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Ethics of Inclusion and



An Indian Anthology of Cases Vol. 3

John Mohan Razu

Ethics of Inclusion and Equality

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Vol. 3

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John Mohan Razu

Globethics.net Readers No. 8

Globethics.net Readers

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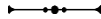
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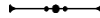
DEDICATION



This work is dedicated to our son, Swithin S. Razu, Post-Doctoral fellow in Bio-Mechanics at Research Division, hospital for special surgery, Weill Cornell Medicine, New York USA for critical inquiry and creative application.

INTRODUCTION

AN INDIAN ANTHOLOGY OF CASES



Notions of “empire” have undergone sea-changes through historical trajectories—from biblical to the present times. Conceptions of “empire” fall within the domains of normative political theories. Ideas of empire appears and re-appears, configures and re-configures as an all-encompassing doctrine and is posing intense contestations and serious debates both in academia and in political arenas. There are those who view and endorse “empire” as positive and good, whereas others consider empire as negative and regressive. Debates and discourse on “empire” continues and are being nuanced at ideological, theological and political levels. How do we discern the changing trends and with what we locate the changing templates?

Empire is a formula that keep changing as the politics and economy changes its course as the times go by. In the 21st Century it is not the nation-states that push its might over the weaker countries; a few elected representatives who have come together based on their ideological convictions and political vision. Therefore it is imperative to capture the changing contours of our locales. The crisis that we face now is indeed a new variable of the old battle between protectionism and free trade. Economic globalization in the 1980s with the matrix of LPG brought together under its umbrella which has been called as One Economic

Unit/Order that required opening the trade walls and free flow of labor, goods and services as well as capital —perhaps be called as *Oikumene*.

On the one hand, based on Trinitarian principles of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG), so that free market system based on the fundamentals of the market that dismantled the controls and interventions of the government entrenched in and firmly believes and thus observes in rule of law, democracy and human rights guaranteed in the liberal political thought. While on the other, the conservatives believe in the credo of capitalism, but retained their conservative position on LGBTQ, abortion, euthanasia, gay and lesbian rights, abortion, racial and caste supremacy, religious fanaticism and host of others. There have been a clear divide that we see between two ideological positions that dominated the world across the political spectrum—liberalism and conservatism.

In that, the far-right conservatives—a section within the rightists’ populism believe that only a particular race, castes and religious communities should live and so the country belongs only to them and those falling outside their realms and prescribed guidelines are considered as ‘outsiders’, “aliens” and “traitors”. Therefore, no outsiders are allowed so that the resources, jobs and all that available belong to them. To protect from the migrants, refugees and immigrants they want to build walls across the borders, detention centers for those who infiltrate and invoke legislation to show their citizenship and check their patriotism with skewed narratives and dictates. Nowadays this credo is spreading like wild fire across the continents and between the countries. The staunch proponents and advocates and executioners of this ideology are Trump, Modi, Boris and others such as Brazilian President, Israeli and the Australian Prime Ministers believe in the totalitarian democracy.

Trump, Boris, Modi and those subscribing to it keep re-inventing and thus circumventing far-right populism to their advantage and totally crushed the ‘liberals’ and ‘centrists’ who could not match their on-

slaughters with powerful rhetoric and narratives such as ‘America First’, ‘Hindu India’, ‘White Supremacy’, Zionist tendencies, Xenophobia, Islamophobia and religious fundamentalism are some of them. Those who have been longing for such toxic ideas and ideals went all out in support of them and embraced them as their ‘messiahs’. Once considered as ‘losers’ and ‘fallen victims’ saw in them their hope. And currently they represent the ‘empire’ and pushing their political agenda and project in systematic Coronavirus (COVID-19) and vicious manner.

Global Order is rapidly changing in tune to the changing times and moving towards populism and far-right conservatism. Apart from many, one such classic example where a reference could be made what Russian President Putin in one of his interviews to the *Financial Times* said that “liberalism had become obsolete” by substantiating that refugees, migrants and LGBTQ issues were “overwhelmingly opposed by majority of population”. The ideological battle between those who believe in populism, nationalism and trade protectionism are the frontal ideological principles of ‘empire’ as against the liberal values such as democracy, rule of law, freedom and human rights.

Accumulation and centralization of power is seen amongst those who have been changing the Constitution in order to usurp and stay on and on in power. Accordingly, they amend the Constitution to suit their whims and fancies. Within the empire building, shades of totalitarian pushers in militarily and economically powerful countries have come together wielding absolute power that never allows them to be questioned and contested. Classic examples we find in recent times are Russian and Chinese Presidents who have annexed power in disproportionate manner and absolute ways. In Russia and China, those who oppose them in whatever ways possible are brutally contained, intimidated, put behind the bars and even liquidated from the face of earth. Both in Russia and China opposition is totally demolished.

Empire is characterized and represented by a few individuals who want to further totalitarian democracy across the world. Similarly some of the nation-states are represented by individuals who tend to project them bigger than the nation-states and the parties they belong to. The nation-states are not represented by the sum total and collective citizenry, but by a few individuals. Summits, agreements and state visits we see only their faces emerge and not others, because they are the emperors who pose as big monolithic—bigger than the parties they hail from and often act as if “the country is them and they the country”—‘Howdy Modi’ and ‘Namaste Trump’. Theories and conceptions emerged that said “End of Meta narratives”, “End of History”, “End of Ideology” and many others have become obsolete and bygone.

On the contrary, we have been observing the clash between ideologies leading to another trajectory of history. Empire shall never make the *world flat*, rather believes in flattening and polarizing the world to its advantage. In this Zionism, ultra evangelicalism and religious fundamentalism benefit the most and so the forces of empire are engaged in the process of consolidation and hegemonization. Three key words that dominate to-day’s world: 1) populism, 2) nationalism and 2) protectionism. India, USA, Brazil, Italy, Poland, Hungary, United Kingdom and some more across the world are entrenched with these. What we are witnessing is a shift from liberalism to populism, wherein the far-right ideological positions has taken the centre stage. Brexit is a classic example.

Modi, Trump, Boris, Netanyahu and Bolsonaro are some of the strong and staunch advocates of far-right politics with rhetoric “Go back to the countries of origin”, “Go to Pakistan”, “Urban Naxals”, “anti-nationals”, “Make in India”, “America First”, “Make America Great Again”, “Go back to your country of origin”, “White America”, “White supremacists”, “Majoritarianism”, “Hindu Rashtra”, “Only English-speaking can enter UK”, Building Walls”, “Goli Marro”, “Terrorists”,

”Identify by the dress you wear”, so on and so forth. Through the lens of BJP—RSS, PM Modi’s visit to Israel marks the beginning of a new symbolism, fresh substance and nuanced narratives.

Recently the current dispensation of India made a radical departure of its foreign policy and political position. PM Modi and his government wants to befriend Tel Aviv by totally sidelining and practically undermining the Palestinian question and cause—by not visiting the Palestinian locales such as West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights. He did not even discuss with the Israeli counterpart about the illegal settlements and occupation of the Palestinian land. It was deliberate, clear message and ideologically positioned move because there have been closer proximity and affinity between “Jewish Zionism” and “Hindu Nationalism”. Empire is gradually spreading its tentacles in the Middle East as Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and worked out a peace plan between Israel and Palestinians without involving Palestinian leadership and the Government of Palestine. Comity of nations including United Nations could not put a stop to the American administration.

It is a known fact that PM Modi, PM Netanyahu and President Trump have similar narratives particularly wooing ultra-evangelical American Christians, ultra conservative Jews and fundamentalist Indian Hindu in the State of Israel, the United States and in India. Consolidation of ultra-fundamentalism is going on across the world and some of these leaders do represent the growing political project of these leaders. As protests are going on across the country on CAA, NPR and NRC, I remember George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty Four*, a masterpiece and a dystopia published in June 1949, goes beyond 1984 and is relevant now. George Orwell satirically brings to the foreground on the risks of the governments’ outreach that consequently leading to totalitarianism and repressive compartmentalization of all persons in any given society.

Bidar in Karnataka is a classic case which manifests the brute face of the State where Mother and Head of the School are arrested in Bidar and

8 and 12 old school children classes 6, 7 and 8 are being interrogated for participating in a play about CAA for hours. 9-year child who was part of the play whose mother has been arrested pleading for her mother's return presently being held behind bar being charged under "sedition". Further, all the former three chief ministers in former J & K are now detained under Public Security Act (PSA) which means they can be detained in prison without trial. All these show clearly Orwell's *1984*=Karnataka 2020.

Sedition by children and questioned by police for enacting in a play on CAA. Two women have been arrested and one happens to be a single mother. It candidly shows that when the State terrorizes the citizens what we should call this— fascism. It falls perfectly within the definition of fascism. It continues to shed light more value and relevance to us as we are surrounded by those who are engaged in "double speak" and "double think". Orwell offers a few dictums that totally juxtapose the opposing meanings that have innate depth such as "war is peace"; "freedom is slavery" and "ignorance is strength". This is what PM Modi calls "New India" which reflects the totalitarian democracy.

The State is represented and thus visibly present by the Government of the day. The State is permanent, but the government is impermanent and therefore is subject to change. The State vis-à-vis government whenever it faces opposition—internal or external or unrests or uprisings it perceives or assumes as seditious or waging war to put simply as against the state/government. It would not hesitate to unleash its machinery at its disposal. The power of the State is enormous via its Government and so it would no longer abdicate its reign and by all means tends to perpetuate its power and authority and would go all out to protect.

The State when it sees some kind of threat looming against it shows its ferocity and thus becomes rogue when its frontal entity the government faces the threat factor. Threats may come from varied forces and

due to numerous factors. Take for instance, the current dispensation, the Government of India (GOI) ruled by the BJP swept to power. Since then, the present political dispensation controlling the reins of the GOI is decimating the political parties that opposed them electorally. BJP thus far enjoys brute majority and brought the organs of governance under its control. In the absence of an articulate and united opposition, BJP's juggernaut stretched its arms to many others and brought those under its control.

Since December 2019, we have been witnessing protests right across the country against CAA-NRC-NPR. Raging protests day after day all over has shaken the power-base of the ruling party that gradually started to erode. Protests across the country are not from the opposition political parties, but primarily from the young India. Surprisingly this time, the opposition has primarily been by the youth particularly the students' community and young India. It emerged from one locale and then on without any leadership spread to diverse pockets and is gaining momentum. Apparently, these spontaneous, sudden and fast-spreading uprisings have totally deactivated the smooth-functioning of government and governance.

As a result, uprisings by young India has hugely paralyzed and check-mated PM Modi's juggernaut. Since 2014, there has been political vacuum and PM Modi enjoyed the vacuum thinking that the electorates are with him. In the absence of united opposition the ruling dispensation RSS-BJP with brute majority went on pushing sensitive issues translating them into laws without proper debates and consensus across party lines. BJP has taken the Indian electorates and the people for granted and went on for CAA and openly announced and started moving in the direction of implementing NRC and NPR. These triangular initiatives are three-edged sharp lethal weapon that compliments one another.

In the name who should fall within its definition and categorization of "Indian Citizens" and "Not Citizens"—all these are devised to ac-

commodate and exclude communities on the basis of religion. The move of the GOI has grossly undermined and blatantly violated the fundamental rights enshrined and guaranteed in the Indian Constitution irrespective of religion. Further, some of the BJP-ruled states have already started to construct detention centers. Some of the sinister moves of the GOI irked the people of India, though opposition political parties in their own ways resisted CAA, NRC and NPR, but the modes used failed to attract the attention of the public mood.

A section of the electorates for varied reasons reposed their hopes on the leadership of PM Modi since 2014 thinking that he would deliver the goods and take India by laying solid socio-economic, politico-cultural and political foundations thereby building a strong, dynamic and vibrant India. Contrary to their expectations, young India surprised many occupying the political space by storm which has filled by BJP since 2014. The young India across region keeps opposing CAA-NRC-NPR courageously and consistently. A question that arises at this point is: Who are these young Indians all of a sudden bloomed from nowhere which eventually become a live wire and turned into ‘Young India Protest Movement’?

Surprisingly, it is spontaneous emanating from deep-down emotions coupled with courage, patriotism, love, resolve and resilience. It is out of patriotic feelings towards consolidation and visualization of New India that runs deep. Further, it is the autonomous character of the youth who want to build a free, inclusive, secular India. Young India keep protesting right across is indeed a new phenomenon that we are witnessing after JP’s “Total Revolution” which galvanized many youngsters some decades. The uprisings were sudden and totally unexpected. Young India keeps raising slogans by standing together putting up a courageous fight against the government emphasizing the India they want to live and inherit.

What runs deep in them are daringness and frustration, anger and moderation, commitment and forbearance. Fake news, false narratives, fact-checks, quantum of numbers and social media dunks have not changed their feelings and resolve. Songs, poems, reciting of the Preamble of Constitution have become the soul of the protesters. As we have been witnessing the protests gradually spreading nationwide from big cities to small towns which include higher research and professional institutions, UGC affiliated colleges including government-funded universities, private and public schools and youth from other sectors continue to protest. The character of protests is gradually churning emotionalism and determinism as well as activism and idealism.

The protesters want the GOI to roll-back CAA-NRC-NPR. This is why the protest gaining momentum and getting intensified week after week. GOI thought that the protest may last for few days and fizzle out, but to their surprise of the ruling dispensation it is gathering more numbers and spreading rapidly. The State via GOI has been in denial mode and keeps blaming the opposition political parties for spreading false information about CAA, NPR, NRC and others. Instead introspecting its follies and consequential impacts on women, poor, vulnerable and some minority communities and admitting those the GOI went ahead in heckling an “imagined enemy”.

Who is the “imagined enemy” of the State/GOI? “Imagined enemy” of the State via GOI could be the “Young India” who is by and large students. The State needs an enemy to target to point out in order to conceal rising prices, growing inflation, unprecedented joblessness and widening inequality. Since 2014, it is a known fact that the State has been targeting State-funded Universities employing its force on them. Politically the things that are happening are not coherent and so there’s no definiteness. We see the fluidity and therefore we are in a state of flux. The present dispensation is bent on to go ahead with its view and program and against any dissent or contrarian views. Young India woke

India and the recent uprisings are to make India better, dynamic and vibrant.

The State/GOI must have an imagined enemy in order to perpetuate its rule and power. The might of the State is now under test. Intellectuals, questioning and inquiry minds are now considered as imagined enemies. Young India has its idealism and wants their dreams and aspirations are to be realized, while the intent of the State is to isolate and sideline the minorities, poor and marginalized further by initiating all sorts of laws and enactments. Government crack-down of the students continues, but the students unfazed. Students and young India brought back moral clarity and constitutional value to the centre that the State failed which believed on its brute strength.

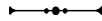
We live in tumultuous times. Anxiety has gripped many as they face insecurity and uncertainty of their present and future of their children. However, it is not new. It has been there through ages and humanity managed to cruise and navigate. Charles Dickens in his masterpiece entitled *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) even after one hundred fifty years ago sheds light to us: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us ...". A fabulous blend of polar opposites that describes the web of life the humanity per se passed through the ages.

The poor, vulnerable and hapless in particular in amazing ways managed to survive those difficult times. Even now they are in dire straits and subjected to all sorts dangers and difficulties. What is the magic wand they have? In such difficult times they survive—though they are caught in utter devastating perils. The things happening around us are human-triggered. Everyone knows who triggers, how it is triggered, why it is triggered and for what it is triggered? How many times one can turn

a blind eye, pretend to be deaf, act as mutes when millions and billions of people undergo horrendous problems in their day-to-day problems.

People cry, suffer and die due to horrific conditions, in which they are made to live, suffer and exist. Maze of problems majority of populace across the world face and confront and all their problems are intertwined with each other—socio-economic, political, cultural and religious. A mass of people across the world undergo all sorts of miseries perpetrated and inflicted by those with money, power and authority—all due to human avarice and arrogance. Across the borders we have been witnessing mass exodus for want of safety, security and better livelihood. What then is the answer? Should we sing metaphorically “the answer is blowing in the wind” or search for solutions ‘here and now’ and act on them. The beauty of human spirit has always been hope-enlivening for better tomorrow and prosperous future for all.

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): AN OFFSHOOT OF GLOBALIZATION!



Nowadays coronavirus has become a buzz word widely used across the world. After the Great Depression there have been a few crises that shook the world—all due to globalization. It is still the key word for the politicians, economists, political analysts and commoners. Globalization as an economic doctrine has been accepted and endorsed by the countries of the world in early 1980s. As a result, the nation-states embraced integration of economies with the global economic order assuming that it would bring progress and prosperity to their countries. Globalization in the initial years promised all sort of things falling in tune to the expectations and aspirations of the leaders and the people who believed in the promises of globalization.

In order to reap bountiful benefits, the forces of globalization pushed the countries of the world to subscribe to its dictates. The developing countries went all out in embracing globalization based on the development paradigm of Walt Rostow who vociferously argued that growth or modernization model was the only path for the developing countries to grow and prosper to ‘catch up’ with the developed countries/economies. His development paradigm is premised on westernization. Rostowian type reiterated that the development path the West followed brought astounding progress, growth and prosperity in terms of GDP, GNP and Per capita income.

In tune to its requisites and mandate the developing countries thought that the best way for them to develop and to ‘catch up’ was to Liberalize, Privatize and Globalize (LPG). As a working principle he prescribed “take-off” model that comprised of five-steps by using a metaphor—air craft which he graphically illustrated right from prior to take-off pointing out primitive modes of production and then the need materials for ‘take-off’ followed by the stage when the air craft cruises. Similarly the countries with agrarian economies should invest more in building sea ports, air ports and railways. In tune to the requisites, more money has been allocated to building infrastructure and communication facilities.

Those who opposes to the project of globalization view it as a negative force primarily responsible for all the consequential effects that the poor and subaltern are facing across the world. Presently the entire world is gripped by a deadly pandemic known as Corona virus—Covid—19. Economists and futurologists predict that the epidemic could push the world to an unprecedented economic downturn which would have worse consequential effects than 2008 economic melt-down, wherein the entire world was hit by global financial crisis. Economic crises of 2008 witnessed the global economy plummeted to its low. The work force and their families in hundreds and thousands had to return due to job losses which continued for some years.

Middle-level employees who had invested in corporations lost all their savings because it was a crash of corporate globalization. At this juncture, let me bring back to the fore the global economic slump—economic depression vis-à-vis 1929-1939—the worst-ever financial crisis of the 20th Century. Presently we by and large have been witnessing a pandemic COVID—19 started during the end of 2019 causing fear initially amongst few countries and then on gradually gaining momentum spreading to numerous countries and now is at its peak. It is undoubtedly posing a grave public health crisis for the comity of nations

and is going to create devastating havoc and effects in number of ways. As a consequence, several thousands of people perished across the world and about 127 thousands of people have been affected thus far and identified as positive across worldwide covering more than 114 countries.

Globalization endorsed connectivity and integration and so pushed for more air and sea ports within and across the countries. For the last three decades many developing countries of the world started investing on constructing airports and sea ports so that their economies would boom. In tune to this cities have been modernized and keep expanding with skyscrapers, eight-lane autobahns, flyovers, metro-trains and silicon valleys' and techno parks. More and more people have started to move into the big cities from, towns and villages for livelihood, quality life and education. Connectivity to any part of the world has been made possible within seconds including transfer of money.

Globalization has connected and integrated the world into one global village/ one economic unit. For the proponents of globalization in the process of integration the world and its populace believe in 'Big is Beautiful'. Global population is more than 7 billion and in that population of the metropolises has more. When something like coronavirus hits it spreads so fast and devours. As we connect and integrate more when any epidemic hits there are a possibility of more people dying. It is the result of globalization. World is increasingly becoming susceptible and virulent after threats such as virus or cyber attacks. We have entered into another phase or setting wherein these pose serious threats and challenges than the conventional wars. These are due to globalization that believes in technological innovation and revolution. More than the positives, the negatives—"catching up" seem to be more when we look at things happening around us.

Virus can easily create ramifying effects when proximity is closer. With all the COVID-19 has taken the world to its hold because health and finance are inter-related complex system. Every activity has come to

a grinding halt wherein people do not want risk their lives. As a consequence it has affected tourism, production, distribution, consumption, education and host of other. There have been lockdown of travels, entry into countries, closures of educational institutions, work places and travel. None wants to take risks. Airports are deserted; educational institutions look deserted; hospitality and entertainment industry in shatters; factories are closed; community gatherings and festivities are curbed and people by and large stay in-doors.

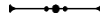
Out of fear for life people stay in-doors which automatically leads to the paralysis of all activity—consumption, production and distribution. All these show that we are heading for serious turmoil and global recession. Coronavirus is undoubtedly a game changer that has hit badly our assumption and presupposition. Globalization has inflicted serious blow after 2008 financial crash and this time it attacked the health of the world which is indeed one of the principle agencies for a healthy society and prosperous world. It has put the global economy to negative growth. Economic activities have been badly hit. Governments and WHO keep advising people not to fear but the gravity and severity of the pandemic keep posing more fear and uncertainty. None can assure when this would stop or put a stop. We live in uncertain times. COVID-19 is an extreme pandemic and has been posing traumatic implications.

There has been drastic decline in the demand, supply and consumer confidence. Coronavirus has exasperated inequality further within and between the countries. Rich and the powerful have the capacity to escape from the deadly pandemic, but the poor would be badly hit because of their financial constraints and living conditions. However, we come across a rhetoric that “pandemic cuts across all sorts of barriers and everything” which is not true. Realistically and empirically speaking it hit the poor and the rich somehow manage to tide over. Economic activity has been hit and so growth in GDP, GNP and Per capita would also be abysmal.

Rich countries have more money to allocate to combat coronavirus but countries like India hardly can do anything. Stock markets keep plunging and crashing as it is driven by the external shock created by coronavirus. The virus penetrated into the wheels of economy and ravaging the production and supply chains. Market is getting nervous and changing and if it continues traders would have to change. Financial crash continues and is percolating at all levels like tsunami since the virus that appeared in Dec 2019. Proponent of globalization say that COVID—19 has ushered the global crisis and not the crisis of globalization. It is certainly the crisis of globalization because coronavirus is the offshoot of globalization.

DE-CODING THE CHANGING TRENDS

THE STATE NEEDS AN “IMAGINED ENEMY” – A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE



Three key words that dominate to-day’s world: 1) populism, 2) nationalism and 2) protectionism. India, USA, Brazil, Italy, Poland, Hungary, United Kingdom and some more across the world are entrenched with these. What we are witnessing is a shift from liberalism to populism, wherein the far-right ideological positions has taken the centre stage. Modi, Trump, Boris, Netanyahu and Bolsonaro are some of the strong and staunch advocates of far-right politics with rhetoric “Go back to the countries of origin”, “Go to Pakistan”, “Urban Naxals”, “anti-nationals”, “Building Walls”, “White America”, “Goli Marro”, “Terrorists”, ”Identify by the dress they wear” so on so forth.

Through the lens of BJP—RSS, PM Modi’s visit to Israel recently marks the beginning of a new symbolism, fresh substance and nuanced narratives. Further, it marks the radical departure on the part of India that PM Modi and his government wants befriend Tel Aviv by totally sidelining and practically undermining the Palestinian question and cause—by not visiting the Palestinian locales such as West Bank. It was deliberate, clear message and ideologically positioned move because there have been closer proximity and affinity between “Jewish Zionism” and “Hindu Nationalism”.

Empire is gradually spreading its tentacles in the Middle East as Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and worked out a peace plan between Israel and Palestinians without involving Palestinian leadership. It is known fact that PM Modi and President Trump have similar narratives particularly wooing ultra-evangelical American Christians and fundamentalist Indian Hindu both in the United States and India. As protests are going on across the country on CAA, NPR and NRC, I remember George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*, a masterpiece and a dystopia published in June 1949, goes beyond 1984 and is relevant now.

George Orwell satirically brings to the foreground on the risks of the governments' outreach that consequently leading to totalitarianism and repressive regimentalism of all persons in any given society. Bidar in Karnataka is a classic case which manifests the brute face of the State where Mother and Head of the School are arrested in Bidar and 8 and 12 old school children classes 6, 7 and 8 are being interrogated for participating in a play about CAA for hours. 9-year child who was part of the play whose mother has been arrested pleading for her mother's return presently being held behind bar being charged under "sedition".

Further, all the former three chief ministers in former J & K are now detained under Public Security Act (PSA) which means they can be detained in prison without trial. All these shows clearly Orwell's 1984=Karnataka 2020: Sedition by children and questioned by police for enacting in a play on CAA. Two women have been arrested and one happens to be a single mother.

It candidly shows that when the State terrorizes the citizens what we should call this— fascism. It falls perfectly within the definition of fascism. It continues to shed light more value and relevance to us as we are surrounded by those who are engaged in "double speak" and "double think". Orwell offers a few dictums that totally juxtapose the opposing meanings that have innate depth such as "war is peace"; "freedom is

slavery” and “ignorance is strength”. This is India and the modus operandi that being employed

The State is represented and thus visibly present by the Government of the day. The State is permanent, but the government is impermanent and therefore subject to change. The State vis-à-vis government whenever it faces opposition—internal or external or unrests or uprisings it perceives or assumes as seditious or waging war to put simply as against the state/government. It would not hesitate to unleash its machinery at its disposal. The power of the State is enormous via its Government and so it would no longer abdicate its reign and by all means tends to perpetuate its power and authority and would go all out to protect.

The State when it sees some kind of threat looming against it shows its ferocity and thus becomes rogue when its frontal entity the government faces the threat factor. Threats may come from varied forces and due to numerous factors. Take for instance, the current dispensation, the Government of India (GOI) ruled by the BJP swept to power. Since then, the present political dispensation which is controlling the reins of the GOI by squarely is decimating the political parties that opposed them electorally.

BJP thus far enjoys brute majority and brought the organs of governance under its control. In the absence of an articulate and united opposition, BJP’s juggernaut stretched its arms to many others and brought those under its control. The State via GOI has assumed its absolute power. Since December 2019, we have been witnessing protests right across the country against CAA-NRC-NPR. Raging protests day after day all over has shaken the power-base of the ruling party that gradually started to erode.

Protests across the country are not from the opposition political parties, but primarily from the young India. Surprisingly this time, the opposition has primarily been by the youth particularly the students’ community and young India. It emerged from one locale and then on without

any leadership spread to diverse pockets and is gaining momentum. Apparently, these spontaneous, sudden and fast-spreading uprisings have totally deactivated the smooth-functioning of government and governance.

As a result uprisings by young India has hugely paralyzed and check-mated PM Modi's juggernaut. Since 2014, there has been political vacuum and PM Modi enjoyed the vacuum thinking that the electorates are with him. In the absence of united opposition the ruling dispensation RSS-BJP with brute majority went on pushing sensitive issues translating them into laws without proper debates and consensus across party lines. BJP has taken the Indian electorates and the people for granted and went on for CAA and openly announced and started moving in the direction of implementing NRC and NPR. These triangular initiatives are three-edged sharp lethal weapon that compliments one another.

In the name who should fall within its definition and categorization of "Indian Citizens" and "Not Citizens"—all these are devised to accommodate and exclude communities on the basis of religion. The move of the GOI has grossly undermined and blatantly violated the fundamental rights enshrined and guaranteed in the Indian Constitution irrespective of religion. Further, some of the BJP-ruled states have already started to construct detention centers. Some of the sinister moves of the GOI irked the people of India, though opposition political parties in their own ways resisted CAA, NRC and NPR, but the modes used failed to attract the attention of the public mood.

A section of the electorates for varied reasons reposed their hopes on the leadership of PM Modi since 2014 thinking that he would deliver the goods and take India by laying solid socio-economic, politico-cultural and political foundations thereby building a strong, dynamic and vibrant India. Contrary to their expectations, young India surprised many occupying the political space by storm which has filled by BJP since 2014. The young India across regions keeps opposing CAA-NRC-NPR coura-

geously and consistently. A question that arises at this point is: Who are these young Indians all of a sudden bloomed from nowhere which eventually become a live wire and turned into ‘Young India Protest Movement’?

Surprisingly, it is spontaneous emanating from deep-down emotions coupled with courage, patriotism, love, resolve and resilience. It is out of patriotic feelings towards consolidation and visualization of New India that runs deep. Further, it is the autonomous character of the youth who want to build a free, inclusive, secular India. Young India keep protesting right across is indeed a new phenomenon that we are witnessing after JP’s “Total Revolution” which galvanized many youngsters some decades. The uprisings were sudden and totally unexpected.

Young India keeps raising slogans by standing together putting up a courageous fight against the government emphasizing the India they want to live and inherit. What runs deep in them are daringness and frustration, anger and moderation, commitment and forbearance. Fake news, false narratives, fact-checks, quantum of numbers and social media dunks have not changed their feelings and resolve. Songs, poems, reciting of the Preamble of Constitution have become the soul of the protesters.

As we have been witnessing the protests gradually spreading nationwide from big cities to small towns which include higher research and professional institutions, UGC affiliated colleges including government-funded universities, private and public schools and youth from other sectors continue to protest. The character of protests is gradually churning emotionalism and determinism as well as activism and idealism. The protesters want the GOI to roll-back CAA-NRC-NPS. This is why the protest gaining momentum and getting intensified week after week. GOI thought that the protest may last for few days and fizzle out, but to their surprise of the ruling dispensation it is gathering more numbers and spreading rapidly.

The State via GOI has been in denial mode and keeps blaming the opposition political parties for spreading false information about CAA, NPR, NRC and others. Instead introspecting its follies and consequential impacts on women, poor, vulnerable and some minority communities and admitting those the GOI went ahead in heckling an “imagined enemy”. Who are the “imagined enemy” of the State/GOI? “Imagined enemy” of the State via GOI could be the “Young India” who is by and large students.

The State needs an enemy to target to point out in order to conceal rising prices, growing inflation, unprecedented joblessness and widening inequality. Since 2014, it is a known fact that the State has been targeting State-funded Universities employing its force on them. Politically the things that are happening are not coherent and so there’s no definiteness. We see the fluidity and therefore we are in a state of flux. The present dispensation is bent on to go ahead with its view and program and against any dissent or contrarian views.

Young India woke India and the recent uprisings are to make India better, dynamic and vibrant, The State/GOI must have an imagined enemy in order to perpetuate its rule and power. The might of the State is now under test. Intellectuals, questioning and inquiry minds are now considered as imagined enemies. Young India has its idealism and wants their dreams and aspirations are to be realized, while the intent of the State is to isolate and sideline the minorities, poor and marginalized further by initiating all sorts of laws and enactments. Government crack-down of the students continues, but the students unfazed.

They see through the game plan of the State/GOI that dents their bigger picture and vision of India. Young India is fighting for better future despite GOI counter-protests. Students and young India brought back moral clarity and constitutional value to the centre that the State failed which believed on its brute strength. Democracy is receding. The government is on denial mode. This is the basic nature of rogue state. As

against the back drop, the State via GOI is currently engaged in attacking the young India by using its enforcement machinery creating “fear psychosis”. And yet, the young India continues to defy. Currently, the young India is the new opposition to the State/GOI.

PM Modi is keen on inscribing his name and want Modian India should be distinct than that of Nehruian India. In what ways it could be different? The things that follow what Orwell describes in *1984*, and so are Orwellian that reiterates in nuanced manner that “big brother” is watching “believes” and yet “do not believe”, ‘true’ and yet ‘not true’ in essence built on ‘inclusivity’ and ‘secular character’. India is hit by agrarian distress, staggering joblessness, stuttering economy, wrecking malnutrition, widening gap in inequality, growing illiteracy and environmental degradation, but all these issues have been overlooked or deliberately sidelined as against the one core issue that became the determining and defining issues was who are “nationals” and “anti-nationals”.

The current trends and foreseeable future in the coming years are candidly portrayed in the following:

The BJP mentor, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) argues for Hindu Rashtra, which is a Hindu State, sans Hinduism, where nationalism takes the place of religion and the State becomes the high priest of nationalism. It is most likely that in the Indian right-wing lexicon, nationalism would replace religion, and nationalism is deceptively secular. Right-wing nationalists frown upon religion because religions preach universalism and transcendence while nationalism demands tribal loyalty to the demarcated territory. Modi, as a nationalist politician, prefers a simpler framework. And it is not easy to find a simple framework in a complex country like India. That is why he would want to stay with the Constitution as it is because it provides the neces-

sary framework to wield State powers to impose the secular religion of nationalism over people and society.¹

The forces at work were: 1) creation of majoritarian society; 2) “Hinduisation” of the Indian Republic and 3) fulfillment of hopes and aspirations of the middle-classes. Concepts such as ‘socialism’ and ‘secularism’ have become outdated and redundant.

Neo nationalism has radically transformed the idea of India in which there are only privileges, and certainly not rights as they do not exist anymore and are thus dead. We as Indians have entered into another political epoch—Modian ‘New India’ is radically different and going to pose many challenges such as:

First... we have gangs of Hindutva hoodlums, who force critics of the government to apologise for their “mindlessness” with the additional threat of arrests still hanging over their intimidated critics... Second... the current repression invokes an ideology, that of “nationalism”, interpreted as being synonymous with Hindutva but cashing in opportunistically on the prestige of India anti-colonial nationalism despite having nothing common with it ...the current repression deliberately portrays them as dishonorable, as “enemies of the people”. The vilification is further magnified when state agencies are used to accuse these opponents of “corruption” and “wrongdoings” of various kinds; the idea is to destroy their moral standing before the people. The third... the media, barring a few... are totally in the Hindutva camp, and the task of destroying the moral structure of the opponents is facilitated because of the media’s complicit in it... Indeed, no government in post-independent India has been a close to the corporate as the Modi government, a point exemplified by his travel-

¹ Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr, in Comment titled *New India: Inevitable Right Turn* in “Deccan Herald”, June 1, 2019, p. 10.

ling in Adani's aircraft to New Delhi to be sworn in as Prime Minister... The fifth... is the Modi government thrust against minorities, especially the hapless Muslim minority... The sixth... is a promotion of unreason, a prioritization of faith over rational discourse, a cultivation of disdain for evidence and even for the internal consistency of argumentation. This phenomenon has for long challenged the RSS, but it... has now invaded official public discourse, with even the Indian Science Congress not in a position to free itself of this discourse. The seventh... is the destruction of institutions that the Modi government has initiated... public universities and other publically funded centers of learning².

The above reminds Orwellian (1984) and names such as Hitler, Mussolini, Amin, Allende and many others. "The Modi years have witnessed not just an authoritarian imposition upon society by the state, that has also got extremely centralized; they have witnessed in addition a setting up of one segment of society against another and the promotion of a cult of hatred, behind which the state acts directly in corporate interests."³ The movement of the political templates since 2014 can be perceived that prompts us to differentiate between authoritarianism and fascism. "The statistics of repression, such as the number of people jailed, were worst during the Emergency. But the potential for repression being bolt up now is much greater, more far-reaching."⁴

In an array of terms used to describe 'nationalism' just a few commentators used the word 'fascism' which also denotes a particular brand of nationalism. Can a democratically elected government be branded fascist—despite being democratically elected? There are all the possibilities for a democratically elected government turning fascist. In history

² For more details, see cover story by Prabhat Patnaik, *Shadow of Fascism* in "Frontline", April 12, 2019, p. 8.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

we have ample examples. To understand fascism comprehensively we need to go back to the father of fascism, Benito Mussolini and his seminal work, *The Doctrine of Fascism*, published in 1935.

The first and most fundamental is the primacy of the state's interests over an individual's rights. As he writes, "The fascists' conception of life stresses the importance of the state and accepts the individual only in so far as his interests coincide with those of the State". The second principle is the primacy of the state over the nation. "It is not the nation which generates the State... rather it is the State which creates the nation." The third is the rejection of democracy. "In rejecting democracy, fascism rejects the absurd conventional lie of political equalitarianism," Mussolini says, dismissing both democracy and equality in one go. Fourth is the state's non-secular character. "The Fascist state sees in religion one of the deepest of spiritual manifestations and for this reason it not only respects religion but defends and protects it." For the Italian fascist, it was "Roman Catholicism, the special, positive religion of the Italians." One doesn't need to spell out what the "special, positive religion" of the Indian fascist would be. Fifth, trying the other four principles together is a conception of the state as the repository of all virtue. For Mussolini, the state is "the conscience of the nation."⁵

If we co-relate the five constitutive elements prescribed by Mussolini and what's happening in India can be summed up "We have created our myth. The myth is a faith, it is passion. It is necessary by the fact that it is a good, a hope, and a faith that is courage. And to this myth, to the grandeur that we wish to translate into a complete reality, we subordi-

⁵ For in-depth analysis See in Perspective a column article by G. Sampath *When the state becomes the nation* in "The Hindu", March 24, 2016, p. 13.

nate all the rest.”⁶ This is Orwellian where myths are generated in order to deflect with a spate of grandeurs so that the real issues are buried or brushed aside and for that myths will have to be created, generated and promoted to keep the hopes of the masses alive.

Neo nationalism and crony capitalism are like strange bed fellows. Known for aggressive nature can go to extent to gobble up that comes in the way to safeguard, protect and promotes its interests. Exploring emergence of the strange symbiosis in recent years needs careful scrutiny and analysis.

Every single one of the characteristics mentioned above as being specific to the Modi's years is in fact a characteristic of fascism: the rampaging mobs, the “fusion of corporate and state power” (supposed to have been Benito Mussolini's definition of fascism), the targeting of hapless minority, the promotion of unreason, the destruction of universities, and so on. To say this does not mean that we shall have a re-enactment of the 1930s. We have fascist elements in power but not yet a fascist state, and today's context being different from the 1930s, we are unlikely to even have one.⁷

On these lines,

Such a crisis bring with it a threat to the hegemony of the corporate-financial oligarchy, which therefore looks for an additional prop to retain its hegemony, one that can shift the popular discourse away from the flaws of the system to the danger supposedly posed by the “other”, some hapless minority that can be made the focus of anger. Corporate capital in such situations

⁶ For more details and elaborations refer Benito Mussolini's writings on *The Doctrine on Fascism*.

⁷ For more details See Cover Story by Prabhat Patnaik, *Shadow of Fascism* in “Frontline”, April 12, 2019, p. 9.

picks up some “supremacist” fringe group (such groups spewing hatred against a minority exist in most modern societies) and pushes it centre stage through massive financial backing: what the renowned Polish economist Michal Kalecki had called a “partnership of big business with fascist upstarts” comes into being.⁸

Politics of populism and nationalism couched with crony capitalism bolsters the political economy of the current dispensation. More than anything we should be concerned about the widening inequality within the country and between the countries. Political economy of Modian ‘New India’ manifests the nexus between right-wing nationalists and crony capitalists that favors big businesses at the cost of the vulnerable, hapless and poor who have been ominously and systematically discriminated that constitutes the majority.

Therefore, “... authentic prophecy cannot be achieved in the absence of a dialectic unity between denunciation of the oppressive reality and annunciation of a new reality... This merger of denouncing with announcing is what established the revolutionary praxis...”⁹ Those who are disenfranchised and disempowered live in the culture of silence and in miserable conditions. Invoking and reiterating prophetic vocation is crucial at this point because “For the prophet it is not enough merely to speak in the name of those who cannot speak: he or she must make a commitment to the cause of those who have no voice.

The prophet struggles along with them so that all of them may speak.”¹⁰ A few merit invoking and their prophetic conjectures now become more important. Orlando Fals-Borda, a leading Colombian sociologist made the following statements that “... I cannot identify ...

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Foreword by Paulo Freire in Denis Goulet, *A New Moral Order*, Mary knoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1974, p. xiii.

¹⁰ Ibid.

with any institutions of the United States that would uphold or sustain the present economic and social policies pursued toward the nations of the Third World.”¹¹

One year later he declined an invitation to join a group of intellectuals on the future of UNO saying that “as far as I can, to the liberating effort to make my country a better place for its people, and to its search for autonomy and dignity. For me this task is of the highest priority.”¹² Orlando Fals-Borda, an organic intellectual, a dedicated scholars, active protestant layman and committed agent of social change who also had to fight conflicting loyalties he was compressed particularly with three crucial choices or options that,

- To be a detached scholar or an active revolutionary intellectual.
- To be an institutionally successful professional or a marginalized outcast.
- To be a “maker of history” or a Christian witness to transcendence.¹³

The ways with which he constructs the framework is grounded solidly on the faith he lived and expressed. There has not been any dilution in this process—unique and rooted in the calling of Christian vocation and calling. It is more apt now as we live in fluid templates that blur us to develop a clear understanding of the situation in which we find ourselves.

We are caught up with polarized narratives that obscure clarity of analysis of the real settings and theological articulations we are into and confronted with. The macro and micro scenarios posit uncertainty, while certainty is poised in the formats of climate change, skewed development process, flawed governance, fake narratives, detention camps,

¹¹ Ibid, p. 51.

¹² Ibid. p. 52.

¹³ Ibid, p. 53.

construction of binaries and walls, imposing draconian laws, shutting of democratic norms and constructional rights and guarantees.

Uncertainty, on the other hand, presently is raising alarm to the future of humanity and so is the fundamental question of human life for the present and future generations. In such a scenario, we are unable to counter and destroy the forces that threaten us on all fronts. The patterns and mechanisms of domination vests with the State are huge and horrendous, and so, we have been witnessing social unrests within and across the world and are spreading persistently in many parts of the world. The unrests raises many questions on polity, ideology, governance, human rights so on and so forth.

Uncertainty is present and visible in many ways as how our natural and human resources are utilized and abused; the patterns of production of goods, the ways they are distributed and to whom being produced; the ways with which climate is behaving and often in erratic ways and where our global and national polity is moving and in which direction partisan binaries employed and how far-right populist ways garnered. In such settings with all sorts of uncertainties majority of people exist and face all sorts of people.

As against the backdrop: what should be Christian response and how as faith community engage ourselves and respond to the current impasse and thus transform the helplessness and hopelessness into positives and transformative and thus face courageously because “Faith gives substance to our hopes and makes us certain of realities we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith ought to manifest in concrete ways. For many, faith remains at ecstatic levels—triggering pseudo/false consciousness from the subjective realms of religiosity and superficiality of spirituality.

Many can see, but pretend as if they are blind; they can talk aloud, but mumble so that others do not hear; know what is happening around them, but pretend as if nothing is happening. Why, this silence? Is it out of fear? They neither want to see, nor speak nor hear! Few months

ago—when Article 370 abrogated in J&K, the entire India was mum—as if it was gripped in silence. Deep-seated silence coupled with intense fear arising out of many factors. Silence is cancerous because it spreads like virus and affects the individuals, community and society.

The context in which we live presently makes me to go back to Mark 5: 1-10. We need symbolism because narratives enjoin symbols to convey messages. We do construct our discourses and arguments effectively by employing symbols and thus connects our messages via symbols. It is effective and enlivening. The key word in this passage is *Legion* which means a division of 3000-6000 (a large group of soldiers) who belonged to cavalry in the ancient Roman army. It also means a *horde* (many). More importantly to our context the term *legion* does mean a bunch of people or horde prepared to do anything to retain their power and push their political project.

The text unfolds a conversation between Jesus and Legion—a man possessed with evil who has been chained (hands and legs) obviously strong as possessed with horde of demon and known for hopping from tomb to tomb. When Jesus asked his name, he said *Legion*—meaning he is not just one, but many (*horde*). Since he is not single, but many, he could not be bonded. It is symbolic that fits to our setting. We are caught in similar situation as we keep confronting *Legion*, *horde* a group of people—with polarized evil ideology inflicting a spate of problems since 2014. Continually we have been facing from the *Legion* that questions our very existence and domicile.

Increasingly we are being tested by *Legion* on several fronts that questions our citizenship, our religion, patriotism, democracy, freedom that are guaranteed in our Constitution and are expected to prove failing which called as anti-nationals, urban naxals, aliens, when we question the government/ its governance or policies or anyone who control the state machinery could be charged under sedition or Public Security Act (PSA). The present dispensation is like *Legion* that unleashes its power

in such ways that those who defy have to undergo huge difficulties. The regime thinks that it is invincible and all-powerful.

It is imperative that binding the *Legion/horde* a theological proposition and a biblical mandate. For more than 45 days we have been witnessing sites of resistance and defiance against the *Legion*, despite arrests, warnings, police charge, FIRs, intimidation, shootings and deaths. Citizens of India particularly the Young India has woken Secular Democratic plural inclusive India dared to question and started defying the *Legion*. Christian faith demands resistance to diabolical arrangements that demeans the sanctity of human life as Christians enjoy in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth and Christ of the Divine.

It is this fusion that extends authenticity and grandeur to human life and offers life in all abundance. Any political system or ideological arrangement that thwarts or subverts reducing or treating humans in different ways impinges on the sanctity of *Homo sapiens* is antithetical to God's design. Christian faith is dynamic and resilient and never compromises to those forces that reduce to human power lust, As Dietrich Bonhoeffer points out "The one who believes obeys and the one obeys believes" and this is indeed the dynamic of Christian faith.

SDGS INTERROGATED

WIDENING INEQUALITY AND SKEWED DEVELOPMENT POLICIES, PROCESSES AND PRACTICES



Development Nuanced

‘Development’ is a Post-War II concept. A key word commonly used amongst communities and particularly amongst two-third world. It has assumed alarming proportions as it is believe that it would usher ‘progress’, ‘growth’ and ‘prosperity’ from poverty to prosperity; from tradition to modernity; from agrarian to industrialization; from primitive to technological; from superstition to rationality and from local to global. Countries of the world, the UN bodies, international and regional financial agencies, non-governmental (NGOs) and quasi-governmental organizations contribute huge sums of money towards development initiatives in the LDCs.

The core of development for many revolves around was ‘growth’. Modernization or Growth-oriented development paradigm finds its centrality amidst wide-ranging shades of development models/theories such as Walt Rostov’s ‘take-off’ and five stages leading to mass-consumption society. The ‘modernization’ or ‘growth’ development paradigm is geared towards integration of global production, distribution and consumption based on market-driven model, which can only force people

and communities into one unified system of economy, values and culture.’ Growth’ or ‘modernization’ paradigm in theory and practice is synonymous with westernization.

It is an irony that the majority of people tend think within the narrow confines of economic parameters such as growth in per capital income, GDP, GNP, exports and so on. One side of the world reflects affluence, quality life and what not, whereas the other side portrays squalid conditions, grinding poverty, hunger, mal-nutrition, joblessness, infant mortality and so on. Therefore the planet we live portray two worlds, a globe within a globe. These two worlds epitomize diametrically opposing scenarios. For example,

- The Millennium Declaration and the Campaign to reduce extreme poverty by half before 2015 came into being even as the world population as about to learn that the numbers of the poorest of the poor were steadily increasing as a proportion of the world population. At the same time, the richest of the rich were engrossing an ever-longer proportion of the world’s wealth.
- Underdevelopment grows during periods of economic growth, and poverty persists, inequality deepens, despite growing overall prosperity.
- The compilations of the World development Indicators for 2001 indicated the kind of challenges ahead, says the World Bank. For example, of the world’s six billion people, 1.2 billion live on less than \$1 a day; about 10 million children die under the age of five, most from preventable diseases; more than 113 million children do not attend school; and about half a million women die each year during pregnancy and childbirth from complications that can be treated or prevented.

The Human Development Reports since 1998 reveals “alarming explosions” in global consumption pattern, but also points out billions and billions of people left behind as those living in abject poverty and thus

living in squalid conditions. The apparent revelation is that the gap between the rich and poor is widening further. Have these people missed yet another ‘consumption revolution’. Almost all the reports of UN or UN related agencies state that almost three-fifths of the 4.4 billion people live in LDCs and almost three-fifths of those live in communities without basic sanitation.

Further, the UN Development Reports from its agencies since 1990s consistently keep projecting the trends for the present and the future. The following quotations would reflect how far our development initiatives both at the global and local levels fostered or created impact while addressing the development issues. It would also help to see the present scenarios of development indicators as we are in the second decade of the 21st Century:

Humanity stands at a defining moment in history. We are confronted with a perpetuation of disparities between and within nations, a worsening of poverty, hunger, ill health and illiteracy, and the continuing deterioration of the ecosystems on which we depend for our well -being.

– Earth Summit Report, 1992

The North has roughly one-fifth of the world’s population and four-fifths of the income, and it consumes 70 per cent of the world’s energy, 75 per cent of its metals and 85 per cent of its wood. Replicating the patterns of the North in the South would require ten the present amount of fossil fuels and roughly 200 times as much mineral wealth. And in another 40 years, these requirements would double again as the world population doubles.

–Human Development Report 1994.

In saying ‘development’, however, most people are now saying the opposite of what they want to convey. Everyone gets con-

fused. By using uncritically such a loaded word, and one doomed to extinction, they are transforming its agony into a chronic condition. From the unburied corpse of development every kind of pest has started to spread. The time has come to unveil the secret of development and see all its conceptual darkness.¹⁴

As Wolfgang Sachs, a noted development thinker once said, “Development has become a shapeless, amoeba-like word. It cannot express anything because its outlines are blurred.”¹⁵ It is in this context, it is important to look at development critically since it involves people, their future and welfare. Gunnar Myrdal rightly points out “Every study of a social problem however limited in scope, is must be determined by valuations. Hence development as such is not value-free, but value-loaded concept.”¹⁶ Development is value-loaded and reflects the emergent political economy and represents the global hegemonic arrangements.

Former President of the World Bank, James D. Wolfensohn told the EU and US leaders that their lavish agriculture subsidies were impoverishing third world farmers. Continuing further he said, “Subsidies rob poor countries of markets for their products.” Elaborating further, “Spending on subsidies is six times what the rich countries provide in foreign aid to the developing world.” Former President Bush of USA had pledged that its aid budget will be increased by unto £5bn (£3.6bn) a

¹⁴ Gustavo, “Development” in *Development Dictionary*, Wolfgang Sachs (Ed.), (New Delhi: Orient Long man Ltd, 1997), p.8.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ See for example both the volumes of Gunnar Myrdal’s writings such as *Asian Drama*, and others that deal on development and underdevelopment where he basically argues and pushes his thesis that underdevelopment of the third world esp. the Asian region by and large could be attributed to the exploitative extraction of raw materials by the imperial powers and by using the third world countries as their market which has created abundance of development of the developed West at the cost of the least developed countries. The source is not available.

year bill 2006. Mike Moore, former President of the World Trade Organization (WTO), said that “abolishing all trade barriers “could boost global income by \$2.8 trillion and lift 320 million people out of poverty by the year 2015.”¹⁷

The first UN conference while addressing the direct foreign aid, the organizers said that “... after a steady decline in development assistance ...the mere fact that world leaders had agreed that more aid was needed was a significant accomplishment”¹⁸. On similar vein, the British International Development Secretary, Clara Short, said the conference marked a major turning point and reiterated that “We’ve reversed a decade of declining budget and the world is uniting around the reform agenda”¹⁹

To put the discourse within a framework and in the proper perspective, William Easterly, the iconoclastic economist who spent 16 years at the World Bank, estimates more than £700bn has been disbursed in aid since 1950—yet in many parts of south Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, living standards are now lower than they were 30 years ago”²⁰ We need to interrogate the growing contradictions of the dominant powers and global arrangements. Let me cite one classic example that in one of the World Bank’s reports suggested that “A flow of aid equivalent to 1 per cent of national income will cause a 0.6 per cent rise in growth, a 1.2 per cent fall in poverty, and similar decline in infant mortality”²¹ Shedding light on this William Easterly said that “World Bank and IMF’s structural adjustment loans “have not been working for 20 years”²² Notions and variance of shades of development are not neutral or neutral, but are value-loaded having political connotation with perspective.

¹⁷ See “Guardian” (March 22, 2002), p. 18.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

Pervasive Inequality

Inequality is widening. A maze of recent facts and figures ranging from income inequality data to many others from the Human Development Survey and wealth inequality numbers that indicate socio-economic and gender disparities have grown along with GDP. What it means that while the poor have indeed benefitted from India's economic success, the rich have garnered a greater share. Some of these statements and utterances need careful scrutiny. For instance,

- In the 10 years between 2005-06 and 2015-16, India pulled more than 271 million people out of extreme poverty, a population larger than that of Indonesia. Further, the biggest gains were made, among the states and groups that were the worst off. But the governments have been on an overdrive to cover the basic needs of poor people, widening inequality leaves them exposed to the same disadvantages that had limited their life choices to begin with. Such inequalities stand out in key areas that determine how effectively people can beat poverty.²³
- Worldwide, fewer people are now living in poverty than in the decades before. But success against poverty has had little impact against inequality, which has just got worse everywhere. In India, the top 1% of the wealthy, roughly 13 million people, hold 42.5% of national wealth is against 2.8% held by the bottom 50%, or about 650 million of the poorest citizens. Oxfam said in a report released ahead of the World Economic Forum meet in Davos, Switzerland, 2020. It also added that the world's richest 1% have more than twice the wealth of the rest of humanity combined. In India and elsewhere, the brunt of this inequality is borne by

²³ For more details refer UN Human Development Report 2019 by UNDP.

women, who have to battle the double disadvantage of socio-economic deprivation and discriminatory norms.²⁴

- Economic growth and environmental sustainability can often appear framed as other/or phenomena, that is, as mutually exclusive. Suggesting that the creation of prosperity has to come at the cost of ecological degradation. But a report by World Economic Forum suggests that it is businesses themselves that have far greater exposure to climate change than is immediately apparent as more than half of the global GDP coming from economic activities is dependent on nature. That means most businesses everywhere should worry more about supporting the response to climate change – to protect their profits and the planet, both.²⁵
- India has slipped four places to No. 112 in the latest report on gender parity by the World Economic Forum. But the slide in the Global Gender Gap report 2020 is despite a slight improvement in the country's score. That's because countries that were placed below India in the previous edition of the report (2018) have achieved bigger improvements in closing the gender gap, show that much work remains to be done. India is at the bottom of the table for all components of gender parity analyzed by the report of 153 countries, political empowerment being the only exception. On Gender Gap Index, 0 represents complete inequality and 1 represent complete equality.²⁶

Above data candidly explains in detail the layers of inequality present globally and nationally. Inequality is the core of skewed development and thus adds many dimensions as such:

²⁴ “The Times of India”, January 21, 2020.

²⁵ For more data See “The Times of India”, January 24, 2020.

²⁶ For others classifications and sectoral analysis and divergences, see “The Times of India”, December, 2019.

Inequality is not just about disparities in wealth distribution. A large number of Indians not only have very low income, but their opportunities for healthcare, education and social security are dreadfully inadequate. UNDP's 2019 Human Development Report (HDR) explores precisely these inequalities in human development, by going beyond income and identifying the deep-rooted systemic drivers of inequality.²⁷

Inequality prevails whether rich or poor countries, high levels inequality persists in many high-income countries and it is rising. Inequality means different things to different people. Inequality is closely related and is sometimes combined in composite measures. In a divided and fragmented world, 'equality' as a concept becomes very important. Rousseau rightly observed that inequality prevails at an alarming level where a privileged few keep accumulating and a vast majority of people is struggling for the bare necessities of life. But, does that mean the ideal of equality is the answer?

