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TOWARDS A NEW DAWN

The Other Voice
of the PEOPLE

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Ideology and Politics Of BJP
NRC Mockery of Legitimacy
Contextualizing the **Babri Mosque** Debate
Social Fascism
Modi Government & **Kashmir**
Employment and Labour Law Being Revised

ON THE SPECIFICITIES
OF
Brahmanist
Hindu Fascism

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the PEOPLE

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Editorial

In 2019, RSS controlled BJP, headed by Modi came to power for a second term and thus revealed the pathetic condition of parliamentary politics in India. It is the parliamentary path which has been taken for the growth and proliferation of religious fascism in this semi-feudal semi-colonial country. No Reichstag like incident, coup, termination of elections or military upsurge has been required so far – the organized nature of RSS, media lapdogs, the money and support of comprador industrialists, war frenzy egged on by ultra -nationalist religious sentiments and religious polarization have proved to be potent tools for the Modi led BJP to capture power. The rise of fascism through the path of peaceful democratic means raises serious questions about the parliamentary system; how democratic is this structure itself? Congress too has used similar means to capture power, only the process was less crude. Standing at this juncture, it is important to analyze the development of various events and thereafter take a closer look at the Indian democratic system and the potential for revolutionary politics that lies in it.

6years have passed since the beginning of Modi's government and seventy-two years have passed since the attainment of independence. The masses, particularly the workers, peasants, Dalits, Adivasis and minorities are facing economic, political and cultural attack of the worst kind. Liberalisation and privatization is near complete. Modi led BJP has undertaken the responsibility of completing the structural changes that began during the rule of Congress. BJP's economic agenda was to bring an end to reforms and serve imperialism completely and that operation is in full swing. Part of its political agenda was to build Ram Mandir and abrogate Article 370 in Kashmir- those too have been completed. Creating a hustle about Bangladeshi immigrants is also ongoing through NRC and CAA. By 2025, which also happens to be the centenary year since the establishment of RSS, they aim to reach yet another goal- and that is the establishment of Hindu Rashtra (Hindu state); a goal which they are steadily marching towards. At the same time it is also crystal clear that through promulgation of NRC and building of detention camps the fascists are aiming to make lots of cheap labour easily available. At this juncture there are primarily two sides – on one hand is the fascist state and the Indian workers, peasants and working masses on the other. This situation is a rare one. The beatings of the fascist forces have hardened the spines of the masses like no other.

Given these circumstances the most natural reaction of the masses is – revolt. We have witnessed examples of such strength last December in the anti-CAA protests. For five long years the very people who have been pushed into a corner and terrorized by chants of 'Jai Shree Ram' are now

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Painting by Chittoprasad

Employment and Labour Law Being Revised: A Few Words for Workers

Avijit Sengupta

In English the word 'revised' is synonymous with the word 'reformation', which means the input of new elements in an otherwise traditional trajectory. For example, old temples, heritage buildings are structurally revised when falling apart, as part of regular maintenance of creations that are at present damaged, either partly or wholly. Hence, people like us—contractual or non-contractual workers at factories, gatekeepers, hawkers, migrant labourers, even workers of shut down factories—were bound together, our professional lives defined by the rules and legislations of the 'Employment and Labour Law'— laws that have been present in our society since Britain's colonial rule over India.

Since 1936, every decade has seen newer laws being included within this Act—sometimes during 'independence', sometimes in the 60s, 70s and 80s. These laws are now called 'labour laws'. They have certain guidelines and even grant the workers some rights. It is on the basis of these laws that the workers can legally fight against exploitation by their employers. On

the basis of these documented laws, workers can organize themselves and fight for their rights against the employer. Unfortunately, several workers do not have the slightest clue about these laws. No trade-union leader felt the need to explain these laws to the workers, a convenient arrangement keeping alive the possibility of gaining personal benefits from the employers. Another possibility for the purposeful information blockade by trade union leaders could be to maintain their own position and keep the workers dependent upon them.

The present government is changing labour laws. The working class may be swayed by the idea that the revision of these laws will lead to a betterment of these laws—however, no government has revised labour laws to benefit workers in the past. Workers know this from (their own) experience. When facing pressure from workers in the form of strikes, protests and rallies, the government has been compelled to introduce labour laws that benefit the workers. Hence these laws were passed under the threat of workers' strikes and were not gifted to the workers.

Let us now deal with some of the central ideas of the labour laws.

There were 44 labour laws in India. They have now been reduced to 4 main codes. What are these codes?

1. The Code on Wages
2. The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code
3. The Code on Social Security
4. The Industry Code

The first two codes have already been passed in the Lok Sabha. The next two codes will be implemented soon. Let us take a closer look at these codes.

1. There are several laws within The Code on Wages:
 - a. Minimum Wage Act, 1948
 - b. Payment of Bonus Act, 1965
 - c. Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
 - d. Payment of Wages Act, 1936
 - e. Factory Act, 1948
- a. Minimum Wage Act: Since the introduction of

this Act, there was a central, uniform pay structure for workers. There was a benchmark to pay a uniform minimum wage. These structures will now no longer be applicable with the introduction of the new Labour Codes. The Central government has now declared 4,628 rupees as the minimum wage per month, which is 178 rupees per day. The minimum wage is set on the basis of the current market prices, and the rate of consumption of the families of workers. We live in times of immense inflation, and to dictate that 170 rupees is all that a worker will need to spend in a day is an anti-worker policy. Is it possible for workers' households to sustain themselves with 178 rupees a day?

b. Payments of Bonus Act: Due to the strength of this Act, the workers had the right to access the company's accounts, finances, and balance sheets. The workers could hence formulate their demand by looking at these statistics. In changing this law the government has now negated the possibilities of workers knowing the statistics of the companies they work for. According to the new code, if the factory owner establishes a new factory elsewhere, they do not have to pay bonus to the workers. What will result from this is, a company can change its name every time it establishes the new outlet and thereby not have to pay a bonus to their workers. If the workers decide to strike against this move, the strike will be declared illegal.

c. Equal Remuneration Act: According to the laws of this Act, there would be no discrimination on the basis of sex and gender in wages. Two employees belonging to different sexes shall be paid the same amount for the same work under the same employer. A gap in wages is a phenomenon that has unfolded massively in all industries. Passed in 1976, the Equal Remuneration Act ensured a discrimination-free process even during placement. It also directed the formation of an advisory committee to the government that would advise the government on issues of women's health, wages, etc. The new code eliminates this committee.

2. The Health and Social Welfare sector once boasted of a dynamic labour law named the 'Contract Labour Regulation and Abolition Act (1970)', which delegitimized contractual work of any form. The Act stated that it would be illegal to appoint a contractual labourer to a job that is by nature permanent. It is not unknown to us that contractual workers are appointed in permanent nature jobs in public-private enterprises, private enterprises and even government sectors. Now that this is not legally prohibited anymore, employers

have no reason to not appoint contractual workers freely and exploit them to their heart's desire. In the name of 'fixed-term employment', the government has taken the side of the employers and declared that work will no longer be fixed, and that a worker can be out of work whenever his contract gets over. The demand for proper and healthy working conditions, applied especially to the jute workers and workers who exerted most amount of physical effort. Several ailments affect these workers, which include silicosis, heart, eye, and kidney related diseases. This law existed to ensure the demands of proper working conditions were maintained through the allocation of funds specifically for these sectors. The government now wants to eradicate all forms of pensions, gratuities, P.F.s, and several other beneficial pay schemes for the workers.

3. The Code on Social Security and The Code on Industry will also be implemented in a matter of time. The government is trying to remove the basic norms of the Trade Union Act, which falls under The Code on Industry. This Act stated that 15% of the employees of a company could choose to form a union if they wanted to, but now the government is increasing that number to 30%. Passed in 1947, the Act declared that firing a worker would require the government's permission, but now even that has been removed.

The policies of 'lay-off closure', 'removal from work', 'lock-out'—policies which were declared illegal on execution by the law, will now be legalized in factories which have less than 300 workers and more than 50 workers. Protest methods that the workers implemented, like 'go-slow', 'work to rule', and 'strike', have now been declared illegal.

Factory Act (1946): According to this Act, if a factory had no electricity and had 20 workers, or had access to electricity and had 10 workers, it would be considered an organized sector of work. Now even that has been rejected. Hence now these workplaces will not have to maintain labour laws. The new laws state that a workplace with no access to electricity will now have to have 40 workers to fall under the organized sector, and a workplace with access to electricity will have to have 20 workers to be considered a part of the organized sector. Leave has also been reduced and the

work hours have been increased from 60 hours to 72 hours.

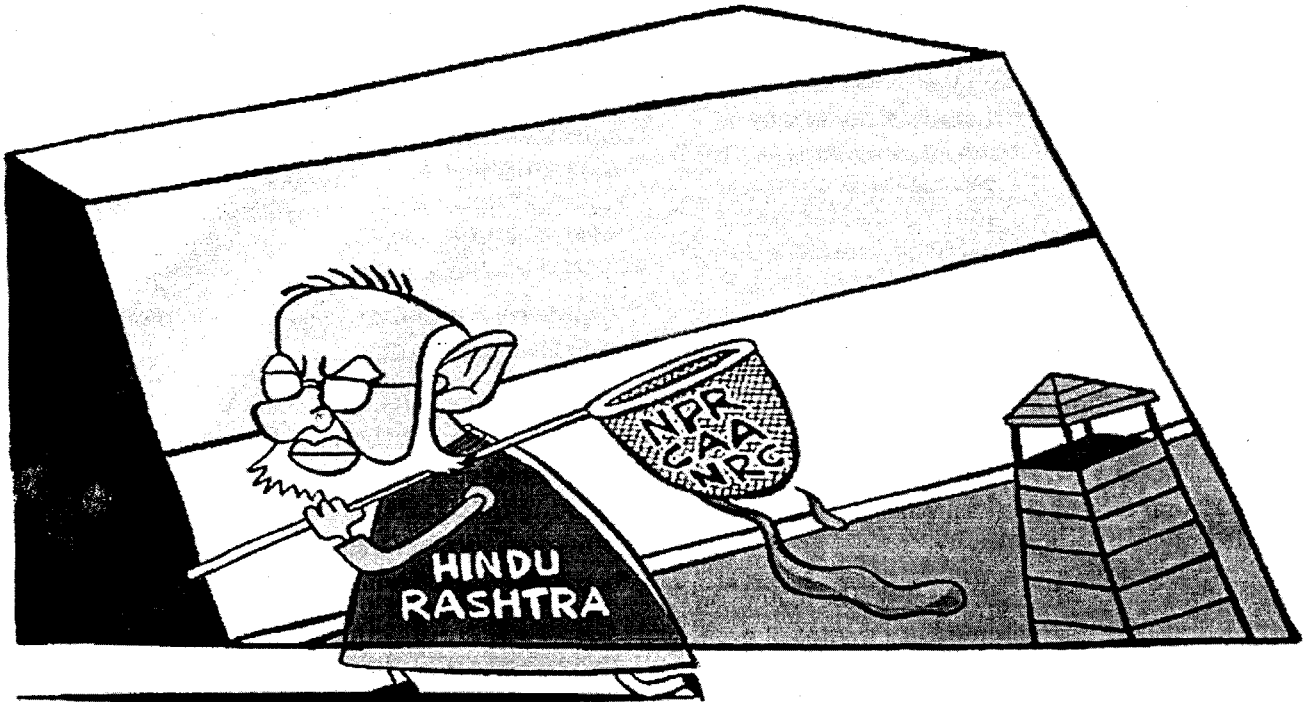
Payment of Wages Act (1936): This Act ensured the intervention of a government appointed factory supervisor who would inspect whether the workers of the factory had any grievances against the employer, and whether they are receiving payment on a regular basis. If the employer or owner would not allow the factory to be inspected by the District Labour Commission appointed supervisor, the factory owner would be penalized and punished.

The law is now being changed, and the supervisor is being renamed 'facilitator'. This facilitator will no longer inspect the factory floors, but instead work based upon a report produced by the factory owner. Who does this facilitator then facilitate? No one other than the factory owner.

The workers of India will understand how the Narendra Modi led government is acting against the interests of the working class. The advanced workers knew that these laws would not contain even an ounce of thought for the workers, but even knowing this they could not stop working for the benefit of the ruling classes under the banner of established trade unions like the CITU, INTUC, INTTUC, BHMS, etc. The working class may question now whether all the previous laws spoken of here, were for the working class, and anti-ruling class. The laws mentioned here were to some extent for the working class—the laws presently on the brink of being passed do not even have the slightest interest in serving the working class.

Our demands are as follows:

1. **Minimum wage of 25000 rupees.**
2. **Equal pay for equal work. No discrimination on the basis of work.**
3. **No contractual agreement for permanent work.**
4. **Social security for all workers.**
5. **Reject the New Labour Code; reject the intervention of international corporate capital.**



NRC Mockery of Legitimacy

Srijan Dutta

The greatest threat to Indian political and social life today is the NRC or the National Register of Citizens. From the central government's declaration, the rationale of this register is to identify the foreign illegal immigrants and take due action against them. We get a hint of the barbaric nature of this 'due action' by looking at the detention camps which are being built in Assam. To understand why the BJP government has resorted to such gross barbarism after being 'elected' to power for the second time, we ought to not just look at the present times only. We need to go back into the history of colonial Assam to understand those causal links which have decided the blood bathed fate of the region after 'independence'.

Colonial Assam

We all know that the British had first annexed the province of Bengal politically and economically, and then spread their colonial and English education in Bengal to ensure cultural annexation of the region as well. It is to a direct consequence

that we find this British morality reproducing a 'newly English-educated middle class of Bangali Babus. When the British head up to Assam, these loyal Bengalis were hired by them as the local aide to help them in their quest for governing and exploiting the varied indigenous communities of Assam. With the British settling in Assam, many tea gardens were established there. People from the Munda, Santhal, Gond and Oraon communities were brought to labour in these gardens. To increase the quality and quantity of the land productivity of the region, many Bengali Muslim peasants were also brought in from East Bengal. The colonisers even commissioned huge mining operations for which many poor labourers were hired. In 1905, Lord Curzon's decision to bifurcate Bengal for the sake of administrative utility led to the joining of Assam with East Bengal. A huge wave of migration had been initiated by this.

Assam after 1947

With the transfer of power from the British crown, two countries were born – India and Pakistan – and it is due to this whimsical partition, Bengali Hindu migrants from East Pakistan were forced to come to India. The people who came to Assam were majorly Bengali Hindu residents of the Sylhet district of East Bengal. The biggest wave of migration in Assam was noticed during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 and the creation of the country. Millions of people had sought refuge in India owing to the widespread violence and repression and majority of them settled in Assam.

Assam's nationalist movement and hatred for Bengalis

From the annexation of Assam by the British in 1826 to 1971, the region has been witness to huge waves of continued migration of different people at different times. It is for this reason that Assam has gone through a major demographic change. Owing to this, the indigenous communities of Assam, who had been the first inhabitants of the region, felt hugely deprived. This anxiety to be a minority in one's own land and to lose their language, culture and livelihood was a direct

human concomitance. After getting independence from the colonisers, many colleges and universities were set up in Assam that facilitated rapid spread of education among these communities. But in spite of being meritorious achievers in higher education, the youth from these communities never got the kind of jobs they deserved to sustain themselves.

This issue of unemployment was a result of the faulty government policies yet the increasing fear and anxiety within the communities instantly gave vein to a rage and hatred towards the migrant Bengalis. With the establishment of All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), the nationalist movement of Assam or the 'Assam Agitation' started in 1971. This massively popular mass movement had two main agenda. First, the immediate identification of foreign migrants and sending them back to where they came from. Second, to pressurize the State into giving the Assamese people their due rights relating to education and employment. These protests took a violent turn in the Nellie and Khoirabari massacres. In order to pacify this situation of unrest, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was compelled to sign the Assam Accord with the agitating AASU and AAGSP leaders on the 15th of December 1985. The clauses of this accord fixed 28th March 1971 as the 'cut-off date' for the residents of Assam to be recognized as citizens of India and whoever would not fall within this 'cut-off date' would be treated as a Doubtful Voter (D-voter) and the person's voter Id Card would be confiscated. After that, the person would be deported.

The ploy of citizenship and the future of 'foreigners'

The State depends too much on legalese and precise use of terminology to avoid being held responsible for future disputes and avoid accountability towards the people. Hence, whenever we now speak of the NRC, 'refugee', 'asylum-seekers', and 'infiltrators' are the words which keep coming back to our everyday discourse. Each of these words has a different connotation and social

significance. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has defined the word 'refugee' in a very specific context, "A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so." This definition clearly states that no human being willfully becomes a 'refugee'; one is 'forced' by social, political or natural circumstances. It is apparent from the word 'fear' in the given definition. The Indian State and its representatives are not obliged to follow this internationally accepted definition as they have deliberately never signed neither the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), nor the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (1964). The Indian State pretends to be unfamiliar with the word 'refugee,' but its attitude towards the concept of 'citizenship' is totally opposite. The frequent amendments to the act and rules related to citizenship show this difference in attitude. The Citizenship Act of 1955 was amended in 1987 for the first time. According to the 1955 Act, any person who is born on or after 26th January 1950 till 1st July 1987 would be considered a citizen of India. But this idea of citizenship has been made more complex after the amendment of 1987. Those born between 1st July 1987 and December 2004 would be granted citizenship if one of their parents were Indian by birth. During its tenure in 2003, the BJP had brought in another amendment to this act. According to this amendment, persons born on or after the 4th of December 2004 should either have both the parents as citizens of India or one of the parents as a citizen and another as a migrant with valid papers. One must mention here that when this government tried pursuing the NRC in Assam, it treated 24th March 1971 as the cut-off date but the Citizenship Act was amended first in 1986. The Indian Constitution clearly states that no law or act can nullify its antecedent laws and the mechanisms that the previous law ensued. Hence whatever happened in Assam has directly violated the Citizenship Act of 1955.

The central government is changing the laws and the constitution to its own whim and bending legal terms to suit its interests. Although the demand for NRC in Assam was first raised by the nationalist groups in the state, the Hindu fundamentalist and communal forces like BJP and RSS have appropriated those claims for long now. They have added a communal dimension to the nationalist struggle of Assam and have divided the people who have sought asylum in India on the grounds of religion – they are referring to the Bengali Hindus as 'refugees' and the Bengali Muslims as 'infiltrators'. Such a difference is being carefully highlighted to prove that Bengali Muslims have consciously come to India settled here illegally and the Bengali Hindus have fled because of persecution in East Pakistan and later Bangladesh. They do not want the truth to come out that refugeehood is forced upon a person by circumstances.

Amit Shah is appeasing his Hindu voters by assuring them that their citizenship would remain secure. To let them slip into his trap, he has used the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) as a weapon. This Bill has recently been passed both at the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha. The crux of the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2019 (CAA) is that all Hindu, Christian, Sikh, Buddhists and Parsis who have come here from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh will not be treated as "illegal infiltrators' anymore.

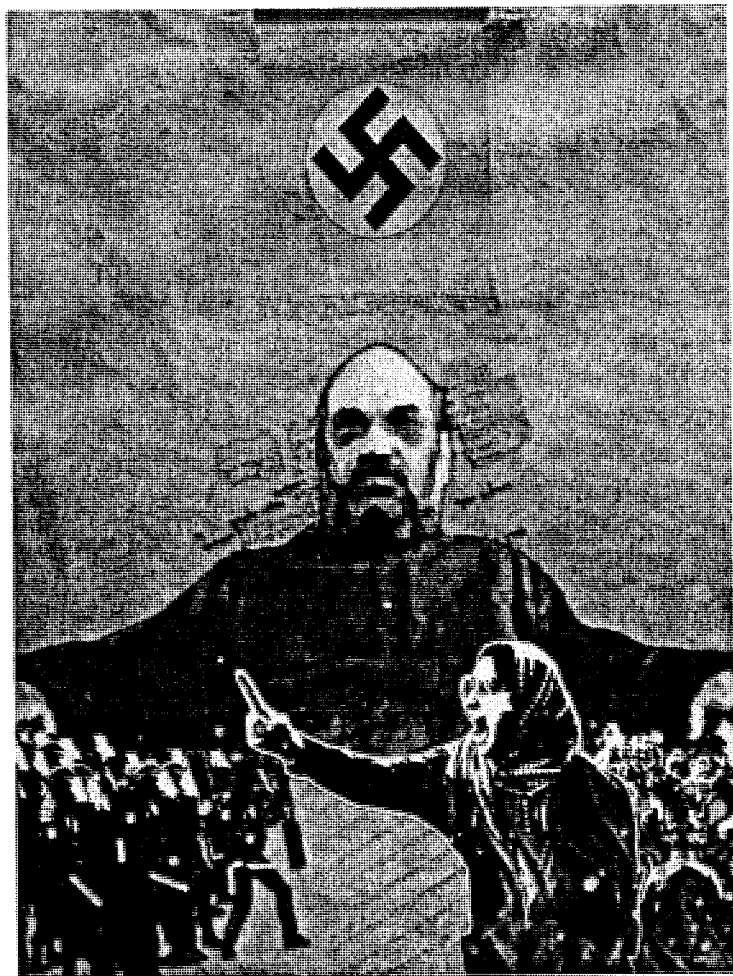
But nowhere in this act does one find how and by what time these people would get citizenship. The fact that this act is unconstitutional is clear because Muslims have been consciously left out of its ambit. India's constitution clearly states that India is a secular country and thus the State cannot make laws selectively on the basis of their religion. Those who are thinking that this act is only anti-Muslim are falling prey to the communal agenda of the Sangh Parivar. The aim of this Amit Shah-Modi government is to vilify the Muslims of India and reduce all other religious communities into idle passive spectators. The best possible example of this is how the Prime Minister of a country says that people protesting against NRC-CAA-NPR can be identified by their

clothes. The NRC-CAA-NPR nexus is an anti-people programme, and that the CAA is an act to give citizenship to non-Muslim is a complete lie. On the 7th January 2019, a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on CAB gave its report to the Lok Sabha. The committee had revealed at that time that only 31,313 people (25847 Hindus, 5807 Sikhs, 55 Christians, 2 Buddhists and 2 Parsis) would be eligible to apply for citizenship if the CAB was passed. The government also intimated on the three criteria on which this appeal would be recognized or not. These people ought to prove that they had come to India before the 31st of December 2004, and had been dislocated for reasons of religious persecution, and must produce identification documents that they have from Afghanistan or Pakistan or Bangladesh.

When the NRC list came out on 31st August 2019 in Assam, more than 1.9 million people (19,06,657) were left out, of whom 1.2 million were Hindus. But one must not be surprised as the central government has made citizenship synonymous to the ability to show documents given by the State. On top of that to keep the hoax going, the State is giving false assurances that if one's name has been left out, one can seek judicial review in this matter. But one must note that since this delisted person is already a 'foreigner' in the eyes of the government one does not have the luxury to rove around the courts and judges of India for eternity. Instead, special Foreigners' Tribunals are going to look into the cases. Till 2005, the onus of proving that a person was a foreigner was on the State, but after Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) (IMDT) Act of 1983, one has to prove whether one is a citizen of this country or not. Thus the State has carefully planned an elusive exit from the 'burden of proof'.

Citizenship sets the premise of a person's interaction with the State. So, Article 15 of United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) says that, "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change

his nationality". We must take note of this formulation, since the State links all of one's fundamental rights with the idea of citizenship. To understand this situation of brute repression by the Indian State that is determined to make millions of 'stateless', we must look at the economic conditions of contemporary India and the world. At this time, the unemployment rate of the country is at its peak, the State is trying hard to privatize Air India, Indian Railways, BSNL and 42 other public sector industries. Education has been reduced to a commodity and the New Education Policy (NEP) facilitates its sale. On the other hand, the Narendra Modi government in its second term has brought down the 44 labour laws into 4 'codes' of which 2 have already been passed in the parliament. The little that the workers had achieved through years of ongoing resistance is now being taken away. When the entire world economy is in shambles and capitalism is facing a crisis, our government is playing a charade of



citizenship to deceive the people and strengthen the hands of big corporates. On one hand, the Modi-Shah duo had dubiously promised to send back all 'infiltrators' before elections, but ironically they have also promised Bangladesh to not send them there (and why would Bangladesh even accept these 'infiltrators'?). 6 detention camps have been set up in Assam, these can only accommodate up to a few thousand people while the number of people left out of the NRC list is 1.9 million. Though the government has planned to build a few more detention camps, it will never be possible to hold such a huge number of people. Thus, the main aim behind the implementation of the NRC is to sieve cheap labour off these people whom the government has declared to be stateless. Owing to historical reasons, the BJP got a golden opportunity through the inhuman programme of NRC to realise its exclusionist political project. One also needs to note that it is not just in Assam but also in every state that the BJP is trying to implement this model.

On the 31st of July 2019 in the Gazette of India they had first hinted how they are planning to formulate this. This programme of transforming huge sections of the population into cheap labourers in reality serves the global capital. Although there are similarities of our present situation with that of the colonial period but there are some marked differences too. During British colonialism labourers were brought from outside in Assam to serve the imperialist needs and today as the global capitalism is in such a crisis that it has planned a new conspiracy of converting lakhs of people into cheap labourers. The difference lies only in the legality-as these people have been declared stateless, they are not the citizens of the country therefore they not only lack the basic rights of a Citizen (employment, health care and education etc) but also all required human rights -their existence being reduced to 'illegal'. But these illegal people would labour for that very Indian State which would deny their citizenship. Surprisingly that on one hand these capitalists are preaching free flow of capital in the name of globalization via World Bank and the International Monetary Fund(IMF) and on the other they are up in arms against migration of any

kind and is declaring all refugees illegal. The more the working class remains unorganized, the less rights they have the more profitable it is for the state. If we look back into the history of Germany under Hitler, the purposes of a detention camp would become clear. Thousands of Jews were sent to such detention camps in which various national and international companies in coalition with the fascist government used to exploit those Jews as labourers. Companies like Siemens, Volkswagen, BMW, Audi etc which rule the world market today were all used to deploy workers from these Nazi detention camps. If one feels that this structure of oppression is a myth, then that person is surely unaware of how China, with its pacts with global capitalism is exploiting the detained Uighur religious minorities in the Xinjiang province.

