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# Connecting the Dots

## An Anthology

Volume 1

Editor

Binu Mathew



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Dear Readers,

Ever since Countercurrents.org came online in May 2002, it was our dream to make it available to readers who can not access it on internet. With the 'Countercurrents Connecting the Dots – An Anthology' series this dream is coming true. This issue features articles published in Countercurrents.org in April, 2017. There are thousands of other valuable articles on our website. We hope to make it available in book form in future.

True to the character of Countercurrents.org, this volume contains an eclectic collection of articles on important events and issues that featured in our online daily issues. The content ranges from global, national, environmental, human rights and philosophical issues to almost all topics that we, humanity, face collectively in this moment of global crisis, that we at Countercurrents.org term as the 'Titanic Moment' in history.

This issue features the Khan Sheikhoun chemical attack in Syria and the following U.S air raid in Shayrat Air Base, the Mother of all Bombs attack in Afghanistan and Erdogan's victory in Turkey. In Palestine it is the year of anniversaries, from 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Balfour declaration to 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the occupation of Palestine, 50<sup>th</sup> year of Six Day war which captured the rest of Palestine.

In South Asia we saw the lynching of Mashal Khan in Palestine, Pehlu Khan in India. The Ayodhya case too came into limelight once again. We explore in this volume the legal and ethical aspect of the dispute. Kashmir is burning. We cover Kashmir issue from many angles. We have important interviews with John Scales Avery, one of the greatest living intellectuals, Anand Patwardhan, a giant of Indian documentary films and Anand Teltumbde another intellectual giant.

Hoping that this new initiative from Countercurrents.org will be enthusiastically received by our enlightened readers, we submit this volume for your reading, discussion and most importantly searching for counter solutions and actions without which humanity has a hard chance of survival.

Yours Sincerely

Binu Mathew

Editor

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# AL-SHAYRAT AIRFIELD ATTACK VIOLATES UN CHARTER

Richard Falk\*

In early morning darkness on April 7<sup>th</sup> the United States fired 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at the Syrian al-Shayrat Airfield from two American destroyers stationed in the Eastern Mediterranean. It described the targets as Syrian fighter jets, radar, fuel facilities used for the aircraft. It asserted prior notification of Russian authorities and offered the assurance that precautions were taken to avoid risks to Russian or Syrian military personnel. Pentagon spokespersons suggested that in addition to doing damage to the airfield, the attack had the intended effect of “reducing the Syrian government’s ability to deliver chemical weapons.”

President Donald Trump in a short public statement justified the attack as a proportionate response to the Syrian use of chemical weapons against the town of Khan Sheikhoun in the western Syrian province of Idlib a few days earlier, which killed an estimated 80 persons, wounding hundreds more. Although there were denials of Syrian responsibility for the attack from Damascus and Moscow, a strong international consensus supported the U.S. view that Bashar al-Assad had ordered the attack allegedly as a means of convincing opposition forces concentrated in Idlib that it was time to surrender.

In the background, is the conviction among the more militaristic policy advisors and political figures, including Trump, that President Barack Obama’s failure to enforce his 2012 ‘red line’ warning to Syria emboldened Assad to launch this latest attack with chemical weapons. Of course, this is all hawkish speculation that can be neither proven nor disproven, but it undoubtedly influenced the Trump entourage to suppose that it was presented with an opportunity to exhibit a greater readiness to use American military force in the Syrian conflict, incidentally, an outlook long advocated by Hillary Clinton and many of her advisors and foreign policy supporters. To do so, abandoned one of Trump’s

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signature pledges, to avoid military engagement in the conflicts raging throughout the Middle East, which he portrayed as a costly failure of prior American political leaders. Trump under pressure due to the growing evidence of ties with Russian political leaders during the 2016 presidential campaign may have welcomed an occasion on which to demonstrate his independence from Moscow and Putin. The departure from the Trump campaign agenda is particularly pointed as there were no American casualties resulting from the attack on Khan Sheikhoun 60 hours earlier than the Tomahawk response.

In Trump's brief public rationale, the red line argument was not relied upon, but rather the combination of humanitarian outrage and grief with an assertion of the "national security interest of the United States to prevent and deter the spread and use of deadly chemical weapons." This geopolitical purpose was reinforced by a cursory appeal to international law and even the UN Security Council: "There can be no dispute that Syria used banned chemical weapons, violated its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and ignored the urging of the U.N. Security Council." Yet identifying Syria's evident violation of international law should not be confused with an international law justification for the use of retaliatory force. In using this language Trump was evidently seeking to weaken the impression of an irresponsible unilateral American recourse to non-defensive force without bothering to seek an endorsement from the U.S. Congress or the UN. Not surprisingly Moscow and Damascus both condemned the attack as an act of 'aggression' and 'a flagrant violation of international law.'

Trump used some additional words designed to draw attention away from the unilateral nature of the attack by contending that it fulfilled the common goals of "civilized nations" to deter Assad and defeat terrorism, thereby linking the American initiative to what he called 'justice' rather than basing legitimacy exclusively on an appeal to 'law' or 'order.' Trump expressed this sentiment as follows: "And we hope that as long as America stands for justice, that peace and harmony will in the end prevail." This is very different in tone, substance, and policy from Trump's campaign rhetoric, which stridently stressed 'America first,' clarified as a call to act with reinvigorated resolve to devote military capabilities exclusively to promoting U.S. material national interests, and to stop wasting resources and energy by trying to address the larger concerns of the world, especially in the Middle East. This abrupt affinity with an internationalist spirit is made explicit in Trump's final words—"Good night, and God bless America and the entire world." As far as I know, this ritualistic invocation of God so much associated with George W. Bush and mimicked by Barack Obama never was extended to include "the entire world," which is such an unfamiliar wording as to suggest that it was deliberately inserted to stake a quite unexpected and renewed claim to American moral leadership in world affairs.

As with the attack itself, it seems likely to be a one/off embrace of cosmopolitan sentiments, but it is still worth noting. After all, language matters.

As has been suggested, bombing a Syrian airfield is unlikely to help Syrian children exposed to the terrible ravages of this war, that is, unless it does create a new momentum for a sustainable ceasefire. Already, the Russian reaction signals a worsening of relations with the United States in Syria and generally, and may end up producing the kind of confrontation that had led Republicans in the national security establishment to abandon Trump during the presidential campaign a year ago. With the removal of Bannon from the National Security Council it may not be premature to suggest that the deep state has found ways to reestablish its influence on national security policy after all seemed lost due to Trump's electoral victory and vindictive attitude toward 'the intelligence community.' It is far too early to say that bureaucratic wars are over, but there is at the very least clear movement evident toward the restoration of the pre-Trump established order in Washington.

The Khan Sheikhoun attack raises more fundamental questions that are neither raised nor resolved by Trump's speech. Despite making a gesture in the direction of international law by reference to the Chemical Weapons Convention and Security Council directives, the strike against al-Shayrat Airfield was a non-defensive use of force by the United States that violates the core UN Charter prohibition unless carried out on the basis of an explicit Security Council authorization. It is precisely the sort of unilateralism that the Charter, and post-1945 international law, made unlawful. In this context, there was no urgency or necessity to strike immediately that might have made the departure from Charter norms seem more reasonable. Of course, Security Council authorization would not have been forthcoming, given the near certainty that Russia would use its veto. In that sense, assuming the attribution of responsibility for the chemical weapons attack to the Assad regime holds up, which is by no means assured, there is a dilemma presented when the moral and political case for action is strong but lacks an ample justification in international law.

Of course, international law has for more three decades given way to the dictates of counterterrorism policies, which have featured retaliatory strikes ordered by American presidents without international authorization. Has this pattern of essentially unchallenged practice by the U.S. Government done away with the legal constraints of the UN Charter? Some jurists suggest that state practice of this character creates new expectations about the scope of the legality of international uses of force by states in addressing security threats posed by non-state actors or by internal threats of state/society atrocities as here and in the Kosovo War of 1999. In a decentralized world, lacking

governmental authority at regional and global levels, it seems regressive to endorse this return to a state of affairs where warfare is discretionary, and international law and respect for the authority of the United Nations are reduced to considerations of convenience and self-interest, and thus, as here, when inconvenient, a powerful state can use force with unconditional impunity in pursuit of its foreign policy goals.

There are also accompanying prudential questions about recourse to a military response in this instance where the intended target is the internationally recognised government of a sovereign state that is engaged in a protracted civil war. Is this a further challenge to state-centric world order? Will the attack magnify the conflict still further rather than deter Assad and make a political compromise more likely? Will the antagonism of Russia and Iran make it more difficult to bring the conflict to an end by reliance on diplomacy? There is no way to answer such questions beyond the observation that where, as here, international law opposes recourse to force, the risks of further escalation are considerable, and the rise of geopolitical tensions inevitable, the presumption should be strongly against a military response.

Then there are domestic questions about whether it is okay for an American president to resort to an international use of force without some sort of Congressional debate and authorization (short of a Declaration of War). Again Trump has plenty of precedents for acting without a specific Congressional authorization from the presidencies of Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. Executive war making authority was definitely increased after the 9/11 attacks, and given a limited, although broad, legislative imprimatur in the Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) statute of 2001. AUMF is limited to those forces responsible for the 9/11 attacks and ‘associated forces,’ which the Obama presidency interpreted to extend to Al Qaeda wherever located, and without any time horizon. It seems beyond doubt that constitutionalism in the war/peace context has been severely weakened over the course of the last 70 years, and this latest episode just continues the trend. It would seem that where there is no necessity to act instantly and where there is no formal UN authorization, the underlying Republican commitment to checks and balances to avoid abuses of power, should have led Trump to seek authorization from Congress, and in light of his failure to do so, a critical reaction from Congress.

There are two clusters of serious questions raised. Is this a new turn toward belligerent internationalism by the Trump presidency that will shape the near future of American foreign policy in the Middle East, and possibly elsewhere? Does the reversion to unilateralism with respect to international uses of force

heighten the risks of geopolitical escalation and large-scale warfare, including possibly the threat or use of nuclear weapons?

# THE SILVER LINING OF TRUMP'S OWNERSHIP OF REGIME CHANGE POLICY IN SYRIA

Nauman Sadiq\*

On a positive note, it has been a good development that the Trump administration has owned the “regime change” policy of the Obama administration in Syria by launching cruise missiles strike against the Syrian air force in the al-Shayrat air base. Because over the decades, it has been a convenient stratagem of the Western powers with two-party political systems, particularly the US, to evade responsibility for the death and destruction brought on the hapless Middle Eastern countries by their predecessors after the elections.

For instance: during the Soviet-Afghan jihad of the late '70s and '80s, the Carter and Reagan administrations nurtured the Afghan jihadists against the Soviet-backed government in Kabul with the help of Pakistan's intelligence agencies. The Afghan jihad created a flood of millions of refugees who sought refuge in the border regions of Pakistan and Iran.

Moreover, the Reagan administration's policy of providing training and arms to the Afghan militants also had the unintended consequences of spawning al-Qaeda and Taliban and it also destabilized the Af-Pak region, which is still in the midst of lawlessness, perpetual anarchy and an unrelenting Taliban insurgency more than three and a half decades after the proxy war.

After the signing of the Geneva Accords in 1988, however, and the subsequent change of guard in Washington, the Clinton administration dissociated itself from the ill-fated Reagan administration's policy of nurturing Afghan militants with the help of Gulf's petrodollars and Pakistan's intelligence agencies and laid the blame squarely on minor regional actors.

Similarly, during the Libyan so-called “humanitarian intervention” in 2011, the Obama administration provided money and arms to myriads of tribal militias and Islamic jihadists to topple the Arab-nationalist Gaddafi regime. But after the policy backfired and pushed Libya into lawlessness, anarchy and civil war, the mainstream media is now pointing fingers at Egypt, UAE and Saudi Arabia for backing the renegade general, Khalifa Haftar, in eastern Libya even though

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he had lived for two decades<sup>1</sup> in the US right next to the CIA's headquarter in Langley, Virginia.

Moreover, if we were to draw parallels between the Soviet-Afghan jihad of the '80s and the Syrian proxy war of today, the Western powers used the training camps located in the Af-Pak border regions to train and arm the Afghan jihadists against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan with the help of Pakistan's intelligence agencies.

Similarly, the training camps located in the border regions of Turkey and Jordan are being used to provide training and weapons to Syrian militants to battle the Syrian regime with the collaboration of Turkish, Jordanian and Saudi intelligence agencies.

During the Afghan jihad, it is a known historical fact that the bulk of so-called "freedom fighters" was comprised of Pashtun Islamic jihadists, such as the factions of Jalaluddin Haqqani, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf and scores of others, some of which later coalesced together to form the Taliban Movement.

Similarly, in Syria, the majority of so-called "moderate rebels" is comprised of Islamic jihadists, such as Jaysh al-Islam, Ahrar al-Sham, al-Tawhid Brigade, al-Nusra Front and myriads of other militant groups, including a small portion of defected Syrian soldiers who go by the name of Free Syria Army (FSA).

Moreover, apart from Pashtun Islamic jihadists, various factions of the Northern Alliance of Tajiks and Uzbeks constituted the relatively "moderate" segment of the Afghan rebellion, even though those "moderate" warlords, like Ahmad Shah Massoud and Abul Rashid Dostum, were more ethnic and tribal in character than secular or nationalist, as such.

Similarly, the Kurds of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces can be compared with the Northern Alliance of Afghanistan. The socialist PYD/YPG Kurds of Syria, however, were allied with the Baathist regime against the Sunni Arab jihadists for the first three years of the Syrian civil war, i.e. from August 2011 to August 2014.

At the behest of the American stooge in Iraqi Kurdistan, Masoud Barzani, the Syrian Kurds have switched sides in the last couple of years after the United States policy reversal and declaration of war against one faction of the Syrian

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<sup>1</sup> Leaked tapes expose Western support for renegade Libyan general.

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/revealed-leaked-tapes-expose-western-support-renegade-libyan-general-185825787>

opposition, the Islamic State, when the latter overstepped its mandate in Syria and overran Mosul and Anbar in Iraq in June 2014.

Regarding the Western powers' modus operandi of waging proxy wars in the Middle East, since the times of the Soviet-Afghan jihad, during the eighties, it has been the fail-safe game plan of the master strategists at NATO to raise money from the oil-rich emirates of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE and Kuwait; then buy billions of dollars' worth of weapons from the arms' markets<sup>2</sup> [2] of the Eastern Europe; and then provide those weapons and guerilla warfare training to the disaffected population of the victim country by using the intelligence agencies of the latter's regional adversaries. Whether it's Afghanistan, Chechnya, Libya or Syria, the same playbook has been executed to perfection.

More to the point, raising funds for proxy wars from the Gulf Arab States allows the Western executives the freedom to evade congressional scrutiny; and the benefit of buying weapons from the unregulated arms' markets of the Eastern Europe is that such weapons cannot be traced back to the Western capitals; and using jihadist proxies to achieve strategic objectives has the advantage of taking the plea of "plausible deniability" if the strategy backfires, which it often does. Remember that al-Qaeda and Taliban were the by-products of the Soviet-Afghan jihad, and the Islamic State and its global network of terrorists is the blowback of the proxy war in Syria.

On the subject of the supposed "powerlessness" of the US in the global affairs, the Western think tanks and the corporate media's spin-doctors generally claim that Pakistan deceived the US in Afghanistan by not "doing more" to rein in the Taliban; Turkey hoodwinked the US in Syria by using the war against Islamic State as a pretext for cracking down on Kurds; Saudi Arabia and UAE betrayed the US in Yemen by mounting airstrikes against the Houthis and Saleh's loyalists; and once again, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt went against the "ostensible" policy of the US in Libya by destabilizing the Tripoli-based government, even though Khalifa Haftar is an American stooge, as I have already described.

If the US policymakers are so naïve then how come they still control the global political and economic order? This perennially whining attitude of the Western corporate media that such and such regional actors betrayed them otherwise they were on the top of their game is actually a clever stratagem that has been

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<sup>2</sup> Billions of dollars of weapons flowing from Eastern Europe to Middle East.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/27/weapons-flowing-eastern-europe-middle-east-revealed-arms-trade-syria>



deliberately designed by the spin-doctors to cast the Western powers in a positive light and to vilify the adversaries, even if the latter are their tactical allies in some of the regional conflicts.

Regarding the Pax Americana which is the reality of the contemporary global political and economic order, according to a recent infographic<sup>3</sup> [3] by New York Times, 210,000 US military personnel are currently stationed all over the world, including 79,000 in Europe, 45,000 in Japan, 28,500 in South Korea and 36,000 in the Middle East. By comparison, the number of US troops in Afghanistan is only 8,500 which is regarded as an occupied country. Thus all the European, Far Eastern and Middle Eastern states mentioned in this list are not independent countries but the colonies of the US.

Fighting wars through proxies allows the international power brokers the luxury of taking the plea of “plausible deniability” in their defense and at the same time they can shift all the blame for wrongdoing on the minor regional players like the Syrian government, Turkey, Saudi Arabia et al. The Western powers’ culpability lies in the fact that because of them a system of international justice based on sound principles of morality, justice and fair play cannot be constructed in which the violators can be punished for their wrongdoing and the victims of injustice, tyranny and violence can be protected.

The neocolonial powers only pay lip service to the cause of morality, justice and humanity in the international arena and their foreign policies are solely driven by the motive to protect the Western national interests without any regard for human suffering in the remote regions of the world.

More often than not, it isn’t even about protecting their national interests, bear in mind that the Western powers are not true democracies; they are oligarchies catering to the needs of their business interests that wield a disproportionate influence in the governmental decision-making and the formulation of public policy. Thus the real core of the oft-quoted “Western national interests” is mainly comprised of the Western corporate interests.

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<sup>3</sup> What the U.S. Gets for Defending Its Allies and Interests Abroad?

[http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/16/world/trump-military-role-treaties-allies-nato-asia-persian-gulf.html?smid=tw-share&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/16/world/trump-military-role-treaties-allies-nato-asia-persian-gulf.html?smid=tw-share&_r=0)

# SYRIA CHEMICAL WEAPON ATTACK: TRUTH COMES AT A COST

Dr Arshad M Khan\*

Shooting from the hip with unerring accuracy was the Wild West according to Hollywood. As anyone who has ever fired a pistol will tell you it is improbable, and historically the West's few gun duels were rather unremarkable. The latest hip-shooter is, of course, Donald J. Trump whose foreign policy seems to turn on a dime — from not interested in removing Bashar al-Assad to his having no place in a future Syria, all within a week.

The U.S. has a powerful military and it is very good at breaking things, so it is no surprise that presidents are tempted to use it. It doesn't matter that the problem requires shrewd diplomacy and difficult negotiations; the president is making a point.

In a ridiculous Kabuki drama, 59 Tomahawk missiles were fired off at Shayrat Air Base ... after the Russians had been forewarned and had promptly informed their Syrian allies, who were spotted removing equipment and personnel. Damaging a few hardened aircraft shelters and a few of the less serviceable aircraft makes the episode a token rather than a serious military attack. And costing the U.S. taxpayer \$1.6 million a piece for a total close to \$100 million, this missile show left the U.S. a likely loser financially.

Who knows what happened in Idlib when there hasn't been time for a proper investigation. Eyewitnesses report a plane dropping a bomb which is not much to go on. But a conventional bomb does its damage through its explosive force and would show much greater physical destruction at the site than a chemical weapon using a small quantity of explosive as a means for dispersing the gas. An examination of the site could prove or disprove the Russian assertion that a conventional weapon hitting a storage/manufacturing facility released organophosphates.

No such analysis from anyone, least of all Mr. Trump as he shed crocodile tears for the poisoned 'babies'. Instant death from gas is clearly more humane than shrapnel. It is why you won't see any pictures from Yemen (they are much too gruesome) where Mr. Trump's allies are making mincemeat out of men, women

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\* Dr Arshad M Khan (<http://ofthisandthat.org/index.html>) is a former Professor based in the U.S. whose comments over several decades have appeared in a wide-ranging array of print and electronic media. His work has been quoted in the U.S. Congress and published in the Congressional Record.

and children alike, even using cluster bombs in civilian areas. That does not cross Mr. Trump's 'many lines'. The Convention on Cluster Munitions bans their use and has been ratified by a majority of the world's nations.

It was another time but the same place, the UN, when Secretary of State Colin Powell accused the Iraqis of concealing WMDs. The denials of the Iraqi Ambassador were brushed aside, and the subsequent war continues in one form or another. A million plus dead and many millions displaced, an ISIS monster born, war in Syria and a refugee crisis in Europe. The latter tipping the scales in Britain's narrow Brexit vote. Who could have imagined the consequences or the ultimate cost — initially estimated at \$64 billion, but nearly \$5 trillion and counting according to a Sept 2016 report by the Watson Institute at Brown University.

Now we have UN Ambassador Nikki Haley's undiplomatic language accusing Syria of using chemical weapons. The question not being asked in this propaganda war is simple: What in heaven's name does Syria gain from using sarin gas on its own civilians? Assad is not an idiot. Syria does not need the extra firepower, it certainly does not need the opprobrium of the world, and, if one may recall, it surrendered all its chemical weapons (under international supervision) after the last such incident four years ago.

Quite frankly, this accusation makes as much sense as the one about Iraqi soldiers in Kuwait removing premature babies from hospital incubators leaving them to die, to steal the incubators. That one by the Kuwaiti Ambassador's daughter Nayirah al-Sabah was gospel at the time, even corroborated by Amnesty International, and helped propel the first Iraqi war under George Bush Senior. It was absolutely false.

When President Trump now says he is changing his mind about Assad, the objective seems to have been achieved. Whether it was a shot fired by intransigent rebels to disrupt the Russia-sponsored Syria peace talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, or an accident, the results are highly satisfactory for those who do not want peace. Again, it points not to Assad but elsewhere.

While military analysts like Col. Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, consider the Russian account "unsustainable" and "very fanciful," the idea that a storage/manufacturing facility could have partially damaged weapons leaking after the blast heat had dissipated may not be. The Russians are not fools and would not make a claim so easily dismissed. And as yet without forensic evidence, nobody can be certain what nerve agent is responsible.

Dan Kaszeta also a former military man concurs with Bretton-Gordon. Yet in 2013, the hexamine in government storage prompted him to blame the Assad regime for a chemical attack. However, hexamine has many uses. It was also

determined that the triggering devices used containers and explosive not in use by the Syrian army. The experienced Swiss prosecutor Carla Del Ponte, a member of the then UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria, expressed “strong concrete suspicions” of rebel culpability. A former Swiss attorney general and respected prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, her conclusion was categorical: “This was use on the part of the opposition, the rebels, not by the government authorities,” she had ascertained. Are military analysts unconsciously biased?

Now we are being told this is the second time Syria has used chemical weapons. The fake news never stops and neither do leaders or their representatives. Their currency is never counterfeit ... until it's too late. In the 2013 incident, the fake news would have had us believe that Assad invited UN inspectors and then exploded a chemical weapon 10km from their hotel.

It is important not to demonise Assad not only because it is unconscionable if he is innocent of these war crimes, but also because peace without him is at present unattainable. As a British MP, George Galloway, not taken in by the hysteria at the time said, “he may be bad but is he mad?” Here we are back again and it's time to repeat his question. Also one more — the elephant-in-the-room question: WHY?

‘Remember the Maine’ before the Spanish-American War; the Lusitania carrying weapons despite Germany’s strong warning before the First World War; the ‘Gulf of Tonkin’ before the Vietnam war; the ‘undeniable evidence’ of WMDs in Iraq; and now Syria — an unrepentant tarnished history of varnished mendacity costing millions of lives and tens of millions of refugees in a trail of horrendous human suffering.

The truth would be refreshing, but it comes at a tremendous cost. Ask some recent purveyors.

# TRUMP'S SYRIA ATTACK POSES NEW CONUNDRUMS FOR THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

Raghav Kaushik\*

There is widespread criticism of Trump's Syria attack on the left, and many of the reasons stated are spot on:

1. The attack was surely not motivated by humanitarian considerations, contrary to what is claimed.
2. The attack is illegal, both under US and international law, and hence constitutes an act of war.
3. The US has been conducting military strikes in Syria for well over two years. However, it is for the first time explicitly targeting the Assad regime.
4. It is stunning, yet predictable, to see the establishment, across party lines, line up behind the president in times of war. The same holds for the media that has predictably become the voice of the state department.
5. While the attack might be a one-off, it may also not be a one-off, and with the Trump administration, one can never be sure. A prolonged military confrontation with the Assad regime raises the prospect, however slim, of a military confrontation with Russia, setting the two nuclear powers "on a dangerous collision course".

Yet, even though there is general agreement on most of the above points, Trump's attack seems to have further polarised the anti-war movement, instead of uniting it. As always, the tone adopted by various arguments is a major factor contributing to the polarisation. However, there are also issues of substance that are at stake, that ought to be recognised.

Many analysts on the left have raised questions about who is responsible for the use of chemical weapons against the town of Khan Sheikhoun. It is unclear what is the objective of this line of questioning. While calling for a careful investigation is, of course, sensible, surely the goal is not to imply that if the Assad regime is in fact responsible for using chemical weapons, then perhaps the Syria attack is justified. The argument gets even murkier when some point

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out that the Assad regime had nothing to gain by using chemical weapons. We know very well from the history of state power that states often act in seemingly irrational ways to project their power. For example, it was unclear if Israel gained much by using white phosphorus against Gaza during Operation Cast Lead. Yet, it did. Similarly, the Assad regime's track record suggests that it is fully capable of using chemical weapons "aimed to demonstrate the government's impunity and to demoralise its foes".

The fact is that each of the criticisms raised above about the Syria attack holds *even if* the Assad regime was responsible for using chemical weapons. Questions of responsibility are the wrong issue to focus on.

Another significant issue on which most left analysts have been silent is the effect of the attack on ordinary Syrians. While some Syrians oppose the attack since "the airbase was instrumental in keeping at bay Islamic State militants", it is also true that for other Syrians "who have lived under Assad's bombs", a strike against the "killer pig Assad" is worth celebrating. For the latter Syrians, the illegality of the strike is a mere technicality. The US has, after all, been striking Syria for over two years; the difference is that for the first time, the right target has been hit.

This does not mean that antiwar activists in the US should stop protesting US military intervention in Syria. They should, because of the reasons stated above, plus historical evidence that together strongly argue that the cost of US intervention almost always exceeds its benefits.

The seeming contradiction between opinion on the ground and anti-war analysis is not specific to Syria. During the initial days of the Iraq war, many Iraqis celebrated the end of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. That never stopped the anti-war movement from criticising the war (rightly so). However, in the case of Syria, the degree of the contradiction is greater. The fact that the regime has wreaked havoc on a large scale with the aid of Iran and Russia means that US military action against the regime could be viewed as legitimate by many Syrians. As anti-war activists, our role should be to offer analyses that acknowledge these contradictions.

The anti-war movement has rarely been so fragmented. Yet, there is an urgent need for unity within the movement. How the movement responds to this challenge will determine how effective it is.

# THE CIVILIZED WORLD STRIKES AGAIN

Jim Miles\*

It is apparent given the timelines and the lack of time given to verifying the validity of accusations concerning the gas attack in Homs, Syria, that plans had already been coordinated for such an attack. Watching the mainstream media the viewer receives the impression from the wording of the announcer's reports and questions for the "experts" that the matter was already decided in favour of the U.S. military strike on the airbase. I see pictures of Colin Powell at the UN holding up glossy photos of supposed chemical weapons manufacturing plants.

It demonstrates to a high degree how easily manipulated Trump is and how there is not an iota of critical thinking occurring in Trump's prefrontal cortex. He has become a complete puppet to the military industrial complex regardless of his bold rhetoric during the election. Now that he is doing Hillary Clinton's work for her, his approval ratings are sure to improve. Trump likes to win, and if winning, or being perceived as a "winner" means doing as others say without any concerns for logic or rationality, so be it – of course, he is incapable of the latter anyway.

As Trump was dining with Xi Jinping at the moment of the attack, the generals in the background probably offered this up as something that could happen to North Korea as well. Admittedly China is not happy with North Korea, but they would be a whole lot less happier with U.S. nuclear missiles stationed in North Korea. China is capable of looking long term, unlike politicians and businesses in the west, and is also capable of destroying the US\$, not without harm to itself, but there is certainly a point where that would be an acceptable asymmetric counter to U.S. hegemonic desires.

Who benefits?

As for the chemic attacks, if one does use some rationality, meaning who benefits from it, the answer is definitely not Assad, and Assad should not be mistaken for either stupid or irrational. The beneficiaries are ISIS and al-Nusra (al-Qaeda in Syria). One of the sideline winners as always with U.S. military mayhem in the region, is Israel, a country all our politicians seem to fawn over in spite of their terrible human rights and international law record. Israel would

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love to have all the rest of the Middle East broken up into fighting little fragments of tribal groups in order that their tribe can dominate the region, its resources, and perhaps find a 'final solution' to the Palestinian demographic problem.

Another favourite ally, Saudi Arabia, also benefits. Canada is also enamoured of the Saudis, perhaps because they are the ones keeping the US fiat petrodollar afloat through its use as the reserve currency. Canada, of course, needs that as well as Canada's economy is very highly dependent on the U.S. economy and the US\$. Canada also enjoys a degree of manufacturing trade with Israel and Saudi Arabia, mostly in the field of armaments and 'security'.

In Turkey, Erdogan may benefit as he claims he wants more of the same, but he is playing a very dangerous double game. Being allied to the U.S. through NATO has some benefits, but it also has some drawbacks – obedience and subservience to empire in order to maintain its integrity geographically. The drawbacks concern the same item, geographic integrity, as the Kurdish people are at the cusp of establishing their own autonomous/independent zones, assisted by Canada and the U.S. The U.S. has supported then rescinded support for the Kurds, a people seemingly of 'convenience' for U.S./Israeli efforts at control of the Middle East. Being tied into Russia's economy, especially for agriculture, trade, and petroleum resources, another set of problems could occur.

### Domestic reaction

The Canadian public is generally ignorant of the complexities of foreign policy – well really they are not that complex when the baseline is U.S. desires to be global hegemon, supported by its ever favourite lap poodle, Canada. As mentioned above the MSM provide no real insights into this kind of overall picture as they are fully supportive of U.S. war efforts regardless of legality or intention.

Trudeau's response was that of a very much junior partner seeking to avoid abrading Trump's tender ego. He supported the action, a quick turnabout from his days earlier pronouncements about verifying the source, means, and accuracy of the attack (anytime I see "white helmets" now something fake must be going on). His thinking is fickle, a weather vane turning to avoid any harsh winds that might blow our way from criticising Trump or the U.S. in its imperial drive – and with NAFTA perhaps up for significant changes.

Of course, Pierre Poilievre, the House Conservative opposition leader of the day, pronounced his support as well, but at least the Conservatives are consistent in their hard right support of all things USA! USA! USA! Given that



several of their candidates for leadership have imitated certain Trump traits it would be surprising if they did otherwise.

Chrystia Freeland, Canada's foreign minister waiting to become Canada's leading ministerial oligarch has not said anything yet today. Two days ago our Lady in Red said the findings must be presented "in a highly credible international format so they cannot be disputed in any credible way." Along with Trudeau's lame additional comment about the way to resolve the matter in Syria is through negotiations (says the man sending troops to train/fight with the Kurds, and sending military vehicles to Saudi Arabia so they can continue to illegally attack Yemen), Freeland is an ardent neocon plutocrat (the Conservatives would love her as leader!). From the book titled *Plutocracy*, she writes,

"America really does need many of its plutocrats. We benefit from the goods they produce and the jobs they create. And even if a growing portion of those jobs are overseas, it is better to be the home of these innovators—native and immigrant alike—than not. In today's hypercompetitive global environment, we need a creative, dynamic super-elite more than ever."

Yeah, right on Chrystia, let's support the U.S. oligarchs in their pursuit of global dominance, assuming of course that you will become/are one of those "super-elites."

That was a bit of an aside, but shows how the connivances of the current Trudeau government are working with and for the global dominance of the U.S. ruling elites – and in spite of Trump's apparent wealth, it is not that they are whining for, but the deep state, the military industrial complex that runs the show behind the scenes, the main true benefactor of yesterday's attack on Syria.

# AMERICAN MILITARISM AS A WAY OF LIFE: BEYOND SYRIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Jon Kofas\*

## Introduction

Nothing unifies America at home and rallies support among its allies quicker than a bombing of a Muslim nation, no matter the ideological, political, and moral justifications about the military option as a first resort before or after the bombing. Governments divided and lacking popular support, governments questioned by a segment of the military, political and business elites, and by their allies resort to military conflict as a means of bringing together opposing factions and unifying the disparate elements behind military action, even if the longer term consequences are disastrous. This has been the case since fifth century Athens and it remains true to this day with the US in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century desperately holding on to its post-WWII role as the world's policeman amid gradual economic decline, chronic socioeconomic and sociopolitical polarisation, and the rising global influence of non-Western powers.

This is not to imply that the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad (2000-present) has been politically and socially just; certainly no more so than others in the region allied with the US against Syria in the civil war started in 2011 and intended to bring down the regime that the US, UK, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Turkey oppose. Nor does critical analysis of US militarism mean that Moscow backing Damascus is engaged in anything but the preservation of a long-time strategic ally; denying the West the privilege of enjoying hegemony in the Middle East. The issue is not one of moral superiority or “just war” by one side vs. the other. However, there are degrees of blame for the tragedy of Syria since 2011 just as is the case in Yemen’s monumental tragedy resulting from civil war.

Despite its long-standing record of militarism as a way of life in perpetuating Pax America since the Spanish-American War (1898-1901), the US insists on projecting the image that it has a morally, politically, and ideologically superior position to accord itself the role of patron imperialist delivering the wretched of

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the earth to Western capitalist civilization – a 21<sup>st</sup> century version of the 19<sup>th</sup> century “White Man’s Burden”.

Does the US have such a stellar record of delivering “freedom and democracy” to Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen or anywhere in the world where it has intervened militarily since the Spanish-American War that it reserves the right to conduct unilateral bombings killing mostly civilians? Is the US so concerned about delivering democracy to Syria and stopping the use of chemical weapons resulting in civilian deaths, or did it have a role in causing and perpetuating the Syrian civil war?

Other than delivering more contracts to defence companies and the ability to justify a 10% rise in the US defence budget of 2018 what exactly is the US national security interest in Syria, as candidate Donald Trump often asked throughout 2016 while campaigning. Other than creating the dislocation of tens of millions of refugees that burden neighbouring nations and Europe while denied entry into the US, what is the goal of American militarism? Is it the added acres as it was in Vietnam where defeat was inevitable from the outset but the war continued until there was no hope for Pax American to prevail? Other than throwing fuel on the fire of jihadist terrorism as the US defines it what exactly is the end game of destabilisation policies in the Middle East? Certainly not human rights and social justice because the entire world knows the US record regarding these issues as it does the treatment of its own minority citizens, immigrants, and refugees.

Military power for the sake of symbolism and feeling good comes at a very high cost and long-term consequences to the detriment of the country engaged in reckless conduct in everything from higher public debt to declining civilian economy. This has always been the case throughout history, from the Athenian Empire under Pericles, to the Roman Empire after Marcus Aurelius, the British Empire subjugating Africans and Asian, the Japanese Empire focused on “Asia for Asians” militarist policy, ND the German Empire and Nazi Germany largely responsible for the two world wars.

### US Bombing of Syria: Beyond the Regional Balance of Power

On 6 March 2017, the US hit Syrian Shayrat Airfield with 59 missiles from two ships in the Eastern Mediterranean. The reason given was that US officials “believed” – not knew as and had verified by the UN – that Damascus was responsible for the use of gas warfare against jihadist rebel targets a few days before where 100 civilians died. The UN Security Council had requested time to investigate the use of chemical weapons to determine what actually took place. Russia argued that Syria’s chemical weapons had been removed in 2014 and that

its planes hit a gas chemical weapons site belonging to jihadists, thus releasing the toxic chemicals that killed innocent civilians.

If one followed the same logic as the US government's justification for launching a missile attack on Syria, then where is the accountability for the US air strikes in Mosul (Iraq) that left twice as many civilians dead as the chemical strike in Syria in March 2017? In the age of the web and mass communications with photo and video evidence of atrocities, hypocrisy by any government or group is quickly exposed throughout the world no matter what the corporate or government media efforts to obfuscate the evidence and propagate.

Given their own foreign policy goals in the Middle East, Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other authoritarian Arab governments, many of which have been providing direct and indirect support to ISIS, al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups in Syria and Yemen, they immediately expressed support for US bombing. NATO members immediately came to the defence of their principal member that had been expressing lukewarm commitment toward the historical Atlantic Alliance with overtones for rapprochement toward Russia and political support for anti-EU right-wing populist parties in Europe. What a better way to bring the US back to the fold than to applaud bombing operations toward Syria. What a better way to send a signal to Russia, Iran and China that have been supporting Assad than to strike at Syrian military targets?

Just days before the US struck Syria, both the US Secretary of State and President publicly stated non-interference policy, refusing to engage in regime change politics like the Obama administration. Because the continuation of American militarism as a way of life has been a catalyst to political unity and distraction from the serious issues that matter in peoples' material lives – living standards, health care, affordable housing and college – Trump caved to immense institutional pressures for military action regardless of the longer term costs and regardless of the absence of any goals other than deterrence.

Did Assad or Russia have a motive to use chemical weapons precisely at a time that Washington announced it was content with the status quo? An investigation could prove that Russia and Syria were indeed responsible, but it has yet to take place. Did jihadist rebels have such a motive immediately after Trump announced that Assad's regime was acceptable? Eventually, we will find out who really used chemical weapons, just as we found out that Saddam Hussein's Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction but the US and UK governments had absolutely no problem lying to the UN, to their citizens and to the world. By the time the facts emerge about who used chemical weapons in Syria, the US would be preoccupied with other military operations because militarism for the purpose of destabilisation remains a way of life for US foreign

policy, no matter the announcement by Trump to be more restrained and narrowly focused about highly costly military operations.

As already stated, there were enormous domestic and international pressures on the US to remain the status quo Cold War power committed to NATO, militarism, and anti-Russian as though we are still amid the Cuban Missile Crisis. Domestic and international pressures on Trump expected him to play the role of the world's policeman with destabilisation in the Middle East at the epicentre. There was and still is very little support domestically among both US political parties and among EU and Middle East allies to deviate from the long-standing policy of militarism as a way of life because political, military and economic elites of all the respective countries benefit from militarism linked to political and economic interests. Saudi Arabia purchasing billions of dollars in defence contracts from the US and UK have tragic implication in Yemen's civil war – Sunni-Shiite power struggle. This struggle that has resulted in one of the world's worse humanitarian crisis is inexorably linked to massive profits in the UK and US selling weapons to Saudi Arabia.

This is not to minimise the regional balance of power that has to do with Iran emerging as the most powerful regional player after the US spent close to \$4.6 trillion in the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the Gulf States do not want a powerful Iran as much in Syria and Iraq as in Yemen. For the sake of multi-billion dollar defence contracts and securing the loyalty of authoritarian Arab regimes, the price paid is by millions of civilians including women and children that the US and UK bombs have killed, injured, and displaced in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As far as the US and its allies are concerned, these are not war crimes. Just as the case of innocent civilian victims in Mosul Iraq killed by US bombs are collateral damage rather than war crimes, similarly, any war casualties no matter where and how many are just that, whereas the same war casualties owing to enemy fire constitute war crimes. American Exceptionalism remains a justification for a license to maintain militarism as a way of life.

### Domestic Political Pressure

The Democrat Party's strategy has been to use the Cold War anti-Russia card as a means of attacking Trump who invited WIKILEAKS and the Russians to hack the DNC emails and undermine the electoral process. Clearly, Trump's family and various associates under FBI investigation have had financial interests in Russia and they have proved that they were at least willing to sell policy for the right price, no differently than Democrats have done with Wall Street and friendly nations. To mobilize public support among the popular base, which was sharply divided between the progressive wing of Senator Bernie

Sanders and the neoliberal-militarist wing of the Obama-Clinton establishment, the Obama-Clinton Cold War-neoliberal wing of the party used the Russian issue to attack Trump from the right in an ironic role reversal with rightwing Republicans like John McCain siding with Cold War Democrats.

The day after Trump was sworn into office, there were mass demonstrations against him. Popular protests continued against the Muslim ban executive order randomly targeting Islamic nations that have no history of posing a threat to US national security. The Democrat Party was moving left and Bernie Sanders, an Independent, was the most powerful politician in the Democrat camp. To bring the party back to its Cold War-neoliberal agenda that faithfully serves Wall Street and the military-industrial complex, the party establishment focused on the Russian menace, rather than on the corruption of the Trump family and associates who placed their personal financial interests above those of the broader national interest.

This is not to pass judgment on what Russia did with the election because there has been no evidence declassified to prove anything either way. However, by adopting a hard line toward Russia, Democrats presented themselves as more patriotic, more nationalistic, and more willing to have a full blown new Cold War than Republicans. Even European leaders were so confused that they were asking both Moscow and Washington to clarify where exactly US-Russian relations stand. The anti-Russian Cold War strategy served Democrats well with the military, political, and corporate elites linked to the party, while it projected the image of a Democrat Party embracing patriotism and national interest that Republicans were at best ignoring and at worst betrayed. Amid FBI and congressional investigations of the Trump clique's ties to Russia, Democrats pushed the White House to seriously consider military adventurism as a panacea, at least short term and as another Trump distraction from his troubles with Congress sceptical about his agenda. As far as Democrats and Republicans were concerned, militarism makes a politician a leader, a theme accepted by the corporate media, analysts, and the business elites.

In an article entitled, "The Syria strike could revive Trump's economic agenda" one journalist argued that: "The Pentagon's April 6 (2017) attack on a Syrian airfield used to launch chemical weapons has been about as popular as a military strike can be. Many world leaders support the move, either overtly or through lack of criticism. In Washington, Democrats who have been bashing Trump on everything voiced approval of the Syria strike. That includes Sen. Chuck Schumer and Rep. Nancy Pelosi, leaders of the Democratic resistance on Capitol Hill."

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/syria-strike-revive-trumps-economic-agenda-154609716.html>

Establishment Republicans in the Senate and House of Representatives on the defensive for Trump's Russia links finally felt elated when bombs started dropping on Syria. Defence contractors, 'think tanks', and the corporate media finally breathed a sigh of relief that Trump authorised military action signalling that he was willing to confront Putin by attacking his ally, Assad. It was as though military adventurism was the oxygen that Trump had taken away from the establishment and they were suffocating until bombs began dropping on Syria, symbolic as that action was. At last militarism as a way of life, although in very limited form, was back on track for the ideologues, for the Israeli lobby, for the corporate media, for all questioning Trump's patriotism amid allegations of Russian meddling in the US election. In the absence of going after North Korea militarily as a realistic option, and given the symbolism of having China's president at the time of ordering the bombing in Syria, Trump took the advice of the Pentagon, CIA and National Security Council as well as the Republicans who wanted him to prove that he was a mainstream Cold Warrior and not an isolationist.

### International Pressure

A strike against the Assad regime was a strike against Russia but also the new beginning of an international armed conflict. That was exactly what US allies wanted from the Trump administration. After all, he had raised doubts about pursuing foreign policy along the bipartisan path that had been carved out since the Truman Doctrine in 1947 with NATO at the centre of the militarist global network intended to facilitate Western imperial expansion. Although a number of foreign governments stated that the US government "believed" (not had facts) that the Damascus government used chemical weapons, it was hardly surprising that all US allies, except Austria, backed US military strikes against Syria and were unwilling to have the US wait for a multilateral approach with some semblance of UN consultation. Clearly, there was no cost to US allies and many benefits to see Trump move into the foreign/defence policy mainstream that he had vowed to ignore.

One could argue that the risk in such action was alienating Russia and Muslims worldwide, with possible terrorist strikes in Western cities such as the one that took place in Stockholm Sweden hours after the US dropped bombs on Syria. Echoing unilateral themes, Trump has stated that he did not wish to be the leader of the Free World, but of the US, thus disregarding the historic commitment to leading military blocs and defining national security on the basis of the Truman Doctrine.

The US ranks as the world's most hated nation followed by its close ally Israel which relishes in American militarism and destabilisation policies. Dropping bombs on Syria would not make the US much more unpopular than it is already.

Anti-Americanism began to decline when Obama was elected in 2008, after he had promised but never delivered on a policy that placed diplomacy ahead of military solutions; respect of national sovereignty and multilateral institutions ahead of unilateral intervention; respect for international law and human rights above drone warfare that has killed countless civilians; and observance of national sovereignty and self-determination instead of military intervention that feeds defense contractors more profits and makes ideologues feel better about their delusional sense of American superiority.

Predictably, Syrian allies Russia and Iran categorically condemned US bombing as a violation of Syria's national sovereignty and an act of aggression and international norms, calling an emergency UN Security Council meeting where Russia and Syria castigated the US for its hypocrisy when it comes to talking about the war on terror but pursue policies that promote terrorism. US-Russian relations have obviously reached a new low point, as Moscow accused Washington that "terrorists" struck immediately after US bombing, thus signalling a green light for the resurgence in the waning Syrian civil war. Because ISIS benefits from any kind of US or US-allied strikes against Assad, it becomes very difficult to convince public opinion around the world that the goal is to defeat terrorism.

The more important player in all of this was China. President Xi Jinping was having dinner with Trump when the US gave the order to commence bombing. The official reaction of China was to condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone but to call for diplomatic instead of military action as a solution to political problems. Unofficially, the Chinese have much larger trade and the South China Sea geopolitical issues that concern them to the degree they would understandably not make Syria the core of their discussions. However, China's UN voting record has been consistently against the US and on the side of Russia and Iran when it comes to the balance of power in the Middle East.

Amid the emotionally-charged atmosphere of the bombings, there were many US politicians, media analysts and others offering opinions about how the entire world would in effect roll over and play dead, or taught a lesson simply because the US dropped 59 missiles on Syrian military targets. There are also those who believe that US demonstrating military resolve somehow proves the US is still the superpower it was in the early Cold War, no matter how much more influential China has become in the world economy. Very quickly the Trump administration will discover what the Obama administration learned the hard way, namely that the policy toward Syria immersed in contradictions must be set aside because it leads nowhere.

Militarism as a way of life in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century carried a much heavier influence in a world divided between Communist East and capitalist



West, a world in which the US was not just the preeminent military power but economic and technological/industrial one as well. In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, militarism as a way of life still sends a message about America's resolve to use the military option first and resort to diplomacy when that option has failed. Nevertheless, it is more symbolic as it makes people feel good about gunboat diplomacy and somehow asserts their sense of identity with the past when the US militarism was the effective means of implementing "transformation policy". Such policy neglects to face the reality of American world influence in decline at all levels to the degree that the US has to bomb Syria in order to validate its status in the eyes of its own deeply divided citizenry and the world highly skeptical of the US as a responsible power unable to use its influence in the world arena unless it uses bombs.

If the goal was regime change as the US and those supporting its military solution policy suggest, they are in for a reality check. Assad is stronger than he has been at any time since the US and its allies instigated the civil war. Moreover, only delusional analysts believe that Russia and Iran will simply walk away from Syria and allow the US to reduce it to the kind of chaos that they reduced Libya, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The US refusal to accept defeat in its covert and overt operations in Syria prolongs the tragedy for the people of Syria and keeps the entire Middle East in a chronic state of instability under authoritarian regimes.

Even if Assad is removed, the idea that a pro-US regime will govern Syria suggests that those dreaming of it do not know Syrian history and have no clue about Syrian society and culture. The best the US can do is to negotiate with Russia and Iran to strike a deal about the regional balance of power. However, US, Western European, Saudi Arabian and Israeli interests have a lot to gain politically and financially by having Washington maintain a destabilization policy, thus militarism as a way of life is a deeply ingrained pattern in US foreign policy with deep roots as much in the military and political establishment as in the corporate structure.

# TRUMP ATTACKS SYRIA: A GAMBIT AND A WAR CRIME

Taj Hashmi\*

There are contradictory opinions about who on last Tuesday, April 4<sup>th</sup> used chemical weapons, which killed more than 80 civilians including children in the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhun in Syria. Some pundits impute the deadly Sarin gas attack to Bashar al-Assad, while others believe terrorists belonging to the al-Nusra Front, which is an al Qaeda surrogate and friends with pro-Western Saudi Arabia and Turkey, are behind the attacks. There's, however, no ambiguity about America's missile attacks on Syria's Shayrat airbase in the early dawn of Friday, April 7<sup>th</sup>. US government sources have confirmed 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles fired from US warships in the Mediterranean hit the air base, from where they claim Assad's forces launched the deadly chemical attacks on Syrian civilians.

Trump's missiles killed nine civilians including four children in villages near the base. Meanwhile, Republican and Democrat leaders, analysts, and media in the US are supportive of the attack, which seems to have boosted President Trump's self-confidence as the "Leader of the Free World", a hyperbolic expression Americans use in self-glorification. The illegal missile attack is likely to improve the President's sinking popularity among Americans, which was around 35 percent last week, one of the lowest in US history.

What's surprising – and extremely sickening though – is the way Western governments, media, analysts, and some of their counterparts across the world are analysing the short- and long-term effects of the missile attack, without outright condemning it as war crime. As if only the Assad regime is responsible for human rights violations and war crimes, while the US is just "defending democracy and freedom", as Americans always claim before and after all major wars and invasions it makes across the world. Sadly, only a handful of US analysts and politicians are publicly criticising the Trump administration for attacking Syria without a UN Security Council resolution, and without seeking any approval from the US Congress either. However, the Congress approval for invading a country by the US, doesn't bring any stamp of legitimacy for the crime, in international law.

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Damascus, Moscow, and Tehran are openly condemning the attack. NATO and EU countries in general, and Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and Turkey, in particular, are seemingly very happy with Trump as he punished Assad for “crossing the red line”. Some even praise Trump for not behaving like another Obama, who despite his promise, didn’t retaliate against Assad for “crossing the red line” by allegedly using chemical weapons against his own people, in 2013. While China isn’t relishing the attack, Russia has announced retaliatory steps against such attacks. It’s also going to strengthen Syrian air defence capabilities. Iran and Hezbollah have also registered their strong protests against this unlawful attack.

So far so good! However, those who are happy about the so-called “retaliatory attack” against Assad for his alleged use of chemical weapon against his own people don’t know several anti-Assad rebel groups also have piles of chemical weapons, and some of them have already used it in the recent past. On several occasions, neutral UN observers pointed fingers at some Syrian rebel groups, backed by the US, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey in 2012-2013, for chemical weapon attacks.

Syrian civil war is a cumulative long-drawn effect of multiple proxy wars in the region, between Washington and Moscow, and Tehran and the Riyadh-Tel Aviv-Ankara triumvirate, backed by Washington. It’s time to understand, Russia and China along with Iran and Hezbollah aren’t going to give up their interests in Syria. They aren’t going to accept a pro-Western regime there. In Syria, Russia has its strategically very important and only military base in the region. It has more than 100,000 “advisers” in the country. So, Trump’s missile attack in Syria is going to become an episode without any fruit for Washington and its allies. It’s time to reflect on what former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan emphatically stated in June 2012 after the failure of the UN-sponsored peace plan in Syria: “Syria is not Libya, it will not implode; it will explode beyond its borders”

Now, is Syria only a “strategic issue” or a battlefield for multiple proxy wars? No. It’s a small country with very diverse population, who profess different faiths, and are racially multi-ethnic as well. It used to be a peaceful country. Thanks to the influence of the Israel Lobby, America has had a problematic relationship with Syria since 1948. In March 1949, CIA toppled the democratically elected President Shukri al-Quwatly through a military coup d’état and installed Colonel Husni al-Zaim (the “American Boy”) to power. Zaim legitimised Israel by signing an armistice with it and allowed the ARAMCO to pipe Saudi oil to go through Syria to the Mediterranean coast. Afterwards, America staged multiple military coups in Syria. Eventually, Syria became a self-reliant, free, modern, and secular dictatorship under Hafez al-

Assad, who ruled from 1971 to 2000. His son Bashar al-Assad is the President since 2000.

In view of the above, there's no reason to assume that what America, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and their allies are doing in Syria is anything but promoting democracy, human rights, and secularism. Syria is possibly the most secular country where Shia, Sunni, Maronite, Druze, Christian, atheists, pagans, and women enjoy much more freedom and equal opportunities than anywhere else in the Muslim World. If promotion of democracy and freedom is the prime US objective in Syria, one wonders as to why it is teaming up with Saudi Arabia and its reactionary allies, the thuggish Jabhat al-Nusra, Free Syrian Army, and last but not least, ISIS! As Fareed Zakaria told CNN this Friday (April 7<sup>th</sup>), ISIS is a bigger threat to the free world than the Assad regime. "The weaker Assad gets, ISIS becomes stronger", he spelt out.

Despite the sound and fury about Trump's missile attack in Syria – which amounts to war crime – it's nothing more than a balderdash, so much so that it's only going to boost Trump's sinking popularity among Americans, who are historically great admirers of presidents who invade countries and kill tens of thousands of civilians, in the pursuit of democracy, freedom, and glory for the "Greatest Nation on Earth". Since the attack has agitated and angered Putin a lot, it could work like a steroid shot for Trump. He can now defend himself better from those who think Putin's hackers were somehow instrumental in his victory in the Presidential election.

Nevertheless, a war crime is a war crime! The US has no international mandate to work as the custodian of any world order. There's nothing called "US exceptionalism" in any textbook on international law or diplomacy. Any unilateral invasion of another country, without prior approval from the UN Security Council, is a flagrant violation of international law, hence a war crime. Unfortunately, the US has been behaving like a bull in the china shop since its annexation of Mexican territories in the 1840s. It's invading countries, almost non-stop and with impunity from Hawaii to the Philippines, Hiroshima to Honduras, Indo-China to Indonesia, Afghanistan to Iraq, Libya, and Syria – and in the process, has killed multiple millions of innocent civilians across the world. Instead of justifying the latest US aggression in Syria, it's time to condemn it as war crime. The UN should ask US to apologise to Syria and pay compensation for the illegal attack.

# TRUMP DOES A DIRTY HARRY – AND AFRICA STARVES

Dr Richard Hil\*

So; President Trump launches 59 Tomahawk missiles (each costing over \$1 million) to obliterate Syrian air base because we're informed, he was moved by footage of chemically impacted children. As it turns out, it was, according to Fairfax's Paul McGeogh, one of the Trump family members, Ivanka, who was so moved. Still, the shocking images apparently drove the President to the final moral frontier; he simply had to act – this, after much policy flip-flopping in the previous week, and notwithstanding his public displays of breathtaking insensitivity toward Syrian refugees during the election campaign. Suddenly, Trump was cast as the steely yet compassionate man of action. Not for him the red-lines without consequence. No; America's Putin-cum-Dirty Harry was set to act. As he huddled alongside his national security advisers and defence chiefs in a tiny room in his Florida holiday complex, with Steve Bannon watching from the sidelines, Trump was all grim determination, bottom lip protruding in *Ill Duce* fashion.

Despite the likely geopolitical fall-out, Trump insisted that something had to be done to counter a demonstrable evil. Brave men rarely shy away from such challenges. God-given exceptionalism along with an opportunity to extricate himself from the Russian knot, also proved irresistible to the President, whose high stakes decision was warmly greeted by Britain, European allies and our very own prime minister, who – hilariously – described Trump's decision as “proportionate” and “calibrated”, which in some senses it was, but not quite in the way Turnbull meant.

Few if any of us, I hope, buy the Trump line about the chemical attacks, or anything else for that matter. After all, his caring credentials have long been the subject of derision, as have his claimed affinities with the poor and marginalised. Indeed, as Noam Chomsky recently pointed out on *Democracy Now*, while the Democrats and sections of the media have been glued to the Russian-inspired soap opera, the extremists in the Republican Party – and there are a lot of them – have set about dismantling the “administrative state”, which is code for a full-scale assault on public services (as demonstrated in the proposed federal budget). This included cuts to meals-on-wheels services, the cost of which over two years is equivalent to that spent on the missiles launched against Syria. Not

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much sign of caring there, or for the millions impacted by cuts to foreign aid and overseas ‘development,’ programs.

Despite Trump’s choreographed concern over children dying in Syria, many of his policies will cause great harm to millions of children in his own country, as well as to countless others across the globe. Particularly harmful will be his administration’s multi-pronged attack on the environment. In rolling back environmental protections and regulations and in seeking to discredit the climate science, Trump has provided a major fillip to the fossil fuel industry who will no doubt pump out, even more, carbon dioxide into an already saturated atmosphere. In short, Trump’s actions will add significantly to global warming, with all its damaging consequences.

As we know, those most impacted by global warming are the world’s poor. Last week, as Trump sat alongside Chinese leader Xi Jinping, tucking into his New York strip steak in a private dining room at Mar-a-Lago, conditions in East and southern Africa were getting grimmer by the minute.

Tens of millions of people face starvation in that part of the world, thanks to prolonged drought caused in large part by global warming. While much of the western media seem obsessed with Russian influence on the US election, the crisis in Africa has largely escaped public notice. Yet, as UN humanitarian chief, Stephen O’Brien informed the UN Security Council in early March, tens of millions of people in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and northeast Nigeria face chronic food insecurity, and “without collective and coordinated global efforts”, O’Brien said, “people will simply starve to death”, adding that, “many more will suffer and die from disease”. O’Brien further noted: “Already, at the beginning of the year, we are facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the creation of the United Nations...Now, more than 20 million people across four countries] in East Africa] face starvation and famine.” In Yemen, two-thirds of the population need aid and millions more are hungry.

Statistics belie the lived reality of chronic food shortage. As O’Brien told Al Jazeera: “What I saw and heard during my visit to Somalia was distressing – women and children walk for weeks in search of food and water. They have lost their livestock, water sources have dried up and they have nothing left to survive on...With everything lost, women, boys, girls and men now move to urban centres.” In South Sudan, O’Brien observes, “more than one million children are estimated to be acutely malnourished across the country, including 270,000 children who face the imminent risk of death should they not be reached in time with assistance”. In Somalia, the majority of the population - over 6million people (including over a million children) require urgent humanitarian assistance.

These countries have had their fair share of violent conflict with various insurgent groups in Sudan and Yemen vying for control. In the case of Yemen, Saudi Arabian weapons purchased from the United States have turned parts of that impoverished nation into rubble. Such destruction has disrupted already strained food supply networks, but anthropogenic climate change has deepened what the US military likes to refer to as the “threat multiplier”. As the UN’s International Fund for Agricultural Development noted of east and southern Africa, droughts are getting longer and their effects more pronounced, with the current drought leaving over 12million people in East Africa at death’s door, a situation only destined to get worse in coming months given lower than usual rainfall. The increased flow of refugees and a spike in communicable diseases have further exacerbated an already dire situation. The “new norm” includes more extreme weather events. As recently noted by NASA: “Effects that scientists had predicted in the past would result from global climate change are now occurring: loss of sea ice, accelerated sea level rise and longer, more intense heat waves”. Future effects will include: rising temperatures, significant changes to precipitation patterns (leading to more floods and inundation), more droughts and heatwaves, more intense storm systems, and significant sea level rises. Many countries have already been severely impacted. Over recent years the Canadian southeastern prairies were flooded, destroying millions of hectares of crops, major heatwaves, water shortages and floods have impacted South America, and global temperatures have broken all global records. Parts of Asia too have experienced extreme heat waves and floods, with a devastating flood in Jakarta in 2014. Despite the fact that countries across Africa emit much less carbon dioxide than richer western nations, including the US, they experience the most drastic effects of global warming. Writing in *The Guardian*, Lucy Lamble notes that according to the UN, over 36 million people face chronic food insecurity across southern and eastern Africa, “with the worst drought in decades at a time of record high temperatures”. Faced with the double whammy of a prolonged El Nino and climate change, Ethiopia, Kenya and the former “bread basket of Africa”, Zimbabwe, have been severely impacted. In Ethiopia four-fifths of the nation’s crops have failed. With temperatures rising, there are fears that “the long-term impacts of climate change are also undermining the region’s ability to endure extremes in weather, leaving huge numbers of people vulnerable to hunger and disease”. Africa director of World Vision, Beatrice Mwangi, observes that: “In the past, it was one big drought every 10 years, then it came to one drought every five years, and now the trends are showing that it will be one every three to five years... But it’s going to be the new norm”.

Australia has also been severely impacted by climate change, with major and prolonged heatwaves, destruction to the Great Barrier Reef, and more flooding. People living in low-lying atolls in the South Pacific Ocean, millions living in

southern Europe and across Africa and major parts of Asia are more than familiar with these effects, resulting in destruction to agricultural systems, more climate refugees, and conflict over resources. In 2009, the Global Forum, under the leadership of former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, noted that climate change was directly responsible for 300,000 per year, while the World Health Organization puts the figure at around 250,000, with most fatalities resulting from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress.

In short, when President Trump trumpets a new-found concern over the plight of children in Syria, we might remind ourselves of the violence he is already inflicting upon the world's poor – the unpeopled; those without a voice; out of sight, out of mind. The first stages of Trump's global violence emerged last week when he signed an executive order aimed at rolling back Obama's global warming policies.

Among other things, this will do away with limits to power plant carbon and methane emissions, as well as erase the moratorium on federal coal leasing.

And there are more executive orders to come.



# IF ASSAD MUST GO, SO MUST ALL THE WARMONGERS

Irwin Jerome\*

The real truth revealed by the chemical weapon tragedy in Syria's Idlib Province is that as the world continues to tear itself asunder and make a mockery of the United Nation's concept of international law and the sovereign rights of nations – supposedly intended to protect them from such unprovoked, preemptive attacks by rogue countries like the United States and its unilateral 59 Tomahawk cruise missile attack – is that so much acrimony and mistrust now exists to the point that the world teeters all the more dangerously on the edge of a potential World War III?

In the critical first days of the chemical weapon tragedy and the United States loose cannon/lone wolf response, the world's corporate media in the West especially did virtually nothing to get at the real truth about what really caused this tragedy. Instead it mostly offered up little more than propaganda, bogus allegations and glowing accolades about President Trump's showing his "presidential timber" as a warrior-leader, who now has proven himself capable of taking swift, decisive action against what the corporate media described as a chemical attack committed by Assad and his Government against innocent Syrian civilians and especially innocent, helpless children and babies. Historically, it was yet another classic false flag Vietnam 'Gulf of Tonkin' Resolution, Iraq 'Weapons of Mass Destruction' moment in time when Deep State Fifth Columnists – who always are gathered in the shadows of whatever geopolitical event, once again sought, as they always do – mobilize – through sabotage, disinformation, espionage or outright aggression with whatever external military forces – any excuse to foment another new war and commit yet another unprovoked attack against whatever country upon which it has imperial designs.

But if Assad and his family now must go for his/their alleged guilt in the recent chemical weapon attack in Idlib Province, then so must go the whole lot of world leaders and their families of rogues and criminals who are complicit in the horrendous reality of so much that has been the history of the world, especially during the last century up to the present day. If the Assad's now must go for the

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part they play in all this than so should: Trump, Putin, Erdogan, Netanyahu, Merkel, the Saudi Royal Family and a host of lesser lap dog war monger leader-followers in countries throughout the world.

In short, the world desperately needs a completely new makeover from top to bottom and regime changes throughout its length and breadth. Otherwise, the same *Fifth Column of the Deep State* and its multitude of neo-conservative/alt-right plotters, corporate media propagandists, arms merchants and manufacturers of the materials of war, Wall Street financiers and speculators will only continue to endlessly fan the flames war, death and destruction in the Middle East and everywhere else as they have for countless decades, regardless of the murders of however many hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, the utter devastation of whole countries and subsequent tsunami waves of refugees and immigrants who continue to sweep throughout every country in the world, creating endless political chaos and ideological backlash. To all those who relish creating such a dark, obscenely-evil world, rather than one based on light, peace and tranquillity, the world is considered nothing more than an abstract algorithm to be endlessly manipulated for their own advantage.

So to say, “Assad Must Go!”, is to say nothing significant will ever change for the better any more than it did when Saddam Hussein, Muammer Gadhafi, Osama Bin Laden and a host of other madmen who were removed and eliminated also finally “Had To Go!”. One could argue that it instead only makes world events so much worse because such mad men represent nothing more than the tip of an iceberg of what is constantly going on everywhere in the world.

The corporate media’s subterfuge, spin and hype has run riot over this latest chemical weapon tragedy in Syria. To try to make sense of it all is a crazy maker of Orwellian doublespeak of epic proportions. Some contend the whole problem began when President Trump received a fraudulent briefing on the Syrian event that some say originated from one Shajul Islam, a British-accused terrorist who was previously put on trial in the UK for terrorism offences and kidnapping, yet mysteriously was allowed to travel to Syria to join al-Qaeda’s fight to overthrow Assad where he is affiliated with a British Intelligence project, known as the *White Helmets*, who are funded by the British Foreign Office and USAID, and are the ones who provided the graphic images of the victims of the Idlib attack that were shown “*as evidence*” to the UN Security Council and Donald Trump.

British journalist Peter Hitchens telling description of the terrorist-controlled site of the Idlib Province attack immediately calls into question the source of such questionable ‘evidence’ when he commented, “No independent Western journalist could go there. He or she would be kidnapped or killed within hours.

Any report which came from that region is filtered through people who you never see. These are groups like Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, alias the al-Nusra Front, alias al-Qaeda, the Syrian 'opposition' which Britain and the U.S. have been supporting for years...the same movement which destroyed the Manhattan Twin Towers."

Yet U.S. military authorities, the CIA intelligence network and British MI5 already knew full-well before Trump's ordered attack that the chemical weapons in question came not from the Assad government's air force but from the warehouse/ammunition depot of an al-Qaeda based terrorist group that operated in the region. And the White Helmets only operate in terrorist-controlled areas, as they are in fact members of al-Qaeda. So, it begs the question who in the Deep State is behind the scenes mouthing who or what to say and do in all this? Is it Trump and his administration dictating to the generals and military what to say and do or is it the other way around? If President Trump was either lied to or kept ignorant of these facts by individuals in his administration or those within his national security/intelligence chain of command they should now all be exposed, fired from whatever their current position, criminally-charged with war crimes against humanity and, perhaps, even executed for treason?

Other geopolitical analysts even go so far as to say that the sources President Trump used to claim Syrian culpability for the chemical weapon attack began with the British, exclusively, and its corporate media who are the same Fifth Columnists who, for a multitude of nefarious reasons, have been coordinating an international attack on Trump's Presidency in an effort to destroy any positive potential for healthy, non-violent relationships with Russia and China so as to rebuild the U.S. and world economy. However, Trump is making the same mistake in Syria as President Bush did in Iraq when he only listened to those British and American Intelligence advisors who were/are clearly bent again on a war for which there is no compelling reason, the unintended consequences of which are certain to be catastrophic.

The Rupert Murdoch war propaganda machine likewise has gone into high gear over Syria, just as its atrocious Sun newspaper in the UK and Sydney, Australia's Daily Telegraph attacked anyone who questioned the corporate media's Big Lie. During the Iraq War Murdoch's media labelled all those who opposed it as scum and traitors, while labelling all those who now question the Assad/Syrian chemical attack spin as sick trolls. The British & Australian governments, in turn, initially cheered Trump after his cruise missile attack and applauded him for resorting to war when they had previously criticised Trump when he attempted to make peace overtures to Russia and China. Yet others go so far as to suggest that Trump was intentionally 'played' and set up as the 'fall guy' by

both al-Qaeda and the British Royal Family itself for the near world holocaust that might have occurred and still could because of Trump's cruise missile attack. It's very curious that this all occurred on the eve of President Trump's historic meeting with China's Xi Jinping that many had hoped would lead to a new and peaceful paradigm for economic and scientific progress in the world beyond all the mindless, senseless wars.

By contrast, the level of political acrimony in the world continues to escalate beyond anything that has come before. Progressives and peace activists are constantly ridiculed and made caricatures of by the corporate and social media. Trump, like the dupe that he is, beyond his war-mongering in Syria, continues to play into the hands of alt-right Fifth Columnists when he declares, like the bully that he is, "If China is not going to solve North Korea, we will, too!"

So many political analysts and pundits now wonder, "How has the world come to all this?" For starts, it has come to all this because ever since the Fifth Columnists in the Democratic Party, like Hillary Clinton, Robert Kagan, Victoria Nuland and other hardliner neo-conservatives in the Obama Administration, committed their violent intervention in the civil war of Libya, and then further enflamed the geopolitical scene by their covert interventions with a Nazi movement that led to a violent coup in the Ukraine. Almost all the pro-interventionist editorial pages in the United States corporate media since Trump's attack against Syria have similarly supported his interventionist actions, suggesting that the actions he took showed that he finally had "*become president*", as if such despicable actions are what makes a real man of a president. Editorials in such major U.S. papers as the: Wall Street Journal, New York Times, USA Today, New York Daily News, Washington Post, New York Post, Chicago Sun-Times and Denver Post heralded Trump's preemptive attack against Syria. Even normally progressive editorials like the San Jose Mercury News and LA Times have been ambiguous about their moral and geopolitical position on Trump's attack, while the New York Times even couched Trump's attack in terms of making one "feel some sense of emotional satisfaction...and *feeling good as a result of the attack*". The Pittsburg Post-Gazette again even went so far as to refer to Syria and North Korea together as Russia and China's *moderate little proxies*. While various pundits in the U.S. corporate media actually waxed poetically about the 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles that Trump hurled at Syria's sovereign territory.

One, in particular, MSNBC's Breaking News anchor Brian Williams bumped MSNBC Rachel Maddow to report Trump's attack on Syria. Invoking a line from the song "First We Take Manhattan", by the late Canadian poet-singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen, Williams described the Tomahawk cruise missiles as they lifted off of the decks of the U.S. warships, as "beautiful pictures in the

night”. His description of the cruise missiles seemed almost orgasmic if not religious. It was a reminder of something Leonard Cohen himself once said about that song when he revealed its meaning in an interview. Cohen commented, “I think it means exactly what it says. It is a terrorist song...There’s something about terrorism that I’ve always admired; the fact that there are no alibis or no compromises. That position is always attractive”.

Brian Williams and Leonard Cohen’s remarks call to mind a particular scene from the 1970 sci-fi movie “Planet of the Apes” that involved an Alpha-Omega Bomb; a large atomic bomb that was designated as a “Doomsday Bomb” to be used only as a last result that the few remaining human survivors referred to as The Divine Bomb. It had been placed at the altar of what used to be St. Patrick’s Cathedral in the irradiated ruins of New York City. This ‘Divine Bomb’ was venerated by a subspecies of psychic mutant humans who religiously safeguarded the missile and its operational launch system. The mutants believed they owed their very existence to this missile and worshipped it as a deity. They wore specifically designated latex masks to hide their grotesque features and only during their liturgical services to worship the bomb would they take off their masks to, “reveal their innermost selves unto their God”.

The implied suggestion is that what is being revealed here about the innermost nature of the United States as a whole – all its politicians, citizenry and violent history – by and large has demonstrated a constant fixated upon war since its very origins and probably won’t ever change until, in the end, it finally extinguishes itself and, in the process, unfortunately, possibly the entire world at the same time. As is commonly stated in many news reports and history books it simply is a very violent and violence-prone society that would rather happily spend the bulk of its national GDP and lifeblood of its people upon war materials, the conducting of war, and the funding of other societies in the world – like Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and others – who practice the same ideology, rather than on other more peaceful, non-violent, countries and solutions that would otherwise lead to an entirely different, more tranquil world and human being way of life.

# THE MOTHER OF ALL BOMBS GOES TO AFGHANISTAN

Dr Binoy Kampmark\*

These are the times where magnitude and size matters. Bombs in number with much heft and presence are being sought to root out those non-state jihadists of the Prophet, destructively maiming and killing all before them in the name of the next heavily drawn out cause.

On Friday, United States armed forces busied themselves with dropping such a weapon of truly lethal size against a country that has had more bombs directed at it than worthy industrial incentives in half a century.

It seemed to rival the announcement of a birth, and it was, in fact, sanctified as the “Mother of All Bombs” known less romantically as the GBU-43 Massive Ordnance Air Blast. (The only other conventional weapon of greater scale is the physically suggestive Massive Ordnance Penetrator, coming in at a busting 30,000 pounds.)

The use of this particular weapon was tediously familiar, reminding villagers on the ground in Nangarhar in eastern Afghanistan how their country has become fun and fodder for US air strikes since Trump came to power.

The new president, in turn, has built on the murderous momentum ushered in by the outgoing Obama presidency, which stepped up airstrikes in dramatic fashion with the departure of the majority of coalition troops two years ago.<sup>4</sup> Afghanistan remains a vacuum repeatedly filled by failed missions and violent urges.

Bombs of enormous power, short of the nuclear variety, were deployed against an elusive Osama bin Laden in the aftermath of the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. The issue then, as now, was his use of labyrinthine tunnel complexes. The weapons of choice then were 15,000-pound “daisy cutters” with a supposedly adept pulverising capability.

In the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Air Force Research Laboratory wished to add more punch to such weapons, designing a MOAB, ostensibly as a deterrent against the soon-to-be-deposed Saddam Hussein.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/2016/07/29/us-air-force-reports-sharp-climb-air-strikes-against-militants-afghanistan/87737638/>

The 21,600-pound beast was used against a complex of tunnels supposedly designed by Islamic State, killing 36 militants. A subsequent report from Afghan authorities raised that number to almost a hundred, though their US counterparts were staying mum.

“The United States takes the fight against ISIS very seriously,” claimed the historically challenged White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer, “and in order to defeat the group we must deny them operational space, which we did.”

General John W. Nicholson, US commander in Afghanistan, referenced the desperate tactics of the ISIS group as a justification for the weapon. “As ISIS-K’s losses have mounted, they are using IEDs, bunkers and tunnels to thicken their defence.” He further explained that “This is the right munition to reduce these obstacles and maintain the momentum of our offensive against ISIS-K.”<sup>5</sup>

In the meantime, WikiLeaks insisted on a dark irony to the whole story: those very same tunnels now being pulverised by mother bombs and what not were actually funded with resources from the Central Intelligence Agency.

WikiLeaks was hardly being controversial in mentioning it, citing a report from the *New York Times* by Mary Anne Weaver noting how the Tora Bora tunnel complex was envisaged and constructed during the war against the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup> “It’s miles of tunnels, bunkers and base camps, dug deeply into the steep rock walls, had been part of a CIA-financed complex built for the mujahideen.”

There was a repeated sense that this entire episode was one for show, the usual bullyboy psychology power tends to encourage. For one, would the North Koreans take note of this phallogocentric display of might? The regime in Pyongyang has been more erratic, and theatrical, of late, keeping up with the Trump administration’s own sense of thespian bluster.

Using such a weapon also carried various risks, not least of all the prospect of obliterating villagers in proximity of the oxygen hungry blast. In the optimistic and unconvincing overview given by Dawlat Waziri, Afghan ministry spokesman, the bomb had avoided causing mayhem to the civilian population. “No civilian has been hurt and only the base, which Daesh use to launch attacks in other parts of the province, was destroyed.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/13/united-states-drops-mother-of-all-bombs-on-isis-in-afghanistan/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/11/magazine/lost-at-tora-bora.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/13/us-military-drops-non-nuclear-bomb-afghanistan-islamic-state>

Where such a monstrosity fits into the legitimate canons of international law is hard to see. At worst, it has been destructive to sovereignty and the restrained use of force. “Through its use of blunt military force on non-state actors in South and West Asia,” Arun Mohan Sukumar solemnly notes, “the US had systematically weakened the restraints that the United Nations imposes on all countries, big and small.”<sup>8</sup>

Blanket justifications for such actions keep pivoting on UN Security Council Resolution 1373, deeming terrorism to be a “threat against international peace and security”, granting states the authority to target terrorism “by all means”.<sup>9</sup> An unfortunate and unguarded choice of words.

The actual impact of the weapon in terms of overall strategy is also shrouded in vague Pentagon speak and speculation, the sort typical in this long, misnamed period called the “War on Terror”. It was, according to one spokesman, merely “projected... that the bomb has the ability to collapse the tunnels” upon combatants operating within them. Assessments would have to follow, and these would not necessarily be conclusive.

What a wonderful sense of purpose for this Easter: a massacre, another sovereign violation and an entire compromise of values in the name of military bravado. All of this merely adds to the fact that Afghanistan has become a military test site for the United States, one where belligerent big boys may test their murderous toys with minimal restraint.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://thewire.in/124539/international-law-moab-india/>

<sup>9</sup>

<http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/specialmeetings/2012/docs/United%20Nations%20Security%20Council/>



# MOAB: MUSLIM LANDS ARE TESTING GROUND FOR DANGEROUS WEAPONS?

Abdus Sattar Ghazali\*

The U.S. Thursday (April 13) dropped a bomb with an explosive force equal to 11 tonnes of TNT on a cave complex used by the Afghanistan branch of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Pentagon said.

The bomb is officially called a GBU-43 or Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB), the origin of its nickname as the “mother of all bombs.” ,

The 9,797kg GBU-43 was dropped from a MC-130 aircraft in Achin district of Nangarhar province, close to the border with Pakistan, according to the Pentagon.

At the White House, President Donald Trump called the bombing “another very, very successful mission.” According to CBS News, asked if he personally authorised the strike, Mr. Trump said: “everybody knows exactly what happened.” “What I do is I authorise my military,” Mr. Trump said. “We have the greatest military in the world and they’ve done their job as usual. So, we have given them total authorization and that’s what they’re doing.”

White House Press secretary Sean Spicer said that the strike targeted a “system of tunnels and caves that ISIS fighters used to move around freely.” He said the U.S. “took all precautions necessary” to minimize civilian casualties.

Not surprisingly, the office of the US-client Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said in a statement the US attack was a part of a joint operation by Afghan and international troops. “Afghan and foreign troops closely coordinated this operation and were extra cautious to avoid any civilian casualties,” it said.

In a statement, the U.S. command in Afghanistan said the strike was “designed to minimize the risk to Afghan and U.S. Forces conducting clearing operations in the area while maximizing the destruction of ISIS fighters and facilities.” General John Nicholson, head of US and international forces in Afghanistan, said the “weapon achieved its intended purpose”. Nicholson said the decision to use the bomb was based on his assessment of military needs and not broader political considerations.

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## Hamid Karzai

Former Afghan president Hamid Karzai has condemned the dropping of the largest non-nuclear bomb ever used in combat, saying Afghanistan shouldn't be used as a "testing ground" for weapons. In a series of Twitter posts, Karzai said: "This is not the war on terror but the inhuman and most brutal misuse of our country as testing ground for new and dangerous weapons."

Afghan ambassador to Pakistan, Dr Omar Zakhilwal, also took to Twitter to share his views. Alluding to the bombing of Afghanistan since 1979, first by the USSR and then the U.S., ambassador Zakhilwal said: "If big bombs were the solution we would be the most secure place on earth today."

Hindustan Times quoted an Afghan journalist as tweeting: While the "civilized west" is celebrating Easter, the "uncivilized & barbarian Afghan Muslims" are being dropped at 21,000-pound bomb... Dropping 'mother of all bombs' was yet another stage show by Trump who made it clear that Muslim lands are but the West's laboratories.

### Towering flames

The GBU-43 ultra-heavy bomb is equal to 11 tonnes of TNT with a blast radius of 1.6km on each side. At a village 5km from the remote, mountainous area where the bomb was dropped, witnesses said the ground shook from shockwaves, but homes and shops appeared unaffected. "Last night's bomb was really huge. When it dropped, everywhere it was shaking," a resident told Reuters news agency, adding he believed no civilians were in the area hit.

Al Jazeera quoted spokesman for a hospital in eastern Nangarhar, as saying that the facility had received no dead or wounded from the attack.

On its part, ISIL denied it suffered any casualties. "Security source to Amaq agency denies any dead or wounded from the American strike in Nangarhar using a GBU-43/B," the group's self-styled news agency said on social media accounts.

The Taliban, meanwhile, condemned the bombing. "Using this massive bomb cannot be justified and will leave a material and psychological impact on our people," the armed group said in a statement.

### The GBU-43 Mother Of All Bombs

The 9,797kg GBU-43 was developed in 2003 just before the invasion of Iraq. According to the then Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld the test was in Florida intended to demonstrate the "enormous incentive" Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein had to relinquish power and "spare the world a conflict." The GBU-43 had never before been used in combat since its first test in 2003.

Marcus Weisgerber, global business editor of Defense One, tells CBS News that this heavy bomb is used to “penetrate through rock and concrete and then once they get through, they explode, creating devastation to whatever is below.” “It was the type of weapon that was most suited for this type of mission,” Weisgerber tells CBS News. “It was a target below the ground and there are a lot of people there — and this is the type of weapon that would neutralize that number of people.”

5,700 kg of GSX explosives, BLU-82 ‘Daisy Cutter,’ is the predecessor of 9,797kg GBU-43. BLU-82 ‘Daisy Cutter,’ was reportedly developed to create helicopter landing zones in dense jungles during the Vietnam conflict. It was dropped during the 1991 Gulf War on Iraqi troop concentrations. In November 2001, U.S. warplanes dropped the 15,000-pound “Daisy Cutter” bomb in Afghanistan. The USA Today reported in November 2001 that the Pentagon acknowledged that two of the automobile-sized bombs, the most powerful non-nuclear weapons in the U.S. inventory, have been dropped on Taliban troops in the past week.

# ARMS AND THE BABIES: UNBRIDLED COMPASSION FOR ALL THE CASUALTIES OF WAR

George Capaccio\*

*We must not conceal from ourselves that no improvement in the present depressing situation is possible without a severe struggle; for the handful of those who are really determined to do something is minute in comparison with the mass of the lukewarm and the misguided. And those who have an interest in keeping the machinery of war going are a very powerful body; they will stop at nothing to make public opinion subservient to their murderous ends.*

—Albert Einstein, 1934

Nikki Haley, U.S. Ambassador to the UN, is justifiably outraged by the slaughter of innocents in the Syrian town of Khan Sheikhoun where rebel forces are lodged. At least eighty-six people, including women and children, died from exposure to chemical weapons. Doctors Without Borders and the World Health Organization, after examining the bodies of victims, believe their deaths were caused by a possible nerve agent such as sarin. Western states, in particular, the U.S., France, and Britain blame the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for the attack, which left hundreds in need of emergency care.

During an emergency meeting of the Security Council, Ambassador Haley threatened unilateral action to punish the Syrian government for its army's alleged use of poison gas. Sporting a sapphire blue dress while displaying photographs of dead Syrian children, Haley warned that if the UN fails to respond to this latest atrocity, the United States will take matters into its own hands. "There are times in the life of states that we are compelled to take our own action," she said, echoing former President George W. Bush. At the start of the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Bush asserted that America doesn't need a permission slip to wage war. It will do whatever is necessary to preserve and defend its national security. UN Charter and international law be damned! As befits a monolithic empire, the law is what we say it is. And Congress, the

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theoretical arbiter in matters of war and peace, will naturally be sidelined. Who needs Congressional approval to start a war of aggression when all that really matters is our unqualified right to stand tall, act tough, and murder whomever we please.

In response to the deaths from poison gas, Haley's boss in the White House, during a press conference with Jordan's King Abdullah II, lamented the killing of babies, "innocent babies — babies! — little babies ...." Now, only a few days after the attack, Trump has demonstrated his fighting spirit by launching scores of Tomahawk cruise missiles at a Syrian government military base. I wager lots of folks in the media and the upper echelons of government bureaucracy are swooning with delight over the Big Guy's swagger, his willingness to throw caution to the wind and risk all-out war with Syria's most powerful ally — Russia. And to do so while no one knows for sure who gave the order to deploy chemical weapons, what weapons were actually used, and whether the Syrian government or any one of the numerous opposition groups was behind the attack, hoping the use of an illegal weapon would draw the United States into direct confrontation with Syria's armed forces.

I was struck by Trump's repeated reference to "babies," innocent little babies choking to death in clouds of poison. Perhaps Trump was genuinely moved by the horrific manner of their dying and decided he had to do something to show the world that America, beacon of freedom, democracy, and human rights, does not stand idly by while the most innocent, most vulnerable little beings among us are deliberately and savagely targeted. And yet, whoever the perpetrator(s) may turn out to be, a few things are abundantly clear to anyone who has been following events in the Middle East. For starters, we need look no further than our own government as a major threat to that region of the world's most vulnerable and at-risk populations. In 2015, Physicians for Social Responsibility published the results of their investigation into the death toll from the "war on terror," begun by the Bush Administration after the tragic events of 9/11:

This investigation comes to the conclusion that the war has, directly or indirectly, killed around 1 million people in Iraq, 220,000 in Afghanistan and 80,000 in Pakistan, i.e., a total of around 1.3 million. Not included in this figure are further war zones such as Yemen. The figure is approximately 10 times greater than that of which the public, experts and decision makers are aware of and propagated by the media and major NGOs. And this is only a conservative estimate. The total number of deaths in the three countries named above could also be in excess of 2 million, whereas a figure below 1 million is extremely unlikely.

Furthermore, the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that 8 to 10 million Iraqis are in need of humanitarian assistance out

of a total population of roughly 36 million people. About 4.7 million, or half of those in need of assistance, are children under the age of 18. The rapid spread of extremely dangerous jihadist groups, particularly Islamic State or ISIS, has generated a worsening security situation and new waves of internally displaced persons (IDPs) across central Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. As of January 2016, according to UNICEF, over 3.3 million people were displaced across Iraq with 1.5 million IDP children in need of immediate protection and assistance.

It bears repeating that much of the bloodshed, the rise of ISIS, the displacement of millions of families, the seemingly intractable refugee crisis, and the growing number of terrorist attacks in Europe are partially due to U.S. interference in the Middle East, its preference for conflict over diplomacy, and its hegemonic drive to control the region's trade routes and energy resources. While Ambassador Haley and President Trump are wringing their hands over the truly tragic slaughter of innocents in Syria, one wonders how they responded to news that in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul just a few short weeks ago, on March 17, hundreds of innocent civilians perished when their homes were bombed by U.S.-led air strikes against Isis strongholds in the city. While the exact number of deaths has yet to be determined, the U.S. military confirmed: "that a coalition airstrike had hit an Islamic State-held area of Iraq's Mosul where as many as 240 civilians may have been killed as a result of the air raid."

A statement issued by U.S. Central Command noted that Iraqi security forces requested the airstrike and that the targeted area was the same location where civilian casualties were reported. The *International Business Times*, an online news source, has published a series of photos documenting the aftermath of the airstrike. I may be mistaken but I don't recall seeing Ambassador Haley holding up any of these or comparable images of grief-stricken Iraqi parents weeping over the bodies of their children killed in the strike. Could their apparent indifference to the fate of these children be due to the cause of death? Instead of being the victims of the Syrian government's alleged use of poison gas, they died from American bombs, blessed by God and the Almighty's second-in-command, the U.S. Joint Chief of Staff. I guess that crucial difference — the type of weapons used and the side that used them — determines who is and who isn't worthy of our most righteous indignation and loudest sabre rattling.

One of the victims of the U.S. bombing of Mosul in March is four-year-old Hawra. Before the airstrike, her father, Alaa Hasan, left to buy food at a nearby store. A short time later, two explosions reduced their home to a pile of rubble.

"I saw Hawra under some concrete, yelling," her father said. "Her face was black, smashed." He carried her to safety then searched for his wife, Mayada,

whom he soon found. “I saw there was a body without a head, only a leg and this,’ he said, pointing to his torso. He knew it was his wife.”

The good news for the residents of Mosul still trapped inside their homes and facing the prospect of starvation is that the U.S. military takes care to avoid excessive collateral damage. According to U.S. Brig. General Rick Uribe, “We’re here to defeat them [the Islamic militants] and we’re going to do it the moral way.” And what could be more moral than dropping bombs on crowded urban dwellings where militants may be using civilians as human shields and were targeting miscalculations are almost certain to produce casualties, or “collateral damage” in the language of military obfuscation.

As of this writing, no tears have yet been shed by our glorious heads of state for the besieged people of Yemen, the poorest country in the Middle East, where Saudi Arabia and its own set of coalition predators, including Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, are raining down death and destruction in “Operation Decisive Storm,” a brutal bombing campaign against Houthi rebels. In January 2015, the rebels succeeded in ousting Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi mainly because of their opposition to Hadi’s proposal to divide Yemen into six federal provinces. If enacted, the proposal would have weakened Houthi influence over Saada province in the north, the movement’s traditional base.

The Houthis assumed control of the central government shortly after the coup, which the UN Security Council officially denounced on February 16. One month later, on March 26, a Saudi-led, 10-member coalition began bombing Houthi positions in the city of Sana’a, Yemen’s capital. Saudi Arabia argues that the Houthi movement receives substantial support from Iran, the country’s foremost enemy and the dominant Shia power in the Middle East. Before beginning their bombing campaign, the Saudis went to Washington to request the approval of the Obama Administration, which they received, along with diplomatic cover and direct material aid in the form of U.S.-manufactured bombs, like cluster bombs (CBU-105 munitions), formerly made by Textron in Wilmington, Massachusetts, and the provision of refueling services to coalition planes that are carrying out the bombing. As if that largesse weren’t enough, since 2010, “the Obama administration authorised a record \$60bn in US military sales to Saudi Arabia. Since then, the administration concluded deals for nearly \$48bn in weapons sales — triple the \$16bn in sales under the [previous] administration.”

Though Obama blocked a portion of arms sales to Saudi Arabia in the final months of his administration owing to pressure from human rights groups and opposition from the House of Representatives, President Trump’s State Department rescinded Obama’s decision in early March. Since then, Trump has

signed off on an expanded new arms package for Saudi Arabia despite that country's two-year assault on the people of Yemen, its continuing violation of human rights, and its likely commission of war crimes, including the blockading of Yemen's major ports, thus preventing vital food, medicines, and fuel supplies from reaching the people.

