast becoming an Indian colony with a big presence of Indian bankers, mostly Tamil Chettiars, who through foreclosures had bought up most of the fertile rice lands. Marwari and Gujarati traders were present. During colonialism further migration from

Bengal Presidency (which included Bihar and Odisha) took place encouraged by the British who had incorporated Arakan into the Bengal Presidency on gaining this territory in 1824 after the first Anglo-Burmese War, and these people settled along with the indigenous Muslim population. They were needed there as labour for export-oriented intensive rice cultivation promoted by the British.¹

Burma became a separate British colony in 1937 as a result of the pressure of Burman nationalism and British colonial interests of creating a wedge between Burmese and Indian nationalisms. Indians generally, about half of whom were Muslims, (ethnic Chinese migrants too were not exempt) started being targeted during the 1930s because many of them, as mentioned, had come in with the British invaders and enjoyed a superior position in the economy and society. In 1938, there were anti-Muslim riots for several months throughout the country. Burmese nationalism (demanding Burma for Burmans – the dominant nationality), strongly linked to the trend of Buddhist revivalism and its imagined threat perceptions by a proselytising Islam wanted all these ‘invaders’ out.

The Burmese Army under colonialism had a preponderance of ethnic minorities, who were used against Burman resistance movements. Many Rohingya had fought in the British Army during the Anglo-Burmese Wars in the nineteenth century and during World War-II and aligned—as did other minority ethnic groups like the Kachin and Karen—with the British who expertly played a divide-and-rule policy here as elsewhere in its Empire. There were various armed insurrections by the Rohingya since the 1940s with the aim of creating an autonomous Muslim zone in Arakan. They

pushed for the creation of Pakistan during the freedom movement and had wanted to be included in this state at the time of independence in 1947. After Partition, being largely Bengali-speaking, they even requested Jinnah to annex the State of Arakan from Burma.²

The Burman nationality formed the main component of the Burma Independence Army which was trained by Japan. The Burman-dominated Burmese Communist Party founded by Aung San also took Japanese help for military training. But the Japanese imperialists reneged on their promise of independence for Burma and occupied it in 1942. Aung San then went over to British and allied with them to drive the Japanese out. He formed the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), negotiated independence from the British, and an elected interim government saw AFPFL win an overwhelming majority of assembly seats. In 1947, some of the minority ethnic groups had been persuaded by General Aung San to join a multi-ethnic conference at Panglong, in the Shan hills, to devise a political structure acceptable to Burmans and to them. The concept of a secular federal union within which each ethnic State (which had never come under Burman domination) would be accorded full autonomy over internal administration was upheld.

The process of drafting a Constitution was started, but he and other members of his cabinet were assassinated on instigation of a conservative politician. The Constitution detailed the right of the State governments to make laws, run their own civil services, and develop their own budgets. State heads would be part of the Union cabinet and members of State legislative councils would serve in Parliament. The Karenni (later renamed Kayah) and

the Shan States were given the right to secede after ten years, if they were not happy with their status within the union. The Karen nationalist leaders not being able to come to an agreement regarding boundaries with the Rangoon government took up arms to forcibly create an independent State that might or not join the Union. The Mon and the Arakanese, who at that time were offered full and equal citizenship under the 1948 Union Citizenship (Election) Act, also wanted independent states of their own, and they organised armed resistance movements too.

The Bamar nationality asserted its dominance in the Army after the 1948 independence from Britain. Burma did not join the British Commonwealth unlike India and Pakistan. In 1958, when the time came for possible secession of some ethnic minorities, the army took over under General Ne Win to assert the political and economic supremacy of the Bamar ethnic group over others and also to purge communists. The minority states were forced to bow to the central government. The Burma Socialist Programme Party was formed and it followed the ‘Burmese Way to Socialism.’ Nationalisation of major industries was done and Indian traders began to be forced out. A demonetisation in 1987 robbed most people of their savings.

ROHINGYA PERSECUTION

Systematic persecution of the Rohingya people started in the 1960s following the military coup by General Ne Win after a brief period of electoral democracy from 1960-62. They were driven out of their land holdings and replaced by Rakhine Buddhist peasants. In 1982, the Ne Win government passed an exclusionary Citizenship Act. This Act created three categories of citizens – national, associate and naturalised. Full national citizenship was reserved

for 135 “national races” (official indigenous ethnic groups) or those who could prove their ancestry in Burma before 1823, that is, before the first Anglo-Burmese war (1824-26). The term Arakanese was now replaced by the term Rakhine, and the Rohingya were given only a second class Associate Citizenship by offering them ‘white cards’ which conferred the right to vote. Those not conferred full citizenship suffered restrictions on their freedom of movement, could not avail of state education or apply for civil service jobs. They have been subject to periodic pogroms since 1978. In 1991, the Army confiscated Muslim agricultural land in Rakhine State to feed its troops and establish encampments, imposing forced labour and arbitrary taxes. A quarter million fled to Bangladesh at that time. A later repatriation of about 200,000 under oversight of the UNHCR was not always voluntary. The violence against the Rohingya did not abate even under the so-called democratic transition in 2015, whereby the military retained much power.

In fact, now even the ‘white cards’ were cancelled and military repression became particularly severe in the period 2016-18. They were labelled ‘Bangalis’ and had to furnish evidence of three generations of continuous living in Myanmar for eligibility as naturalised citizens. Race and Religion laws restrict intermarriage with Muslims because ostensibly this less than 5% of the country’s population presents a take-over threat through Islamisation. On the one hand, while making it difficult for them to live in Arakan, the Myanmar government is also constructing a chain-link wire fence with bunkers and military posts along its border with Bangladesh. Forty out of two hundred miles of border have this fence since 2009

with the purpose of containing trafficking, narcotics smuggling and terrorist activity. Some refugee camps have come up on the no-man’s land after the fence.

The pre-colonial Muslim indigenes are known as Kaman in Burmese and are a recognised indigenous ethnic group with citizenship rights. But they are also affected by the anti-Rohingya ethnic cleansing drives of the Burmese Army and by Buddhist ultra nationalists, who make no distinction between the two Muslim groups. Already living mostly across Myanmar (50,000) they are being resettled by the authorities outside Rakhine State, where about 20,000 of them lived. They also now face discrimination in terms of the difficulty of getting national identity cards for the younger generation, thus obstructing for higher education and land ownership registrations. Climate change has also played its part. The Irrawady Delta is seeing erratic monsoon patterns and above normal flooding making rice farming here an increasingly risky venture. This has led to the phenomenon of internally displaced climate refugees, some of whom migrated to the Rakhine State exacerbating the ethnic conflict situation there.

There are economic and political reasons behind the ethnic cleansing of the stateless Rohingya from Rakhine State, which has massive oil and natural gas reserves. A sizeable chunk of land (1,268,077 ha) was allocated for corporate rural development (plantation agriculture, e.g., timber and oil palm). In 2012, the law governing land was changed to permit large corporate acquisitions displacing millions of smallholders (mostly Buddhists) who became refugees. The burning of Rohingya homes, the bulldozing of entire villages (a scorched-earth policy), wanton destruction of their ancient religious sites, forcing them

to live in internment camps in so-called “lockdown zones” or “area clearance operation zones,” the systematic stoking of generalised Islamophobia also through social media by its psychological warfare division initiated in the mid-1960s, is a genocidal and divide-and-rule policy, whereas actually all smallholders are affected. It is falsely billed as counter-insurgency or anti-terrorist self-defence measures of a state under attack.³

Over a million have become stateless and are being forcibly driven out at the risk of genocide. Ninety per cent of Myanmar’s Muslim population has become displaced. Like other minority ethnic groups in Burma (and now also like many in mainstream society currently) persecuted Rohingyas have been fleeing the country. The major chunk of refugees is concentrated in Bangladesh. They have been taking risky sea voyages to South-East Asian countries and to Australia trying to escape from the difficult conditions in the Cox’s Bazar refugee camp in Bangladesh suffering severe deprivations, sometimes losing their lives in the process because of being turned away by nations and having to drift around in the seas without adequate provisions. Cases of trafficking via Thailand to work as bonded labourers are there.

The UNHCR’s call for neighbouring countries to give protection to anyone coming from Burma is not heeded by China, Thailand, India or Malaysia. The World Bank initially proposed that Bangladesh should integrate/assimilate this population and it will provide funds for the same, and it will also simultaneously help Myanmar by funding relevant projects. But the Bangladeshi government rejected this proposition and would like them to be eventually repatriated to their homeland in Arakan. It is trying to forcibly resettle

unwilling 1 lakh refugees on a recently formed low lying silt island with constantly shifting shorelines, *Bhasan Char*, because of the overcrowding (more than 1 million) of the main (world's largest) refugee camp in Cox's Bazar on hilly forested land. Already suffering arbitrary internet access cuts and susceptible to frequent fires, difficulties increase due to it being enclosed by a barbed wire fence and watch towers.

According to a report by Human Rights Watch—which calls *Bhasan Char* an Island Jail inaccessible in severe weather conditions—insufficient measures are in place to protect against severe cyclones and tidal surges that are predicted to increase in frequency and intensity due to climate change, putting lives at serious risk. Refugees already resettled report separation of family members, inadequate health care and education, severe movement restrictions, food shortages, unreliable fresh water sources, lack of livelihood opportunities and abuses by security forces. Disruption of the education of the young is a major problem for Rohingyas in Bangladesh. The Rohingya Youth Organisation in Cox's Bazar has suggested that the international community in collaboration with the Bangladesh government can develop a higher education facility for Rohingya children or reserve quotas for them at various institutions with scholarship facilities.

The World Bank has now committed to a grant to help Bangladesh in hosting the refugee community till their safe and voluntary repatriation. But the funds required for looking after the needs of the refugees far exceeds this amount. Other international donors are also not pitching in to the extent required as the Afghan refugee situation has also come up and the ravages caused by COVID 19 worldwide has its own demands on donor funds.

ROHINGYA IN INDIA

The fact is that the Indian government has been more concerned about normalising diplomatic relations and improving trade and commercial relations between the two countries. This has been the position of China since long and that of the West and now of Japan, which have investments in the oil, gas and other sectors. Both the public and private sector of India are involved in the extraction of these fossil fuels and requisite infrastructure development to bring them to India like building a petrochemical complex, laying pipelines and upgrading the Sittwe port. As there is insurgency in these border areas on the Indian side too, and militants take shelter on the Burmese side, the government has been interested in cooperating with the military juntas to curb the insurgent activities. Joint military campaigns with this purpose have been held.

The Rohingya refugees face discrimination from the present Indian government also due to their religious background, which is majorly Muslim but also includes Hindus and Christians. Their fighting force, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), is identified as a jihadist terrorist group, in the same way as the Burmese government does. The small number of Hindu refugees among Rohingyas, now in Bangladesh, would like to resettle in India, but the overall government policy towards Rohingya is making this difficult. The ARSA claims to be a nationalist resistance group with no links to pan Islamic fundamentalist forces. And there are other organisations fighting for Rohingya rights in a non-violent way, such as the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights. Though fleeing from extreme persecution they are not accorded refugee status by India and face unkind treatment and deportation. Human rights

treaties demand individual assessment of cases and not a blanket generalisation of entire populations.