The 'privatised immigrant detention centers' in countries like USA, UK, and Australia has become hubs of huge industrial economies. In this very same way the BJP -RSS wants to create a new work force by exploiting the deported people from detention camps. So within India, they want to push a majority of its population on the verge of slavery. If the agents of global capital who are sitting in India can successfully achieve this plan, India will emerge as the largest cheap labour producing country in the world and in which capitalists of the world and investors would find easy substrate for profit. And after a major section of the population is turned into cheap slaves the remaining legal citizens would also be given less wages owing to the dictates of the market and needs, the economy of the country will become more informalised. And it is Capitalism and the Indian comprador bourgeois who would gain from this. By this succinct plan the fascist Indian government wants the working class to get further unorganized so that they can assure their profit.

The website of the government clearly states that the first step to NRC is NPR(National Population Register). It was declared in the Gazette notification on the 31st July that between 1st April 2020 to 30th September 2020 in all states except Assam, would start the process of NPR. But NPR is not to be confused with the Census as the next Census is to happen in 2021 according to the Census Act of India. NRC/NRIC and NPR the names itself tell us

the difference. One is a register of population and the other a register of citizenship. The documents which have been asked for in the process cannot be provided by many people. The ones who would face maximum harassment in this procedure would be the workers, most importantly the migrant workers. Alongside the women, queer, transpersons and sex workers have the maximum fear of getting delisted from all these. The reason being that for NRC, NPR the procedure of legal documentation is emphasizing on overtly patriarchal family structure in Indian context and by that scrutinizing 'lineage' and 'bloodline' of every individual. But this issue cannot be analysed in isolation as the root to familiarity lies in private property and production relations.

Many parliamentary parties are now trying to act anti BJP by organizing rallies and meetings against NRC. But all of them acted as agents of the Indian State while supporting the Assam Accord,

arranged rallies demanding NRC in Assam. Assam Accord was a pact to curb the rigors of Assam's national liberation struggle. The ones who fought for the self-determination of the Assamese people had resisted the accord.

Hence at the present moment those who are struggling against patriarchy, the ones who are fighting for the self-determination of people, the major section of the working class which is leading the dalit movement across India and the Adivasis who are unitedly fighting against the Ambanis and Adanis for their forests, land, water- none of these struggles are separate or singular. The broader discourse of class is the crux of these resistances and class struggle is the only way to liberation for the struggling people of India.

Translated by Akashneel Ghatak

Editorial

Continued from page 2

fighting back and their protests have acquired a militant nature. The minorities have led the protests and this has sent the oppressors on the back foot. The most important thing to note here is that none of the parliamentary parties are leading this movement. Congress, CPI(M), BSP and others are simply not in a position to lead. Now that the initial tide of the movement is subsiding, they are trying to pull the masses several steps backwards- all for the hope that it would yield positive results for them in the coming elections. Another important thing to note is that, the primary slogan raised by the sections who are giving the movement their all is, 'save the constitution'. They are emphasizing the words of the preamble in their efforts to safeguard their very existence. The minorities cannot be blamed for this. Since the very inception of the 'independent' Indian state, they have remained second class citizens and it is under compulsion that they have finally hit the streets.

But here another point must be raised. In an interview given to Outlook magazine in 2010, the Communist

revolutionary, Azaad who was killed in a fake encounter, remarked that the constitution was of lesser value than toilet paper for the vast majority of Indian people. Unfortunately enough, some people who claim to belong to the revolutionary left camp too have defected from this position. These elite left leaders celebrated by Delhi media are spewing vague statements that ultimately amount to establishing the constitution as a tool for revolution and not Lenin's 'State and the Revolution'. They seem to lack the courage, revolutionary consciousness and even real interest required to turn this situation into a favourable condition for revolution. All their energies seem to be focused on making BJP lose in the coming elections and pave the way for Congress to come back again. Vague statements about the apparent secular nature of Congress are being made for the restoration of their power- efforts are on to intentionally invalidate revolutionary aspirations and goals. A section of Capitalists are also favouring them. At this hour, it is imperative to consolidate all revolutionary political questions- the struggle against fascism must be accompanied by the political struggle against the oscillating nature of social democracy. We, at Towards a New Dawn, are humbly making an attempt to carve out a theoretical ground for this immense struggle.

Ideology and Politics of the BJP

Suniti Kumar Ghosh

THE PRESENT SCENARIO CALLS FOR A SERIOUS STUDY OF THE PAST IN ORDER TO CONFRONT THE RISE OF FASCIST HINDUTWA IDEOLOGY. THIS PIECE WRITTEN BY SUNITI KUMAR GHOSH IS AN IMPORTANT ONE TO CRITICALLY UNDERSTAND WHO SHYAMA PRASAD MUKHERJEE WAS AND WHAT HIS ROLE WAS DURING THE EVE OF PARTITION. THIS ARTICLE IS BEING REPRINTED FROM THE *INDIAN CONSTITUTION AND ITS REVIEW* BY SUNITI KUMAR GHOSH, PUBLISHED BY RAJANI X DESAI FOR RESEARCH UNIT FOR POLITICAL ECONOMY (RUPE), MUMBAI, 2001.

To know the professed ideology and politics of the BJP we need to have some knowledge of the ideology and role of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), of which the BJP is the political wing. The RSS has spawned many organisations to carry out its tasks on various fronts and they are all under the control of RSS, activists.

The Bharatiya Jan Sangh, from which the BJP has descended, was founded in 1951 by Shyama Prasad Mookerjee (who had been president of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha for some years) and the RSS. M.S. Golwalkar, the sarsanghchalak (the supreme leader of the RSS) sent five of its activists to help Shyama Prasad to set up the Jan Sangh. Among them were Atal Behari Vajpayee and L.K. Advani.¹ The RSS's aims were the Jan Sangh's, and later, the BJP's in the political sphere.

The organisational principle of the RSS is *ek chalak anuvartita* (obedience to one leader). Behind the facade of some elections the Congress has also functioned on the same principle during the Gandhian era and later. Gandhi insisted on unquestioning obedience to his directives. There was broad agreement on many issues between the Gandhian leadership of the Congress and the All India Hindu Mahasabha (the leaders of which like B.S. Moonje and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya took prominent roles in organising the RSS). When the All India Hindu Mahasabha was founded at Hardwar in 1915, Gandhi was a member of its Subjects Committee. Rajendra Prasad, Jairamdas Daulatram, etc, were intimately associated with the Mahasabha for some time.² Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, M.R. Jayakar and others were leaders of both organisations for quite some time. While the

Mahasabha openly championed the interests of the Hindu upper strata, the Gandhian leadership of the Congress did so not openly; they wore a cloak of Indian nationalism. The big Marwari and Gujarati compradors like the Birlas, as we shall see, were close to the Gandhian leadership as well as to the Mahasabha and the RSS, but for a long time they depended mostly on the former for achieving their aims.

There was an important difference also. While the Gandhian leadership launched some seemingly anti-British struggles,³ the Mahasabha and the RSS never directed their attacks against the British and always against the Muslims for a greater share of British patronage for the Hindu upper strata.

Veer Savarkar raised the slogan "Hinduise all politics and militarise Hindudom Before World War II, he urged Hindus to join the British Indian army.⁴ As B.B. Misra said, "Dominated from its inception by a class of landed aristocracy and tradition-bound upper-caste educated Hindus, its leadership used religion as a means to obscure the basic economic issue of urban and rural interests, especially in the Punjab and Bengal.⁵ The Mahasabha movement, to quote Misra again, "was unrelated to the interests of the Hindu masses"⁶

It may be noted that the Mahasabha leaders like Moonje and Malaviya; patrons of the RSS, were no less to blame for the unnatural partition of India on communal lines than Congress leaders like Gandhi and his associates. If they had not rejected the Muslim leaders proposals for the replacement of separate electorate by joint electorate, which the latter offered more than once in 1927, 1930, 1931 and 1935-⁷ the awful tragedy that overtook the people of India, particularly Bengal and Punjab, and also Jammu and Kashmir, Tripura, Sind etc., could have been averted. The use of religion for political gains for the upper strata of society has been the cause of inconceivable tragedies and poses a threat to the lives of the people of the entire Indo-Pak subcontinent.

What the RSS stands for

The RSS was inaugurated in 1925 at Nagpur by K.B. Hedgewar and reorganised in 1927 by B.S. Moonje. The time of its formation is significant.

The withdrawal of the non-co-operation movement by Gandhi in February 1922 gave rise to widespread confusion and resentment. The unprecedented fraternisation between Hindus and Muslims" during the anti-colonial struggle soon yielded to mutual distrust and strife. In 1923 a movement called shuddhi for re-conversion of Hindus who had been previously converted to Islam was started by Swami Shraddhanand. Both the Arya Samaj

and the Hindu Mahasabha took up in earnest the tasks of proselytizing Muslims and protection of the cow. The shuddhi and sangathan(organisation) movements were sought to be countered by tabligh and tanzim movements of the Muslims. Serious communal riots broke out in North India, especially in Punjab and U.P. There occurred a Hindu-Muslim riot also in Nagpur in 1923.

Hedgewar wrote that with withdrawal of the non-co-operation movement, "Brahmin-non-Brahmin conflict was nakedly on view.. The yavan-snakes reared on the milk of NonCo-operation were provoking riots in the nation with their poisonous hissing"⁸ (the RSS's deep-seated hatred for the Muslims is reflected in such utterances). By this time B.R. Ambedkar had started organising the dalits against the upper caste, especially Brahmanic, social hegemony-much to the disike of the Hedgewars. Maharashtra had a long tradition of struggle against this hegemony-the struggle which had been started by Jyotiba Phule and his Satyashodhak Samaj in the 1870s. The RSS was inimical not only towards Muslims but all assertion by the oppressed castes.

The RSS raised the slogan of 'Hindustan for the Hindus.' Even today the RSS family stands for a Hindu Rashtra. The chief of the RSS, Sudarshan, said on 14 August 2000 in an interview on the BBC: "We do not accept the concept of the minorities." According to him, the minorities must accept the culture of the majority in the land. The RSS idea of culture, as clarified in the writings by its chiefs for decades, says A.G. Noorani, "is identical to religion"⁹ The RSS family claims that it is the 'culture of the Hindu nation that forms the national culture. Noorani writes: "Not long ago, Murli Manohar Joshi, now Minister for Human Resources Development, asked Muslims to call themselves 'Mohammadiya Hindus'"¹⁰

The RSS's 'Hindu nationhood' would not recognise the existing differences between castes and castes, between classes and classes and between Hindus of one nationality and those of another. Its professed aim has been to defend Brahmanic culture and strengthen the hegemony of the Hindu upper Castes against all challenges. It talks of building a Hindu Rashtra (nation) and State on the model of Manusmriti and Kautilya's Arthashastra - a Hindu nation under upper caste hegemony and an authoritarian police State.

The RSS was organised along military lines. It set out to build a Hindu militia and set up shakhas in different parts of India to impart physical training to the Hindu youth. The Hindu Mahasabha officially recognised it in 1952 and encouraged and helped it to build its branches all over India. As Misra says, "Though apparently non-political and within the law, the outlook of its members, according to official reports, was definitely anti-Muslim and involved them in communal riots".¹¹ And in Maharashtra "the RSS was closely involved in the social conflict between the Brahman and non-Brahman communities".¹²

The crucial operative element of the RSS's politics, however, was unstated: viz, service to imperialism. The RSS remained aloof from all anti-colonial struggles. M.S. Golwalkar, who succeeded Hedgewar in 1940 as its sarsanghchak, fulminated against Muslims, Christians, communists, socialists, etc., who, according to him, though born in this land, were not true to their salt, or their faiths were of "foreign origin". But he was silent about the British imperialist, the main enemy of the Indian people. He decried composite nationalism which was directed against the British raj.

He wrote: "The theories of territorial nationalism and of common danger, which formed the basis for our concept of a nation, had deprived us of the positive and inspiring content of our real Hindu nationhood and made many of the freedom movements virtually anti-British movements. Being anti-British was equated with patriotism and nationalism. This reactionary view has had disastrous effects upon the entire course of the independence struggle, its leaders and the common people."¹³ No doubt, the doctrine that the Composite nationalism

of the Indian people, which sought to overthrow British rule and achieve freedom for India, was 'reactionary' is quite significant. It appears as an apology for British colonial rule.

Fiction of a 'Hindu nation'

What is "the positive and inspiring content of our real Hindu nationhood"? It takes for granted that all Hindus, irrespective of ethnic origin, language, ways of life, culture, etc., constitute a homogeneous all-India Hindu nation. This all-India Hindu nationalism is a fiction. As we have noted, India is the home of many nationalities and each of them like Tamil, Telugu, Oriya, Marathi or Bengali has a common language, a common past, common ways of life, common culture and a distinct identity of its own. There is no one Hindu culture in India. Though Brahmanic culture has had a strong influence, for instance, on Bengali culture, the latter has a distinct character of its own. Its bedrock is pre-Aryan beliefs and practices and in successive periods Buddhism, Jainism, Brahmanic religion, Islam and Christianity have made their contributions to Bengal's composite culture. In old days Bengal was outside the pale of Brahmanic culture.

Hinduism is, indeed, a generic name for faiths and practices which differ from region to region, even from caste to caste. In Bengal there is hardly any temple to Ram, where Bengali Hindus worship. In Bengal Ram is looked upon as the hero of a great epic. He represented Brahmanic culture well. He

killed Shambuk, who, though a Shudra, dared to study the Vedas. Indrajit or Meghnad, Ravan's son, the chief obstacle to Ram's victory over Ravan, was killed not in a fair fight. In Ram Rajya, Sita had no place. Hanuman, one of the chief gods in some regions, is not worshipped by Hindus in Bengal. The issue of cow-killing has led to slaughter of men in many places. But the cow is not venerated in Bengal as it is in some regions. Cow-protection is one of the main items of the RSS family's agenda.

The RSS seeks to impose North Indian Brahmanic culture on the entire people of India. Like the top Congress leaders before and after 1947, the RSS family is bent on forcing Sanskritised Hindi on the one hundred crore people of India in order to develop

“the positive and inspiring content of our real Hindu nationhood” and stifle the growth of various national languages. Equally sinister was the policy of the rulers of Pakistan who tried to impose Urdu as the common language or the people of entire Pakistan, but unfortunately for them, it was successfully resisted by the people of East Bengal. And East Bengal overthrew Pakistan’s rule and became a new state - Bangladesh.

In fascist footsteps

As we have said, the RSS organisation was founded on the principle- ek chalak anuvartita- the fascist principle. Moonje, the Hindu Mahasabha leader and one of the founders of the RSS, saw Mussolini in March 1931 and said to him: “Your Excellency, I shall have no hesitation to raise my voice from the public platform both in India and England when occasion may arise in praise of your Balilla and Fascist organisations. I wish them good luck and every success.”

In 1938, Golwalkar wrote: “German national pride has now become the topic of the day. To keep up the purity of the nation and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic races the Jews. National pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by”.¹⁴ The racial chauvinism of Nazi Germany was directed not only against the Jews-Jews like Einstein had to flee their homeland and six million other Jews were exterminated in gas chambers but also against other peoples of the world. The Nazi racists preached the superiority of the Aryan race, especially of the German people, and held that it was their ‘manifest destiny’ to rule the inferior races. According to them, these inferior races included the Indians about whom Hitler’s Mein Kampf was not wanting in disparaging remarks. It is these German Nazis with their hated racial chauvinism who plunged the world into the worst war which the world has as yet seen and which claimed the lives of crores of people and caused devastation in three continents. It is very significant that the RSS leaders sought their followers to imbibe this most pernicious and

dangerous doctrine of the enemies of mankind- “a lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by”. Those who preached the doctrine perished in the flames they kindled: those who follow in their foot steps may escape their fate but the lamentable fact is that in the process they are sure to cause immense suffering and losses to the common people, some evidence of which is already apparent.

Congress leaders like Gandhi also paid homage to Mussolini and Hitler. On his way back to India after the Round Table Conference in London, Gandhi met Mussolini in Italy and, despite Romain Rolland’s previous warning and despite his own creed of non-violence, he lavished praises on Mussolini in his letter of 20 December 1931 to Rolland.¹⁵ When the League of Nations asked for his opinion on the attack that fascist Italy had launched against Ethiopia in 1935, the Mahatma had no word of condemnation for them and he refused to be interviewed on the question.¹⁶ In 1940, from the time of Holland’s surrender to the Nazi hordes, “Hitler’s stocks are steadily rising in his [Gandhi’s] eyes.”¹⁷ The Mahatma praised Hitler’s “sadhana”, “his single-minded devotion to his purpose that should be the object of our, admiration and emulation” and his unclouded and unerring intellect.”¹⁸ And Nehru, the self-styled socialist, afflicted with a great power syndrome,¹⁹ hailed Hitler as an agent of destiny to the extent that the days of small nations are past.²⁰ Ironically, the “agent of destiny” was consumed by the flames that he kindled while the small nation-states like Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands, to which Nehru referred, rose like the Phoenix from the ashes as independent sovereign states and are today among the imperialist states of the world.

The Tripuri Congress session in 1939 resounded with panegyrics on Hitler and Mussolini. Seth Govind Das, chairman of the reception committee, and Govind Ballav Pant, then U.P.’s prime minister, while praising Mussolini and Hitler, held that Gandhi’s position in the Congress was the same as theirs in the Fascist and Nazi party respectively.²¹

Backing the comprador Bourgeoisie

It is not surprising that on many issues there was a broad agreement between the Gandhian leadership of the Congress and the leadership of the Hindu

Mahasabha and the RSS. Both represented the same classes- the comprador big bourgeoisie (particularly the marwari and the Gujarati compradors), the big landlords and the princes. Both sought to preserve the economic and social status quo, including the Varnashrama Dharma.²²

Though the marwari and the Gujarati big bourgeoisie leaned most on the top Congress leaders- Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, etc- for achieving their goal- self government within the British empire, they did not neglect the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS. For instance, G.D Birla's relation with Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai were very close. Malaviya's newspaper *The Leader*, publishing from Allahabad, owed its existence to the Birlas. In 1926 G.D Birla contested and won the Banaras- Gorakhpur seat in the Central Legislative Assembly as a candidate of the 'Responsivist Party' led by Malaviya and Lajpat Rai. Lajpat Rai hoped that Birla would become the leader of the Hindus of North India.²³ It may be noted that Lajpat Rai urged in 1924 the partition of Punjab and the creation of a Muslim and a non-Muslim India.²⁴ G. D Birla, whom Gandhi regarded as one of the "mentors" whom "God has given me";²⁵ extolled in a letter to Gandhi the virtues of proselytizing Muslims by force.²⁶

On 2nd December, 1926, Motilal Nehru, then a most prominent leader of the Swarajist Party, wrote to Jawaharlal, "I could not hope for better results. I was simply beyond me to meet the kind of propaganda started against me under the auspices of the Malaviya- Lala Gang. Communal hatred and heavy bribing of the voters was the order of the day. The Malaviya-Lala gang aided by Birla's money are making frantic efforts to capture the Congress."²⁷ (It may be noted that, before the elections in 1926, the Swaraj Party in north India became "as good a Hindu body as one would want" and Motilal himself, commented Viceroy Irwin, "Decame a true Hindu").²⁸

A Marwari comprador, Padmaraj Jain, was secretary of the Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha in the early thirties. The Hindu Mahasabha revived in Bengal in 1939 when, at the end of it, the All-India Hind Mahasabha Conference was held in Calcutta under the presidentship of Veer Savarkar.

Funds were very liberally contributed by the big Marwari compradors- the Birlas, Sir Badridas Goenka, Seth Bansidhar Jalan, D.P Khaitan, Radhakissen Kanodia, etc. Big Hindu landlords also were generous patrons of the Mahasabha.²⁹ It was at this time that Shyama Prasad Mookerjee emerged as a prominent leader of the Hindu Mahasabha.

The Bharat Sevashram Sangha, which had close links with the Mahasabha, enjoyed Marwari support. The Bengal branch of the RSS did not fail to receive their patronage. The Birlas Shilpa Vidyalaya in Calcutta was reported to accommodate the Calcutta headquarters of the RSS.³⁰ Till the other day, perhaps even now, the RSS leadership in Bengal was (and is) wholly non-Bengali.

Shyama Prasad Mookerjee

A brief discussion of the role of the founder of the Jan Sangh may not be irrelevant. The BJP is celebrating his birth-centenary this year (2000-1). The CPI(M) deputy chief minister of West Bengal (now chief minister) did not attend the inaugural function held in Calcutta but acknowledged in a statement that Shyama Prasad was a great leader of the people and added that their Left Front government would celebrate the occasion.

Close were the ties between Shyama Prasad Mookerjee and the big Marwari business magnates who served as compradors to European capital. Together with European business houses the Marwari compradors had almost a monopoly of Bengal's wholesale trade. Their influence on Bengal's politics was most sinister. As their prosperity depended on their service to British capital, they acted as a prop of British rule. They adopted the British policy of raising a communal divide between the two major communities of Bengal. Deterioration of communal relations in Bengal, especially from about the mid-thirties, owed much to them,³¹ In playing this role they derived their strength from the Congress high command as the latter owed their sinews of war to them.³²

It needs to be borne in mind that as early as January 1938, G.D. Birla, the outstanding leader of the Indian big bourgeoisie, proposed to Gandhi as well as to Viceroy Linlithgow that the Indian subcontinent

should be divided into two—a Muslim federation and a non-Muslim federation.³³ It meant partition of Bengal as well as of Punjab.

Not surprisingly, there were also close ties between the Congress high command and Shyama Prasad Mookerjee. In June-July 1945, Viceroy Wavell convened a conference of Indian political leaders of different hues at Simla to reconstitute the Viceroy's executive council with representatives of political parties. He asked the Congress and the League to suggest names of members of the Council and he would be free to choose members from among them. The panel submitted by the Congress included the name of Shyama Prasad.³⁴ In the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly held at the end of 1945, Patel wanted the Bengal Congress to allow the Mahasabha president to go uncontested.³⁵ But the Bengal Congress election committee set up a candidate against him and Shyama Prasad could not save his security deposit. All Mahasabha candidates were routed, the security deposits of all of them were forfeited. While, for instance, Shyama Prasad polled 346 votes, the Congress candidate obtained 10,216 votes.³⁶ In the provincial assembly election in early 1946 also, all Mahasabha candidates were defeated, except Shyama Prasad who won from a special constituency—the Calcutta University. Such was the representative character of the Hindu Mahasabha and its leader in Bengal. But the Congress high command nominated the Mahasabha president as a member of the Indian Constituent Assembly in 1946.³⁷

After the serious political riots in Calcutta in the name of religion, engineered by interested persons, Shyama Prasad, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar and other "friends from Bengal" met Patel in New Delhi in September 1946, and Patel instructed them about "what should be done for the future."³⁸

Who pressed for partition?

While hailing British Prime Minister Attlee's announcement about the transfer of power by June 1948, Nehru spoke to Wavell on 21 February 1947 "of the possible partition of the Punjab and Bengal."³⁹ The Hindu Mahasabha led by Shyama Prasad immediately started a movement for the

dismemberment of Bengal on communal lines—a consummation devoutly wished by G.D. Birla since January 1938. The Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress high command and their men in Bengal like Surendramohan Ghosh worked in close collaboration to dismember Bengal.

Early in March 1947 the Congress Working Committee raised the demand for the partition of Punjab on communal lines. Congress president Kripalani announced that the principle would apply to Bengal also. Conveying the decision of the Committee, Nehru wrote to Wavell on 9 March that Bengal too would have to be partitioned.⁴⁰ In March the Hindustan Times, the organ of the Birlas, raised the demand for the division of Bengal on communal lines, even if India was not partitioned.⁴¹ The same demand was voiced by Nehru in his letter of 9 March to Wavell and again in his letter of 1 May to Viceroy Mountbatten. Shyama Prasad did not lag behind. He too insisted several times that Bengal must be dismembered whether India was partitioned or not.⁴²

While leading the movement for the partition of Bengal in close collaboration with the top leaders of the Congress, the president of the Hindu Mahasabha declared in a statement of 19 March 1947: "Partition of Bengal alone will offer a peaceful solution of the grave communal problem confronting the province. This will give the two major communities in Bengal full freedom to develop their own culture and tradition in the areas where they are in predominant numbers; both are sure to recognise soon that it will be to their mutual interest to guarantee full protection to the respective minorities in the two (proposed) provinces."⁴³

(To the protagonist of Hindutva, culture meant religion.)

Surendra Mohan Ghosh, president of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, said later to Leonard Gordon that Shyama Prasad "was saying privately: let us divide now and let the British leave. Later we will take over the whole territory."⁴⁴

There seems to be truth in what Ghosh told Gordon. Soon after the decision to dismember Bengal was finally taken, the Hindu Mahasabha declared in a resolution..."there will never be peace unless the

separated areas are brought back into the Indian Union and made its integral parts." The Mahasabha sought Indian citizenship for East Bengal Hindus and nationalist Muslims and held that East Bengal would be made a part of the Indian Union in no distant future.⁴⁵ The resolution was an invitation to war, not to peace. The Mahasabha's resolution Shows how hypocritical was its president's 19 March statement. The Mahasabha and its president did not want communal peace but endless conflict, which meant death and destruction for the poor of both the communities. And this endless conflict served (and serves) well the interests of their patrons.