Thanks in no small measure to U.S. complicity in what is turning into one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, at least 10,000 Yemenis have been killed since the conflict. However, the economic blockade, according to reporter and historian Gareth Porter, is causing even greater suffering than the actual bombing:

But what's really been happening for well over a year, I think it's fair to say a year to a year and a half, is that more people are dying of starvation-related or malnutrition-related diseases and starvation, than from the bombs themselves. And this is a fact which I'm sorry to say simply has not gotten into the press coverage of the war, thus far.

The children of Yemen are bearing the brunt of the suffering. Approximately 1.7 million, or 31% of Yemeni children under the age of five suffer from severe malnutrition as a result of the U.S.-condoned, Saudi-led blockade. Many of these "innocent little babies," to borrow Donald Trump's words, are quite literally starving to death in a country where our money, munitions, and diplomatic support are enabling Saudi Arabia and its partners to slaughter the innocents with the weapon of starvation. According to David Sim of the *International Business Times*, "Of Yemen's 28 million people some 21 million need some form of humanitarian aid. Intensive care wards in Yemen's hospitals are filled with emaciated children hooked up to monitors and drips."

We won't be seeing Nikki Haley, our UN Ambassador, waving photos of these children and calling for an immediate halt to the bombing of Yemen and a lifting of the blockade. Nor can we expect Trump to shed anything but crocodile tears for the victims of our various strategic alliances with members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and their war in Yemen. Firing cruise missiles into Syria won't do anything for the people of Syria beyond exacerbating an already horrendous situation. And continuing to support Saudi Arabia in its fight against Houthi rebels will only contribute to the growing misery and suffering of the Yemeni people, especially the children. Perhaps there is hope in the wise counsel of Albert Einstein whose words introduced this essay: "We must not conceal from ourselves that no improvement in the present depressing situation is possible without a severe struggle."



# A WORLD IN FREE FALL IN A DANGEROUS UNIVERSE: SYRIA, AFGHANISTAN, NORTH KOREA, IRAN, WHAT'S NEXT, AN ASTEROID?

Irwin Jerome\*

A universal truth was revealed by the recent chemical weapon tragedy in Syria's Idlib Province and the MOAB bombing of Afghanistan. Namely, that as the human world continues to tear itself asunder and make a mockery of the United Nation's concept of international law and the sovereign rights of nations – supposedly intended to protect them from unprovoked, preemptive attacks by just such rogue countries like the United States and its unilateral 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles & MOAB Bomb attack – is that so much acrimony and mistrust exists among human governments and their populaces to the point that the world teeters all the more dangerously and precipitously upon the edge of a potential World War III?

Once again, Trump, like so many other U.S. Presidents before him, has willfully violated international law and conducted another unprovoked preemptive attack by exercising the contrived notion of American Exceptionalism that has long asserted the United States so-called Divine Mission in the world that gives it a self-declared superiority over every other nation and right to conduct itself above and beyond any such mere mortal law.

In the critical days following the chemical weapon tragedy in Syria, and the United States loose cannon/lone wolf response to the tragedy, the world's corporate media in the West did little to get at the real truth about what really caused this tragedy. Instead it mostly offered up little more than propaganda, bogus allegations and glowing accolades about President Trump ability to show his “presidential timbre” as a warrior-leader, who now has proven himself capable of taking swift, decisive action against what the corporate media asserted was a chemical attack committed by Assad and his Government against innocent Syrian civilians, children and little babies.

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Historically, it was yet another classic false flag Vietnam ‘Gulf of Tonkin’ Resolution, Iraq ‘Weapons of Mass Destruction’ moment in time when Deep State Fifth Columnists – who always gather in the shadows of whatever geopolitical event, once again sought, as they always do – to mobilize – through misinformation, disinformation, espionage or outright aggression with whatever external military forces – any excuse to foment another new war and commit yet another unprovoked attack against whatever country upon which it has imperial designs.

But if Assad and his family now must go for his or their alleged guilt in the recent chemical weapon tragedy in Idlib Province, then so must go the whole lot of world leaders and their families of rogues and criminals who are complicit in the horrendous reality of so much of the same that has been, and continues to be, mankind’s history of the world, especially during the last century up to the present day. If the Assad’s now must go for his part in all this madness so should: Trump, Putin, Erdogan, Netanyahu, Merkel, the Saudi Royal Family and a host of other lesser lap dog war monger leaders in countries throughout the world.

In short, the world desperately needs a complete and utter new make-over from top to bottom, with regime changes throughout its length and breadth. Otherwise, the same Fifth Column of the Deep State and its multitude of: billionaire money-bags, neo-conservative/alt-right plotters, corporate media propagandists, arms merchants, manufacturers of the materials of war and Wall Street financiers will only continue to endlessly fan the flames war, death and destruction in the Middle East and everywhere else as they have for countless decades, regardless of the murders of however many hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, the utter devastation of whole countries and subsequent tsunami waves of refugees and immigrants who continue to sweep throughout every country in the world, creating endless political chaos and ideological backlash. To those who relish creating such a dark, obscenely-evil world – that eventually will turn the earth and everything in it into nothing more than a used-up, wasted, charcoal briquette – the world is nothing more than an abstract Machiavellian algorithm to be endlessly manipulated for whatever their short-term gain or advantage.

So to say, “Assad Must Go!”, is to say nothing significant will ever change for the better any more than it did when Saddam Hussein, Moammar Gadhafi, Osama Bin Laden and host of other madmen were removed and eliminated because some other Machiavelli-type decided they finally “Had To Go, Too!”.

The corporate media’s subterfuge, spin and hype continue to run riot over the latest conflicting details of the chemical weapon tragedy in Syria. To try to make sense of it all is a crazy maker of epic Orwellian doublespeak. Some contend the

problem began when President Trump received a fraudulent briefing that was based upon a report by a British-accused terrorist who had previously been put on trial in the UK for terrorism offences and kidnapping, yet mysteriously was allowed by British Intelligence authorities to then travel to Syria to join al-Qaeda's fight to overthrow Assad. This same individual said to be affiliated with a British Intelligence project, known as the White Helmets, who are funded by the British Foreign Office and USAID, who are the ones who provided the graphic images of the victims of the Idlib attack that were shown "as evidence" to the UN Security Council and Donald Trump.

British journalist Peter Hitchens telling description of the terrorist-controlled site of the Idlib Province attack immediately calls into question the source of such so-called 'evidence' when he commented, "No independent Western journalist could go there. He or she would be kidnapped or killed within hours. Any report which came from that region is filtered through people who you never see. These are groups like Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, alias the al-Nusra Front, alias al-Qaeda, the Syrian 'opposition' which Britain and the U.S. have been supporting for years...the same movement which destroyed the Manhattan Twin Towers."

Yet before Trump even ordered his cruise missile attack on the Syrian airbase, U.S. military authorities, the CIA intelligence network and British MI5 apparently already knew full-well from their 'White Helmet' informants, who only operate in terrorist-controlled areas, as they are in fact members of al-Qaeda, that the attack came not from the Assad government's air force but from the chemical warehouse/ammunition depot of an al-Qaeda based terrorist group that operated in the region. So, it begs the question what individuals in the Deep State, in this instance, were behind the scenes mouthing who or what to whom to say and do? Was it Trump and his administration dictating to the generals or the other way around; the Dog wagging the tail, or the tail wagging the Dog? if President Trump was lied to or kept ignorant of these facts by individuals in his administration or those within his national security/intelligence chain of command they should have, by now, all been exposed, fired from their current positions, criminally charged with war crimes and treason against humanity. Or is all this just part of Trump's ongoing, reckless, irresponsible political theatre to send a message to his political handlers and supporters that he is going to fulfil all his promises to them AND MUCH MORE?

Other geopolitical analysts even go so far as to suggest that the sources President Trump used to claim Syrian culpability for the chemical weapon attack began with the British, exclusively, and its own corporate media who are the same Fifth Columnists who, for a multitude of nefarious reasons, have also

been coordinating an international attack on Trump's Presidency in an effort to destroy whatever positive potential might have existed for whatever healthy, non-violent relationships with Russia and China to rebuild the U.S. and worldwide economy. If so, Trump is making the same mistake in Syria, as President Bush did in Iraq, when he only listens to those British and American Intelligence advisors who were, and remain, perpetually bent upon a world war for which there is no compelling reason, the unintended consequences of which are certain to be catastrophic.

The Rupert Murdoch war propaganda machine itself likewise has gone into high gear over Syria, just as its atrocious Sun newspaper in the UK and Sydney, Australia's Daily Telegraph attacked anyone who ever questioned the corporate media's Big Lie behind the real cause of 9/11. During the Iraq War Murdoch's media labelled all those who opposed it as scum and traitors, while labelling all those who now question the Assad/Syrian chemical attack spin as sick trolls. The British & Australian governments, in turn, initially cheered Trump after his cruise missile attack in Syria and applauded him for resorting to war when they had previously criticised Trump when he attempted to make peace overtures to Russia and China. Yet others go so far as to now suggest that Trump was actually intentionally 'played' and set up as the 'fall guy' by both al-Qaeda and even the British Royal Family itself for the near world holocaust that might have occurred and still could because of Trump's cruise missile attack and more recent MOAB attack in Afghanistan. It's curious that all this occurred on the eve of President Trump's historic meeting with China's head of state, Xi Jinping, that many had hoped within the first 100 days of his administration would instead lead to a new and peaceful paradigm for economic and scientific progress in the world beyond all the mindless, senseless wars.

By contrast, an opposite degree of political acrimony in the world instead continues to escalate beyond anything that has come before since the time of the Cuban missile crisis; especially with the Trump administrations now stated insane intention to install the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Air) defense system in South Korea that now needlessly threatens both North Korea and China if not also Russia, with America's on-going behind the scene effort to push NATO every closer to the Russian borders. Trump, like 'the dupe' that some say he is, or the vain, 'schoolyard bully' that he already is well-known to be, beyond his current war-mongering in the East & Far East, continues to play to the alt-right Dr. Strangelove's & Mad Hatter Generals when he now further declares, "If China is not going to solve North Korea, we will!"

Many political analysts and pundits now wonder, "How has the world come to all this so quickly?" Was it because of all the groundwork laid by those Fifth Columnists within the Democratic Party – like Hillary Clinton, William Kristol,

Robert Kagan, Victoria Nuland and other PNAC hardliners in the Obama Administration – who were committed to violent intervention in the civil war of Libya, and then further inflamed the geopolitical scene by their covert interventions in association with a Nazi movement that led to a violent coup in the Ukraine?

Almost all the pro-interventionist editorial pages in the United States corporate media since Trump's attack against Syria and Afghanistan support his continued saber-rattling interventionist actions elsewhere; suggesting that his 'cold war' rhetoric and 'hot war' actions finally are showing himself "becoming presidential", as if such despicable actions are what makes a real man of an American president. Editorials in major U.S. papers, such as the: Wall Street Journal, New York Times, USA Today, New York Daily News, Washington Post, New York Post, Chicago Sun-Times and Denver Post Herald Trump's preemptive attacks. Even normally progressive editorials like the San Jose Mercury News and LA Times have been ambiguous about their moral and geopolitical position on Trump's aggressive foreign policies, while the New York Times even has couched Trump's behaviour in terms of making one "feel some sense of emotional satisfaction...and feeling good as a result of the Syrian attack". Adding to the cold and hot war rhetoric, the Pittsburg Post Gazette again even went so far as to refer to Syria and North Korea together as Russia and China's moderate little proxies. While various pundits in the U.S. corporate media actually wax poetically about the 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles that Trump hurled at Syria's sovereign territory.

One in particular, MSNBC's Breaking News anchor Brian Williams bumped MSNBC Rachel Maddow to report Trump's attack on Syria. Invoking a line from the song "First We Take Manhattan", by the late Canadian poet-singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen, Williams described the Tomahawk cruise missiles as they lifted off of the decks of the U.S. warships, as "beautiful pictures in the night". His description of the cruise missiles seemed almost orgasmic if not religious in nature. It was a reminder of something Leonard Cohen himself once said about that song when he revealed its meaning in an interview. Cohen commented, "I think it means exactly what it says. It is a terrorist song...There's something about terrorism that I've always admired; the fact that there are no alibis or no compromises. That position is always attractive".

Brian Williams and Leonard Cohen's remarks call to mind a particular scene from the 1970 sci-fi movie "Planet of the Apes" that involved a so-called Alpha-Omega Bomb. This large atomic bomb, designated as a "Doomsday Bomb", was only to be used as a last result by the few remaining human survivors left on earth who referred to it as The Divine Bomb. It had been placed at the altar of what used to be St. Patrick's Cathedral in the irradiated

ruins of New York City. This 'Divine Bomb' was venerated by a subspecies of psychic mutant humans who religiously safeguarded the missile and its operational launch system. The mutants believed they owed their very existence to this missile and worshipped it as a deity. They wore specifically designated latex masks to hide their grotesque features and only during their liturgical services to worship the bomb would they ever take off their masks to, "reveal their innermost selves unto their God".

The implication being that what Trump's reckless military adventures says about the innermost nature of the United States as a whole – its politicians, citizenry and violent history – is that it demonstrates a very violent society and way of life that has been constantly fixated upon war since its very origins and probably won't ever change until, in the end, it finally extinguishes itself and, in the process, unfortunately, possibly the entire world at the same time.

Rather than primarily devote its enormous national wealth, resources and attention on non-violent countries and peaceful solutions to the many problems of the world that would otherwise lead to a different, more tranquil world and human being way of life, every year the United States instead happily and willingly devotes the vast bulk of its national GDP wealth and lifeblood of its people upon war materials, the conducting of war, while favoring the funding of those societies in the world – like Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and others – who practice the same violent ideology.

Even now, with the ink on the words written about the Trump Administration's 'First 100 Days' not yet even dry, President Trump chose to violate international law yet again with his decision to drop the MOAB (Mother of All Bombs) on the sovereign country of Afghanistan. Which begs the obvious question: Does the United States, who already has long since before now repeatedly violated United Nation principles of international law and sovereignty in the case of Afghanistan in particular, now deems itself free to forever, repeatedly, illegally, invade Afghanistan or whatever other country America may have previously illegally invaded, without ever being concerned about continuing to violate that country's sovereign rights? Would that also mean that since the U.S. once attacked North Korea some 67 years ago during the Korean War that it also now has the same right to unilaterally bomb North Korea if it so desires?

Furthermore, the United States violation of international law and Syrian and Afghanistan sovereignty raises still yet another pressing question. A field estimate of the effect of the MOAB's devastation is that approximately 94 Afghans were said to have been killed as a result, at a cost of some \$335 million dollars (cost of the MOAB), which means the Afghans killed roughly cost the American taxpayer 3.5 million dollars each. Outside of the absurd cost involved, this gives one to cause to further pause and wonder that since the so-called War

ON Terror, that began after 9/11, has since turned into what now could instead be characterized as a perpetual War OF Terror, has America's new unprecedented 'Mother of All Bombs' blast, rather than eliminate 94 hostile 'enemies' or 'terrorists' of the so-called 'free world', instead, in point of fact, only serve as a recruitment tool to further enlist yet another 94, 940 or 9,400 new enemies or terrorists of the future? If so, where or when does all the madness end?

Playing to the growing alt-right movement of the Deep State in America and among its allies, that seemingly continues to lust for ever more blood beyond the latest preemptive military strikes in Syria and Afghanistan, Trump has wasted no time in further threatening the next step that America perhaps intends to take in an obvious escalation towards a potential nuclear confrontation with all its enemies.

An unequivocal signal was sent to countries like North Korea, China, Russia and Iran, when Trump menacingly declared, however softly, "If China is not going to solve North Korea, WE WILL!" Trump punctuating his menacing threat to virtually the entire world when he tacked onto the end of his brash declarative three simple letters that speak so loudly of so many things to so many nations and peoples; Trump uttering with a hard glare, "If China is not going to solve North Korea, we will", while adding for its intended effect, "USA!" Previous to this utterance, in still yet another press conference, Trump further stated as an unambiguous warning, to any and all who were listening, something about the United States future new resolve in the world when he uttered, again in a soft yet firm tone, with the same hard, cold glare, "Russia is a strong country, but the United States is a VERY, VERY strong country!" Such statements serve as a reminder to many of what other U.S. President's, like President Theodore Roosevelt, once similarly stated about America's long-standing arrogant, aggressive foreign policies. President Roosevelt, in his day, uttering what became known as, "Speak Softly Yet Carry a BIG STICK!"

Even now, over the Nevada desert, the United States continues to speed up advanced tests on the ability of an F-16 bomber to carry and drop America's next 'BIG STICK', an upgraded B61-12 nuclear bomb that will have even greater penetration than the MOAB.

The human world, thanks to 'The American Way', continues to be in a state of endless free fall! Perhaps, though, the next giant asteroid that rushes headlong out of the universe on a collision course with planet earth won't miss us like recently did the 2,000 foot long asteroid 2014JO25 on April 19<sup>th</sup>. Dubbed The Rock, after actor Dwayne Johnson, that was said to be larger than Chicago's 'Willis Tower', asteroid 2014JO25's 'flyby' came within a mere one million miles, a near-miss by cosmic standards. Earth may not be so lucky with the next

'flyby', in which case, unless the Trump administration also has a similar Terminal High Altitude Air defence missile system in place against asteroids, whatever concerns the world may have about the future, one way or the other may be purely academic.



# ERDOGAN CLINCHES VICTORY IN TURKISH CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM

Abdus Sattar Ghazali\*

The Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Sunday (April 16) achieved victory in a historic referendum on a package of constitutional amendments that will introduce a presidential form of government like France and the United States.

In a press conference in Istanbul following his party's declaration of victory, Erdoğan said that unofficial results showed there were about 25m yes votes, 1.3m more than no.

Erdoğan said foreign powers should respect the referendum's outcome. "For the first time in the history of the Republic, we are changing our ruling system through civil politics," Erdoğan said, referring to the military coups which marred Turkish politics for decades. "That is why it is very significant."

Under the changes, most of which will only come into effect after the next elections due in 2019, the president will appoint the cabinet and an undefined number of vice-presidents, and be able to select and remove senior civil servants without parliamentary approval.

Supreme Electoral Council President Sadi Guven also confirmed that the "yes" votes had prevailed, according to unofficial results. He said official results would arrive in about 10 days after any objections had been considered. The yes campaign won 1.25m more votes than the no campaign, with only about 600,000 votes still to be counted, Güven told reporters in Ankara.

Results carried by the state-run Anadolu news agency showed the yes vote had about 51.3% compared with 48.7% for the no vote, with nearly 99% of the vote counted. Turnout exceeded 80%.

The country's three largest cities – Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir – voted against the changes, and so did the vast majority of Kurdish voters and many of the coastal cities, indicating a general decline in the ruling party's support.

## Constitutional Reforms

The package of 18 amendments would abolish the office of prime minister and give the president the authority to draft the budget, declare a state of emergency and issue decrees overseeing ministries without parliamentary approval. The

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draft states: 1.The next presidential and parliamentary elections will be held on November 3, 2019. 2.The president would have a five-year tenure, for a maximum of two terms. 3.The president would be able to directly appoint top public officials, including ministers. 4. He would also be able to assign one or several vice-presidents 5.The office of prime minister, currently held by Binali Yildirim, would be scrapped. 6. The president would decide whether or not impose a state of emergency.

The current constitution, written by generals following a 1980 military coup.

President Erdogan says the changes are needed to address Turkey's security challenges nine months after an attempted coup and to avoid the fragile coalition governments of the past. The new system, he argues, will resemble those in France and the US and will bring calm in a time of turmoil marked by a Kurdish insurgency, Islamist militancy and conflict in neighbouring Syria, which has led to a huge refugee influx. Speaking at one of his final rallies in Istanbul's Tuzla district, President Erdogan told supporters the new constitution would "bring stability and trust that is needed for our country to develop and grow".

Critics of the proposed changes fear the move would make the president's position too powerful, arguing that it would amount to one-man rule, without the checks and balances of other presidential systems.

Opponents say it is a step towards greater authoritarianism in a country where around 40,000 people have been arrested and 120,000 sacked or suspended from their jobs in a crackdown following a failed coup last July, drawing criticism from Turkey's Western allies and rights groups.

### Cautious Western Reaction

The West offered cautious reaction to President Erdogan's referendum victory

The European Union (EU) urged the Turkish government to seek the broadest possible national consensus. "In view of the close referendum result and the far-reaching implications of the constitutional amendments, we also call on the Turkish authorities to seek the broadest possible national consensus in their implementation," said a statement issued by European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker, EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini and EU Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn.

Thorbjorn Jagland, the secretary general of the Council of Europe, said that "in view of the close result" – 51.3 per cent voted with Erdogan according to near total unofficial results – "the Turkish leadership should consider the next steps carefully". It is of the utmost importance, said Jagland, "to secure the independence of the judiciary in line with the principle of rule of law enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights". Turkey is a full member of the

Council of Europe, which “stands ready to support the country in this process”, Jagland added.

Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz, said on Twitter that “it shows how divided the country is; Collaboration with the EU will be even more complex”. “Strange to see democracy restrict democracy. The majority has the right to decide, but I’m quite concerned about new Turkish constitution,” Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said on Twitter. A NATO official was quoted as saying that the constitutional referendum in alliance member Turkey “is a matter for the Turkish people”.

Relations between Turkey and Europe hit a low during the referendum campaign when EU countries, including Germany and the Netherlands, barred Turkish ministers from holding rallies in support of the changes. Erdogan called the moves “Nazi acts” and said Turkey could reconsider ties with the European Union after many years of seeking EU membership. Just ahead of the final results, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said: “We’d be well advised to keep calm and to proceed in a level-headed way.” About 1.4m Turks living in Germany were eligible to vote.

### Turkish opposition

According to CNN, The Turkish opposition took issue with the results, saying the country’s electoral authority had decided to “change the rules in the middle of the game.” The High Electoral Board announced it would not accept ballots that were missing ballot commission stamps. But the board changed course after voting was underway, saying it would accept unstamped ballots “unless they are proven to have been brought from outside.”

The opposition said this would affect the legitimacy of the vote and called for a partial recount of about 37% of the votes, said Erdal Aksunger of the Republican People’s Party, or CHP. He left the door open to challenging a higher percentage of the ballots.

“The High Electoral Board has changed the rules after the voting started. There is a clear clause in electoral law saying unstamped ballots will be invalid and the High Electoral Board issued its notice in compliance with this law,” the Republican People’s Party (CHP) deputy chairman Bulent Tezcan said.

Later, CHP leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu said in a news conference, “On what grounds do you declare these valid? ... You should not change the rules in the middle of the game. ... This is not right. We will never accept this.”

Sadi Guvel, President of the Supreme Electoral Council, said the board has made similar decisions in the past. He said the board made the decision before results began coming in.

# YEMEN: EFFECTIVE HUMANITARIAN AID DEPENDS ON A PEACE ACCORD

Rene Wadlow\*

The United Nations (UN) together with the governments of Sweden and Switzerland which have often led humanitarian issues in the UN system held a high-level pledging conference in Geneva on April 25, 2017 to again draw attention to the deepening humanitarian crisis in war-torn Yemen, currently the largest food security emergency in the world. Some 60% of the population are in a food-insecure situation.

More than 3.5 million people have been displaced in the cycle of escalating violence. “We are witnessing the starving and the crippling of an entire generation. We must act now, to save lives” said Secretary-General Antonio Guterres who presided over the conference. Realistically, he stressed that funding and humanitarian aid alone will not reverse the fortunes of the millions of people impacted. Diplomatically, he called for a cessation of hostilities and a political settlement with talks facilitated by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, the Mauritanian diplomat Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

UN officials and most diplomats are reluctant to call the armed conflict by its real name: “a war of aggression”. The aggression of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates) against Yemen began on March 24, 2015.

The Saudi-led coalition is helped with arms and “intelligence” by the USA and the UK which appreciate Saudi money for arms and do not want to antagonise a large segment of the Arab world when the conflicts of Syria-Iraq-Kurds-Turkey is still “on the table.”

However, the aggression of the Saudi coalition is what has turned an internal Yemen struggle for power between the current and the former President of Yemen into a war with regional implications, now drawing Iran into the picture.

Intellectually, the “political solution” is clear. There needs to be an end to the Saudi bombing and a withdrawal of its coalition troops. Then, the different factions in Yemen can try to develop some sort of inclusive government. The Swiss Foreign Minister, a co-host of the conference, hinted to the issue in suggesting very briefly that, if asked, Switzerland could provide expertise on forms of decentralisation and con-federal government.

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The effort to create a centralised Yemen government has failed. The future lies in a very decentralised government with great autonomy for the regions, taking into consideration the diverse tribal configuration of the country. With intelligence and patience – always in short supply – a single, highly decentralised State might be developed.

The most difficult first step is ending Saudi-led aggression, after which an effective humanitarian aid and development program can be put into effect.

# THE SHAME OF KILLING INNOCENT PEOPLE

Kathy Kelly\*

On April 26th, 2017, in Yemen's port city of Hodeidah, the Saudi-led coalition which has been waging war in Yemen for the past two years dropped leaflets informing Hodeidah's residents of an impending attack. One leaflet read:

“Our forces of legitimacy are heading to liberate Hodeidah and end the suffering of our gracious Yemeni people. Join your legitimate government in favour of the free and happy Yemen.”

And another: “The control of the Hodeidah port by the terrorist Houthi militia will increase famine and hinder the delivery of international relief aid to our gracious Yemeni people.”

Certainly, the leaflets represent one aspect of a confusing and highly complicated set of battles raging in Yemen. Given alarming reports about near famine conditions in Yemen, it seems the only ethical “side” for outsiders to choose would be that of children and families afflicted by hunger and disease.

Yet the U.S. has decidedly taken the side of the Saudi-led coalition. Consider a Reuters report, on April 19, 2017, after U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis met with senior Saudi officials. According to the report, U.S. officials said “U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition was discussed including what more assistance the United States could provide, including potential intelligence support...” The Reuters report notes that Mattis believes “Iran’s destabilising influence in the Middle East would have to be overcome to end the conflict in Yemen, as the United States weighs increasing support to the Saudi-led coalition fighting there.”

Iran may be providing some weapons to the Houthi rebels, but it’s important to clarify what support the U.S. has given to the Saudi-led coalition. As of March 21, 2016, Human Rights Watch reported the following weapon sales, in 2015 to the Saudi government:

- July 2015, the US Defense Department approved a number of weapons sales to Saudi Arabia, including a US \$5.4 billion deal for 600 Patriot Missiles and a \$500 million deal for more than a million rounds of ammunition, hand grenades, and other items, for the Saudi army.

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- According to the US Congressional review, between May and September, the US sold \$7.8 billion worth of weapons to the Saudis.
- In October, the US government approved the sale to Saudi Arabia of up to four Lockheed Littoral Combat Ships for \$11.25 billion.
  - In November, the US signed an arms deal with Saudi Arabia worth \$1.29 billion for more than 10,000 advanced air-to-surface munitions including laser-guided bombs, “bunker buster” bombs, and MK84 general purpose bombs; the Saudis have used all three in Yemen.

Reporting about the role of the United Kingdom in selling weapons to the Saudis, Peace News notes that “Since the bombing began in March 2015, the UK has licensed over £3.3bn worth of arms to the regime, including:

- £2.2 bn worth of ML10 licences (aircraft, helicopters, drones)
- £1.1 bn worth of ML4 licences (grenades, bombs, missiles, countermeasures)
- £430,000 worth of ML6 licences (armoured vehicles, tanks)

What has the Saudi-led coalition done with all of this weaponry? A United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights panel of experts found that: “At least 3,200 civilians have been killed and 5,700 wounded since coalition military operations began, 60 percent of them in coalition airstrikes.”

A Human Rights Watch report, referring to the UN panel’s findings, notes that the panel documented attacks on camps for internally displaced persons and refugees; civilian gatherings, including weddings; civilian vehicles, including buses; civilian residential areas; medical facilities; schools; mosques; markets, factories and food storage warehouses; and other essential civilian infrastructure, such as the airport in Sana’a, the port in Hodeidah and domestic transit routes.”

Five cranes in Hodeidah which were formerly used to offload goods from ships arriving in the port city were destroyed by Saudi airstrikes. 70% of Yemen’s food comes through the port city.

Saudi coalition airstrikes have hit at least four hospitals supported by Doctors Without Borders.

In light of these findings, the leaflets fluttering down from Saudi jets on the beleaguered city of Hodeidah, encouraging residents to side with the Saudis “in favour of the free and happy Yemen” seem exceptionally bizarre.

UN agencies have clamoured for humanitarian relief. Yet the role the UN Security Council has played in calling for negotiations seems entirely lopsided.

On April 14, 2016, UN Security Council Resolution 2216 demanded “that all parties in the embattled country, in particular, the Houthis, immediately and unconditionally end violence and refrain from further unilateral actions that threatened the political transition.” At no point is Saudi Arabia mentioned in the Resolution.

Speaking on December 19, 2016, Sheila Carpico, Professor of Political Science at the University of Richmond and a leading Yemen specialist called the UN Security Council sponsored negotiations a cruel joke.

These negotiations are based on UN Security Council resolutions 2201 and 2216. Resolution 2216 of 14 April 2015, reads as if Saudi Arabia is an impartial arbitrator rather than a party to an escalating conflict, and as if the GCC “transition plan” offers a “peaceful, inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led political transition process that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people, including women.”

Although scarcely three weeks into the Saudi-led intervention the UN’s deputy secretary-general for human rights said that the majority of the 600 people already killed were civilian victims of Saudi and Coalition airstrikes, UNSC 2216 called only on “Yemeni parties” to end the use of violence. There was no mention of the Saudi-led intervention. There was similarly no call for a humanitarian pause or corridor.

The UN Security Council resolution seems as bizarre as the leaflets delivered by the Saudi jets.

The U.S. Congress could put an end to U.S. complicity in the crimes against humanity being committed by military forces in Yemen. Congress could insist that the U.S. stop supplying the Saudi led coalition with weapons, stop helping Saudi jets to refuel, end diplomatic cover for Saudi Arabia, and stop providing the Saudis with intelligence support. And perhaps the U.S. Congress would move in this direction if elected representatives believed that their constituents care deeply about these issues. In today’s political climate, public pressure has become vital.

Historian Howard Zinn famously said, in 1993, “There is no flag large enough to cover the shame of killing innocent people for a purpose which is unattainable. If the purpose is to stop terrorism, even the supporters of the bombing say it won’t work; if the purpose is to gain respect for the United States, the result is the opposite...” And if the purpose is to raise the profits of major military contractors and weapon peddlers?



# AYODHYA CASE SHOULD BE DECIDED BY THE SUPREME COURT, NO SCOPE FOR MUTUAL SETTLEMENT: JUSTICE SACHAR

Justice Rajindar Sachar\*

The suggestion of Chief Justice of India to even act as a mediator in pending Babri Masjid demolition case, showed his concern but was a little odd considering that it has come at the instance of an intermeddler, and without parties involved being before the Court – that is why it caused amongst the parties a certain concern. In my view, Babri Masjid demolition case is not a matter of compromise. This case raises the deep constitutional concern regarding our Constitution which clearly says India is a secular republic.

I was in Geneva attending U.N. Sub-Human Rights Commission meeting when I was told the horrible news that came on T.V. that Babri Masjid had been demolished and saw the glory speckle of B.J.P. hoodlums climbing the Masjid and breaking it down. B.J.P. government Chief Minister Kalyan Singh's assurance to the Supreme Court that he will take full steps to prevent it were belied. The Supreme Court by a majority just accepted his apology instead of sending him to jail for contempt of Court. But this was nothing compared to the ominous conspiracy of Congress Prime Minister Mr. Narasima Rao, who suddenly became inaccessible to senior journalists, his Home Secretary and even his colleagues.

I am also ashamed to admit the unworthy role of complicity of the judiciary which in spite of the injunction having given since 1949 against public not to enter the area did not proceed against the public – even the higher judiciary did not intervene – rather turned a blind eye.

This was the time when the magnitude of danger should have been appreciated by all parties but was not. The battle for secularism should have been joined with a singular determination of nipping the cancer of communalism. But then nothing was done.

I then made a public statement that; “Immediately the Government should have announced December 6, as a ‘National Repentance Day’ when people will fast and pray for unity and welfare of all the communities”. But the non-BJP parties

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\* Justice Rajindar Sachar was a former Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court. He chaired the Sachar Committee, constituted by the Government of India, which submitted a report on the social, economic and educational status of Muslims in India

analysed the situation as merely one of law and order and thus acquiesced in this dastardly Act.

Whatever the past history, all the parties let the matter go to Allahabad High Court to give a decision. High Court has given a decision with which both parties are aggrieved. B.J.P. is still insisting that it would build a temple at the site where Masjid undoubtedly stood for over 500 years. Muslims can not obviously agree to a shameful compromise on the sanctity of Masjid. The matter is already before the Supreme Court – it can not run away from giving a decision which may not make everyone happy. But then it is their constitutional duty and it has no other alternative. I can not foretell the Supreme Court decision. But if past precedents are to prevail, then the case in favour of Muslims is invincible. I say this on the precedence of Shahidganj Masjid case (Lahore now in Pakistan) decided by the Privy Council in 1940. The Supreme Court need not decide on merits whether Babri Masjid had been in existence where Ram Temple existed or not because that is of no consequence as it is not relevant to the decision of case. This is because even if was, there is no denying that Babri Masjid has been in existence since 500 years.

Now it is obvious to the meanest intelligence that it is impossible to prove that the birthplace of Lord Ram was under the masjid — it may be a matter of faith, genuine or contrived or otherwise, but that is no proof, nor can it ever be put forward as a legal ground to take away the land from the mosque.

If the finding is that the Masjid was not built on a Ram Birthplace, then the Muslims get the land back and will be free to use it in any way, including the building of the mosque.

Alternatively, even if it is held that there was a temple on the land of Babri Masjid, even with this finding the suit by the VHP/RSS has to be dismissed. Admittedly, Babri Masjid has been in existence for over 500 years till it was demolished by goons of the VHP/RSS in 1992. Legally speaking, even then the Sangh Parivar would have no right even if a temple had been demolished to build Babri Masjid. I say this in view of the precedent of the case of Masjid Shahid Ganj in Lahore decided by the Privy Council in 1940. In that case, there was admittedly a mosque existing since 1722 AD. But by 1762, the building came under Sikh rule and was used as a gurdwara. It was only in 1935 that a suit was filed claiming the building was a mosque and should be returned to the Muslims.

The Privy Council, while observing that “their Lordship have every sympathy with a religious sentiment which would ascribe sanctity and inviolability to a place of worship, they cannot under the Limitation Act accept the contentions that such a building cannot be possessed adversely”, went on to hold “The

property now in question having been possessed by Sikhs adversely to the waqf and to all interests thereunder for more than 12 years, the right of the mutawalli (caretaker) to possession for the purposes of the waqf came to an end under the Limitation Act'. On the same parity of reasoning even if a temple existed prior to the building of the Masjid 500 years ago, the suit by the Hindu outfits like Nirmal Akhara VHP / B.J.P. etc has to fail.

There is another reason why in such a situation, the suit will fail because in common law, even a rightful heir if he kills his ancestor, forfeits his right of inheritance. In the Masjid case too there was a "murder most foul" and hence the murderer cannot be allowed to take the benefit of his own dastardly deeds, whatever the factual position may be.

Of course, it is the privilege of the Chief Justice of India to constitute the bench may, however, one respectfully submit that it may be more reassuring if bench of seven judges or nine judges was to hear the appeal.

# THE CONSPIRACY BEHIND BABRI DEMOLITION

Ram Puniyani\*

After the long wait, the Supreme Court Chief Justice J.S. Khehar opined that long-pending dispute of Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid should be settled out of court. (March 2017) He even offered to mediate himself in the matter. Uniformly most of the spokesperson from RSS Combine welcomed the move, while a large number of Muslims and other elements have been surprised as the Court was approached for justice and not or compromise formula.

This is in the backdrop of the judgment of Lukhnow branch of Allahabad Court (2010). As per this, the three-judge bench had said that the land should be divided into three parts. As such the judgment was an exercise of sorts trying to do a balancing act between all the parties involved, Ram Lalla Virajman, Nirmohi Akhada and Sunni Wakf board. The title of the land has been divided into three; each sharing one part. Also, the court had declared since Hindus believe that the 'birthplace' of Lord Ram to be below the place where the central dome of the mosque stood, that place should be allotted to Hindus. In response, RSS chief in a jubilant mood had proclaimed that now the path for a grand Ram temple has been opened at the site and all the parties should cooperate in this "national" work.

For larger sections, this judgment came as a matter of dismay. The Babri Mosque has been there from last nearly five hundred years and it was in possession of Sunni Waqf Board. The dispute was created in nineteenth century. In 1885 even the court denied Hindus to build shed on the platform outside the mosque. It is after the forcible installation of Ram Lalla idols (1949) that the matters went in an adverse way. Through a conspiracy; the idols were installed and despite the insistence of Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, the UP administration did not comply. The gates of the Masjid were sealed. It was in 1986 that Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, got the doors of the Masjid opened under the intense pressure of Hindu Right wing forces.

Lal Krishna Advani took up the issue from VHP, which was agitating for Ram Temple so far. With Advani, the President of BJP, taking up the issue its political impact started deepening and widening at the same time. It was made

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the major polarising issue around which consolidation of Hindu vote bank began. The mobilisation for Rath yatra planned for the temple movement became much more in the aftermath of Mandal Commission implementation. Those who opposed reservation for OBCs came forward in large numbers in the mobilisation for Ram Temple.

While BJP did not show direct opposition to Mandal Commission, it converted the opposition into the Ram Temple issue. Mandal versus Kamandal (Holy water pot, Religiosity), is how some framed it.

This issue came up to torment the delicate thread of peace prevailing in the society. The culmination this campaign was in the form of the demolition of the Babri Masjid. In the demolition, RSS combine mobilised large section of people and Narasimha Rao colluded. While local administration collapsed, Kalyan Singh of BJP, who was then Chief Minister of UP, facilitated the assembly of kar sevaks, which was to demolish the mosque. He did this despite his promise to Supreme Court that he will protect the mosque. Narsimha Rao who locked himself in his Puja room as the mosque was being demolished later promised that it will be built precisely at the same spot.

The matters took the turn for the worse as BJP led team of 'archeologists-Kar Sevaks' tried to prove that there are remnants of Ram Temple below the mosque. Archaeologically this is not tenable. That there was no convincing proof of Ram Temple underneath becomes clear from the fact the High Court Bench had to resort to 'faith of Hindus' to allot 2/3 of the land to Hindu groups. The demolition of Mosque might have been the biggest crime in India and that was well planned. Despite that, the leaders of demolition squad have not been punished so far.

Liberhan Commission did point out the nature of underlying conspiracy but unfortunately, the Commission took long to submit its report. To add salt to the injury Advani and company became stronger after this crime against the nation. The demolition also unleashed massive violence against Muslims, particularly in Mumbai, Bhopal and Surat along with other places. The guilty of this violence have also been let off totally or with minor reprimand.

In the matter of this dispute, the ownership of the title has been the real issue. The High Court based itself more on 'Faith' than the records of ownership of the land. The Supreme Court as the highest legal body needs to see the total issue from legal angle and needs to set right the wrongs done so far. Only concrete legal aspects should determine the outcome of the case. Instead, to call for compromise out of Court in present circumstances is overlooking the aspect of justice. In out of Court settlement already the Hindu groups have said that Muslims should leave the place for Ram Temple and another suitable land will

be given to them for the mosque. The two sides are not evenly balanced as far as their strength on negotiating table is concerned.

There are threats from the likes of Subramanian Swami, BJP MP, and others that if Muslims don't give up their claim, the bill will be brought through Parliament once BJP has bigger strength. The threats of this type are immoral. Already there are claims on so many Mosques to convert them into temples! In the out of Court settlement, the Hindu nationalists are more assertive and dominant while the representatives of Muslims are being pushed into a corner that does not augur well for the health of our democracy. Effort to revive issue of other mosques is unwarranted and intimidating to minorities. That needs to be stopped.

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# HOLY COW: ONE MORE LYNCHING

Ram Puniyani\*

One Pehlu Khan from Haryana came to the cattle fair in Jaipur to purchase a buffalo. He was a dairy farmer. In the fair, he was impressed by high milk yielding Cow and bought that instead of his plan of buying a buffalo. On way back in Alwar 'Go Rakshak' (Protectors of Cow) attacked his group and mercilessly beat them up. (April 05, 2017) In the attack, Pehlu Khan died. Police were nowhere around when the brutal beating was going on. Police explained that there are Cow smugglers who escaped their watch and were caught by Go Rakshaks. Not only was this murder done in broad daylight, the assailants were very bold and shared videos of the lynching on mobile. The Rajasthan Minister in charge said that it is OK for cow protectors to catch these smugglers but should not take law into their hands. BJP's Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, to promote his party's cow protection agenda, denied that any such killing has taken place. Pehlu Khan had all his papers in place to show the purchase of cow and to take it to Haryana.

This is the latest in the series of mob lynchings in the name of cow. Earlier we had witnessed that In UP Dadri, the local mob with few of those who were part of BJP lynched Mohamad Akhlaq on the charge that he had killed the calf. The state of affairs of our communalized police is starkly clear. In case of Dadri lynching Akhlaq was charged with Cow slaughter and now a case has been filed against Pehlu Khan for doing illegal smuggling of cow! One recalls that in Una many Dalit youth were mercilessly beaten by the cow vigilantes.

It is during last three years, with Modi Government (BJP-RSS) coming to power in the centre that such incidents and brutality of Go Rakshaks is going up by leaps and bounds. Number of Cow protection groups, inspired by VHP has sprung up. Now they feel that it is their own Government and that they can get away with whatever they do. As such what does the law say? Rajni K. Dixit in Kafila.in tells us that “ In the Constitution of India, prohibition of cow slaughter is included in the Directive Principles of State Policy (guidelines to the central and state government for framing policies, not enforceable in any court of law). The directives on cow slaughter are recorded in Article 48 which reads

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“The state shall endeavor to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving the breeds and prohibiting the slaughter of cows, calves and other milch and draught cattle” (Directive Principles of State Policy, Ministry of Law and Justice).” (<https://kafila.online/2017/04/04/bovines-india-and-hinduism-rajani-k-dixit/>)

It is abundantly clear that ban is on the milch cattle, not the others. Also what the Constitution recognises is the economic and ecological dimensions of the issue, not the religious one. Over a period of time as the power of BJP-RSS has been going up, the laws are being made more stringent in state after state, more particularly in the BJP ruled states. With BJP led Government coming to power in various intimidating interpretations of laws began.

This makes it clear that the laws which came to be made over a period of time are in variance to the Directive principles envisaged by our founders. They are not against the slaughter of cows, but of milch cattle in general, and not for religious but for economic reasons. Raman Singh of Chhattisgarh says that they will hang anybody indulging in cow slaughter. Vijay Roopani, CM of Gujarat, got the penalty for cow slaughter extended to life imprisonment. On the top of that he has pledged that he will convert Gujarat into totally vegetarian state. Yogi Adityanath has not only talked against the cow slaughter (Which anyway is banned in UP) but has acted even against those selling mutton and chicken. Yogi had shown his colours earlier also when at the time of Dadri lynching he had offered Guns to Hindus. Taking the cue from UP's Yogi; BJP ruled states of Uttarakhand, MP and Rajasthan have begun to crack the whip on slaughterhouses and retail shops. Meanwhile, VHP has other state Governments should emulate the laws of Gujarat with respect to Cow!

There is another shade to the BJP-Beef story. BJP candidate for Assembly in Mallapuram, Kerala, N.Sriprakash stated that he will ensure the availability of good quality beef in his constituency if he wins the elections. As per him “BJP has no objection towards consuming beef. The party has not banned beef in any of the states. Only cow slaughter was banned. There is no issue in consuming food of one's choice,” In Kerala and North Eastern states BJP dare not raise the issue of Beef. In Assam elections, it had particularly promised that there will be no tampering with existing dietary practice.

A Two layered hysteria is on at the moment, particularly after Yogi becoming CM in UP. One is the intensification of attacks around Cow. Two, the general tirade against non vegetarian food and harassment of meat-Chicken traders has been stepped up. In Bengal consumption of fish is being criticised. In overzealous Gujarat, the march towards total vegetarianism is planned.



Is it a matter of religion? No way! BJP's language in cow belt (UP, Rajasthan Haryana, MP) is different from its language in Kerala, Goa, Kashmir and North Eastern states. In other states it talks of respecting the food culture of local people. What about the diverse food culture of these states where the Gorakshkas are rampaging? This is totally against Indian culture and the norms of Indian Constitution. This is an attempt to impose the RSS-BJP-Brahmanical norms over the whole society and to intimidate the minorities, in particular, to browbeat others who have different choices. As a byproduct of this identity-related issue the economy will be suffering tremendously. The Cattle fairs in different places are being stopped, meat export will be declining and the ruin of farmers and dairy farmers is a foregone conclusion.

# MINORITIES AND DISSENTERS UNDER INTIMIDATION AND DEEP STRESS IN SOUTH ASIA: THE LYNCHING OF MASHAL KHAN

Vidya Bhushan Rawat\*

'If you are black or you are brown or you are gay or you are lesbian or you are Trans or you are Introvert, Anyone that is treating you unkindly, It's only because they are afraid or they have been taught to be afraid of how important you are. Because being different means you make a difference. So f\*\*\* em, Facebook Post of Mashal Khan on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

'What you wish to ignite in others,...must first burn within yourself' Aurelius Augustinus, a quote from Mashal Khan's post on Facebook.

Hide History and Hate Hindus. This is what we are taught in Schools, a tweet by Mashal Khan

It was April 13<sup>th</sup> when a group of students at the Abdul Wali Khan University of Mardan, in Pakistan had come to the department of journalism, looking for two students Mashal Khan and Abdullah for committing blasphemy against Islam. The teacher Prof Ziaullah tried to protect his students but failed in front of the surging crowd which was baying for the blood of the two. Despite police and administration, Mashal was allowed to die in the savagery that was unleashed by the religious thugs masquerading as students. Rather than taking action against the criminal goons, the university administration ordered in very dubious way, investigation into the blasphemy charges against Mashal, literally after his death. It shows how the university administration remains shameless and spineless to the religious goons who lynched Mashal Khan in full public view without bothering of what will happen to them. We know at the end unless there is a pressure the things would not move much as they won't find enough witness to the event. According to Prof Ziaullah, 'Mashal was a humanist; he was into socialism and Sufism. He would often discuss Sufism with me,' remarked the teacher. "I never saw Mashal without a book in his hand." He was well-versed in different languages and striking a conversation with him always proved to be fruitful. Ziaullah also said Mashal was his student, friend and son.

"Mashal was a 'diya' [lamp]. If all the lamps are put out then the nation will continue to live in darkness," he said. "Mashal's killing was politically motivated.

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I was stunned to watch the very hearty conversation at Geo news channel of Pakistan with Prof Ziaullah, who stood by his student and despite all the threat and pressure on his life decided to resign from the university against the shocking and disturbing behaviour of his own colleagues and administration. A video has now come out where the students celebrated killing of Mashal Khan and shouted religious slogans.

What was Mashal Khan's fault? He did not defame Islam nor did he spoke against Quran. His only fault was that he spoke against hatred which was being perpetuated in the name of Islam. He spoke for women for the courage they were facing the issues in Pakistan. He was talking of humanism where human lives were more important than religious texts. It is as simple as we ask what was the fault of Akhlaq or Pehlu Khan who were killed without any reason on the basis of rumours spread by those who seems to think the sole custodian of religion as well as our nation.

There are protests in Pakistan and many people have spoken against it. Having faced it for over 35 years, it is time for them to stand and speak up this religious terrorism against its own people. We saw some politicians speaking against it but unfortunately, leaders at the highest level remain quite like ours. This reflects that we follow each other's very well and are not keen to learn from our failures.

Pakistan's notorious Blasphemy Law clause 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code clause was amended on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1986 under Zia-ul- Haq regime. The new 295-C – Use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet included life imprisonment or death penalty for all those who insult Prophet :

Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine.

Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) Report on Blasphemy law in 2013 says:

The known blasphemy cases in Pakistan show that from 1953 to July 2012, there were 434 offenders of blasphemy laws in Pakistan and among them were, 258 Muslims (Sunni/Shia), 114 Christians, 57 Ahmadis, and 4 Hindus.

The report mentions that since 1990, 52 people have been extra-judicially murdered, for being implicated in blasphemy charges. Among these were 25 Muslims, 15 Christians, five Ahmadis, one Buddhist and one Hindu.

According to Dawn, around 1274 persons have been charged under blasphemy laws in Pakistan since 1986. The problem is not that the people who are

dissenters or minorities are being charged under the blasphemy law but this law is an easy excuse for the thugs in the name of Islam in Pakistan to intimidate, humiliate and exploit the minorities like Ahmediyas, Christians, Shias and Hindus in the name of insulting Islam. One of the common thing that we hear about is the rumour about 'insulting' Prophet or Quran or Allah' and then you will find numerous propagators who spread hatred on street and TV channels. The political parties in Pakistan speak for 'misuse' of blasphemy law but none of them have come out openly for a complete abolition of this barbaric law which should not be allowed in any democratic society.

Many of the secular democratic friends from Pakistan were always proud that India has that democratic space where dissent was allowed. But the trends here are no great than Pakistan. In fact, it looks, Hindus and Muslims, India and Pakistan, seems to be quick learner from each other faults and mistakes and they use each other's faults and mistakes to instigate the crazy and illiterate rustic masses. The opium of religion is being deeply injected by the growing army of the Babas and Maulvis in our regions threatening the very edifice of democracy. We may be a democracy but it is being controlled by the religious rights who wish to convert it into a theocracy.

In the past three years, we have been hearing the Cow Protection laws and a new breed of Gaubhakts ready to lynch individuals in the name of cow smuggling and cow killing. Now the cow team has been extended to buffaloes too.

Now Gujarat has amended the Gujarat Animal Preservation Act of 1954 extending maximum punishment for cow slaughter from 7 years to life imprisonment and a fine of Rs five lakh on the convicted person. According to India-Spend, India's data journalism initiative, more than 99% of Indian population is now covered under the Cow Protection laws where state after state are competing with each other to make them much severe and harsher. It is a cognizable offence and in more than half of Indian state which have banned cow slaughter, it is non-bailable offence.

After the BJP lead NDA came to power in India in May 2014, the Cow campaign has gained a new height. Now the cow campaigners are not just interested in complaining to the government or seeking stringent laws but they have themselves become the vigilante and had no shame or fear of law in lynching and killing innocent. While the laws existed in India it is the current dispensation where the cowbhakts behaving very much similar to the Islamic zealots seeking Sharia laws in Pakistan during the Zia-ul-Haq regime and taking law unto their hands.

The brutal killing of PehluKhan, a 55 years old, dairyman hailing from Nuh, in Mewat district of Haryana, near Behror, on the Jaipur-Alwar highway by a mob of street goons claiming to Gaurakshaks, on April 1<sup>st</sup>, is an extension of what we witnessed at villageBisara, near Dadri on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015 when a mob of Hindus entered into house and lynched him in full public glare for the 'sin' of killing a calf. The entire village turned against him and his family who had been living there for years. But that relationship was now over as village sharply divided itself on communal lines, a thing very suitable for the political leaders to exploit the emotions during the elections.

How are these things same in relations to Pakistan's blasphemy law is that here too like Mashal Khan's case, police filed cases against the victims and the accused roaming around. None want to speak against the dangerous cow protection act despite the fact that India is losing business internationally and a large number of people inside India who eat beef. The things are not related to beef alone as attempt has been made and impose the Vaishnavite-Jain traditions of vegetarianism on Indians where a huge number of people are meat eaters.

A recent video of a foreign national who had come to Goa for her holidays is going viral on youtube when she was nearly lynched by the goons in the name of Gowsevaks. Her fault was that she just tried to put a cow away from her who was wandering on the beach where most of the tourists actually come for their holidays. The goons assaulted her shamelessly and none in the crowd ever bothered to defend her.

Actually, India is fast following the majoritarianism of Pakistan which has been exploited by the religious rights at the cost of minorities. As Pakistan's blasphemy law target minorities so is Indian Cow Protection Laws targeting minorities and beef eaters. Over the period of time, Pakistan has been turned into a failed state as the state power is unable to control those loudspeakers who want to silent dissenters as well as minorities in the name of Islam but we in India are learning from them. The loudmouth cow goons are doing the same and have the open protection of the state. The way the Indian dispensation is defending them through spreading rumours and wrong information about those who disagree. Whatever are the laws, let us honour them as these things will have to be fought politically but then it is too important to emphasise as whether we will allow the goons to take over the state and decide everything on the street. Right and wrong of cow protection laws are issue of another article but the fear is that how come we allow the goons to take law unto their hand without any sense of fear of it, in a state which has a constitution and a law implementing machinery.

Pakistan's blasphemy law was used by Zia-ul-Haq to legitimise his undemocratic takeover of Pakistan and had a huge support from the religious thugs who got a

chance to enjoy the power without any accountability. India today is heading for the same way through 'democratic theocracy' where the unaccountable religious rights are taking law unto their hands, suggesting various other ways to suppress, intimidate and isolate the minorities. Each day, we hear one or two persons giving new ideas to Muslims to isolation through various means, through social exclusion and eliminating their business under the garb of legalities. From Slaughter Houses to triple Talaq to Love Jihad and now loudspeakers at Ajan are smart moves to keep the Muslims in perpetual business of defending their lives and justify their positions. Even when the state has not given them anything in terms of socio economic cultural development, it want to snatch whatever they have achieved through own hard work.

Cow Protection Movement in India has quite similarities of that of Zia's regime though unlike him they were duly elected democratically. Indian governments even though led by non BJP parties brought law under pressure from the cow brigade which has full support from the SanghParivar which knew well that the issue of cow is more to embarrass government that time but today it is a tool to humiliate and intimidate Muslims in particular. Unfortunately for the most part of their movement, India was led by Congress and other governments. About 50 years ago when a huge protest against the government of the day was organised in Delhi, police had to fire at the unruly protesters killing several of them. The Congress though claimed to be secular party was led by the Brahmin leadership whose 'credentials' for the 'nation' were never questioned. In fact, from time to time, RSS supported Congress and the last one was Rajiv Gandhi but today the Sangh is enjoying power it never had and hence its various offshoots are now behaving as if there is no tomorrow. The power at center have given them extraordinary strength to intimidate the opponents in various means from physical to threatening through legal action and most importantly trolling on social media against the opponents. The mediocre 'karyakartas' whose only quality was speak loud and threaten the opponents have become leaders or mainstream therefore it is becoming difficult for the politicians to completely dissociate from them as they know during the elections it is the same workers who will bring votes through their polarisation.

While there is no similarity between the deaths of Akhlaq, Pehlu Khan and Mashal Khan but if we think beyond boxes then we realise that they have similarities. All of them are victim of religious hatred. All of them have supposedly 'hurt' the 'sentiments' of majority communities. In fact, in all the three cases there is another common factor that rumour worked well? The cow slaughter issue and beef has become a kind of blasphemy law in India with Muslims becoming its major target along with Dalits many of who do the skinning work of the dead animals. Akhlaq and Pehlu Khan are considered dissenters in India because of their community identity in a very similar way as

Ahmedis, Shias, Hindus, Dalits or Christians are considered in Pakistan. They are easy to target under the garb of 'hurting' the 'religious' sentiments. In all these cases, police has worked with the majoritarian tendencies and filed case against the victims. This is the new low of South Asia that victims are further victimised and humiliated by the ruling elite which remain conspicuous. We have not heard our political leadership coming out so openly in unambiguous terms against such brutal public murders which the world has now seen through their TV screens or on youtube.

South Asia has the least tolerance for the dissenting voices. Bloggers are being killed in Bangladesh by the Islamic zealots and the government remain mute. Pakistan saw the brutal murders but the deaths continue there because the fundamentalists don't want the dissent of choices, food eating habits and so on. In Myanmar, the ruling Buddhist elite do not want the Rohingyas to be there. Sri Lanka's Buddhist and Tamils have not yet reconciled fully. Nepal's Madhesi and rest of the country and their Janjatis are still not completely called off their hostilities. India, which was a model for all the South Asian countries, very unfortunately, is following the path of some of its neighbours. The issue of protection of minorities is the job of each of these nations but it would be good if South Asians actually start talking to each-other in terms of protecting their minorities and marginalised through legalised mechanism. If SAARC can take a lead and government agrees then it will be able to bring various civil society organisations together working on minority rights. Whether these agencies and governments agree for a common minimum programmes on minorities or not, it is essential to understand that conditions of minorities in each society gives way to rumours and prejudices elsewhere. Moreover, South Asia will never develop as long as it has religious thugs dictating the political discourse and democracy hijacked by loudmouth hatemongers who make villain of dissenters and minorities in their respective countries. Strong constitutional mechanism need to be worked out so that such barbaric cases of violence do not get repeated again. Unfortunately, for such mechanism to happen, we need to matured leadership and statesmanship at the highest level. India being the biggest democracy of the region can take lead but it is only possible if we show the way and take control of our own fringe which is fast becoming the mainstream.

In the last years we have seen killings of secular rationalist intellectuals and activists like Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare and Dr Kalburgi by the allegedly Hindu fanatic organisations and yet nothing moved. This year, we have seen a brutal murder of A Farooq, a young man in Coimbatore whose rationalist humanist writings and postings were not acceptable to many of his Muslim friends and he was brutally stabbed to death in March.

Violence on the basis of religion will never take us anywhere. I still remember Ajure Abbas, who is in his 90s and had to migrate to Pakistan in 1947 with his parents. His eyes remain moist when he speak to me and want to listen to PulBangas or Mori Gate where he spent his childhood. Partition was never good for us he says but both the Hindus and Muslims were killing each-others. Millions killed yet we learn nothing. He still shivers from those days. My friends in Bangladesh have seen the destruction that the Pakistan army unleashed on the Bangla people. It was a nation that revolted against Urdu and Wahabi nationalism of Pakistan but what happened there. The same kind of religious nationalists have started taking law unto their hand and killing people as we have witnessed in our parts. Today, Bangladesh is struggling to protect its secular identity as dissenters have been killed by the Islamic fundamentalists and yet no will from the government to deal with such a situation.

Governments in South Asia are fast buckling under the majoritarian religious gangs which are intimidating the minorities or feeling apprehensive of minority culture and value system. Such a huge gap between majority-minority will only damage the social fabric of these societies and bring uncertainty in the region. It is easy for democracy to turn into theocracy or for the military to take over. Our political systems are not completely fool proof and hence it is time for all of us to ponder over these issues seriously and strengthen our secular democracy which alone is the guarantee for protection of minorities. For secular democracies, we must stop judging people through their food habits, language, culture and religious values. No laws should be made to placate the religious rights in our societies who might use them to intimidate minorities and marginalised. It is time we understand the repercussion of such laws and encouragement by the state to all the religious goons claiming to represent the voice of majorities in their respective countries. The only way to judge its citizen is following the principle of rule of law and constitution which must include all the international laws and treaties that protect rights of minorities and marginalised so that they are not bulldozed by an intimidating majorities which in South Asia is only counted in terms of religious identities. It is time we learn to live with diversity and dissent as it will only enhance the beauty of this region and ensure a healthier democracy in these countries.



# LYNCHING OF MASHAL KHAN: ROOTS OF RAGE

Maryam Sakeenah\*

How does one move on with all this deep, searing pain over the mob lynching of a body that bore a beautiful heart and a precious mind? And with our senses still reeling, we hear of at least two more horror stories of blasphemy-related violence. Gruelling as it is, one has to navigate a path out of the all-consuming despair, shock and horror.

Self-righteous anger over suspicions of irreligion are all too familiar here. But the roots of the rage go deep; into histories, ideologies, politics and lawmaking. The roots are hard to extricate, but understanding can prevent us from consciously or unconsciously watering and nurturing this poison tree with our words and actions. And so, with this terrible burden of shame to bear as a Pakistani and Muslim, I attempt an understanding.

It is unquestionable that a number of violent crimes are driven by religious zealotry. Desperate attempts to deny that, supposing that this would 'save' Islam's image are pathetically delusional. In doing what the students of Mardan University did in the name of religion, they lynched their own professed faith; and when we take the bait and draw all the wrong conclusions- either haplessly proving that 'religion has nothing to do with it', or directly blaming faith and religious doctrine itself for the atrocity, we fuel the blind hate further, becoming the lynch mobsters sinning against a faith that has equal potential for beauty, peace and healing.

While the mobsters let themselves be swayed and drunken by righteous anger, deep within somewhere, there was an uncomfortable knowledge that this was a sacrilege, an atrocity that no religion, no god, no prophet can condone. But mobs don't pause and reflect; they veer into madness. While the zeal was religiously driven, it was not inspired or guided in any direct way by religious doctrine. That distinction is important to make.

But equally important is the need to address why our mass behaviour descends into mob zealotry and fanatical violence driven by and in the name of religion? The reasons go very deep.

While allegations of blasphemy in the Mashal Khan case are far from proven, it is clear that he professed progressive views, a critical and questioning mind. The local mass religious mindset, however, does not allow questions and cannot withstand intellectual challenge. This is in large part because the religious

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discourse in our society is largely anti-intellectual to the extent that even an intellectual approach to religion is sneered at as deviant, threatening and disrespectful. This simplistic, anti-intellectual discourse is asserted by wielding power and instilling fear by religious leaders, and the use of threat and violence by those who lack the privilege of authority.

This decadence of religious discourse in this part of the world is rooted in the colonial past when the prestigious madrassah was systematically marginalised and disempowered as part of the colonial education policy of 'schooling the world.' The cornered madrassah took refuge behind a defensive, protectionist, insecure religious discourse, trying to hold on in a rapidly changing milieu. In an attempt at self-preservation, this defensive discourse refused to engage and became airtight and obscurantist. This still characterises the madrassah and those who emerge from the system: a stubborn refusal to intellectually engage with alternative discourses that the modern world is teeming with. But we cannot insulate our youth from the tide of intellectual assault from modern ideas and new patterns of thinking. There will be questions raised, and our refusal to engage or even bother with articulating responses will alienate thinking minds.

At the other end of the spectrum, this anti-intellectualism teaches conservative minds to take an intellectual challenge as an audacious affront- hence violence becomes the only 'language' to respond with.

In more open societies in the West, Muslim communities have no option but to engage and adapt, hence one sees an increasing realisation of the need to come up with an intellectually robust spirituality that does not cave in or go berserk on encounter with difference.

Religious scholars, as well as secular voices, need to realise that this is not just about having or not having the blasphemy law. It is about the need to develop a new religious discourse that addresses and accommodates the genuine questions that the modern mind is full of- a discourse that arms itself with reason, not fear and violence.

The many passionate condemnations of the incident by religious leaders and action against hate speech as well as public demonstrations in solidarity with the victim family are welcome developments that help to restore one's faith in ourselves despite this awareness of the terrible darkness engulfing us. But a deeper and more farsighted approach for religious leaders and educators would be to guide a new discourse on religion that contends with alternative perspectives and intellectual challenges with maturity, wisdom and openness; a discourse that accommodates diversity and makes respectful space for difference.

Another more personal lesson for me is to remind myself that while self-righteous consciousness of professed faith charges mobs to blind rage, a deeper rooted faith also inspires some like Ibn Ali Miller to stand in the midst of the storm of hate and violence to save, make peace and heal. It is up to us to make the choice. In our capacities and within our spheres, those who still value faith must resolve to passionately impart compassion, empathy, tolerance and respect for difference as part of and through faith- otherwise, our proclaimed belief cannot prevent us from committing excesses and injustices in religion's name.

# THE UNWANTED MALE CALF

Vidya Bhushan Rawat\*

Just a few days back one of the cows at our Prerna Kendra delivered a male calf. My colleague called me to inform about the birth of it. Everyone, there was waiting for the cow to deliver and as usual, each one was expecting a female calf. My colleague was sad to inform me about the birth of male calf. Human being are very 'matlabi' or selfish as in the so called civilised world, they celebrate the birth of the boy but in the animal kingdom particularly of those whose milk we use without their permission, actually, we feel highly disturbed of a male calf.

In the olden days, it was not an issue as most of the male calf would be used as an Ox for ploughing but now with mechanisation male calf are unwanted as farmers are not in a position to take care of them. With fast disappearing meadows and high cost of fodder, it is impossible for farmers to keep male calf without its usage. So most of the time the farmers leave those male calf and it becomes nuisance particularly for the crop as they damage it.

With the cattle markets coming to virtually stand still, farmers will have to suffer more unless government come out clearly as what is its idea. We are hearing that the government want Adhar Card for cows. I don't know who has been giving such fantastic ideas to government. Cows are definitely not endangered species and if sale and purchase of cows are risky then this is a conspiracy against farmers to leave this occupation voluntarily and then allow the likes of M/s Ambanis and Adanis to take over. The problem with them is that they want to occupy every small thing which was part of the unorganised sector or informal sector work.

If a farmer wants to sell old cow or buffaloes to buy new one, it has become impossible now.

After lots of thoughts, three years ago, I thought of starting a diary and purchased several cows and a buffalo. The number has now grown to 15 in three years though we are still not able to have enough milk to survive. As part of our initiative to empower the most marginalised communities like Mushahars, Kalandars, we started these animals of share basis as per the normal practice in the village. Which means after the cow or buffalo's deliver their babies or when they are about it, the villager find out the possible price of the cattle which is then divided equally between the owner and the person who

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took care of it. That way, a Mushahar family could earn between 20,000 to 30,000 for taking care of one cow or buffalo which they could use for their personal work. Most of them time, people use the money for the marriages of their children.

The cow which delivered the male calf was with a Mushahar family. It was waiting for the day. We asked them to find out and decide. I am shocked to inform you that the price of the cow which is now giving milk and delivered its first calf, was priced for Rs 20,000/- which means they will only get Rs 10,000/- . It is disturbing that so many families depending on these cattle are facing the brunt of the idiocies of the politics in the name of cows. We decided that we will try to help out the family through our own ways and will not go by market logic at the moment.

A few months back, we had lost a cow. We fed it for nearly one month when her condition was bad. Villagers use to come, worship her. When she died, we buried her with all our best effort. It needs nearly one quintal of salt during the process.

Rearing cattle are difficult but they were part of empowering processes to the communities. Government should promote it but at the same point of time if there is no market for them, the farmers will commit suicide as it is very difficult to maintain them. The fodder cost is too high while the milk in the village is still Rs 25/- per litre.

There are big gaushalas of Babas and *mutts*. They get huge donation in the name of cows. The devotees send them fodder but if the government want to help farmers, promote cooperatives, it must not only allow sale and purchase of them but provide subsidies in fodder as well as buy the product. The government must further decide as what should be done with the male calf. Should the people leave them as is happening these days. If not then what is the option ? We must understand where is the space for keeping these animals if their sale purchase is not allowed. Where should the farmer send their bulls and oxen or old cows. Maybe the government can think of old age homes for these animals as it will be beyond the strength of people to feed them in these times of heavy inflation when everything has to be procured from the market.

# DECONSTRUCTING YOGI'S MEAT POLITICS

Aftab Alam\*

The crackdown on illegal abattoirs was one of the first decisions taken by Yogi Adityanath soon after taking over as Chief Minister of the most populous and politically crucial state of the country following the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) resounding victory in the recently held assembly elections.

The UP is the country's largest meat exporting state having a business of Rs 26,000 crore and providing directly or indirectly employment opportunities for more than 25 lakh people. Out of 72 government approved slaughterhouses in the country, 38 are in UP accounting more than half the share. However, most of these approved slaughterhouses only cater for export and the local needs are met only by the small illegal and individual slaughterhouses operating from pavements and congested residential areas and often in unsanitary conditions with no proper provision of disposing off or treatment of animal waste causing health and environment hazards.

The CM can't be faulted for his action against illegal slaughter houses as the state government was well within its rights to take stern actions against them and it was also completely in line with the election manifesto of the BJP which had clearly stated that it would take "stern steps to close down all illegal slaughterhouses, besides banning mechanised slaughterhouses", but it can certainly be questioned for putting forth wrong data to justify its agenda. The manifesto had falsely claimed that due to rampant bovine smuggling during the reign of past state governments there has not only been a fall in cattle counts but also in the milk production. The facts, however suggest otherwise. The UP livestock census has shown a consistent growth in buffalo population, from 229 lakhs in 2003 to 306 lakhs in 2012 also indicating a 6.5 percent increase in cow population from the previous census in 2007. Similarly, the national dairy board's figures for UP have also shown an increase in the production of milk from 24,863 tonnes in 2012 to 29,086 tonnes last year – a jump of 17 percent.

Notwithstanding the action of the Yogi government being both legally and politically 'correct,' it raises many questions that need to be discussed dispassionately. Is the BJP deliberately treading on agenda that will alienate the Muslim minority who are believed to be largely involved in the meat industry and thus affected by this decision? If the crackdown is only against the illegal abattoirs than why those having licenses are also being harassed? Has the government prepared any roadmap to rehabilitate lakhs of people whose

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livelihood was adversely hit by this action? Why did the government before the drive against the illegal slaughter houses not first ensure that its own slaughterhouses were made fully functional? Had it not been more prudent on the part of the government to first give them an opportunity to renew their licenses which has not been done since 2014? Are environmental and health considerations, as stressed by the NGT order, the only considerations behind this drive or religio-cultural issues have anything to do with this move?

While the state Government has clarified that the drive is only against the illegal slaughterhouses the heat is being faced by legal abattoirs as well. In frantic searches, even many legal units were also sealed on minor lapses such as non-functional CCTVs to a pending permission for groundwater use. The meat traders have also accused of injustices and harassment in the name of such drive both by the police and the so-called vigilantes.

The drive against the illegal slaughter houses has also been shrouded in controversy amidst allegation of the fringe Hindutva groups taking law in their own hands. There are media reports from burning of meat shops to their forceful closure by the Hindu vigilantes in some parts of the state. At one place members of the Hindu Jagran Manch tried to enter the top meat exporting unit to conduct their own searches. The Bajrang Dal activists have reportedly raided a meat packaging unit on their own without informing the authorities and beat up a worker who was later discovered as a BJP member. The small meat shop owners fear the vigilantes more than the authorities who have become emboldened with BJP in power. Many of them have shut down their shops just to avoid unnecessary harassment as fear grips the entire community in the meat trade.

Perhaps no one is against the CM's drive to check unauthorized and illegal abattoirs as he is simply discharging his constitutional duty to implement the orders issued by the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal which the previous SP government did not act upon as it could not muster required political courage for the same, but many certainly question the manner in which the whole drive is being hurriedly carried out. Those who were running illegal slaughterhouses or meat shops without proper licenses should have been first given an opportunity to secure the legal permission after fulfilling all requirements. The government should have also made its own slaughterhouses functional with soaring meat demand before the crackdown on illegal abattoirs. The government should have come out with a detailed roadmap for transforming existing unauthorised and illegal abattoirs to more compliant and regulated ones before the crackdown. All of them should have been insisted to follow the norms pertaining to pollution control, disposal of animal waste and health and hygiene.

Many have tried to project the crackdown as a Muslim issue to give it a communal colour to *further vitiate* the atmosphere in the state. It is true that the meat industry is a sector dominated by the Muslims but it also provides employment opportunities to a good number of low caste and backward class Hindus too and also a good source of the government revenue. The crackdown will backfire if an impression is created that the move is purely political and driven by culture, religion and faith. The involvement of Hindu vigilantes in raids and issuing warnings to those involved in the meat industry is bound to create such impression. The government should not forget that beside Muslims and Christians, beef is the dietary choice of a substantial section of Hindus as well.

Furthermore why actions should not be taken against the officials who have become hyper active this time for letting the illegal abattoirs to flourish in the state at the very first place? No illegal activities at such a large scale can be carried out by anyone without the patronage of the officials? The illegal small slaughter houses flourished in the state because the government owned slaughterhouses were shut. The illegalities were committed by many units also because the whole procedure is very cumbersome as abattoirs have to comply as many as two dozen of regulations from the treatment of animals to their transportation to veterinary certification and the treatment of wastes. As per existing law the local bodies are required to build, maintain and license the slaughterhouses to meet the local requirement of meat. The government should come out with more pragmatic solutions than frantic and knee-jerk actions. The government cannot also ignore the interests of the farmers too as they are badly hit by the drive as they are not able to dispose of even unproductive cattle and buffaloes at the same time they cannot afford to feed them and are forced to leave them uncared.



# POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COW-MENTALITY IN INDIA

Parvez Alam\*

India is a mosaic of great cultures. Not now. The culture which we inherited from our founding fathers and martyrs who wanted to preserve the greatness would be ashamed to see India today. India today which is digital, India which is nuclear and India one of the fastest-growing economies of the world is now also the land of cynical, hysterical and emotional people. In today's India citizenship is redefined based on emotions for cows. *Gaurakshaks* (Cow protectionists) are now new citizens. In the hierarchy of citizenship, they are on the top. They are beyond the limits of the constitution. They are limitless. No laws are applicable on them. They are new police. Sometimes it's their responsibility to police the Police also. Police is now spectator and governments are theatre troupes and *gaurakshaks* are directors. They are directing the new India. Disciplining and punishing is now their prerogative.

For the last two years, it is very evident that if you are part of a mob which is intending to lynch your neighbour who is earning more in the free and competitive market, a mere rumour about beef can get your things done. You do not have to employ a sharpshooter to annihilate your competitor. Cow is now more powerful weapon than the Kalashnikov or AK-47. These are the same people who have overlapping membership of a political party, a cultural organisation and a mob. They are the one who have been involved in disciplining youths during Valentine days and attacking pubs on the eve of the New Year. These are the people who are running after rationalist and civil society activists in the country. These are the people who are engaged in mob violence in different states.

From Dadri to Una to Alwar, they are unchecked. They find shelter of politicians. Their vigilantism has paid dividend to those politicians who side with them. It is also evident that in every case they have been proven false and the victims have been found innocent. Is innocence of victim and guilt of perpetrators of violence create narratives other than what has been already established? No. It is the tactics and methodology of those political ideologues to maintain the narratives alive which quite naturally is created on the idea of 'otherisation'. And the same kind of violence is repeated in very similar fashion somewhere else and the very news reverberates in different locations, where

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similar kind of incidents has already taken place in the past. Hence, polarisation gets frozen in those 'sensitive' areas which are divided into binaries.

Even if civil society members make hue and cry and try to do justice with the victims, they cannot stop the next incident to happen. Legal recourse may give sigh of relief to civil society members but not a breathing space to the victims' family at large. Violence done with intention pays back not very immediately but it pays back definitely in a given time. There is no conception of repentance or remorse of such an act because it is motivated action and not an accident. It is pathetic for any society where politics is not based on compassion and empathy but hunger for power and subjugation of others.

Like traditions are invented to perpetuate hegemony, the creation of new normal adds to those structures of power. In redefined normality *sahansheelta* (tolerance) and *ahimsa* (non-violence) are lesser virtues. We Indians are now not frightened and disturbed while seeing dead bodies; we are now not disturbed because of violence. Our private spaces, our entertainment choices and our games are flooded with the themes of violence. Our cinemas are flooded with anti-hero characters. In the new normal, people are instinctively becoming violent.

It is mix of that psyche of violence and lack of compassion and empathy which has reduced a human being lesser than an animal. The sacredness of a deity which was tangible and static in the temples is now roaming around in each nook and corner of the villages and urban spaces. This is another way of capturing space. Sacredness is now installed into the body of an 'animal' by shifting the holiness of a temple which lacks utility in time and space. The moment body of an 'animal' is attacked, that will infuriate the worshippers and amount to desecration of sacred space. This is high symbolism and more apt political ideology to woo the masses who can easily understand this desecration than the complex theories.

As the politics of the nation is changing dramatically for the last two decades or so, the scientific temperament is cornered by the false and crafted emotionalism by certain sections of political class which has utilised tactically prejudices and myths prevailing in the society to consolidate and homogenised uneducated masses who are now biggest assets to right-wing politics. Tyranny of the majority is in offing in India because of the lack of value education to the citizens of this country by the previous Liberal governments. The new liberal and market controlled education do not promote critical attitude hence conformity. Realities and truths are getting redefined. Emotions are getting consolidated and homogenised on communal line. Evil is no more evil, if it can win elections. Consent for crime is sought through elections and past crimes are getting endorsement in the binary politics. 'Us' and 'them' politics is precisely to

win elections. Issues are no more issues if they do not have electoral utility. Poverty, unemployment, price rise and accumulation of wealth by few people are non-issue today. Politics is now looked narrowly in terms of elections. This is new normal. Intellectuals are no more intellectuals. With the tag of intellectuals, they are busy in earning fame and post by conforming to the power centres.

Individuals are no more citizens, they are divided into beef-eaters, Romeos, nationalists/anti-nationalists, love jihadis, Marxists, and sanghis (those from cultural organisation called Rashtriya Swaymsevaka Sangh). Institutions are no more independent, they have to align with the parties in power. Teachers are turning into ideologues and politicians. Students are becoming party workers and foot soldiers of those ideologies. The universities, colleges and schools are encroached not by ideas but by guns, *lathis* (sticks) and abuses (read Ramjas incident).

The era we are living in is the era of whispering and murmuring. One is on surveillance of the other. People are now becoming more sentimental and one should be careful about flagging issues about religion, castes and even questioning the leader, which might culminate into hurt-sentiment and consequently lynching. Families are now conscious of suggesting their kids and children not to enter into discussions over sentimental issues. This is new normal.

We are happy in identifying enemies than friends. We are living in the time where friends should agree with each other. There is no process of dialectics in discussions and deliberations. No counter questions. Agree, agree and agree if you want to avoid becoming enemy and getting targeted publicly. Uniformity is new normal. Conformity is new normal. Absolutism is new normal. Bestiality is new sacredness and man-eating is virtuous than beef-eating.

We have less confused and curious minds and more absolutist and rigid minds. We are living in the era of cacophony. Sharing and learning together is outdated things. If you can scream more in the discussion than that signifies you are speaking truth.

Criminals are rewarded for their criminality and hence aspirants are heading towards becoming like them. The best profession in our times is politics. The best method in our time to become a politician is to become *gaurakshak* (cow protectionist). It is guaranteed that, you will be rewarded with greater posts in your political career. I am aghast and appalled by the fact that the ghettoisation is becoming new normal, ghettoisation of not only minorities/communities but also ideas. This is higher version of governmentality. This is *gaumentality* (cow-mentality).

# BJP'S RISE IN UP SHOWS THE NEED FOR A REAL PROGRESSIVE ALTERNATIVE AND NOT VOTEBANK POLITICS

Kishalaya Mukhopadhyay\*

Even as social media remains abuzz with the fake news of Yogi Adityanath, the newly appointed CM of Uttar Pradesh, cutting down reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs in private medical colleges (which never existed in the first place), what has taken the country by storm is BJP's major upset in the UP assembly elections of 2017. Known to be the strongholds of parties like SP and BSP, BJP's win has left many wondering if this signals the end of lower caste assertion in the state. However, it needs to be questioned if there really was a genuine politics of assertion by the oppressed in BSP or SP. Perhaps BJP's win only exposes the limits of electoral politics, or the politics of representation in general.

As commentators have already noted, BJP has been able to use their own version of "social engineering" to woo non-Jatav Dalits and non-Jadav OBCs along with several MBCs. In fact, this is a process in motion – one that had its manifestations in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections also, when BJP was able to garner support of backward castes and Dalits who had not benefited from BSP rule. However, the story doesn't really end there. There are indications that both BSP and SP-Congress alliance are losing support within their own cozy quarters. The BSP managed to win only two of the 84 seats that were reserved for Dalits in the state. It fared badly in most of the districts with high Dalit population.

What would explain such a colossal defeat of the "Mandal" forces against the forces of Manu? Is it merely a result of tampering of voting machines? Is it because of the family feud in SP? Or is it attributable to the fact that Mayawati had tried to ally with non-Dalits which left the Dalits fuming? Or was it because both SP and BSP failed to understand the changing nature of middle class Dalits? While all of these may have a role to play, what most analysts seem to overlook is the obvious limitation of the politics of representation, i.e. the political version of trickle-down economics, that offering party tickets to representatives of an ethnic group or community will ensure electoral success.

Without a politics that is firmly rooted in improving the material realities of the masses, identity politics will remain a hogwash that only invokes idols like Ambedkar or Kanshi Ram but with little demonstrable results. Symbolic

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gestures, like putting up statues are important, insofar as giving a voice to the marginalised is concerned. But “swabhiman” has little meaning if one has to go hungry or live in poverty. The problem with the idea of capturing power to bring about social change is that it leaves aside the question of engaging with the contradictions of class till too late – if not entirely. Whether some self-proclaimed Ambedkarites like it or not, it is impossible to discuss caste without also engaging with class. This is precisely what noted Dalit activist Bhanwar Meghwanshi points out when he says that both capitalism and Brahmanism have to be fought to forge a better tomorrow.

If giving tickets or promising representation is what is equated with development, then it is no surprise that many non-Jatav Dalits, who constitute 14% of the overall 25% Dalit votes in UP, have opted for BJP instead. The hegemony of this dominant discourse of party tickets as representation-hence-development is to blame for BJP’s success. It is entirely another matter and of little significance really to the struggling Dalit and other oppressed masses, that despite all its tall talk of social inclusion, the new assembly of BJP is still largely dominated by upper castes. While political representation by elites is better than no representation, it is still problematic to place too much emphasis on it. After all, why not consider the fact that the BJP chose to offer 65 tickets out of 85 reserved constituencies to non-Jatav Dalits. How is that materially any different from the politics of BSP/SP?

If we look at the track record of development under the rules of BSP, SP and BJP, we will find all three cut a sorry figure. While SP has been particularly notorious for crimes against Dalit women, the number of registered Dalit rape cases were highest during BJP’s rule in the state, between 1997 and 2002. While Mayawati and her BSP comrades may rightly point out that SP’s regime was punctuated with even greater lawlessness, it would be farfetched for BSP to claim that they have fulfilled the ambitions of the Dalits. Apart from some initiatives like the move to distribute land among landless Dalits, BSP has left the project of democratic revolution an unfinished agenda, as described by Prof. Sudha Pai. The disconnect with grassroots that has cost Mayawati and dashed Dalit hopes, is a direct outcome of the opportunistic, statist configuration of the party, which believes in a top-down model instead of social revolution from below. Prof. Badri Narayan has also described how BSP’s rule has mostly benefited a small section among Chamars and other numerically dominant castes like Dhobi, Kori, Valmiki etc. That said, other numerically strong castes like Jogi, Kanjar, Musahar, Nat, Dom and smaller ones like Kalabaaz, Khairha, Balai, Majhwar have become the “ati-Dalits” due to even greater marginalisation due to unequal distribution of the pie. While Prasad et al may argue that there has been an improvement in “recognition dimension” of inequality for Dalits in UP in post-reform period, there is enough evidence to show that developmental

indicators related to health, education, land holdings etc. were quite abysmal in UP during 1990's. In fact, as Prof. Zoya Hasan has pointed out, there has been no substantial structural change like alleviation of poverty or redistributive programs under the rule of BSP.

Perhaps the Taylor-Fraser dialogue on recognition and redistribution is informative at this juncture. While Charles Taylor is of the opinion that in a multicultural society, politics of recognition is more important, Nancy Fraser suggests that neither identity nor class alone can address all problems and instead presents a dualistic model. The futility of merely portraying a pro-Dalit and anti upper-caste self-image clearly did not work out, even in electoral terms for the BSP. However, instead of increasing its mass base through interventions in the genuine day to day struggles of the Dalits, it resorted to Brahmin appeasement, to the extent of diluting the SC/ST atrocities act. It is no wonder then that merely harping on a politics of recognition without also realising that it goes hand in hand with a politics of redistribution has made way for the rise of BJP. For an assertive politics to be truly inclusive, it cannot overlook the class dimensions within each community. As KM Panikkar points out, identity politics often represents not the interest of the whole community but only of the dominant classes within it. This is an extension of Fraser's point that reification of identity can actually lead to mal-distribution of resources by masking the power of dominant factions within the community and increasing intra-community inequality.

# THE CONTRADICTIONARY BAHUJAN OF THE BSP

Skand Priya\*

The BSP was formed in 1984 after a long span of preparatory activities by the All India Backward and Minorities Communities Employees Federation (BAMCEF) and the *Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti* (DS-4). Its founder Kanshiram used to say that the Indian society and politics is marked by the hegemony of 15% upper castes and they rule over the rest 85% of the society. He called the oppressed majority *Bahujan* and brought the program for their political unity by which social and cultural upliftment of the *Bahujan* was envisaged. In an election manifesto released on the eve of State Assembly elections in UP in 1993, the BSP announced two core programs that are supposed to be at the heart of its social and political agenda: horizontalization of the vertical social order and democratisation of the undemocratic political order. According to the party, these programs form the guidelines to achieve social justice in both the caste-based Indian society as well as the Savarna (upper castes) dominated Indian polity. From this it is clear that social justice or Ambedkarism is BSP's ideology, and horizontalization of the social order and democratisation of the political order are the two core elements of that ideology (Gundimeda, 2014). The *Bahujan* as a broad community had to encompass all Dalits, Shudras and religious minorities which according to Kanshiram shared the same interests against the dominant *Savarna* castes in the vertically unequal social hierarchy.

BSP's idea of homogenization of power or democratisation of the undemocratic order becomes clear in one of its political slogans: *Jiskijitnisankhyabharī—uskiutnibhagedari* (Political representation and share in power will correspond to the support of the particular caste in terms of number of votes). The party believes that political power should be distributed equally among all the castes on the basis of each caste's weight in the total population. According to Kanshi Ram, restoring power to the powerless is a two-stage process. In the first stage, the Bahujans, in the vanguard of the BSP, would capture state power. This would be done not by means of violence, but by the 'ballot box', that is, by taking part in the electoral process. In the second stage, the Party, by making use of the State, would initiate programmes such as the provision of better wages and good working conditions, which would empower the marginalised, thereby leading to a social transformation (Pai, 2002: 121–26). In addition to this the *Bahujan* identity had to be a democratic political alliance between the

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politically deprived caste groups of contemporary India under the leadership of the most exploited castes of Indian history, the Dalits. This coalition of all deprived minority communities (scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward castes, and minorities) in practical sense represents the majority of the population in India [Hasan 2004: 382]. The Dalits being the formulators and leaders of the Bahujan category are also the most stringent advocators of the BSP's political strategies. Being Dalits, they endeavour to overthrow the social, political, cultural and economic dominations perpetuated by the Hindu social order. Such a revolutionary appeal is the basic component of this vanguard party to bring real social change in India and therefore, "Dalitness" becomes the core value of Bahujan political philosophy (Wankhede 2008: 54). In the 1980s, the period when lower castes were seeking assertion through identity politics, the BSP and its Dalit constituency employed three strategies to achieve its objective. The first was to publicly showcase Dalit caste identities with great pride. The second strategy was that of adopting individual caste titles to their proper names. The third and final strategy was of puncturing upper-caste pride through the Dalit adoption of the former's caste titles, supposed to be the exclusive preserve of the caste Hindus (Gundimeda, 2014: 21–38). The presence of Ambedkar's statues in the Dalit localities motivated and shaped the contours of their politically charged identities.

But the idea of *Bahujan* as a category in alliance itself has been very problematic, as the SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities were not on the same unequal grade in relation to the *Savarnas*, but on the contrary and especially in the rural areas, SCs and OBCs have been competing against each other. In most of India there have been instances after 1960s when a good number of atrocities against the Dalits have been done by the Shudra castes and not by the *Savarnas*. The incidents of Keezhvenmani (Tamil Nadu, 1968), Belchi (Bihar, 1977), Morichjhampi (west Bengal, 1978), Karamchedu (Andhra Pradesh, 1984), Chundururu (Andhra Pradesh, 1991), Kambalapalli (Karnataka, 2000), Jhajjar (Haryana, 2002), Khairlanji (Maharashtra, 2006) and many more can be cited here when the Dalits were killed or oppressed directly or indirectly by the Shudra castes. In the post-independence period and especially after the land reforms, the OBCs because of their abundance in rural areas have become politically and also economically strong and have acquired the position of dominant castes. It is these caste groups that are predominantly associated with and implicated in caste discrimination and atrocities. The contradiction between Dalits and non-Dalits that surfaces so violently in rural areas mostly derives its material sustenance from the opposition between the Dalit's role as landless labourer and the Shudra's new position as dominant landowner (Teltumbde 2010: 40-47).

In UP and adjoining areas of Bihar where the BSP gained most of its success, the pattern of relationship between the Dalits and Shudra castes are not much



different from the cases mentioned above. Dalits in UP constitute 21.1% of the total population in the state and among them only single Dalit *Chamar-Jatav* has 57% of the total Dalit population followed by Pasis who are 16% and then comes the Dhobi, Kori and Valmiki. Because of this unique distribution of Dalit castes in UP, there is no significant competition and rivalry between these Dalit castes and they can be politically united with a common community interest. Unlike the Dalits of other states, Jatav-Chamar has been financially well and politically more organised since the days of Babasaheb Ambedkar. These factors concerning the economic and political condition of Dalits in UP has brought them in constant opposition and tussle with other social groups of the state. Apart from Brahmin, Kshatriya (among them Thakur and Rajput) and Vaishya castes, the post-independence period is marked by the economic and political assertion of the Shudra castes that constitute nearly 45% of the total population and among them especially the Yadavas, Lodh, Pal-Baghel, Kurmi and Jats are very well-off.