As of now there are 40,000 Rohingya in India, out of which 16,500 are registered with the UNHCR. Because India does not provide them with any relief as refugees they live in abject poverty in slums of Muslim-majority areas of Delhi, Telangana, Jammu, Mewat in Haryana and West Bengal, where they are being helped by local Muslims and NGOs. Indian Muslims have conducted protests against the Myanmar regime for their treatment of the Rohingya. Putting them into the category of illegal infiltrators (as it has done with the bulk of Bangladeshi Muslims) and marking all of them as terrorists who pose a security threat, without any sort of investigation and verification process, the government decided to deport 150-160 of them detained in Jammu under section 3 of the Foreigners Act and for not holding valid passports under the Passports Act. Right-wing forces organised a campaign against the Rohingya and Bangladeshi Muslims staying in Jammu in the name of safeguarding Dogra identity, history and culture. Similar agitations have been held in some other locations of their residence also and periodic fires break out in their makeshift camps due to suspected arson and bad urban planning.⁴ The Supreme Court did not order the release of the detained Rohingya refugees and allowed their deportation by the central government on 8 April, 2021, classifying them as 'illegal migrants' who present a threat, nay an aggression on the state.

But the fact is the Rohingya are stateless; the most persecuted and one of the most neglected people in the world as the UNHCR says, with all the concomitant misery. So it is

difficult to deport them back. "If there were a refugee law in India, the most important protection that refugees and asylum seekers would receive is from being prosecuted for illegal entry under the Foreigners Act and for entering India without valid documents under the Passports Act, 1920".⁵ What happens is instead of being provided basic amenities and rights they are endlessly and arbitrarily detained. In contrast, minorities from Pakistan and Bangladesh are exempt from prosecution under the Foreigners and Passport Acts. The 2019 Citizenship (Amendment) Act leaves them out of its ambit. This is a discriminatory approach. The government wants to take decisions regarding refugees according to geopolitical and internal political in-

terests rather than out of basic humanitarian considerations.

In Myanmar the only way to stop genocide is for the Rohingya to link up with the Myanmar wide resistance movement against the military junta. A new Arakan-based community has to be forged: of Buddhists and Muslims and others fighting for self-determination, for an Arakan Dream, the Way of the Rakhita, for national liberation and the restoration of sovereignty to the people of Arakan, as proclaimed by the Arakan Army and its political wing, the United League of Arakan. This is necessary for liberating Arakan from the new colonial masters—the majoritarian Buddhist Burmese nationalists armed to the teeth and financed by billions of dollars

in foreign investment and development aid by big powers. □□□

Notes and References :

1. Both Gandhi and Tagore, who visited Burma several times, spoke against this exploitation of Burmese by Indians in collaboration with the British. Tagore described it as a double colonialism and Gandhi emphasised the distinct identity of Burma which never formed part of Bharatvarsha.
2. Sam Darymple in "Five Partitions – The Making of Modern Asia." HarperCollins, 2022.
3. Among others, see Saskia Sassen: Is Rohingya Persecution Caused by Business Interests Rather Than Religion? The Guardian, 4 January, 2017.
4. Riya Singh Rathore: Arson? Demystifying the Midnight Fires in India's Rohingya Refugee Camps. The Wire, March 9, 2022.
5. Meher Ali: An Uncertain Refuge: The Fate of the Rohingya in India. The Wire, 16 November, 2015.

HYPOCRISY UNLIMITED

Politics of Compromise

Manas Bakshi

SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS in Indian polity, especially in the recent past, have caused concern more than ever before. In the absence of a fruitful economic policy paving the way for employment, eradication of poverty and illiteracy, security of life and health, elimination of nepotism and corruption from public life, it is but tomfoolery to think of a smooth sailing of life at socio-political level. What is more, people are being driven towards a situation that enslaves them into a compromised equation with inconsistencies just to scratch out a living. And indubitably, in these doldrums, most affected is the mindset of middle and lower middle class people.

Now, how far the secular fabric of India has remained lucent when it is about to complete 75 years of independence is a point to reckon with in the present socio-political

perspective. When a particular state or the country as a whole is on the precipice of a lopsided economy crippled by black money power and economic offences, the safest way available to a politician, irrespective of his colour to save his skin from the agitators on whatever ground—political, social or religious—is to deflect the attention of the people, already ridden with the maladies like price hike, unemployment, palm assignments and nepotism, towards politics of polarisation from the main issues. It needs politics of compromise with the religious sentiment of either majority or minority section of the people.

It goes without saying that infuriating people of one section or community against the religious sentiment of another is an often-used tool people are all aware of but hardly feel the urge to combat unitedly. Instead, people fall in its trap;

because due to lack of basic education and socio-political awareness, it is easy to exploit the religious sentiment of one section for inciting it against another with some apparently attractive measures. Sometimes, it is playing the card of dole politics; sometimes it is by raising hope in the policy of appeasement. For the power wielder has to enjoy the benefit of vote bank politics while befooling a larger section of the illiterate masses with fake promises. But true to say, dole politics or politics of appeasement serves no such purpose as is ultimately beneficial to the minority community or any other backward class. Sachhar or Mishra committee report has made it glaringly evident. The need is to provide them with proper education, and liberation from unhealthy conditions of living and joblessness. But ironically, it has not happened like that; rather people are getting attuned to politics of compromise in more ways than one.

First comes criminalisation of politics. Criminalisation of politics and politicisation of religion for cheap

populism and/or political gains have become the order of the day. In India, MPs and MLAs accused of criminal cases are no less in number today; so much so that the Supreme Court is reportedly looking for “ways to end criminalisation of politics”. Economic offenders like Vijay Malya, Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi apart, Mafia dons involved in coal, stone, sand scandals and the smugglers at the border areas are swelling in number. And this, despite the provisions in Prevention of Money Laundering Act while political leaders who appear overtly vocal about such issues hardly turn a hair in the real world since they know it for certain who to bank on to come victorious in electoral politics.

Next comes the art of adopting the politics of compromise for political gains using religion as a tool. It was observed during the assembly election, 2021, in West Bengal that the candidates of the contesting parties toed the same line of action for earning confidence of the electorate vulnerable to religious sentiment. Visiting the temple of Lord Shiva or goddess Kali, chanting mantra from Sri Sri Chandi before beginning with their election campaign became part of programme of the candidates concerned—which ever the party. For instance, on 12-03-2021, a BJP candidate at a Kali temple at Debra in Midnapur offered puja before starting her election campaign. It was followed by

the TMC candidate there the very next day. This episode was repeated at some other places as well.

The question remains was it out of devotional urge or religious faith or just to cause titillation to religious sentiment of a particular community to strengthen their individual vote bank on religious basis—clearly indicating politics of compromise with religion? There is another aspect. One wonders whether there is a ray of hope—in Md Salim’s ascendancy to the post of the secretary of West Bengal state committee of the CPI(M)—of regaining the minority base of political support to the party it is said to have lost substantially to TMC at the time of last assembly election. The point cannot be brushed aside if viewed in the context of the Panchayat election in West Bengal to be held in 2023.

Admittedly, politics of compromise is not restricted to religious emotions only. Sometimes it involves ideological standpoint also. For instance, the rally of CPI (M) on 23 January 2020 at Kolkata on the occasion on Netaji’s birthday was indicative of a 90 degree U turn on part of the party which once called him ‘quisling’. Even Tagore was not spared the stigma of a bourgeois poet by some of the extra revolutionary forces of West Bengal in the seventies. Nothing could be more astounding.

Pity is if politics of compromise—seemingly a must for a political party likely to sweep polls—reaches such extent that someone has to wear a fez to prove himself Muslim friendly, then—as a Maulavi at Park Circus has rightly pointed out—will the person concerned exact *khatna* to display his love or feeling for Islam? While at the time of crossing side from one party to another, one’s credibility in obedience to the party he/she owed

allegiance to is in question, loss of trustworthiness and ideological bankruptcy of many a so-called leader have become prominent as daylight. While on the one hand, it is for a political carrier together with greed for power and a better position in the ruling force to satisfy oneself and his followers than anything beneficial to the people, it is also meant for broadening the scope for unbridled defection at the time of election, on the other.

And politics of compromise taking various shapes and colours is not secluded but a ubiquitous phenomenon in so far as some leaders even at the national level opt for taking meal at a Dalit’s house at the time of election only to forget their miseries afterwards. Politics of compromise sometimes hints at politics of opportunism when political parties raising voice against CAA or in support of a Bandh called by Sanjukta Kisan Morcha maintain a stance of equidistance in the hour of need. Unfortunately, democratic values too have ebbed away where dissent is gagged; conscience of the civil society is impaired. Even middle class intelligentsia seems to have lost its voice before money and muscle power. It may be questioned who are the intellectuals? Those who were in a procession in protest against a misdeed of an earlier regime were mostly in expectation of a position in the cultural or academic field if the party of their choice came to power. It takes no time to switch over setting aside political or ideological values if it happens otherwise. For, they know how to keep mum when it is their duty to speak out. When shall people be alert to the hypocrisy of the politicians and intellectuals to free themselves from the tentacles of politics of compromise or politics of opportunism?

□□□

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NO IDEOLOGUES...

Physics, Religion and Dogged Affiliations

Rana Bose

I WILL BEGIN BY SAYING THAT I have not known any of my close political friends dramatically switch sides from a left perspective to a right, although quite a few have been disillusioned enough to settle down to an extreme-centre perspective. Where is this difficult dilemma of being re-energised in this complex world of in-betweenness taking us?

In this essay I am going to avoid using quotations or refer to studies—philosophical, academic or historic documents and complex footnotes. This is because, during the pandemic and before, there has been a tendency to discover the words of sages, scientists, poets and philosophers to make a case for opposite sides of the argument based on both libertarian self-centeredness or hoodlum class-ism and digging up historical situations, as if in the debris of history lies the truth. This has become infinitely boring. History is debris. You only learn historical snapshots, but you cannot ever find a replication of a historical moment in the present or into the future. It is also a vindication of how attempts at winning arguments, even discretely and politely, reflect existing unconscious partisan affiliations. Making arguments for one side or the other has become a lazy exercise, especially in this era of social media frenzy and then go on to assume scornful, mocking positions behind a one-hundred-year-and fifty-year-old quote from Karl Marx, two statistical curves and three irrelevant quotes from Sagan, Tagore, Luxemburg, Martov or Brecht.

This is also not an essay on the

intricacies of economic analyses, political power structures, global capital, reserve currency, geo-politics, wars and macroeconomic manipulations to stave off economic collapses. Nor is this about the history of colonisation or post-colonial philosophy. This is really about the growth of a post-Gramscian, post-Cold War era of paralysis. Where, a “no-matter-what” argumentativeness, that relies on entrenched affiliations based on decades of indoctrination, decades of blind affiliation to one book by Deutscher, one essay by Marx, repetitive invocation of the impact of inaccurate and false-flag incidents, or the contemporary effect of paid bots twittering away, have left their mark. Very simply—the uninformed, bigoted yes-but-ers, from both sides of the left and right spectrum, have triumphed. And they are a large population indeed.