During the movement Shyama Prasad was leading to dismember Bengal, he and the Mahasabha were preaching a pernicious theory-the theory of hostages. The Muslims in West Bengal and in the Indian Union would be treated as hostages after the division of Bengal.⁴⁶ The Hindu Mahasabha conference held in April assured the non-Muslims in East Bengal that "they will have the sanction, not simply moral, but in certain eventualities also physical of the new Government of West Bengal".⁴⁷

It is worth noting that leading Congressmen also were enamoured of this theory of hostages. Abul Kalam Azad wrote that at the meetings of the A.I.C.C. held on 14 and 15 June to ratify the decision of the Working Committee to partition India as well as Bengal and Punjab on communal lines, "It was being openly said in certain circles that the Hindus in Pakistan need have no fear as there would be 45 millions of Muslims in India and if there was any oppression of Hindus in Pakistan, the Muslims in India would have to bear the consequences". Azad continued: "In the meeting of the A.I.C.C., the members from Sind opposed the resolution vehemently. They were given all kinds of assurances. Though not on the public platform, in private discussion they were even told by some people that if they suffered any disability or indignity in Pakistan, India would retaliate on the Muslims in India...It implied that partition was being accepted on the basis that in both India and Pakistan, the minority would be looked upon as hostages to safeguard the security of the minority of the other state. The idea of retaliation as a method of assuring the rights of the minorities seemed

to me barbarous. Later events proved how justified my apprehensions were. The rivers of blood which flowed after partition on both sides of the new frontier grew out of this sentiment of hostages and retaliation." Azad added: "I remember in particular Kiran Shankar Roy.. who first brought this to my notice. He also spoke to Acharya Kripalani who was then President of Congress and pointed out that it was a most dangerous theory. Once such a feeling was allowed to grow, it would lead to the oppression and murder of Hindus in Pakistan and of Muslims in India. Nobody however paid any attention to Kiran Shankar Roy. In fact, many ridiculed him for his fears. They also told him that once India was divided, we must accept the theory of hostages."⁴⁸ That is, innocent, helpless Hindus in Pakistan, victims of "the war of succession" between their leaders and the League leaders, would be massacred for the crimes of some of their co-religionists in the Indian Union and the Muslim minority in India, though innocent, would be butchered for the criminal acts of some co-religionists of theirs in Pakistan.

This inhuman doctrine had its adherents also among some League leaders like Chowdhry Khaliqzaman.⁴⁹

Whether Shyama Prasad or leading Congressmen or Khaliqzaman, they all were out to sow hatred among men and destroy life, not to build it on a better and humane basis. Claiming to serve their co religionists, they were actually digging the graves of the latter, for their policy could (and did) only cause violence and counter-violence to spiral endlessly higher and higher. Despite their claims to serve their own communities, they were indeed enemies of all communities. For winning a greater share of concessions doled out by the British raj for the elite of their communities, they were directing all their efforts to break up the unity of the people, which was the pre-Condition for the people's victory in the struggle against their common enemies- British imperialism, Indian big capital and big landlordism against poverty, ill-health, ignorance and squalor.

It may be noted that big Hindu business magnates, mainly non-Bengal, came out of the background and took an active part in partitioning Bengal on communal lines. Meeting on 30 April 1947, they formed a committee including B.M. Birla,

Sir Badridas Goenka, B.L.Jalan, D.C. Driver, M.L.Shaw and Nalini Sarkar to implement their resolution demanding partition of Bengal.⁵⁰ As noted before, G.D. Birla had been pleading with Gandhi since at least 11 January 1938 for the partition of India into two federations-one, Muslim and the other, non-Muslim-and consequent partition of Bengal and Punjab.

On 5 June 1947, after the plan to dismember India as well as Bengal and Punjab on communal lines and to award dominion status to the two new states- India and Pakistan-had been finally adopted and announced, B.M. Birla, replying to Patel from Calcutta, congratulated him, for "things have turned out according to your desire... I am very happy that the Bengal partition question has also been settled by you." He recommended to Patel that "we should consider Hindustan as a Hindu State with Hinduism as the State religion" and that Shyama Prasad (who was not even a Congress member) should be made the leader of the West Bengal Congress Assembly Party, that is, chief minister of the new province of West Bengal to be formed.⁵¹ When the minds of tens of millions of Bengalis were haunted by anxiety, alarm and profound unhappiness, the big compradors were jubilant: their long-term plan had succeeded. Instead of being chief minister of West Bengal, Shyama Prasad was made the first minister for industries of the Nehru government after the transfer of power.

What tender solicitude did the Nehrus and the Shyama Prasads feel after the partition, for Hindu Bengal, the distressed damsel for whom their hearts had been bleeding? On 1 December 1949, West Bengal's chief minister B.C. Roy, politically one of their kind, wrote to India's Prime Minister Nehru: "You are under the mpression that your Government gave us a large grant for the purpose of relief and rehabilitation. Do' you realise that the total grant received for the purpose from your Government in two ycars-1948-49 and 1949-50, is a little over three crores and the rest about five crores was given in the form of a loan. I do say that the grant so far given is insignificant for 26 lakh displaced people because it works out at about Rs20 per capita spread over two years.⁵²(There were successive waves of refugee movement from East Pakistan to West Bengal and

from West Bengal to East Pakistan.) What uprooted these people from their homes and turned them into refugees whose wretchedness beggars description? This was not inevitable. If Bengal's division was not forced by Nehru and Patel, the refugee problem would not arise. And the appalling tragedies which overtook Bengal could be averted; for, it was quite possible to prevent Bengal's dismemberment even in the event of India's partition.

Some Bengal Congress leaders and Muslim leaders of Bengal of al political hues were strongly opposed to the partition of Bengal and wanted and worked for an undivided separate State of Bengal- separate from Hindustan and Pakistan- when partition of India on communal lines became a certainty. Congress leaders like Sarat Chandra Bose, who resigned from the Congress Working Committee in January 1947, Kiran Shankar Roy, leader of the Congress party in the Bengal Legislative Assembly, Satyaranjan Bakshi and representatives of the Bengal Muslim League drew up a draft constitution of a 'United Sovereign Bengal', which would be free to determine its relations with the rest of India. This move enjoyed the support of several Congress M.L.A.s and others, and of the parties like the Forward Bloc, the Communist Party of India (which had no negligible influence on the masses in Bengal), some small parties like the Revolutionary Communist Party of India and the Radical Party.

But the dismemberment of Bengal did not depend on the masses of Bengalis but on an agreement between three outside forces- British imperialism, the Congress high command and the top leadership of the Muslim League. The British cabinet⁵³ as well as Jinnah and the League's general secretary⁵⁴ agreed to the proposal for the formation of an undivided Bengal state outside Hindustan and Pakistan. It was at the insistence of Nehru and Patel that Bengal was divided.⁵⁵ One should not forget that until 1947 the main seat of Marwari capital was Calcutta.

Shyama Prasad or the Hindu Mahasabha only served as the accomplice of the big compradors and their political representatives by playing on the fears of the upper and middle classes of Bengali Hindus. These classes had been firmly opposed to the partition of Bengal until almost the end of 1946. The political riots in the name of

religion in Calcutta and Noakhali in the second half of 1946, the so-called nationalist newspapers like the Amrita Bazar Patrika and the aggressive Communal propaganda carried on mainly by the upcountry Muslim compradors like the Ispahanis helped Shyama Prasad and the Hindu Mahasabha. No plebiscite, referendum or general election was held to seek the opinion of the people of Bengal on this most momentous issue which was a question of life and death to them as well as to future generations, despite demands from many. The date of the transfer of power was advanced by more than ten months- again at the insistence of Nehru and Patel⁵⁶ in order not to allow any time for plebiscite. As Sarat Bose said, "Bengal's voice has to be stifled and she has to continue to be a pawn in the all-India game"⁵⁷ Communalism, which was a passing phase, was given permanence so that it could be used as a source of perpetual conflicts by the ruling classes of the two new states-a means of diverting the attention of the masses from the actual problems of life.

Bengal, which was described by foreign travellers and others from various lands- from the East and the West-as one of the most prosperous countries of the world with flourishing agriculture and industry was reduced to wretchedness during colonial rule. Of course, since 1947 the neo-colonial stranglehold has continued over the whole subcontinent, preventing real economic development, but Bengal has its specific problems as well. The partition of 1947, the end of interdependence between the two parts of Bengal, the huge waves of refugee movement for years, the fiscal and industrial policies of the Central government from the time of the emergence of the Indian Union and their policies relating to refugee rehabilitation, railway freight, planning, etc.,⁵⁸ have intensified the misery and wretchedness to an almost inconceivable extent.

In Punjab, the carnage, the dishonouring and abduction of women and girls, the burning of homes, the flight of panic-stricken millions in search of shelter in unknown lands immediately before and after the transfer of power assumed the vast proportions they did because of the activities of the RSS, the Akal Sena and their counterpart, the Muslim National Guards.

On 6 April 1948, when Shyama Prasad was the Union Minister for Industries, the Government of India adopted an Industrial Policy Resolution and an accompanying memorandum. These extended a warm welcome to imperialist capital. Instead of breaking the fetters of imperialist capital, they decided to strengthen them.⁵⁹

Gandhi was assassinated in Delhi on 30 January 1948 by Hindu fanatics. The RSS was believed to have been involved. Though forewarned, the responsible ministers of the Central government had refused to take any protective measures⁶⁰ and did not undertake full investigations into the conspiracy after the assassination for reasons of their own. Soon after, the RSS was banned. The RSS chief, Golwalkar, wrote to Nehru and Patel to get the ban lifted. Referring to "the alarming happenings in Burma, Indo-China, Java and the neighbouring states" in his letters to them of 24 September 1948, he proposed a joint front between the Congress government and the RSS to fight the danger of Communism. He wrote that the Indian youth was strongly attracted towards Communism, for "the one effective check of the RSS no longer exists". He appealed to Nehru to allow the RSS "to work honourably and help the government to fight the menace on its own cultural lines". Writing to Patel, he felt sure that "if you with government power and we with organised cultural force combine we can soon eliminate this menace."⁶¹ Significantly, G.D. Birla was one of the mediators in the negotiations that started between the RSS leaders and the Congress government and the ban was lifted in 1949.⁶² Shyama Prasad resigned in 1950 from the Central cabinet: he wanted the Government to pursue a tough policy towards Pakistan "including the use of economic pressures and, if necessary, the application of force"⁶³ - a policy more tough than what Nehru thought discreet.

In its election manifesto issued before the general elections in early 1952, the Jan Sangh demanded an end to partition and reunion of India and Pakistan obviously forced. Among many other things like adoption of Hindi as the national language and a ban on cow-slaughter, it also demanded complete integration of Kashmir into India. Its another target was the Hindu Code Bill, which granted certain

rights to the women of the Hindu male dominated society. "It claimed to stand for four fundamentals: one country, one culture, one nation, and Dharma Raj, rule of law."⁶⁴ By one culture, the Jan Sangh and its descendant, the Bharatiya Janata Party, like their parent body-the RSS- have always meant Brahmanic culture. Seeking to revive Bharatiya culture, it aims at reviving all the negative features of Brahmanic culture and suppressing all the composite cultures of the different nationalities of India. Like its counterpart Muslim fundamentalism this aggressive Hindu chauvinism, blind to reason and inimical to the development of an individual's power of thinking, is a bar to all progress, a source of endless conflicts among the exploited and the oppressed and spells disaster for them all, irrespective of castes and communities.

A special target of the Jan Sangh and the BJP has been Article 370 of the Indian constitution, which, as-neted-before, denying the Kashmiri people the right of self-determination, granted a 'special status' to J and K. Shyama Prasad president of the Hindu Mahasabha and then founder of the Jan Sangh, was a member of the Indian cabinet which repeatedly promised the Kashmiri people the right to self determination. He was also a member of the Constituent Assembly which added Article 370 to the Constitution. Yet, trampling undertoot all commitments to the Kashmiri people, he and the Jan Sangh launched a fight to give a burial to Article 370 and for complete integration of J and K within the Indian Union. That has been the BJP's stand also, to which we shall return later.

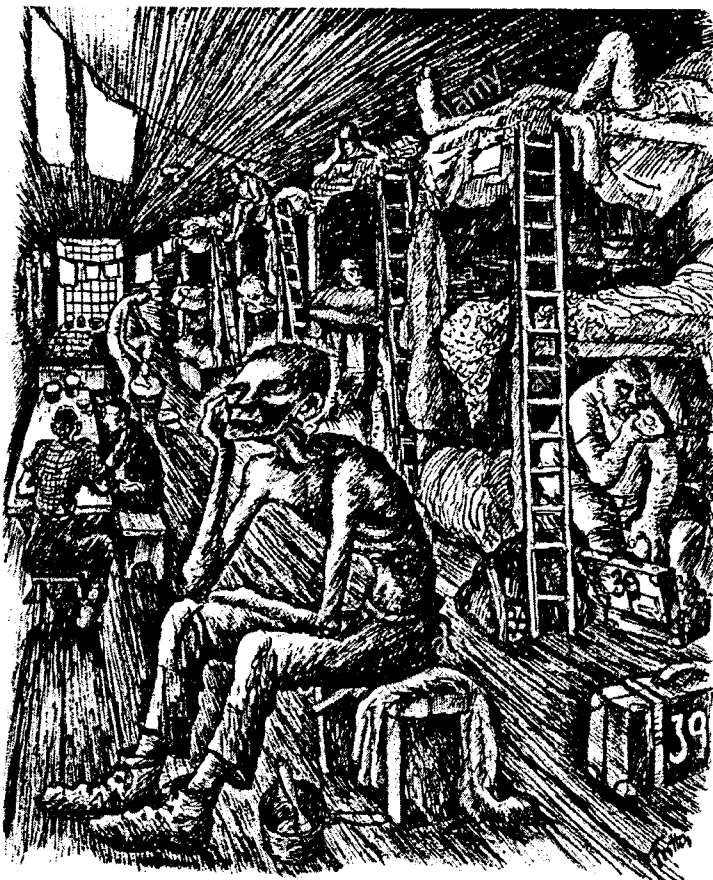
One may ask: who is a great leader of the people-one who leads them towards freedom from all thralldom-political, economic and social and towards a better life, materially and culirally, or one who sows discord among them and whose policies spell disaster for millions?

Referring to Shyama Prasad, Viceroy Mountbatten wrote in his personal report of 8 August 1947 to the British king, Prime Minister, Secretary of State, etc: "...Burrows [then Governor of Bengal], who knows him [Shyama Prasad] well, described him to me-recently as being so low that a snake could not crawl under his belly."⁶⁵ Mountbatten himself, too, was a rather poor specimen of humanity.

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Painting by Bedřich Fritta



Contextualizing the **Babri Masjid** Debate and the recent verdict of the Supreme Court

Sabyasachi Goswami

The Babri Masjid verdict has propelled India one step closer to the Modi-Shah dream of a Hindu Rashtra.

The Supreme Court has recently declared its verdict on the Ram Janmabhoomi (Ram's birthplace) issue. This is nothing but a smokescreen of religious fanaticism, behind which, the majoritarian Hindutva-sentiment serving Modi-Shah and a bunch of unruly, religious fanatics will conduct rampant violations of freedoms.

Some neo-liberal friends are content to think that the mandir-masjid (temple-mosque) debate has finally subsided, they are relieved that their so called 'worries' have decreased by an issue. But in reality this is nothing but an onslaught of the secular, democratic fabric of the country. The entire country shall now witness the madness called 'Ram temple'. Besides, the Sangh Parivar has already declared 'Kashi-Mathura baki hain' (we are yet to raise the issue in Kashi and Mathura). So, mandir-masjid is yet to get over.

The Brahminical fascist forces of this country hold a lot of communal cards in their hands. Truth be told, the Supreme Court's verdict is ahistorical and it is also a reflection of the fact that secularism in India is in grave danger. This is the same country which has had a long history of harmonious co-habitation amongst multiple communities. But time and again the overlords have used religion for the sake of gaining power, wealth and consolidating oppression. It was a tactic used by the British imperialists to divide a people united against them, to sow the seeds of distrust and communalism. Through their conscious efforts of distorting history, communal sentiments arose and now the Hindutva Right wing forces are bringing out the same.

The BJP and RSS are tapping into the reserves of communal hatred in common people which many years of the Congress as well as the parliamentary Left have been unable to break. To a certain extent these political parties have also used the same as strategic points to further their political ambitions. This has actually strengthened the agenda of the Sangh Parivar. It is nothing but a unholy union of British imperialism and communal feudalism. The Babri Masjid verdict has propelled India one step closer to the Modi-Shah dream of a Hindu Rashtra.

Earlier, Ranjan Gogoi has pushed Assam into an abyss by declaring the NRC in the state. Many lives have already been lost since then. The Sangh Parivar which is adept at controlling the masses by creating an atmosphere of terror has found a perfect weapon in the NRC and the Supreme Court is doing nothing but egging it on. Notably, this is the same Ranjan Gogoi who was the judge in a molestation complaint filed against him, and (un)funnily, (un)surprisingly he found himself not guilty! The Babri verdict, which the constitutional bench has given under his leadership, is shameful to say the least but one must look into it and see for oneself how shameful it is.

So, hat does the verdict say? What the 1035 page long verdict states is as follows:

1. '2.77 acres of the disputed land in Ayodhya will go into the hands of the Hindus. And on that land the Ram temple will be built.' Funnily enough, the constitutional bench has affirmed that they have found no proof of the earlier existence of a Ram

temple in that spot. But so what? Non-Islamic architectural relics have been found beneath the mosque and that alone has been considered to be enough proof to hand over the land to the Hindus. The argument of respecting the 'religious sentiment' of the majority has been added to this potent mix.

However historians like Ramsaran Sharma, Romila Thapar and Irfan Habib have pointed out that back when the mosque was built, it was common practice to use material from old and abandoned architectural structures. Examples of this phenomenon can be found in various temples and mosques across the country. In this case too something similar must have happened.

2. The centre will commence the process of building the temple within 3 months. A trust and a board of trustees shall be formed to look after the process of building the temple. Question is, why should an officially secular government undertake the duty of building a temple for a particular religion? The supposed guardian of the constitution, i.e. the Supreme Court itself has violated the constitutional decree of maintaining secularism!

3. 'The area both inside and outside of Babri mosque shall be under the trust.' Therefore the entire disputed land is going into the hands of the Hindus. Whatever little grants the Muslims received via the Allahabad High Court verdict has been entirely stripped off by this highest court of 'justice'!

4. Following the 1993 controversy, the Centre had made land acquisition of 67 acres in excess. The Centre can even hand over this plot to the trust for building the temple, if it so wishes.

5. 5 acres of alternative land shall be allotted for building a mosque in Ayodhya itself. The central or state government shall allot a plot that they deem suitable.

6. Muslims haven't been able to prove that the area inside Babri mosque belonged to them exclusively. The area outside was completely under Hindu control.

7. Reports made by archaeologists regarding the existence of an old structure beneath Babri mosque

cannot be discarded or be considered mere 'assumption'. But at the same time the verdict also accepts that there is no guarantee that the structure below was a temple. Questions have also been raised regarding the report of the Archaeological Survey of India. One report from 'The Wire', published on 8 November 2019, states,

Two archaeologists, Supriya Varma and Jaya Menon, had observed the ASI's excavations on behalf of the Sunni Waqf Board. In 2010, they wrote a paper in the Economic and Political Weekly detailing why they had objected to the ASI's results, and the subsequent Allahabad high court judgment in September 2010. According to the article, the duo had objected to various practices the ASI was following during its dig, which made "it clear that there was already a preconceived idea in the minds of ASI archaeologists".

The authors argued that the ASI's report had gone largely unchallenged because of the power it holds over researchers in the country. "Any archaeologist in India or from outside who wants to explore or excavate sites has to obtain a license from the ASI. So no field archaeologist is willing to speak out against it or its outdated methods."

Challenging the three proofs provided by the archaeological body, Supriya Verma wrote in Huffington Post:

a. A western wall: "The western wall is a feature of a mosque. It is a wall in front of which you say namaaz. It is not the feature of a temple. Temple has a very different plan."

b. Fifty pillar bases: "These are completely fabricated and we filed many complaints to the court about it. Our argument is that if you look at what they are claiming to be pillar bases, these are pieces of broken bricks and they have mud inside them."

c. Architectural fragments: "Of these 12 [most important architectural fragments], none of these were found during the excavation. These were recovered from the debris lying above the lime floor of the masjid. ... A temple, a stone temple – supposedly this is a stone temple – has much more sculptured material than what they have found."

d. Nirmohi Akhra's claims to exclusive priesthood rights have been nullified. But the Centre may take this Akhra in the Trust. Incidentally this is the same Nirmohi Akhra on which the SanghParivar (read: Modi-Shahs) have little control.

e. The case regarding existence of 'Ramlala' is a rightful one. Ramlala has been legally recognized as a 'person.' But the place of his birth has not been legally recognized as a property of any such 'person'.

The funny thing is that this very constitutional bench has accepted that breaking the Babri mosque on 6 December, 1992 was 'a grave violation of law'. On the night of 22 December 1949, when they entered the main dome of the mosque to install the statue of Ram and thereby destroyed the sanctity of the place whilst forcefully evacuating the Muslims, they were not following law. Muslims have been wrongfully denied their place of worship for over 450 years and to add insult to injury, they have been allotted 5 acres of land in a different area. To top it all the ones who broke the law, the ones who entered the disputed land with explosives and destroyed a historical monument, the ones whose fanaticism murdered over 2000 people of the minority community, managed to get not only the piece of land they were after but also an additional 67 acres of government-occupied land in excess. Is this justice? The highest court of India has made a farce of justice! Nothing can protect us from these goons now unless we rise in rage and pull their towers down.

Let us now look at some facts.

The specific place in Ayodhya that the Sangh Parivar claims to be the birthplace of Ram, a claim that has received legal backing from the highest court of justice, has actually no real historic or scientific basis. Historians have proved, going by the various editions of Ramayana, the possible birth place of this fictitious character, could be in 6 places – and contrary to descriptions presented by RSS and the SanghParivar, none of these are located anywhere near the Babri Masjid in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya. Most historians believe that the Ayodhya mentioned in Ramayana is located in modern Afghanistan. According to the Buddhist Ramayana, Dasharath Jatak, Ram was not born in Ayodhya but Varanasi. Only once source has claimed that modern

Ayodhya is Ram's birthplace, but they too point to an area which is 3km away from the disputed land. Therefore there is no historical source that proves that the disputed area is the birthplace of Ram. (Let us never forget that Ram is a fictitious character to begin with)

Secondly, one can find multiple places where 'Lord Ram' was supposedly born. So, even if we consider religious sentiment, there is no evidence of a singular Hindu sentiment that can drive the controversy.

Thirdly, expert historians have pointed out that the place which is being claimed to be the birthplace of Ram was practically uninhabitable back when the Ramayana was composed.

Fourthly, When Babar arrived in India, Tulsidas was hardly two years old. Therefore if indeed there was destruction of Ram temples in Babar's time, a Ram devotee like Tulsidas must have mentioned it in at least some of his writings. Such stories are absent not only in Tulsidas's writings, but also in all accounts of writers from the Mughal period. In this regard, the Hindutva forces of the Sangh Parivar have a strange logic; they say that some pages are missing from 'Babarnama' and it is only in those pages where description of the destruction of the temple can be found. The obvious question that arises is how does one ascertain the contents of a missing document? They have no clear answer to this. Besides, religious sentiments can always be used to suppress rational thought and the Bhakts are doing precisely this, every day. Not only are they killing rationalists, but also slaughtering all rational thought.

Fifthly, they claim that the said temple was built 1500 years ago during Vikramaditya's time but history points to the fact that the practice of worshipping Ram started merely 600-700 years ago. 1500 years ago there was no existence of Ramayana or Ram. During Vikramaditya's time the worship of Lord Ram was just non-existent.

Sixthly, it is claimed that Ram was born in the Treta yug(era). The timeline mentioned dates back to a time when humans didn't exist, the predecessor of apes did. According to Darwin's theory of evolution, the predecessor of apes weren't even able to walk upright at that time, let alone worship Ram! Perhaps that's why Darwin's theory is also under attack today.

Seventhly, there is no historical evidence that the mosque was built by Babar. Because:

1. Babarnama does not mention construction of any such mosque.
2. British Governor General Marquitas Hamilton Buchanan conducted a survey and after that it was found out that the mosque was built by Hussain Shah, 16 years prior to Babar's birth.

So, how did this story come about? Primarily, this exists because behind this too lay a larger British imperialist conspiracy. After the Great Revolt of 1857, 'divide and rule' became an intrinsic part of the British policy and merely 4 years after the Revolt, in 1861, we find stories of 'temples being destroyed to build mosques' in the writings of British author Carnegie. Before this, English scholar Lyden while translating Babar's autobiography lamented that "Babar had probably visited Ayodhya".

Carnegie followed Lyden's hypothesis (which had no historical evidence attached to it) and took it a step forward by coming up with the theory that the temple had been destroyed to build a mosque. In 1861 Lady Liverage while translating Babarnama added this theory of 'destruction of temple to build mosque' to her work, randomly.

On 30th January 1948, however, Nathuram Godse's assassination of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi made RSS highly unpopular among the masses and it is in this setting that they made a desperate attempt to revive their dead mass support. On 22 December, 1949 they secretly entered Babri Masjid at midnight and installed a statue of Ram. Archaeologists suggest that this statue is hardly a hundred years old- yet to hide the blood of one murder RSS created an ambience of even more violence within no time. The incidents that followed are of course known to us.

It is thus a duty of every democratic citizen to take an active part in bringing the real history to light. History must be saved from religious sentiments and communal fabrications. The scientific truth behind it must be established.

The false idea that Muslims destroyed and looted many Hindu temples is often propagated amongst the majority community. This is nothing but

prejudice. Behind this too lies the communal history composed and propagated by the British. The Indian government, post-independence too, in its urge to create the sentiment of nationalism amongst people, let the history text books of schools get away with the idea of Muslims plundering and looting temples. In reality, all the feudal kings, irrespective of whether they were Hindus or Muslims, used to attack religious sites whenever there was shortage of money in the royal exchequer. Thirst for wealth was the primary intention. Sultan Mahmud is infamous for looting Somnath Temple. But what is erased from the pages of history is the fact that in his own capital, Hindus used to raise funds and conduct Durga Puja without any qualms. Hindu king, Dahir unleashed terrible repression on Buddhists in the Sindh region. King of Marwar, Kumbha was known for oppressing the Muslim population. In 1791 Maratha troops attacked Sringeri Math. The Marathas of course were Hindu. The commander of this operation was Raghunath Rao Pattawardhan. The target of the Maratha troops was the massive wealth of the Math. Naturally, the Sringeri Math was totally destroyed in the blink of an eye. Multiple Brahmins were killed in the hands of the Marathas. The head of the Math, Shankaracharya was forced to flee. The idol of Saradadevi was felled. Later on the king who came forward to rebuild the Math was Tipu Sultan. For the reconstruction of the temple, he did not stop only at providing money and food grains, he also sent clothing for the new idol and a pair of shawls for the head of the Math. To protect the head of the Math, Shankaracharya, from the Maratha bandits he also appointed armed bodyguards for him. These facts have been unearthed from the letters exchanged between Tipu Sultan and Shankaracharya.