These demographic conditions in UP has kept the Dalits and Shudras in constant rivalry and this rivalry has actually increased after the 1980s with the beginning of identity politics in the state. STs constitute a small section in the state and the religious minorities have always remained in dilemma on the question of which party is of their own. In this sense Bahujan as a category based upon the alliance between dalits, shudras and minorities had the lacunae of cohesive and organic unity. Though the Shudra and Dalits identified themselves as politically allied upon the call of their leaders, Shudra would not have been ready to form a *Bahujan* front under the leadership of the Dalits. In 1993 with the BSP and SP alliance, slogans like *Mile Mulayam Kanshiram, Hava me Udgaye Jai sbri Ram* were in the political air but, this alliance was possible against a common oppressor Brahmanism and only under the leadership of both.

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# KASHMIR: ELECTION “BALLOON” DEFLATED!

Mohammad Ashraf\*

(Total boycott accompanied by gruesome mayhem clearly shows the oft bandied “Balloon” of elections has been fully deflated!)

George Bernard Shaw had said “Democracy is a balloon filled with hot air. Fools watch it when it rises and the clever pick their pockets”! This has been happening in Kashmir from the very start. The best excuse oft used by the Indian Government to get away from holding the UN mandated Plebiscite in Kashmir for its final settlement has been the holding of elections. It has been always portrayed as the substitute for the referendum claiming that the local people have full faith in the Indian democracy and are participating in elections to elect the local governments as well as their representatives in the Indian Parliament. It is true that many elections in the past have seen sizeable participation in spite of boycott calls. The common people have most of the time taken these elections to be a way to get their day to day facilities for carrying on the daily life. They have never construed these to be something to decide their ultimate future. In fact, in one of the recent elections, the slogan of “Bijli”, “Pani” and “Sadak” was coined. It was meant to convey that the people were voting for improving the power supply, water supply and the roads. These were the most essential items which had been neglected by the earlier governments elected by the people. Except during the period of militancy in the nineties, the boycott calls were hardly successful. The government still managed to get sufficient number of people to the polling booths by coercion or through inducement. The lowest polling percentage was only during militancy. There was rarely violence except during nineties when the militants attacked the booths and so on.

The present bye-poll has seen a dramatic change. Apart from very low percentage probably the lowest in last three decades or so, there has been extensive violence. According to reports eight persons have been killed and scores injured some with pellet guns. There has been extensive physical intervention from the youth not only to prevent people from voting but even preventing the polling staff from discharging their duties. The violence and virtual mayhem during the polling for the Srinagar Parliamentary constituency in the three districts of Srinagar, Ganderbal and Budgam has been the worst ever seen in Kashmir during any elections held so far. In view of the violence, the other Bye-election has been postponed. As stated Kashmir has been a witness

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to umpteen election boycotts from the time these were started here. Most of the time people preferred to stay home and did not venture out in response to boycott calls given by various parties. In spite of boycott calls some people would come out to vote in previous elections, especially the party workers of the candidates. In fact, there were many innovations when groups of people would be moved from one polling station to other to cast their votes. Nobody bothered and results were declared regardless of the riggings indulged in by various candidates. Recently, a very senior former Police Officer has publicly admitted that the elections in Kashmir have always been rigged. In fact, in many elections, candidates got elected without contesting, thanks to the returning officers rejecting nominations of all opposite candidates! This is first time that so much violence has taken place during polling. The headings of various newspapers reporting the events are reflective of the situation. “Black Day for Democracy”!, “Election Narrative Deflated”! And By (e) – Polls etc.

The most important question is why has this unprecedented violence taken place during an election boycott? The simple answer is that new generation of Kashmiri Youth, born and brought up in the conflict of the nineties of the last century are in no mood to compromise. Not only have they been brought up with the worst violence all around but have been subjected to continuous harassment right from the very start. The climax of that harassment gave birth to the symbolic rebel “Burhan Muzaffar Wani”! The long shut down with extreme violence following his death was like a Tsunami which swept the entire Kashmir Valley. A hundred persons killed, thousands injured and with hundreds losing eyesight. Thousands put in jails signifies the worst ever suppression of the people. The youth refused to compromise and they had only one slogan of “Azadi” everywhere. The additional resentment is the betrayal of the so called mainstream leaders who have always let down people in preference to power and material goodies. This was more than evident in the last Assembly election when the party swearing to keep the grizzly bear of Hindutva out of the valley simply hugged it with full force leaving the masses bewildered and shattered!

It is very unfortunate that the authorities in Delhi have not learnt any lessons from the last year’s uprising and are determined to crush the popular will with brute force. This is in spite of the fact that many intellectuals, political leaders, journalists and even top Army officers in the country have advised for restraint and opening of a dialogue with all stakeholders to sort out the basic political issue. This bye-election should open their eyes. Kashmiri youth are now in no mood to compromise. Tragically, the fanatically motivated leadership is so much drunk with power that they may unwittingly by their violent actions initiate the disintegration of the country and Kashmir may become the fuse to light up that explosive fire.

# AN OPEN LETTER FROM A KASHMIRI STUDENT TO THE PEOPLE OF INDIA

Imran Khan

Dear all

I am a Kashmiri student of psychology. While studying the topic of resistance to persuasion, I came across this: "Few of us like orders or being told what to do. We all have probably experienced advertisers, politicians or individuals pressurising us to change our attitude about some issue. In all such cases if we feel like our personal freedom to decide for ourselves is threatened, we may experience growing level of annoyance and resentment. The final outcome: Not only do we resist their pressures of persuasion but we may actually take a view opposite to that of what was intended. Such behaviour is an example of what social psychologists call reactance" (Social Psychology 13<sup>th</sup> Ed., Baron and Branscombe). That is exactly what is happening in Kashmir. Imposing nationalism, patriotism and what I may call Indianism (in a way threatening our personal freedom) only leads to reactance from us. The more you pressurise, the stronger reactance. Many of you may be uncomfortable with such an explanation. But then in order to have an understanding of the situation here you may have to swallow some bitter truth down your throat.

Whatever is the truth, it needs to be faced. In the age of information technology and social networking, deceit and lies will no longer help you cajole the people. And the truth is that Kashmir is a dispute, which needs to be resolved according to the aspirations of the people of Kashmir. You must accept the fact that Kashmir belongs to none but Kashmiris. You can no longer call it as your integral part and your neighbouring country as their jugular vein. The fact is that we are tired and angry of the way you have caged us, and now no military might, political gymnasium or media campaign can hold it for you anymore. Those among you theorising about Pakistan's involvement or so called 'Wahabi Islam' can remain in those delusions as long as they desire. Don't be shocked by what is happening these days in Kashmir. You should have seen it coming since the day your government started curbing our freedom.

The way force is being used against our students reflects either your feeble mindedness or your fascist face, masked by the lie of so called democracy. One does not even treat animals the way you treat protesters here. Have you forgotten the ideals of democracy? Why don't you understand that we have a right to protest? When you choke all the political space and crush dissent, how can you expect no reactance from common people? And most importantly how can you expect peace to prevail here?

Those mourning on less poll percentage, student activism and unarmed uprising should instead mourn on the murder of democracy at their own hands. You looted the belief of people in democracy here a long time ago and now you expect people to have faith in it again. Till now instead of addressing the core issue, you have only done everything in your capacity to manage people. Be it by brute force or by political deceit, you have only tried to manage the conflict and not resolve it.

We have a message for your soldiers also. Though they have agonised us limitlessly, but we want to relieve them too of their agony. After all, they too have families and they are here only for the sake of livelihood. However, they need to know that it is soldiers who are made to fight. Soldiers die in the battle and not the kings (politicians these days). It is they who are made to face all the agony and not those anchors sitting in cosy air conditioned newsroom, provoking common people and you all. You may unleash your machoism here, but then one day you may have to retire and die with all the emptiness. The memories of brutality and the cries of innocents of Kashmir may never allow you to live in peace. If we are struggling for the resolution of Kashmir, it is for your salvation too.

Now let me ask your nationalist news anchors that if they may be us, what will they do? How can we love a state (Particularly it's security establishment) that is up against it's own people? Before discussing Kashmir why don't you come and live here for few years? Then maybe you may need no explanation of the situation here. I do accept that sometimes people hold violent demonstrations against Indian rule, but that is not in the spirit of recklessness or because we here have any love for violence. But because you have made us feel suffocated and frustrated. We are tired of your false promises and now we don't believe you. Why don't you ask your politicians and Army an important question and that is: What India is getting by keeping the Kashmir dispute unresolved? What India is getting by holding the land only and not winning the people?

Now to blame you for all of our problems may also be too harsh. We know that our own people misrepresent us on media and in different forums. Our own politicians (Particularly mainstream politicians) sell us like cakes. We are aware of that. We also know that they are the best of the chameleons. They show one colour before elections and other after elections. They speak one language in Kashmir and other in Delhi. However, it is you who have nourished them and promoted them, without any concern for us, only to be used for your own advantage.

Now you may point fingers at Hurriyat leaders. We want you to know that we are familiar with them too. We know that they have limited their leadership to occasional speeches in some gatherings and press statements, and lack a well

designed and well thought plan regarding their struggle. You must know however that today the situation has reached to a point where people don't follow them; instead they are being forced to follow. However, if you allow them a significant political space, I am sure they too can contribute towards peace and ultimately solution of Kashmir.

Lastly let me conclude with these words that we gave you all a chance since time immemorial. But all of you have failed us and now you see a spontaneous reaction from common masses. Do you remember nothing out of the world revolution? It is the people who hold the real power. We too can bring revolutions and leave you shattered. We have a clear and loud message for you all. Our voice needs no reinterpretation. Your only favour to us can be a humane listening and empathy. Like all the people of the world we too want to live in peace, with dignity and freedom in our own land. For God sake leave us alone.

Thanks and Regards

Imran Khan

A Kashmiri,

# THE CASE FOR A TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION IN KASHMIR

Sheikh Athar\*

Co-Written by Sheikh Attar and Palvi Singh Ghonkrokta

Every time one thinks that life in Kashmir has returned to its normal course and hopes that no more innocent lives are lost, the hope gets mercilessly shattered with news of young boys dying in protests. Death is not new to Kashmir. Here seasons' change, moods change, governments change but the only thing that remains constant is the loss of innocent life. Since the nineties, fake encounters, extra-judicial killings, internal displacements, disappearances etc have marred the struggle for a permanent solution of the conflict. Unfortunately, in focussing on the political aspects of the discourse, the concept of justice to the people, has taken a backseat.

The recent deaths of eight young civilians on the polling day once again underscores the need move beyond the sovereignty versus *azadi* debate or even the embittered dynamics of the neighbourhood territorial dispute and mend fences closer home, before the embers of dissatisfaction spill over the streets again. The narrative should shift stance on justice dispensation, a crucial facet, which is often ignored by the political class and state institutions alike. Pursuing the idea of justice in the strife torn landscape of Kashmir is a particularly tricky proposition for several reasons. Yet this is precisely why, delivering justice is imperative to the reconciliation process and rebuilding strained relations in this protracted conflict.

Invoking transitional justice that is armed with both judicial and non-judicial remedies such as fact finding and truth-telling initiatives, criminal prosecutions, reparation processes, vetting and institutional reform can perhaps alleviate the long festering wounds of the Kashmiri people.

In terms of a concrete measure, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission can be established, by the central legislature aided by International jurists, as a sincere manifestation of its commitment towards addressing the massive human rights abuses that have plagued Kashmir over decades, with an eye on restoring the dignity of individuals.

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## CONSTITUTION OF THE TRC

Historically TRCs are instituted by the State/regime in power, post the conflict period. This has been cited as a reason to keep its formation in abeyance, given the ongoing armed conflict and widespread civil unrest in Kashmir. However, the open-ended nature of the Commission's mandate offers a window of opportunity, if the period to be probed pertains to the past, say the troubled nineties. So a specific mandate, with an inclusive term of reference, that cover actions by state as well as armed non-state actors to investigate and document the truth behind the dark period in the Valley's past, namely, the forced disappearances, the unmarked graves, the Pandit exodus and the extra-judicial killings in detention camps, may open the door for justice that has long eluded Kashmir.

Further, an effective reparations policy is a must, as it comprises the most tangible efforts of atonement, bearing a direct impact on the victim's welfare. Official public apologies, a specialised health care program for survivors, pension for victims and victims' families, rehabilitation of the internally displaced persons as well as symbolic reparation via identification of the mass graves, memorialization of victims, publicly listing names of the disappeared and the dead, disclosure of offenders' names and vetting in official posts to avoid recidivism are important measures in redressing past abuses and regaining the lost trust.

Equally, holding public hearings to record testimonies of victims, witnesses and perpetrators to officially acknowledge the truth must not be underscored as it has unparalleled effects on the sufferers', survivors', their families' and the community's psyche by providing due recognition of wrongs, creating an authoritative record, according responsibility and lifting the veil of impunity that offender's enjoy by naming and shaming.

## WHAT IT OFFERS TO THE GOVERNMENT

For the government, it provides the opportunity to shoulder meaningful responsibility of addressing the judicial aspect of a political problem that has been long skirted. Effectively it can extinguish long standing fires of distrust and alienation, while disengaging from the larger political scenario that requires a consensus, which is hard to achieve at present. Further, it strikes the right balance between maintaining the State's authority and public accountability, while circumventing the question of allowing third party involvement, which has been the subject of much debate, thereby avoiding all discordant notes. If successfully executed, it would amount to revitalising a moribund dialogue, significantly boosting the government's credibility in the valley and would bring



about a holistic closure for the masses while reiterating the state's obligation towards fostering reconciliation with the people.

## ROLE OF MEDIA

The role of the media is crucial in unearthing and dissemination of facts and walking the thin line to maintain a balanced and objective coverage without becoming polarised in its narrative. Significant media initiatives include documentaries on the report with the aim of contributing towards building a collective memory and educating the masses. For example, the report of the Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared (*Nunca Mas* meaning Never Again), is widely used for civic education and reprinted in various formats.

No doubt for its critics transitional justice with its emphasis on restorative rather than retributive justice, particularly in the context of systematic human rights abuses can seem like too little too late. However its benefits may outweigh its misgivings. Its flexibility allows for an efficacious justice delivery within the contours of the socio-political ground reality. Moreover, as an official agency, it lends the much needed stamp of legitimacy and state recognition needed to restore public faith in the rule of law and equality before law. It should therefore be viewed as an opportunity to leverage access to justice that has remained a mirage for the average Kashmiri, rather than an outright denial of justice.

It goes without saying that political will and genuine commitment is a prerequisite for the process. An onus on truth seeking instead of obliterating facts and figures, arming the commission with adequate teeth such as the power to hold someone guilty, limited exchange of amnesty for testimony, allowing statements to form the basis of criminal prosecutions where grave crimes have been committed and providing adequate resources such as legal support staff are critical to piece together a comprehensive, well documented history of past abuses and atrocities.

Finally, the report itself should be considered an important national document, its recommendations implemented in letter and spirit, with the long term aim of reconciling a divisive society with a deeply troubled past. This includes *inter alia* reforms of state institutions and policies by reviewing acts like AFSPA that bestow sweeping powers and have the tendency to turn into draconian laws if left unfettered, if proposed by the Commission.

*Azqadi* can mean several things to several people – for those who've suffered and seen wrong without justice being meted out, it could well mean having access to justice, even if restorative.

# KASHMIR TODAY NEEDS A HEALING TOUCH

Vidya Bhushan Rawat\*

What is the meaning of victory of Farooq Abdullah from the Srinagar constituency where not even 7% votes polled. In many of the booths merely 2% votes were polled. I know there are past precedences of such a situation in at least three Indian states when people boycotted and government determinedly went for polls and were 'able' to form governments. But when the world is watching and we claim to be the biggest democracy of the world, shouldn't it a matter of deep concern. Can any democracy of 7% vote would legitimise. Farooq Abdullah may enjoy Lutyens housing complex as a senior leader but the credibility of the political parties at all time low in Kashmir. You may win elections but you are losing people. How to win over people? Has there been any credible attempt by the government? Kashmir seeks serious answers from us all.

The outrageous video of a Kashmiri youth being taken as hostage or human shield by the armed forces is a dangerous act and will further alienate people in the valley. We know the forces are under deep stress and so are the people of Kashmir who have been facing deep insecurities and all kind of difficulties for past so many months. I am happy that Lt General H S Panag, a highly decorated officer of the Indian army, who is retired now, expressed deep shock and anguish over it. Let us acknowledge that life is not normal in Kashmir despite a 'civilian' government.

It is easy to blame the army but the fact is they are just doing their job. Their problem is that when they are send to Kashmir or north east, most of them go with a mind as if they are entering into a 'dushman ki territory' or énemy territory'. Most of them do not have any understanding of the Kashmir conflict or the issue of adivasis or north east. As they enter into these areas, every dissent and protest become anti national, a foreign agent. In terms of Kashmir, anti national has a direct connotation which means pro Pakistani and the result is well known to us. Without understanding the deeper political issues of the region, forces will not be able to control the situation. One need to realise that these are not the old age wars where you can conquer everything by guns and ammunition but by winning over the heart of the people. These days it has become more so because of the uncontrolled tongue of political leadership. It is the failure of the civil administration and political leadership of the country which continue to treat the Kashmir issue as an administrative one ignoring the

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historic reality of the entire issue. Political rhetorics and jargons will not take Kashmir further. The unfortunate part is that the politicians of the day has used Kashmir as a political tool to create hatred and phobia among their respective constituents without understanding the complex issue in all its sincerity.

The PDP-BJP government in Kashmir today has no control over the situation. They remain a government on paper as violence continued. Mehbooba Mufti does not have a stature of her father who could have definitely spoken to all the groups. We do not have a Sheikh Abdullah who was a power house and had credibility among people. The other leaders including his son and grandson Omar Abdullah remain isolated today. The entire situation seems to be being looked after by a set of 'experts' who perhaps despise any political person of the state. It has resulted in the entire issue being discussed and decided by the self proclaimed anti terrorism experts' and those hypes who want to discuss the entire problem in Indian Pakistan binary without speaking to local Kashmiri civil society and political leadership. The problem with the Kashmir experts is that they want to isolate all others and addressing the issues to Non Kashmiri population in the Indo Pakistan issue. They have little time for introspection and the only thing they advise is more arms, more forces and more power to military. None of them is ever bothered about how to initiate a political process. Though there is a civilian government but its credibility is lowest and it is also isolated. Delhi's media and expert look down in suspicion to every political person and civil society activists, media from the state, Once the political parties and civil government fail, who does the government initiate the negotiations. It is here the maturity of a political leaderships counted as how much liberal it is in countering such a situation. In the age of WhatsApp and internet when everything is now coming out in open, it is important for political leaders to show their better side but for Hindutva supporters, Kashmir is a bigger political agenda for elections. The ranting over Kashmir is so high pitched which comes to how the Pandits were forced to migrate to how our women were molested and raped by the Jehadis. The emotions on Kashmir in the rest of country are too high and help in consolidating one people against its own minorities named as Muslims.

It is sad to see authors, celebrities, diplomats joining debates on Kashmir in a very parochial way. It looks more as if are more worried about a geographical landscape without an inch of sensitivity of feeling towards the fellow Kashmiris. We talk of Kashmiri Pandits but forgotten completely the Muslims in Kashmir who have faced the harassment, intimidation all their lives. Why it is politically correct to speak of Kashmiri Pandits but completely ignore the issue of Kashmiri Muslims ? The whole propaganda and perception developed outside Kashmir is that Muslims are not pro Indian and only people defending India is Hindus particularly Kashmiri Pandits. This happen when we build our

perceptions from those for whom the land mass is more important than the people in the region. When you want to know about Kashmir, you can not ignore the past, the history and crime perpetrated on Kashmiri subjects by different rulers including Dogra regimes.

For years, we have been fetched in our mind how much Indian government is providing subsidies to Kashmiris and how everything is so cheap and easy in Kashmir and how each one of them is a traitor Pakistani agent. In the 1990s when the Ram Mandir movement grew and we had a few high decibel 'loudspeakers' who became 'heartthrob' of the people used to describe Kashmir situation as "atrocities" committed on Hindu families in general and women in particular". Kashmir became a highly hell zone in the perceptual ideas of middle class Hindus where everything is anti Indian and our forces are there to defend the people.

Such issues can not be handled in a surcharged atmosphere but with cool mind and acknowledging that the history of Kashmir was complex and need a careful understanding. That nothing can be resolved in the region without taking into account the people which means inclusion of the leadership of Kashmiri Muslims in the valley. It can not be just political leadership but also academics, civil society and other actors. Just by terming every one as anti national we are pushing the whole valley into the brink of disaster. If the political leadership is discredited then who are you going to talk ?

The role of the armed forces is to protect our borders. They cant be used for day to day administrative work which is the job of civil administration. The army jawans come from diverse socio cultural background and living in deep stress. For them obeying the orders from the higher up is the most important thing and therefore J & K for them become an alien area. Most of them come with their own understanding and follow the orders. With active militancy in the region, it become difficult for them to manage things. Whatever is happening today in J & K is the extensive usage of army which is not advisable in long term. Unfortunately, there are many self proclaimed nationalist expert who want to make us believe that we should do what Donald Trump did in Afghanistan ? How can you not feel offended when some one want to suggest that the hapless man who was taken as human shield by the forces in Kashmir was not the first of its kind incident and Israel have been doing it for long ? Does not it look shocking when we hear people spreading message to send Yogi Adityanath to Kashmir. The connotation of such messages is clear that Kashmir is a Muslim problem and it need to be handled with iron hand. It is with that idea that government knows well that whatever the armed forces are doing, has got 'support' from ordinary masses. It look as if the government is acting 'decisive'

in Kashmir because it is not allowing' secessionists to stand. But if these issues were that simple, the problems would not have been there.

I would not blame on Army for the disturbing situation in Kashmir but on the political leadership which continue to ignore the need of a political dialogue. Can we rise up on the occasion and engage with Kashmiri people and all the stake holders including Ladakh, Jammu as well as other parts of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. We must remember that Kashmiris have been a peace loving people but the antipathy of our civil administration and lack of will among political leadership has created such a situation today that most of the youths in the valley seems to be completely alienated? The government need to think beyond administrative mechanism ? Farook Abdullah's win may not bring any result as at the moment both the parties of Kashmir, PDP and National Conference are at the lowest of their credibility and there are no other political groups in the valley who the government will engage for a negotiations.

It will do good if political parties think of this seriously and not use Kashmir issue as a political plank to enhance their domestic TRP ratings. If the government is serious it must start to work otherwise it will be too late for any negotiations. Let government speak with Kashmiris as it is time to heal scar and build confidence among people so that peace and normalcy is returned. We know that Pakistan's inter services intelligence and military leadership will always play the religion card and try to exploit its sentiments, for us it is important is to show our sincerity and discuss the issue on table with all the stakeholders. There are proof of direct involvement of Islamic groups too which need to be handled administrative way by police and paramilitary. But all our efforts to win over Kashmir will remain of no use if ordinary Kashmiri's faith in civil administration is not restored and political leadership is not made accountable towards people. You can win people with sincere effort and healing touch and not through highhandedness. Let us hope that good sense will prevail and there will be a political effort to bring normalcy in the region

# KASHMIR : A HUMAN RIGHTS HELL

Syed Tajamul Imran \*

Kashmir is undoubtedly the human rights hell of the world. The tale of human misfortune in Kashmir is of unprecedented nature. Every form of brutal human rights violations and tactics of suppression have been committed against the masses of Kashmir to quell their sentiments of solution and right to self-determination . Most of the voices of conscience in the valley of Kashmir are irked by the realities of past and continuing degradation with relation to the human rights situation in Kashmir, the harsh and painful realities of one lakh Kashmiris have been killed in this conflict every minute strikes our mind.

The alleged crimes of the state forces, numbering more than half a million, against the people of Kashmir have according to reports of reputed human rights organisations and the 'voices on ground' reached genocidal proportions, presenting the worst example of state-sponsored abuse of these rights. The recent bloodbath at Chadoora Budgam represents the same painful fact as now forces are empowered enough to commit any crime in face of continued zest in Kashmir for freedom. Because the people of Jammu and Kashmir were pledged by no less an authority than the UN Security Council to exercise their right to decide their future under conditions free from coercion and intimidation. But these resolutions were ignored and even peaceful movements have been badly crushed in this part of world by a country which calls itself the biggest democracy of the world. Every Peaceful movement of the Kashmiri people for the realisation for their right and the respect for their fundamental human rights has been crushed with brute force by Indian state since 1947.

Moreover; the Indian authorities have done little to control these abuses. Members of the Indian army and security forces are almost never prosecuted for human rights violations in Kashmir. In the rare cases in which investigations have taken place, the most severe punishments for abuses have generally been limited to dismissals or suspensions from duty. Even during the recent Chadoora bloodbath Witnesses said people staged a peaceful protest in main town of Chadoora Budgam as People from various areas had to assemble at Chadoora. But the forces had sealed entry points, triggering anger among people who resorted to protests and clashes with forces, and unleashed brute force killing three young men wounding tens.

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What have been the results of limitless inquiries ordered by the government post killings, rapes, tortures committed by the state forces the answer is big zero. The results have been like snow in desert which never happens. The big voices of the world have testified same sorry fact.

Sometime Back, renowned human rights expert, Brad Adams, Asia Director at Human Rights Watch, while commenting on the fake encounters in Kashmir had famously remarked:” This epidemic of fake ‘encounter killings’ by the security forces have plagued Kashmir for too long,” “The police must stop their standard operating procedure of killing people in custody.” “Too often we find that India’s security forces are deemed ‘above the law’ and are spared criminal prosecution despite committing grave human rights abuses. Extrajudicial executions by Indian security forces are common”, Brad Adams had said. “Recent revelations have confirmed what families in Kashmir have been alleging all along,” said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “The Indian security forces have ‘disappeared’ countless people in Jammu and Kashmir since 1989 and staged fake encounter killings while fabricating claims that those killed were militants.” “When there are public demonstrations protesting a fake encounter killing, the official response usually is to offer an oral assurance of an inquiry, though these rarely happen. If such inquiries do take place, the findings are seldom made public. If any action is taken against those found responsible, that too is rarely made public”, added Brad Adams.

Enough is enough. Realities urge that the Indian state needs to wake up from the slumber and address the Kashmir dispute in a democratic manner as per the wishes of masses, which is also an ethos of a functioning democracy and shun the oppressive means. Ground sentiment to India is that nothing is as powerful as an idea whose time has come. There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come.

# I'M HUMAN, RIGHT?

Zainab Wani\*

*“Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.”*

– Office Of High Commissioner, Human Rights

Referring to the definition given above, human rights are something we are all entitled to, something that should be a given in any situation. But alas, this isn't the case when it comes to the valley. The value for life is absolutely disregarded in the geopolitical tug-of-war that has been occurring for decades, and with the advancement in technology and interconnectivity, people from around the world are finally getting to see the extent of damage that is occurring.

Human rights are universal and inalienable. Universal? Does this mean that the child that gets pelted in Kashmir would have been pelted on the roads of New Delhi? I think not. Inalienable? If someone is simply accused of terrorism, there will be no trial for the first 6 months. Now, imagine just how many lives must be altered once they've been branded with the name 'terrorist' regardless of proof.

Human rights are interdependent and indivisible. The right to life, social and cultural rights like the right to work, social security and education? I have one word, Hartaal. When society and the economy comes to a complete standstill, each individual suffers, leading to nothing more, if anything less. Equality before law and freedom of expression? If this were the case, then there wouldn't be an issue at all in the valley. Violence has only culminated due to the lack of equal distribution of these basic human rights.

The question isn't are human rights being violated in the valley, but how, and to what extent are they being bludgeoned. This is not only speaking for the civilians that are suppressed in their homes more days than not, but also for the army officials that are subjected to fight in this never ending loop between rock throwing children and extremist manipulators being paid under the table to cause unrest. The deeper we go into this topic, the more complex and controversial it gets. Because now it has become more than just an issue, it has become a way of life.

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Kashmiris suffer because they are Kashmiris, not for a specific cause, not for a specific reason. The army suffers because they are trying to fix a problem that has no solution, at least none that the dedicated political parties have arrived at, and after how many years?

The issue becomes more than just political; this becomes one of human rights now. Why should the common man suffer for the egos of maniacs? His children must get educated, his wife and daughter must feel safe, his bread and butter must be put on the table, and his home must be secure. If these are rights that are being denied at such a mass scale, how can the people go on? How is this not abuse and violation of everything that makes us human?

If this was an issue that could have been solved, or even saw progress towards being resolved, we could have hope. But now, in our present situation, regardless of the politics of the situation, we must focus on the human element. We must protect the rights of these humans who have been suffering, causing deprivation and a complete stand still in progress, with conditions degrading day by day.

We say human rights. A Kashmiri asks, "I'm human, right?"

# THE HINDU RASHTRA AND KASHMIR!

Mohammad Ashraf\*

(With the unprecedented victory of BJP in the U.P. elections giving rise to militant Hindutva proclaiming India to be a Hindu Rashtra, the relationship of Kashmir to India loses the very basic premise of accession!)

After the recent phenomenal success in the U.P. elections, the RSS is going full steam ahead to give practical shape to Golwalkar's dream of turning India into a Hindu Rashtra. Even there is talk of holding the Parliament elections in 2018 itself to cash on the Hindutva wave generated during the U.P. elections. Slaughterhouses and meat shops have been closed. Many Muslims are running away from some of the localities. The way seems clear for ushering in a real Hindu Rashtra within a few years. In keeping with Golwalkar's edict, there is no place for non-Hindus in the India of the future. Muslims and other minorities would have to live as second-class citizens. Golwalkar writes in his book, "We, or Our Nationhood Defined", "The non-Hindu people of Hindustan must either adopt Hindu culture and language, must learn and respect and hold in reverence the Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but of those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture ... In a word they must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment—not even citizens' rights." This thought is now taking practical shape. So far there is no substantial resistance to halt the process of Hinduisation! The worst thing to happen is that even the judiciary including the country's apex court has been forced to mount the Hindutva Bandwagon! The typical example is the highest court instead of itself giving a verdict about the dispute on the site of the mosque, asking the two communities to settle it by mediation!

Kashmiris are supposed to have supported the action regarding the accession of the State by the erstwhile Dogra Maharaja to the Union of India, in very unusual circumstances, through their undisputed leader of that time specifically on the basis of India being a democratic and secular country compared to Muslim Pakistan created on the basis of religion. They are supposed to have rejected the two nation theory advocated by Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Pakistan was declared to be an Islamic Republic, a home for the Muslims of united India! The creation of a separate country for Muslims was probably because of the apprehension that the Hindus in undivided India would persecute the Muslim minority. Till the recent takeover of the Indian Government by BJP with

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Narinder Modi as the Prime Minister, India was proclaimed to be a Secular and a Democratic Republic by various political parties including Congress which came to rule over it. Even BJP as part of NDA did not openly try to change that character. It is a different matter as to how secular and democratic it has been! However, in spite of much discrimination in practice, the nomenclature of Secular and Democratic Republic of India was continued. But now not only the character of the Republic but its very nomenclature is proposed to be changed by declaring it as a Hindu Rashtra, a home for Hindus only!

If India does really become a Hindu Rashtra, will it not automatically negate the very basis of accession of the State to the Union of India? A Muslim majority State has absolutely no basis to be part of a Republic based on Hindu religion. The first thing that strikes one is whether Mohammad Ali Jinnah was, after all, right in demanding a separate country for Muslims? Had he foreseen the ultimate goal of the Hindu majority of India in spite of its secular, progressive and Democratic leadership at the time of its independence? Kashmir which is a Muslim majority state, does not profess an extremist religious ideology. Over the ages, it has been the most tolerant society. In fact, the religious tinge to its struggle has been caused by the extremist Hindutva elements in India. It is a reaction and a protest against overt and covert Hindutva from the secular and progressive Kashmir which has been a home for Muslims, Hindus and even Buddhists in the past. It has always been proclaimed to be the “Valley of Saints”. Throughout its history, Sufis and Rishis have been the most important and symbolic attribute of its character. Earlier, Kashmiri youth have been protesting with green flags and even Pakistani flags to irritate and frustrate Indian authorities but now they have a reason to demonstrate and protect their Muslim character to prevent the Hindutva onslaught. Even the so-called mainstream parties in Kashmir which have been persuading people to be part of India have become uncomfortable by the tearing of the fig leaf of secularism. They have now been forced to acknowledge the Hindutva onslaught on Kashmiri Muslims through RSS!

Unfortunately, the resistance against this onslaught from the secular and progressive sections of the society has been very feeble and mostly limited to some progressive educational institutions. During the worst period of the partition mayhem, Mahatma Gandhi had seen the only ray of light in Kashmir. One wonders what would have been his reaction if he was alive today. Maybe he himself would have asked Kashmiris to part ways with Golwalkar’s India!

# TELL ME HOW LONG HAVE I TO WAIT FOR A PEACEFUL KASHMIR?

Khan Arif\*

The each death on the streets of Kashmir resonate the belief that Kashmir once called paradise on earth has become a lost paradise on earth. The streets are witness to blood oozing out from warm bodies. The place of encounter sites reiterates the support and desire to live in a peaceful Kashmir. The brutal killings of innocent people on the streets of Kashmir have culminated a sense of loss in the minds of the people. The hegemonic state does not shy away from coercion, intimidation, threats, and ruthless unleashing of violence against people. Such a vicarious structure has paralysed not only the peace in Kashmir but it also has weakened the development in Kashmir. The economic development over the decades has worsened since the region is simmering in the conflict.

The attacks on the army personals were a common phenomenon to be seen in Kashmir but attacks on the families of police officers is something new in the politically charged ambience of Kashmir. Such attacks have contributed in making prognostications about the civil war situation in Kashmir. Such a situation along with killing of innocent people has led to poor development in the region. This situation along with vulnerable political ambience, an intricate political history needs a strong independent architecture of developmental accomplishments, which would survive as the perfect apotheosis of the collective Kashmiri reminiscence of agony and infirmity, of death and disappearance, of pain and protest. The economy of the state subordinated to political considerations has distorted in this process. This distorted nature of economy on one hand and decline of socially purposive politics on other has serious consequences on Kashmir.

The Story of economic development in Kashmir is pathetic; neither the wealth of the 'nation' nor the youth are contributing to the economic development. The thinking of young generation in Kashmir is paralysed by the combined effects of the political imbroglio, the high rate of unemployment, the police recklessness, that in turn have been contributing to the vile quandary of today's youth in Kashmir. Growing up in the shadows of conflict, the people in Kashmir are witness to many baffling narratives that are engraved in their minds of people apparently forever. It has emotionally- paralysed minds of youth to

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make them feel insecure about their future because of struggling economy, stunted agriculture and distressed industrial sector in the region.

The two political parties with very discordant ideologies announced the formation of a “popularly” elected government (March 2015) in Jammu and Kashmir and after reportedly agreeing to a common minimum programme. PDP’s supremo Mufti Muhammad Sayeed had dubbed the PDP-BJP alliance as the meeting of “North Pole and South Pole”. *“We have to merge North Pole and South Pole,”* he said after taking oath as CM of J&K” *“We want to make this alliance a turning point. We want to do justice for all people.”* Nevertheless, people voted for Mr Mufti, it was to keep the BJP out of the state not to make it a partner in power. The question here is where is the idea of justice which Mufti sahib was taking about?

However the moot question is to what extent this alliance proved fruitful, as this fractured mandate also repeated the reminiscence as both the parties talking according their regional aspirations. The BJP-PDP alliance has contributed to fractured notion of development in Kashmir. The 2016 killings and heavy use of pellet guns have already alienated people of Kashmir. By associating with BJP- PDP has put its political future at stake. One really wonders what happens to juicy portfolios of BJP-PDP alliance. The both parties are successfully deluding the people in Kashmir. This unholy alliance has contributed to bolstering national consciousness among the people of Kashmir. The alliance has failed to address the alienation of people. Such a political situation reflects the fractured notion of politics in Kashmir.

The state with its mighty powerful apparatus is hell bent upon muzzling the dissent in the region. Dissent in any form is seen as poisonous to nationalism discourse of Indian state. The political uncertainty as result of uncertain peace has targeted children who are caught up in conflict in which they are not merely bystanders, but direct targets. Many examples reiterate this point. Some fall victim to a general blitzkrieg against civilians while others die as part of premeditated killings. The heavy crackdowns and search operations of Army have given the notion of nineties returning to valley. The people in Kashmir grow up with violence as a constant part of their daily lives since nineties. In this long shadow of conflict and high politics of ‘Unfinished business’ it is important to understand the need for investment in peacebuilding process and socio-economic development in Kashmir.

Amid this entire political situation in Kashmir, one wonders the future of India’s stance in Kashmir. Should India work more on the minds of people to delay the revolution in Kashmir or should it prepare itself to address the Kashmir issue. What makes us think on these lines is the present notion of India in minds of Kashmiri people. The idea of India in the minds of people is

hardly respected. The amount of hatred against Indian occupation is reflected through the graffiti's on the walls. The streets are witness to violence unleashed on youth of Kashmir. The post Burhan spell in Kashmir has already encouraged educated and conscious youth to take up arms. The recent attacks on the police make us think about the possibility of civil war like situation in Kashmir. Amid all these concerns shouldn't the bilateral talks between the two states resume? Should it be not seen as political emergency to address the Kashmir issue as remarkable amount of Indian GDP is spent on crafting plans and policies to linger the Kashmir issue. Till that time comes let us wish good sense prevails and less people die on the streets of Kashmir.

# KASHMIR: REMEMBERING THE UNSUNG HEROES

Mohamad Ashraf Khwaja\*

29 April 1865 is marked as the bloodiest day in Kashmir history. On this day the Dogra army brutally massacred 28 Kashmiris at old city's Zaldagar, when shawl weavers peacefully protested against the Dagh shawl department and the cruel taxation of the government. This protest was in the backdrop of their frustration, their extremely difficult working conditions, meagre wages, excessive taxation and other curbs. The procession was nothing but a demonstration of the fight against the exploitation, oppression and tyrannical measures of the Dogra autocracy.

M. Hussain calls this the first organised protest for demands in the history of class struggle in India. Historical records reveal that the protest was an event of far-reaching significance. In the beginning, the shawl bafs sent delegations to the governor, Kripa Ram, with the hope that their woes would be addressed. But, Kripa Ram's refusal to meet them dashed their hopes discordantly. The delegation subsequently turned into a procession and moved towards Zaldagar, Srinagar. In bittered despairing mood, the shawl bafs made a wooden bier placing a cover over the coffin, and carried it to and from the procession, exclaiming, *'Moud Kak Dhar; Kus Waen Dijyas Kabar (Raja Kak Dhar is dead, who will give him a burial space)*. Raj Kak Dhar, the Kashmiri Pandit official who headed the Dagh Shawl Department, manoeuvred a myth and wrongly reported to the governor that they would attack his house and kill him. Unnerved, he hastily rushed a large army under the command of Colonel Bijoy Singh who rounded off the demonstrators and asked them to disperse. On the refusal to accept the orders, the troops indiscriminately fired at them and later charged them with spears and pushed the unarmed hungry multitude towards the narrow bridge and most of the processionists fell into the marshy canal and got drowned. Twenty-eight dead bodies were recovered from the river, and over hundreds are thought to have sustained both serious and minor injuries in the violence. Fines were imposed not just on the shawl-bafs who had directly participated in the demonstration, but also on the *patwaris*, or local government officials, of the areas from which it originated.

Historians have been unable to determine the names of all those killed on this fateful day. However, the fate of the leaders of the 1865 shawl-baf uprising is well recorded. The leaders like Sheikh Rasool and Abli Baba were tortured to

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death in a dungeon in the Shergarhi Palace, while Sona Shah and Qudda Lal were imprisoned in the Bahu Fort at Jammu after they failed to pay a fine of fifty thousand rupees (*chilke*) each to the Maharaja. Hundreds of other protesters were held in prison at Habak, where many died of cold and hunger. This is where the phenomenon of custodial killings started in Kashmir which continues to be in vogue even today under the so-called democratic India.

This uprising was a great milestone in the social and political history of Kashmir. It was started against a system that had pushed almost entirely Muslim population into a position of exclusion and disadvantage in almost all spheres of social, political and economic life. Why the Kashmiri's raised their voice against the then autocratic regime is a question to be seen in the backdrop of the economic measures of Dogra regime. The Dogra rulers would eat into the hard toil of artisans especially the shawl weavers by imposing heavy taxes on their products.

The author of "*The Abode of Snow*" Andrew Wilson who visited Kashmir during the time of Maharaja Ranbir Singh substantiates this by writing that 'the shawl weavers were getting miserable wages and were allowed neither to leave Kashmir nor change their employment, so that they were in the position of slaves, and their average wage was only about three half-pence a day'. It was such a kind of labour in Kashmir where after working from dawn to dusk, their earnings hardly touched their subsistence level. The shawl weaver could earn seven or eight rupees per month out of which he paid three to four rupees in tax which left him three or four rupees to live on. Almost all the households in the city of Srinagar and other areas were fully or partially, directly or indirectly, involved in this industry and derived some kind of economic advantage. The industry indeed formed the considerable source of revenue to the government, but it went beyond limits in taxing the industry.

Reflecting the pain and plight of the labour class of Kashmir during the tyrannical Dogra rule, Allama Iqbal was moved by their miserable condition. After visiting the valley in 1921 he left behind a subversive couplet which spread around the whole of Kashmir. "Ba reshmaqaba Khawaja azmehnat-e-oo Naseeb-e-tanashjama-e-taarey: 'While you are destined to cover your body with rags, The Khwaja's silken robes are the fruit of your labour.)" The poet further lamented: "Sarma ki Hawaonmaeuryanhae Badan us ka; Detaahaehunarjis ka ameeron ko dushala: 'With his body naked in the flaw of the winter, He offers by his skill shawls to the rich.'" This couplet was probably in the backdrop of the event when the South Indian ruler Tipu Sultan sent a Kashmir shawl to Napoleon who liked it so much that he gifted it to his beloved Queen Empress Josephine. The irony of the fact is that the Kashmiri shawl weavers with their



ambidextrous hands produced masterpieces for which they were famous, but their children would sleep empty stomach during the bone-chilling winters.

They were reduced to the level of extreme poverty. While depicting their pathetic condition, Dr Elmslie, a Scottish Doctor and Missionary to Kashmir records in his memoir "Seed Time in Kashmir that there were thousands of shawl weavers in Srinagar, all Mohammedans, and were a most miserable portion of the population, both physically and morally. Crowded together in small and badly ventilated workshops, earning a mere pittance, and insufficiently nourished, they suffer from a chest infection, rheumatism and scrofula. The Dogra officials had made the life of these weavers as ill omen which is reflected by the fact that when a woman wishes her neighbour ill, she says, may you get a shawl weaver for a husband. The height of oppression on these Kashmiris was such that the poet Hafeez Jallundari was mortified and he wrote later: "Shir Sae Mehroom Hae Malik Hai Jui Sheer Ka: Ek Pehlu Ye bhi Hai Kashmir Ki Tasveer Ka: He who owns the river of milk is denied the milk: Kashmir's image has this side to it too."

It appears that there are probably no historical records that could reveal where these unsung Martyrs of Kashmir, who were the first in the world to raise their voice for the labour class, are buried. As time passed, their resistance was erased from Kashmir's political memory. The world began to observe a day for labourers from the 'May Day' of 1886 but the brave sons of Kashmir raised their voice earlier in 1865. Therefore this very day holds an important position in the annals of Kashmir history. However, the irony of the fact is that the Martyrs of Zaldagar are not being remembered the way they deserve to be remembered. These unsung heroes, unfortunately, have been forgotten to the extent that they are forgotten both by the state and the people of Kashmir as well. Kashmiris have been struggling against the yoke of subjugation and oppression for long offering innumerable sacrifices of their life. During past three centuries only the tyrant rulers have changed hands, be it the Afghans, the Sikhs, the Dogra rulers or the present Indian occupation, as for the people of this land, the saga of subjugation, humiliation and oppression remained a continuous affair.

# PALESTINE RETOLD: PALESTINE'S TRAGIC ANNIVERSARIES ARE NOT ONLY ABOUT REMEMBRANCE

Dr Ramzy Baroud\*

For Palestinians, 2017 is a year of significant anniversaries.

While historians mark May 15th as the anniversary of the date on which Palestinians were expelled from their historic homeland in 1948, the fact is the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians began in earnest in 1947.

In strictly historical terms 1947 and '48 were the years in which Palestine was conquered and depopulated.

The tragedy, which remains a bleeding wound until this day, started 70 years ago.

June of this year also marks the 50th anniversary of the Israeli military occupation of the 22 percent of historic Palestine that was not seized by Zionist militias in 1947-48. Among other notable dates, November 02 is starkly remembered as the 100-year anniversary of the Balfour Declaration.

While the roots of the Zionist campaign to claim Palestine as a Jewish state go back much earlier, the document signed by British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, was the first official commitment made by a major world power to facilitate “a national home for the Jewish people.”

The British made their infamous ‘promise’ even before the Ottoman Empire, which controlled Palestine and most of the modern Middle East officially capitulated in World War I.

A few years after the declaration was made, Britain was entrusted by the League of Nations in 1922 to be the caretaker of post-Ottoman Palestine, mandated to lead the country, like other Arab regions, towards independence. Instead, the Brits worked to achieve the opposite. Between 1922 and 1947-48, with direct British assistance, Zionists grew more powerful, forming a parallel government and a sophisticated and well-equipped militia. Britain remained decidedly pro-Israel after all these years.

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When the British mandate over Palestine officially ended in November 1947, that parallel regime simply moved in to fill the vacant space, in nearly perfect tandem, claiming territories, ethnically cleansing most of Palestine's Arab population and, as of May 14, 1948, declaring as a reality the State of Israel.

The following day, May 15, has since been recognised by Palestinians as the day of the Nakba, or the catastrophe of war and exile. Nearly 500 Palestinian villages and many cities and towns were depopulated, seized or destroyed. An estimated 800,000 Palestinians were made refugees.

These anniversaries are important not because they form convenient numbers, but because the political context surrounding them is unprecedented.

The United States government has abdicated its long-term commitment to the so-called 'peace process', leaving Israel alone to decide the course of its own action, while the rest of the international community stand hapless.

The 'peace process' was certainly not designed to create favourable outcomes for Palestinians, but was part of a larger design to formulate a 'solution' in which Palestinians were to be granted semi-autonomous, disconnected, mini regions to be called a state.

Now that pipedream is over – Israel is expanding its illegal settlements at will, constructing new ones and has little interest in adhering to even the US-envisaged 'negotiated agreement' paradigm.

In the meanwhile, the Palestinian leadership remains visionless.

Although politically defunct and practically impossible, the Palestinian Authority (PA) still insists on the two-state solution formula, wasting precious time that should be geared towards arranging a future that is predicated upon co-existence in a shared land and a joint future.

It is important that the Palestinians are freed from the stifling discourse which rendered the Nakba of 1947-48 extraneous and moulded an alternative narrative in which only the Israeli occupation of 1967 seems to matter.

Indeed, the official Palestinian discourse has been quite confusing and consistent for some time.

Historically, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was forced to concede under American, and sometimes Arab pressures, and alter its demands throughout the years.

The greatest of these concessions was made in 1993 when the PLO agreed to the Oslo Accords, which redefined Palestinian rights around specific UN resolutions 242 and 338. It relegated or discarded everything else.

Not only was this a great folly, but also a strategic mistake for which Palestinians continue to bear the consequences to this day.

Existing now are several Palestinian depictions of the history of their struggle against Israel, while the truth is that there can only be one way of understanding the so-called conflict – one that starts with Zionist settlements in Palestine and British colonialism 100 years ago.

The strange thing is that PA President Mahmoud Abbas is himself sending mixed messages. While on one hand, he seemed disinterested in contextualising the struggle of his people back to the Nakba 70 years ago, his authority announced that it will be suing Britain for the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

Britain, on the other hand, had brazenly announced that it will be ‘celebrating’ the 100-year anniversary of the declaration, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu being the guest of honour.

The country that facilitated the ongoing tragedy in Palestine still refuses to acknowledge the enduring harm it committed one hundred years later.

Israel is experiencing no moral awakening either.

Aside from the small school of Israel’s ‘new historians’, Israel continues to hold into its own version of history, much of which was constructed in the early 1950s under the guidance of then Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion.

Compelled by pressures, fears and lack of vision, the Palestinian leadership failed to grasp the need to hold onto and explain these anniversaries combined as a roadmap towards a solid, unified and sensible discourse.

Politics aside, the Balfour Declaration of 1917 cannot be appreciated without understanding its dreadful consequences which played out in 1947-48; and the Israeli occupation of the remaining 22 percent of Palestine is entirely out of context if read separately from the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948.

Moreover, the Palestinian refugee crisis, which continues to manifest itself in Syria and Iraq until this day, cannot be fathomed or explained without examining the origins of the crisis, which date back to the Nakba.

True, 2017 is burdened with significant and tragic anniversaries, but these dates should not be used as opportunities to protest, registering only a fleeting movement of solidarity. They should offer the chance to re-articulate a unified Palestinian discourse that crosses ideological and political lines.

Without honest understanding of history, one cannot redeem its many sins.

# ISRAEL CELEBRATES 50 YEARS AS OCCUPIER

Jonathan Cook\*

Nazareth: Israel is to hold lavish celebrations over the coming weeks to mark the 50th anniversary of what it calls the “liberation of Judea, Samaria and the Golan Heights” – or what the rest of us describe as the birth of the occupation.

The centrepiece event will take place in Gush Etzion, south of Jerusalem. The West Bank settlement “bloc” enjoys wide support in Israel, not least because it was established long ago by the supposedly left-wing Labour party, now heading the opposition.

The jubilee is a potent reminder that for Israelis, most of whom have never known a time before the occupation, Israel’s rule over the Palestinians seems as irreversible as the laws of nature. But the extravagance of the festivities also underscores the growth over five decades of Israel’s self-assurance as an occupier.

Documents found this month in Israel’s archives reveal that, when Israel captured East Jerusalem in 1967, its first concern was to hoodwink the international community.

The foreign ministry ordered Israel’s ambassadors to mischaracterize its illegal annexation of East Jerusalem as a simple “municipal fusion”. To avoid diplomatic reprisals, Israel claimed it was necessary to ease the provision of essential services to the occupied Palestinian population.

Interestingly, those drafting the order advised that the deception was unlikely to succeed. The United States had already insisted that Israel commit no unilateral moves.

But within months Israel had evicted thousands of Palestinians from the Old City and destroyed their homes. Washington and Europe have been turning a blind eye to such actions ever since.

One of the Zionist movement’s favourite early slogans was: “Dunam after dunam, goat after goat”. The seizure of small areas of territory measured in dunams, the demolition of the odd home, and the gradual destruction of herding animals would slowly drive the Palestinians off most of their land,

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“liberating” it for Jewish colonisation. If it was done piecemeal, the objections from overseas would remain muffled. It has proved a winning formula.

Fifty years on, the colonisation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank is so entrenched that a two-state solution is nothing more than a pipe dream.

Nonetheless, US President Donald Trump has chosen this inauspicious moment to dispatch an envoy, Jason Greenblatt, to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In a “goodwill” response, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has unveiled a framework for settlement building. It is exactly the kind of formula for deception that has helped Israel consolidate the occupation since 1967.

Netanyahu says expansion will be “restricted” to “previously developed” settlements, or “adjacent” areas, or, depending on the terrain, “land close” to a settlement.

Peace Now points out that the settlements already have jurisdiction over some 10 per cent of the West Bank, while far more is treated as “state land”. The new framework, says the group, gives the settlers a green light to “build everywhere”.

The Trump White House has shrugged its shoulders. A statement following Netanyahu’s announcement judged the settlements no “impediment to peace”, adding that Israel’s commitments to previous US administrations would be treated as moot.

Effectively, the US is wiping the slate clean, creating a new baseline for negotiations after decades of Israeli changes stripping the Palestinians of territory and rights.

Although none of this bodes well, Egypt and Jordan’s leaders met Trump this month to push for renewed talks between Israel and the Palestinians. The White House is said to be preparing to welcome the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas.

Some senior Palestinians are rightly wary. Abbas Zaki, a Fatah leader, fears Trump will try to impose a regional solution on Arab states, over Abbas’s head, designed to “eliminate the Palestinian cause altogether”.

David Ben Gurion, Israel’s founding father, reportedly once said: “What matters is not what the goyim [non-Jews] say, but what the Jews do.”

For nearly a quarter of a century, the Oslo accords dangled an illusory peace carrot that usefully distracted the global community as Israel nearly quadrupled its settler population, making even a highly circumscribed Palestinian state unrealisable.

Now, that game plan is about to be revived in new form. While the US, Israel, Jordan and Egypt focus on the hopeless task of creating a regional framework for peace, Israel will be left undisturbed once again to seize more dunams and more goats.

In Israel, the debate is no longer simply about whether to build settler homes or about how many can be justified. Government ministers argue instead about the best moment to annexe vast areas of the West Bank associated with so-called settlement blocs such as Gush Etzion.

Israel's imminent celebrations should lay to rest any confusion that the occupation is still considered temporary. But when occupation becomes permanent, it metamorphoses into something far uglier.

It is past time to recognise that Israel has established an apartheid regime and one that serves as a vehicle for incremental ethnic cleansing. If there are to be talks, ending that outrage must be their first task.

A version of this article first appeared in the National, Abu Dhabi.

# WHEN DAESH IS DEFEATED: WHO WILL FILL THE INTELLECTUAL VACUUM IN THE ARAB WORLD?

Dr Ramzy Baroud\*

Back in the Middle East for a few months, I find myself astounded by the absence of the strong voices of Arab intellectuals.

The region that has given rise to the likes of Michel Aflaq, George Habash, Rached al-Ghannouchi, Edward Said and numerous others has marginalised its intellectuals.

Arab visionaries have either been coopted by the exuberant funds allocated to sectarian propaganda, been silenced by fear of retribution, or are simply unable to articulate a collective vision that transcends their sects, religions or whatever political tribe they belong to.

This void created by the absence of Arab intellectuals (reduced to talking heads with few original ideas, and engaged in useless TV ‘debates’) has been filled by extremist voices tirelessly advocating a genocidal future for everyone.

It is no secret that Arabs and Muslims are by far the greatest victims of extremism.

Strange as this may sound, religious scholars seem more united in countering the voices that hijacked religion to promote their dark political agendas.

Yet despite repeated initiatives, cries of Muslim scholars who represent majority of Muslims worldwide have garnered little media attention.

For example, in June 2016, nearly 100,000 Muslim clerics in Bangladesh signed a religious decree (Fatwa) condemning the militant group, Daesh.

Such Fatwas are quite common, and many thousands of Arab Muslim scholars have done the same.

Although hardly popular among Muslims in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and the rest of the world, somehow Daesh came to define Islam and all Muslims in the eyes of the West.

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The debate in Western media and among academics remains futile, yet pervasive – while the Islamophobes are eager to reduce Islam to Daesh, others insist on conspiracy theories regarding the origins of the group.

Much time is wasted in this demoralising discussion.

The roots of extremism cannot be found in a religion that is credited with uplifting Europe from its Dark Ages to an era of rational philosophy and the ascendancy of science.

Thanks to Muslim scientists during the Islamic Golden Age, Alchemy, mathematics, philosophy, physics and even agricultural methods were passed from the Arabs – Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Persian scholars – to medieval Europe beginning as early as the 12th Century and lasting for hundreds of years.

The developed Arab Muslim city states in Al-Andalus, Spain, was a major gate through which Muslim knowledge gushed into Western Europe, affecting a continent then sustained by endless wars and superstitions.

Fortunes had indeed turned with the fall of Granada in 1492. Massacres of Arabs and Jews in Spain ensued, extending for hundreds of years. It was then that many Jews sought a safe haven in the Arab world, continuing a period of relatively peaceful co-existence that remained in place until the mid-20th Century.

While times had changed, the essence of Islam as a religion remained intact.

In the hands of scholars and intellectuals, Islam influenced much of the world. In the hands of Daesh ‘scholars’, Islam has become exploited, offering bloody fatwas and humiliating and enslaving women.

Islam has certainly not changed, but the ‘intellectual’ has.

Most of the answers we continue to seek about Daesh often yields little meaning simply because the questions are situated in American-Western priorities.

We insist on discussing Daesh as a question of Western security and refuse to contextualise the emergence of Daesh in US-Western interventions in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen.

It seems that extremists (whether Daesh, al-Qaeda or others) are almost always linked to Western military ‘areas of operations’ in the Middle East. Extremism thrives in places in which strong central powers are lacking or have no political legitimacy and popular support, leaving the door wide-open for foreign interventionists.

Yemen had no strong central power for many years, neither did Somalia, nor recently, Libya and Mali. It was no surprise that these places are dual victims of extremists and interventionists.

Foreign interventionists often cite ‘fighting extremism’ to further justify their meddling in other countries’ affairs, thus empowering extremists, who use interventions to acquire more recruits, funds and self-validation.

It is a vicious cycle that has occupied the Middle East since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

That relationship – between foreign interventions, ensued chaos, and extremism – is often missing in Western media discourses.

But here in the Arab world the challenge is somewhat different.

In recent years, the ‘marketplace of ideas’ has shrunk to the point that what remains is an alternative marketplace in which the ‘intellectual’ is bought and sold for a negotiable price.

It is quite common that an editor of a newspaper can use his publication to serve as a mouthpiece for a Middle Eastern party, before he changes his loyalty to other competing parties.

It all depends on who pays more.

Many once-promising intellectuals are now victims too, acting as mere mouthpieces.

There were times in which Arab intellectuals fought to articulate a unique narrative – a combination of nationalist, socialist and Islamic ideologies that had tremendous impact on the Arab individual and collective.

Even if the offshoots were sometimes populist movements centred around an individual, or a ruling party, the Arab intellectual movement that emerged during the anticolonial and postcolonial struggles remained relevant, vibrant and massively consequential.

The setback following the upheaval of the 2011 revolts, uprisings and civil wars, has led to massive polarisation. Many Arab intellectuals fled to the West, were imprisoned or opted to remain silent.

Pseudo-intellectuals, however, were readily co-opted, selling their allegiances to the highest bidder.

This intellectual vacuum allowed the likes of Daesh, al-Qaeda and others to fill the space with their agendas.

True, their agendas are dark and horrific, yet they are rational outcomes at a time when Arab societies subsist in despair when foreign interventions are afoot, and when no homegrown intellectual movement is available to offer Arab nations a roadmap towards a future free from tyranny and foreign occupation.

Even when Daesh is defeated on the ground, its ideology will not disappear; it will simply mutate, for Daesh is itself a mutation of various other extremist ideologies.

Neither the Westernized Arab intellectual nor the co-opted local one is capable of filling the empty space at the moment, leaving room for more chaos that can only be filled by opportunistic extremism.

This is not a discussion that can be instigated by Western universities or state-sponsored Arab media for these platforms will impose a self-serving narrative doomed to prejudice the outcomes.

It is fundamentally an Arab discussion that must be generated by free Arab thinkers – Muslim and Christians alike. It is the birth of that movement that will begin to imagine an alternative future for the region.

Seemingly wishful thinking? I think not. Without such intellectual renaissance, the Arabs will remain hostage to two choices: to remain lackeys to Western powers or hostage to self-serving regimes.

And both options are not options at all.

# HOW THE INSURGENCIES IN MIDDLE EAST ARE NOT TERRORISM?

Nauman Sadiq\*

The definition of the term “terrorism” has been deliberately left undefined by the Western powers to use it as a catch-all pretext to justify their interventionist policy in the energy-rich Islamic countries. Depending on context, “terrorism” can mean two markedly distinct phenomena: that are, religious extremism or militancy.

If terrorism is understood as religious extremism, then that is a cultural mindset and one cannot possibly hope to transform cultures through the means of war and military interventions; if anything, war will further radicalise the society.

However, by terrorism, if the Western powers mean militancy, then tamping down on militancy and violence through the means of war does makes sense because a policy of disarmament and de-weaponization can be subsequently pursued in the occupied territories.

That being understood that the Western powers aim to eradicate militancy through wars, but then a question arises that who were the Libyan and Syrian so-called “rebels” who were, and still are, being supported by the Western powers in their purported wars of “liberation” of those hapless countries? Are they not armed to the teeth militants?

Notwithstanding, it can be argued that war and militancy are only means to an end and it’s the objectives and goals that determine whether such wars are just or unjust. No-one can dispute this assertion that the notions of “just wars” and “good militants” do exist in the vocabulary; empirically speaking, however, after witnessing the instability, violence and utter chaos and anarchy in the war-ravaged countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen, the onus lies on any “liberal interventionist” to prove beyond doubt that the wars and militants that he justifies and upholds are indeed just and good.

In political science, the devil always lies in the definitions of the terms that we employ. For instance: how do you define a terrorist or a militant? In order to

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understand this we need to identify the core of a “militant,” that what essential feature distinguishes him from the rest?

A militant is basically an armed and violent individual who carries out subversive activities against the state. That being understood, now we need to examine the concept of “violence.” Is it violence per se that is wrong, or does some kind of justifiable violence exist?

In the contemporary politics, I take the view, on empirical grounds, that all kinds of violence is essentially wrong; because the ends (goals) for which such violence is often employed are seldom right and elusive at best. Although democracy and liberal ideals are cherished goals but such goals can only be accomplished through peaceful means; expecting from armed and violent militants to bring about democratic reform is naïve and posterous.

The Western mainstream media and its neoliberal constituents, however, take a different view. According to them, there are two distinct kinds of violence: justifiable and unjustifiable. When a militant resorts to violence for the secular and nationalist goals, such as “bringing democracy” to Libya and Syria, the misinformed neoliberals enthusiastically exhort such form of violence.

However, if such militants later turn out to be Islamic jihadists, like the Misrata militia and Ansar al-Sharia in Libya, or the Islamic State, al-Nusra Front, Jaysh al-Islam and Ahrar al-Sham in Syria, the credulous neoliberals, who have been misguided by the mainstream narrative, promptly make a volte-face and label them as “terrorists.”

More to the point, there is a big difference between an anarchist and a nihilist: an anarchist believes in something and wants to change the status quo in the favour of that belief, while a nihilist believes is nothing and considers life to be meaningless.

Similarly, there is also a not-so-subtle difference between a terrorist and an insurgent: an Islamic insurgent believes in something and wants to enforce that agenda in the insurgency-hit regions, while a terrorist is just a bloodthirsty lunatic who is hell-bent on causing death and destruction. The distinguishing feature between the two is that an insurgent has well-defined objectives and territorial ambitions, while a terrorist is basically motivated by the spirit of revenge and the goal of causing widespread fear.

The phenomena of terrorism is that which threatened the Western countries between 2001 to 2005 when some of the most audacious terrorist acts were carried out by al-Qaeda against the Western targets like the 9/11 tragedy, the Madrid bombing in 2004 and the London bombing in 2005; or the terrorist acts committed by the Islamic State in Europe in the last couple of years; those acts

were primarily the result of intelligence failure on the part of the Western intelligence agencies.

However, the phenomena which is currently threatening the Islamic countries is not terrorism, as such, but Islamic insurgencies. Excluding al Qaeda Central which is a known transnational terrorist organization, all the regional militant groups like the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, al Shabab in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria, and even some of the ideological affiliates of al Qaeda and Islamic State, like Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula, Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb, the Islamic State affiliates in Afghanistan, Sinai and Libya which have no organizational and operational association with al Qaeda Central or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, respectively, are not terror groups, as such, but Islamic insurgents who are fighting for the goal of enforcing Sharia in their respective areas of operations; like their progenitor, the Salafist State of Saudi Arabia.

Notwithstanding, after invading and occupying Afghanistan and Iraq, and when the American “nation-building” projects failed in those hapless countries, the US policymakers immediately realized that they were facing large-scale and popularly-rooted insurgencies against foreign occupation; consequently, the occupying military altered its CT (counter-terrorism) approach in the favor of a COIN (counter-insurgency) strategy.

A COIN strategy is essentially different from a CT approach and it also involves dialogue, negotiations and political settlements, alongside the coercive tactics of law enforcement and military and paramilitary operations on a limited scale.

The goals for which Islamic insurgents have been fighting in the insurgency-racked regions are irrelevant for the debate at hand; it can be argued, however, that if some of the closest Western allies in the Middle East, like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait, have already enforced Sharia as part of their conservative legal systems and when beheadings, amputations of limbs and flogging of criminals are a routine in Saudi Arabia, then what is the basis for the US declaration of war against Islamic insurgents in the Middle East who are erroneously but deliberately labeled as “terrorists” by the Western mainstream media to manufacture consent for the Western military presence and interventions in the energy-rich region under the pretext of the so-called “war on terror”?

Regardless, the root factors that are primarily responsible for spawning militancy and insurgency anywhere in the world is not religion but socio-economics, ethnic differences, marginalization of disenfranchised ethnolinguistic and ethnoreligious groups and the ensuing conflicts; socio-

cultural backwardness of the affected regions, and the weak central control of the impoverished developing states over their remote rural and tribal areas.

Additionally, if we take a cursory look at some of the worst insurgency-plagued regions in the Middle East, deliberate funding, training and arming of certain militant groups by regional and global powers for their strategic interests has played the key role.

Back in the '80s, during the Soviet-Afghan war, the Afghan so-called "mujahideen" did not spring up spontaneously out of nowhere; the Western powers, with the help of Saudi money and Pakistan's intelligence agencies, trained and armed those "freedom fighters" against their archrival, the Soviet Union. Those very same Afghan "mujahideen" later mutated into the Taliban and al Qaeda.

Similarly, during the Libyan and Syrian uprisings, the Western powers, with the help of their regional client states, once again trained and armed Islamic jihadists and tribal militiamen against the hostile regimes of Qaddafi and Bashar al-Assad. And isn't it ironic that those very same "moderate rebels" later transformed into Ansar al-Sharia, al Nusra Front and the Islamic State?

While formulating their security policies, military strategists generally draw a distinction between intentions and capability of adversary, and they always prepare for the latter. Similarly, the ideology of militants, whether it's ethnoreligious or ethno-nationalist, only has a tangential importance; it's their capability: that is, their funding, training and arming that decides the strength and success of a militant organisation.

# THE BALFOUR DECLARATION 1917 - 2017: 100 YEARS OF DECEIT, DEVASTATION AND GENOCIDE

William A Cook\*

Since 1948 the state of Israel has celebrated annually its independence as a nation, though it is not clear from what or whom it has declared independence. The UN had portioned Palestine in November of 1947 and the British Mandate had made clear that its last day in Palestine would be May 15, of 1948. The Zionists determined that they would declare their independence on May 14 and so notified Britain and the United States of that intention, yet neither had opposed the declaration. Perhaps the celebration should be for the existence of the state of Israel. But that lacks the ring of the glory that attends a state that fought the good fight against a determined enemy and vanquished them. In fact, the Zionists had from 1939 to 1948 fought an enemy in Palestine, the very Mandated authority placed there by the League of Nations and later by the United Nations and the British Government. The Zionists were committed to destroy that Mandate despite its efforts to establish “a home for the Jewish people” from 1922.

And so began the ruthless modern Terrorism that plagues the mid-east and beyond. It began in deception and continues to the present day. Indeed on February 8, 2017, the world had a rather unique look at how this state came into existence through an interview with Lord Jacob Rothschild about, what he declared to be, “a miracle.” “It was the most incredible piece of *“opportunism.”*” (emphasis mine) made more so by Dr. Chaim Weizmann’s “seduction” of Lord Balfour, as Lord Rothschild fondly recalls (“Lord Rothschild discusses cousin’s crucial role in ‘miracle’ Balfour Declaration.” *The Jewish News*, February 8, 2017).

Curious word “opportunism” when it refers to an official British document declared such on November 2, 1917 before Britain had mandated authority to govern Palestine, before Britain consulted with the people that lived in

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Palestine, before WW II and the suffering inmates of Nazi Germany's camps gave sympathy for the Jewish people, and before the Mandate government could act on behalf of the Jews being brought to Palestine in fulfillment of the Balfour Declaration. The result, a British government forced to interact with an agency they had designed to help care for the Jews entering Palestine. That Agency declared war against the British authorities as they established a clandestine government in Palestine and acquiesced in silence to the terrorism mentioned above.

There remains but one more word to add to "miracle, opportunism, and seduction" as the good Lord describes the events that made possible the existence of the Jewish state. Cousin Dorothy de Rothschild, a teenager at the time, "was crucially important" because she connected Weizmann to the British establishment, "told him how to integrate, how to *insert* himself into British establishment life." Curious indeed that a handful of people could arrange for a miracle that would displace 800,000 Palestinians who had lived on and owned the land of Palestine for thousands of years without so much as a mention of their existence, condemning them to wander to refugee camps in foreign lands, bereft of homes, jobs, citizenship and a life of humiliation and destitution.

But more curious still is the fate of the Palestinian people when the World Zionist Organization realized that its dependence on Britain to ensure "a homeland for the Jewish people" was in jeopardy with the issuance of the White Paper by the Mandate Commissioner to limit the flow of immigrants from Europe, and, "opportunistically" turned both to terrorism and "seduction" of the United States to ensure its conquest of Palestine. Hence their attention to President Truman's campaign to defeat Dewey by contributions and advertisements to recognise the "new" state.

And thus did Israel become a state, a state like no other, a state given its land by a Government that had no right to it but a 67 word note written to Walter Rothschild, the gentleman who penned the note. A miracle indeed! Let AviShlaim compress the consequences of the Balfour Declaration into its devastation of the Palestinian people.

Britain's failure in Palestine can be at least partly attributed to the Balfour Declaration for that was the original sin. In Arabic, there is a saying that something that starts crooked, remains crooked. The Balfour Declaration was not just crooked; it was a contradiction in terms. The national home it promised to the Jews was never clearly defined and there was no precedent for it in international law. On the other hand, it was arrogant, dismissive, and even racist, to refer to 90 per cent of the population as "the non-Jewish communities in Palestine." And it was the worst kind of imperial double standard, implying that there was one law for the Jews, and one law for everybody else.

By the end of the mandate, there was no gratitude and no goodwill left towards Britain on either side of the Arab-Jewish divide. I can only agree with Sir John Chancellor that the Balfour Declaration was a colossal blunder it has proved to be a catastrophe for the Palestinians and it gave rise to one of the most intense, bitter, and protracted conflicts of modern times.

(Avi Shlaim, in Wm. Roger Louis, ed., *Yet More Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain*, London, I. B. Tauris, 2005, pp. 251-270.)

Today, February 6 of 2017 to be exact, the fulfilment of the Zionist intent to confiscate all of Palestine (see *The Plight of the Palestinians*, "Introduction." Macmillan, 2010) passed the Israeli Knesset by a vote of 60 for and 57 against, a vote that forces the Israeli court to accept legitimization of all land in "Judea and Samaria," the land still owned by Palestinians in anticipation of recognition by the communities of the world as the Palestinians' state. Once again, a handful of "opportunistic" people who have "inserted" themselves into the Israeli government to "seduce" their own people of their right to this land because of beliefs proffered centuries ago destroys the rights of the Palestinian people despite the Charters of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights because the United States Congress has become the means to make the Israeli state immune to international law by vetoing the implementation of Justice.

Three developments have merged at this time as Israel celebrates the "miracle" of the Balfour Declaration: the abstention by the United States in the UNSC that allowed a unanimous vote to censure the Israeli state for crimes against humanity; the United Nations International Conference in support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace; and the vote in the Knesset to annex the West Bank preventing the possibility of a Palestinian state. The Knesset vote (60-57), driven by religious zealots cancels out the first two; "the debate is over. Annexation it is," (RogelAlpher. *Haaretz*, Feb. 19, 2017).

B'Tselem condemned the bill's passage, saying it "proves yet again that Israel has no intention of ending its control over the Palestinians or its theft of their land. Lending a semblance of legality to this ongoing act of plunder is a disgrace or (sic) the state and its legislature. Passing the bill mere weeks after UN Security Council Resolution 2334 is a slap in the face of the international community. While enshrining the dispossession in law is a new development, in practice it is another facet of the massive land grab carried out openly for decades by declaring 'state land'" (Haaretz2/7/2017, Jonathan Lis).

The first and second of these come 69 years after the Zionists declared their "independence," their declared right to seize the land of the Palestinians

regardless of international laws and moral rights declared by the United Nations. For the first time in all those years, the Security Council can bring the State of Israel before the Human Rights Council for crimes against Humanity and refer the violations they have enunciated to the International Court of Justice. Equally important is the action that the UN International Peace Conference can take by its recognition of the Palestinian State assuring that the Palestinians have equal status with the Zionist state to negotiate their future relative to rights of return, rights of compensation, rights of land with boundaries that constitute a state, and rights of a free people able to secure stability and safety for its people. But even as this possibility arises, after 69 years of ever expanding occupation, land seizure, eradication of human rights, invasion and destruction by land, sea and air, the possibility of achieving these ends is declared by the Knesset in its action that effectively erases the existence of Palestine caused by a handful of “opportunists” that have ensured that fear exists in the hearts and minds of Israelis.

As the Jewish state celebrates its “miracle,” the people of the world have overwhelmingly declared that the occupation and oppression by Israel of the people of Palestine must stop. It’s time for resolution: does the world community stand indifferent to the plight of the Palestinians or does rule by international law determine that moral rights, engraved in the conventions of the UN charter, determine human rights. We are faced with determined fanatics that are in control of the Knesset, a situation not unlike what the US faced under the rule of President George W. Bush when a similar force of far right Evangelical fanatics controlled the government. Both groups impose their beliefs on the governing administrations, the Neo-Cons of the Bush administration bolstered by the evangelicals when they determined it was God’s truth the US must bring to the world as expressed in the book of Revelation, and the Settlers and their party in the Knesset under Netanyahu crying that the land was a gift to them as recorded in their book of Genesis. Both groups, the extremists and fanatics, are the products of pathological minds indifferent to all others who must suffer the consequences of their dementia.

Survival of the beast, not survival of the fittest.

[A brief review from the past will help illuminate both the Nakba and the Day of Independence. This review is drawn from the past, as far back as 2005 when I examined the destruction caused by the Zionist Zealots of the Christian right and saw in them the superstitious ideology that drives their madness as it does the Zionist mind.]

What fuels slavery, ethnic cleansing, land theft, and genocide? What enables a mind to justify imprisoning another without cause, without trial, without rights of due process and assumption of innocence until proven guilty? What enables

a soul to accept dominance over another, to degrade and humiliate other humans, to participate in or acquiesce to genocide?

I'll posit two trends of thought, two of many perhaps, that seem to reside at the root of Western culture, trends that swirl like infected eddies beneath the surface of our ideals allowing for slavery, ethnic erasure of populations, land theft and genocide. The first blossoms when men, driven by a commitment to an ideology they accept as absolute, as those who zealously and fanatically proclaim they alone know God's word, rise to power and force their beliefs on others, knowing in their hearts that they are chosen to lead because of their innate superiority, men like Ferdinand, the King of Spain, Columbus and the Pope who guide their legions of friars and conquistadors to impose their divinely ordained right on others. The second follows from the first, when men, who accept unquestioningly their superiority over others deemed by them to be sub-human or inferior in intellect or will, move to positions of power not driven by an ideology, but willingly use those so possessed, to impose their covetous desire to acquire land, natural resources, or labor regardless of the consequences.

Condoleezza Rice noted in her Paris speech "...history does not just happen, it is made. History is made by men and women of conviction, of commitment and of courage, who will not let their dreams be denied." Once again the past of Christian, civilised Europe is on the march; its dreams of God's mission to bring His gift of "freedom" to all the peoples of the world will be executed whether or not they are the dreams of all the peoples who will accept them or die. What mind decides, "We are on the right side of freedom's divide"? What mind declares it will impose its righteousness on all the peoples of the earth? What soul will succumb to the will of its leaders to slay the infidels who deny the "right" as determined by an elite group of fanatics driven by a self-determined superiority and a zeal to impose their beliefs on all?

Let us note that the Secretary of State did not say history is made by those seeking oil to ensure its military dominance, nor did she say that history is made by the nation that supports America's and Israel's interests in the mid-East; she said, most emphatically, what the Zionists of the Christian right claim to be "right," that God gave this land to a Christian nation, to be a "City on a Hill," a beacon to all the world that they might see what God expected His creatures to do on His behalf, and in that covenant, the responsibility to bring that gift to all the world.

Imbedded in that belief resides the spirit of superiority of God's chosen, an awareness that they alone possess the truth, and, consequently, are the most civilised creatures on the planet. Indeed, refusal by a people to accept conversion to Christianity became a mark of irrationality and subhuman status.

Now, this most Christian of nations brings God's gift to the nations of the world judging them fit to join the "advanced, civilized, and developed" nations of the West if they adopt willingly or by force America's form of Democracy, a form dominated by Corporate power and control, where "advanced and developed" means, in reality, new markets for Capitalism and new resources to fuel its continued growth. Strange how the "bread of heaven" has metamorphosed into a euphemistic "freedom" for all if they become cooperative consumers for extended Christian Capitalism. Both trends that give rise to genocide swirl beneath the rhetoric of "freedom and liberty," a virtual whirlpool of Zionist Christian fanaticism and neo-con covetousness for land and resources, and will erupt in a tsunami of devastation for those who oppose the will of this administration.

Genocides and holocausts arise out of unchecked zeal, unquestioned duty, and silent acquiescence. They are fueled by blind belief, personal fear, and a sense of superiority that gives license to slaughter. Both the United States under Bush and its clone under Sharon and his successors exemplify the presence of racism resulting in genocidal devastation as they impose their respective wills on Iraqis and Palestinians. The facts alone demonstrate the rampant racism running unchecked as Israel shackles the Palestinian people in chains as grotesque as any imposed by America's plantation owners on their property in the old south; and the United States, not to be outdone, occupies and oppresses the Iraqi people in methods learned from their Israeli tutors who teach them how to subdue, intimidate, humiliate, torture, and eradicate a people considered inferior to their oppressors.

Let Lt. Gen. James Mattis "tell it like it is" as he instructs our soldiers in the grace of war: "It's a lot of fun to fight. You know, it's a hell of a hoot ... You go into Afghanistan, you got guys who slap women around for five years because they didn't wear a veil. You know, guys like that don't got no manhood left anyway. So it's a hell of a lot of fun to shoot them." Imbedded in that statement resides America's superiority over the Afghanistan people: a superiority in moral values based on the wearing of a veil, a veil not unlike those used in years past by Catholic nuns to show their modesty before God and their awareness of the frailty of men who "lust in their hearts," to borrow a phrase from a former President of the United States, caring not to be the source of that lust; a superiority in judgment since this general can determine that his indictment justifies killing every male that has reached the age of marriage; and a superiority in legal rights because he can, as we learned from our Israeli brethren, predetermine who is guilty of breaking our laws, and, without leveling a charge, without representation by jury, without trial before peers, execute all of the male gender in Afghanistan. That is genocidal thinking, base, irrational, and savage.

Let's be clear. The actions in the Knesset a month ago propel a mentality on all that characterised the spirit of the enlightened age of the industrial revolution, a spirit of survival of the fittest, only today we must not confuse that propagandist euphemism with what it really is, survival of the beast.

After sixty years, we celebrate not the rebirth of Judaism in Palestine but the aborted triumph of an amoral Nation that, in its Zionist arrogance, from its conception through its infancy to the present day defies not just the secular codes of International conduct agreed upon by the member states of the United Nations but the very principles, morals and values of Judaism. That is the conundrum the Diaspora Jew must face: to embrace those who rule in Israel by imposing on Jews everywhere defiance of International Law – illegal and inhumane acts of collective punishment, eradication through extrajudicial executions of the principles of a state founded on equality before the law, occupation and theft of another people's land and natural resources, the imposition of daily humiliation of an oppressed people by economic deprivation, harassment, and visible identification based on Arab lineage as Palestinians, acceptance of torture that in effect denies the humanity of its victims, forced imprisonment without charge or due rights, approval of and complicity in a slow but insidious genocide of the Palestinian people by imprisonment behind an inhumane, illegal Wall, and constant military attacks of a disproportionate kind against a virtually defenseless people – or to embrace the moral fiber that nourished the Jews century after century sustaining their humanity as they came selflessly to the aid of others faced with discrimination and racism that often resulted in death for those they protected and themselves.

Let's be blunt: the anniversary of the Day of Independence in Israel is a day of death not of birth. Any state conceived in terror, nourished with the blood of massacred civilians in the Nakba, and delivered of a land made empty and barren by forced expulsion of its inhabitants is not and cannot be a child born to the community of nations that seeks the rights, the respect and integrity of all its brothers and sisters. It is rather a deformity, an abnormality, in the words of Jeremiah, —"Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth!" (15:10).

How conceived in terror? —When the Zionist movement started its ethnic cleansing operations in Palestine, in early December 1947 ...; so begins Chapter 3 of Dr. IlanPappe's book *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 2006, only to offer a passage from —Plan D of that movement's operations in Chapter 4. "... From the very beginning, the Zionist movement that effectively controlled by forceful means the total Jewish community of over half a million in 1948 regardless of their desires, had determined that the UN partition plan was moot; the Jewish state had no borders other than what it could take by force (Mss. Medit. 20.

Criminal Investigation Department Headquarters, the Palestine Police, Jerusalem, 31st July, 1947, p. 4, 7, Top Secret, Rhodes Library, Oxford). Despite protestations to the contrary from that day to this – the myth of the Jews as victims of annihilation by superior forces – the reality is that the Jews faced Arab forces of less than 50,000 troops, ill trained and equipped as a result of the British devastation of their forces in 1936, while Jewish forces numbered over 80,000 well trained troops (As noted by Pappe from Jewish documents and the investigative reports and evidence of the British Mandate government in the Rhodes Library).

What form did the terror take? Ironically, it mirrored the terror that the current Israeli government protests when undertaken by Palestinians. Virtually nothing the Palestinians have done by way of terror was not done by the Jews to the British Mandate government. The first leg of their terror necessitated ridding Palestine of the British Mandate forces since it was its policies concerning immigration that made the Zionists turn to terror against the very nation that had made possible a large Jewish presence in Palestine through the Balfour Declaration. That Declaration had imposed on the British government responsibility for both the indigenous Arab population and the new Jewish immigrants proportionate to their relative size. In keeping with that responsibility, the Palestine Government issued a White Paper in 1939 that limited Jewish immigration to 10,000 per year for five years and an additional 25,000 refugees. That limitation infuriated the Zionists who would tolerate no limits on immigration. Terrorism followed.

From conception to nourishment in the womb of Nakba, how the blood flowed. I should begin here with the massacre at Deir Yassin because it was beneath a tree in the field outside the mental hospital now placed there that I heard about the atrocities committed in this town and felt the anguish that hung like a pall over the land. Deir Yassin had an agreement with Haganah, a non-aggression pact, but unknown to its residence it lay in a pre-determined path of destruction and ethnic cleansing that sealed its doom. On April 9, 1948, a little more than a month to the UN date that removed Britain from its Mandate responsibilities in Palestine and the date that gave Israel its right to its segment of Palestine, the 55% allotted to the Jews, their forces — ... burst into the village, the Jewish soldiers sprayed the houses with machine gun fire, killing many of the inhabitants. The remaining villagers were then gathered in one place and murdered in cold blood, their bodies abused while a number of the women were raped and then killed. Pappe continues his recital of this massacre with this comment: “—One only has to be told that thirty babies were among the slaughtered in Deir Yassin to understand why the whole —quantitative exercise — which the Israelis repeated as recently as April 2003 (that the number killed cannot be considered a massacre) — is insignificant. Indeed, at the time the

Jewish forces greedily accepted a much larger number of dead as a “—warning to all Palestinians that a similar fate awaited them if they refused to abandon their homes and take flight” (Pappe 90-91).

But the Jewish forces in their eagerness to grab as much land as they could before the legally established date for the Israeli nation, found time of the essence and efficiency a necessity if they were to enlarge the land holdings far beyond what the UN resolution had provided to them. Realizing that the remaining British troops could do nothing during the “—lame duck months between the acceptance of the resolution and its date of implementation, the months between March and May of 1948, the Hagana forces moved with great speed to erase as many villages and towns as they could from the landscape of Palestine.” Walid Khalidi’s research tome, *All That Remains*, accounts for 418 such sites levelled by the Jewish forces, with their populations killed or expelled from the borders of Israel.

The State archives of Israel contain documents that provide a perspective into the mentality of those driving the Zionist Consultancy, as Pappe labels it. In a section made available through Palestine Remembered, a newly established Internet site, labelled “Plunder of abandoned Arab property, looting, possession without permit, robbery” numerous personal comments are stored by former Israeli forces remembering years later what they had endured. One stands out in my mind as pertinent and telling: it foreshadows the issues facing the Diaspora Jew now.

“—If I thought that the State of Israel would be capable of Deir Yassin, I would not only not wish to be an Arab here – I wouldn’t want to be a Jew here” (Zalman Aran, MAPAI). This reflection comes years after the Zionist terrorism, years after the true Jew had time to consider “what have I done,” and in whose name have I done it, only to grasp the reality that all honest Jews must ask, “what have I become.”

“—The voice of your brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground,” cries the Lord, and so the act must be judged and justice done. All humankind will don the robes of justice to condemn the fratricide; all 12 tribes of Israel will sit in judgment on their own; and God Almighty will cast the ultimate curse — the very ground Cain tilled, the land he stole from his brother, will no longer yield fruit and, as a consequence, he will be a fugitive once more and a wanderer on the earth. Thus will Cain’s intent — satiating his selfishness, appeasing his jealousy, releasing his aggression — reveal the disconnect between his inherent evil and his higher nature. In time these are the birth gifts Israel will inherit from a world that is witness to its wanton killing of its brother, the Semitic people of Palestine, who die daily one by one in the scorching heat of the noon day sun, forgotten and alone. No candles light the darkness now, no songs are



sung, no ribbons adorn the gifts, no laughter greets the guests, for the Nakba is not a day of celebration, it is a mark of catastrophic wickedness that tolls the death knell of the Jewish soul even as it blares to the world the power of indifference to one's brother, the ultimate birthright that severs the very blood of the family. And so will the words of Isaiah ring on this day: "—Ah, sinful nation, people laden with iniquity, offspring who do evil, children who deal corruptly, who have forgotten the Lord." May all of us who hear that cry not forget, that evil may be purged from the earth.

Thus do we return to Arthur Koestler's admonition to the Jews in the Diaspora, the dilemma they must face that will become more acute with time: choose between the Zionist controlled, amoral state that acts in your name casting lies like seeds before the multitudes and justifying brutal acts of vengeance and racism as necessary for the security of a state that stands alone in the mid-east as a bastion of technological and nuclear power or choose the truth of the Torah, as those Jews from across the world who remain compassionate, giving and loving people who seek peace in Palestine for both Jews and Palestinians (*Promise and Fulfillment*, Epilogue, 335).

# PALESTINIAN, JEWISH VOICES MUST JOINTLY CHALLENGE ISRAEL'S PAST

Dr Ramzy Baroud\*

Israel has resorted to three main strategies to suppress Palestinian calls for justice and human rights, including the Right of Return for refugees.

One is dedicated to rewriting history; another attempts to distract from present realities altogether and a third aims at reclaiming the Palestinian narrative as essentially an Israeli one.

The rewriting of history happened much earlier than some historians would assume. The Israeli hasbara machine went into motion almost simultaneously with Plan Dalet (Plan D), which saw the military conquest of Palestine and the ethnic cleansing of its inhabitants.

But the actual discourse regarding the 'Nakba' – or the 'Catastrophe' – that has befallen Palestinian people in 1947-48 was constituted in the 1950s and 60s.

In an article entitled: "Catastrophic Thinking: Did Ben-Gurion Try to Rewrite History?" Shay Hazkani revealed the fascinating process of how Israel's first Prime Minister, Ben Gurion, worked closely with a group of Israeli Jewish scholars to develop a version of events to describe what had taken place in 1947-48: the founding of Israel and the destruction of Palestine.

Ben-Gurion wanted to propagate a version of history that was consistent with Israel's political position. He needed 'evidence', to support that position.

The 'evidence' eventually became 'history', and no other narrative was allowed to challenge Israel's take on the 'Nakba'.

"Ben-Gurion probably never heard the word 'Nakba,' but early on, at the end of the 1950s, Israel's first Prime Minister grasped the importance of the historical narrative," Hazkani wrote.

The Israeli leader assigned scholars in the Civil Service to the task of fashioning an alternative history that continues to permeate Israeli thinking to this day.

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Distracting from history – or the current reality of the horrific Occupation of Palestine – has been in motion for nearly 70 years.

From the early myths of Palestine being a 'land with no people for a people with no land' to today's claim that Israel is an icon of civilisation, technology and democracy surrounded by Arab and Muslim savages, Israel's official distortions are relentless.

So while Palestinians are gearing up to commemorate the war of June 5, 1967, which led to the, thus far, 50-year military occupation, Israel is throwing a big party, a major 'celebration' of its military occupation of Palestinians.

The absurdity is not escaping all Israelis, of course.

"A state that celebrates 50 years of occupation is a state whose sense of direction has been lost, its ability to distinguish good from evil, impaired," wrote Israeli commentator Gideon Levy in the 'Haaretz'.

"What exactly is there to celebrate, Israelis? Fifty years of bloodshed, abuse, disinheritance and sadism? Only societies that have no conscience celebrate such anniversaries."

Levy argues that Israel has won the war of 1967 but has "lost nearly everything else."

Since then, Israel's arrogance, detestation of international law, "ongoing contempt for the world, the bragging and bullying" have all reached unprecedented heights.

Levy's article is entitled: 'Our Nakba'.

Levy is not attempting to reclaim the Palestinian narrative, but is succinctly registering that Israel's military triumphs was an affliction, especially as it was not followed by any sense of national reflection or attempt at correcting the injustices of the past and the present.