At this point, although the ideal of equality as an absolute principle posits impossibility, however, we ought to strive to make 'equality' workable and realizable. However, equality as a functional concept by all means should be realized and be strived for. 'Equality' as a concept and theory should be made to work because it is rich in meaning and essence. For instance,

At the heart of the notion of equality lies the conviction that each person is of infinite, and hence equal, worth and should be treated as such. This means that being human is far more important ...This conviction should colour our attitudes and relationships and should shape social structures, which are networks of rela-

²⁷ A comprehensive article that covers all aspects of development by Shoko Nada, UNDP resident representative, entitled *Inequality and Discontents* in "The Indian Express", December 10, 2019.

tionship and distribution. We recognize other people's equal worth by our attitude towards them, our treatment of them, our relationships with them and our regard for them, and also, rather more indirectly, but very significantly, in the way a society and its distribution of resources of all sorts are organized.²⁸

Reducing inequality almost requires narrowing the economic and social divides because of the fact that,

The norms relating to social inequality determine the distribution of resources among individuals, families and groups. Unequal distribution causes high and low positions and other dysfunctional consequences. Such a ubiquitous phenomenon of inequality is not uniformly intense and mono causal and monolithic. There is constant structuring and re-structuring of social inequality. Inequality is a 'relational' rather an 'absolute' phenomenon. Inequality and equality may coexist in family and community. Also criteria such as income, occupation, education and competition alone cannot explain the entire gamut of social inequality.²⁹

Unless we articulate clearly how inequality affects different layers of society we may not progress with this type of venture. Inequality reduces economic efficiency and traps societies in bad development paths through inequality-perpetuating institutions in three ways:

- *Inequality* reduces the participation of poor people in political processes, both directly and indirectly. This in turn reduces the likelihood that poor people have access to education, health care, and other services that would contribute to growth.

²⁸ Cf. Duncan B Forrester, *On Human Worth* (London: SCM Press, 2001), p.30.

²⁹ K.L. Sharma (ed.), *Social Inequality in India: Profiles of Caste, Class & Social Mobility* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications), p.16.

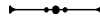
- *Inequality* can hinder the establishment of independent and impartial institutions and the enforcement of binding rules, because they might reduce the benefits of the privileged.
- *Inequality* makes it easier for the wealthy to hold out in political bargaining, either directly or through capital flight. It therefore makes it more difficult for societies to respond quickly and optimally to external shocks.

Each of these effects prevents the emergence of institutions that would distribute incomes, assets, and opportunity more widely.³⁰ Inequality is entrenched within the structures and systems of governance, which is systemic and pervasive.

³⁰ See *World Development Report 2003*, p.89.

FUTURE IS NOW – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ITS PIVOT



The acquisitive mind has infinite and insatiable greed and thus ingrained in exploiting the natural resources and accumulation of wealth. The inquiry mind goes beyond the narrow confines and sees the big picture taking the whole humanity and the planet by employing reason and science for the present and future generations³¹. Because of this ‘some’, the world is still livable because they look beyond—the Mother Earth and her future and its survivability. Their logic firmly grounded on the wholeness of the cosmos and its inhabitants—living and non-living not by compartmentalizing, but by integrating. The irony is that the world that we live and confront by and large is being reined by the audacious, atrocious and petty minded leaders.

There are a few with futuristic concern, critical mind coupled with reason and care for the planet and its species are increasingly being sidelined or even silenced and therefore their voices are hardly heard. It is a fact that on the one hand wealth keeps generating at alarming levels,

³¹ Presented at the National Seminar on the theme: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The Indian Story, organized by the ISI (Bangalore), ISI (Delhi) & Aloysius College, Mangalore, 13-14th February, 2020 at Aloysius College, Mangalore.

while on the other there have been depletion of natural resources resulting in erratic climatic conditions all over. As against the background, the fact and the reality we live in by all means ought to be acknowledged that there is intrinsic link between the environment, the planet, economy, humanity, future of children and the cosmos we live in. Overstepping or minimizing or negating the things we confront and face in our day-to-day existence leads to catastrophic consequences.

We are reminded by the scientists and futurologists who tell us that we should take “Doomsday Clock” seriously and if we fail to moderate the problems and challenges we face it would be late and shall never reverse the clock again. They did warn that things are getting worse locally and globally that have ramifying effects. The canopy we live is inter-connected and closely linked with each other. Therefore it is imperative that it should be seen as a whole, and not in parts. Healthy life, vibrant economy, quality life, good environment, prosperity and progress to all are dependent on the sustainability of the planet on which development goals hangs. Everything is scientifically ordered and functions on its laws and rhythms.

Meddling with these shall hamper the whole and therefore exploiting the nature and its resources for human wants and greed would result in imbalance in the laws of nature. Sustenance of the Mother Earth and its resources becomes crucial and vital for us. Considering the present and the future of our planet in 2015, 195 nations agreed that they can change the world for the better. This will be accomplished by bringing together respective governments, businesses, media, institutions of high education, and local NGOs to improve the lives of the people in their country by the year 2030. The following are the goals:

- Eliminate Poverty
- Erase Hunger
- Establish Good Health and Well-Being
- Provide Quality Education

- Enforce Gender Equality
- Improve Clean Water and Sanitation
- Grow Affordable and Clean Energy
- Create Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Increase Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
- Reduce Inequality
- Mobilize Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Influence Responsible Consumption and Production
- Organize Climate Action
- Develop Life Below Water
- Advance Life On Land
- Guarantee Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
- Build Partnerships for the Goals

At the dawn of the 21st Century the leaders of the world at the UN had agreed to translate the MDGs, but hardly translated those goals globally. As we have just begun the Second Decade of the century, we are engaged in examining and analyzing SDGs and to be translated by 2030. Hardly have we made any significant inroads into the goals. By and large, they are all intact except a few paving ways to serious consequential effects. Whether we like or not, we should agree to the fact that everything is connected to nature wherein all parts belong to the whole. All the aspects that we find in SDGs are directly connected to the nature that we live-in.

As against the back drop it is not possible to realize SDGs without safeguarding the natural world which is the core. In recent times we have been witnessing fury of the Mother Earth at unprecedented levels causing huge damages to many countries. Colossal damages to the people as well as to the exchequer. Comity of nations keeps promising to its citizens many things, but fails to deliver quality of life and healthy environment. Those who govern should be responsible and prudent so

that the economic climate in planning, procedures and processes without squandering natural resources.

Entire human existence is premised on nature and its eco-systems. Reliance on human arrogance and greed that propels human might against natural world with all sorts of irresponsible actions and interventions have led to nature's fury for which we have no answers. SDGs are so deeply constrained to the current development model—both the global as well as local. The dominant growth or modernization development paradigm seems to be in collusion with the economic pursuits and aspirations of crony capitalists, oligopolistic corporations and those subscribing to unregulated free-market capitalism wielding with power and authority.

Limitless growth is firmly believed and consciously promoted as part of the growth model to maximize profits that involves and entails indiscriminate and exploitative tendencies of the human and natural resources. Growth in per capital income, GDP, GNP, mushrooming of concrete buildings, fly-over, skyscrapers, malls, eight-lane autobahns, neon lights and host of others are just means development and not development. Growth or Modernization model of development emphasizes and focuses on converting the eco-space into concrete jungles that prompts us to ask a few questions: At what cost and for whom? It is at the cost of nature, poor and marginalized masses.

Development as of now is capital-intensive, exploitative of natural and human resources. It fails to take into account the present and future of the planet and majority of people and falls short of SDGs goals centering humans. The cost undoubtedly will be colossal, consequential and irreversible. The future of our planet is bleak. The present development paradigm—Growth/Modernization is now dominant model being promoted by the countries of the world which posits paucity of Human Development Indices (HDIs). It fails to take into account the people as actors and participants of development.

Poverty syndrome might have come down, but inequality is widening within and between countries resulting a few controlling wealth, resources and peoples' and nations' destiny. It is the Nature, the Mother Earth and Our Planet that creates wealth, develops people, runs economy, makes people and nations prosperous, industry and agriculture moving. The core of human endeavours is solely dependent on nature. It is nature that makes possible the humans to exist and provides sustenance. If the nature is destroyed we cannot have human development. Therefore sustainable development is a pre-requisite for a healthy natural world.

The bottom line of SDGs is to preserve and promote life in all fullness that embodies aspects of life in its entirety. And so, if we damage the natural world, we are damaging our present and future. The economic foot-prints that believe in exploiting the nature without any moderation threaten our own future. Rising Ocean levels, volatile and unpredictable temperature swings across the planet, large stretch of cracked land and large swaths of land, some countries will sink and many others become uninhabitable triggering mass climate-induced migration.

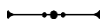
We have been witnessing some of these trends such as the city of Venice witnessed floods and the water receded suddenly; people and tourists who visited Paris had to keep their heads cool all the time and went for showers; in India the city of Mumbai received unprecedented rains in one day despite monsoon arrived late; the weather conditions in many parts of the country went volatile to the extremes; Australian bushfires is a classic example that destroyed billions of species and green cover. The natural world is intrinsically linked to the human world. The natural world provides life and livelihood for all but only a minuscule enjoys ravaging the nature and all the fruits that it provides by depriving life and livelihood of many.

The laws that regulate the domains of economy, polity and ecology are connected to each other and any wrong to the nature will show its

adverse effects in some form or the other. The fulcrum of human existence is fully dependent on natural world and any interference or dent would result in disastrous consequences. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), set at the United Nations, are a set of targets across 17 sectors ranging from poverty to environment to be met by all member states by 2030. The objectives are clear, commitments are tall, but realization by 2030 is grave. Unless and until the developed and developing worlds take their commitments seriously particularly the nature, our planet and the cosmos seriously we together sink together for our flaws and arrogances. Let me conclude by invoking J Krishnamurti in this connection that *“It is odd that we have so little relationship with nature, with the insects and the leaping frog and the owl that hoots among the hills calling for its mate. We never seem to have a feeling for all living things on the earth.”*

INTERLOCKING MOTHER EARTH, NATURE AND WOMEN AS SACROSANCT AND SYMBIOTIC

IMPENDING CHALLENGES



Symbiosis: Nature and Women

Nature is the centre and core of survival for Homo sapiens and all the living species. Every living being is connected to nature and thus webbed to one another. Therefore, every living and non-living is linked to nature. Nature being the base structure, it is foundational because all other superstructures is connected to the base vis-à-vis nature without which survival is not possible. Nature is thus the base, on which everything hangs on and revolves around. Hence, nature is the whole and all others are parts of the whole. And so, it is dialectic: meaning the parts belong to the whole and there is no whole without the parts.

This is equally true of a healthy environment and vibrant economy. Sustenance is not possible without taking care of nature and environment, because the very survival is dependent on nature. We live in an inter-dependent world. Each geographical location has its own fauna and flora and accommodates unique creatures and species. The laws that govern the nature are also connected to each other. Intervening and interjecting by laying faith on human greed and arrogance tantamount to

interfering with the laws of the nature. Science and technology have taken us to greater heights.

The model we subscribe to wealth creation with the intent of maximizing profits and production and consumption of want-based goods by exploiting the natural and human resources without any limits. It clearly deviates from the need-based eco-centric production, distribution and consumption. The current global and national development paradigm is top-down and trickle-down and thus collides with the laws of nature. Paradoxically, wealth is being generated at alarming levels concentrated in the hands of a few, but poverty, hunger, unemployment and falling standards in the purchasing power/capacity of the poor and hapless are dwindling.

Entire activities of *Homo sapiens* are absolutely dependent on nature. Those who believe in modernization/growth paradigm view assume that the world is filled with the objective material reality from the vantage point of materiality and want the material world is to be converted into goods and services for the consumption and living of human beings. While on the contrary the materiality of the world in which materials come from the very nature. The nature is comprised of everything—the air, water, food, shelter, metals, fabrics and what not. All these are found in the nature and from there we acquire and therefore nature is the heart of our life-line.

It is the nature that makes the wheels of industry and agriculture to run without which everything will come to a grinding halt. We cannot sustain life without taking care of nature. This is why we call *NATURE* seated on *MOTHER EARTH*. The very nomenclature edifies the sanctity of woman which is life-enlivening, life-giving and life-sustaining. The sanctity of nature characterizes purity, preservation and protection. Nature is like a womb from where the life-systems and sub-systems keep sustaining for millennia. Mother Earth is compared to women for the

very fact that it is the core and foundation of the eco-space that Homo sapiens have occupied and exist. Now it is under threat and attack.

It should be noted that the present and future of survival of the Mother Earth is premised and grounded on women—the women that make thousands and millions of life-systems and its dependents live. It is this metaphor that apparently became a metamorphosis. In all the human endeavors and advancements, we need to look at the bottom-line which is loud and clear that when we damage the natural world vis-à-vis Mother Earth, we are damaging ourselves. This is true when it comes to women that when women are kept disempowered, disenfranchised and disengaged, then the damage we inflict on ourselves.

The stories, imprints and images of women that they leave before us in the form of data, case studies and above all what's happening (episodes) around us displays appalling and deplorable picture. With the projected rise in the assaults, crimes and misogynist narratives against women show all our claims remain superficial that are antithetical to the attributes that we use for women. This is why when we say Mother Earth is groaning its inhabitants more than half grieve for diverse forms of pains inflicted on them. In addition, the social media sends all sorts of messages and depictions that relegates ridicules and belittles women further.

Social Media: Predatory in Nature

The world we live-in is primarily influenced and driven by information technology. It is proven that those who control media control information and in turn many others. Media as the tool and the message is now the important medium that forms opinions and views. The messages that we receive through the media forms our perceptions, Based on our perceptions on issues we act and our actions are invariably determined by the opinions and views that we form.

We live in the world of tweet and hash tag wars. Social media has radically transformed the ways in which they connect with the electorates and their messages are delivered. The social media especially tweets and hash tags should not be construed as just tools of communication, but providers of spaces for free expression. Almost all the political parties hire top analysts and have their IT cells and those who have expertise in giving information about the electorates, their expectations and positions and also extending strategies so woo them to their side.

Allegations of social media sites and analytics firms harvesting user data to help political parties to plant election strategies raise serious question about the safety of personal information. The time has come to reassess digital pervasive domination on the privacy of people. It's is just a select few whereas "Both the public and the private sector are collecting and using personal data at an unprecedented scale and for multifarious purposes... the unregulated and arbitrary use of data, especially personal data, has raised concerned regarding the privacy and autonomy... centralization of databases, profiling of individuals, increased surveillance and a consequent erosion of individual autonomy."³²

Currently, in India over 250 million active users considered as the largest national users base for Facebook. WhatsApp and Instagram, two other entities owned by Facebook, have over 200 million and 53 million users in the country respectively.³³ Privacy is dead and everything is coming out in the open. It is predicted that the next 300 million who will go on line by 2020 belong to the lower socio-economic pyramid with no digital literacy.³⁴ The following facts and figures amplify the magnitude and gravity of digital age in which we live and the ways in which we are being controlled:

³² Kaushik Deka, *The End Of Privacy*, in "India Today", April 9, 2018, p. 28.

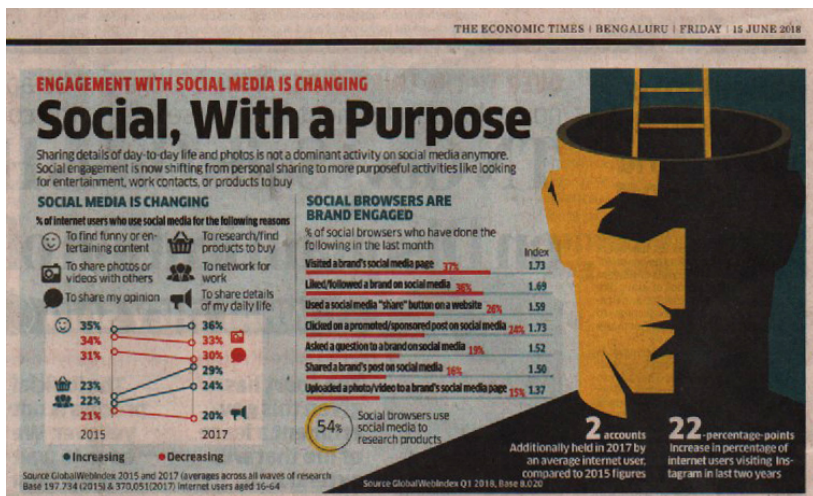
³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Prasanto K. Roy, *Why the 'Breach' may be good for India*, in Ibid, p. 42.



Source: "India Today", April, 2018, p. 30.

The above data clearly portrays that media has certainly made to dispatch one's message in a targeted manner and are invariably influenced and to a larger extent controlled by them. Media is with purpose and the purposes are varying—control, profit and smash privacy. This is why we are all the time bombarded with all kinds' messages. For instance,



The multinational corporations that control information technologies sift the information so that their objectives and motives are met and fulfilled. Accordingly, the formats—content, target groups who and how tailored in such ways to hit their overall objectives. The MNCs that control information and its modes by which information is disseminated appropriates power. In order to maximize profits, the big corporations engaged in keep maximizing its profits out of personal data. In this way the state and corporate connive to control people by controlling information and through this acquired enormous power because we live in a world where information is power.

As against the backdrop media went hay way asking its customers and consumers: Why do you need privacy and why do you want the right of privacy? Moving little further, if you have committed any ‘wrongdoing’, why do you get suffocated and suffer with that guilt? Above all, why do you hide? And by concealing you continue to live with that guilt that gradually gets thrust upon you? This is why you should get rid of privacy. The best ways to go public use social media that erases ‘privacy’. Presently we live in a world of ‘public’—transparent and open. In all these the worst affected are the women.

Privacy is dead and now what matters are control, commerce and profit be pursued unhindered. Women are used as objects and their privacy is stake. Information technology is manipulated in such ways using women to extract money and for other dubious purposes. For example, after the closure of Disney a deal to acquire Rupert Murdoch-controlled 21st Century Fox's major global assets—including Star India—for over \$71 billion, the promoters of Zee Entertainment unveiled a share sale plan that could lead to a block buster biggest merger and acquisition deal in the Indian media industry. Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) as part of a “strategic review of its businesses in the changing global media landscape.”³⁵

Media is the most fast growing industry with huge stake and high returns. It's now multi-billion industry and there are many media-corporate houses vying to expand their empires by swooping into information technologies for in the closest-ever competition that we have been witnessing in recent times. About 1.4 billion people on an average log onto Facebook daily; every second on average around 6,000 tweets are tweeted on Twitter; since its inception, over 40 billion photographs have been posted on Instagram.³⁶ The data candidly conveys that the world we live in and where we aren't only consumers of information, but creators as well which has given us a misplaced sense of control.

It is virtually real as we live today on social media in filter bubbles and echo chambers, and our experiences are directed by algorithms. As we have entered into the second decade of 21st Century, social media and Internet have drifted from their promise of closing distances and exposing us to the views of those who existed beyond our personal networks. Instead, we find ourselves to be more rigid versions of our for-

³⁵ See *Zee's promoters seek buyer for up to half their 42% stake* in “The Times of India”.

³⁶ See comment column article Advaita Kala, *Is Social Media Polarizing Society?* in “The Hindu”, December, 2018.

mer selves.³⁷ Fake news has become an industry and found great resonance with people. Its rise corresponds with the growing distrust in the mainstream media. Apparently, fake news has even slipped into traditional media outlets and is often circulated by prominent individuals.

People nowadays seek only ‘informal opinion through filters from who they trust and look for news that conform their world view. This results in people cultivating rigid opinions of issues that they would have probably been willing to discuss more in the past.’³⁸ In conjunction to this, Indian media has turned India as a fertile and breeding ground for biased, distorted and polarized one which is being controlled and taken over by vested interests who are keen in promoting hostile environment of abuse and violence against those journalists who believe in reporting what exactly happened and speak the truth.³⁹ Sites of the social media are known to promote hypes and thus push abetment and in the process become predators.

Twitter, for example, consistently prompts its consumers to follow people who are in agreement with their views; bombards with ‘wants-based messages’ that lead to consumerism; prompting narcissistic impulses encouraged by Instagram; prompting biases and polarization on Tweeter and Facebook.⁴⁰ Today, social media platform such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp and host of others have proliferated and thus have taken over or even substituted the mainstream media as powerful tools to disseminate information. Nowadays women are projected as objects of sex and commoditized for monetary gains. Information technology and media sites do not have any binary between public and

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Milind Deora, *Pressed Against the Wall* in “The Economic Times”, 18th May, 2018, p. 16.

⁴⁰ Advaita Kala, Op.cit.

private. Private space of women has taken over by the public and this space is used to derogate women as low as possible.

For all these happenings media is one of the prime contributors to changes in people's perceptions. "Within a truly democratic and secular framework, the media is conceptualized and the 'fourth estate', which must be allowed to function independent of government to maintain a system of check and balances on the power of the State, and to objectively observe, report, analyze and critique its actions to communicate to the people at large."⁴¹ On the contrary, media by and large take positions and indulge in their news and messages that lack objectivity, analysis, interpretation and evaluation.

However, "Unfortunately, in India, the media is increasingly perceived to have morphed into an extension of the State, often resorting to sensationalism at the cost of visibility to issues crucial for the welfare of the people, with its bands of cheerleaders and blanket critics."⁴² As seen media aided by information technologies (IT) polity, economy, religion, culture, education and other facets of the Indian society keep changing at alarming levels. Society is undergoing sea changes that have not been seen before.

"Contemporary social media in India—increasingly the platform of choice for untrammelled and unchecked discourses, and exchange dissemination of information and 'news'—is chock-full of 'fake news', gross distortions of facts to serve political ends, and sensationalism. Mainstream media, in this context, runs the risk of becoming the proverbial 'second paper' for a gullible readership/viewership. News that can be trusted is under serious risk."⁴³ The state is coming down heavily on the media and in different ways heckles the media to fall in line.

⁴¹ Milind Deora, Op.cit.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

For instance, "... the silence against State tyranny at worst, and 'leaning heavily on the media', at best, in India, is a manifestation of the extreme fear of persecution in civil society, which to the phenomenon of self-censorship."⁴⁴ Media ably supported by information technology is endowed with power. Those in power and authority have monopolized media to further control over people. Information and messages of all sorts keep floating and thus become viral. Barring a few, media per se used for spreading fake news and lies blatantly that have dire consequences to families, communities and societies.

Media has an immense responsibility to reclaim the public sphere from deliberate falsehood, the disinformation avalanche and social-media driven hate content. Our social fabric is totally fragmented and further fragmenting. It has resulted in the erosion of empathy and absence of truth. Currently, media increasingly employs its power by gradually shutting and occupying the public space information silos and out rightly denying the due space of the people by amplifying prejudices and binaries.

Realty Check: State of Women

Everyday brutality that the dominant upper-castes and patriarchal bodies inflict on women particularly those belonging to Dalit and vulnerable sections in varied forms have become new normal and are on the rise. The repetition and reproduction being inflicted everyday shows the societal embodiment that displays and thus manifests totally a new direction which intensely allows dominant patriarchic bodies to realize their undiminished being. This imperative, directive and intensity are supposed to flow in and through the schema of patriarchy expressed via the power dynamic and societal equations that the male-domination

⁴⁴ Ibid.

enjoys the domains of social, economic, religio-cultural and political reproduction.

Patriarchy is the base that galvanize and regulates patriarchy. Patriarchy is entrenched in the mind-set and thus manifests in psychosomatic domains of the patriarchic bodies. With all these, it is a paradox that mother-earth is equated to women. Nature and its inhabitants by and large are sustained by the Mother-earth. Under this rubric and schema, women do play the most significant part in economic, social, political, religious and cultural domains. A question that arises is: Are women given due space in the societal arrangements? In a male-dominated society both the public and the private domains for women keep receding, despite time and space.

Increasingly public space is shrinking and thus becoming hostile for women. It is not that the women are disempowered and therefore need to be empowered. A maze of sexual violence we are witnessing today has to do with who “owns” the public space. We live in a knowledge-based world for which information technology and its apps provide ingredients that enable knowledge to grow and with its applications our life is made comfortable. As the world today goes through many fundamental and drastic structural changes – from the advent of digital economies to the transforming relationship between people and work – an important trend that is emerging is the changing association between women and public spaces.

Gender gap still prevails though relatively more women in higher education; more women occupied the political spheres; business, sports and other sectors as well. Comparatively, the spaces of women in some of these spheres enlarged than before, and yet, posit the gender gap. Women’s presence in the public spaces has not been more pronounced and significant. Patriarchy continues to reign over as significant percent of women in the mid-and-top-levels are leaving their Though their stereotypical roles are breaking down, the gender gap continues. Since the

public spaces have been structured in accordance to the patriarchal mores over centuries, greater participation of women in public life is leading to a virtual backlash, as evidenced in the higher education, occupation in higher positions and crimes against women. The following tables and graphs amply demonstrate some of these that have been articulated:

HOW INDIA LETS DOWN ITS WOMEN ON HEALTH, JOBS

India has slipped four places to No. 112 in the latest report on gender parity by World Economic Forum. But the slide in the Global Gender Gap report 2020 is despite a slight improvement in the country's score. That's because countries that were placed below India in the previous edition of the report (2018) have achieved bigger improvements in closing the gender gap, showing that much work remains to be done. India is at the bottom of the table for all components of gender parity analysed by the report of 153 countries, political empowerment being the only exception. On Gender Gap Index, 0 represents complete inequality and 1 represents complete equality

BANGLADESH TOPS THE SUBCONTINENT ON GENDER EQUALITY

Overall Gender Gap Index

Global Top 5		India and its neighbours		
	Score	Rank	Country	Score
Iceland	0.877	50	Bangladesh	0.726
Norway	0.842	89	China	0.676
Finland	0.832	101	Nepal	0.68
Sweden	0.82	102	Sri Lanka	0.68
Nicaragua	0.804	112	India	0.668
		131	Bhutan	0.635
		151	Pakistan	0.564



99.5 years | Time to close overall gender gap in scenario as assessed by 2020 Gender Gap report. This is almost 10 years less than that measured in the last edition

EXCEPT POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, INDIA AMONG THE WORST ON ALL FACTORS

Economic participation and opportunity subindex

Global		India and its neighbours		
Best	Worst	Rank	Country	Score
Benin	Iraq	91	China	0.651
Score 0.847	Score 0.227	101	Nepal	0.632
		126	Sri Lanka	0.558
		130	Bhutan	0.544
		141	Bangladesh	0.438
		149	India	0.354
		150	Pakistan	0.327

257 years | No. of years before we close the economic participation and opportunity gap. It is the only subindex that has regressed this year; it was 202 years in last year's report

Educational attainment subindex

Global		India and its neighbours		
Best	Worst	Rank	Country	Score
35 countries have a perfect score	Chad	87	Sri Lanka	0.988
	Score 0.589	100	China	0.973
		112	India	0.962
		116	Bhutan	0.954
		119	Bangladesh	0.951
		132	Nepal	0.895
		143	Pakistan	0.823

12 years | Years in which educational attainment gender gap can be fully closed. Global performance is above 96% or less than 4% from full parity

Health and survival subindex

Global		India and its neighbours		
Best	Worst	Rank	Country	Score
39 countries have the highest score of 0.980	China	1	Sri Lanka	0.980
	Score 0.926	115	Bangladesh	0.696
		129	Nepal	0.966
		144	Bhutan	0.960
		149	Pakistan	0.946
		150	India	0.944
		153	China	0.926

The time it would take to close the health and survival gender gap remains undefined and it is the smallest gap, which can be considered virtually closed in most countries

Political empowerment subindex

Global		India and its neighbours		
Best	Worst	Rank	Country	Score
Iceland	Yemen	7	Bangladesh	0.545
Score 0.701	Score 0.018	18	India	0.411
		59	Nepal	0.227
		73	Sri Lanka	0.193
		93	Pakistan	0.159
		95	China	0.154
		132	Bhutan	0.082

55 years | Time it will take to close political empowerment gap, an improvement from 107 years assessed in last year's report

Source: World Economic Forum

How inequality is worsened by women working for free

Worldwide, fewer people are now living in poverty than in the decades before. But success against poverty has had little impact against inequality, which has just got worse everywhere. In India, the top 1% of the wealthy, roughly 13 million people, hold 42.5% of the national wealth as against 2.8% held by the bottom 50%, or about 650 million of the poorest citizens, Oxfam said in a report released ahead of the World Economic Forum meet in Davos, Switzerland. It also added that the world's richest 1% have more than twice the wealth of the rest of humanity combined. In India and elsewhere, the brunt of this inequality is borne by women, who have to battle the double disadvantage of socio-economic deprivation and discriminatory norms

The rich are growing richer, the poor not so much...

46%
Increase in wealth of the top 1%

3%
Increase in wealth of the bottom 50%

759,000
Dollar millionaires in India in 2019, up by 416,000 over 2018

Rs 28.9 lakh crore
(\$408 billion)

Total wealth of all the 106 Indian billionaires, greater than India's 2018-19 budget of Rs 24.4 lakh crore

83.2%

Gini wealth coefficient in 2019, up from 81.2% in 2008. A coefficient of 100% represents perfect inequality

...And there's little chance it'll change in their lifetimes

22,277 yrs

Time an average female domestic worker will take to earn what the CEO of India's top tech company makes in one year

10min

How long it would take the CEO, at Rs 106 per second, to earn what the domestic worker makes in a year

But if you are a woman and poor, it's even worse

15yrs

is how much longer a higher caste woman is likely to live than a Dalit woman in India

11 percentage points

is how much lower a rural woman's body mass index is likely to be compared to her urban counterpart

Women are a small fraction of job-seekers

On female labour force participation rate (FLFPR), India is better than just nine countries (Egypt, Morocco, Somalia, Iran, Algeria, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen). In fact, the country has seen shrinking participation rates for both rural and urban women in the labour force

23.3%

FLFPR (for women age 15 and above) in 2017-18 according to NSSO

20.4%

Urban FLFPR in 2017-18, down from 20.5% in 2011-12

24.6%

Rural FLFPR in 2017-18, down from 35.8% in 2011-12

Among educated job-seekers, male participation rates at different levels of education far outstrips that of women at the same levels

Level of education	Labour force (%) by level of education			
	2012		2018	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
Basic	79.29	17.93	74.78	16.40
Intermediate	62.32	14.17	59.40	13.47
Advanced	82.48	30.28	79.93	31.55

Lion's share of unpaid house work is done by women

The task of running households, including providing care to the elderly and children, leaves women with little time to acquire job skills and it also means that a good majority of them cannot opt for outside work. Both urban and rural men spend about 30 minutes a day doing household work, while their women counterparts spend close to 5 hours behind such chores

VALUE OF UNPAID CARE WORK AS % OF GDP, 1998-99, INDIA

Male	Female	Total
0.4	3.1	3.5

Adding injury to insult: Beatings, rebuke common for women

A survey by Oxfam of 1,107 households in Bihar, UP, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh found that women are often at the receiving end of ire over domestic work

% of households where women were **beaten up**, or **harshly criticised**, for the following reasons

Disobey men in the family	24.3%	42.6%
Spend money without asking	26.3%	42%
Fail to take care of children	33%	53.4%
Leave an ill adult unattended	36.2%	60.6%
Fail to prepare meal for men in the family	41.2%	67.9%
Left house without permission	54.4%	86.4%

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95 years | Time it will take to close political empowerment gap, an improvement from 107 years assessed in last year's report

Source: World Economic Forum

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2019

Women's Space: In Public and Private

The above graphs and tables candidly explain about various sectors and show how women have hardly any space of their own both in the private and public. Issues such as dowry, inter-marriages, role of women in domestic chores and in others, women continue to maintain tradi-

tional roles despite contributing in economic realms as well. Participation of women in the public and private spheres has been abysmal and not radically changed. Patriarchy is all about power and the mechanisms employed to control women. For centuries patriarchy managed to survive and went through numerous forms primarily to exercise power over women. Patriarchy has gone through monumental changes and yet is strongly entrenched appearing in newer formats.

Take for example, honor-killings, acid-throwing, suicidal death, sex-trafficking, ethnic conflicts, climate and other refugees and host of others. It is women who suffer the most. Rape, disfiguring the face by throwing acid when women says no and blackmailing through social media have assumed alarming proportions in recent times. The episodes that we come across every day extensively show the increasing erosion of public and private spaces of women. The spaces that have been taken over by patriarchal bodies subvert and tramples upon the rights of women that concerns equality, gender justice and freedom. Life has not changed for women who study and work. Rape is on the rise and those who dare to challenge and dare are silenced or responded in such ways others think twice.

Who owns the private and public space? This question is being asked for thousands of years. It has been “man’s world”. With a spate of sexual violence making headlines in the media, it becomes all the more necessary that the social media which is more popular should be contained as it carries all sorts of messages and visuals that degrades women. The legal machinery has its own *modus operandi* that takes its own time. Indian society is in limbo when it comes to abuses inflicted to women. Media by and large including the social media in particular being the fifth estate has the power to influence the perceptions and sentiments of people to view the episodes that the women undergo objectively.

Increasingly we keep hearing that the public space is dominated by male and the private space by female—a convenient patriarchal slant

and a ploy. Nonetheless, both are controlled by males. “As women fight to establish themselves as fully human and equal, rather than foils and caretakers to men, they have struggled to claim public space.”⁴⁵ Patriarchy never allows such moves. Each and every advancement women makes patriarchy tends to nullify. Patriarchy is one of the most powerful ideologies that survived for centuries, since it is reified by religion, tradition, culture and customary usages. Ideology of Patriarchy by all means wants to control women and doesn’t believe in gender justice and equality. “In the last century, women started studying... working outside the home. But their equal right to the city... is still to be fully realized. To hang out at a park or go running, wander without purpose, eat a meal along, find a public toilet, take a solitary stroll at night, breastfeed a baby, mingle in a crowd – these are simple things that women can’t fully take for granted yet.”⁴⁶

Defining—private and public is done by male agency—masculinity that sets the agenda and rules: who should be where and when and how much space women should have? For instance,

They are taught to move anxiously through the world. To see how patriarchy literally cramps Indian women, just observe their body language on the streets. So many young women train themselves to hunch, hid their bodies, lower their gaze, make themselves invisible. Men rarely make way; women step aside, evade passing motorcycles and cars, keep distance from others. Hostels chaperone women as though they are fragile items in transit from the parental to the marital homes, rather than thinking self-possessed adults.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Amulya Gopalkrishnan, *Why public space isn’t public unless women feel free* in “The Times of India”, January 17, 2020.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

In such an ambiance, virtually every day we keep reading and viewing the most brutal, ghastly gruesome rapes of Indian women show the vicious misogyny of the patriarchal Indian society. A profound, ugly and pervasive mind-set against women questions the Indian culture and ethos. Over and above, caste discrimination and gender subordination are intimately linked to one another in the Indian society. Women who belong to “Untouchable”/Dalit segments are engaged in “hereditary”/ritualized” sex work dedicated the goddesses all in the name of “religion”—commoditized as objects of sex to the priests and those with power and authority—literally as sex workers.

Further, those born as “Untouchable” required cleaning the dry toilets/night soil of “dominant castes” manually the worst unpleasant activity which nobody wants to do. Dalit women face discriminatory practices and oppression in multiple forms that are supposed to be crude, cruel and the worst in the patriarchal Indian society. They are humiliated, ridiculed, raped, attacked and beaten up by the dominant “caste Hindus” and those in power and authority. In an advanced literate state where rationalism seem to be a propelling factor “ritualized prostitution” is encouraged—anathema to a region that should have been in the forefront of Dalit liberation.

What then is the way out for women? An alternate view flows from B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of India’s Constitution and an organic scholar offers cue and a framework on which we need to situate caste as the base social structure and analyse how it subordinates women:

Ambedkar clearly saw that caste hierarchy has to be annihilated before we can hope for

the emancipation of Indian women. Women can never be liberated as long as the radical inequality of the caste system is protected, as it continues to be today. And this is why the ghastly rapes and the ugly misogyny will continue in our country until all women and all men, whatever their caste, are seen as of equal

worth. Caste hierarchy has to be smashed before we can hope for the emancipation of India's women. Women can never be liberated as long as the caste system is protected as it is today. But, if women rebel and reject arranged marriages choosing their own spouses, this will be at least spell the beginning of the end of caste. This is what Ambedkar gave his life for—all this should be our common pursuit.⁴⁸

The struggle is on and women by and large want their spaces—public and private. In different forms the struggles are being carried out. Patriarchy is such heinous system that manages to exert its influence and control over women, but women continue to counter the patriarchal bodies defiantly. In this regard, public and private spaces need to have the reimagining and recapturing capacities in order to strengths their articulations. In their narratives, struggles and actions, women should claim as equal stakeholders. Patriarchal mores could only be annihilated only when the women claim and take over their public and private spaces.

It is their space and they have the right to reclaim and none need to give. It is time women start owning their spaces. The public spaces allocated exclusively in the public transports and other places for “women only” show only tokenism because their struggles and assertion needs to be consolidated in tune to their rights and egalitarianism. Similarly women keep asserting their rights to take over their private spaces not only in economic spheres, but also in the socio-religious, cultural and political spaces as well.

There have been ample examples. Women per se are sacrosanct and central to the survival of the planet. All that comes in literature, novels, poems and host of others depicting women as sacred, pivotal and center of human existence fails to stand the test to the facts and the stories that

⁴⁸ Karin Kapadia, *Ambedkar's Feminism*, in “Economic and Political Weekly”, January 2020, Vol LV, No 1, pp. 10-12.

we come across every day. It makes many to go aghast and wonder that all these narratives happen to be just fictional having hardly anything to do with the reality. Many thought that as times go by patriarchy would wane and disappear, but it is growing stronger and nastier. In India patriarchy is showing its ferocity, vulgarity, toxic character and power dynamic by devastating and dismantling women's resolve and resilience by raping and murdering. Our terrains manifest the atrocity of masculinity and ferocity of patriarchy in the following ways:

Rape is the action of a rapist, and has nothing to do with the victim, what she was wearing or where she was going at what time. And yet, the victim bears the crushing burden of caution, inhibits herself. As writer Rebecca Soinit says, the willful action of the male perpetrator is so absent from our common narrative that it is as though women are raping themselves. "Men are abstracted into a sort of weather, an ambient natural force, an inevitability that cannot be governed or held accountable," she writes. Social and institutional attitudes need to be straightened out—misogyny in the police and courts and media silences and doubts women, instead of supporting them if they are hurt.⁴⁹

The beauty and splendor of the *Homo sapiens* reflects the transference of the image of the Creator to the humans (male and female) with same value and without out any distinctions—as rational and inquiry beings. Usage of the term "Mother Earth" embodies our reverence to women in totality. Femininity of the Earth characterizes life-sustaining, life-promoting and life-giving qualities of women. It is this symbiotic relationship that runs—between Mother-earth, nature and women makes the world integral. This reality by all means ought to be respected. Negation of this dynamic and dialectic synthesis shall no longer be accepted in a fast changing world of women. Patriarchy is to be annihilated.

⁴⁹ Amulya Gopalakrishnan, *Why public space isn't public unless women feel free*, Op.cit.

Towards this end, despite horrendous assaults and numerous set-backs women across the board are leading the movement for their freedom.

Mother Earth

Thou art the vessel, the Mother of the
people, the fulfiller of wishes,
far-extending. Whatever, is wanting in
thee is filled by Prajapati, first-born
of Eternal Order.

May those born of thee, O Earth, be,
for our welfare, free from sickness
and waste. Wakeful through a long life,
we shall become bearers of
tribute for thee.

– Atharva Veda

POVERTY ELEVATION OR POVERTY ALLEVIATION

ABHIJIT'S NOBEL RIPS OPEN THE AILING INDIAN ECONOMY



The Government of India headed by the BJP party believes in poverty elevation and not in poverty alleviation. Over the years poverty ratio seem to have been fluctuating, but not to the extent as of now. For example, India was ranked 102nd on the Global Hunger Index, as against an index of 117 countries. It was the lowest ranked among the South Asian countries (the rest being ranked between 66 and 94) and way behind the other BRICs nations, the lowest of which was South Africa at 59. To cite something of the past years there has been steady improvement. India's rank slipped since 2015, when it was ranked 93. Even Pakistan which used to be the only country in South Asia to rank below India has pulled ahead in the 2019 ranking to 94th place. It simply means India has slumped to 102 in hunger index, 8 ranks below Pakistan.

The GHI score, which reflects data from 2014 to 2018, is based on the proportion of a country's child population that is undernourished, share of children under five years of age who have insufficient weight for their height or whose height is not commensurate to their age and the mortality rate of under five children. "Because of its large population, India's GHI indicator values have an outsized impact on the indicator values for the region. India's GHI indicator values have an outsized impact on the indicator values for the region. India's child waste rate is extremely high at 20.8 per cent—the highest wasting rate of any country

in this report,” stated the report of Global Hunger Index. The data further proves that India’s poor scores were pulling down South Asia to a point where it does worse than sub-Saharan Africa.

The report further states that only 9.6% of children between 6-23 months in India were fed a minimum acceptable diet. However, a recent Union health Ministry survey had in fact put that figure at an ever lower 6.4%. While making a comparative analysis the GHI report praised the progress made by Bangladesh attributing it to “robust economic growth and attention to “nutritive-sensitive” sectors such as education, sanitation, and health”. The GHI ranks countries on a 100-point scale, with 0 being the best score (no hunger) and 100 being the worst. The above data shows that India is lagging behind nations in South Asia. We keep lauding about our defense capabilities, space research and technological advancements, but waylaid when it comes to providing basic nutritious food for the infants under five.

What does the above data indicate? Children are our future and it is in dire need of nutritious feeding. At 20.8%, India’s child wasting ratio is the highest of any country in this year’s Global Hunger Index. The data reveals about children under five who have low weight to their age and height. This shows that India tops the child stunting rate, which has more share under five children with low height for their age, reflecting chronic under nutrition—a whopping 37.9%.. The present Government should be ashamed of itself for the present ranking plummeting to 102 out of 117 nations, despite some steady strides in alleviating poverty. The data shows the government has elevated poverty. When our neighbors could do better, why India failed and where it failed? It is about poverty and abject poverty and hunger wherein millions of infants under five years live. Why it is so important because of the fact that 90% of the brain grows in the first thousand days of human life. Nerves grow in the first 1000 days of human life. Nerves grow and connect and build the scaffolding which will determine how one will think and feel and

learn all through adulthood. Studies keep emphasizing that proper nutrition and stimulation in these early years can make future decades 50% more productive.

This is science and for India in order to be productive should concentrate and allocate huge sums to develop the brains of those under-five. It is scientifically proven and agreed upon. There should not be any politics to be played with young lives because they are our young ones and India's future. Enough of playing with those innocent lives and let us be cautious of them. It is the responsibility of the State to take care of the little infants so that they become strong, innovative and productive citizens of this country. The present government could allocate huge sums to all other sectors, whereas for this sector that deals with the human resources and the future of India allots paltry sum. It is mandatory on the part of the Government to find resources because 9.8% of all children between 6-23 months are being fed a minimum acceptable diet.

Number of studies on poverty has been carried out such as *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations* by Gunnar Myrdal and others like Amartya Sen, C.T. Kurien and many others across the world. It was a timely reminder that Abhijit Banerjee has resurrected the nations' conscience particularly the conscience of India. India gave the team so much of raw material to prove that poverty exists despite Garibi Hatao, Acche Din Lao, etc. The face of poverty has not changed, rather deepened. It can be seen from the very faces of our infants—the future of India. If the present is not taken care of, then the future of India is a big question mark. All these years the present dispensation hoodwinked and somehow managed to conceal the incidence of poverty and malnutrition in India. After the Global Hunger Report and Abhijit Nobel work it is now abundantly clear that poverty exists in India and please do not invent something to hide it.

Politicians and others have been playing with 'politics of poverty'. Now the real face of Modian India is unmasked. Publication of *Poor*

Economics Abhijit in 2012, shortly after the publication of *Poor Economics* to the bewilderment and dismay of the current dispensation got the Nobel award smashed the assumption of \$5 trillion economy. Indian economy is in dire strait. The poor do not have any money to meet both the ends. They hardly have any purchasing capacity—to buy and sustain their lives with nutritious food. This is why almost major portion under-five is mal-nourished. Abhijit in his works made an inquiry into why many children are still in the grip of severe acute malnutrition and why the existing interventions have failed them. He traces the causes and thus offers solutions. In his seminal work along with his wife and his colleague they linked both the micro and macro dynamics of economics and show that there should be more emphasis on this segment because for Nobel laureates: “*The poor are no less rational than anyone else—quite the contrary. They have to be sophisticated economists just to survive*”. Dismissal of their findings and thesis could be disastrous and futile because they are professionals and the data provided concurs with the outcome of research objectives.

ABOSOLUTISM

‘BEST’ OR ‘WORST’ AS A HUMAN ATTRIBUTE



In politics and particularly in religion, the concept “absolutism” reigns. Nowadays inter-face between these two are strategically, intrinsically and semantically used for political manoeuvring, identity issues and whipping up ‘nationalism’, ‘citizenship’ and ‘democracy’ the term ‘absolutism’ is being used. The world in which we live, the term “absolutism” is being widely used in such abusive ways and thus occupies the centre-stage. How do people look at the term ‘absolutism’, which we use in our daily parlance? Is it a worthwhile conception? Does it add any value to ‘human attribute’? For these questions, it is worthwhile to look out for a response none other than Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a renowned philosopher and educationist having held the highest position in the Indian Republic asked Jiddu Krishnamurti, philosopher of education of par excellence and renowned composite thinker as to: what’s the worst human attribute? This question at the surface level seems to be simple, but quite penetrating.

Question posed by an eminent philosopher Radhakrishnan to another laconic, creative and critical educationist and philosopher JK’s response: “To be absolute, so very true. To be absolute is indeed an exceedingly undesirable attribute a person can have. No one has seen tomorrow and

no one knows where life will take a person to. Future is forever unpredictable and perennially capricious. So, in retrospect, today's rigidity seems stupidity tomorrow." What he infers is: Humans must be open and flexible so to be open to drastic and sweeping changes happening in us and around us. Therefore, there should be flexibility (adaptability) to the changes that we keep seeing before us. The present by all means will have to be handled, negotiated and steered in such ways so that we handle them in realistic ways and in better manner. We live in uncertain terrains and so, future happenings shall never be envisaged. Trends can be interpreted, but not be vouched.

No one can say that he/she shall not change and remain the same. If we do not change to changing things, we will be devoured by the sweeping changes happening around us. Jiddu Krishnamurthi calls it not a good quality, rather stupidity. It's nothing, but foolishness and stubbornness to face the changing scenarios. So, changes are inevitable and bound to happen. As *Homo sapiens* we not static, but dynamic, therefore, we are bound to move forward from phase to another. Changes do not offer stability and equilibrium, sometimes smooth; sometimes erratic and volatile. Hence, we should be prepared to cruise through the ups and downs, highs and lows. Once we are open to changes then we are ready to face the challenges with a sense of pliable equanimity and elastic equilibrium.

"Absolutism" is now the most used and widely abused term in religio-political realms in particular swinging between religion and politics in the form of ideology that pushes the nationalists and populists to whip up the emotions of people. 'Majoritarian', 'truth', 'theology' and 'ideology' be it religious or political emphasize on 'absolutism'. Is it part of cerebral evolution or indoctrinated in and through our education—secular and religious systems? We should imbue and be endowed with aspects such as adaptability, elasticity and openness. In our preparedness, if we have these elements we can face life realistically and prac-

tically. Life should be open to new vistas and vicissitudes, and for that we should be prepared to face any eventualities. Life shall never be a steady stream and ever 'beautiful', 'smooth' and 'straight' wherein there are no guarantees. If it is so, then it would lead to stagnation and boredom. Only in suddenness, unexpectedness, and in the midst of sweeping changes and more importantly it is in unpredictability that we face in our life acquires fuller meaning. This is life and all about life.

Human life ought to be meaningful and purposeful. Life is to be lived and lived with purpose. It is in this context, it is better for us to be reminded of Jiddu Krishnamurti's beautiful metaphor: "*When you draw or paint a tree, you do not imitate the tree; you do not copy it exactly as it is, which would be mere photography. To be free to paint a tree or* ANXIETY

Anxiety is not something new; certainly not of the present. It has been there through ages. It is part of us, in all of us and thus cuts across race, class, creed, caste and color. It is within us and amongst us and therefore what is to be done. Anxiety will have to be faced boldly and should be addressed and resolved. To bring clarity to this term, Charles Dickens in his masterpiece *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) even after 150 years sheds light to us:

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us ..."

A fabulous blend of polar opposites parallels and paradoxes that describes the web of life that humans cruised through the ages. It is important at this juncture to ponder over that despite many achievements, progress and phenomenal economic, social and technological accomplishments over centuries we are more than ever intensely caught up

with the anxiety syndrome. Technology has taken us to greater heights and thus made transformative changes. Global wealth has grown many times that has never been witnessed ever before. Indices of nations' GDP, GNP and per capita income show stupendous growth figures. Increasingly, we have been entering into a world of digitalization, robotization and atomization. For these stupendous changes technology plays the most crucial part thereby taking us to greater heights. Many of us keep wondering not knowing how to cope-up with stupendous changes, almost at the cusp of post-human trajectory.

For instance, more than half the global population including India is outside the technological revolution. Majority of them live either US\$1 or \$2 a day—somehow with great difficulty managing and meeting both the ends. At the same time, global wealth has grown phenomenally, but inequality widened. However, the changes and transformation, growth and progress and wealth and prosperity accrued has not minimized anxiety, rather we live in an age where anxiety has maximized at alarming levels. The reasons are: The chasm of iniquities between countries has narrowed, but within countries, the rich-poor divide has widened. Pollution levels, environmental degradation and ecological disasters have grown due to meddling with the eco-system in the name of 'development'. Materialism and consumerism have become the credo.

As a result, more than half of the younger population is obese. On the one hand, children under less than five die of malnutrition and live and prolong without basic health care; many keep dying due to conflicts between castes, clans and racial and creedal differences; hundreds and thousands of people die because of climatic changes like tsunamis, typhoons, pollution and landslides, while on the other, communication technology and related apps coupled with all kinds of techs and its disciplines in science and others have taken the world we live-in to unbelievable heights. The biggest worry is a massive technological trend; displacing basic labor in favor of skilled labor and capital. Robotization,

atomization and digitalization have taken the toll of semi-skilled labor force. If this is understood as “progress” and “growth”, then it would us to shuddering halts.

Inequality is also a “best of times-worst of times”, followed by questions: @whose cost and @what cost? Clubbing all these cumulatively, inequality among all citizens of the world is real which is taking huge toll. A few (super-rich and middle classes) are prospering, but many hardly can meet both the ends and there’s no sign of quality of life in the near future. This scenario is manifests across the world leading to xenophobia, fear of migrants and immigrants within and between countries. Right-wing politics, nationalism, populism, Brexit and Trumpism furthered anxious moments. Due to all these a sense of anxiety has already been crept into us that we live in a world of rising insecurity wherein lynching of all kinds have become the order of the day—terrorism, honor killing, ethnic and religious conflicts; rapes, building walls and host of other.

In a world of anxiety, is there any hope? Yes! Taking cue from Prophet Isaiah: 40: 31: ‘Arise with Eagles Wings and Be Renewed with Strength, Expectation and Hope’. Analogy of eagle by prophet Isaiah is something unique and apt because for centuries people have seen eagles as symbol of beauty, bravery, courage, honor, pride, determination and grace. Eagle as a bird is important and symbolic to humanity particularly at this juncture because of its characteristics of eagle that has been associated with escalation of anxiety that we face at present. Eagles are fearless and tenacious, which is why they love the storm. Usually, birds tends to flee from the storm and resort to hide-outs, while eagles fly into it and use the wind of the storm to rise higher in a matter of seconds. Eagles use the intensity and ferocity of the storm to glide over.

Eagles characterize some of the most amazing characteristics that are to be taken as solid benchmarks for us to move on in a world of anxieties. There are numerable storms we face and confront each and every

moment of our existence. Running away from them shall never be a solution. Eagles fly into it and use the gale/typhoon to fly higher and higher and then glide over storing and preserving its energy. Whatever may be the crises-ridden situations, those who have imbued with the characteristics like that of eagles can overcome daringly with the resolve to maneuver the situation boldly. Let us not assume that life is smooth, straight and devoid of any problems. Life is studded with problems being engulfed with all sorts of issues. Problems vary from each other arising out of social or economic or political or cultural or religious facets, but its magnitude may differ from one to another. Obviously, the problems that we face and confront infuse anxiety that propels us to take diverse actions. However, the core of all these is anxiety.

Anxiety therefore is part of human nature which is obviously quite natural. However, handling anxiety differs from one to another. Apparently many sink as they fail to encounter anxiety in the ways it should be handled. But, a few boldly face anxiety and thus transform it as opportune moments. Anxiety should never be allowed to creep-in, because it is like slow-poison, which affects our mind and then gradually seeps into body. Despite problems of all sorts and anxiety of numerous dimensions and proportions, what constitutes in our life is hope. To conclude, let me bring a quote from Bethan Albertson: "Democratic citizenship in an anxious world can be deeper, more informed citizenship". With hope and in hope, we should move on. Let us strive for secured and humane world. Let 2019 be anxious-free and hope-filled year.

Particularly there are many who believe and assume that once you touch 60 years or starts graying it's time to withdraw or retire from a whole gamut of activities. Those who retire from active services especially males will work out their routines confining and attending to selective certain things and do not want to go beyond. In the name of 'retirement' they live and lead their lives within a set rubric of things. They tend to lose their confidence, capabilities and potentials within and

begin to lose hope in them relegating to the levels of helplessness, despair and hopelessness.

In articulating and detailing on this the best selling Columbian author, Gabriel Garcia Marquez observed in his book titled *One Hundred Years of Solitude* “*The secret of good old age is simply an honorable pact with solitude.*” And so, withdrawing from a number of things from a world of many challenges, vistas and vicissitudes and thus languishing and living in seclusion is definitely what human metabolism or physiology or nature wants us to be, but should be seen as nothing, but our own ways of conditioning. Whoever is born will have to go through a process and in that ageing is natural and therefore it's obvious. We rather should welcome it and live in and though and relish and embrace and enjoy the beauty and overcome the complexity of ageing.

Offering or by giving all sorts of excuses—too much of traffic, no proper pavements, no facilities for the old and above all, it's risky to go here and there. Many tend to give too many excuses and in the process offer all sorts of justifications. Examples that come before us are the physically challenged achievers who despite their physical handicaps with grit and determination push themselves in such ways by facing the world boldly and bravely. They do not create cocoon and live within, but rather break those confines and come out of it. We should be prepared to break the physical limitations and mental obstructions infusing positive thinking and re-focusing our vision and re-positioning ourselves to the changing contour of time and space.

Old age is to be welcomed and enjoyed and above all to be lived with. This is the phase wherein those living in the phase old age should come out with creative ideas, critical questioning and higher levels of potentials that matured them through the intervening phases. “In old age, the mind continues to produce as many neurons as it did at an earlier age” says a report appeared in TOI (April, 7, 2018). The findings suggest that “Many senior citizens remain more cognitively and emotionally

intact than commonly believed.” Maura Boldrini, associate professor at Columbia University in the United States on similar vein said: “We found that older people have similar ability to make thousands of hippocampal new neurons from progenitor cells as younger people do.”