The main motive behind such plunders was always to loot and reduce the power of the religious centres. This is something that communal historians skip. They even skip facts like Tipu Sultan's economic contribution to build Srikantenswar temple or his endowment of 10 thousand gold coins for building the Kanchi temple. Besides, he resolved disputes between two rival gangs of priests in Melkot temple

and sent many gifts to Lakshmikanto temple. He also built the first church in Mysore.

Tipu hailed from a family that followed Sufi ideology of the Chisti / Bande Nawaz gharana and was undoubtedly a secular, liberal king who was philanthropic towards his subjects. In southern India he had assisted at least 156 temples in various forms throughout his life. The Sriranganath Swami temple which is located near his Srirangapattanam fort received his special attention. Yet the Sangh Parivar propagates distorted history about Tipu Sultan.

Kalhan's ancient novel 'Rajtarangini' mentions how Hindu king Harsh appointed a group of royal servants called 'Debotpatnayak' whose task was to loot temples. History makes it clear that Mourya kings used to do this whenever there was a crisis in the royal exchequer. They looted bronze and brass utensils in particular. Shivaji is showcased as an emblem of an ideal Hindu king. But they don't showcase the fact that Shivaji had built mosques in his kingdom and for bringing this fact to light, Govind Pansare was killed by Hindutva goons.

The Muslim rulers from medieval times are shown as communal, religious dogmatists who hated Hindu religion. But the real history is quite different from this narrative. We must remember that it was during the Mughal era that beef eating was restricted keeping the religious sentiments of Hindu Brahmins, Jains and Buddhists in mind. Aurangzeb is painted as an intolerant king, but the examples of religious tolerance that he created are quietly brushed under the carpet by Hindutva historians. After going through the archives of various Hindu temples in northern India, various decrees of Aurangzeb and deeds and documents of those temples were found by historian BN Pandey who authored a book called 'Islam and Indian Civilization.' He showed how Ujjain's Mahakaleshwar temple, Chitrakut's Balaji temple, Guwahati's Umanand temple, Shatrunjayee's Jain temple along with various other gurudwaras received grants and land allotments from Aurangzeb. Many people don't know that the land upon which the Tarakeshwar temple had been built in West Bengal was also

an endowment from Aurangzeb. It is true that he used to collect 'jizya' tax from Hindus, but it is also true that Hindus had been giving this tax for over 400 years before the rise of Aurangzeb. During his rule Muslims too had to pay a tax called 'zakat' for pilgrimage. He exempted Hindu women, children and old people from paying the 'jizya'.

Truth be told, Aurangzeb to Tipu Sultan – all are victims of historians who upheld British colonial interests or the Hindutva saffronisation of history. Both streams of historians are close allies. Proper evaluation of Tipu Sultan or Aurangzeb has never been done by the history books motivated by imperialist interests and unfortunately we are continuing this legacy of the colonial education system.

Historians like Romila Thapar have pointed out that there was no case of religious intolerance when Aurangzeb attacked the Kashi temple. He actually had to carry out that mission on the insistence of Hindu kings. Aurangzeb had built a camp in Kashi according to the pressing demands of the then Hindu kings. He had just started inspection of his territory. Soon after, pandas of the Kashi temple raped the queen of Kuchh when she went in to pray. After several search missions she was found in a

secret chamber of the temple and this is when the Hindu kings pressurized Aurangzeb to carry out a military expedition. After this the authority of the temple claimed that the sanctity of the temple had been lost and so Aurangzeb allotted a large piece of land right next to that area where a new temple was built and even today it remains a place of worship. Instead of highlighting this story if one promotes that Aurangzeb attacked the Kashi temple, then it is nothing short of distortion of history. But this is a strange time; lies and hatred breed violence. A toxic mix of religion and ultra nationalism opiates the youth, while poverty increases. Divisive forces are on the rise, discrimination abounds and within that organisations under the state are being privatized one after the other.

All kinds of mineral and forest resources are being forcibly seized by multinational companies while the Prime Minister shamelessly continues to invite foreign investors with the bait of cheap labour. To complement this, taking full advantage of their numerical strength in the Parliament, one bill after the other is being passed to repudiate the rights of workers, peasants and the common masses. People are frenzied and the entire nation is being sold away.

It is now that we need to put a stop to this. It is now that we must take to the streets. If we fail this call of history the future will not be ours.

Translated by Nabottoma





Painting by Bedřich Fritta

Winning Panda, Losing Bull & ***Detention Camps in India***

The Fetid Patterns of Fascism

Suddhabrata Deb

While instigating the citizenship atrocities, the Indian Fascists are partially successful in engaging the liberal and left liberals debating over the nitty-gritties of documentary disorders of these acts, shifting the focus from the nodal point. Many of the dissents are still concerned with how many of the citizens will be going to be pushed out of the country rather than how many of them are going to be kept detained within the country simply as the forced labourers. This is how we keep ourselves ignorant about the history of fascism. In crude reality, the fascists were least bothered about the citizenship and ethnicities; those are merely tools for them towards a larger capitalist agendum.

Over the ages, why all these Fascist patterns are so identical?

We cannot say that the story restarted over here, because it has never ended. Out of the two crudest outputs of capitalism, imperialism, experimented and evolved with its forms and

techniques almost from the very first phase of its inception, and renewed its applications, features and façades perpetually. It was not the same in case of fascism; rather it always happens to be an idiotic replication of the past! Primarily connoted by Benito Mussolini, the very concept of 'fascism' was taken to a consolidated elevation by Adolf Hitler in early thirties. After that, the manifesto, program and practices of Hitler-led NSDAP (or the 'NAZI Party') were considered as the height of fascist features. At Comintern's extended plenum of the Executive Committee (Moscow, 1933) it has been defined as the "...open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most ultra nationalist, most imperialist elements of venture capital". Fundamentally correct though, this classical definition, derived essentially from the experiences of Italy and Germany, needs to have further magnification in post-Mao global context, particularly in the context of the countries where fascism surely could exist even in the absence of independent national bourgeoisie. Although contexts and global power configuration are changed, the elementary features of fascism are too identical to connect with history. In India, for an instance, the Hindu-fascist RSS-BJP loyally follows the manifesto and program of the NAZIs. Now either of <the Kristallnacht (1938) and post-Godhra Gujarat violence (2002)>, or <the Reichstag Fire Trial (1933) and Bhima Koregaon-PM assassination plot trial (2018)>, or <the Nuremberg Law (1935) and recent NCR-CAA cases (2019)> be compared between – one will be stunned to see the crude resemblances superseding the ages. The rudimentary features which connect today's fascist practises with the past are too tangible!

It is too indistinguishable to see (through the ages) how the fascists behave with the basic masses, with the protests and resistances of the basic masses, with the advanced contingent of the basic masses and surely with vanguard section of the basic masses. They always chose at least two enemies and the one of them must be an ethnic (or religious) minority. Consider the Hitler case; they were Jews & Communists for him. To General Franco they were Jews-Freemasons-Communists. In case of Harry

Truman and Richard Nixon they were Jews, Black and Communists. To Chilean Pinochet they were Mapuche indigenous people and the Socialists. In Suharto's Indonesia they were Abangan Javanese, ethnic Chinese and Communists. To Narendra Modi-Amit Shah duo they are Muslims and Maoists. Well, one thing we could easily comprehend, Communists are (and they must be) the arch enemies of an authority which stands for a bourgeois dictatorship, to whom 'dictatorship of the proletariat' cannot sound philharmonic. But why the ethnic or religious minorities, how far they could be a threat to a dictatorship? If compared to the Communists, minorities cannot be that extent of a threat to a totalitarian state. Still dictators need to bubble up a 'minority ghost' shadow, because it is the fastest way to instigate an ultra-nationalist, ultra-racial frenzy, essentially among the deprived section of the youth, whom they need to consolidate as their regimented militia force. But there is other agenda too! The suppressed minorities and the detainees, throughout the ages, are proven to be the coolest source of cheap labour. Before going to amplification of this point, which happens to be most pertinent today, it'd not be much embellishment to insert a small paragraph over here.

Fascism is a losers' doctrine

This is also an eternal truth from the inception of fascism. Why fascism was incepted particularly at Italy and Germany? Because both of states were simply the losers, comparing to other European states, in terms of having colonies. At that point of time it emerged as a doctrine of the 'colonialists without colonies.' Thus it was a crises moment for the capitalists in Italy and Germany. We saw the fascist face of USA when it was actually threatened by the resistance of Vietnam and nationwide great economic depression. Or, for an instance, take the case of Indonesia. Just think over against which backdrop the military dictatorship was brought to power backed by USA – it was Vietnam War and spreading of Communism over South East Asia. So the emergence of Suharto and Indonesian

Communist Purge took place. We could recall the fascist stretch in Indian history during Indira Gandhi days. It was the storm of radical resistance throughout the country at large, and the immediate aftereffect of the first phase of CPI(ML)-led 'Naxalite' movement in particular which had compelled the traumatized state power to declare the emergency. And today's context is no exception.

Hence the China-struck underdogs need detention camps!

The capitalist world has their threats from within too. Apparently the world supremo USA is actually a loser to China in capturing the global market. China's economy produced \$25.3 trillion in 2018, according to the International Monetary Fund, makes capitalist China the world's largest economy. The European Union is second, at \$22 trillion. The United States is third, producing \$20.5 trillion. Even in its own domestic market Chinese products overpower USA's. The U.S. trade deficit with China was on pace to close out 2019 at about \$353 billion, according to figures through October of 2019. This would be about 15% less than 2018's \$419 billion deficit. The trade deficit exists because U.S. exports to China were only \$87.6 billion through October while imports from China were \$382.1 billion, a difference of \$294.5 billion for the 10-month period. USA bull, the largest debtor internationally, is actually trembling with the all-out aggression of Chinese panda! And the shaking capitalist camp needed there a rougher dictatorial face to retaliate with. Thus the emergence of Donald Trump was somehow obvious.

But it is not feasible to combat China just only with the manufacturing ability of USA, of its own. The popular notion is that USA cannot go beyond a point of daily wage, so the cost of production cannot ever compete with China's. Nonetheless, this is not a mere question of costing, issues remain elsewhere.

1. The wage imparity is just one indicator;
2. The other key factors behind controlled production cost depend hugely upon other factors e.g. power,

transport, sourcing, distribution channels. China commands a state control over these essential factors, and could allow a considerable subsidy to keep the end cost lower. In USA or EU those are under the control of individual capitalist corporations, hence the subsidy is not even thinkable;

3. Finally it's not only a question of costing, far more about the pricing rather. Unlike China, the big corporations here enjoy the abandoned liberty to decide about and make the ruthless profit, leaving the landing price much higher.

Now even the western capitalist world thinks about combating China with low cost production; that is not feasible in their own territory. They need to have a production ground, preferably in any of the third world countries where they could go beyond the precedent labour laws contained in their own countries. Simply speaking, USA and EU needed a large and densely populated country like India, rich in natural and human resources and poor in fundamental human rights. But again, in India too, power, transport, sourcing, distribution channels are majorly under the ruthless control of comprador bourgeoisie. Government cannot control them, as they have the control over the government. The coolest way out is to slash down the daily wage brutally. The remaining of feudal structure in India allows an easier sourcing of cheap labour. The drastic slashing down of wages in existing manufacturing sector will surely create a volatile unrest throughout the country. Subsequently the fascist Indian government opts for going by the classical way of exploiting forced labour; there is no furthest intention to eliminate the semi colonial structure of India in this decision. Creating a huge amount of forced labour out of the landless peasantry and the marginal "illegal immigrants" will not only ensure the supplying of lowest cost labour to the foreign corporations and their collaborators, but also will reduce the pressurising and bargaining power of the existing working class in organised sector.

After eighty four years from Hitler's implementation of Nuremberg Law, Modi-Shah replicated the Nazist plot over citizenship. While the principal intention of NPR-NRC-CAA is to detain the

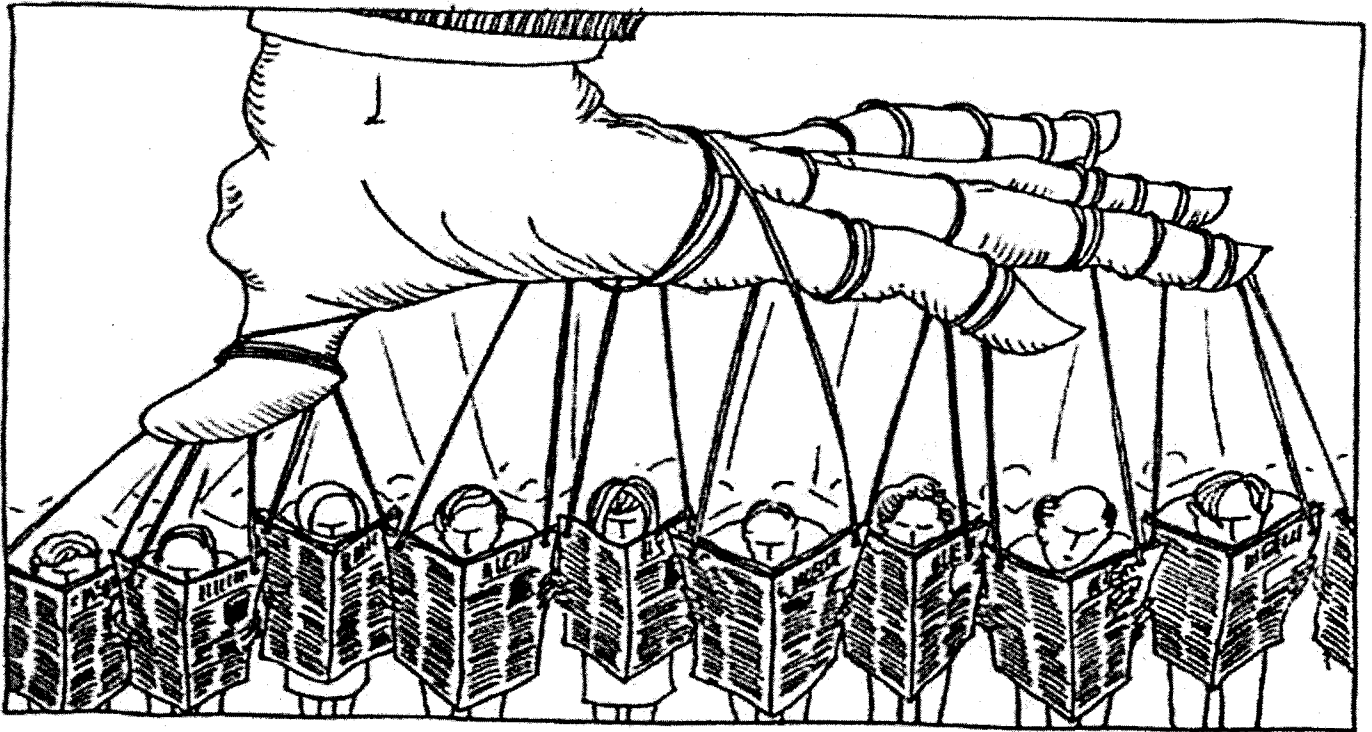
workforce labelling as the illegal immigrant, they are partially successful in engaging the liberal and left liberal dissents debating over the nitty-gritties of documentary disorders of the acts, shifting the focus from the forced labour issues. Many of the dissents are still concerned with how many of the citizens will be going to be pushed out of the country rather than how many of them are going to be kept detained within the country simply as the forced labourers. This is how we keep ourselves ignorant about the history of fascism. Even when we recollect about the Nazi concentration camps, the quantum and techniques of torture and killing commands the nodal pages, not the economic issue of using the detained labour power essential for the capitalist underdogs at that point of time.

Consider a striking fact here. Facing the fascist onslaught under the Nazi rule, when the Polish Jews intended to migrate to other countries, what restrained them from leaving? Among other factors one was the Reich Flight Tax, the capital control law implemented in order to stem capital flight from the Weimar Republic. The Reich Flight Tax was assessed upon departure from the individual's German domicile, provided that the individual had assets exceeding 200,000 Reichsmark (RM) or had a yearly income over 20,000 RM. The tax rate was set at 25 per cent! Why a government, who supposed to dream about a Jew-free nation, should dissuade the Jews to flee by charging a hefty amount as a migration penalty? It was because Adolf Hitler never strategized towards an all-out migration of the Jews out of Deutschland, rather to keep them remained as the detainee workforce without any basic human right so that they could be exploited wherever and however the Reich needed to.

Those who still do not comprehend that the 'cheap labour issue' as the decisive factor of citizenship acts, let us end with some crude facts and figures for them, about how Nazi Germany utilized the detained labour forces between 1932 and 1945. The largest number of labour camps held civilians forcibly abducted in the occupied countries to provide labour in the German war industry, repair

bombed railroads and bridges, or work on farms. Manual labour was a resource in high demand, as much of the work that today would be done with machines was still a manual affair in the 1930s and 1940s –shoveling, material handling, machining, and many others. As the war progressed, the use of slave labour increased massively. Prisoners of war and civilian "undesirables" were brought in from occupied territories. Millions of Jews, Slavs and other conquered peoples were used as slave labourers by German Corporations, such as DaimlerBenz, Demag, Thyssen, Krupp, Bosch, Henschel, Junkers, IG Farben, Messerschmitt, Siemens, and even Volkswagen, not to mention the German subsidiaries of foreign firms, such as Fordwerke (a subsidiary of the Ford Motor Company) and Adam Opel AG (a subsidiary of General Motors) among others. Once the war had begun, the foreign subsidiaries were seized and nationalized by the Nazi-controlled German state, and work conditions there deteriorated as they did throughout German industry. About 12 million forced labourers, most of whom were Eastern Europeans, were employed in the German war economy inside Nazi Germany throughout the war. The German need for slave labour grew to the point that even children were kidnapped to work in an operation called the Heu-Aktion. More than 2,000 German companies profited from slave labour during the Nazi era, including Deutsche Bank and Siemens. (Ref: John C. Beyer; Stephen A. Schneider - Forced Labour under Third Reich).

But ironically, history doesn't repeat as it did in its first term. Adolf Hitler at least could implemented Nuremberg Law and accomplished Concentration Camps with slightly more ease. The peoples' resistance against NPR-NRC-CAA has already shoved Indian fascist government in the back foot. If it compel the Indian people to meet the fate of Dachau Concentration Camp at Goalpara Detention Centre, the Indian compradors' fate will be far worse than the last days of Hitler in the bunker, under his 'unbreakable' headquarter of the Third Reich.



Fascist Capture of **Indian Media**

Swadesh Roy

Has the Indian media capitulated to the Bharatiya Janata Party? Is Narendra Modi government browbeating Indian newspapers and television channels into submission? Are the Indian spy agencies snooping on every Indian netizen, reading each and every post on social media? Are they reading even our personal emails? Does the grand programme of saffron fascists include total manipulation of the media in order to keep the Indian people ignorant of the murderous pro-corporate policies and to divert people's attention to the constant drum beats of crass jingoism? Questions are many. But the answer is a simple three letter word - Yes. The BJP-led Modi government is doing all these and much more. The Indian media is dancing to the tunes of saffron-fascists, with very few exceptions.

Let's go directly to the facts to understand the situation.

In April 2018, the Information & Broadcasting ministry of the Modi government issued a tender notice (only in its own website, which is hardly ever seen by the common man) seeking bids from private companies to build a "social media analytical tool." This "tool", according to the I&B ministry, should be able to "crawl the worldwide web, listen

to every chatter from all core social media platforms and digital platforms like news, blogs and forums." The software should be able to listen to this chatter, analyze it and generate automated reports in real time, the I&B notice said.

The Modi government wanted this software to target Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Google+, Instagram, LinkedIn, Flickr, Tumblr, Pinterest, Play Store, along with emails, news, blogs, forums and complaint websites. The software must support English, Chinese, German, French and Arabic apart from Indian languages like Hindi, Urdu, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Bengali, Punjabi, Major English etc. "The software must have special depiction.... to get exact location details of the users in real time," the I&B notification stated.

What was the purpose of such a large-scale surveillance? The I&B ministry stated that the purpose would be to gauge sentiments of people, identify those who are unhappy with the government by studying "historic conversation of each user in a reverse chronological manner by merging conversations across channels (sic)".

In what seems to be straight from a science fiction book, I&B notification also wanted the software to "predictively analyze" what could be the breaking news and headlines of various channels and newspapers and what could be their global perception. The software would also have to suggest "how can nationalistic feelings be inculcated among the masses."

If these facts are not chilling enough, read on.

After publication of the notice, the Internet Freedom Foundation sent a legal notice to the I&B department. Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Supreme Court. (Significantly, Moitra later told the Huffpost in an interview that she had filed the PIL in her "personal capacity" and not as a Trinamool MP.) In December 2018, the Apex Court observed that I&B department's decision to set up this social media tool would amount to nothing short of building a "Surveillance |State" with abilities to electronically spy on every Indian netizen. Following the court's observation, the I&B ministry hastily withdrew the notice.

Yet, after returning to power for the second time in 2019, the Modi government decided to ignore Supreme Court's observation. In August this year the I&B minister announced that his department was looking for an agency that could provide an "integrated social media feedback tool" and set up "an integrated dashboard, which will receive and put together feedback from print,

electronic, digital and social media platforms." This effectively means that the Modi government has now decided to ignore even the apex court's observation. The Supreme Court may simply go to hell. Why would the government act otherwise? Two years before Narendra Modi became Prime Minister in 2014, BJP's IT cell had put in just a similar type of surveillance tool, to target voters' for personalized propaganda.

Narendra Modi-Amit Shah government's fascist media policy is multi-pronged, sophisticated and well defined. On the one hand it wants to use Artificial Intelligence to identify those citizens who are unhappy with the present government. It wants to find out the causes of their unhappiness. Finally, it wants to find out what these citizens might do – whether they would vote for a rival party or whether they would take more drastic steps such as organizing mass protests or even revolt. Laws like UAPA has already been amended and the NIA strengthened to deal with the more militant section of the population. The Union home ministry has already empowered 10 spy agencies of the country including CBI and ED to intercept, monitor and decrypt any computer in the country.

The Modi government also wants to identify those "neutral" citizens active in various social media platforms and bombard their minds with perverted concepts of nationalism, anti-minority or anti-dalit sentiments etc. and win them over. On the other hand, this saffron-fascist government also wants to influence people by various means like the Indian newspapers and news television channels. It wants the media to suppress news uncomfortable to the government. Those who refuse to toe the government's lines are arm-twisted and subdued.

Consider the case of Punya Prasun Bajpayee, an editor of ABP's Hindi news channel. Bajpayee had committed the cardinal mistake of questioning Modi's habitual tall claims. In his popular programme 'Masterstroke', Bajpayee had observed that though Modi was claiming that his government's scheme of imparting skill development training to 40 crore youth by 2022 was on a fast track, the scheme was clearly faltering. The reality was that only two crore youth received training in 2018 and it would be impossible reach the 40-crore target. Immediately after the programme was aired, the Additional Director General of Modi's 200-member Media Monitoring team sent a note of displeasure to ABP's proprietors and Bajpayee earned their ire. He was asked not to name Modi in his programmes.

Bajpayee, however, could not be subdued. Soon he ran another report in Masterstroke showing how the

Jharkhand government had bent rules to accommodate a thermal power plant of Gautam Adani – Modi's sidekick – at Godda. He quoted local people who said that Adani's officers had threatened to “bury them alive” if they did not vacate the land where the plant would come up. He also quoted local police officials who said that there was no use complaining because “Adani is very influential. He is close to the prime minister.”

The conflict between the journalist and Modi government reached its peak when Bajpayee showed in another programme of Masterstroke how Chandramoni Kaushik – a poor woman peasant of Kanker in Chhattisgarh – was forced to say during one of Modi's video conferences that her income had doubled thanks to the BJP government's agricultural policies. Bajpayee sent one of his reporters to the spot to cross check. The lady said on camera that officers from Delhi had come to tutor her on what to say and what not to say during Modi's video conference.

When the poor woman's statement was aired, all hell broke loose. Modi's ministers began to say that ABP's report was false. Complaints were sent to the channel's owners. But that was not all. From the very next day, the channel's satellite links were disrupted when Masterstroke was on air. The satellite links to ABP's four other channels were also disturbed. Then advertisers began to withdraw. The first to go was Baba Ramdev's Patanjali – the biggest advertiser to the programme. The others followed. They told Bajpayee that the Prime Minister's office had asked them not to advertise in Masterstroke till Bajpayee quit. Finally, the senior journalist had no other option but to resign from ABP. Immediately, ABP's satellite link was restored and advertisements began to pour in.

ABP is not the only media house to face the wrath of the BJP government. All government advertisements were frozen for six months even to The Times of India, The Telegraph and the Hindu after they published reports critical of the government. When corporate ads and classified ads continue to plummet because of the intensifying economic recession since 2008, newspapers and channels are becoming more and more dependent on government ads. The BJP government is taking full advantage of this situation. Advertisements are refused unless media houses vow loyalty.

There are other sinister methods. NDTV, which tried to maintain a modicum of media neutrality, was raided by the CBI. Cases were filed against the channel's owners – Pronoy Roy and Radhika Roy. Senior journalists, who refused to be compliant, were forced to resign. Upright women journalists were constantly trolled and

threatened with rape and even murder. Bobby Ghosh, the erstwhile editor of Hindustan Times, had to resign under government pressure after he introduced 'Hate Tracker' – a column, which tracked hate crimes by activists of RSS-BJP and its affiliates. There is a complete clampdown on the media in Kashmir to blackout daily mass demonstrations and hardships imposed on the people. In 2016 the Modi government used a colonial law to stop publication of Kashmir Reader. In December 2018, the Modi government even went to the extent of changing rules empowering itself to order internet companies like Facebook and Twitter to remove content within 24 hours, if the government so desired. It is important to remember that the number of Indians who regularly use social media like Facebook and Twitter grew from 16.8 crore to 32.6 crore between 2016-18. This is almost 25 per cent of the entire Indian population.

