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TOWARDS A NEW DAWN

The Other Voice
of the People



Constitutionalism: **A Marxist Critique**

Ram Mandir: The symbol of **Hindutva Fascism**

AI-The Eyes of Imperialists?

Story time of **Women revolutionaries**

On Xi Jinping

Palestine

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Editorial

In January 2024, India witnessed the Pran Pratisthta of the Indian fascist regime. With the inauguration of Ram Mandir, a myth leading to the demolition of Babri Masjid has been turned into a religio-political establishment. Ironically, this brouhaha about Ram Mandir has been legalized by the legislature, approved by the judiciary, endorsed by the government, and hailed by the media – the four pillars of ‘democracy’ now serve as the four tentacles of our very own ‘Hindu Rashtra’ — no doubt we have entered the ‘Amrit. Kaal’! We need to introspect about what these developments mean for the working classes, peasants, minorities and the marginalized. From the erasure of Mughals from history textbooks to Narendra Modi publicly upholding Hindu rituals at Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, which is more of a display of aggressive Hindu nationalism than faith and devotion, the current regime seeks to homogenize and erase the rich heritage of India’s diverse cultural identity. Now, propaganda is being established as history. News is pouring in from different parts of the county about spontaneous assaults on the Muslims on this ‘auspicious’ eve. In response, some are celebrating the Constitution as an ‘instrument of resistance’. But can its lofty ideals combat the stark realities of class and power? As we are observing the decline of political sanity in Ayodhya, the State’s aggression and persecution and execution of Dalits and Adivasis continue – sometimes in the name of eradicating Maoists, and at other times, just as a mere excuse of maintaining law and order. The current regime wants to get rid of all the dissenting voices and achieve a ‘Swachh Bharat’ – where purity is distinguished by class and caste hatred, and inequality is the new social hygiene. Though Bramhinal fascists have been trying tooth and nail to change the course of history, the toiling masses of India are vehemently resisting this brutal force. The farmers in Punjab and Haryana, the transport workers striking for better working conditions, the Adivasis resisting their displacement in central India — have shown the way. Besides the domestic struggles, we are also witnessing one of the longest and hardest enduring battles of a displaced population taking place abroad. For us, Palestine is a stark reminder in these difficult times that the fight for rights, liberation, and dignity is universal, eternal, and justified. In the era of ChatGPT, we must reflect upon the dangers of AI becoming the tool of imperialistic surveillance; an ‘Orwellian eye’ scrutinizing dissent. Generative artificial intelligence with its remarkable ability to churn out hate content at a mass scale and to propagate fake information as authentic can turn into a powerful weapon of mass manipulation if ethical safeguards are not enforced. In this issue, we have tried to delve into the current socio-political affairs, and invoke our readers to unite, agitate and resist the Bramhinal Hindutva fascists. It is a call to arms for the skeptics, the dissenters, and the dreamers who dare to envision a world where liberation and justice is not a mirage, but a lived reality.



Constitutionalism: A Marxist Critique

Ravi Narla

Necessarily their last word is the Bourgeois Republic, in which free competition rules supreme in all spheres of life; in which there remains altogether that minimum only of government which is indispensable for the administration, internally and externally, of the common class interest and business of the Bourgeoisie; and where this minimum of government is as soberly, as economically organized as possible. Such a party, in other countries, would be called democratic

—Marx

*The Chartists, Marx-Engels,
Articles on Britain, Moscow,
Progress Pub., 1971*

Currently, various debates are going on about the Constitution in India.

These can be broadly divided into three types.

One, the efforts of the Sangh Parivar forces and the BJP to change the basic structure of the current Constitution to rewrite the Constitution with Manuvad values and replace the federal system with a unitary one.

Two—the argument of many liberal secularists, Constitutionalists, Democrats and Ambedkarites calling for the preservation of the Constitution to thwart these efforts by the BJP. Some among them argue not only to protect the constitutional rights but also that the Constitution should be protected because Ambedkar is its author.

Third—the critique of the Constitution by the Marxist revolutionaries. Many of today's constitutional rights found their place in the Constitution because of many struggles waged by the people. Therefore, the people have to fight to protect these rights. To that extent, Marxist revolutionaries would agree with the constitutionalists. However, as per the Marxist understanding, the present State and the Constitution basically serve the ruling classes which are comprador big bourgeoisie and the landlord classes. Therefore, as per this understanding, this Constitution and the State have to be smashed and replaced with proletarian State and a Constitution that protect the interests of the working class and other exploited classes and sections.

People of this country became aware of democratic and civil rights due to the freedom struggle against British colonialism, democratic revolutions in the Western countries, Russian October Revolution, anti-feudal struggles that took place in our country, and the anti-caste and anti-Brahminical struggles led by Ambedkar, Phule, Periyar and other progressive forces. Ambedkar and other progressive and democratic forces did their best to enshrine this awareness in the Constitution in the form of rights.

Many people's struggles took place even after the Constitution came into effect. There was the Telangana armed peasants struggle against the Nizam, the Naxalbari struggle that began in 1967 and the subsequent revolutionary movement and various other people's struggles. Many progressive amendments were made to the Constitution because of these struggles in the post-Ambedkar period as well. It is the duty of the people to defend these rights. We have to fight against the attempts of the ruling parties, especially of the BJP which is in power today, that are trying to destroy these rights. All progressive forces including the Marxist revolutionaries should be part of this fight. Even while doing so, there is a need to refute the approach that puts the Constitution beyond criticism and argues for solving the problems only within the framework of the Constitution. There is a need to refute this constitutionalism.

Before going into these matters in some more detail, we have to know about constitutionalism and how the State, the Constitution and the constitutional rights have evolved historically. It is also equally important to delve deeply into the relationship of the class system and class exploitation with the State and the Constitution.

Constitutionalism:

There are broadly two interpretations of constitutionalism.

One is an interpretation from a liberal point of view and the other is the interpretation from a Marxist point of view.

A Constitution is an official document that contains provisions that determine the structure of the government and of the country's political institutions, and that sets out regulations and limits for government and citizens.

According to Western liberal constitutionalism, a 'constitutional state' means a government with well-defined limits, clear laws and clearly defined administrative procedures. There should be functioning legislatures, executive branch and judicial system that work in a framework as per prescribed method. If any changes are to be made in the system, that should be done peacefully and systematically without any attempt at violence. There must be rule of law that ensures freedom and equality for all. There should be freedom of the press and pluralism that gives opportunity for anyone to come to power. Liberal constitutional view involves the separation of powers between different branches of the State. There are checks and balances to ensure that no branch of the State transgresses its authority and encroaches upon the authority of the other branches. For example, there is division of powers between the legislature, executive and the judiciary and there are rules in the Constitution itself to ensure that there is separation of powers and that they do not cross their respective lines. As per this view, the State is un-biased towards any section of the people. Everyone is equal before the Constitution and the law. In short, constitutionalism means rule of law.

This is broadly the liberal view of constitutionalism.

As per this view, the capitalist system seems to provide for an equal exchange between the workers and the capitalists, the Constitution appears to provide equal rights to all and the State appears like a class-neutral institution.

This perspective fails to realize the fact that the basic function of the State and the Constitution is to serve the ruling classes or at the least it is indifferent to that fact. It does not take into account the influence of the accumulated wealth, power and prestige of the ruling class on politics and the lack of

the same with the poor. On the whole this theory of liberal constitutionalism does not take into account 'social problems'.

Some progressive constitutionalists focus more on progressive interpretation of the Constitution. Their understanding is that the Constitution is good despite some flaws and the problem is in its implementation. They do not care about the systemic changes necessary for a true democracy to function.

Marx's understanding of the Constitution:

Throughout his life, Marx examined the subject of Constitution theoretically and historically. In 'Critique of Hegel's Theory of Rights' he discussed the question of Constitution in detail. He critically examined and discussed the constitutions and constitutional debates in the context of the French Revolution and the German Revolution. He discussed this in detail in '18th Brumaire'.

The constitutional theory developed by Marx is not only political but also social and socialist in nature. It analyzes the intricacies of the Constitution not only from an ideological perspective but also from a socio-economic perspective. It rejects the claim that the Constitution is sacrosanct because it was written by great leaders and nation-builders, and it rejects the restrictions it imposes on future generations. It invites change and experimentation as opposed to treating the Constitution as something beyond the people. It rejects the concepts that the Constitution is above ordinary laws or that it binds together the general politics. It proposes that Constitution is born out of class struggle and comprises of many different social relations.

Marx's critique of the Constitution was not just about the separation of powers in the State, or about the struggle over access to the State. Marx's theory talks about extending democracy not only to the political sphere but also to the economic sphere. Marx's theory advocates social control of the state and that society should be comprised of 'free and associated toilers' to overcome the alienation of the people from the State. Thus, in Marx's view,

democracy should be synonymous with socialism. Marx's constitutional critique stems from the need and possibility to establish an alternative to capitalism.

Marx argues in the '18th Brumaire' that the fundamental contradiction in modern Constitutions lies in the separation of social and political emancipation. 'On the one hand the French Constitution reinforces a class-based social system (a system in which workers are dependent on capital and exploitative wage labour) and on the other hand it gives all citizens the right to vote. It grants political emancipation on the one hand, but hinders social emancipation. This creates a contradiction. On the one hand it perpetuates the social enslavement of the workers, peasants and petty-bourgeoisie classes. On the other hand, it places political power in the hands of those classes through universal suffrage. It allows the old social power to continue in the hands of the bourgeoisie. At the same time it removes the political guarantee of that power. This means that the capitalist class does not rule as a State on its own and is responsible for operating within certain democratic constraints. It restricts the working class from moving forward from political freedom to social emancipation. That means they can exercise their right to vote and participate in elections, but they should not ask for their economic and social equality, and should not fight for it.

The capitalist class may continue the old social oppression but there are restrictions on that class from moving towards the old form of political power (such as power in a monarchy). This means that exploitation of labor and exploitation of surplus value can continue, but not for endless political power, as in monarchies and feudalism. A 'democracy' should function within certain limits imposed on political power and not the unlimited political powers of old.

A Constitution that establishes a parliamentary democracy, by protecting the right to private property and by means of many other factors, restricts the political power of the people to fundamentally

change the social order. Democracy and Constitution came into being through political revolution but it was an incomplete revolution. It prevents society from becoming more democratic. It seeks to deprive workers, peasants, and the petty-bourgeoisie of the power to change society by democratizing the economy. In other words, it stabilizes a socio-political system and prevents the people from further deepening the political democracy and prevents the continuation of the revolution’.

Marx says that what modern democracy is doing is to portray the State as something beyond the people and as a political instrument beyond material wealth. For example in a feudal society, the landlords wield the political power. Wealth also belonged to the landlord or the king. But in a modern State, everybody has equal political rights; and apparently the State is independent of wealth. But in reality, the wealth that influences that political right belongs to a few. Even if the State is used to increase that wealth, it is also done in the name of democracy. People also see that this is happening. But the relationship between changing the status quo and changing the system of production is masked by Constitution and democracy.

Modern Constitutions treat all citizens as a homogeneous group. But it does not take into account class differences and other differences between them. It proclaims the noble value that all are equal before the law. After much struggle it takes into account certain types of differences—for example caste differences, tribal-non-tribal differences only for certain limited purposes. Class differences are not taken into consideration. It does not take into account the relationship between these differences and the political power and other rights. Even the judiciary does not care about the existence of social classes. Liberal constitutionalism closes its eyes and does not concern itself with how all these are engendering the reproduction of these class, caste and other differences.

To further understand this Marxist understanding of the Constitution, one must know,

even if only briefly, the origin and history of the State and Constitutions. Only then, we can understand the Marxist approach to constitutionalism.

Origin of the State–Class Exploitation:

Engels explains that, historically, the State arose at a point when society had developed the forces of production to the extent that it had become entangled in insoluble class antagonisms.

“But in order that these antagonisms, classes with conflicting interests, might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power seemingly standing above society that would alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of ‘order’; and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the State”.

The tool used by the State to establish that ‘peace’ in the society is the ‘armed forces’. Courts, prisons, army are all part of it. In other words, although it may appear different on the surface, the power of the State is not class-neutral. It is a tool wielded by the propertied class to oppress the property-less class.

But it is not possible to keep the people down by force and force alone. So in addition to that, laws and Constitutions (and other things like organised religion, literature, and caste) came into existence. All the hitherto formed States have become stronger than the previous ones. The modern State is the strongest of all. The Constitution is the beautiful shield that covers the real nature of this State. It is only embellished to cover its true nature.

Since its inception, the State has followed a set of rules, though they varied depending on the then prevailing system. But all the laws and rules that preceded the emergence of a modern democratic State were full of inequities. For instance, the laws and customs for slaves were different from those for the slave owners. The laws for landlords were different from those for serfs and peasants.

We have caste based feudalism in our country

and therefore there are different sets of rules for Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras and Dalits. Rules for women are also different - that too caste-wise. Varnashrama dharma with inherent inequalities is the source of all laws and regulations. The concept of equal political power for all people was born in the course of struggle for bourgeois democratic rule with the advent of capitalism. The concept of democracy, which existed in the tribal societies before the class differentiation was fully established in them, sprung up again during the period of bourgeois democracy. It is this that led to the birth of modern Constitutions. These Constitutions granted equal political rights such as universal franchise and some social rights. These Constitutions also put some restrictions on the powers of the rulers.

Social and political background behind the development of this concept of equal rights:

In the process of social evolution, the production of commodities gradually increased in feudal societies. If the producers of those commodities want to sell them, they have to be the legal owners of the commodities they have produced. There should not be any dominance of the landlords. In feudal societies and monarchies, the rules and laws are imposed by the landlords. Moreover, these vary from region to region. Therefore, the landlords in Europe used to make announcements saying 'we will protect your business and we will provide armed protection in the trade routes to and from the trading cities' in order to increase the trade in their respective states. Traders themselves also employed their own forces. But in such a situation, whoever has more strength and power will have the upper hand. That means there will be an unequal situation. Equal exchange of goods is not possible. If there is no equal exchange of goods, there will be disruption in the circulation and the production of commodities. This is not an acceptable situation for capitalists/commodity producers. Hence a principle, a rule, a slogan

of equality between commodity producers/capitalists was born. The concept of equality is thus born from the concept of freedom of trade. This is the economic reason for the introduction of the concept of equality in modern States and Constitutions. The capitalists propagated ideas of various rights and egalitarianism to mobilize the masses, including the peasantry, to fight against feudalism. This is the political reason behind the concept of equality. It is for these economic and political reasons that the concept of equality has entered modern States and Constitutions.

Bourgeois democracy came into existence as feudalism was overthrown and the capitalist class came to power. This led to the written Constitutions in almost all modern democracies except Britain.

There is a contradiction in all these Constitutions. No Constitution of any capitalist country provides for economic equality. They gave only political equality. Marx explores this contradiction in his analysis of the French Constitution. 'On the one hand there are severe social and economical inequalities and on the other hand everyone has equal political rights according to the Constitution. This is a contradiction. Apart from that, capitalists have extensive financial resources and wealth. But the Constitution imposes certain restrictions and regulations on their political powers. This is another contradiction. These two contradictions lead to a crisis'—says Marx.

The basic role of the State has always been the same, whether it be the State of slave system of holding (or the first State of the Magadha Empire in our country) or the feudal State or 'modern democratic State.' It has always been an instrument to keep the workers under control and facilitate the exploitation of surplus labor. Constitutions also perform the same function. Constitutions are only a tool in the hands of the ruling classes in fulfilling this duty. Neutrality between the rulers and the ruled is an illusion even in the case of the modern Constitutions. The Constitution of India is no exception.

Moreover, these Constitutions and modern bourgeois democratic States came into existence only after several centuries of bloody and violent struggle. None of them came into existence through non-violent and peaceful struggles. The history of the emergence of Constitutions and democratic States of Britain, France, Germany, America and other countries is a history of bloody struggle.

Without understanding this nature and history, the Constitution is generally accorded a sacred and superior position. It is a common notion that the Constitutions should not be changed because the founders and great leaders of the nation or freedom fighters have drafted it. The argument that the Constitution is sacred and unalterable, is by itself undemocratic. As Thomas Jefferson said 'laws/Constitutions are of living men, not of dead men'. So even Constitutions are bound by limitations of time and space. It is but natural that the Constitutions undergo many changes depending on the strength of the class forces existing in that particular society at any given time. It is unnatural if this does not happen.

When power is concentrated in the hands of reactionary forces, we see violations of constitutional rights by all the institutions, including the judiciary, under the very guise of democracy even while chanting about the sanctity of the Constitution.

Men in power have created religion to be above the humans. Similarly, it is propagated that the Constitution is above all other laws and beyond any changes. However, 'just as it is not religion that creates man but man who creates religion, so it is not the Constitution that creates the people but the people who create the Constitution.'

Separation of powers among the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary is one of the cardinal principles of the modern Constitutions. Liberal constitutionalism says that these three organs of the State work independently of each other and mutually impose some limits on each other and maintain balance to prevent centralization and abuse of power. This argument masks the repressive nature of the Constitution and hides the fact that it

is a tool in the hands of the ruling classes. Although there is an apparent separation of powers, the fact that the wealth of the ruling class influences them behind the scenes is kept hidden. Marxists need to expose this essence.

Marx also criticizes holding judiciary above criticism and making it highly impossible to remove judges from high judicial positions. A legal system closely tied to the exploitative system tends to interpret the Constitution in a way that maintains the status quo and prevents any change. There is nothing people can do about it. A hallmark of modern Constitutional systems is the existence of such a judicial system opposed to the majority of the people.

An independent judiciary is only a fantasy. This legal system opposes any social control over it and prevents the State from becoming more democratic. For the judiciary to be accountable to the people, Marx proposes that judges should be elected like other public servants, held accountable for their judgments, and methods should be in place for their removal by the people.

By concealing the class nature of the courts, they are constantly hailed as sacred institutions that uphold justice and Dharma. But, in the past seventy five years, the courts have mainly upheld the interests of the ruling classes and the dominant castes with only a few exceptions.

When the Parliament made a law abolishing privy purses, the Supreme Court struck down the law saying that it is a violation of the right to private property. Parliament had to amend the Constitution. Even when the land reform laws were enacted and banks were nationalized, the courts adopted an anti-people attitude that these laws violated the right to private property. On the other hand, when the ruling classes grab the lands of farmers and tribals and make them refugees and when they brazenly violate the PESA Act and the 5th and 6th Schedules of the Parliament, in the name of SEZs, industries, dams, mines, airports and ports, the courts do not pass any judgments

that these are violations of private property. In all this, the class nature of the courts is clearly evident. And we all know what judgments have been given in the case of innumerable attacks and massacres of the Dalits and minorities by the upper castes, Hindutva organisations in this country, acquitting the upper caste perpetrators. The upper casteist nature of the courts continues to emerge in restricting the reservation up to 50 percent and providing 10 percent EWS reservation to the upper castes. As the BJP's political influence increases, we also see the courts issuing innumerable judgments in favor of Hindutva.

Efforts continue to mask the class nature of the courts by pretending that everything is fine and sing paeans of the judicial system when the courts rarely ever rule against the State or pass judgments in favor of the people.

In recent times, even criticizing the anti-people or pro-ruling class rulings of the courts from a progressive angle is increasingly considered as contempt of court. The corporate media, on the other hand, goes to the extent of portraying such criticisms as anti-constitutionality and even unpatriotic treason. Even those who criticize the judgments are afraid of contempt of court, adding a rider saying 'we have faith in the Indian judicial system'. We continue to see a situation where the criticism is very soft.