Ageing is something to be lived with and live in full. As Maulanal Wahiduddin Khan rightly says that “Ageing is not the beginning of a countdown, but is rather, the time for a count-up. This is, in fact, nature’s way of enabling man to pass on his wisdom to succeeding generations. The world can benefit greatly from the planning skills and wisdom of the aged. This is, in fact, nature’s way of enabling man to pass on his wisdom to succeeding generations.” He adds that “Longevity and old age are often spoken of in the same breath. But there the emphasis is misplaced.

The key aspect of old age is maturity not longevity. An old person develops mature thinking by experiencing the vicissitudes of life. This is not only enhances his knowledge but make him a prolific source of guidance and advice.” He adds further that “Succeeding generations are always in need of this unique gift from nature so that they may plan a way forward. All major developments have taken place in the world by people ‘standing on the shoulders of their predecessors’.

He further adds that “It is time to actively acknowledge the contribution that senior citizens can make to society at large and to bring them into the mainstream so that they may uphold the veracity of the old age.” Nonetheless, the ageing population is growing across the world. Countries like Singapore, Japan and even India, the population of the ageing is growing at a faster pace. Brian Kennedy, director of Singapore’s Centre for Healthy Ageing warns that “If we don’t do something about the dramatic increase in older people and find ways to keep them healthy and functional, then we have a major quality of life issue and a major economic issue on our hands.” Let us welcome and celebrate ageing.

BLATANT LIES, FAKE NEWS AND CONCOCTED NARRATIVES

PART OF THEIR BEING



I have known and come across a few who lie and known for blatant lies, spread fake news and their narratives are concocted. There are no limits to their lies and spreading fake news. These wily, cockeyed and corroded mind-sets shall never go beyond. They are struck because their life travels across a small circle. Their words and actions reveal destruction and thus intended to destroy the lives of those who they target. Their entire life revolves around how to destroy and in the process intended to put down people who they do not like. Their intentions and motives are precisely to destroy people.

How to define these people and what to call them? Certainly, their words and acts manifest nothing but evil and so they have evil inside and they per se are evil. Their minds and to be precise their psyche is mired with evil. Their evil actions manifests what is in their subconsciousness and they by and large filled with venom of destroying others! In my life I did face a few corroded mind-sets and cockeyed people. They have only one set agenda—by hook or crook they should make their ways through although they do not strive or struggle for it. All the time these cowards and psychics keep designing vicious plans, working

out deadly and destructive strategies and scheming obnoxious plans primarily to destroy others.

By and large, those who get indulged in these acts are mediocre, unproductive and unskilled having evil in them. Precisely because of their failure in life, hopelessness and helplessness they tend to indulge in wrecking the lives of others. In my life I did come across a few who were bent on destroying my life and by doing that they thought that they could destroy me and my family. They tried their level best and thought that they have succeeded in their agenda, but failed miserably. I'm intact and my family is intact. I'm reminded of a biblical verse "Yet not a hair of your head will perish" (Lk 21: 18) which also appears in Luke 12:7 and Matt 10:30.

10 years passed by, and those who have been after me failed miserably to deter anything, while on the other moving from strength to strength, higher and higher. A few keep floating all sorts of lies, fakes news and concocted narratives that "I've got to pay 30 lakhs, 40 lakhs so on so forth", "I apologized" and what not even writing to those not to invite me to national or global seminars and other academic engagement. Their job is primarily to destroy me and to paralyze my movements. Nothing seemed to have worked and whatever they planned failed to succeed. To them and to others: The case is in the High Court of Karnataka and there is another criminal defamation case against those who tried to destroy me.

Those who do not have the courage to face me openly face-to-face engage in such sneaky and clandestine acts—shamelessly involve in blatant lies, spread fake news and concoct narratives. I pity them because they disclose their cowardice tendencies and nothing goes in their way and so increasingly get frustrated. I'm different and I shall never buckle to all their cowardly acts. The past ten years I thought would have given some lessons to them so that they get rid of their vicious

plans, but one or two cannot digest the way I'm moving on in life. Do not dare to get involved in such ventures; it's going to end in futility.

Basically I face the episodes that I confront openly and daringly. I don't run and hide myself, while on the other, I daringly challenge the nefarious forces face-to-face and be assured that I shall never tolerate and spare the cowardly acts and cowardice mind-sets. Those who want to destroy me dare to face me rather involved in spreading fake news and speak blatant lies. Their narratives have failed and miserably hit the ground zero to convince many, except a few who also belong to the 'cowardice category'. A few see nothing in them productive and their actions are counter-productive. They are rather involved in self-destruction process.

The world is open offering new opportunities and vicissitudes. Those who have the skills and daringness can get into it and be part of the process. In the power-dynamic scenario, those who dissent and who defy would face boldly the cockeyed and corroded mind-sets. Their motives and actions are extremely corrosive and damaging, but these cowards ought to be challenged and countered by varied means and methods. I'm not affected by their actions and this has irritated those who thought I would crumble and run. What they saw and are seeing all these years is something just the opposite. I wasn't bitter for a bit; it never affected and bothered me. I was not angry; because I knew that a few who wanted to tarnish my image and paint that I'm bad and so on shall never succeed. Contrary to their expectations there was no massive backlash.

I always believe that life is to be lived and for that I need just God's Grace to live through. As I move on in life many things have started to unfold and converted my crises as opportunities. I did respond to those productively and creatively. I'm convinced that no human force can destroy me except God. And I'm clear that the dignity and the basic rights I have shall never be surrendered. I'm different and do not equate

with others. Those who have the guts should face me eye-to-eye. I have accepted them as they are and have begun to reckon with the fact that there is something wrong with their psyche and mind-set is corroded and cockeyed.

“It may be true that the law cannot make a man brave, but it can keep him from lynching me, and I think that’s pretty important.”

– Martin Luther King, Jr

“Together with culture of work, there must be a culture of leisure as gratification. To put it another way; people who work must take the time to relax, to be with their families, to enjoy themselves, read, listen to music, play a sport.”

– Pope Francis

CASTE BINARY CONTINUES

‘SUPERIOR’ – ‘INFERIOR’, ‘HIGH’ – ‘LOW’,
‘PURE’ – ‘IMPURE’



Even in the 21 Century, almost at the very fag end of the second decade of this Century, those holding responsible positions in the nation come out with bizarre utterances and narratives that irk those against this binary. The reason being, on the one hand, we have proven to the world that India almost came much closer to put an unmanned space shuttle on the moon, while on other, we read such statement from none other than Lok Sabha Speaker, Om Birla that “*Brahmins are superior by birth*”. It intrigues me, because of the fact that the levels of mind-sets some have and still holding on to a system that grades people on the basis of caste. Gradation of people on the lines of varna that determines one’s birth is heinous and deplorable and shall never be considered as ‘progressive’. However, many tend to hold on to this position. Precisely because of these reasons and so, caste still thrives and moves on stronger and stronger in the Indian society.

On the one hand, we keep speaking about scientific temper, while on the reinforcing castestic temper that do not go well, rather they are indeed contradictory. By uttering “Brahmins are superior by birth” conveys a clear message that displays casteist mind-set which endorses castiest gradations against other communities as if they are “inferior”.

This type of utterances is deliberately floated in order to condone the system of caste. It is pitched against the opposing narrative that believes in the annihilation of caste. The Lok Sabha Speaker, Om Birla, hails from the BJP, the ruling party at the Centre, a veteran politician and is in a responsible position, should have gone beyond the caste stereo-types and hierarchical gradations.

In reality, he seemed to have towed the typical BJP's position and followed its mind-set that made him to say that "Brahmins are superior by birth". The reasons he gives are: dedication, sacrifice and guiding roles. It opens up the Pandora box: How about other communities? Have they not sacrificed, guided and dedicated? This is indeed the problem. He reinforces that Brahmins are the only one who sacrificed and could guide and play mentoring roles because they are superior by birth. For me, it's absurd and illogical. There are many who have excelled and shown to the world and thus proven their worth—not on the basis of caste-equations or the binaries casteist construct—'inferior'-'superior', 'low'-'high'. He, by uttering that statement once again added to the dominant prevailing view and opinion that BJP is indeed a Brahmanical party—controlled by the Brahmins because "they are superior by birth". This needs to be challenged by all means.

Brahmins are superior by birth, says Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla

In his tweet, Birla said, "Brahmins have always held a high position in society which is due to their sacrifice and dedication. This is the reason the Brahmin community has always been in a guiding role."

Written by Hamza Khan Jaipur Updated: September 10, 2019 6:39:55 pm

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said that Brahmins are held in high regard by birth because of their dedication, sacrifice and for guiding other communities.

Speaking at a meeting of Akhil Brahmin Mahasabha in Kota on Sunday, Birla said, “Brahmin samaj hamesha sampoorn samaj ko maargdarshan dete hue kaam karta hai. Aaj vartaman samaj ke andar bhi, ek gaon ek dhani mein ek Brahmin parivar bhi rehta hai, toh woh Brahmin parivar apne samarpan aur seva ke kaaran, uska hamesha ucch sthan hota hai... Aur isiliye is samaj mein paida hone ke saath he, aapka samman, sampoorn samaj mein ucch roop se hota hai. (Brahmin community always works towards guiding all other communities, and the community has always held a guiding role in this nation. It has always played a role in spreading education and values in the society. And even today if just one Brahmin family lives in a village or a hutment, then that Brahmin family always holds a high position due to its dedication and service... hence, Brahmins are held in high regard in society by the virtue of their birth).”

Birla also tweeted his appreciation for the community and also posted a similar update on Facebook on Sunday. In his tweet, he said, “Brahmins have always held a high position in society which is due to their sacrifice and dedication. This is the reason the Brahmin community has always been in a guiding role.”

His twitter statement was condemned by several users, some of them said that he should respect his position as the Speaker, which is held in high regard.

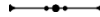
Kavita Srivastava, Rajasthan president of People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) condemned Birla’s statement and demanded that he withdraw his words, saying that, “to establish a community’s supremacy or declare one community over other communities is against Article 14 of the Constitution. This, in a way, demeans other castes and promotes casteism.” Srivastava also announced that PUCL will send a complaint against Birla to President Ram Nath Kovind.

At the Sunday meeting, Birla, who is also an MP from Kota, said, “in this country, you will still find that most teachers today hail from Brahmin community.”

Since the meet was a Yuvak Yuviti Parichay Sammelan (youth introduction meet) for families of Brahmin youth to search for prospective brides and grooms, Birla said that Parichay Sammelan was the only way to save the society.

“If we want to bind the society together, then there is only one arrangement today; like our ancestors used to forge alliances for marriage, we today have parichay sammelan, and if we want to save the society, then this is the lone alternative,” he said. He contrasted it with alliances over websites and through “marriage brokers,” saying that earlier the marriages didn’t break.

CAB—PENULTIMATE TO ULTIMATE: HINDU RASHTRA IN THE MAKING!



December 11th of 2019, was the darkest day particularly to those who believe and cherish India's democracy, secularism and civilization. In 2019 parliamentary elections, 40 per cent of the electorates preferred to vote for the Hindu fundamentalist party (BJP) and gave the mandate to take over the reins of the Government of India. The rest 60 percent of the electorates voted against the current dispensation. And yet, 40 per cent minority that voted for far-right Hindu nationalist political party swept the polls in great numbers; while the 60 per cent of the electorates—the majority had failed to garner the required numbers and thus lost. This is indeed parliamentary democracy entrenched with numbers—whoever plays with numbers shrewdly and strategically wins the game. We have been witnessing the number games since 2014.

Indian democracy works on sheer numbers and not on percentage points. With brute majority, BJP is playing with numbers and determined to translate its ultimate agenda transforming the country from secular India to Hindu Rashtra. On these lines, BJP had tabled Citizens Amendment Bill (CAB) in both the houses of Parliament and had a smooth passage that resulted in favor of the ruling party and thus awaits President's assent—a formality which eventually become an act and probably is subjected to be contested in the court of law. Those who believe in secularism and citizenry rights enshrined in the Constitution

should be worried and anxious though CAB excludes Muslims but gradually trample those who subscribe to other religion.

This is the first step towards realizing Hindu Rashtra. Its smooth passage should be viewed as slicing the long-cherished Heart of India in the middle making it into two—Hindu majority and other religious minorities. In this way, the Indian sub-continent in the near future would posit having dubious distinction of two-theocratic nation-states vis-à-vis Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. British used this to divide and rule, but now BJP-RSS has furthered it by dividing the country on religious lines/basis Hindu Rashtra based on majority Vs minority. Hindu nationalists cleverly devised a master plan using their narrative that one who supports CAB would be considered as the patriot and those who opposes anti-nationals. Over and above, CAB has been used as a tool to push the agenda of Hindu Rashtra by basing majoritarian matrix.

The entire project is based on the paradigm that State of Israel has employed and currently using wherein the Jews wherever they are can come and settle down in Israel and their citizenship is guaranteed. Though many countries of the world have been pushing the idea of two-nation theory (Jews and Palestinians co-existing side by side), Israel nowadays rejects that idea and gradually expanding and in the process occupying the areas belonging to the Palestinians. Though the ruling party—BJP assures the Indian Muslims that constitutes 200 Muslims not to get scared, but in reality, the political project of BJP can easily be perceived that revolves on the triune rubric—religion, citizenship and identity. BJP has welcomed other religious minorities from the Muslim dominated countries in South Asia to come to India, except the Muslims.

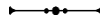
CAB has indeed been used and thus employed as a first step to flush out the Muslims and later the Indian Muslims, the largest minority religious community in India numbering more than 200 million and certainly would spread its ambit to other communities. CAB and NRC are like two sides of the same coin. The Hindu fundamentalists as of now keep

appeasing others by offering all sorts of promises, but CAB and NRC ought to be viewed as twin-edged swords. The ways with which the whole exercise was carried out by BJP and Hindu fundamentalists' political parties casting their votes in favor of CAB in both the houses of Parliament conveys a clear message to their constituencies that the momentum has been set and it's a matter of time and so their hopes and aspirations of India would soon become a reality which means Hindu Rashtra be actualized soon.

BJP and other Hindu fundamentalists did speak to their hard-core constituencies clearly and squarely assuring them not to worry and the process is moving in the right direction. India is known for its civilizational values—believed and practiced for hundreds of years. Idea of India is purely based on the plurality of values and multiple belief systems that respect diverse religions, cultures, customs and traditions. India has a big heart that accommodates and welcomes everyone irrespective of religion, language, ethnicity, caste and color. This is the beauty of India that everyone should be proud of. Converting the notion of India on religious basis and determining its citizenry on majority Vs minority are antithetical to India's secular ideals, values and ethos.

Petty mind-sets are currently engaged in shrinking India on the basis of religious lines—Hindu Rashtra shall never be accepted as the idea of India for the majority because the notion of India is premised on secularism. Democracy needs citizens' intervention all the time. People are at the center of democracy and our Constitution as part of fundamental principles assures our citizenry, which no one including the State can negate, deprive and nullify. If the State or its agencies of the Government enforces, the citizenry should resort to democratic and constitutional means to defy the onslaughts.

CAST ON THE WHEELS: PROGRESSIVE OR REGRESSIVE



Caste continues as the base structure that cuts across almost all the segments of the Indian society. Caste according to some is the most heinous schema that determines where individuals and communities should fit and accordingly their occupation is fixed. But, for many, who fall within the cusp of: top, middle and bottom rungs view that caste is such a unifying social fabric that regulates the Indian society so well and thus places everyone who should what and for those who are born in higher brackets enjoys power, prestige, status and authority. Caste basically regulates the Indian society and many continue to subscribe to their caste, because it gives them identity, pride and a label. For centuries caste has been reigning over the Indian social, religious, political and cultural spaces and is undoubtedly going stronger and stronger.

Those who enjoy being born as Brahmins, Kshatriyas and, Vaishyas are very proud and wish that caste should continue including some from Shudras, since they also occupy the same social space along with the other dominant castes. Those who are born outside the system of caste the so-called ‘Untouchables’, the Dalits and other civilized people think that caste is such as diabolical and regressive social category and by all means ought to be annihilated. Caste compartmentalized the Indians and has given each Indian a tag. Even in the second decade of the 21st Century, caste continues to dominate the Indian psyche and thus prevails in

covert and overt ways. Those who thought and in their analysis stated that caste would wane as the society develops and progresses seemed to have failed, because caste is getting entrenched in almost all facets of the society and going stronger.

We should obviously be proud of our country. We laud our achievements in various fields and carried out significant breakthroughs in science and technology. We speak high of our culture and civilizational values. But, many people take pride in ‘boldly’ displaying their caste on wind screen or number plates of their cars and motor cycles. It is gaining momentum and growing rapidly in Uttar Pradesh, the State where caste has always been potent to electoral politics as well as others. Caste like Yadav, Jat, Gurjar, Brahmin, Pantdit, Khatriya, Lodhi, Maurya, and others appear competing with each other and asserting their dominance or family status or political status by putting their caste or sub-caste name tags on their SUVs, cars, motor cycles and other vehicles. Even in the Southern states some put their caste tags on their vehicles. In recent times, this sort of assertion is gaining ground.

Acknowledging the growing caste fanaticism, V K Singh, the additional transport commissioner, enforcement said, “This is true that many people nowadays drive vehicles with their caste names written on the body, window screen or registration number places.” However, he added that “Doing this is not permissible under the Motor Vehicles Act and action against such vehicles is taken from time to time.” Similarly those castes that align with the political parties when they form the government take pride of writing their caste names boldly. Nowadays in Uttar Pradesh, castes such as Kshatriya, Thakur or Rajput and other variants are the new entrants in Uttar Pradesh. By boldly displaying their caste tags they send a clear message that ‘Do not dare to touch us or mess with us’. These things send clear message that our government is ruling and we are in majority—clearly implying ‘watch out’.

Displaying the caste names opening on the wheels and taking pride of to which caste one is born is such regressive and backward and certainly not progressive or forward looking. Caste is such a horrendous social system, which needs to be annihilated and challenged. Majority may take pride of it, but this social evil stunts the progress and civility of the nation. We, as Indians cannot say that we are progressing or developing keeping the system of caste intact.

CASTE REINS

‘CASTEIST MIND-SET’ A REGRESSIVE DNA FOR ‘NEW INDIA’



Social structure of the Indian society is premised on a system known as caste. Caste is the base and fulcrum of the Indian social structure on which other systems and sub-systems hang on. Caste system is the regulative mechanism, which plays the pivotal role in regulating the Indian society. Politicians and many others blatantly negate that caste is gradually withering away, but rather reinforcing strongly than ever. Caste configurations and permutations continue strongly manifesting its color and form quite regularly though a few political parties disown, particularly BJP, but in reality, very much present in BJP, and thus manifest in all spheres of Indian society.

Caste has been existing in the past for the last several centuries and continues to manifest in ‘New India’ as well. For instance, recently, the media (print and visual) flashed about a MLA’s daughter who married a Dalit man went hiding, but kept sending messages to the MLA not to hunt for their lives. Both of them have age eligibility and are adults and thus endowed with the rights to marry whoever they wish. Though they have all the requirements to marry, the system of caste forbids them not to marry, because the Indian society reflects a combination of caste-class character. She was pleading with her dad to tell his goons to back-off from witch hunting.

She kept saying that she has been married. This is a classic case, wherein an upper caste girl married a Dalit boy in a caste-ridden state of Uttar Pradesh, where hardly rule of law reins. Out of fear, no one dared to file an FIR. In the name of protecting ‘caste identity and supremacy’, many parts of the so-called ‘New India’ experience ‘honor killing’ that goes on unabated. The couple to save their lives were on the run after death threat for weeks and finally the Court asked the police to give protection and given them time to get married in the court. Reality of caste in the ‘New India’ shall never permit inter-caste marriages that happens out of love.

Caste atrocities are on the rise and India is more casteist than ever. Crime rates against the Dalits have risen 25 percent in 10 years. PM Modi is talking about only ‘two caste theory’, the poor and the other who have the ability to invest and create wealth and employment is not real and fitting to the division of Indian society. In reality, PM Modi’s simplistic equation does not fit into our societal schema, but many castes and there are those who fall out the caste rubric. Should we say that caste is a cure of curse of 21st Century’s so-called ‘modern India’? Caste never allows individuals and communities to be kind. There are caste-based political parties.

Caste contributes inequality and difference and therefore exists in all facets of societal life, particularly in politics. Political parties thrive on caste-ownership and consider caste as vote-banks. BJP is not an exception. There are parties banking on ‘Dalit votes’, ‘Yadav votes’, ‘Minority votes’, ‘Vokkaliga votes’, ‘Lingayat votes’, but BJP is banking on ‘Brahmin votes’ and ‘High castes.. Despite transformative changes in other aspects caste continues and thus becoming stronger manifesting itself even in 21st Century. The system of caste is a conscious system that offers privileges—particularly those occupying the upper layers of the system automatically get the rights and privileges that cover many aspects. 20 per cent of dominant caste categories control 80 per cent of

people/communities belonging to middle and lower rungs of the caste system and 80 per cent live under the mercy of 20 per cent of dominant castes. This is India, the so-called 'New India'. It is visible and glaring that offers privileges of all kinds.

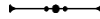
Did the PM Modi or BJP or anyone from any political party ever say that caste is heinous and by all means be annihilated? Political parties are premised on castes because they are the vote banks. How can we say that we are moving towards 'modern India' or 'New India'? Mere gestures. Some may say that PM washed the feet of those who were involved in manual scavenging which was symbolically and certainly be appreciated. Nonetheless, PM Modi could have gone a step further by announcing that manual scavenging should end at all cost and should have promised a viable technology that substitutes manual scavenging, so that manual scavenging would end. This would have given hopes to the safai karmachari who have been designated by the heinous caste system to carry the 'night soil' and clean the human excreta. PM Modi and political parties relies on 'caste vote bank politics' ought to go beyond symbolism.

'New India' is based on caste consensus and thus believes in the practices of discrimination. Caste biases and prejudices do extend privileges. This is how caste hierarchies impose duties and responsibility and reiterates. During the time of elections, political parties distribute the tickets on the basis of caste. Caste mobility derails the constitutional morality. India has become more casteist than before. 'Modern India' continues to shoulder the shame of caste, and therefore, shall never be called as 'modern', rather medieval—a better word. In spite of the Article 15 that deals with caste violence and yet we have been witnessing a significant rise in caste violence. Those who are born in dominant castes and also others would say we should not blame caste, but the system as such is to be rejected. A system that articulates in such ways who should

be on top, in the middle, at the bottom and outside This is caste system, which has absolutely no merit.

Therefore, caste shall never be progressive. As long as caste system continues India shall never progress and caste is a regressive and totally inhuman and irrational.

CAA RIPPED OPEN THE FALLACY AND FANTASY OF THE BJP GOVERNMENT



A few days old Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is now a reality, but has ripped open the fallacy and fantasy of the BJP Government right, left and center. The beliefs and dreams of the RSS-BJP and its coterie came to a grinding halt for the last few days as both the houses of the Parliament passed the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) and with the President's assent it became an Act. More problems started to loom for the Government of India (GOI) being run by the BJP thought that there won't be any drastic eventualities to CAA and business as usual would go on. But, to the total dismay of the GOI and RSS-BJP in particular, CAA turned out to be a night mare causing all sorts of problems to the GOI, BJP and its allies (regional parties) that support BJP because others view CAA as draconian.

Many things seem to have taken for granted in the Bill and so there is no clarity and so cleavages between those "included" and "excluded" articulated without proper substantiation—but one thing became evident that the Muslims seeking citizenship from countries mentioned in particular have been left out. BJP never thought it would boomerang, but in fact hit the very core i.e., the North-eastern India which the ruling party seems to have taken for granted. Cutting across the country, protests initially started in Assam and then spread to NE India and to other parts. Added to these, the important segment BJP since 2014 has been targeting is the student community, and so BJP as usual seem to have taken

for granted by infuriating the students of Jamia, wherein the police force of Delhi showed its brute force and attacked and injured the students. And this time it snowballed and thus spread to other Institutes and Universities across the country. It did spread like wild-fire though the communication networks have been cut.

Police brutality was so glaring and handling of the students by lathi charging and shooting with rubber bullets had angered the young students' fraternity bringing before us a glaring image—the future of India parading like criminals. Actions of the Government particularly with the students in recent times show that it's turning out to be police raj wherein excesses and brute display of force can be seen which have added more fuel to the anger of the students' community. As AL Sharpton said that "We're not anti police -- we're anti-police brutality." Therefore, the students are not against the police, but the brutality manifested against them should be condemned by all right thinking people because showing brute force against unarmed civilians who are citizens—the present and future of India be condemned. The BJP Government wants that everyone should follow its notions of democracy, nationalism and India which is hard to realize because it should reckon with the fact that only a minuscule of people less than 40 per cent agree with BJP's conceptions and the rest totally disagree and so it should not resort to bulldozing politics.

In tune to the current scenario, former President of India Pranab Mukherjee, while delivering the second edition of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Memorial Lecture on the 16th December 2019 in New Delhi said "The Indian electorate has time and again conveyed to the ruling party that goes on to form the government that yes, they may be entitled to form the government with the majority of seats won by them, but they are also to take into consideration all those people who may not have voted them... It is also to be noted that every time a government has behaved on the contrary, the voter has punished the incumbent in the

elections that follow.” He added that “...No party or leader had won a 51% majority since 1951. In comments that came in the wake of protests over the Citizenship Amendment Act, Mukherjee said an “...overwhelming majority” in the legislature should not be an excuse to do “anything and everything”. “Unfortunately, this message of the Indian electorate has never been clearly understood by political players. That is why we think we can do anything and everything when we have an overwhelming majority in the legislature. But that should not be the case.”

These are the thoughts coming after decades of experience in various capacities that should be taken seriously by the ruling political class right across the party-lines. A clear reminder by the former president Pranab Mukerjee to the ruling dispensation to mend ways of governance by not abusing the power vested with them. Protest and dissent are part of democracy, and by all means be allowed. Those who disagree to the dominant view or bill or act to be introduced or already introduced which they feel draconian in democratic ways would defy because how else an individual or a group or a community or electorates vent their disapproval to something for which they are against. There are ways to deal when students or citizens who democratically show their protest, but by sending the police in the University or colleges or libraries charging them with lathis showing excessive force is not good. Protests against the CAA have spread to many university campuses—at least 30 campuses across the country expressing their solidarity to Delhi’s Jamia Millia Islamia University. News of police excesses spread and thus sparked off.

Evidently CAA which the students thought would affect the present and future of India’s plural ethos and understood the deliberate wily moves of the ruling dispensation cleverly pushed through CAA. BJP worked out a schema to isolate those who they do not like and include those they want to. The present and future of India understood the sinis-

terous move of the BJP and thus felt that the need to express their vent on the issue through protests. Many do not approve of the ways that the Government brought CAA that shows a number of fault lines when it comes the conception of citizenship and how it is going to be determined—inclusion and exclusion on the basis of BJP’s guidelines. Those who think that “might is right” should recognize the fact that it’s not right all the time and it cannot hold good always, there are other ways to go about.

It is in this context, welcoming CAA, Vice Chairman of the National Minority Commission George Kurian said “good” and added that “The NCM is flooded with messages from Christian leaders of all denominations across the country welcoming the new legislation. They tell me “justice has finally been done to Christians who are victims of draconian blasphemy laws, religious conversions and abductions.” He also pointed out that “...minorities in India are safe and therefore do not migrate elsewhere unlike minorities in neighbouring countries. The CAA does not affect the prospects of communities other than the six communities mentioned.” His statement may endorse those who wrote to him and certainly does not represent the views of all the Christians across the country. CAA cannot be welcomed and shall never be accepted in the present form because of numerous lacunas. Though the PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah say now that it won’t affect Muslims and others in Northeast and rest of India, it should be seen as a window to the realization of Hindu Rashtra which the present dispensation wants to work a scheme on the basis of Majority and Minority on religious ground and not on the basis of Article 14 of Constitution. I am reminded of the period in Europe in 1930s where the totalitarians came first at those who opposed them strongly, then against those who defied and then at those minorities who for their survival and positions towed their moves for survival. Let us not pass frivolous statements and talk for the entire Christian community. To conclude, John Berger’s idiom is apt

and sheds light to the present context we live in: “Protest and anger practically always derive from hope, and the shouting out against injustice is always in the hope of those injustices being somewhat corrected and a little more justice established.”

IS DEMOCRACY DERAILED OR WAY-LAID?



2019 Parliamentary Elections shall remain in the memory of the people of India for some time to come and will certainly be remembered by the electorates who exercised their franchise. It is not because of free and fair elections; it is not due to any other considerations, but solely for the reasons the leaders of the political parties barring a few conducted themselves in the debates, speeches and narratives. Narratives, speeches and counter-narratives that crisscrossed across the political parties, its leaders and some candidates had no limits and thus exhibited free-for-all trend. Throughout the electioneering and political campaigns the electorates witnessed the heights of hatred and venom spewed at the opponents without any hesitation and civility.

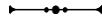
People in general are fed up and totally taken aback with some of the politicians who hold top-notch leadership position in the country and also in their political parties and top position in the nation by and large had stooped down to the lowest level invoking all sorts of things that had nothing to do with the issues except hitting their opponents below their belts. Certainly some of the narratives and rhetoric had lowered the debates and civility expected in politics. The primary objective in any elections is to win and take-over power. What ensued in 2019 elections was “It is not the means that justify the ends, but it is the ends that justify ends”. 2019 elections was fought on only on this and without any restraint each party went ahead hitting at their opponents citing personal, familial and others in such ways that was unprecedented and totally appalling.

Acquiring power is certainly the most important and core factor, but it is equally important to observe how one uses or employ the ways and means to acquire power. Some of the etiquette and basic requisites in conducting oneself in politics seem to waning in the Indian politics. Only a few observe, gone are the days. What has been left behind in the post-2019 polls is that the nation is hurt, deeply wounded and thus needs healing. The campaigns had vilified, dragged the names of the dead and alive, polarized the society on caste and religious grounds, calling people with all kinds of names and hitting the opponents with all types of utterances. Indian society is vertically polarized and horizontally split. Communities are divided on varied levels and caste politics resurged. Religion is also used to whip up caste and religious passion against others.

What is important is that once the results are out whoever forms the government at the Centre especially if the BJP comes to power and Narendra Modi becomes the Prime Minister of India for the second term, it is expected of him that he should heal the wounds caused by him and others irrespective of political difference. Further, polarization on caste and religious grounds, politicizing the organs of the State and using the institutions of governance for the advancement of personal gains will have to stop and continuance the similar politics of polarization shall do more harm rather than any good. In tune to this the following short editorial sheds more light to some of things said in the above paragraphs:

COUNT ON DEMOCRACY

WITH POLLING CONCLUDED, INDIA NEEDS TO
HEAL ITSELF FROM THE BITTER,
FACT-FREE CAMPAIGN



With the seventh phase of polling for the 17th general election over, the anxious wait is now for counting day. The election dates were announced on March 10, and the first phase of polling took place on April 11. The entire process will take 11 weeks to complete; polling itself was spread over six weeks. The consolidated turnout till the sixth phase was 67.37%, as against 66.4% in 2014, and there were 8,049 candidates. The compulsions on the Election Commission of India to stretch the exercise into a painfully long-drawn process are unclear. Given the absence of a rationale for such a prolonged schedule, doubts were raised whether it was designed to help Prime Minister Narendra Modi campaign in the widest possible manner. That was the first instance of the EC's impartiality and integrity coming under doubt during this election season, but not the last.

A series of lapses that followed accumulated into a crisis of credibility for the commission. By being reluctant to hold Mr. Modi to standards set in the past, the EC has bruised its reputation. The process of decision-making in the three-member commission itself was called into question, with one member notifying the others that he would not partic-

ipate in meetings on complaints regarding violations of the Model Code of Conduct unless his dissent, when made, is recorded in the final order. The wisdom of holding elections over stretched phases needs to be revisited in light of this year's experience and feedback from stakeholders. And restoring its reputation and integrity must be the commission's immediate priority.

Some self-reflection is called for as the country concludes a bitterly fought election during which boundaries of civil public debate have been crossed and norms breached. What makes 2019 unprecedented is not that inappropriate words were used and misinformation spread, but the fact that India witnessed an increasing tendency to normalize these. In the 2019 campaign, the leaders of the government preempted a fact-based debate on its performance of five years by blocking or contaminating official data on job generation and other parameters, and successfully pushed electioneering into a fact-free zone filled with emotive and divisive issues.

This was a double whammy for democracy. On the one hand, informed discussions have become difficult, and on the other, social tensions have risen. The outcome on Thursday remains a suspense, but the incoming Prime Minister, whoever that will be, must take the initiative to rally all Indians around a truly inclusive and secular national agenda as soon he or she takes over.

NEW DELHI VS. J&K

INDIA'S FEDERALISM UNDER TEST



Those in favor of nullification of Article 370 of the Constitution jubilate over it, because 72 years of history has been rewritten and therefore justice is being done. Further, they argue that Article 370 has been the stumbling block for the full integration of Jammu and Kashmir into the Indian Union. At the same time there are those against doing away Article 370 contend that national integration could not be furthered by unilaterally and arbitrarily, without consulting the people of Kashmir. However, those in favor of getting rid of Article 370 view that it was born out of a political machination, but was never meant to be a permanent provision—President may, by public notification, declare that this Article shall cease to be operative... Provided that the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the State shall be necessary.”

Though the Constituent Assembly was disbanded in 1956, prior to the dissolution, the Constituent Assembly neither recommended the abrogation of Article 370 nor did it advocate for it to be made a permanent feature of the Constitution. Every crisis presents an opportunity. Those in favor of this move say that changing times need radical decision and so need to go beyond Nehru-Gandhi legacy. Others point out to the ways in which the nullification of Article 370 was brought about in dubious manner. And so, it deserves careful assessment. The integration

of J&K with the rest of India has three dimensions: administrative, economic and socio-psychological. Would nullifying 370 deepen integration or distancing on these counts?

First and the foremost factor is that nullification of the Article 370 has relegated J&K from Statehood to Union Territory, meaning direct rule from New Delhi. In such a context, the two regions will be integrated with the central government and by extension, presumably with rest of India. Second, it is assumed that GOI's removal of 370 and 35A on land ownership and domicile will encourage greater integration. This would lead to the entry of corporate companies and big businesses which would usher 'employment potential' and 'modernization' leading to 'development' wherein infrastructures such as high-speed auto-bans, airports, hotels and communication technologies automatically leading to growth in tourism industry bringing in more growth, development and prosperity for all. This needs heavily fortified corridors as forts.

J&K has limited natural resources. Opening up the whole region would lead to unlimited exploitation of natural resources for maximizing profits. Over and above, those residents who have been there surviving with limited resources due to the onslaught of the big business be isolated leading to militancy and terrorism. Already the Government sources keep saying that terrorism is on the rise in Kashmir and it is at this juncture, would abolition of 370 would reduce terror attacks or escalate? Further, the intent and purpose for which Article 370 was abolished failed to realize those instead in its place just the opposites occurred; then those who considered the move only as a political spin-off would become true. More significantly, opening J&K for the purchase of land and free-movement of people in line with Government's integration gels with BJP-RSS's long-time vision of Hindu-majoritarian settlements in Kashmir. Building Hindu majoritarian locales in Kashmir is bound to drastically change the socio-economic, politico-religio-cultural landscapes in the coming years.

A key and unique element which would be unique and distinct that arises out of dismantling of 370 is going to attract skilled migrants and their families. This was observed at the time of partition where people thronged to Delhi and now this is the first one since then which will reek of internal colonialism. It is somewhat like that of the State of Israel that deliberately allows and promotes internal settlement of Jews amidst the Palestinian settlements. Third, by nullifying 370, it assumes that integration would automatically bring in the Kashmiris with the rest of Indian society particularly socially and psychologically which seem to have been taken for granted. Article 370 was a promise to the people of Kashmir that it would retain its distinctiveness as part of secular national life fabric. After the nullification of 370, under the Hindu majoritarian regime proved the very fact that India continues to pose and thus presents not certainly concerns 'friendly-mode', but depicts 'hostile picture' of its notion of India against the Muslims.

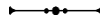
Apart from all these, the abrogation of Article 370 has exposed the ambiguities that were present in India's federal system. Asymmetric arrangements have been negotiated and dealt with in such rudimentary ways. Kashmir's autonomous stature the oldest one ripped open and thus removed by popular mandate at the pan-India level. BJP at the Centre has altered the trajectory by abrogating Article 370 and bifurcating Jammu and Kashmir and thus created two Union Territories by demonstrating that inherent flexibility could be maneuvered in the federal order to centralize power in order to reshaping the size, power and status—from State to Union Territory of a Constituent Unit of the Indian Union—the only Unit with a Muslim majority population. One could predict that in due course of time Kashmir's demography would certainly change.

The constitutionality of the abrogation of Article 370 is under question as the Government went all out for passing legislation though aware of the face and its consequences for the fabric of federalism—the elected

assembly of J&K not presents which exposes the fragility of India's asymmetric federal system hangs on. Asymmetric Constitutional provisions are a common feature of federalism in diverse societies such as Nagas and Mizos (Article 371) recognizing multiple modes belonging with the Union. For example, Union Minister of Home Amit Shah said that those who oppose nullification of Article 370 are anti-Dalit, anti-tribal and anti-women.

In an asymmetric society which is basically hierarchical and differentials with a schema of top=down status is given as part of the extension of rights. So, the decision to transform the J & K State into Union Territories and at the same time dismantling Article 370 is presumed as a radical departure designated as radical' and 'historic', and yet, no one knows the impending consequences that Kashmir is going to offer which certainly and presumably would have wider implications for India's federalism. Indian Constitution is combined with unitary and federal features that need careful readings, applications and scrutiny. *But, the current dispensation invokes everything that suits its political interests, envisaged project and vision all in the name of - 'ONE NATION, ONE FLAG AND ONE CONSTITUTION'.*

DO NOT TAKE REFUGE UNDER THE GUISE ‘INTERNAL MATTER’



If countries of the world if allowed to do whatever they want pointing to others not to interfere under the pretext ‘internal matter’ there would be pandemonium and won’t be law, governance and order. The world we live is still somewhat orderly wherein the rule of law prevails supreme and should not become under totalitarian or dictatorial regimes—‘law of the jungle’—then the tyrants and anarchists rule. The paradox is India and to be precise the present administration wants American dollars, goods and services, more exports, technical know-how, technology and movement of students and capital to grow, but should not open their mouth on mal-governance, human rights violations, heckling of democratic rules and principles and abuse of rule of law.

In a globalised world when the elections are monitored, trades are regulated and bullying is not tolerated, how come some of the things that goes against the international codes of conduct, conventions and covenants be treated as ‘internal affair’? Sovereignty is respected and adored, but when the state becomes rogue state, then the comity of nations have the right to intervene. Therefore the sovereign nations should not point to and brush aside because those who abuse say ‘it is internal matter’ even when they unleash brute power against the unarmed innocent citizens. The tyrants and totalitarians have the tendency to retain power by

hook or crook—ruthlessly perpetrating violent means and methods. Hundreds and thousands of innocent people suffer

The United States' Annual report ripped the Indian Government on religious freedom of the minorities pointing that the minorities face all sorts of problems and questioned the government for its inability to curb the growing menace particularly the Muslims. As expected the Government negated the charges and countered the report that India enjoys plurality of religions and mutual co-existence. The government may pooh-pooh with all sorts of excuses, but in reality the fringe groups have again been set loose and now forcing particularly the Muslims to chant Jai-Sri Ram/ Jai Hanuman. For instance, the hate crimes are on the rise and the pattern is almost the same—taking religious or communal angle—where the Hindu outfits are involved.

Between the years 2009-2019 there were 297 hate crimes and about 722 people were injured. In the 2019 thus far, 11 incidents of hate crimes and in that 22 injured and 4 people died. 66% of cases happened in the BJP ruled states, 16% in Congress ruled states. Therefore, who should be held responsible and how could some of these be negated. What do we make out of these data? Indian society is currently more polarized now than ever on socio-religio grounds that run deep down—Majority Vs Minority presently is the order of the day—fall in line or face the consequences is the imperative. Even in the Temple of Democracy we watched in the channels that most of the MPs belonging to BJP party took oath in the name of 'Jai Shree Ram'—which testifies Modi's 'New India' in the making.

Mind-set of the police and the onlookers in most parts of our India is corroded with social and religious majority identity poison and look at the 'other' as enemies. 24-year old Shams Tabrez was attacked on the night of 17th June 2019, was working in Pune. He got married to 19-year old Shaista Parveen barely 45 days ago, had come to celebrate Eid on June 3rd. His wife testified that he was beaten to death just for being

a Muslim. The Hindu mob thrashed him tied to an electricity pole and for hours thrashed him. The police arrived after some hours and took the badly bruised Ansari for a preliminary check up to the Government-run sadr Hospita on June 18th morning where the doctors declared him “medically fit”—the police and medical units’ nexus.

Police then took him to the court the same day to court and the magistrate ordered that he be sent to prison the same day. This clearly shows the levels of corroded mind-sets we have in the institutions of law and order and governance. The hate crime against the minorities has been recurring quite regularly and the data shows that 59% of the hate crimes in the last 10 years perpetuated against the Muslims. And incidentally 28% incidents have been rather related to alleged cattle thefts, which show the fanatic mind-set of the lumpen elements who think that cows have more value than human beings and the lives of the minorities have no-value a

Facts and data don’t lie and the hate crimes against the minorities in recent years show the upward trend. Apparently, PM Modi’s second innings has just begun, but what we see in the rise of fringe elements. The recent lynching occurred very recently rips opens the blatant lies and cover-ups of the Government both at the Centre and BJP-ruled states. A few days ago in Jharkhand where a young man by name Shams Tabrez was tied to a pole, beaten black and blue for several hours, made to chant ‘Jai Sri Ram and Jai Hanuman’ later succumbed to injuries after few days. This is what minority-Muslims get in return in the name of ‘Sabka Visvas’!

CHURCH VS. METRO: WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?



Land currently has added more value than any other in Bengaluru. The government both at the Centre and in the state of Karnataka keep acquiring land for 'developmental' purposes in exchange of payment of money as fixed by the government. In this context, All Saints Church located on Hosur road with its premises run different programs such as—home for the elderly, school for the physically challenged children and a place to worship for the adherents. The point of contention is between the CSI-KCD agreed on a specific portion of land transacted with the Metro authorities for the said purpose—construction of Metro. The problem as of now is that the Metro needs some more land for which though the so-called authorities somewhat seem to be prepared to give in to the demand, but the adherents of All Saints Church do not want part with the stretch that the Metro wants. This is where the problem lies.

Since the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) has departed from the original plans and proposal for which it sought 6,643.11 sq. metres as per the DPR to what it now requires 12,883.747 sq. metres, almost double to what it initially asked for. The second proposal, almost takes away the entire land of the All Saints Church premises. BMRCL promises many things, but it is a known fact that

once the land is given—be it on lease or for a period or something below or above the stucture—the lender has no say once it is parted. Apart from this, the eco-space and its species would be wiped out entirely. The problem with the Government is that they agreed on something and once agreement is made it gradually stretches its arms to some more and they do when the minority institutions such as this where programs for the poor and vulnerable catered to. We should at this juncture say the audacity and duplicity of the BMRCL .

Those who are resisting against the BMRCL and those who signed the MOU should put more pressure and continue to look out for other avenues, so that it continues to manifest the basic rights of the minorities within the democratic formats so that not an inch is parted to the BMRCL. Everyone and now particularly the CSI-KCD might buckle under pressure, because of varied factors. CSI is known for that and huge tracts of land already gone for personal gains and other reasons. The struggle and resistance going on by the members of the All Saints Church should be appreciated and be shown solidarity. Certainly it would be catastrophic and suicidal once further land is parted and therefore the struggle and protest should garner momentum and coninuity. The decision that the congregation members and those who govern the church make should be responsible and accoutable so it should not lead to another messy deal.

BMRCL may promise many things and say and show all sorts of theatrics and do dramatics, but the resistance should go on and no buckling under pressure. Now the Government has changed vis-à-vis both the Centre and the State governments are ruled by BJP, and so as minorities a lot of pressure be applied, but justice and basic and fundamental consitutional rights always prevail.

DISCRIMINATION: A SCOURGE

INDIA IS PLAGUED WITH IT



It's sickening! Totally appalled when I heard a young doctor belonging to a vulnerable community committed suicide because of discriminatory practices where such practices should not be there, but very much being practiced. This incident happened in Mumbai, so-called cosmopolitan, progressive, multi-cultural city and also called as the economic capital of India. Over and above, this incident took place where there should not be any room for 'discrimination' and 'prejudices', and yet it happened. Young doctor hailing from a vulnerable community took away her life due to discrimination which shows the gravity and nakedness of our society. The so-called 'doctors' fraternity' should have transcended above these biases and discriminatory practices, but they haven't and mirror others as the Indian society is obsessed with caste.

Almost all the countries of the world are caught up and thus entrenched with discrimination in one way or other and in that India is unique. Tadvī, a second-year gynaecology student in TN Topiwala National Medical College, Mumbai, had committed suicide on May 22, 2019, allegedly for caste-based remarks and harassment. Three seniors seem to have been accused by her according family the family sources

that led her to commit suicide. Following the incident the Chairperson of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribe is likely to meet the State health and the police officials to ascertain the incident. In addition, Maharashtra State Commission for Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribe has also agreed to conduct a separate inquiry on this. Her suicide seemed to be due to harassment. All these are procedural in itself and certainly not going to bring back Tadvī.

Our country is known for caste-based discriminatory practices and in the process lost hundreds and thousands of people belonging to the Dalit and Tribal communities. We are used to such incidents and taken these for granted. The real sufferers are those who belong to the vulnerable sections living on the margins. We have failed to evolve deterrents that would send clear messages to those who practice, perpetuate and abet caste-based discriminatory practices. Protective mechanisms and procedures ought to lead to building confidence to those vulnerable communities that instills hope and faith in the system they live and participate.

After seven decades of India's independence and with scores of preventive and protective acts and policies incidents of this nature continues to happen and are happening quite regularly and there has been no reprieve. Those belonging to the dominant castes and communities keep talking about removing the reservation and pro-active and protective mechanisms that safeguards the Dalits and the Tribals from discriminatory practices. With all these even in the 21st Century the vulnerable communities are subject to all kinds and forms of discrimination. One can imagine that what would have been the scenario if we did not have.

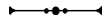
We should acknowledge that the Indian society is a sick society and majority of Indians wears caste blinkers. For them, it is very difficult to transcend beyond stereo-typical constructions and schema such as caste—based on hierarchy and Untouchability and thus is discriminatory. If we don't go beyond caste hierarchies and continue to live in caste schema, we shall never make any headway in other spheres. Caste sys-

tem is indeed a stumbling block for India's growth and progress. Unless and until people at large transcend caste hierarchy there is no hope for the Indian society to grow. Most of the Indians are caught up with narrow caste mind-sets and are drawn into it and gradually getting soaked to it. It is surprising to see that the professional class such as (medical fraternity) is also immersed into it.

A young doctor from the most vulnerable community came to such a level and the castists and those with all sorts of biases and prejudices discriminated and pushed her to a corner where she finally had decided to end her life. Caste-based discriminatory practices are indeed deep seated socio-psychological problem and most Indians have this in their mind-set. It has corroded the mind-set and penetrated into their psyche which propels them not to accept other oppressed communities to come up on par with them.

Those responsible for her death should be brought to books by all means. I would not say that in her death she found 'freedom', rather she has been pushed to take such drastic decision that was hugely detrimental. A precious life is gone and only she knew the horrific discriminatory episodes she underwent and experienced day-in and day-out. What type of 'professionals' they are? They should hang their stethoscopes and coats for good. These are the misfits and castists who would continue to push many to commit suicides. Her death is a blot to all of us especially to those castists belonging to the young 21st Century 'New India' that should never forgive them.

DOES RELIGION HAVE A PLACE IN A MODERNISING AND SECULARISING WORLD?



There is the churning and the boiling of the sea,
And the foam on top of it and that is
What man is, churning and foam together.

– Simone Schwarz-Bart, French writer

I do not want the peace that passeth understanding
I want the understanding which bringeth peace

– Helen Keller

Right through the evolutionary process of the Homo sapiens religion journeyed through. Sociology of religion continues to maintain the very fact that religion happens to be the core in many societies and is gaining momentum in a fast changing world. With the stupendous advancements and achievements of Homo sapiens in science and technology, the world has made great strides in many facets that have transformed the world in which we live. Almost in all the areas of human existence we have made such transformation that we never even imagined as we look at the levels of which we are currently into.

On the one hand we have been witnessing breakthroughs in science and technology that galvanized the life and the living of people much better, secured and easier. Undoubtedly, technology has played a major role in a radically changing the world. It has taken the world in which live to newer and greater heights. Homo sapiens are rational beings. In view of this we have made huge strides on all fronts. Side by side with all the strident strides and rationality, religion also exists with all the superstitions and packages of pre-fabricated dogmas. It is amazing to watch both these opposing categories continue to co-exist side by side.

In a fast-changing secularizing world there are people who say that there is no need of religion. Those who are for religion say that religion is the one that balances the society and the world at large of many things including fast growing agnostic and atheistic tendencies. Despite tremendous breakthrough in knowledge domains where critical inquiry and logical thinking in human existence permeated there is some kind of 'incompleteness' or 'not fullness' with most of the Homo sapiens. What is that? The vacuum pre-supposes that human knowledge alone will not suffice, and there is something beyond. And so, religious texts and sacred scriptures come handy for them such as the sayings, morals and commands that have been said long ago resonates eternal values that illumines moral values and ethical principles for individuals, communities and societies to lead moral life. They for centuries continue to illumine light and path to spirituality to those who believe in religion.

With all the stupendous advancements of technology and knowledge systems, the people by and large get distracted and go erratic. All that they learnt fails to give them to live and lead life that promotes character and values. To put it simply ways, the questions that emerge: How to lead a moral life? How to live a good life? Those who are for religion say that only religion could give and impart the values, and certainly not the modern and secularizing world. According to them religion has ingenious ways and means to enable the seekers to imbue knowledge

and wisdom. The justification is God who is Knowledge and so the source of knowledge is to be acknowledged. Therefore, God becomes the center of many religions. Religion unites people irrespective of caste, class, color, language, region and nationality. Religion basically and fundamentally believes in uniting all sections of society and strives for harmony and mutual co-existence. Religion via its scripts and texts candidly brings people together and inspires them to work for peace, justice and fairness. Religion goes beyond merely transference of knowledge and wisdom. Religion also claims that it brings hope to the hopeless and lifts up the poor and disadvantaged from their miserable conditions. At least in principle religion may hold but may not be in practice whatever it claims to uphold, but fails because it is filled with bias and discrimination claiming as if it possesses 'absolute truth'..

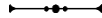
While on the other, science and technology have connected people across the world and unified one another with the dissemination of information. With the help of mass media and social media, unification of people within and between countries on issues that they get confronted and in the process alienation takes place. Pockets of protests across the world have sprung up and became real due to the technological development and modern communication. Uprisings within and across the world are happening because of the technological revolution. Dictators and autocrats, financial institutions and others that throttle democracy, human rights and justice have been defied and forced to leave—all because of rational and logical thinking where the religion failed. Religion at one point of history acted as the agency of transformation, but as the time went by particularly in recent times has failed to be the torch bearer of society. Rather, religion has become the obstacle of change and transformation.

In recent times religion is becoming glaringly organized with all sorts of dogmas and doctrines. This type of rigidity seems to be unacceptable to those who subscribe to rationality and critical inquiry. Athe-

ists and agonists and secularists do not accept the rigidity and superstitious belief system of religion. They want to move beyond the religious constructs and frameworks because of the fact that religion propagates ‘other worldly’ realms and thus instils false consciousness. We live in a world of modernism and secularism. Somehow in such a world of secular and modernizing landscape religion continues to thrive. Therefore, in such a world wherein religion and secularism co-exists there should be common thread that needs to be built based on common principles that enhances the life of individuals, communities and societies—equality, dignity, fraternity, humanity, freedom, justness, peace, fairness so on and so forth.

DUPLICITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

REPRESENTATION OF THE OPPRESSED SECTIONS ABYSMAL



Social disequilibria continue to evade the oppressed sections of the Indian society in higher education. A society shall never reach its zenith, if it is built on social inequality. A tiny percent—minuscule enjoys the facility extended by India population enjoys the facilities that are there in higher education, whereas a huge percent that occupies the oppressed sections do have any access. Obviously, those in the higher echelons of the system of caste—the privileged castes have the access and benefit of enjoying all that offered by the society in the sector of higher education. The general categories (the dominant castes) comprise nearly 95 percent in posts of “professors” as against 3.54 percent of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and 0.86 percent of the Scheduled Tribes (STs).

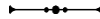
Likewise, in the junior most teaching position such as “assistant professor” and also in general categories have a share of 66 percent as against 12 percent of SCs and 6 percent of STs, OBCs have count for nearly 15 percent. Across these lines, of the three oppressed categories, general communities have a share of 75 percent, SCs 10 percent, STs 4 percent and OBCs 10 percent. HRD ministry has recently provided to the Parliament’s Committee on Welfare of OBCs the caste-wise break up of faculties in higher education institutions. It observed that the

creamy layers continue to enjoy the maximum whereas the oppressed sections do not enjoy as against the numbers that they represent and therefore it should be rationalized.

The observation clearly posits the massive shortfall in comparison to the reservation available to SCs (15%), STs (7.5%) and OBCs (27%). Interestingly the government has recently carved out 10 percent reservation for the poor among the general communities (dominant castes). However, all these committees do not carry out whatever prescribed at the policy levels. Even if there are vacancies, the dominant castes that sit and control these committees tend to deliberately thwart the oppressed communities to enter into for which they are entitled legitimately. On the basis of diverse pretexts and narratives they tend to justify and offer reasons why they have not been accommodated. It's unfortunate that there are no checks and balances because those who control these mechanisms belong to the dominant communities.

This is the sole reason wherein the oppressed communities do not occupy the top position in the higher education. On the contrary, the oppressed communities occupy the major fulcrum of the Indian society, but their visibility is abysmal. Those who are concerned on social parity/equilibrium will have to ask for social audit that too at the departmental level. The dominant castes show one big basket and say that they did fill as per the prescription, but in reality that may not be true. Over and above, most of the vacancies have not been filled despite the Apex Court's directives as well as Constitutional guarantees. This is nothing but a clearly drawn out 'conspiracy' of the dominant castes. They want to control education and educational institutions and certainly the higher education. Most of the institutions and higher levels of learning like IITs, advance research institutes and centers are being controlled by communities which are tiny as against the overall percentage of the Constitution. When would this aberration be rectified and challenged and how are we going to do?

2019 –
A YEAR OF PROTESTS
STRIVE FOR A BETTER WORLD IN 2020



There are absolutely no denials and frankly no regrets to state that the year-2019 was a year defined by a wave of protests sweeping right across the globe. Right from Chile to Hong Kong, United States to India, France to Lebanon, name it, protesters occupied the main streets and by-lanes for varied reasons candidly defying the rulers and their governments conveying as well as reminding them that ‘enough is enough —‘don’t cross the line’, failing which face the fury of the masses. Precisely, this is what happened. We did witness a number of massive protests across the countries and continents that covered the print and visual media.