WhatsApp messages of prominent lawyers, journalists and human rights activists (some of whom were later arrested in the Bhima Koregaon case) have been spied on. This is old news. What is not widely known is about documents submitted by Facebook authorities in a California Court regarding worldwide hacking of WhatsApp. The spyware Pegasus was manufactured by the Israeli company NSO. The contract signed between NSO and the government of Ghana showed that Pegasus could be sold only to a government agency and that too only after written permission of the Israeli Defence ministry. It is clear that the WhatsApp snooping in India could be done only by the government of India.

Arm twisting is not the only means by which the BJP is purchasing Indian media's loyalty. The carrot precedes the stick. An RTI inquiry has revealed that the Modi government spent a whopping Rs 3767 crore of tax payers' money to place advertisements in the media, that too in only three years between 2016-17 to 2018-19. The advertisements came in the form of government notices but a lot others contained photos of Modi and lauded the 'achievements' of his government. Just 10 days before Code of Conduct came into force before the country went to polls this year, the BJP placed as many as 160 ads in only three leading national newspapers and 93 of them were hugely expensive full page ads. Expectedly, Modi grabbed more space and news time than his other rivals during media's election coverage. A recent sting operation by Cobrapost exposed a scandal of a magnitude never before experienced in India. The

sting revealed that owners, senior editors and managers of India's top 25 media houses (including Times of India, New Indian Express, India Today, Zee etc) agreed to do stories that would promote BJP and project Narendra Modi as a supreme national leader. They even agreed to publish tacit communal propaganda, in exchange of cash.

But this is not all. Yet another unprecedented behind the curtain strategy is silently unfolding. Mukesh Ambani, India's richest man, who is now the greatest financial backer of the RSS-BJP, is silently buying off big Indian media houses. Ambani took his first step to establish monopoly over the media by buying off all the channels of ETV. He tightened his grip by purchasing TV18 Broadcast, which operates 56 channels in the country and also 16 international channels catering to the global Indian diaspora. In a shareholders' meeting of his Reliance Industries earlier year, Mukesh revealed that he already had complete editorial control over as many as 72 top national and regional media houses in India and through them could reach 80 crore Indians. Filings with the Registrar of Companies revealed that five news media companies – TV18, NDTV, News Nation, India TV and News 24 are indebted to Mukesh Ambani or to Mahendra Nahata, who is an associate of Ambani and is also on the Reliance Industries' Board. Ambani and Nahata and another industrialist Abhey Oswal (whose son in law is industrialist and Congress leader Navin Jindal) own between 20 to 70 per cent stakes in these five channels. All these newspapers and news channels together drummed up hysteria during the Pulwama attack, which most media pundits believe ensured Modi's victory in the 2019 parliament election.

The drive to establish monopoly over India's media is continuing at rapid pace despite the Telecommunication Regularity of India's (TRAI) warning in 2014 that "There may be thousands of newspapers and hundreds of news channels in the news media market, but if they are controlled by only a handful of entities, then there is insufficient plurality of news and views presented to the people."

It will be entirely wrong to suggest that Indian media lost its freedom and neutrality only during Modi's time. Mainstream Indian media was never neutral. Its prime motive was always profit. When the Times of India group first launched Economic Times, it unhesitatingly announced that it would not cover the agricultural

sector, because "there was no money in it." The owner of the group Samir Jain always insisted that for him, a newspaper was "no different from a bar of soap." Both must be sold to earn profit. Yet, in those times newspapers were not dependent on government advertisement for survival. Corporate and classified ads minted money and their coffers overflowed. So, to keep its readership intact, the media could maintain a so called anti-establishment stance and criticize some government policies. The mainstream political leaders had to keep the editors and proprietor in a "good mood" to plant stories and to prevent critical stories from being published. Now both corporate and classified ads are drying up, thanks to the economic slowdown and government ads remain almost the sole sources of revenue. The BJP is utilizing this situation. Loyalty to the government is now a must to get government ads. But it must be said that compared to Saffron Brigade's near total fascist stranglehold over the media (a few online news sites are still trying to avoid BJP's clutches), Indira Gandhi's press censorship appears to be child's play. India ranks 140 out of 180 countries on the Press Freedom Index in 2019. (In 2002 India's was ranked 80th). In terms of press freedom India now lags even behind Myanmar and South Sudan.

How can the Indian media wiggle out of the saffron-fascist stranglehold? Can they ever do it? These are naïve questions. The real question is whether the media is at all willing to free itself? The media owners are free from all pro-people, pro-poor ideological baggage. Their sole motive is to earn as much profit as possible. In 2018 the Times of India group earned a total revenue of Rs 9055 crore. HT Media Ltd, which publishes the Hindustan Times, earned revenue worth Rs 2457.24 crore. Zee Entertainment's revenue was Rs 5125 crore. Jagaran Prakashan earned Rs 1882 crore. The media owners are happy even in the Modi regime. They are sacking journalists and other staff at will, mostly with little compensation. What they are looking forward to is a time when the economy will revive and corporate advertisement will again start flowing in. They have no real need to defeat fascism. The fight must come from the common people, especially those who are being increasingly sucked dry by saffron-fascism of RSS-BJP-Narendra Modi-Amit Shah.

On the Specificities of **Brahmanist Hindu** Fascism

K. Murali

Fascism as a political ideology has its origins in the crisis ridden monopoly capitalism of imperialist countries. It is a form of bourgeois rule. The growth of neo-fascist political parties and the repeated electoral successes of Rightists in imperialist countries is directly related to the continuing economic slowdown experienced in these countries, triggered off by the financial crisis of 2007-08. They are greatly aided by the resurgence of narrow nationalism, which portrays the 'other' (mostly identified as immigrants) as the main cause for economic stress.

As a form of bourgeois rule, elements of the fascist ideology are quite often internalised by the modern ruling classes of the Third world, ie., the oppressed countries, also. It is blended with the autocratic, 'rule by edict' system of rule commonly seen in the past under feudal regimes all over the world. In the imperialist countries also fascism resurrected aspects of the feudal polity, replacing bourgeois democracy's 'rule of law' and 'formal equality'. But there is a difference in the oppressed nations. This stems from persisting semi-feudal socio-economic and cultural relations. As a result, even when forms of bourgeois rule like the parliamentary system exist, they are inherently flawed. The blending is a permanent feature. The switch over from a formal parliamentary system with constitutionally assured rights to the blatant suppression of democratic rights, has an economic dimension even in an oppressed country. The difference lies in the near total permanence of economic distress.

When it comes to the situation in India, the inherent flaw of the parliamentary system is often discounted or ignored by mainstream political analysts. They consider this country to be a mature democracy as compared to other Third world countries. The decades long sustenance of the



parliamentary system and separation of powers between the legislature, executive, and judiciary, are taken as proof. Fascist rule, like the one seen during the Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi, is taken to be an aberration. A closer look would reveal something else.

For example, the application of the 'one person, one vote' principle in India produces results quite opposite to the promise of political equality (even if formal) it is supposed to assure. As warned by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, what it actually does is to reproduce a 'permanent communal majority,' rather than a changeable 'political majority'. An examination of the caste composition of the Lok Sabha proves him correct. The BJP has replaced the Congress as the main political representative of the ruling classes. So long as the Congress was in that position it enjoyed solid backing from the Savarna Hindus. They have now shifted their allegiance to the BJP. Meanwhile, the new Lok Sabha too remains overwhelmingly Savarna Hindu. Their share in MPs is nearly half of the total. Though the political dispensation has changed, the communal majority enjoyed by the Savarna Hindus throughout the nearly seven decades of the Indian parliamentary system remains unchanged.

This then is the context in which we must situate and analyse the fascism being promoted in India, presently by the Sangh Parivar through the Modi government. It is an outgrowth of the reactionary foundations on which the Indian parliamentary system rests. By reactionary foundations I mean persisting semi-feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism unique to all oppressed countries. But that is not all. It also represents a further step in the ruling classes' project to tackle and overcome the longstanding legitimacy crisis they have been facing for decades. Under the Sangh Parivar dispensation it has acquired a distinct hue and doubly venomous content. This makes it appropriate to name it Brahmanist Hindu fascism. But Brahmanism is by no means restricted to the Sangh Parivar. Therefore, to make an accurate analysis of this fascism it must be done in a broader context.

The aggressive Brahmanist stance advocated by the RSS and other Hinduvadi forces had existed parallel to the Gandhi-Nehru ideological theme from the beginning itself, all along vigorously contesting it. But that stream never gained traction among the ruling classes. In the aftermath of the Gandhi assassination it even faced severe isolation and suppression. Yet it

was never completely excluded. On the contrary, it had always been allowed some space, even if limited. The passage of this aggressive Brahmanist stance from the margins to the dominant position it now enjoys in the hegemonic consensus of the ruling classes has been the most significant development in the Indian polity during the past few decades. It can be properly situated and understood only if its viewed on the light of the legitimacy crisis of the Indian state and the direction taken in the recasting of the ruling classes' hegemonic consensus. Otherwise one will remain trapped in the superficiality of parliamentary politics.

Brahmanism has always been at the core of the Indian ruling classes' ideological make up. It was a key ingredient during the emergence, coalescence and alliance forging of these classes during the British period, as ruling classes in the making/waiting. Yet this was not the Brahmanism of the Middle Ages, of caste-feudalism. Complying with the pressures and influences of colonial modernity, it was recast, remoulded. Moreover, throughout this period, in keeping with the changing demands to be addressed while shaping up the consensus being forged under the hegemony of these classes, its articulation and stance have been modified. This became particularly noticeable with the formation of the Indian National Congress (INC) in the late 19th century and its successful positioning at the van of the anti-colonial struggle.

The forging of a hegemonic consensus is never a top down, linear, affair. It always has to respond to, and even adapt to, the pressures from below, from the people. The gradual awakening of the broad masses to political life under colonialism thus soon found its resonance in a deepening rift within the INC, between the 'moderates' and the 'militants'. The latter's insistence on political action, as opposed to the petitioning of the former, gained them favour among the masses. But there was also another side to this. The 'militants' unabashedly defended Brahmanism as a matter of 'national pride'. They explicitly placed it as an integral component of the 'Indianness' sought to be articulated by them. Social reforms were vigorously resisted. This exclusion of the 'social reformist' agenda had its repercussions. Both with their own agencies and as response to the uncompromising Brahmanism espoused by 'militant' leaders like B.G. Tilak, more and more social sections began to distance themselves from

the Congress. The 'militant' stream thus ran into a dead end. This prepared the entry of M.K. Gandhi and a new recasting of the hegemonic consensus being forged.

In the new dispensation the stress was on Brahmanism's capacity to retain and extend its domination through accommodating and assimilating the 'other'. The concerns of all those social sections organising and struggling outside the Congress were partially addressed. The INC expanded into a conglomeration of diverse interest groups headed by the emerging ruling classes. The Brahmanism favoured by them during this period was implicit. It was one of moderation, infused with prominent aspects of modernity's political symbols. Take the case of the local elite's imagining of an 'Indian' nation. This was made possible by colonialism. As such it was a very modern product. Yet it was also useful to breath new life into Brahmanism's dream of a 'Bharat' spanning the whole sub continent. Simultaneously, by providing a sense of ancient origins, Brahmanism allowed this creation of colonialism to be conceived as the resurgence of a held back, glorious, past. Continuing as an integral component of this 'Indianness', Brahmanism was now positioned implicitly, embedded in the discourses of modernity. The Brahmanist precept of 'unity in diversity' secures its supremacy by deeming all diversity to be mere manifestations of a 'one' acclaimed by it. This was now projected as the ethos of the 'Indian' nation, thus placing it at the root of all the actually existing nationalities. Gandhi was instrumental in this whole endeavour. Many others too contributed. In particular Jawaharlal Nehru brought in a 'Western' slant, with economic 'development' as a major theme.

Under neocolonial conditions of indirect imperialist control and exploitation, the semblance of independence is of much importance – both for the local ruling classes and imperialism. Post-1947, imperialist designed and funded projects and technology were absorbed. Deeper penetration of foreign finance capital was welcomed. Amidst this heightened dependence, all of this was heralded as development. Thus, the false consciousness of independence and development became crucial in the new hegemonic consensus.

The pretension of secularism was yet another of its prominent ingredients. Secularism can only mean the separation of the state from religion, making it

the private affair of a citizen. This was never the case in India. Instead, the state's 'equal treatment of all religions' was deemed as secularism. In practice, it always favoured the majority religious community. Religious minorities, especially the Muslims, were dealt with in a prejudiced manner. The dismal conditions of the Muslim masses, even after more than five decades of 'secular' rule was well exposed in the Sachar Committee report. Yes, there certainly has been a spike in attacks on Muslims under the Modi Raj. The unabashed justification of such attacks by their perpetrators, the apathy of government agencies, the socio-political-cultural milieu where such murderous incidents get accommodated as the 'new normal' – these are surely new developments. However, one must also not forget that they have their antecedents in decades old state and non-state violence against Muslims and other religious minorities.

This 'new normal' too needs to be situated in the socio-political process it has emerged from and which it further embellishes. Otherwise we would end up in simplistic and artificial divisions. The distinction sought to be made between a supposedly 'secular democratic' past and a threatening 'ethnic democratic' future is one such example. An index offered for such differentiation is the under-representation of Muslims in the Lok Sabha. The fact is that this has been the norm throughout. It has never been anywhere close to their proportion in the population, right from the very first LS of 1952. Yet, just like triumphalist sermons on 'self-reliance' masked deepening dependence on imperialism, secularism too remained a convenient disclaimer absolving the Indian State and the party in power of their communal crimes.

All of these elements of the hegemonic consensus started to come under severe stress from the 1960's onwards. The reality of imperialist dependence and the hollowness of the 'socialist, secular, democratic' claims of the rulers, became more and more exposed. Their state's legitimacy was increasingly being challenged by various sections of the struggling masses and by national movements. The Naxalbari armed peasant rebellion shook up the whole country. Attempting to regain ground and restore the hegemonic consensus, the INC led by Indira Gandhi first tried a mix of populism coupled with fascist rule. When that failed, an ideological remoulding raising the need to revise hitherto sanctioned views

on caste-based reservation, secularism and other elements of the old consensus was promoted. The state-controlled, public sector-led, economic model began to be dismantled. The semblance of self-reliance made way for deeper penetration of TNCs. All of this would take a leap with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the wholesale promotion of the globalisation agenda in the 1990s. There was greater concentration of power at the Centre. The Prime Minister's Office emerged as the real centre of power. Congress ideologues began to openly raise the need to shift to a Presidential style of elections and governance in place of the existing Westminster model. Elections began to be focussed on personalities.

The recasting of the hegemonic consensus was accompanied by a conscious attempt to bind the Savarna Hindu castes into an all-India compact as a core social base of the state. Energetic promotion of 'national integration', vicious suppression of revolutionary movements and nationality struggles and aggressive expansionist acts against neighbouring countries – all of this was put to the service of fanning up national chauvinism, now openly given a Hindu communal colour. Over the years, the undertones of the new hegemonic consensus being shaped up became more and more apparent as an explicit Brahmanism, packaged as resurgent Hinduism. All sections of the ruling classes, their political representatives across the whole spectrum from right to left, have endorsed and promoted it. Remember, the attack on the Golden Temple, pogroms against the Sikhs, the opening of the Babri Masjid giving a boost to the RSS' plans eventually leading to its demolition – all of this took place under Congress rule. Rajiv Gandhi had symbolically launched his LS election campaign from Ayodhya. This was also the period when a Supreme Court bench had conveniently declared 'Hindutva' to be a 'way of life', greatly aiding the RSS and other Hinduvadis. While the ruling classes as a whole endorsed the promotion of explicit Brahmanism, they differed among themselves (and still do) on the limits of its aggressiveness and the modes of its articulation.

The extension of reservation to the intermediary castes (OBCs) at the Central level by the VP Singh government's implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations and the rise of caste based parties like the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) were two important

developments during this period. Were they counter-currents to the ideological remoulding going on? These developments are often clubbed together and termed as the 'Mandalisation of the polity'. However, the social dynamics underlying them were distinct. They need to be examined separately. The implementation of the Mandal recommendations certainly was a tactical move aimed at checking the RSS' game plan. But that was not all. It was also intended to ease caste contradictions inevitably sharpened by the promotion of explicit Brahmanism and thus related to the overall design of consensus recasting being pursued. Similar in intention was the countrywide celebration of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's birth centenary, also initiated from the Centre by the VP Singh government. In the process, he was being positioned as some sort of a 'Father of the Constitution' and co-opted into the ruling classes' political pantheon. His primary and prominent role in the anti-Brahmanist struggle was thus back sided.

Struggles for getting the Mandal recommendations implemented, going against Savarna resistance, did produce a new awareness among the oppressed castes. To that extent it brought forth a counter-current and also gave a boost to the growth of caste-based parties. But their formation and growth were essentially propelled by a different dynamics. The breaking away of social sections from the Congress conglomeration was already underway. It was not limited to the Dalit and intermediary castes alone. In some states Savarna castes concerned over the prospects of being side-lined in state politics moved away from the Congress. In some others, caste and nationality interests combined, allowing the formation of a broader break away. It was propelled by nationality based exploiting classes trying to shake off the control of an all-India party in order to facilitate their growth by gaining greater and direct control over governmental power at the state level. In yet some other regions, alienation from the Congress was spurred on by economic stagnation arising from the plateauing of the 'Green Revolution'. Overall, these developments indicated the sharpening of contradictions – economic, political and social. The new parties that emerged represented the aspirations and concerns of new elites forming up within various social sections, located in the nationalities and cultural regions. It opened up the spell of coalition governments, with and without an all-India party as anchor. The political churning this gave rise to did complicate the

ruling classes' ideological project as well. However, soon enough the new elites too got integrated with the ruling classes and became participants in its remoulding exercise. The metamorphosis of the BSP from Savarna baiting to locating its own symbols in Brahmanist iconography is a striking example of this transition.

The Sangh Parivar stands at an extreme in the explicit Brahmanism commonly endorsed by the ruling classes. However, it would be wrong to identify this as an 'exclusionist' position as opposed to some 'inclusiveness' favoured by others like the Congress. Brahmanism thrives on the graded assimilation of the 'other'. It excludes the 'other' from an equal status precisely by allowing such graded space to it. It privileges itself by what may be termed as an 'exclusionist inclusion'. There is therefore nothing new or unusual in the sermons of RSS leaders on being inclusive, even while their fascist minions go around lynching Muslims and Dalits. Modi's tacking on 'Sabka viswas' to his earlier spiel of 'Sabka saath, sabka vikas' is very much a part of this.

Other than its extreme in aggressiveness, the shaping being given by the RSS to the hegemonic consensus has its own specificity. They are born of compulsions particular to it. To put its stamp, the RSS must recast it completely, displacing and marginalising the Gandhi-Nehru legacy. This is being done through an exercise in de-hyphenation. While Gandhi is given a make over projecting his 'localness', Nehru is vehemently excluded, emphasising his 'foreignness'.

The Congress has all along staked a monopoly claim on representing the country by foregrounding its role as the main political stream in the anti-colonial struggle. This was a major facet of the old consensus. The Gandhi-Nehru legacy is tightly enmeshed with it. So long as it retains some credibility, the formal enthroning of an RSS-brand aggressive Brahmanism at the core of the new hegemonic consensus cannot be realised with full force. Crude substitution of its aggressive stance in place of the benign one of the Gandhi-Nehru theme, while leaving the latter's claim to an exceptional anti-colonial pedigree unchallenged, is not feasible. The historical record of the Sangh Parivar and its founder leaders simply won't allow it. They kept away from the anti-British struggle. The broader Hinduvadi forces too were no better.

Given this burden of its past, the RSS has been energetically pursuing a multi-pronged strategy

aimed at manufacturing its own 'nationalist' narrative. This ranges from crude chauvinism centred on flaunting symbols and slogans born of its bigotry, to the appropriation of historical icons of past struggles, social as well as national. Facts are stretched to 'prove' the participation of the RSS in the anti-colonial struggle. In order to offset the Congress' monopoly claim on that struggle, it publicises all other streams hitherto ignored or sidelined in official narratives. (Those led by Communists and Muslims are carefully avoided.) In all of this, a repositioning or re-reading of their icons as votaries of Hinduvada, even if as mild ones, is sought to be realised.

Along with this, it has gone all out to establish its brand of communal chauvinism as the sole credential of patriotism. We are also treated to big talk on India's 'arriving' on the world stage as a 'power', on its own strength. Under Modi this propaganda has been taken to ridiculous heights even as India is getting tightly tied up into the US military web. While the 'India as a world power' balloon is blown up by the RSS with Modi as poster-boy, the risk of the Indian people getting dragged into US instigated conflicts has greatly heightened.

The RSS is trying its best to draw the Dalit, intermediary castes and Adivasis into its folds. Through this it tries to address two separate, yet interrelated, challenges. One of them is of an ideological nature. It is that of papering over the inevitable sharpening of social divisions that accompany the promotion of aggressive Brahmanism. The blatant attempt to appropriate Ambedkar is an example. The other challenge is born of immediate electoral compulsions, i.e. the need to form broad caste-based alliances. It needs this to offset the treat posed by caste-based parties like the BSP or SP. The Congress too had its caste, communal, electoral alliance, mostly Savarna-Dalit-Muslim. In the case of the RSS, it has the burden of squaring its alliances with its aggressive brand of Brahmanism, normally repulsive to these castes. It has sought to do this by playing on intra-Dalit, intra-intermediary caste contradictions. Much more than the successful appeal of a 'common' Hinduness standing above caste divisions or the 'chemistry' of Modi, its success in building a broad alliance, pulling in the smaller Dalit and intermediary castes, secured it greater vote shares and seats in states like UP and Bihar. To give the example of UP, these castes remain relatively disadvantaged vis a vis those like the Jatav or

Yadav, dominant among the Dalits and intermediary castes of that state. A combination of the Savarnas, non-Yadav intermediary castes and non-Jatav Dalits easily outstrips the Jatav, Yadav and Muslims, who collectively come to only forty per cent. This was the basic arithmetic at work – the one of caste.

Apart from the shrewdness of such electoral tactics, what is of more interest in the long run is the material grounds that allow their successful deployment. An elite has emerged within the oppressed castes. They are getting Brahmanised in direct proportion to the growth of their exploitative interests. On their own, they have been 'sanitising' their struggling pasts and leaders to suit them to their current interests and supposedly improved social status. Hence, there is much that is complementary between the dynamics governing these elites and the RSS' appropriation strategy. Any attempt to counter the RSS' electoral tactics with exclusively caste-based alliances thus inevitably runs into an inherent obstacle.

In India, the parliamentary system remains the preferred form of governance due to certain particularities of the country. The first of these is its extreme social fragmentation with its abundance of castes, communal groupings, nationalities, ethnicities and regional identities. The second one is the absence of a dominant nationality or cohesive social group that could be made the social base of the state. Neither the 'Hindi belt', nor the Savarna Hindus, or even the Hindus as a whole can satisfy this need. Each of them is riven with divisions. Greater doses of Brahmanism only go to harden them, even as they join up against the 'other', the Muslims.

These are the unique conditions of our society which make the parliamentary system eminently suitable for the ruling classes. It allows some distribution of governmental power and opportunity to corner a share of the spoils of exploitation. It has the potential to accommodate various echelons of the exploitative classes, even some layers of the middle classes, and of course, varying patterns of caste representation. All this can be done while maintaining and exercising the overall hegemony of the ruling classes. The functioning of the parliamentary system surely does generate a lot of centrifugal pulls and complicates Central governance. Therefore, the resolution of the legitimacy crisis may finally end up with a more centralised presidential system with an elected president enjoying executive powers and a curtailment of fundamental rights. Even then, the

parliamentary system with its layers of governmental and administrative potential for co-option will most likely be retained along with it.

Buoyed up by their sweeping victory, BJP leaders boast that this is now going to be repeated for several coming elections. That is a baseless claim. If not for Pulawama and the Balakot air strike the outcome of the recent elections would not have been so favourable to it. Given the dim global economic scene, further complicated by aggressive protectionism and the growing contention among the big imperialist powers, the prospects of an economic upturn in India are rather bleak. The huge majority the BJP has won is not going to change this material reality, just as it did not during its last term. A slew of anti-people, anti-labour legislation, more sell off of public assets, and greater easing of conditions for the penetration of imperialist capital, all packaged as 'bold reforms' is already on its way. Coupled to this is the promotion of rabid jingoism and communal Muslim-baiting. However, given the above scene, they are unlikely to be of much use in terms of triggering of 'growth' (for whatever that is worth). The only outcome one can reliably predict is that these measures will surely call up larger sections of the masses into struggle. As a result of all this, the electoral prospects of the BJP may well get reversed as its present term progresses. The larger question would still remain – how can the promotion of explicit, aggressive Brahmanism be countered and reversed? Can a revival of the Congress and its allies assure this?

Right now the Congress finds itself in a rather unfavourable situation. The two ends holding up its traditional vote alliance, the Savarnas and Dalits, have pulled away, damning it to crash down. Though varying from state to state its Muslim vote base is on the whole holding up. But that won't be of much help by itself. Even though it is hanging on to the Gandhi-Nehru legacy, this is more in appearance than substance. It is no less explicit in its Brahmanism or aggressive in advocacy of the globalisation agenda. Given its class nature it cannot but be so. Besides, since 'globalisation with a human face' is now part of the imperialist agenda, there is not much it can offer by way of social welfare that cannot be met in equal measure by the BJP. As for foreign policy, the tilt

towards the US and willingness to get entangled in its military web, was initiated by the Congress itself. Here too it cannot offer anything new other than some fine calibration. Despite all of this the Congress is not going to be wiped out of existence. Modi is not going to be granted his wish of a 'Congress-mukt' India. The ruling classes still need it as an all-India counterpoint; a role no state party can fulfil.

The chances of the Congress making a comeback by gaining a majority on its own are extremely remote. But it can hope to regain power as part of a coalition. As was proven by the UPA-1 and 2, a coalition with the Congress as its anchor is quite acceptable and workable for the ruling classes and imperialism. Moreover, a functioning Congress is necessary for them for a more fundamental reason. A parliamentary system can remain meaningful only so long as the possibility of switching parties from government to opposition benches and vice versa is retained. As noted earlier, the parliamentary system remains the preferred form of governance in India due to certain particularities of the country. Since the promotion of explicit Brahmanism is not something simply limited to Hinduvadi outfits like the RSS, it would be futile to seek weapons against it in the Congress or other parliamentary parties. Neither will they come from the Gandhi-Nehru arsenal.