And can we smash through this imbroglia and re-find our bearings?

No Temples, No Churches, No Mosques, No Synagogues, No Ideologies....

I have chosen to write about how my own mental processes have evolved and unfolded or changed from the time of my student years till now, when I am in my seventies. It takes a lot; stumbling is life-giving, although the pain and injuries can be bloody. I am old enough, to firmly assert that I have changed my mind on certain affiliations and have realised how my conscientisation process was unfortunately always based on binary dichotomies. Many things have come up lately, in discussions with friends and they all point to an unfortunate sense of binarisation or a somewhat

lazy affiliation to the concept of “Ah! That is good! Or, Ah! That is bad! Knew it would happen!” Simplistic affiliativeness. It becomes a case of archaic intellectual suicide... and I consider myself lucky, that I have passed that stage—where taking sides or simply supporting a “side” without a detailed study of all aspects, is naivety and somewhat akin to supporting your favourite super league football team. China Bad! Russia Bad! India Great! Ukraine Ok! Putin terrible! Europe is hypocritical! Modi-ji is great! The entire history of post-colonial India must be rewritten. Jaishankar makes more sense than Biden! And what a charmer Tharoor is! This is such a religious, sycophantic, binary swamp! Everyone is up to tricks, up to games, distractions. In fact, it is not even a roll of the dice. India knows how to play the game! A card has two sides only. So, what is to be done, really?

There came a period in the sixties and onwards, of reading it all in books and blogs on science, political debates, philosophy and history; but things changed, as one neared retirement. Of course, inherent to that process of acquisition of knowledge there have been physical experiences, as well—but not like the apple falling from the tree and bonking Newton on the head straight; and why did it not follow a curved path and then there is Archimedes, the mathematician, running out of his bath tub, screaming Eureka... when he realised the theory of buoyancy, displacement and volume—these are not what I am sticking to as necessary encounters that we must all have to become knowledgeable. With great respect to all physicists from the era of Newton, General theory of Relativity and Quantum theory, I am not going to practise walking into a

Gyproc wall to convince myself that it exists. That is done with! It is of applied value. But one does have close physical encounters and knowledge does get enhanced; but the question is, does one change one's mind as a result? Does one change one's affiliations? Because changing one's mind and then changing one's affiliations is really a quantum leap of consciousness. Do physical encounters change our consciousness?

So, the starting point for more and more of my friends has been to acquire basic knowledge, most often through conscious study. From childhood till now. And that knowledge has not been acquired in temples, in churches or anywhere else where religion is offered as the basis of knowledge. That I am done with. Not Temples, not Churches, not Mosques, not Synagogues. Religious texts could be another matter. They have to do with a hodgepodge of conjecture, combined even with enormous study of materialist phenomena, cosmology, astronomy and the introduction of estrangement from materialism and some kind of hibernation and physical/mental isolation. To me formal religious practice is a massive construct to explain and codify or justify the need to structure society into the good, the bad, the ugly, the stupid, the useless, the wise, the foolish, the underclass, the upper class, the natural leader, the producers, the middlemen, the reapers and the rulers and the ruled. Every religion has carried out this task, with singular mendacity. This does not mean that every religious leader or person is evil. In fact, some religious edicts and religious leaders have provided the most extraordinary insights for human liberation. The emergence of thrall and transcendentalism was not always meant to be ignored; the possibilities of

intermediate complexities and even chaos that is not resting on Cartesian coordinates but on cloudy intermediate possibilities that hover for a while and then change as the social reality changes, are a challenge to certain European over-deductive reasoning systems. It is a separate subject, but it should not raise alarms bells.

I remember, as a child, I decided to stand up on a rocking chair, leaning on the back rest and the chair toppled over. I landed on my forehead and for months I had two bumps on my forehead. It taught me many things and I had not yet been introduced to physics and when I grew up to learn physics, I did learn about mass, weight, centre of gravity and of course gravitation. So, Experience? Knowledge? Conscientisation. Not only did I stop standing up on a rocking chair, I chose to sit down firmly on it, when I could. But I still had not realised that conscientisation is not interchangeable with Conscience!

When the Police happen to beat you up, arrest you, charge you on false cases ...as has been the case with many of my friends... perhaps when you are at a demonstration for the killing of Indigenous people and the judge or jury cherry-pick the evidence and your lawyer is unable to fight back always—then you learn about the police, the legal system, the prosecutor, the judge or the jury—you are Conscientised about the System and systemicity—and you do develop a Conscience about the Origins of the State, the scions who run it, how did they get there and the nature of property and the origins of the Money or Capital and how it is extracted from the producers who produce value and also the changing realities of neo-liberalism. Even neo-liberalism has evolved and is sweet talking about social democracy, now! Neo-liberalism is talking

about minimum living wages! Why did welfare capitalism start failing, some ask? These questions need to be discussed. As in the period of Slavery and the Settler Colonial economy—the Reagan-Thatcher era spawned the Globalisation period, introduced Slave labour elsewhere—bringing direct labour costs to near zero! Pretty profound impact I would say and the basis of the creation of a wannabe class between the haves and the have -nots. And if that population is verging towards 250 million, at least in India, it is definitely a physical and mental obstacle to enabling democracy for the 90% who do not see it and do not experience it—as far as living wages, housing, education and food go. Commodity fetishism and consumerism has taken a firm root in the conscientisation process, no doubt. But the business of compensation by a neo-liberal state has also been taken up with substantial effect. What exactly is this causing, for those who believe only in the inevitability of class struggle?

So, one must explore where we get our affiliations from and where do we get our Conscience? Is it a sense of justice, ethics, morality—that is inborn? Is it a sense of taking sides based on what one has acquired as knowledge? Or, have we all succumbed to a sense of “common prosperity,” when the level of absolute property hovers around 30 to 60% in most countries!

Could knowledge be influenced by inter-generational conflicts and rebellious hand me downs? In the sixties and for that matter several generations back as well, this was clearly demonstrated. Breaking out of parental conservatism had been quite prevalent. In this day and age pure conservatism has been replaced by a libertarian sense of freedom and knowledge is increasingly in the realm of warped hand-

me-downs—worshipped by wannabes—based on misinformation, contrived and repeated; the basis of knowledge, the basis of developing affiliations, the basis of taking binary positions is handed down. And increasingly it develops into a mindset that cannot be changed. Self-doubt is suppressed and the capability to question oneself as to the authenticity of the news is becoming too difficult and one starts following and reading only what

ones to like to read and what one feels comfortable with.

That is one reason why we have reached a point where the concept of multipolarity, although very quickly identified as a Russian/Chinese geopolitical chess move, is actually rooted in a non-binary, non-orthodox and non-tribal affiliation to history. That is why our past affiliations to a single correct line, a single leading organisation, a single definition of the stages of social

change—invariably evolved out of the deductive reasoning of Francis Bacon or Charles Darwin—must itself evolve. Not everything has been written in the classic volumes we have devoured for so long. It is unwritten in the contemporary social media context. Chaotic slivers of brilliant ideas float around and mobilise new broad alliances for social change. □□□

[Rana Bose is a retired professional engineer and author. Ranabose.org]

NERO AGAIN

Further News From The Imperial Capital

Pareto Chamelon

NERO CLAUDIUS CAESAR was livid. He flung the bunch of grapes on which he had been absentmindedly nibbling at the startled minister Seneca and shouted, 'Catch him and bring him here. I'll feed him to the lions!'

Unfortunately, the aged Seneca was not quick enough to dodge the fruity projectile which smashed into his face, bursting into a soggy mess that began to drip onto his ceremonial toga. Gingerly wiping the muck from below his eyes, he stammered out a response: 'But Modicum Rex has pledged eternal allegiance to your majesty.'

'Eternal allegiance my left toe! He is a traitor!' The emperor's fury was undiminished. 'We must bring him to Rome and teach him a lesson he will never forget.'

As he made a futile attempt to stroke away the juice stains on his toga, the wise Seneca realised that Nero's anger would only be stoked by assurances of Modicum's loyalty. He decided to change his line. 'Your majesty, we have conveyed to Modicum Rex your great displeasure and warned him of serious consequences

if he fails to reverse his unacceptable policies towards Ruskiya. We expect an answer from Hindia in the next few days.'

'Tell him we'll take away the flying chariots we gave him. And no more fancy cannons for his army. Let the diabolical Ping overrun his country. We won't bat an eyelid. The ungrateful wretch.' Nero Claudius Caesar's words revealed his utter frustration at the sudden turn of events in his empire.

Indeed, news from the empire had not been happy in recent weeks. It all started a few months ago when Putinov of Ruskiya decided to invade tiny Ukrania. Nero had not heard of Ukrania before and was not much enlightened when Seneca had tried to point it out on a map. It was all barbarian country anyway. But Putinov's audacity had crossed all limits. Nero was outraged to hear (even though Seneca had tried his best to prevent the news from reaching the emperor's ears) that Putinov had even started calling himself the czar of Ruskiya which, Nero had been told, was a rendering of Caesar in the barbarian tongue. The em-

peror was so enraged that he had called the LegatusLegionis and ordered six crack legions to be immediately despatched to attack Ruskiya. The military commander was so non-plussed by this peremptory order that he sent word to Seneca who, in his inimitably gentle way, had explained to the emperor that this was a command that could not possibly be executed.

Seneca had a tough time trying to explain to an impatient Caesar the intricate subtleties of nuclear strategy. 'Oh, why can't we go back to the days of the Cold War,' the imperial advisor kept muttering to himself. Then, not only emperors but even senators, scroll writers, teachers and housewives understood that war between superpowers had to be avoided at all costs. But ever since Rome had established a universal empire some three decades ago, people had forgotten the lessons of nuclear deterrence. Seneca's effort was futile. Nero could not be made to understand why such colossal amounts of money had been spent on these expensive rockets only for them to be kept for ever in their silos. Somebody, the emperor thought, was trying to fool him. Finally, Seneca declared that the weapons had been trained not to fly off unless they themselves perceived an imminent threat of attack; without that, not even the emperor's screams would

release them from their stations. Ever since then, Nero's mood had become sullen.

Seneca had devised a complicated set of sanctions to squeeze Putinov's revenues. It involved a great deal of wheeling and dealing to get the argumentative Gauls and the surly Franks to come on board. The nations of Europe dreaded the prospect of having to weather the winter without piped gas from Ruskiya. There was no guarantee that the sanctions would hold. Besides, Putinov's navy was blockading Ukrania's seaports to prevent wheat being shipped out from the empire's biggest granary, causing massive shortages all over the world. Even more alarmingly, fuel prices had risen everywhere, even in the imperial capital, and Roman citizens were beginning to complain. Soon, the emperor would hear of all this and demand explanations from his advisor.