By and large, the protests were directed against injustices and misgovernance. This is what we did witness throughout 2019. However, a common feature that undergirds all the protests happened throughout the world in the year 2019, for example, Lebanon, India or Hong Kong or take the climate protests that covered the entire world, one important and notable feature in all these we come across is that the young outnumbered and so it was youth-centric. The issues were wide-ranging from climate-to-citizenship-to-misgovernance-to-corruption-to-abuse of power and authority. The youth of the world realized that their world has been robbed by the ruling classes.

The young came out in large numbers voicing out that their future and the generations to come into this world shall not accept and toler-

ate the ways with which their world is governed and the levels with which those who rule them abused their powers they are vested with. Therefore, the youth of the world came in thousands and millions on to the streets shouted slogans, carried placards and voiced their grievances against those who claimed to be their representatives. Climate, joblessness, gender injustice, corruption, price rise, polarization, religious fundamentalism and cultural nationalism that led to total collapse of governance, rising economic and social inequality were some of the crucial issues that triggered the protests.

In India in particular anti-Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) coupled with NRS and NPS, infuriated the young Indians who saw that their dreams and aspirations were being dismantled and crushed. And their frustrations fuelled as their idea of India was being determined on the basis of religion which was antithetical and diametrically opposed to diversity of India in which they saw unity and oneness. Further, 2019 protests across the world evoked clear ideological and political divide pitched between liberalism and conservatism, fundamentalism and globalism, unit in diversity and unity in uniformity. And so the youth wanted to intervene and set it right.

2019 protests seem to be directed against the populist forces for their failures to deliver solutions to refugees, migrants, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, bigotry, misogyny and others that concerns socio-economic, politico-religio-cultural facets. Young people all over would not agree with the traditionalists, their leaders who in their sixties and seventies offering all sorts of excuses, dodging the problems with frivolous excuses that their countries were facing and in the process accumulating properties and laundering the public money for themselves by abusing their powers and authority and what not. Apart from these, the theme that irked the young world was the planet's climate emergency. With the climate behaving in erratic ways due to the humans' greed, exploitation of nature that totally changed order of nature which evoked serious

concerns pushing the youth to intervene. The young world thus far seemed to be disconnected and totally left out asserted and became as agents of change and should become as the center of participation and part of decision-making processes.

Instead of transforming the world we live as a shared and inter-dependent those who control the nation-states barring a few remained selfish and not at all concerned about many things that the citizens are facing in their day-to-day life. In addition, the young saw the ways with which gender equality and gender justice have been subverted. For instance, India topped the list wherein indiscriminate rape of women and girl children which became a regular feature and flashing point in 2019 that further rip opened the patriarchal mores and sexism. Young women bravely occupied the streets of the Indian cities challenging the ruling dispensation of treating women as objects of sex and commoditizing them. Year 2019, belong to the youth of the world who daringly protested against those powers who let them down and thus asked those politicians who failed in their governance. A clear message they gave to the world leaders was that they would never forgive and excuse them for their wrongs and failures.

The young envision a just, humane, equitable and sustainable world. Year-2019 was a year that was an inflection pointer for politics, democracy, globalism and governance. Protests are part of democracy and 2019 was totally dominated by the young. They did defy and challenged the global and national powers that their continuance in office shall never be taken for granted. As rightly opined by Henry David Thoreau “Disobedience is the true foundation of liberty. The obedient must be slaves.” The message passed on by the young conveys similar views. Year 2019 that passed by belonged to the youth and the year 2020—it is hoped that the second decade of the 21st Century too belongs to the youth who would continue to play key and pivotal roles in the making of new histories and in constructing new narratives thereby playing critical

and creative roles in all aspects of nation building. In them there's anger, hope and vision.

The past and future is a continuum as Kilroy J Oldster from the Dead Toad Scrolls unfold that "Human mortality threatens a person's ontic self-affirmation. Life is a dream within a dream. The past is nothing, the future is an illusion, and my own existence is a trifle. If I can stop living a life of artifice and face my own nonbeing with courage, I will no longer suffer from the demons of damnation ... Unlike human beings, no other creature spends their day brooding over their history of wrongdoing, or agonizes over the vagueness surrounding their future. Our preoccupation with the past and the future oftentimes causes us to fail to embrace the true joy of living each day one minute at a time. Some people are inclined to sabotage their present happiness by assigning a disproportionate significance to their past. Other people escape a meaningful engagement with reality by fantasizing about their future." A nuanced swipe of the past, present and future that leaves the year 2020 open to us and the young knows what to do.

Year 2019 had indeed instilled a ray of hope to all of us because it was sprouted from the youth of India. More than 50 per cent of the Indian populace belongs to the youth segment. The second decade of the 21st century starts with 2020 spearheaded by the youth of India illumines to the rest that they believe in moderation, peaceful resistance, faith in the Constitution, committed to secular ethos and democratic norms. Young India knows what type of India they want for the present and the future generations. Accordingly they paved way by organizing protests, marches and participating in peaceful ways wherein students and faculty from many Universities and colleges including IITs; IIMs, NLSIU and those engaged in diverse sectors have taken part.

The political class irrespective of ideological shades has failed to understand the hopes and aspirations and thus underestimated the youth of the country. The uprising is spontaneous that expresses their anguish

aimed at the ruling dispensation that evaded and left out their idea of India in their discourse. Young India is interested in development, economy, jobs, education, equal rights and opportunities for all and certainly not divisiveness and exclusion. The young minds know the constitutional verities, guarantees and obligations that they learn and see through the ways with which the ruling dispensation keeps flouting in political practice has provoked them to go for protests and resistance. Protests by the young India is pan-Indian and certainly rattled and taken aback the ruling dispensation and other political parties.

At this point of juncture, it is befitting to invoke Linda Sarsour, an American activist said that “Dissent is the highest form of patriotism, and I intend to continue to push my country to respect the rights of all its citizens.” Perceptions may vary and interpretations loom large, but as rightly said the young India is precisely engaged in restoring democracy, secular values and plural ethos. Many right thinking people have come to a realization that only the young India can deliver from the toxic politics of the last decade and the continuance of the protests right across the country are to put a stop to political machinery that halts for good so that it would not spill over to the second decade of 2020. The young India is struggling for an alternative which certainly be seen in the near future as the young is fed up of the political parties thus far ruled and ruling.

2020 GLOBAL MISSION

PUT PEOPLE FIRST



Dawn of 2020 is certainly hope-enlivening. As we entered into the Second Decade of the 21st Century we do expect lots of challenges and possibilities. A mixture of these duos makes life worth living and purposeful. 2020 mission agenda for the decade will have to be something different and yet in congruence of the reality that people across the world faced in the previous decade and be facing in 2020 and beyond. It is imperative that we should take into account the happenings and episodes of the previous decade while working on the mission agenda. It should not be another replication of the past decade, but something different. A question that arises is: who is going to translate as number of happenings vividly travelling in our mind?

Horrendous episodes people around the world faced during the last decade on account of a number of policy changes and also changes in political templates that pushed people to uncertainties and insecurities keep rekindling our memories and conscience. In such socio-economic, political, cultural and religious terrains, citizens across the globe are totally disillusioned and showed their anger against those responsible for their plight and predicament tolerated and did bear patiently for years. The difficulties that the global citizenry underwent and faced in the last decade has certainly been beyond comprehension as those who govern them had ruthlessly and blatantly abused their power and authority vested with.

Those who control the government machinery and state apparatus unleashed their brute power against the unarmed citizens and civilians because they did raise their democratic rights peacefully by protesting against the powers and principalities. Year 2019 happened to be the most explosive, volatile and erratic and yet defining as the whole world witnessed a wave of protests within countries and between continents. In a troubled world where people have lost their hope and in a state of shock, somewhere from unknown quarters a ray of hope kept flickering. Oh, a great surprise and huge relief for many as it was totally unexpected. The youth across the globe raised their voice against those who throttled and heckled the innocent citizens.

Year 2020 is bound to set the tone for this decade. Undoubtedly the major players to dominate this decade are the youth. The youth of the world have come of age and are going to take the centre-stage of the national and global affairs. It became amply clear and evident and is hoped that this decade belongs to them. The protests that occupied the capitals and major cities of the world grabbed the attention of the comity of nations and people around the world were climate change, corruption, extra-constitutional jurisdiction and host of others. The young thronged the streets of the capital cities along with others shouting slogans and protesting over the ways with which the political class dealt with the changing nature of environment and climatic conditions.

Absolutely a defining moment and in fact a global movement that irked almost all the global leaders. The climate movement questioned the irresponsible global leaders for ransacking the natural resources for their selfish motives. The teens—the future of the world occupied the podium of the UN dared the world leaders of having betrayed their future and also blamed them for having given all false promises and fake narratives. Leaders were stunned and had to sit and forced to listen to them patiently. The power dynamics totally shifted since then where the youth in different parts of the country occupied the streets on a number

of issues that hit them ranging from employment, economy, freedom of religion and speech, human rights, refugees, migration and host of others. In their expression there were moderation, anger, farsightedness, reason, temperance, justness and care for the planet and care for the present and future generations.

The impending problems--environmental, economic and political challenges the people of the world face have gripped the world in complex ways and thus pose numerous challenges. All these have further depleted the hopes and thus annoyed them. The young world keep asking their leaders who govern the world: Can they assure a livable planet to the present and future generations because they pitch their narratives filled with false promises, age-old traditions, myths and fakes tweets. The global youth want arguments and rhetoric based on reason, science and facts, and certainly not tall unfulfilling promises and superficial claims. As there were hardly any positive answers and problem-solving measures the long wait of the youth reached a point which turned out to be uprising against them.

The political class either received or guaranteed their subjects better living, meaningful existence and quality of life for the present and the future generations', large waves of protests right across the globe blossomed. Out of many, the primary issues that hit the world in totality have been forced displacement, throttling of democratic voices and undemocratic rule. Unlike the older generations, the young protesters are unwilling to compromise and not afraid to defy; prepared to face consequences; outraged by structural and systemic inequalities. As Amartya Sen opined: "In India, isolation is viewed as the progress of knowledge and this is fundamentally defective, no matter how appealing it may be to the nationalist and the sectarian. We learn from each other and our intellectual horizons are expanded by being in touch with what others know. Once acquired, our newly-learned knowledge expands and we can then give to the outside world much more than we received from them."

Their patience came to a boiling point and so started their defiance and resisted openly the vital issues such as crony capitalism, religious fundamentalism, populism, patriarchy and homophobia. The youth never agreed with the growing divide, oligopolistic and autocratic rule. For them freedom, constitution and right to life and quality of life are vital. By way of occupying the streets and roads, the young protesters of the world have woken up nation-states and its rulers. By their culture of defiance and brave occupation of the main streets and by-lanes in tens and thousands unfolded a path of prosperity and freedom for all. It clearly conveys a message that the dominant narratives are getting punctured; populist measures are gradually waning and rhetoric hardly works.

People of the world are no more prepared to get fooled by hollow talks and narratives that have any substance and contents. Laws are enacted to control, silence and question the citizenship of people being enforced with the help of the organs of the State. Institutions of governance meant to protect people rather used for oppressing and dehumanizing their people. The narratives such as “Go to Pakistan”, a senior Uttar Pradesh police officer uttered when people were protesting the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) in Meerut; Home minister Amit Shah referred to Delhi protesters as “tukde tukde gang” and PM Modi accusing those who dissent as “urban naxals” in a speech in Delhi in recent times fails to draw any attention or inspiration to the young India and young world because

The current ruling dispensation is shaken and rattled because the young India wants something new, an appealing approach and political lexicon towards those disagree and protest. Old narratives have failed to inspire and makes people to listen and get convinced. Citizens gather in massive numbers across India, devised posters with street plays within the non-violent and democratic framework. By and large, most of the protests have been peaceful and non-violent. The polity of nation-states at large portrays centralized leadership. For example, take Russia, India,

most of the African, Latin-American and Arab countries either ruled by dictators or totalitarian. Be it democratic, dictatorial or monarchical, if there is no opposition or real political vacuum, defiance and protest by the citizens automatically it turns out to be one-man rule.

Like many others, India has now becoming highly centralized rule wherein the police, paramilitary and the state machinery posits dangerously over-extended structure which the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi warned against. He opposed due to the fact that “Centralization as system is inconsistent with a non-violent structure of society ... centralization cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force.” What he said some time ago is relevant and more apt to the Indian scenario. Centralized State tends to consolidate its power by abetting and normalizing violence between citizens—though it is abnormal but a new normal in India. Those who control the State use the state machinery for the promotion and promotion of power. Furtherance of power in recent times is only by terrorizing the people in brute manner.

Nowadays citizens are divided as pro-CAA protests sponsored and endorsed by the State/GOI and anti-CAA protests by those who challenge CAA-NRC-NPR. The ways with which the State dealt with the anti-CAA protesters has been brutal and thus showed its ugly face against the unarmed ordinary civilians protesting peacefully and in democratic ways. Over and above, those employed in the government offices and state-funded universities and colleges have been warned not to participate in the anti-CAA protests. Further, those foreign nationals who participated in the protests were asked to leave. In the name of collecting the damages caused to the public property the Uttar Pradesh Government for example issued summons which contravenes the Apex Court’s directives and procedures.

Democracy by definition recognizes and accommodates dissent and protest. Indian democracy is centered on the people. It further reiterates that it is built and functions for the people, by the people and to the

people. In conjunction to this, the Preamble of our Constitution starts with “We, the people...” which elongates people are the first and the center of our democracy. Irrespective of religion, caste, creed and region and language the people are the means and ends of democracy. Democracy is such as amazing framework that accommodates those who secured fewer seats or more seats to form the governments both at the Centre as well as in the states. Minority or majority though works on the principle of numbers be it bigger or smaller, its basis is premised on one person, one value and one vote. In democracy each and everyone is considered as equals. No one is above and no one is below—all are equal and no distinction on any counts.

As against the back drop, Decade 2020 should consider people as means and ends—the Alpha and Omega. Humanity is centered on the people who in democracy called as citizens. The protests presently going on at the pan-India level spearheaded by the young India cutting across ideological and political divide joined in unison on one singular agenda—India is one and united. The message conveyed to all the political class is crystal clear—in diversity young Indians are united—irrespective of religion, language, region and ethnicity. The young world taught lessons to older generation and leaders of the world that the youth is watching and knows when to intervene and how to intervene. It’s their world and their future and so their hopes and aspirations be respected and they shall not tolerate their world being robbed and ransacked.

Representatives who have been duly elected to represent the electorates and to make the world livable and sustainable are by and large engaged in looting the global resources and accumulating wealth in disproportionate ways. What Edmund Burke long ago said fits well to the current scenario: “Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion.” It is apt to the present as 2019 was clouded with “too much of government” and “too less of governance”. The youth

of the world decided that “2020 should be the year of the citizens and governance”. If the opinion of the citizens is not given due attention and weightage by the elected representatives, then the citizens have no other option or choice, except occupying the main lanes and by lanes.

Youth of the world shall never tolerate exclusion, oppression and differentiation. They are the vanguards and custodians of the world in which we live engaged in transforming the glocal that impedes their development, progress and future and so initiated global movements on diverse issues. In the year 2019, we did witness how they vented their fury at different points and levels. Their uprisings have been against those responsible for the current fiasco and their movement is gaining momentum and growing at stupendous ways and thus spreading like bush fires right across the world. This is the country the citizens want to live and the citizenry shall never be taken. And so, year 2020 will certainly set the trends for the present and future generations.

IT'S NATURAL AND OBVIOUS: GROWING OLD IS PART OF THE PROCESS



Particularly there are many who believe and assume that once you touch 60 years or starts graying it's time to withdraw or retire from a whole gamut of activities. Those who retire from active services especially males will work out their routines confining and attending to selective certain things and do not want to go beyond. In the name of 'retirement' they live and lead their lives within a set rubric of things. They tend to lose their confidence, capabilities and potentials within and begin to lose hope in them relegating to the levels of helplessness, despair and hopelessness.

In articulating and detailing on this the bestselling Columbian author, Gabriel Garcia Marquez observed in his book titled *One Hundred Years of Solitude* "The secret of good old age is simply an honorable pact with solitude." And so, withdrawing from a number of things from a world of many challenges, vistas and vicissitudes and thus languishing and living in seclusion is definitely what human metabolism or physiology or nature wants us to be, but should be seen as nothing, but our own ways of conditioning. Whoever is born will have to go through a process and in that ageing is natural and therefore it's obvious. We rather should

welcome it and live in and though and relish and embrace and enjoy the beauty and overcome the complexity of ageing.

Offering or by giving all sorts of excuses—too much of traffic, no proper pavements, no facilities for the old and above all, it's risky to go here and there. Many tend to give too many excuses and in the process offer all sorts of justifications. Examples that come before us are the physically challenged achievers who despite their physical handicaps with grit and determination push themselves in such ways by facing the world boldly and bravely. They do not create cocoon and live within, but rather break those confines and come out of it. We should be prepared to break the physical limitations and mental obstructions infusing positive thinking and re-focusing our vision and re-positioning ourselves to the changing contour of time and space.

Old age is to be welcomed and enjoyed and above all to be lived with. This is the phase wherein those living in the phase old age should come out with creative ideas, critical questioning and higher levels of potentials that matured them through the intervening phases. "In old age, the mind continues to produce as many neurons as it did at an earlier age" says a report appeared in TOI (April, 7, 2018). The findings suggest that "Many senior citizens remain more cognitively and emotionally intact than commonly believed." Maura Boldrini, associate professor at Columbia University in the United States on similar vein said: "We found that older people have similar ability to make thousands of hippocampal new neurons from progenitor cells as younger people do."

Ageing is something to be lived with and live in full. As Maulanal Wahiduddin Khan rightly says that "Ageing is not the beginning of a countdown, but is rather, the time for a count-up. This is, in fact, nature's way of enabling man to pass on his wisdom to succeeding generations. The world can benefit greatly from the planning skills and wisdom of the aged. This is, in fact, nature's way of enabling man to pass on his wisdom to succeeding generations." He adds that "Longevity and old

age are often spoken of in the same breath". But there the emphasis is misplaced.

The key aspect of old age is maturity not longevity. An old person develops mature thinking by experiencing the vicissitudes of life. This not only enhances his knowledge but make him a prolific source of guidance and advice. He adds further that "Succeeding generations are always in need of this unique gift from nature so that they may plan a way forward". All major developments have taken place in the world by people 'standing on the shoulders of their predecessors'.

He further adds that "It is time to actively acknowledge the contribution that senior citizens can make to society at large and to bring them into the mainstream so that they ma uphold the veracity of the old age." Nonetheless, the ageing population is growing across the world. Countries like Singapore, Japan and even India, the population of the ageing is growing at a faster pace. Brian Kennedy, director of Singapore's Centre for Healthy Ageing warns that "If we don't do something about the dramatic increase in older people and find ways to keep them healthy and functional, then we have a major quality of life issue and a major economic issue on our hands." Let us welcome and celebrate ageing.

B.R. AMBEDKAR: A COMPOSITE PERSONA



As India celebrated the most precious Ratna of India—Dr. Ambedkar’s 128th birth anniversary, on the 14th of April, 19, we are once again reminded of his ideals and contribution to this nation and her people, especially the oppressed section that constitutes one-fifth of the population—the Dalits. He will be remembered beyond time and space, particularly by the oppressed sections of the Indian society vis-à-vis the Dalits. His contributions to writing on diverse areas of society and Constitution and in that his notions of social justice, functioning of democracy, equality, fraternity and dignity have been outstanding that sheds light to hundreds and thousands of people not only in India, but across the globe. He was a genius of par excellence and brilliant in such ways nuanced the concepts and categories that shed new horizons of understanding as we read and interpret them.

Ambedkar’s idea of social justice runs through the basic structure and tenor of B.R. Ambedkar alone and none can match him. For him, the flesh and blood and in letter and spirit, he steered the Constitution of India—and this flows through in and in and out and out. Why did he add on social as the prefix to justice? He went beyond Rawlsian notion of justice and added social. India is a peculiar country and the Indian society is structured in and around the system of caste. As we are aware of the fact each individual is designed on the basis of birth and occupation.

Those considered as *avarnas* the “Untouchables” remain outside and not at all considered as human beings. Dr. Ambedkar in his life faced the naked and heinous sides of ‘Untouchability’ and caste. He went through the deep roots of caste and came to a realization that the Indian social structure is premised and triggered on the system of caste and he went all out to annihilate caste.

Social does pre-suppose the identity of a person attached to *varna/jati*—a de-facto category that describes about his/her being and becoming. Therefore, as long as the system of caste remains in the Indian society, those designated as ‘Untouchables’ will have to face the wrath of the diabolic manifestation of caste—the dominant castes. D B.R. Ambedkar knew very well that under the current schema of caste, the Dalits have no scope or avenue to compete with those who come under the rungs of ‘*varnas*’. It was under these contextual realities and specificities mooted social justice. He pushed this concept and elaborated as he drafted the constitution. He incorporated mechanisms and provisions for those who have been ostracized by the system of caste. Therefore, B.R. Ambedkar wherever possible unfolded spaces for the Dalits to maneuver and do employ their presence and move on till the system of caste is eliminated.

Nevertheless, in the judiciary, executive and the legislature and in the different organs of the State the presence of the Dalits is hardly visible and in some facets like the judiciary and legislature their visibility is just minimal. Though there are clear constitutional provisions those agencies that ought to translate or execute do not want and by and large they belong to dominant castes. Even after 127 years of Ambedkar’s legacy in this country his clarion calls and the constitution he worked has not taken off. The following write up by the former AGI opens up a series of question that questions the constitutional apparatus failed to translate and why is it so is the question.

AMBEDKAR'S IDEAS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE STILL HAUNT COUNTRY'S CONSTITUTIONAL APPARATUS

– HOW MUCH HAVE WE ACHIEVED?



Ambedkar believed that unless the moral values of a constitution are upheld, the grandiloquent words in it will not protect the freedom and democratic values of the people.

B R AMBEDKAR is rightly regarded as the principal architect of our Constitution⁵⁰. In the course of his labours, he studied the constitutions of several countries and worked tirelessly. Ambedkar believed that unless the moral values of a constitution are upheld, the grandiloquent words in it will not protect the freedom and democratic values of the people. Ambedkar also attached great importance to constitutional morality in the working of the Constitution: He explained this — by referring to Grote, the Greek historian — as paramount reverence for the forms of the Constitution, enforcing obedience to authority acting under

⁵⁰ Written by Soli J. Sorabjee, former attorney general of India. [Updated 18 April, 2019 This article first appeared in the print edition on April 18, 2019, under the title ‘The legacy of Ambedkar’.

and within these forms yet combined with the habit of open speech, of action subject only to definite legal control.

The question of whether the President was bound by ministerial advice and could act independently of it or contrary to it arose in the constituent assembly: Ambedkar was of the opinion that the president was bound by ministerial advice, and, Rajendra Prasad, the chairperson of the constituent assembly, had protracted exchanges with Ambedkar on this issue. Ambedkar was of the firm view that “the President could not act and will not act except on the advice of the Ministers. He will never be able to act independently of the Ministers”. These passages are reproduced in the landmark judgment of our Supreme Court in *Shamsher Singh’s* case, in which the Court accepted Ambedkar’s view.

Ambedkar was also passionate about the guarantees of fundamental rights being appropriately incorporated in the Constitution. The subject of fundamental rights was debated for 38 days after which the Assembly adopted a fairly comprehensive array of basic human rights covering a wide spectrum.

It is trite that rights without remedies are meaningless. Guarantees of fundamental rights remain ornamental promises unless they can be judicially enforced: With that objective in mind, the draft Constitution provided that a person can move the Supreme Court directly for the enforcement of his or her fundamental rights without going through the high court.

According to Ambedkar, “If I was asked to name any particular article in this Constitution as the most important — an article without which this Constitution would be a nullity — I could not refer to any other article except this one. It is the very soul of the Constitution and the very heart of it”. That was his invaluable contribution to our Constitution and to the people of India.

On the concluding day of the deliberations of the constituent assembly, Ambedkar expressed his misgivings about the successful function-

ing of democracy in our country in these memorable words: "On 26th January 1950, India would be a democratic country in the sense that India from that day would have a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

The thought comes to my mind is what would happen to her democratic constitution? Will she be able to maintain it or will she lose it again? If we wish to maintain democracy the first thing in my judgment 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, non-cooperation and satyagraha... Where constitutional methods are open, there can be no justification for unconstitutional methods. These methods are nothing but the Grammar of Anarchy and the sooner they are abandoned, the better for us."

Unfortunately, the Grammar of Anarchy is prevalent still, and Ambedkar's hope that it would be abandoned has not fructified. He also underlined the importance of observing the caution which English philosopher John Stuart Mill had formulated, namely not to lay civil liberties at the feet of even a great man. There is nothing wrong in being grateful to great men but there are limits to it.

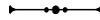
As has been well said by the Irish patriot Daniel O'Connell, no man can be grateful at the cost of his honour, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity and no nation can be grateful at the cost of its liberty. Ambedkar warned that Bhakti in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul. But in politics, Bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship.

Social justice was Ambedkar's mission. He fervently believed that mere equality on paper was not sufficient. What was needed was de facto equality, real equality of opportunity for the millions who had been denied it. In ringing tones, on the last day of the constituent assembly, he pointed out the perils of a "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 else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of democracy which this Constituent Assembly has so laboriously built up.”

The anguished questions posed by Ambedkar continue to haunt us. Social justice, the signature tune of our Constitution, still eludes us. But we cannot afford to give way to despair. The struggle for social justice must continue with determination and its achievement would be the best tribute we can pay to one of the greatest sons of India.

MANDIR-MASJID TUSSLE: LEVERAGING WIN-WIN OR WIN-LOSE!



One of the most sensitive and explosive cases in the post-independent history of India popularly known as Ayodhya, located in the state of Uttar Pradesh, two major faith communities of India namely Hindus and Muslims had been claiming the ownership of their worship places—contesting its existence earlier than the other. Though its history goes back to several centuries back, its importance had gained its momentum in the post-independent India, particularly since 1990s. And so, Ayodhya—Masjid-Mandir issue had assumed alarming proportions in India and thus started gaining momentum particularly ever since 2014.

This issue was in fact considered to be the most volatile, high-voltage promoting ecstatic and eclectic fluctuations, emotion-driven, brewing-within, looming at-large and heavily-charged one arousing psychedelic effects. The centrality of the issue and the triggering point happened to be religion-based, faith-related and belief-driven. After prolonged legal wrangling and mediation initiative, at last the contesting parties went to the apex court and the verdict was delivered on the 9th of November, 2019. 1,045 pages judgment has been viewed analyzed and interpreted by cross sections of people in India in and through varied prisms and perspectives.

The judgment on Ayodhya is being viewed from number of angles and standpoints, since it is now open to the public for scrutiny. For in-

stance, when it comes to judgments such as faith which is by and large associated with religion and so it is obvious that the manidir-masjid tussle had been posing lots of difficulties for the lower courts to make judgments. However, the apex court at last came out candidly and boldly with its observations and reliefs based on the materials provided by both the parties that were available to them. More particularly, the ways with which the counsels of the contesting parties argued the case to prove their points needs appreciation.

However, the crux of the case entwined with two diametrically opposing components: faith Vs reason; historicity Vs myths, facts Vs postulates. Despite these, certainly issue of this sort would have to be negotiated and then settled, rather than going to court, so that both the contesting parties could have mutually placed their grievances, disagreements and thus sorted out their differences and agreed on some areas where to give-in and take away. The contesting parties went to the court and agreed to abide by the verdict of the court whatever might be the nature and content of judgment. The judgment of the Supreme Court by and large reflects whatever suggestions and proposals that the Persons of Eminence representing diverse sections and profession from both the sides who tried to negotiate with the contesting parties echoes in the judgment.

The legal row is over and both the parties will have to abide by the verdict, although a review is possible. Nevertheless, the five-member bench passed judgment which is total and unanimous and thus adds credibility. Nonetheless, the case is all about belief/faith on the supernatural vis-à-vis gods/goddesses though personal, and yet cuts across familial, communal and societal domains. The case per se was indeed sensitive, tricky and ambiguous and in such a scenario the court delivered its judgment based on available facts and other materials available. In such fluid conditions the case was heard by the Supreme Court and

thus argued by the contesting parties to prove the merit of the case from their standpoints.

However, the tussle in the case has been between the objective materiality versus belief/ faith on someone namely ‘god entity/factor’ irrespective of the fact whether ‘real’ or ‘unreal’—a matter of absolute faith on which the object of belief that exists. It is in this context therefore there are all possibilities of getting into total objectivity or even be subsumed by subjectivity couched with impending factors that emanate from the ground reality probably leading to ‘cowardice’. The nature of the case was so complex and be seen within the gamut of so many things and number of factors that intersected.

Having said, what would have prompted the Supreme Court to give a verdict to bring closure to Ayodhya. The case ought to be brought to a close with scintillating judgment. As decades and years went by Ayodhya Temple-Masjid case reached a boiling point wherein the Indian society has been vertically split and horizontally ripped open. In such a situation, the Indian populace by and large desired for an amicable solution. Fortunately everything had fallen in its place and so bringing closure to a long-pending dispute at Ayodhya, the apex court seems to have posited peace as the mediating principle for amity as the pivotal rallying point.

Further, the case ought to be brought to logical, natural and juridical ends, so that amity and harmony could reign over in the Indian society which seemed to be the utmost priority and pre-occupation of the five-member bench of the Supreme Court. Over and above, Ayodhya almost became the triggering point for the fundamentalist political parties and organizations that are engaged in changing the secular templates and the secular landscapes of the Indian society. Taking into considerations all these factors, the Apex Court allowed a temple to be constructed on the disputed site through a government appointed trust in Ayodhya invoking a path that paves peace and harmony amongst warring communities with

a long-lasting settlement that could lead to establishing amity, harmony and cordiality.

Therefore, while delivering the judgment the bench probably may have taken the objective reality prevailing on the ground and thus gave the verdict—pragmatic and lasting. Nonetheless, how do we view the judgment? Does the Supreme Court somehow managed the impossible to something realizable and workable? Within the limitations and constraints posed, the apex court managed to deliver the judgment on Ayodhya which has been the most contentious and thorny dispute spanning centuries. However, there are some important and crucial questions that surface: Is it a fair judgment that reflects equity and justice? Or is it simply a validation of the ground reality of our society particularly the current political scenario that prevails in our country since 2014?

In addition, has justice been sacrificed for the sake of peace and tranquility? Justice being the pre-requisite for peace, has peace acquired fuller status and meaning in this judgment? In order to promote peace and harmony in the Indian society and to compensate the Muslim litigants who happened to have been deprived for decades with all sorts of things that include demolition of Babri-Masjid, the court ordered allotment of five-acres of land in the prime area. Along with reason and facts, the Court observed in this case pragmatism vis-à-vis faith and tradition as the overriding, overarching and mediating principle.

Based on the judgment, the concerned parties particularly RSS-BJP would translate and engage in the construction of the Ram Temple at the earliest, probably before the next Lok Sabha elections. Construction of Ram Mandir appeared in the election manifesto of BJP. It has appease its electorates that figured in the election manifesto. BJP is mandated to show something to its electorates as well as others. Its acquisition and construction adds one more feather to BJP-RSS, and so, by all means the far-right parties and organizations would resurrect temple at Ayodhya and thus capitalize at the time of elections. As of now, PM Modi in his

tweet said that “This verdict shouldn’t be seen as a win or loss for anybody. Be it Ram bhakti or Rahim bhakti, it is imperative that we strengthen the spirit of rashtra bhakti. May peace and harmony prevail’.

Narratives of those in power and authority call for temperate and plead for temperance. Therefore, it is obligatory and certainly a necessity for others particularly those belonging to far-right parties, religious fanatics and fundamentalist organizations to abide by the message of the Prime Minister. The message is loud and clear Even RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said the same thing that as no one won and no one lost. Their narratives sound soothing, promising, hold good and show great prospects. But, the questions however are: Would the fringe elements listen to them and abide by those dictates? Would the motor mouths shut their mouth and the ground-level cadres of BJP-RSS and other fringe groups listen to as desired by the PM Modi and RSS chief? We will have to wait and see.

However, as weeks and months go by, the political climate, contours and temperatures would certainly change and gradually gets charged. What can be foreseen in the months and years to come that the narratives of RSS and BJP could change drastically from the present in order to galvanize and woo the electorates to garner votes? The Supreme Court in its judgment gave the authenticity and did stamp the historicity of their claims. The worrisome scenario and an irony is that those who have been implicated on the demolition of the mosque such as Advani, after the Supreme Court’s judgment said that he had been vindicated as if he was been absolved from the criminal case.

This is just one such case, but there are many such men and women charged with destroying the mosque to be concluded. More importantly, the Supreme Court in its ruling described the destruction of the Babri mosque as an “egregious violation of the rule of law.” This should not be diluted as some of the tops wing in the RSS-BJP played major roles in the demolition. The case is still on and many top wigs have been in-

dicted. Supreme Court came down heavily on that. Judgment on Ayodhya is certainly paramount for all in particular for those engulfed with hatred, fear and anxiety. It quelled some of the apprehensions in the minds of many that kept surfacing during elections and in other for a and formats.

Indian Constitution is premised on parliamentary democracy. India's social fabric characterizes multiple ethos and ethnicities. To realize reconciliation and peace the onus vests with the government of India (GOI) and the majority religious community of India as the verdict once for all settled their claims in favor of them. Therefore, it should not be "We" Vs "You"/"Other". The judgment candidly stated that the major community has the right to worship their revered one in the spot claimed as his birthplace. So, leveraging win-win for the contesting parties is not possible. Nonetheless this verdict should not incite the Hindu fundamentalists to stray on other impending issues of such nature.

A new political reality has dawned. The judgment should lead all to move towards a progressive, inclusive and secular India—certainly not regressive and divisive. Ours is a parliamentary democracy. India's social fabric characterizes multiple ethos and ethnicities. Our socio-religio-cultural mosaic displays beautiful terrains and landscapes. Living in harmony by mutually accepting and respecting one another with all the diversities and heterogeneities are part of our civilizational and cultural ethos. Derogatory statements against communities or some sections of society are detrimental to our plural ethos and secular fabric of our society which believes in peaceful and harmonious co-existence.

THE VALUE OF CRITICAL KNOWLEDGE, ETHICS AND EDUCATION

– A BOOK REVIEW



Dr. Ignace Haaz, author of a book titled *The Value of Critical Knowledge, Ethics and Education* with a sub-title *Philosophical History Bringing Epistemic and Critical Values to Values*, pp. 223, published by Globethics.net, Geneva, 2019, is indeed an addendum to the gamut of growing literature available in the areas of philosophy and ethics. Ignace Haaz undoubtedly is one of the centrepieces of Globethics.net Publications. Having played the crucial facilitating role to the release of over 190 books on ethics, theology and philosophy, across 14 Series in 7 languages, is primarily engaged in developing ethics online library collections on applied ethics for Globethics.net; currently focusing on education. Ignace has a doctorate from the University of Geneva and taught ethical theories in the Department of Philosophy of the University of Fribourg, Switzerland.

The book under review is divided into six sections such as: 1) Ethics and Realism: Elucidation of the Distinction between Understanding and Explanation, 2) Leadership, Anti-realism and Moral Psychology, 3) The Bright Lights on Self Identity and Positive Reciprocity, 4) Descartes' Virtue of Generosity and Its Importance for Inclusive Education, 5) Ethical Education as Normative Philosophical Perspective and 6) Con-

clusion: The Aesthetics of a Philosophical Garden runs through the theme the value of critical knowledge undergirding ethics and education Ignace Haaz embarks on a central philosophical question: “Why should I be ethical?” and then beautifully nuances in our times of many nuances and narratives.

In a complex world entrenched with a variety of problems big and small where we are supposed to make ethical decisions all the times that propels us to ask as Aristotle raised in two words “how” and “why” prompts us to respond to go deeper to the interrelated causes. For all these, Haaz basically starts with a number of Western philosophical traditions particularly European—philosophical ethics. The ways with which he integrates the six sections exposit cohesiveness and logical development of thought process. The core reflection is grounded on essentialising the value of philosophical ethics for life and education. And so, the entire argumentation and progression that Haaz brings about in this book is by way of invoking key philosophical concepts that travels through diverse historical phases.

First two chapters the author addresses issues that confront humanity on day-to-day basis. The issues that we confront day-in and day-out needs decisions and what are the bases on which decisions are made and how are they made? For the author, ethics provides illumining principles and guidelines just like that of a light house. He beautifully weaves the dilemmas we face while making or taking decisions, and so emphasizes the reality of life and how ethical principles play the most crucial part in making decisions. And so, abstract philosophical concepts hardly plays any pertinent roles in the objective reality of the world and also the new situations demands appropriate ethical principles that goes beyond the traditional ethical systems. Hence for him, “Values in order to be real need coordination between the finality of our action, our intention, and some formal and material components, that we shall describe in the framework of our emotional life” (p. 12).

The author candidly brings out a metaphor lighthouse and pitches it as the ethical norm. He reiterates that lighthouse being a metaphor facilitates to broaden the first of the concept of understanding—ethical or meta-ethical question, so that, a realistic perspective on ethical values be derived. To substantiate, he uses Kant extensively on the question of knowledge and categorizes into 1) divine knowledge—creative to grasp freedom which is intrinsic and indivisible, 2) intuitive knowledge—receive objects of sensibility as they are determined in time for a subject, and 3) intellectual knowledge—that shapes what is only passively received by sensitivity. He fuses these three that offers different things creatively.

Realism for the author in ethics a serious matter which is all about finding a clear light house type of reference to ethical truth, because a problem or an issue has the tendency to get blurred, and so application of value premises, and as a result gets lowered in the order of reality. Haaz builds his arguments in systematic manner. Analysis on the relations between morality and power giving credence to moral psychology that becomes an ethical system of punishment and reward. It is in this sense, psychology of power plays an important role because it is related to motives and how power is being used for which he brings in Nietzsche. Good treatment is given on the notion of power and how it is linked to psychology and political realism. In the process he redefines the notions power by taking cue from philosophers known in that field.

While tracking epistemology he carefully brings to the fore history and methodically integrates with other disciplines. “A critical positioning towards history should not hide that history bring the point of view of the human communities, expressing opinions on relationships such as the family or the civil society, but the moral depth formed ... in different contexts and social relations ... becomes crucial for the evaluation of transnational relations and solidarities” (p. 89). A noteworthy ethical mode he brings in and thus relates to history that touches upon ‘ethic of

consequences' wherein not just the micro but also macro is involved and so he proposes an ethic of solidarity. He elucidates that "The antinomy between the affirmative elevation of one's own morality and the obligation of norms is solved in *human all too human* ... where the asymmetry between the subjective obligation of self-interest and the rule is significantly reduced" (p. 97).

In the whole book, chapter three according to me seem to be foundational wherein the author exclusively presents Spinoza's view on self-esteem and positive reciprocity which makes human beings beyond the constructed subjective framework. To substantiate, "Spinoza makes the interesting claim that some essential ethical means are to be considered in priority: share and create competency, to foster community values are reciprocity, not for sake of some revealed truth on human values, but by deep ethical understanding of our essential structure of values" (p. 121). Discarding materialistic conception as many recent neuro-scientific conceptions of mind do, he invokes Spinoza who delves into holistic perspective, presenting the complexity of the human being by not reducing to the psycho-physiological conditions of life. use of the terms such as 'gratitude', 'recognition', 'gratefulness',

While constructing between notions of identity of the self and mutual recognition Spinoza's use of terms such as "gratitude", "recognition", "gratefulness" and "thankfulness" as ethical categories becomes as normative principles. In a landscape that we live and the entire world facing—migrants and refugees along with an ethic of hospitality some of the allied principles that Spinoza's prescribes become more useful. For the author, "while thinking about ethics as a system, one needs to bear in mind some basic principles, such as the thinking particular essences ... human being is to be a reasonable animal ..." (P. 127)

As against the backdrop, the author in order to prove his argument cites Spinoza that "Ethics starts for Spinoza by a metaphysical reflection on the importance and the role of God or the divine, as a realistic foun-

dational point of values. Ethics is also a purification of the understanding, mediation on the experience of joy as an experience of the perfect character of love as related to competency, by opposition to weakness, which leads to corruption and evil.” (pp. 127-128) In fast changing scenario be it political or economic or social or religio-cultural the author delineates Spinoza who prefers “such virtues as honesty, trust, reliability and faithfulness to describe the positive interplay of share competencies” (p. 134).

Method of holism resonates through the pages of the book wherein number of disciplines and a comprehensive set of normative principles from a number of philosophers and ethicists such as Spinoza who along with others points out virtues such as honesty, trust, reliability and faithfulness. Further, “Spinoza’s early modern formalism should be understood as the affirmation that all being is given by God or nature. The later description of the subjective space and time as an essential structure of the experience, attached to an inter-subjective component, will compliment the rather minimalistic framework of the constitution of the human world within Spinoza’s work” (p. 135).

So, what is important is that to take into account inter-subjectivity, inter-spatiality and inter-contextuality as theoretical framework for better articulation and presentation that posits cumulative experiences of those communities who have been marginalized and side-lined. In a religious and metaphysical frame of reference the author interweaves mind and body linking to God who is inalterable and thus remains inalterable. This postulate fuses the attributes such as material, spiritual and metaphysical wherein God being the infinite, the unique substance of the universe and so everything is in God and without God there is no substance. In such context specificity there is a need for ethics of sustainability that keeps everything not going, but sustaining for which attributes of absolute and infinite becomes central.

Transition throughout the discourse and presentation has been logically progressing so comprehensively from one terrain to another building up the arguments and ideas by keeping in mind the philosophical and ethical moorings. The author picks on Descartes' virtue of Generosity and posits its importance for inclusive education in chapter four. Identifying Descartes and developing inclusive ethics defined on the basis of the body and the soul (virtue ethics which Descartes integrates with education as mediatory agency. The author highlights "Generosity being the highest form of the grounding principle of a parity of esteem ... as related to liberal understanding of responsibility and education... which connected virtues play a key role in inclusive education, from Descartes' point of view" (p. 155).

Ignace Haaz weaves in the connectivity and relational responsibility from individual to institutional in such ways that "The virtue of generosity will not only be the reason for knowing how to live a virtuous life, but also a reason for developing ethical education institutions which would in turn reciprocally disseminate and implement this virtue, which should not be considered as only determined by innate capacities and inherited wealth, but as the key aim of good education" (Ibid). In chapter five the author delves into ethical education and considers it as normative philosophical perspective. For him, education is not just knowledge dumping but goes beyond that. Education should not be compartmentalized, but be viewed as integral part of human life and activity and in that he pitches in ethics. Ethics and education go hand in hand and almost like two sides of the same coin.

Education ought to enable to exhume the innate potentials and capabilities of individuals and thus push that individual to go to greater heights. It is in this context, the author proposes a few models. He also brings to the fore a number of theories and philosophies in education. More or less the author seem to be in cognizance with Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich and John Dewey who were against the formal and educational sys-

tem and make scathing critique of it. Action-reflection-action systematization will have to be the core principle of education. Education will have to unfold the world in you and around and education is for life. The author emphasizes that education ought to imbue normative principles and ought to unfold issues that individuals and communities confront for which decision making process be availed.

In the last chapter Ignace Haaz culls everything he has been talking about and offers proposals. For instance, "I intended to show five contrasting yet similar philosophical ethical reading on what makes us consider a value to be ethical" (p.205). However, "As conclusion we would want now to enlarge our journey in applied ethics to a last allegory of philosophical education and ethics, that of saving the normative of ethics as being placed in an imaginary space of a philosophical garden" (p. 206). Ethics and philosophy are complimentary and woven with each other, and so a framework by all means will have to be composite and integral, and not rudimentary. It is not ethics in education the author is talking about; it is ethical education that integrates many areas such as human rights, leadership, power equations, communication, aesthetics, cultures polity, ecology and host of other that intertwines and intersects.

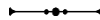
The author is of the opinion and firmly believes that our ethical postulates ought not to be that suggests mastery over the world in which we live, while on the other, reckon with the very fact that we are fundamentally ethical community bound by the social contract. "Therefore, neither the deep foundation in transcendental essential structure which grants the reality of our ethical experience, nor the biological instinctual level of expression of life would be the main entry point to ethics; it would be our capacity to identify a system of higher values, built on individual interrelations of reciprocity and solidarity" (p. 205). As ethical beings, our moral discourse and dispensation ought to embrace the fundamental quality of life and life in all fullness.

Undergirding the ethical principles that revolves around throughout this book is as Homo sapiens how ethical we are in our words and dispensation. Ignace Haaz brings together all the ethical categories and concepts within the framework of humanities and theology. Ethics and philosophy by and large are inseparable and thus offers an all-inclusive and all-encompassing framework proposing life-enlivening and life-affirming theologies. Philosophic-ethical systems offer numerous modes and normative principles and out of many some are eternal and absolute. In tune to the changing context-specificities, the author suggests that we should strive for higher values that enable the Homo sapiens to sustain and preserve the world in which we live.

It is apparent that *The Value of Critical Knowledge, Ethics and Education* by Dr. Ignace Haaz has unfolded many intrinsic issues and possibilities specifically in the areas of philosophy and ethics. Accordingly, this book covers numerous areas that fall within the domains of philosophy and ethics and the author has critically and creatively handled and nuanced effectively. I commend this book especially to those pursuing in the areas of philosophy, theology and ethics. It is a must read book and I recommend that this book be prescribed for the post-graduate and doctoral students. I wish Dr. Ignace Haaz many such productions in the years to come.

NEO NATIONALISM AND CRONY CAPITALISM METAPHORIC OCTOPUS PERMEATED INTO SOCIETAL SEGMENTS

A THEOLOGICO-ETHICO IMPERATIVE



Abstract

Unprecedented upsurge of neo-nationalism and the phenomenal growth of crony capitalism in various societal facets of India are not virtual, but real. A plethora of lynching, attacks on historically discriminated communities, unbelievable increase in the figures of unemployment, insatiable ‘wants’ of middle-class and widening gap between have and have-nots in recent times in India indicates closer proximity and growing nexus between crony capitalists and the neo-nationalists who govern the country in power.

The far-right neo-nationalists in power and crony capitalists with huge capital are in nexus and thus connives to further their exploits—political ambitions, amass money and wealth. This development posits a strange symbiosis developing and closely linked to those who subscribe to neo-nationalism and the crony capitalists who control enormous capital leading to manipulation of law and order, erosion of level-playing grounds, anarchy, and autocracy leading to authoritarianism and totalitarianism.

As against the backdrop, this paper seeks to explore neo- nationalism and crony capitalism has developed strange symbiosis, which requires in-depth analysis as these two has permeated into diverse aspects of the Indian society. Neo-nationalism and crony capitalism metaphorically compared to octopus which has the tendency by reaching to the potential preys striking with power thereby dislocating and disempowering its preys. Likewise, neo nationalism and crony capitalism with their powerful arms have the tendency of reaching out to all the spheres—social, economic, political, cultural, ecological and religious.

As a consequence, in particular neo nationalism has altered the notions of nation and democracy and thus reconfigured institutions of governance and state machinery/apparatus which apparently becomes the operating framework. Hence, this paper exposes the nefarious designs of neo nationalism and crony capitalism clarifying and detailing how these two webbed with each other and at what cost and how we ought to contain the problems that arise out of these and what should be our theologico-ethico response are the areas deliberated and argued out.

DO NOT QUESTION, IF DARED, PREPARED TO FACE THE WRATH



Populism, fascism and totalitarianism shall never allow or tolerate idea/notion other than its own and considers that theirs is the one and only view and everyone should be prepared to chant whatever that singular and dominant view that predominates or prevails. If you dare to air your view that opposes the dominant view, be prepared to face the consequences. This is what happened to those 49 celebrities who penned their views to the PM Modi on the growing rise of hate crimes and lynching. The letter expressed their concern over the rising phenomenon to their Prime Minister. Who else would they write, since he is the country's top-most political executive? And they are the citizens of this country.

For that, a case has been filed by an advocate in Bihar against some of them under several sections such as sedition, prejudicial to national integration, public nuisance, hurting the religious feelings and sentiments and those who interjected their letter with a counter have now become the witnesses in that case. In that, a few have been picked from both the sides. The reasons cited seem to be absurd and frivolous, and yet sends clear signals that 'watch out, do not air your views and so fall in line dear citizens'. Line has been clearly drawn—there's no other line, only one line that is 'all of you know'. There shall be no freedom of expression and no alternative discourse or opposing sign posts, and the

implications as of now on a milder pitch, but as the days, weeks and months go it's going to rigorous and stronger.

Out of many, one of the reasons that the petitioner pointed out was the best and the most ridiculous one that their act: *"tarnished the image of the country and undermining the impressive performance of the Prime Minister"* and also charged them with *"supporting secessionist tendencies"*. As Indians we are all should be concerned with the growing deteriorating law and order where rape of women and girl children happening across the country and is on the rise; human trafficking of the poor and vulnerable women for sex industry continues as a thriving trade; public health and education are in turmoil; unemployment and joblessness show upward mobility; farmers' suicide and atrocities against the Dalits are not addressed; killing in the name of 'caste honor' still prevails; corruption and botching of legislators (MLAs and MPs) and 'resort politics' shows the new trend in Indian polity and taking oath in the name of 'gods and goddesses' becomes the order of the day.

The governance in Uttar Pradesh makes many to think and question "Have we gone back to jungle raj? Quite regularly we keep hearing something new happening in that State. Let us as citizens be ashamed of these that too in the 21st Century and together set right the problems and fix the lacunas. Instead, hitting at those as anti-nationals and unpatriotic and questioning the authority of the Prime Minister and tarnishing the image of country fails to address the issues they raised. Please let us read the messages and not brand them as enemies and outsiders.

Please read the messages carefully and they are important and not the messengers. Let me ask another question that in what ways their letter *"tarnished the image of the country and undermining the impressive performance of the Prime Minister"* and what did they do so that they be charged with *"supporting secessionist tendencies"*. I consider the charge are bizarre and lacks substance. The matter is likely to come up for hearing on 3 August.

As citizens of India, don't they have the right to write to their Prime Minister? Democracy is allowing the citizens to enjoy the freedom of thought and is the constitutional right. In what ways they have become secessionist and I would like to know the 'tendencies'—what are they? PM Modi won the elections in thumping majority and by having a huge mandate he would respond in his own way to the letter of the 49 celebs and there are fringes and sycophants who tend to politicize and thus trivialize the letter. By doing this, they take the political mileage. PM Modi's 2.0 innings has many challenges and we as citizens and people of India look forward the ways with which he plugs the lacunas and gaps.

As citizens, we are responsible and democracy functions more the citizens gets empowered and stronger in their thought process and expressions. Democracy is centered on the citizenship and so it's for the citizens, of the citizens and by the citizens. They wanted to communicate to the PM Modi and did it and let us not throw our apprehension with all sorts of bias and prejudices. We are rational beings and sometimes behave in irrational ways and certainly not in this because it deals with one's rights—basic and fundamental rights.

CASTE AS THE TOOL OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COLONIZATION OF INDIA

AFFIRMATIVE AND LIBERATIVE DALIT PRAXIS



Abstract

After more than seven decades of India's independence, Dalits, the 'Untouchables', one-fifth of India's population lives in segregated section of the overwhelming majority of villages and metropolis of India. To this day, in several parts of the country it is risky to walk with footwear on, prohibited to marry girls or boys from other communities and if they dare both are killed in the name of 'honor killing'; in some parts, the dominant caste communities constructed walls that separates the Dalits in the name of 'purity-pollution'; do not have burial grounds/burning Ghats and cemeteries for the Dalits in several villages—all in the name of 'Untouchability'. For all these, caste is the base structure on which others (super structures) hangs on. The root of all is caste in Latin *castus*, meaning "chaste" or "pure"/"separated". The word has been transliterated in Portuguese *casta*, which means "race" or lineage", and was first used in the 1700s in reference to Hinduism's system of social stratification.

Hinduism as a religion and caste as its tool thrives and going strong for centuries in the Indian society. Therefore, caste as a social system

played the pivotal part during colonial periods and continues to play the most significant role in the post-independent India. Hinduism is effectively and efficiently employs caste by stratifying who should be on top, middle, bottom and outside, legitimizing and reinforcing the societal order—in which slots/rungs one should belong. Therefore, the Indian society is hierarchically stratified. In such a de-humanized top-down social order, the so-called “Untouchables”—the Dalits fall outside the *varna* which means color and thus considered as ‘Untouchables’. By virtue of being born in that rung, the Dalit are designated to do certain jobs such as cleaning and carrying the human excreta, burying the corpses and carcasses and removing the skins of the dead animals and working in the leather tanneries.

As against the backdrop, one of the major pre-occupation of this paper is to delve into Hinduism which plays the pivotal role in propelling, perpetuating and consolidating the system of caste. At the same time, attempts will be made to bring to the foreground the blatant contradictions that the “Untouchables” who belong to this land for thousands of years and yet treated as “the Other” and “the Polluted”, during the periods of colonization and even in the post-Independent India. Further, the terrains of the “Untouchables” impregnated with anger, insecurity, frustration, hopes and volatility and the magnitude of atrocities meted out by them in recent times become points of reference. As a result, the changes in identity from “Untouchables” to Dalits have generated significant transformation from objects of vote bank politics to subjects of their destiny. Notably, employing Dalit Praxis augments Dalit power as resistive and affirmative identity, transforming the Dalits as the subjects of history apparently becomes the core of Dalit Emancipation.

Key Words: Caste, Untouchability, India, Dalits, Hinduism, Stratification, Hierarchies, stratification, Religion, Dalit Praxis, Affirmative Politics and Identity.

Political Economy of Pax Britannica

What were the reasons, quests and necessities which impelled the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English to take direct sea routes from Europe to India to venture into the Indian territories? Keeping aside other colonial powers from Europe and their interests, what was that quest and drive of the English to venture into India? Undoubtedly, Britain had multiple interests. To put everything within a perspective, the race to conquer India for these countries from Europe was primarily triggered around economic and political interests. Those European nations that ventured to set its foot in India had to compete with each other for reaching India first. Therefore, each colonizer tried to navigate taking the shortest route so that they would reach first. What was the main motivating factor to reach India? Why did the Portuguese, Spaniards, English, French and the Dutch vie with each other for centuries of such a strenuous sea route to India? The reasons were crystal clear. They were interested to obtain luxuries particularly spices, chilies, cloves and others could be got only from India and the East.

Further, India's geographical landscapes and terrains somehow seemed to be best suited for occupation. Abundance of natural resources has given her the distinct advantage of attracting many who were in search of livelihood and attracted explorers who set voyages in search of unexplored lands for varied purposes. For example, "Animal life is not only abundant in British India ... kinds of animals inhabiting India and its dependencies is very large, far surpassing ... of the species found in the whole Europe, although the superficial area of Europe exceeds that of the Indian empire by about one-half."⁵¹ All these factors put together should have made India self-sufficient, while on the contrary made Brit-

⁵¹ Quoted by Vasant Moon (ed.), in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar*

Writings and Speeches, Vol. 12, New Delhi: Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, 2014, p. 5.

ain along with a few nations richer, greater and advanced on the face of this planet today and in the process India started to recede.