The task is to confront and undermine the ruling classes hegemonic consensus being forged with explicit, aggressive, Brahmanism at its core. That cannot be fulfilled by seeking refuge in the benign Brahmanism of the Gandhi-Nehru type. Moreover, democracy has no obligation to defend this legacy against the Hinduvadis. The liberalism it displayed, the democracy it professed, was superficial. It avoided the basic issued of democratisation in our context, even those of a bourgeois nature. This Savarna stream of democracy was satisfied with modifications in caste-feudalism and the reworking of Brahmanism to suit the modern needs of the exploiters, new and old. It must not be confused or equated with the democratic values generated by the masses through their struggles or the rights they have gained through them. At various levels, and in varying degrees, these dealt with the basic issues of democratisation. They dealt with the its political, social, economic and cultural dimensions. Not

the Savarna stream of democracy but this Avarna stream, with its roots going all the way back to the anti-Brahmanist Bhakti movements, must be made the basis for any meaningful struggle against the Brahmanist fascist agenda of the RSS and its cohorts. However, a mere recall of those values and teachings will not suffice.

All of those movements had emerged from, and responded to, then existing conditions. They cannot be simply stretched out to suit our times. The material conditions that have given rise to Brahmanist Hindu fascism within the recasting of the ruling classes' hegemonic consensus are a complex ensemble. Not just the interests of the ruling classes, those of contemporary imperialism too are enmeshed in it. Present day Brahmanism is not the old one. It is neither that of the colonial period, nor even of the early decades after the transfer of power in 1947. For example, it is conscious of the heightened awareness seen among various oppressed social sections. New tools and stratagems to co-opt their leaders and subvert them are being developed by it. Moreover, class division is very much present and growing among the Savarnas too. Among the peasants murdered by government policies and misguidedly recorded as 'suicides', a good number come from these castes. So too are a large share among the impoverished labourers in urban centres. The concerns off all oppressed sections, including these, should be addressed, while drawing on the people's traditions of anti-Brahmanist struggles. This cannot be done through caste, religious community alliances, no matter how representative they are. It cannot be done through the parliamentary system. What is needed are grass roots movements. Movements that address class, caste, gender, ethnic, religious minority, nationality, regional and environmental issues need to be promoted. A broad, radical democratic, platform and a counter-consensus must be given shape to through them. This is what is needed to build a powerful, consistent struggle against the RSS and the fascist cohorts within the broader, radical, perspective of confronting the ruling classes.

Social Fascists

Sourav Banerjee

In the colonial and semi-colonial countries also, as was mentioned in the discussion, certain fascist groups are developing but of course there can be no question of the kind of fascism that we are accustomed to see in Germany, Italy and other capitalist countries. Here we must study and take into account the quite special economic, political and historical conditions in accordance with which fascism is assuming and will continue to assume peculiar forms of its own

Once again, the global capitalist structure is under severe crisis and therefore it has resorted to fascist tendencies. And the situation therefore, brings the question of alternative to this fascist rule, to which the left seems historically the most favourable. In the present scenario, where in every country in the world there are multiple socialist and communist parties which are functioning in various domains. Some are solely legalist parliamentary parties functioning only within the domain of the state, - plunging into the accommodative process of diffusing the discontent of the masses with semblance of protestations on petty issues, in which the state becomes the actual gainer as its legitimacy stands vindicated: as if, all grievances, problems, discontents, and revolting tendencies can be solved within the boundaries of the existing state. Whereas, there are other parties who are trying to organise people into broader resistance against the system as a whole. The social democratic parties which operates only within the boundaries of state apparatus, incorporates the very forms of state rule, mobilizing in which it mobilizes the toiling masses in support of declining capitalism. The bourgeois class rule, which is actually the capitalist dictatorship has two major forms: bourgeois democracy and fascism. The capitalist dictatorship regulates itself through various forms of government: from parliamentary social democracy to single party rule. These forms are determined by the aspects of both internal contradictions within between the ruling class and the contradiction between the ruling class and the masses.

The 13th Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) in December 1933 defined Fascism as the "open, terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and the most imperialist elements of finance capital." However, though this does not mean that fascism being the dictatorship of the "most imperialist elements of finance capital" can only exist in

imperialist countries. Does it mean that there can be no fascism in a country without a developed financial bourgeoisie? Dimitrov pointed out in his concluding speech to the 7th World Congress of the Comintern in August 1935: "In the colonial and semi-colonial countries also, as was mentioned in the discussion, certain fascist groups are developing but of course there can be no question of the kind of fascism that we are accustomed to see in Germany, Italy and other capitalist countries. Here we must study and take into account the quite special economic, political and historical conditions in accordance with which fascism is assuming and will continue to assume peculiar forms of its own", he further continued that, "No general characterisation of fascism, however correct in itself, can relieve us of the need to study and take into account the special features of the development of fascism and the various forms of fascist dictatorship in the individual countries and its various stages. It is necessary in each country to investigate, study and ascertain the national peculiarities, the specific national features of fascism and to map out accordingly effective methods and forms of struggle against fascism."

The development of fascism, and of the fascist dictatorship itself, assumes different forms in different countries, according to historical, social and economic conditions, owing and to the national peculiarities and the international position of the given country. The fascization of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and its allies in a country can be termed as "developing fascism". In general, in politics, the direction of development is often more important than where things actually stand at the given moment. These conceptions regarding fascism are not only crucial to understand the changes introduced in the bourgeois state apparatus during the transition phase of the regime, but also to clearly understand what alternative is required. The emancipatory goal of the communist party lies in its goal to champion the objective of the class struggle, which concerns seizing state power by the proletariat in order to destroy the existing bourgeois state apparatus and replace it with a new one, and then set in motion a radical process, that of the destruction of the state. Therefore, the legalist communist parties and socialist parties who rejects the necessity of capturing the state power by forcibly overthrowing the ruling class to install proletariat dictatorship, serves and aims to continue the capitalist state and its oppressive instruments.

These parties which incorporates and enacts the very fascist principles, acts and policies under the garb of 'Communist' or 'Socialist' parties (at least according to their manifesto) are social fascists. To proceed further into the question of social fascism, one has to understand it historically. One cannot deal with the question of fascism without clarifying the concept of imperialism.

As Lenin says, "We have to begin with as precise and full a definition of imperialism as possible. Imperialism is a specific historical stage of capitalism. Its specific character is threefold: imperialism is monopoly capitalism; parasitic, or decaying capitalism; moribund capitalism." "Since the specific political features of imperialism are reaction everywhere and increased national oppression due to the oppression of the financial oligarchy and the elimination of free competition, a petty-bourgeois-democratic opposition to imperialism arose at the beginning of the twentieth century in nearly all imperialist countries.", where "Imperialist ideology also penetrates the working class. No Chinese wall separates it from the other classes. The leaders of the present-day, so-called, "Social-Democratic" Party of Germany are justly called "social-imperialists", that is, socialists in words and imperialists in deeds; but as early as 1902, Hobson noted the existence in Britain of "Fabian imperialists" who belonged to the opportunist Fabian Society.

Bourgeois scholars and publicists usually come out in defence of imperialism in a somewhat veiled form; they obscure its complete, domination and its deep-going roots, strive to push specific and secondary details into the forefront and do their very best to distract attention from essentials by means of absolutely ridiculous schemes for "reform"

It is important to clearly understand the way in which Lenin maps the ideological diversions taking place in the imperialist stage of capitalism. Lenin used terms—"social-patriots," "social-chauvinists," "social-imperialists," and "social-traitors" during the First World War to denote those Social-Democrats who wished to fight for the defence of their own countries rather than the defeat, of their own countries. The Social Democrats regarded the social state in which they functioned as one of partially achieved and fully promised democracy, came forward to defend it from "foreign aggression". Denying, as a democrat and social pacifist, the real struggle of the classes, they betrayed the workers to their class-enemies

and drives them into the service of the Fatherland. This is the stage of Social Democracy described by Lenin as "social patriotism": the pretence that the workers' cause is bound up with the interests of "their" country, in the preservation of "their hard-won democratic rights". It is true that in the ranks of the social traitors there was an apparent division between patriots and pacifists, but the function of the two were complementary. It was the business of the pacifists to misdirect the elements of class opposition to the bourgeois Fatherland, to lead them into futile demonstrations in favour of "peace by negotiation" (between the bourgeois governments), and prevent direct proletarian action—as Macdonald did in Britain. The solidarity of the two sections was amply demonstrated soon after the war; and it was the pacifist "lefts" who brought social patriotism to its culmination in the theory of Empire Socialism.

Therefore, in the specific world historical situation of imperialism, vulgar bourgeois reformism emerged as a result of theoretical divorce of imperialist politics from imperialist economics, monopoly in politics from monopoly in economics and opportunism transformed into revisionism which profoundly created social chauvinists and social imperialists. Lenin locates the historical shift, which leads to the emergence of social imperialist in "the desertion of a stratum of the labour aristocracy to the bourgeoisie" which "has matured and become an accomplished fact" and this "economic fact, this shift in class relations" according to him emerged in the political form of social imperialism.

With the deepening crisis of Imperialism and the weakness of the revolutionary forces to confront it, fascism's emergence marked both quantitative and qualitative expansion and fascization of the brutal dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Fascism being one of the two major forms of bourgeois class rule, deploys significantly much more state terrorism over revolutionaries and revolutionary parties, while exercising its brutal dictatorship over the masses. In the transition period to fascism, the social democratic parties which are already social imperialist to its core, in no way tries to go into direct conflict with that of the fascist party or ideology in power. Rather it participates and enriches the fascist political narrative of chauvinism, xenophobia and jingoism. Paradoxically, these social democratic parties then become a major obstacle in the road of fascism to seize the state power completely and

therefore eliminating them becomes the primary aim of the fascists. This intra-class contradiction creates wonderful spectacles, within which the social-imperialist, in the fear of being annihilated, camouflages as revolutionaries talking of radical reformism and progress. This phenomenon is evident in the later stages of fascism's emergence to power, when the fascist party captures considerable power and starts annihilating the bourgeois democratic setup.

The terminology "social fascism", was notably deployed against the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), whose police chief in Berlin, Zorgiebel, issued a ban on open air demonstrations resulting in the murder more than 30 people and wounding at least 200 in the Communist-led the International Workers Day march in Berlin, on May 1st 1929. Following the May Day massacre the Communists led massive strikes and shut downs, while popular neighbourhoods were on virtual lock down occupied by heavily armed police backed by the social democrats. These events led both the Communists in Germany as well as in the Comintern to begin linking the role of social democracy with the rise of fascism. Not just in case of Germany, but Marshal Joseph Pilsudski of Poland, Filippo Turati and Lodovico Arago of Italy, J. Ramsey MacDonald of Britain and the Bulgarian government Socialists were also characterised as fascist social democrats by the Comintern in 1924. The program of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928 precisely described the reactionary role of the social democratic parties in the post war situation: "In its systematic conduct of this counter-revolutionary policy, Social-Democracy operates on two ranks: The Right wing of Social-Democracy, avowedly counter-revolutionary, is essential for negotiating and maintaining direct contact with the bourgeoisie; the Left wing is essential for the subtle deception of the workers. While playing with pacifist and at times even with revolutionary phrases, "Left" wing Social-Democracy in practice acts against the workers, particularly in acute and critical situations." Therefore the Comintern, which extensively dealt with the concept of social fascism, theorised the roots of social fascism in the right wing of social democracy.

This has been a topic of controversy and debate between scholars and academics, but the ghost of 'Stalinism' has been promoted by Trotskyites and other such cliques to keep discussion of the

phenomena of social fascism at bay. The third period of the Comintern have their defects, and the proceeding period of the popular front have as many if not more shortcomings which were corrected by the Chinese communists during their application of United front against Japanese fascism.

The theory of social fascism re-emerged in the backdrop of sino-soviet split with Khrushchev's coup d'état to power. The CPC pointed out that "Utilizing the state power under its control, this new-type bureaucrat monopoly capitalist class has turned socialist ownership into ownership by capitalist roaders and turned the socialist economy into a capitalist economy and a state monopoly capitalist economy. In the name of the "state," it unscrupulously plunders the state treasury and embezzles at will the fruits of the labour of the Soviet people in every possible way. Indulging in luxury and debauchery, it rides roughshod over the people. In order to extort maximum profits and maintain its reactionary rule, this new-type bureaucrat monopoly capitalist class not only exploits and oppresses the people of its own country, but it necessarily engages in rabid expansion and aggression, joins the company of world imperialism in redividing the world and pursues the most vicious social-imperialist policies." CPC highlighted Mao Tse-tung's theory "The rise to power of revisionism means the rise to power of the bourgeoisie," "The Soviet Union today is under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, a dictatorship of the big bourgeoisie, a dictatorship of the German fascist type, a dictatorship of the Hitler type." , to explain revisionist social-imperialism and its fascist nature. Peking review further elaborated the connection of social fascism with that of social imperialism on the eve of soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, it stated: "Fascist White terror reigns in Soviet society today. At the end of its rope, the Soviet revisionist renegade clique is feverishly practicing social-fascism at home and cruelly suppressing the broad masses of the Soviet working people in order to maintain its tottering reactionary rule and press ahead vigorously with social-imperialism abroad." The neo-revisionist theory of Khrushchev's "dictatorship of the whole people" and "proletarian dictatorship"-- these two diametrically opposed concepts were lumped together for no other purpose than to deceive the masses and camouflage the dictatorship of the big bourgeoisie. By "party leadership" they actually mean political control over the broad masses of the party members and the people by the handful of

social-fascist oligarchs. By "discipline" they mean suppression of all who are dissatisfied with their rule. And by "centralism" they mean further centralizing the political, economic and military power in the hands of their gang.

The question of United front, which according to academic scholars and other critics posed an essential contradiction with the concept of social fascism, was clearly addressed by CPC. In describing the united front as one of the three magic weapons of the revolution, it clarified that the basis of forming a united front is unite all the forces opposed to imperialism and comprador bureaucrat capitalism. The social fascists are essential components of the ruling class, serving the direct interest of imperialism and comprador bureaucrat capitalism, who in no circumstances, becomes a part of the revolutionary united front to serve the revolutionary cause.

The Indian Experience

In the specific condition of India, when imperialism is in a crisis owing to the unprecedented world economic crisis, the subservient ruling classes in India are whipping up of communal sentiments to cover up the lack of development in every aspect of social lives, and misdirect the real grievances of the people regarding their deplorable material conditions. The parliamentary model, which was inherited from the colonial rule, has its discrepancy with the Indian condition. The parliamentary form was born in Europe after the bourgeoisie accumulate considerable amount of power and the capitalist development required major changes in forms of regulation and control. Unlike that of European condition, the capitalist transition in India is not completed yet and a midway condition of imperialist capital and its ally big comprador bourgeoisie has not taken progressive role in changing production relation in backward countries like ours, they only strive to make some reforms to change the appearance. If they weaken the semi feudal relation in one form, they resurrect it in other form. In India the caste and creed system embraces semi feudal relationship economically, politically, culturally. Especially while dealing with adivasi people, the state itself stands as a feudal lord through its complicated web of bureaucracy. In our country initiation of any big industrial projects means eviction of tribes and other oppressed lower castes from their home land and in this way the number of pauperized farmers

flares up. In the era of liberalization, this trend has become even more prevalent. In totality, we can say Indian monopoly comprador bureaucratic capital is working in the service of world imperialist capital, and semi feudal relations provide the social basis of this function. Politics is condensed form of economic relationship and therefore the endeavour to retain this semi feudal relation by the ruler is expressed in arena of politics in a more concentrated way. Any revolutionary land reform movement is challenged by all the forces of the state.

The institutionalised Marxism of the CPI(M), CPI, etc. in the post-1947 period has shown no qualms in collaborating with the Congress Party of Nehru, Indira and now Sonia Gandhi in the name of opposing right reaction. They also joined directly and indirectly with the BJP and its earlier version Jan-Sangha creating the same smokescreen of a mock-fight with the Congress misrule. For the unsullied love of parliamentary politics, on the occasion of each and every election, at the state or the central level, such social democrats plunge into the fray with the same old argument that defeating their electoral adversary(ies) can alone save the nation. The 1994 industrial policy adopted by the then Jyoti Basu government clearly endorsed foreign capital and technology on a mutual benefit basis; welcomed private investment in the generation of electricity, and in other fields etc. It is notable that the 1994 industrial policy is at once an extension of the 1977 policy and it is conspicuously pro-privatisation and foreign capital investment oriented. However, it must be admitted that even one tenth of the MOUs signed by the W.B government and the prospective foreign investors could not see the light of day. The CPM M.P Mr.Somnath Chatterjee, only since 1996, flew to the West as many as 7 times and got signed 53 MOUs, of which 3 could only materialize. On 13 December 2002, the 'Left' Front Chief Minister really won the hearts of capitalist masters, when in the presence of as many as 80 top industries of India, he categorically said that the state government shall resort to lathis if workers' movement cross the limits. The industrialists present applauded the "Marxist" Chief Minister clapping hands. The I.T.C Chairman Yogesh Chandra Debeswar even commented at that meeting that the productivity and workers' discipline in his factories can be compared with that of the best in the world. To mention few more, The 15 units of Webel, which were earning profits, were first turned into joint ventures with private owners

like Webel Carbon & Metals Film Resistors Ltd; WebelSen Capacitors Ltd, WebelNicco Electronics Ltd, and Webel Communication Industries Ltd. Webel Communication, among others etc. And then some of such profits – making units were sold out to individual capitalists as Webel Telematics Ltd. Way back in 1992, it was a joint sector profitable concern and in 1994, it was sold off to the MNC Siemens. The Webel VDO concern has been handed over to Philips. The 'Left' Front's topsy-turvy came in the wake of the proposals from Indian Oil Limited, Indian Oxygen Company and the Reliance Group. Foreign investment too comes in the form of building roads, bridge projects, for some of which the Japan Bank for International Corporation (JBIC) has financed. Earlier, the 'Left' Front Government had borrowed money from JBIC for the Bakreswar Power plant. This is the way foreign direct investment or IMF / World Bank or JBIC penetrate easily into West Bengal, while the so-called Left-Front cries hoarse that Bakreswar or such projects were built as symbols of advance. Under the CPM misrule, there is a clear nexus between promoters and administration and CPM leaders, with land sharks in every city and its outskirts, roaming around, about hungry with a hunger for lands. The worst nexus was seen when at the Chandmoni tea garden near Siliguri was forcibly handed over to a promoter – businessman like Harsh Newatia, an agent of Bengal Ambuja, operating under the patronage of the 'Left' Front Government's Urban Development Minister. On 26 June 2002, when workers put up stiff resistance, two of them were gunned down and many were critically injured. The "Marxist" government was determined to set up hotels and tourist spots on that land at the cost of workers' lives. Similar incidents of nexus between the extortionist CITU leaders and police was witnessed in the Changmari tea gardens when 9 workers refused to part with a sum of Rs 20 as 'donation' (originally a coupon of Rs 10 denomination was given in each case) every week. The CITU leaders took to their heels and took shelter in the CPM office at the Luksan Bazar. Then the "Marxist" gangsters, backed by huge posse of policemen appeared on the scene. The police firing snatched the lives of 3 workers and injured many.

From the mid-sixties, the ruling classes in India under pressure from the World Bank and other international agencies like, Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation opted for seed fertilizer technology the agricultural development in the

well-endowed regions having a higher percentage of irrigated areas and other infrastructure facilities like Punjab and Haryana. The motive behind this shift was firstly to impose 'Green Revolution' as an alternative to 'Red Revolution'. Secondly, to create a big market for multinationals and agri-business and also to facilitate their steady entrance into the country's economy. Thirdly, this way of developing capitalism in agriculture was motivated by integrating it with the world capitalist system. With the same aim as stated above it has reorganized the credit structure and nationalized scheduled commercial banks and expanded credit cooperatives, marketing federations, etc. This imperialist dictated and presided agrarian policy, in the name of modernization through using machines, HYV seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, etc., while maintaining keeping the unequal land relations, have, after some years of production growth, developed not only extreme inequality after some years of production growth, and regressive features prominently came up like, huge burdens of foreign 'loan', diminishing productivity of land, destruction of nature, and most of all increased dependence on imperialist countries and institutions. The CPM, for an improved 'Left' Front in the world of economic restructuring now proves itself an equivalent of the Congress Party whose government had struck an agreement with the U.S government in 1965 for launching the 'Green Revolution' programme in India. The CPM, even while maintained a pretence of criticism of globalisation, arrogated to itself the incontestable power to seek 'advice' from McKinsey Global Institute, a U.S based top global consultancy organization. Its advice is now as to how to get along the stream in the world of so-called globalization. Once the U.S president and the Indian comprador bourgeois class and new kulaks were so much moved by the growth in production under the 'Green Revolution', that they glorified it as a blessing for the Indian peasants. It is noteworthy that before the assumption of power by the 'Left' Front in West Bengal in 1977, the use of fertilizer per acre was below the all-India level. But by 1980-81 under the parliamentary Marxists' rule this rate outstripped the all-India level by using 10% more fertilizer per acre land. In that year, the Indian average was 14.23 kg per acre, while in West Bengal it was 15.65 kg per acre. And by 1995-96, while the all India average in this regard was 33.86kg per acre, in the 'Marxist' ruled West Bengal it was as much as 45.95 kg i.e., 35% more than the all-India level. By 2000-2001, the

over-all use of the fertilizer got reduced in India but still West Bengal recorded 31% more than all-India level. In India it was 42.67 kg but in West Bengal 55.87 kg.

Having stated the workers and peasant policy, and the situations during the CPM led Left Front rule, without going any further into statistical evidences, we have endless data and reports how the CPM has unleashed its brutal violence on implementing SEZ in Nandigram. Rajya Sabha MP Nilotpal Basu said "In an age of globalisation, SEZs can act as instruments for economic development, industrialisation and employment generation." It has acted as direct agents to sell off people's resources, and served the interest of global imperialists. Jyoti Basu's establishment of friendly relationship with Israel back in 2000, when he led a 25 member business delegation there proved fruitful as in 2010, West Bengal 'Left front' government took the help of Israel to 'deal' with the Maoists. In the backdrop of acute economic and political crisis, numerous people's movements were emerging, which exposed the social fascist characters of the CPI(M). Even though the party has attached the self-proclaimed batch of 'Marxist' with their name, the very way of dealing with agitations and people's movement was inherently fascist. In order to carry out its fascist repression over all aspects, the CPM time to time switched alliance from Congress to BJP and even international tyrants such as Israel.

CPM has also its notorious casteist legacy. From the recent support of the EWS (economic category) bill in the parliament to the Marichjhapi massacre, the CPM has continued to reveal its brahmanical character from time to time.

The violent offense that CPM unleashed during the Lalgarh movement in Bengal unveiled their actual character. Alongside the joint central and state paramilitary forces that was launched in the name of Operation Green Hunt, a private army was formed by them. This private army, mostly known as Harmad Bahini was armed with sophisticated weapons, mostly procured from the illegal arms market at Bihar's Munger. With this armed atrocities over protestors in rural areas, the most heinous UAPA act was used to target many urban activists, intellectuals and protesting voices. This violence was organised in the name of 'law and order' but in reality it was a violent attempt to sweep away all those who stood in between their way of implementing the policies of IMF and World Bank.

Conclusion

The identification of social fascists are necessary to understand the tactics of the revolutionary force. Born in the period of imperialist crisis, the social fascists have their roots of origin in opportunism and revisionism. The social fascist forces not only aims to capture power for its own exercise of dictatorship over the masses, but the path to conquer power lies in their deceptive functioning as communist parties or socialist parties. Therefore, the Leninist law of democratic centralism is appropriated, and deformed into authoritarian centralism of the party oligarchy. With all their deceptions, phase mongering, and party functioning, the social fascists cause the major hamper to the working class and its vanguard revolutionary force. We must remember that fascism believes in diametrically opposite concept of 'rule of minority over majority' to that of the communist principle of 'rule of majority over the minority'. Therefore, this handful number of fascists gains power over the vast majority of the masses through appeasement and mediation of 'pacifying' forces. The typical role pacifying force that the social fascists play during fascisms emergence to power, is crucial in understanding how it gains power. To understand the phenomena, one has to understand the characteristics of fascism, which are not only limited in the structural realm of the state.

The antifascist movement needs to have revolutionary communist forces in lead. The constant fight it needs to continue is against both fascists and revisionists. The proletariat should fight all types of fascism, including social fascism, through militant and uncompromising struggles, by isolating and fighting the extreme right-wing reactionary forces on the one hand, and the social fascists, who act as scabs within the working class movement on the other. The final defeat of fascism, however, is possible only by overthrowing bourgeois-feudal rule through proletarian revolutions, establishing genuine working class working-class states, and eliminating the capitalist-imperialist system as a whole. If the working class does not seize the initiative, if it becomes a victim of social chauvinism and social pacifism, it cannot check the fascist onslaught on people's movements and the basic human rights. Hence constant struggle should be waged by the

working class and the oppressed masses against the growing fascist danger. The task of annihilating fascism requires an alternative form of state, built on the principle of equal distribution and production.

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Birendra Chattopadhyay and Our Rallying Cry

Asok Chattopadhyay

A tumultuous long century has passed since the poet Birendra Chattopadhyay was born on the 2nd of September 1920. His birth centenary this year will be celebrated with an assemblage of cultural luminaries like the poet Sankha Ghosh and others, and it would have been grand if such a celebration could have been observed throughout the year till its culmination on the 2nd of September 2020. The current political situation, however, limits us. The rampant atrocities committed by the State and the police have forced us to take to the streets and to assert for self-determination. But this is nothing new, not atleast to the poet Birendra Chattopadhyay.

Three years before Birendra Chattopadhyay was born, the October (November) revolution shook the world while India fettered in colonial chains, was entering a new phase of liberation war armed with the inspiration of the Russian revolution.