As it is, the last couple of years had gone badly in the empire. A strange fever had broken out, beginning in that secretive country called Sina but soon spreading everywhere else, killing thousands. No one knew how to prevent it. The best advice Seneca could give was for people to avoid physical contact with other humans. The recommendation was not popular. Dinner parties and orgies had to be prohibited. Senators and plutocrats began to invent new pleasures with non-humans. The emperor claimed sovereign privilege and continued with his daily entertainments until he too was struck by the fever. Fortunately, his physicians managed to cure him in a few days. And then, just when the dreaded disease seemed to have receded and cultural life was returning to its voluptuous normal, the wily Putinov had struck.

Seneca was actually quite happy with the way his diplomacy, combining carrots with a big stick, had

reasserted Rome's authority over the fractious nations of Europe. Scared by Putinov's threats, they had all meekly gathered under the empire's protective umbrella. Of course, they would have to pay for the expenses. Seneca had also coaxed them to send weapons and medicines to Ukrania. Needless to say, they were grumbling among themselves, but as far as public demonstrations were concerned, there was a show of unity not seen in many decades. Not that Emperor Nero was hugely impressed. He didn't care much for the Franks and the Gauls, and as for the others, considered them below the standard of civilised humans. Nevertheless, he didn't protest when Seneca made an elaborate presentation of the grand success of the new imperial diplomatic effort.

That is when the news reached Rome that Modicum Rex had cut a secret deal with Putinov to buy crude oil from Ruskiya. This was totally against the sanctions announced by Rome to punish Putinov which every imperial underling was obliged to respect. True, Modicum did have a problem. Even though his rule was virtually unchallenged in his country, the economy was not doing well and his subjects were becoming restive because of rising prices. The sanctions had sent the prices of fuel sky high. Modicum did the smart thing. He instructed his officials to covertly buy oil from Ruskiya without transacting the business through imperial banks. But soon the intelligence made its way to Seneca's parlour. One thing led to the next. Ergo, the smashed grapes on Seneca's face.

The wise advisor had tried to give his emperor a cultural explanation of Modicum's betrayal. The ruler of Hindia, he said, came from a region whose merchants had for centuries perfected the intricate art of buying cheap and selling dear. They had done so regardless of the military or

political fortunes of the country and did not consider a profitable deal to have any moral significance that might affect their relations with family and friends. It was a different culture – somewhat lower in the scale of civilisation, perhaps –but nonetheless different. Hence, one shouldn't attach too much significance to Modicum's truancy. He was, the advisor reasoned, not inherently untrustworthy.

Nero, as we have noted, had not been placated by this complicated explanation. The aged advisor had left the imperial chambers in a dejected mood and a soiled toga. Back in his villa in the Palatino hill, Seneca plotted an elaborate scheme to restore the emperor's faith in his advisor's abilities. A visit would be arranged of the High Priestess Pelucia of the Pantheon temple to the breakaway island of Formosia. That would be certain to send the diabolical Ping of Sina into a frenzy of hot words and hotter but ineffectual military threats.

Sure enough, as soon as Seneca's plans were carried out, Ping vowed revenge by invading Formosia. Everyone in the region got alarmed and sought reassurance from Rome that they would be protected. Most interestingly, Modicum sent word to both Nero and Seneca that he was firmly, and for ever, loyal to the empire and that the minor infraction of the Ruskiya sanctions would soon be rectified. Not only that, he would soon visit Rome personally to pledge his allegiance at Caesar's feet. Clearly, Modicum was terrified by the prospect of an aggressive Sina on his borders.

Seneca heaved a sigh of relief and ordered a new toga for himself. As for Ukrania and Formosia, he knew from long experience that they were mere pawns in the great game of empire, unworthy of even a tear drop. □□□

“TRYST WITH DESTINY”

The Modis are Reversing Gains of Freedom Struggle

Sankar Ray

THE FOUNDERS OF INDIAN Republic had a foresight during the freedom struggle on how to manage Independent India that India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru encapsulated in three words together—‘tryst with destiny’ at the moment India woke into freedom. Nehru spent nearly ten years in jail—the longest among the freedom fighters excepting Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. That farsightedness and grit made Nehru and the new government he led in attempting with at least partial success to achieve ‘an economic take-off or an early industrial and agricultural break-through’—essentials for constructing an ‘effective democracy’ to be caressed by the working people.

The Indian National Congress (INC) which represented the ‘national bourgeoisie’ (the Naxalites’ characterisation of them as ‘comprador bourgeoisie’ was parroting of what the Communist Party of China—actually Mao Zedong—formulated without going in-depth, somewhat cavalierly) first scripted the path of development once it would become free at the Karachi Congress in 1931. Had the Government of India been ruled by the comprador bourgeoisie, it hadn't liberated Goa from the Portuguese colonial rule nor helped the Liberation Struggle of Bangladesh achieve success. It started to envisage firmer control of the Indian economy. In its programme for an Indian government, it declared, ‘The State shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways,

waterways, shipping and other means of public transport’, wrote David Lockwood in his “The Indian Bourgeoisie: A Political History of the Indian Capitalist Class in the Early Twentieth Century”. The resolution adopted, stated, “This Congress is of opinion that in order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions. In order therefore, that the masses may appreciate what Swaraj as conceived by the Congress will mean to them, it is desirable to state the position of the Congress in a manner easily understood by them”. The Congress outlined the future constitution of Independent India.

Nehru wrote later that the Karachi resolution took a very short step in a socialist direction by advocating nationalisation of key industries and services, and various other measures to lessen the burden on the poor and increase it on the rich. Gandhi himself endorsed state intervention to the extent that it was needed to protect Indian industries: ‘I am an out-and-out protectionist’, he declared, endorsing protection for the cotton industry and the reservation of coastal shipping for Indians.

Under the auspices of Nehru and the other leaders of the Congress Left, Subhas Chandra Bose, the Congress set up a National Planning Committee in 1938. ‘The very essence of this planning’, Nehru wrote, ‘was a large measure of regulation and co-ordination. Thus while free enterprise was not ruled out as such, its scope was severely restricted’. Defence industries were to

be state owned, while ‘key industries’ would be state controlled. ‘Such control of these industries, however, had to be rigid.’ The Congress manifesto for the elections of December 1945 advocated ‘social control of the mineral resources, means of transport and the principal methods of production and distribution in land, industry and in other departments of national activity’, as well as ‘large state farms’.

From the wee hours of day one, the new government of India ‘was committed to a democratic and civil-libertarian political order and a representative system of government based on free and fair elections to be conducted on the basis of universal adult franchise’, succinctly wrote Bipan Chandra, Mridula and Aditya Mukherjee in their book, “India Since Independence”. The sovereign-in-the-making state came into being at the midnight of 15 August 1947 is now threatened by the present ruling government of National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the hegemonic Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which is subordinated to the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (RSS) which not only dissociated from the freedom struggle ever since its birth in 1925 but obediently served the British colonial rule. While the freedom movement opposed and exposed the mischievous ‘divide and rule’ policy and instead waged a protracted battle for a secular and democratic India. Directly opposed to the freedom struggle and its ideology by working for the ‘divide and rule’ conspiracy, Vinayak Deodars Savarkar theorised ‘Hindutva for that’. Today, the NDA government with Narendra Damodardas Modi, a hardcore RSS product, as the Prime Minister has been pampering the RSS-BJP's dream of converting the secular democratic India into a

'Hindu Rashtra'. Gandhiji wrote in Young India in the year of founding of RSS, "Real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be obtained by empowering the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority".

The three authors envisioned the motto of Sangh Parivar that includes Viswa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal and others, apart from RSS and BJP to demolish India, born out of freedom struggle. They apprehended the concerted endeavour to encroach civil sources of power such as universities, the Press, trade unions, peasant organisations and professional associations. The many social, economic and political challenges that the country was to face were to be dealt with in a democratic manner, under democratic conditions.

Nehru who warned against the dangerous possibility of poisonous emergence of majoritarian communalism (Hindutva, not Hinduism) as the path of rise of fascism. He was prophetic. He did not sit idle. Instead he almost single-handedly took upon himself the principal political task of furthering the democratic consciousness among the people, sprouted during the freedom struggle. "The leadership completely rejected the different versions of the 'rice-bowl theory, that the poor in an underdeveloped country were more interested in a bowl of rice than in

democracy, and that, in any case, democracy was useless to them if it could not guarantee them adequate food, clothing and shelter", asserted Chandra and Mukherjees.

Although there had been default in the needed social transformation eliminating gross economic, caste and gender inequalities attacking the massive poverty, a hangover of the Raj, Nehru was virtually isolated amidst conservative and anti-socialist group in his own party Indian National Congress. But Nehru too was to be blamed, albeit partially. He was at times in two minds perhaps fearing that any hard decision might lead to a split in the INC, as happened during the tenure of Purushottamdas Tandon as the Rashtrapati. He had a pro-Hindutva mindset.

The Nehruvian India is now under an unprecedented attack. Privatisation of profit-making central public sector undertakings one after another (initiated during the first NDA government when Atal Behari Vajpayee was Prime Minister) is going on with full speed. VSNL, Balco and Modern Foods were sold off. Equity shares in highly profitable government organisations such as the Life Insurance Corporation of India were sold out at throw away prices. And the attackers are those that stabbed the freedom struggle at the back. Apparently, secular democratic India has been defeated by ballots (read manipulation by Electronic Voting Machines and Voter verifiable paper audit trail, to a considerable extent). In a sense, Sangh Parivar hatches a conspiracy to reverse the saga of success stories of Indian freedom struggle.

Modi government's policies frequently prioritise creed over the country. The Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 is a case in point. It grants Hindu, Christian, Buddhist and Jain refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh

and Afghanistan citizenship of India but has been purposively using it against the Muslims who are persecuted as never before—a proof that the saffron regime makes religion a criterion for citizenship trample the basics of the Constitution of India. The citizenship laws are a mismatch with Constitution of India, the core of which is secularism, fitting into its republican identity with secular conditionalities.

Contextually in the reverse sense, the saffron intimidation against minorities—not always the Muslims, continues unabated. Father Stan Swamy who embraced martyrdom in custody against suppression of dissent was a Christian missionary who dedicated himself in the battle against exploitation of subalterns (mostly Dalits). The role of journalists (not all) was no less than nefarious. Almost everything that people know about how Indians vote comes either from political journalists 'on the field' or from opinion polling. The way they ask questions, the data from these surveys and selective reporting have created false narratives around the Indian voter that comes in the way of an honest understanding of democracy in India. How do the nuts and bolts of Indian democracy work? Newspapers and nightly TV shows are full of experts explaining what Indians think, feel and do; one can hardly take an Uber pool or an overnight train without someone reeling off their pet theory about what Indians are really like. The problem is most of these established "narratives are pure fiction masquerading as fact", inferred Rukmini Sen in her path-breaking study. This shows how freedom of the Press is mischievously misused. It started much before the BJP came to power. However, the Indian democratic polity is under attack in a concerted way from various sides. □□□

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Ukraine War Brings an Ecological Paradox and its Explanation

Saral Sarkar

ANY MODERN-DAY WAR IN and between rich industrial countries has bad ecological impacts. The amount of destroyed built-up material is a wastage that has to be replaced, which entails negative ecological impacts through mining and smelting of non-renewable resources. Same is the case with used up metals and other materials contained in equipment of war and munitions. All this is known since long and applies also to the war in Ukraine. What, however, is especially remarkable in the case of the Ukraine War, is the clarity it brings to some dodgy ecological issues.