The 'rule of law' in imperialist countries also has another limitation. In almost all the countries of Europe and America, Constitutions and 'rule of law' came into force in the 18th and 19th centuries, but they were limited to those countries only. In the colonies they occupied, they did not rule by law, but by brute force. They ruled the countries of Asia, Africa and South America for three or four centuries in quite an inhuman fashion with violence and bloodshed and 'not by the rule of law'. All the European countries attacked China in the name of obstructing free trade when it objected to the import of opium, which was banned in their own countries. Those are infamously known as the

Opium Wars. Such is nature of their 'rule of law'. There is no need to say more about the US military attacks today in violation of all international laws. This double standard adopted by the imperialist countries towards other countries is also seen in the implementation of the Constitution and laws within their countries. Forced opening of the economy to sell their goods under the guise of trade agreements with other countries and unilateral imposition of sanctions is also being done in the name of 'rule of law'.

Therefore, we need to understand the relationship between these States, Constitutions and the modes of production. Modern Constitutions came into existence only with the emergence of the capitalist system. We should always remember that their primary duty is to protect the interests of capitalists/ ruling classes and imperialists.

Constitution of India:

In European countries, modern Constitutions came into existence in the process of overthrowing the feudal system and establishing a capitalist society and a corresponding bourgeois democratic state. The background to the origin of Constitution in India is different. British colonialism weakened after the Second World War and the British felt it safe to withdraw from here while protecting their economic interests in a situation where it was not possible to suppress the anti-colonial struggle going on in our country. In such circumstances, direct state power was handed over to the comprador bourgeoisie, rulers of princely states and landlords. Constitution was written here in that context. Thus, the Constitution was written in the context of India's transition from a semi-feudal-colonial country to a semi-colonial-semi-feudal country. Our Constitution has those limitations.

Formation of Constituent Assembly in our country:

Provincial (territorial) elections were held in January 1946 to elect the Constituent Assembly

during the period when the British were still ruling our country. Not everyone had the right to vote in this election. There was no universal franchise. Only those who own land, pay rent, are educated, and some women had the right to vote. They elected representatives to the Provincial Assemblies and those representatives elected the members of the Constituent Assembly. That means these were indirect elections. Constituent Assembly was thus constituted with 299 members who were elected by indirect election in which only one sixth of India's adults were voters. In addition to these, 93 representatives were nominated from the provinces. That means they are the representatives of the princely states who were there without getting elected in any way.

The Constituent Assembly thus formed appointed a Drafting Committee to draft the Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar was the chairman of the drafting committee.

Ambedkar had lost the Bombay provincial election and was elected from East Bengal. But Ambedkar, who was elected from East Bengal, lost his seat in the Indian Constituent Assembly as the process of formation of Pakistan into a separate country had already begun. Fearing that he could not play any role in the drafting of the Constitution, Ambedkar wrote a document entitled 'States and Minorities' on behalf of the 'Scheduled Castes Federation' to incorporate it into the Constitution. It contains Ambedkar's true ideas. But to make Ambedkar an integral part of the Constitution, Bombay Legislative Congress Party elected Dr. Ambedkar as a representative and sent him to the Constituent Assembly. Later, to Ambedkar's surprise, he was elected as a member of the drafting committee and later even as its president.

B.N. Rao, a judicial officer, was appointed as the Constitutional Adviser to the Constituent Assembly. (He once served as a British ICS officer and later as a judge in the Calcutta Court and also wrote the Constitution of Burma). In December 1946, Nehru introduced the principles

to be included in the Constitution as a statement of objective. That later became the preamble of the constitution. Many committees were appointed to make recommendations on various matters. Apart from the Constitution Drafting Committee, 12 other main committees were formed under the leadership of Nehru, Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Abul Kalam Azad and others and made suggestions on various matters. Due to their enormous prestige, most of the recommendations of these committees were accepted by the Constitution Drafting Committee. Equipped by the reports of these committees and the Constitutions of other countries, B.N. Rao prepared the first draft of the Constitution and submitted it to the Constituent Assembly. After that, the Drafting Committee under the chairmanship of Ambedkar drafted the Constitution in detail and placed it before the Constituent Assembly for discussion. After detailed discussion the Constitution came into force after a total of two years eleven months eighteen days.

In the Constituent Assembly there are those with a capitalist mentality, while the representatives of the provinces were the direct representatives of the landlords. Apart from them, many of the representatives from the Congress and the Muslim League were feudals and had a feudal ideology. There were also those with liberal socialist ideas. Most of the 389 members of the assembly were from the upper castes and only 15 were women.

Looking at these details, we can understand that the original Constituent Assembly was not elected by the people. Moreover, it is wrong to understand that the Constitution as a whole is a reflection of Ambedkar's ideas and opinions or that Ambedkar himself wrote the Constitution. To presume so would also be unfair to Ambedkar's opinions.

Ambedkar's Role in Constitution Writing—Limitations; Contradictions in the Constitution

When Ambedkar was given the responsibility of drafting the Constitution, he tried to include as many rights in the Constitution as possible for

the 'Scheduled Castes' and other downtrodden communities for the upliftment of whom he had dedicated his whole life. Ambedkar was instrumental in including reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, for constitutionally banning untouchability and bonded labour. He put forth his views strongly on all other matters as well but in the end the representatives in the Constituent Assembly accepted only those that suited their interests. This is the limitation that Ambedkar faced. Ambedkar said in the Constituent Assembly that 'the drafting committee should work as per certain rules and regulations, and there is no other choice'. He also said that 'the drafting committee has implemented the instructions and orders given by the members with sincerity'. During a debate on a matter in the Parliament, he was criticized that he was the one who incorporated certain things in the Constitution and that he was the maker of the Constitution. To this, he replied in the Rajya Sabha on September 3, 1953, 'My answer is that I am not the maker of the Constitution, I am an unrecognized politician, I did whatever I was ordered to do against my will'. When the members further provoked him then he said that he would burn this Constitution. Once again talking about Article 31 of the Constitution (procedure of acquisition of private property by the government), he said 'I and the Constitution Drafting Committee have nothing to do with this article. We did not propose that'.

One of the anti-people aspects of the Constitution is the right to property. Right to property was a fundamental right in the first Constitution. So when the parliament enacted laws like land ceiling acts and abolition of privy purses, the landlords (a Kerala landowner named Kesavananda Bharati) challenged it in the Supreme Court, and the court struck down the law on the ground that right to property was a constitutional right. Article 31 of the Constitution describes the circumstances and manner in which private property (private land, industries) can be acquired. Accordingly, fair or appropriate compensation shall be paid. Ambedkar

opined that the government could not acquire private property without compensation. Thus, the Constitution had been protecting the right to property. During the 1950s-70s, the Supreme Court restrained State interference in property rights. The right to property was considered sacred.

Parliament had to amend the Constitution to rectify this. Parliament passed the 44th Amendment in 1978 which removed the right to property as a fundamental right and made it a general statutory right.

How preposterous is it from the point of view of the peasants and the landless to pay compensation for taking over the lands of the landlords!

Socialists and communists opposed the centralization of more powers at the center and argued that the states were being reduced to the level of municipalities. Ambedkar replied to this criticism that those powers were only to be used in times of war and other emergencies, and in normal circumstances the states and the center had equal powers. But we are witnessing what is happening in practice.

Fundamental rights and directive principles are enshrined in the constitution. Violations of rights by the State can be prosecuted in the courts, but if the directive principles are not implemented, no one is held accountable. This arrangement was opposed by many in the Constituent Assembly. In the beginning, even Ambedkar wanted to make the directive principles justiciable. But in the subsequent discussions, the proposals of BN Rao and others had to be accepted. In this way, the directive principles to be followed and implemented by the administration have been left out of the court's purview. Basic needs are not recognized as rights.

Ambedkar presented a long list of fundamental rights to the Constituent Assembly. He opined that fundamental rights and directive principles should be at the same place. That is why the list presented by him includes rights and regulations for minorities, especially scheduled castes, and a social scheme to be implemented for ten years. However, the Constituent Assembly rejected the social scheme

proposed by him on many occasions saying that it cannot be included in the Constitution and that it should be left to the laws.

Ambedkar expressed different views on the Constitution at different times. To some extent, like Marx, he correctly anticipated and warned against the contradictions of the social and political issues in the Constitution .

“On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics, we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has laboriously built up,” he said in his last concluding speech in the Constituent Assembly.

Despite this warning, he could not suggest a way to resolve the contradictions he mentioned owing to his outlook.

Ambedkar could not fully assess the role of the state machinery in implementing the Constitution and its true nature. Ambedkar’s pragmatist view and Fabian socialist liberal view is the reason for this. If he had correct assessment then he would not have said the following in his last speech at the last meeting of the Constituent Assembly –‘If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact, what must we do? The first thing in my judgement we must do is to hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives. It means we must abandon the bloody methods of revolution. It means that we must abandon the method of civil

disobedience, noncooperation and Satyagraha. When there was no way left for constitutional methods for achieving economic and social objectives, there was a great deal of justification for unconstitutional methods. But where constitutional methods are open, there can be no justification for these unconstitutional methods. These methods are nothing but the Grammar of Anarchy and the sooner they are abandoned, the better for us.’

This was the confidence that Ambedkar had in the Constitution!

But in the same speech he also warned that if equality is not achieved, ‘those suffering from inequality will destroy whatever democracy the Constituent Assembly has created’.

Where revolutions took place, the old state machinery was smashed and replaced with new machinery to a large extent. But because we got ‘independence’ in our country with the compromise reached with the British, the state machinery and the system of administration that existed during the British period continued almost as it is. The police, the military, the revenue system right from the village level to the higher levels, the judicial system - nothing changed. They they have been serving the new ruling classes comprising comprador big bourgeoisie and the landlords as loyally as they had served the British rulers.

We are seeing how this state machinery is implementing or rather not implementing the PESA Act, the 5th and 6th Schedules of the Constitution, the Dalit Rights Act and many other progressive pro-people laws. Ambedkar did not warn the people about the counter-revolutionary role that would be played by such a state apparatus. The oppressed people, the working people, the oppressed castes (except the handful of them who join the ruling classes) will not gain anything without destroying the old state machinery .

If we attribute the entire Constitution solely to Ambedkar, then we will have to make him responsible not only for the positive aspects of it but also for all the aspects that take away the

rights of the people. How does this do justice to Ambedkar? Therefore, we have to accept and adopt only the rights for the oppressed castes and classes and women, which the progressive and democratic minded members of the Constituent Assembly, including Ambedkar, have specifically incorporated in the Constitution and oppose those elements which are detrimental to the interests of the working people. Only then will it amount to truly honoring Ambedkar. Moreover, Ambedkar himself, because of his faith in the State and the Constitution due to his liberal political outlook, introduced in the Constitution certain aspects that are not acceptable to us. It is not right for us not to take a critical view of them.

When the members of the Lok Sabha criticized Ambedkar regarding certain aspects of the Constitution accusing him of incorporating them in the Constitution, Ambedkar himself said, 'I had only a nominal role in the drafting of the Constitution'. We should ask ourselves a question. Why did the parliament – representative of the ruling classes of the country – adopt the Constitution while the same parliament created conditions that forced Ambedkar to resign on a single matter like the Hindu Code Bill? They agreed to and adopted the Constitution because it basically and completely serves their interests and is suitable for them. The stand that one should uphold the Constitution because Ambedkar is the author of it serves only the interests of the ruling classes.

This constitutionalism only creates illusions among the workers, peasants, Dalits, minorities and other oppressed people that they can ameliorate their conditions in this system itself instead of fighting for the establishment of a new democratic state. We have to realize that this State uses constitutionalism in the same way as it used the pseudo-patriotism. It only binds the people to the parliamentary path and kills their spirit and will to fight militantly.

Ambedkar proposed in 'State and Minorities' that the State should nationalise the agricultural

land and key industries and should have control over the resources of production and that the produce should be distributed equally to all without caste differences etc. In addition to these, he proposed that the government should have control over the financial sector. He proposed that to encourage private industries.

This type of 'state socialism' proposed by Ambedkar is different from the socialist theory of Marxists. However, he does not have any method and the path to be adopted as to how to achieve any of the goals he has proposed. He strongly believed that social change was possible only within the framework of parliamentary democracy, driven by the State. Will the State which has not even implemented the nominal land reform laws implement the scheme proposed by him? Isn't this an illusion regarding an exploitative State? Change is not possible by just setting the goal, no matter how well intentioned the goal is! What is the path to be adopted to achieve the goal?

That is why we need to understand the limitations of Ambedkar in writing the Constitution. We should utilise the rights incorporated in the Constitution by him and other progressive forces. But at the same time we must reject the constitutionalism that stifles the fighting spirit of the people in the name of the Constitution and binds them, especially Dalits, Adivasis, Bahujans and minorities to the parliamentary path. Hence we should realize the limitations of Dalit-Bahujan constitutionalism.

Dalit-Bahujan Constitutionalism:

Due to the struggles led by Ambedkar for the rights of Dalits, due to the inspiration given by Ambedkar, due to his teachings, due to the reservations provided by Ambedkar in the Constitution, many Dalits got education and jobs. They could stand up with dignity. They were able to get education and other rights that they were deprived of for thousands of years. Their social status has also improved a great deal. Enshrining certain rights in the Constitution itself has helped this. With the

consciousness gained through these rights, and the consciousness gained through democratic and revolutionary movements, many more struggles were launched by the Dalit-Bahujans and they obtained more rights through various laws enacted.

A desire to share in parliamentary power with the suffrage conferred by the Constitution, and the political right that came with it, also grew. By the eighties and nineties, due to the changes in the rural economy and land relations, the peasant castes among the Shudras were able to acquire land. In many places they were able to grow as middle class farmers and rich farmers and in some places even as landlords. At the same time, the urban middle class, the educated intelligentsia and the bureaucratic class also grew out of the Dalit castes. In many places, the political power in the states also gradually shifted from the upper castes to the backward castes. The number of Dalit parliamentary leaders has also increased. Ambedkar and Phule became symbols of self-respect for Dalits and Bahujans across the country after the Dalits, especially Kanshiram-led BSP, came forward with the slogan 'Why should we only have the votes and You have the seats'. Along with this, Dalit-Bahujan constitutionalism and identity politics also got stronger. Though the Dalit-Bahujans are launching many struggles, the above-mentioned leadership of the middle and rich classes among them is spreading the illusion that the Dalit-Bahujans will gain real State power through the parliamentary path only. They are trying to raise consciousness but within the limits of the Constitution and owing allegiance to it. They are failing to assess the true nature of the State. These illusions serve a section of the Dalits-Bahujans who have grown into an elite class and want to join the ruling elite. But they do not in any way serve the working class majority from among the Dalits-Bahujans. So Dalit and Bahujan toiling classes can fight for their true liberation only if this kind of constitutionalism is also categorically rejected.

If we accept the argument that 'Constitution is good, but only those who implement the Constitution are not good', then we would have to fight for the implementation of the Constitution. But it should be understood that there is a relationship between the Constitution and the mode of production. It should be recognized that the State and the Constitution exist primarily to protect the interests of the owners of the means of production. Then we must try to change the mode of production. Society is not built according to law and Constitution. Instead, the corresponding laws and Constitution come into being based on the structure of the society and the mode of production. Therefore, it is not possible to just change all anti-people aspects of the Constitution. It is not further possible to implement any of these changes. Basic changes are possible only through basic change in the mode of production. Realizing the inextricable relationship between the State, the Constitution and the mode of production, all the working classes, including those of the Dalits, Adivasis, Bahujans and the minorities, should strive to overthrow the exploitative mode of production, the exploitative State and Constitution and establish a new democratic state in its place. ◆



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Ayodhya Ram Mandir: The symbol of *Brahmanical Hindutva Fascism*

Mrinal Gupta

It is the eve of the Ram temple inauguration and the opposition's brouhaha regarding the great democratic heritage and secularism of this country seems to be slacking off. This really seems to be a great moment of unity—an absolute cooperation between the ruling party and the opposition to keep the state apparatus intact. Why not? After all the proponents of the Hindu Rashtra has been quite accommodative. It has not discriminated while sending invitation to the parliamentary parties for the Ram Mandir inauguration. Some might have decided to play “radical”

with minor subversive pretensions of declining the invitation and criticizing the event “in a democratic manner”. After all, India is the mother of democracy. Only a terrorist, anti-national can deny it.

While our country is marching ahead in a grandiose funeral march, it is important to remember that this absolute hegemony of the Brahmanical Hindutva did not begin from BJP’s electoral victory in 2014. Rather, the so-called opposition, left or liberal have directly or indirectly preserved and nurtured the majoritarian sentiment to secure their votes. Who opened the locks of the Babri and let the VHP do the foundation stone laying ceremony in 1985? Rajiv Gandhi. He was termed to be the “second most prominent karsevak” in the Ayodhya dispute. The Congress is not at all uncomfortable regarding this role. From recitals of the Hanuman Chalisa, sending 11 silver bricks for the foundation of Ram Temple, turning Twitter handles saffron and crediting former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for deciding to unlock the Babri Masjid in 1985, Madhya Pradesh Congress leaders did everything in their power to prove their affection for this Hindutva hegemony. Digvijay Singh even claimed that the original foundation ceremony has already been done during Rajiv’s time. They are now competing to prove how their brand of Brahmanism was better than the BJP’s and how the credit of Ram Temple actually belongs to them.

Uddhav Thackeray has been very direct in his approach saying that the “Congress’ soul is Hindu and it should attend the Ram Temple ceremony if invited.” Kejriwal has also been very honest about how AAP government is inspired by the ideals of Lord Ram. In fact, in 2021, he had already taken out a Tiranga Yatra (national flag march) to pay homage to Ram Lalla at Ayodhya. Sadly, even wire.in has not spared to criticize how he has been normalizing Hindutva. It seems his liberal friends are distancing away. Samajwadi Party has also been quite transparent. The party secretary and chief spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary said: “The temple has been built in accordance with the decision of the Supreme Court. Had the Samajwadi

Party been in government, we would have got the temple built.” A large hoarding has also been put up outside the party headquarters in Lucknow welcoming Prabhu Shri Ram with a large picture of the Ram Mandir, Ram and Akhilesh Yadav.

The CPIM just like every other parliamentary party accepted the Supreme Court’s verdict and almost upheld the SC’s decision in making the Ram Janmabhoomi Teertha Kshetra Trust responsible for the supervision of the construction. Then it protested against the Modi’s participation in the foundation ceremony. The announcement of the trust was made by Modi on 5th February, 2020. How does this make the trust a non-state sponsored body? And above everything, how is the verdict a decisive moment of justice when it in order to appease the majoritarian sentiment, has trivialized and justified the exemplarily criminal act of demolition, land grab and vandalism? Even though the SC judgment termed the demolition of the Babri to be a crime, it rewarded the perpetrators of the crime with exclusive access to the expropriated land. Is this a clear capitulation of the CPIM to the agenda of state sponsored Hindutva? Or is it just trying to make a fool out of the people? From the beginning CPIM demanded that the Babri issue can only be solved by the Supreme Court and appealed everyone to keep their faith intact on the judicial verdict. Even on November 9, 2019, after the verdict was announced, CPIM’s Politbureau statement read:

“By this order... the Supreme Court has sought to end the dispute which has been utilized by the communal forces and resulted in large-scale violence and loss of lives.”