He was only twenty two when the quit India movement of 1942 took place and he valiantly penned down his protest:

Then so be it—
Let man live—
Let love live
—Let truth live

In November 1955, he wrote:

'November, thou art the development of free soul.'

In the late fifties he wrote:

**At the embrace of the Sun,
the night shivered in the wake of
giving birth to a child.
And the ruddy soil witnessed a light
And the crow barked.**



During the movement for food rights in 1966, when Nurul and some other students in their teens were mercilessly slaughtered by the police for demanding food and kerosine oil Birendra Chattopadhyay emoted:

What a charming fragrance of rice
chanting through the night's sky!
Some others are cooking rice,
serving to plates
and have their dinner
And we pass our sleepless nights
and smell sweet fragrance of boiled rice
and pray through
and wait for

And in the next year he cried to get the perfidious dogs to be off and away.

Thus Birendra Chattopadhyay paved the way for a new line of thought, a new way of portraying injustices perpetrated, cruelties of the state.

Whenever a social movement originates from the grassroots, its war cry is enough to shake the foundations of power. When an entire country holds its head high, hoisting the red flag of courage in the towering trail of aspirations and dreams-one can only chant: long live the Revolution. The loathsome mask of fake revolutionaries fall, at such times, and hope blossoms, shaking up one's conscience. It is in these times that we witness emboldened citizens taking to the streets, repeating history again and again.

The 1967 of North Bengal unfurls its yellow pages to speak about the very same. The incidents at Naxalbari on May 23-25 and the then ongoing police terror, at the behest of the 'Marxist' home minister of the then ruling class, resulted in bringing forth an unforeseen storm of resistance, harbingering revolution not only in the districts of West Bengal but also to the farthest parts of the vast land of India. It was a red dream, a dream of a new dawn, a dawn fuelled by unparalleled resistance and valiant songs.

Birendra Chattopadhyay wrote, on the 23rd of November:

Thousands of vultures have encircled the sky
Wherever someone bleeds they rush into there...
And here in the flaming fire
Lakhs of hypnotized men find their faces mirrored

Casabianca's ship had become our own.

After six days Birendra wrote, on 29th of November:
'every cornstalk of paddy is flaming red like a blood-wet flag.'

And in December 1967, he wrote again:

'the winding red flag in the tower is crimsoned in the blood of people, in the bleeding lives of the students in thousands...stars, all around, are grave in hymning the Sun. Victory must have to be won, victory of new born, victory of the people.'

During the black days of state repression in the seventies, Birendra witnessed the pain the bloodied streets of Calcutta then embodied. People were being hounded and killed and his humanity protested against this state of terror created by the Congress regime. His letters and poems of the time abound in resistance, however, not many were on his side. Most of the intellectuals, poets and litterateurs of the time chose to mortgage their conscience to the ruling class and stay silent.

At this point Birendra Chattopadhyay not only fought for a culture of revolt, armed with the fire of his poetry, but also led many a protest himself. Many ridiculed him, yet he continued. His poems fuelled the youth on the road to fight the oppressors. His sixteen-paged booklet stands as a testimony to the times of fire, death and protest. It reached the remotest of suburbs and village and spread like wildfire. Hundreds of young budding poets flocked to him as like an Orpheus he played on his flute of resistance and protest.

Ashu Majumder, a resident of Jadavpur area and a beloved student of the late renowned author Mihir Acharya, editor of Suksari and Lekhak Samabesh, died a martyr's death while fighting against a joint operation of the state police and military forces, on the 10th of March 1971. Poet Birendra was present in Jadavpur on that black day. The police picked up

a bleeding and dying Ashu into their van before the very eyes of the poet and Bamacharan Chakraborty, an RSP leader of Jadavpur. As these two were the only eye-witness of the incident, the police picked them up too.

The state engineered murder of a young poet and naxalite like Ashu haunted the poet Birendra throughout his life. Four and a half months later, on the 25th of July, another young naxalite poet Murari Mukhopadhyay of Ariadah died a martyr's death in the Hazaribag jail. On the midnight of the 4th of August renowned poet and naxalite theoretician Saroj Dutta was picked up by the police, from an apartment on Basanta Roy Road of Kolkata. He was then shot dead at a point blank range and beheaded so that no one could recognize him. One and a half years before this, another renowned poet Subbarao Panigrahi of Andhra Pradesh was dragged, tied to a tree and shot dead by the police. Three months after Saroj Dutta's assassination, Amiya Chattopadhyay was lynched to death in the Alipur central jail along with other prisoners while another poet and naxalite activist Dronacharya Ghosh was shot dead within jail custody in the first week of February 1972. The list is endless.

Birendra Chattopadhyay, to protest against these assassinations, wrote the poem: 'Trial' (Bichar) in a Bengali leftwing weekly Durpan edited by the renowned journalist Hiren Basu. The title of the poem was followed by a note offered to Saroj Dutta.

Civil society, however, was silent at large. Despite such blatant heinous crimes by the police and administration of the then Congress Government, everyone in the ministerial berth along with the chief minister and leaders of other political parties kept mum. Even the poets, artists and the intelligentsia kept mum. This all-round silence and bowing down to tyranny shocked the poet. He wrote:

'is there any man in this land? Am I a man yet?'

As a conscientious poet he reacted to corpses of children shredded by bullets, protested against the assassinations of Ashu-Murari-Saroj Dutta, compiled a list of political prisoners murdered within jail custody, genocidal operations at Kashipur, Baranagar, Barasat etc. On the 10th of September (year?), he wrote: 'hangman has killed you like a beast and howls in glee.'

Addressing the slain poet he writes:

You are dead. Didn't write a poem for a long.

Didn't don a fresh dress for a long.

You have strolled like a mad

...so dead—you have doffed your old dress

And it's your fault...

After his 'trial' (Bichar) was published in the Durpan, Birendra was placed under surveillance by the police force. In the month of September 1971, police and a novice to a local congress leader arrived at his work place of Bipin Bihari Ganguly Street in Kolkata. An officer of Kolkata police bullied the poet the worst and threatened to shut down the offices of the weeklies Durpan and Bangladesh! The poet only kept his head high while his resolve to take this further got more strengthened.

At that time, not only did he dutifully extend his humanitarian outlook and practice the role of a conscientious intellectual, but at the same time he was offensive enough to counter the negative ideology of poets like Nirendranath Chakraborty, Subhas Mukhopadhyay, Golam Kuddus etc of his time.

In September 1976, he wrote to one of his junior poets Sagar Chakraborty:

Bravo! You have written a poem indeed

Police seeks you to get in...

In the end-December 1972, he wrote irritatingly: 'you being a man, who are you getting frightened with and bear out the beasts' temper?'

He was irritated with the token protest against state terror and was perturbed. He dreamt of a terror-free homeland where human lives would be safe and harmonious.

Politically he was never a supporter of the naxalite ideology but their courage, dreams, boldness and uncompromising attitude moved him. He found hope for a new way of life in those dream-haunted naxalite youngsters who dared to dream and die for it. In the end of 1975 or in the earliest part of 1976 he wrote:

**They sometimes become the stream of blood
 Sometimes the hills of bones;
 Only they do have the courage to face the monster;
 In their charming grace I do feel, I can find out
 A real homeland for the every human being
 Is in the making—and I am its citizen.**

This and such was our poet Birendra Chattopadhyay. Despite his attachment to the constitutional 'left', he psychologically leant towards the Naxalites. Poets like Samir Roy, Sagar Chakraborty, Sarojlal Bandyopadhyay, Partha Bandyopadhyay, Satyen Bandyopadhyay and so on were his close associates. During the turbulent seventies they were all comrades. Now none of them are alive.

What he has done for the cause of the Naxalites enthused many an intellectual to rise up from slumber and fight. His courage emboldened others to come out and protest in the streets. Birendra Chattopadhyay became the lighthouse amidst the deep darkness of his time. He pioneered a way of artistic expression that was unthinkable during the seventies.

In March 1977 he along with Samir Roy edited Chant of life (Jeebaner Jayogan) which was a compilation of poems and letters of political prisoners in jails. On May 1, 1978 in the Explanation (Jababdihi) of Benche Thakar Kobita he wrote unhesitantly that the decade of seventies was the decade of emancipation.

In the foreword of his book of poems entitled Bhahaba Samay Tor Sarkaser Khela he wrote on the 9th August, 1974 : 'the ceaseless bloodshed of our children can never be futile in the long run...' This assertion of a naxalite hope in unnaxalite terms reflects what Birendra Chattopadhyay stood for.

In the September 1976, after the death of Mao Ze Dong, the maker of revolutionary China, he wrote:

**All through the life
 He sauntered into the sun
 And wanted to compose
 An unblemished poem
 For the world of the people...**

He had always wanted to strive for an unblemished, emancipated world that could be brought forth only by revolution.

Now in these dark days of fascist onslaught India suffers the worst. Protests are being branded anti-national, students against fascism are being arbitrarily called Naxalites and Pakistan is apparently where they all belong! The ruling class/caste with its consumerist, neo-liberal capitalist ideology is oppressing and othering the people who have taken to the streets and their right to life and livelihood is being severely threatened. Many an organized team under the RSS leadership is busy at terrorizing the Muslims and Dalits, reducing their lives to playthings while communal and sexual violence become their favourite pastime. Their newest excuse is the CAA-NPR-NRC and they are wreaking havoc in UP.

We will not be silent; protests will be staged but the division and polarization of people is also a reality. The bluff of Hindutva forces spewing hate speech have to be called out and it is at these times when we feel the need for a poet like Birendra Chattopadhyay. His poems ring true even to this day and will become our rallying cry for justice and self-determination.

Foul is not fair but at all times foul has to be called out for fairness to prevail. The oppressor has to be pulled down for the peoples' rights to prevail and Birendra Chattopadhyay did just that. His pen was truly mightier than any sword and he strove to make the game fairer for all the oppressed. History will remember peoples' struggles and people will always struggle at times when democracy is under threat, when peoples' freedoms are under threat.

**On the bare streets,
 In the lockups of the jails
 Of our country
 One or one thousand or
 Ten thousand Prabir Duttas
 Might easily be dragged to dead;
 But the oath of Vietnam
 From the mouth of people
 And the chant for it
 Can in no way be wiped out
 And washed away.
 No ma-eater or wild tiger
 Can but fail to do it.**

"You Will Confess Everything"

My Ordeal of Fighting the So-Called War Against Terror

SAR Geelani

SAR GEELANI REMAINED A FEARLESS CRUSADER OF THE MOVEMENT FOR THE RIGHTS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND THE RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE OF KASHMIR. HE WAS FALSELY IMPLICATED IN THE 2001 PARLIAMENT ATTACK CASE AND WAS SUBJECTED TO SEVERE TORTURE AND REPRESSION FROM STATE AUTHORITIES. TOWARDS A NEW DAWN PAYS HUMBLE RESPECT TO OUR BELOVED COMRADE WHO TILL HIS LAST BREATH STOOD UP FOR THE CAUSE OF THE PEOPLE AND DEMOCRATIC VALUE. WE ARE REPRINTING THIS PIECE WRITTEN BY HIM FROM **HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIA: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND CHALLENGES AHEAD**, ED. AMIT BHATTACHARYA & BIMAL KANTI GHOSH, SETU 2010. AS A HOMAGE.



I was arrested on 14th December 2001. In front of the International Student's House (hostel of Delhi University at the Mall Road) between 1 and 1:30 pm, while going to the mall road mosque for Friday prayers. It was the last Friday of Ramadan.

I was in the bus when a man in plain clothes approached me. He wanted me to move beside the window. I had to get down at the next bus stop. So I asked him to sit inside. But, strangely, he took no heed and kept standing. The bus had stopped for the traffic signal. Suddenly he broke the news to me that he was from Delhi police. His senior officer wanted to have a word with me, he clarified.

The bus started moving in the meantime. He shouted at the driver to stop. The bus stopped. Soon I was out of the bus with him. I did not want to create any inconvenience for the fellow passengers. I requested him to accompany me to the mosque first and we will talk once the prayers are over. But the moment we got down, two people came out from a white Maruti car, which was dot behind the bus. They pushed me into the car. The moment we were in the car they took out the guns, brandishing them at me. There were five people in the car - including myself - all in the plain clothes. Two were seated in front, two behind, one on either side, literally sandwiching me in that small vehicle. They started showering me with the filthiest of abuses. I could not understand who they were, as they searched my pockets and took out whatever was there - my wallet, mobile phone and a hearing aid instrument.

I repeated my request for being taken to the mosque. The response was a volley of abuses. From their behaviour they seemed to me like a bunch of thieves.

I told them that I was a teacher in the university and that they could see my identity card. But the man who was sitting beside the driver replied that they knew I was a professor. Of course, the sentence was prefixed with an abuse. On seeing the hearing aid instrument, one of them asked me whether I had a hearing problem. I told them it was not for me. It was to be sent to Kashmir.

The same day, in the morning, I had gone to Chandni Chowk to purchase the hearing aid instrument for my mother-in-law. My brother-in-law, a student of Hamdard University was leaving for Kashmir the same day to be with his parents on Eid, which was after a full two days. They asked me how I would be sending the hearing aid to Kashmir. I told them that my brother-in-law was about to leave that day, from Tis Hazari bus stand of the Jammu & Kashmir Road Transport Corporation. They drove me to the Tis Hazari bus stand where they apprehended my brother-in-law Inayatullah, his cousin Muzammil and my younger brother Bismillah. Both Muzammil and Bismillah were students of Delhi University. They had gone to Tis Hazari to see off my brother-in-law. From where our vehicle was stationed the person (whom I later came to know was Assistant Commissioner of Police, Rajbir Singh of the Special Cell of the Delhi Police) who was sitting next to the driver (who I later came to know was Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma) took out money from my wallet and gave it to his fellow gang men to fetch some eatables. The car moved to Rajghat once the person returned with whatever he was ordered to buy. At Rajghat, they stopped the car on the road. A traffic policeman who was standing there asked them to park the vehicle on the side. Rajbir Singh got out of the car brandishing the gun and shouted at him: "Don't you know who I am?" He then went aside and talked to someone on the phone. When he got into the car again I was blindfolded. They tied my hands behind and covered me with a cloth. The vehicle started moving towards an undisclosed place. After more than an hour's travel I was taken out of the car. A little later they took the blindfold off me. I found myself at the verandah of a building. It was surrounded by trees with a lush green lawn. It looked like a farm house.

A large number of people were there. Some of

them appeared to be higher officials of intelligence agencies. All of a sudden many people started hitting me from all sides. Some with bamboo sticks some with belts and the rest with whatever they could reach out to. It went on for about 15-20 minutes. Then, one person came forth and asked me to confess as the mastermind behind the parliament attack and reveal the names of those who died inside. I replied that I knew nothing about that. How is it possible to confess of something that you have no knowledge of? His language was abusive as he said: "don't worry, you will confess to everything in a while".

Soon I was stripped naked. My hands were tied behind with a rope. The legs were also tied together as they inserted an iron rod between my ankles to hang me upside down. They started beating me, severely in a rage, without even betraying once with the faintest of mercy that I hoped against hope was somewhere within them. Two of them targeted my soles. This went on and on till I almost fainted. I was later brought down and put on something very cold. It was perhaps an ice slab. When I regained my consciousness, two of them held me from either side and made me stand. But I fell down. Not satisfied, two of them again forcefully held me and dragged me. They wanted me to run. It was impossible for me to stand and I collapsed again. They poured me with chilled water in those winter days. A normal human being can ever think of let alone endure the third degree methods, which they indulged in my body.

They failed to extract a confession through physical torture. Now was the turn for psychological torture. A senior officer, whom I later came to know as Ashok Chand, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Cell, threatened me that if I didn't confess, my wife and kids would be kidnapped and eliminated. Soon he was on the phone instructing his subordinates to pick up my family from my residence. I asked him whether the law of the land which he was supposed to protect and execute allows him to harass innocent people, innocent women, and children who were yet to be admitted in a school. He showered me with abuses and said arrogantly: "We are the law".

They were tired after torturing me for long hours. They needed a break DCP Ashok Chand ordered tea and snacks over the phone. I was on fast throughout the day. My request for water to break the fast

was coldly turned down. They kept on sadistically experimenting with my body till the tea arrived. They sat in a huge well-furnished hall. They took me along, tied with a rope without a shred of cloth on my body. They made me sit on the ground and offered me a cup of tea. The sugar sachet which was there with the cup of tea had "Ashoka Country Side" written on it. The tea session gave me some respite. For the first time I had the opportunity to look at myself. Blood was oozing from different parts of my body. The moment they were over with refreshment some senior officers arrived. None of them were introduced to me. But I could guess their seniority on the basis of DCP Ashok Chand's behaviour. Another long round of interrogation started. They too were compelling me to confess. On my persistent denial the ordeal of torture went on intensifying. It stopped somewhere in the middle of the night when I was finally asked to put on my clothes. Blindfolded with my hands tied behind, as I could neither stand nor walk, they lifted and dumped me into a vehicle. It started moving.

After a long drive we stopped somewhere. I was shoved out of the vehicle. They made me walk. I tried but failed and collapsed. I could feel that we were moving upstairs as they carried me. They threw me into a room like a bundle. After a while, the blindfold was removed. I found myself in a small room, chained, handcuffed with a few gun totting guards standing around. Two of them were whispering to each other that my family was at the same place. I got anxious to know about them. But to no avail. Half an hour might have passed when DCP Ashok Chand came and informed me that my family was there. He threatened if I didn't confess my wife would be gang raped and my whole family would be eliminated in front of me. I would be in jail for life. I requested him not to bring my kids near me nor take me to them in this condition. I dreaded the sight of my kids seeing their father bleeding, chained, handcuffed, knowing fully well how they will take it. For them it will be a harrowing image of the largest democracy on earth. But he did not listen. He was overwhelmed by his sadistic nerve. Sometime in the wee hours I was taken to my family. My wife was told to impress me to follow the instructions given by the police and 'cooperate' with them failing which the family would be eliminated.

I talked to my wife, explained the diabolic designs of the police and the dangerous consequences of my agreeing with their plan. I told her that the whole plan is to malign the Kashmiris by attributing this attack to them. All this was happening in the backdrop of 9/11 and the so-called war against terror. It also involves the honour of a premier educational institution – the University of Delhi. And this will surely give them the license to go after all the educated Muslims, especially, the Kashmiri Muslims in the name of fighting terrorism. She understood and stood with me encouraging and providing me with the much needed strength in that hour of despair. After this brief meeting with my family they took me to some other place. I lost the count of the beatings. Every pore of my body was writhing in pain as they brutally continued with the torture to somehow extract the confession.

Finally, they left me in a small filthy dark cell, chained and handcuffed to bide with the remaining part of the night. Early in the morning, I was taken to the toilet, still handcuffed and two gun totting men on my heels, even inside the toilet. Back in the same cell, which was heavily guarded by two rings of commandos, I was given a cup of tea and few biscuits as breakfast. After that I was taken out from the cell, blindfolded and dumped into a private vehicle to be driven to some unknown destination. After a long drive, they took me into a building. My blindfold was removed. It was difficult to figure out the place as the doors and windows of the room were shut. Here again, different teams of officials kept coming, torturing me in the name of interrogation. Later in the afternoon when the officers ordered lunch I was also given a plate to eat. I found the letters "BSF Bhilaswa Camp" written in the middle of the plate. I realized that I was probably being tortured and detained at that moment in the BSF headquarters.

Throughout the day different teams came in and out without identifying themselves, all of them in plain clothes; some questioning me while others torturing without any break, apart for the brief interval for lunch. In the evening officers at the BSF camp also resorted to psychological torture again threatening that my family would be wiped out. To prove how serious they were about their threat I was taken to the other side of the building where my family was

kept in a room. I could see my wife, two children, brother, two brothers-in-law and Afshan Guru (Shaukat's wife) in a room. I was not allowed to interact with them. Sometime in the night, I was again blindfolded, to be taken out in a vehicle. After a long drive they dragged me out of the car to somewhere upstairs as I was unable to walk. In the corridor, my blindfold was removed. Two policemen were holding me from both sides so that I could walk. While moving through the corridor I fell down near a door. The impact of my fall made the door open. I saw my brother, brothers-in-law and few more people in that room all squatting on the ground. I requested the officer to let me rest for a while in that room. After consulting the seniors over the phone I was allowed to rest for a while in that room with the gun totting commandos around. While in that room I enquired about the people other than my relatives. And I found that they were also Kashmiri Muslim men picked up in connection with the parliament attack case from the Azadpur fruit mandi where they had their business.

Later I came to know that these people were let off, only after being squeezed of a huge amount. I am told by reliable sources that they still pay monthly levy to the special cell, Delhi Police, to ensure that they are not framed anymore. So after allowing me to rest for a while I was taken to a room where many officers were present. Another round of interrogation started. After a few hours, I was again transferred to some other room for finger prints, foot prints and a harrowing photo and video session. Everybody present in that room did not want to miss any opportunity of either physically harming or humiliating me. From here I was again shifted to another cell. By then it was almost dawn.

After sometime I was taken off from this cell in the presence of large team of commandos and dumped into a vehicle. Here I saw Mohammad Afzal and Showkat already seated in the vehicle. I tried to talk to them, but there was a stern warning from the accompanying officers not to talk. We were driven to the Safdurjung hospital for the so called medical check up. When we aligned from the vehicle at the Safdurjung Hospital I saw a bevy of armed commandos surrounding the area. No civilian was in sight. We were straight away taken to a room

handcuffed and chained, to a doctor who was supposed to examine us and give us a medical report. But to my consternation one of the police officers accompanying us was filling up a proforma in front of the doctor. He promptly without even batting his eye ordered the doctor to write on the paper that the heart beat, pulse and the blood pressure were all normal. And last but not the least any visible signs of torture I tried to draw his attention to my bleeding wounds, reminding him of his professional and moral responsibilities. But there was no doctor. There was only a wall, cold and damp.

Once the certificate was given we were taken to a residential apartment somewhere around Mandir Marg. We were made to stand in front of a house which happened to be the residence of a magistrate. The police officers went inside the house and after about 15-20 minutes a woman accompanied them out. After seeing us she asked whether we wanted to say something. I told her that first of all we want to know why we have been arrested and were being tortured, kept chained and handcuffed. It's our legal right to have access to a lawyer. I requested her to kindly get us a lawyer. She got back to her house without uttering a word. She let the police keep us in remand for a week. To my surprise I did not find any mention of this conversation with the magistrate anywhere in the court documents that were later produced. Neither did I find any mention of the open bleeding wounds littering my body which had become numb by then.

We were back into police custody, all kept in a dark cell for a while. During this brief period I was informed by Showkat and Afzal that they were also brutally tortured; some of the policemen even urinated into their mouths. They were stripped naked and forced to have anal sex with each other and photographed in that posture. The conversation abruptly ended as we were again taken for interrogation to different places.

This was the 16th of December 2001. We were interrogated at different places in the rest of the day. In the evening we were paraded before the media, but not allowed to utter a word. Some of the journalists tried to come closer and I shouted to them that we had been framed. But no one ever reported even that single sentence. Every Indian national newspaper celebrated instead with banner headlines: "Varsity don guided fidayeen into the parliament".



Why Did the Modi Government Snatch Away Kashmir's *'Special Status'* ?

Abhijnan Sarkar

Courtesy Narendra Modi, almost all politically aware, educated and democratic citizens of the country have come to know the history of Kashmir becoming an 'integral part' of India. Earlier Kashmir was not so widely discussed, hence people talked more about the heavenly beauty of Kashmir, the hospitality of Kashmiris, or the lives of Kashmiri shawl merchants rather than the history of Kashmir. But now due to Modi-Shah, Kashmir is widely discussed in news and social media. Hence the history of the freedom struggle of this region; Of course those who believe that cows produce gold cannot be counted in this category.

Narendra Modi has fulfilled his promise regarding Kashmir to the Sangh parivar and the larger forces of comprador capital. The reality is that India is a country of many peoples, languages and faiths. This means that

India is a country of many nations. But the Indian ruling class comprador bourgeoisie (who are mostly Rajasthani, Gujarati, Parsi and Jain going by the current 5 richest Indians headed by Mukesh Ambani, Gautam Adani, Azim Premji) do not wish to accept this reality. They have one aim: to tighten their grip on India's entire economy by waving the flag of akhand bharat. Their two biggest political representatives, namely the Congress and BJP, are united on this issue. This does not seem so on first sight because they have different theoretical analyses. Whereas the Congress uses 'unity in diversity' to gloss over questions of 'Indian-ness' or Indian nation, the BJP and Sangh parivar use 'aggressive Hindu nationalism' to claim Hindustan mein rehna hoga toh Hindu ban kar rehna hoga. The BJP's narrative is entirely based on bravado - which explains the popularity of the 56 inch chest. They want to turn minorities into even cheaper labour by threatening a section with forced eviction. The very real problems which affect a large number of people due to the feudal economic system and policies undertaken by comprador capitalists driven by the greed of profit are masked by the web of lies spun around the imagined threats posed by minorities and Pakistan. These people have no real responsibility towards the hindu people or religion. It can be said that they do not even represent the interests of the majority. From birth their class character has always served the interests of the zamindars and banyas, along with national and international capital. Earlier they served British imperialism, now they represent the interests of upper caste Hindus.