Facts are nearly always the best proof of the correctness or otherwise of political, economic, and ecological opinions and theories. Selection of recent facts is very important. Here are two scenes from German TV broadcasts.

After the beginning of the Ukraine war, many Europeans, but especially the Germans, who since long have been importing huge quantities of relatively cheap Russian natural gas for domestic heating and many industrial purposes, became panicky over whether the Russians would continue to deliver gas in terms of the contract in spite of the various economic sanctions imposed on them by the EU. In the course of his frantic search for alternative sources of natural gas, Robert Habeck, the Green economy minister in the current “traffic-Light” coalition government went to Qatar and met the equally young Emir of the small but gas-rich country. Dur-

ing the handshake—one could see that in the TV-Report—Habeck made a low bow in the style of a humble supplicant, while the Emir stood with his head held high in the style of a patron.

The next scene: the former foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel of the SPD, now a political has-been, derided the present coalition with the words: “It is really a change of times when the economy minister Habeck of the Green Party breathes new life into CO₂-emitting coal-fired power plants, and the champion of an austerity policy finance minister Lindner of the FDP (Free Democratic Party) incurs hundreds of millions of Euro new debt.

Fact is also that many other states are taking several retro-steps like building new coal-fired and nuclear power plants. They are doing this because they are anxious to keep their industries and infrastructures, and their whole industrial or half-industrial mode of living supplied with sufficient and sufficiently cheap energy. Worldwide, at present, 200 new coal-fired power plants are being built. In Germany, of course, they are not building any new coal-fired power plants after Datteln 4 (completed in 2019), but they are now repealing the earlier decision to close down all lignite-fired power plants soon. Moreover, they are planning to import from the USA large quantities of LNG extracted by the fracking method which was earlier much reviled by ecologists and the Greens for its evil polluting effects. Together with the Netherlands government, they are also

considering gas extraction from under the mud flats of the North Sea—formerly, for ecological reasons, a prohibited zone for such purposes.

As for nuclear power—opposed by all kinds of ecologists and Green parties since 1974, it is enjoying a new lease of life. At present, eight European countries are building new reactors, or are seriously planning to build new ones. France has decided to keep all its nuclear power plants running. And the EU has decided to change its energy taxonomy, henceforth calling natural gas and nuclear energy green energy.

Similar things are happening all over the world. China has recently been building more and more new coal-fired power plants. The tempo is increasing. For instance, in March 2020 alone, the authorities gave permission for building of more coal-power capacity (7,960 Megawatt) than in the whole year 2019 (6,310 Megawatt). India is pursuing a similar policy. This is manifested in the data on permission for opening new coal mines. Recently, some 40 such permissions have been given.

All over the world, at present, also about 55 new nuclear power plants (NPP) are being built. The German Angst of nuclear power does not appear to be too great anywhere else, not even in the underdeveloped world. In India, e.g. at present, two NPPs are being built, in Bangladesh one.

This worldwide trend has naturally led to very bad results for the climate. Instead of going down, total CO₂ emission is continually increasing. According to International Energy Agency (IEA), in 2021, globally, 36.3 billion tons of CO₂-equivalents of green-house gases were emitted. That is two billion tons more than the figure for 2020. In Germany, after going down

steadily since 1990, total CO₂ emission is again rising. Whereas in 2020 it was 644 million tons, in 2021 it was 675 million tons.

In view of the above-mentioned facts and figures, Antonio Gutierrez, General Secretary of the United Nations, said in despair: “We are committing collective suicide”. Many Germans are thinking that the ambitious goal of energy transition has failed—among them are many leading politicians, such as Michael Kretschmer, Chief Minister of the province of Saxony. Chancellor Scholz and leading Green politicians however think that, despite the obvious setbacks, the energy transition can still be achieved. In their despair, many other European politicians—particularly the French President Macron—have recently declared nuclear power and natural gas to be “green energy”. The German Green Party, but also those of Europe as a whole, the main pillar of whose founding ideology was opposition to nuclear power, are of course resisting. But they may soon buckle.

Obviously, it is a paradox. The din of the Ukraine War, the embargo on Russian oil etc and the fear of Russia turning off the gas taps are only four and a half months old, whereas the euphoric assertions of low costs and all round efficacy and adaptability of the renewable energies are quite old. Here are three examples:

The late Herman Scheer, the then President of Eurosolar, and high priest of solar energy, wrote in 1999:

“For an inconceivably long time the sun will donate its energy to humans, animals, and plants. And it will do that so lavishly that it could satisfy even the most sumptuous energy needs of the worlds of humans, animals and plants experiencing drastic growth: The sun supplies us every

year 15,000 times more energy than what the world population commercially consumes...”¹

In 1999, this euphoria was a bit too far away from the then reality. Photovoltaic and other “renewable” and “clean” energy technologies were actually still too costly. But in 2014 came good news. Ottmar Edenhofer, economist and one of the three co-chairs of the third working group of the IPCC, said something that made concerned people sit up and take notice. He said: “It would not cost us the world to save the planet”. The cost of limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius would, he said, be only 0.06 percent less yearly economic growth than what would otherwise be possible. And Paul Krugman, Nobel Laureate in Economics, wrote a few weeks later in *New York Times* an article entitled ‘Climate Change: Salvation Gets Cheap’. Referring to the glad tidings on the cost of saving the planet coming from the IPCC, Krugman wrote the [problem of] climate threat is solved. He even wrote: “...there’s no reason we can’t become richer while reducing our impact on the environment”. The reason behind this euphoria was that prices of photovoltaic panels were tumbling.

And now a more recent example: Greta Thunberg founder-leader of the teenager climate protection group *Fridays for Future*, that is simply demanding that the politicians finally do something decisive about the problem, was once asked, what then the politicians should do. She is reported to have replied: ‘Why do you ask me? I am only a schoolgirl. Ask the scientists’ (as if all that the scientists advise were so easy to do!). She once wrote, all the technologies needed for the solution of the problem were already there. They only needed to be used. This was nothing concrete, though many other young people are glibly mouthing

concrete “solutions” like their radical elder brothers do: “shut down all coal mines immediately”, “let all fossil fuels remain in the ground”, “all energy supply must come from renewable sources only” etc. etc.

And now, in 2022, this mad rush for alternative sources of natural gas—a fossil fuel, mind you—and the US President Biden eating his words of making Saudi Crown Prince Salman a pariah and going to him with the request to increase oil supply on the world market. Inevitably, the question comes to mind: Why couldn’t the renewable energy technologies long ago replace the fossil fuels and nuclear energy? How does one explain this about-turn in energy policy?

This euphoria, which had begun much earlier than 1999, was all along baseless. For the sake of brevity, this writer here presents only the main points of the arguments and won’t go into details, which the interested reader can find in theoretical book 2 and many articles in blog. 2:

- (1) India e.g. is a tropical sunbathed country. The sun nearly uninterruptedly shines nine months a year. Even in the rainy season the sky is not clouded all the time and everywhere. And the South-West and North-East monsoon winds plus long coast line can provide ample suitable sites for setting up wind-power facilities. Highly qualified engineers and technicians are also not scarce. Similar are the conditions in China. So why don’t the Indian and Chinese capitalists ditch much reviled fossil fuels, coal in particular, as the main source of power and invest heavily in solar and wind-energy industries? Can’t they calculate chances of making profit? Of course, they can.
- (2) The reason why capitalists do not want to give up fossil fuels,

particularly the super versatile petroleum, is that they are the most profitable sources of energy. That is mainly because their energy density is much higher than that of the renewable sources sun and wind. Since for capitalists the ecological and social costs of fossil fuels are mere externalities, they, not being idealists and fashion-conscious, naturally prefer the fossil fuels.

Moreover, ordinary people are not willing to pay higher prices for energy, not even in rich industrial countries. This was demonstrated in France by the yellow vests movement, the participants in which even violently, and successfully, resisted the increase in prices of fossil fuels for automobiles.

No large scale use of liquid hydrogen made by using “renewable” energy (so-called “green hydrogen”) is yet being tried. Through any conversion of energy from one state form to another, a lot of the original amount of energy gets lost. So “green hydrogen” is much costlier and much less profitable than any original form of energy. The greater part of the batteries of e-cars of the world are for this reason still loaded up with electricity made by using conventional fuels, not with solar or wind electricity.

(3) Krugman and all others of that ilk always look at the market price of solar panels (and wind turbines), which indeed tumbled in the recent past. But serious energy scientists, when they try to judge the basic cost and efficacy of energy technologies, compare mainly their EROEI (Energy return on energy invested) figures.

The market price of any commodity is in principle a very uncertain thing. It can vary from time to time and place to place, and it depends on

many variable and volatile factors: wages, taxes, subsidies, distances etc. But, given that technologies used for the manufacture of solar panels, wind turbines etc are more or less the same everywhere, the amount of energy required to be invested, from A to Z, for manufacturing them (the EI of the term EROEI) must be roughly the same everywhere, and hence they can be compared. The ER of the term (energy return) varies from place to place, depending on availability of sunshine and blowing wind.

To measure the ER of any energy technology is easy. It is necessary to attach a meter to the end point of the system. But to measure its EI is difficult. The equipment needed to produce e.g. solar panels have first to be produced themselves—beginning with all the mining machinery (excavators e.g.) for mining the necessary minerals all the way upwards to the metal frame on which the solar panels are mounted.

Of course, an excavator e.g. is not used for producing just one solar panel. But the prorata energy consumption of any equipment used in any serially produced object can be estimated. In this estimating process many mistakes can be and indeed are made, many steps in the production line are ignored. This explains why different researchers can and do present very different, often exaggeratedly optimistic estimates of the EROEI (aka net energy) of renewable energy technologies. This is why many false hopes of 100 percent renewable energies, total energy transition etc could be circulated—particularly by the Green Parties. How controversial the matter still is can be seen in a recent paper.³ Well, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

One may now ask: why do people then hear (e.g. in Germany) that today renewable energies are

cheaper than coal-fired energy? One brief reply: in Germany, electricity production in coal-fired power plants is almost entirely done with lignite excavated in Germany with equipment made in Germany by high-wage German workers. The solar panels e.g. used in Germany are however all made in China, by using coal-fired electricity and the labour of low-wage Chinese workers. State subsidies, tax benefits etc also play a role.

The atmosphere of the earth is a global affair. It does not matter at all where the green-house gases are emitted; they are distributed by the winds in the whole atmosphere. And the whole earth warms up as a result.