One of the vanguards of imperialism “Great Britain” propelled by economic and political interests, colonized countries primarily in the Asian and African continents as its colonies. India was one of its major colonies—which contributed enormous raw materials and cheap human labor. Imperialism was at the peak and the justification and defense for that “... they were a people of superior race with a culture too high to be compared with any other, that they had better system of administration, that they were versed in the arts of life ... the rest were people of inferior race with a very low culture ... devoid of the arts of life ... their administration was very despotic.”⁵² These comparative notions particularly from an imperial country or a colonizer arise out of not finding any genuine reasons to justify its action.

Let us recall the economic condition of England before and after 1600 and the ways it prospered after colonizing India and others, what was the condition of India before and after History will offer answer to these questions. Some of the direct and indirect advantages to England from India in the words of St. George Tucker were as follows:

1. “The East India Company have, at different periods, drawn, a surplus revenue from their territorial possessions to the extent of a million and a half sterling per annum after paying the interest of the territorial debt and this surplus was evidently a directtribute from India to England.”
2. “About four-fifths of the territorial debt being held by Europeans British subjects, a large proportion of the annual interest, amounting to near two million sterling may be regarded as an indirect tribute paid by India to the mother country.” This indirect or private tribute” including the savings, the profits of commerce,

⁵² Ibid, p. 53.

etc., Tucker estimates at “three million sterling per annum at the present period” (i.e. about 1821).

3. “The shipping of India (that is, the India built ships which are employed in carrying on the trade from port to port in the (eastern Seas) forms no in considerable portion of the whole tonnage of Great Britain.
4. “The possession of India furnishes a most convenient outlet for the present overflowing In one class at least of the community, for whom it is found difficult in all countries, and in none more than our own, to make a suitable provision ... The service of India alone opens a field in which they can be employed largely with the prospect of benefit to themselves and to their country.”⁵³

This is how the British colonialism worked. The above do not by any means exhaust the ways by which India contributed to the prosperity of England. Their colonial dynamic worked so precisely—the colonies supplied the raw materials to the colonizers and they in turn flooded the finished products to the Indian markets for sale. Likewise, when it came to human labor, the colonies supplied cheap and surplus labor force to the colonies for varied works. At the same time colonizers in this case Britain employed drastic measures, so that the colonies do not take advantage, develop and grow. In order to control and curtail, Britain heavily used protective measures such as tariffs and quotas. In doing so, they kept India and its colonies by stringently employing protectionist policy.

Sir W.W. Hunter candidly explains when the Europeans came in contact with India that “Europe emerged from medievalism, was then making her first experiments in Asiatic rule ... Medieval types of commerce were perpetuated in the Indian trade. Portugal, Spain, Holland established their power in Asia when these conceptions and types held

⁵³ Ibid, p. 62.

sway.”⁵⁴ Substantiating further, “The English ascendancy in India came later and embodies the European ideals of the 18th Century in the place of the European ideals of the Sixteenth. It was the product of modern as against mediaeval Christendom. Yet even for England it was difficult to shake off the traditions of the period ... of monopoly in the Indian trade, and of Indian Government for the personal profit of the rulers.”⁵⁵ Therefore, British colonialism in India was like a two-edged sword—1) East India Company and the other 2) the imperial rule.

To sum up the economic side of British colonial rule in India Frederick John Shore of the Bengal Civil Service describes that “The fundamental principle of the English had been to make the whole Indian Nation subservient in every possible to the interest and benefit of themselves ... Had the welfare of the people been our object, a very different course would have been adopted, and a very different result would have followed.”⁵⁶ So the rule of the Company and the rule of the Crown became the most powerful tools to control the economic-political facets and thus the entire country.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 64.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 71.

POSITION OF THE ‘UNTOUCHABLES’ IN PAX BRITANNICA



Limiting the scope to the current theme from what the British colonialism did to India, a question that surfaces: What have the British as the colonizer done for the Untouchables? For instance, the contributions of the Untouchables at the time of British colonialism in the army were noteworthy. Let me bring a few instances. In the year 1757 in a battle between East India Company and the Army of Siraj-ud-Daulah, the Nawab of Bengal, the British forces won which is known as the battle of Plassey. And in 1818, in a battle known as the battle of Korageon where the British Empire defeated the Maratha Empire and thus established its place in India. Nonetheless, “India was conquered by the British with the help of an Army composed of Indians ... Who were these people who joined the arm of the East India Company and helped the British to conquer India ... the people who joined the Army of the East India Company were the Untouchables of India.”⁵⁷

It is worthwhile to note that first battle Plassey in 1757 and the battle of Koregaon in 1818 (the conquest of India during 1757 and 1818) were predominantly comprised of the Untouchables. However, many who look at the Untouchables joining in the British forces as an act of gross treason. Whatever may be the reasons, “History abounds with illustrations showing how how a section of people in a country have

⁵⁷ Ibid, pp. 85-86.

shown sympathy with an invader, in the hope that the new comer will release them from the oppressions of their countrymen.”⁵⁸ Therefore, the British army was mostly composed of the Untouchables. Take for example, the Mahars in Bombay army and the Pariahs in Madras. The Untouchables not only helped the British to conquer India but also enabled the British to retain India.⁵⁹ A pertinent question arises at this point is: How did the British treat the Untouchables so far as service in the Army concerned? Despite the help ushered to the British Raj by the Untouchables the treatment received from the British was just the opposite wherein the British Government since 1890 placed a ban on the recruitment of the Untouchables in the Indian Army, which means those recruited remained and received pension and in course of time died and by 1910 completed disappeared from the Army.⁶⁰

Why should there be such exclusion and what were the reasons? The policy seemed to be based on two principles related to 1) organization and 2) recruiting. The following amply elucidates those principles on which they stand:

The principle of organization that was introduced in 1890 is known as the principle of class composition as against the old principle of a mixed regiment... This means, in the first case, that the whole regiment is composed of one class (or caste) and in the second case, that every squadron or company is formed entirely of one class... Under the new principle, race of the man became a more important factor than his physique or his intellect. For the purposes of recruitment, the different castes and communities of India are divided into categories, those belonging to the martial races and those belonging to non-martial races. The non-martial races are excluded from military service. Only the castes and

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 86.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 87.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

communities which are included in the category of martial races are drawn upon for feeding the Army.⁶¹

The principles employed by the colonialists (British) was untenable as they contradicted and thus exposed their divide and rule policy particularly in the case of recruitment of the Untouchables. For instance,

If, under the system of class composition, there can be regiments of Sikhs, Dogras, Gurkhas, Rajputs etc., why can there not be regiment of Untouchables? Again, assuming that recruitment from martial races only is in sound principles, why should it affect adversely (to) the untouchables unless they are to be treated as belonging to the non-races? And what justification is there for classing the untouchables who formed the backbone of the Indian Army and who were the mainstay of the Indian fighting forces for over 150 years as non-martial? That the British Government does not deem the Untouchables as belonging to non-martial classes is proved by the fact, that in the Great War, when more men were necessary for the Army, this ban was lifted one full battalion was raised and was known as the 111 Mahars... When the need was over and the Battalion was disbanded...⁶²

The above colonial policy of the British towards the Untouchables showed not just their double standards, but candidly reveals their policy of exclusion of the Untouchables from the Army. It is thus a proven fact that the Colonizer, the British, believed in the exclusion of the Untouchables from the Army premised on Untouchability. Untouchables were accommodated into the army as long as there was no problem in the early part of the British history, because the touchables did not want to join the British Army as long as the Indian rulers were there. After the Indian Mutiny, the Race of Indian rulers shrunk, and then the

⁶¹ Ibid, pp. 87-88.

⁶² Ibid, p.88.

Hindus started to enter the British Army, which was dominated by the Untouchables wherein they earned their living—a career that gave them a sense of importance, power, prestige and authority. Having served in the army for more than 150 years and for not being wanted in the Army without giving times for alternate occupation, it was devastating for the Untouchables.⁶³

The Untouchables did not have the needed qualifications and so unable to get into civil services. Even if qualified under the British Government, the authority to fill vacancies is left with the discretion of the head of the department who invariably belonged to high caste Hindus who by very nature would never and certainly not recruit Untouchables, rather prefer touchables.⁶⁴ The very coinage of the word ‘Untouchables’ showed the attitude of the British, and then the usage of the polar opposite term ‘touchable’ unfolds the very intent and the ways with which British structured the Indian society on the basis of these binaries. When binaries are used, then there should be a justifiable schema that interprets in accordance to the order. The colonizers in their administration and governance used these effectively and efficiently.

Caste and Untouchability in British India

Caste and Untouchability are the two most heinous and the worst social evils widely prevalent and being practiced in India. Caste has enabled the Hindu caste-stratified society to function premised on birth and occupation, whereas untouchability keeps a huge chunk of people away on the basis of purity-pollution equations. And yet, Pax Briticannica has not made any attempts to get rid of, rather it completely ignored these two social evils. “It was the duty of the British Government to legislate at least to the extent necessary to protect their civic rights ... A short

⁶³ Ibid, p.89.

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 89-90.

Enactment on the lines of Caste Disabilities Removal Act would have been sufficient. Yet the British Government has gone on as though these two evils did not exist at all.”⁶⁵ Caste and Untouchability are by nature social and civic. These two somehow managed to cruise through the British Raj. What is more surprising “... although Legislative Bodies were established in India in 1861 and have been passing laws on every social questions and discussing public questions, yet except on two occasions the Untouchables were not even mentioned.”⁶⁶

The first occasion was in 1916, when Sir Maneckji Dadabhoy a Parsi moved the a Resolution in the Central Legislature that “... a small representative committee of officials and non-officials for an amelioration in the moral, material and educational conditions of what are known as the Depressed classes... as a preliminary step... be invited to formulate schemes with due regard to local conditions.”⁶⁷ As soon the resolution was moved there were furor and angry scenes from the Hindu members of the Legislature who objected including social Reformer like Surendranath Bannerjee who said that “... after all, if you analyze the situation, it is a social problem, and the British Government ... in conformity with its traditions, holds aloof from all interference with social questions ... it cannot actively participate in them...”⁶⁸ The British Raj somehow managed to tide over the situation and disposed off the Resolution.

The second time the Untouchables are mentioned in the proceedings of the Legislature was in 1928 when M.R. Jayakar moved the following Resolution that “... issue directions to all Local Governments to provide special facilities for the education of the Untouchables and other depressed classes and also for opening all public services to them, specially the police.”⁶⁹ This time to the British Raj was not keen and not both-

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 133.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 135.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 136.

ered about the social reform. So, "It is true that the British Government in India has by its legislation set up a standard of morality independent of ... the standard set up by caste; and it may be that the former standard has had some beneficial effect in influencing native customs, practices, and modes of thought ..."⁷⁰

The British Government was neither interested nor prepared for recognizing the basic right of a person to be treated as equal nor initiating social reform recognizing Untouchability a penal offence nor give the Untouchables a preferential treatment in public service. Pax Britannica failed to undertake to reform caste-stratified Hindu society, rather colluded with the dominant castes to run their government. And,

The result was that Untouchable has remained what he was before the British, namely an Untouchable. He was a citizen but he was not given the rights of a citizen. He paid taxes out of which schools were maintained but his children could not be admitted in to those schools. He paid taxes out of which wells were built but he had no right to take water from them. He paid taxes out of which roads were built. But he has no right to use them. He paid taxes for the upkeep of the state. But he himself was not entitled to hold offices in the state. He was a subject but not a citizen. The Untouchable stood most in need of office to protect himself. Owing to his poverty he should have been exempted from all taxes. All this was reversed. The Untouchable was taxed to pay for the water supply of the touchable. The Untouchable was taxed to pay for the salary of the touchables in office.⁷¹

Over and above, B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of India's Constitution graphically cuts through the fallacies and slices the innate contradictions of the Government of the British in India that failed to intervene

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 137.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 146.

in the abject conditions of the Untouchables. On many counts the British Raj had abysmally failed. B.R. Ambedkar probes further the ways the Untouchables were treated:

What good has British conquest done to the Untouchables? In education, nothing; in service, nothing. There is one thing in which they have gained and that is equality in the eye of the law. There is of course nothing special in it because equality before law is common to all. There is of course nothing tangible in it because those who hold office often prostitute their position and deny to the Untouchable the benefit of this rule. With all this, the principle of equality before law has been of special benefit to the Untouchables for the simple reason that they never had it before the days of the British. The Law of Manu did not recognize the principle of equality. Inequality was the soul of the Law of Manu. It pervaded all walks of life, all social relationships and all departments of state. It had fouled the air and the Untouchables were simply smothered... a real gain to the Untouchables ...⁷²

In sum British colonialism had not brought any significant different in the lives of the people. The Untouchables remained as subjects and never as citizens though they contributed immensely to the welfare and growth and progress of British India.

Caste – Tool of Internal Colonization

The system of caste became the most powerful tool that continues to colonize the 'Untouchables' even in the post-Independent India. It is rather a continuum from the British India to Independent India. For instance, when the third general census of India was taken in 1901, there were objections raised by the caste Hindus to the enumeration of the

⁷² Ibid, pp. 146-147.

questions regarding castes. The objection was overruled by the Census Commissioner on the grounds that enumeration by caste was important and necessary. While substantiating his views he added that,

Whatever view may be taken of the advantages or disadvantages of caste as a social institution, it is impossible to conceive of any useful discussion of the population questions in India in which caste would not be an important element. Caste is still foundation of the Indian social fabric' and the record of caste is still 'the best guide to the changes in the various social strata in the Indian society'. Every Hindu (using the term in its most elastic sense) is born into a caste and his caste determines his religious, social, economic and domestic life from the cradle to grave ... In India spiritual and social community and traditional occupation override all other factors ... in the case of Indian population is the distinction of religion and caste ... caste as a national and social institution it is useless to ignore it, and so long as caste continues to be used as one of The distinguishing features of an individual's official and social identity ...⁷³

The system of caste is perhaps the world's longest surviving social hierarchy that stratifies people on the basis birth and occupation. The systems that stratify people on the basis of class, race and gender by and large disappeared, but the system of caste is the only schema that survives for centuries. How could a system that manages for centuries and what then is the basis on which it survives are the questions that emerge? It is Hinduism that legitimizes, accommodates and reinforces caste by ordering complex sets of groups within a schema on the basis of ritual purity.

⁷³ Vasant Moon (compiled) *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, Vol.5, New Delhi: Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, 2014, pp. 6-7.

A person who is born in a particularly rung should die in the same caste and there is no exit or upward mobility from the rung. Differences in terms of gradations (four layers) are justified by the religious doctrine of Karma, a belief that one's place in life is determined by one's deeds in previous lifetime. The caste scheme designates clearly who should be on top, middle, bottom and outside. Accordingly each community is designated its occupation (jobs). A fifth category falls outside the varna system and consists of those known as 'untouchables' or Dalits,⁷⁴ who are assigned tasks—such as burying the dead carcasses, works related to leather works, cremating or burying the corpses that according to the Law of Manu as ritually polluting.

Caste is endogamous and thus divided along occupational lines and therefore collectively be referred to as “caste Hindus” or those falling within the caste system. The so-called ‘Untouchables’ the Dalits tend to fall “outside the system”—so inferior to other castes and so, they are deemed to be polluting and therefore called as ‘Untouchables’. Although “untouchability” was abolished under Article 17 of the Indian Constitution, the practice continues and vividly seen in the socio-economic and religious standing of those at the bottom of caste hierarchy. Apparently, those who fall within the caste hierarchy and rungs are free to choose their occupation, whereas the Dalits have by and large been confined to the occupational structures into which they are born.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ The term “Dalit” emerged in 1970s as against those derogatory and condescending terms such as ‘Untouchables’, ‘Harijan’ and host of others that the Dalit community wanted to get rid of; instead mooted the term ‘Dalit’ an affirmative and assertive term that gives liberation, dignity and respect. This term has since then been popularized by Dalit Panthers. “Dalit” refers to a situation of subjugation and brokenness and thus loaded with political, cultural and social connotations. Dalit as such a new construct is an all-empowering and all-inclusive conception being perceived by the community that assigns new identity offering equality, dignity and citizenry.

⁷⁵ For more details See *Broken People: Caste Violence Against India's "Untouchables"*, New York: Human Rights Watch, 1998, p. 25.

A 1997 report prepared by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes underscored that “Untouchability”—the imposition of social disabilities on persons by reason of their birth in certain castes—was still practiced in many forms through the country.”⁷⁶ The report described a number of social manifestation of caste-based discrimination in the 1990s such as bridegrooms were not permitted to ride a mare in villages, ‘Untouchables’ could not sit on their rope beds when persons of other castes pass b; not permitted to draw water from common wells ; separate tumblers and places for the ‘Untouchables’.⁷⁷ The scenario even in the 21st Century has not changed much, rather it continues in different formats. Caste continues to be the base structure and decisive factor that determines a person’s/community’s occupation.

Occupations traditionally considered as ‘lowly’, like sweeping, sewerage and cesspool cleaning, burying and cremating the carcasses and leather work continues to be dominated by the Dalits. White collars and corporate jobs have the worst representation of ‘Untouchables’. About 93 per cent of corporate manager jobs are held by non-Dalit people. In the case of public sector—the government sector such as teaching and healthcare, the scenario seems to be better.⁷⁸ What is amply evident is that the link between caste and occupation visible and obvious. And yet, in the 21st century, one of the most worrying factor “is the link between occupations traditionally viewed as ‘lowly’, such as sweepers and leather workers, seems to be as strong in younger age groups as in older ones.”⁷⁹ Among the most desired jobs (aspired) as per TOI analysis (22.12.18) based on the census data (See graphics 1), SCs have the high-

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid, pp. 25-26.

⁷⁸ See for example, a column article by Rema Nagarajan, *In the 21st Century India, Caste still decides what you do*, in “The Times of India”, December, 22, 2018.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

est proportion among teachers and healthcare professionals, 8.9 percent and 9.3 percent respectively. Though still below their proportion of 14 percent of in all non-farm workers.⁸⁰

Another profession with representation of SCs (13.7%) almost in proportion to the population share is that of police again falls within the government sector. Another glaring scenario that the reports bring about is that of mid-day meals cooks belonging to SCs facing discrimination. As compared to others high proportion of SCs among cooks in several states includes Punjab (44.3%) and Uttar Pradesh (21.3%), as both the states perennially seen as caste-ridden.⁸¹ The reasons are multiple and out those the most triggering ones are by and large related to caste discrimination and social exclusion. The lower rung professions (hard manual labor) show that SCs stand above their proportion in the non-farm worker population. In the middling (tolerable/average) professions, their presence improves considerably compared to the aspirational professions, but remains lower than their share in all non-farm jobs.⁸² It is so appalling that even in the 2nd decade of the 21st Century there is no semblance of this equation coming down—leather works and sweeping wherein the SCs are in majority.

Of the 46,000 leather works in Uttar Pradesh, 41,000 are from castes traditionally associated with leather work – Chamars, Dhusia, Jatava, etc. Similarly, in Rajasthan, of 76,000 sweepers, almost 52,000 belong to castes such as Bhangi, Mehtar and Chura, associated traditionally with this job.⁸³ Despite a few positive signs and trends, in the case of castes associated with sweeping and leather work, a huge chunk is still stuck in these traditional occupations. For instance, in Uttar Pradesh, of the total number of SCs in the 35-39 age groups working as sweepers,

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

63.4 are Balmikis. Even in the 15-34 age groups, 62% of SC sweepers are Balmikis, showing there has not been any significant change in this century and there is nothing for the new generation and in new India. Likewise, amongst the SCs those engaged in leather work in the 35-59 age groups, Chamars, Dhusias, Jatavas account for 88.2%. In the 15.34 age group, the proportion is 88.2%. A similar pattern may be seen in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan as well.⁸⁴

India is still a country of villages wherein the population in the villages are divided into two section—Touchables and Untouchables. The Touchables live inside the villages and the Untouchables live outside the villages in separate quarters. Economically the Touchables is well-off, while the Untouchables are dependent community. In Hindu order rule of segregation is strictly followed due to purity-pollution dialectics. The Untouchables have a set of prescribed set of names, dress code, sitting in chair before the caste Hindus, riding on a horse or a palanquin through villages are considered as offences. A large majority of the Untouchables are semi-skilled /unskilled and work as agricultural laborers and in informal sectors. They do not enjoy equal rights and suffer all sorts of exploitation and injustices.

Dalit Power and Praxis: New Assertiveness

Caste and Untouchability are two sides of the same coin being used as tools of subjugation by the Colonizers as well as in the free Independent India. Caste atrocities and violence against the Dalits keep growing and there are no signs of reprieve. What then is the alternative? And, what should then be done by the Dalits who have been the victims of the system of caste reinforced by Hindu religion? Those who live in unjust and exploited settings, tends to engage in “Revolt and rebellion against the Established order is a natural part of the history of the poor in all

⁸⁴ Ibid.

countries of the world ... In the theological age, the poor lived by the hope that spiritual forces would ultimately make the meek inherit the earth. In the secular age ... modern times, the poor live by the hope that the forces of historical materialism will automatically rob the strong of their strength and make the weak take their place.”⁸⁵

For Ambedkar, theology revolves on hope, liberation, quality of life ‘here and now’ remains as ‘utopian’, whereas political parties tends to translate the promises spelt out in their election manifestos that guarantees better quality of life. Nonetheless, the Dalits realize that “... neither spiritual forces nor historical forces are going to bring the millennium ... if the Hindu Social Order is to fall on the ground ... Firstly, the social order must subjected to constant fire. Secondly, they can’t subject it to constant fire unless they are independent of the Hindus in thought and action.”⁸⁶ In such a complex scenario, how many from other communities have come out openly in support of injustices perpetrated against the Dalits, and how many are prepared to make the cause of the Untouchables as their own cause? However, it should be borne in mind that Hindu religion has no moral code and ethical grounding enforcing social justice.

In such a context, it is a known fact that Hindu religion shall never dispense justice because Hindu religion is itself the embodiment of inequity and injustice. The reason being, “For it, to preach the gospel of justice is to go against its own being ... it would be impossible for it to perform. The social barrier between them and the Hindus is much greater than the barrier between them and the Hindus is much greater than the barrier between the Hindus and their men. Religion, however, efficacious it may be within a community or nation, is quite powerless to

⁸⁵ Vasant Moon (compiled), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, Vol. 5, op. cit., p. 396.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

break these barriers and (make) them one whole.”⁸⁷ Apparently, it is a known fact that caste and Untouchability is the soul of Hindu religion, and therefore, it is futile to expect ‘common good’ from it, rather find ways and means to annihilate it.

If this is the ground reality, what and how the Dalits should strive for? The following could shed some light on the possibilities:

The power of the privileged classes rests upon lies which are sedulously propagated among the masses... While the lie which is the first and the chief line of defence remains unbroken there can be no revolt. Before any injustice, an abuse or oppression can be resisted, the lie upon which it is founded must be unmasked, must be clearly recognized for what it is ...they must strive for is power. It must not be forgotten that there is a real conflict of interests between the Hindus and the Untouchables and that while reason may mitigate the conflict it can never obviate the necessity of such a conflict. What makes one interest dominant over another is power. That being so, power is need to destroy power. There may be the problem of how to make the use of power ethical, but there can be no question that without power no one side it is not possible to destroy power on the other side.⁸⁸

For the Dalits, power is therefore an absolute necessity, and so, acquiring power thus becomes imperative. Hence, power is real and manifests in covert and overt ways, and so power is not virtual. ‘Power is everywhere’ and ‘comes from everywhere’. Power operates in big and small ways. In this sense, caste is certainly an agency/a tool representing a well oiled structure premised on the Vedas and sashthras and in sum in the Hindu religion. The system of caste is insulated by a web of lies’ and thus pervades the ‘domain of truth’. As Ambedkar rightly pointed out

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 398.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 399.

that knowledge and power are necessary to dismantle the power of the powerful. Without power the Dalit shall never or ever dismantle the power of the dominant casteists. Dalits' power therefore should transcend in such ways that could annihilate caste which is the agency and structure.

In a world of volatility being present in the locales of Dalits, knowledge and resistance are the means realizing the casteless society as ends for the Dalits' and in that organic praxis which becomes apparently the only way to change the current Hindu scheme. To prove this point there are two classic episodes that surfaced in recent times. The inscription depicts that Captain Staunton's force "accomplished one of the proudest triumphs of the British Army in the East" in Western Maharashtra. It lists the names of the 49 soldiers of the East India Company killed in the battle. On January 1, every year the place comes alive and becomes a pilgrimage site—a small piece of history of British rule in India, but actually a place of inspiration and defiance that testifies the valor of the Dalits. Ever since B.R. Ambedkar visited the Bhima Koragaon memorial on January 1, 1927; it has been a tradition for Dalits to gather at the spot on the first day of the New Year. It signifies an important date in Dalit history, because it was when the British East India Company's soldiers defeated the army of Peshwa Bajirao 11, in the battle of Koregaon on January 1, 1818.⁸⁹

As part of the fighting units, one unit of a battalion of the Bombay Native Infantry, which consisted of about 500 Mahar soldiers and the victory symbolized not just a military one, but a victory that symbolically represented over centuries of caste repression by the Peshwas—not just for the present, but also future generations. For Dalits, visiting the site is like a pilgrimage, an assertion of pride for the community—a social liberation movement from caste prejudice. On the 1st of January,

⁸⁹ For more details, refer cover story titled *Dalit Defiance*, Lyla Bavadam in "Frontline", February 2, 2018, p. 4.

2018, Dalits gathered as usual and the numbers were larger because of the bicentenary of the battle. Before the celebrations could start it had come to a grinding halt as the casteist forces belonging to the far-right ruling political party waving saffron flags and chanting “Jai Bhavani, Jai Shivaji” attacked the Dalits who had gathered. The riot that followed left one person dead and many injured. There were spontaneous protests across the State.⁹⁰

Normalcy of the state of Maharashtra was totally affected. Police force watched the happenings helplessly and the Dalits were waving the blue Dalit flags that read in Marathi: “You can do nothing.” A day and half *bundh* (shut down) took everyone by surprise wherein mobs of men hurling stones, climbing on parked vehicles and smashing window screen with small boulders, militant women daring cars to move while they stood in the middle of the road, groups of people blocking rail tracks and young men whose faces were contorted with rage riding bikes and shouting slogans. It was like watching a new page being written in the history of Dalits.⁹¹ Dalits’ assertion and defiance was the core and the root of Bhima Koregaon uprisal.

The second incident that occurred was just a few months after Bhima Koregaon. On the 2nd of April 2018, many were unaware of *Bharat bandh* (national shut down) called by a few Dalit group not widely known. The protest was against a Supreme Court’s ruling diluting the stringent provisions in the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. By noon, social media and the TV screens started flashing images of violence that spread like wild fire in more than 10 states of India. Dalits clashed with the police and casteists’ groups. At the end of it, 11 people were dead and properties worth crores of rupees were destroyed. The uprisings across the nation was

⁹⁰ Ibid, pp. 4-5.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 9.

spontaneous and many were wondering how could this happen and who were behind the sudden upsurge.

These two episodes shed fresh insights and unfold the levels of assertion and resilience of the Dalits. Dalits once considered as 'vote banks' and victims of 'appeasement politics' by the political parties and the dominant caste categories had punctured the long held fallacy and assumptions. These two incidents convey a clear message that,

The court ruling was only the trigger, but what India witnessed on April 2 was an explosion of pent-up resentment, a sort of climax to a steady build-up of mistrust between Dalits and upper castes in various parts of the country, a violent manifestation of fear that the entire "system" was conspiring to pull them down again, and strip them of their constitutional rights. Indeed, on the day, many protesters were even heard saying they were revolting against the "scrapping of the reservation system" in the country. For Dalits, the moment was now or never.⁹²

Dalits per se lived and continues to exist for centuries in sub-human conditions. Their terrains are filled with all sorts of combinations—volatility, anger, havoc, lynching, hopelessness, resolve and resilience. And yet, a question that arises is: What makes them to survive? While responding to these incidents, particularly April, 2018, a Dalit sociologist Vivek Kumar of JNU, Delhi, asserts that "I can argue that this is the accumulated anger of a group that has been humiliated and stigmatized for ages."⁹³ Further, Kumar while explicating the incident of April 2018 uprising says that it signifies that the "Dalits have now rejected the patronizing culture of political parties—they don't need them to espouse their cause."⁹⁴ Synthesis of organic knowledge and political praxis of

⁹² Kaushik Deka in the cover page article entitled *The Dalit Awakening* in "India Today", April 16, 2018, p. 32.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

the Dalits has begun to amplify their identity assertion and affirmation. So, “An increasing awareness about their electoral power coupled with a rise in literacy and a measure of economic liberation have emboldened Dalits to assert their social and political rights. Instead of political parties setting the terms of engagement, Dalits now are setting the agenda for politicians.”⁹⁵

Going beyond Bhima Goregeon and the Supreme Court’s meddling with the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities Act) opens up many complex questions: How come the Dalits, despite all the provisions of the Indian democracy has failed to extend dignity and equality? What made the judiciary to enforce stringent clauses to the Act that protected the Dalits all these years? Why is it the guarantees enshrined in the Constitution have been blatantly and vulgarly betrayed and violated? How come the Dalits have been subjected to perennial indignities, reiterated insults and bodily harm by the citizens of this Republic? In a new climate of Dalits self-assertion, the Dalits continue to defy and rebel against the dispassionate, soulless and heartless casteists. It clearly posits that the Indian society is caste stratified that lives and thrives on hierarchy and difference. How long this type of sub-human existence reinforced by the system of caste be tolerated?

Republic of India is reeling under the scourge of the caste schema and Untouchability. It is nothing but an aberration and anathema for a Constitutional democracy that embarks on a note in the preamble “We the People of India”. Affirmativeness centering around resolve and resilience have certainly contributed to set the historical wrongs right by the Dalits is something noteworthy. The State has failed to set right the wrongs and the oppressors do not want to change their psyche and body politic and in such scenarios only option left for those who have been subjugated is to find ways and means to evolve liberative praxis. Dalits

⁹⁵ Ibid.

have seized the right to voice through collective action and thus influence public debates and shape public opinions.

Historical injustices could be set right only by those who suffered and bore the brunt of it. And yet the ideology of discrimination continues to dominate despite a number of constitutional provisions, laws, affirmative action policies and political mobilization. Distribution of resources and allocation of funds shall never bring about self-respect and human dignity to the Dalits. The Dalit praxis can achieve a great deal in the public sphere and in the process should promote social relations and common humanity. One of the most essential principles of human beings is the right to respect and right to be treated as human beings.

CASTEIST, NOT CASTEIST AND ANTI-CASTEIST

RIPPING INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS AND UNFOLDING NEW HORIZONS



Caste is the single most powerful tool in India that journeyed with the Indians thus far. Indians, by and large, and the Indian society in particular stood by caste stoutly. Its journey with most of the Indians has been phenomenal and as a result caste is being widely accepted and cozily accommodated. The matrix is rather the other way around wherein as most of the Indians have journeyed with caste because caste has indeed given them the honor, dignity and thus endowed them with many titles, incentives and entitlements. So, caste per se has become intrinsic and inviolable to most of the Indians and thus indispensable. Trajectories of caste has been momentous over centuries though traversed at different points, but cruised through a few skirmishes successfully.

Caste virtually dominates the Indian society. People of India barring a few are clouded and corroded with caste. Caste manifests at all levels and permeated into all segments of Indian society. A number of incidents that we hear and come across testify this claim. Caste atrocities and Untouchability crimes are on the rise across the country that manifests deep-seated malice of it. In such appalling ways caste functions in the Indian society. We are yet to see a leader in the polity in 72-years of free and independent India openly issuing a statement or dared to pronounce that caste should go or to be annihilated. Caste is the base on

which the societal fabric is woven so intrinsically extending and expressing meanings and offering justifications.

Caste is pivotal and acts as a regulator in determining who is who and what one should do and should not. Many believe that caste schema is good that enables the Indian society to regulate a complex mosaic of the Indian diversity without any hiccups and breakdown. Those who have occupied the highest particularly the top notch position—political executive thus far have not thought of dismantling or annihilating caste, rather keep using to their advantage. It is an irony that such a heinous system such as caste continues to rein over. It is the base and therefore at the centre and other facets gravitate around caste. Therefore, be it social, economic, cultural, political or religious all these invariably revolve around caste.

Caste is everywhere—allegorically—one can feel, smell and taste. Caste can be perceived in an individual, amidst communal and societal life. This means caste is everywhere and its presence can be felt within and around us. Therefore, the society in which Indians live is undoubtedly casteist. Roots of casteism run deep in multifarious ways and spans to several centuries. Those born in a particular caste automatically enter into it and once entry is made there's no exit. Life and death of individuals and their existence in-between, life of communities and of the Indian society are largely determined by caste. There are no boundaries be it urban or rural India, but only in terms of its forms and manifestations, veracity and magnitude they tend vary.

Caste is heinous and obnoxious permeated into all facets of the Indian society. Caste is intrinsically embedded from within more in our psyche and manifests covertly and overtly outside in despicable forms. Can India ever find a solution or to be precise 'salvation' to come out of this treacherous agency such as casteism which is intimately bound up in the psyche of most of the Indians and shows its ferocity in diverse form in varied locals of India? Those belonging to these segments are leaders,

cadres attached to political parties, organizations, movements and others as well. Nonetheless, whoever subscribes to the system of caste are casteists. Since it is entwined with a set of ideas emanating from many sources and is being pushed as a pre-fabricated dogmas or creedal expression and thus becomes (ism) casteism.

Further, any religion or philosophy or ideology (political, religious, cultural and social) that reinforces and justifies caste with its scriptural and textual bases should be termed as casteist. The reason is simple wherein 'ethics, ought to be the governing and regulating force for any religion or any endeavor or initiative. And, if this core principle 'dharma' (ethics) is absent, then it leads to enormous problems and huge contestations. Indian society is absolutely and intimately bound up in casteism. Casteism has become part and parcel of Indian psyche and obviously reflecting in all facets of the Indian society and therefore becomes the Indian reality. In varied was and in number of formats caste is being played and thus unleashed for diverse reasons.

Casteism is an ideology because is systematized, rationalized and legitimized. Therefore casteism is systemic. Many Indians believe firmly in such ways they are born in such a caste bracket or slot and therefore in accordance to it keep moving accepting and legitimizing caste in totality. When people say that you are born in a particular caste and supposed to carry on your duties and live in this way and live without questioning many accept and live and carry on which is nothing but casteism. Casteism and casteists are like two sides of the same coin. They are two-edged sword—process and product moves in such ways that completes the inherent dynamic. Within the caste rungs those called as "Untouchables" are described in a number of ways—filthy, dark complexion, stinking, lacks etiquette, devoid of culture and host of others.

Those who are shunted and shunned or have pushed outside the system of caste are designated as "Untouchables" or even constitutionally

termed as “Scheduled Castes”. This nomenclature will have to be reviewed and relooked in view of the fact that these terms attribute many meanings leading to all sorts of apprehensions and interpretations. For instance, by classifying a particular community in definitive slots or fixed brackets is nothing but casteism. Casteism infers lots of meanings—of their past, present and future. The narratives that we read are so dreadful, inhumane and beyond comprehension of thinking people. The narratives make many to wonder or awestruck. The levels to which the casteists push their discourses in such appalling ways show the levels of idiocy and ferocity. The duplicity and bizarre arguments put forth by the casteists show the hollowness and devoid of any essence and yet dominates.

As against the casteist Indian social order enmeshed deeply into the ideology of casteism, it is mandatory to unveil the inherent contradictions of caste and casteism and thus pitch a discourse that counters caste and casteism. Even after 73 years of India’s Independence, Indian society is gripped in caste and casteism. Those relegated by the heinous caste order even now manually engaged in cleaning the human excreta. Those communities engaged in this work are termed and called as “Untouchables”/“Scheduled Castes” are forbidden to enter into the temples, they are lynched and ridiculed, socio-economic indicators compared to others their ranking is the last, representations of those belonging to this community in polity, judiciary and higher levels bureaucracy are abysmal. Atrocities and discriminatory practices against them are on the rise. Even in 2019 they are being looked down and not treated as humans.

If the discourse is zeroed down leaving aside castist discourse, there are two conversations that surface to this —1) *not casteist* and 2) *anti-casteist* and certainly there are no in-betweens, as far as I’m concerned. These two discourses are juxtaposed against each other and firmly opposed to one another. I have observed and heard a lot from many ranging from different age-groups, subscribing to diverse theological, reli-

gious, ideological, philosophical and political domains convincingly arguing out in their discourses that they were not casteist which implies that they do not subscribe to caste and to they're not casteist. What do they mean by that? The moment they point to particular community is better than that community or one is better-off or entering into comparative analysis in terms of their culture, traditions and belief systems or comments in such ways and conclude probably because of these reasons they are like this—all put together expresses the casterist overtones and they may be under the impression they are not casteist.

Take the history of India and read through the prism of Subaltern and from underside, the inferences, episodes, caste studies and gradation of atrocities and forms of oppression occurred and narrated have been interpreted on casteist lines in subtle ways offering all sorts of justifications. The locales, water system, temples and the whole socio-eco space built on structure on caste lines and planned around caste. Hence, the system of caste is not normative, rather descriptive and prescriptive. In our common parlance we come across a community or the other is better-off than so and so, or worse-off or could have been better-off? What do we mean by those? Do they contain bias or prejudices? They are not based on objectivity and devoid of any reasons, rather pre-set casteist mind-set, propelled by subjectivity and corroded feeling.

Those who say they're not casteist are on denial mode. If we observe and read their narratives carefully they keep offering reasons for the plight of the 'Untouchables' that pre-supposes they're in a justificatory mode such as 'they would have progressed' or 'could have been much better-off' or 'developed', if they had done this or that implying not-casteist, but part of casteism. Constitution of India indeed invokes a lot of pro-active measures that protects socially ostracized groups and communities due to caste and casteism. However, in the same constitution the usage of the word "Scheduled Caste" is found and also extensively used in the Government gazettes and notifications. What does it

mean? They are replicating in direct and indirect ways and in the process justifying by endorsing the very presence of caste in all the facets of our country. So, it simply infers that the Government at the Centre and the State Governments including the Constitution of India is simply “not casteist” and therefore not “anti-casteist”.

In many ways when it comes to terms such as casteist, not-casteist and anti-casteist, we are by and large not sure while using these terms. These terms are loaded ones and highly nuanced. Often I have been bombarded with the statement: “There’s something wrong with ...” This statement like many others connotes though at the surface level sounds “not casteist”, but certainly casteist. For example, those who claim to be “not casteist” in their utterances and narratives tend to inter-face “casteist” and not-casteist” terms which in sum total conveys casteist overtones. So, I am fed up with many who say not-casteist, but what is in their heart as well as in mind I tend to think that what comes out in their statements, utterances and narratives we need to read carefully and then find out what does he/she mean only by reading between the lines.

This leads to another question: Are those who say they’re “not casteists” unconscious of what they’re saying? Do they not know what they are saying or knowingly playing with this term? Indian society is rooted in the system of caste and casteism as an ideology manifests in all the spheres. It is certainly not black and white polarity. But, in its subtlety the term “not casteist” conveys a larger message as casteist. “Not casteist” posits a number of ambiguities and should be clearly spelt out. There is a need and necessity to spell out what do they mean by “not casteist” and their narratives should carefully be weighed because the narratives they utter rip open the underlying essence of the rhetoric such as “should have better”, “things should have been set right in this way”, “problems with the genetics, culture” and so “they should not be blamed “so on and so forth.

Going deep into some of the things and drawing empathy and some sort of appeasement there could be some sort of cleansing taking place in their conscience or guilt, but all these things further reiterates that they are obsessed with soft layers still left or somewhere hanging and so continue to remain at the sub-conscious level. Caste has pervaded into the psycho-somatic frames of most of the Indians and is difficult to take away the caste factor that are equally on par with the casteists, but want to give a kind of projection to the world as if they are “not casteists”. Certainly “not casteist” category hardly conveys any real meaning, rather a cover up of “casteiest”. This segment is quite dangerous who come out with all sorts of propositions.

There are umpteen number of people keep saying that they are not ‘not casteists’. How to understand their narratives? And what constitutes “anti-casteists”? What are the parameters? These questions are being raised as against the backdrop that too often we hear caste is being condoned certainly not in the ways that the casteists adhere and practice, but in subtle ways offering some sort of solace or advice or suggestion for those who have been the victims of the system of caste. Even amongst those who have been pushed outside caste if their narratives resonates some of the things mentioned above

Anti-casteist is the one who recognizes the very fact that Indian society is caste ridden and laden. Further, anti-casteist firmly believes that caste schema functions on the basis of inequality wherein people are hierarchically ordered and ordained in tune to Brahmanic Hinduism and other scriptures that justifies and thus designates jobs and duties based on Manudharmashastra and so must be challenged. Therefore, anti-casteists underscore that caste sustains and promotes inequality and so in his/her words and actions challenges and strives for the eradication of caste and realization of casteless society. In this process, whoever strives and challenges the system of caste with a vision of annihilating caste is anti-casteist. By doing nothing and literally allowing and participating in

the heinous system of caste that tends to dominate and legitimate in the life of us is nothing but an endorsement of the position of the casteists and not-casteists as well.

Confessional journey to some extent be allowed when casteism and casteist ideology dominates if and when those who subscribes to it unknowingly or unconsciously since they are entwined to it but shall never be justified all the time by offering petty reasons. If and when allowed, and continued having known the roots of caste, then it amounts to subscribing to casteist ideology and certainly not anti-casteist position. One may be born outside the system of caste, but need not be absolved from being a casteist or not casteist as long as he/she dwells within the rubric of narratives that offers all sorts of justifications and propositions. Caste is a descriptive term and offers a number of postulates and therefore needs careful scrutiny and action. Action should lead to annihilation of caste because it is so heinous and systemic.

Complexities of caste by all means should be nuanced and not positing 'good' or 'bad' people or giving some sort of excuses that offers if not for this or if they change they would like that—these games need to be stopped and be opposed by all means. Profiling of those who have been shunted outside the system of caste should take the responsibility of annihilating caste. There are people struggling against caste and in different ways fighting the nefarious designs of caste. Usages such as problem is having in that community, parental upbringing, they need some more time, need more time and more support and host of others are casteist connotations.

Caste has a long history and one common thread that weaves is gradation of people that defines who is superior and who is inferior and who is touchable and who is untouchable. Those who are born as untouchables born their varna is way down and outside and so their culture will have to be backward. For all these something will have to be done be it casteist and not-casteist. Both the categories include and exclude

people based on their own convenience and interests. Why are including some and excluding others and sometimes why do include all—spell out the reasons clearly. When asked give explanation about who we admire and hate we hardly have answers because our explanation run deep into caste roots prompting either admiration or defects thus positing subjectivity and irrationality, and certainly not objectivity and rationality. There are some who belong to outside the caste rungs by and large admire the dominant casteist groups and keep praising that it would enhance or change the identity which is not true. Some of the people from the untouchable community tried imitating the rituals, taking the names of the dominant castes, changing the dietary habits, resorting to Brahmanic traditions and rituals assuming that it would lead them to upward mobility forgetting that caste is a taboo, a stamp and a brand.

Caste is used as a tool to regulate and to enhance social inequity amongst communities. A few questions that arise at this juncture are: Has casteism promoted social justice amongst communities towards realizing egalitarian society? Has caste helped economic, political, religio-cultural equality and dignity amongst those communities that fall outside the caste scheme or realms? Or has casteism facilitated constitutional provisions to those communities belonging to outside the caste rungs? The answer is simple, the very rubric of caste and the very ideology of Casteism enabled the communities that have fallen within the rungs of caste have been added status, privileges and entitlements. The socio-economic data reveals that they remain still backward and the fruits of economic growth and others have not reached them.

The real challenge is this, particularly to those who subscribe to casteism should be committed to part a portion of the pie to others-the oppressed communities. Caste and casteism have helped immensely those who belong to the dominant castes. In India dominant caste categories have been having many privileges and entitlement that triggers and thus sustains caste to continue. This is why caste prevails all through

the centuries. Why should those belonging to the casteist rungs renounce their caste identities and tags? They will not because the caste tags helps them to get into better jobs, schemes and incentives offered by the government; climb up in the political and judicial ladder so on and so forth. Subscribing to caste and to the ideology of casteism the dominant castes are endowed with numerous privileges that adds to their caste identity and new levels of power equations.

Casteism has helped the casteists to get into bigotry, lynching, prejudices, hatred, violence, supremacy, violations of human rights and led to inhumanity. The anti-casteists have been fighting and struggling against the dominant caste mind-sets. Only by annihilating caste and breaking the system that sustains caste we can think about social equality. The pro-active measures and sops given and extended to the communities shall not bring any structural change because caste is systemic. Take the wealth ratio of those who belong to dominant castes and others belonging to the 'Untouchable communities'. The gaps are huge and is widening. Wealth created by all trickles down only to the dominant castes that enjoy all the privileges.

When we observe the comparative analysis of the communities both the dominant castes and those who are outside the caste rungs since the Independence by taking into the past and the present on comparative advantage bases, the data projects are highly damning. Even after 73 years of India's independence we as Indians come to terms and are still struggling to extend whatever is due to them. The communities ostracized due to the system of caste contribute to GDP and GNP and nation building. Why then, should they be discriminated and why not the wealth accrued is equitably distributed to them as well? Anti-casteists view these things more seriously and thus zeroes down to societal level concluding that Indian society is casteist by nature, function, representation and edification. Those outside the caste rungs live in abominable settings and lead their life not like human beings—threatened, ridiculed,

lynched and burnt. They too contribute to the wealth of the nation, but not treated as subjects, participants, citizens and beneficiaries.

Wealth gap is widening between the casteists and those outside the castes. Widening gap of wealth between communities at alarming levels per se is casteist. Indian society which is highly caste-driven cannot and shall not bring about egalitarian society. Wealth as such is a combination of the past and the present. In such a context, caste is also a reality that continues its journey with us from the past to the present. And so, those born in dominant castes added their value to the wealth they own and others from outside caste rungs could not do so and shall never ever. Obviously the wealth is accumulated in the hands of the dominant castes in alarming ways because the castes they represent add privileges and incentives. In such a discriminatory unequal play ground, many fail to question; rather have become insensitive and irrational

The society we live is casteist and so we do not have any sensitivity and accepted the prevailing situation as new-normal and there are no qualms about it. Hence, whether we are born outside or inside the caste rungs, except a few many would find their space within the casteist frame or not-caste frame. There are reasonably a good number born and raised in the communities outside the system of caste keep blaming not “they”/“other”, but “we” and “us”—which conveys that consciously or unconsciously they get absorbed, assimilated and internalized in their thought-process, thinking, narratives and actions typically that of casteists and so their claims do not subscribe to that of anti-casteists.

The fact of the matter is that the Indian society runs on two rails parallel to each other—1) casteist and 2) anti-casteist. They are like two rails on which the Indian society keeps functioning. Metaphor of rail being used here is apt and significant in view of the fact that theoretically the rails do not meet each other and the engine which is the Indian society somehow managing to steer somewhat without any collision, except on certain times there would be derailments or skirmishes or

irruption and unease. We keep witnessing in diverse forms sometimes across the country that surface all of a sudden and then evaporate. Sporadic uprising and irruptions keep happening across the country between the casteists and anti-casteists.

Caste has been with us for centuries and even in the 21st century caste reins in. Caste and its vestiges can be present is felt in every sphere of Indian society. Caste is such an agency that vitiates equality and dignity of humans in all the ways. Certainly there is no iota of doubt caste is the one that obstructs socio-economic equilibria. A social structure that hangs on the system of caste that divides and differentiates on the basis of varna is to be ridden of. So, it is time for those particularly “not casteist” to reflect, ponder over and join the movement of anti-casteist.

CHURCH: DISTANCING WHY AND FOR WHAT?



At last, after protests and demonstrations some of the things kept secretly thus far have started to surface. Nonetheless, some more information needed, apart from the peripheral info. Those signed in the agreement should come out clearly and squarely and the material that figures in the following write up appeared in the news paper *Deccan Herald* is not sufficient. Church, in this context, is referred to CSI-KCD, is the body and its chief functionary, the so-called bishop and others, so-called officers associated, seem to have entered into an agreement with the BMRCL, involved in the acquisition of land and execution of the project. It's all about the construction of Namma Metro that requires land. Towards that end, BMRCL approached the concerned and entered into agreement. The questions that arise here are: When and other details in toto.

A section of people belonging to All Saints Church, when they came to know openly about the project they were asked to shut up. Gradually it started to gain momentum and many wanted to know more about it particularly the base information. When asked to provide information and in return not provided, what is there available in a democracy. Protest is part of democracy and not apart from democracy and is indeed a constitutional means. Who are those protesting and for what are they protesting? And who are they? They are the stake-holders, members of the church and the vital component and the most e importantly constituency of the church. They have all the right to ask for information and if the administration goes hay way and dilly dallying protest will be the

last resort. Please do not lower the meaning of ‘protest’—we are called as Protestants.

Let not those by using the term ‘protesters’ deflect the issue because those who keep protesting are the members of the church and pay subscription regularly. And those who belong to other churches also are part of CSI-KCD and so have all the right to ask and join the protest because All Saints Church is part of CSI-KCD. Let not those cronies think that by saying or using terms such as ‘outsiders’ and ‘protesters’ escape from the deal that has been executed. All the members of CSI-KCD in general and members of All Saints Church in particular have the right to ask questions and to protest as well. If the cause is genuine and just, the protest has the vibrancy to extend to others too—those who want to show solidarity belonging to other facets as well.

The character of the church throughout the history and even while addressing or facing issues both within and outside has distanced and deflected. Why should it distance from the issue? It is as simple as that. Let the concerned the so-called bishop and his cronies meet the stake holders who have a number of questions to ask. If the responses and answers are genuine certainly there would be ‘consensus’. The agreement between the two parties, in this case CSI-KCD CEO and the chief of BMRCL may have taken some time ago and certainly MOU must have been signed. Those who want to know the stake holders, the very body of All Saints Church want to know, what transpired between CSI-KCD and BMRCL. Even I want to know about the deal as a member of CSI-KCD. What is wrong in that? Right to Information is a basic fundamental right and those who subscribe for their membership have all the right and the information ought to be provided. Call the stakeholders deliberate and provide the facts and figures. Can you do that?

Queries are asked and responses given do not match that totally leads to more suspicion than clarity. For example, about felling of trees the response has been not this many trees, only some trees; would the

church will be protected and for that some other citation given and coming out suddenly extending the acquisition—leaves the members of the church in total dismay. More importantly, what then is the total cost and how much has the CSI-KCD agreed/thus far received now and what then is the balance? This is the crux because CSI is badly hit and its image has plummeted for money laundering in hideous ways. It is located in the prime area and the value of land runs to several crores. The members of CSI-KCD, particularly the stakeholders of All Saints Church have all the right to ask and no one has right to deflect and deviate from it.

Someone seemed to have told the reporters that there were some who are ‘unconnected’ to the church. What does he/she mean by that? What type of connectivity one should have? Anybody can raise question and if you do not have answers please keep quiet. It is not difficult to know about the functioning of the church and the whole world knows how the Church of South India—right from Synod down to Diocesan Levels throughout South India functions. Above all the function of CSI-KCD is right out in the open and those in Bangalore are aware of its functioning.

Church Distances itself from Protesters against Vellara Station

Are activists misleading some members truly concerned over trees?



The All Saints Church located near Johnson Market, Vellara Junction; (right) citizens stage a protest against the felling of trees. DH FILE/S K Dinesh



BENGALURU, DHNS: Officials of the All Saints Church and Church of South India (CSI) have distanced themselves from the activists protesting the acquisition of church land for a metro station.

The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) has acquired 3,618 sqm of land from the church for the construction of the Vellara station on Reach 6 of Namma Metro's Phase 2 corridor. The authority proposed to acquire an additional 3,797 sqm on a temporary basis for construction activities. About 20 members of the church have opposed the project, claiming that the temporary land acquisition will result in uprooting of over 100 trees at the church's 'Sacred Grove'.

Bishop Reverend P K Samuel, head of CSI's Karnataka Central Diocese, said some individuals who joined the protest with the church members genuinely concerned over the trees are spreading misinformation. "The church will not be damaged by the metro construction activities as claimed (by the protesters). The officials have accommodated our concerns and changed the plans twice, reducing the area of land

acquisition as well as the number of trees. It is a project that will benefit the larger public. We have agreed to the temporary land acquisition, but BMRCL officials will not be allowed to enter the church premises for land and tree survey,” the bishop said.

In a meeting held during the first week of July, the secretary of All Saints Church and four CSI members said those organizing the protests and giving statements to the press are “unconnected with the functioning of the church”. After activists blocked forest and metro officials on several occasions, the BMRCL has proposed to acquire the land permanently.

Project Would Affect Less than 45 Trees: BMRCL

BENGALURU, DHNS: The BMRCL has sought to reassure activists and members of All Saints Church, protesting against acquiring the church land for the Vellara metro station, that the tree felling will be kept minimum.

In a letter to the Bishop of Church of South India’s (CSI) Karnataka Central Diocese Reverend P K Samuel, BMRCL managing director Ajay Seth said the project will affect less than 45 trees. “The transplantation/cutting of trees is inevitable. The total number of trees to be transplanted/cut are not more than 45, as against the 180 trees as claimed by the activists,” he said. “Strong mitigation measures like translocation and compensatory plantation will be taken up. Approval of the tree officer and that of an expert committee to be constituted... will be obtained,” Seth said. The BMRCL official said activists are blocking its engineers and BBMP tree officer to conduct a detailed census and measurement of trees. He said the temporary acquisition of about 3,700 sqm land was only for a period of four years.

Precautions Will be Taken

Responding to concerns over the safety of the church during the metro excavation work, Seth said all necessary precautions will be taken to

protect the 150-year-old building. “Similar work had been carried out for the Cubbon Park station at a distance of 3 metres from the 100-year-old CTO building. The All Saints Church, being around 17 metres away from the station excavation, will not face any danger during the work,” he said.

The BMRCL has also offered to build a new building to accommodate the school for children with special needs. Church authorities said they could accommodate the 20 children in the school at similar facilities.

My Take

The leaders of CSI particularly, the so-called ‘bishops’ and ‘clergy’ have been misleading the congregations for long. Do not try again now and on this. Those concerned about the church have been struggling and fighting against those ‘evil powers’ that are involved in loot and scoot. When questioned they are branded as ‘anti-church’, ‘misleading’, ‘heretics’, ‘evil’ so on and so forth. If, they sustain the struggle or protest they are warned of ‘ex-communication’. These are the modes of the 20th

Century Church—repent and reform. Church is soaked in all sorts of nefarious designs and certainly distancing shall never help, rather it would expose the church much more. Those who are struggling to set-right the right and ask for basic information are the church. They contribute to the life and witness of the church. The sycophants and fringes should not unnecessarily come out with bizarre statements and narratives. If you speak and ask question in the secular world you are branded as ‘anti-nationals’, ‘urban-naxals’ and in the church circles branded as ‘anti-church’, ‘rebel’, ‘devil’ and so on. Struggle will continue and more will join until the stakeholders know everything about the project. Presently the church is in crossroads.