However, the process of claiming the term 'Nakba' has been pursued cunningly by Israeli writers for many years.

For those scholars, 'the Jewish Nakba' refers to the Arab Jews who arrived in the newly independent Israel, largely based on the urgings of Zionist leaders for Jews worldwide to 'return' to the biblical homeland.

A 'Jerusalem Post' editorial complained that "Palestinian propaganda juggernaut has persuaded world public opinion that the term 'refugee' is synonymous with the term 'Palestinian.'"

By doing so, Israelis attempting to hijack the Palestinian narrative hope to create an equilibrium in the discourse, one that is, of course, inconsistent with reality.

The editorial puts the number of 'Jewish refugees' of the 'Jewish Nakba' at 850,000, slightly above the number of Palestinian refugees who were expelled by Zionist militias upon the founding of Israel.

Luckily, such disingenuous claims are increasingly challenged by Jewish voices, as well.

A few – but significant – voices among Israeli and Jewish intellectuals around the world are daring to re-examine Israel's past.

They are rightly confronting a version of history that has been accepted in Israel and the West as the uncontested truth behind Israel's birth in 1948, the military occupation of what remained of Palestine in 1967, and other historical junctures.

These intellectuals are leaving a mark on the Palestine-Israel discourse wherever they go. Their voices are particularly significant in challenging official Israeli truisms and historical myths.

Writing in the 'Forward', Donna Nevel refuses to accept that the discussion of the conflict in Palestine starts in the war and occupation of 1967.

Nevel is critical of the so-called 'progressive Zionists' who insist on positioning the conversation only on the question of occupation, thus limiting any possibility of resolution to the 'two-state solution.'

Not only is such a 'solution' defunct and practically not possible, but the very discussion precludes the 'Nakba', or the Catastrophe, of 1948.

The "Nakba doesn't enter these conversations because it is the legacy and clearest manifestation of Zionism", Nevel wrote.

"Those who ignore the 'Nakba'- which Zionist and Israeli institutions have consistently done – are refusing to acknowledge Zionism as illegitimate from the beginning of its implementation."

This is precisely why the Israeli police have recently blocked the 'March of Return', conducted annually by Palestinians in Israel.

For years, Israel has been wary that a growing movement among Palestinians, Israelis and others around the world have been pushing for a paradigm shift in order to understand the roots of the conflict in Palestine.

This new thinking has been a rational outcome of the end of the 'peace process' and the demise of the 'two-state' solution.

Incapable of sustaining its founding myths, yet unable to offer an alternative, the Israeli government is now using coercive measures to respond to the budding movement: punishing those who insist on commemorating the

'Nakba', fining organizations that participate in such events and even perceiving as traitors any Jewish individuals and groups that deviate from its official thinking.

In these cases, coercion hardly works.

“The March (of Return) has rapidly grown in size over the past few years, in defiance of increasingly repressive measures from the Israeli authorities,” wrote Jonathan Cook in ‘Al-Jazeera’.

It seems that 70 years after the founding of Israel, the past is still looming large.

Fortunately, the Palestinian voices that have fought against the official Israeli narrative are now joined by a growing number of Jewish voices.

It is through a new common narrative that a true understanding of the past can be attained, all with the hope that the peaceful vision for the future can replace the current one – one which can only be sustained through military domination, inequality and sheer propaganda.

# INTERVIEW WITH JOHN SCALES AVERY, ONE OF THE GREATEST LIVING INTELLECTUALS ON EARTH

Binu Mathew\*

I'm at the home of one of the greatest living intellectuals on earth. In the cold, windy Copenhagen weather as we ring the bell John Scales Avery opens the door and welcomes me and my friend John Graversgaard warmly into his home. He serves us coffee and we talk. I'm stunned by his humility and breadth of knowledge.

John Avery is someone who is an academician but not restrained by the rigidity of the academic community. He is a scientist but not constrained to his area of study. He is someone who connects the dots. With his deep knowledge and vast experience he surmises human destiny scientifically. No, he is someone who is worried about the fate of all life forms on earth. His book "Information Theory And Evolution" is a seminal classic. He is coming out with a book "Civilisation's Crisis: A Set of Linked Challenges" which will be published by the World Scientific.

John Avery is not just an academician and scientist. He is also an active peace activist who campaigns vigorously against nuclear proliferation. Since 1990 he has been the Contact Person in Denmark for Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs. In 1995, this group received the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts. He was the Member of the Danish Peace Commission of 1998. Technical Advisor, World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe (1988- 1997). He was also Chairman of the Danish Peace Academy. More than everything else he is an intellectual who sees through the miasma that clouds our vision by ideological rigidity and mass media obfuscation.

*I have a fascination to know how life evolved on this earth, and what's it's future. Your wonderful book, "Information Theory and Evolution" answers almost all these questions. What prompted you to write the book?*

During the summers of 1960 and 1961, while I was still a postgraduate student in theoretical physics at the University of Chicago, I had the privilege of spending two summers working in the laboratory of the great Hungarian-American physiologist and biochemist, Albert Szent-Györgyi. He was famous for isolating vitamin C and for discovering the molecular mechanism of muscle

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contraction. But more importantly, he founded a new field of study: Bioenergetics.

Szent-Györgyi wondered how the chemical energy from food is harnessed to do mechanical work or to drive our metabolisms. He reasoned that there must be structures in living organisms which are analogous to the structures of engines. If you pour gasoline onto the street and set fire to it, no useful work results, only heat, but if you burn it inside an engine, the chemical energy of the gasoline can be converted into useful mechanical work. Following this line of thought, Szent-Györgyi looked for energy-transducing structures in the tissues of living organisms.

Among the structures that caught Szent-Györgyi's attention were mitochondria, which power the metabolism of all animals, and he also studied the microscopic photosynthetic unit (thylakoids) in plants. After some years of work, he became convinced that quantum theory was needed in order to gain a complete understanding of how these microscopic engines work. Therefore he spent a year at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, where he learned quite a lot of quantum theory.

Although he knew enough quantum theory to understand what physicists were talking about, he nevertheless thought that for the research which he wanted to undertake, he needed to collaborate with people whose whole education was in that field, and he brought some theoretical physicists (including me) to his laboratory. During the time that I was there, we worked to obtain a quantum theoretical understanding of the mechanism of the primary process in photosynthesis, where the energy of a photon is stabilised and trapped, ready to drive the synthesis of sugars.

In 1969, after I had obtained a PhD in theoretical chemistry from Imperial College, University of London, and was teaching there, Plenum Press invited me to start a new journal and to become its first Managing Editor: It was called "The Journal of Bioenergetics and Biomembranes". (I think that Szent-Györgyi must have recommended me for this task). I served as editor until 1980. During that time, I am proud to say, our authors included Peter Mitchell and Jens C. Skou, whose papers were being refused by other journals at the time, but who each later won a Nobel Prize.

In 1973, for family reasons, I moved permanently to the University of Copenhagen, One of the courses I helped to teach there was on "Statistical Mechanics from the Standpoint of Information Theory". What a title! My Copenhagen colleague, Dr. Knud Andersen, who had initiated this course, was really ahead of his time! I learned a great deal from helping him to teach the course.

Also, for many years, I taught physical chemistry to biologists. In this field, the concept of Gibbs free energy is very central. In a chemical reaction, the entropy (i.e. disorder) of the universe must always increase, as is required by the second law of thermodynamics. Entropy is a measure of disorder, and the universe always moves towards a state of greater disorder. To say this is the same as saying that the universe always moves from less probable configurations to states of greater and greater probability. We can create local order, but only by exporting disorder to the universe as a whole. In chemical thermodynamics, the requirement that Gibbs free energy must always decrease in a spontaneous chemical reaction is equivalent to saying that the entropy of the universe must always increase, but it allows us to take into account the fact that chemical reactions usually occur at constant temperature and pressure.

In addition to teaching courses in chemistry and physics, I also taught a course on “Science and Society”. This was a history of science and its enormous social impact. An enlarged and updated version of the book that I wrote for this course has recently been published by World Scientific. One of the features of my Science and Society course was that we had many exciting guest lecturers. Among these were Dr. Claus Emmeche and Dr. Luis Emilio Bruni, both of whom were experts in the new field of Biosemiotics, which regards information as the central feature of living organisms. Listening to their wonderful lectures, I found a criticism forming in my mind: They did not distinguish between cybernetic information and thermodynamic information. In other words, they did not distinguish between the information contained in messages and the information content of Gibbs free energy. I decided that I would try to write a book which would make this distinction clear, but the project was left “on the back burner”, and I took no steps towards starting it.

However, a few years later, when I was visiting the Harvard laboratory of the famous chemical physicist Professor Dudley R. Herschbach, he took me to lunch with his postgraduate student, Anita Goel. She was in a special Harvard-MIT program where she was simultaneously obtaining both her Ph.D. in chemical physics and her M.D.

After lunch, I spent the afternoon talking with Anita, and I told her about the information theory book that I was vaguely planning to write. Listening to her reaction, I realised that this was an extremely hot topic. Anita told me that there were many other people working hard on these questions, although they perhaps did not have exactly my angle of approach. I decided to start writing immediately.

Anita was very good at asking questions, and during the whole afternoon, she asked me more and more about how my planned book would be organised. How would I explain this, and how that? Which topics should come first and



which afterwards? Her excellent questions forced me to find answers. At the end of the afternoon, I returned to my lodgings and wrote down in detail my whole conversation with Anita.

By a coincidence, when I returned to Copenhagen, I found on my desk a letter from the World Scientific Publishing Company asking whether I had any writing plans in which they might be interested. I immediately formalised the outline that I had written at Harvard, and sent it to them; but I did not think that they could find a reviewer who had a background both in information theory and in biology.

To my amazement, World Scientific found a Swedish professor with a background in both fields. He wrote an extremely long review of my book proposal, many times the usual length, criticising some aspects of my proposed outline, suggesting improvements, and finally recommending publication.

When the book came out, I expected some harsh criticism from the Biosemiotics experts like Claus and Luis, but in fact they liked what I had written. Recently World Scientific asked me to produce a new edition, incorporating the latest research. Today, if one includes topics like artificial life and computer technology inspired by mechanisms of the brain, the field is developing with great speed. MIT, where I graduated with a B.Sc. in 1954, now has a Department of Cognitive Science, in which half the researchers are looking more and more deeply at how the brain works, while the other half are producing hardware and software that mimic the functions of the brain, including learning and intuition.

*I also have a fascination for the second law of thermodynamics, and how it affects every aspect of our life. You've wonderfully connected the evolution of life and the second law of thermodynamics. Can you explain briefly for CC readers how both these phenomena are connected?*

The second law of thermodynamics states the entropy (disorder) of the universe constantly increases. This follows from the fact that disorder is more statistically probable than order. For example, if we put a completed jigsaw puzzle into the bottom of a box, and shake the box, a disordered jumble of pieces results. The reverse process is virtually impossible. We could never, or almost never, put disordered pieces of a puzzle into a box, shake it, and then to find the completed puzzle in the bottom,

Since disorder (entropy) always increases, how is it possible that the world we see around us so highly ordered? How is life possible? How is the Taj Mahal possible? How is the internet possible?

The answer is that the earth is not a closed system. A flood of information-containing free energy reaches the earth's biosphere in the form of sunlight. Passing through the metabolic pathways of living organisms, this information keeps the organisms far away from thermodynamic equilibrium, which is death. As the thermodynamic information flows through the biosphere, much of it is degraded to heat, but part is converted into cybernetic information and preserved in the intricate structures which are characteristic of life. The principle of natural selection ensures that when this happens, the configurations of matter in living organisms constantly increase in complexity, refinement and statistical improbability. This is the process which we call evolution, or in the case of human society, progress.

In his 1944 book "What is Life" Erwin Schrödinger (one of the main founders of quantum theory) showed that, even at that early date, he was already aware of how life and entropy are related. He wrote: "What is that precious something contained in our food which keeps us from death? That is easily answered. Every process, event, happening, call it what you will; in a word, everything that is going on in Nature means an increase of the entropy of the part of the world where it is going on. Thus a living organism continually increases its entropy, or if you will, produces positive entropy., which is death. It can only keep aloof from it, i.e. alive, by continually drawing from its environment negative entropy..."

"Entropy, taken with a negative sign, is itself a measure of order. Thus the device by which an organism maintains itself at a fairly high level of orderliness (= a fairly low level of entropy) really consists in sucking orderliness from its environment."

*The information revolution has made life easier for many of us humans, even helping us to be born. But it has also destroyed our ecosystems, putting our own life, and the life of our fellow species into peril. Can we use the information revolution to our advantage to save the planet?*

Cultural evolution depends on the non-genetic storage and transmission, diffusion and utilisation of information. The development of human speech, the invention of writing, the development of paper and printing, and finally in modern times, mass media, computers and the Internet: all these have been crucial steps in society's explosive accumulation of information and knowledge. Human cultural evolution proceeds at a constantly accelerating speed; so great in fact that it threatens to shake society to pieces.

Within rapidly-moving cultural evolution, we can observe that technical change now moves with such astonishing rapidity that neither social institutions, nor political structures, nor education, nor public opinion can keep pace. The lightning-like pace of technical progress has made many of our ideas and

institutions obsolete. For example, the absolutely sovereign nation-state and the institution of war have both become dangerous anachronisms in an era of instantaneous communication, global interdependence and all-destroying weapons.

In many respects, human cultural evolution can be regarded as an enormous success. However, at the start of the 21st century, most thoughtful observers agree that civilisation is entering a period of crisis. As all curves move exponentially upward, population, production, consumption, rates of scientific discovery, and so on, one can observe signs of increasing environmental stress, while the continued existence and spread of nuclear weapons threaten civilisation with destruction. Thus, while the explosive growth of knowledge has brought many benefits, the problem of achieving a stable, peaceful and sustainable world remains serious, challenging and unsolved.

The achievements of modern society are achievements of cooperation. We can fly, but no one builds an aeroplane alone. We can cure diseases, but only through the cooperative efforts of researchers, doctors and medicinal firms. We can photograph and understand distant galaxies, but the ability to do so is built on the efforts of many cooperating individuals.

Looking at human nature, both from the standpoint of evolution and from that of everyday experience, we see the two faces of Janus: one face shines radiantly; the other is dark and menacing. Two souls occupy the human breast, one warm and friendly, the other, murderous. Humans have developed a genius for cooperation, the basis for culture and civilization; but they are also capable of genocide; they were capable of massacres during the Crusades, capable of genocidal wars against the Amerinds, capable of the Holocaust, of Hiroshima, of the killing-fields of Cambodia, of Rwanda, and of Darfur.

This being so, there are strong reasons to enlist the help of education and religion to make the bright side of human nature win over the dark side. Today, the mass media are an important component of education, and thus the mass media have a great responsibility for encouraging the cooperative and constructive side of human nature rather than the dark and destructive side. Our almost miraculous means of communication, if properly used, offer us the possibility of welding humanity into a single cooperative society.

*Like every activity on earth, economic activity also is a dissipative form of energy flow. Why is so much income disparity taking place? According to a recent Oxfam report, eight people own as much wealth as the poorest half of humanity. How do you explain it? Do you think that the second law of thermodynamics should be made an essential part of our educational system, especially in economics?*

With your permission, I will try to answer your last question first. I absolutely agree with you that the concept of entropy and the second law of thermodynamics ought to be made an essential part of our educational system, especially in economics. Although classical economic theory leaves it out entirely, a few pioneers of economic thought have realised that entropy and dissipation need play a central role in any correct theory.

One of the first people to call attention to the relationship between entropy and economics was the English radiochemist Frederick Soddy (1877-1956). Soddy won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1926 for his work with Ernest Rutherford, demonstrating the transmutation of elements in radioactive decay processes. His concern for social problems then led him to a critical study of the assumptions of classical economics. Soddy believed that there is a close connection between free energy and wealth, but only a very tenuous connection between wealth and money.

He was working on these problems during the period after World War I, when England left the gold standard, and he advocated an index system to replace it. In this system, the Bank of England would print more money and lend it to private banks whenever the cost of standard items indicated that too little money was in circulation, or conversely destroy printed money if the index showed the money supply to be too large.

Soddy was extremely critical of the system of “fractional reserve banking” whereby private banks keep only a small fraction of the money that is entrusted to them by their depositors and lend out the remaining amount. He pointed out that, in this system, the money supply is controlled by the private banks rather than by the government, and that profits made from any expansion of the money supply go to private corporations instead of being used to provide social services. When the economy is expanding, this system is unjust but not disastrous. However, when the economy contracts, depositors ask for their money; but it is not there, having been lent out; and the banks crash. Fractional reserve banking exists today, not only in England but also in many other countries. Soddy’s criticisms of this practice cast light on the subprime mortgage crisis of 2008 and the debt crisis of 2011.

As Soddy pointed out, real wealth is subject to the second law of thermodynamics. As entropy increases, real wealth decays. He contrasted this with the behaviour of debt at compound interest, which increases exponentially without any limit, and he remarked: “You cannot permanently pit an absurd human convention, such as the spontaneous increment of debt [compound interest] against the natural law of the spontaneous decrement of wealth [entropy]”. Thus, in Soddy’s view, it is a fiction to maintain that being owed a large amount of money is a form of real wealth.

Frederick Soddy's book, *Wealth, virtual wealth and debt: The solution of the economic paradox*, published in 1926 by Allen and Unwin, was received by the professional economists of the time as the quixotic work of an outsider. Today, however, Soddy's common-sense economic analysis is increasingly valued for the light that it throws on the instability of our fractional reserve banking system as economic growth falters.

The incorporation of the idea of entropy into economic thought also owes much to the mathematician and economist Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen (1906-1994), the son of a Romanian army officer. Georgescu-Roegen's talents were soon recognised by the Romanian school system, and he was given an outstanding education in Mathematics, which later contributed to his success and originality as an economist.

In Georgescu-Roegen's words, "The idea that the economic process is not a mechanical analogue, but an entropic, unidirectional transformation began to turn over in my mind long ago, as I witnessed the oil wells of the Ploesti field of both World Wars' fame becoming dry one by one, and as I grew aware of the Romanian peasants' struggle against the deterioration of their farming soil by continuous use and by rains as well. However, it was the new representation of a process that enabled me to crystallise my thoughts in describing the economic process as the entropic transformation of valuable natural resources (low entropy) into valueless waste (high entropy)."

After making many technical contributions to economic theory, Georgescu-Roegen returned to this insight in his important 1971 book, *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1971), where he outlines his concept of bioeconomics.

Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen's influence continues to be felt today, not only through his own books and papers but also through those of his student, the distinguished economist Herman E. Daly, who for many years has been advocating a steady-state economy. As Daly points out in his books and papers, it is becoming increasingly apparent that unlimited economic growth on a finite planet is a logical impossibility. However, it is important to distinguish between knowledge, wisdom and culture, which can and should continue to grow, and growth in the sense of an increase in the volume of material goods produced, which is reaching its limits.

Daly describes our current situation as follows: "The most important change in recent times has been the growth of one subsystem of the Earth, namely the economy, relative to the total system, the ecosphere. This huge shift from an "empty" to a "full" world is truly 'something new under the sun'... The closer the economy approaches the scale of the whole Earth, the more it will have to

conform to the physical behaviour mode of the Earth... The remaining natural world is no longer able to provide the sources and sinks for the metabolic throughput necessary to sustain the existing oversized economy • much less a growing one. Economists have focused too much on the economy's circulatory system and have neglected to study its digestive tract."

Let me now turn to your question about enormous economic inequality. This exists today both within nations and between nations. Part of the explanation for this intolerable economic inequality can be found in the remarkable properties of exponential growth. If any quantity, for example indebtedness, is growing at the rate of 3% per year, it will double in 23.1 years; if it is growing at the rate of 4% per year, the doubling time is 17.3 years. For a 5% growth rate, the doubling time is 13.9 years, if the growth rate is 7%, the doubling time is only 9.9 years. It follows that if a debt remains unpaid for a few years, most of the repayments will go for interest, rather than for reducing the amount of the debt.

In the case of the debts of third world countries to private banks in the industrialised parts of the world and to the IMF, many of the debts were incurred in the 1970's for purposes which were of no benefit to local populations, for example purchase of military hardware. Today the debts remain, although the amount paid over the years by the developing countries is very many times the amount originally borrowed. Third world debt can be regarded as a means by which the industrialised nations extract raw materials from developing countries without any repayment whatever. In fact, besides extracting raw materials, they extract money. The injustice of this arrangement was emphasised recently by Pope Francis in his wonderful encyclical "Laudato Si' "

Another part of the explanation lies in "resource wars", conducted by militarily powerful countries to put in place or maintain unfair trade relationships with resource-rich nations in the third world.

Finally, our present economic system favours concentration of wealth. "The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer", or "To him who hath, it shall be given, but from him who hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away". At present, powerful oligarchs use their wealth to control governments. Democracy decays, tax loopholes are found for the rich, and inequality increases. This situation, and the impossibility of perpetual growth on a finite planet, point to the need for a new economic system, a system where cooperation plays a greater role; a system with both a social conscience and an ecological conscience.

The nuclear bomb is the greatest concentration of man-made energy on earth. Why peace is the only software capable of diffusing this dangerous concentration of energy?

Let me begin to try to answer your question by quoting Albert Szent Györgyi: I have always found these words very enlightening and inspiring:

“The story of man consists of two parts, divided by the appearance of modern science...In the first period, man lived in the world in which his species was born and to which his senses were adapted. In the second, man stepped into a new, cosmic world to which he was a complete stranger.... The forces at man’s disposal were no longer terrestrial forces, of human dimension, but were cosmic forces, the forces which shaped the universe. The few hundred Fahrenheit degrees of our flimsy terrestrial fires were exchanged for the ten million degrees of the atomic reactions which heat the sun.”

“This is but a beginning, with endless possibilities in both directions; a building of a human life of undreamt of wealth and dignity, or a sudden end in utmost misery. Man lives in a new cosmic world for which he was not made. His survival depends on how well and how fast he can adapt himself to it, rebuilding all his ideas, all his social and political institutions.”

“...Modern science has abolished time and distance as factors separating nations. On our shrunken globe today, there is room for one group only: the family of man.”

I would also like to quote from the Russell-Einstein Manifesto of 1955, the founding document of Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs. The Manifesto ends with the words, “Here, then, is the problem which we present to you, stark and dreadful and inescapable. Shall we put an end to the human race, or shall mankind renounce war?... There lies before us, if we choose, continual progress in happiness, knowledge and wisdom. Shall we instead choose death because we cannot forget our quarrels? .. We appeal as human beings to human beings: Remember your humanity and forget the rest. If you can do so, there lies before you a new Paradise; if you cannot, there lies before you the threat of universal death.”

The human tendency towards tribalism evolved when our remote ancestors lived in small, genetically homogeneous tribes, competing for territory on the grasslands of Africa. Because marriage within a tribe was much more common than marriage outside it, genes were shared within the tribe. The tribe as a whole either survived or perished. The tribe, rather than the individual was the unit upon which the Darwinian forces of natural selection acted.

Although it was a survival trait 100,000 years ago, tribalism threatens our human civilisation of today with thermonuclear annihilation. As Konrad Lorenz put it, “An impartial visitor from another planet, looking at man as he is today, in his hand the atom bomb, the product of his intelligence, in his heart the aggression drive, inherited from his anthropoid ancestors, which the same intelligence cannot control, such a visitor would not give mankind much chance of survival.”

Today, at the start of the 21st century, we live in nation-states to which we feel emotions of loyalty very similar to the tribal emotions of our ancestors. The enlargement of the fundamental political and social unit has been made necessary and possible by improved transportation and communication, and by changes in the techniques of warfare.

The tragedy of our present situation is that the same forces that made the nation-state replace the tribe as the fundamental political and social unit have continued to operate with constantly increasing intensity. For this reason, the totally sovereign nation-state has become a dangerous anachronism.

Although the world now functions as a single unit because of modern technology, its political structure is based on fragments, on absolutely sovereign nation-states. They are large compared to tribes, but too small for present-day technology, since they do not include all of mankind.

The elimination of war, and the elimination of the threat of nuclear annihilation will require effective governance at the global level. In 1995 the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded jointly to Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs and to its leader, Sir Joseph Rotblat. In his acceptance speech, Sir Joseph said, “We have to extend our loyalty to the whole of the human race... A war-free world will be seen by many as Utopian. It is not Utopian. There already exist in the world large regions, for example the European Union, within which war is inconceivable. What is needed is to extend these.”

*How can information theory play a role in peace politics?*

Biosemitics regards information as being the central feature of living organisms- Societies can be regarded as super-organisms. One might think of extending Biosemitics to the study of the way in which information is the central feature of the development and function of societies. Such a field of study might be called Sociosemitics. Information theory is certainly essential to an understanding of history and to an understanding of the crisis of civilisation that has been produced by the information explosion.

*Do you see any connection between the rise of populist and even fascist leaders around the world and information theory and thermodynamics?*



When the earth's human population is plotted as a function of time over a period of 10,000 years, the simple mathematical function that best fits the data is not an exponentially increasing curve but a hyperbola,  $P=C/(2025-t)$ , where  $P$  is the population,  $C$  is a constant, and  $t$  is the time, measured in years. If population continued to follow this curve, it would become infinite in the year 2025, which, of course, is impossible. In fact, global population has already begun to fall below the curve.

Why is the empirical curve a hyperbola rather than an exponential? We can understand this if we see the growth of population as being driven by the information explosion. According to Malthus, population always presses against its food supply. As human knowledge and control of nature increased, the food supply also increased, leading to an increase in population. But today, we are facing a crisis. Our global food supply may be hit severely by the end of the fossil fuel era, and by climate change. These factors have already produced a flood of refugees fleeing environmental catastrophes in Africa. Added to this are millions of refugees from wars in the Middle East.

The result of the refugee crisis has been a loss of human solidarity and the rise of fascism. In this difficult situation, we need to regain our human solidarity. We need to fight against fascism and to regain democratic government. We need to end the wars, which are producing many millions of refugees. We need to avoid catastrophic climate change.

*“Post-truth” was the word of the year of 2016. Why such a word now? Was there a “pre-truth” or “truth” era? Or is there ever truth?*

Let me again quote Albert Szent-Györgyi. One of his remarks that I remember from the time that I worked in his laboratory was this: “The human mind was not designed by evolutionary forces for finding truth. It was designed for finding advantage”.

Napoleon Bonaparte, quoting Fontanelle, said “History is a set of agreed-upon lies”.

Members of tribe like groups throughout history have marked their identity by adhering to irrational systems of belief. Like the ritual scarification which is sometimes used by primitive tribes as a mark of identity, irrational systems of belief also mark the boundaries of groups. We parade these beliefs to demonstrate that we belong to a special group and that we are proud of it. The more irrational the belief is, the better it serves this purpose. When people tell each other that they believe the same nonsense, a bond is forged between them. The worse the nonsense, the stronger the bond.

Sometimes motives of advantage are mixed in. As Szent-Györgyi observed, evolution designed the human mind, not for finding truth, but for finding advantage. Within the Orwellian framework of many modern nations, it is extremely disadvantageous to hold the wrong opinions. The wiretappers know what you are thinking.

But truth has the great virtue that it allows us to accurately predict the future. If we ignore truth because it is unfashionable, or painful, or heretical, the future will catch us unprepared.

*What do you think of fake news, and the discussions going on the mechanisms to control it?*

Throughout history, art was commissioned by rulers to communicate, and exaggerate their power, glory, absolute rightness, etc. to the population. Modern power holders are also aware of the importance of propaganda. Thus the media are a battleground, where reformers struggle for attention, but are defeated with great regularity by the wealth and power of the establishment. This is a tragedy, because today, there is an urgent need to make public opinion aware of the serious threats that are facing civilisation, and the steps that are needed to solve these problems. The mass media could potentially be a great force for public education, but in general, their role is not only unhelpful: it is often negative.

Today we are faced with the task of creating a new global ethic in which loyalty to family, religion and nation will be supplemented by a higher loyalty to humanity as a whole. In addition, our present culture of violence must be replaced by a culture of peace. To achieve these essential goals, we urgently need the cooperation of the mass media.

How do the media fulfil this life-or-death responsibility? Do they give us insight? No, they give us pop music. Do they give us an understanding of the sweep of evolution and history? No, they give us sport. Do they give us an understanding of need for strengthening the United Nations, and the ways that it could be strengthened? No, they give us sit-coms and soap operas. Do they give us unbiased news? No, they give us news that has been edited to conform with the interests of the military-industrial complex and other powerful lobbies. Do they present us with the need for a just system of international law that acts on individuals? On the whole, the subject is neglected. Do they tell of the essentially genocidal nature of nuclear weapons and the need for their complete abolition? No, they give us programs about gardening and making food.

In general, the mass media behave as though their role is to prevent the peoples of the world from joining hands and working to save the world from thermonuclear and environmental catastrophes. The television viewer sits slumped in a chair, passive, isolated, disempowered and stupefied. The future of the world hangs in the balance, the fate of children and grandchildren hang in

the balance, but the television viewer feels no impulse to work actively to change the world or to save it. The Roman emperors gave their people bread and circuses to numb them into political inactivity. The modern mass media seem to be playing a similar role.

Because the mass media have failed us completely, the work of independent editors like yourself has become enormously important for the future of humanity and the biosphere.

*Do you think that humanity can tackle climate change? Do you have any suggestions?*

Solar power and wind energy are already much cheaper than fossil fuels if the enormous subsidies given to fossil fuel corporations are discounted. The main thing that the world needs to do is to abolish these subsidies, or, better yet, shift them to the support of renewable energy infrastructure. If this is done, then economic forces alone will produce the rapid transition to renewable energy which we so urgently need to save the planet.

Oil Change International, an organisation devoted to exposing the true costs of fossil fuels, states that “Internationally governments provide at least \$775 billion to \$1 trillion annually in subsidies, not including other costs of fossil fuels related to climate change, environmental impacts, military conflicts and spending, and health impacts.”

Hope that catastrophic climate change can be avoided comes from the exponentially growing world-wide use of renewable energy, and from the fact prominent public figures, such as Pope Francis, Leonardo DiCaprio, Elon Musk, Bill McKibben, Naomi Klein and Al Gore, are making the public increasingly aware of the long-term dangers. This awareness is needed to counter the climate change denial propaganda sponsored by politicians subservient to the fossil fuel industry.

Short-term disasters due to climate change may also be sufficiently severe to wake us up. We can already see severe effects of global warming in Africa, in parts of India and in island nations threatened by rising sea levels.

*What do you think of the attitude of people like James Lovelock, who say “enjoy life while you can”?*

I believe that this is a betrayal of our responsibility to our children and grandchildren and to all future generations of humans. It is also a betrayal of all the other species with which we share our beautiful planet.

We give our children loving care, but it makes no sense do so and at the same time to neglect to do all that is within our power to ensure that they and their descendants will inherit an earth in which they can survive.

Inaction is not an option. We have to act with courage and dedication, even if the odds are against success, because the stakes are so high.

The mass media could mobilise us to action, but they have failed in their duty. Our educational system could also wake us up and make us act, but it too has failed us. The battle to save the earth from human greed and folly has to be fought in the alternative media.

We need a new economic system, a new society, a new social contract, a new way of life. Here are the great tasks that history has given to our generation: We must achieve a steady-state economic system. We must restore democracy. We must decrease economic inequality. We must break the power of corporate greed. We must leave fossil fuels in the ground. We must stabilise and ultimately reduce the global population. We must eliminate the institution of war. And finally, we must develop a more mature ethical system to match our new technology.

*What do you think of a world 50 years from now?*

The future looks extremely dark because of human folly, especially the long-term future. The greatest threats are catastrophic climate change and thermonuclear war, but a large-scale global famine also has to be considered. Nevertheless, I hope for the best, and I think that it is our collective duty to work for the best. The problems that we face today are severe, but they all have rational solutions.

It is often said that ethical principles cannot be derived from science, and that they must come from somewhere else. However, when nature is viewed through the eyes of modern science, we obtain some insights which seem almost ethical in character. Biology at the molecular level has shown us the complexity and beauty of even the most humble living organisms, and the interrelatedness of all life on earth. Looking through the eyes of contemporary biochemistry, we can see that even the single cell of an amoeba is a structure of miraculous complexity and precision, worthy of our respect and wonder.

Knowledge of the second law of thermodynamics, the statistical law favouring disorder over order, reminds us that life is always balanced like a tight-rope walker over an abyss of chaos and destruction. Living organisms distill their order and complexity from the flood of thermodynamic information which reaches the earth from the sun. In this way, they create local order; but life remains a fugitive from the second law of thermodynamics. Disorder, chaos, and destruction remain statistically favoured over order, construction, and complexity.

It is easier to burn down a house than to build one, easier to kill a human than to raise and educate one, easier to force a species into extinction than to replace it once it is gone, easier to burn the Great Library of Alexandria than to accumulate the knowledge that once filled it, and easier to destroy a civilization in a thermonuclear war than to rebuild it from the radioactive ashes.

Knowing this, we can use the second law of thermodynamics to form an almost ethical insight: To be on the side of order, construction, and complexity, is to be on the side of life. To be on the side of destruction, disorder, chaos and war is to be against life, a traitor to life, an ally of death. Knowing the precariousness of life, knowing the statistical laws that favour disorder and chaos, we should resolve to be loyal to the principle of long-continued construction upon which life depends.

# REGARDLESS OF LIFESTYLES WE'RE TOO NUMEROUS TO BE SUSTAINABLE

Lionel Anet\*

To survive and live well we must reduce our population back to 2 billion as it was 80 years ago.

Why did we allow our world population to keep growing to an unsustainable 7.4 billion, and passing on to our children the task of feeding and managing 9 billion people on a planet of degrading soils, acidifying and rising oceans with a depleting fish stock, in a hostile climate, and with next to no affordable oil. We obviously don't know what we're doing. Nor do we care about the outcome of our present activities on our children when our precious ones' time to take over that exhausted overpopulate polluted world. That's criminally insane.

On the other hand, our children are for us – average functioning parents – our prime consideration. But sadly, we can only imagine social interactions and activities for the future that are a part of civilisation past and present. We experienced no other; our social imagination was squeezed by our education. Thus we are ill equipped to deal with a completely new danger that's so severe it could end life on our planet. It's not a vision we can contemplate, but we owe it to all life.

The ultimate way to reduce our footprint on the planet is to reduce our population, a near impossible task in any civilisations but particularly capitalist ones. It's the reason it's shelved before it's planned, except for the cruel Chinese example. Nevertheless, it must be done if we are to survive. The obstacle preventing an effective reduction on a world scale is the socioeconomic system and the education formulated to be competitive in that system. However, we are genetically cooperative and adaptive. This can give us the ability to either, enhance nature's health which in turn can secure our survival, or we can continue to exploit whatever is on the planet to be more competitive until we all perish.

Surviving with an anticipated 9 billion of us within 4 decades time will need many sacrifices, considering how much more our planet will have degraded before we get honest information on our situation. It will require an incredible reduction in our consumption, energy use, with very supportive interactions instead of the competitive and combative ones we have. Also to achieve that radical reduced consumption, we must have a drastic decrease population, but

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neither can be achieved in a competitive setting. Therefore we must abandon the contradicting competitiveness of civilisation and turn back to our natural supportive and cooperative way of life on a world scale.

We are by far the most adaptable life that ever lived on our planet, we start to adapt before we are born to the social culture our mothers lives in. So, we are a reflection of the society we were nurtured in, therefore, it takes a great deal of conscious effort and time to become aware of the deceitfulness and its resultant destructiveness of civilisation. Our competitiveness is so intense that it doesn't allow us the time and mental effort to search outside the regular, so we rarely attempt it, and therefore many will succumb jeopardising our survival. Overcoming that individually amongst non-participating groups of ones fellows is overwhelming and will take too long to save our children.

The people that can change the information, are the few billionaires, they are the one we should target, not as a foe but as partners in grave danger. Not all, powerful wealthy people are fanatical to the point of mass suicide, those that are, are likely to be inept. The ones with strong survival instinct can help to change public opinion, as the alternative for them and their offspring can't be contemplated.

What environmentalists and the Left have been doing is competing against the establishment to change peoples' perception of the state of our planet, as it is and will affect us. Unfortunately, it's an extremely one-sided competition and the outcome of that struggle may meet yesterday's desires, but would finalise our fate.

How can we manage to live in this quagmire? Can any civilised system save our children from extermination? The quick answer is, none of them can. Not even any modification of them at this stage. We got to bite the bullet; or more to the point, our wealthy 1% must. Our responsibility is to make sure those few wealthy individuals who have the power, but are not as yet aware of the fatal predicament they're in, to see it. Only those who have the power can save themselves by saving as many of us with as much of our planet as possible.

The threat to our planet's life must be seen as a whole and not in the present disconnected way, as nature is connected in multitude of ways. The reductionist method has severe limitations, it's very thorough, but narrow in its research is isolated from the other parts of nature, and this has given us a great deal of information with limited understanding.

Yet we know that to understand a complex situation we need a wide ranging holistic approach. However, the socioeconomic system needs more of the same; not a greater questioning of the system as that will tend to divert our attention from boosting to economy. That may have been understandable 60 years ago,

but today it'll be disastrous. To survive, we will need a very efficient economic system that's fair and satisfies everyone, therefore it will be peaceful. This will, in turn, allow us to cooperate for our survival.

Our goal for the future must be to reduce population down to a few billion and only produce what will enhance our quality of life. To have the best possible life, we as the most social life form must start with the way we presently relate, and fix those relationships so as to conform with our nature instead of trying to exploit one another. We must realise that civilisation is about taking or controlling as much territory as possible by whatever means.

This is in stark contrast with Australian indigenous people, for example, according to Alan J. Cooper from the Centre for Ancient DNA. He states that 50,000 years ago, people settle all around the coast of Australia, going east and west and then inland, but once they settled in a territory, the descendants stayed. There were no invasions to take other people's land in all that time. This contrasts with Eurasia, where people kept coming from Africa fighting for new land, while Australia was isolated and even more so as the oceans rose after the ice age, which was the critical invasion times .

Once we convince the powers-that-be of their dire circumstances that their only chance of survival is to cooperate. The steps needed for our survival are simple and obvious; the difficulty is to convince the 1% that their life is at stake like everyone else. So we can have a common interest and we can stop competing and start those measures to save our children.

Here are some obvious steps.

1. End military spending and actions as a priority and recycle the equipment.
2. Stop producing cars and concentrate on a public transport worldwide, mainly rail and shipping.
3. Reduce trade to the barest minimal and charge actual total cost of moving stuff around. Focus on local produce as much and quickly, as its socially acceptable. Air transport only for emergencies.
4. Be self-sustaining locally as quickly as possible
5. Free health care, education, local transport, basic healthy food, and housing for everyone. This is best done by local communities with people who know each other. Help should be on hand, if needed, for localities in trouble.
6. As costs of living is reduced, wages also can be lower, reducing the cost of providing services and allowing full participation (employment).



That will mitigate higher energy cost set to reduce Greenhouse gas emissions. That's less stuff, more and better services.

7. Split-up agribusiness to smaller units with more labour and less need of oil, synthetic fertilisers and pesticide. Permaculture as the way.
8. We desperately need to change the education to promote happiness through cooperative activities, as they enhance our feeling of wellbeing and security, tranquillity as a way of life.
9. The aim is to live within environmental constraints and have the most peaceful, fulfilling, and involved life with a large safety factor to cope with the unexpected.
10. Set up community of the ideal size, to give the most economical and satisfying life for all.
11. With the above societies we can easily reduce population to an ideal level quickly without stress, by discarding the nuclear family, which is structured to accumulate property or poverty.
12. A one to two billion population to allow for the best and safest life. This could be achieved relatively quickly with that kind of living arrangement without any undue stress. The aim must be to give the best life for all children. They would have multiple fathers and mothers, which would mitigate any odd behaviour, idiosyncrasies or pathological behaviour.
13. Gradually reduce the importance of private property to near zero and facilitate communal living in the largest efficient workable groups. That would enable all who are dependent, young or old; their welfare is the community's responsibility and privilege. Everyone regardless of age and ability must be able to participate in the group's economy.
14. The social group would be responsible for every child's welfare, as they belong to that group and not exclusively to the father or mother. Also, as there's always an older child and a younger child, we mature with a sense of fairness. (We were that way for hundreds of thousand years until the twin phenomena of an over populated planet with a severe and sudden local climate change happened, which has disturbed relationships to this day.)
15. One must consider that once our footprint on the planet had reached its maximum carrying capacity, more people means less per capita.

# IS POPE FRANCIS THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL ADVOCATE FOR CLIMATE STABILITY?

Don Fitz\*

Maybe not now. But that's what he could well become. Pope Francis' Encyclical "On Care for Our Common Home" recognises the incredible damage being done to climate change and biodiversity. Few realise how strong his beliefs are and the unused power of persuasion he has. Here are 10 ways that power could be used.

1. Francis could call for a renewed emphasis on not eating red meat on Fridays.

Francis unequivocally recognises the science of climate change: "The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system." [23]

He shows no quarter to climate change deniers, writing "Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference..." [14]

Missing from Francis' Encyclical is the massive scientific evidence that meat is probably the single most important contributor to greenhouse gases (GHGs). Meat production (beef, chicken, pork) produce more GHGs than either the transportation sector or all industrial processes.

Some believe that meat production could account for much more than the 18-20% of GHGs if other factors are taken into account, such as livestock respiration, medical care of livestock, full loss of land used for meat production, and packaging, refrigerating, cooking and disposing of meat. Francis affirms the "an urgent need to develop policies" to address climate change [26]. There is probably no better way to develop a policy to reduce GHGs than resurrecting the emphasis on meatless Fridays.

2. Francis could ask religious leaders throughout the world to consider a day without red meat.

This brings up two big questions: Would a pope try to influence non-Catholics? and, Would non-Catholics pay attention to a Catholic tradition? Francis clearly

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understands that the extent of environmental crises goes beyond his own church when he says “I wish to address every person living on this planet” regarding “our common home.” [3]

In wondering about the potential response from non-Catholics, I recall going to elementary school in Houston during the McCarthy era of the 1950s. It was not a particularly tolerant time or place. The proportion of Catholics at my school was tiny – not more than 3-4%. When I asked my teacher why we had fish cakes every Friday, she said “It’s because the Catholic kids aren’t supposed to eat meat on Fridays.” That seemed reasonable. And it was okay with everyone else. Not one kid ever challenged a school that was over 90% non-Catholic adjusting its meals to accommodate a meatless Friday.

Might non-Catholics of today move from a passive acceptance of meatless Fridays to actively participate in a joint effort to halt environmental devastation? Francis is hopeful when he says, “Outside the Catholic Church, other Churches and Christian communities – and other religions as well – have expressed deep concern and offered valuable reflections on issues which all of us find disturbing.” [7]

Millions of people are searching for ways to have a meaningful effect on the climate. Most individual behaviours either have little impact on the big picture or are out of the reach of many people. For example, individuals who live 20 miles from work cannot really choose to ride a bike or take mass transit that does not exist.

Choice of food is different – it is something that most people can do by themselves. New eating habits by enough people might dramatically influence the world’s climate.

3. Francis could ask governments to ensure that those who receive their livelihood from the livestock sector are protected from harm by decreased consumption of meat.

Over 1.3 billion people depend on livestock for income. This could make for a very long unemployment line and a lot of hostility toward vegetarianism. In addition to those who raise livestock, livelihoods that derive from it include manufacturing ranch equipment and supplies, growing animal feed, transportation, and sales of animal products such as leather.

Workers in all these industries are super-sensitive to the economics of livestock reduction. They must be a core part of planning for economic transition. A transformation would need to include projects that demonstrate how changing from a cattle ranch into growing crops (or other economic activity) can successfully occur. This would also include educational programs on how to

make such changes, as well as proposals for new jobs for those currently working in livestock-dependent industries.

The US is a rich country that can afford to be a model for the rest of the world. We could guarantee an income equal to what families relying on animals currently make if they agree to transition to plant-based agriculture for human food.

4. Francis could recommend that Catholics not eat any meat (including fowl and fish) on Mondays.

This would be a bold step, going beyond reemphasizing what is already Catholic doctrine. Yet, it would be consistent with Francis' belief that the world has a "sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life." [2]

Overproduction of meat has horrible effects beyond climate change. The livestock sector accounts for over a third of global land area, which makes it a major contributor to deforestation, habitat destruction, and species extinction. According to the Food & Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, livestock production is responsible for 55% of erosion, 37% of pesticide usage, and 50% of antibiotic usage.

There is already an embryo of the needed change in the "Meatless Monday" movement. A serious effort toward stewardship of the Earth requires a halt in the expansion of land which is used for livestock and then a progressive increase in acres of land returned to wild Nature.

5. Francis could ask religious leaders to consider a day without any meat (including fowl and fish).

Papal Encyclicals are recommendations – they are not commandments. Thus, an Encyclical by Francis recommending meatless Mondays would mean that Catholics would need to decide to what extent they should follow it.

Inspiring controversy would actually be better than ordering people to eat less meat. Once folks argue and haggle, the issue sticks to their minds. Those who do something because of their own choice are much more committed once they have made a decision.

A debate between the world's 1.2 billion Catholics would not be ignored by other religions. In fact, it could be a powerful impetus for a Great Discussion regarding how people can effectively impact climate change.

If Francis were to take such an audacious stand within the Catholic Church, he would elevate his ability to ask other religious leaders to step outside of their roles established hundreds or thousands of years ago to similarly recognise the profound threat to Life on Earth. What could be more helpful than several

billion people questioning how actions during the next few decades will affect the existence of generations to come?

6. Francis could precaution the world against using vegetarianism as a weapon of cultural domination.

Of particular concern are non-Brahmin Indians and American Cowboys. Most of the world's 1.1 billion Hindus live in India, which is often assumed to be overwhelmingly vegetarian. In fact, over two-thirds of Indians eat meat.

While Hindus do not have a strict ban on eating meat, most avoid doing so because they wish to minimise harming other life forms. Indians who do eat meat eat far less than do Americans. They include young people exposed to Western lifestyles and religious minorities of Muslims and Christians. According to Priti Gulati Cox, they also include "Dalits (formerly known as untouchables) and Adivasis (Indigenous communities)," who are victims of "Hindu-centric cultural imposition."

In his article "Beef ban is an attempt to impose upper-caste culture on other Hindus" Dalit Professor Kancha Ilaiah explains that eating meat has always been a part of Dalit food culture. Since water buffalo meat is cheap, it is their major source of protein. He sees the current attempt by Brahmins to impose a beef ban as "casteist and racist." Non- Brahmin Indians particularly resent attempts to ban eating beef when India is a major exporter of water buffalo meat, which is not considered sacred by upper castes.

Glance a few thousand miles away to the US. Many people in western states are very hostile to having a lifestyle imposed upon them by what they perceive as urban elitism. Some do things that harm their own health and welfare to preserve their customs. (Witness 2016 Presidential voting patterns.) In this way, they are not so different from India's Dalits and Adivasis who strongly resist having Brahmin vegetarianism imposed on them.

The issue is how to present a change away from overconsumption of meat without devaluing their culture or creating massive unemployment. There is no magic bullet. But the answer must include a dialogue and understanding that eating less meat at each meal has as much effect as having some meals without meat.

In fact, the small portion of meat eaten means that Indians already have much less environmental impact than do Americans. Instead of being grain-fed, cattle and water buffalo in India typically eat vegetation from land unsuitable for farming, further reducing their harmful effects.

Yet, we must keep our eye on the prize. Giving up smoking and having unprotected sex with multiple partners have both been sub-cultural values that

came into conflict with objective facts. Campaigns became effective when former smokers spoke out and when gay men themselves advised new behaviours. Attempts to reduce meat consumption will be counter-effective unless they include those American Cowboys who already question the quantity of meat eaten.

7. Francis could recommend that Catholics eat no animal flesh or animal products (including eggs, milk and cheese) on Wednesdays.

The tradition of not eating meat on Fridays comes with the idea of doing without something for Lent. Not eating red meat for three days a week, no meat of any kind for two days a week, and no animal products one day a week would transform the concept of “doing without” to mean “doing without to preserve our common home.”

This is the sort of sacrifice that Francis hints at when he says calls on humanity “to recognise the need for changes in lifestyle.” [23] He quotes approvingly of the leader of Eastern Orthodox Church stating that “to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin.” [8]

This reflects the belief in man’s stewardship over nature shared by Jews, Christians and Muslims. The responsibility to preserve Life in all forms is an impossibility if ranchland and farms for animal feed continue to expand their destruction of wildlife habitat throughout the world.

How can the desire to protect wild Nature best be expressed? Recognising that food travels over 1000 miles from “farm to plate” has lead many to become “locavores” who seek to eat food grown close to where they live. However, research demonstrates that not eating red meat and dairy for less than one day per week “achieves more GHG reduction than buying all locally sourced food.”

8. Francis could suggest to those of other faiths that they join him in setting aside an additional day for eating no animal flesh or animal products.

Clearly, millions of Catholics combining a locavore diet with a meatless diet for multiple days per week would have a profound impact on GHG emissions. Imagine the effect if billions of people did so.

Participants would make two important discoveries. First, food can taste good if it does not include red meat, if it does not include any animal flesh and it can even taste good without any animal products. As this realisation spread, an increasing number of restaurants would offer non-animal dishes on a regular basis. There would be more cooks realising that vegetarian food is not the same as the current diet without meat but is a different approach to preparing food. Many people would voluntarily change to eating less meat during each meal and eating more meals without meat.

Second, reduction in eating meat would have profound health effects. High meat consumption is associated heart disease, obesity and colorectal cancer. Health improvement would occur not only in Western countries but also China, where meat consumption has zoomed upwards. Combined discoveries of taste and health could well reinforce each other as people realised that they would not be giving up good food to have a better quality of life.

9. Francis could urge the world to recognise the need for humane treatment as well as humane killing of animals.

Both Muslims and Jews are prohibited from eating meat from animals killed in a cruel way. Jews include humane killing as part of kosher meat and, for Muslims, it is halal meat. At the time those rules were written, there was no such thing as factory farms (Confined Animal Feeding Operations, CAFOs).

A twenty-first century extension of ancient laws would recognise that CAFOs practice a merciless process of killing by slow torture. Confinement of animals in tiny cages is so unhealthy that CAFOs routinely pump antibiotics into them so they will live long enough to be slaughtered.

Treating (and killing) animals in a humane fashion is close to a universally accepted value. CAFO owners are so worried that people would be horrified if they saw how they operate that they go to great lengths lobbying for laws that criminalise filming how animals are treated.

It is highly unlikely that the meat industry can continue to grow without an expansion of CAFOs. National laws and international treaties banning CAFOs should parallel an increase in plant-based diets. A call by Francis for humane treatment of animals, with a specific request that CAFOs be banned, would be an enormous contribution to reducing animal cruelty, reducing meat consumption and reducing GHGs.

10. Francis could request a global inquiry into the need to begin shorter work weeks in a world which consumes less meat.

Since producing 1 pound of beef protein requires 10 pounds of vegetable protein, obtaining sufficient protein from vegetables will require vastly less cultivation. Just as fair trade means less trade, a world which relies on less meat will be one which needs less labour.

The livestock industry is merely one piece of an economy that must be massively reduced for human survival. Vegetarian agriculture is a bit analogous to a peace economy. Vegetarian production requires different use of land, but more important, use of less land. Peace economics emphasises having fewer weapons to kill people rather than killing people with different weapons.

It is not possible to have less meat, less war, fewer toxic chemicals, less extractions of fossil fuels, fewer products (including homes) designed to fall apart and more wild Nature in an economy that is growing exponentially. More astute than many progressives, Francis recognises dangers of unlimited economic expansion when he nods approval to "...correcting models of growth which have proved incapable of ensuring respect for the environment." [5]

We need a smaller economy which focuses on providing basic needs for every person on the planet. This means a shorter – a much shorter – work week.

Producing less is only the first step in solving or reducing environmental problems. Of course, changes in production will be very different in various industries; so, environmentally sound economics requires considerable planning, education, adjustment and readjustment.

This train of thought runs counter to capitalism, whose First Commandment is growth.

Francis has not been particularly receptive to capitalists, along with their politicians. They are left out of the equation when he calls for heeding "the reflections of numerous scientists, philosophers, theologians and civic groups..." [7] He warns that "Many of those who possess more resources and economic or political power seem mostly to be concerned with masking the problems or concealing their symptoms ..." [26]

Neither is Francis receptive to "Technology, which, linked to business interests, is presented as the only way of solving these problems, in fact, proves incapable of seeing the mysterious network of relations between things and so sometimes solves one problem only to create others." [20] He spells out concerns with the latest step in capital accumulation: "Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatise this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market. Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right..." [30]

### Bringing it home

We can't explore every religion; but, now that we've looked at Catholicism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam, let's consider my religion of devout atheism. Devout Atheism is quite different from dogmatic atheism, whose dedication to putting down religion has much in common with narrow-minded adherents within the religions it belittles.

Devout Atheism feels a connection with the natural world that would be quite receptive to an encyclical from Francis that specified actions to protect Earth. Dogmatic atheists would, of course, reject anything from a Pope because they



often worship money and power as do their dogmatic counterparts in the powerful religions.

The division of world is not between Catholic vs. Protestant, Muslim vs. Jew, Hindu vs. Adivasi or pious vs. atheist. Rather, the great division is those of every belief who exalt the preservation of Nature vs. those who fantasise that happiness flows from possession of an ever greater quantity of objects.

Attaining a 100% vegan world overnight is not going to happen. Instead, we should work toward a huge reduction in meat production by (a) encouraging heavy meat eaters to decrease their portions, (b) encouraging moderate meat eaters to increase their vegetarian days, and (c) expanding the number of vegetarians and vegans, while (d) avoiding domination of meat-eating cultures, and (e) preparing for the economic disruptions which will inevitably accompany changes of the magnitude that must happen. Securing alliances and modifying approaches are possible without compromising the goal of vastly reducing the amount of meat produced.

Note. Numbers in brackets indicate the section of “On Care for Our Common Home” from which the quotation is taken.

# HUMANITY ON THE ROAD TO EXTINCTION?

Prithiraj Dullay\*

We live on a beautiful and a delightful planet, which is so awesome and so perfect that we wonder at its creation. This has to be the greatest gift given to humanity by the force that created our world. We can call this force 'God' or some other force. We can only marvel at the purity and its absolute greatness. It was this 'force' that also created the magnificent Universe in which we live. We are a minuscule part of this vastness. Every religion pays tribute to this great gift.

Yet, so far into our search into space and billions of dollars later, we have not found anything remotely matching the fabulous Earth we live upon. I will not be so arrogant as to presume that there is no intelligent life among the billions of planets and galaxies that make up the Universe, which is so vast that it boggles the human imagination. At our moment in time, we are light years away from discovering any hospitable planet that can support life forms as complex as those on Earth, let alone the means to travel through such vast inter-planetary or inter galactic spaces! All we have is our Earth. Nothing else for the immediate future!

Generations from now, perhaps, we may find life forms comparable to those on our Earth, or we may not! Seen from space, our Earth is that magnificent blue-green-brown planet that hangs so delicately in the vast black velvet of space. Our beauty hangs in isolation. Truth be told: Right now we are on our own in the never ending vastness of deep space.

Why the 'Force' chose Earth for development is not for me to speculate. I am just grateful that my home is on planet Earth, in the present known Universe, which is violently hostile to the development of life, as we know it. Maybe 'the Force' intended that the Earth be first to be populated and that in some future time, other planets would be ready to accommodate us, as we overflowed Earth? Is it possible that we were 'chosen' to populate the Universe? I cannot answer that; like you, I can only speculate.

My great concern is why we should even think of colonising another planet, when we have shown scant respect for the great gift of 'Earth' that we already have? Without any doubt, we can only continue where we left off viz. our great selfishness in driving our present world to near extinction in the name of

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making a vulgar profit. It is in this context that I wish to find an explanation of our attitude to gross and utterly mad exploitation of Mother Earth.

While I was still in exile in 1988, some 22 years ago, the ANC journal 'Sechaba' published my piece "Environmental Destruction in South Africa" in which I warned about the dangers of the pursuit of profit over all else and for the need for progressive forces to fight against the rape of our common heritage viz. our environment. The trade unions and the formations of progressive forces rallied to the call. Sadly, today a great many of our progressive forces have succumbed to the demon money god. In doing so, they have embraced the very forces of greed over the common good. Read this as a betrayal.

I have provided this introduction so as to contextualise how we railed against the forces of Apartheid for its neglect 'of our people'. Yet after the defeat of Apartheid, we are still faced with the spin doctors of the new order, who want us to believe that we need to hush-hush and accept the non-existent benefits of our silence and complacency. Please read another betrayal here.

So, now we have reached the stage of using a very warped logic for the continued pillage of the Earth and its resources. When we closely examine the beneficiaries of the new order and those who are seeking our support, we find amongst them many of our 'comrades'. Read here yet another betrayal!

On a national scale let us critically examine the role of Eskom. It is true that Eskom warned government as late as 1999 of the impending energy crisis and again in 2003. The Minister in the Energy sector chose to blithely ignore the observations and recommendations. She was not demoted for her short-sightedness; instead, she was promoted into the deputy presidency! That should have already warned us about what was to come; instead, we chose to believe in those who had no belief in themselves! Here, add yet another betrayal.

South Africa grew explosively since 1994: new malls, new housing estates, new factories and tens of thousands of new homes. Even an imbecile would have guessed that with growth comes the demand for more energy. The bright sparks gave themselves huge bonuses and perks and then began shutting down electricity to major urban areas. There was just not enough energy to support our growth. Some years down the line Eskom has raised an astronomical loan to build one of the largest coal fired power stations in Africa at Medupe and to fund its blinkered energy programme that places a massive reliance on a fossil fuel: coal. Did anyone one of the bright sparks factor into the equation that using coal is horribly polluting and that thousands of our people will pay with their health/deaths? Did they not understand that we need to REDUCE our carbon emissions and not move in the opposite direction? Has it not been made clear that carbon build up contributes to global warming, to the melting of the

huge glaciers and ice sheets? Is it just a question of making a quick profit and bolting, with the severely negative impact on the Earth of no consequence? Our coal fired power stations and our smoke spewing industries make our country the 13<sup>th</sup> worst polluter in the world and certainly the very worst in Africa. Do we have any moral right to do this to our own people and then to export acid rain across our borders into Mozambique and Zimbabwe? Acid rain over the Lowveld is killing some of our most productive and fertile land. Global warming and all its terrible consequences is no fantasy.

It very real and it is HAPPENING NOW! Permanent coastal flooding is a real possibility for Durban, Cape Town and all the towns along our very long coastline. Be assured we will reap the whirlwind in just a few decades. Many alive today will still be around then and will curse us for our greed and more for our sheer stupidity. We know what has to be done to prevent this from happening but there is no will to do what is right for humanity and for the Earth.

If the Polar ice caps melt, it will raise the oceans by as much as 70 metres! Much of central Durban and all of the foreshore area of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Mossel Bay, Margate, Port Shepstone, Balito, Richards Bay will be submerged! Think about it: when the sea rises it will flow deep into our rivers, raising its level to 70m above where it is now! It will devastate all riverside communities. There will be no Robben Island, no St Lucia and all the low islands around the world will have disappeared as a monument to the greed of mankind.

Seen from another perspective, South Africa has the enormous potential to turn all of this around and become one of the leading countries in terms of Sustainable Development. We could show the world that there is another way to living: not in competition with nature but harnessing its fantastic potential sustainably for the common good of all our people. Add to this, that going down this path has the further potential of creating jobs for tens of thousands. This could make the country a leading force for global change away from coal and oil to renewable energy .

- Recent research has shown that South Africa can get an astounding 70% of its energy needs from the wind. It's free and non-polluting and the wind is always there.
- What of catching and using the massive number of hours of sunshine that bathe our country? The Northern Cape has some of the most concentrated sunshine in the world! Let us cover our barren deserts with solar panels and make them productive.

- Why don't we use the vast potential of biogas to provide energy in all our rural areas?
- We have yet to harness the electricity generating potential of ocean currents and of the waves of the sea.
- Re-cycling has the very real possibility of reducing landfill wastes. We can re-cycle just about anything. The bio degradable waste can then be buried and the resulting methane gas be tapped as a source of energy.
- All our 21 universities have the potential to generate the ideas and produce the proto types to slot into a new way of looking at our needs that can be met without destroying our great planet.

It is time to stop the rape and pillage of the Earth. It is time to use clean technologies to protect the environment and to coax it into giving up its bounties in a sensible and sustainable way. South Africa has the technology, the human expertise and money. It just needs the political will to make the change. Let us learn to respect the intricate 'web of life'. We need to again become a part of nature.

Let us frame the question in another way: Do we really have a choice? I think not!

# SCIENCE AND WARS AGAINST THE ENVIRONMENT

Mary Lynn Cramer\*

At the Boston Science March this past Saturday, April 22, I did not notice any signs proclaiming “SCIENCE FOR THE PEOPLE, NOT FOR PROFIT” or “SCIENCE FOR PEACE, NOT FOR WAR.”<sup>10</sup> Were there any? The few scientists I have known personally believe that science is value-free, unconcerned with politics or morality. It exists as pure truth born of the scientific method. And as the Science Guy exclaimed at the march in Washington, D.C., scientists can save the world.<sup>11</sup>

Just about everyone appreciates the research, experimentation, and creativity that has resulted in everything from the electric light bulb to call-forwarding (I mention these only because they are said to have been invented by humble people working in their own homes, on their own time), as well as all the latest modes of communication and transportation, and medical interventions we depend upon today. At the same time, it is difficult for me to forget other often-unacknowledged uses and abuses of the “scientific method.” Maybe the least discussed in the history of science in this country is that of the contributions made by the many Nazi scientists snuck into the US after the end of WWII, protected and valued because of their scientific work on rockets, lethal gases, and inhumane psychological and physical experimentation carried out on civilian prisoners.<sup>12</sup> Closer to home today, I think also about the several medications scientifically proven to be beneficial, and “tested” by the same

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2017/04/22/here-are-the-nerdiest-signs-from-bostons-march-for-science-rally>

<sup>11</sup> “Science must shape policy. Science is universal. Science brings out the best in us. With an informed, optimistic view of the future together, we can, dare I say it, save the world!”

[https://www.democracynow.org/2017/4/24/speeches\\_from\\_the\\_march\\_for\\_science](https://www.democracynow.org/2017/4/24/speeches_from_the_march_for_science)

<sup>12</sup> Operation Paperclip: The Secret Intelligence Program to Bring Nazi Scientists to America by Annie Jacobsen. (Little, Brown & Company, 2014)

pharmaceutical companies who market them. Thankfully, I have refused a couple of those physician-recommended products that later proved to be dangerous, carcinogenic, and were subsequently taken off the market. In the same light, it is hard for me not to react to the “science” programs on NPR that focus on how technological innovation is going to free all workers from menial labour. This passionate optimism contradicts actual experience reported in the news elsewhere about the most modern ‘automated’ factories being set up in poor Southern states, where workers barely make minimum wage, have no medical insurance or paid leave, work very long hours, and suffer horrible accidents when the “robotic” assembly line breaks down and no one knows how to fix it. People lose digits, limbs, and one young woman working on the assembly line was killed when the automated process stapled her to the front fender of an automobile. The particular factory in this story was South Korean owned, and the technician whose aid workers sought to help free the woman did not speak English; he just walked off the job.<sup>13</sup>

At the end of this week, we will also see Climate Marches.<sup>14</sup> Here again, it is hard not to notice how much global warming and earthly destruction has been facilitated by scientific innovation, especially that employed by the US Military and Industrial Leaders. In fact, some of the leading scientists protesting global warming have done their most productive work for projects directly related to the military and “global competition” (increasingly militaristic rather than economic). The representatives of amoral, politically unbiased scientific research refer to “workers” as “consumers,” and insist we can each contribute to saving the planet by making changes in our daily lives: use recycled toilet paper and new LED lights, buy a Prius, and have solar panels installed in your house. (What percentage of Americans owns their own house, or can afford a Prius?) When asked about the much larger contribution made to environmental problems by US military-industrial production, necessary infrastructure and distribution systems throughout the global market, my personal experience is that most scientists don’t know, don’t have the data, and aren’t interested.

As long as science is set above or outside of any discussion of morality, consequences, or social responsibility, it will continue to be difficult to find the data supporting the observation that the military-industrial complex (with all its

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<sup>13</sup> “Bride-to-Be Crushed to Death by Car-Factory Robot;”(Failing to find the radio program discussing US-based foreign car production in the Southern US, I did find there were hundreds of reports of workers maimed and killed in the US, Europe, Asia and elsewhere by “robots” or automated assembly lines.) <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2017/01/03/bride-to-be-crushed-to-death-by-car-factory-robot.html>

<sup>14</sup> <https://350.org/april-29-2017-lets-march/>

essential infrastructure construction, transportation, labor, resources, and materials, as well as the employment of destructive weapons) accounts for most of global pollution, while if working people all went “green” today that would have a negligible impact on climate change. I hope to see marchers making more connections between War and Warming in the upcoming Climate March. Here is one of the early attempts to focus on this larger cause of environmental catastrophe.<sup>15</sup>

“High-technology warfare damages the environment and threatens life in ways that cannot be measured. It is clear, however, that modern warfare is the most reckless and dangerous threat to the habitability of the planet that human abuses of technology have produced. The Gulf War is a case study of the ecological perils of war. To count the ways weapons kill in our technologically advanced times, you must look far beyond battlefield casualties. Deadly radiation is released from bombed nuclear power plants and toxins are released from chemical and biological factories. Radioactive shrapnel from uranium-tipped missiles and shells render whole regions uninhabitable. The crush of thousands of tanks and heavy armoured vehicle and the concussion from thousands of tons of high explosives pulverise fragile ecosystems. And the massive fires that result from bombing oil refineries and storage tanks, and the ignition of crude oil at wellheads pollute the atmosphere around the world. Whole water systems are destroyed and polluted, and sewage systems crushed beneath the earth ooze cesspools throughout cities and towns. Full-scale modern warfare attacks life on the planet...”

“...In August 1990 the Pentagon and the White House signed an agreement to waive National Environmental Protection Act requirements for U.S. military operations in the Gulf. The act mandates that the federal government must fully study any environmental effects of a proposed project, and must then allow review by the public. Keith Schneider would later write in the *New York Times*, ‘Concerned that war efforts could otherwise be hampered, the White House has waived the legal requirements for assessments of the effect that Pentagon projects have on the environment...’”

“By waiving the law’s requirements, the Pentagon could ignore the environmental impact of its massive mobilisation and assault. The waiver also set a precedent endangering other environmental laws...On November 6, 1990, at the Second World Climate Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, Jordan’s King Hussein warned, “A war in the Gulf would not only result in devastating human death and injury and tremendous economic loss and prolonged political confrontation between Orient and Occident, it could also lead to an

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<sup>15</sup> The Fire This Time: U.S. War Crimes in the Gulf, pp 94-95, by Ramsey Clark



environmental catastrophe that would be swift, severe, and devastating.’ In presenting the conclusions of Jordanian scientists, Hussein said, ‘The impact of a war on the 50 million barrels of oil that Kuwait produces, set in flames, could increase atmospheric carbon dioxide from these fires and the result could cause a global warming and result in lower food production.’...His predictions turned out to be accurate.”

During the past 25 years, or from the time of the Gulf War up to the seven simultaneous wars waged by Obama (and which Trump is continuing), would we suspect that “high technology warfare” could have increased global warming...or not? Even if we don’t have all the necessary data, what might we conclude? John Lawrence writing in the SD Free Press has done an excellent job of estimating military costs and causes of climate change given the available data in 2014. In establishing that the US Military is a major contributor to global warming and the largest single consumer of energy in the world, Lawrence states that “the US Air Force is the largest oil consumer. Not only does the military consume a lot of oil, they pay outrageous prices for it. The Pentagon pays an average of \$400 to put a gallon of fuel into a combat vehicle or aircraft in Afghanistan. The DoD uses 4.6 billion US gallons of fuel annually, an average of 12.6 million gallons of fuel per day.”

Besides oil, Lawrence cites the DoD use of electricity: “In FY 2006, the DoD used almost 30,000-gigawatt hours of electricity at a cost of almost \$2.2 billion. The DoD’s electricity use would supply enough electricity to power more than 2.6 million average American homes...In the fiscal year 2012, the DoD consumed about a billion gigawatt hours of site delivered energy at a cost of 20.4 billion dollars. While consuming that amount of energy, DoD emitted 70 million metric tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.” Missing from the DoD’s data are the “energy use and costs arising from the contractors to support military operations both domestically and abroad”.

In his study, Lawrence refers to another very important report, The Military Assault on Global Climate which includes data regarding the US Air Force (“the single largest consumer of jet fuel in the world”): “A quarter of the world’s jet fuel feeds the USAF fleet of flying killing machines; in 2006, they consumed as much fuel as US planes did during the Second World War (1941-1945)—an astounding 2.6 billion gallons”<sup>16</sup>

Most of the “political scientists” look at this backassward: i.e., they think that global warming causes war, and never ask if waging war might have been an initial cause of environmental devastation in the first place. That connection

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<sup>16</sup> <http://sandiegofreepress.org/2014/11/the-us-military-is-a-major-contributor-to-global-warming/>

apparently never occurs to them.<sup>17</sup> Google it: There are numerous articles noting that the military is concerned about global warming; none pointing out that the military is concerned about being a major contributor to global warming.<sup>18</sup> (9)

If the only moral outrage protestors express is at Trump, we will experience no radical change in our political or environmental climate. Obama, who received the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize because he promised to get rid of nuclear weapons, was also the President who authorised building more nuclear warheads than any other President. As John Pilger notes: “Obama gave full reign to the Pentagon war-making apparatus of his discredited predecessor. He prosecuted more whistleblowers – truth-tellers – than any president. He pronounced Chelsea Manning guilty before she was tried.” Pilger concludes that Obama ran “an unprecedented worldwide campaign of terrorism and murder by drone.”<sup>19</sup>

Think about it: Compare the US 2010-2015 investment of \$56 billion for clean energy, with the \$1 trillion Obama committed for modernising nuclear weapons. As an environmental engineer and professor of environmental health, Patricia Hynes points out, “Climate change is inevitably an issue of peace because the Pentagon is the single largest contributor of climate change emissions in the world. And as the Pentagon goes, so go the military budgets of other major powers....Growing global militarization portends greater military build up in Russia, China, NATO and the Middle East and greater climate change emissions.” She also emphasises that pollution and environmental destruction caused by war has greatly compounded the very process of reconstruction: “Between 2003 and 2007, the Iraq war generated more carbon dioxide equivalent in greenhouse gas emissions each year of the war than 139 of the world’s countries release annually. Re-building Iraqi (and Syrian and Yemeni) schools, homes, businesses, bridges, roads, and hospitals pulverised by

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/brexit-climate-change-al-gore-says-global-warming-syria-war-helped-leave-vote-a7645866.html>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,132519,00.html>

<sup>19</sup> “James Bradley, the best-selling author of *Flags of Our Fathers* and son of one of the US marines who raised the flag on Iwo Jima, said, “[One] great myth we’re seeing play out is that of Obama as some kind of peaceful guy who’s trying to get rid of nuclear weapons. He’s the biggest nuclear warrior there is. He’s committed us to a ruinous course of spending a trillion dollars on more nuclear weapons. Somehow, people live in this fantasy that because he gives vague news conferences and speeches and feel-good photo-ops that somehow that’s attached to actual policy. It isn’t.” <http://johnpilger.com/articles/silencing-america-as-it-prepa...>

the war will require millions of tonnes of cement, the most fossil-fuel intensive of all manufacturing industries.”<sup>20</sup>

I talked with one science enthusiast who for several years has had a very well paid job with one of those cutting-edge “off-shore” companies` (actually US land-based but tax-free) working on military-industrial applications of cyber-technology all week, while demonstrating against the use of weaponized drones and cyber-surveillance products on weekends. When I asked if there was any contradiction in carrying out these seemingly conflicting roles, the calm response was simply “well, you don’t expect me to compromise my standard of living do you?” Apparently not: Science is a method, free of any conflicting moral or political complications. And Climate Science—might it benefit from a revolutionary paradigm shift?

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<sup>20</sup> <https://portside.org/print/2017-01-28/war-and-warming-can-we-save-planet-without-taking-pentagon>

# OUR COMMON OCEANS AND SEAS

Rene Wadlow\*

The United Nations is currently preparing a world conference 5-7 June 2017 devoted to the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal N 14: Conserve and sustainable use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Non-governmental organisations in consultative status with the U.N. are invited to submit recommendations for the governmental working group which is meeting 24 to 27 April in New York.

The Association of World Citizens has long been concerned with the Law of the Sea and had been active during the 10-year negotiations on the law of the sea during the 1970s, the meetings being held one month a year, alternatively in New York and Geneva.

The world citizens position for the law of the sea was largely based on a three-point framework:

- A. that the oceans and seas were the common heritage of humanity and should be seen as a living symbol of the unity of humanity;
- B. that ocean management should be regulated by world law created as in as democratic manner as possible;
- C. that the wealth of the oceans, considered as the common heritage of mankind should contain mechanisms of global redistribution, especially for the development of the poorest, a step toward a more just economic order, on land as well as at sea.

The concept of the oceans as the common heritage of humanity had been introduced into the U.N. awareness by a moving speech in the U.N. General Assembly by Arvid Pardo, Ambassador of Malta in November 1967. Under traditional international sea law, the resources of the oceans, except those within a narrow territorial sea near the coastline were regarded as “no one’s property” or more positively as “common property.” The “no one’s property” opened the door to the exploitation of resources by the most powerful and the most technologically advanced States. The “common heritage” concept was put forward as a way of saying that “humanity” – at least as represented by the States in the U.N. – should have some say as to the way the resources of the oceans and seas should be managed. Thus began the 1970s Law of the Seas negotiations.

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\* Rene Wadlow, President and a representative to the United Nations, Geneva, Association of World Citizens

Perhaps with or without the knowledge of Neptune, lord of the seas, the Maltese voted to change the political party in power just as the sea negotiations began. Arvid Pardo was replaced as Ambassador to the U.N. by a man who had neither the vision nor the diplomatic skills of Pardo. Thus, during the 10 years of negotiations, the “common heritage” flame was carried by world citizens, in large part by Elisabeth Mann Borgese with whom I worked closely during the Geneva sessions of the negotiations.

Elisabeth Mann Borgese (1918-2002) whose birth anniversary we mark on 24 April, was a strong-willed woman. She had to come out from under the shadow of both her father, Thomas Mann, the German writer and Nobel laureate for Literature, and her husband Giuseppe Antonio Borgese (1882-1952), Italian literary critic and political analyst. From 1938, Thomas Mann lived in Princeton, New Jersey and gave occasional lectures at Princeton University. Thomas Mann, whose novel *The Magic Mountain* was one of the monuments of world literature between the two World Wars, always felt that he represented the best of German culture against the uncultured mass of the Nazis. He took himself and his role very seriously, and his family existed basically to facilitate his thinking and writing.

Borgese had a regular professor's post at the University of Chicago but often lectured at other universities on the evils of Mussolini. Borgese, who had been a leading literary critic and university professor in Milan, left Italy for the United States in 1931 when Mussolini announced that an oath of allegiance to the Fascist State would be required of all Italian professors. For Borgese, with a vast culture including the classic Greeks, the Renaissance Italians, and the 19th century nationalist writers, Mussolini was an evil caricature which too few Americans recognised as a destructive force in his own right and not just as the fifth wheel of Hitler's armed car.

G.A. Borgese met Elizabeth Mann on a lecture tour at Princeton, and despite being close to Thomas Mann in age, the couple married very quickly shortly after meeting. Elisabeth moved to the University of Chicago and was soon caught up in Borgese's efforts to help the transition from the Age of Nations to the Age of Humanity. For Borgese, the world was in a watershed period. The Age of Nations – with its nationalism which could be a liberating force in the 19th century as with the unification of Italy – had come to a close with the First World War. The war clearly showed that nationalism was from then on only the symbol of death. However, the Age of Humanity, which was the next step in human evolution, had not yet come into being, in part because too many people were still caught in the shadow play of the Age of Nations.

Since University of Chicago scientists had played an important role in the coming of the Atomic Age, G.A. Borgese and Richard McKeon, Dean of the

University felt that the University should take a major role in drafting a world constitution for the Atomic Age. Thus the Committee to Frame a World Constitution, an interdisciplinary committee under the leadership of Robert Hutchins, head of the University of Chicago, was created in 1946. To re-capture the hopes and fears of the 1946-1948 period when the World Constitution was being written, it is useful to read the book written by one of the members of the drafting team: Rexford Tugwell. *A Chronicle of Jeopardy* (University of Chicago Press, 1955). The book is Rex Tugwell's reflections on the years 1946-1954 written each year in August to mark the A-bombing of Hiroshima

Elisabeth had become the secretary of the Committee and the editor of its journal *Common Cause*. The last issue of *Common Cause* was in June 1951. G.A. Borgese published a commentary on the Constitution, dealing especially with his ideas on the nature of justice. It was the last thing he wrote, and the book was published shortly after his death: G.A. Borgese. *Foundations of the World Republic* (University of Chicago Press, 1953). In 1950, the Korean War started. Hope for a radical transformation of the UN faded. Borgese and his wife went to live in Florence, where weary and disappointed, he died in 1952.

The drafters of the World Constitution went on to other tasks. Robert Hutchins left the University of Chicago to head a "think tank"- Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions – taking some of the drafters, including Elisabeth, with him. She edited a booklet on the Preliminary Draft with a useful introduction *A Constitution for the World* (1965) However, much of the energy of the Center went into the protection of freedom of thought and expression in the USA, at the time under attack by the primitive anti-communism of then Senator Joe McCarthy.

In the mid-1950s, from world federalists and world citizens came various proposals for UN control of areas not under national control: UN control of the High Seas and the Waterways, especially after the 1956 Suez Canal conflict, and of Outer Space. A good overview of these proposals is contained in James A. Joyce. *Revolution on East River* (New York: Ablard-Schuman, 1956).

After the 1967 proposal of Arvid Pardo, Elisabeth Mann Borgese turned her attention and energy to the law of the sea. As the UN Law of the Sea Conference continued through the 1970s, Elisabeth was active in seminars and conferences with the delegates, presenting ideas, showing that a strong treaty on the law of the sea would be a big step forward for humanity. Many of the issues raised during the negotiations leading to the Convention, especially the concept of the Exclusive Economic Zone, actively battled by Elisabeth but actively championed by Ambassador Alan Beesley of Canada, are with us today in the China seas tensions. While the resulting Convention of the Law of the Sea has not revolutionised world politics – as some of us hoped in the early 1970s – the

Convention is an important building block in the development of world law. We are grateful for the values and the energy that Elisabeth Mann Borgese embodied and we are still pushing for the concept of the common heritage of humanity.

# SAVING THE AMAZON REEF

Marianne de Nazareth\*

The Great Barrier Reef on the north-east coast of Australia which contains the world's largest collection of coral reefs, has been the only reef which has been in the news of late and has a UNESCO heritage label. Today with oceans heating up reefs are threatened and the world holds its breath, hoping to reverse the trend.

Interestingly, a newly discovered reef, the Amazon Reef, spread over 9500 km, at the mouth of the Amazon River is receiving focused attention from the IUCN and marine scientists. It is important because it is like no other coral reef that we know of. While other reefs exist in clear, sunlit waters, the Amazon Reef lies in very muddy, sediment-filled waters of the Amazon, and is a product of unusual chemosynthesis. The reef lies in a uniquely bio- diverse area, and as scientists explore this area further, new exciting species of life are likely to be discovered.

The reef, which also serves as a natural carbon sink, is surrounded by the largest mangrove stretch in the world, which again is another massive natural carbon sink. Any threat to the reef will directly affect the earth's ability to remove carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the atmosphere (carbon sequestration)

Now, oil companies have plans to drill around 15 to 20 billion barrels of oil from the surrounding area, which, once up for consumption, will further adversely affect efforts to mitigate climate change and destroy this pristine habitat.

This is where Greenpeace India has stepped in with the goal of stopping oil exploration near the mouth of the Amazon river and guarantee that the ecosystem of the region, and its vital mangrove carbon sinks, will remain intact and protected.

Ravi Chellam, Executive Director, Greenpeace India, ” I strongly believe that our interactions with Nature, our environment and fellow human beings have to be based on a robust ethical foundation. We, both as individual human beings and collectively as the human race have no right to damage and destroy any part of nature, especially if our actions will result in extinction of species as extinction is forever! The case of the newly discovered Amazon reef is particularly compelling for us to take global and collective responsibility for it.

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This reef is quite expansive in its scale, occupying at least 9,500 sq km and very unique in its location, at the mouth of the Amazon River and in muddy waters. Currently, we have barely documented 5% of these reefs and it would be unpardonable if we allow any damage to these reefs in the name of “development”. I find it particularly distressing that the proposed development is for oil drilling when the dangers posed by global warming and climate change are increasingly becoming part of our daily lives. If the global community has to deliver on the pledges made as part of the Paris Agreement, any future exploration for hydrocarbons, especially in biodiversity rich sites like the Amazon Reefs should be prevented.” The Amazon Reef is an ecosystem composed of corals, sponges and rhodoliths (calciferous algae). In the southern part of the Reef, there are mainly sponges, some of them are over 2 meters in length. In the 70’s, scientists speculated about the existence of a reef in the region, but no further research was done. Then from 2010 to 2014, scientists went on three expeditions to collect samples and study their findings. This system of corals, sponges and rhodoliths was revealed in April of 2016. Because of its characteristics and extreme conditions, this system of corals is unique. Its discovery was celebrated by specialists as one of the most important in marine biology in recent decades. According to Ronaldo Francini, one of the scientists who revealed the Reef to the world, “this is clearly a hotspot for biodiversity”.

The campaign will hasten the end of the oil age and maintaining global temperatures within 1.5C degrees and contribute to the erosion of political and economic power currently held by fossil fuel corporations globally by weakening their relationships with governments, customers and investors and undermining their social license.

The common man is being made more aware of these issues through online campaigns and what is known as ‘clicktivism’. The Amazon Reef Campaign has crossed 1 million signups globally. The fight to protect our natural treasures, functional ecosystems and a better world is gathering momentum in one more corner of the globe. Greenpeace India is very much part of this global campaign, we have received 3000 sign ups and counting within just four days of the launch of the campaign. Greenpeace India launched the Amazon Reef Campaign on 13th April and is running successfully. Several big names including, Leonard di Caprio, supports the Amazon Reef campaign.

“The reef is a new biome, located in a place where it was thought not possible for reefs to exist – they are located in the mouth of the Amazon basin, where there is a lot of sediments brought by the river (largest in the world in volume of water), there are spots where only 2% of light passes through. So it is a new biome that needs to be studied as is very important for marine biodiversity and fish stocks.

At the same time, this area is risky to drill for oil – from 95 attempts to produce oil in the mouth of the Amazon basin since the 1960s, 27 failed due to mechanical accidents, while the other attempts either didn't find anything, or the reserves weren't technically or economically viable.

So it is a new frontier of oil and we can't access new reserves, where already have more oil reserves guaranteed in the world than we can burn if we want to keep climate warming to 1.5C.

Regarding the mangroves, they are not linked to the reef. Both mangroves and reefs play a very important role in biodiversity and carbon capture. The largest continuous mangrove in the world is in the coast of Amapá and if oil got to it, we know there is no technology for cleaning it up. And the mangroves play an important role in both marine and land biodiversity in the coast, extremely important for artisanal fishing communities and extractivist communities – the coast of Amapá is home to several traditional communities, fishing, extractivist, indigenous and quilombola (former slaves from the 18th and 19th centuries that ran away,” says Thiago F. C. Almeida a Brazilian Climate & Energy Campaigner.

Regarding the mangroves, they are not linked to the reef, but both mangroves and reefs play a very important role in biodiversity and carbon capture. The largest continuous mangrove in the world is on the coast of Amapá and if oil destroyed it, there is no technology to clean it up. And the mangroves play an important role in both marine and land biodiversity in the coast, extremely important for artisanal fishing communities – the coast of Amapá is home to several traditional communities, fishing, extractivist, indigenous and quilombola (former slaves from the 18th and 19th centuries that ran away).

Plus, coral systems are very susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Between the atmosphere and the ocean, there is an exchange of gases, primarily carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), which is absorbed, and oxygen, which is released by the action of the algae. As we are emitting large amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere, the oceans are having to absorb much of this gas in a short period of time, which throws the system out of balance. One of the effects of this excess CO<sub>2</sub> is that the ocean is becoming more acidic. And acidity harms mollusks and corals, which are unable to form with the same amount of carbonates. As an analogy, it is as if the ocean has osteoporosis. A study published in Nature Climate Change shows that in corals reefs, the diversity and complexity of marine life falls as the acidity of the water rises. Species that use calcium carbonate to build their shells and skeletons, like mussels and corals, are particularly vulnerable to acidification. In addition, the areas surrounding mangroves and corals are inhabited by species of turtles, marine mammals, etc.,

that, we know today, play an important role in the sequestration of carbon in the ocean.

Oil exploration involves seismic surveys. The waves stun marine animals and diving birds, interfering with their navigation and communication abilities. This can be deadly for individuals and species. The drilling process also involves large volumes of waste being produced. This includes extracted water mixed with oil and other contaminants, drilling “muds” (including toxic chemicals and heavy metals) to cool and lubricate the equipment and other forms of industrial waste. These inevitably end up in the ocean and are ingested by marine life of all sizes. Some of the tiniest marine creatures, foundational to our ecosystems, the plankton, are particularly susceptible to crude oil pollution and suffer population reductions.

Oil companies are estimated to drill around 15 to 20 billion barrels of oil from the surrounding area, which, once up for consumption, will contribute immensely to global warming and adversely affect efforts to mitigate climate change. So we need to support the campaign, save the reef and stop the drilling.

# AN EXPEDITION TO EXPLORE LIFE ON UNDERSEA MOUNTAINS

Marianne de Nazareth\*

For the common man, mountains are a large landform that stretches above the surrounding land in a limited area, usually in the form of a peak. In geography, we were taught that a mountain is generally steeper than a hill. And that mountains are formed with movement between tectonic plates or volcanoes erupting. So it is amazing to know that there are mountains under the sea as well and that marine scientists today with the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) are undertaking their third expedition to explore these seamounts. This scientific expedition is to explore life on undersea mountains – or seamounts – in the high seas south of Madagascar

So why is an expedition like this needed at all one might ask? This expedition is a key stage of a project, aimed at the conservation and sustainable use of seamount ecosystems in the South West Indian Ocean, led by the IUCN. It is a three-week-long expedition aboard the French Polar Institute's research vessel Marion Dufresne which will explore the fauna of the Walters Shoal seamount.

The IUCN explains that while past expeditions concentrated solely on collating information on species inhabiting the seabed and the water, this one will gather extensive data on everything from plankton to seabirds and marine mammals to better understand how the seamount is linked to surrounding ecosystems. The summit area of Walters Shoal is very shallow; and this will enable scientists to dive on the seamount, observe and collect species by hand rather than relying on robots as they did during previous expeditions. The expedition is to set out from Le Port, Reunion Island on April 23rd. Planned arrival date in Durban, South Africa is May 18th, after three and a half weeks at sea. Scientists will spend around 19 days exploring the seamount.

The expedition will be undertaken in the Walters Shoal, which is a group of submerged mountains in the Western Indian Ocean, on the Madagascar Ridge, 450 nautical miles south of Madagascar, & 700 nautical miles east of South Africa. The summits rise to at least 500m below the water surface and extend over an area of 400km. The maximum summit height is 4,750m – around 60m short of the Mont Blanc. The expedition will set out from Le Port, Reunion Island, and end in Durban, South Africa.

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\* Marianne Furtado de Nazareth is the former Assistant Editor, The Deccan Herald, adjunct faculty, St. Joseph's PG College of Media Studies & a PhD scholar at the Madurai Kamaraj University

To answer the question as to why such an expedition needs to be undertaken, this is what François Simard, Deputy Director of IUCN's Marine Programme says – “Seamounts are islands of marine life with an important role in maintaining the health of the ocean. They contribute to food security by supporting fish stocks, and the unique species they harbour could provide genetic material for the development of future medicines. Yet they face increasing threats from unsustainable fishing and deep sea mining and remain largely unexplored. We urgently need more research into these hotspots of marine biodiversity or we risk losing species that we didn't even know existed.”

Seamounts are home to many endemic, slow-growing, slow-reproducing species, and are highly vulnerable to intense fishing practices such as bottom trawling; both commercial and recreational fishing take place on Walters Shoal, including illegal fishing.

Seamounts have the potential to contribute to the development of new medicines through the use of marine genetic resources from the many unique species they support.

Seamounts play an important and only partially understood role in marine ecosystems well beyond the seamounts themselves; damage to seamounts could have widespread effects on ocean health and fisheries.

Fewer than 300 out of the world's 200,000 seamounts have been explored so far.

Scientists will explore the fauna of the seamount and its role in the surrounding ecosystem.

They will also investigate the effects of unsustainable fishing practices and exploration for future deep sea mining on the seamount ecosystem. Walters Shoal has particularly shallow summits – some only 18 metres below the ocean surface – while the summits of seamounts are usually 1000-2000m below the surface; this will enable scientists to dive on the seamount rather than relying on subsea robots as during previous expeditions, allowing for hands-on data collection and better observation of marine life.