A great sigh of relief! The party did not slam the verdict, like it did regarding the Supreme Court’s verdict on article 370 calling it a “Disturbing Verdict”. Clearly the Ayodhya verdict is not much of a disturbing one for CPIM. It’s just a verdict with certain “questionable premises” and the Ram Mandir inauguration is bad because religion is being politicized and Mr. Modi is being a little mischievous with it.

Outside the parliamentary clown show, there have been liberals who have highly condemned the act of December 6, 1992. And branded the razing of the mosque to symbolize 'dismantling the Indian secularism and pluralism.' Limiting the Babri issue to an annual mourning day of December 6, they chose to remain outspoken from their ivory tower. But once after 2014, the BJP government started accelerating the frenzy for the Ram Mandir, the liberals started preaching peace. From "how grave an injustice has been committed in 1992", the narrative mellowed down to "why not build schools and hospitals?" This was the best contribution of the liberals into this discourse. Once it became clear that the BJP government is going to get the Ram Mandir constructed and the SC verdict will hardly challenge the frenzied atmosphere all around, the liberals started swinging in various directions. The burden of this 'ideal solution' of building schools and hospital on the land began to be imposed upon the Muslims. Since the Hindus were incorrigible and mischievous children, the Muslims should play the role of the calm, wise grandfather and pardon them and do the ideal on their part. It did not take much time for the demand to turn "build the Ram Mandir but also build hospitals and schools in Ayodhya". So, Ram Mandir is fine, it is going to be there by hook or by crook. But the Muslim needs to prove their secularism at this juncture. Actually, this test of sacrifice and submission begins from now. The VHP and RSS have declared their consecutive plans of demolishing various mosques around the country and the Muslims have to prove their allegiance to the nation and ruling regime every time.

Presently, the preparation for the demolition of the Sunehri Bagh Mosque is going on and the fate of Kashi Gyanvapi Mosque is also quite predictable. Why could the parliamentary parties of a country, that has been "independent" for over 75 years, not avert this conquest of Brahmanical Hindutva? It seems they all have been pernicious regarding the interest of the Indian masses. They have been hand-

in-gloves with the Hindutva hegemony that has its material foundations in the semi-feudal semi-colonial mode of production persisting in India. In this absolute frenzy and insane moment of fascist mass hysteria, we forget that in 1993, NarasimhaRao promised to rebuild the Babri Masjid. But it was just another lie. Even the so-called Left and democrats have completely ignored this historic promise and have never made it clear what "justice" they demand regarding the Babri demolition. The parliamentary lefts have historically helped in maintaining the status-quo of the Hindutva hegemony in the Indian society for its bankrupt vote bank politics. The inauguration of the Ram Mandir will be the curtain-raiser to the Hindu Rastra Bharat. The temple will embody the brutal domination and massacre of thousands of innocent lives, the spineless opportunism and capitulation of the so called 'Left' in mainstream parliamentary politics and the great betrayal of the ruling class against the peasants and workers of India. The Ayodhya Ram Mandir, which the BJP is propagating as the 'national temple' will be the symbol of the futility of a frivolous and fake parliamentary democracy and the brutal hegemony and triumph of Brahmanical Hindutva fascism. ◆



Swachh Bharat! Whither Transparency?

Srijan Dutta

The Prime Minister of our country launched the 'Swachh Bharat Mission' immediately after coming to power. Critics say that Modi's initiation of this scheme on the birth anniversary of Gandhi is a sham and the real motive behind this move is to wash off Gandhi's blood from the hands of the BJP, which is the political wing of the RSS. One must take note of the fact that many individuals who worship Nathuram Godse for assassinating Gandhi are a part of Modi's cabinet of ministers and are enjoying the authority entrusted to them. Thus, critics are quite skeptical of the 'democracy' that exists in India under Modi's regime. The image of Narendra Modi himself holding a broom in his hands is often fed to us through advertisements of the Swachh Bharat Mission and leaders of different ranks of his party claim that this mission is centered on the conviction of building a new India free of corruption. We often get to hear Suvendu Adhikari, the poster boy of BJP-RSS in West Bengal, remarking that a certain leader or other from the current ruling party in the state is about to go to jail. We even get to see Sukanta Majumdar, who was known to be a crybaby, making big claims similar to that of Suvendu Adhikari, after becoming the BJP's president in the state. These politicians remind us of the 'trickster fox' from the fables though this one is not of Aesop's but the 'fable of Indian democracy'. The wails of democracy can be heard time and again in Modi's new India. After BJP's shameful defeat in the last Bidhan Sabha elections, the party's leaders have failed to turn the tables for themselves in the state solely based on their organisational strength. Thus, they have resorted to operating as the opposition by hiding behind central agencies such as the CBI-ED-IT-NIA. These agencies are functioning at the whims of the BJP. The preparation of charge sheets, production of witnesses, execution of arrests, and rejection of bail pleas— everything is going on as per the BJP's plan. We even get to witness erstwhile TMC leaders, who have been recorded on tape accepting bribes greedily during the 'Narada' sting operation and later joined the BJP to get saved, giving speeches against corruption and participating in talk shows on the subject. This

is the true farce of time. The BJP had come to power in 2014 by raising anti-corruption slogans against the Congress. Undoubtedly, the Congress government was soaked in corruption from head to toe at that time and the BJP had capitalised on this issue to pursue its electoral goals. Narendra Modi owes credit to a bunch of people ranging from Anna Hazare to Ajit Doval for launching a strong anti-corruption campaign that facilitated the BJP's victory in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. However, Arvind Kejriwal continues to function as an opposition to the BJP because of his political aspirations. But, this opposition is subjected to the test of time. The BJP raises corruption-related allegations against the TMC and other opposition parties very often. From Akhilesh to Abhisekh, or be it Arvind, every opposition leader is being summoned by the CBI-ED, and these summons are all politically motivated by the BJP. Some of the faces of the opposition are also ending up in jail like Partha-Balu-Anubroto or Manish Sisodia. Now, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal has started to express a new concern that the BJP is plotting to send him and the West Bengal CM to jail before the upcoming elections. The BJP is trying to establish itself as the embodiment of Swachhata by claiming to be the only political party that is free from corruption. The continuing arrest of big opposition leaders is a part of this plan. But, where is the transparency concerning the policy that is being executed by the BJP? In reality, the opposition parties are indulging in corrupt practices in an old-school manner but the BJP has institutionalised corruption in India by maintaining balance while surfing on the wave of globalisation. From where do the political parties acquire funds? What is the source of their income? The opinion of all governments is that the common public is not entitled to know the answers to such questions. Why are the servants of the common public afraid of telling the common public about their source of income? Is this the true nature of their transparency? Is it a case of the 'Pandora's Box' containing evil secrets? Are the masses not supposed to know what tactics these politicians have adopted to amass so much wealth? The answers to these

questions are already known to us. We all know that whenever someone asks for an explanation regarding Adani's massive growth, it invokes the wrath of BJP leaders. It is clear from the recent attacks on Rahul Gandhi and Mahua Moitra by the BJP.

The reality is that there has been a 'globalisation of corruption' in this age of globalisation. The BJP, which is funded by the Banias, has internalised this truth the best. Hence, we will not see BJP leaders caught taking bribes like Madan Mitra on camera as part of sting operations by journalists. Probably, a huge amount of black money will not be recovered from the houses of BJP leaders like it was found in the case of Partha. So what? Is wearing the veil of swachhata enough to prove that BJP leaders do not indulge in corruption? The conscious public will base its judgement on scrutinising the policies that are being pursued by the BJP. Speeches are not enough to fool the conscious public. What does the BJP's policy say? Is the BJP devising any new policy that would help uproot corruption that is deeply embedded in Indian society? The answer is no. In reality, the BJP is walking in the opposite direction. Their true intention is to spread and deepen the roots of corruption in India. They are trying to create an institutional framework where corruption can flourish. The BJP conducts its loot by relying on electoral bonds. What is an electoral bond? If an industrialist wishes to donate a few crores of rupees to a particular political party through electoral bonds, then in that case, there would be no record of the transaction between the individual donor and the political party at the receiving end. Who is giving how much money and for what purpose would also remain a secret? The terms of the transaction would also be kept secret. Since, this bond-based transaction would take place through the State Bank of India, whose 90% shares are owned by the Government of India, the Central government will only have knowledge of these transactions between individual donors and different political parties. However, the BJP, which is currently in power at the centre, will only get to enjoy the advantage of keeping

information related to the between it and its patrons a secret. There is no doubt that nowadays, bribes are also taking place through these bonds, and this is what we have previously referred to as institutional corruption. In 2017, Arun Jaitley, the then finance minister from the BJP introduced this system of bonds. No matter what figure of money is being paid through these bonds, be it in the thousands, lakhs, or crores, the Central Reserve Bank has no control over them. One can purchase these bonds, sell them to another person, and that second person can again hand them over to a political party. This is the reason why the Central Reserve Bank had opposed the use of these bonds. They had raised concerns related to an increase in money laundering practices because of the use of these bonds. On 25 March 2019, the Election Commission also remarked that bond-based fund acquisition would destroy the existing transparency related to the raising of electoral funds.

The BJP did not stop with the introduction of electoral bonds. In the name of transparent transactions, it has given a free hand to all the political parties to carry out unrestricted loot. The situation has turned out to be a golden ticket for the BJP. To conduct corrupt activities structurally, they have made amendments to four laws.

1. They have amended the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRM) 2010. Earlier, under this act, no foreign company could donate money to any Indian political party. (However, foreign companies used to send monetary donations to different Indian political parties before the amendment as well. Such transactions were executed by circulating the money through a bunch of intermediaries until they finally reached the particular Indian political party that was supposed to be on the receiving end; by securing such transactions foreign companies used to control the different ruling parties in India.) After the BJP came to power in 2014, it removed the intermediaries and paved the way for Indian parties to directly

receive monetary donations from foreign companies! The only transparency that was ensured by this move was the 'transparency of loot'. The new amendment opened doors for Indian political parties to receive monetary donations from foreign companies by declaring that any company that had some kind of business relation with India from the time of the amendment would be allowed to financially aid Indian ruling parties.

2. Income Tax Act 1961 — earlier, according to this law, political parties had to keep a mention of the source of the monetary donations received by them and maintain a proper record of these transactions. After the new amendment, such obligations no longer exist.
3. The Representative of People Act 1959 has also been amended. Earlier, it was mandatory to publish a public record of a monetary donation that exceeded 20,000 rupees. Under the amended version of this law, no matter what amount of money is acquired through bonds, publishing an account of the transaction is not mandatory.
4. Under Narendra Modi's regime, the Company Act 2013 has also been amended. Earlier, a company could donate up to 7.5% of its net profit to a political party. This upper limit was withdrawn after the amendment of this law.

What is the consequence of these amendments? To elaborate on this matter, we will refer to what S. Y. Qureshi, the ex-election commissioner had said on behalf of the Centre for Media Studies in 2019. He had said that in 2014, different political parties had officially spent a sum of 30,000 crores in total. In 2019, this amount became double, i.e., 60,000 crores. In the latter case, BJP alone had spent 24,750 crores. But, it is to be noted that in 1998, they could only spend 1,800 crores. Look how exponentially the accumulated

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A *country* worth fighting for.

Satyaki Majumdar

On the fifth of August, 2023, two Niyamgiri Suraksha Samiti activists, Krushna Sikaka and Bari Sikaka were forcibly abducted from LanjigarhHaat in the Kalahandi district of Odisha by police in plain clothes. The next day, a FIR was lodged against them and seven others, containing charges under the UAPA 1967 and the IPC. The ostensible offense stated in the charge sheet – organizing public opinion against the state. On the twenty first of August, protesting farmers were lathicharged in Chandigarh, resulting in an elderly farmer Pritam Singh's death. The reason for the lathicharge – voicing the democratic rights of the farmers, demanding compensation from the government for agricultural damages and loss of life and home during the summer floods. Since the morning of the fifth of September, the NIA has been raiding the offices of Bhagat Singh Students Morcha (BSM) in Benaras Hindu University, as well as the homes of PUCL activists Seema Azad, Viswavijay, Soni Azad, Ritesh Vidyarthi, and Manish Azad in Allahabad. Three of them were detained without any disclosure of whereabouts by the NIA. BSM students' phones and laptops were seized without warrant while they were forcefully interrogated by the NIA. In Deoria district of Uttar Pradesh, activist Rajesh's house was raided, in a similar manner.

The three instances mentioned above occurred in different states with different social, economic, and political backgrounds, but there is one thing that

STOP WAR ON PEOPLE

ties them together. They are all instances of state repression on political workers, who are associated with various people's movements against state-endorsed corporate loot and destruction. In Odisha, the environmental inviolability of Niyamgiri is beyond dispute, and yet the central government is far more interested in the financial benefits it may obtain from Vedanta, with whom it had signed an agreement in 2003. The verdict of the Supreme Court on this issue, clearly highlights the violations committed by Odisha Mining Corporation in collaboration with Vedanta. There is no question – peoples' land may not be illegally, coercively and forcefully occupied by corporate entities, displacing the inhabitants, even with the sanction of the government. But ten years after the 2013 verdict, in 2023, Niyamgiri residents still register the Odisha government's collusion with Vedanta, in hiring goons who abduct activists from the area, as well as Odisha police, who repeatedly try to destroy protest by wanton application of the draconian UAPA. Nowhere is the consent of the people respected. Particularly in Niyamgiri, there is a resounding, repeated violation of consent. This is what the Dongria Kondh have been fighting against – the violation of their lives, livelihoods and environment, their customary practices and their right to preserve and protect and practice their own culture.

In Punjab and Haryana, the approach of both governments is vehemently anti-people – for Haryana particularly, a litany of state-sponsored offenses against the people may be recalled (one may merely remember the farmers' protests which occupied the national capital for an entire year) – and it results in state-directed police aggression against farmers and repeated deaths in consequence. The attacks on human rights workers across the country by the NIA demonstrates that the central government has no wish to uphold human rights, even though they are enshrined in the constitution. The central government's majoritarian stance and anti-people

policies are thus granted primacy over the right to life with dignity, the right to freedom of speech and expression, and the right to peaceful assembly.

Set against a context where BJP MPs introduce private members' bills in the Lok Sabha seeking to change the Preamble, whose contents and suggested changes undermine the 'basic structure' of the Constitution, these incidents do not appear to be isolated, but part of a larger pattern of state terror.

The attacks on media houses not affiliated with the state have been going on for a while now. On the third of October, however, they assumed a different stature. The homes of prominent journalists and human rights activists associated with Newsclick, an online news portal, were raided by the Delhi police special cell, across more than 30 locations simultaneously. Prabir Purakayastha, the editor and Amit Chakravarty, the HR head of Newsclick were arrested under the UAPA, in addition to Sections 153A and 120B of the IPC. The others targeted in this fabrication are journalists Abhisar Sharma, Bhasha Singh, Subodh Verma, Urmilesh, Paranjay Guha Thakurta and Auninyo Chakravarty apart from writer Githa Hariharan, historian Sohail Hashmi and comedian Sanjay Rajaura.

This pattern transcends the Hindi heartland – and the NIA detains anybody it pleases to do so, identifying dissenting voices and targeting them specifically with the formulaic excuse of 'Maoist links'. On the second of October in Telangana, Chandra Narasimhulu of the PKS was arrested under UAPA. In Jharkhand, 64 organisations were put on a NIA list of suspects with 'Maoist links'. Movements against casteist oppression, against depredation on Adivasis' lives, against human rights and civil liberties violations are relentlessly under attack by a repressive state apparatus that believes casteist oppression is a way of life, as it is in Uttar Pradesh, that believes Adivasis should be massacred en masse in Chattisgarh for the benefit of the friendly MNC bankrolling the election

budget. In Bihar, movements campaigning for protection of Adivasi land are brutally cracked down upon. In Chattisgarh's Bastar district, activists like Soni Sori and Himangshu Kumar are detained by the NIA for days on end, only to be released on the condition that they remain silent about Adani.

In this pattern, like music, there is a crescendo. We heard it before, during the 2019 elections, when the government performed its first large-scale UAPA experiment through the Elgar Parishad case. One of the accused, Stan Swamy was killed by this government in prison. His offence – working with the Adivasi people on issues pertaining to land rights. The government wants to send a very clear message – there is no scope for dissent without opening yourself up to the possibility of formulaic application of UAPA and NIA raids. Unfortunately, this message bears so many similarities at so many levels with historically established fascist regimes that one can safely say that the exercise of democracy in India is only electoral. Without the right to recall, Indian citizens are forced to endure all oppressions by the state, without recourse to law. We are witnessing this again, in the buildup to the 2024 elections.

On the ninth of December, in Chattisgarh, Orcha Jan Andolan activists TirumalLakhma Koram and Ranu Podyam were arrested while returning from an event marking the anniversary of the Bechaghat movement. On the same day, Tirumal Shankar Kashyap and TirumalSamlu Koram of the Adivasi Adhikar Bachao Manch were arrested in Narayanpur. This is against the backdrop of brutal state repression by the District Reserve Guards, on the Orcha Jan Andolan in Narayanpur which campaigns against corporate mining and militarization through paramilitary camps. None of the state's interventions in the area have taken permission from the respective Gram Panchayats, as mandated under PESA. Several of the DRG members are ex- Salwa Judum SPOs. It

is well known how Salwa Judum unleashed terror upon the people at the behest of the state from 2005 till its disbanding in 2012. Forced surrenders, fake arrests and mass arrests are some formulaic strategies devised by the state for this purpose, to behead mass movements as part of Operation Samadhan – Prahar.

On the eighteenth of November, in Telangana, Dr. M.F. Gopinath, Gade InnaiahJanjerla Suresh and Gadicherla Srinivas were arrested, again through application of UAPA. On the twenty second of November, a march by twenty thousand slum dwellers in Bhubaneshwar, Odisha, was severely cracked down upon by Odisha police. Jayadev Nayak, Pramila and many other activists were arrested under UAPA. On the twenty seventh of November, seven students from Sher-e-Kashmir University, Srinagar, were arrested under UAPA for allegedly celebrating the Indian team's loss in the finals of the cricket World Cup. Social media updates protesting the brutality of the Israeli attack on Palestine are met with application of UAPA.

But why this pattern at all? Why does the mighty Indian state need to implement UAPA to brutally crackdown on dissent in the name of curbing antinational behavior? Why should the Indian state have anything to fear at all? Perhaps we hit nearer the mark, it is fear that drives this brutal state oppression. Fear of collective opinion, particularly organized dissident opinion, motivates the government to act in a 'preventive detention' format and levy unnumbered violations against the people. One is reminded of the Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi and the nationwide human rights violations that followed. It does not seem remiss that the present prime minister, who most closely resembles Mrs. Gandhi in their attitude towards dissent, should adopt similar procedures, without declaring a nationwide Emergency. On the contrary, the democratic necessity of an Opposition is waived aside, and changes to the IPC, CrPC and CPC are instituted

unilaterally without opposition MPs present in the Lok Sabha. The Nyay Sanhita, Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Sakshya Sanhita enforce sweeping changes to the procedure of law and justice. Just as in UAPA, where the accused is considered guilty to begin with, flouting all the basic tenets of law, likewise, the state has embarked on a constitutional procedure of undermining the constitution, to make it easier to arrest and detain and torture and kill countless dissidents until not one dissenting voice remains. Then and only then will the state's ideal vision come to be. Amrit Mahotsav and Amrit Kaal and Mandir notwithstanding, the poorest and most vulnerable people of India are under the greatest amount of attack by the state. And all who raise their pens to write are, in the Prime Minister's own words, more dangerous than those wielding guns. One can only imagine the fate awaiting dissident writers.