The truth of the matter has been sufficiently revealed in the months following the beginning of the Ukraine War. Industrial society is basically and mainly a product of fossil fuels. A whole industrial society cannot be run without these fuels. And, moreover, the global ecology problem, the various kinds of global pollution, cannot be reduced to the issue of climate change and green-house gas emissions. It is also and mainly a question of growing amount of resources that a growing number humans consume in an industrial way. Global warming and its consequences are just symptoms of too much consumption of fossil fuels and other resources.

As per Greta Thunberg’s belief all the technologies needed for the solution of the climate change problem were already there. That they only needed to be used. Below the article of Thunberg was a comment made by a reader. It read: “The greatest minds in the Western world are working on this. They have produced no solution, because there is none.”

This comment is convincing, but only partly. There is no solution

because nobody is prepared to ditch the industrial society that has made life so comfortable for so many people. “The greatest minds” have failed to find a solution because they all want to have their cake and eat it too. If they were prepared to give up their addiction to the industrial society and their self-sanctifica-

tion, then the problems could be solved: with a steady state economy at a much lower level with just two billion humans living on the earth.□

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REVIEW ARTICLE

*Streets in Motion

Anuj B

STREETS IN MOTION IS A powerful book. It studies the complex relation between the spatial and the political in twentieth-century Calcutta. The street is a ‘framing device’ of this story.

Sophisticated academic social science of present times does often tell: ‘how things work and why resistance ultimately fails’. Rarely does it go beyond problematisation and critique of power, and work towards a new imaginary of politics. Only a few academic books can attain the good fortune of exceeding their academic purpose. This is one of those few books that go beyond the confines of the university.

Streets in Motion studies the connection between spatial mobilisation and political mobilisation in a capitalist urban milieu. It shows that spatial mobilisations are deeply political and political mobilisations are deeply spatial in nature. By ‘spatial mobilisation’, the author means the circulation of space as property in the market and its historical metamorphoses into private, public, and common resource via diverse human practice. The author talks about a range of actors involved in this process—governmental agencies, urban planners, engineers, speculators, petty property owners, contractors, soil raiders, street hawkers, transport workers, pedestrians, trade

***STREETS IN MOTION: THE MAKING OF INFRASTRUCTURE, PROPERTY AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CALCUTTA**

By Ritayoti Bandyopadhyay
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unionists, politicians, refugees, communal mobilisers, and so on. Spatial mobilisation has both intended and unintended implications in society. It excludes many in order to include a few. This selection is political, and it elicits social responses which often exceed the anticipated outcomes. This excess is also political.

By ‘political mobilisation’, the author refers to a range of collective actions—from anti-government protests to communal riots. These mobilisations require spaces to appear, thrive and dissolve. They act upon the physical space by territorialising and repurposing it. Thus, mass encroachment of footpaths by the hawkers re-mobilises a public space—designed for the pedestrian movement—into a shared resource for the sake of livelihood. But such a mobilisation of space (collective encroachment) may not be possible under authoritarian colonial rule. It must wait for a regime that at the very least claims its legitimacy from the people. By establishing the complex co-constitution of the spatial and the political,

the book concludes that ‘the street is politics in as much as politics is the production of space’. This is easier said than done. The author sustains this argument over nearly 270 pages.

Streets in Motion studies when, why, and how protests fail/succeed in the urban streets, and what one learns from their successes and failures. It closely observes the actors who can participate in protests, who all are excluded, and who fails to make an ‘impact’. Thus, this book can be read as a historical manual for urban activism. It shows what happens when academics keenly learn from the activists and become one of them.

The idea of ‘obstructionism’, which is at the core of the book’s formulation of the space-politics dialectic, comes from the streets. This is a concept that people live through and frequently deploy to punctuate, re-form and re-direct the iron will of capitalist motion. Look at any municipal law or the Penal Code—obstruction is vilified as delinquency everywhere. Eliminating obstructions is the prime purpose of the urban police and the civic authority. The author studies this repression and weaponises it as a positive concept to understand how people make history under structural limitations. The author shows how capitalist motion acquires its historical specificities when it seeks to overcome obstructions. Understood in this manner, obstruction is the domain of human subjectivity

and agency which may take an organised form in certain historical junctures and subjugate motion. Studying urban motion through its dialectical opposite (obstruction) becomes inevitable when one accepts activists and trade unionists as knowledge producers. This is their way of looking at the capitalist city.

The book may be read as a treatise on urban activism, trade unionism, and social movements. It is not an academic book. It is a deeply political reading of twentieth-century Calcutta. The theoretical framework and the strategy to study the city from below (i.e., from its streets and in this sense, it is below both in physical and metaphoric sense) can be tried and tested in different urban contexts.

This book is an optimistic history of the urban process—arguably, a very rare breed in contem-

porary urban studies. Its optimism emanates from an analysis of the changing material condition of Calcutta in the twentieth century. Hence, its optimism is not idealist or romantic. There is no nostalgic longing for the twentieth-century version of mass politics. Radical protests and progressive encroachments constituted only one part of the twentieth-century urban political culture. The other part of it was framed by mass communalism, brutal riots, and spatial zoning of cities according to the sectarian logic. The author shows how these two aspects of the twentieth-century political culture inflected each other and inhabited the same urban milieu. *Jabardakhal movement* (forceful and collective encroachment) enabled the refugees to reclaim property from the whirlwind of real estate (the author calls it ‘encroachment-as-

class’). But at the same time, it expelled minority Muslims from various neighbourhoods and quarantined them in ghettos (the author calls it ‘encroachment-as-community’). In the 1950s, these two forms of encroachment manifested simultaneously.

Is the twentieth-century version of street politics over? Yes. Thus, the author ends the book in this manner, paraphrasing Hobsbawm:

‘The twenty-first-century street requires a new political vocabulary. Vocabulary is imminent in struggles. It will emerge from its lived contradictions. The twentieth-century’s owl of Minerva that brought wisdom has flown out at dusk. The twentieth-century street is dead. Long live the street!’ (P. 267) □□□

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A TRAGIC COMMUNIST HERO

50th Death Anniversary of Charu Mazumdar

Harsh Thakor

ON 28TH JULY THIS YEAR Naxalites commemorated the 50th death anniversary of Charu Mazumdar, who was tortured to death in police custody. It ranks amongst the worst abuse of human rights of a political prisoner or leader in India or the world. Today history is repeating itself with custodial deaths being a routine occurrence in jails. Charu Mazumdar’s assassination illustrated the neo-fascist nature of the Congress regime in West Bengal. The Civil Rights groups undertook extensive research on the fascist nature of the execution of not only Mazumdar but thousands of cadres of CPI (ML). In 1997 a judicial inquiry was initiated 25 years after the murder by son Abhijit Mazumdar and other activists, but the petition was dis-

missed by the High Court and Supreme Court.

Charu Mazumdar must be credited for igniting the spark of ‘Naxalbari’ by giving it a political shape, through his eight documents. He planted the seeds of the Indian Communist Movement demarcation from revisionism and Naxalbari Movement by formulating path of New Democratic Revolution. Whatever serious errors or dogmatic thinking, Charu Mazumdar formulated a path of agrarian revolution based on teachings of the Chinese Revolution. He stitched the base for rebuilding an All-India Revolutionary Party by delivering a striking blow to revisionism and parliamentary opportunism. Naxalbari and Charu Mazumdar are inseparable.

Charu Mazumdar infused the

spirit in thousands of students and youth to rebel against feudal autocracy and an authoritarian social order. Young rebels thronged the villages to organise the peasantry. Students and youth at the very core revolted against the semi-colonial and casteist education system. Workers’ rage reached a boiling point over their economic exploitation. Peasants sprung out like a spark turning into prairie fire, to confront the landlords—jotedars. An upsurge was created within Bengali Society, with poets, musicians and painters plunging into fire.

In his lifetime Charu Mazumdar was one of the most popular Communist leaders worldwide. CPI(ML) sprouted an upsurge nationwide. Tribals in Srikakulam were also inspired to combat police and landlords heroically as well as peasants in Terai and Bhojpur or Punjab. Thousands were victims of police bullets, fluttering the red flag of liberation.

5 years ago Mazumdar's son Abhijit Mazumdar gave a heart-touching interview on his experiences. He narrated how people were obstructed from entering the crematorium where his father's dead body lay, to pay tributes, with the area packed with policemen. Still some people daringly paid homage. Charu Mazumdar's wife was so devastated that she fell into the morass of oblivion, remaining in absolute political silence from media till death in 1995. His father was praised as being very loving and caring. He also recounted how his mother as a life Insurance agent, was the sole bread winner of the family.

CM rebelled against social inequalities even as a teenager. Later, impressed by "petty-bourgeois" national revolutionaries, he joined All Bengal Students Association affiliated to Anusilan group.

Dropping out of college in 1937-38 he joined Congress and tried to organise bidi workers. He later crossed over to CPI to work in its peasant front and soon won adulation of the poor of Jalpaiguri region.

Soon an arrest-warrant forced him to go underground for the first time as a Left activist. Although CPI was banned at the outbreak of World War II, he continued CPI activities among peasants and was made a member of CPI Jalpaiguri district committee in 1942.

This move motivated him to organise a 'seizure of crops' campaign in Jalpaiguri during the Great Famine of 1943, more or less successfully.

In 1946, he joined Tebhaga movement and organised a militant peasant struggle in North Bengal. The stir designed his perspective of a revolutionary struggle. Later he worked among tea garden workers in Darjeeling.

The CPI was banned in 1948

and he spent the next three years in jail. He tied the nuptial knot with a fellow CPI member from Jalpaiguri—Lila Mazumdar Sengupta in January 1954.

CM's escalating ideological rift with CPI came alive after the party's Palghat Congress in 1956. The 'Great Debate' across the communist world in the late 50s had a telling effect on Charu Mazumdar, inspiring him to devise a revolutionary line for the Indian situation. He was again jailed during 1962 Indo-China war as part of curbs on all Left activities in India.

After the CPI split in 1964 CM joined the breakaway CPI(M) but failed to abide by its decision to participate in polls postponing 'armed struggle' at a time when revolutionary situation prevailed in India.

He kept a bad health during 1964-65 and was advised rest. But he devoted this time, even in jail, to study and write about Mao's thoughts. The exercise crystallised his vision and ideas of a mass struggle, which were recorded in his writings and speeches of 1965-67. These were later called 'Historic Eight Documents' and subsequently formed the basis of Naxalbari.

The CPM formed a coalition United Front government with Bangla Congress in West Bengal in 1967 but CM and other 'purist' elements in the party charged the party with betraying the revolution.

On May 25 the same year, the CM-led "rebels" lit the first spark to the historic peasant uprising at Naxalbari in Darjeeling district of West Bengal. It was "brutally" suppressed by the CPM-led state government but the ideology of "naxalbari" spread like wildfire.