Like most seamounts, the Walters Shoal lies within areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) – marine areas covered by fragmented legal frameworks which leave their biodiversity vulnerable to growing threats. By improving our understanding of seamount ecosystems, this project aims to inform on-going discussions towards an implementing agreement to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The Project is led by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) – Global Marine and Polar Programme. Scientific project partners:

Muséum National de l'Histoire Naturelle (MNHN), Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD) Vessel chartered by the Institut Polaire Français (IPEV) The project is financed by the Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial "Walters Shoal" Expedition The "Walters Shoal" expedition is bringing to fruition the objectives of the scientific component of the IUCN FFEM-SWIO project. Acquiring scientific data to enhance their knowledge and understanding of high seas ecosystems is one way to help move forward and support the future negotiations for the implementation of measures towards a sustainable use of their resources and conservation of their biodiversity.

In addition to the scientific aspects, the expedition aims to raise awareness about these important issues. Thus, it will serve as a basis for the development of a scientific documentary and an educational program.

# LATEST LANCET DATA IMPLY ADANI AUSTRALIAN COAL PROJECT WILL KILL 1.4 MILLION INDIANS

Dr Gideon Polya\*

A multi-author 2017 paper in the prestigious UK medical journal *The Lancet* estimates 1.1 million Indian deaths annually from ambient (outdoor) air pollution, notably from fine carbon particulates (PM2.5). Assuming coal burning causes 50% of ambient air pollution in India, pollutants from the burning of coal exported to India from the giant, Australia-approved Adani coal mine will eventually kill 1.4 million Indians. Racist White Australia has a 2-century history of complicity in mass murder of Indians that is ongoing.

Under a pro-coal, climate criminal Coalition Australian Government and with the support of a compliant, pro-coal, Right-dominated Labor Party Opposition, Australia is heading towards a human and environmental catastrophe represented by the huge, Australian Government-approved Adani Carmichael coal mine in the Galilee Basin of Queensland that is set to be the biggest coal mine in the world and is adjacent to the seriously ill, acutely industry-threatened and acutely climate change-threatened Great Barrier Reef.

Coal kills just as surely as bombs, bullets and imposed starvation. The proposed Adani coal mine will be the biggest in the world and has been approved in the face of expert scientific advice that says we must keep coal and other fossil fuels in the ground to prevent catastrophic global warming. Indeed it is now too late to avoid a catastrophic plus 2 degrees Centigrade global warming. However, coal kills and ambient (outside) air pollution from pollutants from burning coal kills about 500,000 Indians each year. On a global comparative basis that ignores national pollution specifics, pollutants from burning Australian coal exported to India from the proposed Adani coal mine are estimated to kill 13,000 Indians annually and 500,000 Indians over the lifetime of the coal mine (most of the coal will go to India and thus most of the victims will be Indians). However, based on the latest specific data for India published in *The Lancet*, pollutants from the burning of Adani Australian coal in India will eventually kill 35,000 Indians annually and 1.4 million Indians over the lifetime of the coal mine.

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\* Dr Gideon Polya taught science students at a major Australian university for 4 decades. He published some 130 works in a 5 decade scientific career, most recently a huge pharmacological reference text "Biochemical Targets of Plant Bioactive Compounds" (CRC Press/Taylor & Francis, New York & London, 2003).

Properly taking land use into account, Australia has a Domestic annual per capita greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution in “tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent per person per year” of 52.9 and a Domestic plus Exported annual per capita GHG pollution (i.e. including its huge GHG-generating exports) of 116, as compared to the annual per capita greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution of 8.9 (the world), 7.4 (China), 2.1 (India), 2.5 (Pakistan) and 2.7 (Bangladesh).

Australia with 0.3% of the world’s population has a Domestic plus Exported GHG pollution equivalent to 4.4% of the World’s total GHG pollution (Gideon Polya, “Revised Annual Per Capita Greenhouse Gas Pollution For All Countries – What Is Your Country Doing?”, Countercurrents, 6 January 2016: <http://www.countercurrents.org/polya060116.htm> ; Gideon Polya, “Exposing And Thence Punishing Worst Polluter Nations Via Weighted Annual Per Capita Greenhouse Gas Pollution Scores”, Countercurrents, 19 March 2016: <http://www.countercurrents.org/polya190316.htm> ). However, the Adani coal mine will lift Australia’s outrageously disproportionate percentage to 4.5%.

Pro-coal, neoliberal, US lackey, war criminal, climate criminal and Trumpist Australia ranks second only to war criminal and climate criminal Saudi Arabia for climate change inaction on the German Climate Watch Index (see German Climate Watch Index 2015: <https://germanwatch.org/en/download/10407.pdf>). The Australia Coalition Government- and Labor Opposition-backed Adani coal mine will eventually kill 1.4 million Indians as argued below.

(A). On a comparative global basis (ignoring country specifics) pollutants from burning Adani coal will eventually kill about 0.5 million Indians.

Below is a letter sent to Australian MPs, media and activists in look-the-other-way Australia on 16 April 2007 re the prediction (based on global comparative data ignoring national pollution specifics) of an eventual 0.5 million Indian deaths due to pollutants from the burning of Adani-extracted Australian coal in India:

LETTER:

“Dear etc,

The anti-science, neoliberal, pro-coal and Trumpist Australian COALition Government and the Labor Opposition both support long-term domestic fossil fuel use and unlimited fossil fuel exports, and ignore the deadly impact of pollutants (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub>) from burning coal. Coal kills as illustrated by the following estimates: (1) 7 million people die globally from the long-term effects of air pollution each year (WHO), including about 1,000,000 Indians (half from coal burning for power), 200,000 Americans, 10,000 Australians and 9,000 Londoners, with several million people dying annually from the long-term



effects of coal burning pollutants, (2) 75,000 people die annually from pollutants from the burning of Australian coal exports, and (3) it is estimated that a further 13,000 people will eventually die annually from the burning of proposed Adani Australian coal exports with 500,000 people, mostly Indians, dying thus from the lifetime operation of the proposed Adani coal mine that also threatens Australia's desperately ill Great Barrier Reef.

DARA estimates that 0.4 million people presently die from climate change annually, but this may be a huge under-estimate because 17 million people already die avoidably each year from deprivation in tropical or sub-tropical Developing World countries (minus China) that are already disproportionately impacted by man-made climate change. Presently 20 million people are facing famine and mass starvation in war-, climate change- and drought-impacted northern Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen. Two top climate change scientists have estimated that as few as 0.5 billion people will survive this century if climate change is not requisitely addressed, this translating to a Climate Genocide involving the untimely deaths of about 10 billion people this century. It is now too late to avoid a catastrophic plus 2 degree Centigrade temperature rise but decent people are obliged to do everything they can to make the future "less bad" for future generations e.g. by urging and applying boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against and voting out ecocidal and homicidal climate criminals.

Yours sincerely, Dr Gideon Polya, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

See Gideon Polya, "Pollutants from Adani coal mine will eventually kill 0.5 million Indians", *Countercurrents*, 14 April 2017: <http://www.countercurrents.org/2017/04/14/pollutants-adani-coal-mine-will-eventually-kill-about-0-5-million-indians/> ; "Stop air pollution deaths": <https://sites.google.com/site/300orgsite/stop-air-pollution-deaths> ; "Climate Genocide": <https://sites.google.com/site/climategenocide/> ; "Too late to avoid global warming catastrophe": <https://sites.google.com/site/300orgsite/too-late-to-avoid-global-warming> ; Gideon Polya, "Humanity must pledge inescapable dispossession and custodial retribution for climate criminals", *Countercurrents*, 20 December 2016: <http://www.countercurrents.org/2016/12/20/humanity-must-pledge-inescapable-dispossession-and-custodial-retribution-for-climate-criminals/> "END LETTER.

The Silence is Deafening in response to my letter. Silence is Complicity.

(B). Based on the latest, specific national pollution data for India reported in *The Lancet*, pollutants from burning Adani coal will eventually kill about 1.4 million Indians.

A major problem with ignoring reality is that it keeps on getting worse. A multi-author paper published in the prestigious UK medical journal *The Lancet* on 10 April 2017 estimates 1,090,400 annual Indian deaths and 1,108,100 annual Chinese deaths from ambient (outdoor) air pollution (Aaron J Cohen, Michael Brauer et al., “Estimates and 25-year trends of the global burden of disease attributable to ambient air pollution: an analysis of data from the Global Burden of Diseases Study 2015”, *The Lancet*, 10 April 2017: [http://thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)30505-6/fulltext](http://thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)30505-6/fulltext)).

Presently India burns 924 million tonnes of coal each year. Assuming that all the 60 million tonnes per year of Adani Australian coal will go to India (most will) and that 50% of ambient air pollution in India is due to coal-fired power generation (as asserted by major India media),  $0.5 \times 1,090,400$  Indian deaths per year  $\times$  60 million tonnes Adani coal exported per year / 924 million tonnes coal burned in India per year = 35,403 or eventually about 35,000 Indian deaths per year and  $0.5 \times 1,090,400$  Indian deaths per year  $\times$  2,300 million tonnes coal exported / 924 million tonnes coal burned per year in India = 1,357,100 or eventually about 1.4 million Indian deaths over the lifetime of the Adani project due to pollutants from the combustion of Adani coal from a greed-driven, homicidal, ecocidal, terracidal and genocidally climate criminal Lib-Lab (COALition and Labor Right) Australia (see “Stop air pollution deaths”: <https://sites.google.com/site/300orgsite/stop-air-pollution-deaths> and scroll down to “Australia” and “India”).

History ignored yields history repeated – White Australia’s 2-century complicity in mass murder of Indians.

History ignored yields history repeated and racist White Australia – politically correct racist or PC racist because overwhelmingly White Australians vigorously and sincerely deny that they are racist – has an appalling past, present and future complicity in the deaths of horrendous numbers of Indians as detailed below (but overwhelmingly missing from Australian historiography, Mainstream media and general public perception):

1. As part of the British Empire Australia was complicit in the 2-century, British-imposed Indian Holocaust in which 1,800 million Indians died avoidably from extreme deprivation regularly punctuated by successive horrendous famines under the British Raj (see Gideon Polya, “Economist Mahima Khanna, Cambridge Stevenson Prize And Dire Indian Poverty”, *Countercurrents*, 20 November, 2011: <http://www.countercurrents.org/polya201111.htm>).

2. White Australians fervently supported the British suppression 1857 Indian War of Independence (aka the Indian Rebellion or Indian Mutiny), related captured Indian weaponry were displayed at the Victorian State Library together with Australian Aboriginal weapons, and as British Imperial subjects, a number of Australians served in the British forces. Indian historian Amaresh Misra claims in his 2 volume work "War of Civilizations: India AD 1857" that in the decade after the Indian rebellion the British killed 10 million Indians in reprisals for the 2,000 British killed in the 1857 rebellion (Amaresh Misra, "War of Civilisations: India AD 1857"; Randeep Ramesh, "India's secret history: :A holocaust, one where millions disappeared", Guardian, 24 August 2007:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/aug/24/india.randeepramesh> ; Gideon Polya, "Genocidal Racist Charles Dickens (1812-1870), Indian Holocaust And UK – US Muslim Genocide ", Countercurrents, 10 February, 2012:  
<http://www.countercurrents.org/polya100212.htm>).
3. By withholding grain from its huge wartime granaries, Australia helped Britain deliberately starve 6-7 million Indians to death for strategic reasons in the WW2 Bengali Holocaust (WW2 Indian Holocaust). This atrocity was associated with horrendous, large-scale, military and civilian sexual abuse of starving women and girls (Gideon Polya, "Australia And Britain Killed 6-7 Million Indians In WW2 Bengal Famine", Countercurrents, 29 September 2011:  
<http://www.countercurrents.org/polya290911.htm> ; Gideon Polya, "Jane Austen and the Black Hole of British History. Colonial rapacity, holocaust denial and the crisis in biological sustainability", G.M. Polya, Melbourne, 2008 edition that is now available for free perusal on the web: <http://janeaustenand.blogspot.com/> ).
4. As a disproportionately rich country, Australia is disproportionately complicit in the post-1950 Global Avoidable Mortality Holocaust in which 1,500 million people, including about 400 million Indians, have died avoidably from First World-imposed deprivation since 1950 (see Gideon Polya, "Body Count. Global avoidable mortality since 1950", that includes a succinct history of every country and is now available for free perusal on the web: <http://globalbodycount.blogspot.com/>).
5. The 2015 per capita GDP is \$51,000 for Australia versus \$1,600 for India, \$1,400 for Pakistan and \$1,200 for Bangladesh . As disproportionately rich people, Australians are complicit in the ongoing Global Avoidable Mortality Holocaust in which 17 million

people in the Developing World (minus China) – including 4.7 million Indians, 630,000 Pakistanis and 230,000 Bangladeshis – presently die avoidably from deprivation each year on Spaceship Earth with the First World in charge of the flight deck (“List of countries by GDP (nominal) by capita”, Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_GDP\\_\(nominal\)\\_per\\_capita](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)_per_capita) ; Gideon Polya, “Body Count. Global avoidable mortality since 1950”; UN Population Division,” 2015 Revision of World Population Prospects”: <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/>).

6. Australia is a world leader in coal exports and will shortly become the world’s top liquefied natural gas (LNG) exporter. According to The Lancet (April 2017) annual deaths from ambient (outside) pollution total 1,108,100 (China), 1,090,400 (India), 135,100 (Pakistan) and 122,400 (Bangladesh). Coal burning for power is deemed responsible for 50% of ambient pollution in India and one supposes is a major contributor to deadly ambient pollution involving PM2-5 carbon particulates in all of these countries. Australia per se kills at least 75,000 people a year, mostly Asians, via pollutants from the burning of its world leading coal exports. The Adani obscenity will increase this annual Indian death toll by about 50%.
7. Two leading UK climate scientists, Dr James Lovelock FRS (famous for atmospheric gas analysis and his Gaia Hypothesis) and Professor Kevin Anderson (Deputy Director, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, University of Manchester, UK), have separately estimated that only about 0.5 billion people will survive this century if carbon pollution and man-made climate change are not requisitely addressed, this translating to a Climate Genocide of about 10 billion deaths this century, overwhelmingly in Developing countries. Noting that the world population is expected to reach 9.5 billion by 2050 (UN Population Division) , this predicted Climate Genocide involving the deaths of 10 billion people this century would involve the premature death of roughly twice the present population of particular mainly non-European groups, specifically 6 billion under-5 year old infants, 3 billion Muslims in a terminal Muslim Holocaust, 2 billion Indians, 1.3 billion non-Arab Africans, 0.5 billion Bengalis, 0.3 billion Pakistanis and 0.3 billion Bangladeshis.

#### Final comments and conclusions.

As a whole Australians are affable, easy-going, fair and reject explicit racism within Australia. Indeed these attributes plus Australian prosperity and love of cricket make Australia an attractive destination for Indian university students

and skilled Indian immigrants. However, there are major exceptions to this idyllic picture. Thus the bigoted and racist Australian One Nation Party now has about 10% of the vote, started life with extremely bigoted and offensive anti-Asian and anti-Indigenous policies and presently has an extremely bigoted and offensive anti-Muslim position. Further, White Australians have always had a huge fear of their vastly more numerous non-White Asian neighbours that crystallized into the 1901-1974, so-called White Australia Policy that excluded non-Europeans, including Asians and Indians, from Australia (this policy was scrapped by the Whitlam Labor Government before this reformist government was itself removed in a US CIA-backed coup in 1975). However, there is a secret New White Australia Policy today that discriminates against non-Europeans wanting a visa to enter Australia.

Australians are politically correct racist or PC racist because, while most vehemently rejecting racism at an interpersonal level, they are deeply involved in racist actions at an international level. Thus the ultimate in racism is the invasion and devastation of other countries, and as UK lackeys and thence US lackeys White Australians have invaded 85 countries (with 30 of these invasions involving genocidal atrocities) as compared to the British 193, France 82, the US 72 (52 after WW2), Germany 39, Japan 30, Russia 25, Canada 25, Apartheid Israel 12 and China 2. Australia is presently involved in the ongoing Afghan Holocaust and Afghan Genocide, is engaged in its Third Syrian War and Eighth Iraq War in a century, and via the US-Australian Joint electronic spying facility at Pine Gap in Central Australia, it is involved in US nuclear terrorism and in targeting illegal US drone strikes in Libya, starving Somalia, starving Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan... who is next? Australia has been involved in all post-1950 US Asian Wars, atrocities that have been associated with 40 million Asian deaths from violence or war-imposed deprivation. An intrinsically White Supremacist Australia is second only to the US as a blind, racist, White Supremacist supporter of Apartheid Israel, and is a fanatical supporter of the US War on Muslims (aka the US War on Terror) in which 32 million Muslims have died from violence, 5 million, or from imposed deprivation, 27 million, in 20 countries invaded by the US Alliance since the US Government's 9-11 false flag atrocity (Gideon Polya, "As UK Lackeys Or US Lackeys Australians Have Invaded 85 Countries (British 193, French 80, US 70)", *Countercurrents*, 9 February, 2015: <http://www.countercurrents.org/polya090215.htm> ; "Stop state terrorism" : <https://sites.google.com/site/stopstateterrorism/> ; "Stop state terrorism" : <https://sites.google.com/site/stopstateterrorism/> ; Gideon Polya, "Paris Atrocity Context: 27 Million Muslim Avoidable Deaths From Imposed Deprivation In 20 Countries Violated By US Alliance Since 9-11", *Countercurrents*, 22 November, 2015:

<http://www.countercurrents.org/polya221115.htm> ; “Muslim Holocaust Muslim Genocide”:

<https://sites.google.com/site/muslimholocaustmuslimgenocide/> ).

To be fair to the White Australians, Australian Mainstream media fake news through lying by omission means that White Australians are blissfully unaware of the horrendous consequences of their complicities, whether the mass murder of Indians under the British Raj or the global American Empire, the adumbrated eventual killing of 1.4 million Indians by the Australia-approved Adani coal mine or the predicted death this century of 2 billion Indians in a near-terminal Climate Genocide in which a climate criminal Australia is disproportionately complicit. Australian Mainstream media journalist, politician and academic prostitutes ensure that ordinary Australians are like mushrooms – kept in the dark and fed manure (Gideon Polya, “Mainstream media fake news through lying by omission”, MWC News, 1 April 2017: <http://www.mwcnews.net/focus/analysis/64626-mainstream-media.html> ).

What can decent people do? Decent people (and especially acutely-threatened Indians) must (a) inform everyone they can (especially Australians) and (b) do everything they can by Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) to ensure that coal and other fossil fuels remain in the ground. Coal kills.

He has published “Body Count. Global avoidable mortality since 1950” (G.M. Polya, Melbourne, 2007: <http://globalbodycount.blogspot.com/> ); see also his contributions “Australian complicity in Iraq mass mortality” in “Lies, Deep Fries & Statistics” (edited by Robyn Williams, ABC Books, Sydney, 2007: <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/australian-complicity-in-iraq-mass-mortality/3369002#transcript>

) and “Ongoing Palestinian Genocide” in “The Plight of the Palestinians (edited by William Cook, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2010: <http://mwcnews.net/focus/analysis/4047-the-plight-of-the-palestinians.html> ).

He has published a revised and updated 2008 version of his 1998 book “Jane Austen and the Black Hole of British History” (see: <http://janeaustenand.blogspot.com/> ) as biofuel-, globalization- and climate-driven global food price increases threaten a greater famine catastrophe than the man-made famine in British-ruled India that killed 6-7 million Indians in the “forgotten” World War 2 Bengal Famine (see recent BBC broadcast involving Dr Polya, Economics Nobel Laureate Professor Amartya Sen and others: <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/social-economic-history/listen-the-bengal-famine> ; Gideon Polya: <https://sites.google.com/site/drgideonpolya/home> ; Gideon Polya Writing: <https://sites.google.com/site/gideonpolyawriting/> ; Gideon Polya, Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gideon\\_Polya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gideon_Polya) ). When words fail one can say it

in pictures – for images of Gideon Polya’s huge paintings for the Planet, Peace,  
Mother and Child see  
<http://sites.google.com/site/artforpeaceplanetmotherchild/> and  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/gideonpolya/>

# LIFE IN A 'DEGROWTH' ECONOMY, AND WHY YOU MIGHT ACTUALLY ENJOY IT

Samuel Alexander\*

What does genuine economic progress look like? The orthodox answer is that a bigger economy is always better, but this idea is increasingly strained by the knowledge that, on a finite planet, the economy can't grow forever.

But what is a steady-state economy? Why is it desirable or necessary? And what would it be like to live in?

## The Global Predicament-

We used to live on a planet that was relatively empty of humans; today it is full to overflowing, with more people consuming more resources. We would need one and a half Earths to sustain the existing economy into the future.<sup>21</sup> Every year this ecological overshoot continues, the foundations of our existence, and that of other species, are undermined.

At the same time, there are great multitudes around the world who are, by any humane standard, under-consuming, and the humanitarian challenge of eliminating global poverty is likely to increase the burden on ecosystems still further.

Meanwhile, the population is set to hit 11 billion this century.<sup>22</sup> Despite this, the richest nations still seek to grow their economies without apparent limit.

Like a snake eating its own tail, our growth-orientated civilisation suffers from the delusion that there are no environmental limits to growth. But rethinking growth in an age of limits cannot be avoided. The only question is whether it will be by design or disaster.

## Degrowth to a Steady-State Economy-

The idea of the steady-state economy presents us with an alternative. This term is somewhat misleading, however, because it suggests that we simply need to maintain the size of the existing economy and stop seeking further growth.

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\* Samuel Alexander is co-director of the Simplicity Institute ([simplicityinstitute.org](http://simplicityinstitute.org)), and the author of the books 'Prosperous Descent: Crisis as Opportunity in an Age of Limits' (2015), 'Sufficiency Economy: Enough, for Everyone, Forever' (2015), and 'Entropy: Life Beyond Industrial Civilisation' (2013).

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/world\\_footprint](http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/world_footprint)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/early/2014/09/17/science.1257469.abstract>



But given the extent of ecological overshoot – and bearing in mind that the poorest nations still need some room to develop their economies and allow the poorest billions to attain a dignified level of existence – the transition will require the richest nations to downscale radically their resource and energy demands.

This realisation has given rise to calls for economic “degrowth”. To be distinguished from recession, degrowth means a phase of planned and equitable economic contraction in the richest nations, eventually reaching a steady state that operates within Earth’s biophysical limits.

At this point, mainstream economists will accuse degrowth advocates of misunderstanding the potential of technology, markets, and efficiency gains to “decouple” economic growth from environmental impact. But there is no misunderstanding here. Everyone knows that we could produce and consume more efficiently than we do today. The problem is that efficiency without sufficiency is lost.

Despite decades of extraordinary technological advancement and huge efficiency improvements, the energy and resource demands of the global economy are still increasing.<sup>23</sup> This is because, within a growth-orientated economy, efficiency gains tend to be reinvested in more consumption and more growth, rather than in reducing impact.

This is the defining, critical flaw in growth economics: the false assumption that all economies across the globe can continue growing while radically reducing environmental impact to a sustainable level. The extent of decoupling required is simply too great. As we try unsuccessfully to “green” capitalism, we see the face of Gaia vanishing.

The very lifestyles that were once considered the definition of success are now proving to be our greatest failure. Attempting to universalize affluence would be catastrophic. There is absolutely no way that today’s 7.2 billion people could live the Western way of life, let alone the 11 billion expected in the future. Genuine progress now lies beyond growth. Tinkering around the edges of capitalism will not cut it.

We need an alternative.

Enough for Everyone, Forever-

When one first hears calls for degrowth, it is easy to think that this new economic vision must be about hardship and deprivation; that it means going

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<sup>23</sup>

[http://www.postcarbonpathways.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/1\\_Critique\\_of\\_Techno\\_Optimism.pdf](http://www.postcarbonpathways.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/1_Critique_of_Techno_Optimism.pdf)

back to the stone age, resigning ourselves to a stagnant culture, or being anti-progress. Not so.

Degrowth would liberate us from the burden of pursuing material excess. We simply don't need so much stuff – certainly not if it comes at the cost of planetary health, social justice, and personal well-being. Consumerism is a gross failure of imagination, a debilitating addiction that degrades nature and doesn't even satisfy the universal human craving for meaning.

Degrowth, by contrast, would involve embracing what has been termed the “simpler way” – producing and consuming less.<sup>24</sup> This would be a way of life based on modest material and energy needs but nevertheless rich in other dimensions – a life of frugal abundance. It is about creating an economy based on sufficiency, knowing how much is enough to live well, and discovering that enough is plenty.

The lifestyle implications of degrowth and sufficiency are far more radical than the “light green” forms of sustainable consumption that are widely discussed today. Turning off the lights, taking shorter showers, and recycling are all necessary parts of what sustainability will require of us, but these measures are far from enough.

But this does not mean we must live a life of painful sacrifice. Most of our basic needs can be met in quite simple and low-impact ways, while maintaining a high quality of life.<sup>25</sup>

What Would Life Be Like in a Degrowth Society?-

In a degrowth society, we would aspire to localise our economies as far and as appropriately as possible. This would assist with reducing carbon-intensive global trade, while also building resilience in the face of an uncertain and turbulent future.

Through forms of direct or participatory democracy we would organise our economies to ensure that everyone's basic needs are met and then redirect our energies away from economic expansion. This would be a relatively low-energy mode of living that ran primarily on renewable energy systems.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://simplicityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/TedTrainerandTheSimplerWay1.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> <http://simplicityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/YOURDELIGHTFULDAYTrainer1.pdf>

Renewable energy cannot sustain an energy-intensive global society of high-end consumers.<sup>26</sup> A degrowth society embraces the necessity of “energy descent”, turning our energy crises into an opportunity for civilizational renewal.

We would tend to reduce our working hours in the formal economy in exchange for more home production and leisure. We would have less income, but more freedom. Thus, in our simplicity, we would be rich.

Wherever possible, we would grow our own organic food, water our gardens with water tanks, and turn our neighbourhoods into edible landscapes as the Cubans have done in Havana. As my friend Adam Grubb so delightfully declares, we should “eat the suburbs”<sup>27</sup>, while supplementing urban agriculture with food from local farmers’ markets.

We do not need to purchase so many new clothes. Let us mend or exchange the clothes we have, buy second-hand, or make our own. In a degrowth society, the fashion and marketing industries would quickly wither away. A new aesthetic of sufficiency would develop, where we creatively re-use and refashion the vast existing stock of clothing and materials, and explore less impactful ways of producing new clothes.

We would become radical recyclers and do-it-yourself experts. This would partly be driven by the fact that we would simply be living in an era of relative scarcity, with reduced discretionary income.

But human beings find creative projects fulfilling, and the challenge of building the new world within the shell of the old promises to be immensely meaningful, even if it will also entail times of trial. The apparent scarcity of goods can also be greatly reduced by scaling up the sharing economy, which would also enrich our communities.

One day, we might even live in cob houses that we build ourselves, but over the next few critical decades the fact is that most of us will be living within the poorly designed urban infrastructure that already exists. We are hardly going to knock it all down and start again. Instead, we must ‘retrofit the suburbs’, as leading permaculturalist David Holmgren argues.<sup>28</sup> This would involve doing everything we can to make our homes more energy-efficient, more productive, and probably more densely inhabited.

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1108/08288661311319166>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.eatthesuburbs.org>

<sup>28</sup> <http://simplicityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/RetrofittingTheSuburbsSimplicityInstitute1.pdf>

This is not the eco-future that we are shown in glossy design magazines featuring million-dollar “green homes” that are prohibitively expensive. Degrowth offers a more humble – and I would say more realistic – vision of a sustainable future.

### Making the Change-

A degrowth transition to a steady-state economy could happen in a variety of ways.<sup>29</sup> But the nature of this alternative vision suggests that the changes will need to be driven from the “bottom up”, rather than imposed from the “top down”.

What I have written above highlights a few of the personal and household aspects of a degrowth society based on sufficiency (for much more detail, see here and here). Meanwhile, the ‘transition towns’ movement shows how whole communities can engage with the idea.

But it is critical to acknowledge the social and structural constraints that currently make it much more difficult than it needs to be to adopt a lifestyle of sustainable consumption. For example, it is hard to drive less in the absence of safe bike lanes and good public transport; it is hard to find a work-life balance if access to basic housing burdens us with excessive debt; and it is hard to re-imagine the good life if we are constantly bombarded with advertisements insisting that “nice stuff” is the key to happiness.

Actions at the personal and household levels will never be enough, on their own, to achieve a steady-state economy. We need to create new, post-capitalist structures and systems that promote, rather than inhibit, the simpler way of life. These wider changes will never emerge, however, until we have a culture that demands them. So first and foremost, the revolution that is needed is a revolution in consciousness.

I do not present these ideas under the illusion that they will be readily accepted. The ideology of growth clearly has a firm grip on our society and beyond. Rather, I hold up degrowth up as the most coherent framework for understanding the global predicament and signifying the only desirable way out of it.

The alternative is to consume ourselves to death under the false banner of “green growth”.

Published on the Economics of Happiness Blog at <http://www.localfutures.org/life-in-a-degrowth-economy/>.

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<sup>29</sup> <http://simplicityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/The-Deep-Green-Alternative.pdf>

Note: This piece first appeared in ‘The Conversation’:  
<https://theconversation.com/life-in-a-degrowth-economy-and-why-you-might-actually-enjoy-it-32224>

# WHAT SHOULD ACTUALLY MAKE THE DOCTORS ANGRY

Prof Shah Alam Khan\*

The recent strike of doctors across Maharashtra (and other parts of the country) against violence unleashed on them by disgruntled relatives of patients have thrown up uncomfortable questions. Whenever and wherever, violence must be abhorred and condemned in all its forms. Without a doubt, all healthcare providers should be ensured safety at places of work. Violence at place of work can have negative and disastrous effects on the employee satisfaction and work performance. Having said this, it is also essential that the medical community should do an introspection and try and find the flaws within; flaws which need to be rectified to avoid ugly situations at work. Unfortunately, the medical fraternity either fails or turns a blind eye to realise that we live in a society which institutionalises violence. The recent misbehaviour and violence (with impunity) by a Member of Parliament with an Air India employee is a glaring example of this. The real problem is when violence ceases to be violence when it loses the contempt it deserves and this is what the young Indian doctors should be more worried and angry about.

Violence as a means of justice is a common parlance in the present-day Indian society but a large part of the intellectual class (including doctors) remains insensitive to it till it turns on them. Working with some of the best brains in medicine in the country, I wonder how many of my seniors, colleagues and juniors would even know about the tombstones in India's graveyard of monumental injustices and violence. Unfortunately, most of my professional brethren haven't even heard about the Khairlanji massacre, don't understand the reasons behind the Bhagalpur blindings, don't care about what happened at Naroda Patiya and fail to understand the logic behind the Narmada Bachao Andolan. We, the doctors, live in a glass house where we see the society pass by but cannot feel its pain or share its grief. This insulated existence of the present-day doctor is in sharp contrast to the physicians of the years gone by. The family physicians of the 60s and 70s were a part of the society they served, sharing each loss and every triumph.

In India, doctors are considered god, another fact which wraps each one of us with pride and to an extent haughtiness. Having worked in the West, I have not seen this form of idolization of the medical practitioner where the doctor-patient relationship is nothing more than professional. We Indians have a

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pendant of accepting the divine status too soon. The acceptance of this god-like status by the Indian physician is also a cause of concern and a reason for violence against doctors. Gods are not supposed to mint money. Gods are not supposed to have flaws and if they do, the illiterate and the deprived faithful unleash violence to break the moulds they have so devotedly constructed. The doctors of the land should realise that acceptance of a divine status is the acceptance of violence as an adjunct unless they are ready to sacrifice much more. The rampant corporatization of medical practice and erosion of medical ethics in private and public set ups is another reason why these 'gods' face music now and then. Misbehaviour, over-treatment, under-treatment and blatantly expensive treatment forms an important part of the present-day medical culture but unfortunately not many among us are willing to fight against it. I am yet to find a statement by an authorised/statutory body of medicine or surgery in the country outrightly condemning malpractices of its own members. The Indian Medical Association, the Indian Orthopaedic Association and the Association of Surgeons of India maintain an apathetic silence in such matters. This hoodwinking continues till coercion from the other side becomes threatening.

Also, the medical fraternity and young doctors of our country should realise that we work with limitations of infrastructure. The poor conditions of government hospitals particularly in the interiors of the country is no secret. Lack of proper infrastructure leads to improper care and hence a threat of violence. With one doctor for every 2000 people, the situation is bound to get out of hand at times. Unjustified violence can be common practice. The working hours for residents who form the backbone of public funded healthcare is dreadfully out of proportion but no one, not even the medical fraternity, wants to raise the issue with the relevant administrative authorities. Thus, it would be prudent not to make any struggle as the present one in Maharashtra, a fight against the patients. It just can't be doctors versus patients. Doctors cannot and should not turn against patients, in fact the anger should be used against the administrative lapses of infrastructure which lead to ugly scenes in hospitals. Efforts should be made on part of the doctors to send the message that they are not against patients. A simple way to assert the point would have been to run out-patient clinics outside their hospitals during the days of strike.

Solutions like beefing up security within hospital premises can only provide temporary relief. Most solutions to the problem lie within the training of medical personnel. Sensitising the budding doctor to the poor and the underprivileged can be a simple solution which would reap huge dividends in the long run. Compassion, unfortunately, cannot be taught. Teaching behavioural sciences at undergraduate and postgraduate levels can be helpful. Acquainting the young doctor to prejudices of the society is a method to make

them stand against institutionalised violence which in turn will bring compassion. Thus, the young doctors should realise that the violence they suffer breeds within the society they live. To be insensitive to violence with others, is inviting violence to self.



# DECOLONISATION OF “MODERN MEDICAL SYSTEM: THE NEED TO MARCH TOWARDS PEOPLE ORIENTED HOLISTIC SYSTEM

Dr K S Sharma\*

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Theme:-

At the outset we should all compliment the XL Indian Social Science Congress for choosing the Focal Theme: “PEOPLES HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN INDIA” at a juncture when India is caught at crossroads on the turbulent issue of Public Health. At least during the 70<sup>th</sup> year of Indian Independence, we should thank ourselves for having become conscious of public health issues that are tormenting this country, and when more than 75% of the Indian population is groaning under poverty and misery, unable to get even minimum medical care in the existing landlord-bourgeois rule, under the mask of Parliamentary Democracy. The country’s 42 percent children suffer from malnutrition and more than 50,000 women suffer death even during their maiden Delivery, while you have on the other side of the spectrum, corporate controlled Hi-Tech Hospitals with Heli-pad landing facility, containing the most

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modern medical Gadgets and super-specialists, all in the service of one percent super-rich in the country. What a tragedy and what a paradox?!

It is in this backdrop that we have chosen to present a paper on the Theme: “DECOLONISATION OF “MODERN MEDICAL SYSTEM” AND THE NEED TO MARCH TOWARDS PEOPLE-ORIENTED HOLISTIC SYSTEM”.

This is indeed a very wide canvas, but the situation demands a concise presentation due to paucity of time and the compelling circumstances of the Congress. In tune with this demand, we desire to present the subject concisely in Five parts. The first Part dealing with the Past, showcasing the Indigenous Systems of Medicine prevalent in India, prior to the advent of British Imperialism. In the Second Part, we deal with the imposition of an alien medical system under the nomenclature “Modern Medical System”, indeed a mask for the Western Allopathic System. In the Third Part – we deal with the imperative of decolonization of the so called “Modern Medical System” and in the Fourth Part, deal with the need for a People-Oriented holistic system of Medicine, which alone can be the panacea for the impending ills of colonization and a real deliverance from the clutches of corporate controlled “Modern Medical System”. In the fifth and concluding part, we desire to present a Blueprint for achieving this end, encompassing the ideology the strategy and the tactics.

To sum up, this paper though a short one, is designed to ignite a dialogue on the need for “a People-oriented holistic system” and when and how that could be achieved. Pardon us if the Paper has cryptic aspects. The compulsion of time and space drives us to be so and we assure you we have a whole design to achieve this laudable goal.

#### Part-I

Indigenous Systems of Medicine prevalent in India prior to the advent of the British Imperialism:

Before we probe into this aspect of the problem it is worthwhile noting the role of history in the process of societal development. It is said “The function of history is to promote a profounder understanding of both the past and the present through the interaction between them”.<sup>30</sup> This is a very important observation of the leading contemporary historian, E.H. Carr, in his famous work – “What is History”, which throws new light in enabling an appraisal of the role of history in the process of societal development. “Past and future, have both to be understood thoroughly in grasping the relevance of both in the

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<sup>30</sup> What is History: E.H. Carr, Vintage Books, NewYork, 1961-P.86

development of society”<sup>31</sup>. Poet Laureate and Jnana Peeth Awardee D.R. Bendre has said very caustically: “One who does not know history is a pure idiot”. So it cannot be forgotten that History acquires meaning and objectivity only when it established a coherent relation between the past and the future.<sup>32</sup>

It is keeping in mind that “Past, present and future are linked together in the endless chain of history”<sup>33</sup>, that we need to analyse the theme that has been presently chosen for this Memorial Lecture.

From this point of view let us probe into the indigenous systems of Medicine prevalent in India prior to the advent of British Imperialism. In this part we deal with the history of Ayurveda and Unani, in a concise manner.

The origins of Ayurveda have been traced back to around 5,000 BC, when they originated as an oral tradition. Some of the concepts of Ayurveda have been discovered since the times of Indus Valley Civilization. The first recorded forms of Ayurveda as medical texts are evolved from the Vedas. Ayurveda is a discipline of the Upaveda or “auxiliary knowledge” in Vedic Tradition. The origins of Ayurveda are also found in Atharvaveda, which contains 114 hymns and incantations described as “magical cures for disease”.

There are three principal early texts on Ayurveda which are, the Charka Samhita, the Sushruta Samhita and the Bhela Samhita. The Sushruta Samhita was based on original from the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and was updated by the Buddhist Scholar Nagarjuna in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century C.E. The Charaka Samhita, written by Charka, and the Bhela Samhita, attributed to Atreya Punarvasu, are also dated 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC. The Charaka Samhita was also updated by Pridhabala during the early centuries of the Common Era. The Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hsien (c.337-422 AD) wrote about the health care system of the Gupta Empire (320-550) and described the institutional approaches of Indian medicine. This is also visible in the works of Charaka, who describes about a hospital and how it should be equipped. The Arabic works derived from the Ayurvedic Texts eventually also reached Europe by the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. In Renaissance Italy, the Branca family of Sicily and Gaspare Taglia Cozzi (Bologna) were influenced by the Arabic reception of the Sushruta’s surgical techniques. British Physicians travelled to India to observe rhinoplasty being performed using native methods, and reports on Indian rhinoplasty were published in the Gentlemen’s Magazine in 1794. Instruments described in the Sushruta Samhita were further modified in Europe. Joseph Constantine

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<sup>31</sup> ibid P-

<sup>32</sup> ibid P-173

<sup>33</sup> ibid – P-179

Carpue studied Plastic Surgery methods in India for 20 years and in 1815, was able to perform the first major plastic surgery in the Western world, using the “Indian” method of nose reconstruction. In 1840 Bret published an article about this technique.

It is significant to note that Sushruta, in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, noted the relationship of malaria to mosquitoes and plague to the rats, knew of more than 700 medicinal plants and described more than 100 surgical instruments. He treated fractures, removed tumours and kidney stones and delivered babies by cesarian section.

During the period of Colonial British rule of India, the practice of Ayurveda was neglected by the British Indian Government, in favour of modern medicine.

Let us now try to understand about Unani system of Medicine.

In India, Unani System of Medicine, was introduced by Arabs and soon it took firm roots in the soil. When Mongols ravaged Persian and Central Asian cities like Shiraz, Tabrez and Galan, scholars and physicians of Unani Medicine fled to India. The Delhi Sultan, the Kilji's, the Tughlaq's and the Mughal Emperors provided state patronage to the scholars and even enrolled some as state employees and court physicians. During the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Unani Medicine had its hey-day in India.

During the British rule, Unani Medicine suffered a setback and its development hampered due to withdrawal of governmental patronage. It was mainly the Sharifi family of Delhi, the Azizi family in Lucknow and the Nizam of Hyderabad due to whose efforts Unani Medicine survived during the British Period. An outstanding Physician and scholar of Unani Medicine Hakim Ajmal Khan (1868-1927) championed the cause of the system in India.

This, in short, is the history of the rise and fall of Ayurveda and Unani in India, and these indigenous systems of Medicine were forced to decay under the British Rule in India, and with the rise of the British Rule in India, the “Modern Medical System”, under the nomenclature “Allopathy” became the dominant Medical System and the traditional systems of Medicine, Ayurveda (which has a history of more than Seven Thousand Years), and Unani, (which had a history of around Two Thousand Years), were trampled and allowed to go into oblivion.

With this short history of Ayurveda and Unani, let us proceed to the Second Part.

## Part-II

Imposition of an alien Medical System under the nomenclature “Modern Medical System”.

During the period of colonial British rule of India, the practice of Ayurveda was neglected by the British Indian Government, in favour of “modern medicine”. There is a need to elucidate this aspect taking into consideration three important concepts. The first is ideological, the second is an illustration of colonisation through colonisation of Education, and the Third, the results of British rule in India.

Karl Marx, the founder of Scientific Socialism, has said “Ruling ideas are the ideas of the Ruling Classes”. This is a Universal truth and what has been presented supra regarding indigenous Indian Medical Systems, prevalent earlier to the advent of British rule in India, also evidence this ideological formulation. Ayurveda prevailed from the Vedic period and ruled the roost from then through the rule of the various Dynasties and Monarchies, receiving their patronage and with the advent of the Muslim Rulers, when the patronage shifted from Ayurveda to Unani, came the prevalence of Unani in India. And with the advent of the British Rule, the neglect of both these indigenous systems and the patronage shifting to the so-called “modern medicine”, this alien system came to dominate the Indian scene. The colonisation of medical system can best be illustrated by presenting the way colonisation of Education took place in India. At this juncture, it is worthwhile noting an important observation of the noted historian Romilla Thapar, who distinguished the British conquest from the earlier conquests of India by the Muslim and other Rulers. She says – “The coming of the Europeans, and the Colonisation of India by Britain, was an altogether different experience. They came from distant lands, were physically different, spoke languages which were entirely alien and in which there had been no prior communication; their rituals, religion and customs were alien, their exploitation of land and labour exceeded that of the previous period, and above all they did not settle in India”<sup>34</sup>. This explains the rigour of colonisation by the British rulers, which was more intensive and much different, from the previous conquerors.

In this context, it is pertinent to refer to the “Minute by Macaulay, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1835”, which illustrates the imposition of English as a medium of instruction in higher education in India and finding the basis for the reforms introduced in the English Education Act of 1835. Macaulay, who was Secretary to the Board of Control under Lord Grey from 1832 till 1833, was appointed as the first Law Member of the Governor General’s Council. He

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<sup>34</sup> 5.Romilla Thapar “Cultural Pasts”, Oxford University Press, 2000, Ninth impression, 2010, P. 994]

came to India in 1834, serving the Supreme Council of India between 1834 and 1838, and was instrumental in creating the foundations of bilingual colonial India, by convincing the Governor-General to adopt English as the medium of instruction in Indian education, from the sixth year of schooling onwards, rather than Sanskrit or Persian. By doing so, Macaulay wanted to “educate people who cannot be at present educated by means of their mother tongue” and thus, by incorporating English, he sought to “enrich” the Indian languages so “that they could become vehicles for European Scientific, historical and literary expression”.

A few extracts from Macaulay’s 36 long paragraphs Minute, would reveal the total contempt Macaulay had for indigenous knowledge and scholarship and his stubbornness in getting English medium introduced in Indian higher education. Indeed he even threatened to resign, if his opinion was not accepted.

A few excerpts are reproduced here:

“All the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in Sanskrit Language is less valuable than what may be found in the most palpable abridgements used in primary schools in England ..... a single shelf of a good European library worth a whole native literature in India and Arabia”.

“..... English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class natives at the seats of Government ..... We shall see the strongest reason to think that, of all foreign tongues, the English is that which would be the most useful to our native subject”.

“..... It is said that Sanskrit and the Arabic are the languages in which the sacred books of a hundred millions of people are written, and that they are on that account entitled to peculiar encouragement ..... It is confirmed that a language is barren of useful knowledge. We are to teach it because it is fruitful of monstrous superstitious. We are to teach false history, false astronomy, false medicine”.

These are only very few excerpts from a 36 long Paragraphs which establish beyond doubt that Macaulay, through this Minute, adopted the policy of massacre of indigenous scholarship and imposed English in the natives over whom they were ruling and the entire exercise of Macaulay on designing English medium was to prepare a class among the natives to perpetrate British Imperialist Rule in India and to prepare “Macaulay’s Children” to enable colonization not only politically but also in all fields of knowledge including medicine.

It is useful to note the views of Ramachandra Guha on “Macaulay's Minute”. He said “The Minute is reviled by the natives, who think it condemned India and Indians to centuries of mental servitude .....”. It is also important to note the observation of Karl Marx about Macaulay, who referred to him “as a systematic falsifier of History”. Indeed Marx’s formulation had again got proved – “Ruling ideas are the ideas of the Ruling Classes”.

Before we conclude this part, let us also have a glimpse at Medical Education in British India.

Dr. B.M. Hegde, one of the leading lights in exposing the fallacies of “Modern Medicine” and “Medical Education in India”, in his Article entitled “Is the present Medical Education relevant to India’s needs?” states – “Medical Education in India has undergone very little change since its inception in 1851 by the East India Company in the three Medical Colleges in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta those days. .... Medical Education, in essence, has not changed a wee bit ..... we are still slaves of Western thought. .... Medical Education is in the hands of the powerful drug and technology barrens, we follow on their footsteps”.

It is important to note here the remark of Karl Marx on the impact of British Colonialism in India, He said: “The whole rule of Britain in India was swinish, ..... The profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilisation itself unveiled before our eyes, turning from its home, where it assumed, respectable forms, to the colonies, where it goes naked. .... This is a bleeding process with vengeance”.

To sum up we can say, that with the advent of British rule in India, people here were converted fully into slaves of Western thought, and colonisation of Medical Education and also Modern Medicine came to be the order of the day.

### Part-III

Now let us take up the Third Part of the presentation: “The imperative of decolonization of the so called “modern medicine” and “Medical Education”.

India is said to have become “independent” from 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, and we are now in the 70<sup>th</sup> year of the so-called “independence”. Why are these terms “so-called independence” used? The people of India are yet to realize that what happened on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, was just a “Transfer of Power” from the British Imperialists to the Indian Ruling Classes, the Bourgeois – Landlord Class who continued to rule under the clutches of the very British Imperialist system of governance, system of thought, system of education, system of medicine, medical education and what not. In a recently edited work entitled “Indian Constitution Unriddled” the authors (Sri S.G. Nadgir and Dr. K.S. Sharma)

have established with sufficient evidence that the “Constitution of India” promulgated on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950, is nothing but a cut-paste Document of the infamous “Govt. of India Act, 1935”, to the extent of 75% percent of those provisions bodily lifted, (with very few alterations) and the rest of it, “borrowed” from the Constitutions of USA, Australia, Ireland etc. While the Constitution of India mostly adopted the Westminster Model and continued the legacy of the British Parliamentary, Judiciary and Executive Systems, most of the laws made by the British Rulers continued to govern India. Indeed Post-Independent India, turned out to be a semi-colonial, semi-feudal rule, with the added element of American neo-imperialist hegemony.

In such a set-up, the British introduced “Modern Medicine” and “Medical Education” continued to rule the roost. The Question which “Medical System is Alternate” to which “other Medical System”? was itself not grasped. Should the Indian system of Ayurveda, with a tradition of more than Seven Thousand years, be called “Alternate Therapy” to the so called “modern medicine?” We know fully well that the first recorded attempts to study anatomy were made by Aristotle (384-22 BC), who was the founder of biological science. Even Hippocrates (460-374 B.C), the father of Medicine, found his place in Medical knowledge, only four thousand years after the founders of Ayurveda. If so, which system is the “Alternate”? Surely, “Modern Medicine” shall be “the Alternate Therapy” to “Ayurveda” “Unani” and “Naturopathy and Yoga” and not the other way round. It is only because of the dominance of British Colonial Rule in India, that “Modern Medicine” became the dominant Medical system, neglecting and suppressing the indigenous “Ayurveda” “Unani” and “Naturopathy and Yoga”.

Most unfortunately in the post-independent era, even after Seventy Years, we are yet under the “Mental Slavery” of the British, “a colonial mindset”, a slavery of the Western and the American Systems of not only Modern Medicine but also Medical Education, Governance and what not?

Before going into the next part of the presentation, let us dwell into the tremendous harm and the irreparable damage done by “Modern Medicine” and “Medical Education” to understand the need for “decolonization of both “Modern Medicine” and “Medical Education in India”.

This is a very vast area and only a few contours are presented here, leaving the rest for a detailed deliberation.

Firstly, it is for us to realise that 75 to 80 percent of all diseases in India are related to poverty, malnutrition, lack of proper sanitation and unsafe drinking water. Though, the Judiciary has declared that safe potable drinking water is a fundamental right and is part of right to life under Art 21 of the Constitution of



India, very little has been done to change these. While “Socialist and Democratic” systems are incorporated in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution, they are only precepts not meant to be realised but to be used to perpetually fool the innocent masses of the people. We have in India, even now, after 70 years of Independence, 75 percent of people living below the poverty line. The Human Development Index in India is far less than even tiny nations like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Even to this day, starvation deaths occur and “right to life”, the fundamental right, is only a mere declaration, with no chance of being realised. It is only a farcical declaration. Today, 10 crore Indians in 20 States in India are facing the threat of Fluorosis, which is one of the biggest health problems in India, while 7 Crore suffers from Diabetes. In India out of a total of 29 States, the ground water of 20 States is fluoride-affected. The total population of fluoride endemic 201 districts of India is 411 million (around 40 percent of Indian Population). What a tragedy? What a paradox? These problems of health and disease being system can only be solved by a change of the system, a change from the bourgeois-land lord system to a socialist system. Hence this is a larger problem relating to structural change.

Secondly, can the problems referred to above be solved by the health-care systems being introduced by the Corporates and “Modern Medicine”, which are notoriously known to be highly commercial and perpetrated with the object of super-exploitation? The plight of the poor, the working class and the middle class have worsened. The poor pregnant women, who is blackmailed and coerced to undergo cesarian, costing nearly one lakh rupees? All this is commerce. Indiscriminate and unwanted big business rackets, multi-nationals playing a major role in these health rackets. The big question is with these Corporate Medicare, have child mortality and maternal mortality reduced? It is a shameful situation that is prevalent in India today.

Secondly, “Modern Medicine” instead of curing diseases, has become a breeding ground for new diseases. Indeed “modern medicine” and its practitioners have been “manufacturers of diseases”. Just one such disease is the Thyroid problem. The labs to test this, the medicines for this disease and the specialised Hospitals to treat this problem are all under global monopoly and Indians become victims of such a “manufactured disease”!

Another example of this “manufactured disease” is “Heart Attack”, invented by the “Cardiac Crooks”. The “Outlook” in its Dec. 26, 2016, issue has exposed the huge racket, in its cover story “Heart for Mart Sake”. The Stent is a life-saver, that is all a patient knows. But for the doctor, “what often hangs in balance is a huge cut, bribes and vacation abroad”. This cover story is revealing and thoroughly exposes the massive racket behind angioplasty and the

Stent Industry. The following excerpt from “Outlook” gives a glimpse of this colossal scam.

“The Pass-Pass Scam”

“The cost of importing stents is estimated between Rs.10,000-15,000 per stent. The importer then sells it to the distributor at a profit of 100-120 percent. The distributor is responsible for providing stents to hospitals. These stents are sold at a further profit of about 120 percent. Hospitals buy each stent at anywhere between Rs.20,000-25,000. Distributors approach doctors and hospitals on behalf of companies and importers. Doctors who prescribe angioplasties to patients in general, earn a cut for every stent deployed. Bribes too come into play-both material and monetary. Patients are supplied these stents at prices ranging from Rs.50,000 to Rs.2 Lakhs, with a mark up of 300-700 percent. Needles angioplasties on patients give doctors higher cuts. Some hospitals force doctors to meet monthly quotas of angioplasty. Number of angioplasties done in 2015-16 were 4,20,000 (according to the Cardiologists Society of India) Estimates say four-fifth of these have been performed in Private Hospitals”.

“Outlook” also reports very fascinating details on this Scam. “80 percent of the Indian Stent Market controlled by foreign players”. “Medical devices worth Rs.21,000 Crores imported in 2014 and the market is growing 10 percent a year”.

What is paradoxical is that with all these Scams prevailing and enabling a day light robbery by the Multi-Nationals in collaboration with the speciality Hospitals, Doctors, dealers and others making a booty at the cost of the suffering patients. Governmental Machinery is yet to effectively move to check these mega scams.

“We find that a petition filed in the Delhi High Court has asked for fixing of the MRP on stents. The Pharma department has been given time till December 22 to respond, but this is yet to take a final shape”. “Outlook” suggests that “India may take a leaf out of China’s response; in the last couple of years, China has heavily fined leading multi-nationals for corrupt practices to promote sales”, and concludes its report by stating “..... The arteries of the system will remain clogged by muck, lining the pockets of cardiologists and hospitals, while emptying those of the patients – the final sufferers”.

In this regard, it is also necessary to study the article written by Dr. B.M. Hegde entitled – “Economics and Politics of Heart Surgeries”.

Nextly, it is desirable to draw the attention of people to the article entitled “Modern Medicine: A Trick or a Trade?” by Dr. Hegde who states – “One of the greatest dogmas in modern medicine is that drugs and surgical procedures

only cure illness. It is the immune system that really heals. He asserts – “If one wants to preserve his/her health intact he/she should avoid hospitals and doctors to the extent possible, but when one is ill, one needs to see a doctor without delay and be a partner in the management”. Without going into details we desire to invite your kind attention to a wonderful maxim he has coined – “while there is no pill for every ill, every pill has some ill following its use”. Dr. Hegde states in this Article – “Incidentally, doctors mistakes and unnecessary interventions have resulted in 1,00,000 deaths in the USA in one year of study”. He concludes this Article thus: “A strike by all the doctors in Israel recently where they attended to all emergencies that avoided routine work and elective interventions for three months, death rate and disability fell down remarkably, only to go up to the usual level after doctors came back to work”.

With this, we can conclude this part, by saying that perhaps no more needs to be said about the consequences and results of “Modern Medicine” and the effects of colonisation of medicine in India during British Rule and continued till date after 70 years of independence in India.

In this context, it is necessary to add a few observations on “Medical Education under British Rule” and how the same was continued even after independence in India.

It is necessary to cite the cover story of “Outlook” (Oct. 24, 2016 issue), entitled “Doctored Colleges” which carries an “investigation”, into Ghost Medical Colleges – without Hospitals, patients or faculty – offer dubious degrees to students who can spare a few millions”. There is a cover story, with the Headline – “Teaching Shops of Medicine: A rush for capitation fees and a policy muddle could be leaving us with a horde of doctors who have a degree but little medical education”.

Dr. B.M. Hegde says categorically in his Article – “Is the present Medical Education relevant to India’s Needs?” – “..... Medical Education today is totally irrelevant to our basic needs” and also states that “we are still in the business of aping the west”.

It is these and the other connected factors connected with the colonisation of the Modern Medicine and that of Medical Education that there is the imperative of decolonization of the so-called Modern Medical System and the System of Medical Education in India. Let us bid good-bye to the colonisation still continuing to rule Indian minds even after 70 years of independence.

Let the nation make a determined bid for decolonization of both the “Modern Medical System” imposed during British Colonial rule and the Medical Education System” introduced in India in 1857 during the days of the East India Company. At least now, let India pledge to get itself totally liberated

from the colonial mind-set which has its roots in British Imperialism and from the neo-colonial mind-set which has its roots in American neo-imperialism.

#### Part-IV

Now let us take up the Fourth Part of the presentation entitled – “Need for a People-Oriented holistic system of Medicine”. This is the need of the hour. Is it not paradoxical that a nation which has 75 percent of its population steeped below the poverty line, that we spend more than 3 lakh Crore Rupees on our “Defence” and much more paradoxically spend nearly 3 Lakh Crore Rupees on so called “health care” and more than 80 percent of this money gets siphoned off to Multi-National Corporations through the Drug Mafia, with which the comprador Hi-Tech Hospital Industry and the colluding Doctors work hand-in-glove. This system shall be given a total go-by and the search for a People-Oriented “New Medical System” and “New Medical Education” be begun. Colonial system and its components like Education, Medicine, Governance etc being anti-people and pro-rich, pro-ruling coterie, be decolonized. We have to design a people-oriented holistic system of New Medical System and New Medical Education. For this one has also to launch struggles for a structural transformation of society as a whole, and for ushering in a classless, exploitationless socialist society.

#### Part-V

To conclude this presentation, we desire to present “A Blue-Print for achieving this end encompassing the ideology, strategy and the tactics”. In this part we desire to present a ten Point programme, to enable the realisation of this goal.

1. Indigenous systems of Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Naturopathy, Homeopathy shall be renewed, verified, validated, modernised and whatever is unscientific, superstitious in these systems shall be rejected.
2. Integrate indigenous systems of medicine with what is best, scientific, in “Modern Medicine”, where it has achieved revolutionary leaps due to developments in Science and Technology.
3. 75 to 80 percent of all diseases in India are related to poverty, lack of proper sanitation, malnutrition, unsafe drinking water etc. If these ills have to be eliminated, it is only through struggles against ruling exploiting classes and by establishing a society of equality without exploitation ie. a socialist society that it is possible. A structural transformation will alone eliminate ills borne out of socio-economic-cultural ills of the bourgeois-landlord system.
4. In the name of modernization, aping the Western ways of life, has been the fashion and a passion. Fast and Junk Foods, cold drinks,

sedentary lifestyle etc have led to lifestyle diseases like obesity, diabetes, cholesterol, thyroid etc, which can be cured safely by lifestyle changes and drugless therapy, coupled with Yoga and Dietary practices. Modern Medicine for these diseases have been only multiplying diseases than curing them.

5. Food grains, cereals, vegetables, fruits grown by using chemical fertilisers, pesticides etc have been manufacturing “new diseases” and have to be remedied only by organic farming. This needs radical changes to be introduced in Farming Practices in order to produce safe food grains, cereals, vegetables, and fruits.
6. Reckless industrialisation leading to pollution of ground water and environment need to be tackled, as water polluted with Fluoride, Arsenic, lead etc have been leading to disastrous diseases. Similarly, pollution of the environment shall be tackled as this again manufactures diseases.
7. Modern Medicine, Hi-tech Hospitals, Corporate Drug Manufacturers, unscrupulous Doctors also turn agents of multi-national corporates for attraction of cuts and foreign Jaunts. They have multiplied the menace of Healthcare and these have to be remedied. The current slogan has been – “Long live diseases – diagnostics – Doctors-Corporate Medicine” – and this shall be eradicated.
8. The most important concept of “Prevention is better than cure” shall come into practice. To create this awareness education, propagation and promotion of a healthy lifestyle is necessary. This could save not only people but the country from the massive drain of money from this country to unscrupulous multi-national drug manufacturers and manufacturers of medical instruments and gadgets in foreign countries.
9. Rivalry between various systems of medicine shall be put an end to and a new integrated approach to be developed to enable each system to supplement and complement the other in order to cure the patient and not make him curse the unhealthy malpractices of competition and rivalry. To realise this, the entire Medicare and public health care shall be nationalised and taken over by the State. This alone can put an end to commercialization and all the existing malpractices in the Private Sector controlled Medicare System. India can take a leaf from China, which has along with Modern Medicine, renewed and developed the Chinese traditional medical systems like acupuncture and drugless therapy. There is a need to prioritise treatment procedures. The first and foremost priority shall be to prevention of diseases and better

health care measures to be followed by drugless therapy (naturopathy-yoga –diabetics) and as only a next resort drug therapy and that too placing priority to indigenous systems like Ayurveda, Unani, Homeopathy and as a last resort to Allopathy and the surgical methods. In this process the sophisticated scientific advanced technology in diagnostics shall be used, wherever and whenever necessary.

10. Last but not the least, is the dire need to totally decolonize medical education and to reformulate the entire system by developing a new medical education system to suit the Indian conditionalities. This is possible only when medical education is totally rid from the clutches of private sector and is totally taken over by the state sector. This alone can put an end to the scams and rackets of “Doctored Colleges” and the production of Doctors with degrees but with no real medical education. In India, 75 percent of the population is in rural areas and medical education does not expose its students to diseases of rural people. In this connection, Dr. B.M. Hegde’s incisive and highly relevant article – “Is the present Medical Education relevant to India’s needs?” is highly pertinent and needs a thorough study and implementation. The need of India is as rightly proposed by Dr. B.M. Hegde, a case of “Basic Doctors” to man our family medicine facilities in towns and villages, and the course of study shall be patient-centred and community-based. What we require is not “Repetitive research of the Western type” but “Refutative research to demolish many myths in medicine”.

Without going into details, enough to say, India needs to design its own New Medical Education, both at the Degree, Post-Graduate and Post-Doctoral levels to suit our objective conditions and our people, more so the poor suffering crores.

This ten point Blue-Print is only touching the periphery. We need to go deeper and deeper into details and finally develop “a people-oriented holistic system of new medicine”, and “a new medical education system” which will save this country and the people, who are now totally infested with the colonial mindset and a slavery to the West.

# SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF FLUOROSIS

Dr K S Sharma

Co-authors: K S Sharma & M. Bapuji\*

(A Presentation made at XL Indian Social Science Congress, Dec 19-23, 2016, University of Mysore, Mysuru, focused on PEOPLES HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN INDIA. It was widely appreciated as one focuses on a key problem faced by vast masses of India, neglected by all the (un-)concerned agencies. This is a slightly edited and modified version of that Paper. Presented by FMRRRC (Fluorosis Mitigation Research and Resource Centre), Founded under the leadership of Dr. KS Sharma, Hubli, Karnataka. Dr. M. Bapuji, co-author, is from Acharya BM Reddy College of Pharmacy, Bangalore, and Scientific Adviser, FMRRRC, Hubli. Two other papers of this Congress, one by Dr KS Sharma and another by Dr. BM Hegde, well-known to regular readers of countercurrents.org, were recently published by countercurrents.org. This is the third in the series.)

## Introduction

Fluoride (F) in water is a naturally-occurring ion as F is one of the most common elements of earth's crust. But Fluorosis (Fs), a disease caused by

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\* FMRRRC : Fluorosis Mitigation Research and Resource Centre, Hubli, Karnataka.

Co-authors : Dr. KS Sharma, Founding President, FMRRRC Hubli.

About Dr. M. Bapuji : Retd. Senior Scientist, CSIR 1973-2002 (30 yrs), with vast experience across disciplines. M.Bapuji, born 1948. Basically Ph.D in organic chemistry, he guided six to Ph.D in varied cross disciplinary subjects. Has 6 Patents; transferred 9 technologies to industry, stopped imports of some chemicals by import substitution. Discovered a 80km-long ridge reef off Odisha coast, reported about 140 sponges, corals etc for the first time from this reef. Established lab for microbes associated with sedentary fauna. Studied over 1200 microbes from this resource. General Secretary (3 yrs) and President (3 yrs) for All India CSIR Scientific Workers' Association (SWA) affiliated to the World Federation of Scientific Workers. Working on fluorosis voluntarily with FMRRRC for the past 4 years. Working on improvement of tribal schools, education, labs, faculty in W.Godavari dt(AP). Presently Visiting Prof and Research Adviser, Acharya BM Reddy College of Pharmacy, Bangalore, and Scientific Adviser, FMRRRC, Hubli.

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presence of F beyond permissible levels, has become a menace, a grave public health issue, only in recent decades. Today, officially Fs is identified as a problem in more than 14000 habitations of 230 Dts. in 20 states in India. It is estimated, variously, that upto 10 crore Indians are facing the threat of Fs, (classified as dental, skeletal and non-skeletal, ie., neuro-muscular etc types, even mental retardation in children), perhaps the single biggest health problem, compared with, say, more than 7 crore diabetics. There is panic created around diabetes, but least awareness about bigger menace of Fs. Why? It is the poorest, more so the rural poor, who toil in hot sun and hence consume more water, unprotected water, and they are all malnourished inviting all diseases including Fs, who are victims of Fs. mostly. There is no much money in Fs, as the Big Business sees it.

F is a dissolved salt in water and it does not cause any bad odour or color even when it is in excess; it is a slow poison causing harm unnoticed, when in excess (beyond 0.5ppm); simple filtration, boiling, using copper vessels, tulsi (basil) leaves etc help tackle certain pollutants but NOT F; within a habitation, Fl level in water varies from one source (Ex. well or lake) to another, and seasonally also, thus unpredictable; its deleterious effects are not uniform but variable, depending on various factors including poverty and malnutrition; and hence the difficulty. Damage is done by the time it is noticed and understood, unless monitored pro-actively. We are not presently going into S&T of Fluorosis about which lot of literature is available on the Net.

Swachh Bharat (Clean India ) has not focussed on swachh water

Drinking water contaminated by various pollutants is playing havoc with people's health in India. Swachh Bharat (Clean India ) has not focussed on Swachh water (safe potable drinking water) that is not available, strictly speaking, to 80-90 percent of Indian population. River Ganga and Varanasi represented by Prime Minister Modi are no exception in failing to meet this minimum requirement of safe water. Varanasi neighbourhood villages have several pollutants from F, Arsenic to mercury. The following picture, courtesy Outlookindia.com (weekly magazine), captures it all in a vivid manner. The situation has not changed basically for people there in the intervening period. Similar photos of men and women in their forties, crippled by F are available from so many states across India.

We now propose to touch a few Socio-Political and Economic Aspects of Fluorosis .

All 126 children surveyed by FMRRC-ABMRCP in two schools of Chitradurga Dt were affected by dental fluorosis.

Historical Aspects of Fluorosis



Fs has been identified in India as a problem for the first time in 1937 in Ongole (renamed Prakasam Dt.) tract of present-day Andhra Pradesh (AP), then part of Madras province of British India. Earliest research on health problems of Fs were recorded then. In times known for callousness of colonial Britain as in the case of Bengal famine, how come Fs was identified? There were no deep borewells, a major source known today, in those times. Did they introduce it, even if unwittingly, through their activities? It was a tobacco tract known to UK (ITC was a known major in the field) and Fs is a problem associated with tobacco also. The Europeans started a tobacco curing factory of the ITC Limited in 1923 in Chirala village (now a town) of this tobacco farming tract, and they had also a Health Resort there, its centre being Edward VII Coronation Memorial Hospital 1906, and later American-origin, Dr. Baer Missionary Hospital in 1912. Use of phosphate fertilisers and coal in tobacco-processing, besides geological reasons, is linked with Fs., a problem that came up as an industrial waste, as a by-product. Initially, phosphate fertiliser industry in USA spewed tonnes of waste that played havoc with environs there, destroying vast tracts of land and cattle. ....Then they found, rather invented, a use for it in dentistry and started selling it! Then there was waste from aluminium industry (which got a boost with wars) for which again a use was found by the West, notably USA, and the addition of fluoride in water and toothpastes started decades ago. "By 1950, ALCOA was in a new line of business: selling sodium fluoride to cities to put into their water supply. ALCOA was advertising the blessed purity of its sodium fluoride. Reality had been inverted, and a deadly industrial waste was forced down the American public's throat as "medicine." That reality remains inverted to this day." And this without conclusive evidence of their utility. (Fluoridation: A Horror Story By Wade Frazier . See <http://ahealedplanet.net/fluoride.htm> . ALCOA is a leading MNC in aluminium sector.) And our rulers were ready to inherit and import anything from Anglo-American imperialism.

Research was already going on in US on F, and it was being distorted to sell F. One can see and surmise about research in Ongole tract.

#### Political Economy of Fs

F under the earth did not become a big health problem as long as surface water, shallow and open wells were the main source of drinking water. It was since late sixties in India (green revolution begun then with the support of World Bank-US, and borewells arrived) — when borewells, pump sets and power to pump water, all of them promoted with state support and subsidies — that it gradually, and increasingly, turned into a health problem. From a few districts affected earlier, it went beyond 200 Indian districts. by 2010. It is to be noted

that 80-90 percent, varying as per region, of India's population, depends on groundwater for drinking, much of it without any processing for purification.

Along with green revolution, there developed more and more dependence on ever-deeper borewells, water efficiency in cropping being totally neglected. Many ground water sources in India are listed as sub-critical or critical, due to over-tapping by capital-intensive farming. Now there are borewells, upto 500 meters, or even 1000 meters deep as in Rajasthan, not for drinking water, but for irrigation. And Rajasthan today tops the list of Fs-ridden states, all of its 32 Dts being affected by Fs. Gujarat has it in 24 out of 25dts. Punjab has it in all of its 17dts. Same almost is the case of Telangana (TS), all of its 10 dts. being affected. AP is not lagging behind with only three (out of 13) dts. free from Fs. In Karnataka 20 dts. are affected. 18 Dts of Odisha, 12 of Haryana, 9 of Tamilnadu are endemic for Fs. UP had it in 18 dts., a Unicef report(cited by Times of India, January 2, 2004) says that 11.77 million people in the state are supposed to be having fluoride content in their blood, though later reports understate the problem there as confined to only 7 dts., including Varanasi represented by PM Modi now.

The Gangetic belt is shown to be relatively less affected by Fs, but has another menace, Arsenic in water. A recent paper states: "During our last 27 years of field survey in India, we have studied the magnitude of groundwater arsenic and fluoride contamination and its resulting health effects from numerous states. India is the worst groundwater fluoride- and arsenic-affected country in the world. Fluoride results (in) the most prevalent groundwater related diseases in India. Out of a total 29 states in India, groundwater of 20 states is fluoride-affected. Total population of fluoride endemic 201 districts of India is 411 million (40% of Indian population). In 6 states of the Ganga-Brahmaputra Plain (GB-Plain), 70.4 million people are potentially at risk from groundwater arsenic toxicity."

(<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0946672X16300712>)

We confine here only to Fs. It excludes chemical pollutants like lead, Arsenic and nitrates, ( these are often man-made, by excessive use of chemical fertilisers, reckless ways of industry etc) not to speak of uranium, and also excludes bacteriological contamination. If all kinds of impurities are taken, safe potable drinking water is a luxury for most of our population. And this water problem is behind 75 percent of all diseases in India.

After it was realised that Fs is a big problem in India, along with about 25 other countries, the question of sizing it up was taken up. WHO (World Health Organization) prescribed, early on, upto 1.5 ppm (ie., 1.5 mg per litre) as upper limit (earlier it was 3ppm). But for poor and tropical countries like India, where most people work in hot sun and drink more water, it is not the correct

parameter, as pointed out by experts like Dr. AK Susheela and Dr. D. Raja Reddy. A small poor African country like Senegal consistently raised it with WHO, and got it revised down to 1ppm for such countries...a rider was added accordingly, Dr. Susheela said. And she added: our administrators, and researchers too, still stick to the old guideline, “shamelessly”, she commented.( in the International Conference on Fs at NIN Hyderabad Nov9-11, 2016).

The ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research, a Govt. body) had prescribed 1ppm as upper limit long ago. Fluoride allowed in drinking water in India, as per Buro of Indian Standards, BIS-IS : 10500-2004 standards, is 1 ppm as a desirable limit. But various estimates by Govt agencies, and cited by NGOs, are still based on this parameter of 1.5ppm, thus grossly understating it. If ICMR criterion were to be adopted, the threatened population would be doubled. This denotes the callous and colonial mindset of our Govt and related institutions. The International Conference on Fs, NIN Hyd 2016 November, resolved that 0.5ppm should be taken as the upper limit, not 1.5ppm, for tropics like India. This is the level at which Fs is already appearing in vast masses of poor and toiling classes.

FMRRRC : How we got into this problem

When we from Karnataka State-Govt. Daily wage Employees Federation ( KSGDWEF Hubli, Karnataka), founded by Prof KS Sharma, were studying drinking water problem in rural Karnataka, three years ago — strictly speaking it was no problem of trade unions — we found in Chitradurga Dt., acute problem not only with respect to quantity but also quality of water. The Dt. was ridden with Fs. It is a drought-prone, backward, and neglected Dt. Then began our study of the problem. Our friend Dr. Bapuji, a Senior Scientist (Retd) of CSIR with two of his associate teachers of Acharya Pharmacy College in Bangalore, upon our request, went to a couple of villages there, and found that 120/120 school children they saw were affected with dental Fs, photographed them too. Then they went and saw the local PHCs, fairly good, but no doctor was available, and no awareness about how to tackle Fs. Then on, we found that awareness about Fs., even among doctors, was minimal. It is a problem affecting 6600 villages across 20 Dts of Karnataka (based on water quality data published by Karnataka Govt in 2014), we found to our horror, threatening at least 60 lakhs of people, or 10 percent of population of the state, obviously higher percent of people in rural Karnataka. This consolidated data was available, for the first time perhaps, thanks to Dr Bapuji who downloaded 45000 bits of data and consolidated and analysed it. No Govt agency or NGO did it before. But still doctors have no knowledge how to tackle it, and little concern.

A case of skeletal fluorosis from Pavagada Tq, Tumkur Dt : FMRRRC Survey

Dr.D. Raja Reddy, ex-Director NIMS Hyderabad, a pioneering researcher on the subject, told us : It is a disease of the poor man, more so rural poor, and hence the neglect. Ours is an organisation of poor, unorganised daily wagers, with about one lakh members, exploited – not by the private sector, but by the Govt. of Karnataka, supposed to be a model employer. We knew from experience how our state and central Govt neglect the poor. So we were drawn into this issue and set up FMRRC, Hubli. It is Fluorosis Mitigation Research and Resource Centre, set up more than three years ago, with Dr KS Sharma (daily wagers' leader) as Founding Chairman, and Dr. M. Bapuji as its Scientific Advisor. It is funded by none, neither Govt. nor any NGO. It is a purely a voluntary effort by a handful of concerned citizens, and we hoped to rely on our trade union base, about one lakh of them spread across, more or less, in all the districts, to take up the issue. Thus began our humble efforts on this gigantic issue.

On one occasion, in Sep 2014, we submitted a memorandum to Sri HK Patil, Karnataka Minister for Rural Development, coming from Gadag dt., itself acutely affected by Fs. The knowledgeable Minister was candid enough to openly tell us in a rally of 5000 workers: “ It is an important, massive problem. But any Govt., busy with pressure groups and powerful lobbies, can't and won't do anything on this issue unless there is mass movement on it from below”.

Thus we realised and began our work with a perspective plan of SEAM – Sensitise, Educate, Agitate and Mobilise. And an approach of short-, medium-, and long-term goals is needed. Unless we do all of this, simultaneously, we realised in the course of learning through practice, we cant even touch the fringe of this gigantic problem.

FMRRC and its work in brief :

We thus began our humble work . We prepared a detailed, well-researched, pamphlet in kannada, and distributed over 35000 copies, more so in about 10 districts hit by Fs. We conducted classes on it to several batches of workers covering a few hundred, introducing the subject neglected by the Govt and medical profession. We set up a small permanent exhibition in our Hubli campus, and displayed its mobile version in a few other places like colleges, seminars, and even during the last ISSA Congress at Mangalore University, shared it online to some and plan to do it more. We set up a small Lab to test water and tested, free of cost, a few hundred samples from different Dts., understood the problem, and advised some people. We conducted some field studies, as in Chitradurga, Tumkur Dt. (involving over 90 students and faculty from Acharya Pharmacy College, Bangalore), Yadgir and Gulbarga Dts. We held seminars etc in a few colleges, attended many meets held by others, including by Unicef and the International meet ( XXXIII Conference of the

International Society for Fluoride Research, Nov 9-11, 2016 at NIN Hyderabad), in and out of Karnataka, and contributed a little from our experiences. We interacted with some doctors, scientists, anganawadis, students and teachers, and we tried to stimulate thinking and research.

FMRRC: Pharmacy Professor explaining nutritional aspects of fluorosis to a family in Pavagada Tq.

In the course of our SEAM campaign, we promoted the issue to be covered in media in a big way, with half or full page features on Fs in Karnataka dailies. There was a 90-minute live panel discussion in TV9 Kannada where we (DR. KS Sharma) joined. We visited a few medical colleges, Dental colleges and Agriculture and Engineering colleges in Karnataka. We have a plan to utilise our Naturopathy Inst. at Hubli, Karnataka, to work on Fs.

Our Scientific Advisor, Dr. M. Bapuji, compiled a big library of 15000 pages only on Fs. at a time when medical text books have little on the subject. Many people, including notably Mrs. Leela Iyengar, helped in this. We plan to classify and make it available, online also. Some work was begun too. We are working with a few other experts, learning from them and also from groups on Fs., INREM among them being most important. We are in touch with FKAN (F Knowledge and Action Network , a pan- INDIAN BODY), as also with FAN – F Action Network (INTERNATIONAL BODY), exchanging notes and experiences. We were drawn into the problem of Fs in combination with other pollutants like Arsenic (Raichur and Yadgir Dts.), and with nitrates (blue baby syndrome) and uranium (Gogi area of Yadgir Dt) with its horrible and disastrous impact on people's health. We did some field studies there and felt the pain of the people.

We are in touch with groups in a few other countries and exchanging Info and experiences. Dr. Bapuji has been looking after these aspects. We are aware we did only a little, and have to do a lot. We can only be stimulating, the real agency to work being the various Governments.

Medical world: Not bothered about Fs ?

We met a few doctors and dentists, in different places, and found little awareness and less of concern. We met top officials of ICMR who did little work on this big problem. We enquired with several top corporate hospitals and diagnostic centres at Hyderabad and Bengaluru, whether they have any facility to diagnose (test F in urine and blood) and treat Fs. None had them! So it is elsewhere. They found as yet no business in Fs! Their ignorance and lack of concern were worse than those of Govt hospitals and doctors, we found to our utter dismay.

Why is it that there is little awareness, and even less concern, even among the medical profession? We learnt later that MBBS students had little in their textbooks ...they get one 5-marks question in five years, and who would bother? Prof BM Hegde, learned medical scientist, our current ISSA President here, once commented on this and told us: Our medical textbooks are copy-paste work from USA and UK , and it is no surprise. Then there was no entry on Fs in a voluminous medical encyclopaedia we referred initially. There are CME programs on so many diseases ( they have big sponsors) but none on Fs.

Those few doctors in the know said there is no treatment to Fs., particularly when skeletal, neuromuscular symptoms already appeared. UNICEF too said so, as in 1998-99. The Govt agencies, ie., where they were at least somewhat bothered about this problem , as in Nalgonda Dt. of erstwhile AP and now in TS (Telangana), published literature (posters, CDs, videos) that said there is no treatment... only prevention is possible IF , a big IF, safe drinking water is provided to one and all. And this was wrong as we found, through experiences and work at different places , as with work in MP by Inrem (led by Dr Sundar Rajan, and Dr Indu da), as also several papers published decades ago that it is possible to arrest, slow down, even reverse the disease and such symptoms too. We have living examples too. But the Govt agencies still go about with this outdated notion that it can't be treated. In the latest International Conference on Fs. held at NIN Hyderabad, one keynote paper that piloted the conference repeated this outworn belief. Thankfully, another paper in the same meet said treatment is possible if identified, by x-rays etc, early on. But both ideas had a peaceful co-existence, there was no interaction; neither questioned the other! And it was a gathering of top people on the subject!

We met a top Medical Research Head elsewhere who knew little on these things though he had very close people virtually crippled by Fluorosis. We found there is a China wall between science and society or even family. We met a Senior Prof of Community Medicine in a top medical college who was annoyed why we bothered about Fs, only one among so many diseases. Safe drinking water and a little of good nutrition is all that helps counter Fs., we told him, and if they are ensured, 75 percent of ALL DISEASES in India would be treated too. Thus Fs. is only a gateway to tackle the big challenges of public health. The Professor then saw the point.

In a situation where there was little on Fs in medical textbooks until a few years ago ( Dr. D. Raja Reddy wrote one such detailed chapter in recent years), thanks to a mass movement in Telangana, the AP govt introduced a four-page lesson on Fs in 8th class textbook, and also a short note question in Intermediate (plus two stage); and now in TS, Fs is included in the syllabus for competitive exams held by TSPSC for Group 1, 2 and 3 posts. Thus in AP and TS, millions of

students and teachers are now forced to read about Fs, a sure step that promotes at least awareness in a big way. But, alas, it is not yet similarly included elsewhere in India though it is a menace affecting more than 20 states and 10 crore people. Efforts should be made by all concerned to emulate TS, at least in this regard.

Only recently, Dr Jitendra Ingole, Professor of Internal Medicine, SKN Medical College, Pune, and Consultant, Fluorosis Foundation of India, Regional Center (West), presented a cogent and detailed paper (at NIN Hyderabad, 2016 November 9-11), held thanks to efforts by Dr. Arjun Khandare of NIN, ( our good friend, who has been working on Fs. with devotion for decades) on the need and how to introduce Fs in medical curriculum all over India, as we have been advocating in various fora including one convened by UNICEF at Hyderabad earlier, and teach through textbooks both at UG and PG level. We hope this Congress of ISSA would also do the needful in pursuing and realising the idea.

Fs and pain tablets :

We found that doctors and hospitals, where they bothered about Fs., prescribed NSAIDs, i.e., pain tablets, like Aceclofenac, Diclofenac, on a regular basis to tackle joint pains etc. We saw Govt hospitals in Karnataka as well as TS, for instance, dispensing them free of cost. We saw people buying these tablets from local Kirana shops too and consuming regularly to counter pains and to go to work in the farm. Prolonged use of these medicines causes kidney damage, and we saw hundreds of these cases piling up in villages. And kidney centres are thriving without rendering any guidance to patients regarding prevention. (Recently, after this Paper was presented, the AP govt acknowledged that more than 440 people died off, and thousands affected by, kidney problems in Prakasam Dt. due to high F in the area and people using NSAIDs aplenty. The Govt of AP announced it would open 20 more dialysis centres but was in no hurry to prevent it all by ensuring and stressing supply of safe water.)

When we told some doctors about this problem, some were modest enough to seek advice on what to do. We suggested good nutrition, explained in our pamphlet, mostly Ca, Mg (very crucial for F, but often ignored ), Vit D and C (well-known and recorded), proteins etc , better through locally available foods and menus (tamarind, drumstick leaves, banana stem and flower, horse gram; jowar, til and groundnut chikkies with jaggery etc are very useful) , but supplements also, wherever needed. But we found in our field study that a whole belt of PHCs in F-endemic areas of Hyderabad- Karnataka had no supply and no stock of Ca Mg etc for more than six months, but had plenty of pain tablets which they distributed free of cost! This is not uncommon. We briefly mentioned simple remedial steps (including measures while cooking)

in our pamphlets (English version also available, published earlier in countercurrents.org too). We advised a few anganawadis, teachers, kirana shops etc, besides doctors, on these aspects. We advised against using F- based toothpastes, gutkas, black tea etc. as part of preventive and remedial measures. All these things need to be institutionalised and spread widely. It is more a learning process for us.

### Toothpastes playing havoc

Toothpastes are spreading poison to every doorstep, with sachets priced as low as Rs.5. We indeed are at loggerheads with bigwigs of imperialism and MNCs who are pushing the idea that F indeed should be added, as in water in many states of USA, and in toothpastes across the world. It is claimed that fluoride in toothpastes counters dental caries. The whole dental education system promotes this idea despite little evidence, as repeatedly asserted, for decades now, by Dr. AK Susheela (ex-AIIMS, Delhi), dedicated researcher fighting against Fs. who submitted an affidavit to, and upon invitation by, the Supreme Court of USA against fluoridation. The FMRRRC field study had recorded both dental fluorosis and caries in the same mouth! Dr. Susheela was among the very few who consistently exposed, since decades ago, the health hazards of adding fluoride in toothpastes and fought against it. She reiterated it all recently at NIN Hyderabad. It was a result of, and counter to, that struggle that a warning is published on toothpaste tubes like :

*Not for use by children under 12 years of age, unless on advice of a dental professional or physician ...Keep out of reach of children. Contains maximum 1000 ppm of available fluoride when packed. ( This is on one brand of toothpaste.) Another variant prescribes: only 6 years age and use only a pea-sized quantity of toothpaste, do not swallow, and use under adult supervision ! This kind of warning appears on 90 percent of popular brands of toothpastes sold in India ( most of them made by MNCs), and they also contain 900-1000ppm, even children's brands contain it, and today, unlike in past decades, they reached vast masses of rural and poor customers also, making available even Rs.5 per sachet. Which child would use only a pea-sized quantity of paste, and which parent supervises this aspect as advised? Like they reached low-priced packs of coca-cola, pastes have a very wide reach.*

The serious damage this causes can be seen when we note that maximum Fluoride allowed in drinking water in India, as per BIS-IS: 10500-2004 Standards, is 1 ppm as a desirable limit. And these pastes have 900-1000ppm. Even a minute quantity of this paste, if consumed — as it is most likely to be, everyday, even by adults — even if inadvertently, contains more than 1ppm and causes perpetual harm over the years. Some Ayurvedic toothpaste are NOT ADDING, while some of them are adding F, emulating MNCs, as declared by them on the tube ) fluoride. We found very few users, not even 10 percent of



them, even among the English-educated, even among doctors, have noticed this warning, printed in small print innocuously. Now we see on packets of gutkas/pan masalas and cigarettes a much visible warning about cancer. This F. in toothpaste is no less harmful, even if not fatal, by causing chronic body-pains, stiffness in joints, crippling etc, and undermining productivity of the individual as well as society and the country. THE WORST DAMAGE IS, ADVERSELY AFFECTING MENTAL ABILITY OF CHILDREN, as many studies from US and China indicate! This continues despite 20 years of warnings by people like Dr Susheela. And no surprise we see arthritis, spondylitis etc., spreading across whole population, even by age 40-50. Nobody made a differential diagnosis, how far it is due to F. in drinking water and toothpaste. When we of FMRRC raised this question, in an online TV9 Kannada discussion on F problem , last year, (that went on for 90minutes), a panellist , a doctor from a big corporate hospital, was visibly amazed. This question itself never occurred to them.)

Is packaged, branded, water safe?

People from better-off strata and from metros, like Bengaluru and Hyderabad, believe, mistakenly, that they are safe because they are buying packaged water. Often 20 litre bottles are door-delivered. It is to be noted that all most all of these packaged waters are from underground water sources, most often drawn from deep borewells, given that they are tapping on a massive scale. Nobody knows if such water is tested for F which mostly it is not. The Govt of Karnataka told the High Court, in a related case in 2012 November, that 564 bottled-water companies out of 788 or so in the state are NOT as per BIS Certification, as required by Food Safety & Standards Act 2006; only 224 units have it; but even they don't declare that F is within safe limits. The situation remained the same in 2015 February when the case came up again and the Court pulled up the Govt. Same is the case with all over India. Union Minister for Food and PDS said on 14-2-2015 : BIS (Beuro of Indian standards) is developing standards , among other things, for promoting the use of available Indian standards on ...public supply of potable drinking water. These standards will be made mandatory in a phased manner.” (Economic Times 15-2-2015). Obviously not too soon. Then there are big brands of packaged water processed by 2-3 technologies. They are tested and found to be free from bacteria and harmful chemicals like F and arsenic. But most of them are too pure, and have removed even essential components. They don't retain what is essential for health like minimum levels required of TDS, hardness, alkalinity, Ca, Mg etc. They are more like sterilised water that is not meant for drinking! They are too clean to be nourishing. Such water when consumed over the years may cause problems related to muscle cramps, BP, diabetes, cardio-vascular problems etc., say experts. ( So a few brands entered and made business as

mineralized water! Thus even elite and middle classes are not safe. They should join the struggle for safe potable water for one and all.

In all these, we saw the divorce between science and society, between the Govt and people, between top institutions and people, between doctors and patients, all these much bigger diseases, a socio-political malaise, like the all-pervading unconcern, than Fluorosis itself.

Solutions: Right and wrong, RO

Conservation of rainwater and surface waters (like rivers, lakes etc) is the real, sustainable, most economic and viable solution for India with its huge population. There were many technologies tried over the years to tackle Fs by de-fluoridation of water. But every technology has its problems, moneywise and management-related, merits and demerits.

In recent times RO (Reverse Osmosis) systems, even at community-level, are being promoted as a panacea. RO lobbies are pushing for them. It is big commerce at public expense. We studied some related problems, also at ground level, and found RO is NOT AN APPROPRIATE Technology for F for various reasons: —

v F is a problem, more of drought-prone tracts, and the future is full of water shortages. RO involves wastage of water, Reject Water ranging from 50 to 75 percent of input water. So inappropriate!

v Where is Reject water thrown? In the same backyard. The Reject water with ever higher content of F goes down, to kick up the F level in that ground water source. Today's solution creating a bigger problem for tomorrow.

v Maintenance and replacement of consumables is too poor, more so in villages. There is no arrangement institutionalised for that. After a year or two, most of the RO plants are under disuse, and all public investment goes down the drain.

v With recurrent and regular power shortages, more so in rural India, nobody knows how far water is processed by RO before it is dispensed. A discerning young man in a village told us: F- Polluted water goes in and comes out unprocessed, and we believe it is safe!

v Rural people have no habit of buying water, even when they afford to buy when supplied at subsidised cost. They don't have ready cash in some seasons and at times and they don't buy water. People buy and drink RO water but use polluted water for cooking as they can't afford. More water goes inside thro' cooking.

v We found in some villages caste and untouchability are coming in the way of delivering water to one and all.

All said and done RO plants may be useful as only a short-term remedy pending real steps for conservation of rain and surface waters, the real solution. Priority must be given to drinking water, over needs of irrigation, when projects are devised and implemented. Now the reverse is in operation. F-endemic areas exist just nearby rivers, like Krishna, Godavari, Bhima, Ganga to cite examples.