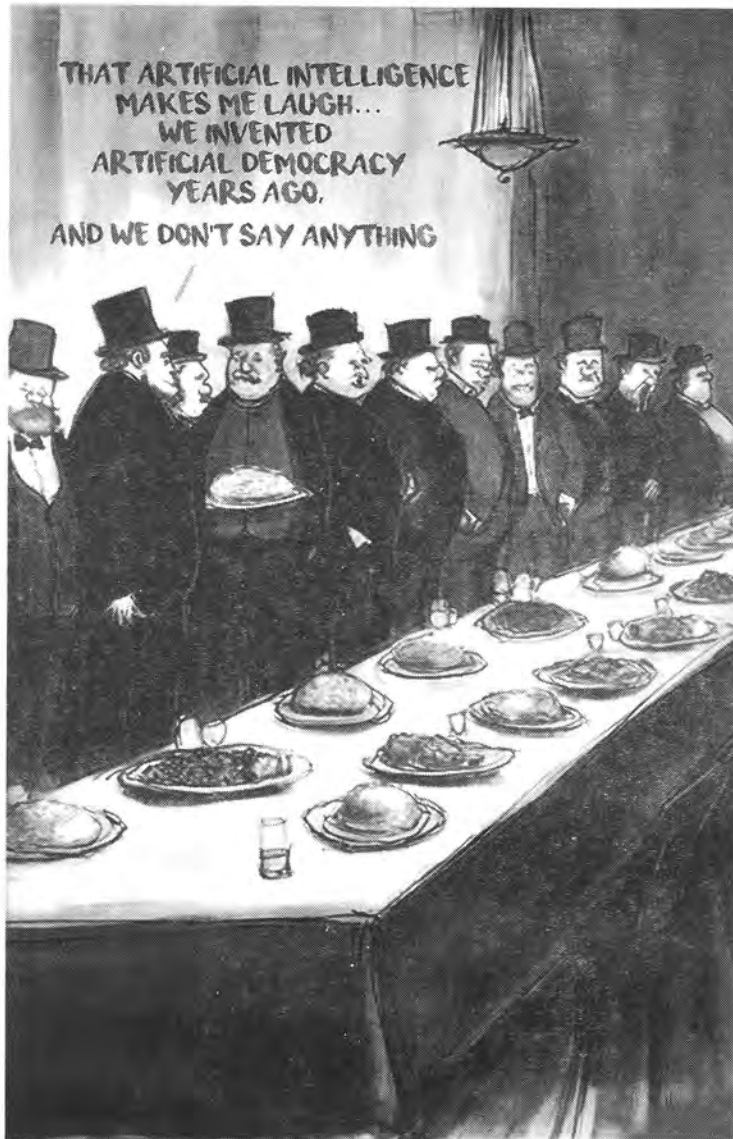
In these times, it becomes even more important to pay closer attention to our rights, to be more mindful of the qualifications of a fascist state, and to register dissent, not merely for one's own sake, but for the sake of all who are alive, and who are yet to come. If democracy is worth fighting for, worth preserving, the onus is on us, who are already liable to be deemed antinational and heckled at every turn, to fight for it. It is not unseemly that we should have to do so. ◆

Swachh Bharat!

Continued after page 20

funds in the hands of different political parties have increased in such a short period. If anybody questions such practices then one will be labelled as a 'naxal with a pen in hand' and would be put behind bars. Statistical data shows that the income of the Congress party has not increased much. In 2009, they had spent 8,000 crores, and in 2019, it has increased to just 8,250 crores. Thus, in the last 10 years, the income of the Congress party has only increased by 250 crore rupees. This is nothing in comparison to the cancerous growth which has been demonstrated by the BJP.

The Association for Democratic Reform (ADR) is one of the main non-governmental organisations that have filed a case aimed at making the sources of income earned by political parties known to the masses. According to their sources, in 2015, 66% of the income of the BJP, Congress, and 8 other national parties, had come from unknown origins. For the period between 2019-21, 71% of their income had come from unknown sources. Therefore, there is no transparency concerning the sources of income of different political parties in Swachh Bharat. Before the introduction of bonds, 54% of the income of regional political parties came from unknown sources. This increased to 64% after the introduction of bonds, thereby, demonstrating an increase of 10%. Here, 81% of what the national parties are acquiring through electoral bonds is going to the BJP. After all this, if a naked child asks the emperor, "Why are you not wearing clothes?"; then we should not be surprised if the emperor answers, "My clothes are 'transparent' enough for you to think that I am naked as well."



Over the last few years, an increasing number of scholars have argued that the impact of AI is repeating the patterns of colonial history. European colonialism, they say, was characterized by the violent capture of land, extraction of resources, and exploitation of people—for example, through slavery—for the economic enrichment of the conquering country. While it would diminish the depth of past traumas to say the AI industry is repeating this violence today, it is now using other, more insidious means to enrich the wealthy and powerful at the great expense of the poor.

— Karen Hao

Artificial intelligence is creating a new world order.

AI-

The Eyes of Imperialists?

Manish Azad

Since its creation, capitalism has sought for itself a situation in which no restrictions are imposed on it - where it can continue to work undisputedly with its real purpose and earn unrestricted profits. During the colonial period, Asia, Africa and Latin America were the areas where capitalism showed its naked and most cruel form. It pillaged the human and natural resources of these regions and took them to their own countries (Europe-America). In these cases too, capitalism had to abide by some rules and regulations. However currently, for capitalism and imperialism, the world of the Internet or the world of the cloud is one such area where there are no restrictive rules. Capitalism is present here in its most brutal form.

Former Google CEO Eric Schmidt, in an interview with the Washington Post in 2011 quoted INTEL CEO Andy Grove, and said that "High tech runs three times faster than normal business." "And the government runs three times slower than normal businesses. So we have a nine-times gap... And so what you want to do is you want to make sure that the government does not get in the way and slow things down." [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-leadership/googles-eric-schmidt-expounds-on-his-senate-testimony/2011/09/30/gIQAPyVgCL_story.html]. According to another interview by Eric Schmidt, "Technology moves so fast that governments really shouldn't try to regulate it because it will change too fast... We move much faster than any government." [<https://www.businessinsider.com/eric-schmidt-google-eg8-2011-5?IR=T>]

That's why Shoshana Zuboff in her book 'The Age of Surveillance Capitalism' compared companies like Google and Facebook with the 'Robber Barons' of last century and wrote, "These claims to lawless space are remarkably similar to those of the robber barons of an earlier century. Like the men at Google, the late nineteenth-century titans claimed undefended territory for their own interests, declared the righteousness of their self-authorising prerogatives, and defended their new capitalism

from democracy at any cost." [page- 105-6]

Former Greek finance minister and author Yannis Varoufakis famously referred to the Internet as "Cloud Empires". Multinational companies worth billions and trillions dollars like Google, Microsoft, Facebook, Apple everyday prepare the innumerable "ordinary" data generated in our daily life in their 'empires', make new models with these data and make "Artificial Intelligence" trend in various forms (machine learning).

This is the reason why the new slogan of today's imperialists is "Data is the new oil."

Before we get into details, let's take a quick look at what data actually is. And how did it become so important? Let's look at an example. Suppose that you made a list of useful things on paper before going to the market and upon returning, you tore that useless paper and threw it in the dustbin. The whole thing ends here. But if you make this list of your important things in an app like "Google Keep" instead of a piece of paper, then the story is different in this case. This very simple list of yours is merged with millions of other lists covered in Google Keep and many models are created by processing millions of such simple data. Based on these models, the "consumer behaviour" of ordinary consumers like us (and even special people) is estimated and then sold to a third party app.

At first, you were exercising your two rights. The first is the "right to own" and the second is the "right to be forgotten" (when you tear up your list and throw it in the dustbin). But Google Keep in the second instance took away these two rights from you without informing you.

The story doesn't end here, Google has been profiting from our private data without informing us. And the companies that buy this information ('customer behaviour prediction model') (e.g. Reliance Fresh) will get a big advantage in business. Thus, the small businesses will easily go out of the market because they wouldn't have access to this crucial private information. As a result, corporate giants will enjoy exclusive rights and single-handedly

capture the market. On one hand, monopoly will lead to large scale unemployment and on the other hand, the concentration of wealth will continue to increase. And with this wealth, it will be easier for them to influence the politics of the country.

Also through 'Customer behaviour prediction models', we will get 'targeted ads' and we will be trapped in this model. That is, it will try to change our daily habits so that we remain 'good customers'. Companies will also do our 'behaviour modification' based on our 'behaviour surplus'. Although the example here is given in the 'future tense', it is actually happening at a large scale already.

Now you're adding to this your other online activities such as; how many times you have Googled something, how many websites you have visited (according to an estimate, if you go to 100 websites, then at least 7 thousand cookies are stored on your computer or phone and about 80 percent of them are 'third party cookies', which have nothing to do with the website you have visited), what orders you have made, how many times you have made online payments, how many times you have used tools like Alexa, how many times you have taken selfies, how many times you have gone to Facebook/Instagram, how many times you have used WhatsApp, how many questions you have asked questions to ChatGPT and how many times you have corrected it. And if you are wearing a smartwatch, then personal information like your heart rate and sleep pattern, i.e. thousands of information are born in 24 hours. Some of the biggest companies in the world like Google, FB, Microsoft and Apple have control over this information created by you, just like the capitalists have control over the things made by the workers in a factory. It is just like Adani getting coal mines almost free of cost and is making immense profit by selling them.

We are also a social and political group besides being consumers. That's why our 'personal data' is collected through 'social coaching' and our 'personal/community profiling' is also done. The buyers are not the capitalist companies, but

the government. On the basis of these profiles, political parties campaign for votes targeting people exclusively (micro-targeted). We have seen the example of the infamous Cambridge Analytica. Using billions of pieces of Facebook data, Cambridge Analytica profiled US voters and built many models based on that and helped Trump's campaign strategy by influencing the US public in the wrong way. The role of Cambridge Analytica has also been proved in the Indian elections [<https://theprint.in/politics/exclusive-inside-story-cambridge-analytica-actually-india/44012/>].

Hence, it has made it very easy to fake elections in the future as well. And to hack an election is to hack democracy. Hacking has already begun on a large scale. It is also being used by the government to conduct secret surveillance on the people of the country. According to Pentland, the author of 'Social Physics', through a data-driven mathematical model, we can learn about people's social behaviour in advance and make strategies accordingly. This means, these companies together with the reactionary government are trying to turn the society into an aquarium, where every movement of every fish can be monitored. Shoshana Zuboff described the relationship between Google and the NSA as "NSA paid Google for a search appliance capable of searching 15 million documents in twenty-four languages.....In 2003 Google also began customising its search engine under special contact with the CIA for its Interlink Management Office." ["The Age of Surveillance Capitalism", p-117]

"Data colonialism is, in essence, an emerging order for the appropriation of human life so that data can be continuously extracted from it for profit. This extraction is operationalized via data relations, ways of interacting with each other and with the world facilitated by digital tools. Through data relations, human life is not only annexed to capitalism but also becomes subject to continuous monitoring and surveillance. The result is to undermine the autonomy of human life in a fundamental way that threatens the very basis of freedom, which is exactly

the value that advocates of capitalism extol.”(from the introduction of the book).

Industrial capitalism used to profit from the exploitation of natural and human labour. Now, along with these two, another new element has been added - the person's entire emotional being i.e. the person themselves. Just as capitalists make profits while sleeping, people make data for companies like Google and Facebook on their phones lying next to them while sleeping. And just as industrial capitalism has destroyed nature, this 'new capitalism' is destroying human nature through behaviour modification. Millions of AI are being created based on this huge data-flow.

In the last few days, AI has suddenly become the centre of discussion when some people associated with this industry claimed that AI will destroy human society in the future. In this context, Melanie Mitchell's Munk Debate [<https://youtu.be/144uOfr4SYA>], the author of 'Artificial Intelligence [A Guide for Thinking Humans]', is correct, that the rumours of the destruction of the world through AI are actually aimed at diverting people's attention from its real catastrophe.

Just like this, the talk of AI being sentient, even if it comes from scientists, is really nothing more than just sci-fi. Red eyes of 'HAL 9000' (2001: A Space Odyssey) are actually the eyes of imperialists, not computers, for which AI experts are working day and night.

Before discussing the functioning of AI, let us know how it is different from all its previous technologies. In fact, AI works based on the basic principles of machine learning. That is, among all the inventions so far, the first invention which is improving itself every moment. And that's based on the constant flow of data. Machine learning is just a metaphor. We need to understand that machines don't learn. It is a pleasure to learn and, to some extent, an introduction to the very living things of animals. The machine is constantly upgrading itself based on man-made algorithms and the data flow sent by humans. It can never go beyond algorithms and data. Just as it is

wrong to call the Higgs-Boson particle a God particle, it is wrong to use the term machine learning.

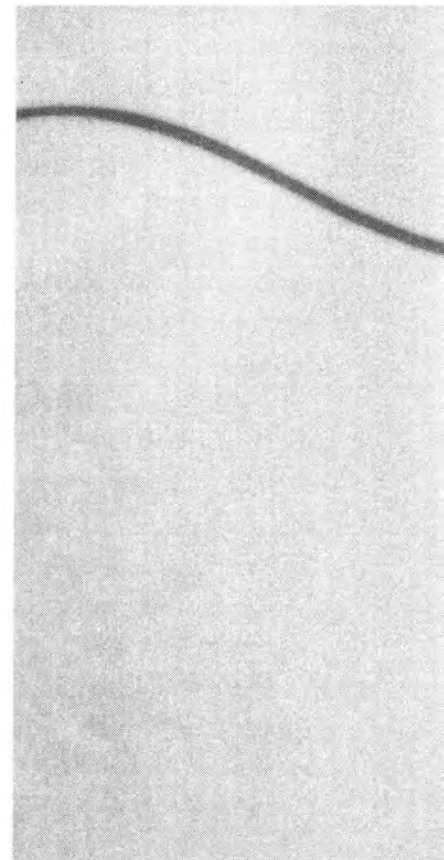
In her book 'Weapons of Math Destruction', Cathy O'Neill explored multiple AI models. Let us take an example from there. An AI in the 'recidivism model' works with the help of judges to punish or not punish criminals and increase or decrease their sentences in many states of America. Let's see how it works. Let's say a young black man named 'Martin Bay' is arrested, approaches a judge for bail. The judge will take the help of AI to look for the data of this young man. What will it get?

“1. Martin Bay's earnings.

2. Martin lives in a slum area where crime is relatively high.

3. Martin's education is very limited. And most importantly, List of any of Martin's friends, neighbours, or family members who have a history of crime.”

In addition, in the complex algorithm of AI, layer by layer, all such information will be recorded,



like in which areas more crimes are committed or which class of people commit more crimes. The important thing here is that this data will not contain the information that Martin is black-skinned. Therefore, it is claimed that AI is free from all forms of prejudice; here Martin can be prejudiced by the Judge due to him being black skinned. If you notice, the data flow that AI is getting makes it unnecessary to know that Martin is black-skinned.

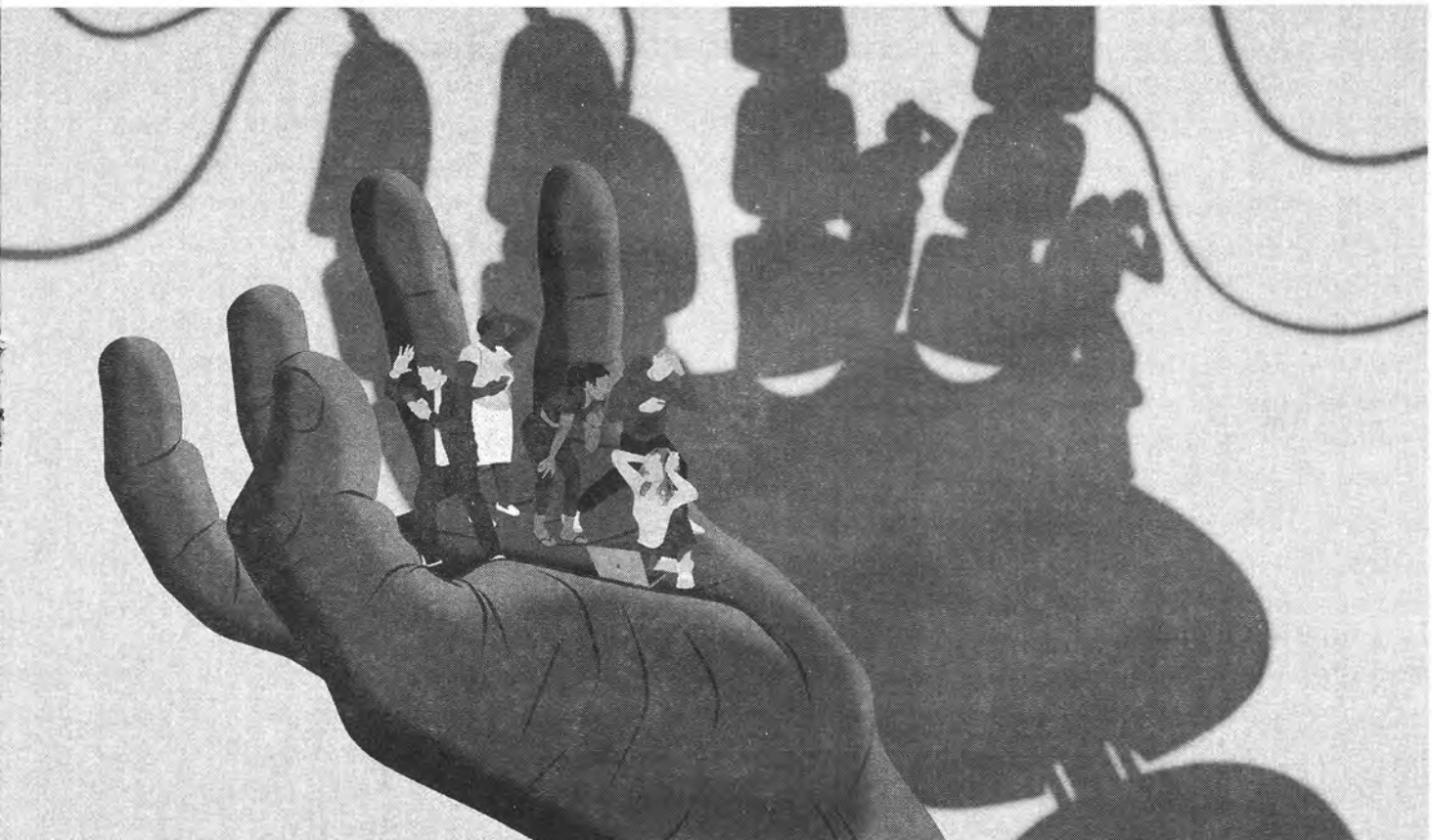
The current AI will process the above data in seconds and deny Martin bail or give him a heavy penalty. But the case doesn't end there. The denial of Martin's bail or the enhancement of his sentence is also data, and immediately that particular data becomes part of the AI along with the data flow. And when the case of an unemployed black-skinned young man named George comes up, Martin's data will be useful against him. Cathy O'Neill calls this the 'Poisonous Feedback Loop'. If a white-skinned judge had to rule on George or Martin, there would

always be the possibility that his sentence would be commuted. But AI doesn't have a chance factor. If we take the help of philosophy here, we will see the importance of chance factor in a person's life. But that's not possible in the case of AI.

In the above example, place a white-skinned young man in place of Martin or George. This will make it clear that AI is far from eliminating the inequality or injustice present in the society; it cannot reduce them rather, AI increases them.