BEYOND 2019: MODI 02 WILL “DEFINE INDIA”



India 2019 and Beyond: Plausible Kaleidoscope

A mixed bag of feelings, perceptions and opinions keep surfacing from cross sections of people across the India and the world. Some say that the results were ‘stunning’, while others say ‘expected’. It is in such a context, particularly in the emergent political landscape in India, I am reminded of George Orwell, a renowned futurologists, satirists and dystopian predicted in his novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* written 70 years ago which became seminal and relevant and eternal moving beyond times and space. For India in the Post-poll 2019 and the years to come “Orwellian 1984 shall be the guide post and goal post that is fixed at least for the next five-years—but should not keep changing of the goal post for securing votes from the electorates.

This is the beauty of those who in their own ways envision and thus communicate, nuance and put their concepts in such ways that makes the readers and analysts to peel layer by layer in order to derive meaning and essence. “Orwellian” is an adjective, defining a situation, idea, or societal condition that George Orwell identified as destructive to the welfare of a free and open society. Post-2019 is going to be a defining moment for India—for some their hopes and aspirations be fulfilled in consolidating their identity politics being projected in number of ways, but for many the current scenario presents hopelessness, despair and anxiety. Orwell precisely identifies and thus predicts the emergent fac-

tors that bear destructive trends to a multi-cultural, free and open Indian society.

He describes a political system in which the government tries to control every facet and part of people's lives, similar to that described in the novel *Nineteen Eighty Four*. George Orwell is known for 1949 dystopian novel *1984* with its theme that brings to the fore infliction and perpetuation of social injustices whenever a country has authoritarian government. *1984* elucidates the real-life situations that are reminiscent of a kind of state control and surveillance carried out by "Big Brother" which could perhaps be expected in India in the coming days. Government in a totalitarian setting could go to any extent that crosses its limit by abusing its absolute power. It starts with democracy and gradually moves towards totalitarian and the trends we have been witnessing portray similar features and characteristics.

The BJP government at the Centre in due course of time could get involved in watching or listening or following its citizens who it suspects or goes against it in tapping the phone calls or watch closely the writing or speeches or whatever may be the modes of communication can best be described as Orwellian. The government that has been just elected under the leadership of Modi enjoys absolute majority and vested with absolute power, and so the power leverage, if not moderated could lead to totalitarian dynamic. The emergent landscape is perhaps the most dangerous template wherein power in absolute terms dominates in which the power cliché vis-à-vis the cronies and fringes eventually takes over "power" in totality and thus unleash at those who they consider as "others" and "they". The only justifying point would therefore be the tag "majoritarian" and "we". This is indeed 'Orwellian'.

2019 Elections and Post-2019 Postulates

Prospects of 2019-elections about who would win or lose, by how many seats and alliances between parties went wild in all directions.

However, one thing that everyone would agree that 2019 elections was the most ferocious lowering the debates, decency and the ugliest and, therefore, the most fascinating fighting for power in the world's largest democracy. 2019-elections demonstrated that to capture power leaders of political parties could stoop down possible to the lowest. There were sorts of semblance of pre-election tie-ups amongst some opposition parties, though uneven nationally and wobbly in some regions. This patchwork of alliances made BJP's job of getting simple majority on its own. For many opposition leaders and their parties, second term for BJP may well effectively end their political careers and prospects. Therefore, those leaders and their parties had to fight to safeguard their personal and political prospects that were at stake.

Calculations, analysis and arithmetic to unseat Modi in the Lok Sabha election 2019 plummeted. BJP, led by Modi returned to power with a pro-incumbency wave and even in bigger mandate. The National Democratic alliance (NDA) led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came back to power as the citizens of India gave unprecedented mandate to Modi-led government bringing him back for a historic second term with a sweeping majority. Media within and outside termed Modi's victory as cleaver maneuvering and mavericks with his innovative ability and skills churned the obstacles to his advantage and brought such a resounding victory to BJP and those who believe in majoritarianism and subscribe to Hindutva ideology as well. Nonetheless, there have many who raised serious doubts on the thumping victory to PM Modi and BJP, a far-right party who opinioned that such results won't auger well for the minorities in the nation under Modi's regime as there would be as days go by an effort and serious push to establish a "Hindu State", which the BJP-RSS has been advocating throughout the campaigns.

Media by and large, reported in mixed ways to PM Modi's return. For instance, *The Washington Post* wrote that: "Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his party won a landslide victory in the

world's largest election as voters endorsed his vision of a muscular, assertive and proudly Hindu India. Modi's win is a victory for a form of religious nationalism that views India as a fundamentally Hindu nation and seeks to jettison the secularism promoted by the country's founders. While India is roughly 80 percent Hindu, it is also home to Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and other religious communities." Similar apprehension was echoed in *The Guardian* that "Now it appears that high watermark was no aberration, and that Indian politics has likely entered a new era of Hindu nationalist hegemony by Modi's extraordinary popularity." The New York Times noted that "Behind Modi's victory is a Hindu hard-liner on the move."

While quoting, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen in his column article in "The New York Times" titled *Modi Won Power, Not the Battle of Ideas* that "Modi's campaign for the General Election ran mainly on polarization and exploiting the "fear and apprehension" in Indians." He substantiated by saying that, "These factors fill up the story of what has been happening in Indian politics. Many might prefer the account that the BJP won what is called "the ideological argument" against the Congress Party. But there has been no particular victory for the philosophy of Hindu nationalism and no noticeable vanquishing of the idea of inclusiveness and unity championed by Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore." On similar vein, Suhas Palshikar, a political scientist and columnist while talking to *The Washington Post* about the post-2019 settings predicted that "What will change are the social and cultural values in the society. Religious minorities will be reduced to secondary citizens, while Hindu nationalists will have free play."

What has been amply proved during the period 2014-19 of BJP's rule was that Indian society has been fragmented gravely along religious lines. In that there have been sharp precariousness, vulner-

ability and insecurity amongst the minorities, particularly Muslims. With a resounding majority of well over 300 seats; opposition parties totally decimated some hopes now being reposed on parties such as DMK, Left and TMC who have marginal presence, but should not be construed as something which would offer credible opposition to brute majority of BJP, which has augmented PM Modi with absolute power. In view of BJP growing in consolidation of power almost in all parts of the country and the opposition has no alternate narrative and story that would dismantle Modi’s juggernauts, what we are witnessing is the growing exodus of MPs, MLAs and Corporators from political parties such as Congress, SP, TDP, TMC, RJD and others keep defecting and joining BJP.

Politics of Pulverization

Modi-Shah combine strategically sliced through the traditional electoral politics of India by totally working out new combinations and permutations at different levels in the diverse regions of India. And Modi with his charisma connected his narratives on the ground. An article by the Associated Press appear in the Guardian and Washington Post highlighted the essence of the magic wand of PM Modi that “Modi, 68, has carefully constructed an image of himself as a pious man of the people, a would-be monk called to politics who has elevated India’s status globally and transformed its parliamentary election from a contest of political parties on social and economic issues into a cult of personality.” Out of many statements and comments from diverse perspective one common thread that weaves in as *The Economist* said: “The BJP’s win is down to the prime minister, not the party.” In tune to that *The Economic Times* said “Brand Modi made it a one-party race.”

A question that arises after PM Modi single-handedly fought the electoral battle of 2019-elections against political alliances and regional

strongholds of political parties and peoples' aspirations is: Is PM Modi bigger than BJP? Many say that party is bigger than person, but nomenclature PM Modi changed which is a reality. It should be borne in mind that BJP won 2014 and 2019 elections because of PM Modi. He stunned the opposition and those who are against his views and policies wherein he successfully shifted the focus of his election campaign after losing three assembly elections. He kept changing the narratives in every phase as the elections were held in phased manner such as he clearly narrated the economic agenda that got the support of corporate India and then moved on to national security that garnered support in the states that bordered countries. A classic example was India's incursion into Pakistani territory, the first since the 1971 war, a week prior to the polls which Modi used to whip up nationalist fervor.

Another noteworthy feature that Modi-Shah combine did was to penetrate into the traditionally left-leaning and TMC-controlled states like West Bengal particularly that thrived on Muslim votes. Both of them in their campaigns did not woo the Muslims, whereas strong in hitting illegal immigration from Bangladesh and funding Islamic schools that jeopardized India's politics. They were confident that without the minorities they could win and attacked the opposition by thriving on 'appeasement politics'. Strategically they put the Muslims in their place by not giving a seat to Muslims, sending the signals to minorities that without them, BJP could manage. The shift was very well articulated in *The Washington Post*, which subscribes to the fact that Modi's meteoric rise with right-wing uprising around the globe because "The result represents a stunning vote of confidence in Modi, a charismatic and polarizing politician who is part of a crop of right-leaning populist leaders around the globe."

A few right-wing leaders can be compared to Modi's politics like Turkey's Erdogan, Hungary's Victor Orban and United States' Donald Trump. Like them, Modi stirred voters with a combination of hope and

fear who articulated the nation's greatness mixing with perceived threats from enemies both internal and external. Like them showed his hatred to the media and always went to his supporters on the ground. He did not believe meeting the press, rather communicated to the people and other paraphernalia via people. Though PM Modi's economic record was volatile and pathetic which the opposition parties wanted to capitalize, Modi cleverly managed to overcome despite alarming unemployment, tensions with Pakistan, farmers distress and falling economic indicators. Modi side-tracked the attention of the electorates and thus played to voters' nationalist sentiments to distract from the country's problems.

PM Modi projected himself as a man from the disadvantaged category and therefore brought in his narratives his vengeful contempt for English-speaking elites by branding them as "liberals", "urban-naxals", "anti-nationals" and coined numerous names seducing "We" against "Others" with envy and hate. PM Modi carefully stage-managed majoritarian populist agenda by carefully avoiding any reference to the promises of development he had made five years ago and relied instead heavily on stoking fears about Muslims in the minds of Hindus and marketing and projecting himself as the only leader capable of defeating terrorism, transforming India into a Hindu State and establishing a 'New India'. The opposition could not match the onslaught of Modi's juggernaut. The campaigns through the different phases of the opposition were without any narratives and foci. It was like a presidential-style contest where Modi President himself as the force to reckon with and for him there was any semblance of any credible and cohesive challenge or alternative forthcoming from the opposition.

2019 election was the world's biggest dance of democracy. It was the most vital and consequential vote cast in the lifetime of a majority of Indian alive. Majority who exercised their franchise in favor of PM Modi hoped for a radical departure of politics and economy and take India to greater heights in all spheres. 2019-election was, in effect, a

referendum on whether the Indian republic retains its founding ideals, or if Modi wins, another term embarks entirely on another oppositional tangent—sectarian leading to Hindu State from which return to Constitutional and parliamentary democracy could perhaps be impossible. For the first in 30 years a single party voted back to power with thumping majority. Modi wave despite many obstacles continued without any difficulty and in fact furthered making dents to traditional voting segments which intrigued many political pundits and analysts.

Process of Consolidation

Modi pledged to create 20m jobs annually. The rate of unemployment is the highest known ever in several decades. He mesmerized with captivating narratives and stories asking the young electorates to give one more chance to fix the things that he promised to deliver. Grand visions notably fabulous projections in comparison to Singapore and South Korea, bullet and roof-transparent super-fast trains, ‘smart cities, clean, green and environment-friendly residential locations are realized. When we compare to one promise out of many PM Modi made in 2014 that he vowed to purify the Ganga, “the river of India” as Pandit Nehru called. If we take stock of it after five years, river Ganga remains a stream of unquantifiable litres of sewage and industrial effluents.

Democratic institutions have been repurposed to assist Modi’s programs and initiatives to transform India into a Hindu nation. For example, some of the major institutions such as Election Commission, RBI, NSSO, CBI and others have become stooges and instruments in the hands of ruling dispensation. Politicization of defence forces and the judiciary plunged into the most existential threat to its autonomy since emergency days. The myth of Modi as a moderate and a revolutionary modernizer had withered off in the first innings itself, instead adorned with a tag as Hindu supremacist who vies for majoritarianism. Since

2014, we have now clearer glimpse of the "New India" he has visualized.

'New India' is indeed diametrically opposed position and reflection of a landscape which is culturally diverse, intellectually vibrant, and emotionally boisterous, progressive, inclusive, loving, compassionate and implacably peaceful posting unity in diversity to something where bigotry against religious minorities, lynching, hate speeches, spewing venom, passing dictates what to eat, dress, directing the other faiths when to worship and how to worship and who to worship, treating minorities as objects of their charity and secondary citizens. Sectarian prejudice is on the rise and sweeping across the country.

Secularism in recent times for those who town far-right, populist and exclusive Hindutva ideology has become pseudo-narrative. BJP-RSS, its allies and its adherents ask: Why must Hindus bear the burden of "secularism"? It is based on the assumption that "secularism" eventually would result in Muslims outgrow Hindus and thus takes/rules over. It is apparent that rants against minorities especially against Muslims contributed to decimate the opposition in 2019 elections. In a democracy there should be a strong opposition, failing which it could lead to totalitarianism. In the recent parliamentary sessions the ruling BJP keep passing many bills. The ruling dispensation is confident that almost all the bills and resolutions would have smooth passage and be realized and be made into laws, since it has absolute majority in the Lok Sabha and the number in the Raj Sabha many from opposition keep joining BJP for their survival and other considerations.

PM Modi had failed to translate man promises he made in the first innings and is now seem to be committed to fulfill. This is how BJP is consolidating its vision and promises and in the process continue to expand its vote base of the others to its kitty that are presently in vacuum. As part of course correction, BJP is in hurry to fulfill the promises it made during 2014. Further, BJP in its 2.0 (second innings) would go all

out in pushing the ultimate vision vis-a-vis Hindu Rashtra by changing the character of the Indian Constitution. This is why very subtly democracy is invoked by PM Modi wherever possible and for that his standard referral point is 1975, wherein Indira Gandhi suspended the Constitution in the year 1975 by clamping emergency and in his own stride and format PM Modi would try his level best this time to write Hindutva ideology in the Constitution vis-à-vis a Hindu State to divide and polarize the minorities constitutionally.

Towards this direction BJP-RSS is gradually pushing its tentacles by infiltrating into diverse facets of the organs of the state and institutions of governance. If PM Modi and Co succeeds, Hindu nationalism in this dynamic by all means would become the official functional ideology of the republic. Once, if this makes entry as part of the Constitution, it would be very difficult to exit. This is what going to happen, if there are no checks and balance. How could this happen? It is a matter of growing concern for many. It is important to see through the character of BJP. Having Modi as the Prime Minister of India BJP does not change the character and color. People by and large are under the impression that BJP has sizably accommodated all kinds of people irrespective caste and creedal distinction.

In 2014 and 2019 elections, electorates from cross-sections voted for PM Modi via BJP. Except a few states, BJP has solid and significant presence, and as of now is the only pan-Indian party. Nonetheless, BJP has miserably failed to accommodate the minorities in the electoral process and also failed to rope them in the cabinet. However, at the bottom or at the membership levels, what BJP's claims could perhaps be true, but the top layer is predominantly controlled by the upper castes that have the upper hand. For instance, in his 2.0, PM Modi accommodated representatives of most castes in his Council of Ministers, but upper castes got dominant presence, bagging 32 of the 58 berths. Other Backward Classes (OBCs), a crucial political constituency, number 13.

In BJP-RSS there’s no doubt that the Upper castes have the upper hand and other castes as per the caste schema fall through.

Nine Brahmin leaders have found their place in top notch portfolios in the Union cabinet. Caste-balance continue to play a key role despite BJP’s claims wherein it maintains that verdict of the Lok Sabha polls showed blurring of caste as a factor in voting even in the Hindi heart land states of UP and Bihar, which by and large, is not true. Caste factor continues as the deciding factor in Indian’s elections. Caste-schema is beautifully reflected as Brahmins are the major political bulwark of BJP-RSS in-charge of navigating and others belonging to middle-rung come next, followed by the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) at bottom and the Minorities have become Untouchable in BJP’s 01 and 02 innings. Therefore, BJP-RSS uses all its gimmicks and theatrics to conceal its original character. Those in the decision-making and policy-taking levels are Brahmins and therefore BJP-RSS operates on the premise of system of caste where its heads are Brahmins and foot comes from other castes. In elections it’s caste and whoever formulates and configures the caste alignment strategically and tactically wins.

Modi’s 2.0: Duplicity or Authenticity

2019-election the most bitterly fought one in the history of India. Every one stooped to the low attacking the opponents in their electioneering and campaigns. Post-results victory of PM Modi speech in the Parliament centered on reconciliation and unity. Modi reached out to minorities in India, who have been traditionally not been with BJP or supporters of BJP. Out of many things, one clear message he sent was that minorities in India had been deceived through an imaginary fear created for the purpose of vote bank politics. He substantiated that BJP would have to “pierce” through this deception and “gain trust”. The prime minister also added a new phrase “sabka vishwas” meaning “eve-

ryone trust” to his earlier slogan “sabka saath, sabka vikas” (development for all).

One of the most conspicuous recurring phenomena that many in India witnessed in Modi’s 1.0 was religious intolerance and lynching of minorities under various pretexts. Modi’s first term witnessed the empowerment of fringe Hindu groups and encouraging inflammatory and derogatory speeches and slogans raised against the minorities and at those who subscribed to liberal views as liberal socialists, communists, urban-naxals, anti-nationals and so on. While PM Modi had intervened periodically and condemned strongly those involved in such acts and thus reiterated that BJP was an inclusive party. But, his interventions on such matters were too little and too late, and hardly made any difference on the ground. In his 2.0 PM Modi could make course correction and has the opportunity to set the record straight by shunning the election rhetoric or keep aside some of his narratives.

PM Modi has ample opportunity to repose confidence in the minds of the skeptics, those who did not vote for him in 2019 and minorities. PM Modi’s “New India” should prove that he walks the talk and walk the walk and will have to show to them that he is seriously engaged in course corrections, which is “inclusive” and “all-encompassing”. In what ways the “course correction” will be and how he would direct it are the questions which we have to wait and see. Some of the “hardliners” who won the elections on BJP tickets are likely to pose a challenge to Modi’s post-election resolve. For example, when it comes to Ayodhya temple, J & K, reservation question, minority rights and several others that involves amendments in the Constitutions, the hard-liners would take upper hand and one classic example is Pragya Thakur the ways with which she firmly defended Mahatma Gandhi’s assassin, Nathuram Godse.

Though Thakur retracted her statement following pressure from the BJP high command, she is now an elected Member of Parliament. Du-

plicity of PM Modi can be seen in some of the things that some of the sitting MPs and good performers belonging to moderates spectrum such as Sushma Swaraj, former external minister and former Lok Sabha speaker Sumitra Mahajan and others were not given tickets, but went for mob rousers who invoke hate speeches that arouse mob frenzy and known for regularly making religiously charged and intemperate remarks. Some of them also found a place in the new Union council of ministers. PM Modi in his second innings if at all he believes in the promises he made, then should rein in these elements. Can PM Modi curb their anti-minorities rhetoric and derogatory slogans directed against those who disagree with BJP's idea of India? These lumpen elements since 2014 have outgrown and thus wield considerable support amongst the militant Hindutva segments and those in power and authority who firmly believe in making the country a Hindu Raj/a Hindu theocratic state.

In addition to these, what is more worrying is Modi's 2019 thumping victory has sent a clear message particularly to the minorities that BJP's landslide victory is out and out without the support of the minorities wherein about 200 million comprise the Muslim community and about 3 per cent Christians and so on. According to the post-poll survey by the Centre for the Study of Developing societies (CSDS) observed that nationwide only 9 percent of Muslims voted for BJP. Another credible survey pegged the Muslim vote at 10 per cent. The figures for India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, show low levels of Muslim support for BJP. According to CSDS, in UP, where a fifth of the population is Muslim, 8 per cent of Muslims voted for BJP. According to CSDS, in UP, where a fifth of the population is Muslim, 8 per cent of Muslims voted for BJP. Muslim representation in Parliament is all-time low. The newly elected Lok Sabha has 26 Muslim MPs, a marginal increase of three from the last house. The figures show under 5 per cent which is supposed to be the second lowest proportion of Muslim MPs to popula-

tion, the lowest was in 2014 which means both during BJP's duration. The proportion of Muslims in Parliament is way behind when compared to their share of India's population, which stood at 14 per cent in 2011.

The scenario and the rubric points out to a fact that BJP's is to consolidate the majority—the Hindu vote irrespective of caste, while at the same time making the minority vote irrelevant. In such a fluid climate a question that comes before the minorities is: should PM Modi's conciliatory message at the start of the second term be construed a suspect or genuine? For this question, more and more conciliatory utterances can be given such as 'subka vishvas', but the minorities are looking for something that matches words with action. Without a resounding mandate, Modi's actions in his second term will determine whether India remains a pluralist, inclusive, secular constitutional democracy or cruises towards a majoritarian polity.

Intriguing Dynamic between Democracy and Populism

PM Modi received a huge mandate in favor of him that spans right across the country. At the same time, huge mandate does not come without any expectations, they certainly being accompanied with enormous responsibility. One may talk about 'New India' becoming stronger militarily, technologically and host of others, but for all these a nation should be stronger economically. This is why Modi frantically visiting many countries entering into economic collaborations, renewing contracts and inviting foreign capital. For any society to survive production distribution and consumption are vital and for that capital becomes the most important pre-requisite. We have army of semi-skilled and unskilled labor, land and infrastructural facilities, but need capital and technology. Intriguing

PM Modi is busy attracting foreign capital both from within and outside primarily to promote jobs. Politicians and leaders of nations may talk about many things; strangely none of their narratives including PM

Modi can bypass the economic sphere. As of now India's economic spectrum is on descending trend and not projecting healthy picture. PM Modi will have to pay heed to the related aspects concerning ailing economy. Despite a plethora of official statements, the data clearly shows that the state of the economy remains a matter of increasing concern. Even statistics regarding the economy are being questioned. The ambitious project of \$5-trillion economy by 2024-25 likely is the economic vision and push of PM Modi. The reality as of now appears to be a in a state of decline and regressive.

Jobs, especially skilled, are not available, in sufficient numbers and this should be a matter for concern. The ability to sustain a rate of growth between 8.5 per cent and 9.5 per cent is again highly doubtful. The indicators of the economic survey and the budget projections fail to reflect any positive indicators. They hardly point to a more robust economy, which is capable of providing a higher rate of growth, more opportunities for labor, and greater potential for investments. The looming challenge for India for the next five years, therefore, would be how to build 'New India' with strong economic foundation, one that is capable of providing the kind of base structure enhancing jobs to growing millions who constitute the 'young India' who voted en masse to PM Modi trusting his narratives and promises who they think believes in 'free-market economy' and 'liberal macro-economic order'. \$5 trillion target of course a good vision, but when questioned about the ways of achieving the 'imagined' target, Modi calling them as "professional pessimists". Aspirations of PM Modi will have to be realized or at least touch or reach the target.

The term "ambitious" some people use, but the populist narratives that attracts the electorates nowadays because they are those who want to be benefitted or their aspirations probably realized by someone. For them PM Modi is the medium who can translate their dreams and aspirations. During the 2019-election PM Modi used many jargons, slogans

and narratives that are ‘populist’, and when questioned about ‘achievability’, they are termed as “professional pessimists”. Narratives of such as these are nothing but diversionary tactic. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that PM Modi used the political climate to his advantage. Further, democracy and populism go hand in hand and closely linked entities. Modi with his charisma hoodwinked the masses (electorates) by emotional chord and blurred the distinctions between the leader and the led as he put himself in such delicate balance--I-You-We. Nevertheless, a charismatic-popular-populist pitch need not become pre-requisites for populism.

Populism requires a context, a setting and a space which is not filled—a vacuum wherein hitherto suppressed frustrations and oppressed hopelessness are expressed in such ways instilling hopes and possibilities by someone obviously becomes the savior/redeemer. So populism lies in social, political and electoral matrix. So, 2019 election was indeed a populist one, wherein there were a number of material conditions present. To translate, there should be a democratic setting, be it real or virtual since the ‘masses’ are indispensable to populism. To translate a charismatic leader is required who is seen as someone who belongs to them or as part of them, who could deliver or redeem from the current political fiasco. It simply denotes take the country to better heights from the doldrums and in the process we—masses too be benefitted.

‘Masses’ are increasingly getting frustrated as the political machinery and institutions of governance being controlled by the bureaucrats and the privileged ones and so the ‘masses’ look out for someone amidst them to take-over. A system for long been abused and in the hands of a few and thus has become diabolic and needs thorough overhauling. As against the backdrop, 2019-election was contested wherein clear lines were drawn—“dynastic polity” Vs “democratic polity”. In such a context, PM Modi has been projected as “savior” as against “demonic forces”—the opposition—a clear brand of “populism”. 2019-election pro-

vided a perfect tenor and canvas for the crusade. PM Modi fits well within the frame of ‘populism’—‘a nationalist’, ‘a patriot’, for RSS and Hindutva constituency, ‘a developmentalist’, a visionary taking the country to ‘modern/new’ for corporate and middle-class, ‘a hope against hopelessness’, for the masses, ‘an ultra-nationalist’ for the far right ideologues, a chaiwala and a chawkidar’ for the poor and the vulnerable, insider and outsider for those ostracized by the system and PM Modi meant something to all these constituencies in 2019-election.

Since 2014, PM Modi’s journey reveals many variations and in all these somehow Modi managed to change the narratives as the political scenario compelled to change the text, tone and tenor. As against the ‘populism’, ‘liberalism’ failed as the liberal did not have someone who could capture the hopes and aspirations of the masses and ably countered Modi’s narratives though initially he faltered and later somehow garnered momentum with new narratives he kept changing to suit the political climate in phased manner. Despite poor economic performance and social upheavals, PM Modi just mesmerized the masses with emotional chord and aroused their passion on ‘nationalism’. Post-Pulwanna helped him to build his narrative on ‘hyper nationalism’ that gave BJP a fillip despite the dwindling charm of Modi. Though the narratives did not hold much essence and content, what mattered was the ways with Modi delivered the narratives, rhetoric and slogans aroused the “nationalistic consciousness”, “narrowed the gap”, “evoked hope” and the body politic touched and jelled with the emotions and expectations of the electorates. Clever and clear ‘master strokes’, amazing balance between the deliverer and hearers and the right chord at the right time.

Muscular State, Hyper Nationalism, Masculine Nation and Majoritarian Nationhood

YEARS 2019-2024 will determine the very character of India. In the eyes of BJP-RSS, constitutional guarantees and fundamental rights for

all hinder the masculine nation and majoritarian nationhood. Hence, PM Modi's most trusted lieutenant Home Minister's Shah's calibration is firmly believes that the state would have to become more muscular which in the process the BJP government gains its strength, validity and authenticity as his core conviction. Being an admirer of Veer Sarvarkar who seem to have influenced him particularly on the understanding of nationalism as the years go by he is certainly expected weave Chanakya in his pursuit of Sarvarkar's goals by making the state more muscular and in the process BJP government gains its strength.

The current political template of India reminds me of a Greek mythology that describes about Procrustes, the cruel abductor is known for his punitive bed which adjusted his enemies to his understanding of 'perfect size'. Those who he considered as enemies if they were tall had their legs amputated with sharp metal tools and those who short had stretched their legs in cruel manner to the size he wanted. For this, he abducted travelers and traders and tortured them on the 'bed' for the simple reason that he did not understand anything about physiology and functioning of human body. Stories around procrustean tailoring of people for fixed shapes and behavior have been echoed in the imagination of nation, nationalism and nationhood today.

Popular and populist discussions and narratives on visual and print media and in political and others in recent times is all about nationalism, democracy, citizenship, migrants, minorities, religion, identity, constitution that the Hindutva, BJP-RSS and other far-right political parties keep growing at alarming levels. These fundamentalist parties and organizations are increasingly becoming assertive, violent, venomous and aggressive—employing the procrustean logic of 'nationalism', 'nationhood' and citizenship. A cursory swipe at the notions of nation, nationhood, nationalism and democracy narratives in India clearly point out the ways with which the far-right Hindutva forces have been shaping their own procrustean conceptions which re-defines and re-structures its

understanding of citizenship and nationhood either by amputating their social and cultural limbs or stretching the body in accordance to their socio-ethnic and religious identities. In accordance to their notions and conceptions of nation, nationalism and nationhood, the far-right ideologues and practioneers have begun to advance their means and method of procrustean politics of hatred and intolerance against those who are defending their constitutional rights and privileges.

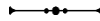
Over and above, we have been witnessing spate of defections almost from most parties be it regional or national to BJP, which seemingly posing a major threat to democracy. If this trend continues it would lead to ‘singular democracy’ leading to one-party polity. From multi-party system since 2014 and 2019 India’s multi-party democracy and pluralism are gradually waning and BJP has been systematically decimating the national and regional parties and moving towards singular party system. In line with this, both 2014 and 2019 fought on the basis of presidential type where the elections campaigned and won on a single person vis-à-vis Narendra Modi. Many did not know who the candidates were but knew one name and one person and voted for Modi. BJP may not acknowledge the fact openly, but knows well that 2014 and 2019 elections were won by one person—Modi. PM Modi is now bigger than BJP—almost in line with his rhetoric—one man and one party.

Congress regulated and dominated political system since Independence is over and now BJP has taken over and thus pushing its system systematically and vigorously. Out of many factors, one man and one party are now the dictum. If this rubric materializes, then, the Indian state by all means would become a ‘muscular state’, leading to a regime— ‘totalitarian’/‘authoritarian’. Behind the Indian State, BJP as ‘singular party’ with brute power takes over the government in ruthless ways. This is why, the term ‘democracy’ is so complex and shall never be taken for granted because it is not a well-oiled machine. For democracy and constitution to function well, it is the people—its core and

material. The person who is at the center of the schema and chief executioner is PM Modi. An interesting observation has been made about PM Modi that came out candidly in an interview by Chidanand Rajhatta with Steve Bannon, who served as the chief strategist of the Trump White House, observed that “As a nationalist, Modi was a Trump before Trump.” He said, “I put India and India’s interest first” and I admired that.

However, we need to carefully observe the shifting terrains of BJP political templates between years 2019-2024. A crucial question arise are: Will 2019-2024, experience a deepening of fissures or will it see course corrections—a pullback forcing the political class to take more centrist positions, rather than pushing towards the extremes. Either of these or whatever emerges, the onus vests with the civil society and conscientious citizens to reclaim the democratic and liberal values and rights enshrined in the Constitution by asserting the democratic power vests with the individual and collective sovereignty. With brute majority, BJP could try all sorts of political assaults, including the Constitution. Those against the nefarious designs of BJP-RSS ought to be assertive, courageous, defiant, argumentative and noisy citizens demonstrating refusal and defiance to get polarized and not treated as objects of vote banks, but as subjects of history.

GOD COMMODIFIED AND MARKETIZED IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD OF RELIGION



During the fourth quarter of the 20th Century and through the first decade of the 21st Century, globalization as a concept and working principle dominated the world at large and was widely used as a buzzword amongst the nations of the world. Across borders, politicians, policy makers, academics, researchers, students and intellectuals were intensely speaking, researching and interrogating about globalization and its impact on the global financial system, global economic order and the people and communities in particular. Although its usage in relative terms is by and large waning, globalization as a functional and conceptual category continues to dominate in some political and academic quarters and parts of the world. However, globalization in recent years continues to have profound influence on religion, which was not the case earlier.

In today's changing templates of political economy, religio-cultural and social landscape, globalization has assumed entirely a new meaning and format. The fissures and maneuvers of politics around the globe have diametrically and radically transformed the ways with which globalization used to be conceived, understood, analyzed and evaluated. The current parlance signifies a new variable and variance that stands between those who used to represent conservative and far-right ideologies and political parties and systems that pervades the socio-political, religio-cultural facets believe in the market-fundamentalism, free-market

and free-trade arrangements. Emergent new variable negates the borderless and seamless globalization that implies that nation-states have borders and territorial demarcations and so crossing of labor across borders. It clearly shows a radical shift in their understanding and perspective.

While on the other, those belonging to liberal political ideologies, left and far-left politics subscribing to state/governments' intervention in economies and functioning of economics believe not in the fundamentals of market mechanisms and thus oppose globalization when it comes to its functioning in economy. They firmly believe that the states/governments have to intervene in the affairs of economy and regulate economics and should not be left to the fundamentals of the market. Hence, political terrains are candidly polarized on grounds that on the one hand protectionists and populists want to protect their laboring classes, economic growth, borders, strict monitoring of immigrants and migrants, trade and goods and services and by all means want to protect their economies and labor, industries and host of others for which they vociferously oppose globalization and say it is no more relevant.

Globalists contend that free-market economic order where trade, labor and capital should move across the borders and let the laws of economics be left to the free market and forces of the markets. They say that there should not be any more control of the movement of labor, capital and goods and services. But, we are witnessing is that the emergent variable is torn by those contesting ideologies pitched in diametrical opposition and are polar opposites. Those believe in closing their borders prohibits, entry of goods and services and justify their actions by saying that globalization did not benefit their economies, rather helped the immigrants, foreigners and migrants which in turn robbed the livelihood of the local populace. So by opening the trade walls has not in any ways helped the countries' labor and economies, rather slowed down leading to rise in unemployment. Technological revolution and scientific innovation are the major aspects that accelerated the rhythm and con-

tours of change and thus added more fillip to the current fiasco. Most advanced countries kept growing at alarming pace creating all sorts of economic asymmetries within and between of the two-third of countries of the world.

We keep observing in particular majority of the highly industrialized, technologically advanced and digitalized countries, the political templates have drastically been changing to building of walls, sulking to aggressive nationalism, protectionist tendencies and arms twisting, bulldozing by withdrawing from international agreements and covenants. It has given rise to xenophobic tendencies. Far-right ideologies and political parties have taken over by whipping out the emotions of the people who by and large have taken pride and getting subsumed. For instance, the party at the Centre, a far-right Hindu nationalist party wants to achieve its dream of making India to \$5trillion economy and to realize it is all out in wooing foreign investors to boost Indian economy as part of economic globalization.

When it comes to political-religio-cultural fronts, it is entrenched on the philosophy that Hinduism ought to become the de facto religion of the secular Indian state—a strategy to make the country to a Hindu state(rashtra) based on Hindu culture and way of life which as part and process of globalization—globalization of religion and homogenization of culture. The new variable that we observe in recent times is that the forces of globalization are gradually transforming world religious movements and religions getting attuned to fundamentalist political ideologies that prevail in the nation-states. Further, in a number of cases we observe that religious leaders and organizations subscribing and show their allegiance to political parties and ultra-conservative ideologies. This is undoubtedly the new variable which is gaining momentum within the contours of the whole gamut of globalization.

As times pass by, religions have to move along with the changing times retaining its essential characteristics, features, principles, theolo-

gies and tenets. Is it possible and feasible? Therefore, religion keeps evolving and should be dynamic in order to survive sustain and thus be relevant to the changing times. In the midst of complex political and ideological configurations and permutations, nowadays religiosity has to the fore which is closely intertwined with superficiality, giving credence to outward performances and appearance of its adherents. This is what happening right across in all the religions. Take for instance, in India, Hindu religiosity is intensely webbed with feelings of national pride, traditions, civilization and culture and all these facets have been absorbed into it. It promotes the supremacy of the self and thus demotes the other as inferior or subordinate promoting binaries pitching infallibility of the belief system to which she/he subscribes.

Globalization has pervaded and permeated into all the crucial aspects of religions and in the process the basic tenets and values being kept aside that reveal that religiosity seem to have taken over the core values of religion. Extreme conservatism has crept into almost all the religions that have led to all forms of religious aberrations invoking religious fundamentalism. If we go back to the world histories we have read that the role played by religions in different epochs of history such as crusades, conflicts, killing and devastations. Semitic religions and others such as Hindu and current format of Buddhism basically have the tendencies to globalize. Religions those that are dynamic have started to spread beyond its geographical boundaries from Indian to global. As against this background we need to analyze and evaluate religion.

Let us turn again to history. Contours of civilizations over centuries keep changing from one epoch to another. In that, forces of globalization tend to influence by creating solid impetus on civilizations that impinges on the changing templates of religion. Religions in tune to the changing contexts keep changing assimilating certain features and formats and in the process jettisoning those traditions and customary habits that comes in the way. At the same time retention of the core values and principles

adhered and not compromised. The classic example is what we have been experiencing in recent times in the country. The ways with which Hinduism is interpreted and used as means for political gains and ends of the current dispensation shows that the basic tenets of Hinduism is being tampered with, distorted and misinterpreted.

The politics of Hindutva is centered on “Hindu civilization”, its understanding of way of life, interpretations of history, culture, customs, usages and traditions. All these factors have infused “nationalistic pride” of being Hindus nationalistic fervor. Hinduism is thus interpreted and approached with grandeur evoking religio-civilizational consciousness coupled with emotive pseudo religious pride. All these keep pushing its adherents to religiosity that warrants public display. It is connected to religiosity leading to erroneous display in public with all sorts of political aberrations. The growing Hindu middle-class in particular is insulated with religiosity that ticks national pride and also gels with globalization adding (pan Indian identity) and this constituency is moving towards global identity. Further, globalization has pushed Hindu middle class segment with economic prosperity. Pseudo religiosity has added Hindu nationalistic fervor.

Prosperous Hindus are gradually moving from the basic fundamental tenets of Hinduism to something which is ritualistic superficial forms of pseudo Hinduism. What we have been witnessing in recent times are fissures in the society that mirrors religiosity of the present—be it any religion. Adherents of religion are gradually moving from the basic foundational tenets of religion to religiosity (external artifacts and material conceptions). It is at this juncture, can we blame—religion or globalization? Both are intrinsically linked with each other in this phase of globalization. Religion keeps evolving in tune to the changing times. Similarly, the contours of globalization have been constantly changing in the last hundreds of years and thus pervaded into the societal facets.

In its project religion is also a part. The current phase of globalization religiosity with all its aberrations manifests in materialistic terms.

Religiosity demands externals observances because rituals are part of and globalization translates for profit maximization. Hinduism like Christianity is now gradually getting globalized. For instance, for religious purposes even cow dung cakes are exported to the United States of America. Religion in a globalized world is gradually drifting away from its basic tenets and religiosity is commoditizing and marketizing God. To substantiate, take for instance any Christian or Hindu festivals or rituals or celebrations or whatever everything turns out to be in material formats and forms. Globalization is using religiosity as its tool to commoditize and marketize for profits. What is to be done? Should be get rid of religion? Or is it possible to do away or change the contours of globalization or just live with them till they gets waned? They continue to co-exist and complement each other. They do have their historical antecedents, personal, communal and societal significance and carries lots of relevance as they permeated and thus pervaded into the lives and existence of majority of people in domains of existence.

In such a paradoxical scenario, BR Ambedkar pragmatically thought about when he too might have confronted with similar questions that Homo sapiens face and experience in their day-to-existence that “Some people think that religion is not essential to society. I do not hold this view. I consider the foundation of religion to be essential to life and practices of society.” BR Ambedkar and others who view positive side of religion say that religions per se unites and pursues peace and harmonious living, sharing love and happiness, treating everyone equally with dignity, dispensing justice and fairness, promoting humanity, igniting truth, endure temperance and humility. These are the salient features and fundamentals of all religions. As times go by adherents of religions moved away from these principles and ethical moorings.

Credo of religions are gradually diminishing and thus ebbing out and its place has been filled by religiosity. Religiosity is converting the basic yearnings, hops and aspirations of the adherents into materiality. Spirituality of religions is now turned out to materiality of religiosity. Religiosity is at present the credo that thrives on: “Mammonizing the Divine and Divinizing the Mammon”. Religiosity is currently manifests in the forms of consumerism, materialism and thus infuses commodity fetishism. It captures humans’ yearnings for “prosperous life” “here and now” and promises to translate their hopes and aspirations. Therefore religiosity pitches its doctrine of “materiality” and grounds its matrix on exteriorities and artifices on material things. Pseudo spirituality and religiosity have penetrated in diverse ways that gives damn to values such as how to live and lead good life.

Take professionals in any profession such as politics, religious priests, bureaucrats, CEOs of corporations, medical and education and others, barring just a few many have developed an attitude of care a damn to ethical dynamic of *means and ends*. Many view *ends* as an important realizable category in order to achieve and realize something that assures “good life” and so, go all out employing all sorts of *means*. Likewise the world we live is groaning due to the absence of ethical values and total bankruptcy of values in all societal segments. In each and every segment of human existence, organs of state, institutions of governance big and small is contaminated with corruption, hatred, money laundering, lynching, power abuse and greed.

IN CONVERSATION WITH PROFESSOR ENRIQUE DUSSEL



A continent that was long overdue and a country that I wanted to visit became a reality on the 3rd of April 2019⁹⁶. I set my foot in South America as I entered into a land of utopia when I landed in Port Lagare, a beautiful city about 90 minutes flight from San Paulo, in Brazil, the largest country in the Latin American continent. I went to Brazil to participate and to present a paper @IAPT Conference, on the theme *(De)coloniality and Religious Practices: Liberating Hope* from 04 – 08 April 2019, at the Faculdades EST in Sao Leopoldo/RS – Brazil, maintained by Instituicao Sinodal de Assistencia, Educacao e Cultura (ISAEC)-CNPJ J 96746441/0007.00. I stayed @ CECREI, a Jesuit Retreat Center located close by about four kilometres from the venue.



⁹⁶ CECREI, Sao Leopoldo, Brazil 4th April 2019.

While entering into the cafeteria on the 4th morning for breakfast when I said hello to a person who I assumed from Latin America and started the conversation. I narrated some of this things what I heard from a Latin American philosopher, historian, theologian and a composite scholar who gave a series of lectures both in Bangalore and in Delhi. I told him that I was totally impressed with his theoretical frame and analysis—integrating diverse disciplines with candid analysis from the underside of history that I have hardly heard. He without any interruptions listened to whatever I said and I gave him a few books of mine, which he accepted.

The conference started on the 4th of April, 2019, afternoon with registration, welcome and greetings followed by Keynote 1 address on *Decoloniality, Theory and Methodology* by Prof. Cloudo Corvalhoes. On the 5th of April, 2019, as soon as the morning devotion got over, Keynote 2 was taken up which was addressed by Prof. Enrique Dussel on *The Need of Social Sciences in the Theology of Economic Systems*. As soon as I saw the presenter I was taken aback because he was the one with whom I was conversing the previous day for some time and intensely engaged with him about the lecture that I attend both in Bangalore and in Delhi—happened to be none other than Prof Enrique Dussel. It clearly proves that my memories of Prof Enrique Dussel's lectures are by and large intact and vivid, but identifying Prof Dussel physically seems to be waning.

Meeting him personally after three decades in his continent was indeed a rare privilege for me. He is regarded as one of the finest thinkers, living philosopher, historian, theologian and political scientist by the academia. I have been influenced by a few, and he is certainly one among them. Further, Dussel is undoubtedly a creative and critical mind having the ability to weave-in diverse fields of social sciences into theology and its allied systems. Prof Dussel is indeed a rare combination that seldom we see amongst the theologians in the present times.

Known for analysis using diverse tools that fall in sociology and political sciences and thus linking to the context—the Latin American context and reflecting the objective material reality from a liberation theological perspective or consideration. One can identify the theoretical frame he works on by ways of developing his arguments within a rubric on—thesis-anti-thesis and synthesis. Prof Dussel is known for systematic and logical thought process expounding the most difficult domains in brilliant and presents the difficult subject matter in simpler manner.

For him, the base reference has always been the South American context and its historical trajectories. He approaches from the below or underside the epochs of history—colonialism/imperialism and by bringing to the fore the naked truth of plunder and loot. He thus demolishes the glorious past of the colonialism that marks not the glorious past but the darker side of history inflicting miseries and pain to the people of Latin America. He digs deep into the colonial history of the Latin America and candidly highlights the means and methods employed to exploit the human and natural resources of the continent of South America. The history of the South America he starts and approaches first from the colonial history only then according to him the present history be understood because without the past there's no present and the future—a series of trajectories that needs to be understood cogently and in that history plays the most important part for theologizing. With this the conversation came to an end.

On the 05 April 2019, keynote 2 from 09-10.30 AM by Prof Enrique Dussel on the *The Need of Social Sciences in the Theology of Economic Systems* was a session spell bound brining in back and forth history, culture, doctrines, theology, philosophy and other social sciences—a discourse and a treat which will be remembered for long. He particularly embarked on the historical trajectories going back and forth from 7th century to 15th century that hardly mentioned in Euro-centric history, but takes the cue particularly 1514 onwards—Euro-centrism and Middle

Ages flows through the continuum of the Modern Age. This is how the Euro-centrists project their history and takes advantage of the modern age and western Christendom.

Euro-centric world rampantly involved in slave trade and slavery and by looting the natural resources became richer and richer and the colonies remained as their reservoirs of prosperity and progress. There has not been any iota of guilt and totally no guilt of sin. Sin of slavery, sale of slaves and killing of people at the apparent or real levels not taken seriously or discussed or taken seriously be it theologically or ideologically or doctrinally or politically by the Western Christianity. 16th Century onwards down to modernity should perhaps be considered as the period of decadence of humanity. Dussel scholarly and methodologically connects the claims that the Western Christianity adheres to the period including the Eurocentric scholars claim—the emergence of Christianity and Euro-Christendom. He thus demolishes their claim not as progressive step but filled with all sorts of black holes that characterizes regressive and pathos that continues to remain in the annals of human history.



He weaved five hundred years of history starting from 1546 to the modern age in such ways wherein from his analysis establishes the fact that from-middle ages-to-modern-age candidly epitomizes Euro-

centrism. Euro-centrism to the epoch of modernity is being considered as a system view of the world wherein Christianity as a religion webbed with capitalism and these two entities inter-faced well with each other and used in order to promote their own interests. In the meantime, Prof. Dussel brought to the fore the other classic epochs wherein the Arabs, Indian and host of others flourished, but have not been brought to the fore or even considered or not being highlighted. Capitalism and Euro-centrism used the colonies for their political and economic advancements. The colonies comprised of 80 percent of population of the world as extensions of the colonizers—labor could be exploited and resources be appropriated. Christianity during this time was identified in the following ways—English Christians, French Christian, Spanish Christians, Dutch Christians so on so forth clearly distinguishing between the colonizers and colonized. This is how the wedge has been created and the system clearly worked the colonizers were the owners and the colonized as slaves—subject to trade (to be sold and to be bought). Therefore, he reminded the audience and the scholars to carefully tread the views between traditional and modernity in view of the fact that modernity is a system view of the world that emphasizes meta-physical view and at the same time to be born in mind that the beginning of the accumulation of wealth denoting the emergence of capitalism (1546).

1592 can be considered as Euro-centric and perhaps be part of middle Ages wherein Latin German Europe by and large dominated and in that Greece has never figured nor been part of middle ages. In addition, Tower and other such things we read in the Old Testament epitomizes the Mammon which believed in the extraction of wealth and loot that belong to others in horrendous ways and at alarming proportions have become new gods. In Christianity accumulation of wealth is directly linked to capital and the colonizers vis-à-vis the Western Christianity has not brought to the fore the power of the capital and the modes of

wealth accumulation because western Christianity believes in the accumulation of capital for which capitalism is the propelling force that find its religio-political justifications from the western Christianity. The origin of wealth accumulation can be traced and linked to the origin of capitalism. But, why is it and how come the origin of sin has not been linked to the origin of accumulation of capital?

Prof. Dussel raises a serious point that should make many to think and ponder about? In the name of doctrines that pre-fabricates dogmas, creeds and other confessions Christians are made to confess which is being followed with other things such as absolution and host of others. Nonetheless, the Western Christianity linked the 'Original Sin' to Adamic Myth as the origin with all the explanations. He goes back to the Scriptures and dig deep into it asking the philosophical and theological matrix hangs on the flimsy frame that do not unfold solid reason(s). Origin of capital and Origin of Protestant Christianity including Christendom have similar periodisation. In order to conceal the origin of capital vis-à-vis accumulation of capital which is the indeed original sin of Western Christendom inserted the Adamic Myth which is an aberration. Prof. Enrique Dussel methodically cuts the theological and biblical myths and Christian doctrines and argues the case of 'Original Sin' and systematically demolishes by proving that unless Christians takes the historicity of the extraction of material wealth by the colonizers and connects to the doctrines and dogmas we may not go anywhere. Western Christianity and the history of the West needs serious scrutiny, so that our understanding of history and religion be set right

The abstract of my paper is herewith attached which surveys British colonialism in the light of Caste and Untouchables. Pax Britannica is part of the Western Christianity and we all know how the British colonialism worked. Colonialism by British contributed to the prosperity of England. Likewise, when it came to human labor, the colonies supplied cheap and surplus labor force to the colonies for varied works. At the

same time colonizers in this case Britain employed drastic measures, so that the colonies do not take advantage, develop and grow. In order to control and curtail, Britain heavily used protective measures such as tariffs and quotas. In doing so, they kept India and its colonies by stringently employing protectionist policy. Almost all the materials I have quoted are from B.R. Ambedkar's speeches and written volumes.

Sir W.W. Hunter explains that "Europe emerged from medievalism, was then making her first experiments in Asiatic rule... Medieval types of commerce were perpetuated in the Indian trade. Portugal, Spain, Holland established their power in Asia when these conceptions and types held sway". Over and above, "The English ascendancy in India came later and embodies the European ideals of the 18th Century in the place of the European ideals of the Sixteenth. It was the product of modern as against mediaeval Christendom." Therefore, British colonialism in India was like a two-edged sword—1) East India Company (tool of capitalism) and the other 2) the imperial rule (Pax Britannica).

In conjunction to this India Frederick John Shore of the Bengal Civil Service describes that "The fundamental principle of the English had been to make the whole Indian Nation subservient in every possible to the interest and benefit of themselves... Had the welfare of the people been our object, a very different course would have been adopted, and a very different result would have followed". So the rule of the Company and the rule of the Crown became the most powerful tools to control the economic-political facets and thus the entire country.

The British Government was not interested and so unprepared for recognizing the basic right of a person who ought to be treated as equal and so not initiated social reform recognizing Untouchability a penal offence nor give the Untouchables a preferential treatment in public service. Pax Britannica failed to undertake to reform caste-stratified Hindu society and so,

The result was that Untouchable has remained what he was before the British, namely an Untouchable. He was a citizen but he was not given the rights of a citizen. He paid taxes out of which schools were maintained but his children could not be admitted in to those schools. He paid taxes out of which wells were built but he had no right to take water from them. He paid taxes out of which roads were built. But he has no right to use them. He paid taxes for the upkeep of the state. But he himself was not entitled to hold offices in the state. He was a subject but not a citizen. The Untouchable stood most in need of office to protect himself. Owning to his poverty he should have been exempted from all taxes. All this was reversed. The Untouchable was taxed to pay for the water supply of the touchable. The Untouchable was taxed to pay for the salary of the touchables in office.⁹⁷

On many counts the British Raj had abysmally failed. B.R. Ambedkar probes further the ways the Untouchables were treated:

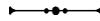
What good has British conquest done to the Untouchables? In education, nothing; in service, nothing. There is one thing in which they have gained and that is equality in the eye of the law. There is of course nothing special in it because equality before law is common to all. There is of course nothing tangible in it because those who hold office often prostitute their position and deny to the Untouchable the benefit of this rule. With all this, the principle of equality before law has been of special benefit to the Untouchables for the simple reason that they never had it before the days of the British. The Law of Manu did not recognize the principle of equality. Inequality was the soul of the Law of Manu. It pervaded all walks of life, all social relationships and all

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 146.

departments of state. It had fouled the air and the Untouchables were simply smothered... a real gain to the Untouchables...⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 146-147.

CORPORATE CAPITALISM IN CRISIS: AN ANALYSIS



Introduction

My personal journey since the early 1990s has been one of defining moments in my life. For the protagonists of free market economics, it is a triumphant beginning because of global capitalism via LPG which became a categorical imperative, a universal norm, and an absolute ideology for almost all the nations and peoples of the world. Global capitalism as an ideology, doctrine and philosophy has captured the imagination of many minds and swept across the borders of nation-states with its “claims” and “promises” that “progress,” “prosperity” and “development” would be ushered in and there would be a “win-win” situation and certainly not a “win-loss” equation.

In sum, corporate capitalism via neo-liberal principles of LPG has been considered as TINA (there is no alternative). Many fell to its dictates thinking that capitalism had won and therefore it is the dominant ideology which is supreme and shall reign forever. Apparently, those who defied and advocated alternatives have been considered as anti-capitalists and retrogrades. A few merit mentioning namely, Joseph

Stigletz, Paul Krugman and David C. Korten⁹⁹ who have consistently challenged the global financial institutions (IMF and WB), trading arrangements (WTO), their processes, mechanisms and international instruments.

Incidentally, my personal encounter with people and communities who live on the margins over the years reveal that they have been pushed further to the periphery because all these institutions, instruments, processes and mechanisms, which they believed would redeem them from poverty, unemployment, low wages and squalid conditions, have created conditions worse than ever before and thus betrayed them in appalling ways. Increasingly, a vast majority of communities are

⁹⁹ Paul Krugman won the Nobel Prize for Economics for the year 2008 for his 'analysis of trade patterns and location of economic activity.' Traditional trade involved exchange of goods that countries were good at producing – rice from China, wheat from India, cotton from Egypt, wine from France. For Krugman, today's trade no longer works like this. Trade is now dominated by a few countries that are similar to one another and often countries import goods similar to those they export. Krugman explained thus: countries (and companies) become more and more efficient at producing their merchandise as they sell more and more and at less cost to themselves and the buyers. This enables countries to exchange similar products. Cities grow, Krugman pointed out, because industries provide jobs and people want to work close to home. Haven't we known that for centuries? Gerald Aungier knew this in 1675 when he opened Bombay to free trade and what passed for industry in those times. One more timeless truth. Krugman while interrogating and critiquing the international trade and its mechanisms proved how international trade is monopolized by the capitalist bloc. He has been consistently opposing the forces of globalization for many years.

Joseph Stigletz who won the Nobel Prize for Economics a few years ago is a staunch critique of global capitalism and international financial institution, wrote a seminal book on *Globalization and its Discontents*.

David Korten, yet another outstanding Economist who taught in Yale and served on big foundations for several years and eventually spent more years in Asia contributing to the third world economies and known to have authored many scholarly books.

skeptical because their livelihood and declining prospects of their children's future is at stake. The advocates of corporate-driven global capitalism have led to a public outcry and frustrations over the government's failure in navigating and managing the current crises created by LPG.

However, the present crisis warrants us to understand the root causes that have unleashed rising poverty, unemployment, inequality, violence, break-up of families, migration and environmental degradation leading billions of people who foresee a bleak future. People all over experience the onslaught of LPG at every level and therefore have a clear perception of what is happening at the ground level. One should go to the roots in order to inquire about the causes that contribute to the current crisis. The forces that propel the current state of affairs need to be identified. We cannot address the crises without identifying the actors involved. We ought to bring in the actors that are invisible. Our analysis will have to entail philosophical, ideological, political and economic factors.

I

The central goal of political economy, as David Ricardo (1772-1823) stressed, is the scientific study of the growth, the social ownership and the distribution of economic and political power, nationally and internationally. It is the grandiose theme that permeates his collected works and correspondence. Understandably, his *Principles* (1817) was to exert a seminal influence on Marx's pioneering theoretical contributions on the 'laws of motion of Capital' – that is, the compulsive logic and propellants of capitalist accumulation and dis-accumulation that provide a key to the workings and misworkings of the system.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Cited by Frederic Clairmont "The Global Corporation: Road to Serfdom," in *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 08, 2008, p.24.