Politico- legal aspects of Drinking water

We of FMRRRC Hubli sent a detailed, well-supported, petition, like a PIL, both in soft copy and by registered post, on F to NHRC almost two years ago, and we got not even an acknowledgement despite our reminders. We believe drinking water is a fundamental right derived from right to life. And Courts uphold it, but it is not enforced. But there is a need to SEAM (Sensitise, Educate, Agitate and Mobilise) on this issue. That is a campaign we have in mind.

Development goals we see, (and welcome!), Swachh Bharat reverberating everywhere in the media, with so many visuals on sanitation, but we find little about Swachh water. How can Swachh Bharat succeed without swachh drinking water? How can Development, MDG and GDP goals, and Make in India succeed when millions of people are crippled and their productivity is hit by F? We find many state Govts. across India, backed by Food Security Act and Centre's commitment on that, giving rice and wheat at Rs 1 or 2 per kg, welcome again. But almost nowhere is found a commitment to supply safe drinking water to every doorstep. (Except in Telangana, where there was a mass moment on Fs as part of a larger movement for separate state, where as a result of that movement, the new TRS govt made such a welcome commitment to fulfil by next elections, or it said: 'don't vote to us next time'. We have to see the reality!)

We call upon all people, all intellectuals, academics, medical professionals, and their bodies, and all public and private agencies,

v to pay utmost and urgent attention to fluorosis, as also all water-related diseases, and

v make concerted efforts to work for a Society, and a country free from Fluorosis. Let us work for safe, potable water as a Fundamental Right.

# AN INTERVIEW WITH ANAND PATWARDHAN

Vidya Bhushan Rawat\*

*For over 40 years Anand Patwardhan's documentary films have stood for freedom of expression. He faced censorship on numerous occasions, took the government to court, and won each time. Anand is not just a filmmaker but an activist in the cause of Indian democracy, clearly under threat today. In this candid conversation with Vidya Bhushan Rawat, Anand discusses his views on the challenges before us, and most importantly, how he perceives both Gandhi and Ambedkar as liberation theologians whose ideas are in danger of being revised by their enemies.*

VB: As a freedom lover secularist what is the difference between today's media and that which existed during the official Emergency in 1975.

AP: The Emergency of 1975 was visible to all. The world condemned it and in India, some brave newspapers protested with blank editorials. Within a fairly short time, a strong resistance movement grew. Today's Emergency is largely invisible to the masses because Indian media houses have been corporatized and these corporates, both Indian and foreign, are direct beneficiaries of an economic system that has been surreptitiously imposed on the country not just by the present regime but by forces that were already moving in the same direction but at a slower pace. We have sold our sovereignty to USA and the global corporates and people have been told that this is for our own good. The invisible Emergency of today depends on what Chomsky called "manufactured consent".

VB: Today we face the biggest challenge to Indian democracy since independence when our civil liberties are under the attack, when freedom of expression is under threat and when media is constructing the 'news'. Is 'free media' now the biggest threat to democracy?

AP: The media is free in the sense that it now has the freedom to tell lies about both, the domestic economy and about national security – lies that parrot an American-Israeli-Saudi axis which created, nurtured and unleashed Al Qaeda and ISIS on the one hand and pretended to "fight terror" on the other.

VB: You have documented major events not only of communal violence but also of violence against Dalits in Maharashtra. After the death of Rohit Vemula, in HCU, JNU and other campuses, students of all ideological frames – from the Left, to Ambedkarites and other Bahujan groups, joined in a common struggle

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against the ABVP and its attempt to vitiate the climate in the universities. Today that unity appears to be crumbling and we are again at the crossroads. Why ?

AP: The fault lies as much with the Left (of all shades) which is still unclear about how to destroy the caste system within, as with Dalit groups that fall prey to red-baiting and exclusivist identity politics. On one side are traditional Marxists who were brought up to think that caste is part of a superstructure that will automatically wither away when the economic base becomes socialist. On the other side are those who think that the caste of your birth alone forever determines how you think and how you act. Not only is such thinking contrary to the teachings of Dr. Ambedkar, it mirrors the mindset of the worst Manuvadis who believe that caste determines everything.

Luckily reality is proving both positions wrong. I believe that the Left and Dalits are natural allies so it is a matter of time before a genuine, long-lasting unity is forged. People like Govind Pansare, Kanhaiya Kumar and Jignesh Mevani have shown us that this unity is possible. Into this mix I would add progressive Gandhians – people like Narendra Dabholkar and Medha Patkar. Together these forces represent the politics of Reason that this country so desperately needs.

VB: Your film *Jai Bhim Comrade* was an extraordinary work which brought us back the memories of the struggle for justice of the people of Ramabai Nagar in Mumbai. You screened the film in various places. What were the reactions?

AP: The film as you know took 14 years to make. In the winter of 2011 we screened it in the open air in Dalit bastis across urban Maharashtra. We bought a powerful video projector, made a huge foldable cloth screen, and in each basti erected bamboo scaffolding to mount it on. As the screen was being erected, we played progressive film songs and Dalit movement songs to alert and attract the audience. Often the crowd would swell to well over a 1000 people. As we could not afford so many chairs, people sat on the ground or stood at the back and on the sides for the three-hour duration of the film. At the end of the screening we tried to organise a discussion but often instead of a back and forth question and answer session, people just grabbed the mike and poured their hearts out about what the film had meant to them. It was an overwhelming experience for me. Later I began to understand the reasons for this amazing response. Although in the bastis, little of the hardship shown in the film was unknown to people, the fact that the film presented its protagonists not as victims but as resisters, was a morale booster. The genre of music heard in the film was in danger of either dying out or getting commercialised, so the film, so full of these songs captured over decades, served as a valuable archive. Lastly, the politics of the film was appreciated, as it did not pull punches. It called to task not only sections of the

Left for not recognising the primacy of caste, but also Dalit leaders who were being lured by Manuvadi Hindutva to betray the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar.

Much later I began to show the film in colleges and schools and other middle class and elite circles. Here the response was enthusiastic but very different from that in the bastis. Even though people generally appreciated the film, almost invariably someone would ask about the evils of “reservations”. It was as if the audience had been blind and deaf to what they had just seen. After 3000 years where manual scavenging has been reserved for one caste alone and education has been forbidden, was it not time to reserve education seats for the dispossessed? In the end after long discussions, we agreed that reservations could be done away with only when the children of the rich and the children of the poor start going to the same schools – from the primary to the college level. Such prolonged inter-caste, inter-class contact could also open the door for inter-caste marriages. Many generations of such mixed marriages could finally end the caste system. This sounds idealistic but in my view this is the only way to finally end caste – when bloodlines become so mixed that no one can clearly say what caste they come from.

VB: Do you think that as secular activists we have not been able to communicate to common people in the language they understand or have failed to use the great secular legacy of India which was radical and rational as well?

AP: In general this is true but in particular some people are genuinely trying to address this. Of course the task is huge and we are up against a fascist force in the Brahminist RSS that has created a hydra-headed, cadre-based organisation that indoctrinates people in the name of cultural and religious pride, as well as today, of fake nationalism. In the early days they attracted mainly Brahmins. Today they are drawing in all castes and tribes that can be mobilised against their stated three enemies – Muslims, Christians and Communists. Religious culture and right wing politics is a potent combination and we rationalists have so far failed to match the organisational genius that runs this fascist machine.

VB: This government has been in hyperactive mode to keep people busy but if we analyse their actions we find clear attempts to divide people and polarise the debate. It started with their favourite topics like ‘Gaay’, Ganga, Rastrawaad, beef, Jana Gana Mana and then to Kashmir. Things went horribly wrong in Kashmir and the last part was a surgical strike but that too was questioned. Then came demonetization which hurt the poorest of the poor but was dressed up to look like an attack on “black money” and the rich. Each act is commonly linked, in my opinion, to privatising our national resources and creating business for crony capital.

AP: Yes there is a clear strategy. Nothing in the Hindutva Parivar happens ad hoc or without central planning. At the same time perhaps Modi and Amit Shah have surprised even their own cadre by their willingness to be brutal and dishonest. Demonetization is an example. Even the direct beneficiaries, like the crony capitalists who emptied the banks and refused to pay back their loans, must have been surprised at how the poor were squeezed to fill the bank coffers up again and then sold the idea that this was a strike on the unscrupulous rich. Even when all the “black money” came back into the banks and became white money, no question was raised while thousands of jobs were lost across the nation. It may be the undoing of Modi in the long run but in the short term, he is still fooling most of the people most of the time.

VB: Communalism or I would call it Brahminism has joined hands with capitalism here but the resistance too is stronger. Unfortunately, political parties are unable to join hands with their egos and brinkmanship for votes. Will people’s pressure bring them together?

AP: At the moment there is no visible peoples’ pressure. There is visible suffering but the anger is not yet visible. Let us see if it manifests later.

VB: Do you feel that the Indian way of secularism i.e. equal respect to all religions, or what we call Sarva Dharma Samabhava is damaging the cause of social change as it allows religious dogmatics to hijack the leadership of different communities? There is a virtual competition between the religious right taking place in the polity thereby denying common persons of all communities the means to counter them. How do we respond to it?

AP: All over the world rationalists have found that religion that has existed for centuries is hard to stamp out and some form of co-existence is the norm in most secular countries. After the Soviet Revolution, St. Petersburg became Leningrad but in 1991 it became St. Petersburg again.

In India, both Gandhi and Ambedkar recognised that this country was so steeped in the idiom of religion that atheism or pure rationality would not be easily accepted by the masses. I consider Gandhi and Ambedkar, each in their own right, to be liberation theologians. Of course, Gandhi unlike Ambedkar, did not choose his own religion, he inherited it. But to whatever he inherited, he applied post-Enlightenment ethical values that were essentially modern. When he began to do manual scavenging and began to advocate this (even force it) on to his followers, he actually destroyed the very basis of the Pollution/Purity dichotomy that is at the heart of the caste system. Theoretically he for a long time infamously clung to the concept of Varnashram Dharma, but in actual deed he destroyed it the day he took up manual scavenging, a job that had been hitherto reserved for the so-called ‘untouchables’. As time went on Gandhi

became ever more radical. He clearly learned from Dr. Ambedkar as well as from his own intuitive understanding of the world he was witnessing. For instance, towards the latter stages of his life, Gandhi refused to attend any marriage that was not an inter-caste marriage. By the end of his life, he had fashioned out of his inherited Hinduism, something entirely new. Only the idiom remained, and not the original hierarchical Sanatan Dharma. Whether his reluctance to discard the idiom was a practical decision that stemmed from a desire to remain in touch with the vast Indian masses in a language they could easily follow, or from his own inner belief system, is something that can be debated, but is of no great interest to me. What is unmistakable is that Gandhi's ethical code bears little resemblance to the hierarchical and vengeful structure of traditional Hinduism.

Dr. Ambedkar in some ways was more fortunate than Gandhi in that he clearly saw how oppressive the religion of his birth was, being as he was, a direct victim of it. So he discarded it and searched for the best alternative to it. After examining many religions he finally chose the religion that was closest to Reason. Buddhism is the one world religion that does not posit an external, all-knowing God. However it has a very strong ethical core that Dr. Ambedkar highlighted. At the same time he discarded irrational and unprovable Buddhist tenets like Reincarnation that many traditional Buddhists ardently follow. This is why I see both Ambedkar and Gandhi as liberation theologians. In the same way that Left wing priests like Ernesto Cardinale in Latin America, a minister in Nicaragua's revolutionary Sandinista government, re-interpreted Jesus Christ as a revolutionary who fought and died for justice to the poor and powerless, Gandhi and Ambedkar gave new ethical meaning to the religions they adopted and adapted.

Make no mistake that I am equating the two. Their differences are obvious. One came from a privileged caste, the other from the most oppressed. One was educated in a limited sense and steeped in traditional religion in his formative years while the other came from a caste denied the right to education and rose to become the best-read and easily the greatest intellectual of modern India. I am not at all blind to the things about Gandhi that are paradoxical and irrational like his life-long demonization of sexuality. Gandhi's insistence on chastity puts him in the same irrational, patriarchal boat as the priests and monks and nuns of many world religions. To examine this aspect in depth would take a whole chapter. And yet this same sex-denying man, by introducing the Charkha as a weapon of non-violent resistance, brought thousands of women into the mainstream of the Indian freedom movement.

I realise that I have let my stream of consciousness diverge from your original question. To get back to the issue about whether Sarva Dharma Samabhava can



take the place of constitutionally guaranteed secular democratic rights, I think it cannot. We need Dr. Ambedkar's Constitution much more than we need holy books. And yet as many in our country are still hooked to holy books and unholy pretenders, we need liberation theologians who can help people to culturally discard the worst features of their inherited religious culture and replace these with ethical, just and non-exclusivist interpretations.

Waiting for everyone to become atheist or rationalist may take centuries. Ethics is the answer. Small wonder that Ambedkar and Gandhi, each in their own way, arrived at individual definitions of Ahimsa.

VB: In post-Mandal India communities are seeking their space in the polity. In the earlier phase of secularism the Indian elite always kept the marginalised communities like Dalits, OBCs, Muslims outside the gates of their decision making bodies and public platforms but things are changing now. Very unfortunately more than the seculars it is the communalists who are jumping into identity politics and social engineering. Meanwhile, communist parties still retain their upper caste leadership. Will we be able to face the challenge in such a way?

AP: Actually identity politics is a double-edged weapon. As long as oppression of identifiable groups exists, it is perfectly legitimate for oppressed groups to unite according to their identity. "Black is beautiful" was a necessary movement for Afro-Americans in the USA, just as pride in Dalit or Buddhist identity is necessary in India. The trouble begins when this turns into an exclusivist or separatist movement. Malcolm X went through a Black Muslim phase when he described all white people as "devils". But in the latter stages of his life he completely rejected this theory for a much more inclusive critique of injustice and inequality. That is when the American deep State killed him. Similarly, while a broad section of Dalits are inclusive and fully understand the distinction Dr. Ambedkar made between the ideology of Brahminism and individuals who happen to be born into one or the other "upper" castes, there is a tiny section of separatist Dalits today who see birth as the sole determining factor. The fact that Western post-modern academia encourages such identity politics in preference to class analysis has given this form of separatist politics international acceptance. Meanwhile in India Manuvadi forces feel obvious glee when Dalits attack the Left or Gandhi, as both have long been the enemies of Hindutva.

VB: Hindutva people are expert in appropriating icons who are secular. They used Ambedkar, Bhagat Singh, Vivekananda, Subhash Chandra Bose, Sri Narayan Guru etc for their purposes. Is this because an overdose of Gandhi and Nehru's role in our freedom struggle minimised all other icons that a kind of resentment began against Nehru and Gandhi?

AP: Frankly I am not a fan of Subhash Chandra Bose. I cannot swallow his alliance with Hitler and Hirohito. Freedom could not be wrested at such a cost. Vivekanand is also very troubling because he advocated a kind of machismo that I think is deeply problematic. Also what is little known about him is that he was deeply casteist. In fact he seems perfectly suited as a BJP icon. The resentment against Gandhi lies at the heart of the project of Hindutva which is why they killed him first and then attempted to appropriate his glasses and broomstick later. Nehru is hated because his development paradigm goes against the grain of privatisation. Ambedkar they do not dare criticise openly these days so the only option is to use his image, minus any content.

VB: Your uncle Achyut Patwardhan was an icon of the socialist movement in India. We heard a lot about his relationship with Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar. Was there any influence of him on your socio-political thoughts?

AP: Achyutkaka and Aruna Asaf Ali, according to British records, were amongst the most wanted underground leaders of 1942. He ran the underground radio and was a master of disguise amongst other things but in later years he ensured that history erased him. You hardly hear or read about him anywhere because soon after Independence he became disillusioned with mainstream politics. He did educational and social work but he would never discuss the past, even with me. He felt it had all been mostly an illusion. His elder brother, Purshottam (Rao kaka to me) was also a freedom fighter and spent over 10 years in British jails. In the 1930's while he was making an anti-communal speech, Madanlal Pahwa tried to assassinate him but was caught. Rao kaka who was a Gandhian socialist, refused to file charges and Pahwa was let off. Later this same Pahwa threw a bomb at Gandhi and was part of the conspiracy that finally killed him.

To answer your next question, it is true that in the decade of the 1930's Dr. Ambedkar spent several months living, writing and studying at our family farm home in Ahmednagar, but this again is a chapter of history that has been irretrievably lost. Rao kaka like Achyut left active politics after Independence and both, by their own choice, were written out of history. I have heard that Dr. Ambedkar and Achyutkaka were friends and met when Achyutkaka was underground, but I have no documents about this. What I do know is that my family opposed the caste system and many married outside their own caste, including my parents.

VB: You have always tried to bring together not only left and Ambedkarites but also what you call 'Progressive Gandhians'. Why are you using this term? You have been critical of people who as you say 'blow out of proportion' the differences between Gandhi and Ambedkar. Many of the Ambedkarites feel it quite disturbing?

AP: I must speak the truth as I see it. I have always felt that the affinities between Gandhi and Ambedkar are greater than their differences. They were both egalitarian humanists at heart. It may not win me any popularity contest today but I think those who are ready to set prejudice aside and undertake a proper historical study will come around to this point of view. Take the act of “Satyagraha”, a term coined by Gandhi. Ambedkar used this very term and form of struggle to launch his Mahad Satyagraha to claim drinking water rights. There are many other examples of common ideas and action. I was pleasantly shocked to read what Dr. Ambedkar had to say in 1932 immediately after concluding the now infamous Poona Pact (where the idea of separate electorates for Dalits was abandoned in favour of reserved seats for Dalits). Popular theory is that Ambedkar was blackmailed by Gandhi’s fast-unto-death into accepting a bitter compromise. But Ambedkar’s statement in 1932 after signing the pact was totally different in tone. He had high praise for Gandhi and stated that the “Mahatma” (yes, contrary to popular belief, Ambedkar referred to Gandhi as “Mahatma” at this point in time) offered a much better deal for Dalits in terms of reserved seats than Ambedkar himself had asked or hoped for. There is no denying however that Ambedkar *did* get disgusted with the Congress in later years. How much of the blame for the failures of Congress are attributable to Gandhi is a matter of discussion and debate. We know that Gandhi’s writ did not work in preventing Partition or the bloodshed that preceded and followed it and that Gandhi did not attend the Independence Day flag hoisting at the Red Fort in Delhi. He was busy fighting the communal inferno in the countryside.

Gandhi had a lot of obscurantist ideas to start with but as time went on he was honest enough to keep evolving. In the end, I see him as a great humanist who died for his belief in non-violence and religious universality. He was also an inventive anti-Imperialist (though in his earlier days he had supported the British Empire) and an organic naturalist that today’s madly consumerist, globally warmed world desperately needs. Are most of today’s Gandhians like that? Of course not. That is why I used the term ‘progressive Gandhians’. It describes dedicated non-violent fighters like Medha Patkar, Narendra Dabholkar, the whole Baba Amte family, Sandeep Pande, S.P Udaykumar, Teesta Setalvad, Aruna Roy, Admiral Ramdas, and so many others. It certainly *does not* include government-fed Gandhians and those Gandhians who jump onto the Hindutva bandwagon as soon as it gathers steam.

Today I believe that all humanists, rationalists and fighters for social and economic justice must unite to fight the usurpers of our democracy and our history.

# AMBEDKAR, NATIONALISM AND THE EMERGING CRISES IN INDIA

Binu Mathew\*

*Today is Ambedkar Jayanti. It would be appropriate to take a re-look at Ambedkar's idea of nationalism in the face of virulent Hindutva nationalism in India and also on the global context*

Ambedkar Jayanti or Bhim Jayanti, the birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar, is being celebrated across the country today. B R Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Constitution of India, was born to a Mahar (dalit) caste family on 14 April 1891 in Mhow. Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar fought against casteism throughout his life. In 1956, he converted to Buddhism.

When Hindutva nationalism is gaining supremacy in India and threatening the very foundation of the Constitution of India, it would be appropriate to look at what was Ambedkar's idea of Nationalism and how it is being undermined today.

Here are five photographs from diverse geographical, sociological, political, economic and environmental dimensions.



Cow vigilante gangs killed two in Jharkhand, in March 2016, for transporting cattle.

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Cattle traders being beaten up in Una, Gujarat in July 2016

## Dalit nominee sits on floor, carries own cup

MP's Son Fighting On BJP Ticket In Jat-Dominated Reserved Seat Says He Accepts Casteism

Alia.Sharma@timesgroup.com

Igias (Hatharas): A dalit BJP candidate here not only sits on the floor when he goes canvassing to the homes of upper-caste voters, he never forgets to carry a steel glass along to drink tea. Here's why: A dalit using a cup at an upper-caste home would incur the untold "ignamir". This is an age when ending casteism is the stated mission of all parties.

Amir Shah, national president of the party Rajvir Diler represents, recently participated in a sit-down

with the Uttar Pradesh government to drive home his party's social-equality message. It's not difficult to understand why Diler, BJP

nominee from Igias, is averse to breaking the caste shackles, unlike fellow dalits elsewhere. Igias is a reserved seat a three-hour ride from Delhi, less than 300km away.

It is dominated by Jat voters, about 90,000 of them. They decide the winner. So while other dalit candidates here, too, show respect to upper caste voters, he takes things to the extreme. Diler calls his ways of sitting

on the floor and using his own glass his "sam-

prangar sutar" (em-

ployed) in

the

at every

the

in his late 40s, repeatedly

touches the feet of Mahan

Singh, Jat

from



**GROUND REALITY** Diler on the floor at a campaign stop

Techbharat, who is years younger to him. "Main uske pair pedhai karu, mujhe meri

amir in Igias. Main ek

ke chakkar ke baad chakkar

ke, ek hi baar (I beg of

you, please tell me my fault).

I'd rather be a watchman than

**"I am the son of a Valmiki. I cannot break away from tradition. Let the world change, I won't"**

Diler is candid in justifying his desire to remain shackled in casteism. "Main ek

ke chakkar ke baad chakkar

ke, ek hi baar (I beg of

you, please tell me my fault).

I'd rather be a watchman than

an MIA if you are angry with me," he

rehears Mohan. But

the

ke chakkar ke baad chakkar

ke, ek hi baar (I beg of

you, please tell me my fault).

I'd rather be a watchman than

asked if it is true that he doesn't drink tea in cups provided by the upper castes.

Valmiki is the lowest among dalits in the caste hierarchy and Diler inherited the so-called tradition from his father Kishan Lal, five-

term MIA and one-time MP. Diler's supporters say people of all castes love him for his desire to remain steeped in discriminatory casteist practices.

The caste hierarchy is evident in the black Dalit Diler uses. While he sits with the driver in the front seat, the most comfortable middle seats go to Jagdish Prasad, a

Behravin, and Kishan Chandhary, a Jat. In the two cramped

last row seats are Amir Valmiki and Mahesh Kumar

Daglish, who also belongs to a

"most backward caste".

He pulls out his steel

glass from his pocket when

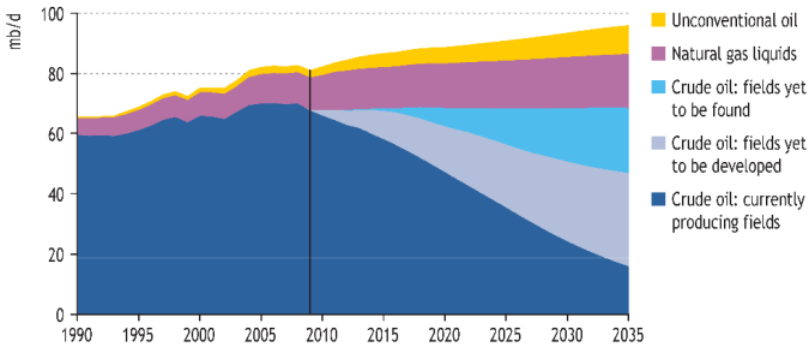


This is the photograph of Rajvir Diler belonging to Valmiki community and fighting on BJP ticket from one of the constituency in Hatharas, in the recently held Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections. To get the big Jat votes which are decisive in his constituency so he did not enter the houses of the Jats and kept a glass with him to drink tea. He won the election.



This is photograph of Larsen C ice shelf. An 18 feet wide, 130-km-long crack has developed in this ice shelf making it's break off imminent. When, the iceberg splits, it will create one of the largest icebergs ever recorded measuring 5,000 sq km.

#### World oil production by type in the New Policies Scenario



This is a famous graph from The World Energy Outlook Report, 2010 published by International Energy Agency (IEA) that startlingly revealed that world conventional oil production peaked in 2006.

These photographs are taken from diverse geographical, sociological, political, economic and environmental dimensions. You may wonder why are these photographs shown? But they are all connected. This article is an effort to point out how all these diverse issues are intimately connected and can even define Indian nationalism and even the fate of India.

Let's take the first of these three photographs first and ask the question, Why India came to such a situation 68 years after India became a republic? Lynching for transporting cattle or eating beef? A candidate has to sit on the floor to beg for votes? Why?

My answer is that Indian democracy hasn't matured enough to give, a life of dignity to, majority of its citizens. On the other hand it is taking away whatever dignity they have gained through the spread of virulent fascist Hindutva ideology.

How did this happen?

Dr Ambedkar in his treatise "Pakistan or The Partition of India" In Chapter VII, titled – Hindu Alternative to Pakistan – clearly expresses his opinions on Nationalism:

"Without social union, political unity is difficult to be achieved. If achieved, it would be as precarious as a summer sapling, liable to be uprooted by the gust of a hostile wind. With mere political unity, India may be a State. But to be a State is not to be a nation, and a State, which is not a nation, has small prospects of survival in the struggle for existence. This is especially true where nationalism—the most dynamic force of modern times—is seeking everywhere to free itself by the destruction and disruption of all mixed states. The danger to a mixed and composite state, therefore, lies not so much in external aggression as in the internal resurgence of nationalities which are fragmented, entrapped, suppressed and held against their will. "

In Simple terms what Ambedkar says is this, without social cohesion a nation or a state is not possible. The greatest threat to a mixed state comes not from external aggression but from the inside.

Let's take the first question first, has India ever achieved social cohesion? If not why?

If it was achieved I would not have to present these horrific photographs.

The question arises WHY?

Some history.

The British found it convenient to co-opt the Brahminical castes to establish their rule of India. The Brahminical castes were willing partners in this process and they were great beneficiaries of this system too. Most of the jobs were given to Brahmins or upper castes, land was controlled by the Brahminical. It is in this historical context Indian National Congress was founded and most of the leaders were from Brahminical castes too. Periyar and many other Dalit Bahujan leaders soon discovered this asymmetrical power equation and left it in

disillusionment. Ambedkar, on the other hand, challenged the Brahmanical power structure of the Congress head on.

This Brahmanical politics of Congress is most pronounced in Gandhi.

Gandhi wrote,

“Caste has nothing to do with religion...it is harmful to both spiritual and natural growth. Varna and Ashrama are institutions which have nothing to do with castes. The law of Varna teaches us that, we have each one of us to earn our bread by following the ancestral calling.... The calling of a Brahman and of a scavenger are equal and their due performance carries equal merit before God and at one time seems to have carried identical reward before man.”

How well it rings with PM Modi’s statement

“Valmiki do manual scavenging for spiritual fulfilment.”

It is quite clear that there is not much difference between Gandhi and Modi in their attitude towards casteism.

Now coming to the other stalwart of Congress Jawaharlal Nehru, he wrote,

“In the ages since the Aryans had come down to, what they called Aryawarta or Bharatwarsha, the problem that faced India was to produce, a synthesis between this new race and culture and the old race and civilisation of the land. To that, mind of India devoted itself, and it produced an enduring solution, built on the strong foundations of a joint Indo-Aryan culture. Other foreign elements came and were absorbed....That mixture of, religion and philosophy, history and tradition, custom and social structure, which in its wide fold included almost every aspect of India and which might be called Brahmanism or (to use the later word) Hinduism, became THE SYMBOL OF NATIONALISM. It was indeed A NATIONAL RELIGION, with its appeal to all those deep instincts, racial and cultural which form the basis, everywhere of NATIONALISM today”

This statement makes it amply clear that the Nationalism of Congress was Brahmanical or Hindu nationalism.

It would be interesting to see what was Nehru’s position on reservation. While Nehru condemned caste wholeheartedly, he disliked the idea of any intrusion of caste into politics; he thought that demands such as reservation raised by non-brahmin and Dalit groups were divisive and tried to ignore them.

It is amply clear that the Nationalism professed by Congress was Brahminical in character and functionally anti Dalit- Bahun and against social justice through reservation.



Almost all cow protection laws in 24 out of 29 states in India were passed by Congress governments or its splint offs. What was the urgency of passing these laws in all these states since cow protection was only included in the directive principles of the constitution while many other urgent issues like Right To Education took decades to be passed into law and many other important directive principles still remains untouched. Of the six states where anti-religious conversion laws were enacted, in three states the law was enacted by Congress and its spin-offs. In Himachal Pradesh directly by a Congress government!

We can see that Indian nationalism from the freedom struggle itself was Brahmanical Nationalism and post independence the nationalism professed by Congress and its spin off parties too was Brahmanical in nature.

This tells the story of Cow vigilante gang lynching in the name of beef, of Dadri, of the Dalit MLA who sits on the floor of the upper caste to beg for vote.

BJP is only reaping what Congress had sown. Hindutva forces are taking Brahmanical nationalism to its logical conclusion.

As Ambedkar predicted, 77 years of political freedom has not brought social union or cohesion in India. In all these decades what we have seen is covert and overt Brahmanism pretending as nationalism. For Ambedkar Nation was not this narrow and oppressive Brahmanical hegemony, but a rainbow unity of all Dalit- Bahujan and minorities. This unity was not achieved in this March of Brahmanical hegemony. These fault lines of nationalism became wider after the Mandal Commission report was implemented, which gave some sort of social justice to the backward classes. This unleashed the fury of the Brahmanical classes and exploded as the Ayodhya movement and resulting in the eventual destruction of Babri Masjid. This propelled Hindutva forces to the centre stage of Indian politics sidelining the soft Brahmanism of Congress replacing it with militant Brahmanism.

Decades of soft Brahmanism played out in India by Congress, has delivered the Indian nation that Ambedkar envisaged on a platter to the militant Hindutva Brahmanists.

Now let's come to the second part of Ambedkar's statement,

“The danger to a mixed and composite state, therefore, lies not so much in external aggression as in the internal resurgence of nationalities which are fragmented, entrapped, suppressed and held against their will.”

Let's examine this statement from a global perspective.

Countercurrents calls our age “ A Titanic Moment in history”. Here Titanic is a powerful metaphor. When The Titanic hit the iceberg, except the captain and some of his close associates all the other passengers on board, didn't know what had happened. The passengers on the ship continued to eat, drink and make merry. When they knew what had happened it was too late. That's the fate of humanity today. 99 % of scientific community is warning us of coming calamity and the public at large is not taking heed. Unlike the passengers of The Titanic we can not complain that we weren't forewarned.

Everybody knows about global warming and climate change, but very few in India has woken up to the dangers of climate change, especially our policy makers and political leaders.

When Countercurrents started in 2002 the level of Carbon Dioxide in the atmosphere was 372 ppm. Last year it has touched 400 ppm and now it has become the new normal.

On April 20, 2016, Scientific American headlined “Earth Flirts with a 1.5-Degree Celsius Global Warming Threshold”. It looks like 1.5 degree is now becoming the new normal and counting. It is the threshold limit agreed upon by COP 21 negotiators in Paris. So we are moving into uncharted territories.

James Hansen, the grandfather of Global Warming science wrote in his book “Storms of My grandchildren” “Prior warmer interglacial periods such as the Eemian were only about 1 degree Celsius warmer than today, on global average, yet sea level was four to six meters higher than today”. With 1.5 degree Celsius we are going to see much higher sea level rise.



Larsen C

Sea level rise is slow but it is happening. NASA reported on its website on February 17 “The Larsen Ice Shelf is situated along the northeastern coast of the Antarctic Peninsula, one of the fastest-warming places on the planet. In the past three decades, two large sections of the ice shelf (Larsen A and B) have collapsed. A third section (Larsen C) seems like it may be on a similar trajectory, with a new iceberg poised to break away soon.” When, the iceberg splits, it will create one of the largest icebergs ever recorded measuring 5,000 sq km.

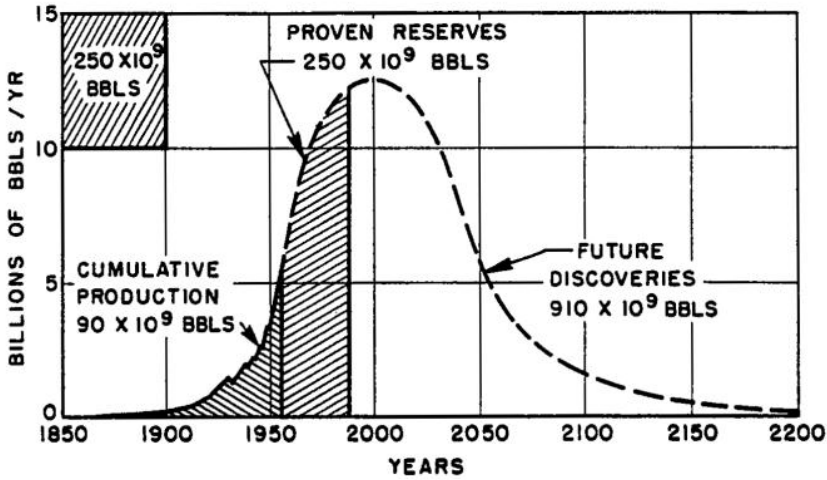
Newer and newer terrifying researches are coming out every day. Research published in the journal *Nature Communications*’ finds that if fossil fuel use continues unabated, the atmosphere could revert “to values of CO<sub>2</sub> not seen since the early Eocene (50 million years ago),” a time when humans did not exist, by the middle of the 21st century. Dana L. Royer, a paleoclimate researcher at Wesleyan University and co-author of the study said “The early Eocene was much warmer than today: global mean surface temperature was at least 10°C warmer than today. There was little-to-no permanent ice. Palms and crocodiles inhabited the Canadian Arctic.”

If palms grow in the Arctic we can imagine the fate of India. Most of our coastal cities would be underwater. I would be surprised if a single human being is alive in the India subcontinent. That means 150 crores of human beings and other species would have died. In any case Cyclones, droughts, floods would be the order of the day. If any human being is alive they would be fighting for drinking water and food.

There is another threat is lurking behind that can turn Nationalism on its heads and can even decimate even the Republic of India. That’s resource depletion.

It is common sense that all our non-renewable resources will run out one day. Even renewables like water is under tremendous pressure. Most of our mineral resources are on the point of running out. We all know that energy is the source of life. One thing that is not well understood is that fossil fuels built, modern civilisation. Coal was the energy source of steam engine and thereby the energy source of early colonisation and the industrial revolution. Then oil age came along and changed everything. One litre of petrol is the equivalent of 3 -4 weeks of manpower labour. You can imagine the energy unleashed by oil. It was oil that built the modern civilisation. Will it last forever?

Oil energy produced so much wealth, health and luxury to us human beings, at the same time destroying the health of the planet. World population rose from about 150 crores to 700 crores. When India got independence India’s population was around 36 crores. Today it is around 130 crore. In just 70 years India’s population rose about 3.5 times.

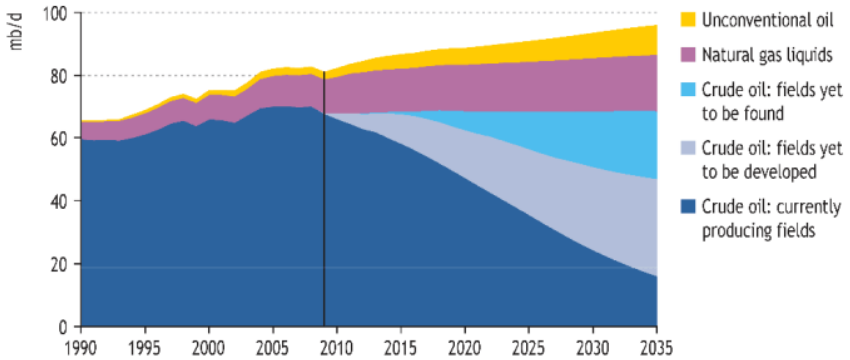


Hubbert's bell curve graph

M. King Hubbert was an American geologist and geophysicist. He worked at the research lab of the American oil giant Shell. He predicted that, for any given geographical area, from an individual oil field to the planet as a whole, the rate of petroleum production of the reserve, over time, would resemble a bell curve. Based on his theory, he presented a paper to the 1956 meeting of the American Petroleum Institute in San Antonio, Texas, which predicted that overall petroleum production would peak in the United States between 1965, which he considered most likely, and 1970, which he considered an upper-bound. Hubbert became famous when this prediction proved correct in 1970.

Since 1970 USA is net oil importer and the country's foreign policy took a tilt towards the West Asia after the 1973 oil shock. America with its rapacious thirst for oil to maintain the famed 'American way of Life' started controlling the West Asia first through diplomacy and through war, on those who didn't fall in line. How many millions have lost their lives? How many millions lost their homes and became refugees? And it is still going on in many regions of the world, including America's own soil with the environmentally destructive fracking technology.

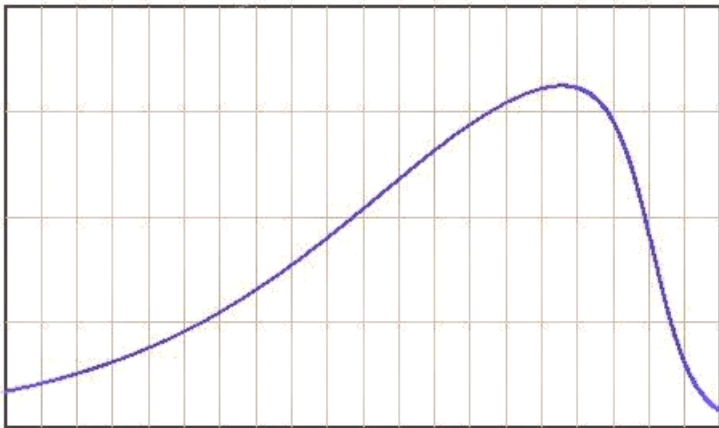
**World oil production by type in the New Policies Scenario**



World Energy Outlook Report, 2010 graph

The World Energy Outlook Report, 2010 by International Energy Agency (IEA) published a famous graph that startlingly revealed that world conventional oil production peaked in 2006. It should have sent shock waves through the capitals of the world, it should have made headlines in the media. It didn't except for some websites like Countercurrents.

**The Seneca cliff**



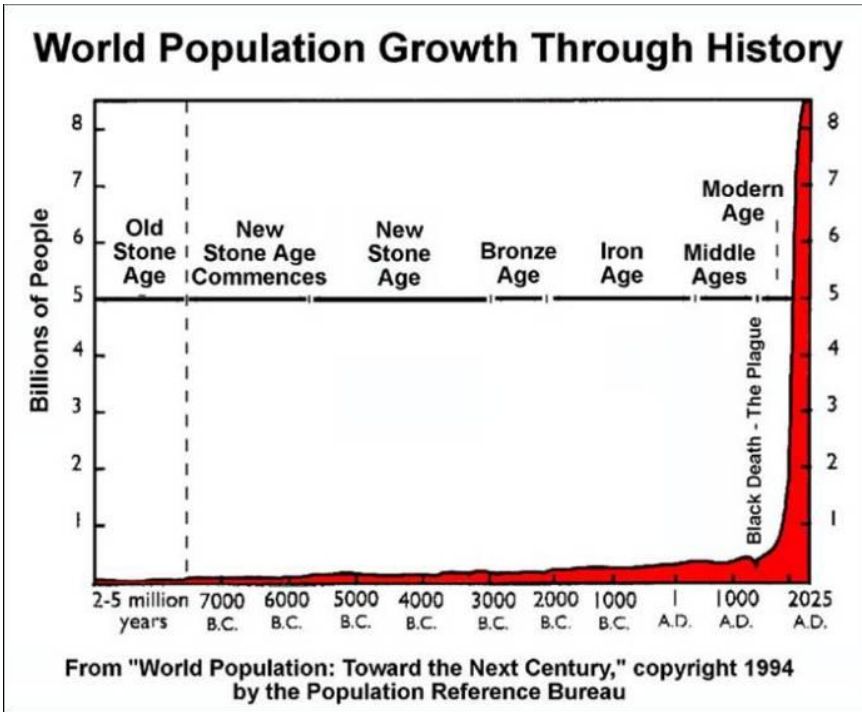
Time

**The Seneca Cliff**

The Roman philosopher Lucius Seneca wrote, “Increases are of sluggish growth, but the way to ruin is rapid.” This statement of Seneca has achieved great attention recently in relation to the resource crisis. Ugo Bardi who teaches

physical chemistry at the University of Florence, in Italy has developed a graph called the Seneca Cliff.

All the previous graphs shown above shows the pattern that Seneca suggested ages ago. "Increases are of sluggish growth, but the way to ruin is rapid."



The most terrifying graph for me is the population graph. It keeps increasing and increasing. Will it go on forever? What will happen the era is gone and modern civilisation collapses? Will follow the Seneca cliff pattern? Terrifying prospects!

How will these converging crises play out in India?

Recently I interviewed John Scales Avery Professor Emeritus in quantum chemistry at the University of Copenhagen, also a Nobel Peace Prize winner of 1995 with Pugwash movement. In his seminal classic "Information theory and Evolution" he argues that human brain hasn't evolved much after the origin of language around 40,000 years ago, on the other hand information has exploded exponentially. When faced with a crisis, human beings behave like our hunter-gatherers grandparents of forty thousand years ago. Reacting violently against any external threat to the clan and on the other hand protecting the clan with love, care, compassion and sharing. Two distinct forces are fighting for

dominance in the character structure of the society. The question is which force will win in the event of a catastrophe?

According to 2011 Census out of the total population of India Muslims consists 17.22 Crores (14.23 %), Christians 2.78 Crores (2.30 %), Sikhs 2.08 Crores (1.72 %), Buddhists 84.43 Lakhs (0.70 %), Jains 44.52 Lakhs (0.37 %) Other Religions 79.38 Lakhs (0.66 %). The Socio Economic Caste Census of 2011 has revealed that India has 4.6 million castes and sub-castes in Hinduism alone. According to Census of India of 2001, India has 122 major languages and 15,99 other languages. In the event of catastrophic social collapse it will be a Hobbesian war of all against all.

I guess this is what Ambedkar meant when he said “The danger to a mixed and composite state, therefore, lies not so much in external aggression as in the internal resurgence of nationalities which are fragmented, entrapped, suppressed and held against their will. “

Wilhelm Reich in his “Mass Psychology of Fascism” argues that it is not Hitler of Mussolini that brings fascism, but the character structure embedded in the society that brings forth Hitler and Mussolini like figures.

Indian society’s character structure has been controlled and structured by the Brahmanical hegemony, for the last several hundred years. It is this character structure of the Indian society that brings forth Modi and Yogi Adityanath like figures. Only by throwing away the Brahmanical hegemony can we have an egalitarian society that Ambedkar and others dreamt of.

Now, let’s ask a speculative question what would be India like 50 years from now?

If India is still standing 50 years down the line, it will be a totally different India. It can go any which way. It can become a virulent Brahmanic, fascist, state where a Hobbesian war of all against all goes on. It can even collapse as a republic and splinter away as Ambedkar feared. Or even worse, it go can down and collapse as a nation and state, under environmental, ecological and resource pressure. Or we can rebuild it as a egalitarian society which allows its peoples to live with dignity and prosper, a nation which protects its environment and chart out a sustainable model of development, where humans, plants, animals and all other species live in a state of mutual respect.

What are the solutions before us?

Short term

1. Congress has to shed its ambiguous Brahmanical mantle and reinvent itself as a Dalit-Bahujan party

2. The left parties have to incorporate the Dalit-Bahujan aspirations into their class based political formulations
3. There should be a grand alliance of all Dalit-Bahujan-left secular parties
4. Political parties have to stop being a party for conducting elections, coming to action mode during election and going into slumber after that, and become parties of the masses, carrying out their hopes and aspirations to fulfilment
5. Learn from the RSS. The audacity that RSS showed in putting Yogi Adityanath as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh didn't come overnight. It was the result of about 9 decades of grass root level work. Dalit-Bahujan Secular parties must become grass root level organisations
6. Work towards implement category wise reservation which Periyar EV Ramasamy championed. This can bring egalitarianism in society and challenge Brahmanism
7. Empower women of India. Implement 50 % reservation for women in all aspects of society
8. It's a time of "Revolution or Collapse" kind of situation. Mass uprising of the people is needed to change society.

#### Long Term

1. Stop following the American model blindly.
2. Capitalism is evil and an anachronism. It must be thrown to where it belongs, into the dustbin of history
3. Implement sustainable model of development
4. Invest heavily in renewable sources of energy like solar, wind and wave and slowly move away from fossil fuels
5. Use technology to for newer models of cooperation between communities

Educate, Organise, Agitate, that is the war cry. Let's build a new world.



# CASTE, GENDER AND OTHER SUCH ISSUES SHOULD BE DEALT WITH AS CLASS STRUGGLE: ANAND TELTUMBDE

Vidya Bhushan Rawat\*

*Anand Teltumbde is a civil rights activist, political analyst, columnist and author of many books. He has a long association with peoples' struggle spanning over three decades backing his theorizations on various issues. Trained in technology and management from the top institutes in the country, he marshals his insights of the modern techno-managerial world to sharpen strategies of struggles. In a well-articulated conversation with Vidya Bhushan Rawat, that he responded electronically, he explains various aspects of Ambedkarite-left politics and also suggests a way forward.*

VB: Anandji, how do you assess the status of Ambedkarite movement in India since the demise of Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar.

AT: To say that the Ambedkarite movement today is in lamentable state may be a grossly understatement. What we see going in its name is the exhibition of identities, Ambedkar himself having become an inert icon supplying that identity; rampant opportunism, everybody floating a shop for political brokerage in the name of devotion to Ambedkar; ideological bankruptcy, openly joining enemy camps for pelf and power but claiming to serve Ambedkarite cause; explosion of scholars rewriting what Ambedkar wrote or showering empty superlatives over him; toeing the lines of power that be for self-aggrandizement; and indulgence in never ending mutilation of what Ambedkar stood for. There are other strands of these to be seen in social media—outpourings on Facebook, WhatsApp groups, and such others, with a new tribe of activists thriving in virtual space.

The question as to what really constitutes the Ambedkarite movement may have to be answered. Is it just anything swearing by the self-proclaimed followership of Ambedkar that makes an Ambedkarite movement or is there any criteria to determine it? While it may not be easy to answer this question, there being many facets of Ambedkar's own struggle, one may broadly take a clue from his vision and say that any movement that is oriented to make society move towards liberty, equality and fraternity may be termed as Ambedkarite. Naturally, the movements that privilege caste identities could not be Ambedkarite. The movements that do not raise voice against the violation of democratic rights of people cannot be Ambedkarite. The movement that is not

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socialistic is not Ambedkarite. Babasaheb Ambedkar stressed this value triad in terms of political, economic and social democracy. These criteria may be supplemented by additional features associated with the persona and character of Babasaheb Ambedkar such as his iconoclasm, rationality and scientific attitude, integrity, dedication, etc.

If we test out what passes as the movements of Dalits on these criteria, we may not get any that comes even within the consideration zone. It is with this understanding that I say that there are no Ambedkarite movements existing today. Being Ambedkarite does not mean worshiping Ambedkar or making him a cult figure, least capitalising on it for selfish ends. But that is precisely every movement of Dalits is engaged in. What is seen as Ambedkar movement is the growing congregations at the newer and newer places being discovered as associated with him, the ever growing number of statues and monuments subtly aided by the state, growing panegyric literature much of it is pointless, building of Buddha Viharas in competition with the Hindu temples just as the marker of identity; growing number of seminars, conferences and meetings that appear to engage/accommodate the growing tribe of educated Dalits with sophisticated version of Ambedkar bhakti. There is a pseudo-concern of the employed Dalits in the name of the 'payback to society' in distributing food packets and providing medical aid, etc. to the poor masses of Dalits who congregate at the places like Chaitya Bhumi and Deeksha Bhumi, indirectly promoting them. Of course there are better versions of it, although in small numbers, that seek to provide coaching, scholarship and extend financial aid to needy Dalit student. The entire Ambedkarite movement is seen in the form of these activities, which do not even remotely connect with what Ambedkar stood for. Many of them may rather be seen as antithetical to his persona and vision.

It needs to be understood that what Babasaheb Ambedkar practised was pragmatism imbibed from his Professor John Dewey while in Columbia. He did not believe that there could be a science of history and therefore some abiding laws of societal development. Therefore, what he did was to figure out the best possible way in the given situation to advance the interests of Dalits. Therefore, apart from the abiding and unflinching commitment to the cause of Dalits (later expanded to entire humanity) one may not find a theoretical string that could be extended to any length of in future. The Ambedkarite movement was supposed to carry on what Ambedkar did, towards certain goals like annihilation of castes, achieving his dream society based on liberty, equality and fraternity as discussed before. The only methodological prerequisite was the sterling commitment to the cause and as he said to the extent avoiding violence and dictatorship.

After his death in 1956, the movement experienced sudden vacuum of leadership as there was no leader who could take his place. But the leaders had

huge personal ambitions. According to J V Pawar, who chronicled the significant events around the time, right after his cremation at the Chaitya Bhumi, the politicking among the Maharashtra Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF) leaders had begun. Babasaheb in his last days had toyed with an idea to form a non-Congress, non-Communist opposition party by bringing all prominent leaders under its banner. He had sent the proposal to socialist leaders like Dr Ram Manohar Lohia and S M Joshi. Nothing is known about their responses but at Nagpur, while addressing a mammoth gathering collected for *Dharmantar* (conversion to Buddhism) he spoke out this idea of forming a new party, Republican Party of India (RPI). Since the 1957 elections were round the corner, the post-Ambedkar SCF leadership decided to defer the decision and fight elections on reserved constituencies although they were supposed to have forsaken Hinduism and were no more the Scheduled Castes. The leadership issue was sorted out by having a collective leadership in the form of seven member presidium. But it did not last long.

Just about a year after the formation of the RPI, in deference to the wishes of Ambedkar on 3 October 1957, the vertical division in the party precipitated. Each faction began claiming to be a true heir of Ambedkar. The division sharpened when Dadasaheb Gaikwad, who had better bond with masses and who had enjoyed relatively greater confidence of Ambedkar than any other leader began talking about the livelihood issues of the Dalits. B C Kamble, by virtue of being an advocate, presumptuously claimed to know the Constitution more than anyone else. He accused Gaikwad of speaking the language of communists. The anti-communist sentiment was ripe in minds of people, as communists were seen as responsible for the defeat of Ambedkar in the 1952 election. These sentiments were duly capitalised by the anti-Gaikwad faction for denigrating him. Gaikwad, not entirely devoid of personal ambition, however, knew the pulse of masses as well as what Babasaheb Ambedkar desired. In his later years, Ambedkar was getting increasingly frustrated as the things he did his entire life, did not seem to produce desired result. In one of such bouts of frustration, he lamented to the Marathwada unit of the SCF that visited him at his residence in Delhi in 1953 that whatever he did had benefitted only a small section of the urban educated Dalits and that he could not do anything for the vast majority of Dalits in rural area. He wondered to the leader of the unit, B S Waghmare, whether he would be able to organise a struggle for demanding land for the rural Dalits. Immediately after his return Waghmare organised a land satyagraha in Marathwada with the help of Gaikwad. Some 1700 people had gone to jail in this first ever struggle for land (or any material issue) in the history of Ambedkarite movement. After the death of Ambedkar, Gaikwad reenacted the land satyagraha in 1959, this time in much bigger scale in the Khandesh-Marathwadaregion of the then Bombay Province in which many

socialist and communist leaders participated and went to jail along with Dalits. The RPI under Gaikwad organised a countrywide land satyagraha in 1964-5 on an unprecedented scale, which lasted for nearly a month, each day hundreds of people including women and children courting arrests. The resolve of Dalit masses to fight for their livelihood issues reflected by this land satyagraha alarmed the government at the centre. It responded with a strategy to co-opt the Dalit leaders. None other than Dadasaheb Gaikwad would fall prey to this strategy inaugurated by the then chief minister of Maharashtra, Yashwantrao Chauhan. Gaikwad fully conscious of the consequences could not, however, save the party from the damage. The strategy opened the floodgates for Dalit leaders to join the Congress or indirectly work for it. The RPI, deformed at the birth itself, would not survive thereafter but for in the name claimed by innumerable factions.

The independent Ambedkarite movement had virtually collapsed by mid-1960s. By the late 1960s, the political emasculation of the Dalits began showing up in rising atrocities. In the wake of the global unrest and particularly taking inspiration from the Black Panthers Party in the US, the Ambedkarite youth, pouring out of universities just to have dark future staring at them despite the chimera of reservations, began giving expression to their feelings of frustration emulating the genre of Black literature. From this movement of Dalit literature was born the Dalit Panthers movement. The very name emulating the Maoist Black Panthers Party in the US and in the background of the birth of another militant movement in Naxalbari in North Bengal, the Dalit Panthers sent a shock wave across the ruling establishment. But before it could set its tone through some militant action, it split on the point of deviating from Ambedkarism. A faction led by Raja Dhale accused the other led by Namdeo Dhasal of being under communist influence. It was a rehash of the split in the RPI on the basis of an idiotic syllogism, that speaking about material interests of the masses was communism, Ambedkar was opposed to communism and hence anything that raised the livelihood issues was against Ambedkar. This time it was constitutionalism but Buddhism. Dalit Panthers thus just proved to be a flash in pan.

Dalit Panthers went the RPI way, with much rapid degeneration than the latter. The electoral politics by then had become intensely competitive with the emergence of regional parties threatening the political hegemony of the Congress. The very processes of creating a class of rich farmers using seemingly the people-oriented policies like land reforms and Green Revolution but intended to create a political ally in rural India had led to this aftermath. The small bunch of votes which were available in the forms of castes and communities assumed disproportionate importance in the first-past-the-post (FPTP) elections and with that the value of brokering. It gave rise to a tribe of

brokers in the guise of Ambedkarite leaders. In the crowd of these fraudsters, the nostalgic Dalit masses were increasingly drawn towards Ambedkar icon which in turn was exploited by the ruling classes in subtly deforming Ambedkar. Babasaheb Ambedkar who remained an ignored figure for almost a decade, so much so that his son had to take out a march from Mahu to Mumbai collecting small donations from people to build a small structure at the place of his cremation in mid 1960s, began to be monumentalized by the establishment all over the country. The gullible Dalit masses would not understand the stratagem of the ruling classes and would increasingly fall for it, setting in a vicious cycle. What remains now of the Ambedkarite movement is these statues of Ambedkar, Buddha Vihars, congregations in his memories, hymns and identity hysteria?

VB: Why, in your opinion, RPI which could have become a strong secular progressive force as visualised by DrAmbedkar, could not achieve much.

AT: RPI was conceived by Babasaheb Ambedkar as a non-communist opposition party to the then ruling Congress. What was to be progressive in it is really not known. What I imagine is that Ambedkar was not very comfortable with a seemingly caste based party like SCF. It was occasioned by the political development triggered by the Cripp's report in 1942. Now that its utility was over and also that its historical performance has been listless, he was naturally inclined to revive the idea of his very first party, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) under the new name, more fitting to the constitutionalism that he propagated. The Congress being a party of the capitalists, the natural opposition party was a party of labour. But labour was associated with the communists. Ambedkar was historically cut up with the communists, and particularly bitter with them for having defeated him in the 1952 elections. They, however, were the major opposition party, although distant second to the Congress. Weighing the relative strength of the parties and taking cognizance of the huge dominance of the Congress, strategically it would have been a good idea to forge a broad coalition of all socialist and communist parties. After all, the Communists had adopted the parliamentary path. The RPI, relying upon ideologically amorphous socialists outside the communists was not destined to be a major opposition party to the Congress. The very fact that it failed to take off, perhaps speaks volumes about its poor strategic basis.

I am not sure Babasaheb used secular for the RPI. The 'secular' is the most abused term in this country popularised by so-called progressives. What I know is that the RPI was to be the non-communist opposition party to the dominant Congress. It may rather be likened to the Janata Party that emerged in 1970s, as the major opposition party to the Congress, that did not hesitate to include the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS). The 'secular' that signifies the firewall between

religion and politics was disposed of during the Constitution making itself. When the subcommittee of the CA decided to have it, none other than Nehru, who is supposed to be the biggest secularist around had rejected it and as a result the Constitution did not contain this term. There is no evidence that even Babasaheb Ambedkar also contradicted the ruling version of *dharmmirapekshta*. It is well known that in November 1948, Prof K T Shah, representing Bihar in the CA, had moved an amendment to the effect that “India shall be a Secular, Federal, Socialist Union of States.” It was Babasaheb himself who opposed it saying that the Constitution was “merely a mechanism for the purpose of regulating the work of the various organs of the State” and what the policy of the State or how the “Society should be organised in its social and economic side are matters which must be decided by the people themselves according to time and circumstances.” It is a different matter that he was a strong votary until his first speech in the CA of hard coding the socialist structure of the society into the constitution!

India is not a secular country; it is a *dharmmirpeksb* country, and *de facto* Hindu country, as the likes of Mohan Bhagwat rightly claim. The Constitution does not have this word; it was inserted by Indira Gandhi paradoxically during the Emergency, perhaps to complete the joke on the Indian people. Well, coming back to the question of the RPI, how would such a party emerge as a strong party? What binding force the motley combination of leaders with all ideological hues would have held it together? What would be its constituency? What would be its goal?

Indian elections are fought on the strength of money, muscle and communal power, all of which are evil. Without resorting to these evil, no party would really survive in India. Communist party was the biggest opposition party in the parliament in early years. Its electoral success was due to its struggles in certain pockets of the country. But leave apart building upon it, the party could not even sustain itself. With what imagination one could say that the RPI would have been different? Yes, there are examples of the Dravidian parties (DMK and AIDMK in its present avatar) surviving as the electoral parties and whether one sees the portents with open eyes, until yester years, the BSP also achieved electoral success. The pertinent question to be asked here is whether they could really do justice to their professed goals. What remains of these parties is a different hue of the ruling class parties. They have enriched their leaders but have kept their constituency vulnerable.

As a matter of fact, neither Ambedkar nor his party could succeed in post-colonial elections.

Whether RPI could have been successful is a purely hypothetical question. The more pertinent question is whether it could have been successful in promoting

what Ambedkar willed. My answer to this question is in flat negative. The proof of my saying is the fact that no party, small or big, or even the parliamentary communist parties, swearing by the working classes, could really serve the interests of poor in this country. The structure of politics sucks you in and dissolves into its colours. Electoral successes could be manipulated and success could be claimed as the BSP did. But as the BSP experiment amply proved, you cannot defy the grammar of this politics. Money, muscle, communal arithmetic drives you away from the masses into the so-called mainstream rendering you indistinguishable from any other ruling class party.

VB: You have been with the left movement and always talked about bringing caste and class issues together. Left has rarely accepted the caste as the primary source of exploitation in India but many of your writings confirm the fact that you too look from the class angle. Could you please explain why you insist class matter and secondly why there is a remote possibility of left and Ambedkarite coming together?

AT: Yes, I have been with the political left (not with any party) for the most part of my life and also willed that the communist and the Dalit movements should converge to make a strong unified revolutionary force. It is not bringing class and caste together but enclosing castes within a class. I have serious objection to the constricted conception of class the communists and even others have. My definition of class subsumes castes. This is the mistake of the early communists that has cost Indian poor their revolution. Marx said that the history of all hitherto existing society was the history of class struggles. How could then castes that were the life world of the subcontinent for most part of the known history be left aside from the class analysis? Neither class analysis of the Indian society nor class struggle in India could be conceived without taking cognizance of castes. This is the greatest blunder of the Indian communists that may be traced to their Brahmanic proclivities to adhere to the given word. In pre-capitalist world classes manifested in various forms; castes also were the forms of classes.

It does not mean ignoring castes. In fact nothing is ignored. Revolutions are not a theory that you assume away something and proceed; you have to confront social reality. Castes, genders and every other such issue are a social reality and they need to be dealt with as part of the class struggle. It is a process to enhance revolutionary consciousness. Castes, given their peculiar characteristics (quite unlike any other social category) cannot be the basis of struggle in any other way. We have experience with various caste struggles for over a century. They reveal that they could not make any dent to the existence of castes. Whatever changes that have crept in them are due to the advent of capitalism and modernity piggybacking it. I have explained it in my book *Anti-Imperialism and*

*Annihilation of Caste* and many other writings. Castes only drive you deeper into the ditch.

Today despite these caste struggles, arguably, India is more casteized than it was ever in history. Class struggle is the prime mover of the history and cannot be contrasted to any other struggle. It does not mean only economic struggle as the ignoramuses made it to be. They subsume all other struggles. In India class struggle necessarily incorporates anti-caste struggle. There cannot be a separate front where castes can be fought against. This has been historical folly in India. Of course, for this I hold the communists responsible because they claiming the ownership of analytical arsenal of Marxism could not use it. Babasaheb Ambedkar, a pragmatist by confession, was devising his praxis as the situation unfolded and hence his blame becomes certainly lesser.

No, I am not pessimistic. Both the movements marching separately have reached their points of extinction. It is natural that at least a section of their adherents has begun realising the mistake and thinking of correcting themselves. Unlike others I do not speak/write in a vacuum; I am intimately in touch with the struggles afield and do have a sense that such realisation is fast dawning on the youngsters on both sides. The times are, however, uncongenial for such manifestations. But the things cannot rot for long. There will be a way out.

Yes, there is big hurdle in the path. The mushrooming middle class of Dalits represent that hurdle. They do not want it. They have whipped up the identity obsession among the Dalits and made Ambedkara marker of that identity. They will naturally prevent it happening. The class characteristics of these Dalits tend to prefer the status quo because it has brought them some stature and material prosperity. They would not want it change. Revolution moreover demands sacrifices, which has not been in their grammar. But that is not the case with the multitude of the Dalit masses. Their condition craves for change. They do not have anything left to lose but their pitiable condition. And therefore they would like to have a revolution. The only problem they do not know what it would be like, what it would entail. It is not only in India but also the world over, people ceased to believe in revolutions and their promises. The communists are solely responsible for this state of mind. They have only given them failures. They need to squarely accept it. Those who want change from the status quo, may have to be low on rhetoric and high on creative strategies. The odds are serious but not insurmountable. The same old stereotype of revolutionary rhetoric and slogan mongering would not work. It will demand new creative ways. The entire revolutionary theory in the context of the contemporary techno-managerial context of the world will have to be rethought. The pace of change in the contemporary world is so rapid and accelerating that no *ism* howsoever scientific it may be can be relied to offer us solution. Revolutions, as such, have always



been a serious enterprise and they cannot be spoken superfluously. They always demand hard work and sacrifices.

VB: Is not it true that the left has historically not considered Ambedkar as icon of the Dalit identity and culture. In fact many of them went on to criticise him to the extent of not even considering him as an intellectual. Is it not the brahmanical arrogance which many of the left ideologue suffer from?

AT: Who says they haven't? Have all Dalits in contrast really considered Ambedkar as their icon? It is only the Mahars in Maharashtra and their equivalents in other states have accepted him as their icon of identity and culture. It was as such a caste affair, pure and simple.

Over time there has been promotion of this icon by the state and he is made what he is today. When India became independent, the ruling classes had adopted Gandhi as their icon. He remained for initial decades the state icon but with the change in times began losing its lustre. It outlived its utility by 1980s. The aura of independence struggle and the ethos of Indianness that the Gandhian icon represented became out of tune by the time India became neoliberal. The ruling classes needed to replace it. Ambedkar, who historically contrasted Gandhi and presented his antithesis, came handy as an icon for the neoliberal India, which was considered as the antithesis of the welfare state during the Gandhian phase. It is therefore that they began projecting him as the free market economist, pro-globalization figure, a monetarist and what not particularly through some of the Dalit brokers masquerading as intellectuals. Ambedkar's modern look combined with liberal and pragmatic views came to perfectly fit in the requirements of the new icon for neoliberal era.

The role of the state in making up the Ambedkar icon cannot be missed. Apart from monumentalizing efforts, it opened up Ambedkar centres everywhere. There was a sudden spurt in so called research on him in universities. Ambedkar, almost an abhorrent figure for the elite, suddenly became venerable. The bout of bhakti Modi expresses for him just illustrates it starkly.

As a matter of fact, as explained above, Ambedkar's iconization had begun from the late 1960s itself. The turning point came with the 1964-65 all India land satyagraha. Dalits for the most part until then had engaged in cultural struggles; against Brahmanism which was in a way abstract, challenging really no one. If they turned towards their economic deprivations, as this struggle reflected, it would pose real threat to the entire structure. Therefore, the Congress had launched its cooptation strategy. There were other factors too that contributed to this trend. As explained earlier, intensification of electoral competition and consequent importance of the vote banks made it imperative to iconize Ambedkar to woo the Dalit voters. Gradually thereafter, one finds roads being

named after Ambedkar, his statues dotting them, institutions being named after him and his pictures adorning them. The nostalgia of the Dalit masses in the face of dilapidation of the Dalit movement by then also aided this trend in a significant way.

As for your question that the Left has historically not considered him as an icon of the Dalit identity and culture, I do not see it as such. Initially, it is true they did ignore him rather if you go to his times; the communists ridiculed him as some hardliners among them still do. But later with their own degeneration, they also could not keep themselves away from the electoral logic. Some of them tacitly realised their mistake in ignoring castes but the peculiar cultural attitude not to admit mistakes prevented them from speaking that out loudly. Today all the communist parties do acknowledge Ambedkar. Even the Marxist-Leninist parties, popularly called Naxalites, who do not have electoral compulsion as the parliamentary parties have, do acknowledge his work and contributions.

But why and how does the Left considering or acknowledging Ambedkar as an icon of Dalit identity and culture become important? How consequential it is either for the Dalit emancipation or the Indian revolution? I would rather ask why should Ambedkar be only a Dalit icon? Ambedkar acquired a universal vision as he evolved. Why should he be demeaned to the mean status of just being a Dalit icon? I am also against this iconization business. Icons, on the positive side, can inspire certain ideals but on the negative side they can also distort the reality. The very concept of icon distances it from the reality and makes it objectionable.

Ambedkar need not be an icon for anyone but should be seriously considered for what he has to offer for the creation of the new world based on 'liberty, equality and fraternity' as he proclaimed. His own attitude towards the great people was similar. He dismissed the heroes and great men in no uncertain terms and proclaimed himself as an iconoclast. Why make him an icon and insult him? All great people—who looked beyond their self and strove for betterment of humanity—have something to say as to how to reach there. And they all should be considered important for their thoughts and actions. One needs to mind, however, that they are simultaneously limited by their own space and time. In the past with slow pace of change their thoughts and actions could guide us in dealing with our problems but not now. We may be inspired by their vision but may not be able to use their thoughts, actions or methods because the entire reference points may have undergone change. Our world demands novel strategies to deal with and limits utility to that extent of the past. Perhaps this dictum would invalidate privileging any ism as the solution. What is

important with them (and those which are not been fortunate to be taken as such) is the insights they had.

As regards your comment about Left criticism, both communists as well Ambedkar criticised each other. Because their constituencies had a huge overlap, the criticism was quite natural. Communists viewed that Ambedkar was dividing the working class and he criticised them that they did not pay attention to caste discrimination that the Dalit workers suffered under their nose. Apart from that the communists' superficial understanding of the Marxian metaphor of 'base and superstructure' led them to believe that mere struggle against caste was pointless. But I do not think that they denied him his intellectual status. Despite the intrinsic intellectual arrogance that the communists reflect, they swallowed his claim in 1938 public meeting that he had read more books on communism than all communists taken together. These issues rooted in the dynamics of times a century before should not trouble us but because of our identitarian obsession they keep deflecting our present focus too.

VB: You have been participating in various programmes of the left Dalit alliances. How is it happening? Do you think possibility of them coming together or will it break due to wider perspective gap among them?

AT: I have already explained that unless Dalits adopt class orientation, they are not going to be successful even in their anti-caste struggle. To have class-approach does not make one automatically communist or Marxist, least the adherent of some political outfit. That is the only approach that could bind all oppressed people together and bring in a hope of annihilation of castes. I am not enamoured with the communist parties that exist in India. My concern is with the movements, there are movements beyond parties. Given the state of politics on both sides, there is little that one hopes for. I see a need to make a new beginning. Yes, I see hope of that happening too. Despite numerous odds in our path, there are enough people who listen to us. It is better to have right orientation than having wrong results. The world today has gone very complex. People will have to be on their toes to comprehend it and devise viable strategies towards making it better for the vast majority. What I do is to prepare them doing that.

VB: Rohith Vemula's institutional murder gave different left and Ambedkarite groups an opportunity but then they split again. The Hyderabad Central University Elections and later the JNU Student elections both places the left parties refused to accept or support the Ambedkarite or Dalit Bahujan groups like BAPSA resulting in much bitter altercation among them. How do you react to this?

AT: It is unfortunate that in both these campuses Left and Ambedkarite students could not use the opportunity to converge. In HCU, in the thick of the protests over Rohith's death, I had a meeting with both sides and advised them to forge a united front against the Hindutva, isolating the ABVP. I had explained my rationale that the HCU was an appropriate place to seed it and promised to replicate in other campuses. But for inexplicable reasons, and I am sure it had all to do with identities that it was not pursued. In HCU, the onus was on the Ambedkar Students' Association (ASA) to make it happen but I don't think they even tried it. As a result, the wider base for the protest movement petered out and it recoiled back to be just a Dalit matter. It is our Telangana based organisation, Kula Nirmulan Porata Samiti that has kept the movement alive.

In JNU, reportedly the left students did take an initiative and striking a joint front with BAPSA but the latter would not speak with them. I do not really know who to blame. But I sense, the identity obsession and hatred for the Left among the Dalits make things difficult. As I said these things are more with the educated middle class of the Dalits than the masses. There is a weird logic underneath this conduct. Hating Left opens up avenues for going anywhere. All said and done, whether they are right or wrong, the Left have the ethos of sacrifice, confines of ideology. Being against them opens the floodgate of opportunities. This is what happened to the Dalit politics. You could easily walkover to the hindutva camp but would not consider touching the Left with a bargepole. This attitude has informed the degeneration of the Dalit politics that we see. The intellectual behavior is not very different. Ambedkarites have made their hatred for the Left it into an art form to justify their opportunism. I have been giving the post-dinner lectures to the JNU students and whatever the topic is bombarded with the same questions by the Ambedkarite students as I was asked say 10-15 years ago. I had to jocularly wonder whether the students haven't passed out of the campus over such a long period. I had answered these stereotypical questions numerous times seemingly to their satisfaction (because every time they kept quiet) but they would keep repeating them over the years with the airs of profundity. My declaration that I do not care for any ism, or my criticism of the Left strewn all over my writings, do not cut any ice with them. They would just assume things and behave. While I may not absolve the Left side of the blame, but my own experience with the so called Ambedkarite students provide me huge data about the dynamics. It is terribly painful to see these young students in relatively elite institution instead of learning shut their faculties willfully.

VB: You have been working a lot on the issue of land acquisition and Adivasi question on both there is a huge misunderstanding of perspective as well as work both by the Ambedkarite as well as those who claims to be Marxists.

AT: Yes, I have associated myself with many land struggles wherever I could and tried to help them as per my capacity. Land is a scarce resource and constituted terrain for class struggle between rich and poor. For the poor they represent livelihood resource and for the rich they are required for 'development'. I have participated in and associated with anti-SEZ struggles, Adivasi struggles to preserve their habitat in many states, and Dalits' struggle for their land rights, also in many states. By Ambedkarite definition, they all become Left struggles but are not necessarily waged by the ideological Left. I haven't seen any Ambedkarite spearheading these struggles. The honourable exceptions were Valjibhai Patel and Jignesh Mewani in Gujarat, who have been struggling to get physical possession of the lands allotted to the Dalits by the Gujarat government in 1980s. Elsewhere, they came in caste conflict with others, not necessarily with the high castes but the likes of Adivasis and BCs. There was a struggle in Chitradurga district of Karnataka led by Shivalingam and another at Pathapally in Telangana, spearheaded by the KNPS activists, to which I actively contributed. Wherever the Dalits were involved, it invariably assumed caste dimension and still the activists were isolated by the middle class Dalits as the Leftists. They would keep themselves away but the masses would actively uphold them. There is this clear divide between the masses of Dalits and their middle classes that surfaces in every struggle and particularly the land struggles.

The Dalit activists leading the land struggle invariably did it under the banner of Babasaheb Ambedkar but could not impress the so-called Ambedkarites and deserve their support. They rather criticised them. When it came to resisting the states' or state-sponsored land grab, Ambedkarites are conspicuous by their absence. There are hundreds of such resistance movements going on all over the country and they are mainly waged by the Dalits and Adivasis but one may not meet any Ambedkarite there. They are only supported by the Left activists. Take for instance the anti-Posco struggle that endured all kinds of state repression but eventually compelled the giant company to wind up their plans. All of them were Adivasis and Dalits. Where were the Ambedkarites there? Has any Ambedkarite scholar considered it important to write on and at least express his moral support? The Ambedkarites rather have tendentiously sided by the state. The Maoist movement may be criticised ad infinitum for its methods, but can never be opposed by anyone claiming to be on the side of the oppressed masses. It is only the Ambedkarites who do it. In my recent experience, as a General Secretary of the Committee for Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR) hosting an executive committee meeting of our umbrella organization – Coordination of Democratic Rights Organizations (CDRO) at the MLA Hostel in Nagpur, there were violent slogan shouting by the people holding Ambedkar's picture and blue flags, demanding death to

Saibaba and his supporters, meaning us. What would one call these Ambedkarites? Babasaheb Ambedkar would cry at such a misuse of his name!

Where is the difference between perspectives on this issue? When you have almost declared the struggle as taboo and conveniently kept away from it; and at another extreme have chosen to actively oppose those who struggle against it, you cannot claim respectability using phrases like difference in perspectives.

VB: Is the question of identity not important for developing the leadership of the marginalised communities or is it just who work for them. Even technically both models have failed given the nature of corrupted leadership that has emerged.

AT: Identity per se is not an issue; what kind of identity for what kind of objective is the issue. People naturally wear multiple identities, from individual to collective. They all have their utility. So, identities per se are not a problem. The combination of identity and objective needs to be examined. When the objective is emancipation of larger humanity, the identity also should reflect it. When the movements are built on sectarian identities, then it becomes problematic. Take for example, the Dalit struggle against castes. It appears that Dalit as an identity is viable. But on a careful consideration it is not. Because the caste oppression of the Dalits stems from caste ideology, which is pervasive, without annihilation of which the former cannot be ended. It is therefore; Babasaheb Ambedkar had thought of annihilation of caste and necessarily graduated to a universal goal of achieving ideal society. If this is the goal, then Dalit identity also will be inadequate. Ambedkar toyed with Dalit identity because he wanted to mobilise all the untouchables for anti-caste struggle as its vanguard. Dalit was still beyond castes; a quasi-class term assimilating all the untouchables. In course, he himself graduated to expand this integrating others as the working class in the ILP phase and later as all people, *a la* Prabuddha Bharat. Therefore, your usage of identity has to be commensurate with the goal.

Caste as an identity has another serious problem. The core characteristic of caste is hierarchy; caste always seeks hierarchy and hence tends to split. We see, Ambedkar's Dalit also split into its sub-castes. These sub-castes may have their own sub-subcastes. With such an identity, you cannot imagine to build a viable struggle for emancipatory goal. Jotiba Phule had conceived shudra-atishudra identity; Kanshiram tried Bahujan as the identity. The problem with them was that they were based on castes and hence they collapsed. When identity is made to serve as the basis of politics, it always becomes sectarian as we observe. With this you can build your empire, you cannot emancipate.

Do you require identity for developing leadership of the marginalised communities? And how necessary it is to develop such a leadership? I would suppose that if a Dalit comes forward to lead the issues of Dalits, no non-Dalits will be able to outcompete him for the sheer reason that he cannot know as much as his Dalit counterpart. Notwithstanding, the primary consideration should remain that whether such an identity would really accomplish the goal. Sans such a marginalised identity, the leadership at least could universalize the issue and broad-base the struggle. That option would disappear if the struggle is built on the sectarian identity. Moreover, as I explained the peculiar proclivity of the caste identity to split makes it seriously problematic in using it.

I don't know what you mean by both models failing. One could see anything in social realm as failure and success. It is difficult to be objective about it as we ourselves are part of it. But just consider, notwithstanding the eventual reversals of the class-based struggles that brought about revolutions in the last century, which indirectly induced many progressive changes in the world, the identity movements could not even make a dent to their oppression. Even Babasaheb Ambedkar who had stressed that the movement of Dalits could and should only be led by the Dalits and permanently dislodged Vittha Ramji Shinde, who had considerable following among Dalits from leadership, also willed that larger society should own up the task of reforms. His ILP strategy and the last RPI strategy also could be construed to do away with the constricted identity of caste. Whence this identity obsession is developed among the Ambedkarites is really difficult to understand.

VB: You have written extensively on Mahad Movement. Recently your book on the same has come out. Why do you felt the need to document this and what are the lessons for all of us from it.

AT: Yes, I would not have written Mahad if it had just been mere documentation. It all started with some friends asking me to write a introduction to the English translation of Comrade R B More's account of Mahad struggle, which was published in a college magazine many years before. The book just evolved. As I am wont, I wanted to put the narrative of this foundational struggle within an analytical frame. Thus, I created a bracketing chapters; the first as the historical background of the Mahad. It was meant to dispel the folklore that Ambedkar is an avatar who descended from heavens to emancipate the Dalits. It provided the history of caste and caste struggle until the eve of the Mahad struggle. One would find that there were many an important struggles that preceded Mahad. They had distinctive characteristics and lot much to teach us even now. The last chapter 'Looking backward, Moving Forward' served to draw certain lessons with the advantage of hindsight. I have drawn many lessons and tried to link them to the state of the

contemporary Dalit movement. The decision not to retaliate the attack of the caste Hindu goons, not to confront the state, not having clarity as to who the target for the struggle was, the pyrrhic aftermath of Mahad, the strategic fluidity, etc. that starkly come out of the Mahad episode appears to have shaped up the future of the Dalit movement. There are numerous other lessons such as Ambedkar's reference to Mahar caste, advice to women, dealing with the collector, democratic content of the movement, presence of women, etc.

VB: As a scholar, how do you define Baba Saheb Ambedkar's economic policies? I mean what would have been his response to demonetization which has rendered millions of people cashless as well as workless. How would Ambedkar respond to those who are quoting him or should I say misquoting him from 'The Problem of rupee' that the currency should be demonetised in every 10 years.

AT: Babasaheb Ambedkar's economics was predominantly normative. He was more concerned with the economic policy being used for the benefit of the majority of people than the technical aspects of the discipline. The most inspiring thing about his study of economics is that he boldly engaged with the contemporary debate and crossed swords at times with the greats of those times. All of his academic theses in economics dealt with the problem of administrative economics, public finance and currency system to be followed by the state. I personally would not see much relevance of these today except for they should inspire young researchers how to take pains in doing research. The most important of his economic writings is his paper 'Small Holdings in India and Their Remedies' which was published in the Journal of the Indian Economic Society, Vol I, 1918. It is an essay with profound economic insights and great relevance to India even after a century. It contains important directions to the economic development of India and particularly the growing agrarian crisis we suffer today.

At that time, British administrators and academics in India were bothered about the low productivity of the Indian agriculture and they attributed it to the small sizes of the farm holdings cultivated by Indian peasants. Many stalwarts of those times such as H S Jevons of Allahabad University, Harold Mann and G F Keatinge of Bombay, and the committee appointed to make proposals on the consolidation of small and scattered holdings in the Baroda State (1917) engaged with the subject and offered their suggestions in terms of consolidating and/or enlarging the holdings in the hands of individual farmers through interesting administrative measures. Ambedkar made a critical examination of these suggestions and came out with very profound observations some of which are of extremely important theoretical value. He dismissed these suggestions saying that there could not be anything like a correct size of agricultural holding.



He argued that land was only one of the many factors of production and the productivity of one factor of production is dependent upon the proportion in which the other factors of production were combined. He pointed out the problem of insufficiency of capital needed for acquiring “agricultural stock and implements”, which in turn could be traced to lack of savings. He still digs deeper and highlights the non-availability of sufficient land and large population superfluously engaged in agriculture. It was precursor to the systematised notions of disguised unemployment or underemployment that would come later into economics. Ambedkar provides solution in terms of industrialisation that would release the pressure of population on land and generate surplus that could help optimise the inputs to agriculture enhancing its productivity. The solution is still relevant to India as it was then.

Much is made out of Ambedkar’s *The Problem of Rupee and Its Solution*, his D Sc thesis submitted to London University and published by P S King and Son Ltd, London 1923. The vested interests projected him as the monetarist and hence pro-globalization to toe the official line of the government. The basic issue Ambedkar dealt with in this work was the currency standards, viz., Gold Standard and Gold Exchange Standard. He favoured Gold Standard in order to maintain the stability of the currency system and thereby the internal pricing structure of the economy. It could not be extended to the free market argument or monetarist management as outlined by Milton Friedman in 1960s. When the Modi government came out with Tughlaquesque idea of demonetization of 86 percent of the currency, it was projected to be in accordance to the advice of Babasaheb Ambedkar in his *The Problem of the Rupee*. The slavish leaders of the Dalits put up the posters to that effect. Surprisingly, Prakash Ambedkar who has been consistently opposing the RSS in recent times also came out making similar statement. I do not know what prompted him to do this faux pas but the fact remained that it was a pure lie. There is nothing in the *Problem of the Rupee* to indicate that the currency should be demonetized, least for the foolish purpose for which the government did it.

Demonetization was the foolhardy decision the motive of which is difficult to discern. I had written as many as three articles in EPW on its various aspects and had speculated the reasons for it. It appeared that Modi wanted to weaken the opposition parties, particularly the BSP for the ensuing elections in UP. It also wanted to project its macho image to the public and resolve to fight black money. And perhaps test out endurance of people. Demonetization put poor people to indescribable hardship but hats off to the Goebblesque propaganda of Modi that he fooled them to repeat his lines that demonetization was a small price for cleansing the economy. All the reasons that Modi gave for demonetization on 8 November proved invalid and made him to shift the goal

post every time he opened his mouth. And still the public failed to note the lie and willingly fell prey to his vicious design.

What surprised and saddened me most is the invocation of Ambedkar. Supposing Ambedkar had really said it, can it make demonetization less evil? What is more important: the actual sufferings of people or a casual utterance of Ambedkar? This misuse of Ambedkar by the vested interests has already cost the Dalits dearly but they do not wish to see it and behave in an inebriated manner taking pride in their identity. Any issue and Ambedkar is invoked as though the issue is automatically justified if he spoke in favour and invalidated if he did it against. And what of his contradictions and inconsistencies which he would just dismiss invoking Emerson's dictum. Was Ambedkar against Muslims, communists, Brahmins? Did he speak on Bhagat Singh, Adivasis, Telangana movement? How is that important? He may have said what he did in his times. How is that applicable to me in my world?

VB: Today even the Sangh Parivar is using Baba Saheb Ambedkar in its discourse. Is it because the Sangh want to use his writings on political Islam, particularly on Pakistan to create an impression as if he supported the idea of Sangh Parivar's India?

AT: Sangh Parivar has not begun using Babasaheb Ambedkar today. It started way back in 1980s. Initially, Ambedkar was an anathema to it because of his utterances against its Hindu religion. During the Hedgewar-Munje-Golwalkar phase, it kept distance from Ambedkar. They openly spoke against all that Ambedkar stood for without however naming him. The Dalit movement was vibrant enough to allow any inroads. Moreover, it seemed to believe that it could do with the Hindu population and did not need Ambedkarite Dalits to accomplish their project. But when Deoras, the lowest profile Sarsanghchalak, took over the RSS, he gave a clear strategic direction. He clearly knew that in order to accomplish their objective they could not remain away from the constitutional structure. It was important to appeal to as many communities as possible. It was during his period that Babasaheb Ambedkar was included in the list of *pratahsmaraniyas* (the ones to be remembered at the dawn). They slowly supplemented it with their saffronizing drive. They launched Samajik Samrasata Manch. Huge literature was produced and disseminated among the Dalits to show Ambedkar as friends with Hedgewar, praise of the RSS, the greatest benefactor of Hindutva, and against the Muslims, etc. They had already started their work among the Adivasis to hinduize them. The non-Ambedkarite Dalits were already with them. Now it was the turn of the Ambedkarite Dalits!

No, it is not confined to only Muslims. Wherever they found exploitable clues, they used it. It was Vinay Katiyar, the then the state president of the BJP, had

gone around spreading the canard on the eve of the 2004 election in UP that Ambedkar was against Muslims. He was showing a copy of the book *Pakistan or Partition of India* in support of his statements. It had provoked me to write a counter through a book *Ambedkar on Muslims*. Muslim, as the other, always came handy for the BJP but their canard is not confined only to Muslims. If they could saffronise Ambedkar much of the battle is won, the strategy with which Gandhi for instance coopted Ambedkar to be the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, the same strategy informs the BJP to saffronize Ambedkar. Ambedkar represents the aspiration of the Dalits; saffronizing Ambedkar implies saffronizing those aspirations.

VB: Dr Ambedkar wanted nationalisation of land but it could not happen in our constitution. What would have been the reason for the same?

AT: I do not consider the Constitution has anything to do with Ambedkar's views. His contributions have been like that of a professional. He actually spoke out his mind in the Rajya Sabha when on 2 September 1953 he resorted to the charge that he was the architect of the Constitution, by saying, "My answer is, I was a hack. What I was asked to do, I did much against my will. .... Sir, my friends tell me that I have made the Constitution. But I am quite prepared to say that I shall be the first person to burn it out. I do not want it. It does not suit anybody...." Unfortunately, later he patched up the statement by analogizing the Constitution as a temple that needed to be destroyed as the demons took its possession before the gods could be installed.

As you know, when the constituent assembly was being constituted, Ambedkar did not have any way to reach there as his party, SCF had just two seats in the 1946 elections. In that situation, he had prepared a memorandum to the constituent assembly proposing a scheme of state socialism. It proposed nationalisation of land, key and basic industries being owned and run by the state, etc. But later he managed to get elected to the CA from Jessore-Khulna constituency with the help of Jogendranath Mandal. Shortly thereafter according to Mountbatten's 3rd June plan, partition of India was announced and his membership was annulled as Jessore-Khulna went over to Pakistan. There was a patch up between the Congress and him and he got elected by the former from the Bombay Assembly. He was also made the chairman of the most important committee of the CA, the drafting committee. During the proceedings of the CA in 1948, one member Prof K T Shah (an alumnus of the London School of Economics and later (1 May 1949) the founder president of the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC), a trade union of the Revolutionary Socialist Party), had proposed an amendment seeking to declare India as a "Secular, Federal, Socialist" nation, it was Ambedkar who opposed it. He argued that "how the Society should be organised in its social and economic

side are matters which must be decided by the people themselves according to time and circumstances and it could not be laid down in the Constitution.

What could have been the reasons? Aren't the reasons obvious? The Constitution was the collective opinion of the CA finally worded by the drafting committee of which Ambedkar was the chairman. What was the composition of this CA? Of the total 389 members, 292 were representatives of the states, 93 represented the princely states and four were from commissioner provinces. Of the 292 elected members, Congress had won 208, and the Muslim League 73, who however, had refused to participate. There was overwhelming domination of Congress in the CA. How was the election done? It was done by the elected members of the assemblies formed in the February 1946 elections. The members who elected the members of the CA themselves did not represent the Indian people; only 28% people having the voting right. Where was the possibility of any radical provision being included in the Constitution? A perceptive commentator like Granville Austin is absolutely right in commenting that CA was the Congress and the Congress was India.

The CA predominantly representing rich urbanite and landlord classes could not be expected to sign its own death warrant!

VB: How would you describe Nehru-Ambedkar relationship? Was that better than Gandhi Ambedkar relationship as both were modern secularists?

AT: My impression is that Nehru never liked Babasaheb Ambedkar. Not only both were secularists but even Fabians and that similarity perhaps repelled them as the same poles do. However, Gandhi was a strategist par excellence. He knew the strategic importance of Dalits and Ambedkar as their representative. Although they clashed in RTCs, and Gandhi blackmailed him to give up separate electorates, he fully acceded to the counter demands of Ambedkar in terms of the enhanced numbers of reserved seats and volunteered to commit the Congress working for the upliftment of the Dalits. It is a different matter that after some time it did not produce much result and disillusioned Ambedkar completely.

Moreover, their persona was cast very differently. Gandhi's religio-moral bearing was accommodative. I believe it was he who influenced Nehru to accept Ambedkar in his cabinet as well as the Congress to get him elected to the CA when he lost his membership. The identity obsessed Dalits refuse to see this strategic masterstroke that chained them emotionally to the Constitution which proved to produce a society antithetical to Ambedkar's vision: sans liberty, equality and fraternity. The ignoramuses among them innocently seek proof for such an sterling intrigue, when the secrecy has been its crux. Their very arguments rather prove the value of the stratagem.

VB: How do you describe the antipathy of Ambedkarites towards Savita Ambedkar ?

AT: I would not like to speak about it. To me, it only smacks of the casteist attitude of the Ambedkarites towards that lady. She was an ordinary person, who for whatever motivation decided to marry him but the fact remains that she took care of him in his old days. To smell criminality in such a person was an ungrateful act.