Comparing capitalism with vampires, Karl Marx said that it survives by sucking the labour of the workers. But this new capitalism, surrounded by AI, survives by swallowing up all the essence of human life.

This is exactly why the widespread opposition to AI's recidivism model in many parts of America has forced it to close. In fact, AI is always dependent on the past data (even if it was a second ago) and it follows that this pattern will be repeated again. But human life goes on by breaking this pattern.



‘OpenAI’, ‘ChatGPT’, which have spread rapidly recently, are no exception. Viney Kirpal, a former professor at IIT Bombay, wrote in *The Hindu*, “ChatGPT can put together known information but cannot ask new questions or find answers to those questions. Its limits are the limits of the team feeding the information on the platform.” [<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/its-only-search-not-research/article67165221.ece#:~:text=Assembly%20seats%20revised-,Research%20has%20no%20value%20if%20it%20only%20summarises%20known%20information,Research%20is%20not%20a%20joke>]

Experimenting thousands of AI, Cathy O’Neil said, “Nevertheless, many of these models encoded human prejudice, misunderstanding, and bias into the software systems that increasingly manage our lives. Like gods, these mathematical models were opaque, their workings invisible to all but the highest priests in their domain: mathematicians and computer scientists. Their verdicts, even when wrong or harmful, were beyond dispute or appeal. And they tended to punish the poor and the oppressed in our society, while making the rich richer.” [‘Weapons of Math Destruction’ 2% in EPUB format].

Comparing AI with ‘Human Intelligence’ and talking about ‘Alternative AI’, Cathy O’Neill has made a very important point that “Big Data processes codify the past. They don’t invent the future. Doing that requires moral imagination, and that’s something only humans can provide. We have to explicitly embed better values into our algorithms, creating Big Data models that follow our ethical lead. Sometimes that will mean putting fairness ahead of profit.” [81% in EPUB format].

In Plato’s philosophy, the ‘perfect form’ of this material world was in the Other world, as in the divine world. In the same language, it can be said that today’s AI model has the ‘perfect form’ of all the inequalities and injustices in the world. That’s why Meredith Broussard has written in her famous book ‘Artificial Unintelligence’, “One

of the red flags I want to raise in this book is a flawed assumption that I call technochauvinism. Technochauvinism is the belief that tech is always the solution.” [Artificial Intelligence, 3% in EPUB format]. Further explaining its class character in details she said, “We have a small, elite group of men who tend to overestimate their mathematical abilities, who have systematically excluded women and people of colour in favour of machines for centuries, who tend to want to make science fiction real, who have little regard for social convention, who don’t believe that social norms or rules apply to them, who have uneasy piles of government money sitting around, and who have adopted the ideological rhetoric of far-right libertarian anarcho-capitalists. What could possibly go wrong?” [‘Artificial Unintelligence’, 36% in EPUB format].

But today the governments and intellectuals of all the countries are finding solutions to all the problems in AI technology and turning the attention of the people away from social revolution and radical change. I remember one such story. A man was looking for something in the street light. When a passing policeman asked him what happened, he said he was looking for the keys to his house. The police asked him if his keys were there. He said, “No, but the light is here.”

Let us now turn to India. Information Technology, Internet, AI, Cloud Computing, Data-Mining, Quantum Computing - India’s position in these matters is abysmal. The truth is that after the advent of these technologies in the last twenty-five years, India has strengthened its semi-colonial relationship with imperialism. Like the old days, India is providing free data to companies like Google and Facebook and buying technology and various AI models from them at higher prices.

Today India is completely dependent on China for low-tech and America and other European countries for high-tech. Despite all the anti-China propaganda, the fact is that India’s trade relations with China are increasing day by day.

Many international companies are coming to India from places where there is a dispute between China and America and other European countries. On the basis of this, the government and its 'policy intellectuals' are claiming that India is going to make modern technology like mobile phones and memory / logic chips. But Raghuram Rajan, in an interview to Karan Thapar on 11 August 2023 [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4pd7BVJ5Vw>], made it clear that we are not making mobiles at all. We're just assembling it. And in various studies, it has been found that the value of assemblage is only 4-6 percent in the value chain of any product.

There are about 1 lakh start-ups working in India today. Most of them are imperialist investments and most of them are working at the basic level to collect data or create preliminary models based on this data and supply it to the imperialist powers.

Just like in the past, the ruling class of India is trying to strangle the common people at both economic and political levels with the help of imperialism and their modern technology. On March 16, 2020, an important story appeared on huffpost.com. Kumar Sambhav Srivastav wrote in it "The Narendra Modi government is in the final stages of creating an all-encompassing, auto-updating, searchable database to track every aspect of the lives of each of India's over 1.2 billion residents, previously undisclosed government documents reviewed by HuffPost India established." [https://www.huffpost.com/archive/in/entry/aadhaar-national-social-registry-database-modi_in_5e6f4d3cc5b6dda30fcd3462]

And it goes without saying that all this is being done through the seemingly innocuous Aadhaar. The recently passed 'The Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023' has made the data flow one way. This means, you cannot take any information from the government, but the government will have all the information about you. After this bill, the 'Right to Information Act' has lost its value.

Finally, it is important to talk about something crucial. That is the effect of AI on climate. Much has been written about e-waste. Also,

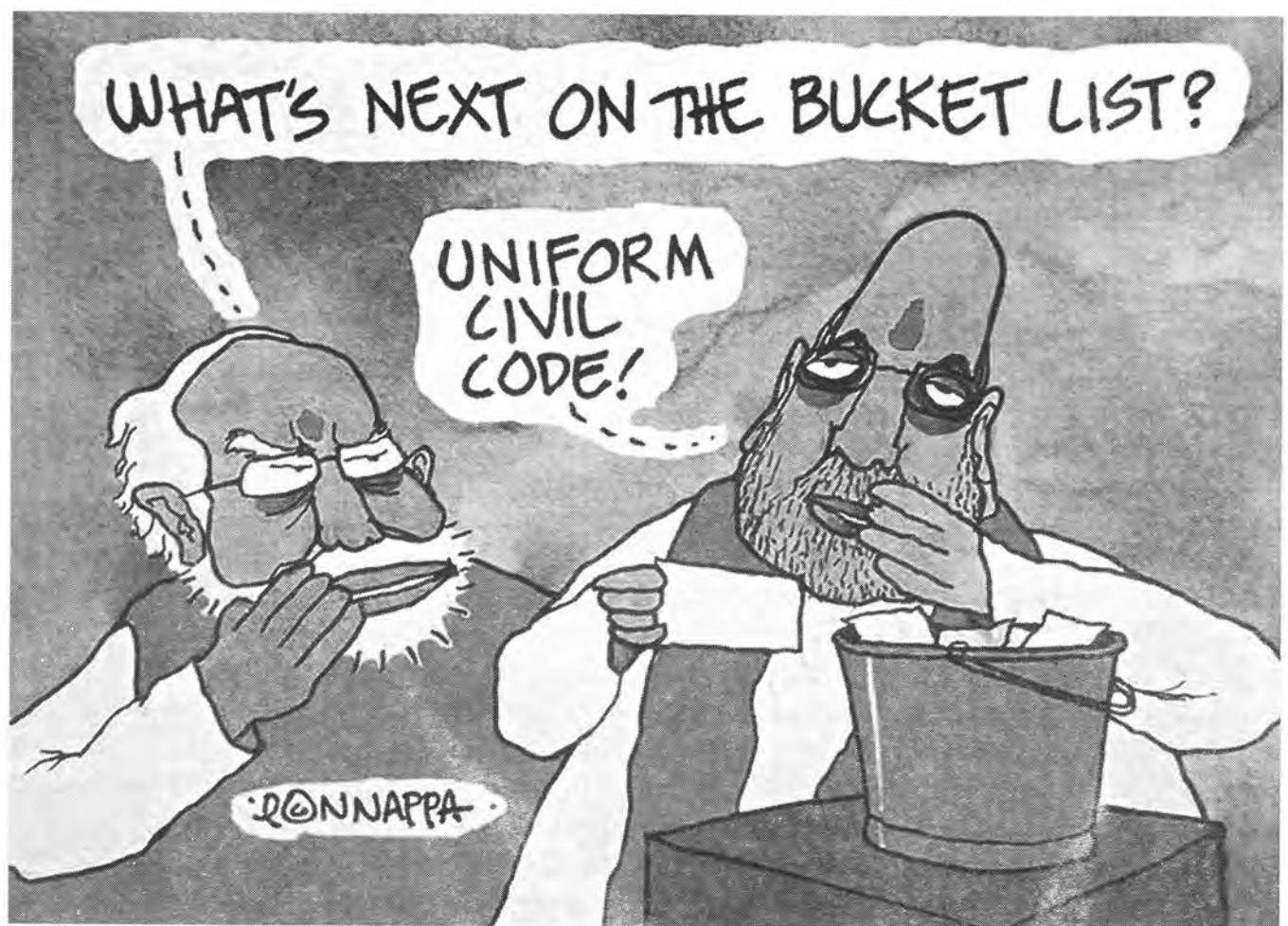
big data processing requires a lot of energy. After the arrival of the quantum computer, it will increase many times. No matter how we produce this energy, global warming will be very closely related to it. In addition, Google, Facebook and other multinational companies have laid their huge cable lines on the seabed of different countries. According to CSIS [Center for Strategic and International Studies], if these cable lines are measured in length, then it will be about 1.3 million kilometres long. About 95 percent of the inter-state data passes through these huge cable lines. Crossing this huge amount of data every second not only heats up a lot, but also cools the sea water. Imperialist countries and companies are using the vast ocean as their personal refrigerators at no cost. This is destroying the marine ecosystem.

What is interesting is that there are no scientific experiments or observations on this important issue. The obvious reason is that companies like Google or Facebook are influencing their interests by giving large amounts of funding to the testing organisations.

Karl Marx wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*: "Capitalism creates the world according to its reflection." After 200-300 years of capitalism, it seems that its image is complete. Now we are forced to live in 'The Dictatorship of No Alternatives'. Only by destroying this 'Dictatorship' can we create a new alternative - where we can use cutting-edge technology like AI for the benefit of the people.

Yann LeCun, an AI scientist working at Meta on the Munk Debate, claimed that an AI created by Facebook can capture and delete about 95 per cent of the hate comments on Facebook. But Facebook does not use this feature.

Shoshana Zuboff, author of *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, wrote: "In the conquest of nature, industrial capitalism's victims were mute. Those who would try to conquer human nature will find their intended victims full of voice, ready to name the danger and defeat it." (p-525). ◆



Uniform Civil Code:

A Brahminical Fascist Ploy to Subdue Minorities in the Guise of Gender Equality

Sanchita Mukharjee

India is a land of diversity based on ethnicity, caste, socio-cultural identity & religious beliefs of the people of this country. Accordingly, different communities of people have their own set of rules and practices related to marriage, divorce, maintenance after divorce, succession of property rights etc. Some of these communities have their rules codified, some do not. The issue of bringing uniformity in civil laws related to the aforementioned

aspects of life has been included in Article 44 of the Indian Constitution and is a part of the Directive Principles of State Policy. We find opposing views on this question of bringing uniformity raised at different points of time by different sections of the civil society and the parliamentary parties.

The issue of Uniform Civil Code (UCC) first made its appearance in the BJP's poll manifesto in 1996. Thereafter in each successive manifesto the issue re-appeared. If we glance through these documents, we get their justification for bringing UCC.

- In the 1996 manifesto, the issue of UCC appeared under the heading "Nari Shakti: Towards Empowerment".
- In the 1998 manifesto, the issue was mentioned under the heading "Nari Shakti: Empowerment of Women".
- In its 2004 manifesto, the UCC first appeared under the heading "Our Basic Mission and Commitments". In that manifesto, the party clearly stated that to end the legal validity of "regressive personal laws" and to achieve gender equality UCC must be enacted.
- In its 2009 manifesto, the BJP moved a step ahead and promised to set up a commission to draft a UCC.
- In its 2014 manifesto, it said, "BJP believes that there cannot be gender equality till such time India adopts a Uniform Civil Code".
- Finally, in its 2019 election manifesto, the argument behind the issue of UCC was the same as that of the previous manifesto.

Now the question naturally arises, can a party, guided out and out by Hindu Brahminical ideology, ever bring a civil code which genuinely guarantees family rights to the women of this country? 'Manusmriti', which BJP consider as their constitution, describes the role of a woman in a family as a mere servant of her husband and her only function is to give birth to a boy child as the sole successor of her husband's property. Apart from various misogynist comments of the BJP leaders, their out-and-out patriarchal mindset revealed

itself once again when the Party denied to consider marital rape as a form of rape; the argument pitched by them was that it would destroy the very institution of marriage.

Thus, it needs no further argument to conclude that be it 'women empowerment' or 'gender justice', the justifications put forward by the BJP party for bringing UCC are, in no way, related to their real intentions.

Now at this point of the discussion, keeping aside the question of the real intention of the Party behind this game plan of bringing the UCC, we will try to explore the complexities that would crop up with the passage of a UCC. For such a diverse society as India, when one thinks of a uniform civil code, which essentially means a single set of civil code for all the communities across the country, as BJP propagates the idea of 'One nation, one constitution', that will definitely be an imposition which will have different impacts on different communities. Here we will try to ascertain the impact that the UCC will have on different tribal communities as well as religious groups of people living in our country.

Tribal communities & the UCC

Under Article 244 of the Indian constitution, the Sixth Schedule was designated to protect and preserve the cultural identity of the indigenous and tribal groups living in the north-eastern states through the establishment of Autonomous District Councils and Regional District Councils. These district councils and regional councils have legislative competence to deal with the subjects like marriage, divorce, succession and inheritance as well as administration of justice. Now the fact is that, more than 220 different ethnic communities live in these north-eastern states and if a civil code with an obvious Hindu majoritarian essence is enacted, it will necessarily infringe upon the customary laws of these tribal groups.

Articles 371 A – 371 I of the Indian constitution contemplates a different treatment to the north-

eastern states of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh. As per article 371A, no Act of Parliament in respect of

1. religious or social practices of the Nagas,
2. Naga customary law & procedure,
3. administration of civil & criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law, and
4. ownership & transfer of land and its resources,

shall apply to the State of Nagaland, unless the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland, by a resolution so decides.

Articles 371 B-371 I offers similar exemptions to the other states in North-East.

But as soon as the UCC is imposed on these tribal communities, it will do away with the protections that they enjoy under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Consequently, these tribes of the North-east will not only lose their socio-cultural identity, but most importantly, their ownership rights over land and other natural resources will be threatened. To quote from the Report of the Law Commission of India, 2018, “Many of these exceptions entail the preservation of not only distinct family law systems, but also various other exceptions relating to other aspects of civil law. In Nagaland, women can now inherit self-acquired property even though some tribes are skeptical of women inheriting village land and then marrying outside their tribe.” In the same paper the Law Commission also writes, “... Garo and Khasi tribes of Meghalaya are matriarchate, that is, they follow a female line of descent and property is inherited by the youngest daughter.” Thus, it’s obvious that in the name of a uniform civil code, if the BJP Government can enforce a family law which goes against the tribal customary laws, then it will be an easier task to get hold of the tribal land and other resources. This whole issue of UCC will then undoubtedly be a major weapon in the hands of the Government to facilitate its Look-East policy. To quote Dr. Walter Fernandes, Director of North Eastern

Social Research Centre, Guwahati (Uniform Civil Code, Women, Class and the Tribes, Arunachal Times, June 28, 2023), “But in this debate (on UCC) are ignored the tribal customary laws that have not been codified like the personal laws but have evolved over centuries as intrinsic to the cultural, livelihood, social and political systems and identity of each tribe. A UCC is a threat to all of them and to tribal identity. This danger is equally visible in the demand of an RSS-backed organisation that tribal Christians be delisted from the schedule. That demand to deprive tribal Christians of their tribal status is only the first step in the effort to free their land from all protection under the law. Tribal Christians happen to be the majority in the Northeast where the Act East Policy needs plenty of land. Once they are delisted and their land is freed from legal protection, the next step will be to take it over, since it is not protected by the law.”

In its report on UCC published in 2018, the Law Commission pointed out that certain tribes and groups, such as the Khasis, Garo hill tribes of North Eastern India, and Nairs of Kerala who follow a matrilineal system, have expressed concerns that the UCC may impose patriarchal uniformity upon them.

On the other hand, the ruling government of Mizoram has already passed a resolution in the State Assembly on February 14, 2023, so that any current or future steps towards enacting UCC in India can be opposed.

In case of Meghalaya, Robert Kharjhrin, an advocate and activist stated, “Even among us, we are completely different, and the same applies to Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo tribes. This has been a topic of discussion since the day we became a part of the Indian Union. It is also the reason why the hill tribes are included in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which grants them the authority to enact laws regarding customs, including marriage, divorce, inheritance, succession, and adoption.” On the other hand, all three Chief Executive members of Meghalaya’s tribal councils have also decided to oppose the implementation of the UCC.

As far as Nagaland is concerned, Article 371A ensures the protection of social and religious practices, customary laws, and ownership of land and resources in the state. No parliamentary legislation concerning these matters can be applied to Nagaland without the approval of the Legislative Assembly through a resolution. According to an article published in India Today on July 1, 2023, “On June 30, the Nagaland Transparency Public Rights Advocacy & Direct-Action Org. (NTPRADO), an organization with over 3000 members across Nagaland, issued a stern warning to legislators. The group threatened severe actions if the 14th Nagaland Legislative Assembly (NLA) succumbs to external pressure and approves a bill in favour of the Uniform Civil Code.”

Apart from the North Eastern states, tribal communities in Jharkhand are also opposing UCC vehemently. Their leaders are organizing regular meetings and programs to spread awareness and organize people against the Universal Civil Code.

Durgawati Odeya, founder and head of the Central Sarna Sangam Committee, told recently, “We have lost our lands in the past, and the UCC has brought a new threat.” In fact, right from the 1700 till the first half of the 20th century, tribals of Jharkhand fought many battles against the British colonizers and all those had been centered on land rights. Consequently, the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act (CNTA) of 1908, the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act

(SPTA) of 1876 and Wilkinson’s Rule in 1837 all gave special provisions to the States’ 32 tribes. Later on, the Indian Constitution recognized those acts. Moreover, in a tribal society land is not a private entity, rather it is recognised as the property of the community. In Jharkhand, tribal society is patrilineal. So here land is divided among the men only, thereby keeping it within the same clan. However, in 2016, the BJP government headed by CM Raghubar Das introduced an ordinance seeking changes to CNTA and SPTA. Such amendments diluted the provisions of the Acts, thereby allowing for the sale of tribal land and facilitating its acquisition for “public interest projects” like infrastructure building. But because of strong protest from the tribals of the State, the then Governor refused to accept such amendments.

Thus, as far as the tribal communities of the country are concerned, the entire question of the Universal Civil Code has to be seen, apart from



endangering the cultural diversity of them, as a ploy to grab the tribal land and the resources underneath so far protected by the special provisions of Indian Constitution.

Religious groups, personal laws and UCC

In the beginning of this discussion, we have mentioned that in respect to certain civil matters like marriage, divorce, maintenance of a divorcee woman, inheritance and succession of property and adoption of a child, there are diverse laws applicable to different religious communities of people living in India. Historically, all such laws were based on religious beliefs of respective religious communities. As religion was the basis of such laws, feudal patriarchal values governed them. Such laws were basically meant to ensure the inheritance rights over private property for the male folk of the family; naturally laws on other civil matters like marriage, divorce, maintenance of a divorcee etc. were framed accordingly and all those relegated women to the servitude of their father, husband and sons. For example, Hindu Laws of inheritance are based on the text of Manu, where women are portrayed no better than domesticated animals.