The above quotation clearly signifies that capital accumulation in principle ought to be for productive investments so that redistribution of its benefits would trickle down to all because each and everyone must have contributed to its multiplication at every state. And therefore, it is not only for redistribution and consumption but also for enhanced accumulation of maximizing profits. This is done for boosting shareholder value to perpetuate the over-riding goal and credo of capitalism is nothing but the expansion of markets, maximization of profits and indiscriminate utilization of the natural resources enmeshed with the spirit of consumerism.

By doing this it instills confidence amongst all that capitalism is the most effective economic doctrine or ideology which can efficiently and effectively multiply the capital at an amazing level so that their investments through their shares plough back more returns. This is how the shareholders are boosted and made to invest more and more money by buying more shares for quick returns irrespective of what their money as capital is invested. The belief that the shareholders have in the functioning of capitalism is that it could offer more and more money and never go wrong. But the real side of capitalism needs an enquiry at this crucial juncture. What then is capitalism?

II

Capitalism is the most powerful of human inventions, which has assumed global proportions and importance. Capitalism has already entered into another epoch with which it assumed a new form. Profit and expansion are the core pre-requisites of any form of capitalism. Human urge has always been to discover, create and conquer. On the basis of this logic global capitalism operates and thus spread its tentacles to almost every part of the world. In the process of becoming global, capitalism has eliminated or kept aside other economic doctrines, or creeds and economies. Capitalism survives because it is premised on the logic

of the law of the jungle vis-à-vis survival of the fittest. Currently, many view that it is the only absolute global credo with the unique ability to convert simple human greed into infinitely varied productive energies.

Capitalism could transform the “human greed” or “selfishness” into “maximum good for the maximum good for all.” In the name of “success,” “efficiency,” capitalism has unleashed “relentless competition” for profit and wealth. Capitalism is said to have transformed the global resources “efficiently” and allocated them “equitably” without any regulation or scheme or discipline. However, capitalism is a set of values, a system or economic and cultural process where humanity all over leads a life, which is organized in perfect ways. Capitalism has been part of Western civilization. Capitalism has been and is being defined variedly at different historical epochs.

What is Corporate Capitalism?

Corporate capitalism is one of the few fields where globalization and the concept of borderless transactions of various kinds come into operation. This is realized especially in the areas of financial markets, where transactions are actually performed via electronic information technology such as the internet. The concept of borderless and seamless world; and time-space compression is possible only through geo-national integration of global economy. Developing economies assume that in order to improve their conditions they should invite foreign capital into their countries by opening up their economic spheres to multinational corporations. In this context money assumes a totally different meaning.

Megabyte-ushered Neo-liberal Financial Globalization

Money has hypertrophied. The instrument that symbolized the real wealth created by humankind has itself been transformed, virtually, into real wealth. From being a symbol of goods to be

exchanged on the market, it has become merchandise itself. This is a fiction, an illusion. Like the Anti-Christ, who presents himself as the real Christ but is just hollow pretence, today's globalized capitalism has made a farce of money. It no longer represents real wealth, and this may be the fatal disease for global capitalism.¹⁰¹

Money does not represent just the notes and coins minted by national treasuries today. It also manifests in diverse forms such as shares, debentures etc., that hit the capital markets. All these papers claim to represent real wealth, which includes foreign exchange. "Once a means to economic activity, financial operations are becoming more and more as an end."¹⁰² Today, cash no longer possesses a reference value. In today's globalizing world the North American dollar has no value because the United States is the largest debtor nation in the world, yet it controls and reigns supreme. It has created a myth or illusion.

With its mystical power and the world's only super-power the United States continues to exert greater influence to the bearer of this currency. The value that U.S. dollars exert does not represent the real wealth or value. The unregulated and unplanned growth of exchanging cash for money-paper and vice-versa has resulted in increasing speculation, apparently creating a great air bubble in the world economy; a bubble of virtual moneys that triggered spending and consumption by individuals, governments and banks till the bubble bursts. Classic examples are Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and countries in South East Asia.

However, in the last few years the idea of a "New Economy" has gained momentum. This New Economy is seen closely linked to those firms and economic sectors involved in digital technology. Apparently,

¹⁰¹ Marcos Arruda, 'Neo-liberal Financial Globalisation: Capitalism': 'A Grave Illness', in *Echoes*, 15/1999, p.20.

¹⁰² Ibid.

For many the focal point of the New Economy has been the highflying technology stocks that carried stock market speculation to new giddy heights during what has come to be known as “millennium boom.” This was rationalized by business (though with growing nervousness after the shortfall in technology stocks in the second half of 2000) as a measured response to the opportunities offered by the New Economy – and not simply a speculative bubble. Meanwhile, a vast new wave of corporate mergers beyond anything ever seen before has been taking place – for which the dual rationale is globalization and the rise of the New Economy.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, the bubble still continues in the following ways:

Today, the bubble of international speculation is formed by all the moneys that circulate rapidly around the world, without productive work, without creating real wealth, merely by changing hands, by speculating with foreign exchange, with products that are to be produced and traded in the future, foreign debt securities from indebted countries...

A wide range of agents is inflating this bubble. Much is said about “popular capitalism” in the USA or in Switzerland, where millions of individuals own company shares, government bonds, foreign debt securities, foreign exchange, and so on. The main agents... are the big banks and investment companies, the pension funds and other types of private, and even State, institutional investors. It is they who are responsible for the bubble.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Paul M. Sweezy, et.al, ‘The New Economy: Myth and Reality’, in *Monthly Review*, Vol.52, No.11, April 2001, p.1.

¹⁰⁴ See *Echoes*, 15/1999, p.21

It is clear that the modern capitalist organization functions in the maximization of returns for the minimum amount of risk. And, the larger is the corporation the minimal is the risk factor which the firms are prepared for. A classic example is the way in which the large conglomerates exploit the small and middle businesses and thus eliminate them in the process. Further, the way in which they transfer the salary to money-purchase pension schemes has led to individual risks rather than the company facing risks. In the name of 'competition' and 'entrepreneurship,' the monopolies tend to raise prices and thus transfer risks to someone else. In this way they also eliminate their closest rivals. 'Trust' is the basic underlying principle these monopolies use in their games. 'Trust,' however, seems to look like a luxury to corporate houses that are under pressure to satisfy the demands of the financial markets for higher returns to their shareholders.

As Harry Shutt argued in his book, *The Trouble with Capitalism* (2 ed. books), that illegal or legal methods are being used to lure the customers as the economy becomes more service-driven and more dependent on humans rather than physical capital. The difficulty in defining the book value of key executives and other 'intangible' assets (such as product brands or other forms of 'goodwill') points to another tempting way for companies to try and push up the market values of their share.¹⁰⁵ While interrogating capitalism, one cannot ignore the close interconnection between capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, global capitalism and globalization.

The development of industrial capitalism and financial capitalism that eventually became turbo had serious human costs. Premised on the competitive search for profit, capitalism has always been very innovative, devising new modes, instruments, processes and methods for market expansion and profit maximization thereby facilitating exploitation

¹⁰⁵ See Larry Elliott feature article titled 'Break up the Five Big Bean Counters' in *The Guardian*, March 25, 2002, p.23.

of the weak by the strong. The brute nature of these instruments is glaringly reflected in an asymmetrical relationship of interdependence between materially advanced societies and less advanced societies. These disequilibria we see in the dependency model where core-periphery dynamic operate. The structural and organic inconsistencies and internal contradictions have created a series of crises since the 1930s.

For some, capitalism as such cannot perpetuate itself indefinitely and would crumble by its own contradictions. On the contrary, capitalism per se demonstrated that it is dynamic, versatile with remarkable resilience and has the ability to survive and bounce back from any crisis situation. For instance,

Global capitalism then found that the time is ripe for it to reappear as a sensible alternative to state-led development and socialism (Drucker 1997). Sensing peoples suspicions about colonialism, imperialism and their 'neo-versions,' the promoters of global capitalism formulated the neoliberal agenda and the 'anti-state' discourse with attractive offerings like liberalization, privatization and globalization (Amin 1997). People were told that this new paradigm of globalization has nothing to do with their 'traditional perception of capitalism.' Soon the term 'globalisation' became the buzzword in the lexicon of bureaucrats, consultants and policy analysts. It also acquired legitimacy and an aura of 'sacred,' 'goodness' and 'desirable' (Diwan 2000). It created a 'new global order with new markets, tools, actors, and rules/codes/obligations' (UNDP 1999). But the skeptics expect it to accentuate inequalities, create greater dislocation in the common man's life and accelerate the pauperisation of the poor. The polarization between left and right and between neoliberal and radical discourses on the central issue that market must be al-

lowed to make social, political and economic decisions soon became strong.¹⁰⁶

As quoted in the above, global capitalism in the latter part of the twentieth century, posited at different stages its booms, busts and stagnation. As pointed out by Adam Smith, in a relatively atomistic competition, we see the top 200 corporations plunged into the control of the global resources, production, consumption that includes finance too. These top 200 corporations plunged into the new millennium and expanded its markets and further consolidated its control by integrating trade and manufacture both vertically and horizontally. Hence, the transnational corporations tend to operate within the framework of 'markets' and eventually control the markets and this controlling power of the market eventually leads to the control of other dimensions such as socio, political, cultural etc. We see more and more the corporate aggression and the way in which global corporations are obsessed with grabbing control of every aspect of the marketing and distribution chain to boost its power of accumulation. To substantiate:

To analyze TNC market power and its manic drive for greater and ever greater market share divorced from the totality of capitalism's exploitative class relations is a blatant absurdity, but this is precisely the rationale of neo-classical economic theorizing. Markets are not a set of abstract mathematical functions analyzing in abstracto the relations of buyers and sellers, consumers and producers, borrowers and lenders, operating in idyllic competitive markets. This is so because markets and their economic actors do not possess equal bargaining power. Thus inequalities are

¹⁰⁶ K. Ramachandra Nair "Governance Reforms and Development in Kerala in the Context of Globalisation," in *Globalisation, Governance, Reforms and Development in India*, Kameshwar Choudhary (ed.), New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007, p.183.

not aberrations but the normal emanations of market accumulation. Competition is the father of monopolistic power.¹⁰⁷

The current global economic structure is controlled by a handful of mega corporations. This means that markets are overwhelmingly controlled by these power complexes, hegemonized within the unaccountable totalitarian supra entities. "The Top 200 are massive configurations of sectoral muscle enmeshed in a web of manipulative and corrupt modes of share holding and interlocking directorates. They are underpinned to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars by the state apparatus and their corrupt ideological extensions: the WTO, IMF and World Bank."¹⁰⁸

III

The world is gripped by an economic crisis. Free market capitalism is now synonymous with the free-falling stock market. The severity of the current financial market collapse has stunned policy makers, economists and analysts who are at a loss to explain how an economic edifice they had always thought impregnable is suddenly imploding. The enormity of the problem can be gauged from the fact that the US government has announced a \$700 billion bail-out plan for the economy, the Chinese government plans to spend \$586 billion to stimulate domestic demand and the governments of smaller countries too have earmarked billions of dollars to rescue their economies. However there are two sides that we see in this crisis.

The critics of free-market economics view the current crisis as the end of American capitalism because free-market capitalism is nothing but a vulgar passion of the greedy rich that mercilessly trample the working poor. For them capitalism which is creating an increasingly

¹⁰⁷ Frederic Clairmont, op.cit.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

severe periodic crisis has become true. Massive lay-offs and economic despair-driven suicides provide further evidence. Extending this argument many conclude that India's LPG are draconian measures destined to crash one day. On the contrary, the free-market capitalists on the Right blast the current mess as a result of anti-capitalism governmental interventions like subsidized home ownership, government-backed enterprises and bail-outs. They argue their 'let the market take its course' with passion.

Reacting to this President Bush said that "Wall Street was slightly drunk." Wall Street clearly portrayed anarchic capitalism. The questions that arise now are: Will American capitalism survive? Can capitalism function with greater transparency and sanity checks?

The capitalists look at the present crisis as nothing to worry about because there may be hiccups but it is naïve to suggest the demise of sensible capitalism. The innovations and entrepreneurship are the bed-rock of American capitalism. They are the fulcrum and foundation for capitalism to survive and keep moving. The 'American Dream' is deeply rooted in the American psyche. It is not the question of owning many things but is about innovations and opportunities.

For example the universities in the United States are known for their innovation and in the process are involved in brain-drain. The U.S. corporations invest enormous capital and resources in Research and Development. All these form the foundation for capitalism which continues to thrive and is committed to survive despite volatility and turbulences. The capitalist system has structured a bunch of younger generations like Bill Gates (Microsoft), Michael Dell (Dell computers) and Steve Jobs (Apple, Inc.) etc., who with their innovative capability keep sustaining the system. Capitalism promotes competition out of which good quality, choices and comparative price advantage emanates. On these principles capitalism is premised and discards bad quality and inefficiency. The pundits of capitalism contend that bailing out the auto industry is anti-

thetical to the ideology of free-market and is nothing but hypocrisy. Nevertheless, it is a necessity to protect the large number of citizens under threat.

But there is another side to the U.S. anti-industry debacle vis-à-vis the role of unions. During the boon time in the 1950s and 1960s, when the U.S. auto-manufacturers had almost a 90 per cent market share, the unions demanded and received unprecedented benefits and wages. The average wage of an auto-worker in GM, Ford, and Chrysler is over \$70 per hour which amounts to \$150,000 a year. They have extensive pension and health care paid by these firms. In contrast, the non-unionized foreign companies in the U.S. give 40 per cent less in salary with greater security, quality and benefits. Often the union presented quick changes in firm strategy or failed to co-operate when needed. Rather than fighting for job security as its only demand, the union could have pressurized the management to build fuel-efficient cars to compete in the market. This clearly reflects the incompetent performance of the management, rigid unions and imprudent regulations on bio-fuel and mileage standards which has now resulted in an economic nightmare.¹⁰⁹

Sensible free-market capitalism according to the pundits is indeed the most desirable system for wealth and job creation. However, there is a government to facilitate economic activities with sensible regulations. Regulations play two important roles with a capitalist system.

First, they protect investors and innocent by-standers... elimination of naked shorting, and checks on excessive commodity speculations and predatory lending practices are regulations necessary for sensible capitalism. While short selling is shown to reduce market bubbles, it can severely disrupt markets when investors sell aggressively... The zeal for deregulation and the en-

¹⁰⁹ See the lead article by William H. Seay "Anarchic Capitalism vs. Sensible Capitalism," in *The Hindu*, 04/12/08, p.8.

suing lack of regulations and transparency simply made the stock market a giant gambling machine. Innocent investors paid the price...

Secondly, sensible regulations induce innovations and new job creation. Some well-known regulations include environmental and consumer safety measures, and fuel-efficiency standards... while some strict regulations can have unintended consequences, sensible regulations can create new growth opportunities while preventing unwanted innovations like the financial engineering of the last decade.¹¹⁰

For the protagonists of capitalism, the economic ideologues at the extremes are too rigid and orthodox in their position. Incidentally, the pragmatic ideologues of capitalism contend that capitalism has unlocked the potential and is still the best path to prosperity if it is coupled with common sense regulations and policies for sensible capitalism to thrive. However, what we see at the global level is that the current economic melt-down steam-rolled 516,000 jobs in the U.S.A. in October 2008. The 30-crore Indian middle class do not want to spend because of the fear psychosis. There has been a slack demand for cars, bikes, electronic items, home appliances, clothes, and people traveling from one end to another, which has affected the airlines, hotel industry and tourism. Even the industries such as steel, chemicals, cement, are now faced with lower demand. The scene is no better in the petro-chemical industry.

Many multi-national companies having captive operations in India for IT and BPO are also laying-off people. In British Telecom 10,000 employees lost their job, when Layman Brothers collapsed, its entire support service team of about 2,300 people in Mumbai became surplus. The IT industry body NASSCOM has predicted that the IT industry in India will hire 2 lakh new people in 2008-2009 as against 2.80 lakh last

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

year. Similarly hundreds of small industrial units have removed lakhs of workers from their jobs as the market for their products has either vanished or dwindled. About 50,000 workers in the gems and jewellery industry are believed to have lost their jobs due to the economic crisis. Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council Chairman, Vasanth Mehta, said: "Over 3-4 per cent people in the sector, which employs over 1.3 million have lost their job due to recession in the US and Europe, the two big high-end markets for Indian exporters."

The job loss will rise if global recession continues, he said. The situation in the textile industry is even worse. Affected by loss of export orders, rising cotton prices, massive power shortage and liquidity crunch, textiles and garment manufacturers, together have closed 700,000 jobs in the last six months. If the situation fails to improve, the job loss will rise to 12 lakhs said R.K. Dalmia, Chairman of the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry. On these lines hundreds of carpet makers from the northern states are now unemployed as export orders from the U.S. and Europe have almost stopped.

As per the survey 1,000 companies in 22 sectors in early 2008, around one million new jobs were expected to be created. But after the global melt-down it will be 30 per cent lower than expectations, said K. Pandia Rajan, Managing Director of Recruitment from the Ma Foi Group.¹¹¹ The financial crisis which is rocking the world is serious. For instance,

First, a banking crisis that occurs at the centre of capitalism is different from the balance of payments crisis common to developing countries, which until the 1990s tried to achieve growth by luring foreign investment, and by running up their current deficit and foreign debt. The giant current account deficit of the US in

¹¹¹ See Dilip Maitra, "World Financial Slump Slams Slowdown on India," in *Economy & Business, Deccan Herald*, November 17, 2008, p.12.

this decade, together with the soaring federal budget deficits, are not, however, unrelated to the banking crisis. Second, the direct cause of the crisis was the reckless writing of mortgages to people, who would be unable to make after the low introductory interest rate ended. The effect of this would not have been so serious if the financial operators had not used imprudent innovations to “securitize” loans categorized as toxic wastes, transforming them into three AAA securities, thanks to the rating agencies anxious to help their clients. Third, this could happen only because the national financial systems had been systematically deregulated since the mid-1970s and the ascent of neo-liberal dogma and market fundamentalism, which holds that the market is self-correcting and is most efficient when left alone and not subject to government regulation. Four, this ultra-liberal ideology was legitimized in the US by neo-classical economic theory, a school of thought that was dominant between the 1870 and 1930, then went into decline and was displaced by Keynesian macro economic theory which prevailed until the mid-1970s and became dominant again in recent decades. Five, this economic theory was mostly implemented not by those who set government economic policy but rather by macro economic theorists in business and specialized publications, because the neo-classical presumption of efficient markets rejects any economic policy that is not fiscal adjustment. Everything must be liberalized and deregulated. Because governments have to shape monetary policy they continue to use Keynesian instruments.¹¹²

Not surprisingly, the juggernaut of capitalism is grinding to a halt. The wave of corporate bankruptcies, corruption and inefficiency have betrayed their ‘claims’ and ‘promises.’ The year 2008 has been a year

¹¹² See the lead article by L.C. Bresser-Pereira, “This crisis is no replay of 1929,” *Deccan Herald*, October 31, 2008, p.10.

where the mask of global capitalism is unmasked. The contradictions in capitalism surfaced nakedly when its instruments and agencies crashed and in turn brought about a series of crises that even surpassed the Great Depression. Times have changed and ideologists come and go but a few play dominant and significant roles in interpreting the societies and help to change the societies. Capitalism emerged as opposed to socialism and communism. At this point of history especially the post-1990s, capitalism as an ideology was considered to be the absolute ideology of the world that survived all odds and onslaughts and claims to have delivered 'common good' and 'prosperity' to all.

The adherents of capitalism kept saying and hoping that capitalism as an economic doctrine, working principle and pragmatic ideology has the ability to survive any situation because of its innate capacity to upgrade technological know-how and innovating managerial capabilities and in the process harnessing natural and human resources effectively and efficiently. This is how corporate capitalism brought 'progress,' 'prosperity' and 'development' to countries located in Western Europe and North America and by embracing it has assured the generation of wealth to all countries in the world. Almost all the countries in the world have subscribed to this belief hoping to 'catch up' with the rich industrialized capitalist countries of the West.

What has happened? The 'claims' and 'promises' that corporate capitalism offers have crashed. The effects have been horrendous, severe and grave. Its impact has been not only economic, but political, social, cultural and seems to have affected other facets too. Those who projected it as inevitable and irreversible had to retreat from their overwhelming support to global capitalism because of the bubbles of corporate capitalism that subsequently was busted. It is in booms that the seeds of busts are created. The development of the great bull market of the 1980s and 1990s was the freeing of investors from high fixed trading costs. Much of the credit went to those who maneuvered around the system

and let investors and speculators trade for less. Bernard Madoff is one among them whose firm became the largest player in the NASDAQ stock market. It is through speculation shares are inflated to alarming levels and as time goes by the artificial boom gets busted. We have been witnessing the sites of corporate crashes in the most developed capitalist countries.

Various experts have identified various starting points of the current financial crisis that spans different points of time. Rakesh Khurana of the Harvard Business School feels that it all started with Enron. “The symptoms of this can be traced to seven or eight years back, when we first had the crisis at Enron, which is that company boards had very little understanding of their businesses,” says Khurana.¹¹³ Enron was an American energy company headquartered in Houston, the second largest American state of Texas. The company went bankrupt at the end of 2001.

After the bankruptcy it was found out that the increase in profits was primarily through complicated derivative deals and accounting fraud. This was true about Enron as well as other big investment banks on Wall Street. As Khurana points out, “We had created an executive compensation system which pushed CEOs and executives to take risks that put their enterprises at risk. Many of those practices continued unabated and, in fact, amplified at many of the firms in Wall Street.”¹¹⁴ The current financial crisis is primarily due to the abuse of financial derivatives to make short-term profits. Cumulatively putting these factors together what essentially started with Enron culminated in the following way:

So these are the factors – and the unwillingness to address these fundamental issues which had been fairly well known and understood over the last seven years – that caused the financial crisis,

¹¹³ Cited in Vivek Kaul’s write-up, “It all started with Enron,” in *Daily News and Analysis* money column, p.21.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

although all the pieces hadn't been put together," says Khurana. But when you put all the issues together, the accounting scandal, the executive compensation scandal, the conflicts of interests, the lack of boards' fundamental understanding of their businesses, I think these have contributed to not only threaten Wall Street, but now threaten the entire global economic welfare," he adds.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

The 2008 global financial meltdown has created a major global crisis which would continue and have its repercussions at different levels in the years to come. This crisis should not be looked at as a separate facet; instead it should be seen as an inter-linked and inter-connected factor with socio-cultural, political and religious ramifications. The gravity and enormity of the financial crisis could perhaps be measured by the way it hit global economies, prompting world leaders to pour more than 2000 billion Euros into their banks to stabilize the international financial system. The U.S. mobilized close to a trillion dollars in guarantees and bailout funds, and the U.K. rescue package is at least 400 billion pounds. By comparison, it is estimated that world poverty could perhaps be eradicated over two years with 700 billion euros of development aid.

The financial crisis has hit severely the developing countries more as they are struggling to contain food shortages and high fuel prices. The worldwide distribution of financial resources has never before been as unequal, with 10 per cent of the global population currently holding more than 80 per cent of the wealth, while the poorest half has just one or two per cent. Though the economic crisis began in the world's so called richest country, its spill over effects will be most tangible in the developing world. The economic recession has clearly portrayed the erratic nature and unpredictable character of global capitalism. It has

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

once again revealed that our current financial architecture premised on corporate global capitalism is fragile and no longer meets today's demands.

Against this backdrop, one should critically look into the ideological underpinning of corporate capitalism that manifests in varied forms. The financial crisis of 2008 has sent shock waves and ripples for world economies, but it can also be the spark to illuminate new ideas and thinking for an economic theory or a political ideology or political economy that would usher 'common good' for a global community or humanity. As much damage as this crisis may have caused the world, it gives us a historical opportunity to create a system that reflects the betterment of the vulnerable, hapless, disadvantaged and disenfranchised humanity that runs into more than two-thirds of the global population.

Further Reading

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DE-CODING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN POST-DE-GLOBALIZING WORLD: THROUGH THE PRISM OF CHRISTIANITY



Positing the Past—LPG

I grew up during the Cold-war era, wherein the left-right binary was relatively simple and easily be comprehended. To be precise, one block that adhered to liberal democracy and free-market economics, while the other, gave much larger role to the State the right to regulate the economic sphere. The Cold War ended in 1989-90, resulting in the disintegration of USSR and the collapse of Berlin Wall. As a consequence, those who towed the line of democracy and free-market liberalism affirmed that global capitalism is the only system as the most successful and the other system based socialistic principles could not be sustained and thus failed. Both the binaries are enmeshed with economic imperatives and bound to have sociological and political implications. So, it is important to recognize this factor, rather than just pointing to black-white assessments of the Cold-War including the others that ensued. The Western block of Europe lead by the United States professed democracy and free-market liberalism and the Eastern-bloc of Europe led by USSR advocated state as the custodian and regulator pushed their views hardly and remained as two powerful blocs reign the world. Both deferred

diametrically from their ideological and political orientations. In the melee, the philosophy free-market capitalism survived.

Early 1990s has been one of defining moments in the life of India and many developing countries of the world. For the protagonists of free market economics, it is a triumphant beginning because of global capitalism via Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG) which became a categorical imperative, a universal norm and an absolute ideology for almost all the nations and peoples of the world. Global capitalism as an ideology, a credo and a doctrine has captured the imagination of many minds and swept across the borders of nation-states with its “claims” and “promises” “progress,” “prosperity” and “development”. It also claimed that it would usher “win-win” situation to all and wipe-out “win-loss” equation. In sum, corporate capitalism via neo-liberal principles of LPG has been considered as TINA (there is no alternative). Many fell to its promises and claims thinking that capitalism had triumphed and considered it as the dominant ideology and shall reign forever. As against this position there are some who out rightly defied and initiated alternatives such as Joseph Stiglitz, Paul Krugman and David C. Korten¹¹⁶ who have challenged LPG, the global financial

¹¹⁶ Paul Krugman won the Nobel Prize for Economics for the year 2008 for his ‘analysis of trade patterns and location of economic activity.’ Traditional trade involved exchange of goods that countries were good at producing – rice from China, wheat from India, cotton from Egypt, wine from France. For Krugman, today’s trade no longer works like this. Trade is now dominated by a few countries that are similar to one another and often countries import goods similar to those they export. Krugman explained thus: countries (and companies) become more and more efficient at producing their merchandise as they sell more and more and at less cost to themselves and the buyers. This enables countries to exchange similar products. Cities grow, Krugman pointed out, because industries provide jobs and people want to work close to home. Haven’t we known that for centuries? Gerald Aungier knew this in 1675 when he opened Bombay to free trade and what passed for industry in those times—One more timeless truth. Krugman while interrogating and critiquing the international trade and its

institutions (IMF and WB), trading arrangements (WTO), their processes, mechanisms and international instruments.

A cursory look after 25 years of LPG in India and around the world would reveal that a vast majority of people—the poor and the vulnerable engaged in formal and informal sectors whose livelihood dependant on daily wages shows declining prospects of their future. The outcry and frustrations of billions of people who live on margins by selling their labor for meager wages are totally taken by surprise and live in the lurch. The proponents of LPG However, the present agrarian crisis warrants to understand the root causes that have unleashed realized that their slogans of LPG and TINA started cracking and by 2008 the corporate globalization propelled by global capitalism went totally berserk. The entire global economy faced the worst financial crises and lasted for several years. As a result, recession, unemployment and misery prevailed across the world. Those who subsisted on daily wages had to face multiple ramifications such as, migration, distress, violence, break-up of families, labor unrest and suicides.

The onslaught of LPG on poor and the vulnerable in particular has been horrendous. Hence, one should go to the roots to make an inquiry about the causes that contribute to the crises. The age of globalization generated prosperity for the rich and the transnational corporations. Never in the human history have we witnessed so much of wealth generated and at the same time we come across widening inequality within

mechanisms proved how international trade is monopolized by the capitalist bloc. He has been consistently opposing the forces of globalization for many years. Joseph Stiglitz who won the Nobel Prize for Economics a few years ago is a staunch critique of global capitalism and international financial institution, wrote a seminal book on *Globalization and its Discontents*. David Korten, yet another outstanding Economist who taught in Yale and served on big foundations for several years and eventually spent more years in Asia contributing to the third world economies and known to have authored many scholarly books.

and between nations. There have been protests and demonstrations against capitalism and globalization and also G-7, IMF, WB and other transnational banks and corporations. The hype the globalizing forces created eventually became a nightmare. The forces that propel the current fiasco need to be identified. Analysis should entail the changing contours of global economy and a in the process pitching the actors and agencies to the foreground in general and the nature of ideological premises of politics.

Unfolding the Present—Post (De)-Globalization

Globalization is on the retreat and gradually ebbing out. The ethic and vocabulary of globalization was written in the liberal democracies of the West based on certain foundational assumptions: opening one economy and integrating with the global free-market economy to trade and capital would increase employment, GDP, GNP, foreign reserves, incomes, consumer choices and tastes and so, values and beliefs. It was also thought and believed that globalization would eventually become the universal exemplar and aspirational trend setter. The claims of globalization made a whole generation of politicians, scholars, trade economists, commentators and many from academia eventually got converted and thus became robust evangelists to the credo of globalization. The forces of globalization failed to live up to the expectations and many who subscribed to globalization had no other excuses and justifications to offer in the wake of series of failures they people across the globe faced and experienced.

The era of globalization has generated great prosperity for the capitalists and the transnational corporations. During this era, the flight of capital moved from place to place looking out for cheap labor, incentives and concessions; movement of labor and people across the borders surged and in that the elites class globally accrued huge profits; professionals classes moved to different corners of the world for lucrative jobs.

The process and mechanisms that the forces of globalization employed widened the inequality further stirring stiff resistance among those who were left behind from market mechanism in many pockets of the world. As a result, what happened is those who have been the victims of globalization and the discontented turned to the nationalists and right-wing politicians for remedy and solace who in turn promised to impose controls on free trade, transnational transactions, multilateral trade, stringent immigration policies and monitoring labor and flight of money?

A new age of de-globalization has dawned and is on in full stride. It's gaining momentum and spreading across the world swiftly. Populists are taking over the governments as evidenced by the stunning victories of Modi, Trump and May. Populism is gaining momentum and acceptance is gradually spreading in other countries as well. The populists and right-wing conservatisms in India, USA, UK and other countries subscribing to populism have called for protectionist measures such as tightening their borders. Their move does imply—a clear indication sending signals that the open world order is breaking apart. The new age of de-globalization is set and is likely to continue. We would be witnessing many more reversals in the new age of de-globalization as the post-war order is under attack from both popular autocrats in the emerging powers and election of populist candidates in other countries as well. Apparently, the slogans that populists use: “Make in India” “UK for Brits”, “America First” along with host of others indicating that protecting domestic industry and territorial borders from the refugees and migrants and sharing wealth within the country gains more appeal and positive signals from the electorates—all in the name of ‘nationalism’ and ‘patriotism’.

Post-globalization believes in the distribution of wealth within nations for the rich and does not want to share the wealth equitably to all the citizens and beyond its borders. Distribution of wealth within and between will have salutary effect of narrowing the income gap between

individuals. But by protecting its borders and restricting the free movement of people could widen the wealth gap between nations. By opening its borders and pushing for borderless and seamless world, the dictum that globalization pushed had faltered in 2008, that helped the conservatives to capitalize and thus mobilized vast sections of the victims of globalization against the forces of globalization. Since then majority of the countries show decline in freedom and increase in xenophobic, conflicts spurting between communities positing intolerance.

These democracies propelled by populism, the ultra-fundamentalist and rightist leanings elements by and large invoke nationalism and patriotism as their weapons to lynch and suppress its citizens. For these ideologues and followings, the notions of global village, interdependency, freedom of expression and free movement of people, live and let live and mutual co-existence are anathemas and in its place populist slogans and narratives are being replaced. The world in which we live is moving in this direction—tightening of immigration laws, toughening border security, nullifying the major trade deals and withdrawing support for allies. The consequential effects will be detrimental as the global movement of goods, money and people are likely to slow down drastically hampering growth, development and progress.

Globalization in its twenty-five years has connected societies, erased the seams of the borders, promoted digital opportunities, opened up its economy to foreign capital and transfer of technology, shifts in science and knowledge boom and thus entering into higher levels of innovative areas leading the countries towards new world order. But, in the process many were way laid and left behind. As a consequence, the counter-narrative by those who have been pushed out by the market forces showed their anger and resistance against globalization across the world became glaringly apparent and a reality. The quest to reinvent the ethic and vocabulary of de-globalization is now on the upsurge. What we are witnessing is the walls within nations, open resentment against trade and

migration, rising parochial and protectionist attitudes surfacing starkly across the globe.

The contour of global political economy has changed drastically. Since the elections of the populists in major democracies such as India and the United States, the crony capitalists have become the major influencing actors. They are found behind a demagogue or charismatic leader of the corporate state. Trump and Modi have given to their respective countries inverted totalitarianism, a persona and a face, by unfolding totalitarianism proper could be totalitarian theocracy in India and totalitarian neo-liberalism. From now on, we will be associating with this type of politics called as totalitarian. Anything could be taken as their weapon to push their agenda of divisive politics. Behind the mask of populism the totalitarian regimes whip the emotions of the masses more towards their brands of “aggressive nationalism” and “pseudo-patriotism. This is how they want to hold on to power by pointing to something “invisible” as enemies. Unmasking, demythologizing and evolving counter-narratives should be pursued to demolish their dominant narratives.

The transition is from global neo-liberalism to “national neo-liberalism” show the inter-facing of business and the state. Since their elections we come across slogans “America First” and “Make in India”. Their narratives continue to attract those who have been sidelined by the market forces. Both the Indian and American voters are thrilled with their narratives. The populist have already created ideological covers for the closer connections between capitalists and the state. The new emergent politico-economic global landscape would further escalate enormous conflicts and high-levels of risks in all facets of human endeavors. We have been witnessing in recent times the rise of populism as well as the end of globalism thereby leading to the dawn of post-globalization. One should capture the shifting trends of politics and also changing nature of issues that the people confront in their day-to-day living and in

the process see through the contours of the issues that the people face and confront in their day-to-day existence.

De-Coding Human Trafficking – the Dynamics

Trafficking of humans is not a recent phenomenon. It has been in existence since the time immemorial. As centuries and decades pass by, its form, essence, value, areas and modus operandi did undergo sea changes. However, the core of human trafficking remains the same. Unless and until we go deep into the subject matter we may not understand the intricacies and complexities of human trafficking. Human trafficking has been one of the most “successful trade” that managed to survive despite all restrictions, surveillance and monitoring and in recent times maintains a dubious status as its worth ranging to several billions of dollars and thus regarded as an “industry” along with other trades like “drug trafficking”. The driving force behind human trafficking is global capitalism which is premised on profit maximization.

Capitalism keep progressing from one phase to another over centuries revolutionizing its modes of production and diversified its operations extracting labor by exploiting humans such as labor, women and desires to maximize its profits. It is amazing the ways with which capitalism keep innovating new ways and means in keeping its ways as human society progresses. Human trafficking is one form of capitalist exploitation. Nonetheless, capitalism has survived and managed to survive and going stronger as the capitalists use their capital investing in a number areas where the returns are colossal and so it is considered by its proponents and those who believe in capitalism as the most successful economic creed, political philosophy and ideological power house. So for many, it is the best innovative politico-economic creed that has brought about transformative changes in the human activities such as production, consumption and distribution without which nations and societies would perish. Precisely because of these reasons they say and

claim that there is no other alternative and so it would stay. It survived and now remains as the most successful brand.

Capitalism has the tenacity to bounce back, be it globalization (corporate, financial, casino) or de-globalization of diverse shades and formats. Capitalism is the underpinning factor that triggers the process. Unregulated fundamentals of free market economics is going strong, and in that capitalism both (global) and (local) does play significant and decisive roles in the changing contours of political economy. The basic tenet and driving force of capitalism is the mechanisms being employed to multiply the capital invested. For that to materialize, capitalism does involve in innovative ways and processes. Everything is being construed as materiality and thus commoditized, including human body vis-à-vis labor, women, organs, enticing materials that satiate humans as needs and want cater for profits. For capitalism to grow and prosper human body and labor play the concomitant part and the most significant role.

At the same time capitalism sustains itself as the capitalists involve in innovation by spending huge amounts of money in billions on R & D (Research and Development). Capitalism believes in the surplus which is converted as profits and so labor as the years to come be made redundant and in its place robots will be introduced. Nevertheless, human trafficking in all formats is certainly one form of the most rewarding capitalists' enterprise that augments profits. Trafficking of humans for various purposes primarily to make more money is being carried out within and between countries and continents. Prior to embarking into the intricacies of human trafficking it is important to know what is human trafficking is all about. "Human trafficking is the trade of humans, most commonly for the purpose of forced labor, sexual slavery, or commercial sexual exploitation for the trafficker or other. This may encompass providing a spouse in the context of forced marriage or the extraction of organs or tissues including for surrogacy and oval remov-

al.”¹¹⁷ Trafficking of humans can take place within a country or transnationally.

Human trafficking is considered as a crime because it is heinous and willed against persons who have been forced into. It is a violation against the person because every individual is entwined with basic human rights to make individual decisions about their movement and jobs. No one has the right to curtail the movement and choices of individual through coercion and intimidation for exploitative motifs. Exploiting in whatever forms and nature tantamount to intrusion of one's rights and freedom. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) forced labor alone (one component of human trafficking) generated an estimated \$150 billion in profits per annum as of 2014. In 2012, the ILO estimated that 21 million victims are trapped in modern-day slavery. Of, these 14.2 million (68 per cent) were exploited labor, 4.5 million (22 per cent) were sexually exploited and 2.2 million (10%) were exploited in state-imposed forced labor.¹¹⁸ By now, the number, forms of exploitation and its magnitude of human trafficking would have reached alarming heights. Hence, trafficking of humans is considered to be one of the fastest-growing activities cutting across the nation-states and acquired transnational character controlled and promoted by the criminal organizations.

Human trafficking involves human person(s) *per se* for diverse purposes in the forms of recruitment and transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by employing threat or force or forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of abuse of power or of taking advantage of vulnerability or of luring by paying or receiving payments or promising benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over the other person solely for the purposes of exploitation in return of

¹¹⁷ For more details See Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia titled *Human Trafficking*.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

money. Exploitation include all forms such as sex workers or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or removal of organs. Exploitation is the core of human trafficking and it exhibits in all forms. There are many actors and agencies involved in trafficking of humans. There are also many types of human trafficking such as trafficking of children, sex trafficking, forced marriage, labor trafficking and trafficking for organ trade. Within each type the form, method, modus operandi and stakes vary from one to another. In all these those who have been affected and thus become victims are the women and children. The reason being they are susceptible and become easy prey in a world of patriarchy and male chauvinism.

Shocking Reality—Trafficked, Traded, Enslaved

Human trafficking has stupendously scaled upward and reached its zenith. As global capitalism keep innovating news ways and forms of exploitation, in its stride it undergoes different phases. In correspondence to the changing scenario, trafficking of humans too in the process has undergone sea changes. Human trafficking is considered as an “organized racket” with a turnover of billions of dollars. We live in a world of global capitalism spearheaded by the de-globalizing forces. Despite the walls being built, securing territorial borders, stalling migration, tightening immigration policies and curbing the movement of people, human trafficking continues to grow and spread at alarming levels by devising new ways and mechanisms. Out of many types one type has been taken as a point of reference to prove the case under scrutiny. The following stories amply testify the gravity and intensity of trafficking of humans:

The first episode is all about Soni a popular name amongst the advocates that contains resonances. She is at an undisclosed location in Bihar in hiding fearing for her life, recuperating from the injuries that have been

inflicted to her soul. As she narrates her story over the phone she breaks down. As a minor she came to Delhi and in stages passed through and stepped into a world totally unknown to her—a world of slavery. She was confined in a tiny house where unknown men set in motion a whole cycle of exploiting her body and also other young girls who stayed. Soni was 15 in 2010 when she along with four friends moved out from her village in Jharkhand and met an agent and then a sale and transfer of ownership to an agency and then had to work as a maid in a home in Delhi. During this period she lost track of her friend. After six months a man came to see Soni who introduced himself as he was from the “office”. He saw her and then left.

Couple of days later another agent came took her along to a new house. She found the second one who treated her harshly when compared with the residents of the first house. They gave her Rs. 10,000 which Sony took and kept in a safe place. The new house was tiny and surrounded by narrow lanes. Sony was made to sign papers she could not read which was written in English. She was subjected to a strange routine had started—regular check-ups at a hospital such as blood tests and most importantly, strange injections. She did not understand why needed those injections. There were other girls in that house living a secluded life. The curtains were always firmly drawn. The security guards kept moving from one end to another and also filled with agents, staff members and a caretaker, a woman from Jharkhand called as ‘didi’. This was the routine—sleeping, waking up, cleaning and eating. If Soni wanted fish she would be served fish and people were ‘good’ to her, but she failed to understand and could hardly comprehend ‘why’.¹¹⁹

Later she found out the reasons for ‘why’. A girl whispered to Soni in the bathroom that a baby was growing in her womb. Since Soni did

¹¹⁹ Pragya Singh in his Cover Story “Cops Call It Forced Surrogacy” in *Outlook*, 22nd May 2017, pp. 2427. Names have been changed to protect real identities of those who became the victims of human trafficking.

not hear the word ‘baby’ properly, nor may have come across the word, she somehow failed to understand what she said since she was just 15 or 16. After three months of regular hospital visits in a curtained vehicle, Soni was taken for an ultrasound. Once she came back she pestered the caretaker that “Kya hai did, dikhaiya na, dikhiya na’. And she showed me a photo of a very small child—ekdum chota sa bachcha tha.”¹²⁰ The news came as a rude shock to Sony as she was young and for her age she could not digest that since emotional maturity was to the level of adolescent. This is the rottenness of system in which the vulnerable women and girls undergo all kinds of exploitation because by the time they realize they are pregnant and is too late for abortion. Sony swallowed the hard reality and managed to go through. The caretaker told her to adjust and be good. She stayed on for another three months—in all about six months. They took her for walks in a local park and send her to buy vegetables. Those who tried to run away were caught and brought back and beaten. Sony used to get scared and somehow managed. She won their confidence and one day during wee hours she slipped out and asked a taxi driver to her to the station. She had Rs.10,000 and used it for her expenses and reached Ranchi.¹²¹

Back in her village Soni, pregnant wandered alone in the forest, tried many times to commit suicide—either by hanging or pouring kerosene, but survived. “I knew there was a child inside me, but didn’t know how to tell anybody, how to explain how it happened,” she says. She was aware of the fact that those in her situation had ended their lives However, a male friend finally arranged a doctor for abortion when the fetus was four months. Sony recalled and many things flashed back as the tears rolled by. Despite her mother’s cry and warning even at the bus stand asking her not to leave for Delhi, “I didn’t listen—meri zidd thi—I was set upon going. The agent was from my village so I believed him,”

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

she says. Her father filed an FIR when he found that she had gone and yet there was no police investigation. When she registered a case she received threats to her life. “The agents tore up my FIR and threw it away,” she says. She did not mention the pregnancy in the FIR. “My FIR was only about agents selling girls for Rs. 40,000—50,000 per child, but the police did not probe even this. Nobody supported me,” she says.¹²²

From a sense of sheer isolation and helplessness, a sense of belongingness living in a community started to develop within her. In the meantime, Soni met another girl from Jharkhand who told her of having given birth six times, until her body gave way. “She got Rs. 50,000 per child. It is such a sad thing. I believe her. Nobody can live with a lie thin big. I cry so much. Why did this happen to me? Why does it happen to unmarried girls? I didn’t love anybody?” It came from her guts; from her inner resources of vitality coupled with gradual recovery and vague apprehension about the future kept Soni silent in public. “Tell the police? What will they do? They will only ridicule me and I’ll never be able to marry. My parents will be defamed, that’s all. What choice do I have? What can anybody do for me?”¹²³ These were the questions that we keep hearing from those young girls who have been the victims of human trafficking.

The second story certainly overlaps with the first but there are a number of commonalities on the physical and social map—but this one has an eye-witness. Rohini is about 20 years old and when she was 13 years old the system pushed her out of her village on the Simdega plateau in southern Jharkhand, bordering Orissa. In September 2014, Rashmi escaped from seven years of domestic slavery. The placement agent, who had lured her to that city back in 2008, put her on a train back to Ranchi. Rashmi travelled another 100 km by bus, crossing jungle and

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

river to reach familial territory—the town of Gumla where he own people live.¹²⁴ It was the house of her sister and brother-in-law. After arrival they took her to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) office in Gumla since it concerns about a child—a tale that talks about the lost years of childhood that concerns Rashmi. CWC is the only government agency authorized to hear and record such testimonies. Unfortunately the officers were out on that day saying “Our team was attending a UNICEF function in Ranchi... so we didn’t meet Soni,” says Targen Panna, CWC’s Gumla chairperson.¹²⁵ However, Rashmi’s story was flashed in the media and then an activist took her to Shashi Kant, an anti-trafficking activist who heads an organization of his Chik Baraik tribe and is a journalist for a district paper. Rashmi recorded on videotape what she witnessed in Delhi.¹²⁶

It is called as “Bachcha bechne waala kaam,” in the words of Rashmi meaning, baby-selling. It has become a racket that has evolved in the shadow-zones of modern life of global capitalism to cater to the growing demands of human wants. Baby-selling is only the last link in the chain. In human trafficking baby production is a necessary interim stage. The market fundamentals dictate as per the dictates of demand and the supply will have to concur with it. It also reveals the exploitative nature and practices of human trafficking that unfolds a typical form of slavery. The video conversation with Rashmi ranging five minutes is one of the rare testimonies of what was always suspected to have happened in Jharkhand, but has not come to the surface so starkly—how the adivasi girls have been trafficked, then raped, compelled to conceive, and finally their children sold in the flourishing adoption in the black market--assembly-line of organized cruelty depicting modern slavery.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 27.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

According to the activists the price of a child secured through forced conception ranges between Rs. 1-4 lakh. The price rises in accordance to the demand and desperation of those wanting a child. Further, the fluctuations also depend on the willingness and agreement of advasi women; the risk factors involved and the problems to be encountered while conception especially the cold chain logistics.¹²⁸ The episode cuts deep into the phenomenon that has many layers. Since it is highly organized it is difficult to pin down the roots. The traumatized women often do not want to talk for a number of reasons. Victims go through all sorts of vulnerabilities and so do not want to disclose what really happened to them. The stigma is too strong and thoughts and memories would last till their death. The testimony such as Rashmi's is so valuable and thus reveals that it's just the tip of the iceberg. Rashmi's story was later published as a report which states that an agent named Chayin Singh took Rashmi to Delhi to a placement agency in Moti Nagar office of Manpower Bureau, run by Naina Kumari, allegedly one of Jharkhand's three most notorious traffickers—occupied with a number of babies and pregnant women. On one of her visits she met four girls, two of them pregnant who explained everything to her. Rashmi recounted that "Girls who get pregnant, their children are kept in the agency office and sold after they are around one year old." "The police should have investigated the allegations ... We keep hearing of such cases but the victims are poor tribal girls. They recant under pressure from agents,"¹²⁹ says Shashi Kant.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 28.

Evaluating Human Trafficking—Through the Prism of Christian Ethics

In the previous sections the two live testimonies narrated expositively horrifying experiences that they did undergo in phases—trafficked, traded, enslaved, raped and made to conceive babies for adoption. These two cases represent the larger vulnerable segment of young girls and women being trafficked within and between national and global borders numbering thousands and millions of young girls. As a consequence, *advasi* young girls are turned into baby-making machines for Rs 1-4 lakh per child. It is now termed as an organized racket that depicts cruelty, vulgarity and incivility. Its turnover runs to many billion dollars carried out by illegal traders—but well-organized, clinically worked out, cold-blooded and amoral enterprise.

At the heart of human trafficking--the central core of it is indeed the idea that one can exert absolute control over the other including her body. The terms such as abuse and exploitation does go beyond human civility because the human body is considered in a capitalist world as a commodity. Ever since the body of women is commoditized for maximum returns *vis-à-vis* womb is construed as a device and the fetus as its product. Global capitalism as it progresses has made women's womb for rent—for profiteering. The stories evoke greater scrutiny, analysis and evaluation. Before embarking on those, can we call our society as civilized and supposed to be living in a civilized world should not pretend and thus offer flimsy excuses and justifications for human trafficking—it has been there and would continue and nothing can be done..

Global capitalism has entered into baby production because huge profits are involved. Capitalism has been using women's body as means of exploitation and now 'renting the wombs' is its recent one and its *modus operandi* is premised on the fundamentals of the market. The demand for 'surrogacy' has grown and for that they need young women. The demand is growing and to meet the demand there should be enough

supply. For this, there should be regular supply of young women prepared to 'rent their wombs'. We need to view the whole gamut of human trafficking within the emergent framework—a supply chain and assembly which is highly organized propelled by diverse means and methods. Adoption of children nowadays is a flourishing black market. The whole assembly-line of human trafficking is nothing but an organized cruelty. Those got caught in the web of human trafficking not out of their choice they entered into, but are forced into it. Their experiences have been horrendous and traumatic. It should be reiterated that most of them became victims against their will. Lured by the agents the teens from marginalized section have fallen prey due to their vulnerability as baby producing machines.

The questions that confront those who have been trafficked haunt them all the time are: Why did this happen to me? Why does it happen to unmarried girls? They did not love anybody, had no friends. Why should god do this to them—have they done any harm to anyone. We see the depletion of their inner resources paving way for vague apprehension about their future. They are a selected lot and have no future. On similar vein, Soni asked the following questions: "Tell the police? What will they do? They will only ridicule me and I'll never be able to marry. My parents will be defamed, that's all. What choice do I have? What can anybody do for me?"¹³⁰ These questions amplify total devastation of their dreams and aspirations. For them, their whole life and future came to a grinding halt. Commodification of bodies by the forces of capitalism for profits show the modern phase of exploitation we have entered. Using the wombs of the adolescents against their will and without their knowledge shows the total breakdown of laws and failures of enforcement agencies.

The basic tenet of capitalism is to maximize the returns by way of profits and to get it there are no scruples. As pointed out by Siddharth

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 27.

Kara, the author of *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Modern World of Sex Slavery* states that “one woman or child is trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation every 60 seconds in the world.”¹³¹ He observed that sex slaves are invariably moved from poor areas and countries to richer areas and countries. The central argument of his book is that “the enormity and pervasiveness of sex trafficking is a direct result of the immense profits to be derived from selling ... around the world. The structures of Western capitalism ... contribute greatly to the life destruction of lives this profitability entails.”¹³² Despite the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and punish trafficking particularly women defines exploitation of trafficked persons for forced labor, slavery and other forms of sexual exploitation. Nonetheless, the existing legal framework to combat trafficking includes many along with related provisions, but somehow they fail to arrest the growing menace of human trafficking.

Human trafficking is the worst form of inhumanity inflicted against other humans who are susceptible. Over and above, sex trafficking and in that exploiting the womb of young women for surrogacy without their knowledge and consent is immoral. To substantiate, “Sex trafficking one of the ugliest contemporary actualizations of global capitalism because it was directly produced by the harmful inequalities spread by the process... deepening of rural poverty, increased economic disenfranchisement of the poor... erosion of real human freedoms across the developing world... sex trafficking requires and attack on the industry’s immense profitability and a radical shift in the conduct...”¹³³ Profits accrued by exploiting the wombs of innocent young women ought to be brought under the prism of ethics—as Christians under the domain of Christian ethics. Therefore, all human actions as Christians ought to be

¹³¹Quoted by Divya Trivedi, in his article titled *A call for dignity* in “Frontline”, November 13, 2015, p. 104.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid, p. 105.

brought under Christian ethical prisms. It is puzzling as well as anguishing as we read and hear the testimonies of two young *advasi* women who were trafficked, raped and forced to deliver babies. Conscious people are often puzzled by these episodes that they face and confront in the real world.

This is particularly true in our complex fast-changing world. We as Christians particularly those belonging to the tribal, Dalit and *adivasi* communities are agonized over human trafficking in the face of violence and exploitation. Capitalism and other patriarchic tenets could offer all sorts of ‘moral justifications’, but certainly fails to offer any justifiable moral reasoning to human trafficking. Nonetheless, our age is plagued by so much uncertainty that we tend to forget that there has always been a gap between moral commitment and moral judgment. The basic questions that arise are: what are the implications of Christian faith for our actual moral judgments? What should be the Christian attitude toward sex trafficking?

Subjectively committed Christian must ask an objective question what he/she should do about his/her commitment in the wake of human trafficking. Both the subjectively committed Christians and objective questions that are asked ought to revolve around Jesus Christ as the norm in the Christian moral life—while making decision and entering into action. Our claims and actions ought to invoke Jesus Christ as normative. Therefore, Jesus Christ is normative for Christian’s moral purpose whether convenient or whatever. He is the standard by which our decision and actions are measured. He becomes the centre and content-filled symbol for our efforts to discern what God is enabling and requiring in the world we live in. Hence, our ethical framework seeks to relate the sphere of morality to God, by living and protecting God’s moral order in such ways that what God wants, how God in Christ commands us to live and lead our lives in particular moral ways so that the moral commands direct our actions to “humanize” life.

God in Jesus Christ came into this world to humanize and redeem this world from all sorts of bondages, so that all may be one and live in abundance. If this is the categorical imperative for us 'here and now', then it is mandatory that,

If God's will is that of humanization, Christians ought to be doing what God does; that is, they ought to be engaged in humanizing activity. If the moral order created by God is an order of justice and love, the "What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, love, mercy, and walk humbly with you God?" Theological ethics is necessarily involved in a process of theological interpretation of what occurs in experience and in history, since the vocation of the believer is to "respond to all actions upon him and to respond to God's action" in H. Richard Niebuhr's language, to be obedient to the command of God in Barth's language, to endorse and coincide with God's humanizing activity as Lehmann suggest, to be in accord with man's true tendencies and ends as God has created him to be, Thomaistic language.¹³⁴

The wombs of the young women being converted as baby production chambers for profiteering ought to be interpreted in the light of specific Christian commitment that emanates from the uniqueness and centrality of Jesus the Christ to our faith and the normative principle for elucidating what God wills in the world we live. And so, for the Christians, the starting and ending point—the Alpha and Omega and also for all ethical evaluation Jesus Christ—the human and divine becomes the norm, the value and operative principle. While affirming the goodness of the created order, it is important to recognize the very fact that the world in which we live promote that goodness amongst the fellow human beings,

¹³⁴ James M Gustafson, *Christ and the Moral Life*, New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1968, p. 266.

so that goodness will have to be nourished and sustained transferring hope and love, freedom and trust.