With the upsurge of Naxalbari, communist revolutionaries from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, UP, Bihar, Karnataka, Orissa and West Bengal set up All India Coordination Com-

mittee of Revolutionaries (AICCR) in Kolkata on Nov 12-13, 1967. It was later renamed as All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries, which launched CPI(ML) on April 22, 1969 with Charu Mazumdar as its General Secretary.

Unfortunately Charu Mazumdar committed serious mistakes letting the movement veer towards left adventurism or terroristic path. His calling for 'China's path as India's path', 'Chairman Mao as India's party chairman' etc was not in consonance with a Marxist Line. The national bourgeoisie was characterised as an enemy as well as the rich peasant class. Mass organisations were disbanded being described as revisionist. Line of 'Individual annihilation of class enemies' was adopted as the sole form of struggle'. 'Boycott of Elections was propagated as a strategic path'. It was predicted that the evolution would be completed by 1975. The CPI(ML) too displayed authoritarian or bureaucratic tendencies, which led to its eventual disintegration. It failed to properly knit or converge all party forces around it. Most undemocratically it expelled communist veterans like T Nagi Reddy and D V Rao in 1968 from the All India Coordination Committee. In 1971 in an interview with Premier Chou En Lai Souren Bose received strong criticisms of the CPI(ML), on all these questions.

Quoting Sankar Ray in *Frontier* weekly in 2011 "There is no denying that Mazumdar had inspired thousands to plunge into the Naxalbari armed struggle. However after few years after the formation of CPI(ML), Charu Mazumdar failed to create an impulse among hundreds of youths to plunge into armed revolutionary path unlike in the end-1960s. The adventurist essence of Naxalbari came into the open. None-

theless, the CPI (Maoist) and most of the variants of over-ground CPI (ML) indulge in personality cult of CM. Portrait of Mazumdar is placed aside Marx, Lenin and Mao at every state party conference and congress of the CPI (ML) Liberation but no ideological debate on CM is encouraged."

It must be remembered that Mazumdar did not play the exclusive role in Naxalbari. Charu Mazumdar himself admitted in his speech in the rally at Shaheed Minar on 11 November 1967 that the leader of Naxalbari was not him but the local organisers including Kanu Sanyal, Jangal Santhal, Kadam Mallik and Khokan Mazumdar etc.

Though it is incorrect to say that Charu Mazumdar was the leader and architect of the Naxalbari peasant uprising, it must be stated that he created the breeding ground for its ideological basis. Charu Mazumdar was instrumental in establishing a radical rupture from CPM politics. Had it not been for Charu Mazumdar, perhaps the

Naxalbari struggle would have simply been reduced to a quagmire of economism?

Intellectuals like Bernard De Mello feel that Charu Mazumdar failed to distinguish the Indian path of revolution or the nature of the Indian bourgeoisie, from the Chinese one, but still credits achievement of Charu Mazumdar and CPI (ML) in inspiring peasant uprising nationwide. Earlier late Mohan Ram made an incisive analysis in 'Maoism in India' on why CPI (ML) formation was incorrect in 1969.

In truth the Revolutionary Movement today has not yet completely extricated itself from line of 'annihilation of class enemy' which glorifies individual heroism of squads. Earlier 'annihilation line' had a telling impact on the practice of erstwhile CPI (ML) People's War and Party Unity Groups who persisted with it in spite of initiating self-criticism. In spite of self-critical documents by the COC of CPI (ML) in 1975 and Andhra Pradesh State Committee in 1977, infections of past line still vitiated political practice.

Today right opportunism is predominant in the Indian Communist Revolutionary camp. Some groups like CPI (ML) Liberation or CPI(ML) Red Star have abandoned the path of protracted People's War and embraced parliamentarism. Other groups like Communist League of India are propagating Socialist Revolution as the path of Indian revolution and labelling Charu Mazumdar as a terrorist. On the other hand CPI (Maoist) has not completely extricated the erroneous line of 'annihilation of class enemy'; propagated by CM. Very few sections adopt balanced view of Charu Mazumdar's contribution. Maoists still eulogise CM, but fail to recognise contribution of mass-line by Communist Revolutionaries like Tarimela Nagi Reddy or DV Rao.

Today Marxist historians have to probe into the phenomena of the Charu Mazumdar era, in light of reorganising the Communist Movement in India, chalking a path conducive towards the Indian revolution and confronting neo-fascism.

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THEORY AND PRACTICE

A Guide to Reading Karl Marx

Michael Lazarus

WITH INEQUALITY AND class struggle on the rise, there is more interest in Karl Marx's thought now than there has been for decades.

Reading Marx, however, is a joy, and not just because his critique of capitalism is unsurpassed. His thought is fundamentally concerned with human freedom, and his writings go well beyond the detail of economic exploitation under capitalism—they challenge all forms of social domination. He was a brilliant stylist whose oeuvre spans political journalism, philosophy, his-

tory, and political economy. His interests in literature, linguistics, science, mathematics, and anthropology fed into his major ideas and enrich his writing.

Many German workers prior to World War I demanded to be buried with *The Communist Manifesto*. This commitment is a testament to the profound importance that text held for the early twentieth-century workers' movement. For this reason alone, *The Communist Manifesto*, first published in 1848, is probably the best starting point for readers who are new to Marx. It helps that it is

also one of the most famous and powerful texts ever written.

Building on drafts put together by his lifelong collaborator and friend Friedrich Engels, Marx wrote the text in a matter of weeks. It was intended as a declaration of the views of the *Communist League*, a small working-class party that counted Marx and Engels among their members. Despite its brevity, the text is densely layered. It conveys a sense of the revolutions that swept Europe in 1848 and contains some of the most famous lines Marx ever wrote, including this passage from the famous opening chapter, "Bourgeois and Proletarians":

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, pa-

trician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

As well as eloquently denouncing capitalism, *The Communist Manifesto* explains some of the most essential parts of Marx's theory, including his analysis of class struggle and historical change and his argument for working-class political organisation. Marx aims to grasp the political present and make explicit the social dynamics of the modern world. This is why it is also worth returning to—each new reading reveals new layers to Marx's thinking.

In 1872, Marx and Engels gave *The Communist Manifesto* a new preface in which they made one major addition. Having carefully observed the *Paris Commune*—an 1871 uprising that held France's capital for nearly three months—they became convinced that it would be impossible for the working class to merely take hold of the state and use it against capitalism. As a result, in *The Civil War in France*, written shortly after the commune was suppressed, Marx argued that only institutions created and controlled by the working class could embody a democratic, political alternative to capitalism.

Drafted in London, where Marx spent most of his life in exile, *The Civil War in France* was originally intended as a public statement on behalf of the *First International*, a network of socialist groups and unions from many countries. As a result, it went on to inspire socialists the world over, demonstrating that

worker's organisations could collectively and democratically constitute their political power. *The Civil War in France* is a testament to Marx's radical idea of democratic organisation and vision of social emancipation.

He saw communism as a radically different system in which people's needs—which are both potentially unlimited and vary from individual to individual—should come first.

If *The Civil War in France* was aimed at the public, Marx's 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Programme* was intended as a polemic within the socialist movement, directed mainly at the newly formed Social Democratic Party of Germany. In this short text, Marx is acerbic in criticising socialists who considered themselves Marxists but who misunderstood key aspects of his theory. Indeed, one finds in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* a number of crucial ideas that Marx does not address elsewhere to the same extent. Most famously, he discusses the transition from capitalism to communism, noting that socialism and communism should not be seen as two distinct stages. Rather, Marx envisions socialism and communism as different "phases" in the development of a new form of society after capitalism.

This helps one understand his famous slogan describing communism: "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs." Marx proposes a form of life beyond the "limited horizon of bourgeois right," where production is reorganised based on rational and collective decision-making. Marx is a critic of any view, socialist or otherwise, that argues for equality merely in the form of wealth redistribution. He saw communism as a radically different system in which needs—which are both potentially

unlimited and vary from individual to individual—should come first.

Prior to 1848, most of Marx's works were concerned with philosophy. As a young man, Marx was part of an intellectual milieu defined primarily by the ideas of German philosopher GWF Hegel. Famously, following his death in 1831, Hegel's followers in Germany divided into two currents, each of which claimed his legacy. The "right Hegelians" typified a conservative and religious philosophy and supported the antidemocratic Prussian state. The "left Hegelians," by contrast, favoured an anti-religious version of Hegel's philosophy and advocated for radical political and social reforms. Although Marx is often considered a left Hegelian because he affirmed a radical critique of religion and politics, he was never strictly in this camp. Crucially, he did read Hegel with depth and devotion.

As a result of this influence, Marx's "early" writings—generally said to span from 1839 to 1845—are very much marked by Hegel's distinctive and difficult terminology. On top of this, Marx extensively polemicalises against many now-obscure contemporaries. For this reason, they can be hard to approach.

Perhaps the best early text to start with is *On the Jewish Question*, written in 1843. It is among the most important of Marx's early writings since in it he outlines a critique of modern politics that is still powerful today. In this short article, Marx analyses the variety of liberalism that focuses on human rights and became dominant after the French Revolution in 1789. He argues that the liberal approach to political citizenship defends equal rights but ignores the concrete inequality produced by the modern market. In Marx's account, there is a dichotomy between the political

*With Best
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life of citizens and the private life of the economy. Although political life appears to be free, rational, and equal, the power of the market and private property undermines this by giving real-world power to owners of capital. Marx argues that political rights are needed but must be expanded and made universal as human freedom.

Without theory, practice is blind, and without practice, theory is impotent.

After coming to this insight, Marx increasingly turned his attention toward understanding how capitalism organises production and labour. As well as taking inspiration from Hegel's idea of alienation, in order to understand where wealth comes

from, he attentively read early economists like Adam Smith and David Ricardo. In the course of these studies, Marx wrote notebooks to help him clarify his thinking. After being rediscovered in the 1930s, these notebooks became known as the 1844 Manuscripts.

Marx's 1844 writings contain his first great confrontation with bourgeois political economy. Marx is trying to work out the nature of human being under capitalism, which he sees here as "alienated" and "estranged." Not only does capitalism take away control over productive and conscious activity, Marx argues it also denies the rewards of individual and collective labour capacities. When workers sell their labour to an employer for a wage, they lose control of what they do, what they produce, and the social and environmental context of their labour.

Marx's early writings are often seen to be bookended by his 1845 *Theses on Feuerbach*. This short text includes the widely cited eleventh thesis: "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." It is probably the single most famous sentence to flow from Marx's pen, and it encapsulates the contradiction between theory and practice that Marx was dedicated to overcoming. Marx's point in the eleventh thesis is that theory and practice need each other. Without theory, practice is blind, and without practice, theory is impotent.

Approaching *Capital*, Marx's magnum opus, can be daunting—but it is well worth the effort. While Marx wrote *The Communist Manifesto* very quickly, *Capital* became his life project. At first, he planned six volumes, although as he grew older and his health declined, he revised the plan to encompass four volumes. Only the first appeared in his lifetime, in 1867. However,

thanks to various drafts and manuscripts Marx left behind, Engels edited and published the second two volumes of *Capital* after Marx's death. His manuscripts intended for a fourth volume, a critical history of economic theory, were published later as *Theories of Surplus Value*. Far from containing all the answers, like Marxism as a whole, *Capital* remains unfinished.