Now after the transfer of power in 1947, to establish their legislative power over the majority Hindu community, when the Indian government passed the Hindu Code Bill in 1955, the Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains were included in the Act. But for Muslims, Christians and Parsis, their own personal laws based on their religious beliefs were retained.

In 1978, when Shah Bano, a Muslim divorcee woman filed a petition in the court seeking maintenance for herself and five of her children under section 125 of the CrPC, the High Court as well as the Supreme Court upheld her right to get maintenance in 1985, overruling the provisions of the Muslim Personal Law, which guarantees maintenance only during the Iddat period (3 months after the death of husband or a divorce,

after which a Muslim woman can remarry). This ruling of the Supreme Court irked the Muslim religious leaders and created an uproar throughout the country. The then Rajiv Gandhi government succumbed to the pressure of the Muslim Personal Law Board, and subsequently passed Muslim Women (protection on divorce) Act, 1986, which nullifying the 1985 judgement of the Supreme Court, declared that the relatives of the divorcee woman (in their absence the Waqf Board) would have to pay for the maintenance. This was the starting point when the Hindu right-wing groups first came forward with their agenda of enacting a uniform civil code for all the religious communities of the country with the pretext of making a gender-just uniform civil law. With the gaining of political powers over the years, their policy of spreading hatred against the minority communities, especially the Muslims, gained momentum. On the one hand their leaders are pointing at the custom of polygamy present among the Muslim men as the root of oppression of the Muslim women, on the other hand, they are saying “Muslim women should be taken from their graves and raped”!

If we look through the lens of the law, whether customary or codified, we must conclude that, though basically patriarchal in nature, each minority community has some aspects in their personal law which are gender-just. Or to put it in the other way round, as Flavia Agnes, a women’s rights lawyer says, “... all personal laws are gender unjust, but they are not gender unjust in the same way.” She points out, that the system of ‘Kanyadan’ in the Hindu Marriage Act, where a daughter must be ‘given away’, validates the system of dowry, which results in thousands of dowry-related deaths of Hindu women. But in Muslim Personal Law, marriage is a contract and conditions can be incorporated into the contract. According to their custom, during marriage ‘Mehr’ must be stipulated by the husband as a future security for the wife. This is more

advantageous for women than the dowry system. On the other hand, for Christian women, mutual consent was not a ground for divorce till 2001.

But despite such gender unjust leanings of personal laws of each religious community, the Hindu right-wing government has been trying hard to impose a civil law with Hindu majoritarian bias uniformly throughout the country. If we go through the questionnaire circulated by the 21st Law Commission of India, the intention of the BJP government would have been clear. The questionnaire focused on specific contentious practices of the Muslim minorities, such as bigamy, triple talaq etc., whereas the contentious practices of the other religions, such as the concept of the Hindu undivided family and coparcenary property among the Hindus were ignored. Regarding inheritance of ancestral property, the Hindu joint family system is divided into two schools, i.e. Mitakshara and Dayabhaga. So, there is lack of uniformity even in the Hindu Law. Not only that, under the Mitakshara system a male child gains right to be a coparcener by birth, but a girl child does not enjoy the same right. Whereas under the Dayabhaga system, the father has the absolute power of separation for the ancestral property. Thus, to be accurate, the Hindu laws are not at all gender-just.

Change in Hindu right-wing group's stand on UCC

Over the years the RSS-led Hindu right-wing gang has changed its stand on Universal Civil Code. Their own weekly newspaper Organiser published an interview of their much-revered Guruji Golwalkar on 23 August, 1972, where he said, "Harmony and uniformity are two different things. For harmony, uniformity is not necessary. There have always been limitless diversities in India. In spite of this, our nation has remained strong and well-organised since ancient times... I think that diversity and unity can co-exist, and they do co-exist." But the same

Organiser in its webpage published an article named 'The Irony of the Uniform Civil Code' on July 1, 2023, where they highlighted the need for UCC using the argument put forward by Justice Pratibha M. Singh, a Delhi High Court judge, while delivering in a matrimonial dispute. To quote from the aforementioned article, "Justice Pratibha M. Singh said that the need for the code (UCC) has been envisioned under Article 44 of the Constitution and has been reiterated from time to time by the Supreme Court while bringing to light that cases like the present one highlighted the need for such a code 'common to all' would enable uniformity in all principles of marriage, divorce, succession etc., adding that citizens will be in a better position to safeguard their rights, without conflicts and contradictions of various personal laws."

The question naturally arises as to what forces the BJP party to take a stand diametrically opposite to its earlier position. If we give a close look to their explanations in favour of UCC, we will find that other than bringing gender-just civil law and national harmony, they have raised the question of the policy of appeasement taken by various governments to consolidate their minority vote bank. Thus, the corollary is the Hindu right-wing party's policy to consolidate their Hindu vote bank, which forces them to enact UCC, as it paves the way towards their larger agenda of making India a 'Hindu Rashtra' where the religious minorities, especially the Muslims, the Dalit communities and the Adivasis would become non-citizens. In reality, this will enable the Brahminical Hindu rulers of today to enforce a fascist rule on these non-citizens in a much better way, thereby offering such vulnerable sections of the society to the service of the imperialist masters and their Indian stooges. ◆



Story time of

Women revolutionaries

B Anuradha

When we think of a writer who could wield pen and gun simultaneously, Subbarao Panigrahi is the first person who comes to our mind. But little is known to the outside world about those who are carrying on that legacy. Even less is known about the women revolutionaries who are fighting with a gun in one hand and writing innumerable literary works of amazing quality. While exploring the reasons for this in her article 'The Story of Revolutionary Movement —Telangana Women Writers', famous literary writer and critic Katyayani Admahe made the following analysis quoting the famous historian E.H.Carr. 'Literary historians living in a particular society and influenced by a particular ideology are limited to preserving what they consider to be original and real literature. So often many literary traditions remain unrecorded in and are not part of history. It is a fact that the literature of revolutionary movement, literature of backward areas like Telangana, literature of women who are pushed to the margins of the society and literature of Dalit and minority groups who are oppressed in the society have never got a proper place in the history of Telugu literature. It is now necessary to fill these gaps in literary history. In order to meet this need scientifically, it will be very useful to limit oneself to a narrow area of study such as that of Telangana literature, especially the story form of it, where the stories are related to the revolutionary movement and are written by women in the revolutionary movement'.

The 'Viyyukka' anthologies will definitely fill this gap to some extent. These are stories written by women revolutionaries who are a part of four decade long Maoist movement. In Gondi language 'Viyyukka' means morning star. So far we have found 315 stories written by about 52 authors which are being published in six volumes. These stories are again divided into two main parts—there are 148 stories written with armed revolution as the subject of the story, and there are 167 stories written by the same authors about other issues in the society. Instead

of grouping the stories on the basis of authors, we grouped them on the basis of subject matter into different sections. In the first three volumes, the revolution is the subject of the stories. The next three volumes include stories related to the urban movement, along with other stories.

Katyayani Vidmahe also said in the above-quoted article that 'revolutionary stories need to be studied from two angles—those that are written from the inside and those that are written outside the movement'. In that sense, these stories are straight from the 'inside', but they also talk about 'outside' things. They present creatively the journey and history of the movement over four decades.

Collecting works of 'underground revolutionary' (UG) authors is not an easy task. Even if it could be done, it is not easy to find the writings of women in them, as these authors wrote under many pen names. When revolutionaries were martyred and books about their life were published, in some cases their pen names and their works were also published. It has been possible to glean information about some of the women writers from such books. We could know about some of the pen names when anthologies of two or three of these women writers were published.

Some of the stories about the revolutionary movement in the early eighties were published as anthologies in the nineties. In our research, we found out that some of the stories written in the names of women are not really written by women. For example, in compilations like 'Nelatali Vimuktikosam' (For the Liberation of Mother earth) (1990), 'Swetararulu' (Bright nights) (1993), 'Rutupavanalu' (Monsoon Winds) (1996) etc. even though some of the stories had the names of women as authors, they were written by male authors. The stories included in the Viyyukka anthologies are those written by women who have all participated in the underground Maoist movement. Some of them are martyred, some are still in the movement, some have been arrested and some have been part of the movement for

some time and have come out for various reasons. But many more stories are missing. For example, it seems that Nyalakonda Rajitha also wrote some stories. But we didn't find them. From Shamsher's letter published in January-February 2004 issue of Aruntara we came to know that she wrote stories under the name of Masani Ravinder.

Ellanki Aruna wrote a story under the name of Birsa. This information came to light because of the above mentioned letter and also because her life sketch and writings were published as a book after her martyrdom. It is also difficult to tel the gender of some writers based on their pen names. For example, pen names such as 'Spark', 'Selayeru'(Brook) etc. From the articles that were written after their martyrdom, we learned that 'Spark' is Gajjela Saroja and 'Selayeru' is Chada Vijayalakshmi (East Division Karuna) and thus included their stories. But in case of names whose gender we could not ascertain, we did not include their stories. For example, stories whose writer's names were Bhumi and Ninja. Even the stories with women's names as authors have been confirmed in multiple ways that they were indeed written by women. Only then have we included their stories in these collections.

Women revolutionaries have been writing stories since the 1970s till now. But, it gathered momentum mainly in the past three decades.

A life of an underground activist is not a bed of roses. Daily life in a squad involves hours of walking. Being constantly on the move, carry-on luggage should be kept to a minimum. In addition to personal belongings, this luggage includes a share of the common belongings and goods of the squad. Sometimes even a needle can feel heavy. Everyone has to carry at least 15-20 kg weight including their weapon. Being in the field of war they have to be constantly alert. There are no chairs or desks to comfortably sit and write. There are no lights to write at night. Except when they camp, in day-to-day operations they cannot use light at night, so there is no chance of writing then at all.

This is especially so during times of repression. It takes time for those who go from the plains to the squad to get used to that life. So it is difficult for them to start writing stories immediately. All this applies to male revolutionaries as well. So, among the writers who wrote stories in the early days, they either had close connection to that life, or were part of the movement for a while and used their experiences of that time to write stories from outside. However, some of the male revolutionary writers also wrote while living in squads. Of them, Sadhana - the author of 'Rago'— is well-known to the outside society. Before Rago, he also wrote a serial titled 'Adavilo Annalu' (Brothers in the Forest). Later the serial was published as a novel titled 'Sarihaddu', meaning border. But as per the details of publications, Sadhana also started writing only in the second half of the 80s.

At around the same time, the 'sisters in the forest' who have developed the consciousness to ask the question 'Are there no sisters in the forest' have not only asserted their presence but have been establishing their position in all areas of the revolutionary movement. Shortly after the squads entered Dandakaranya in the eighties, women started joining them. By the end of that decade, women had joined the squads formed in the plains, even if in small numbers. Women also joined the squads in Nallamala and Andhra Orissa border.

Some of the writers wrote stories even before they entered the underground life, on various women's issues, while being members of mass organizations. They also wrote stories with the theme of revolutionary movement. The stories written by those who chose an underground life as revolutionaries, after working as radical student union activists, were the earlier ones. One of such stories was the story 'Defying Repression' published in Radical March. This story written by Nilovna (well known as Kavini) was published in 1985.

Some of these women writers who worked clandestinely in the urban movement could write more stories as they had relatively more leisure

compared to those working in rural and forest areas. Some started writing stories even before they went into underground life and continued subsequently. Some others lived a long revolutionary life and came out of it either due to personal reasons or after having been arrested and put in prison. They then penned stories related to the life in the revolution. Narsakka, (a.k.a Vanaja) who worked in the North Telangana Movement, wrote the novel 'Adavi Putrika' (Daughter of the Forest) and Bharathi wrote a novel 'Ammulapodi' (Quiver – Container of Arrows) after her release from jail. As the present anthologies are limited to stories, these novels are not included in these.

The stories of these underground women writers have so far been published as four anthologies under the names of the authors. Through Shaheeda's anthology of stories 'Jajipula Parimalam' (The fragrance of Jasmines), we figured out that she also wrote with the names P. Seshulatha, N.D., Mani and Prabhata. She also wrote a story under Sudhakar's name. However, we used the name Shaheeda as the author for all the 32 stories included in this collection. Shaheeda wrote many more stories after 'Jajipula Parimalam'. Similarly, from the compilation of Midko's stories called 'Metla Meeda' (On the steps), we came to know that Midko wrote under that name as well as Nirmala, Renuka, Zameen etc. But for all the 18 stories included in that collection, we used Midko as the author's name. Tayamma Karuna also wrote under the pen name Tumbri. Her stories have already been published as anthologies, therefore we used the name Tayamma Karuna for all her stories. The stories of Nithya, Sujata and Maina have been compiled under the name 'Samanyula Sahasam' (The Extraordinary deeds of ordinary people). Apart from these, we found some more stories written by them.

Uppuganti Nirmala, popularly known as writer Nitya and as Narmada in the movement, was arrested when she came to Hyderabad for treatment of cancer. She was taken to a hospice center from Mumbai's Byculla Jail when she was

'not in a condition to be provided further treatment' and passed away there. As she is well known to the readers as Nitya, we retained that name in the anthologies instead of using her original name. She also wrote a story in the name of Narmada.

Ellanki Aruna, who is known as Lalitha and Sadhana in the movement areas, wrote under the names Birsa, Pranitha and Mayuri. On the basis of the collection 'Praneetha Savvadi' (Praneetha's Voice) that was published after her martyrdom, we used Ellanki Aruna as the name for all the stories she wrote. Although Gajjela Saroja wrote under the name of Spark and one story under the name of Shaheeda, we used her original name for all her stories based on the book 'Gajjela Saroja Rachanalu' (Writings of Gajjela Saroja) published after her martyrdom. Based on an article published in the 'Viplavamahila' magazine after the martyrdom of writer Chada Vijayalakshmi known as Karuna of East Division in the movement area, we learned that she wrote the two stories that were published under the name Selayeru.

Com Daggubati Kalpana worked in Palnadu region and Rayalaseema for two decades. By November 10, 2006, when she was martyred in an exchange of fire in the forests of Badwel in Kadapa district, AP she was a member of district committee. She was known to the people in the movement area as Ramana and Chandana. We came to know through her friends that the story in 'Mahilamargam' under the name Kalpana was written by her. (Mahilamargam is the Women's magazine in Telugu meaning The path of women.)

At the end of the story published in 'Porumahila' magazine as Amidelu Vijaya's autobiography, it was mentioned that the author Vijaya was martyred in Amidelu. We learned through the book 'Biographies of Female Martyrs' that Vijaya's real name was Jarta Venkata Lakshmi. Com Jarta Venkata Lakshmi was an adivasi comrade from the Kondareddy tribe. She started to read and write only after coming into the movement, worked as a cultural activist and wrote her life experiences as a

story. She served as the commander of the Armed Jananatyamandali squad and was martyred.

Although Adoni Padma, who organized women in the urban movement, wrote under the name 'Tungabhadra', we published her stories under her real name. Padma was a member of the first women's sub-committee formed in united Andhra Pradesh.

The needs of revolution are many. One of them is organizing dens. Aluri Lalita carried out such work for many years. In the eighties, she worked in a women's organization in Vijayawada and paved the way for the women's movement. She wrote stories in the name of Ramadevi.

The strength of these stories lies in their content. None of these stories is fiction. They record the continuing history of four decades of revolutionary movement. They record a life that can only be written by those who directly participated in the revolutionary movement. Apart from two or three stories that were published in the eighties, many stories were published in the Arunatara magazine over three decades. Some of the stories were published in Mahila Margam, some in various anthologies and some in web magazines such as Vasantha Megham, Virasam.org, Kolimi. Only a few got published in underground magazines such as 'Poru Mahila', 'Viplava Mahila', 'Viplavi' and '-Turpu Kanuma'. These stories remained modestly hidden among the vast number of the 'main stream' stories. Until we put them together, we did not comprehend that the revolutionary movement produced so many women writers. We could not even imagine that there are such a large number of revolutionary women writers. Some among them have written just one story. Some are accomplished writers who have developed skillful artistic expression and a writing style of their own.

There are also those who wrote powerfully depicting real life events along with the associated characters. These events remind us that 'fact is stranger than fiction'. We become very emotional on realising that each character in these stories

is not fictional, but is a flesh and blood human being. The consciousness that it is important for the general public to understand what is written is visible at every step in all these stories. Not only in the dialogues of the characters, but even in the narration of the story, the writers use the people's language because of their class consciousness and because of their intimacy with the oppressed people. Similarly, those who learnt to read and write after coming into the revolutionary movement naturally wrote their stories in the people's language. In a sense, these stories have sprouted from the earth.

Although most of the stories are written in the various dialects of Telangana, there are also stories using language of the coastal people, stories that use Gondi language words extensively, and in some stories, the dialogues are written directly in Gondi with translation provided in brackets.

A great deal of literary effort was put in the revolutionary movement to bring out so many stories. It is interesting to know how such an effort was made. The first attempt to inform the outside world about such an effort was the paper 'Examination of Dandakaranya Literary Movement' presented from Dandakaranya in 1993 in the context of the decadal celebrations of the All India League for Revolutionary Culture.

In the paper, they said 'Even though some of the revolutionary writers are making some efforts to write stories that reflect today's system, the revolutionary fires raging in the villages of Telangana, the history of the people and revolutionary activists who are making heroic sacrifices and giving up their lives for that revolution is yet to be analyzed from all angles and reflected in the stories. It is the duty of today's writer to present to the public the many changes taking place in the villages, forests and plains, the changes in economic life and in production relations, and the changes taking place in land relations...'

They also said, 'The need to bring out the achievements of the people and revolutionaries in the military field, the way people are resisting

the enemy's preparations to attack them with a long-term strategy, people's experiences under repression, and the day-to-day hardships of the squads - is more serious today than in the past.'

The revolutionary women writers accomplished most of the tasks that were identified exactly three decades ago. These compilations are an attempt to fulfill the duty of receiving the fruits of their effort and placing them before the sympathisers of the revolution and the rest of the suffering masses. In fact, the number of women who wrote stories directly from the revolutionary movement three decades ago could be counted on one's fingers. But, in these three decades, many women have written stories.

People from different regions, from different social groups and at different levels of consciousness come into the revolutionary movement. They are establishing new human relations by abolishing the role of regressive ideology in all old relations and the base that is engendering that ideology. Since they are the subject and object of the changes happening around them, they are able to write very naturally in a conversational style about all that has happened and is currently happening. Fabricating an event and adding imaginative component to it to weave a story is not the process followed by them. Instead, they convey astonishing realities in ordinary language to tell stories that touch the hearts of people. In fact this is the very purpose for which the revolutionary movement prepared these stories and narrators. From time immemorial, telling their history orally in the form of stories is a wonderful art that people have had for generations. This attempt to give it a written form and record it as history is a continuation of that art.

On the basis of the foreword written for an anthology of poems called 'Kondagogulu' (Wild flowers) published in December 1997, we came to know that the erstwhile Communist Party of India (M.L.) (People's War) 'organized literary forums in all state-level congresses and special conferences prior to the all India special conference held

in November 1995'. The party brought out the literature produced during the Dandakaranya Forest conference as the anthology 'Kondagogulu'. Based on a report in Jhankar, we were able to know something about the literary work that took place in the Andhra region of the movement. In the camps held during various level conferences and meetings, since there is a possibility to stay in one place for a few days, everybody was given white papers and asked to write something every evening. This program was called 'Guerrilla Vani' (Voice of the Guerilla). In 1997, there was a report in Andhra Jyotidaily news paper, that a workshop on stories was held by the party in the Nallamala forest area. Later it was learnt that while they were in the process of bringing out a compilation of those stories, they lost them in a police raid. From the report "Not a workshop, but an edifice of life's afflictions" that appeared in the Vasanta Megham online magazine in December 2022 in Telugu, we came to know that the party organized another workshop on stories recently.