VB: How would have Dr. Ambedkar responded to the whole issue of honoured killings in India as well as unattended issues of the marginalised particularly those who remain at the margins of the Dalit mainstream?

AT: He would certainly be disturbed to see castes kicking after 70 years of the working of the Constitution and despite his lifelong struggle. But is that not purely speculative? He would also be disturbed to see the aftermath of many policies that were the products of his own efforts. As a matter of fact, he was disturbed to see them in his own lifetime. Didn't he say publicly in Aga on 18 March 1956 that the educated people had ditched him? He was disturbed to see his representational logic not working. He did observe that those who occupied bureaucratic positions remained engrossed with their own families and own progression and paid no attention to the Dalits. As a matter of fact he was realising at the fag-end of his life that most things he did actually did not work. As referred to before, he had lamented that whatever he did only benefited a small section of the urban educated Dalits and he could not do anything for the rural Dalits, who constituted a vast majority. Babasaheb in his frustration had written a small note to Gaikwad, which is included in the published volumes, saying that he thought his methods did not seem to work and if communism could get Dalits immediate relief, they could become communists.

VB: There are feelings of some of the Adivasi activists that their issue was never addressed by the constituent assembly with sympathy. In fact they blame the Constituent Assembly for denying the Adivasis their identity by putting it under the Scheduled Tribe category. What is your view? Why Ambedkar be targeted for that after all making of constitution was the job of the constituent assembly and there were debates and discussions on each issue.

AT: Yes, I would agree with you that such criticism should be disposed of by the fact that the Constitution was made by the CA, Babasaheb Ambedkar just put it in the proper language. What is the point in saying that Ambedkar has not addressed the issue of Adivasis in the CA with sympathy?

Some people object to his condescending tone and 'racial' remarks while writing about Adivasis in the *Annihilation of Caste*. The passage runs as follows: "... the fact still remains that these aborigines have remained in their primitive

uncivilised state in a land which boasts of a civilisation thousands of years old. Not only are they not civilised but some of them follow pursuits which have led to their being classified as criminals. Thirteen millions of people living in the midst of civilisation are still in a savage state and are leading the life of hereditary criminals! But the Hindus have never felt ashamed of it.” [BAWS, Vol 1, p. 52]

Yes, the reference reflects to some extent his prejudice and lack of appreciation of the tribal genius of coexisting with nature, but in all, the argument he is making is innocuous. There is another passage often quoted to project his lack of appreciation of tribal identity. While discussing the issue of proportional representation, Ambedkar says that “[T]he *Aboriginal Tribes* have not as yet developed any political sense to make the best use of their political opportunities and they may easily become mere instruments in the hands either of a majority or a minority and thereby disturb the balance without doing any good to themselves...” There could be disagreements with his vision of incorporating tribal into the mainstream and not arguing for tribal autonomy whereby the tribal would be at liberty to develop themselves according to their genius and culture. But to accuse him of prejudice perhaps is going little too far.

VB: How could you bring the Dalit, Adivasi and farmers movements together? There may be contradictions among them based on their identities but the need of the hour is definitely to bring them together.

AT: As I explicated my viewpoints the prerequisite for striking unity of various struggling people is to discard castes and identify on class line. Howsoever, it may sound formidable, that is the only way out in this country. Ambedkar himself had given a prototype of such a unity in bringing the Dalits and non-Dalits to march together on Bombay road for the anti-Khodi bill. Unfortunately, the circumstances dragged him in different directions. The identity aspects, particularly the aspects of caste identities, are many times amplified by vested interests. They need to be seen realistically.

VB: What ideological difference you have with the Bahujan/Republican polity. Is it that they never approached you or do you feel that they rarely raised people’s issues?

AT: I do not have any ideological difference with anyone as long as they reflect anti-caste orientation. The Bahujan is welcome but if they mean collection of people on the basis of caste certificates, I am not for that. Same thing can be said of Republican. Ambedkar imagined Republican as the then anti-Congress, anti-communist opposition party and did not speak of castes. But his followers reduced it to be the renamed Scheduled Caste Federation. These groupings only

lead to strengthening caste identities and strengthening of caste. According to me they are not only anti-Ambedkar but also reactionary.

VB: In today's environment when corporate unambiguously shown their preference towards a Brahmanical India, how would according to your understanding, respond to current socio-political crisis in India and South Asia.

AT: Corporate are enamoured with neoliberal India and anything that helps creating it is welcome to it. There is a kind of ideological affinity between Brahmanical ideology and the neoliberalism. Although, the Congress brought these policies in but over the time the BJP demonstrated that they reflect ideological congeniality to these policies than the Congress's pragmatism. I had shown in my book *Hindutva and Dalits* how these two ideologies, Brahmanism and Neoliberalism, resonate in India. Now that the BJP has nearly decimated electoral opposition, and as the results of the recent state assembly elections portend, the BJP will have a cake walk through the next elections. That would mean official transformation of India as the Hindu Rashtra. There is nothing to imagine how this Hindu Rashtra would be. The ideologues of the RSS like Golwalkar had given enough clues as to what it means. The Hindu Rashtra is the revivalist project aimed to create the unitary rule of the elite class. It may not be the Brahmins as the Ambedkarites are prone to imagine. It may approximate to something like fascist Italy as the Hindutva ideologues have idealised. But it may not mean dismantling the façade of constitutional democracy. What they will do is to change the Constitution to the presidential system that gets them closer to the one leader paradigm. They may bring in suitable changes in electoral system so as to ensure that they may not be easily dislodged from power. I do not think it would mean any threatening changes to political configuration to the South Asia as much as it would to the internal political situation in the country. It would certainly mean decimating dissent and even physically exterminating the resistance.

# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: SOCIOECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND ETHICAL DIMENSIONS

Jon Kofas\*

## Introduction: Humanity's Future in AI-Biosynthetic World

In a few centuries or perhaps a few decades, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and biosynthetic engineering will be perfected to the degree that androids will closely resemble humans and biosynthetically engineered humans will resemble androids. Despite the nightmares of such a prospect for some scientists, humanist scholars and theologians, AI will be a dream becoming reality for those espousing Max More's philosophy of "transhumanism"; a movement whose goal is to enhance the human condition physically and intellectually through the application of scientific and technological means. (*Carvalho, Joseph, The Techno-human Shell-A Jump in the Evolutionary Gap. Sunbury Press, 2012*)

Whether one agrees with transhumanism or finds it abhorrent because it is merely another means of promoting eugenics, the race to transform science fiction dreams into a profitable reality is picking up speed by corporations and investors. Multinational corporations see the opportunity for billions in profits and that is all the motivation they need to move forward full speed, advertising AI research and development even now to prove that their company is decades ahead of the competition.

Besides corporations, the potential power and wealth in AI has universities, government-funded research institutions and privately-funded labs working to realise the dream without worrying about the potential risks involved for society at large. Like the nuclear bomb developed in the 1940s, the AI genie is out of the bottle and it has been since the 1940s when scientists from different fields contemplated building an artificial brain thus giving birth to the formalise scientific discipline of AI in 1956.

British code breaker Alan Turing is known as the Father of Computer Science, also a pioneer in the domain of artificial intelligence, was only at the theoretical stage in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when he was conducting research. Contemporaries of Turing, Ross Quillian and Edward Feigenbaum followed by Marvin Minsky who co-founded MIT's AI lab were all pioneers along with corporate giant IBM. By 2016 when Minsky died, AI was the hottest field that

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corporations, governments, and research institutions intensely pursued, some trying to beat the competition marketing robots for various tasks in the next few years. (George Zarkadakis, *In our Own Image: Savior or Destroyer? The History and Future of Artificial Intelligence*, 2017).

GOOGLE's Peter Norvig, in charge of research, made the argument that there is no turning back on AI which he views as the ultimate tool in solving problems, not considering the new problems it would create. "I don't care so much whether what we are building is real intelligence. We know how to build real intelligence...—my wife and I did it twice, although she did a lot more of the work. We don't need to duplicate humans. That's why I focus on having tools to help us rather than duplicate what we already know how to do. We want humans and machines to partner and do something that they cannot do on their own." <https://www.forbes.com/sites/gilpress/2016/12/21/artificial-intelligence-pioneers-peter-norvig-google/#7dd2f52c38c6>

In 2016, there were more than 650 business deals involving \$5 billion in startups for AI research. With Google leading in patent applications, Microsoft, Amazon, INTEL, Facebook, and Apple became heavily involved in the domain of AI. The same companies involved in the web and cell phones are now competing for the lucrative AI market of the future with different venture capitalists backing research and development (R & D). With the advent of the web and cell phones, R & D in AI has moved rapidly since Turing's era into the mainstream of government in a number of countries in the world, but especially US and China which are the main competitors in the field. According to some, AI is the global arms race of the future because of its potential in every sector including defence. <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/02/china-artificial-intelligence/516615/>; <http://www.nbcnews.com/mach/features/next-global-arms-race-aims-perfect-artificial-intelligence-n685911>

Because of immense institutional interest in AI, there has been a great deal written and debated about what it would all mean for society. There are tens of thousands of scholarly books and articles on the subject covering everything from scientific dimensions to social political and philosophical, some enthusiastic, others sceptical, and still others condemning AI as the new danger to humanity, even worse than motion pictures and science fiction novels depict. While most scholars are neither pessimistic nor as glowingly optimistic as Norvig about the miracle of AI awaiting the human race, there are those who cautiously point to both benefits and possible risks and skeptics cautious about the possible unforeseen consequences, some already evident with the cybergeneration of infophiles addicted to cell phones, computers, and video games.

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the cybergeneration growing up in cyberspace with mechanical toys, videogames, cell phones and computers relate to machines as their reality. Accepting cyberspace as parallel to experiences with people they come into direct contact, the cybergeneration is conditioned to accept alienation from empirical reality as the norm, separating existential reality they may dread from cyber reality in which they live because they enjoy the illusion of greater control from a distance. A cybergeneration individual may have dozens or even hundreds of “cyber-friends” across the country and across the world but few if any friends in school, in the neighbourhood, or at work. These cybergeneration individuals deem detachment normal because the cyber-community has replaced the empirical one where they cannot hide behind numerous masks that cyberspace permits and promotes. The conditioning of the cybergeneration is very different than the socialisation of any generation in the past that was socialised in the real community rather than in cyberspace. If this is the condition of the current cybergeneration, what would the future look like with AI robotics?  
[http://cyberikee.tripod.com/thinking\\_cyber\\_subjectivity\\_1.html](http://cyberikee.tripod.com/thinking_cyber_subjectivity_1.html)

By the end of this century, the reality of children growing up with robots, holograms and bioengineered humans will be far different than it is for the generation of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century in every respect from individual to group identity. The wealthier families will have androids in their homes, most likely helping to raise and educate their children, conditioning them about the existential nature of robots as an integral part of the family like the loveable dog or cat. The less affluent middle class would be able to rent-a-robot for the ephemeral experience of it. The lower classes will feel even more marginalised because AI robotics will be out of reach for them; in fact they will be lesser beings than the robots whose intelligence and functions will be another privilege for the wealthy to enjoy. As we will see below, the sense of identity and community will be largely impacted by AI in ways difficult to conceive today for all classes.

#### AI, Population Explosion and the Job Market

Robotics and AI goes to the heart of how existing and new industries could widen the class gap between rich and poor, and between richer advanced countries and poorer nations. AI raises many public policy questions especially in the domain of economics and politics. This is largely because resource allocation will mean that the lower classes and less developed countries will be further marginalised in the world economy. Even in the advanced countries robots will be replacing humans in the workplace with grave social consequences in the absence of a strict regulatory regime and a social safety net for the working class.

In 2016, a White House report speculated that AI will result in higher productivity, but it will also leave millions without work while creating far greater wealth inequality than already exists. Just as the Silicon Valley has created a small wealthy class without absorbing the surplus labour force at a time that the rich-poor gap has been widening in the last three decades, similarly AI will exacerbate the trend. Apologists of the market economy reject all pessimistic scenarios, insisting that AI will deliver paradise on earth for all humanity. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-4068986/Is-job-risk-White-House-report-warns-AI-soon-leave-millions-Americans-unemployed.html>;  
<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/jan/04/robots-future-society-drones>

If world population reaches 9 billion by 2050 as it is expected (38% higher than in 2010), and assuming it climbs to 11.2 billion by the end of the century with 9 billion living in Africa and Asia, it is easy to envision the sorts of sociopolitical problems that AI will create in the name of solving others, mainly for the benefit of raising corporate profits. Considering that most people will live in the non-Western World, those in the West will use AI as the pretext to keep wages low and exert their political, economic, military and cultural hegemony. Xenophobic politicians and nativist groups will use AI as a pretext to keep out Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans. Heightened xenophobia with robots to the rescue of the Caucasian minority on the planet will be another dimension of those looking for a pretext to rally rightwing populists behind an authoritarian regime. <http://www.visualcapitalist.com/animation-world-population-2100-region/>

It is a given that AI will result in many benefits in every field from surgery to the auto industry, and to an estimated 700 fields according to an Oxford University study. Just as the internet has made possible the assistance of a physician in Cleveland providing live instructions and advice to a colleague carrying out surgery in the Philippines, similarly AI will result in such miracles. The issue however is the manner that corporations and government will use AI as leverage for labour policy. When the auto industry introduced robotics in the 1970s (MIT's "Silver Arm"), auto workers reacted like Luddites in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century England because they realised that corporations used robotics as leverage to drive down wages and benefits, circumvent labour standards and policies impacting workers and their socioeconomic condition. [http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/academic/The\\_Future\\_of\\_Employment.pdf](http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/academic/The_Future_of_Employment.pdf)

In our era, fast food restaurants are among some industries that want to replace minimum wage workers with robots as soon as possible. Multinational

corporations have been threatening government not to raise the minimum wage because robots are not far off replacing humans. Just as capitalists in early 19<sup>th</sup> century England were using the machine as leverage to determine labour policy, so do corporate CEOs in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Just as the British government sided with businesses against the Luddites in the era of the Napoleonic Wars, governments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are also on the side of industry against workers.

From the perspective of the capitalist, an Android can do a much better job in everything from serving food, to serving on the Court bench as a judge without human prejudice which is the flaw that accounts human uniqueness. Although some argue that robots should not be used as health care providers or any area where human judgment of ethical considerations must be taken into account such as the judicial system, others insist that androids will serve humans better than people in every endeavour. As tools for human advancement and comfort, science and technology are a welcome development from a consumerist perspective, something that business and government use as an argument to fund R & D for AI.

AI could unlock immense potential for economic growth and development for the betterment of mankind, at least as far as its advocates are concerned. This assumes that the benefits of AI once fully implemented will be equally shared among all social classes across the entire world. Did all social classes and all nations advance equally because of the Scientific Revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the first Industrial Revolution in England in the 18<sup>th</sup> century? The rich-poor (Northern Hemisphere vs. Southern Hemisphere) divide between north-west Europe, North America and Japan that were the core of the world capitalists system became more pronounced by continued scientific, technological, and industrial development. Scientific, technological, and industrial development under the capitalist system was hardly the solution for the lack of social justice, for widespread misery owing to poverty and disease, and lack of health and education among the poor. On the contrary, the advanced capitalist countries used technology as tools of exploitation of the Southern Hemisphere and AI technology will be no different.

Greater egalitarianism and the promise of creating a techno-scientific paradise on earth is the bait that corporations and bourgeois politicians and their apologists have been throwing to the masses for the past three centuries and they continue to do it when it comes to the AI revolution. There are studies warning about the greater gap between rich and poor people and countries that robotics will cause. *“Oxford University researchers have estimated that 47 percent of U.S. jobs could be automated within the next two decades. And if even half that number is closer to the mark, workers are in for a rude awakening. In the 1800s, 80 percent of the U.S. labour*

*force worked on farms. Today it's 2 percent. Obviously mechanisation didn't destroy the economy.* “

<https://www.wired.com/brandlab/2015/04/rise-machines-future-lots-robots-jobs-humans/>

In *Robot Nation*, Stan Neilson raises the question of how a large percentage of the population will survive when corporations replace humans with robots on such a scale that half of the active workforce will not be employable. Is the future of the majority of the people to serve robots serving the rich who own the robots? Will such conditions create the atmosphere for social revolutions because AI will create greater polarisation than we have seen in modern history? After all, the contradiction of the AI revolution is the promise to make life better for all when it is entirely possible that it will make it much worse for the majority. While businesses and politicians are constantly trying to convince people that the AI revolution is a panacea, people will see for themselves that the benefits will accrue to the elites. Will there be a rise of a Luddite movement against robots and will the elites use robots to suppress revolutionary uprisings?

Advocates of AI insist that hyperbolic issues depicted in science fiction motion pictures and books have nothing to do with the practical reality of AI. The proponents of this new revolution believe that many new opportunities will be created by the new industry and robots will complement humans rather than humans competing with robots for jobs. The challenge for large corporations is to have the engineers to keep pace with the job demand. American companies have complained that government must do something to meet the demand shortage that forces corporations to recruit from India, China, Iran, Russia and other countries. India and China graduates 10 to 20 times more engineers (depending on the source) than the US where the field is not popular with students. On November 30, 2016, the computer sciences dean Andrew Moore testified before the congressional Subcommittee on Space, Science and Transportation that the US must have one million High School students now geared for engineering to maintain global competitiveness in AI. <https://www.cmu.edu/news/stories/archives/2016/november/moore-senate-testimony.html>

The engineering glut in Asia, India, China and Japan also points to the race for AI that is seen as another tool giving the competitive advantage to whichever country crosses the finish line first with far reaching implications for the economy. Considering that about half of US engineering graduates (54% Ph.D. and 42% MS) are foreign nationals, corporations have been asking government in the past ten years to provide more incentives, everything from scholarships to R & D grants to universities graduating engineers. Because of the enormous potential to the economy and defence sector, AI has become an

important element in international competition, leaving no room to question the nuances of corporate welfare for the AI industry and about what it would mean to the active workforce of the future.

### Transhumanism and Identity

Resting on the works of “transhumanist” intellectuals, the corporate, political and business advocates of AI believe the evolution of culture and identity is inevitable with the advent of robotics. Welcoming transhumanism, the advocates believe that human beings have always evolved under very different conditions throughout human history, and they will continue to evolve physically and mentally thanks to the advancements in science and technology. While Max More’s definition of transhumanism cited below touches on some risks of AI, it stresses the benefits and it is the kind of justification that AI investors, government and industry is seeking.

1. The intellectual and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally improving the human condition through applied reason, especially by developing and making widely available technologies to eliminate ageing and to greatly enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities.
2. The study of the ramifications, promises, and potential dangers of technologies that will enable us to overcome fundamental human limitations, and the related study of the ethical matters involved in developing and using such technologies. (<http://whatistranshumanism.org/>; Max More and Natasha Vita-More, *The Transhumanist Reader*, 2013)

Ever since British geneticist J. B. S. Haldane’s essay *“Daedalus: Science and the Future”* (1923), scientists advocating transhumanism have flirted with the idea of eugenics made possible by advances in science and technology. The idea of humans existing in a mechanical environment and approximating an Android could be an anathema to a theologian or a humanist. For transhumanists, this is neither blasphemy nor perversion of the human condition; only its improvement. (<http://www.nextbigfuture.com/2013/03/data-driven-eugenics-genetic.html>)

Cyberculture that has created virtual communities raises philosophical questions about identity, relationships, values, the withering of real community culture, and lifestyles that will largely be determined by the AI industry. Robot companions and infophiles are oblivious to the unknown risks that AI could pose on society, arguing that a generation or two ago sceptics of the internet had similar questions. There are those who maintain that cyberculture is

egalitarian and within it there is a counterculture movement validating its democratic nature and endless possibilities for individual and cyber-identity.

Others warn that there is also a criminal and “hate group” culture operating in everything from promoting narcotics to human slavery, from neo-Nazi elements to nihilistic cults promoting suicide, all of which could potentially become much worse with AI technology. “Social engineering, which refers to the practice of manipulating people into performing actions or divulging information, is widely seen as the weakest link in the computer security chain. Cybercriminals already exploit the best qualities in humans — trust and willingness to help others — to steal and spy. The ability to create artificial intelligence avatars that can fool people online will only make the problem worse.” [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/24/technology/artificial-intelligence-evolves-with-its-criminal-potential.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/24/technology/artificial-intelligence-evolves-with-its-criminal-potential.html?_r=0)

To apologists, cyberculture is not confined to the perimeters of the hegemonic culture of the elites simply because Silicon Valley is an integral part of corporate America. To sceptics, it has yet to be determined what role AI will play in shaping human and group identity if robotics is the domain of the business and political class. After all, large corporations and governments have a dominant role in cyberculture because they control cyberspace. Although we have no way of determining how AI will shape human identity, we do know something about the web’s influence in that regard.

In 2012, the British government commissioned a study directed by Professor Sir John Beddington on the manner the web was redefining human identity. Concluding that traditional identity based on community was becoming less relevant by web users, the study noted that there were both positive and negative influences resulting from the web community and users’ sense of identity. A segment of the population identifying with a particular sporting or cultural event could be mobilised through the web because individuals identified with that specific cause. At the same time, thousands of people could be called into political action as was the case not just with the Arab Spring uprisings, but also Occupy Wall Street and European protests. *“The internet can allow many people to realise their identities more fully. Some people who have been shy or lonely or feel less attractive discover they can socialise more successfully and express themselves more freely online”*.<http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-21084945>

According to the British report on web identity, there was a sharp rise of internet users becoming members of social networks in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, along with the prevalence of social networks that accounted for changing identity of users. This is especially in the advanced capitalist countries, but the trend has spread rapidly to India, China and other parts of the world. Given the prevalence of social networks and the web, what will AI mean to

human beings and their sense of identity and community once perfected to be almost indistinguishable from humans? If Fidel Castro and Ernesto “Che” Guevara used RADIO REBELDE effectively to undertake the Cuban Revolution in the 1950s, will future generations use AI robots for social change, for personal satisfaction, for both and much more?

Infophiles are already becoming more like the machines they use, like surreal characters in a Franz Kafka novel or a science fiction motion picture. They crave virtual reality more than empirical reality; their relationship with their cell phones or computers outlasts any other they have with human beings. If we accept the assumption that environment shapes human nature to a large degree as empiricist philosophers ever since John Locke argued, then we must accept that a techno-science environment of AI robots used by bio-engineered humans will result in robo-humans and a world where transhumanism will be the norm.

Eager to have robots behave like the ideal human, scientists are trying to create the machine that can emulate human beings when in fact the infophile has evolved into a quasi-robotic existence. The robot can be programmed to mimic human behavior, but humans are already programmed by institutions to mimic robots. Obedience is what businesses want from employees and consumers, what government expects from its docile citizenry, what religious institutions expect of the faithful. Just as robots are subject to conformity lacking free will, similarly the masses have moved in that direction as well. It often seems as though society has moved closer to the science fiction world of Fritz Lang’s METROPOLIS, but it is all in the name of ‘progress’. Given the mechanical evolution of where Capitalism is leading humanity, why should it be surprising that rich people who could afford the robot would have a problem with it as a lover or companion; after all it would be in the name of ‘progress’ and who wants to be left behind?

Future generations growing up in the world of AI will be conditioned into virtual reality as “more real” than the blood running in their veins, rejecting the real community which they cannot switch off and on like cell phones. It could be argued that the generation conditioned in infophilia has an identity not much different than our ancestors in the Age of Faith (500-1500 A.D.) who lived with the dream of achieving eternal life in Paradise. Nevertheless, the infophilia generation would be condemned to increasing alienation from the real community. As long as AI human-like robots and techno devices keep people content, at least for those with the means to afford them, humans will be aiming at techno-perfection.

To be human entails a myriad of contradictions, rational and irrational tendencies; instinctive spontaneous reaction and carefully planned; expressing free will and yearning for spiritual and emotional ventures; striving for self-



improvement in every aspect of one's character, and above all the limitless boundaries of creativity rooted in the totality of life's empirical experiences. The robot does not have these traits and is defined by programmed behaviour, or operating within certain confines even when perfected at some point in the future to account for emotional reactions and creativity. Nor does the robot have the biological sense of empathy for humans even if programmed not to harm them. This makes a robot as much the perfect soldier and police officer as it does the perfect worker to obey. In short, through robotics, corporations are designing the perfect soldier and worker and one that would be a model for humans to emulate.

Erich Fromm's theory of social necrophilia helps to explain human behaviour increasingly emulating technical devices, not merely as a byproduct of science and technology, but of sociopolitical conditioning in a world where human values are measured by inanimate objects. There is a case to be made that identity with the machine and emulating it leads to a necroculture distorting human values where inanimate objects have greater worth than human beings – materialism in a capitalist society over humanism of an anthropocentric society is the norm. (Charles Thorpe, *Necroculture*, 2016)

While force, social and legal/criminal justice pressures, along with religious institutions kept people docile and compliant in centuries past across the globe, it could be argued that science and technology are substitutes to religion as the new conduits to keep human beings in a state of conformity. Existential alienation that Jean-Paul Sartre addressed in *Being and Nothingness* is vastly exacerbated by the cyber-world in which we live. We are wired to alienation by the dominant market-oriented culture, whereas the French peasant in the 12<sup>th</sup> century was presumably content in the illusion of connectedness to the divine and hope for eternal Paradise. Either our cyber-illusions could be as fulfilling as those of our ancestors 1000 years ago, or we are merely more delusional about a false sense of hope in our cyber-controlled lives.

Beyond threatening human identity, artificial intelligence and biogenetic engineering intentionally and inadvertently will reduce even the elites into robots, affording them the illusion that because they have the means to buy the latest science and technology has to offer so they could manipulate their identity that entails control instead of subjugation to the machine. Human beings especially the wealthier ones treasure uniqueness money can buy. But instead of turning inward to develop their creative potential and build positive character traits, they turn outward to science and technology to achieve what they believe will afford them satisfaction. If the ancient Greeks created a pantheon of anthropomorphic deities to reflect the superego as well as the realisation of their limitations, why shouldn't our generation create anthropomorphic robots even

if many people feel threatened by them in this embryonic phase of androids walking down the street next to humans and difficult to distinguish? Gods and heroes are a timeless human illusion and the AI industry is willing to oblige for a price.

## AI Alienation and Sex-bots

Addictive behaviour – drugs, drinking, gambling, etc. may become worse with the AI technology becoming more prevalent because of greater alienation from the real community and retreat into a cyberculture. Although narcotics use in the US has been an integral part of society since the Nixon administration created the war on drugs to punish blacks and the anti-war left, in our cyberspace era there is some correlation between the necroculture of which cyberculture has become an integral part and widespread use of drugs in the secular West. The culture of materialism and hedonism are certainly considerations as is marginalisation and alienation of a segment of the cyberspace community. Will AI make people able to cope with alienation without resorting to narcotics and/or prescription pain killers, or will they become even more addicted because of alienation? (Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*. 2006)

The population of the US is 4.34% of the world's, but consumes 80% of the world's opioids. The US also has the top spot in the use of a number of other narcotics, including cocaine and marijuana with heroin addiction infecting all communities in the nation. It hardly comes as a surprise to most people in the age of cyberspace that human beings in much of the world are increasingly more alienated despite of the means of communications available. Symptomatic of the Industrial Revolution and rise of urbanisation, alienation is hardly the result of computers and cell phones. The sense of community once enjoyed in the village, small town neighbourhood, small social environments where people enjoyed personal interactions as in the place of worship have been replaced by cyberspace and they are about to become even more remote with the advent of robotic and artificial intelligence.

Those in the business of developing AI argue that their goal is to build robots more human than humans for everything from doing menial jobs around the house to satisfying the human in the bedroom. This raises many questions about the perimeters of human identity and uniqueness. Is the human mind more like a computer or is that only one of its many aspects? Some believe that sex robots will become widely used in a decade and by the middle of this century women will use mostly robots. Clearly, AI social robots, including sex-bots or companion-partners will be confined to those who can afford them, with much cheaper and crude versions for the broader rental market. <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2096530-why-grannys-only-robot-will->

be-a-sex-robot/; <http://www.express.co.uk/news/science/613337/Bionic-bonking-with-robots-will-become-more-common-than-normal-sex-claims-doctor>

However, there are companies lining up to manufacture and market such robots, some which exist today even if in a crude form for the mass market. “Rent-a-robot” for a few hours, days or weeks when you go on that dreamy vacation to exotic islands and robo-love seems to be the acceptable trend. If need be, your hotel could make a sex robot available for you, or you can pick one up at the airport at the same location of the self-driving car rent-a-center. The sort of uninhibited sex without boundaries that science fiction films like *Westworld* depicted will become a reality and the lines between human and android could become as blurred as in the film *Blade Runner*. This eventuality will mean that teenagers could be experimenting with robots and viewing sex with the machine as normal thus encountering difficulty with humans that have emotions, thoughts, and free will that does not respond to commands.

A segment of the male population could be opting for a *Stepford Wives* type of relationship with a female, and for those who are into alternative sex lifestyles could be enjoying the freedom of relationships with a machine without any pressures or limitations that human impose. Everything from objectification of the sex partner to taboo sexual practices will be made much easier with robots that will change how humans view sex, emotional, and intimate relationships with other people. (Jason Lee, *Sex Robots: The Future of Desire*, 2017)

Therapists could be using androids to help individuals with psychological problems ranging from fear of intimacy to pedophilia and misogyny. At the same time, there is the potential that robots will be the facilitators for psychopaths to express their distorted desires that include everything from abuse to murder. The Pandora’s Box of sex robots has already been opened by many companies around the world. Nevertheless, it is still in its very early stage when very little is known about what emerges. Researchers are not in the position of determining what will emerge until it actually does by examining a large sample of cases.

At this stage, there is interest on the part of companies making crude versions of sex robots to capture the global market craving inanimate objects that are as close to human as AI permits for the relatively low price of a moderately priced car. It would hardly be surprising if Las Vegas style AI clubs appear throughout the world as part of the adult entertainment industry. Beyond the economics of the adult entertainment robot industry that promises disease-free, problem-free relationships, there is the issue of humans becoming intimate with machines, namely, robo-love/lust that reinforces proclivities toward necroculture. <https://www.bustle.com/p/is-this-the-future-of-sex-robots-49207>

## Civil Rights and Police-State-Militarism with AI Robots

There is nothing inevitable about the polarising impact of AI as some have argued any more than there was anything inherently polarising for society with the invention of the steam engine or electricity, except in so far as technology is a part of a class-based economy bound to disadvantage the lower classes in the race for capital accumulation. The issue is how the new science technology will operate under the capitalist system as an instrument of capital accumulation and how politicians, from the populist right wing that may oppose AI to the progressive left that may favour it under a certain regulatory regime intended to benefit the broader population. <https://rationalaltruist.com/2014/05/14/machine-intelligence-and-capital-accumulation/>

Idealists and propagandists argue that there is no reason for the new science and technology to be the servant of big capital rather than of humanity. Under the existing political economy, there is little doubt that socioeconomic problems, which many scholars fear about the implications of the AI industry, will come true. Even worse, given the current trend increasingly toward an authoritarian system parading under a thin cloak of consumerist democracy, it is highly unlikely that governments will use AI for the progress of all human beings in education, the handicapped who are unable to afford special care, etc.

Government already plays a major role not just in tax breaks and subsidies to AI research and development. In the future, government regulation and the ability of intelligence agencies to use AI for surveillance as they currently use the web and cell phones will be major issues. “Machine ethics” will include the domain of civil rights and surveillance for those coming into contact with AI robots. Some social scientists are concerned that AI robots could be subject to abuse for the more thorough exploitation of citizens and consumers. This is reflected in books and science fiction movies reflecting human concern for machine rather than fellow humans. Liability for malfunctioning robots whether as security guards at the airport, or as lovers in the bedroom will be another major policy and legal issue that is currently unknown. <https://www.21centurystate.com/articles/artificial-intelligence-to-play-bigger-role-in-policing/>

In many respects, humans are already subordinated to machines in many facets of life. AI will only be an add-on. If the cell phone, computer, smart TV, even the headset are devices that permit government and corporations to monitor people, will civil liberties become non-existent in the future? How would the AI technology enhance the existing surveillance society already here for Americans whose government and corporations have their citizens under

watch? What would AI technology entail for the social contract when robots would have to be an integral part of that contract?

While some believe that robots will need protection under the law as pets or even humans, in the last analysis the robot is no different than the vacuum cleaner intended for a purpose, even if it is highly intelligent one and looks like a human fashion model. Given that the values of society are such that objects are held in higher regard than human beings, it would make sense that robots are accorded special legal treatment that not even minorities enjoys in the hands of the criminal justice system. Some advocates of AI contend that all people, but especially women, ethnic and religious minorities would be better protected by androids in the courts and criminal justice system because robots would not have human prejudices. The flip side of this is that human dignity would suffer across the board for all people subjected to AI robot surveillance and supervision. Humans could wind up becoming servants of robots in the distant future; a scenario some scientists fear. In my view, it will not be because of a robot revolution and takeover but rather the dependence of humans on robots.

The police-state militarism regime is already here concealing itself behind the very thin veil of bourgeois democracy that lacks accountability to anyone other than the capitalist class whose representatives formulate policy. The Pentagon estimates that in another 20 years the US armed forces will be composed of both humans and hi-tech machines that will be more lethal than anything we have seen in the past. Of course, the drone warfare that became popular with the Pentagon and CIA under President Barak Obama set the groundwork for machines fighting humans, destroying many innocent civilians in the process when hitting military targets in Muslim countries. <http://www.governing.com/columns/tech-talk/gov-artificial-intelligence-government-technology.html>

The US government has contracted for autonomous robot soldiers with the ability to fight in the front lines and make spontaneous strategic decisions under changing battlefield conditions. Considering that drones have been largely responsible for indiscriminate killings of civilians, how would robo-soldier do in the battlefield against the amorphous “human enemy” of soldiers and civilians? Will AI create war crime conditions much worse than we have ever seen, or will it be discriminating killing and destroying? <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-4068986/Is-job-risk-White-House-report-warns-AI-soon-leave-millions-Americans-unemployed.html#ixzz4ePxj71FR>

The same companies working on “robo-soldiers” are also working on “robocop” technology. Police departments already have serious problems with their militarization approach to law enforcement, pursuing minorities with

greater vigour in overzealous pursuits. Robo-cops could be an improvement or they could make police departments even more militaristic than they are already. Joergen Pedersen, the CEO of RE2 robotics and the chairman of the National Defense Industrial Association's robotics division argued that: *"If these robots are used in manners for which they were unintended, we would expect that the officers who are there to keep citizens and themselves safe would use good judgment where the application of lethal force is a last resort."*  
<http://www.defenseone.com/technology/2016/07/military-robotics-makers-see-future-armed-police-robots/129769/>

Pedersen's comment hardly inspires public confidence because it states that human officers will be making the decision on robocop conduct thus transferring human prejudices to the machine. Would the criminal justice system be any less racist than it is today in America because of robots if white racists are programming the robots? Considering that the robocops presence will make the officer feel invincible over citizens to a much greater degree than the real officers feel today, can the human power-hungry officer be trusted with a robocop by his side to keep order in a public demonstration against government policy about any number of issues? It is estimated that within the next two decades US police departments will be using robocops throughout major US cities. The combination of robocops and robo-soldiers could make society far more authoritarian than we have seen since the era of the Third Reich, prompting mass demonstrations against repression and polarising society even more than it is in our time.

The universal presence of robot would mean the absence of self-determination and even the absence of humans collectively determining their own destiny. If the robot will be more useful and smarter than any human with the ability to make countless calculations and decisions based on algorithms, then why not have robots and computers run society as they see fit so that people no longer blame social, business, religious, academic and political leaders? There is a very real danger that governments will program AI to manipulate public opinion even more than it is today where empirical truth is reduced to a relativist alternate reality amid a barrage of propaganda. Besides government manipulating public opinion to convince people that behind the thin veneer of democracy operates capitalist authoritarianism, why would corporations not be using AI to manipulate consumers and increase profits? The AI industry is itself a reflection of where capitalism is headed.

### Scientific and Religious Opposition to AI

AI Skeptics claim that robots and computers cannot be programmed to account for relativism in domain of morality, ideology and culture, thus failing to best serve humanity because of the inability to account for nuances in human nature,

human experiences and the unique conditions that may deviate from the pre-programmed mould. If indeed one of the great traits in human character is the capacity to doubt, to consider options, to change one's mind, to dream and aspire, to feel torn because of dilemmas owing to moral and emotional considerations, the question becomes whether AI machines can be programmed accordingly and if so what would this mean for humans.

Two public opinion polls (2007 and 2016) indicate that the majority of Americans have no fear of AI robotics in the manner that motion pictures and science fiction books depict them. Understandably, respondents were more worried about their fellow humans that intentionally cause harm rather than programmed robots. Because living standards have been declining in the age of the internet whose proponents had been promising techno-paradise on earth for all people, many do not see how things could become worse with thinking machines. In a public opinion poll conducted in 2016, 53% of the respondents replied that it is important to proceed with AI research and development, while 15% agree with some scientists warning that AI is potentially dangerous. Another 20% see no need for AI, presumably because human beings are sufficient to carry out tasks of these robots. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-vaunt-fair-poll-artificial-intelligence/>

A public opinion poll conducted in 2007, asked: *“Do you, for some reason, fear the current and/or future increase of artificial intelligence?”* RESULTS: 16.7% Yes, I find the idea of intelligent machines frightening (1002 votes); 27.1% No, I don't find intelligent machines frightening (1632 votes); 56.3% I'm not afraid of intelligent machines, I'm afraid of how humans will use the technology (3366 votes). <http://www.thinkartificial.org/web/the-fear-of-intelligent-machines-survey-results/>

To some degree, public opinion polls on AI actually reflect the concerns of scientists and scholars, including theologians and religious leaders. Most scientists are well aware of both the potential benefits and possible risks involved in the AI industry as it becomes a major segment of the economy. World renowned physicist Stephen Hawking has argued that AI has the potential of becoming the most worthy contribution to humanity but also the instrument of its destruction. Thousands of scholars have expressed serious reservations about AI but for different reasons, some for political, others for ethical, others for man's inability to control his own inventions from taking over and turning against humanity. <http://www.newsweek.com/ai-asilomar-principles-artificial-intelligence-elon-musk-550525>

Some scientists estimate that by the end of this century AI robots will have superhuman intellectual capabilities. One key question is whether AI will make

humans more intelligent or intellectually and creatively lazy because the machine will think and work for them. Some scholars believe that computer technology is actually making humans less intelligent, while others insist the computer will never be as smart as their human programmers and it is but a tool for human development. Advocates of AI argue that most likely humans will evolve along with robots, although it may take genetic modification for humans, those whose parents can afford it, to keep up with the robot. <http://nautil.us/issue/28/2050/dont-worry-smart-machines-will-take-us-with-them>

There is evidence to indicate that the average middle-class child in the Western World is more intelligent in 2017 than a child growing up in the 1950s. At the same time, however, the average child of the early 1950s used her/his brain to solve problems, whereas today's child resorts to the computer for everything from problem-solving and analysis to information and memory. The machine facilitates and speeds up research and communication, but it also makes the user intellectually lazy. Even worse, the computer can make the user cynical often unable to distinguish between what is useful and edifying and that which is useless or potentially destructive.

Although the cell phone and computer make it much easier to communicate and gather information, the web cannot think or make judgment for the individual about what is true and what has scientific, scholarly and ethical validity. This is where the vast "garbage" of the web enters into the picture, overloaded with all sorts of completely useless, untruthful, unscientific, and often harmful material that many people embrace as empirical fact; a reflection of a value judgment on the part of the web user. The ability to determine what is truly for the edification of humankind and what is useless or even harmful remains a human endeavour and one that the computer or AI robot cannot carry out in the absence of a program. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/mr-personality/201305/is-technology-making-us-stupid-and-smarter>

The debate about AI technology raises old questions about human nature. Viewed from the perspective of a neuroscientist, the debate about the mind goes to the heart of understanding consciousness (aware of one's existence and surroundings) and whether that particular feature can be replicated in a robot. While some scientists and of course advocates of AI believe it is possible to create robots that are self-aware, others are skeptical. If one takes the view of the brain as another mechanical device and consciousness limited to the definition of memories, thought processes, then it is easier to see how AI proponents would conclude robots will be no different than humans.



If we accept the brain as a machine-like device, then we are not far apart from accepting AI in every aspect of human society, including as intimate partners. Politicians of the future could be consulting robots on how to make policy decisions. Generals about to launch a military strike, or media editors deciding what news stories the public needs to see/hear and how to deliver such information could be carried out with the assistance of computers and robots. Because all of this in a primitive form takes place right now, we are already in the pre-AI phase of a robo-society where the hegemonic culture is conditioning robo-citizens into conformity.

Many theologians and philosophers believe that AI will simply make humans more like robots depriving them of their soul; a controversial position for those who doubt there is such a thing as a “soul”. One could argue that 17<sup>th</sup> century rationalist philosophers Rene Descartes, Baruch Spinoza and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz had a much more mechanical view of humans than philosophers before the Scientific Revolution when religion dominated everyone’s worldview. If the living body is an “automaton” and God the computer programmer, then why is AI so vastly different with humans playing the role of God as the Grand Programmer?

Critics, especially theologians, argue that humans are more than merely mechanical devices like a robot because they have a conscious, a soul for those who believe in its existence as either separate from or an integral part of the brain. AI technology may pose a very serious threat to religion; more so than Charles Darwin’s work on evolution that remains unacceptable even today for many yielding to religious dogma. Despite religious reservations about the new technology, houses of worship are among the first to use it to reach the faithful through computers, advertise and project their services online. If “tele-worship” is already here and now, how far behind would the houses of worship be when it comes to using AI robots in all sorts of ways, insisting they are instruments of God serving mankind’s path to salvation! Just as opportunism drives corporations to pursue research and development and government to want “robo-soldiers” and “robo-cops”, all other domains in society, including religion will adapt to the new AI technology, setting aside their dogmatic opposition. After all, what could be greater than using a robot as a model of an obedient servant to God in the name of redemption which humans ought to emulate? Isn’t blind robotic obedience what religion always expects of its faithful?

### Conclusions

Regardless of what many critics warn about the risks once AI becomes commercially viable, the potential for immense profits and power are the sole motivating factors. Naturally, there will be a high-end market, and medium to low-end for the mass consumer looking to emulate the experience of the elites

by renting these machines. Biosynthetic engineering fits into a similar elitist mould, despite the promise of providing miracles in human health and wellness for the sake of a ‘wellness society’.

Of course, the issue of scientific and technological progress goes beyond rich people having a robot as servant or an intimate partner (SEX-BOT), or deciding that their offspring must have blue eyes, blonde hair, and an athletic built. Nor is the issue about how cheaply robots in fast food restaurants can serve French fries to customers; how fast they can go in a self-driving car; or how doctors could be providing the option to those who can afford it of freeing their children from crippling hereditary diseases. AI raises a public policy debate with many dimensions for the entire social structure impacted by new science and technology in a very uneven manner. Because moral reasoning programmed into an AI device will have the inherent limitations of its programmer (s), this raises questions about social justice as a goal for society where the elites will use AI as instruments of exploitation.

AI also raises the issue of human evolution of the elites that will set themselves apart from the rest of humanity existing outside the world of AI; elites that will be able to afford the dream of super-race status; of techno-flawlessness as a way of life emulating their robot partners that would have either replaced or supplemented their human partners. This is not an issue of defining human beings so narrowly that they only fit the mould of pre-civilization hunter-gatherers, or even pre-industrial era peasant existing in self-sufficiency and immersed in religion and superstition.

In a globalised economy and culture where the means of communication are instantly bringing people closer together than at any time in history, AI will have profound ramifications working as much in favour as against the elites by groups using AI to change the status quo. Revolutionary movements, resistance, protest and dissidence will change because of AI. The dialectic will continue because AI cuts both ways, no matter what the corporate world and bourgeois politicians wish for their robots as their exclusive servants against society.

Creativity’s boundaries are as endless as the universe. While human creativity has resulted in the edification of mankind, creativity also extends to the domain of weapons of mass destruction for which there can be no possible defence for anyone with a modicum of social conscience; something that nuclear physicist Robert Oppenheimer discovered after realising the atomic bomb’s destructive potential to humanity. AI can be a useful tool that enhances the human experience but with it will come the destructive aspects used for by governments for wars and police-state methods. Realistically, no matter what ethicists, politicians, theologians and scientists argue, the voice that matters mostly in the AI industry is that of capitalists.

Among others, American billionaire Mark Cuban speculates that the world's first trillionaires will be those with the ability to master all aspects of artificial intelligence and derivative industries. No doubt, such an appetising dream has many companies investing in artificial intelligence research and development. The recognition that the new industry of the future will be operating under existing rules of capitalism is a tacit acknowledgement that AI will not solve any of the outstanding social, economic and political problems. <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2016/09/berg.htm>

Just as advancements in science and technology operating under the capitalist system did not result in social justice, the AI industry is merely a continuation of scientific, technological, industrial development and hardly a panacea for society's larger economic, social and political problems. Their hypocritical claims to the contrary aside, corporations will use AI to amass profits not to enhance the lives of human beings. This means exploiting everyone as a consumer, from small children to the elderly and the physically and mentally ill. Human beings will gravitate toward AI because they have a predisposition to acquire godlike qualities, a quest to experience even vicariously what it is like to remain forever young, immortal and as close to perfect as possible. AI will afford the opportunity to the wealthier class to enjoy the privilege of the godlike satisfaction.

# PROSECUTION OF ASSANGE IS PERSECUTION OF FREE SPEECH

Nozomi Hayase\*

US authorities are reported to have prepared charges to seek the arrest of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. This overreach of US government toward a publisher, whose principle is aligned with the U.S. Constitution, is another sign of a crumbling façade of democracy. The Justice Department in the Obama administration could not prosecute WikiLeaks for publishing documents pertaining to the US government because they struggled to determine whether the First Amendment protection applied in this case. Now, the torch of Obama's war on whistleblowers seems to have been passed on to Trump, who had shown disdain toward free speech and even called the U.S. media as "enemies of the people".

Earlier this month, CIA Director Mike Pompeo vowed to end WikiLeaks, accusing the whistleblowing site as being a "non-state hostile intelligence service often abetted by state actors like Russia." He also once called Edward Snowden a traitor and claimed that he should be executed. This declaration of war against WikiLeaks may bring a reminiscence of George W. Bush's speech in the aftermath of 9-11, where he said, 'either you are with us or against us,' and urged the nation to side with the government in his call to fight global 'war on terror.'

In a recent interview on *Democracy Now!*, a journalist at The Intercept, Glenn Greenwald, put this persecution of WikiLeaks in the context of a government assault on basic freedom. He spelt out their tactics, noting how the government first chooses a target group that is hated and lacks popular support, for they know attacking an idea or a group that is popular would meet resistance. He explained:

"... they pick somebody who they know is hated in society or who expresses an idea that most people find repellent, and they try and abridge freedom of speech in that case, so that most people will let their hatred for the person being targeted override the principle involved, and they will sanction or at least acquiesce to the attack on freedom because they hate the person being attacked".

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Demonising and scapegoating of a particular group or organisation is an alarming tendency toward an authoritarian state. At a news conference last Thursday, Attorney General Jeff Sessions also chimed in to emphasise how Assange's arrest is a priority. This targeting of WikiLeaks is a threat to press freedom and could be seen a slippery slope toward fascism.

### History Repeats Itself

Recall the Weimer Republic just before the rise of Adolf Hitler. He was successfully able to install hatred in the minds of Germans and carry out massive crimes against humanity. Americans often wondered what made many ordinary Germans accept these horrendous acts that led to the Holocaust. Now, in Trump's America, it is not so far a stretch to say that Muslims, Mexicans and other immigrants are becoming like the new Jews, to be a scapegoated under this right-wing administration.

Once he gained power, Hitler made his word to be above the law. Trump, in his first 75 days in office, turned the rhetoric of hatred into action through passing executive order barring refugees and citizens from seven majority Muslim nations from entering into the United States and enacting mass deportation with the ICE agents acting like Nazi Gestapo to track immigrants. Draconian policies that were more under the radar during the Obama administration are now becoming overt. More and more, Americans might now be able to get under the skin of those 'Good Germans'. In Hitler's Germany, persecution of Jews didn't happen overnight. It was a gradual escalation. The first thing Hitler did was to control media and create an arm of propaganda. By using this weapon of mass deception, the Nazi Regime garnered popular support on a platform of racial identity and nationalism and managed to brainwash citizens with the Nazi-Auschwitz ideology of anti-Semitism. Under the guise of fighting communism, the Party suppressed civil liberties, free speech and association and expanded its power by demonising whoever stood in their way.

### Identity Politics and Machination of Power

The Trump campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" spoke to middle-class America and disfranchised populations who were fed up with corporate plunder enacted under both Democrats and Republicans. His message of putting America first also struck a chord with white nationalists. By channelling their frustration and desires, Trump successfully created a fertile soil to harvest identity politics that is now coming to resemble Nazi's emphasis of nationalism and racial supremacy.

No one can deny how the Trump victory empowered white supremacist groups that until now were more on the fringe. These identity politics that seem to be spreading around the world tend to contract one's heart. Whatever the ideology

is, progressive or conservative, anyone gripped with it falls into a narrow vision of humanity and loses perspective. This identity, fixed by ideology becomes a point of manipulation, to be exploited by those in power and used to divide everyone into *Us vs. Them*.

When people lose capacity for dialogue, they become deaf to their own humanity. Then, the state can easily exert control over the masses and seize power through manufacturing wars of all against all. We are now seeing a new civil war unfolding in America. The city of Berkeley is becoming a battleground. In February, riots erupted on the UC Berkeley campus when protesters shut down an event scheduled for right wing commentator Milo Yiannopoulos. Also, at the recent free speech rally on Patriot Day, Trump supporters, along with members of far-right nationalists clashed with local activists and anti-fascist groups. Ironically, the birthplace of the Free Speech Movement in the 60s turned into a bloody fight, devolving into violence, with each camp acting totally contrary to the principles of free speech.

#### Height of McCarthy Era Hysteria

This attack against Julian Assange and WikiLeaks is not something new. Consorted efforts to delegitimize the organisation through character assassination and smearing of Assange have been persistent, ever since the site came to public prominence. Assange was called a high-tech terrorist by former Vice President Joe Biden and incitement for his murder came from high-level US officials. Assange has been holed up in asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy for 5 years, despite a UN ruling clearly stating his detention is unlawful. This is not the first time he and his organisation were declared to be enemies of the State. In 2012, the US military had designated them as such enemies. So what is different now? The head of the CIA and the Department of Justice's declaration of war against WikiLeaks comes in a particular political climate. These efforts to arrest Assange, now backed by President Trump, are taking place at the height of a kind of McCarthy-era style hysteria.

Just like the recent US government cruise missile attacks on Syria, carried out without any investigation or evidence that Assad was the one using chemical weapons, the echo-chamber of the liberal media has been amplifying their own speculation of WikiLeaks alleged source of DNC leaks and Podesta emails. With the narrative that Russia meddled in the US election, they branded Assange as a Putin sympathiser and/or Russian agent without backing it up. The Left's seeming irrational obsession with Russia is also rooted in these identity politics, namely their allegiance to the Democratic Party and America's post-cold war national identity, defined by a hysteric red scare and its mission of defeating communism.

## Whistleblowers as Democracy's Last Line of Defense

In the wake of the possible arrest of Assange, the ACLU noted that “prosecuting Wikileaks would set a dangerous precedent that the Trump administration would surely use to target other news organisations.” We must never forget where hatred-driven identity politics led Nazi Germany. Martin Niemöller, the famous Protestant pastor who spoke against the rise of Hitler and spent years in concentration camps, reminds us of this:

“First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out – Because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out – Because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out – Because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me.”

Fascism begins in the mind. Its seed grows whenever we accept hatred toward someone who has different or opposing views. Enclosure happens when we suspend critical thinking in the hype of fear and turn the other into an enemy. It happens every time we close our hearts, shunning those who have been made into our enemies. Democracy dies whenever we choose to pick up the sword of ideology, rather than choosing to uphold our common humanity and instead engage in a self-righteous crusade of defeating the enemy.

When Trump signed a Muslim ban into law, outrage spread nationwide and people rallied at airports. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit refused to reinstate Trump's travel ban and so the solidarity of the people won. As Trump pressured to cut funds in sanctuary cities, these cities defied the order, assuring to maintain their immigrant policy. Now, the US government is coming after WikiLeaks, a transnational journalistic organisation, who has no allegiance to any nation, governments or corporations, only to the conscience of ordinary people around the world.

In the darkness that hovers in the veil of ideology, whistleblowers shine a light, through which we are able to recover perspectives that were lost. WikiLeaks, through their act of publishing, lets everyone see views that are forbidden, marginalised or shunned. They are last line of defence and are on the front line in this battle for democracy. One may dislike WikiLeaks and disagree with Assange, but whatever one's opinion, we all need to stand up against this erosion of our civil liberties. Prosecution of WikiLeaks is persecution of free speech. Setting this precedent moves us down a dangerous path.

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# RAHUL PANDITA'S NEW INDIA: A HINDUTVA INDIA ON THE ASHES OF DEMOCRATIC SECULAR INDIA

Shamsul Islam\*

*It is in response to Rahul Pandita's piece 'Gorakhpur and the Ghost of Gangadhar Adhikari: Whether liberals like it or not, the story of Hindu consolidation is not over yet' appeared in Open Magazine on March 24, 2017. My response is a lengthy one, as reproduction of many original documents from the RSS/Hindutva archives is needed to evaluate many beliefs of Rahul Pandita. This detailed response can be handy resource material to challenge the justification of Hindutva rule in India by the Hindutva zealots and characters who as fence-sitters were just waiting India to be stormed by the Hindutva gang to join the latter. Link for Rahul Pandita's write-up: <https://www.openthemagazine.com/article/cover-story/gorakhpur-and-the-ghost-of-gangadhar-adhikari>*

It was about 10 days after Modi became PM of India in 2014, an old acquaintance of mine, a known RSS sympathiser, phoned me up and in a tone which was not friendly, warned that since a Hindu government had come to rule India after 1000 years I should be careful while writing on RSS and Hindutva politics and organizations. Realizing that he was not joking but serious about his message, without challenging his knowledge of history (that how despite 'Muslim' and 'Christian' rules of 1000 years Hindus remain 80% of the population and in control of the national wealth), I shared the fact with him that Modi had won on development plank and as PM he and his ministers had taken oath to uphold a democratic-secular polity, so how their rule could be described as a Hindu rule. He did not want any argument and ended the call by telling me that world would know it soon and I would be doing on my peril if I failed to understand this phenomenon of the rise of Hindu power.

He was not the only one who announced the heralding of the Hindu rule in 2014. A senior RSS leader from UP, Rajeshwar Singh believing in the same thesis declared that by 2021, all Muslims and Christians would have to convert to Hinduism or leave India.<sup>35</sup> The perennial hater of Muslims, renowned VHP

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<sup>35</sup> <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/dharm-jagran-samiti-leader-vows-to-create-hindu-rashtra-by-2021/1/407660.html>



leader, Ashok Singhal described crowning of Modi as PM a “Hindu revolution” which would culminate in “Hindu world” by 2030.<sup>36</sup>

The mad frenzy around the ‘ushering’ of Hindu rule in India in 1914, forced one of the most decorated police officers in Independent India, Julio Ribeiro to lament (March 2015) that, “in my 86th year, I feel threatened, not wanted, reduced to a stranger in my own country” and being condemned “for practising a religion that is different from theirs. I am not an Indian anymore, at least in the eyes of the proponents of the Hindu Rashtra”.<sup>37</sup>

Interestingly, India was announced to be under Hindu rule in 2014, despite BJP securing only 31% of the polled votes and NDA committing itself to be loyal to democratic-secular Indian Constitution. Even if the votes polled by Shiv Sena (1.9%) which stood for a Hindu Rashtra were included, the tally would be 32.9% votes. So according to RSS and flag-bearers of Hindutva politics, 32.9% constituted majority out of 100% inventing a new Hindutva theory of calculating majority!

A similar Hindutva frenzy is brazenly on view after BJP and its allies’ clean sweep of 2017 UP assembly elections and subsequent installing of Mahant Yogi Adityanath as CM of the State. The RSS always claimed to be a cultural organisation but Rakesh Sinha who goes around as an ‘ideologue’ of the RSS commenting on the UP victory wrote, that “RSS dominates India’s politics”.<sup>38</sup> What he wanted to emphasise that though RSS had not contested the elections but it was Hindutva agenda of RSS which had won. Rahul Pandita’s elation on Adityanath’s crowning is to be read and believed. Some of the laudatory comments are worth noting: “After Yogi Adityanath was declared Uttar Pradesh’s Chief Minister, his supporters and closest supporters have been arguing that he deserves a chance. That, he is getting already, whether some people like it or not. On social media, his supporters have mauled even right-wingers who have expressed their disagreement with this decision; they see Adityanath’s shift from Gorakhpur to Lucknow as the new dawn of militant Hindutva.”

Rahul Pandita is sure that despite Adityanath’s statement in “the Lok Sabha that his government will uphold law and order and that there will be no discrimination against anyone” there will be “an assertion on Hindutva lines

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<sup>36</sup> <http://hinduexistence.org/2015/07/18/india-will-be-hindu-rashtra-by-2020-and-a-hindu-world-by-2030-ashok-singhal/>

<sup>37</sup> <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/i-feel-i-am-on-a-hit-list/>

<sup>38</sup> <http://indianexpress.com/article/blogs/rss-rashtriya-swayamsevak-sangh-need-to-be-indianised-4590377/>

even if he ensures that no communal riots break out in the state”. The Hindutva assertion means “strict action against cow slaughter, while the sealing of some slaughterhouses is underway. The new government is allocating 25 acres of land for setting up a Ramayana museum in Ayodhya”.

Rahul Pandita seems to have intimate knowledge of Hindutva mind-set of UP chief minister when he tells, “unlike his predecessors, Adityanath will have no use of the symbolism of skullcaps and chequered Arab scarves”. Without taking any stand on anti-Muslim and anti-women ideas of UP CM Rahul Pandita goes to glorify him in the following words: “Those who stand in opposition to Adityanath may put up video clip after clip of his anti-Muslim and anti-women remarks on social media. But those who are happy with his ascension to UP’s throne see this as a special attribute and not a handicap.”

Modi’s victory in 2014 which was declared to be the beginning of Hindu rule is downgraded as Rahul Pandita writes that in 2014 “the vote was overwhelmingly for Modi, rather than the BJP. It is the same this year in UP, except that a clear consolidation of Hindu votes has happened this time, putting the BJP at an advantage which it is likely to be replicated in other elections”. The cat is out of the bag when Rahul Pandita adds that “2017 vote is not for bridges or hospitals, but for Hindutva. This election has also exposed the implausibility of a Dalit-Muslim alliance. Whereas a significant number of Dalits and other backwards castes voted for Modi, it is also an election where the Muslim vote has become irrelevant”. And the concluding prophetic lines of Rahul Pandita convey in totality what he wants to convey finally. For him, “Adityanath is indeed the new reality—a reality that will have more layers in the coming days. This is New India. How it plays out is another matter”.

Rahul Pandita is absolutely right in underlining the fact that RSS/BJP fought and won UP elections openly on polarising Hindutva agenda. Leading the charge was PM Modi whose main plank was appeasement of Muslims in UP by non-BJP governments. The building of Ram temple at the place of demolished mosque at Ayodhya was promised both directly and indirectly. The UP election was to be fought on Anti-Muslim agenda was made clear in the beginning itself when RSS/BJP decided to field not a single Muslim candidate. Rahul Pandita is right when he says that UP vote for Aditya is vote for Hindutva, which even Modi could not secure, as never in the history of elections RSS/BJP used anti-Muslim/Islam rhetoric of this magnitude. Shockingly the Election Commission of India remained silent spectator to this polarising game.

But Rahul Pandita who declares the whole of UP under the hegemony of Hindutva as a result of “clear consolidation of Hindu votes” misses one crucial fact that BJP with its allies secured only 42+ percent votes in this election, BJP securing only 39.7% of the polled votes individually. If all votes polled in favour

of BJP and its allies were for Hindutva UP, how we should categorise 58% of the voters who voted against BJP and its allies. Should these not be categorised as anti-Hindutva vote? But according to Hindutva mathematics 31% votes for Modi in 2014 and 42+ percent votes for BJP and allies in UP in 2017, become 100% votes for declaring India under Hindutva!

Rahul Pandita in classical Hindutva model churns out the oft-repeated argument that “consolidation of Hindu votes” was a reaction to “the turning of a blind eye to Muslim fundamentalism, as practised by the Congress party and followed zealously by the Left and by Lohiaites, and their utter disregard of the Hindu identity have led to a large chasm that the Modi-led BJP has effectively filled. As more and more Hindus think their interests are being threatened, they are gravitating towards a more assertive form of Hindutva”. Later in his masterpiece he adds, more names to the list like mainstream Left, extreme Left, Kobad Ghandy, Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Amnesty International for facilitating the birth and growth of “Muslim sub-nationalism and fundamentalism” (I feel instead of Muslim it should be Islamic) and CPI leader, Gangadhar Adhikari.

This can be described only as total disregard of history and facts as those were unveiled. The names listed by Rahul Pandita as enemies of Hinduism and Hindus may have many-many more ‘crimes’ to explain and defend but to claim that Hindus coming under the umbrella of Hindutva was due to these enemies is a blatant lie.

We need to refresh our memory to know few significant facts about growth of Hindu nationalism and Hindutva. The latter came into existence when none of the individuals/organisations listed as inimical to Hindus were even born.

#### TWO-NATION THEORY PROPOUNDED BY HINDU NATIONALISTS

Hindus and Muslims were not one nation, this thesis developed at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century in Bengal. Raj Narain Basu (1826–1899), the maternal grandfather of Aurobindo Ghosh, and his close associate Naba Gopal Mitra (1840-94) can be called the co-fathers of two-nation theory and Hindu nationalism in India. Basu organised meetings proclaiming that Hinduism despite its Casteism presented a much higher social idealism than ever reached by the Christian or Islamic civilisation. Basu not only believed in the superiority of Hinduism over other religions but also was a fervent believer in Casteism. He was the first person to conceive the idea of a Maha Hindu Samiti (All India Hindu Association) and helped in the formation of Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, a precursor of Hindu Mahasabha. He believed that through this organisation

Hindus would be able to establish an Aryan nation in India.<sup>39</sup> He visualised a powerful Hindu nation not only overtaking India but the whole world. He also saw, “the noble and puissant Hindu nation rousing herself after sleep and rushing headlong towards progress with divine prowess. I see this rejuvenated nation again illumining the world by her knowledge, spirituality and culture, and the glory of Hindu nation again spreading over the whole world.”<sup>40</sup>

Nabha Gopal Mitra started organising an annual Hindu Mela. It used to be a gathering on the last day of every Bengali year and highlighted the Hindu nature of all aspects of Hindu Bengali life and continued uninterrupted between 1867 and 1880. Mitra also started a National Society and a National Paper for promoting unity and feelings of nationalism among Hindus. Mitra argued in his paper that the Hindus positively formed a nation by themselves. According to him, “the basis of national unity in India is the Hindu religion. Hindu nationality embraces all the Hindus of India irrespective of their locality or language.”<sup>41</sup>

C. Majumdar, a keen observer of the rise of Hindu nationalism in Bengal who is described as a Hindu historian by Hindutva camp, had no difficulty in arriving at the truth that “Nabha Gopal forestalled Jinnah’s theory of two nations by more than half a century.”<sup>42</sup> The Arya Samaj in northern India aggressively preached that Hindu and Muslim communities in India were, in fact, two different nations. Bhai Parmanand (1874–1948), a leading light of the Arya Samaj in northern India, also a leader of both Congress and Hindu Mahasabha, produced an enormous anti-Muslim literature, highlighting the differences between the two in the past. One of the pamphlets thus described the irreconcilability of Hindus and Muslims: “In history, the Hindus revere the memory of Prithvi Raj, Pratap, Shivaji and Beragi Bir, who fought for the honour and freedom of this land (against the Muslims), while the Mahomedans look upon the invaders of India like Muhammad Bin Qasim and rulers like Aurangzeb as their national heroes.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Singh, Nagendra K., *Encyclopaedia of the Indian Biography*, APH Publications, Delhi, 2000, pp. 588–590.

<sup>40</sup> Cited in Majumdar, R. C., *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, vol. I, Firma KL Mukhpadhyay, Calcutta, 1971, pp. 295–296.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Parmanand, Bhai in pamphlet titled, ‘The Hindu National Movement’, cited in B.R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or the Partition of India*, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1990, pp. 35–36, (first Published December 1940, Thackers Publishers, Bombay).

Long before V. D. Savarkar (1883-1966) and M. S. Golwalkar (1906-73), who laid down elaborate theories of Hindu *Rashtra* allowing no place for minorities, it was Bhai Parmanand [1876-1947] who declared in the beginning of the twentieth century that followers of Hinduism and Islam in India were two different peoples because Muslims followed a religion which originated in Arab lands. Parmanand specialised in writing popular literature in Urdu in which the main emphasis would be on Hindus being true sons of India and Muslims as outsiders.<sup>44</sup> As early as 1908–9, Parmanand called for the total exchange of Hindu and Muslim populations in two specific areas. According to his plan, elaborated in his autobiography, “The territory beyond Sind should be united with Afghanistan and the North-West Frontier Province into a great Musalman [*sic*] kingdom. The Hindus of the region should come away, while at the same time Mussalman in the rest of India should go and settle in this territory.”<sup>45</sup>

Lajpat Rai (1865-1928), a renowned leader simultaneously of Congress, Hindu Mahasabha and Arya Samaj, long before Mohammad Ali Jinnah pronounced his poisonous two-nation theory in 1939 and demanded a ruinous partition of India in 1940, the Mahasabha leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai and Savarkar had openly advocated this theory...<sup>46</sup> In 1989, Lajpat Rai published an article for the Indian National Congress in the *Hindustan Review* in which he declared that “Hindus are a nation in themselves because they represent all their own.”<sup>47</sup>

In fact, it was Lala who proposed partition of India on communal lines. His plan of partitioning India of 1924 went like this: “Under my scheme the Muslims will have four Muslim States: (1) The Pathan Province of the North-Western Frontier (2) Western Punjab (3) Sindh and (4) Eastern Bengal. *If there are compact Muslim communities in any other part of India, sufficiently large to form a Province, they should be similarly constituted. But it should be distinctly understood that this is not a united India. It means a clear partition of India into a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India.*”<sup>48</sup>

Another Hindutva icon, B. S. Moonje was another prominent Congress leader (who equally dabbled in organising the Hindu Mahasabha and later helped the RSS in its formation) who carried forward the flag of Hindu Separatism long before Muslim League’s Pakistan resolution of March 1940. While addressing

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<sup>44</sup> Parmanand, *Hamare Qaumi Hero*, Hindu Bookshop, Lahore, nd.

<sup>45</sup> Parmanand, *Bhai, The Story of My Life*, S. Chand, Delhi, 1982, p. 36.

<sup>46</sup> Noorani, A. G., ‘Parivar & Partition’, *Frontline*, Chennai, August 22, 2014, p. 52.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53.

<sup>48</sup> Rai, Lala Lajpat, ‘Hindu-Muslim Problem XI’, *The Tribune*, Lahore, December 14, 1924.

the third session of the Oudh Hindu Mahasabha in 1923, he declared: "Just as England belongs to the English, France to the French, and Germany to the Germans, India belongs to the Hindus. If Hindus get organised, they can humble the English and their stooges, the Muslims ... The Hindus henceforth create their own world which will prosper through *shuddhi* [literally meaning purification, the term was used for conversion of Muslims and Christians to Hinduism] and *Sangathan* [organisation]."<sup>49</sup>

All such ideas of declaring India as a Hindu nation and excluding Muslims and Christians from it were further crystallized by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in his controversial book *Hindutva* as early as 1923. According to his definition of the Hindu nation Muslims and Christians remained out of this nationhood because they did not assimilate into Hindu cultural heritage or adopt Hindu religion. Savarkar decreed: "Christians and Mohamedan [*sic*] communities, who were but very recently Hindus and in majority of cases had been at least in their first generation most willing denizens of their new fold, claim though they might a common fatherland, and an almost pure Hindu blood and parentage with us cannot be recognized as Hindus; as since their adoption of the new cult they had ceased to own Hindu *Sanskriti* [culture] as a whole. They belong or feel that they belong, to a cultural unit altogether different from the Hindu one. Their heroes and their hero-worship, their fairs and their festivals, their ideals and their outlook on-life, have now ceased to be common with ours."<sup>50</sup>

Savarkar, the originator of the politics of *Hindutva*, later developed the most elaborate two-nation theory. While delivering the presidential address to the 19th session Hindu Mahasabha at Ahmedabad in 1937, Savarkar unequivocally declared: "as it is, there are two antagonistic nations living side by side in India, several infantile politicians commit the serious mistake in supposing that India is already welded into a harmonious nation, or that it could be welded thus for the mere wish to do so. These were well meaning but unthinking friends who take their dreams for realities... Let us bravely face unpleasant facts as they are. India cannot be assumed today to be a unitarian and homogeneous nation, but on the contrary, there are two nations in the main: the Hindus and the Moslems, in India."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Cited in Dhanki, J. S., Lala Lajpat Rai and Indian Nationalism, S Publications, Jullundur, 1990, p. 378.

<sup>50</sup> A Maratha [V. D. Savarkar], *Hindutva*, VV Kelkar, Nagpur, 1923, p. 88.

<sup>51</sup> Savarkar, V. D., *Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya: Hindu Rashtra Darshan*, [Collected works of Savarkar in English] vol. 6, Maharashtra Hindu Sabha, Poona, 1963, p. 296.

Reacting to Savarkar's propagation of two-nation theory, B R Ambedkar as a contemporary of both Savarkar and Jinnah wrote: "Strange as it may appear, Mr Savarkar and Mr Jinnah, instead of being opposed to each other on the one nation versus two nations issue, are in complete agreement about it. Both not only agree but insist that there are two nations in India—one the Muslim nation and the other the Hindu nation."<sup>52</sup>

This politics of two-nation propagated by the Hindutva camp got further impetus with the appearance of the most prominent ideologue of RSS, M. S. Golwalkar's *We or Our Nationhood Defined* in 1939. Total assimilation or ethnic cleansing was the *mantra* prescribed by Golwalkar to deal with the problem of minorities in India. According to him, older nations solved their minorities' problem by not recognising any separate elements in their polity. Muslims and Christians, who were 'emigrants', must get themselves naturally assimilated into the principal mass of population, the 'national race'. Golwalkar while declaring the determination to cleanse minorities from India on the models of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy where Jews had been almost annihilated warned: "If they do not do so, they live merely as outsiders, bound by all the codes and conventions of the nation, at the sufferance [*si*] of the nation and deserving of no special protection, far less any privilege or rights. There are only two courses open to the foreign elements, either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and to quit the country at the sweet will of the national race. That is the only sound view on the minorities' problem. That is the only logical and correct solution. That alone keeps the national life healthy and undisturbed. That alone keeps the nation safe from the danger of a cancer developing into its body politic of the creation of a state within the state. From this standpoint, sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment not even citizen's rights. There is, at least should be, no other course for them to adopt. We are an old nation; let us deal, as old nations ought to and do deal, with the foreign races, which have chosen to live in our country."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ambedkar, BR, *Pakistan Or the Partition of India*, Govt. of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1990, p. 142.

<sup>53</sup> Golwalkar, M. S., *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, Bharat Publications, Nagpur, 1939, pp. 47-48.

The RSS English organ, *Organizer*, on the very eve of Independence when India had decided to begin its historic journey as a democratic-secular polity, rejected the whole concept of a composite nation (14 August 1947, editorial title ‘Whither’): “Let us no longer allow ourselves to be influenced by false notions of nationhood. Much of the mental confusion and the present and future troubles can be removed by the ready recognition of the simple fact that in Hindusthan only the Hindus form the nation and the national structure must be built on that safe and sound foundation [...] the nation itself must be built up of Hindus, on Hindu traditions, culture, ideas and aspirations”.

There is no doubt that Muslim nationalists flying the banner of Muslim separatism led by MA Jinnah succeeded in destroying an all-inclusive India but there was no dearth of Hindu nationalists who set the ball rolling for it, former borrowing it from the latter.

RSS IS NOT JUST ANTI-THETICAL TO MUSLIMS, BUT TO A DEMOCRATIC-SECULAR INDIA AS WELL

For RSS Casteism, Hindu Nation and Hindu Nationalism are Synonymous

‘Hindusthan’ for Hindus only did not mean that it was for all Hindus. The Hindu nation would be governed by *Manusmriti* which decrees sub-human status to Sudras and women. Hinduism and regime of Casteism were declared to be synonymous. According to the most prominent ideologue of RSS, MS Golwalkar, the Hindu People is, “the *Virat Purusha*, the Almighty manifesting Himself...it is clear from the following description of the Almighty in *Purusha Sukta* wherein it is stated that sun and moon are his eyes, the stars and the skies are created from His *nabhi* (navel) and *Brahmin is the head, Kshatriya the hands, Vaishya the thighs and Shudra the feet*. This means that the people who have this fourfold arrangement, i.e., the Hindu People, is our God. This supreme vision of Godhead is the very core of our concept of ‘nation’ and has permeated our thinking and given rise to various unique concepts of our cultural heritage.”<sup>54</sup>

Golwalkar continued to preach for the regime of Casteism which is synonymous with Untouchability even after Independence. In a speech in 1961 he declared: “Today we try to run down the Varna system through ignorance. But it was through this system that a great effort to control possessiveness could be made...In society some people are intellectuals, some are expert in production and earning of wealth and some have the capacity to labour. Our ancestors saw these four broad divisions in the society. The Varna system means nothing else but a proper co-ordination of these divisions and an

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<sup>54</sup> M. S. Golwalkar, Bunch of Thoughts, (Bangalore: Sahitya Sindhu, 1996 edition), 36-37.



enabling of the individual to serve the society to the best of his ability through a hereditary development of the functions for which he is best suited. If this system continues a means of livelihood is already reserved for every individual from his birth.”<sup>55</sup>

How Untouchability as an offshoot of Casteism continues to be practised in the RSS fraternity, the 2017 UP elections present a shocking example. BJP candidate from Iglas Reserved constituency (with 80% Jat votes), Diler, a Dalit while campaigning used to sit on floor at upper Caste houses and carry his own tumbler for drinking water/tea. He is MLA now. Rahul Pandita needs to read the story to know about the nature of Hindu consolidation in UP via link: <http://www.countercurrents.org/2017/02/15/return-of-untouchability/>

### Golwalkar's Racism: Denigrating Kerala Hindus especially Women

Golwalkar who was also boss of RSS during 1940-1973, was invited to address the faculty and students of the School of Social Science of Gujarat University on December 17, 1960. In this address, while underlying his firm belief in the Race Theory, he touched upon the issue of cross-breeding of human beings in the Indian society in history. He said: “Today experiments in cross-breeding are made only on animals. But the courage to make such experiments on human beings is not shown even by the so-called modern scientist of today. If some human cross-breeding is seen today it is the result not of scientific experiments but of carnal lust. Now let us see the experiments our ancestors made in this sphere. In an effort to better the human species through cross-breeding the Namboodri Brahmanas of the North were settled in Kerala and a rule was laid down that the eldest son of a Namboodri family could marry only the daughter of Vaishya, Kshatriya or Shudra communities of Kerala. Another still more courageous rule was that the first off-spring of a married woman of any class must be fathered by a Namboodri Brahman and then she could beget children by her husband. Today this experiment will be called adultery but it was not so, as it was limited to the first child.”<sup>56</sup>

The above statement of Golwalkar was highly worrying in many respects. Firstly, it proved that Golwalkar believed that India had a superior Race or breed and also an inferior Race which needed to be improved through cross-breeding. Secondly, a more worrying aspect was his belief that Brahmans of the North (India) and specially Namboodri Brahmans, belonged to a superior Race. Due to this quality, Namboodri Brahmans were sent from the North India to Kerala to improve the breed of inferior Hindus there. Interestingly, this was

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<sup>55</sup> M. S. Golwalkar cited in Organizer, January 2, 1961, pp. 5 & 16.

<sup>56</sup> M. S. Golwalkar cited in Organizer, January 2, 1961, p. 5.

being argued by a person who claimed to uphold the unity of Hindus world over. Thirdly, Golwalkar as a male chauvinist believed that a Namboodri Brahman male belonging to a superior Race from the North only could improve the inferior human Race from South. For him wombs of Kerala's Hindu women enjoyed no sanctity and were simply objects of improving breed through intercourse with Namboodri Brahmins.

Astonishingly, Golwalkar expressed these Racist, anti-women and anti-egalitarian views not in the presence of some uneducated or lumpens crowd but before a noble gathering of gentry consisting of the faculty and students of a prime university in Gujarat.

What is going to be the status of Sudras and women in Hindutva rule of the dreams of RSS can be understood by a glance of some of the decrees of Manu about them. One can only shiver after going through the following Manu Codes.

Laws of Manu concerning Dalits/Untouchables<sup>57</sup>

1. For the sake of the prosperity of the worlds (the divine one) caused the Brahmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, and the Sudra to proceed from his mouth, his arm, his thighs and his feet. (I/31)
2. One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Sudras, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes. (I/91)
3. Once-born man (a Sudra), who insults a twice-born man with gross invective, shall have his tongue cut out; for he is of low origin. (VIII/270)
4. If he arrogantly teaches Brahmanas their duty, the king shall cause hot oil to be poured into his mouth and into his ears. (VIII/272)
5. With whatever limb, a man of a low caste does hurt to (a man of the three) highest (castes), even that limb shall be cut off; that is the teaching of Manu. (VIII/279)
6. He who raises his hand or a stick, shall have his hand cut off; he who in anger kicks with his foot, shall have his foot cut off. (VIII/280)
7. A low-caste man who tries to place himself on the same seat with a man of a high caste, shall be branded on his hip and be banished, or (the king) shall cause his buttock to be gashed. (VIII/281)

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<sup>57</sup> This selection of Manu's Codes is from F. Max Muller, *Laws of Manu* (Delhi: LP Publications, 1996; first published in 1886). The bracket after each code incorporates number of chapter/number of code according to the above edition.

As per the Manu Code if Sudras are to be given most stringent punishments for even petty violations/actions, the same Code of Manu is very lenient towards Brahmins. Shloka 380 in Chapter VIII bestowing profound love on Brahmins, decrees:

“Let him never slay a Brahmana, though he has committed all (possible) crimes; let him banish such an (offender), leaving all his property (to him) and (his body) unhurt.”

Laws of Manu concerning women

1. Day and night woman must be kept in dependence by the males (of their (families), and, if they attach themselves to sensual enjoyments, they must be kept under one's control. (IX/2)
2. Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence. (IX/3)
3. Women must particularly be guarded against evil inclinations, however trifling (they may appear); for, if they are not guarded, they will bring sorrow on two families. (IX/5)
4. Considering that the highest duty of all castes, even weak husbands (must) strive to guard their wives. (IX/6)
5. No man can completely guard women by force, but they can be guarded by the employment of the (following) expedients:
6. Let the (husband) employ his (wife) in the collection and expenditure of his wealth, in keeping (everything) clean, in (the fulfilment of) religious duties, in the preparation of his food, and in looking after the household utensils.
7. Women do not care for beauty, nor is their attention fixed on age; (thinking), ‘(It is enough that) he is a man,’ they give themselves to the handsome and to the ugly. (IX/14)
8. Through their passion for men, through their mutable temper, through their natural heartlessness, they become disloyal towards their husbands, however carefully they may be guarded in this (world). (IX/15)
9. (When creating them) Manu allotted to women (a love of their) bed, (of their) seat and (of) ornament, impure desires, wrath, dishonesty, malice, and bad conduct. (IX/17)

10. For women, no (sacramental) rite (is performed) with sacred texts, thus the law is settled; women (who are) destitute of strength and destitute of (the knowledge of) Vedic texts, (are as impure as) falsehood (itself), that is a fixed rule. (IX/18)

## DENIGRATING THE NATIONAL FLAG

RSS and its offshoots keep on organising ‘Tiranga’ (National Flag) yatras and demand that all Muslim madrasa must unfurl Tricolour on its buildings. Let us compare these with RSS denigration of our national Flag. The RSS English organ *Organizer* in its editorial (titled ‘The Nation’s Flag’), dated July 17, 1947, while reacting to the news that the committee of the Constituent Assembly of India on National Flag had decided in favour of Tricolour as the National Flag since it was acceptable to all parties and communities, wrote: “We do not at all agree that the Flag ‘should be acceptable to all parties and communities in India’. This is sheer nonsense. The Flag represents the nation and there is only one nation in Hindusthan, the Hindu Nation, with an unbroken history extending over 5,000 years. That is the nation and the flag must symbolise that nation and that nation alone. We cannot possibly choose a flag with a view to satisfy the desires and wishes of all the communities. That is to complicate matters and is unwarranted and entirely unnecessary...We cannot order the choice of a flag as we order a tailor to make a shirt or coat for us...”

Shockingly, RSS organ *Organizer* on the eve of Independence of India carried a long piece, ‘Mystery behind the *Bhagwa Dhawaj*’, which while demanding hoisting of saffron flag at the ramparts of Red Fort in Delhi openly denigrated the choice of the Tricolour as the National Flag in the following words: “The people who have come to power by the kick of fate may give in our hands the Tricolour but it never [*sic*] be respected and owned by Hindus. The word three is in itself an evil, and a flag having three colours will certainly produce a very bad psychological effect and is injurious to a country.”<sup>58</sup>

It was in July 1947 that the Constituent Assembly of Independent India deliberated on the issue of the National Flag of the country and adopted the Tricolour as the National Flag. However, RSS under the leadership of M. S. Golwalkar refused to accept as one. While addressing a *Gurupurnima* gathering in Nagpur on July 14, 1946, stated that it was the saffron flag which in totality represented their great culture. It was the embodiment of God: “We firmly believe that in the end the whole nation will bow before this saffron flag.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *Organizer*, August 14, 1947.

<sup>59</sup> MS Golwalkar, *Shri Guruji Samagar Darshan* (collected works of Golwalkar in Hindi), *Bhartiya Vichar Sadhna*, Nagpur, nd., volume I, p. 98.

Even after independence when the Tricolour became the National Flag, it was the RSS which refused to accept it as the National Flag. Golwalkar opposed this choice of the National Flag in an essay entitled 'Drifting and Drifting' (reproduced from in the book *Bunch of Thoughts*, a collection of Golwalkar's writings in English published by the RSS in 1966). Citing examples of 'Drifting' from the Hindutva goals by the Founding Fathers, Golwalkar wrote: "Our leaders have set up a new flag for our country. Why did they do so? It is just a case of drifting and imitating...It was just a politician's patchwork, just political expediency. It was not inspired by any national vision or truth based on our national history and heritage...Had we no national emblem at all these thousands of years? Undoubtedly, we had. Then, why this void, this utter vacuum in our minds?"<sup>60</sup>

### MUSLIMS, CHRISTIANS & COMMUNISTS AS INTERNAL THREATS

The 'Holy' book for the RSS cadres *Bunch of Thoughts*, has a long chapter titled as 'Internal Threats' in which Muslims and Christians are described as threat number 1 and 2 respectively. Communists are played at number 3. This chapter opens with the following statement:

"It has been the tragic lesson of the history of many a country in the world that the hostile elements within the country pose a far greater menace to national security than aggressors from outside."<sup>61</sup>

While treating Muslims as hostile element number 1 he goes on to elaborate,

"Even to this day there are so many who say, 'now there is no Muslim problem at all. All those riotous elements who supported Pakistan have gone away once for all. The remaining Muslims are devoted to our country. After all, they have no other place to go and they are bound to remain loyal'...It would be suicidal to delude ourselves into believing that they have turned patriots overnight after the creation of Pakistan. On the contrary, the Muslim menace has increased a hundredfold by the creation of Pakistan which has become a springboard for all their future aggressive designs on our country."<sup>62</sup>

He goes on to spit venom against common Muslims in the following words:

*"...within the country there are so many Muslim pockets, i.e., so many*

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<sup>60</sup> MS Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Sahitya Sindhu, Bangalore, 1996 [first edition 1966], pp. 237-238.

<sup>61</sup> MS Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Sahitya Sindhu, Bangalore, 1996, p. 177.

<sup>62</sup> MS Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Sahitya Sindhu, Bangalore, 1996, pp. 177-78.

*'miniature Pakistans'... The conclusion is that, in practically every place, there are Muslims who are in constant touch with Pakistan over the transmitter...'*<sup>63</sup>

While deliberating on the 'Internal Threat' number 2, the Christians, he says, "such is the role of Christian gentlemen residing in our land today, out to demolish not only the religious and social fabric of our life but also to establish political domination in various pockets and if possible all over the land."<sup>64</sup>

Golwalkar's hatred for Muslims was inexhaustible and never-ending. So far as his hatred for Muslims was concerned there was no difference in his views contained in *We or Our Nationhood Defined* in 1939 or his hatred for Muslims in 1960. In fact, this hatred got wilder. While addressing the leading RSS cadres of South India in Bangalore on November 30, 1960, he declared: "Right from Delhi to Rampur, Muslims are busy hatching a dangerous plot, piling up arms and mobilising their men, and probably biding their time to strike from within."<sup>65</sup>

Shockingly, no proofs were given and law and order machinery was not informed about such a critical situation but this Guru of Hate continued spitting venom against patriotic Indian Muslims. His only purpose seemed to be to create mob-hysteria against Muslims. More shocking was that Indian State took no action against Golwalkar for creating enmity between 2 major religious communities of India.

For Golwalkar and RSS, Communists are described as 'Internal Threat' number 3 as the latter rise in defence of a democratic-secular Indian polity and challenge the Hindutva forces which are working overtime to undo an all-inclusive India.<sup>66</sup>

## RSS DECRIED THE DEMOCRATIC-SECULAR CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

The second sarsanghchalaak of the RSS, MS Golwalkar led the organisation during 1940-1973. What RSS thought about the Indian Constitution would be clear from the following words of his reproduced from *Bunch of Thoughts*:

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<sup>63</sup> MS Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Sahitya Sindhu, Bangalore, 1996, p. 185.

<sup>64</sup> MS Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Sahitya Sindhu, Bangalore, 1996, p. 193.

<sup>65</sup> M. S. Golwalkar, 'From Delhi to Rampur Muslims are Conspiring' Organizer, December 12, 1960.

<sup>66</sup> MS Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Sahitya Sindhu, Bangalore, 1996, p. 195.

“Our Constitution too is just a cumbersome and heterogeneous piecing together of various articles from various Constitutions of Western countries. It has absolutely nothing, which can be called our own. Is there a single word of reference in its guiding principles as to what our national mission is and what our keynote in life is? No! Some lame principles from the United Nations Charter or from the Charter of the now defunct League of Nations and some features from the American and British Constitutions have been just brought together in a mere hotchpotch.”

In fact, RSS wanted this Constitution to be replaced by *Manusmriti* or Codes of Manu. When the Constituent Assembly of India had finalised the Constitution of India RSS was not happy. *Organiser* in an editorial (“The Constitution”) on November 30, 1949, complained: “The worst about the new constitution of Bharat is that there is nothing Bhartiya about it. The drafters of the Constitution have incorporated in it elements of British, American, Canadian, Swiss and sundry other constitutions. But there is no trace of ancient Bhartiya constitutional laws, institutions, nomenclature and phraseology in it...But in our constitution, there is no mention of the unique constitutional development in ancient Bharat. Manu’s Laws were written long before Lycurgus of Sparta or Solon of Persia. To this day his laws as enunciated in the Manusmriti excite the admiration of the world and elicit spontaneous obedience and conformity. But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing.”<sup>67</sup>

**RSS IS COMMITTED FOR CONVERTING DEMOCRATIC-SECULAR INDIAN INTO A HINDU RASHTRA**

### Against Secularism

The RSS is committed to establish a Hindu Rashtra in opposition to a Secular India will be clear by the perusal of the oath (*pratigya*) which every member must take before admission into the RSS and prayer (*pararthana*) which is recited in its meetings.

Oath:

“Before the all-powerful God and my ancestors, I most solemnly take this oath, that I become a member of the RSS in order to achieve all round greatness of Bharatvarsha by fostering the growth of my sacred Hindu religion, Hindu society, and Hindu culture. I shall perform the work of the Sangh honestly, selflessly with my heart and soul, and I shall adhere to this goal all my life. Bharat Mata Ki Jai.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Organizer, November 30, 1947.

<sup>68</sup> Shakha Darshikha, Gyan Ganga, Jaipur, 1997, p. 66.

Thus they are not faithful to the Indian Nation as it exists as a legal entity but want to subvert it into a theocratic state like Muslim League which created Pakistan in the name of Islam.

Prayer:

Affectionate Motherland, I eternally bow to you/O Land of Hindus, you have reared me in comfort/O Sacred Land, the Great Creator of Good, may this body of mine be dedicated to you/ I again and again bow before You/O God Almighty, we the integral part of the Hindu Rashtra salute you in reverence/For Your cause have we girded up our loins/Give us Your Blessings for its accomplishment...<sup>69</sup>

RSS and its fraternal organisation, Hindu Mahasabha were very angry when Indian Constituent Assembly adopted a democratic-Secular Constitution under the supervision of Dr. BR Ambedkar. VD Savarkar as leader of Hindutva believed:“*Manusmriti* is that scripture which is most worshipable after Vedas for our Hindu Nation and which from ancient times has become the basis of our culture-customs, thought and practice. This book for centuries has codified the spiritual and divine march of our nation. Even today the rules which are followed by crores of Hindus in their lives and practice are based on Manusmriti. Today *Manusmriti* is Hindu Law”.<sup>70</sup>

## AGAINST DEMOCRACY

What kind of political system the RSS wants to usher in and run will be clear from the following words of MS Golwalkar’s speech which he delivered before the 1350 top level cadres of the RSS at Resham Bagh, the RSS headquarters at Nagpur in 1940:

“RSS inspired by one flag, one leader and one ideology is lighting the flame of Hindutva in each and every corner of this great land.”<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, this ruling mantra was lifted from the programmes of Nazi and Fascists parties of Europe.