Incidentally, it must be said that the parliamentary left along with regional parties which serve the ruling classes are all on the same page as the Congress (apart from parties like the Shiv Sena) on this question. There is no difference among them on the question of 'Indian-ness', merely on whether Hindutva and Indian-ness are synonymous. Which is why, regardless of external differences, both approaches regard Kashmir as an integral part of India. This is why the ruling classes have brought down brutal State terror on the people of Kashmir to hold on to the region. Yet the Congress' approach is somehow viewed as liberal. Even if the Congress wears the garb

of a pluralistic India, essentially they propagate a monolithic Indian-ness. We can see this in the case of Kashmir, where both Nehru and Patel accepted the demand for a plebiscite - even promising the same at the United Nations and supporting the demands of Articles 370 and 35A - only to later have Sheikh Abdullah arrested under the Nehru-led Congress for demanding the same plebiscite. This revealed the nasty interior of their liberal facade, since Nehru and Patel accepted the special status of Kashmir according to Article 370 during the accession of Kashmir. According to Article 370 the centre has control only over the departments of 1) Defence 2) Communications 3) Foreign Affairs - the rest are under the aegis of the elected government of Kashmir; the Chief Minister of Kashmir shall be addressed as the Prime Minister of Kashmir; it shall have its own national flag; the Governor of Kashmir shall be appointed not by the President but by the legislature in Kashmir; the President shall merely have the power to ratify this. Under pressure from a mass movement in 1922, the Dogra ruler of Kashmir introduced a law which would allow only permanent residents the right to hold government jobs, permanent housing and the right to buy/sell land. In the spirit of this law, Article 35A was added to Article 370. Even though the Indian government accepted these laws officially, practically they were never executed; rather in 1954, 1958, 1965 and 1986 constitutional amendments were brought in to dilute these acts and laws like the AFSPA have been used to trample the civil rights of the Kashmiris for a long time. Even so, the policy of the Congress is still subtle. While they have not implemented Articles 370 and 35A, they did not abrogate them either. It is noteworthy that the abrogation of Article 370 has been a longstanding demand of the RSS, but even during the Vajpayee-era the BJP did not take such a radical step. So the question is why did the BJP government take this step today? Behind this lies the ever-increasing economic crisis of the Indian ruling class - something which cannot anymore be hidden by Acche Din or Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas. Let us explore these two slogans.

The Tale of Acche Din

The Modi government promised the gift of Acche Din if voted to power. Apart from hate, fear and violence, it has not been able to present the country anything. The most fatal blow was delivered on 8th November 2016 when almost 85% of the country's money was declared not usable through the action of demonetisation. A report in The Outlook states: 'The Cost of printing currency notes escalated to Rs. 7,965 crore in 2016-17, the year when the government had banned the high-value 500 and 1,000 rupee bills, the government informed Parliament Tuesday.[Outlook, Nov. 25, 2019] After this, the Modi Government's GST or 'One Nation One Tax' increased the severity of the economic crisis. As a result of this, unemployment figures have been the highest in 45 years. At present, it is still increasing. After initially remaining silent about figures from the NSSO, the government has finally been forced to acknowledge it. Only in the last three years, 10 lakh people have lost their jobs.

On the one hand, the unprecedented loss of interest rates in the central bank have made it increasingly difficult for the majority of Indians, including senior citizens, who depend on the interest rates of their fixed deposits to make an everyday living. On the other hand, investment and production are not at par with the falling rates of market interest. Recently, the NSSO report has revealed a sensational information. According to this report, between July 2017 and June 2018, the rural population's capacity purchasing power has reduced by 8.8 %. After 1972, this is the first time that the rural population is experiencing such deterioration in their purchasing capacity. The urban and the rural put together accounts for a total of 13 % in the reduction in purchase capacity.

According to the statistics of the World Inequality Database put together by Thomas Picketty and his associates, in 2017, 58 % of the country's resources were owned by the rich (only 9% of the population). By 2018, that number has increased to 73 %. This means that the income of 91% of the country's population is continuously decreasing. According to the Credit Suisse Report, it is during the Modi government that the country is witnessing the highest income inequality in the last 80 years.

According to the World Health Report, India currently ranks second on the global list of rich-poor inequality. 60% of the country owns only about 4.8% of the total resources.

More than 7 lakh factories have shut down in the last five years. In 1980-81, workers claimed 28.5 % of the production as wages. By 2012-13 that has come down to 11%. In the following years, it has further fallen to 9% (Source: ILO, Asia Pacific Working Paper Series). This means that the capitalists appropriate 90% of the value produced by the labor of the working classes. And now according to the Finance Bill 2017, for the first time in history, political parties do not have to account for the money received from foreign sources. By passing this bill, illegal foreign earnings and corruption have been given a legal basis.

India suffers from the highest rate of malnutrition in the world. More than 50% of women, between the ages of 15 and 49, suffer from malnutrition. The mortality rate of infants below the age of five is also the highest in India. According to the GII (Global Innovation Index) report, we rank 109 on a list of 113 countries in the World Hunger Index. The daily rate of infant mortality is 3000. These are not just deaths but outcomes of structural violence. Hunger is so rampant that more than 20 crore of this country's population goes to sleep hungry every night. Farmer suicides are another instance of structural violence. According to the statistics released by the Home Ministry itself, a total of 11,379 farmers have committed suicide in the year 2016, which means that on an average, each month of that year witnessed 948 farmer suicides. And the daily average stands at 31. The NCRB has documented 3,33,407 farmer suicides from 1995 to 2016.

According to data related to healthy lifestyles, India ranks 164 on a list of 224 countries. The subcontinent is right at the bottom with Pakistan concluding the list. In 2016, India became the first country to become multi-drug resistance to cases of Tuberculosis. We share the first position with Nigeria in the highest rate of infant deaths caused by diarrhoea. On the Global Hunger Index, we rank 103 out of 119 countries. In 2017, we rank the highest in global malnutrition. And where

are we in terms of environmental pollution? Out of the 15 most polluted cities in the world, 14 are Indian. IN 2018, 20 Lakh premature deaths were caused by environmental pollution. We occupy the 177th position on a list of 180 countries in the Environmental Performance Index. Currently the per head water consumption has reduced from 5000 cubic metre in 1950 to 1140 cubic metre (1000 cm is the lowest limit!). According to the World Human Capital Index (HCI), India ranks at 115 out of 158 countries. In 2017, we fell 12 positions at one go, even below Sri Lanka and Nepal. According to the ICT development index (IT), we are at 134 on a list of 176 countries. However, the TTN/PR report shows that in 3 years Modi spent 255 crores on flight expenses in only three years.

Caste atrocities have increased by 66% in one decade; this is what the National Crime Records Bureau has reported. According to a report documenting the decade between 2007 and 2017, Dalits fall victim to crimes every 15 minutes. Additionally, 6 Dalit women are raped on a daily basis. According to BJP MP Tarun Vijay, 22317 manual scavengers die every year in Modi's "Swaccha Bharat". During Congress rule, the UPA government had allotted 55 crores for the rehabilitation of manual scavengers. However, the Modi government has not invested a rupee on the rehabilitation of manual scavengers.

Even then we can say, that the Modi-Shah duo have never said a word of lie. It's only that there are some fallacies in the meanings of what they say, which mediocre people like us cannot understand. For instance, in 2014, before coming to power, he had promised the arrival of "Acche Din". Before the 2019 Loksabha elections, he announced "I am a Chowkidar". We raised issue with why the narrative of "Acche Din" had now transformed in to that of the "Chowkidar". But alas! We had completely failed to understand him. As promised, he did bring "Acche Din" over the last five years. However that wasn't "Acche Din" for the common people, but "Acche Din" for corporate capital. He is not accountable to the people; he is accountable to corporate capital, and to the Sangh Parivar, because it is with their blessing that he is able to occupy the position of Prime Minister today. And how has he kept his promises to corporate capital? We have shown

that above with the increasing rich-poor inequality index. India ranks second in the world in resource inequality, right after Russia. This is according to the Global Wealth Report. Just imagine the amount of "Acche Din" that the Modi-Shah duo has made possible for themselves. Naturally, at the completion of the first five years, Modi announced himself as the "Chowkidar". If we conclude from this that Modi was declaring himself as a guardian of the nation, then that would be like living in fool's paradise. If we get sentimental and start claiming that it is during Modi's rule that the most amount of national resources have been trafficked abroad, if we further claim that it is during Modi that the most of corruption has been legalised or that Modi has enabled the handing over of all of the country's resources to corporates; or that during Modi's rule bank looters have openly looted banks and fled to other countries; we will definitely not be able to oppose his claims of being a Chowkidar. Indeed, Modi is the Chowkidar of corporate capital! In that sense, Modi has not made any false claims. But the problem is, in spite of all his efforts, Modi is not being able to rescue the country from its financial issues. Not just from the perspective of the people but also that of 'Development'. Market facts letting us know that the country is at the brink of a financial disaster. Even by increasing taxes on the people in order to slash corporate taxes; by laying off people from employment; by completely destroying small businesses; by limiting the rights of the people, including their wages; even by completing displacing them from their life and living in the name of development, he hasn't been able to revive the industries. Let's look at the overall picture. According to an Anandabazar editorial of November 18, 2019: "the fall in the value of rupee continues; this is only a symptom of the problem. One of the reasons would be the increasing lack of global faith on the Indian economy. In the recent past, even the Indian Reserve Bank has brought home a massive amount of dollars; this would mean that even the central banks do not have much faith on the future of the rupee. The reasons for such lack of faith is clear; the complete breakdown of the entire economy. The indicators of industrial production are facing downwards; there is no demand for electricity. In the month of October, the

rates of retail price hike against absolute wholesale prices has practically hit zero. All indicators point to the complete breakdown of industry. On the other hand, the rates of price rise against absolute retail goods prices has been the highest in 16 months; way beyond the limits of tolerance of the Reserve Bank. The complex riddle at the moment is this; how is it that the rates of price rise of the retail goods market are on a high when those of the wholesale market are at the lowest in 40 months?

The answer maybe found in calculations. The weightage of food stuff is only 15% of the value of the wholesale market; while in the retail market it is more than 45 %. In September itself, the price of only retail food stuff had gone up by 5.08 %; by October, that increased to 7.65 %. This means that industry is failing; but the food prices in the market are on fire. People are being hurt from both sides. Additionally, if the value of rupee continues to fall, then petrol prices along with that of many other things will rise exponentially. And people will feel the heat of it. The likes of Narendra Modi do not even know how to free the country's economy from the maze that they have dragged us in to."

Moreover, the Moody's Investor Service has recently produced a report that would create tremors within the government. According to them, the depression in the Indian economy is for the long term. They have further reported that in the current economic year i.e. 2019-2020 the Indian GDP will fall to 5.6 % against the 5.8% that was expected at the beginning of the year.

Lay-offs are continuously increasingly in industrial institutions. In 2014, the investment on factories and machinery was 34.3% of the GDP; by 2017, that has fallen to 30.7%. During UPA, this rate was on an average 39%; during Modi's rule, the average had come down to 31.8%. This shows our rapid degradation in foreign trade. In 2014, India's trade had increased by 13-14 % on an average. During Modi, that percentage has come down to 2.9 %. As a result, the value of dollar has been gradually increasing. According to news sources, the Reserve Bank has now been forced to do something for the first time on 40 years; in 2019, it has sold off 1.15 Billion dollars worth of gold.

Industrial reserves are at all time low. In addition, workers are being laid off at an increasing rate from car manufacturing, parts companies, dealer and informal sectors. The cars industry alone has seen unemployment of more than 3.5 lakh people in the last few months. Of these, 2.5 lakh are dealer employees. The parts industry and car companies have seen a loss of 1 lakh and at least 15000 employees respectively. In the last three months, Maruti Suzuki, the largest car manufacturer in India, has suffered losses of 20% in their sales. There are massive losses in net profits. The condition of other car companies is also miserable. If demand does not increase immediately, 10 lakh employees are likely to lose their jobs in the near future. At this moment, car companies have demanded massive relief assistance from the central government to save the car industry. The contribution of motor vehicles industry constitutes 7% of India's GDP, and this field directly and indirectly employs a total of 3 crore 70 lakh workers. In addition to the drop in sales of expensive consumer items such as motor cars, air conditioners, refrigerators or televisions and washing machines, even the sale of biscuit packets have reduced. Recently an article in Aajkal reports that: "The State Bank of India has indicated that in the financial year of 2020 the rate of GDP increase is likely to fall further. According to the Bank report, the GDP increase in the financial year of 2020 will fall to only 5 %. However, SBI had earlier reported that the rate of increase will be 6.1%. It was even feared that the rate of rise would fall to 4.2% in the second quarter of the 2019 financial year. The Asian Development Bank, World Bank, OECD, Reserve Bank and IMF had already warned of such a situation.

According to the SBI, the fall in economic development can be attributed to multiple reasons. Car sales have decreased. The number of flight passengers has decreased. The business of airplane companies has not increased. Production has not increased in the core sectors of industry. Investment has reduced in the manufacturing and infrastructures sectors. In addition, what is worrisome is that the rate of industrial manufacturing has come down to 4.3%. Alongside the industrial degradation, non-banking institutions, governmental and non-governmental banks have reduced loans. Add to this the crisis in agriculture. All of these factors are major obstructions to economic development according to the SBI report.

This report adds that in the first quarter of 2019, 33 valuable indicators whose rate of increase was 65%, fell to 28% in the second quarter of the same year. On top of that, excess rainfall in the agriculture intensive states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Punjab has led to anxieties in the yield of Kharif crops. 40-50% soyabean farming, 30-40% badaam farming in Madhya Pradesh and 30% cotton farming in Gujarat are facing massive losses. This will also affect the development of agriculture.

Even the loan market is in crisis. Credit Suisse, a financial services company has reported that between July and September, India's capacity to give out loans has come down to only 6%, which had earlier happened at the time of demonetisation. Even the Nationalised Banks are not willing to take the risk of giving out loans. This is because the non-banking financial sectors do not have enough capital in their reserve to give loans. In spite of the government enabling massive amounts of capital, in the first semester of the current financial year alone, bank loans have reduced by 3%. Even private bank loans have reduced from 22% to 14% in the last one year. Capital supply from mutual funds has also reduced by 30%. The news of large scale irregularities in the IL & FS has prevented other non banking companies from supplying capital. Even taking loans from the market is not reducing the crisis. Additionally, interest rates have gone up massively. As a result, the loan market is in a big crisis" BJP leader Subrahmanyam Swamy accepts that since 1947, India is undergoing the worst economic crisis ever.

Also in crisis are the steel, tyre, parts, paint and many other industries. Even these sectors are likely to see employment losses. In trouble are the consumer goods industries as well. As a result multiple industrial sectors have been demanding relief from the government. Therefore, on the one hand, industry is in utter crisis. On the other hand, people are also subject to multiple-fold sufferings. They are becoming unemployed everyday; losing their jobs; their spending capacity is decreasing and on the other hand, the prices of everyday goods are on the rise. Today, even many bourgeois economists are of the opinion that the country's economic and internal market crisis is the primary reason

for the people's miserable economic condition and for the overall fall in their spending capacity. Under the circumstances, there are only two ways before us. One way would be to give employment to the people. Do whatever it takes to improve the people's spending capacity. Immediately put a stop to price increase. The other way has been to resort to temporary relief from the economic crisis by increasing oppression on the people; to increase profits and increase the burden of taxes on people, while at the same time relieving corporate capital from heavy taxation. This way is bound to take the country towards fascism. On the one hand increase in people's employment possibilities, income etc. will lead to progress in the market; industries will improve; people's bargaining capacity will develop (which is usually low at the time of unemployment). On the other hand, industries may find temporary breathing space by destroying the people's bargaining capacity, by turning them in to a class of cheap labour to enable excess profit but that relief is only temporary. But a large section of this country's anti-people profit greedy lumpen corporate capital prefer the second way and which is why they prefer the Modi-Shah duo. That is why right at the outset of his second term, Modi has quickly gotten passed a number of bills, of which the most important is the Minimum Wages Bill, which is the basis to reduce the worker to the level of a slave. On the other hand, through the NRC, they want to convert crores of people to D-voters or non-citizens, push them to detention camps, take away all their citizenship rights and convert them to another category of slaves. Modi's Kashmir policy must be seen in the context of the patterns of his fascist policies. It is noteworthy that the celebrations of big capital following the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A are evidence to the primary interests that have driven Modi's fascist policies.

What is the primary reason for taking away Kashmir's special status:

The primary reason is to plunder Kashmir's labour and human resources. That is why, immediately after the announcement of the abrogation of Article 370, Mukesh Ambani announced his interest in beginning investments in Kashmir. He has also said, that his Reliance Group of Industries is interested

Kashmir's Mineral Resources:

Mineral	Occurrence	Reserves	Uses	No. of Mining Leases granted
Limestone	All districts of Valley, Kathua, Udhampur, Rajouri, Poonch, Kargil and Leh	6081 Million Tonnes	Manufacture of Cement, Calcium Carbide, Quicklime, Bleaching- Powder, Glass, Paper, paints	37
Gypsum	Baramullah, Kathua, Ramban and Doda Distt.	150 Million Tonnes	Cement, fertilizer, Filler in Paper, Paints, Rubber, Textile industry, Plaster of Paris & sanitary ware,	19
Marble	Kupwara, Kargil, Leh	400 Million Cubic Mtrs	Decorative building stone	1 (and 4 in pipeline)
Granite	Kargil, Leh, Ganderbal, Baramullah, Poonch and Doda	5.2 Million Cubic mtrs. However, stretched over an area of 800 sqkms	Decorative building stone.	Nil
Bauxite	Udhampur and Ramban	8.6 Million Tonnes	Manufacture of aluminum, aluminum products, and aircraft industry	1
Coal	Udhampur, Rajouri (Kalakot)	9.5 Million Tonnes	As fuel	1
Lignite	Nichome, Handwara (Distt Kupwara)	8 Million Tonnes	Thermal power and low grade fuel	Nil
Magnesite	Udhampur	7 Million Tonnes	Refractory Bricks for furnaces . Pharmaceuticals	1
Slates	Poonch, Kathua, Doda and Baramullah	9.6 Million cubic mtrs	Building Material	Nil
Sapphire	Doda (Paddar)	2 kms mineralized zone	Precious Stone	1
Quartzite	Anantnag, Baramullah and Kupwara	2 Million Tonnes	Glass & IT industry	Nil
Borax	Puga valley, Leh	400 tonnes annual crop	Medicine, glass, ceramics, nuclear industry, rocket fuel	1
Dolomite	Rajouri, Udhampur, Reasi	12.37 Million Tonnes	Refractory bricks	Nil
China clay	Doda, Udhampur	28 Million Tonnes	Ceramics, pottery	1
Graphite	Baramullah	62 Million Tonnes	Crucibles, foundry, refractory, paints	Nil

Sr. no.	Name of District	Portland cement	Plaster of Paris	Lime Kiln	Marble Processing	Total
1.	Srinagar	5	6	-	-	11
2.	Budgam	-	-	-	-	-
3.	Pulwama	5	2	2	-	9
4.	Anantnag	1	-	7	-	8
5.	Baramullah	-	2	-	-	2
6.	Kupwara	-	-	-	6	6
7.	Leh	2	-	-	-	2
	Total	13	10	9	6	38

in creating a Special Task Force towards the development of Kashmir and Ladakh. Let's look at the celebrations of big capital in Piyush Pandey's article in The Hindu on August 5, 2019. Ambani is quoted to have said: "I have always believed that Article 370 should be abrogated. The article existed for the unfortunate politicisation of the Kashmir valley. I congratulate BJP for this decisive initiative. And I am happy that they have conformed to their election manifesto." Sajjan Jindal, chairman of JSW Group, tweeted, "I have always believed that Article 370 should be abolished — its existence was a result of unfortunate politicisation of the Kashmir Valley. I support the BJP on this decisive move. Also, glad to see them deliver on their election manifesto."

Mr. Jindal said, "It is a strong move by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah to abrogate Article 370. This ensures that Jammu and Kashmir enters the Indian mainstream and becomes a part of our great nation's collective growth." Motilal Oswal, CMD of Motilal Oswal Group, tweeted, "Post GST, we became one nation one tax. After J&K's special powers are revoked, we have in a real sense become one nation. My compliments to Modi ji, Amit bhai and the whole BJP. Feel proud as a citizen."

Mumbai Stock-Exchange Managing Director and CEO Ashish Chauhan tweeted, "This has been a historic day of great importance for India and Indian democracy. It is also a day of relief for most Indians. A long standing issue is in the process of being resolved today. It is time to re-integrate Kashmir into India in a true sense. Lodha Group MD and CEO Abhishek Lodha tweeted, "Great move. If the nation

is integrated and strong, prosperity will follow ... Hats off to PM and HM for their visionary move."

From the above picture, the celebrations of India's profit-greedy big capital is clear. Now they are interested in investment and development in Kashmir. Although in a post-globalization world, a United Nations Planning report has called this "Jobless Growth" a long time back. Experience says that this country's big capital is more adept at displacing people from employment instead of ensuring their employment, and yet they tell us tales about turning Kashmir in to a haven of employment for people. They are themselves suffering, and they are out to develop Kashmir. The reality is that they are in so much trouble that they have turned their hungry eyes towards Kashmir's resources.

Jammu and Kashmir is a state full of resources. Coal, Bauxite, Lignite, Copper, Lead, Nickel, Lime stone, Borax and other valuable minerals are found here:

You will find both forest and water resources. In addition to the Jhelum, Indu, Chenub, Tawai, there are numerous streams, lakes etc. Every year at least 10 gigawatts of power are extracted from water, air and solar power. Horticulture and floriculture are important sources of livelihood for the rural population. The share of Kashmir's apple agriculture is constantly increasing in the world export market. According to latest reports, it has increased from 65.97% in 2012-13 to 69.15 % in 2014-15. This state is also a big share holder in apricot export. 7 % of the world's apricot export is accounted for by Jammu and

Kashmir. Handicrafts is also a big source of livelihood. This industry is constantly developing. 2.25 lakh people were employed in handicrafts in 1990-91. By 2007-08, this number had increased to 3.505 lakhs. Handicrafts export in 1990-91 earned 34.60 crores, which increased to 1200.47 crores in 2007-08. In addition to this there is of course the tourist economy of Kashmir. Businesses of hotels, restaurants, resorts and transportation have flourished around it. In spite of so much unrest, in 2015 alone, 58,568 tourists visited Kashmir. The Modi-Shah duo's primary aim has been to obliterate the obstacle presented by Article 370 and 35A towards the acquisition of Kashmir's resources and businesses for India's big capital. However, India's big capital has taken lease on multiple occasions to save itself; however, the Kashmir policy will now allow big capital to take complete control of Kashmir's market, resources and cheap labour and turn the entire state in to a massive prison. According to a Business Economy report of November 12, 2019, "According to the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), the region's economy is in dire straits while the losses incurred since 5 August are colossal in nature, mostly due to the continued ban on internet, pre-paid mobile phones, SMS and the protest shutdown of over 100 days now". On the other hand, Kashmir's apple industry is suffering massive losses since the abrogation of Article 370. 3.5 million Kashmiris (almost half of Kashmir's net population) have lost employment from the apple industry; a turnover of Rs 8000 crores is estimated from this industry. However, because of the handlings of the rulers, this business is not endangered. According to an Economic Times article of November 18, 2019, "Market intervention by government agency Nafed (National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation) led to crash of apple prices in Kashmir post removal of article 370, said Raju Shetty, farmer leader and head of the Swabhimani Shetkari Sangathana from Maharashtra." It further states that: 16 lakh to 17 lakh boxes of apple production, Nafed could purchase only 1.5 lakh boxes. According to a report in Reuters on September 19, 2019, "Business people who spoke to Reuters say it is not just the fruit industry that is reeling - two other key sectors of Kashmir's economy, tourism

and handicrafts, have also been hit hard. Shameem Ahmed, a travel agent who owns a houseboat in the summer capital Srinagar, said this year's tourist season was completely wiped out."

According to a report in Economic Times on October 25, 2019: "A big reason why a politician like Newhouse, who represents a huge Red Delicious farming state, is agitated about Indian tariffs is because American farmers are desperate to dump their fruit abroad, since American consumers no longer want them. From being the favoured mass market apple, Red Delicious has become the apple that no one wants - and this is why Cosmic Crisp has been developed and is being marketed in an unprecedented way.

American farmers hope that American consumers will get back to eating apples with these new varieties, while Red Delicious can be dumped with consumers, like Indians, who don't know better.

But the biggest irony is that, just as farmers in the USA are turning against the old mass market varieties, Indians have been planting them. Ten years ago in Uttaranchal, I was told that some of the old British planted trees were still around, with varieties like Benoni, Rymer and Early Shanbury that would probably count as prized heirloom varieties.. like Benoni, Rymer and Early Shanbury that would probably count as prized heirloom varieties now. But as they reached the end of their natural lives they were being replaced with Red and Golden Delicious, since these were what the market valued."

The reality then remains that the destruction of Kashmir's apple industry is directly related to India's attempts to appease American apple industries. One thing should be clearly understood that patriotism, Hindutva etc are all fabrications. There is no relation between these and the occupation of Kashmir. Hidden behind it is the actual love for India's Baniya and imperialist capital. According to historian Partha Chatterjee, who in his article "Kashmir is the Test Bed for a New Model of Internal Colonialism" has written about the political and economic implications of the abrogation of Article 370: "There are speculations on why the BJP government chose this moment to abolish Article 370, dismember Jammu and Kashmir and

bring it under direct physical control. Perhaps the impending deal in Afghanistan between the United States and the Taliban and the strategic advantage this might give to Pakistan had something to do with it. There may be plans afoot for property development and demographic change in Kashmir to alter the effective political character of the state, but those plans would take years to bear fruit. Or perhaps it was the utter confusion and despair in the ranks of the opposition parties that presented an opportunity to the government to push the measure through both houses of parliament. The legality of the step will certainly come under judicial scrutiny in the days to come. But the political implications for the Indian people of what has been done are not merely alarming but catastrophic.”

Politically BJP has argued, why should there be a different set of laws within the same country? It is a valid argument but only to the extent that it does not take in to consideration Article 371, according to which non-residents of Himachal Pradesh

cannot purchase land in the state. In the same way, according to Article 371-A, 371-F, 371-J, 371-H and 371-I, Nagaland, Sikkim, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Goa have special status according to the constitution. According to BJP’s logic, soon these states should also lose their special status.

In my opinion, if big capital is under crisis again, it won’t be long before that BJP would materialise apprehensions related to these states as well, provided their fascist tendencies are further empowered. In today’s crisis it has been convenient to target Kashmir because the state’s majority is Muslim, and its neighbour is Pakistan. Branding them as terrorists has been convenient. Kashmir is in fact the first subject of experiment. But what is also true is that the success of their fascist onslaught will depend to a great extent on the resistance of the people of Kashmir and India. The consequences of such fascist arrogance are bound to be unpleasant for them.

**STOP
WAR ON
PEOPLE**

**RELEASE ALL
POLITICAL PRISONERS
UNCONDITIONALLY**

**TOWARDS
A NEW DAWN**

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