In fact such meetings are held secretly with great vigilance under the most difficult circumstances. Creative writing under such conditions is no easy matter. Forget about comforts such as rocking chairs and sumptuous meals, they have to write these stories under conditions where they cannot afford to be careless for even a second. Story writing may have started with the formation of the leisure class but it is a fact that the red soldiers who are in an unceasing class struggle and have no leisure time were able to take it up. They have to somehow 'allot' time to write the stories. Especially those in leadership positions, even if they are seasoned writers, can only devote limited time to story writing. Since they have other important responsibilities, they cannot allot much time for writing. While encouraging newbies, there will also be situations where those who are prolific writers are told to slow down a bit. With the realization that literature is a strong medium to address the misconceptions of the outside society with respect

to the revolutionary movement, and to bring to the notice of the people a record of the changes it is bringing about, some special efforts were made to produce such literature.

The revolutionaries also run literary magazines. That's how 'Jhankar' magazine started. It was the first literary magazine of the guerrillas. In the article that came out on the occasion of the completion of 10 years of this magazine, they wrote that they started it as a hand written magazine and later it was composed using computers. This magazine contains articles in many languages such as Telugu, Hindi and Gondi. This magazine, which celebrated its first decade of existence in 2004, will soon complete its third decade. 'Thurpu Kanuma' (Eastrn Ghat) is the literary and cultural magazine being published from the eastern division of the movement in Telugu. The women comrades of the revolutionary movement also run various women's magazines from different regions focusing on women's issues. Dandakaranya Kranthikari Adivasi Mahila Sangham's magazine is published as 'Porumahila' in Telugu, 'Sangharsharat Mahila' in Hindi and Gondi language. During the period when the movement was strong in Andhra, they published the magazine 'Viplava Mahila', and after the formation of Andhra Orissa Border Committee they published the magazine 'Viplavi'. Although it is not known whether these continue to be published or not, it is a fact that such magazines also became centers for literary creation by the guerrillas.

Some of the stories published in the underground magazines were not published under the category of stories but under other categories such as 'Spandana' (Reaction), 'Naa anubhavam' (My Experience), 'Adarsha Guerrilla' (Ideal guerilla), 'Prajale ukku kota' (People are like Steel Fortress) and 'Idi katha kaadu' (This is not a story). But in these collections we have included every work that is in the nature of a story. Since they are true events, they might have been published under different categories but undoubtedly they fall under the category of stories. Some are in the

form of narratives. There are Memoirs written in the form of stories using characters and dialogues which we included in this collection, but those that are written as pure memoirs are not included. The stories in the first three collections were written with various aspects of the revolutionary movement in different areas as their subject. Apart from Dandakaranya, these stories are written from Nallamala and Palnadu regions in Andhra, from Andhra -Orissa border region, and from North and South Telangana regions. Three of the stories have Jharkhand as the background. For the past decade, the stories of the revolution are being referred to as 'Dandakaranya story' in the outside society. It is used merely as a metaphor to the revolution but not to set any geographical boundaries for the revolutionary story.

Based on the available evidence, we have concluded that each story was written at a certain time, but it is indeed a remarkable thing to be able to start writing a story and finish it in one go. Sending out completed stories from underground life to the outside world is another adventurous event. They reach us only when the 'Courier Red Soldiers' who carry them to the outside world can save their lives and bring them safely to the intended target. In order for the story to even reach the courier, the writer should have saved her life and kit (back pack) during the encounters with the police. So, the dates we are talking about here are the dates of publication but they may not be the actual periods of writing.

Very often we read in the newspaper that backpacks were found in the areas where the encounter took place. The guerrillas keep every thing related to their daily life as well as important things such as documents and the stories they have written in the backpacks and carry them. How many stories could we have lost when such backpacks were lost in encounters? An article in Jhankar mentioned that JNM Bhaskar not only encouraged others to write but also kept everyone's writings with him and carried them carefully till they were sent out. The same article reported that many of the works

were washed away when the guerrillas including Bhaskar and their backpacks drowned while crossing the Krishna river. Despite the efforts made to preserve underground magazines carefully and hand them over to the outside society, how many more have we lost due to the carelessness of the outside society in not preserving them? Even when we managed to receive the stories outside, we have no count of the number of stories that were lost during arrests and detentions. Considering all these factors, we cannot conclude that the total number of stories written by the women writers is what we have available with us.

The initial stories were written by the educated people who went into the revolutionary movement from the plains and took to the underground life. Later, even those who learned to read and write within the movement, slowly took to writing their experiences in the form of stories. After the revolutionary movement recruited the local Adivasis and gradually abolished the difference between the outsiders and the locals, the locals participated in everything, improved their skills and moved into leadership positions. We ascertained that there are two stories written by local adivasi women in these collections. It is possible that this number could be more. There are some stories written in Gondi and Kuvvi languages that were published in the underground journals. A story written in Hindi from Jharkhand was translated and sent to Arunatara. We have included that story also in these anthologies.

'Revolution? What revolution? Where is it? Is it still there? Where do you see it? We can't see it anymore. Maybe it exists in some remote place. We don't think it has any impact on people's lives.' Those who write such comments on platforms that are not accessible to the revolutionary movement should read these stories once. They will find a miracle of ordinary people becoming writers in these stories. These stories also offer a humble answer to those who castigated Virasam (RWA) for 'thinking that you can create writers by running

workshops' and called it a delusion. Creative literary writing is not anyone's exclusive domain. It is not a skill that is attainable by just some persons. Authors can also be 'made'. The skills of any person in this society are not inherent in them but created by the conditions in society. The revolutionary movement created 'new human beings' to cure the many deformities and vices that society has created. They are not only making history, but are recording history in various ways. These stories demonstrate that apart from being red soldiers, they are performing diverse roles such as writers, artists, historians, doctors and teachers.

People in the movement areas can identify their near and dear ones in these stories. These are not just black letters printed on white paper. Behind these are the lives of those who lightly sacrificed their lives, personal comforts and fame for the benefit of all of us. These stories are full of the earthy fragrance of an alternative society dreamt by the revolution.

Russian and Chinese literature, especially stories and novels rocked the youth of the country between the seventies and the nineties. They shaped the values among the youth inspiring them to get rid of self-interest and to participate in the struggle for social change. During that period, a large body of Russian and Chinese literature was translated into many languages including Telugu. Many of those who wondered at that time as to when we would write such stories about the revolutionary movement in our country have now realized that dream. Even those who do not know much about the Russian and Chinese literature joined them and gave us these stories.

It is a fact that the hardened gender inequality and patriarchy that exist in caste-based feudal societies and capitalist societies do not exist in tribal societies. Compared to these societies, there is relatively more gender equality and sexual freedom in tribal societies. For a long time, the intellectuals in the outside society were of the view that there is no patriarchal oppression and no classes in the tribal societies. Even the revolutionaries had such

an opinion to an extent in the early days of their entry into those societies. However, these illusions exist only if we forget the dialectic principle that the tribal society also undergoes changes over time. The revolutionary movement recorded the changes in the tribal life through its reports, articles, papers and documents and introduced them to the outside community. Adivasi society did not always remain a matriarchal society. It did not remain unaffected by the outside world. The revolutionary movement studied the changes and the class divisions that took place in the adivasi society once the merchants and brokers entered the lives of Adivasis from the patriarchal and caste based feudal society. Their observations are also brought out to the outside society.

The 12 stories included in the section 'Shackles of Custom' are the stories depicting the problems faced by women in the tribal society, and the sort of problems they were facing when the squads of revolutionaries entered Dandakaranya from the plains. As the novel 'Rago' written by Sadhana depicts the life of female protagonist 'Rago', these stories depict the problems faced by other 'Ragos' in different forms. Although people were initially suspicious of the revolutionaries, they slowly began to accept them. It is mentioned in the foreword of the book 'Thirty Years of Dandakaranya Literary Cultural Movement' that people started telling their hardships to 'Annalu' (Brothers meaning Revolutionaries) through songs which are a part of their cultural life.

How is life in a squad? There are 8 stories in the section 'Life in a Squad' which show the daily life, food consumption, long distance walking, relations with people, activities etc., in a squad in detail. Whatever be the subject of the story, this section includes stories that mainly depict life in a squad.

Four decades ago literacy was very low in our country, especially in the tribal community. So it was (is) customary for those who join the revolutionary movement to learn to read and write from the initial days. It is an essential part of their daily

routine. It is also mandatory for educated people to learn the languages of the region where they are currently working. There is also ideological study. This sort of study is probably the first thing that almost everyone does upon joining the movement. There are 11 stories in the section 'Let's Study' that depict interestingly the many ways in which study can be carried on.

The work of a revolutionary movement is to elevate the human relations to a higher level by subjecting them to great changes in the outside society. Such relationships include companionship and marital relationships between men and women. When women developed consciousness of their rights and took to the path of revolution, it was impossible for the existing relations to remain the same. Only when the consciousness level of both the partners is equal, their relationship is stable. Even if they are unequal, they should at least be oriented in the same direction. Only then can those relationships be elevated and reach new standards. But this change cannot happen so easily. Any serious change leads to serious conflict. The 12 stories in the section 'Companionship' depict even if in broad strokes, the journey, the conflict and the course of attaining higher level relationships between men and women.

Bearing children is a biological function assigned to women by nature. Women who were once respected as 'creators' because of that, have now lost their high status and are living as subordinates. Raising children is not an easy task. For women who want to participate equally with men in the revolutionary movement, having children means departing from the guerrilla life. Hence, many women revolutionaries such as Malla Ratnamala (Nirmala), who was the first woman to enter Dandakaranya, were forced to give up their babies to others and take to the guerilla life. There is a lot of emotional conflict involved in it. It is not an easy decision for mothers. After a decade, female guerrillas reached the level where they were able to take the tough decision that it was better not to

bear children than to bear them and give them to others. Just as the guerrillas have nothing of their own, they are also not narrow minded enough to think of only their biological children as their own. There are 8 stories in the section 'Motherhood' that depict many emotions such as the pain of leaving the children behind, the conflicts in deciding not to have children, and to acquire the loftiness of being able to love other people's children as their own.

Revolutionary movement means armed struggle. Many people have doubts about the participation of women in such movements. They cannot imagine them in anything but supporting roles. Do women really have courage? Do they just carry a gun or do they actually use it? The 11 stories in the section 'People's Army' answer such doubts. In fact, if there were stories recording the amazing military feats performed by some women commanders and their higher up female comrades, they alone could have been an anthology as there are so many such incidents. This becomes clear from the essays written about martyrs.

There is no such thing as a movement separated from the people. If it is, it will not survive. Revolutionaries mingle with people like fish in water. The people in turn keep the revolutionaries close to their heart and protect them. That's why it is said 'people are a steel fortress'. To protect the revolutionaries, the common people have resorted to unparalleled courageous acts and sacrifices. Naturally the revolutionaries have given priority to give a story form to such incidents which is reflected in the number of stories that have come under that category. There are 21 such stories in the section 'Ordinary people's Extraordinary Acts. However, they do not depict even a quarter of the things that can reveal the role of the people, especially the role of women in such incidents.

The famous Russian communist leader Krupaskaya said that children are people too. Neither the enemy nor the conditions of repression made any exceptions for the children. Even children had no choice but to prepare themselves for war. Their

role in the progress of the revolution cannot be underestimated. There are 8 stories in the section 'Revolutionary Sprouts' which prove that point.

Some mistakes do happen in destroying the old ideology that has taken root for thousands of years and in establishing a new people's culture. Instead of glossing over those mistakes, it is important to correct them. Without that, it will be difficult to even move forward. The process of Rectification is not just reviewing in committees, which always happens in any case. It includes going to the people, openly acknowledging the mistakes and correcting them. Such rectification campaigns have taken place in the party, in the squads, in mass organizations and in front of the people at least three times in these four decades (as far as information is available). In addition to these, local (state level) campaigns have also been held. A rectification campaign was held specifically against patriarchal tendencies. Under the section 'Rectification' are 8 stories that talk about how even seemingly minor mistakes were rectified not only during such campaigns but also at other times.

Going to jail is also an inevitable thing in the movement areas. But it must be said that there are not enough stories written about the arrests, tortures and prison struggles of the revolutionaries. There are 6 such stories in the section 'Unchained Voices'.

The outside society has a lot of information about repression. This information comes out when brought to light by news papers, reports and fact-finding committees. But these reports fail to capture what a terrible havoc repression wreaks on people's lives. There are 8 stories in the section 'Repression-Defiance' which depict exactly that havoc. In these, we also see how people are prepared to resist severe repression.

The word Salwajudum means 'peace march'. Under the leadership of Mahendra Karma, all that was done in the name of Salwajudum was a campaign of military repression. As part of this, they carried out attacks on villages and resorted to killings, rapes, burning people alive,

burning crops, forcibly moving people to 'relief camps' which are concentration camps, and raping women in those camps. There are 6 stories depicting these atrocities in the section 'Salwa Zulum' (Zulum means tyranny).

There are 10 stories depicting the lives of those who were martyred in the revolutionary movement in the section 'Immortal Songs'.

We cannot imagine how the deaths of revolutionaries push their families, especially the parents and siblings, to depths of sorrow. The revolutionaries have more kinsmen based on class relations than family relations. Twenty one stories depicting the efforts of such class-based kin, in the face of state repression, to provide a last look at the martyrs for their blood relations; their effort at sharing the memories of the martyrs and erecting their memorials; and especially the stories depicting the agony of the martyrs' mothers are included in the section 'Defiant Sorrow'.

If we read these stories in sequence, we can get a bird's eye view of the history of four decades of revolutionary movement. These stories place the revolutionary movement before the reader in an honest, sincere and undoubtedly transparent manner.

The attempt of the revolutionaries to bring the works of underground women writers into the literary world that is considered 'main stream' is not of today. But as mentioned earlier, before the stories collected with a lot of difficulty could be put together methodically, they would be lost due to arrests and repression. After many repeated attempts, these stories are seeing the light of day after at least a decade of delay.

And now, let us step into the historical story time of the revolutionary movement.

Translated by P. Aravinda)

Note: stories of Viyyukka in English are being uploaded in the website of virasam every fortnightly.
<https://vasanthamegham.com/category/stories/>



On Xi Jinping's *Common Prosperity*

Ajith

What is this 'common prosperity' the Chinese President Xi Jinping is talking about? Is it the prosperity of the workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie? Well yes, a bit. Some measures have to be taken to ease stark inequality. At the least, the state must present an image of doing something of that sort. However, the 'common' is not really about them. Nor is the 'prosperity' mainly meant for them. This is actually a reset in the positions, relations, of the two factions of the Chinese ruling classes, the bureaucratic and private monopoly capitalists.

The state sector in China has all along remained dominant, in size and reach. State-owned industrial assets total twice as much as private industrial assets. They occupy a predominant role in sectors such as finance, energy, automobiles, telecommunication, and mining. Yet the private sector has been growing faster. When measured by revenue or market value, China's private sector has grown not only in absolute terms but also as a proportion of the country's largest companies from a low level to a significant share today. Even though state owned enterprises (SOE) still dominate among the largest companies by revenue, this is decreasing. So much so that Jack Ma, the owner of the internet giant Alibaba, was reported to have stated, 'Chinese consumption is not driven by the government but by entrepreneurship, and the market... In the past 20 years, the government was so strong. Now, they are getting weak. It's our opportunity; it's our show time, to see how the market economy, entrepreneurship, can develop real consumption.'

The ruling party of China still retains the label of Communist Party. But it has been admitting these private monopoly capitalists as members for several decades. Given this direct presence in the political structure, their growing economic weight and international relations contained the potential to become a serious challenge to the existing dominant role of the bureaucratic faction of the monopoly bourgeoisie. The presidency of Xi

represents an all out attempt by this faction to retain its domination, to put the private faction in its place, and to deflect the anger of the masses towards them. It has received broad acceptance within the ruling class since it addresses its internal and external compulsions.

What are the internal compulsions? Stark and sharply growing inequality is now reaching an explosive point. This is happening in a situation where growth has considerably decreased. The share of personal wealth for China's billionaires shot up, especially during the Covid pandemic. Meanwhile unemployment among youth has touched 20 per cent. In the first five months of 2023 itself there have been 130 strikes in Chinese factories. This is more than double the registered strikes in China in the whole of 2022. Moreover, political discontent has been getting linked to economic discontent. The outburst of mass anger and protest against draconian Zero-Covid clampdown measures revealed this. Despite all efforts of the security machinery, the illegal, underground transmission of information about people's struggles and anti-state literature is going on unabated.

Xi repeatedly reminds his fellow rulers about what happened in the erstwhile Soviet Union. He attributes this to the "Communist Party of the Soviet Union" becoming detached from the people and turning into a group of privileged bureaucrats. Therefore, he explains, 'Realising common prosperity is more than an economic goal. It is a major political issue that bears on our Party's governance foundation. We cannot allow the gap between the rich and the poor to continue growing—for the poor to keep getting poorer while the rich continue growing richer. We cannot permit the wealth gap to become an unbridgeable gulf.' And who is causing this wealth gap? Absolving the bureaucratic faction of the monopoly bourgeoisie to which he belongs of any role, the blame is put on the private sector — 'By its nature, capital pursues profits, and if it is not regulated and restrained, it will bring immeasurable harm to economic and social development.'

So the problem is not capitalist exploitation. That is fine and necessary. All that is needed are

regulations which ensure that at least a little of the surplus trickles down to the masses. Xi has repeatedly clarified that 'common prosperity' is not at all about ending private capitalism. He says that its role "in driving China's economic advance" must be 'fully approved'. All kinds of capital will be promoted and encouraged. But investors should be 'educated and guided' to 'walk the right way'. In other words, the private monopoly bourgeois faction must not get ambitious. It should stick to its place. However, though almost all of the monopoly capitalists are party members, Xi is not so sure about their obeying 'party discipline'. It is reported that the ruling party has deployed cadres in private ventures to influence their decision making. The number of enterprises with party committees in their management has risen to over 16 lakhs since Xi took power ten years ago.

Xi echoes the World Bank's 'globalisation with a human face' when he speaks of inclusive economic development and fair distribution of income. This 'inclusion' is similar to the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy existing in India. It is materialised through philanthropic donations by private corporates. A tiny share of the huge surplus extracted through exploitation is selectively doled out to the masses. Xi's 'common prosperity' has already been equated to philanthropy by the mainstream Chinese media. Widely publicised donations of billions of yuan, declared by monopoly big shots after being 'legally' shaken down by the state, attest to this.