Despite its undeserved reputation as a dull work of economics, Marx's prose in *Capital* is often exciting (at least in Volume 1), and his argument is both polished and carefully structured. More importantly, *Capital* is an achievement because it contains an account of the concepts that are necessary to start to understand capitalism as a social form of life and a historical set of social relationships. While these social relationships structure people's lives, they are not natural but are the product of a specific historic and economic system.

In the first chapters of *Capital*, Marx argues that capitalism is fundamentally defined by commodity production and exchange. Commodities, as he explains, have a "use-value," which is to say, for something to be a commodity, someone must find it useful in meeting some need. Yet commodities are not defined or valued by their use alone but by their sale on the market as commodities. For example, a meal cooked for friends certainly meets a human need—but it is not a commodity. Rather, commodities possess "exchange value," which names their worth in prices.

To understand this, Marx asks why wealth appears under capitalism in the form of value, a social relationship expressed as money, and how this value is constituted. Part of his answer is that capitalism depends on treating human labour power as a commodity. The ex-

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change value of labour power is measured in wages. Meanwhile, the use value of labour is consumed during the working day to produce commodities for sale on the market. This is a crucial insight and contains the key to Marx's theory of exploitation.

Capitalism depends on treating human labour power as a commodity.

Crucial to Marx's argument is that value does not arise distinctly from every act of physiological labour but from a social process that equates human labour as "socially necessary labour time" and renders labouring activity abstract and commodities uniform as values. This process necessitates exchange, since it is only the sale of commodities that validates their social value.

Marx gives an account of how commodities, money, and capital serve as distinct moments in the constitution of value. These economic forms are all social relationships that are, for Marx, dependent on labouring activity that has been alienated from the people who sell their work for a wage. As a result, the products of human labour stand over the people who made them, appearing as separate and independent from people. The market reduces human beings to a purely economic function as buyers and sellers of commodities. Marx's term for this phenomenon in *Capital* is "fetishism" and it applies to his analysis of commodities, money, and capital. These social forms have incredible power as relations of

domination, impersonal and omnipresent under capitalism.

It is also important to stress that *Capital* is a critique of economic theory in toto. Marx's achievement is to show that value itself is a historical form of life and as a result can be transformed. By showing that capitalist social relations are not natural but a product of history, he demonstrates that capitalism is prone to crisis and rupture. This means that social change is both possible and necessary.

Thanks to Marx's lifelong commitment to freedom and human flourishing, his vision illuminates the path to changing it. □□□

[Michael Lazarus teaches politics and philosophy at Monash University. He works on normative ethics and the critique of political economy.] [Source: Jacobin]

GLOBALISATION-4

The Fourth Industrial Revolution

T Vijayendra

WITH EVERY CRISIS CAPITAL tries to restructure itself. Many old industries collapse and new ones with newer technology replace them. The latest avatar of capitalism calls itself the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

This time it has not happened in one big capitalist country. It is transnational and is being promoted at the highest levels of the global capitalist elite. Leading the charge is the World Economic Forum (WEF), a club of the world's richest businessmen and investors. The WEF, based in Switzerland, is an international NGO, founded in 1971 by the economist Klaus Schwab. Mostly funded by its 1,000 member companies as well as public subsidies, it views its own mission as "improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and in-

dustrial agendas."

The Forum dogmatically argues that a globalised world should be governed by a self-selected coalition of multinational corporations, governments and civil society organisations (CSOs), which it expresses through its initiatives like the "Great Reset" and the "Global Redesign".

But, what exactly is the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution'? The following is taken from an article by Sajai Jose, titled 'When the Fourth Industrial Revolution Comes Knocking.'

"The origin of the term itself can be traced back to a 2013 initiative by the German government known as 'Industrie 4.0'. It was a strategic policy bid to harness the rapid convergence of digital technologies, manufacturing processes, logistics and human systems to build 'smart factories' or 'cyber-physical production systems,' with the stated pur-

pose of preserving Germany's global manufacturing dominance well into the 21st century.

However, this factory-centric understanding of new technologies obscure their true significance, says Schwab, who describes this shift as an Industrial Revolution in its own right. According to this view, the First Industrial Revolution, starting from the 1750s, used steam power to mechanise production; the Second advanced this by using electric power to scale up production in the beginning of the 20th century; while the Third deployed electronics and IT to automate production. Now, he says, a Fourth Industrial Revolution is building on the Third, the information revolution that has been occurring since the last century".

Schwab describes it as being "characterised by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres." However, unlike previous industrial revolutions, it is evolving at an exponential rather than a linear pace. "The speed of current breakthroughs has no his-

torical precedent,” writes Schwab, and it is leading to “a technological revolution that will fundamentally alter the way we live, work, and relate to one another. In its scale, scope, and complexity, the transformation will be unlike anything humankind has experienced before.”

Schwab identifies a set of emerging technologies that are driving this change, including Artificial Intelligence, robotics, Internet of Things, autonomous vehicles, 3-D printing, nanotechnology, biotechnology, materials science, energy storage, and quantum computing.

Since this technological shift in production is “disrupting almost every industry in every country,” it also entails a paradigm shift in terms of logistics, trade and exchange, which Schwab calls ‘Globalisation 4.0’. It refers to new frameworks for international cooperation that he says are needed to manage and adapt to the unprecedented pace and breadth of technological change unleashed by Industry 4.0. Announcing the theme of the WEF’s 2019 meeting

as “Globalization 4.0: Shaping a New Architecture in the Age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution”, Schwab declared, “Ready or not, a new world is upon us.”

On 10 October 2016, the WEF announced the opening of its new Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution in San Francisco. In October 2018, the World Economic Forum (WEF) opened its ‘Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution in India’ to work in collaboration with the Government of India. Part of a network of such centres being set up across the world, it is located in Navi Mumbai, and was unveiled by none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The WEF has offices in New York, Tokyo and Beijing.

WEF has roped in the UN for its project. It engages with national governments by asking them to promote public-private initiatives. It tries to use the world’s scientific and engineering knowledge to promote its agenda. China will play a major role in this shift because of its manufacturing capacities and its

control over rare earths. In 2017, the WEF conclave in Davos attracted considerable attention when, for the first time, a head of state from the People’s Republic of China was present at the alpine resort.

The current pandemic is a trigger for the launch of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which has been on the cards since the 2008 meltdown. The medical-industrial complex has earned billions of dollars in a short span of two years, making a killing from selling protective gear, medicines, vaccines etc. The lockdown has also killed a lot of the present industries, paving the way for newer Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies. Working from home has increased the sale of smart phones and computers enormously. Millions of school children are using smart phones for online learning. E-commerce and home deliveries have come of age. People are buying furniture, refrigerators and even cars online! Meanwhile, millions of people have lost jobs and hunger is looming on the horizon.

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While climate change is the mega crisis facing humanity, in the present moment, it is the growing hunger crisis triggered by the lockdowns that is the most immediate challenge.

Malnutrition and famine are closely related. During a famine those people die who are already suffering from malnutrition. If food is available then malnutrition can be addressed and people need not die. In today's world there is enough food available. It was so even during the 1943 Bengal famine when a very large number of people died. So why do people die in a famine? It is because they are unable to pay for food.

Dr Binayak Sen has written extensively on the relation between malnutrition and famine. Here is what he says:

"People need to be conscious of what constitutes a famine and what can be done about it. The "sudden collapse into starvation" is only the final phase of a famine. Famine is not marked by the death of the victims. There is a number of social, economic and political signs that mark a famine which we fail to recognise. The World Health Organisation states that any community with 40 percent of its population having a body mass index (BMI) less than 18.5 is in a state of famine. Child malnutrition is already a known fact with around 44 per cent of deaths under 5 years is due to malnutrition, but adult malnutrition is also widespread especially in the poorer sections of society. Anyone with BMI less than 18.5 is said to suffer from chronic energy deficiency or hunger. Data from the National Nutritional Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) states 37 per cent of adults in the country have a BMI of less than 18.5. This percentage goes higher among weaker sections. In some tribal regions, around 40 per cent of men

and 49 per cent of women have BMI less than 18.5. By implication, it means large areas of India are famine affected. Not only is there a deficit in consumption of food grains but also that the deficit is increasing. This state of widespread ongoing famine coexists with an abundance of food with national granaries overflowing."

The project of the proletariat is consciousness driven and requires a change of mindset from individualism of capitalist society to a collective consciousness. So, it is a difficult project.

For a more conscious project, different things will happen in different areas depending on its history of people's mobilisation. In countries which are strong centres of capitalism the governments will make only cosmetic changes but any real change will be prevented from occurring. Typically these are the countries which have nuclear weapons and nuclear power. But there are also other countries; for example, Australia. In these countries local actions like Transition Town will be important.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are countries like Cuba and some countries in Latin America and smaller countries in Europe where people are conscious and have progressive governments.

In reality, halfway measures occur in those areas where capital is weak and the situation is desperate. Good leadership can make a lot of difference. In India, the North East States and Kerala might see some good activity. And may be some remote regions which are not rich in minerals, people may be left to fend for themselves and will survive. In rest of the country, only local initiatives offer any hope for achieving good results.

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DRC LETTER

'I Confess'

Dipanjan Rai Chaudhuri

[Dipanjan Rai Chaudhuri, a long-time associate of Frontier and a renowned Naxalite activist passed away in Kolkata on October 24, 2020. Before his death he wrote a letter to his friends explaining some points, particularly in relation to his journey to London after release from jail in 1971. This is said to be the last letter of Dipanjan. Two of his fellow-travellers gave this letter to 12 persons, including Ashim Chatterjee (Kaka), as per Dipanjan's wish to deliver it only after his death. Kaka apart, notable recipients of the letter were Tania, Muzaffar, Babu, Kumaresh, Tapas Bose and six others. We publish below this letter under the caption—'I Confess'.]

My friends,

CORONA VIRUS PREVENTS me from taking your hands. Who knows this is the last of plagues perhaps and so we might meet in the anti-room of Mephistopheles? Of course, if you cross the plague successfully, we will

be living separated for eternity. I find that, there are still friends, who wish to define me by my passage to England. For them, I say that, it was a bad move and not adequate compensation can be arranged, as I have also tried to explain this, in the 'India' book by Naipaul. However, it

must be placed on the records that, during my penitentiary days, it was the party, who first introduced and offered me the role of playing 'Shaitaan' to Adam. It was a party project. As we had decoded that, old man would be kept out of the council hall, I drop the audacity of offering suggestions for the tactical line. I say only that all said and done the little momentum that remains at this moment may be harnessed by our friend and guide Kaka, with his critique of the pro-China line without falling into the Indonesian or the Filipino errors.

No woman to shed tears, not an ideal *Dasvidaniya*, or what say you?

From

Dipanjan Rai Chaudhuri