The above original documents from the RSS/Hindu Mahasabha archives go to prove one fact that with Hindutva politics taking over the Indian constitutional polity, no enemy is required to undo India.

## HINDUTVA AND COW

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<sup>69</sup> Shakha Darshikha, Gyan Ganga, Jaipur, 1997, p. 2

<sup>70</sup> VD Savarkar, ‘Women in Manusmriti’ in Savarkar Samagar (collection of Savarkar’s writings in Hindi), vol. 4, Prabhat, Delhi, p. 416.

<sup>71</sup> MS Golwalkar, Shri Guruji Samagar Darshan (collected works of Golwalkar in Hindi), Bhartiya Vichar Sadhna, Nagpur, nd., Volume I, p. 11.



Rahul Pandita seems to be enjoying Adityanath's guidelines to the police for

“Strict action against cow slaughter, while the sealing of some slaughterhouses is underway”. He does share the fact that slaughterhouses sealed were not slaughtering cows thus facilitating the spread of a stereotype against Muslims that they slaughter cows. This is the kind of rumour mongering which has resulted in lynching of innumerable Muslims who were seen transporting cows. Muslims found with cow are legitimate target for Hindutva zealots as witnessed recently in Alwar, Rajasthan. Rahul Pandita wants to remain oblivious, knowingly or unknowingly that Hindutva gang's agenda of holiness of cow is a modern construct. Swami Vivekananda, regarded as a philosopher of Hindutva by the RSS, said: “You will be astonished if I tell you that, according to old ceremonials, he is not a good Hindu who does not eat beef. On certain occasions, he must sacrifice a bull and eat it.”<sup>72</sup> Imagine what these ‘gau rakshaks’ will do to Swami if he reappears today! Rahul Pandita does not dare to question DOGHLAPAN (hypocrisy) of RSS/BJP on cow slaughter; their governments in Goa and many north-eastern States of India openly allow beef.

“The assertive form of Hindutva” is required only for teaching a lesson to Muslims who have been appeased by all except Hindutva brigade. Why should Rahul Pandita bother about the fact that 800 years of ‘Muslim’ rule and decades of pampering of Muslims of India by ‘secular’ leaders, the community socially, economically and politically remains static at the lowest pedestal of ‘New India’.

Lastly, I would like Rahul Pandita not to trivialise the issue of persecution, repression and forced ouster of minorities, secular and liberal elements to plight and brutalization of Kashmiri Pandits only. The Islam-o-fascists in league with intelligence agencies from across the borders, went after non-Pandit Hindus, Sikhs and secular Muslims also in order to convert Kashmir problem into a fight between Hinduism and Islam. It is to be noted that never in the history of communal/Casteist violence in India, the victims who were forced to migrate like Kashmiri Pandits were provided with jobs/allowances/residences/reservation in admissions. It is to be appreciated and fair-paly demands that all those who were/are forced to migrate due to communal and Caste violence must be provided with the same kind of support and should not be confined to one kind of victims.

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<sup>72</sup> Vivekananda speaking at the Shakespeare Club, Pasadena, California, USA (2 February 1900) on the theme of ‘Buddhistic India’, cited in Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol 3, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1997), p. 536

# RAGE AGAINST THE ESTABLISHMENT: NAXALBARI AND DALIT PANTHERS MOVEMENT

Sourabh Kumar\*

In the era when most of the government regimes all over the world are being installed by the multinational companies and transnational corporations behind the garb of parliamentary electoral set up or in the name of democracy (21st century's – White man's burden) to facilitate naked plunder of natural and human resources; it then becomes the responsibility of every person to revolt against the dictatorship of the capitalist class all over the world and work towards the establishment of an egalitarian society.

In India, there has been a constant struggle by the exploited masses (Dalits, Adivasis, Women, Minorities) against the dominant ruling classes-castes, the agents of imperialism and their infrastructure of political governance and social institutions since last century. This struggle has intensified since the transfer of power from British colonisers to their agents of imperialist capital. The first phase of revolutionary communist movement in India started with the Telangana movement. Before Naxalbari, Telangana movement had already set precedence to a well organised Communist Revolution.

“By 1947, a guerrilla army of about 5000 was operating in Telangana. During the course of the struggle which continued till 1951, the people could organise and build a powerful militia comprising 10,000 village squad members and about 2,000 regular guerrilla squads. The peasantry in about 3000 villages, covering roughly a population of three million in an area of about 16,000 square miles, mostly in the three districts of Nalgonda, Warangal and Khammam, succeeded in setting up ‘gram-raj’ or village Soviets. The landlords were driven away from the villages, their lands seized, and one million acres of land were redistributed among the peasantry. In the brutal suppression by the newly independent state of India as many as 4000 communists and peasants were killed, and more than 10,000 communists and sympathisers were put behind bars.” (Sumanta Banerjee, India's Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising)

But the Naxalbari movement differed in two ways from the Telangana movement. Firstly, in its fight against the comprador bourgeoisies, and against increasing domination of American imperialism in the country. Secondly, in its struggle against the revisionist and opportunist parliamentary communist

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parties. Charu Mazumdar who led the struggle states in his writing that “the People’s Democratic Revolution in this country can be led to a victorious end only in opposition to all the imperialist powers of the world.” And this is possible when we break the economic structural base on which Imperialism bases itself in the country. He writes: “Because forty crores of people out of the total population of fifty crores live in the rural areas...feudal exploitation continues to be the main form of exploitation to which they are subjected, the contradiction between the peasants and the landlords in the countryside remains even today the main contradiction.” To uproot this, the only way is “the establishment of liberated zones by the peasants’ armed forces under working class leadership.” (Suniti Kumar Ghosh, *The Historic Turning Point: A Liberation Anthology*)

Such detailed and experienced understanding of the contradictions in the country, and chalking out of the way forward was the beginning of the revolution in India. The shivers it sent down the spine of the dominant ruling classes in the country made them use the coercive machinery of the state to crush down the movement. But the movement was far from being getting suppressed. The correct recognition of the enemy classes and the use of armed resistance, rejecting the path of parliamentary politics appealed the oppressed masses and many sections of middle class to join the movement. For Dalits this revolutionary communism was also the way forward. The movement soon spread all over the country. In Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh, the landlords who had fled from villages in the wake of the mass peasant upsurge, did not dare to come back even after the police repression was launched against the guerrillas. The struggle still continues in the many states and parts of the country even after it was massively repressed fifty years back. Now, the movement is much stronger than before and has successfully liberated much wider area, thus becoming the biggest security threat for the Indian ruling classes as spoken by our previous Prime Minister. Also, the Naxalbari movement was not just against economic oppression, but also had its own cultural implications specifically in the field of art and literature. The movement tried to bridge the gulf between two different caste-class realities — the reality of the city bred middle class poets, and that of the tribal, Dalit poets of the countryside. This cultural encounter between two different realities divided by rich and poor; high caste and low caste; rural and urban, came face to face resulting in the integration of the urban activists into the struggle of the oppressed masses. This integration happened when the urban bred young people rejected the colonial education system, and their middle class ethics. The urban youths sacrificed their comfort zones, and countered the knowledge system in which they were born and brought up. But the process of integrating with the masses was not an easy task. The uneasiness involved gave rise to a style of literature written in deep turmoil

and agony. The process of self-transformation of the middle class-caste youth involved perceiving the social reality from the worldview of the masses.

Similarly, understanding of the contradictions in Indian society, aims and objectives of the Naxalite movement reverberate in the Dalit Panthers manifesto. Dalit Panthers in their manifesto explain the root causes of the persistence of caste, and how it has been reworked to further the exploitative interests of the imperialist powers, and their agents in India. The manifesto clearly states:

“Due to the hideous plot of American imperialism, the Third Dalit World, that is, oppressed nations, and Dalit people are suffering. Even in America, a handful of reactionary whites are exploiting blacks. To meet the force of reaction and remove this exploitation, the Black Panther movement grew. From Black Panthers, Black Power emerged. The fire of struggle has thrown out sparks into the country. We claim a close relationship with this struggle. We have before our eyes the examples of Vietnam, Cambodia, Africa and the like.” (Dalit Panther manifesto)

Dalit Panthers not just revolted against caste oppression, but also against the semi-colonial structure by targeting the corrupt parliamentary system, organising workers to shut down factories, and boycotting elections in Bombay. Apart from the Dalit Panthers, it was only the revolutionary Naxalites who broke the myth of an independent Indian nation.

For the Dalit Panthers:

“The struggle for the emancipation of the Dalits needs a complete revolution. Partial change is impossible. We do not want it either. We want a complete and total revolutionary change. Even if we want to move out of the present state of social degradation alone, we will have to exercise our power in economic, political, cultural fields as well. We will not be satisfied easily now. We do not want a little place in the Brahmin alley. We want to rule the whole country. We are not looking at persons but at a system. Change of heart, liberal education etc. will not end our state of exploitation. When we gather a revolutionary mass, rouse the people, out of the struggle of this giant mass will come the tidal wave of revolutions. Legalistic appeals, requests, demands for concessions, elections, satyagraha – out of these, society will never change. Our ideas of social revolution and rebellion will be too strong for such paper-made vehicles of protest.” (Dalit Panthers manifesto)

This new awakening in the Dalit masses and the glorious background of Naxalite movement led to the emergence of the militant literary and social movement led by the Dalit Panthers. This was the first time Dalit movement took an anti-establishment stand.

“The literature of revolt vowed to take revenge for the centuries of oppression: it sprang up on notice boards, in slums, in small magazines and posters... the Bhagwad Gita burnt; campaigns to break the practice of untouchability in various forms were organised... On 5 January 1974, in a mammoth rally in Worli, Bombay, the Panthers called for the boycott of the forthcoming Lok Sabha by-elections... they supported the strike of the textile workers going on then. Hearing the call for boycott, the Shiv Sena attacked the meeting... In protest, the Dalit Panthers organised a big morcha on 10 January, which was again disturbed by Shiv Sena. In the police firing, one young poet, Bhagwat Jadhav, was killed. After this, riots broke out between Panthers and the Shiv Sena in Worli, in the heartland of the textile workers’ chawls. For over two months the fighting raged between the two groups.” (Anuradha Ghandy, *Scripting the Change*)

The Dalit Panthers like the Naxalites confronted state repression, upper-castes private armies, and ruling class goons. But this militancy of the Dalit Panthers did not last long as the leadership fell prey to the ruling class co-option and containment. By 1979, Dalit Panthers group got splintered into nine factions led by their self-styled autocratic leaders. Though, not all groups got co-opted in the mainstream politics. On the other hand the Naxalites smashed the barriers that were erected by the dominant ruling classes that prevented people from uniting against their common enemies. The movement not only broke the caste hierarchies by bringing people from all the section of the society together, but also led the movement of gender equality and democratisation of the Indian society. In all parts of the country which were engulfed by the movement, revived the popular folk songs, dances, arts, and created a revolutionary culture which speaks of the values which Ambedkar wanted to establish. Though the rebellion was crushed by the dominant ruling classes in some states, but the rupture that was brought in the Indian political and cultural system continues even now. The present Maoist movement in India is the spreading of the same “spark that set the prairie fire”, that is, the Naxalite movement. It has been 50 years since the Naxalbari movement, and the movement has now spread across many parts of India. So far we have witnessed that the movement has won the support of exploited masses to an extent that they are ready to sacrifice their lives for the establishment of an egalitarian society for all. It is equally important to point out that this is the only revolutionary communist movement in India that has been constantly developing and growing even after constant state oppression on it since its inception. Looking at the present state in India with its self-proclaimed ‘democratic’ status, a claim which rests on invisibilizing and erasing the thousands of dissenting voices growing every day and every minute in the country, it becomes imperative on our part to realize and acknowledge the significance of the suppressed and gagged voices, and become a part of

them, instead of conveniently brushing them under the national carpet. The task at hand requires that people facing oppression instead of closeting themselves in class and caste categories, and thereby alienating themselves from each other, begin to unite together and work to ensure that there be equality for all – a fight geared towards ending the reign of Capitalism, which thrives on these divisions, co-opting and absorbing all oppositional voices. Dalits becoming capitalists for individual gains, garnering benefits at their own individual levels, and thus, in effect, they becoming a part of the oppressive structure are a case in point. Looking at the history of the Naxalite and the Dalit Panthers movement, and the art generated by these movements, we can while on the one hand begin to learn the importance of uniting against the hegemonic forces in society, on the other hand, engaging with their literature, can also enable one to unlearn all the class and caste prejudices one is born into and which makes us the interpellated subjects we are. It is pivotal to keep in mind Bhagat Singh's revolutionary call for change, and remember that there is not one, but several Naxalbaris burning in India, and the moment requires that we don't let that fire die.

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# INDIAN MUSLIMS: LOOKING AHEAD

Mirza Yawar Baig\*

*If you want to be successful, you must respect one rule: never lie to yourself.*

~ Paulo Coelho

UP elections are over and the results are out. They are surprising for some of us who have become used to living our lives in slumber. But for those who had their eyes open, the result in UP was neither unexpected nor sudden. It is the result of 90 years of dedicated effort by countless people who will remain unknown but whose effort bore fruit beyond their dreams. We Muslims on the other hand, remained content with complaining and begging. The world changed but we remained stuck in a world that no longer exists. UP election result was (or should be) enough to wake us from the deepest slumber so that we learn to deal with the new world in which we find ourselves. Unless we do that, the results will be far worse than what we may imagine.

So, what must be done now that we are faced with this fait accompli?

The principles of resilience are three:

1. Face the brutal facts without mincing words or looking through rose tinted glasses.
2. Identify critical areas of impact and work on them. Not everything is equally important.
3. Make necessary changes no matter how painful.

This is the framework which I am going to try to follow.

The Brutal Facts

BJP won a landslide victory. All the analysts were wrong. More than being divided, the Muslim presence in politics and the way it was portrayed to others, resulted in the Hindu vote getting consolidated behind the BJP. Muslims have become the bogeyman of Indian politics and it appears that the mere presence of a Muslim candidate is enough to bring out the worst fantasies in the minds of others. That none of this is based on fact is not important. Rumours don't need

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facts to thrive. I am not going to make a long list of all that is wrong with the situation of Muslims today. I think we have the intelligence to see that. I will suffice to say that if we don't wake up and do what needs to be done, no matter how painful, we are going to enter an era of darkness that none of us has faced in living memory. Our fate is quite literally in our own hands.

*The truth is not difficult to see but difficult to swallow.*

~ Mirza Yawar Baig

Muslims must understand that their development and future in the country is not restricted to government largesse or elections. It is in our hands and depends on the overall sentiment about us as people, as neighbours, as fellow citizens. Today all this is at an all-time low. I don't say that this is entirely our fault. A lot of it is the result of systematic propaganda against Islam and Muslims which our neighbours believed. However, our inward looking and exclusionist stances have facilitated the misunderstandings and stereotypes. When people don't know you personally it is easy to believe the worst about you. This has happened to us and this must change.

Elections apart, we simply have to win the hearts of the person on the street, the person next door and the person sitting next to us at work. If we do that well, then the sentiment will protect us from those who seek to harm us. We need to be seen as beneficial for all people. Incidentally, this is what Allahﷻ described us and our mission – selected for the benefit of people. We need to therefore redefine how we look at ourselves vis-à-vis others and decide what we need to do to change the negative image into a positive one.

*“In order to change an existing paradigm, you do not struggle to try and change the problematic model. You create a new model and make the old one obsolete.”*

~ R. Buckminster Fuller

All change is painful. Drastic change is even more painful. But the most painful is annihilation. That is what must be remembered when we want to complain about what I am about to propose. Annihilation, not literally but in every other way as productive, influential and important citizens of the country. We are facing a future where when the words of the Constitution are spoken, “We the people of India”, 200 million citizens will not be included in the term, ‘We the people.’ Once again, if that comes to pass, it will be with our active or tacit agreement. Nobody to blame but ourselves.

I believe that there are three areas we must address urgently.



1. Societal impact
2. Approach to Religion
3. Political presence

### Changes for Societal Impact

Become beneficial and be seen as beneficial. The way to the heart is through the belly as they say. This means that people need to feel and taste the goodness of anything to believe it. Words are cheap and today we are looking at a society that has become intensely cynical and has no trust in anyone's words. Action speaks; not just louder than words but it is the only thing that speaks. People don't care what you say until they see what you do. The change must come within our community. We must shed our exclusivist image and communicate with others (non-Muslims). Talk to your neighbours, colleagues, customers. Just talk. Not talk theology but just normal everyday talk. Help them even if they don't help you. Be good to them even if they are not. Greet them in their terms and thank them for any service; for example, thank the taxi driver, the bus driver, check-in and check-out person, the waiter, the doorman, anyone. Thanking increases blessing and changes hearts. This must be done such that people change their perception about us.

I know this is difficult especially in a society that has become very polarised and Muslims are denied housing and jobs. It is difficult but that is why it is even more critical to do it. As for polarising society, it is good to remind ourselves that we are equally responsible for it with less justification because polarisation is suicide for a minority, yet we did it and allowed it to happen. That is the reason we must change this perception by being genuine and approaching our fellow countrymen and women with love, respect, openness and acceptance. It is critically important to give this message to our children who mirror what they hear at home. Listening to the young ones of all communities tells you a sorry tale about the kind of psychological conditioning that is taking place in our homes. All of us, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Esai (Christian) – remember the song?? Today these are empty words. I weep when I recall my own childhood when a friend was simply a friend. His name wasn't a flag to his caste. We lived in each other's homes, ate each other's food, called each other's parents, Amma, Mataji, Dadji, Papa, Baba. Where did we lose it all?

*When the truth must be spoken, silence is culpable.*

*~ Martin Luther King, Jr.*

We must set up a fund to create the following institutions open to everyone:

Legal Aid Cell

1. Establish Legal Aid Cells in every city and take up cases of all those who need legal aid – not only Muslims
2. Make a list of cases that need to be tackled in order of priority and ease of winning
3. Make Law a primary study focus for students
4. Ensure that no attack on anyone goes unchallenged
5. Because injustice to one is injustice to all

#### Focus on education

1. Set up high-quality English medium schools which teach vocational skills
2. Open them to everyone – not only Muslims
3. Make it compulsory for every child to go to these schools until the high school level
4. Make Madrassas only for higher education – graduation and above. Not for primary and secondary education
5. Make every child a potential entrepreneur

#### Employment

1. Set up a Zero Interest Venture Capital Fund and an Advisory Council to help startups
2. Open both to everyone – not only Muslims
3. Send our youth into the army and police both at officer and serviceman levels. This will inculcate discipline and a sense of belonging to the nation, both of which are missing today
4. Teaching, judiciary, journalism & media are professions of choice
5. Zero unemployment is possible with entrepreneurship

#### Social Development Fund

1. Set up a Social Development Fund to help anyone in need – not only Muslims
2. Focus on prisoners who need bail, hospital expenses, clean water, sewage, housing, vocational education, entrepreneurial development, orphans, widows

3. Focus on women's economic and educational development to ensure empowerment of women
4. Demonstrate the real face of Islam to the world of helping everyone to be well

#### Funding for all the above

1. Central collection of Zakat Funds.
2. Capitalising of Awqaf (Religious Endowments).
3. Voluntary contribution of Rs. 100 per person per month.
4. Additional charitable donations.
5. Approach to Religion

#### Change our ways

The change must begin within us, individually, within our families and within our community. We need to clean up our lives of all forms of disobedience of Allah ﷻ and ensure that we spread goodness all around us. Islam doesn't distinguish between Muslim and non-Muslim when it comes to justice or welfare. Neither must we. Our presence must be seen as a blessing in the community we live in, our cities and villages. This message must be spread by all of us in our different capacities. The major share of this lies on the Ulama who have access to the Friday congregations. Their message must be about distinguishing ourselves through service, bringing hearts together and against every form of divisive thought, ideology and message. We need to root out the social evils that our society is plagued with, chief among them being alcoholism, gambling and ostentation. Our ostentatious weddings are a case in point. To celebrate weddings the way we do when our own people are as poor and deprived as they are is immoral and criminal. To participate in such functions is to aid and abet the crime. These are destroying us at all levels and must be forcibly stopped if persuasion doesn't work.

We must not only consciously not propagate differences and divisiveness but we must forcefully do the opposite. Preach and promote by word and action, inclusiveness, acceptance and brotherhood. Universal brotherhood, because that is the way of Islam. Universal brotherhood is a message that is unique to Islam. That and mercy and forgiveness from one person to another. These two must be revived urgently because our lives are currently desolated and deprived of both. Today, let alone preaching divisiveness with respect to non-Muslims, we preach it with respect to Muslims who don't belong to our particular cult, juristic order (Madhab), culture or region. This is completely Haraam. It is not

in the scope of this article to quote from the Qur'an and Sunnah to prove my statement but there are plenty of lectures of mine with all references that you can listen to.

Secondly on the national front the following actions must be taken with respect to our Madrassas and the AIMPLB. Our Madrassas are a symbol of great dedication but very poor quality. The result is that graduates are maladjusted and incapable of being productive members of society and are looked down upon and treated with disdain. To change this, we need to change what we teach and how we do it.

### Madrassa Education

1. Set up a Central Madrassa Board to ensure the following:
2. All Madrassa teachers must be qualified to teach & have a teaching degree. Our Madrassas are perhaps the only schools where teachers need not be trained to teach. This is so incredibly insane that I feel ashamed to write it.
3. Corporal punishment to be banned and punishable if practised.
4. Madrassas only for higher (college) education. Not earlier.
5. Centralised curriculum, syllabus and examination system. Present curriculum and syllabi to be redesigned to make them current, relevant and effective. Please see my paper on this.
6. Centralised management of funds by the Madrassa Board so that funds can be allotted to those who need them and not be squandered by those who happen to have the ability to raise them.
7. Transparency in all matters and merit being the only consideration.
8. Establish the Maktab system to educate children in Islam. This is very successfully practised in South Africa, the UK and elsewhere and can be replicated in India.

### AIMPLB

1. AIMPLB to abolish triple Talaq and not oppose UCC. Let the government introduce the UCC which will be debated nationally in which we can also participate. No need to say anything until then. The image of being regressive must be changed.
2. AIMPLB membership must be democratised and operations made much more efficient and relevant.

3. AIMPLB to be the sole dispenser of Fatwas on any matter. All random Fatwa dispensers to be stopped.
4. No knee jerk reactions and no working in slow motion.

#### Subsidies & Reservations

1. Demand that the Hajj Subsidy be abolished. It is a subsidy to Air India, not to Muslims. Refuse to take it.
2. Hajj is not Fardh on anyone who can't afford it. We don't need to give our detractors another stick to beat us with.
3. Any travel agent can get us better fares than Air India.
4. Demand that Hajj Committee be abolished. It gives little benefit and with the removal of the Hajj Subsidy its purpose will vanish.
5. Ditto for all Reservations. We don't need them. Nobody respects beggars. We need to become self-sufficient. Reservations have never solved anyone's problems and they won't solve ours. They are yet one more stick for our detractors to beat with.

#### Political presence

##### Leave politics as contestants

UP elections have proved that as things stand Muslim presence in politics as contestants only serves to drive everyone into the arms of the Hindutva brigade. Their absence will enable those who stand for principles instead of caste to have a voice to try to steer Indian politics away from a purely caste-based contest. This may sound drastic but I believe our situation today has reached such a desperate state that we need to consider drastic changes. Like invasive surgery and chemotherapy despite the pain and evil after effects become acceptable when life is at stake, I believe we have reached a stage today where our survival as viable, functioning members of society as Citizens of India seems to be at stake.

As I mentioned earlier, it appears that in the future, when the words of the Constitution are spoken, 'We the people of India', somehow 200 million citizens will not be included in this definition. So, we should not stand for election any more at least for a five-year period. If you are not there, you can't become the bogey man. Muslims must break out of it. We must reject all extremist talk and ideas. Polarisation may help some individuals but it is suicide for the community. We must partner and cooperate with all those who stand for justice, human rights, dignity and solidarity of the nation.

#### Conclusion

I believe the time has come for Indian Muslims to rethink their very existence in this country. We are Indians by choice. We love our country and want to contribute to its development. Therefore, it is time to stop living in isolation and start participating in every aspect of life in our country as CONTRIBUTORS. Not merely whine and complain about negative things that happen to us but do nothing positive to help others. Nobody can harm us – unless we allow it. All this will take time and effort. All this will be painful at least to some. All this needs serious investment of funds. But without it, we will cease to exist as relevant and significant members of this society.

The writing is on the wall. The choice is ours.

# I AM AN 'INDIAN MUSLIM'!

Sarah Kidwai\*

The Indian Constitution opens up as,

“WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN, SOCIALIST, SECULAR, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.”

I am an 'Indian Muslim' coming from a moderate practising Muslim family. Brought up in Hindu neighbourhood, studied in a Christian Missionary school and have friends of various faiths and ideologies. During my childhood, I used to burn crackers with my friends on Diwali, make rangolis in the neighborhood. I still have many Hindu, Bengali and Christian friends dining with us on Eid, enjoying 'biryani' and 'siwai' more than I do. Putting 'bindi' on my forehead fascinates me the most during my daily routine while going to the department of studies as well as other public places which never comes in my way of being identified as a Muslim. I refer my mom's best friend as 'masi' who is a Hindu Brahmin. The day I came to Aligarh for my higher studies I was privileged to share my room with a purely vegetarian Hindu girl where we learned so much from each other by sharing the ideologies of each other's religion always appreciated her when she used to purify our room with 'Ganga Jal' very often. From the very first day in our hostel life, we started sharing our food and respecting each other's choices. I regularly woke up early for my morning prayers the same way she used to get up for her 'Gayatri Mantra'. Those were the days we enjoyed the most and learned about other faiths and cultures, which have been the ethos of this country since ages and helped making India identified as an example of secularism in the entire world.

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\* An Indian Muslim!

The time when we were expected to go shoulder to shoulder in making India the most progressed one, we witness the speeches by many politicians and other disturbing elements with full of hate because of their petty benefits. People being deviated from the brotherhood made us all Indians feel dishearten.

The minds are compartmentalised and religion is used as a weapon by many such elements to fulfil their desires of power. Nowadays, education which was considered sacred and through which one can differentiate between right and wrong is not spared. One's nationalism is measured by the institution to which one is associated to. One has to think a number of times twice before speaking his/ her mind out. We have to be cautious while hanging out with our male/ female friends, no matter our parents have any problem or not there are many other people for moral policing. There are much concerned people with our personal equations when personal choice is under threat.

Did Nehru, Gandhi and Ambedkar ever think of this India? I am sure never! They ended their lives in creating secular and united India. We all need to come forward to retain the glory of India's secular identity.



# CONFRONTING EUROPEAN RACISM

Prithiraj Dullay\*

That Europe has jumped to the Right and the Far Right is no longer a matter of debate. Each day sees a new and closer 'solution' to the 'problem' of the rejected, the unwanted, the 'other' and those variously described as not belonging to Europe. To use an Apartheid term: the Non-Europeans. Each day sees a more outrageous 'debate' on what needs to be done to 'the outsiders', much of it, more at home in Nazi Germany of the 1930-40s than in the Europe of 2016. History is about to repeat itself, just 70 years on!

No wishful thinking is going to make that disappear. It is here. It is very real and in our faces: threatening, crude and setting up its message in neon lights. It is a message that we dare not ignore. If we do, we could be the victims of 'the final solution'. Quite simply this means our annihilation in the name of a 'Caucasian racial purity', exactly what Hitler did!

There are those who wish the banning of Muslims from having children in Denmark for the next four years, to those like Donald (Duck) Trump who advocates the banning of Muslims entering the USA and the building of a new US Wall of shame to keep out Hispanics/Latinos. The Chinese Great Wall did not succeed thousands of years ago; what makes the Trump brigade believe that in the age of technology that they will succeed? Ask the Romans of more than 2000 years ago, of their failed attempt to keep out the ancestors of the present Europeans/Americans! Yes, they were the Barbarians of the time. Remember the Vandals, the Franks, the Visigoths, the Huns and the Vikings smashing down the walls of Roman civilisation?

The European Neo-Nazi movement is a reality. Wishful thinking is not going to make them disappear. The Internet and social media has made it easier for these for peddlers of racial arrogance and bigotry to form linkages stretching from South Africa, the USA/Canada, Argentina and the whole of Europe. They have a common agenda. Remember the Norwegian, Anders Brevik who murdered over 70 of his fellow citizens and his reasons for doing so? Remember the teenage killer of the worshipers in Atlanta, USA? Remember Barend Strejdom, the killer of black South Africans in the 1990s in Pretoria? There are a host of other similar acts of unmitigated hatred. More recent are the spate of killings of black Americans by police across the USA. What are we to make of all of this?

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Just random killings? Racist judicial killings, or an unwillingness to recognise and accept black humanity?

This is a call for united action across Europe/USA/UK of all those who are excluded, discriminated against and made to feel the outsider, the 'other'.

I was inspired by the philosophy of South African Black Consciousness leader, Steve Biko who was murdered by the Apartheid Gestapo-like police in 1977. He forcefully articulated the call for struggle in the late 1960s against the abomination of white supremacy, through a unity of those who were discriminated against on the basis of race/colour. His powerful message was explicit: You are not discriminated because you are African, Coloured or Indian. You are discriminated because you are not white.

Now let us extend Biko's thinking to the present. You are not discriminated against because you are Syrian, Iraqi, Somalian, Turkish, Indian, Bangladeshi, Afghan, Armenian, South African, Sudanese (or more). The bigotry stretches from Sicily, Italy, the northern side of the Mediterranean, and across the whole of Europe, no matter whether you see it as East or West Europe. You are discriminated against because you represent a threat on so many levels.

- You are not perceived as Caucasian.
- You are not of the Judaeo-Christian faith. Even if you are such as Ethiopians of Jewish faith in Israel, you will be excluded and the women sterilised.
- Your colour is not 'right' and is therefore unacceptable. I presume 'right' is Nordic, Aryan, blond and blue eyed as the Fuhrer suggested.
- You are perceived as uneducated and simplistic
- You are prepared to work for slave wages in ungodly conditions.
- You are too different to be integrated/assimilated into European culture.
- You are most likely an Islamic terrorist.
- You represent a sexual threat to the European male, based on the myth of persons of colour being more well endowed and far more sexually active.
- That you are more likely prone to stealing/fraud.
- That you do not 'belong' here.

(Perhaps we need to ask: Did you 'belong' or had any moral conviction when you enslaved, colonised, indentured, bombed us into submission?)

Biko advocated a coming together of the various peoples who shared a discriminatory existence, so as to form a united front against a common adversary. Individual acts of heroism/bravery were fine as expressions of non-compliance, but failed to dent the monolith of unbridled racism.

His solution was for a coming together of all persons who were marginalised, discriminated and excluded so as to speak with a united, powerful voice. A voice that said: No more! Enough is enough. You have NO right to determine my destiny at any level.

This is exactly my call. Let us unite in the face of the accelerating fascism and Neo-Nazism. The Far Right is organising itself as never before. The present racist contexts are appropriate for the casting off of their masks. It is time for the formation of a European-wide secretariat, with branches in every country. Let us understand and accept that unity is power.

We need to respond with a greater unity right across Europe, the USA, the UK and wherever the horror of Apartheid rears its inhuman head.

# PAINTINGS WITHOUT FRAMES, LIVING WITHOUT GAMES

Annapurna Tosca Sriramarcel\*

“Near Eastern religions have a propensity for building massive temples and tombs and this tradition has been emulated by Christian tendencies to construct gigantic cathedrals. Temples, churches, and synagogues separate the faithful from the secular world and from the natural world as if religion needs to be isolated from the rest of human activities.” — Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*

“Apparently, according to the Smithsonian, the cave paintings in Sulawesi, Indonesia are as old as their counterparts in Europe. That begs the question of why none of the professors I’ve talked to at prestigious institutions mentions them — except peripherally (if at all) — when they lecture on prehistoric art. That dynamic is an example of how the dominant culture guarantees that our Western perception remains intact.” — M. Foley, from a pamphlet on *Imposing Our Western Outlook On Education*

When I first viewed parietal art in person, the painted cave drawings on walls and ceilings struck me viscerally. The prehistoric products of wildly creative expression *and bonding with the natural world* ran through my blood and bones... as if they had been inside of *me* for tens of thousands of years.

That was when I was in my twenties, in the sixties in Europe. Lascaux was the place to go.

Thirty years later I had an epiphany respecting the artwork. One of my children asked me why the paintings had no frames around them. [*Pause.*] I couldn’t sleep for a week.

Let’s cut to the chase, though. There are no frames around cave paintings because the artists didn’t distinguish between their art and their lives. To have a frame around a painting is to say, in part, what’s inside the frame is a painting, what’s outside is not, and *don’t you ever get the two mixed up!*

It’s a form of labelling which separates one dimension of human activity from another. Like what’s done in schools, so-called educational institutions, including institutions of so-called *higher education*. And yet just about every youngster in our society is moving Heaven and Earth to get into such a setting... to get their *passport* to a better place in life. A college degree, they

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think, will do that for them, help to make advancement and happiness more likely. That's been an obsolete narrative for quite some time now.

But educational environments — to put it mildly — tend to separate learning segments from *living*, relaxing, etc. Just as the four walls of the typical classroom divides this space from that space, the learning that goes on in, say, Period One is distinguished very clearly from what's deemed important and focused on in Period Six later in the day. When the final school bell rings one can sing what one sings when one is released from such spatial and temporal framing. Certainly, there will be no singing in any of the seven periods during the school day unless — maybe — one is taking Music during Period Three. See what I'm getting at?

The labelling and the firm distinctions not only don't do us any good, they're very dangerous. It's like a kind of game playing is going on for the benefit of profiteers. We're still running students through the same loops as we did when I first encountered the cave paintings over half-a-century ago. The artwork at El Castillo in northern Spain is dated to be 40,000 years old or so. But our present day school day is dealt with in a manner that can be said to be more dated than that. Certainly, it's quite *out-of-touch* in the face of our collective crises. And if I have to spell out exactly what they are for you... well then, I'd say you're not well-educated. Not aware of what's coming down. Haven't been paying attention above and beyond the tripe that's trickled down from our mainstream media outlets.

The geometric distinctions that I referenced above when I addressed the business of how this and that classroom had boundaries has a parallel in the very city block that a given school sits on. This block is separated from that block by streets, as a rule. Cross here and you're going there. And don't ever get Broad Street confused with Main Street, okay? [*Actually, no one asks anyone's permission.*]

I also alluded to "game playing" above. And it's time we got down collectively with what's really going on. With songbirds becoming extinct, there won't be much to sing about in Period Three... *if* you're even enrolled in such a class. From what I hear, there are lots of tears being shed nationwide over the arts being reduced or eliminated from the educational menu. So-called *utilitarian* options are all that remain in many quarters. Representing the *practical* point of view.

Well, there's a new kid on the block. One who sees through the game playing on the toxic board, where unevenness prevails to the advantage of the powers that be. Which includes, in case you haven't noticed, the middle management demographic we call teachers. In the vast majority of cases. There's too often

not much difference between those who are raising tuition without a conscience and their underlings under such financial pressures that they feel they must align themselves *properly*. Acting a designated role without stepping outside of the proverbial box.

Education ‘cross the board, along with our mainstream media outlets (and many so-called alternative media outlets), are making basket cases out of our robotic youth.

A new paradigm for education must be embraced. One that does not — consciously or unconsciously — feed our horrid momentum. One which does not guarantee our going over the precipice together. One which does deal with the basics which citizens must learn, but that also acknowledges — in action — the need to step outside of the geometric parameters imposed on everyone and blend what’s inside the classroom with what’s going on outside.

With a sense of urgency. Not with the pace of an arthritic snail that says to kids... “Hey, we’re going to pick up plastic this week on the beach. Want to join us?”

More plastic has been produced in the last ten years than was produced in the past century. And the production of plastic proliferates still. If you keep in mind that our collective crises involve much more than the abomination represented by plastic, you’ll begin to see the challenge that educators face. It’s one that is not acknowledged at present anywhere in the U.S.A. that I know of.

It’s the challenge of how to not churn out plastic children who will play in a wasteland. How to do that without losing your job in public schools, or how to not have enrollment drop in your private sector quarters.

We should be able to play games in schools. Everywhere. But we must stop playing unhealthy *games* inside and outside of school. Like Head in the Sandbox. If you can see those injunctions not as my framing anything, I think you’ll get the picture I’m trying to paint for one and all.

# AYAD AL-JUMAILI AND ISLAMIC STATE'S COMMAND STRUCTURE

Nauman Sadiq\*

Islamic State's second-in-command, Ayad al-Jumaili, has been killed in an airstrike in al-Qaim region on Iraq's border with Syria. The most important fact to note in al-Jumaili's biography is that was the head of the terror group's internal security unit and that he had previously served as an intelligence officer in Iraq's Baathist army until 2003.

Excluding al-Baghdadi who was radicalised in Camp Bucca, the rest of Islamic State's top leadership is comprised of Saddam-era military and intelligence officials. According to an informative Associated Press report<sup>73</sup>, hundreds of ex-Baathists constitute the top and mid-tier command structure of the Islamic State who plan all the operations and direct its military strategy.

The only feature that differentiates Islamic State from all other insurgent groups is its command structure which is comprised of professional ex-Baathists and its state-of-the-art weaponry that has been provided to all the Sunni Arab militant outfits that are fighting in Syria by the intelligence agencies of the Western powers, Turkey, Jordan and the Gulf states.

Moreover, it is an indisputable fact that morale and ideology plays an important role in battle, and well informed readers must also be aware that the Takfiri brand of most jihadists these days has directly been inspired by the puritanical Wahhabi-Salafi ideology of Saudi Arabia, but ideology alone is not sufficient to succeed in battle.

Looking at the Islamic State's astounding gains in Syria and Iraq in 2014, a question arises that where does its recruits get all the training and state-of-the-art weapons that are imperative not only for hit-and-run guerrilla warfare but also for capturing and holding large swathes of territory?

The Syria experts of foreign policy think tanks also seem to be quite "worried" these days that where do the Islamic State's jihadists get all the sophisticated weapons and especially those fancy Toyota pick-up trucks mounted with

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<sup>73</sup> Islamic State's top command dominated by ex-officers in Saddam's army: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1199401/is-top-command-dominated-by-ex-officers-in-saddams-army>

machine guns at the back, colloquially known as “the Technicals” among jihadists?

I think I might have serendipitously discovered the answer to this riddle in an unusual December 2013 news report<sup>74</sup> from a website affiliated with the UAE government which supports the Syrian opposition: it is clearly mentioned that along with AK-47s, RPGs and other military gear, the Saudi regime also provides machine gun-mounted Toyota pick-up trucks to every batch of five jihadists who have completed their training in the training camps located at the border regions of Jordan. Once those militants cross over to Daraa and Quneitra in southern Syria from the Jordan-Syria border, then those Toyota pick-up trucks can easily travel all the way to Raqqa and Deir al-Zor and thence to Mosul in Iraq.

Apart from training and arms which have been provided to the militants in the training camps located on the Turkish and Jordanian border regions adjacent to Syria by the CIA in collaboration with Turkish, Jordanian and Saudi intelligence agencies, another factor which has contributed to the stellar success of the Islamic State is that its top cadres are comprised of former Baathist military and intelligence officers from the Saddam era, as I have already described.

However, a number of Islamic State affiliates have recently sprung up all over the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia regions that have no organizational and operational association, whatsoever, with Islamic State proper in Syria and Iraq, such as the Islamic State affiliates in Afghanistan, Libya and even Boko Haram in Nigeria now falls under the rubric of the Islamic State.

It is understandable for laymen to conflate such local militant outfits for Islamic State proper, but how come the policy analysts of think tanks and the corporate media’s terrorism experts, who are fully aware of this not-so-subtle distinction, have fallen for such a ruse? Can we classify any ragtag militant outfit as the Islamic State merely on the basis of ideological affinity and “a letter of accreditation” from Abu Bakr al Baghdadi without the Islamic State’s Baathist command structure and superior weaponry that has been bankrolled<sup>75</sup> by the Gulf’s petro-dollars?

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<sup>74</sup> Syrian rebels get arms and advice through secret command center in Amman: <http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/syrian-rebels-get-arms-and-advice-through-secret-command-centre-in-amman>

<sup>75</sup> Weapons flowing from Eastern Europe to Middle East: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/27/weapons-flowing-eastern-europe-middle-east-revealed-arms-trade-syria>



To further elucidate this farce by way of an analogy, if a local fast food chain names itself McDonald's or KFC without the latter's food recipes and quality control, would the corporate media recognise such bogus fast food chains as the official branches of McDonald's and KFC? Similarly, if a regional NGO names itself as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch without any organisational control of the latter, would the mainstream media acknowledge such phony NGOs as the official franchises of AI and HRW?

The Western political establishments and their mouthpiece, the mainstream media, deliberately and knowingly fall for such stratagems because it serves the scaremongering agenda of vested interests. Before acknowledging the Islamic State's affiliates in the region, the Western mainstream media also similarly and "naively" acknowledged Al Qaeda's affiliates in the region, too, merely on the basis of ideological affinity without any organizational and operational association with al Qaeda Central, such as Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula, al Qaeda in Iraq and al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb.

Unlike al Qaeda which is a terrorist organisation that generally employs anticolonial and anti-West rhetoric to draw funds and followers, the Islamic State and the majority of Sunni Arab militant groups in Syria are basically anti-Shi'a sectarian outfits. By the designation "terrorism" it is generally implied and understood that an organisation which has the intentions and capability of carrying out acts of terrorism on the Western soil.

Although the Islamic State has carried out a few acts of terrorism against the Western countries, such as the high profile Paris and Brussels attacks, but if we look at the pattern of its subversive activities, especially in the Middle East, it generally targets the Shi'a Muslims in Syria and Iraq. A few acts of terrorism that it has carried out in the Gulf Arab states were also directed against the Shi'a Muslims in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia and Shi'a mosques in Yemen and Kuwait.

Recently, the Islamic State's purported "terror franchises" in Afghanistan and Pakistan have claimed a spate of bombings against the Shia and Barelvi Muslims who are regarded as heretics by Takfiris. But to declare that the Islamic State is responsible for suicide blasts in Pakistan and Afghanistan is to contend that Taliban are responsible for anarchy and militancy in Syria and Iraq.

Both are localised militant outfits and the Islamic State without its Baathist command structure and superior weaponry is just another ragtag, regional militant outfit. The distinction between Taliban and the Islamic State lies in the fact that Taliban follow Deobandi sect of Sunni Islam which is native to South Asia and the jihadists of the Islamic State mostly belong to Wahhabi denomination.

Secondly, and more importantly, the insurgency in the border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan is a Pashtun uprising which is an ethnic group native to Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan, while the bulk of the Islamic State's jihadists is comprised of Sunni Arabs of Syria and Iraq.

Conflating the Islamic State either with al Qaeda or Taliban or with myriads of ragtag, local militant groups is a deliberate deception intended to mislead public opinion in order to exaggerate the threat posed by the Islamic State which serves the scaremongering agenda of security establishments.

# HOW FAIR IS THE MEDIA?

Moin Qazi\*

*There can be no higher law in journalism than to tell the truth and to shame the devil.*

*-Walter Lippmann*

In an ideal world, journalism is a profession of incredible integrity. Good journalists are amongst the most dexterous and skilled people in the world—and also the most respected. We have all benefited from the work of indefatigable journalists who put life, limb, family and even sanity on the line for truth. There is no sane, decent, and democratic polity possible without journalists who challenge power, relentlessly pursue and disseminate truth.

In recent times, the noble values of this equally noble profession have suffered considerable and irreparable damage. Some of the desperately ambitious, and those ideologically rooted in a particular conviction, have taken a dangerously wrong turn, all in the allurements of more web traffic. This is best summed up by the unwritten mantra of many digital newsrooms: "We might get it wrong, but we're not wrong for long." There is no disputing that, like politics, journalism is the fastest ladder to name, fame and fortune -the last being true in several, but not all, cases.

Good journalism requires attentive listening to diverse sources, dogged examination of data and other records, and close observation of policies and institutions. It takes time and skill, and requires support of editors and other news leaders who live in the community and care about it. It does not necessarily guarantee publishers a return in eye-popping audience numbers.

We must not forget the common sense lesson that objectivity has been the hallmark of all quality journalism. Facts are journalism's foundation; the pursuit of them, without fear or favour, is its main objective. Exaggerating facts, presenting just one side of the argument or sensationalising stories is ugly and detestable journalism. As CP Scott, the founder editor of *The Guardian* has emphasised: "Comment is free but facts are sacred".

There are a number of ways that a journalist can hold people and organisations accountable for their actions without taking a position. To start with, journalists

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working on a story must be determined to stay objective, throughout the period of research and investigation. To avoid taking a position, both or multiple sides of the story must be presented. If people or organisations are involved in wrongdoings, then their view, as well as the views of those facing the repercussions of their actions, must be made clear. It is not up to the journalist to help shape the reader's perspective, especially, while reporting a story or doing a feature, therefore, one should avoid taking a stand. Sometimes, simply pursuing a story, because personal interests could be at stake, amounts to taking a position.

In journalism, like in law, facts can be presented to support or disprove an incident, an action or a decision. Being aware of this can help journalists understand that facts have to be presented not as one would like them to be read to fit a notion or a brief, but as they have occurred.

Readers and viewers are now immediately taking comments from their peers, seeing additional points of view on the blogosphere, and even hearing directly from companies and sources that may be the subject of a story. No longer do reader letters take days or weeks to publish—and that was only after they'd been edited down to bite-sized, consumable blip—after a story's news cycle has already passed

While it is vital for journalists to keep a healthy distance from the subjects they cover and the source material they call upon, the good news is that we've arrived at a point where content is ubiquitous, and the very participation of multiple parties has resulted in a much more dynamic, energized and exciting form of journalism. That means the current generation of news consumers are the beneficiaries of a rich conversation that occurs among sources, the press and the public—which, in the end, churns out sometimes really marvellous content.

Liberalisation has ushered in so many news channels and newspapers that it has become a tough challenge for newsmen to differentiate themselves from the flock. While lauding investigative journalism and judicial activism, the Supreme Court had cautioned about the possible abuses that could creep in. Activism can have its dangers. Poorly calibrated, it can make bad problems worse.

The real challenge for today's journalists is that what journalists value and what their audiences value are often frustratingly misaligned. In an environment where trust is no longer the default — where reading your daily newspaper in the morning and watching a news broadcast at night have moved from standard to niche behaviour — doing great journalistic work isn't enough.

In the pursuit of truth and fairness, no price is too high to pay. One should make that extra call, take that extra trip, visit that additional source – then do it

all over again until one is truly convinced that the story is as accurate, as fair and as thorough as humanly possible.

Let us not forget that there was a generation of journalists in whose hands a mystic transference took place with each clack of the typewriter imprinting a journalistic legacy on the next generation. Stamped indelibly on our formative minds when we were training for journalism was the line; "every time a grand editor puts a finger to a typewriter, he sits back to hear the crash of falling governments."

The primary mission of a newspaper is to tell the truth as nearly as the truth may be ascertained. The public expects that of us as the least reciprocation of their trust. If we fail to pursue the truth and to tell it unflinchingly—because we're fearful that we'll be unpopular, or because powerful interests will assail us, or because we worry about financial repercussions to advertising or subscriptions—the public will not forgive us.

For this to happen, the media will have to walk that extra mile. As John Pilger advises in his book *Hidden Agendas*, "It is not enough for journalists to see themselves as mere messengers without understanding the hidden agendas of the message and the myths that surround it."

I remember a young journalist who was desperate to make to the big media during the farm crisis in central India which was marked by an epidemic of farmer suicides. He was always on the hunt for a story that would catapult him to the national league. He coldly hunted stories for a page-one byline. And he landed on one. Within hours of reaching the destination, which happened to be a small village, his story was ready – a villainous moneylender killed by long-suffering villagers. But the young inquisitive journalist had also unearthed a disconcerting fact: the moneylender was a kind-hearted, generous man whose death was being used to intimidate other moneylenders. In case of genuine problems, outstanding loans of penniless families were written off by the moneylender, but the politically well-connected and dangerous moneylenders planned a brutal retribution. The young journalist hates the half-truth he reports, but covets the byline it gets him?"

# PUTIN THROUGH THE U.S. LENSE....

Jim Miles\*

Vladimir Putin is the devil incarnate of the present media frenzy supporting all things USA! USA! USA!. Having just read a trio of books concerning Putin it is obvious that the lens through which Putin is viewed has blinders on the side and rose coloured tints as a lens coating. The blinders are those things the authors just do not want to see; the rosy tints are a combination of all things from the U.S. coming up roses, and all things Russian still being post-Soviet red.

All three books have the same common elements, not so much as to what is said, but as to what is not said. What is not said comprises three major topics: economics, militarization, and democracy; and all of what is not said concerns the U.S. and not Russia. The ‘what is not said’ relies on the mainstream /political media assumptions about the general goodness and lack of evil intentions of the U.S. Russia cannot be discussed without reference to and comparisons to U.S. intentions and actions vis a vis Russia but also vis a vis the world at large.

## Economics

Russia’s economy as seen by all three is weak and relies solely on petrochemicals for its sustenance. There is little accounting of its lack of national debt, about its increasing purchases of gold (see also China), and the positive actions that the sanctions have had forcing Russia to repatriate and upgrade both its manufacturing and agricultural production. There is – perhaps due to the currency of the events – no mention of Nord Stream 1 and the now in process Nord Stream 2 that circumvents EU Regulations (and the Ukraine) and that the EU has now indicated is not within its jurisdiction.

Relationships with China are generally presented as a problem, while China continues to buy huge amounts of gold, and has agreed to use the yuan as common exchange currency with hints of a soon to be gold-backed exchange. All the books were written recently enough to account for the sale of Russian gas and oil to China, but none of them mention the current Chinese developments for creating the “One Belt, One Road” system throughout Eurasia of which Russia plays a significant role as part of the corridor and as a supplier of materials, technology, and military assistance.

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The largest contradiction is the descriptions used of the ruble being dependent on oil and gas, a “petroruble” without any comparison to the U.S. petrodollar. Along with this goes bragging rights about how strong the U.S. economy is.

But understand this: the U.S. economy is strong only because of its petrodollar which has the two advantages of being the global reserve currency and due to this of being able to be printed without end. Behind the petrodollar is the military, which is used along with sanctions to eliminate any potential attempts to circumvent the use of the US\$. Just ask Iraq, Libya, and Iran about that aspect – and now the “pivot to Asia” and the aggressive actions against Russia demonstrate where the big interest lies – US\$ hegemony globally.

For if the US\$ loses its petrodollar/reserve status (as supported by Saudi Arabia) its economy collapses. It produces very little, buys a whole lot, and is in debt over its eyeballs. All its actions however much couched in terms of freedom and democracy are targeted towards the maintenance of the current US\$ status.

### Military

So what is it? Is Russia threatening NATO? Are they being the aggressors? The broken promises of the Gorbachev/Yeltsin era included the encroachment of NATO towards Russian borders and more recently the installation of ‘missile defences’ supposedly against Iran (yeah sure, Iran is going to attack Poland?). After WW II the U.S. occupied – and for all intents and purposes still does – Germany and Japan, creating an axis of containment against both Russia and China – Eurasia – the world island – in general. This is now supported with hundreds of military bases of various components spread through the Greater Middle East and the Asian periphery.

All three authors indicate that NATO’s moves are at worst a benign factor, to help the adjoining states with their security and not intended to threaten Russia at all. Only one of the works recognises the threat NATO poses to Russia, but then awkwardly relates it to the Russian misperception of U.S. intentions. George Kennan is cited twice, first in 1948 on the creation of NATO:

“Why did they [the proponents of a military alliance] wish to divert attention from a thoroughly justified and promising program of economic recovery by emphasizing a danger which did not actually exist but which might indeed be brought into existence by too much discussion of the military balance and by the ostentatious stimulation of a military rivalry?”

And later on in 1997 on the expansion of NATO:

“Expanding NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-cold war era....to impel Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly not to our liking.”<sup>76</sup>

Both comments are applicable to today’s current affairs. The answer is simple. The U.S. wants domination of the Eurasian continent for its global hegemony and is increasingly desperate to attain this as both Russia and China signal clearly their intentions of creating a multipolar world order. The U.S. response is primarily military backing its tattered and torn but not yet negated economic flag.

None of the authors address this prime underlying motive at all, but it is necessary when discussing why Russia is the way it is today.

### Democracy

Putin is presented, within his evil role, as being an absolute authority not allowing democracy to emerge, with indications that is also the general nature of the Russian people. All three books rely on the assumption that the U.S. is the paragon of democracy, that democracy is its greatest virtue.

However right from the start with the declarations within the Federalist Papers that democracy and the “factions” that were to be avoided, democracy was not the prime concern of the founding fathers. That is evident throughout U.S. history from it wars against the indigenous people, the wars against Mexico and Spain, followed by its many incursions into Latin America, and spreading out through Southeast and South Asia, into today’s military attempts at dominance in the Middle East (with its Israeli ally) and Africa.

In current events, the ridiculousness of the U.S.’ electoral college system, the influence of the decidedly undemocratic corporations, NGOs, and financial wheelers and dealers are erupting in the now rancorous and acrimonious presentations between the various levels of government. To call Russia undemocratic is to not be able to look at one’s own lack of democracy.

### The Three Russketeers

I have already mentioned Legvold’s *Return to Cold War*. It tries to argue – and fails – that both sides are at fault, the U.S. essentially for not understanding how someone could react negatively to their security and democratic assistance to others, while Russia suffers from its misperceptions of U.S. intentions as well as its generalised authoritarian character.

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<sup>76</sup> ] Kennan, cited in Legvold, Robert. *Return to Cold War*. Polity Press, Cambridge(UK)/Malden (Maine). 2016.



Legvold uses arguments that are somewhat contradictory, uses assumptions that are not statistically true (especially vis a vis economics), and uses *ad hominem* verbiage that tarnishes an issue without presenting a counter argument. From the latter Legvold uses descriptors such as venomous, poisonous, unrealistic, malevolent, heavy-handed, troublemaker – all of which create a negative impression without actually presenting an argument against the described actions.

The second bad book of the trio I had higher expectations for. Walter Laqueur has published numerous historical works, most relating to Germany, Russia, and Israel. His book *Putinism*<sup>77</sup> is the most recent but suffers from poor organisation, much too much discussion of philosophical elements, and some essentially poorly argued positions. As much as it is titled *Putinism*, it hardly gives a good account of who Putin is or what the invented term *Putinism* really is.

The book I had the least expectations for turned out to be the best, one that drew me into its clear, linear, well researched and referenced history. Steven Lee Myers *The New Tsar*<sup>78</sup> presents back cover descriptors that have an obvious bias, using phrases referencing Putin's history such as "brutal repression of dissent", "new authoritarianism", "destabilising world leader", and "merciless." It fits well into my initial view about rose coloured glasses and blinders in relation how the U.S. fits into the presentation. However, from decades of reading on the U.S. empire, from information gleaned through various non mainstream media sources, I was well buttressed to wade through the book.

Apart from the obvious bias, I was pleasantly surprised by the thoroughness of the history and its references and the quality of the writing style (much better than the above two). I also had an interesting emotional reaction: from what Myers is saying, combined with what I already know of current events and U.S. political and economic/military history, Putin – rather than being evil incarnate – became the quintessential 'right man in the right place at the right time' in order to preserve and save Russia as a sovereign state against U.S. intentions at control.

Yes, if you are a U.S. patriot, without much sense of global history, or your own history as a militarised empire, or wilfully ignore those aspects of international relations, then yes, Putin is certainly a "destabilising leader". Against the U.S.?

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<sup>77</sup> Laqueur, Walter. *Putinism*. Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Press, NY. 2015.

<sup>78</sup> Myers, Steven Lee. *The New Tsar – The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*. Vintage Books (Penguin Random House), NY. 2016.

countercurrents.org

New World Order as per Wolfowitz, Brzezinski, McCain, Bolton, Kaplan, Kagan et al, that is good news.

# OF CELEBRATING INDIA'S 100TH INDEPENDENCE DAY AFTER 30 YEARS.....

Adv Dr Shalu Nigam\*

After 30 years from now India will be celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> year of independence from the colonial rule. What will happen in the year 2047-48? Will India be able to fulfil the vision of those who fought for the freedom? Will the country be able to adapt itself to the dreams and aspirations of the present and the future citizens of the country? When India gained freedom, those who struggled and sacrificed their lives for India's independence had a dream, a vision, a hope, an idea of the free India. They had heaps of expectations, loads of desire and a yearning that in the independent India, the generations of people will enjoy freedom and opportunities in all forms away from the problems and situations they have faced then? They have imagined that India after attaining freedom from the clutches of the Imperial rulers, and liberation from all form of colonialism and the colonial mind-set, will provide all of its citizens' equal rights and opportunities to develop and grow. They envisaged of India that is secular and democratic, where people rule over themselves, India where people live without any discrimination based on their background, India where people are healthy, educated, well fed, free from all kinds of diseases, India where poverty, inequality, hunger, malnutrition and other such vices find no place, India which is progressive, rational and enlightened, India where every person is respected and everyone enjoy freedoms of various kind including that of expressing dissent, India which accommodate differences and promotes diversity of all kinds, India which is envisioned by great men and women such as Tagore, Ambedkar, Nehru, Gandhi, Tilak, Sarojini Naidu, Maulana Azad, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Bhagat Singh, and number of such other such freedom fighters and leaders, India which Nehru visualized as modern and plural, India about which Tagore said "where mind is without fear and head held high, where knowledge is free....let my country awake".

In 30 years from now, will India be able to retain its sovereign, socialist, secular, republic, democratic, equal, liberal, fraternal structure as envisioned by those who have sacrificed their lives or by those who wrote the Constitution of India? In the current scenario, when fascism is rising and the feudal forces are arbitrarily claiming spaces while denying fundamental rights to the ordinary

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citizens in their zeal to make this country a Hindu *rashtra*, will India be able to retain its tolerant, democratic, sovereign, secular, socialist and republic sanctity? Over years, since independence, India has witnessed various ups and downs, emergency and riots, man-made disasters as well as natural catastrophes, wars and terrorist attacks and a lot more of such situations where human rights of ordinary citizens are violated. The legislature, judiciary and executive all have, at some point of time, acted sensibly, and at times, have made decisions against the interest of common citizens. Yet, India has been able to retain its secular, democratic, sovereign and socialist spirit. Will it continue to retain this essence in next 30 years?

Will India 30 years later be able to claim that it has achieved peace with all of its neighbouring countries and emerged as a leader among the South Asian nations that proclaim for justice and peace at the international level and will be able to fulfill its vision of *VasudhivaKutumbakam* which entails viewing the world as one family?

Will India after 30 years be able to claim that it has ended all forms of wars – internal or external, at the border or inside the country within various state territories, or in the hearts and minds of its citizens? That all the resources are sagaciously being spent on people's development rather than being deployed for collecting nuclear or other forms of weapons for war including bombs or guns?

Thirty years from now when India will be rejoicing having been complete its 100 years of freedom, will the people of India be able to claim that the democracy has matured over a period of time and the governance is accountable, transparent, effective as well as people-oriented? That people have right to criticise the actions of the state and that the right to dissent and protest exists and that no emergency in any form is imposed in any form and that people's interest prevails over political interest? Will India be able to ensure its citizens that the state is succeeding to fulfil its welfare role and function and is working for the interest of common people rather than the vested political gains of few?

When India will be celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> year of independence, will it be able to boast of its achievements for its inclusive, just, enabling policies and actions that empower weaker and marginalised sections including poor, women, children, Dalits, STs, workers or farmers? Will the India after 30 years be free from depravity, corruption, beggary, homelessness, poverty, illiteracy, diseases and all other such vices? Will the India in 2047 be able to claim that it has protected the biological as well as cultural diversity in all forms?

Will India be able to claim that by the year 2047 it has acquired not only cent percent illiteracy but all its citizens, young and old, men and women, are

educated enough to think freely and critically? Will India be able to say that in terms of primary and secondary education, all its children irrespective of their ability to pay or irrespective of their background, class, caste, religion or gender are well placed and achieving the goals of learning? Will India be able to claim that all the institutions of higher education are free spaces that allow the youth to think critically, examine the situations rationally and express their abilities in creative and imaginative ways? Will India in the year 2047 be able to state that there is no discrimination in the institutes of higher education and that no young people such as RohithVemula are murdered institutionally or are forced to commit suicide?

Will India in another 30 years be able to claim that all its citizens are healthy and free from all forms of diseases, that there are sufficient resources being invested to take care of sick and needy even in the remotest corner of the country? That no children are dying because of lack of care facilities. That the child care facilities including creches and homes are available at every nook and corner of the country. Also, that no person is compelled to sell their organs to earn money. That no person is discriminated upon on the ground of disability, sickness or orientation. No women are forced to undergo operations, abortion or compulsory sterilization, no women's bodies are being tortured for the sake of controlling population, that all women enjoy autonomy and freedom in terms of their reproductive rights, that no women die because she could not receive proper maternal care, that the child marriage is abolished, that the domestic violence, incest, female foeticide, all are prevented, that no old or sick person is deprived of health benefits?

Will India after another 30 years be able to say that patriarchy in all forms has been eliminated, that it is safe for women, where no women are raped, brutalized, beaten or tortured, no female fetuses are aborted or killed, no girl child is discriminated, no women are molested or killed for honour, no women are sexually harassed at the work place or in public spaces, no women are trafficked or sold, that violence against women has been eliminated in all its form? Will the India in 2047 be able to claim that it has eliminated all anti-women practices such as dowry, bigamy, domestic violence, witch hunting, sati, and similar such practices and that all laws are just and women friendly? Also, that women play significant role in decision making, that occupy senior positions in the Parliament, the Supreme Court, the lower courts, the Public bodies, the political parties, government offices, universities and other such places? Will India in 2047 be able to say that there are no more Mathura's, Bhanwari Devi's, SoniSori's, Rameeza Bee's, Manorama's and innumerable others who though fought for justice but could not receive the same because the patriarchal norms work against women who knock the doors of the courts?

With the capitalist forces acquiring more and more wealth while denying poor of their rightful claims and making India more unequal, where income inequalities are widening, where the unemployment numbers are increasing day by day, will the India while celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> year of freedom be able to claim that all of its workforce is gainfully employed, is better paid and is socially secure and that the rights of the work force in all sector is protected and promoted? That the interest of small vendors, fish workers, marginalised workers, farmers, and other such workers are protected and promoted. That every person employed earns not only money but also dignity and respect to live a meaningful life. Also, those not employed are secured socially through one or the other welfare scheme taken up by the state.

In today's India, the formal sector is shrinking while the informal sector is expanding where the worker's rights are violated day in and day out. In such a situation while celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> Independence Day 30 years from now, will Indian government irrespective of the political party or the leader it will be governed by then, be able to say that as a country it has secured its citizens the decent work places and rightful work environment?

Will the India after 30 years be able to claim that it has eliminated all forms of pollution all its air and water sources are clean, and that the natural resources of the country are safe, that no tribal rights to forest or natural resources are violated in any manner? That the issues relating to internal disturbances in several states in the country are resolved peacefully while upholding interest of and justice for local people.

Will India be able to claim that its agrarian economy is flourishing and that no farmers are exploited, that no land is grabbed by the state and given to the corporate sector compulsorily, that the country is capable of feeding its population and that the food is distributed appropriately without any discrimination?

Will India when celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> year of freedom be able to say that all form of casteism and caste based discrimination is eliminated and no people are being discriminated, tortured, abused and murdered because they have been born in particular family? That no Rohith should die with a thought that 'his birth was a fatal accident.'

Will India after 30 years be able to say that bonded labour, debt bondage, child labour, manual scavengers and all other worst form of slavery, trafficking and bondage has been eliminated? That no human is being discriminated, tortured and enslaved because one hails from particular community, class, caste or gender?

Will the India in 2047 be able to claim that no communal tensions or riots, exist in the society and that humanity prevails in all forms, that no Army rule or unjust laws such as AFPSA or UAPA exist, no human rights of persons belonging to any particular community are violated in the name of terrorism, no women's bodies are raped and tortured in the name of war and terrorism, no children are orphaned because of violence in any form? Will India in 2047 be able to say that no more Akhlaqs are being lynched or no more Najeebs are missing from the educational institutions?

Will India after 30 years be able to claim that no farmers are committing suicide, no workers are protesting against any form of injustice, no migrants are deprived of their rights, no soldiers are dying, no wars are being fought at borders and that peace prevails everywhere and the rights of all are protected?

Will India in 2047 be able to claim that in a century it has achieved success in terms of promoting rational and scientific thinking among all its citizens, that there are libraries and laboratories, playgrounds and places for recreational and cultural activities such as dance, drama, music, health facility, orphanages, shelter homes and hostels at every nook and corner of the street just as gated Malls, prayer sites and other such services catering to religion or business are existing currently? That besides roads and toilets, the habitable areas also have proper schools with all facilities, libraries, justice centres, legal aid services, health care facilities, crisis centres, shelter homes, laboratories in very place. That the scientific activities are being promoted to venture out into the horizons of space as well as to deal with day to day activities such as dealing with natural and man-made disasters. That superstition, black magic, unscientific views all have been eroded.

Will India in 2047 be able to provide free and secure environment to all of its citizens irrespective of their caste, class, religion or gender so that they can exercise all of their fundamental rights and freedoms as endorsed by the Constitution? Will the courts, the police, the bureaucracy, the politicians all will be reformed to achieve the goal of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity? That the law and legal system ensure speedy justice in fair manner while protecting the rights of vulnerable people, that the red-tapism has gone and that the people of India play a strong role in governance of the country.

Will the India after 100 years of its independence be able to claim that it has a strong independent unbiased media which is free from any form of control from business of politics and act like a fourth pillar of democracy apart from judiciary, legislature and executive. That this independent media reports true stories and critically analyse the facts and data with neutral perspective. That no sexist, misogynist approach is adopted. Will India after 30 years be able to claim

that the state is protecting the rights of its citizens against all forms of exploitation by the corporate sector?

Will India in 2047 be able to claim that besides creating smart equitable inclusive cities, all the villages and towns are all electrified, have proper infrastructure, are well connected?

Will India be able to claim that it has fulfilled the basic requirements of roti, kapda aur makaan' for all of its citizens? Will the India in 2047 be able to say that the struggle for 'jal, jungle aur zameen' is no longer required because the rightful owners fully own and have access to their resources? That dignity of all citizens is protected and promoted in all forms. That the right to privacy of all the citizens is ensured and that no person is exploited in any form.

One may use any words, phrases or metaphors to describe the idea such as 'Modern India', 'Incredible India', 'Shining India', 'New India', but will this India be able to fulfill the hopes, dreams, ambitions, and aspirations of billions of minds who live differently, think differently and prefer to have diverse lifestyles or have lived in socially and culturally diverse ways? Will this India be able to ensure that the basic dignity and respect is ensured to each and every person irrespective of one's background?

The list is long. More can be added. Expectations are high. Dreams are many. This is just a glimpse of idea called India. There could be debates and discussions on various issues. Yet the question that remains is that will India be able to fulfil all such dreams, aspirations and visions of billions of its people from diverse background?

In the given scenario, this appears to be a far and distant goal, yet it is not impossible. I place my hopes and dreams on such an idea of India where the rights of all its citizens are protected and that the vision of those who sacrificed their lives for making India independent and those who have worked to make the Constitution of India a reality may come true in the future. In other words, let us work together to realise the spirit behind such an idea and surely Hum honge Kamyab ek din....



# IN INDIA ANY SOCIAL ACTIVIST CAN BE ARRESTED, CHARGED AND TRIED – SANS EVIDENCE – FOR TERRORISM: KOBAD GHANDY’S CASE

Dr P S Sahni

*Co-Written by Dr. P.S. Sahni & Shobha Aggarwal\**

In 2009, the Government of India announced a new nation-wide initiative viz. “Integrated Action Plan” (IAP) for broad coordinated operations to deal with the ‘Naxalite’ problem. This plan included increased funding for special police for better containment and reduction of Naxalite influence. Kobad Ghandy’s arrest in September 2009 was a direct fall out of this IAP.

Kobad Ghandy, born in 1951, studied in Doon School; St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai and went to London to study chartered accountancy. He often wrote in newspapers and journals. Prior to his arrest he was living in Delhi since 2006. He was said to be in charge of expanding the Communist Party of India (Maoist) [CPI (Maoist)] in urban areas. He was actually arrested days before 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2009 – the date touted by the police – at the Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi by the Intelligence Bureau. He was illegally detained, tortured and interrogated till his formal date of arrest. At that time a T.V. news channel compared him to Lashkar-e-Tayiba founder Mohammed Sayeed; while the 2008 BBC interview quoted Kobad Ghandy:

“The first step is to distribute land to the tiller ... We have a clear-cut definition of development.”

Kobad Ghandy was charged under the Draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention), Act (UAPA) *inter alia* for the offences under Sections 20 and 38 of UAPA. The investigation was assigned to the then Additional Commissioner of Police (ACP) Special Cell of Delhi Police. The police raid – allegedly conducted at the premises of Kobad Ghandy – yielded a large number of books, CDs, DVDs, computer, CPU, pen drives, laptop and other material/articles. As per the Police Report submitted to the court the material contained codes, email ids and telephone numbers related to CPI (Maoist), a banned organisation under UAPA. The Police Report further stated that the recovered electronic material related to Maoist activities/ programmes e.g. Kobad Ghandy’s disclosure that he had gone to Nepal to meet Prachanda! (Ironically the Prime Minister of

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India, Narendra Modi had met Prachanda in October, 2016 during the BRICS summit, Goa!!)

By order dated 16 July, 2012, charges as above were framed against Kobad Ghandy to which he pleaded not guilty and claimed trial. The prosecution examined in all a total of 37 witnesses including top bureaucrats, police and intelligence officers both from various states as well as Central government e.g. Deputy Superintendent of Police Intelligence; Inspector General of Police; Special Branch, Additional Superintendent Police; Secretary, Govt. of National Capital Territory of Delhi; Deputy Secretary; several Deputy Commissioners of Police. Prosecution evidence was closed on 4 November, 2015 when recording of evidence of accused was fixed for.

Ms. Rebecca John, Senior Advocate addressed arguments on behalf of Kobad Ghandy. She was assisted by Mr. Bhavook Chauhan. Rebecca John argued:

- That recovery shown to have been made at the instance of Kobad Ghandy were planted;
- That CPI (Maoist) had actually been outlawed only on 22 June, 2009; none of the material alleged to have been recovered pertained to any period after 22 June, 2009;
- That no material is produced to show that Kobad Ghandy continued to be a member of CPI (Maoist) after 22 June, 2009;
- That heavy reliance was placed by the prosecution on digital storage devices such as CDs, DVDs, pen drives and hard drives; but none of these media/devices were sent for forensic examination to any Forensic Sciences Laboratory (FSL) to verify genuineness and authenticity of their contents;
- That no photograph or voice sample of Kobad Ghandy was obtained and sent to any FSL to establish that the voice/video footage contained in the said media was that of Kobad Ghandy;
- That unverified newspaper reports placed by the prosecution cannot be said to be evidence;
- That FIRs involving Kobad Ghandy had been placed on record to prove that he was a member of CPI (Maoist); that authors of these FIRs had not been examined; that these FIRs were thus inadmissible in evidence;
- That Section 20 of the UAPA makes punishable membership of a terrorist organisation “which is involved in terrorist act”; but no

evidence on record shows Kobad Ghandy had advocated any terrorist act;

- That additional charge against Kobad Ghandy was under Section 38 of the UAPA; but this Section would not apply to Kobad Ghandy since CPI (Maoist) was not declared to be a terrorist organisation when he allegedly became a member;
- That the Sanction Order was declared to be illegal by the Court of Shri P.K. Jain through its order dated 28 March, 2012; and the second Sanction Order dated 28 March, 2012 could not cure the defect which was there in the earlier Sanction pertaining to Section 45(2) of the UAPA;
- That there was absolutely no time given to the Sanctioning Authority to consider any material;
- That in the absence of any valid Sanction Order, the prosecution of Kobad Ghandy for the offences under UAPA fall through;
- That the prosecution had relied on the recovery of written material and digital storage media touting it to be incriminating evidence at that time;
- That the prosecution failed to prove beyond reasonable doubt that Kobad Ghandy had led the police team to the premises from where incriminating evidence was recovered;
- That the prosecution had relied on material downloaded from the internet as evidence of association and membership of Kobad Ghandy of CPI (Maoist);
- That this material was downloaded by the prosecution and assessed from certain nine named websites which had hosted the information; servers of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are used to host these websites on the internet;
- That prosecution had furnished signed certificates under Section 65B of the Indian Evidence Act in support of this downloaded information;
- That the prosecution witness had assessed the information by using his computer and then taking print outs of the same; the material was thus neither generated nor stored in the computer system used by the prosecution;

- That as per Section 65B(2) of the Evidence Act the information in the electronic record has to be produced by the computer from which it is retrieved; only then it is deemed a document;
- That the said electronic records relied upon by the prosecution are therefore inadmissible in evidence;
- That the prosecution witness was not competent to sign the certificates as he had no control over these websites; therefore the said electronic records are inadmissible;
- That emails attributed to Kobad Ghandy were assessed by the prosecution and relied upon to prove his association.

For the very same reasons (*supra*) that the Court had observed that the electronic records produced by prosecution was inadmissible in evidence, the printouts of the emails too could not be looked into or read in evidence. This was the Court's observation. The emails were stored in the servers of the email service providers viz. Yahoo. The computers used by prosecution witness did not produce the emails, but provided access to these emails. Prosecution would therefore not be competent to give any certificate under Section 65B of the Evidence Act in regard to the emails stored in the servers of Yahoo.

The Court observed in its judgement:

“108. The task of the prosecution is to establish its case against an accused beyond any reasonable doubt. The same has been reiterated by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in several cases. In the case of *Paramjeet Singh vs. State of Uttarakhand* (2010) 10 SCC 439 it was held that the burden of proof is on the prosecution to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt and that the law does not permit the Court to punish the accused on the basis of moral conviction or suspicion alone. The more serious the offence, stricter the degree of proof required, since a higher degree of assurance is required to convict the accused. In the case of *Kali Ram vs. State of Himachal Pradesh* (1973) 2 SCC 808 it was held that when two views are possible, one pointing to the guilt and other to the innocence of the accused, the view favourable to the accused must be taken. When Court entertains a reasonable doubt regarding the guilt of the accused, the accused must get the benefit of that doubt. In the case of *Datar Singh vs. State of Punjab* (1975) 4 SCC 272 it has been held that suspicion, however grave, cannot be a satisfactory basis for convicting an accused person. When the superstructure of the prosecution has crumbled, it is impossible to not give the benefit of the doubt to the accused.

109. In the facts and circumstances of this case, there are reasonable doubts on the version of the prosecution on charge under Sections 20 and 38 of the UAPA. The benefit of the same will have to go to the accused. ...

113. Hence in the absence of any evidence in support of these charges, Kobad Ghandy is acquitted for the charge framed for the offences under Sections 20 and 38 of the UAPA.”

*This judgement was announced in the open court on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June, 2016 by Shri Reetesh Singh, Additional Sessions Judge, Patiala House Courts, New Delhi.*

#### POST SCRIPT:

The prosecution had submitted to the court that Kobad Ghandy had disclosed that he had gone to Nepal in 2006 to meet Prachanda, the Chief of Nepal Maoists and other Maoists leaders in Nepal. This was held against Kobad Ghandy even as he was charged under UAPA. Ironically Narendra Modi, the Indian Prime Minister had met Prachanda in October, 2016 during the BRICS Summit, Goa. Does Modi know the following facts about Prachanda?:

- That Prachanda’s Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) declared a “peoples war” on 4 February, 1996 and started looting weapons of policemen posted in rural Nepal.
- That the Maoists started blowing up police posts.
- That Prachanda led the bloody civil war for ten years during which over thirteen thousand people were killed; over one thousand disappeared; and thousands were displaced. Prachanda still faces cases of his involvement in killings of people during the armed conflict.
- That ending his twenty-five year long underground life, Prachanda made a public appearance at the then Nepal Prime Minister’s residence on 16 June, 2006. It culminated in a 2006 peace deal. Prachanda was elected Prime Minister in August 2008; and is presently the Prime Minister of Nepal in his second term.

During Modi’s meeting with Prachanda in 2016, the Chinese President Xi Jinping was also present. Does Modi know the following facts about Xi Jinping?:

- That Xi Jinping is the General Secretary, Communist Party of China (1974-Present).
- That Xi Jinping has been referred to as Maoist both in ideological terms and in how he tries to control Chinese society.

- That Chairman Mao Tse-tung's or Mao Zedong's Marxist-Leninist theories, military strategies and political policies are collectively known as Maoism.
- That critics of Mao consider him a dictator who was responsible for forty to seventy million deaths through starvation, prison labour and execution.

Modi was appointed Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2001. He was elected to the legislative assembly soon after. His administration has been considered complicit in the 2002 Gujarat riots. Several scholars have described the violence as a pogrom, while others have called it an example of state terrorism.

As far as Kobad Ghandy is concerned there is not a single act of violence committed by him, yet he continues to be in custody for over seven years and continues to fight cases under Draconian laws in several states in India even as he approaches the end of the seventh decade of his life and is in precarious health.

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# IN INDIA ANY SOCIAL ACTIVIST CAN BE ARRESTED, CHARGED AND TRIED – SANS EVIDENCE – FOR TERRORISM: KOBAD GHANDY’S CASE – PART II – THE PUNJAB TRIAL

Dr P S Sahni

*Co-Written by Dr. P.S. Sahni & Shobha Aggarwal\**

The first part of the article (Countercurrents.org, 14.03.2017) dealt with Kobad Ghandy’s trial under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in Delhi, during which he was detained in Tihar Jail for about seven years!; and acquitted by the court of charges under UAPA on 10 June, 2016!! Kobad Ghandy was acquitted of even being a member of CPI (Maoist).

This second part deals with the case filed inter alia under sections 10/13/18/20 of UAPA at Police Station Sadar Patiala, Punjab. Kobad Ghandy has been acquitted in this case too, on 18 October, 2016.

Before detailing the Punjab Case a few gems produced by the Punjab Police are in order.

- In the Delhi case the policemen/prosecution witness had simply done a Google search on ‘Kobad Ghandy, CPI (Maoist)’ through their personal computer; downloaded contents from nine websites; self-attested these documents, and produced them as evidence under the Indian Evidence Act! The court rejected these documents as evidence. Either these policemen had an IQ well below that of a congenital idiot; or were under pressure of the political establishment to frame Kobad Ghandy; or both factors operated in tandem. In the Punjab case wherein, too, Kobad Ghandy was charged under UAPA even the farce of an exercise to collect evidence against Kobad Ghandy – as was resorted to by the men in Special Cell, New Delhi was not deemed necessary!
- The Punjab Policemen/prosecution witness were not even sure as to when during April-May 2009 i.e. a period of 61 days was the alleged anti-national speech delivered by Kobad Ghandy. Some amnesia, this. Besides, he did not remember the exact words of the speech. He referred to a clean shaven person (alluding to Kobad Ghandy) speaking

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words against the country. This witness stated that the clean shaven person must be a Hindu. It is another matter that Kobad Ghandy is a Parsi. In any case a clean shaven person could well be a Jain, Buddhist, Christian or a Muslim; some Sikhs, too, have shorn hair. But these possibilities were not entertained by this witness. Some logic, this.

- The second prosecution witness emphasised in the court that Kobad Ghandy was talking like a communist! Since when has “talking like a communist” attracted the provisions of UAPA? What about members of the parliamentary parties viz CPI and CPI(Marxist) who talk like Communists – at least on occasions? Will henceforth these parliamentarians be charged for anti-national activities?
- A prosecution witness stated that Kobad Ghandy in his alleged speech urged that the present government should be changed; and asked people to vote for CPI (Maoist)! Is the Indian Intelligence Bureau unaware that CPI (Maoist) shuns electoral politics?

The case of the prosecution was that on 23 January, 2010 when Hardawinder Singh, PPS, DSP (Rural) along with police party was present near the main gate of Punjabi University, Patiala, he received a secret information that one person namely Kobad Ghandy “head of the activities of international, national parties”(sic) along with others from different cities were involved in unlawful activities against the country and government due to which the unity, security and sovereignty of the country were in danger. A case was registered and investigated. Statements of policemen and witnesses were recorded in January, 2010 to the effect that in the month of April/May 2009, when they went for walk on the grounds of Punjabi University then one person with shorn hair was addressing an assembly of unknown persons. In his speech he was exhorting the persons to help the Maoist Party as the main aim of the party was to dissolve the democratic government and to establish in its place the new democratic government of CPI (Maoist). During interrogation by Punjab Police on 22 February, 2010, Kobad Ghandy while lodged in Tihar Jail, Delhi allegedly admitted to delivering the agitated speech.

The charges as above were framed against Kobad Ghandy accordingly to which he pleaded not guilty and claimed a trial. The prosecution examined thirteen witnesses including police officers of the level of SP; bureaucrats viz Director, Directorate of Field Publicity, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Chandigarh; official from Home and Justice Department; Manager, Special Cell Intelligence, Hyderabad. Thereafter the Additional Public Prosecutor (PP) closed the prosecution evidence by making a statement which was recorded separately.



The very first prosecution witness deposed that he could neither remember the exact words of the speech delivered allegedly by Kobad Ghandy in April/May 2009 at Punjabi University, Patiala; nor could he identify the accused amongst all the persons present in the court! The second prosecution witness deposed that the accused was talking like a communist person and saying that the present government should be changed!! This conversation took place in April/May 2009 at Mehta Sweet Shop opposite Punjabi University, Patiala where six-seven persons were sitting and addressing one of these persons as Professor Kishore ji (alleged to be an assumed name of Kobad Ghandy). The second prosecution witness could identify the accused in the court. DSP Hardawinder Singh, Investigating Officer (IO) in the case proved the documents filed. FIRs filed against the accused in Punjab, Delhi were proved by prosecution witnesses. The last prosecution witness proved the letter issued by the IG, Hyderabad to Superintendent, Tihar Jail, Delhi showing the cases registered against Kobad Ghandy in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

After closure of the prosecution evidence, the statement of Kobad Ghandy under section 313, Code of Criminal Procedure was recorded, wherein all the oral as well as documentary incriminating evidence was put to the accused. Kobad Ghandy pleaded his innocence and false implication in this case.

**Kobad Ghandy's Statement:**

"I, am a Parsi and of 70 years of age. I am having numerous health problems. I am deeply patriotic. I am also a journalist and have been consistently writing. I have lived in Mumbai and Nagpur in my entire life after returning from U.K. in 1972. No case was registered against me in Maharashtra till today, where I have lived my entire life. The establishment wanted to keep me indefinitely in jail through numerous false cases. I have never been to Patiala University, nor do I know anyone there. I even do not know Punjabi. I could never even dream of making the type of speech alleged against me in the present case. Neither I was nor I am a member of any terrorist gang or terrorist organisation or any unlawful association. I never indulged in any unlawful or terrorist activity in my life. I have not joined any organisation or political party in my life. I am a true believer of unity and integrity of my country. I am innocent. I am peace loving and a law abiding citizen. I have not committed any offence. I have been falsely implicated in the this false case, by the police on false allegations. Nothing was recovered from me in this case. The police had conduct tainted, biased and motivated investigation to falsely implicate me in the present case by introducing the false documents and introducing false and interested witnesses. Up to the time of my arrest in 2009, I have been regularly filing income tax returns and paying tax in Mumbai, having PAN No.AAEPG615IC, Ward No.22(2)(1) and have a bank account with the Vijay Bank, Santacruz(West)

Branch in Mumbai. My wife (now deceased) was a lecturer in Mumbai and a Post Graduate Professor at Nagpur University. I worked as a journalist writing in newspapers and magazines. Recently my articles appeared in Indian Express in August, 2015 and on April 22, 2016 on (socio-economic analysis of crime and criminals in Tihar Jail, Delhi).”

The learned defence counsel, B.S. Sodhi argued:

- that the accused has been falsely implicated in this case;
- that the accused worked for the downtrodden and wrote against injustice;
- that the accused worked during his whole life in Maharashtra and there is not a single case against him there;
- that his main writings are on economics and real development policies;
- that in the year 1968 the accused went to London to study Chartered Accountancy and remained there for four years. He faced racism, opposed it and fought for the Indian community;
- that the accused gave up an excellent career to serve the oppressed people of his country and work for the development of the oppressed masses;
- that a case was registered against the accused in Delhi vide FIR no. 58 of 2009 in Police Station Special Cell under various provisions of Indian Penal Code and UAPA;
- that vide order dated 28 March, 2012, the UAPA charges against the accused were dropped;
- that in July 2012 when a new charge sheet was filed, then the charge only under section 20 of UAPA was framed by the court. In that case too, the accused was acquitted vide judgement dated 10 June, 2016 by Additional Sessions Judge, New Delhi District, Patiala House Courts, Delhi;
- that there is no confession in the present case;
- that no recovery of any material showing the accused as member of any banned organisation has been effected;
- that no prosecution witness has deposed that the accused was delivering the speech in April/May 2009 in Punjabi University, Patiala;

- that the prosecution failed to establish when and where the previous approval of Central Government was accrued by the State Government as required under sections 42 & 43 A of UAPA;
- that the prosecution case was initiated by police, developed by police, attempted to establish at trial by police;
- that merely uttering some spurious comments against the government or against the law of the land does not alone constitute a terrorist act as per definition under section 15 of UAPA. Several Supreme Court citations were quoted to buttress this argument.

Mohammad Gulzar, Additional Sessions Judge, Patiala, Punjab considered the rival contentions of Additional P.P. for the State and defence counsel and went through the evidence on the file and law cited before the court and came to the following conclusion:

- that the incident according to the prosecution case related to April/May 2009; Kobad Ghandy was arrested on 20 February, 2010. The sanction order was given on 19 May, 2011!! Under UAPA (rule framed in 2008) the time limit for sanction of prosecution is seven working days after receipt of recommendation of the authority!!!
- that there is no evidence on the file that the accused was delivering speech against State in April/May 2009; or that the accused expressed himself as a spokesperson of a terrorist organisation;
- that there is no document on the file recovered from the accused to prove that he impersonated himself for the purpose of cheating anybody;
- that mere membership of a banned organisation cannot incriminate a person unless he is proved to have resorted to acts of violence or incited people to imminent violence, or does an act intended to create disorder or disturbance of public peace by resort to imminent violence [*Arup Bhuyan vs. State of Assam (2011) 3 SCC 377*];
- that prosecution failed to establish any evidence as to terrorist activity;
- that the organisation CPI (Maoist) was banned on 22 June, 2009 as a terrorist organisation by Government Notification; while this case relates to April/May 2009 when CPI (Maoist) was not even notified as a banned organisation by the Central Government;
- that the prosecution failed to adduce any specific evidence that Kobad Ghandy has taken part in the activity of the organisation after that ban which can be identified as terrorist activity;

- that no recovery was effected at the instance of accused;
- that there is no evidence on record to show that the accused was having any link with terrorist activities/militant group; nor any prosecution witness disclosed the outcome of the investigation with Hyderabad Police nor it has been proved by any oral or documentary evidence;
- that prosecution failed to establish any activity on part of accused which can be termed as terrorist act;
- that neither directly nor impliedly any allegation raised against the accused could be established by the prosecution beyond reasonable shadow of doubt;
- Hence by giving the benefit of doubt the accused is acquitted from the charges framed against him.

Accordingly on 18 October, 2016 Kobad Ghandy was ordered to be acquitted.

Post Script:

The following is excerpted from Kobad Ghandy's piece sent from Cherlapalli Central Jail, Cherlapalli, Medchal District, Hyderabad where he is currently lodged. This piece titled "Fake News, Post-Truth, Ethics and Me" appeared in the Mainstream issue dated April 1, 2017:

"When it comes to myself, when a Telangana court acquitted me of all charges (February 10, 2017), the media was silent; but when a few days later the Supreme Court refused to entertain a bail plea, it was widely covered. Worse still, the PTI report intentionally misquoted the lawyer as stating that "just because he was a member of the Central Committee, 16 cases were slapped on him....". Where does the question arise of being a 'leader' of a party when I have even been acquitted of being a member across the three States of Delhi, Punjab and Telangana!! It will also not bother to report that I have spent over seven-and-a-half years in jail as an undertrial, though I am being acquitted in case after case.

Though this may result in judicial murder, due to a failing digestive system and other ailments, in the final analysis truth and justice will prevail. The post-truth practitioners, the cunning and the duplicate, the perpetrators of evil and cruelty will rot, notwithstanding the gloss that masks their sins. After all, Chanakya merely lives in the mind of the artful manipulators, while Bhakti/truth/honesty lives in the heart of the masses."

References:

1. <http://www.countercurrents.org/2017/03/14/in-india-any-social-activist-can-be-arrested-charged-and-tried-sans-evidence-for-terrorism-kobad-ghandys-case/>
2. Judgement dated 18.10.2016 in the case titled State vs. KobadGhandy passed by MohammadGulzar, Additional Sessions Judge, Patiala, Punjab.
3. <https://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article7075.html>