Disparity is certainly being accelerated by the exploitative dynamics of bureaucratic monopoly capitalism. However, that is only part of the story. For a long time, the growth of Chinese capitalism was fuelled by an export oriented economy. China was transformed into the workhorse of imperialist transnational corporations (TNC) by the capitalist roaders who seized power in 1976. Crores of peasants were forced to migrate to cities and work in their assembly centres at subsistence wages. All resistance was brutally put down by the social fascist state. The super profits made from

this exploitation was for long mainly appropriated by foreign TNCs. But the Chinese bourgeoisie, both state and private, also benefitted. Aided by various internal and external factors they have been able to grow into a monopoly capitalist class and transform China into an imperialist power. However, the global financial crisis of 2008 upset this. The prolonged recession that set in after that was further exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. All of this has badly impacted the export led growth model pursued by Chinese imperialism. It has also affected its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The profits expected from it have not materialised. Huge loans made to finance its projects remain unpaid. Meanwhile, repeated workers struggles within the country forced the government to improve working conditions and raise wages. As a result, capital started moving out in search of low wage centres in other countries like Cambodia and Laos. The Chinese monopoly bureaucrat bourgeoisie has built up a huge foreign currency chest. Relying on it, large capital investments can be made, both within the country and abroad. They have also developed technological capabilities good enough to compete with other imperialist powers. A new growth model, relying on these factors, was adopted. The export oriented model was sought to be replaced by one that relied on internal demand.

China's 14th Five-Year Plan, released in 2020, announced a policy framework of "dual circulation" economics. Refocus on domestic demand expansion, focus on the real economy, not finance, elevate economic security, forcefully push forward self-reliant innovation and uphold high-level opening up — these are declared to be the key features of 'Dual Circulation Economics'. Domestic consumption needs to be boosted to realise this model. But what should be the principal instrument employed to achieve this? This has become a focal point of the wrangling within the Chinese ruling class. The private monopoly capitalists, along with a section of the bureaucrat monopoly capitalists, propose giving Chinese and international capital and the market

a freehand. This view accords with those proposed by US imperialist bloc think tanks and its agencies like the IMF and World Bank. In opposition to this, the bureaucrat monopoly capitalists mostly prefer relying on the SOEs and state financial institutions. They draw support from a negative experience.

Following the global downturn triggered of by the crisis of 2008, the Chinese state had adopted a policy of debt based stimulation. The aim was to maintain economic growth. Crores of yuan were loaned out to private enterprises in order to fuel a construction boom. It was done on an unprecedented scale. Sprawling residential townships, shopping malls, industrial parks, stadiums, expressways and airports were built up. This construction boom did help in keeping the economy going at its old pace. But that was temporary. It couldn't be sustained. The consumers, the demand to use up this supply of real estate and infrastructure, were largely absent. Prolonged global recession and the Covid lockdowns have aggravated this situation. An analyst notes, "Home sales collapsed by around 30 percent over the past year, driving many property firms to bankruptcy. As developers' revenues collapsed, they slashed their land purchases for new projects. As a result, the land purchases local governments depend on are down...This could destabilise their debt (nearly half of Chinese GDP in 2021), leading to a full blown economic crisis." The dead weight of this useless construction has thus become a critical issue for the whole economy. This negative experience bolstered the bureaucratic faction. Its insistence on controlling the private faction rather than allowing it a freehand won out. Along with that they pushed for an increased pay-up to the state by the private monopolies through hefty tax fines and the like. Internal demand was sought to be promoted by allowing the masses to have more income. That was the political-economy of Xi's 'common prosperity'.

The bureaucrat faction has succeeded in retaining the upperhand through Xi's rule. It is still to replicate this in the economic sphere. Foreign trade dependency is reported to have been halved between

2006 and 2021. However, if the state sector is excluded, internal demand is yet to become a significant growth accelerator. China's GDP expanded by just 3% in 2022, though the target was 5.5%. It was the second lowest annual growth rate since 1976. A lower target of 5% has been fixed for 2023. Whether that will actually be achieved remains to be seen.

While growing protectionism in imperialist countries goes to restrict Chinese monopoly capital in the economic sphere, intensifying inter-imperialist contention adds to this. This has been aggravated by the growing ties between Chinese and Russian imperialism, particularly in the context of the Ukraine war. US imperialism is making an all-out attempt to prevent Chinese imperialism from achieving parity, through sanctions on technology transfer, investments and blocking of Chinese TNCs entry into the US imperialist bloc's markets. This has created serious hurdles. Internationally, China has been trying its best to limit and weaken the dominance of the US dollar. On its own and through various international bodies it has a lead role in, like the BRICS and SCO, China has been steadily chipping away at dollar-based international trade. The Chinese currency's share in global foreign exchange turnover has increased from less than 1% 20 years ago to more than 7% now. But it still represents only a measly 3 percent of global foreign exchange reserves. Even now, approximately half of all global trade is invoiced in dollars. It was involved in nearly 90% of global foreign exchange transactions. 60 percent of global foreign exchange reserves are in dollars. In other words, the Chinese ruling class has a long way to go. It is also vulnerable. China has claimed that it reduced the dollar share of its reserves from 79% to 58% between 2005 and 2014. But, according to financial analysts, the dollar share of its reserves hasn't changed during the last ten years. A major chunk of its reserves continue to be open to control by the US imperialists.

Along with planned moves to ensure economic security, the Chinese ruling class is also forcefully pushing forward to greater technological self-reliance. The Chinese Academy of Sciences

identified 35 sectors that rely most heavily on imports as priorities for indigenous breakthroughs. The 'Made in China 2025 initiative' has set targets for 10 important sectors. They include robotics, new energy vehicles (mainly electric vehicles), biotechnology, aerospace, high-end shipping, advanced rail equipment, electric power equipment, new materials, new generation IT and software (including integrated circuits and telecom devices), as well as agricultural machinery.

China already has an advantageous position in some cutting edge technologies. China contributed to six out of the top 10 electrical vehicle (EV) models sold in 2021, accounting for 13% of global sales. It is one of the major players in EV battery manufacturing, and four Chinese companies were among the global top 10. They accounted for almost half of the global market in 2021. China has a technological lead in this field. It has over 90% of global lithium battery applications. 35% of global robotics patents are owned by Chinese. The Global Innovation Index, published by the World Intellectual Property Organization, ranked China as the 12th-most innovative country globally among 129 economies in 2021. It will probably reach the fifth position by 2030. R&D investment is estimated to reach nearly 4% of GDP by 2030. While R&D intensity in economies such as South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and the U.S. is higher than that of China, when counted in dollars it rank is only below the US. The role of hydro, solar, wind and nuclear energies is growing. Their share in the energy mix rose from 5%- 6% in the late 1990s to 16% in 2020. China has developed high-speed train technology and is putting up stiff competition against world pioneers like Japan and France.

It is still lagging in sectors that require large investment in basic research such as semiconductors and aerospace engineering. As of 2019, the country's domestic energy production met over 70% of domestic demand. However, China's dependency on imported energy is rising quickly as demand growth constantly outpaces domestic production. This rose to 24% in 2019. Average annual foreign direct

investment (FDI) into China in 2019-21 was 15% higher than the 2016-18 average. But there has been a plateauing of FDI in China's manufacturing sector. It is about 20% below the 2011 peak. Greenfield investments are also declining.

At present the Chinese economy has an important role in the world economy, as a market, as a manufacturer and also as a source and destination of capital. A Citi Bank study warns that firms who export a large share of their goods to China may even explore moving production out of the U.S. to avoid its sanctions. 64% of South Korea's, 62% of Taiwan's and 59% of Vietnam's chip exports were to China and Hong Kong in 2020. Forcing China to become self-reliant in this field would adversely affect their economies. That would in turn impact on the US since all of them are mainly dependent on it. Economic ties of this sort also explains why China is able to increase its clout in South East and East Asia. China has become an increasing source of regional FDI flows. East Asia takes the largest share of China's Outward Direct Investment.

One important consequence of intensifying imperialist contention is the greater share of resources China has to allot for its defence spending. For the past decade, the annual increase in China's official military spending has outpaced its annual GDP growth. The official economic growth target for 2023 is "around 5%". But its defence budget is targetted to go up by 7.2%. Despite that, defence spending as a share of the GDP still remains below 2%, as compared to the plus 3% of the US. Moreover, it has also built up a formidable defence industrial sector. Three Chinese companies are in the top 20 arms sellers. It is the fourth largest arms exporter in the world today. These are balancing factors. However, continued high allotment of resources towards defence can, in the long run, have a negative impact on the economy. The lopsidedness this caused in the erstwhile social imperialist Soviet Union was an important factor leading to its collapse.

For now neither the US nor China are prepared to intensify their contention beyond a breaking point. This provides some room for the Xi regime. But, ultimately,

its ability to boost domestic consumption will be decisive. Here, its class nature and the compulsions of the governance structure that has been erected after the 1976 coup are serious impediments. One can see this in the revised Land Administration Law.

Land is still owned by the state or the village. Use rights of landed property was granted to individual families and entrepreneurs. The state retained the power to renew or cancel these rights. This was the user-responsibility system enforced after dissolving communes. A similar policy was implemented in the cities in the mid-1980s. Expansion of urban centres led to demand for land. Meanwhile, large-scale migration to urban centres for work left a large part of arable land vacant. This led to the emergence of a land market. Village units first compensated farmers for leaving their homesteads, and then rented it to urban developers. The new law allows farmers to lease or transfer land use right on their land directly to non-rural operators. It is claimed that this will 'unlock land value' and will be of great significance for rural 'revitalisation'. Earlier farmers could only get a compensation that was no more than 30 times the current annual land yields. The revised law has lifted this cap. The higher income gained by the farmers is expected to provide another source of income that will help boost rural consumption.

Xi's advisors calculate that the reform would increase peasants' income and support their demand for automobiles, consumer electronics and other durables, as well as services. Those who have migrated to urban centres may be induced to capitalise their land wealth. Trade in peasants' use rights to farmland would energise the rural land market. The possibility to buy up user rights of large tracts of land would promote large-scale corporate farming.

All that may happen. But so long as steady and rising income levels are not assured for the rural populace, so long as stable urban-rural economic linkages that promote this are not developed, this consumption boost will be short-lived. The rapacious exploitation of the rulers, even more intense in the vast countryside, will not allow this easily. The new law is accompanied by

measures meant to ensure food security. Strict control to prevent diversion of arable land for other purposes is part of this. Its net outcome is more bureaucratic control over the peasantry, more opportunities to fleece them through fines and a thriving illegal land market that overrides the control on land reassignment. After all, the declared intent of reform is to 'unlock' land value. In a society where 'getting rich' is the ruler's motto, when more money can be made by transferring land use rights, who will want to subsist on the low income offered by agriculture? The law stipulates that 'Farmland should first be used to produce grain and agricultural products such as cotton, oil, sugar and vegetables'. But who gets to decide what is farmland and what is construction land?

Along with the forceful implementation of this Land Law, 'agricultural management teams' have also been formed and deployed. This is supposed to be for ensuring food security and preventing diversion of food crop land. In practice, '...as soon as the agricultural management appeared, it immediately began to interfere with the daily production and life of the masses, directly threatening farmers' means of direct economic income.' Quite naturally this has met with stiff resistance. So much so that the equipment procurement list of an Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau office included 'signal shields, stab-proof vests, electric batons and night vision devices'. Images of 'farm managers' entering the fields with explosion-proof shields to pull out crops were seen on the net.

Maoists in China have made the following observation about the new law: "The 'management rights' are to be separated from the farmers' contractual rights to land. These 'management rights' are to be transferred and traded, and the farmers are then given some compensation benefits. In fact, this is a policy that encourages the annexation of land by large capitals. The essence of contractual rights in the past is in danger of being separated and outlawed today. This is similar to how the revisionists used contractual rights to separate collective land use rights during the restoration of capitalism in China. It was a bourgeois

policy to further divide the countryside and promote the interests of capital. Today, the revisionists are trying to further exploit our peasants by playing similar tricks to those used in the past. If this policy were really wonderful, it would not have caused the peasants to revolt so often. Most of the "peasants" have long since given up farming as a means of livelihood, because their families have little or no land. They have instead moved to the cities to work. But there is clearly a significant proportion of peasants who remain in the countryside. They are the last of the country's peasants in the true and narrow sense of the word. They are of course also workers, albeit with some private ownership. Today that is on the verge of being taken away further by the bureaucratic monopoly bourgeoisie.'

They further note, "The overall picture of change in our agriculture can then be broadly defined: 1. Firstly, our bureaucratic monopoly bourgeoisie has created a standing army to manage and supervise the peasantry and to provide for the exploitation, oppression and suppression of the peasantry. This standing army is under the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. This force, although still small, is bound to grow in size as the need to exploit and oppress the peasantry grows. 2. The so-called "transfer of rural land management rights" is in fact meant to essentially eliminate the land contract rights of our peasants and to deprive them of their land. This in turn has to create a large proletariat or semi-proletariat in the countryside.' Evidently, the consumption boom expected by the Chinese rulers is going to be restricted to a narrow stratum of the rural population. Inequality will increase. Protests will increase.

The Xi regime assumes that greater doses of social fascism will overcome all obstacles and resistance. But the most important impediment it faces is its class nature which places 'profit in command'. Like the political representative of any other capitalist class it can only superintend an economy that repeatedly goes from boom to bust and back again. It remains for the Chinese working class and masses to break that cycle and restore socialism. ◆



Palestine

Tathagata Roychoudhury

To our land, and it is a prize of war,
the freedom to die from longing and burning
and our land, in its bloodied night,
is a jewel that glimmers for the far upon the far
and illuminates what's outside it ...
As for us, inside,
we suffocate more!

The haunting words of Mahmoud Darwish's To Our Land reflect the unfulfilled aspirations of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian people have persisted in their fight for national liberation in the face of numerous setbacks, including the Nakba, seventy-five years of occupation and apartheid, numerous acts of aggression and land theft, betrayals by Arab governments, the Arafats and Abbases, and US funding for Israel totalling hundreds of billions of dollars.

The lightning raid on Israel on October 7, 2023, from the open-air prison that is the Gaza Strip, was a potent demonstration of the spirit of the Palestinian struggle and dealt a severe blow to the US-led imperialist bloc and the Zionist enemy, exposing chinks in their invincible Iron Dome and flaws in their purportedly unbeatable military might.

However, it is only natural that questions arise from amidst the struggle regarding its future – especially from among those struggling for the liberation of Palestine. One of the main concerns regarding this struggle is – what happens to Israel?



Zionists who feel compelled to justify Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people sometimes accuse those who oppose it of trying to "delegitimize" the self-described "Jewish state." They respond that Israel has a "right to exist." However, this simply cannot be true. For a state's "right to exist" does not exist. International law recognizes no such right. The idea itself is ridiculous. People have rights, states do not.

Collective exercise of individual rights is necessary as well, but it must not come at the expense of individual rights. The right to self-determination, which is the ability of a people to exercise their individual rights collectively through political self-governance, is the pertinent right in this situation. The Palestinian people have the right to self-determination. So, now a new question arises. Do the Israeli people have a right to self-determination? Some liberals and 'Marxists' claim that after 70 years of occupation of Palestine, some of these settlers have become "citizens" and found the characteristics of a "nation" and a "modern civil society" has been created.

French 'Marxist' historian Maxime Rodinson avoided demonising either the Israelis as the colonisers or the Palestinian resistance and their rejection of the Israelis and Israel as a reality (at the time of his writing). He called for a long-term perspective and for reflecting on other colonial histories broadly and comparatively. He pled for us to see both the victims and the victors of the colonising process as human beings. "They – the Israelis and the Palestinians – will have to solve the problem of Palestine... There is no revolutionary solution to the Arab-Israeli problem." (Rodinson, 1973)

In a similar vein to Rodinson, the sociologist Shafir also writes in the conclusion to his essay: 'Peacemaking between Israelis and the PLO signals a new, late wave in the decolonisation of overseas European societies' (Shafir, 1999)

In 1971, a 35-year-old PFLP leader rejected this concept of an Israeli nation as fantasy and intellectual compromise. This young leader of the PFLP would go on to draft its Marxist-Leninist programme and become its spokesperson. Ghassan

Kanafani was interviewed in the *New Left Review* by the 25-year-old Fred Halliday, who would become a world-renowned scholar of the Middle East.

The (Israeli)Matzpen group and others [Rodinson and Shafir] had argued that there may not originally have been a Jewish nation, but the migrants who had come to Palestine have established there a new community, which can be called the Israeli nation.

Kanafani's answer to this theorisation was: "... (the idea that Israelis are a nation) is a fantastic intellectual compromise. It means that any group of colonialists who occupy an area and stay there for a while can justify their existence, by saying they are developing into a nation... It is a colonialist situation. What you have is a group of people, brought for several reasons, justified and unjustified, to a particular area of the world. Together, they all participate in a colonialist situation, while between them there are also relations of exploitation. I agree that Israeli workers are exploited. But this is not the first time this has happened. The Arabs in Spain were in the same position. There were classes among them (the Spanish people) but the main contradiction was between the Arabs in Spain as a whole and the Spanish people."

Another popular Zionist defence is that Israel was established via a legitimate political process. This is untrue as well. This myth stems from the belief that the well-known UN General Assembly "partition plan" resolution, Resolution 181 of November 29, 1947, legally divided Palestine or gave the Zionist leadership legal standing to unilaterally declare Israel's independence on May 14, 1948.

In fact, the Zionist leadership claimed legal power over Resolution 181 in that very declaration, Israel's foundation document. In reality, though, Resolution 181 accomplished nothing of the sort. Palestine could not be divided against the wishes of the vast majority of its citizens by the General Assembly. Instead, the Assembly only suggested dividing Palestine into distinct Arab and Jewish states, which would need to be approved by both peoples in order to be enforceable. The Security Council rejected the plan once the Assembly brought it before them, explicitly stating that the UN lacked the power to carry out any such division.

The unilateral proclamation of the Zionists is commonly referred to as a “Declaration of Independence.” A declaration of independence is predicated on the idea that the people making it are sovereign to the region over which they intend to use their right to self-determination. Nonetheless, the area that would eventually become the state of Israel was not under the Zionists’ sovereignty.

Conversely, fewer than 7% of Palestine’s land was owned by Jews at the time Israel was proclaimed to exist. In every Palestinian district, the number of land owned by Arabs exceeded that of Jews. In Palestine, Arabs made up the majority population as well. Jews continued to be a minority, making up roughly one-third of the population, despite widespread immigration. To put it plainly, the Zionist leadership lacked a right to sovereignty over the land that they eventually won via war and genocide. Notably, international law forbids acquiring territory by conflict.

Israel was formed through violence, not through any type of legal political process. Hundreds of thousands of Arabs were ethnically cleansed from their homes in Palestine, allowing the Zionists to seize most of the land for their state. Literally, hundreds of Arab villages vanished from the map.

Israel has neither claim to historical legitimacy, nor politico-legal legitimacy. The question of national liberation consists of the interconnection of the land issue and the settler issue. Lenin quotes

Marx in his essay The Right of Nations to Self-Determination, “...What the Irish need is: 1) Self-government and independence from England;2) An agrarian revolution...” As a result, the national liberation movement for its victory and solving the issue of the right to self-determination of the Palestinians as a nation must solve both issues that are interconnected to each other. It means liberation of all the occupied lands including cities and villages, houses, agricultural lands, etc. and their seizure without compensation to the Israelis. It means complete decolonization from its settlers, who are the financial-military basis for advancing the occupation. Without this, the contradiction between the colonized and the colonizer will not resolve, and the struggle will surrender by reformism to the ethno-state and this cancerous tumour dependent on imperialism will continue to live according to the strategic plans of the imperialists.

No amount of US funding and armament, no amount of brutality committed by settlers, no amount of Mossad espionage, and no amount of Israeli bombs has been able to crush the Palestinian people’s resistance, which has long served as an example to others who are oppressed and exploited worldwide. The oppressor is bound by the very shackles with which they chain the oppressed. The Jewish people can never be free, until the Arab people are free. Israelis can never be free, until Palestine is free and Israel no longer exists.



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