As we witness the phenomenon of human trafficking—exploiting the womb of young women to amass money unfolds the gravity of the issue that warrants us to take position between justice and injustice, life-destroying and life-affirming forces. Experiences of young innocent advasi women portray the depths of inhumanity they meted out and in the process had faced all sorts of dreadful experiences that robbed their womanhood and dignity. More importantly, a question that emerges at this point as Christian(s) is: what I or we to do in a situation like this? We are talking about the pathos and agony of thousands and millions of young women who suffer and undergo all sorts of exploitation day-in and day-out. What should be the Christian response and how are we to reconcile with trafficking of humans which is diabolic and de-humanizing? When faced with situation like this we need to consider multiplicity of things that come in our ways such as means and end that are possible and defensible, between loyalties and commitments that we hold and between various moral principles that can be brought to bear on the situation. So, we are often baffled when surrounded by competing ethical principles that inhibit our decision-making process. For instance,

To say that I will act to coincide with God's action—humanizing, or creating, sustaining, judging and redeeming—does not resolve the matters of choice. And if I admit that such theological interpretation as I engage in is inevitably unclear and inaccurate by virtue of my finiteness and various natural and willful biases. I can rely even less on my Christ informed interpretation to answer my moral question. There are no simple religious or theological resolutions to moral choices; they almost always involve choices between things that are each of some value and each of some perversity. To choose one is not to another, and with that choice

some possibilities are irrevocably lost and others are on the way to conditioning the course of my life and the events.¹³⁵

The above quotation opens up the predicament and ambiguities we as humans go through while making decisions. The whole process is indeed complex and cumbersome. For instance, in a situation like human trafficking "... the analyses and choices are human, made by finite creatures with various biases and perspectives, and as the effects of human agency they can never claim divine sanction unambiguously."¹³⁶ Therefore in situations like this Jesus Christ becomes the norm of our ethical discernment. The normative principle that illumines and undergirds Christian ethics for making ethical decisions is none other than Jesus Christ. Invoking and illumining his words and deeds that personify God's infinite love to humanity that reflects loving care and compassion and goodness and love for humans to sustain and survive. In Christ we are thus mandated in obedience to love which requires in-principled love or love in dialectic with equity, fairness and justice manifesting relational responsibility to self and the neighbor that directs us to do in given ambiguous context –specificities.

The whole process zeroes down to "Christ gives insight and direction; he shows something of the way in which his disciples are to follow. He helps them to see what options are more in conformity with the human good as it is understood in and through God's work and disclosure in him. He helps them to see what choices about ends to be sought and means to be used are in accord with trust in the goodness of God who gives and sustains life, and who acts to redeem it."¹³⁷ As human our response to the commands of Jesus Christ ought to be responsive to the course of events that affects the humanity of fellow human-beings. The mores that are employed and used for evaluation is not something that

¹³⁵ Ibid, pp. 267-268.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid, pp. 269-270.

an individual or a group has but more in tune to bring the oppressive forces under God's moral domain. In the process it is to establish one's personhood integrated around those who have been the victims and what she is and means.

Christian discipleship calls for doing what Christ asked us to do. It pre-supposes what Christians ought to do by ways of responding, participating and showing solidarity with those who have been trafficked, enslaved, raped and used as machines and in the process have lost their humanity and personhood. The struggle by all means should be between the life affirming forces as against life-negating forces. "In other words, simply checking trafficking will not help as long as centers of exploitation exist. Acquisition of sex slaves primarily occurs in one of these five ways: deceit (false job promises), sale by family, abduction (least popular as it complicates trafficking), seduction or romance (marriage), or recruitment by former slaves (rarer)," ¹³⁸ Kara says. Over and above, "In India, Dalits, tribal people and other marginalized communities are extremely vulnerable to trafficking and constitute a large proportion of the bonded labor force." ¹³⁹

It is undoubtedly modern slavery and "... is the third biggest organized crime globally and a \$10-billion industry." ¹⁴⁰ According to Sunitha Krishnan who works on these issues says that "The process of trafficking destroys the body, mind and soul of a person and a corresponding support system has to be in place to take care of this damage." ¹⁴¹ It is paradoxical that after drug and arms, human trafficking is the third largest profitable in the world and in that Jharkhand happens to be the worst victim in India and in that the trafficked girls are impregnated and made to bear children. Sunith Krishnan does use the soul of a

¹³⁸ Divya Trivedi, "A Call for Dignity" in *Frontline*, November 13, 2015, p. 105.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

person which M.M. Thomas calls it personhood. Personhood as normative principle ought to be taken more seriously in the case of those innocent production for higher profits. As a consequence their personhood is being totally crushed, badly wounded and deeply hurt. Personhood is undoubtedly one of the key normative principles that acts as the axel around which other categories hangs on, such as human rights, human dignity, equality, equity and fraternity. Personhood touches upon the most inner self—the core of selves that each and every women reveres the most. It is theirs and they would not allow others to inflict pain or intrude into it.

In such a vulgar and dehumanized scenario, the real alternative and our vocation ought to be humanization. It is unfortunate that this vocation has not been considered and thus negated. While on the other, the victims have been yearning for freedom and justice, and by their struggle they believe and hope to recover their lost humanity. Their humanity has been stolen. As Freire rightly articulates that “While the problem of humanization has always, from an axiological point of view, been humankind’s central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern.”¹⁴² Hence, “Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility. but as an historical reality.”¹⁴³ In this context of human trafficking, humanization is indeed a realizable possibility. The reason being those young tribal women wanted to live and be fully human, but could not be realized. And so, their humanity by all means would have to be restored. Therefore, as pointed out by Immanuel Kant that human beings are to be treated as means and ends, and certainly not as means for one’s ends.

¹⁴² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, London: Penguin Books, 1993, p. 25.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

SHRINKING GLOBALIZATION AND RISING NATIONALISM

HUMAN MIGRATION APPROACHED THROUGH AN ‘ETHIC OF HOSPITALITY’



Abstract

“Space”—social or economic or religio-cultural or political by and large has been inter-connected with each other—due to “globalization”. Presently, on the one hand, the space that has been thus far offered is shrinking while on the other, the spirit of nationalism is rising. In this dialectic-dynamic, bodies in search of free movement within and across borders for livelihood coupled with dignity, equality and equity is being defied and resisted. The entanglements between various spaces who want to migrate are appalling. People per se want to move freely in their private and public spaces within and between the defined and demarcated borders of the nation-states. Towards this end, they take decisions to cross borders, pass through them connecting the spaces they walk or sail through to newer destinies with newer vision, hopes and aspirations. Increasingly, their efforts to move to greener pastures have been thwarted. The rich nation-states in Europe and North America and also other developing countries are gripped with migration syndrome. Migration has eventually become the emergent phenomenon and an anathema for the developed countries as well as other countries as well.

As against the backdrop, this paper seeks to bring together the dialectic-dynamic between shrinking globalization and rising nationalism. It is dialectic because as one shrinks the other rises, which is apparent and natural. At the same time, it attempts to foreground the phenomenon of migration and in the process considers various factors taking into consideration the spaces that prompts those bodies that want to migrate and others who resist their entry. The paper explores the arguments—political, ideological, theological, ethical, moral and philosophical—put forth by those who opposes and supports and thus interfaces the issues connected to the phenomenon of migration. It challenges the dominant narratives of the “closed borders”, “constructing walls” by “Invoking stringent immigration policies” as the “nationalists” and “anti-migrants” promote and propagate. As against this background, the author invokes an ‘ethic of hospitality’ as a pragmatic approach to examine and evaluate the phenomenon of human migration in totality.

Key Words: Globalization Nationalism Migration Challenge Space dialectic-dynamic Public Space Nation-states Developed and Developing countries Dominant Narratives Close borders Immigration Policies moral ethical

Introduction

Human mobility has been there in the past and now it has become one of the major characteristics. Human mobility takes place at two levels—those who want to visit and tour around the world (tourism) and those who leave their domicile and cross borders for jobs or better future (social, economic or political). Hence, the migration phenomenon is age-old and can be traced all along the diverse contours of human history and also in the interface of civilization. Therefore, migration occurs by those who live in poorer countries who move to better destinations with in as well as outside for economic and other reasons. Human mobility is

occurring at alarming levels within and between nations--from the poorer countries to the richer terrains. Therefore, the phenomenon of migration has drastically brought about tumultuous changes.

We have been witnessing and experiencing a spate of incidences that draws dialectics and inference between globalization and nationalism. There has been much higher sale of labor mobility due to political turmoil triggered by totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, rising income inequalities within and across nations brought about by globalization itself and rising neo-fundamentalism. In a given scenario, an appraisal will be made to the factors that contribute to the shrinking space of globalization and increasing presence of nationalism, leading to the influx of migrants, which would in turn be examined and evaluated through the prism of Christian ethics. The purpose of this paper is to address the growing phenomenon of migration in a post-globalization world by examining more closely the movement of people—interrogating the changing contours of political economy within the Christian ethical framework and principles.

Changing World – Globalization and Nationalism in Perspective

For the past twenty five years or so, globalization has provided to us an alluring vision. Theologians, philosophers and politicians were indeed taken up by the new concept and embraced it with a hope that globalization would provide the prospect greater connectivity and common humanity. Undoubtedly globalization has connected the world into seamless webs and networks. But all these stupendous changes has not subsided the influx or reduced migration, rather it helped the populists to attack the protagonists of globalization. The rise of populism to a large extent is due to migration. Along with labor migration, migration of other kinds escalated in due course of time. Nonetheless, human migra-

tion is closely connected with other aspects of globalization and is influencing the debates of various disciplines.

There is no doubt that Brexit signal a major shift¹⁴⁴ Several analysts have described the move for Britain to leave out of European Union (EU) is of course a severe blow to globalization. The protagonists of globalization contend that the Western Europe reached the zenith of progress, prosperity and growth because of globalization. Those who are opposed to Brexit and voted against believe that Britain cannot remain as an isolated island. While on the other, the reasons posed for Brexit were: free movement of people across Europe particularly from Eastern European countries; the low-paid jobs in the U.K. have been taken over by migrants predominantly from the Eastern Europe; those from Britain felt that whatever was due for them (the nationals) has been usurped by the non-nationals vis-à-vis migrants.

The spirit of 'nationalism' runs high not only amongst the people of Britain, USA, Europe, but also in India too. The British, American, European nationals feel that their social, economic and private spaces have been taken over by the migrants from Asia and Africa, Latin Americans and others, which constitute a significant proportion of the population. All these factors led people to point out to globalization which is responsible and the sole culprit because the forces of globalization attempted at greater economic integration that has been interpreted as a loss of sovereignty and rise in inequality. Brexit and the rise of Trump and other far-right politics is indeed a direct attack to globalization. It is a vote against greater economic integration, multi-culturalism and borderless world.

Many right-wing political parties have made their inroads into the national politics. All these put together could lead to further disintegration of Europe and certainly will inflict lasting damage to the alliances

¹⁴⁴ Nadan Nilekani, "The New Road To Nirvana" in *India Today*, July 11, 2016, p. 20.

and co-operation between countries. Across the globe, the right-wing surge is sweeping fueling its politics on “nationalism” and has the potential to become a veritable tsunami not only in Europe but across the world. President Trump echoed that it’s “Americanism, not globalism, will be our credo.” Trump pledged to build “a great border wall” to stop illegal immigration and scrap all free trade agreements and replace them with a “new, fair trade policy that protects our jobs...”

He added that “I am going to bring our jobs back... to America and not going to let companies move to other countries, firing their employees along the way, without consequences,” pledging never to “sign any trade agreement that hurts our workers, or diminishes our freedom and independence.” “For many decades, we’ve enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry, subsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military.”¹⁴⁵ His belief that “the wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their home and then redistributed all across the world” is a gross exaggeration but useful as a spur to protectionism, restricting immigration and bringing back border.¹⁴⁶ India is not an exception. We have been witnessing a spate of incidences and narratives that glaringly portray and define who are the nationalists and patriots and who are not. RSS-BJP combine systematically pushes its ideology of Hindu nationalism and its notion of patriotism. Towards that end it is engaged in polarization and divisive action plan. Subscribing to their programs and politics has been considered as nationalists and patriots and others as anti-nationals.

However, in India in recent times, the notions on nationalism and its interpretations have reached alarming proportions. Nationalism has reached a high voltage concept which garners diverse understanding amongst people of various shades. Amidst a maze of understandings, former President of India, Pranab Mukerjee’s exposition on nationalism

¹⁴⁵ Rakesh Sood, “Navigating a Trumpian World”, in “The Hindu”, p.8.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

is more than sufficient. Addressing the bi-centenary celebrations of the founder of Aligarh Muslim University, Sir Syed Ahamed Khan, at Aligarh University on the 17th of October, 2017, said that ‘nationalism can neither be imposed by law nor implemented by decree or be enforced by a dictum.’

He said that attempts to ‘redefine’ nationalism were unnecessary. “There have been, from time to time, attempts to redefine nationalism. According to me, such attempts are unnecessary, since our concepts of nationalism and national identity predate the modern-post-modern constructs of identity,” the former President said. He cautioned that we need to distinguish the Indian concept of nationalism from the idea of European nation-state. When asked to give an example, he pointed out the AMU was “a perfect example of Indian nationalism and ethos, where students from different religions, ethnicity, linguistic backgrounds and culture integrate and work together in productive ways.”

Migration in a Global World

In today’s inter-connected world, human mobility is one of the major defining aspects of the 21st Century. It engulfs people of diverse backgrounds irrespective of caste, class, creed and nationality. Migration is manifested through diverse dimension and triggered due to numerous factors. Millions of people are forcibly displaced pushed out of their homes and countries by hunger, violence and human rights’ violations or with a hope of better prospects. All such people who have been forcibly uprooted can be grouped together under the category of migrants. Migration pattern in modern times is also changing. For example, the large—and widening gap between the highly industrialized countries and poorer developing countries on the other, along with the socio-economic and political processes of globalization contributed to the escalation of migration and thus paved way for the emergence of ‘politics of populism’.

The phenomenon of migration is on the rise. For instance, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Global Trends report, 65.3 million people were displaced from their homes by conflict and persecution in 2015, up from 59.5 million a year earlier. As the days pass-by the figures go higher and higher. It is not just the total number of displaced which is growing, but also the rate at which people are fleeing is also rising rapidly. A decade ago if six people fled per minute, in 2015, it has risen to 24 people every minute now. The UNHCR in its report observed that the total number of displaced people has roughly doubled since 1997 and grown by 50 per cent since the start of the civil war in Syria in 2011. It points that over half the total number of refugees last year came from just three countries—Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia. It is a matter of deep concern too that 51 per cent of those forced out of their home and countries were children. Many of them have been separated from their parents or travelling alone and are highly vulnerable to being trafficked. It is not out of their own choice but due to the circumstances many are forced to migrate and eventually assume refugee status.

The scale of forced migration is growing at appalling levels. For instance, the data on forced migration in 2015 reveal that 65.3 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide, out of which 21.3 million were refugees, 3.2 million were asylum seekers and 40.8 were internally displaced. In the year 2015, an estimated 12.4 million people were newly displaced, which accounts for 24 persons displaced per minute or 34,000 persons displaced per day. The Commissioner for UNHCR estimates that there are over 10 million stateless persons, though data from 78 countries admit to only 3.7 million stateless individuals. In the last couple of years the world is witnessing unprecedented movement of people from economically poorer, war/conflict affects regions, poverty

and hunger prone areas for livelihood.¹⁴⁷ In 2015 alone, it is estimated that over 1.8 million migrants crossed into Europe and over 1.35 million refugees claimed asylum in several European countries. Over one million refugees arrived by sea and another 35,000 by land to Europe in 2015.¹⁴⁸

UNHCR report reiterates that the problem has reached alarming heights and the trend shows grim scenario. The challenges that the refugees are monumental because day-by-day they keep multiplying and mounting. Apart from strict border controls, the journey they take from the port of origin is horrendous and life-threatening. Hardly some survive and many during the journey perish as they longed to reach the European destinations. In recent years, huge numbers of asylum seekers for a variety of reasons take their journey to different destinations particularly to Europe. Internally most of the European countries especially the Western Europe face stiff opposition from their citizens for accommodating asylum seeker in their countries. The number of the refugees is inflating in greater numbers, and so discussions of the refugee problems have become the major pre-occupation of the European Union. Most the discussions revolve around how to stop the migrants, rather than the causes and sufferings of the refugees. Many countries are devising ways and means to close the borders.

The West wanted to impose their notions of democracy and rule of law, and in the process eliminated the strong leaderships. The vacuum has been replaced by fanatics and fundamentalists, despotic and totalitarian regimes who have converted these countries into places of doom from where the refugees hail. Now they do not know how to handle the crises and left them in the lurch. Because of the wrong policies and approaches the innocent people have to suffer and face all sorts of mis-

¹⁴⁷ See the Editorial by Denzil Fernandes, "Social Action", Jan-March 2017, Vol 67, no 1, p. iii.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

eries. The conditions are such that pushes the people to go on a mass exodus. The West is responsible for creating the conflicts that made the conditions worse leading to mass exodus. Their role in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya are the glaring example. Now they cannot escape from the problem, since they are the creators of the problems and they should address the causes and effects.

The nation-states are increasingly becoming ultra-rightist, popular and regressive. Nationalism is taking over the political discourses and thus occupying the centre-stage. Refugees and migration are shown as the cause and the effects are projected as the main agenda by the nationalists and protagonists who play their politics around these. We have many proponents who speak vociferously against some countries and communities and thus become champions of those who want their borders to shut and immigration policies to be tightened. Globalization is shrinking. We live in an era of post-globalization. In this emergent context the notions of nationalism is on the rise. It is spreading like wild fire across the world. Undoubtedly the dialectic between shirking globalization and rising nationalism is more evident and visible. In this arrangement each country wants to protect its ethnicity, majority identities by erecting walls and fences across its borders, so that its resources and fruits of labor will be appropriated by the natives, and not by the 'aliens'.

The notions of "nation" and "nationalism" in this context are undergoing sea changes leading to protectionism and parochialism leading to binaries such as 'we and the other'. These tendencies have given rise to xenophobic attacks, increasing globalization and civil wars along ethnic lines. Since 2015 we have been witnessing an upsurge in refugee population, starting with the Syrian crisis and the latest Rohingyas of Myanmar whose exodus in millions to Bangladesh considered as the worst ever ethnic cleaning in the modern history. It has been triggered by the

fundamentalist Buddhist military junta of Myanmar targeting the Muslims torching their houses and lynching them indiscriminately.

‘Common Humanity’: A Framework for Addressing Migration

The global order has changed drastically. Much hyped seamless and borderless world has been subsumed and thus altered by the forces of populism and far-right conservatism. It is sweeping the countries across the world at alarming levels. As the years pass by, the entire world would be gripped under and eventually be subsumed by populist rhetoric. One major contributory element for the phenomenal growth of populism to grow in the West and also the rest of the world is the refugee and migrant problems. Echoing the gravity of the refugee and migration phenomena, former UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon echoed that “We are facing the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time. Above all, this is not just a crisis of numbers; it is also a crisis of solidarity.” Even Pope Francis expressed that “Migrants and refugees are now pawns of the chessboard of humanity. They are children, women and men who leave or are forced to leave their homes for various reasons, who share a legitimate desire for knowing and having, but above all for being more.”

In the name of ‘development’ political discourses and dominant narratives has downplayed the fact that human persons with rights and aspirations. For them, the phenomenon of migration does not reflect human pathos and predicament. The State is concerned with the control of borders and national security by posing questions of whom should have access and how the integration of migrants should take place. The nation-states that run by populist and far-right conservative politics are engaged in formulating policies on migration forgetting to preserve and maintain a balance between the economic role and the human rights of migrants harnessing smooth integration calling comity of nations to

agree on binding agreements. Realizing ‘common humanity’ could perhaps be a framework for migration. There are two basic requirements needed in this framework: 1) the human person must remain the priority at all times particularly when mass of people become subjects of migration experience and 2) the pain and pathos, traumas and despair faced by the migrants and be considered as the most-disadvantaged people on the face of the earth.

The overarching foundational theological-ethical principle on which the entire framework hangs on is: The God in Jesus Christ taking the human form lives amongst us. This is the ever-living theologico-ethical pinnacle that God in Jesus Christ and humans have converged—come into fruition. This is the base foundational overarching principle on which the phenomenon of migration will have to be addressed and examined. God becoming human to this world in Jesus Christ manifests the unconditional love manifested to the whole of humanity—God so loved the World and He gave His only Son, so that humanity shall be redeemed. The salvation history of humanity vests and rests in Jesus Christ. The coming together of the Dive-Human is made possible in and through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The mystery of the Incarnation reveals how God up there and Humans down here coming to the earth by sharing the human condition. God became known in and through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. This is the grandeur. Upon this framework human migration hinges on.

Towards an “Ethics of Hospitality”

Exodus of people in massive and unprecedented scales within and between countries and continents are now the new reality we should reckon with. In the new and emergent scenario, welcoming strangers is to be understood as a justice issue, not just charity or an obligation or option. A basic theological and ethical premise and vision we revolve around is on the belief and affirmation that all persons are equal and thus

images of God (Gen. 1:26) and in that creation of humans in God's image are the jewel and the priceless gift. God's redemption is realized and thus become a reality to all the people of God—to the whole humanity. It candidly reinforces that "I have come so that you may have life and in abundance" (John 10:10). This is the affirmation that encompasses all—the whole universe and the humanity and in that all may have life and life in abundance. It categorically specifies that not just a fraction of people who hold on to their nationality, identity and other paraphernalia, but all in totality. Our affirmation endorses this aspect that we include those who are vulnerable and should seize the opportunity that migrants as people of God who have no place resonate in line with 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me' (Matt. 25:35).

God in Jesus of Nazareth by taking the lowest human form was born in a manger without any nationality and identity. He represents himself as a stranger, nomad and migrant. So, Jesus of Nazareth being born as a human person is the most important category of God's incarnation. This is why God became human and in God's created order human beings occupy the central stage. In such a situation God becoming Human shows God in Jesus expressed His solidarity with those who have no place to go. Therefore, "In the mystery of redemption that human person is made able to host God in himself, becoming a stranger to what hurts authentic communion, respectful of diversity and oriented toward the eschatological fullness of unity."¹⁴⁹ Under these circumstances, it becomes a categorical imperative that

"Thus migration offer a symbolic interpretation of life, serve as a reminder of a creation without borders, and require that the religious rights of people be implemented as part of the overall sense

¹⁴⁹ Quoted by Solange Lefebvre et al in *Migration in a Global World*, London: SCM Press, 2008, p.25.

of justice that should direct relations among peoples rich and poor and among individual persons.”¹⁵⁰

We need to address and thus embark on the issue of migration which has spiralled in colossal proportions. It should move along a Christian ethical foundation propelled by its experience and normative principles. Therefore, any approach should take into account the social and political dynamics that triggers migration, resulting in protection of all people who have been displaced and uprooted from their land will have to be a priority. Welcoming and accommodating the uprooted people with open arms exhibits the spirit of hospitality, which has been the mores of any religion. Therefore, the comity of nations should welcome the strangers who have no place to go by showing love, compassion and solidarity.

“Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” (Heb 13:1—3). This attitude and openness will have to be the categorical imperative and need of the hour. By opening our borders and doors and welcoming the strangers belonging to diverse faith persuasion unfolds totally new and different experience and meaning to us as well as to the ethos of nations. Migration is tearing apart the people, communities, societies and countries and in the process changing the contours of international politics. So, an ethic of hospitability can be used as an instrument and approach for building a common humanity thereby the world would eventually become home of the one human family—a common humanity.

Ethic of hospitality emanates from the ethical certainty of homelessness premised on the fact that Christ, the stranger. This fact reverberates in the following verse “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58). The theological motif may be varying and the context in

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 25-26.

which it was said is descriptive and detailed, and yet open to subsequent interpretation. Jesus renounces the familial and national identities. He deliberately displaces himself and intentionally becomes homeless, for the sake of Kingdom and its proclamation. While proclaiming God's Kingdom 'Here and Now' it presupposes discipleship that calls for responsibility for another. Responsibility requires a prior openness to the other and in this case 'relational'.

Human freedom has always been relational—in relation to the other. Likewise, human freedom and responsibility enmeshed 'in relation to the other'. In H.R. Niebuhr's words it is 'relational responsibility'. This equation is dynamic and dialectic, and thus compliments each other. I as an individual assume greater significance and purpose in relation to the other. Only in that 'otherness' my 'I' as an individual acquires greater value. Human person is supposed to act responsibility and in the case of migrants how far have we acted responsibly. Those individuals and communities who are stranded outside their locales, boundaries and structures—whether geographical, social, or cultural—imposed by a State that determines that they should be out.

The State in this case the State acts like a 'rogue state', because those who have been driven out are the citizens with all entitlements and yet treated as aliens. At the same time some other foreign countries in this case like Germany and Bangladesh welcoming the migrants who eventually became refugees unfolds the ethic of hospitality. By offering to the outsides, strangers and aliens unfold other horizons and thus rekindle the possibility to 'reorient the politics of the State and those who are stuck with narrow parochial ideologies. Certainly it restores the morality of politics right across the world which is gripped under populism and far-right conservatism that displays antagonism, intolerance and insensitivity towards 'others' because they are different and do not look like them. Hence, along with the ethical and theological reflection

geared around 'ethic of hospitality', we are now mandated to work on the 'politics of majoritarianism, ethnic cleansing and migration'.

The State if it becomes a rogue state abdicating all its responsibility and drives out those in minority status as part of its political project who eventually become homeless and displaced, how and in what ways that the comity of nations could possibly respond? The struggle is between the powerful State and the non-state actors' vis-à-vis migrants. Over and above, the emergent politics of right-wing nationalism believes in securing and sealing their borders and creating numerous obstacles to keep the migrants and other foreigners at a distance so that the identity of sameness intact. Difference is difficult to accommodate. It can never be assimilated, but only be excluded. The present political climate particularly in the United States, Britain and India and in other parts of the world, the right-wing nationalistic governments show a lot of commonalities and thus converge: exclusion of difference and the maintenance of original identity as part of their politics.

The emergent scenario poses more difficulties than ever because those who move out of their locales now labeled as non-persons without identity. Now migrants are increasingly regulated and must have cards and numbers with bio-metrics. So, what is happening is "Borders must be maintained, and immigration must be controlled. Identity must be assured in the name of security, but also to exclude the different from the same. In short, the other must be identified, even though the other already has his or her own identity which may transcend the limits imposed by an identity-conferring State."¹⁵¹ The migration issue has ripped open the falsity of nation-states who talk about inter-dependence and mutual co-existence. The far-right politics of nationalism do not want the 'other' to pollute their identities. They are now moving ahead of curtailing and controlling the migrants at all levels. But the counter-

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 65.

narrative and political project ought to be undoubtedly an ethic of hospitality and politics of accommodation.

Conclusion

To sum up, the nation-states are engaged in the demarcation of territories; control of borders and boundaries. But when it comes to homeless or displaced, the whole sphere or domain that they occupy is above the nations. “In other words, the significance of space is ethically determined, and the ethical determination of space places in place in question – and gives it significance.”¹⁵² ‘Space’ plays an important part in human existence and this space be it social, cultural, economic and political is being gradually appropriated by the dominant and the privileged. The immigrants and migrants who have been forced to leave their locales end up in a space which is foreign, hostile, volatile and totally different. What then is the way out? It is the ‘ethic of hospitality’ that needs to be invoked. “Hospitality is culture itself and simply one ethic among other. Indeed, ‘ethics is hospitality and so thoroughly extensive with the experience of hospitality’.”¹⁵³

Delving into the notion of ‘hospitality’ Derrida further explicates that “Derrida draws attention to a more original and ethically inscribed notion of hospitality, which orders that ‘borders be open to each and every one, to every other, to all who might come, without question and without their even having to identify who they are or whence they came.’”¹⁵⁴ “For Derrida, ‘the law of an unconditional hospitality’ is an a priori and realizable – not simply ‘a pious and irresponsible desire’ – even though it must be enacted within a particular, and possibly per-

¹⁵² Ibid, 66.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

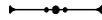
verse, historical space.”¹⁵⁵ This should be the spirit and ethic of the nation-states. But hardly do we see that and consequently the migrants become the hostage.

In such a context, hospitality and its implications as an ethical yardstick, assumes greater value and thus become a measure of humanity. Those who seek refuge and migrant status are yearning for humanity and so with our open arms we should extend our humanity. Humanity is the core of this earthly city since it concerns justice. The reason being God’s created order has enough but a few enjoy and many are deprived. The strangers who knocks at our door steps or borders could perhaps be migrants or refugees or strangers, should never be calculated from an economic or political or as the ‘other’, but as persons with value.

The new world order is transforming economic and social relations. The politics of populism has narrowed the nation-states into enclaves. It has created new forms of vulnerability on the one hand and on the other new sources of wealth and power. Migrants who flee the disruptions of home polity, policies and economies are vulnerable to oppression and exploitation. We are witnessing a new phenomenon vis-à-vis global nomadism; which is a new way of life. In this global nomadism people are treated differently and measured variedly, and so justice, equality, one value and one person ought to become the normative principles to measure persons. Something has to be done; we cannot turn a blind eye to the plight of those beyond their borders. They are also humans and have the right to live with dignity, freedom, equality and humanity on this earth.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

DE-CODING AMBEDKKAR'S NOTIONS ON AUTHENTIC HUMANITY ROOTED IN EGALATARIAN REVOLUTION



Prologue

B.R. Ambedkar, one of the most unique and revered personas, known for versatile scholarship, intellectual acumen, academic rigor and pragmatism hardly be understood not just by viewing through single prism, because his veracity and versatility often goes beyond our comprehension, and therefore be viewed through multiple prisms. Over and above, his understanding, analysis and interpretations particularly about the Indian society have been phenomenal and multi-faceted. Therefore, to understand Babasaheb Ambedkar, it is important to go through all his works, because his works are studded with ideas and thus nuanced. His know-how on varied issues and subjects has been ground-breaking that unfolds horizons of understanding.

De-coding of Ambedkar's understanding of issues that concerns democracy, constitution, caste, Hinduism, equality, liberty, fraternity and host of others revolves around one of the most important and nerve-breaking notions that was close to him was humanity. B.R. Ambedkar in his own ways articulated what's this humanity all about? So, he struggled hard to bring about and thus establish authentic humanity. To bring

about authentic humanity he articulated in-depth the notion of equality by pitching at the centre the egalitarian revolution. Hence, B.R. Ambedkar invoked egalitarian revolution in a society/country where inequality at all levels prevailed and to root out the social-economic, political-cultural and religious ills and structural imbalances, he mooted egalitarian revolution.

As against this scenario, this essay delves into the landscape candidly stratified and hierarchical propelled by a system known as caste. It has graded the individuals and communities based on birth thereby directly linked to occupation manifesting graded inequality thereby subjugating those who are born in the bottom rungs and outside the system of caste as well. Having lived for generations, those at the bottom rungs of the system of caste and outside have been treated as sub-humans and thus treated as Untouchables in the country where they are born and contributes their intellectual and physical labor in various ways. In such an appalling situation, equality becomes the most important principle that promotes resolve, resilience and revolution. The overarching principle that regulates Ambedkar has always been the notion of humanity which he time and again brought it to the centre stage. To establish authentic humanity egalitarian revolution becomes the pre-requisite.

Caste as The as Base Structure

In a caste stratified Indian society, those who have been considered as 'menials' and lesser 'human beings' named as 'untouchables'—who are unworthy to be touched, and therefore liable to do the jobs that 'others' who are born in the upper layers of the caste schema are not supposed to do the jobs of the 'untouchables' who by virtue of having born in that rung are expected to do. Even now, in the 21st Century—the so-called 'New India' Untouchability is practiced and widely prevalent. Those who are born at the bottom layer of caste system (the shudras) as well as outside the caste system (avarnas) involved in the burial of dead

animals, skinning out the cattle, leather tanning and leather processing, carrying the human excreta and host of others.

Caste system is about 2500-3000 thousand years old and those who consider themselves as so-called dominant castes and call those born in the defined and allocated slots as 'untouchables' moved on and journeyed with those tags given by the so-called 'upper-castes'. Histories of those belonging to dominant castes and the 'Untouchables' moved on. After India becoming an independent Republic, having its own Constitution, refers this category (Untouchables) as 'Scheduled castes'. More than seven decades passed by the so-called 'scheduled castes' moved on. Out of some, the most important happenings that the so-called 'Untouchables' or 'Scheduled castes' wanted that they are to be called as Dalits, which means '*dal*' both in Sanskrit and in Hebrew means 'oppressed', 'exploited', 'broken' so and so forth. Further, the term Dalit has its political connotation that endorses 'pride', 'selfhood', 'rights' and 'dignity'. Dalit, by and large, is an assertive, affirmative and empowering category.

Dalit as an affirmative, empowering and all-embracing political category emerged as a historical reality alongside the most-dehumanizing historical antecedents wherein the so-called 'untouchables' or 'scheduled castes' undergoing harrowing experiences. Name changing or name of the community who represents about 18 per cent of the Indian population from 'Untouchables'—'Schedules Castes—to—Dalits an upward movement in the historical trajectories of the Dalits. It simply denotes that from 'objects' of patronizing/charity' to subjects of history; from disempowered lot to empowered community, leading to political bargaining that determines India's course of political history.

As against this backdrop, the Government at the Centre ruled by the right-wing Hindu party, BJP came out with a notification that the Union social justice minister Thawarchand Gehlot said "media should stick to the constitutional term "Scheduled Caste' while referring to Dalits as

there are objection to the term “Dalit”. Following a Bombay High Court order, Union Information and Broadcasting ministry has issued an advisory to all private satellite channels asking them to “refrain” from using the nomenclature “Dalit”. A notification by the Government at the Centre that dismisses the growth and development of the term ‘Dalit’ by issuing a notification ‘not to use the word ‘Dalit’ show something more to it. Going back to etymology of the word, Subodh Ghildiyal and Swati Mathur, points out that way back in 1831, it was an army officer of the East India Company, J.J. Molesworth, who mentioned the word “Dalit” in a Marathi-English dictionary.

JNu sociologist Vivek Kumar traced the roots of the word tracing further back in history. “Dalit is found in Buddhist text Culluvagga Vinaya Pittaka.” However, for many Dalits and those who believe in the annihilation of caste and emancipation of the Dalits go back to BSP founder Kanshi Ram, who travelled across the country in his mission of mobilizing the masses extensively by introducing and employing the term ‘Dalits’ in their struggle for self-respect. Since then, some of the terms such as ‘Harijan’—meaning ‘children of god’ given by Gandhi and others that started neutralizing the struggles of the Dalits came under serious scrutiny and contestations. Kanshi Ram pitched the word Dalit as against the ‘Harijan’ and thus dubbed it as patronizing and humiliating. Kanchi Ram, while de-mythologizing asked sarcastically that: If we are god’s children, are castes Hindus the children of the devil?” Since then, Dalit movements of all shades and political parties started using the term ‘Dalit’ keep gaining importance and relevance across the country and all over the world.

The term Dalit has given the Dalits an affirmative identity that ignited each and every Dalit to assert him/her socially, as a community culturally and politically. 2500-3000 years of shame and discrimination that has been tolerated by different names christened by the so-called ‘dominant castes’ has been consigned to something of the past—the names

such as “asprashya” (Untouchable), “antag” (last born), “antwaseen” (residing last) as something socially constructed with the sanction of Brahmanic Hinduism. Names attributed to the Dalits historically cruised through quite a number of trajectories by those who gave high-sounding names but have shown their caste biases and prejudices.

The term ‘Dalit’ has been coined by the oppressed and the exploited that conveys a comprehensive and fuller meaning of what they should be called as. When a community christens a name to itself attaches more value and significance, than that of the oppressors and exploiters. Names of course have their value and onus on the community that it represents. None from outside can meddle and tamper with it. As against the back drop, the Centre has issued a notification to the media that it should refrain from using the term Dalit. What made the Centre which tows Hindu majoritarianism and polarization politics at this point gave a directive to the media that infers Dalits. It is notorious, but nefarious politics.

BJP and others who subscribe to majoritarian politics invoke the term ‘scheduled caste’ by B.R. Ambedkar be used, so that, there would be uniformity. BJP cannot and any more digest the ways with which the Dalit affirm their rights as subjects and citizens, and thus show their resolve and resilience whenever they are attacked and humiliated. Sangh Parivar is determined to de-code the word Dalit and is keen to bring all those Dalits within the ambit of ‘Scheduled Castes’. In this way they want the Dalits should be brought back to the system of caste. Thus far, the term ‘Dalits’ signified radical and revolutionary postures that unleashes ‘captivity’ and ‘domination’ and with the re-introduction, BJP and Co wants to group the Dalits within the domain of ‘scheduled caste’.

The BJP Government at the Centre is clever enough to notify the media first, because the term ‘Dalit’ has assumed global character and acceptance. Media being the fourth pillar of democracy and has huge influence in the civil society and amongst the general populace, the

notification states ‘stop using the term ‘Dalit’. The moves of the Government have to be resisted and the Government cannot unilaterally decide, since the name ‘Dalit’ carries lots of socio-religio-cultural sanctity, historicity and political significance and momentum. And do not pitch B.R. Ambedkar and justify the notification, because B.R. Ambedkar regretted of being born as a Hindu, but said he shall never die as Hindu, and thus rejected Hinduism and embraced another religion. The following section conveys the manifestations of its gory character in facets of the Indian society.

Caste and its Nefarious Manifestations

EPISODE 1: DOCTOR KILLS SELF, FAMILY BLAMES DOWRY, HARASSMENT & CASTEISM

A Hyderabad-based anesthesiologist killed herself by overdosing on pills late on Tuesday night, 30 October, in Alwal in Hyderabad, allegedly over dowry harassment and caste discrimination by her in-laws¹⁵⁶. Jaya Sree had married Gangiseti Karthik, a general physician, in 2015. Police said that Jaya had spoken to her husband and in-laws before taking her life.

According to Guruvaiah, Jaya’s father, Jaya and Karthik pursued MBBS from China where they met and got to know each other. While Karthik belonged to the Naidu community, generally considered a privileged caste, Jaya belonged to the SC Madiga community. Speaking to TNM, Guruvaiah said that when Jaya informed them about Karthik, they were initially against the marriage as he belonged to a ‘dominant’ caste and they were worried that their daughter might face caste discrimination...

¹⁵⁶ This story was first published on *The News Minute* and has been republished with permission.

The preliminary investigation suggests that she consumed the pills as her husband was returning home. She was found unconscious by her in-laws. The family then rushed Jaya to a hospital, but the doctors declared her brought dead. Her father was informed of her death after her body was shifted to the mortuary of the state-run Gandhi Hospital in the city for an autopsy...

Caste at a Tea Shop

Just before the 2016 Tamil Nadu Assembly election, I was sent to do a story on the relevance and legacy of two important icons: U. Muthuramalinga Thevar and Immanuel Sekaran, who are revered by the Thevar and Devendra Kula Vellalar (Dalit) communities, respectively.

I visited Andipatti, Usilampatti, and other villages and towns in and around Madurai, where the impact of these icons is visible. But it was only during my visits to the memorials of these two leaders that I really understood the extent of social inequality and discrimination against Dalits in these districts. At around the same time, with the then Chief Minister Jayalalithaa deciding not to align with any caste outfit, small caste outfits formed an alliance and vowed to defeat the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), which was looking to get re-elected.

The leaders of smaller Thevar outfits such as the All India Forward Bloc and the Moovendar Munnetra Kazhagam dismissed talk that the AIADMK would continue to get unwavering support from the Thevars and insisted that the name Muthuramalinga Thevar and his symbol (lion) still appealed strongly to the voters.

I was invited by a party cadre of one of these smaller caste outfits to Muthuramalinga Thevar's memorial in Pasumpon in Ramanathapuram district. At the memorial, he told me how no political party that was serious about winning an election could ignore Thevar or the communi-

ty. In the evening, I visited Immanuel Sekaran's memorial in Paramakudi, which is located in the same district. In contrast to Thevar's memorial, this one wore a deserted look and was locked from the outside.

I waited outside the memorial, hoping to find someone who could open the memorial gates. An old woman, who was selling juice and tea at a small stall, asked me who I was and what I was doing outside the memorial. I told her why I was there. We started talking about why the Thevars only voted for the AIADMK and for Jayalalithaa. She then said: "This memorial is a huge problem. Often people start shouting slogans outside and the situation becomes tense. So it is mostly locked unless there is an event."

As I prepared to leave, she asked me if I would like to drink something from her shop. When I initially refused, she said: "Don't worry, I am also a Thevar, you can drink from my shop. We are not them." --
Udhav Naiq

Blinds Justice

Supreme Court ruling adding procedural safeguards for accused under SC/ST Atrocities Act shows that judiciary needs to be sensitized to the operation of caste in Indian society. The abysmal 2-3 per cent conviction rate in atrocity cases explains the unabated impunity with which caste crimes continue to this day across the country.

In November 1995, while dismissing Bhanwari Devi's plea for justice, the district sessions judge remarked that the upper-caste men (the five accused included a Brahmin and the rest Gujjars) could not have raped a Dalit woman at the cost of defiling their caste purity. Twenty-two years later, the Indian judiciary's caste blindness shows little sign of ebbing. Last month, the Supreme Court (SC), no less, tightened the provisions concerning registration of cases under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, seemingly to avoid "instances of abuse" of the law by "vested interests". This comes

in the wake of the sinister Bhima Koregaon violence in Maharashtra less than three months ago.

The SC ruling in Subhash K Mahajan vs State of Maharashtra was in a bid to protect public servants from being threatened by the fraudulent invocation of the above-said Act in the course of discharging their bona fide duties. The court was specifically worried by the spectre of “imminent arrest” facing the accused in such cases. However, in expressing such concern, the bench has failed to establish the prevalence, to any degree, of such abuse of the law. In fact, the court has mandated that the arrest of a public servant under the Act must be approved by the appointing authority whereas that of a non-public servant must be approved by a senior superintendent of police. Thus, it has taken a single case to make a blanket amendment to the law, which has implications for all atrocity accused and not just public servants.

Contentions over the use of the atrocities law are as old as the law itself in India. These contentions have sharpened since the Act was amended in 2016 — the amendments, especially the introduction of Section 4 which punishes neglect of duty by errant investigating officers, increased its stringency. This has not led to an increase in convictions but has certainly raised the stakes for members of the bureaucracy who actively collude with upper-dominant caste perpetrators in hampering cases filed under the Act.

The procedural safeguards introduced by the SC serve to embolden perpetrators of atrocities and weaken the struggles of Dalits/Adivasis for justice. A study conducted by the author on cases of caste/sexual atrocities against Dalit women in rural Maharashtra in 2016-17 revealed that a long history of everyday humiliations and assaults by the perpetrator(s) preceded the climactic episode of violence, which prompted the complainant to break her silence and invoke the law. Even then, the battle of registering a complaint was an uphill one. In all three cases, the FIRs were filed in adverse circumstances (two were filed well past midnight,

and one in hospital), with the complainant outnumbered by the kith and kin of the accused present in the police station, dissuading her from registering a complaint. It often took the persuasive intervention of civil society activists and/or local media to compel the police into registering an FIR.

Even after the FIR is registered, the perpetrators, often in connivance with the police, tamper with evidence, coerce witnesses into turning hostile, instigate villagers to sign bonds stating that the complainant is of poor character or a trouble-maker, and lure the complainants' family with monetary compensation, towards weakening the case or coaxing the complainant to withdraw. If and when, the complainant refuses to withdraw, perpetrators who are usually the village elite effectively issue further threats and social boycotts against the complainant and her supporters, only piling up the odds against her. Thus, when perpetrators fail to avert an FIR, their next alternative is to hamper the investigation leading to a weak charge sheet and the inevitable closure report. These are some of the reasons why 15-16 per cent of atrocity cases meet a premature end at the magistrate's desk, as noted by the Court.

These attempts at intimidation and active obstruction by perpetrators mar the fate of cases in courts too. Such pressure outside the courts, coupled with the historic caste blindness of the judiciary heavily stacks the odds against Dalit/Adivasi petitioners, already reeling from the trauma of the atrocity itself. The abysmal 2-3 per cent conviction rate in atrocity cases explains the unabated impunity with which caste crimes continue to this day across the country. Yet, in a perfect instance of obverse logic, this figure has been trumpeted as evidence of the fact that most atrocity cases are "frivolous or motivated". In arriving at this extraordinary conclusion, the SC has company in the Maratha morchas of Maharashtra, who demanded the very abolition of the Atrocities Act in light of the above argument.

Advocacy for improving the implementation of the law and stringency of its provisions, too, is also as old as the law. Today, the politically conscious and articulate constituency of Dalits has begun to report, support and follow up atrocity cases. The fear and shame are slowly giving way to assertion and resistance. It is this attitudinal change that has shaken the caste complex everywhere. And most upper-dominant castes believe that the Atrocities Act emboldens such consciousness and grants it immunity from further retribution. This explains and fuels the popular angst this legislation.

The Supreme Court's proposed safeguards will not go unopposed. Despite the routine as well as spectacular indignities Dalits face in the cultural realm and political economy, they have time and again invested faith in the law and Constitution. It is this faith which has been put to the test by the Court's recent ruling. The judiciary needs to be sensitized to the nature and operation of caste in Indian society if it is to uphold this faith. The only thing worse than denying justice to a historically oppressed people is to falsify their trauma. Unraveling the truth in acts of willing and dehumanizing violence, for which there is a seeming tolerance in society, requires an unsparing law. The truth of caste oppression must be uncloaked, for there can be no reconciliation without truth. (The writer Anisha George is assistant editor at the *Economic and Political Weekly*, Mumbai, April 3, 2018).

Dalit Woman Heckled¹⁵⁷

The incident took place around noon when student was walking to the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Government Girls College in Seoni district, Madhya Pradesh. Police officials said the accused, 38-year-old Anil Mishra, got down from his motorcycle and dragged the woman to the roadside by her hair. He allegedly pushed the victim to the ground

¹⁵⁷ Published Aug 20, 2018.

and smashed her head with a big stone lying nearby, said Kotwali police station in-charge.

A 23-year-old Dalit student was killed in Madhya Pradesh's Seoni district on Monday after she was dragged by her hair while on her way to college and her head smashed with a stone by a man who was allegedly putting pressure on her to withdraw the sexual harassment complaint against him, police said. The incident took place around noon when the student was walking to the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Government Girls College in Seoni district, around 350 km from Bhopal, police officials said.

Police officials said the accused, 38-year-old Anil Mishra, got down from his motorcycle and dragged the woman to the roadside by her hair. He allegedly pushed the victim to the ground and smashed her head with a big stone lying nearby, said Kotwali police station in-charge Arvind Jain. Some people rushed to help and overpowered Mishra. The woman, who was seriously injured and bleeding profusely, died while being taken to a hospital, Jain said. Mishra, who has been arrested, *prima facie* committed the crime as the victim refused to withdraw the sexual harassment case against him, said KK Verma, Seoni sub-divisional officer (police). Both are residents of a village in Seoni district, Verma said, adding that further investigation is on.

Caste is Not Dead: It lingers on in Workplaces, Universities, and at Home

Two days ago, I found outside my door a food delivery brochure that read, 'Food for Brahmins (Iyengars)'. Despite the prevalence of everyday casteism, it is not uncommon to see Indians, especially in the middle and upper class, speak of caste as an anachronism. Though economic structures have undergone significant changes, caste lingers on in India

— not just in politics, as is widely believed, but to sustain social relations.

While Surinder S. Jodhka's *Caste in Contemporary India* examines questions of untouchability, social mobility, and Dalit activism, a particularly telling portion in the book is on how caste is seen in the very shining example of modern India: the corporate sector. Jodhka finds how inclusion is not part of a capitalist society, even though it is argued that people are judged according to their merits. Even HR departments, involved in the crucial tasks of recruitment and promotions, are filled with upper caste people, he finds, and while merit is the main criterion for recruitment, caste prejudices play a crucial role in judging the soft skills of candidates.

If Jodhka's book is focussed on Dalits in Punjab and Haryana, Sujatha Gidla, in her acclaimed memoir of her mother and uncle, dives deep into the lives of her Dalit ancestors' struggles in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh. Gidla recounts in *Ants Among Elephants* how as a student at an engineering college in Warangal, she found a professor deliberately failing lower caste students. The principal supports the professor, so the students go on strike — only to be detained by the police and tortured. "Beat her until I can see welts on her," the police deputy superintendent tells two policewomen.

Caste is most vividly noticed in one of the ways in which it is kept "pure" — through marriage, with inter-caste unions frowned upon. One of the most haunting works of fiction on this subject is *Pyre* by Perumal Murugan. Saroja and Kumaresan, belonging to different castes, run away and get married and face the wrath of Kumaresan's community. Like in Gidla's book, where she says Indians will ask any number of questions to find out what caste you come from, a villager sneakily tries to find out Saroja's caste. He peers into her face and says: "This is not a face from our caste, Mapillai. This is the face of someone who hasn't toiled." This is not just a remark about looks, but about occupation and

labor, all of which still irrationally divide Indians in every sphere even today.

Dalits Lits MPs Scolded and Thrown Out

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reportedly assured Chhote Lal Kharwar that action will be taken. Uttar Pradesh Dalit MP has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi complaining against Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, alleging he was 'scolded and thrown out' twice and has been facing discrimination. A Dalit parliamentarian from the BJP-led Uttar Pradesh government has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi complaining against Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, alleging he was "scolded and thrown out" twice and has been facing discrimination. Chhote Lal Kharwar, 45, who represents Uttar Pradesh's Robertsganj constituency, in the letter stated that he is facing discrimination by the administration in his constituency and his complaints are not being heard by his own party. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reportedly assured him that action will be taken, *NDTV* reported.

In the letter obtained by *NDTV*, Chhote Lal Kharwar said he met the state party chief Mahendra Nath Pandey thrice but he did not get any help. He has also named another leader, Sunil Bansal. Chhote Lal Kharwar also mentioned that he received death threats a number of times but police did not file his complaint, the reason he finally wrote to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. "You see, I exhausted all my options internally within the party, that is why I went to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes. You please check at the local level and see if you can find any instances of wrongdoing against me. If not, then why is this happening?" Chhote Lal Kharwar told *NDTV*.

In his letter, Chhote Lal Kharwar had raised instances of rampant corruption in the district administration and forest department in the Chandauli district near his constituency for nearly three years. After

Yogi Adityanath came to power in 2017, he said, he had hoped that the situation would be remedied but nothing was done. Rather, his land was shown as encroached forest land by the administration. He has also written that local BJP leaders have been working against him and his brother, who is a local politician, and are colluding with rival parties. Chhote Lal Kharwar's complaint has emerged days after BJP faced massive Dalit protests, in which 11 people were killed. Dalit groups were protesting against a Supreme Court order that they feared weakened a law that protects them from atrocities.

Caste the Rock on Which Indian Society is Built

B.R. Ambedkar graphically describes that “Hindu Society is a house of Castes. Hindus are not a people. They are the aggregates of groups of people formed into castes. This is the peculiarity.”¹⁵⁸ The reason being, “...what the Hindus have done in the matter of Caste. They have given caste as place in the Vedas. Caste has thereby become sacred because the Vedas are Sacred. It would be wrong to say that the Vedas are sacred because they are religious. The position is that they are religious because they are sacred.”¹⁵⁹ Ambedkar beautifully analyses the system of caste in such ways that “Each Hindu is conscious of the caste to which he belongs. Given this heterogeneity it does seem that to include all the touchable castes into one group and put them as forming a block against the untouchables is to create a division which can have no meaning.”¹⁶⁰

The above case studies through representative samples reflect the basic caste structure of Indian society. Therefore, caste is the regulative principle of the Indian society. It stratifies and assigns the roles, includ-

¹⁵⁸ Vasant Moon, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 5 (compiled), New Delhi: Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, p.170.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 181.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p, 192.

ing occupation and marriage. Caste is indeed endogamous and well entrenched within societal structures. In order to keep the binary intact and kicking, caste operates on a schema known as—purity and pollution. The system of caste does not permit the lower castes to marry those belonging to so-called ‘upper or dominant castes’. One may claim or boast of many achievements or breakthrough in science and technology, and host of others, but if the mind is cluttered with caste, no society or even the country can claim to be developed and advanced. The following episode recently happened amplifies the corroded mind-set of many in the Indian society:

Caste is the most cruel and heinous instrument that is being employed to regulate the Indian society. Indians are divided in such ways that those who are born in the lower, lowest and outside have been assigned what type of occupation they should get engaged. Though this arrangement is gradually waning due to education, organization and agitation by the Dalits, in certain sectors such manual scavenging and others, the Dalits particularly Madigas still continue. Every day we come across that those particularly the madigas engaged in the works in the sewers die due to toxic gas since they have not been provided with safety measures. Others involved in cleaning the dry-toilets still continue their work thinking that it’s their ‘moral’ duty to carry on, since they are born in such a slot that prescribes to do that work.

Sociologists and others thought that when modernization and development takes place, caste would automatically disappear. Further, many thought as the younger generation gets educated, their casteist mind-set would wane-off. The above episode wherein both of them highly educated fell in love with each other and got married. The man belonged to a ‘dominant’ caste and the woman belonged to ‘madiga’—Dalit. Though it was a love marriage, other social evils prevailed, such as dowry to the tune of many lakhs and gold and host of others—certainly to the tune of about a crore of rupees. Apart from these the man used to harass his wife

to go and get money from her father. Whenever she resisted, he used caste slurs at her—sub-human and devastating that would have deeply wrecked her dignity and human worth as a human being.

Many thought and still think that inter-caste marriages would somehow gradually make caste to disappear. But even in 2018, amongst the professionals and well-educated caste is deeply entrenched in the mind-set. It's passed through generations after generations and still surviving and thriving. A young girl born in the so-called 'Untouchable' caste ranking was not her problem. Like others she studied hard, came up and fell in love and that man knowing very well about her so-called caste married. But in the melee, the power of caste—where he belonged prevailed and all his education, critical thinking and above all—his humanity failed. He eventually acted like a 'casteist-beast' and thus used all sorts of slurs that denigrated her dignity and worth. Once that hits someone, mostly those who belong to vulnerable and hailing from an oppressed communities, for them the last resort is nothing, but to end life.

Right from B.R. Ambedkar and others keep voicing their critique candidly against the system of caste. Annihilation of caste should start happening in big and small ways. Gradation of people on the basis of caste in the so-called 21st Century India should end. For those hailing from vulnerable communities, especially the Dalits, ending life is not the solution or option. Taking away the precious life should not become the last resort, but by all means should fight it out. The oppressed communities should not give up, whatever may be the circumstances. Whenever young men and women (Dalits) end their lives, the victor is the evil system of caste and those fighting to annihilate caste eventually become the losers. The rubric should change. Dalit is an affirmative and transformative category, endowed with resolve and resilience.

Words of B.R. Ambedkar continue more relevance and add value to the present as we are placed in the 21st Century. B.R. Ambedkar's far-sighted vision and prophetic words makes everyone wonderstruck. As

rightly pointed out by Ambedkar “Caste is still ‘the foundation of the Indian social fabric,’ and the record of caste is still ‘the best guide to the changes in the various social strata in the Indian Society’. Every Hindu (using the term in its most elastic sense) is born into a caste and his caste determines his religious, social, economic and domestic life from the cradle to the grave.”¹⁶¹ Its implications are catastrophic and would have serious implications to the very foundation of India’s social fabric.

Egalitarian Revolution to Annihilate Caste

B.R. Ambedkar viewed caste as the core and base structure of Indian society that stratifies individuals and communities based on birth. Once born into it there’s no exit. It operates on the doctrine of pre-destination (karma) thereby justifying the scheme. Since it is backed by Hinduism caste continues to survive for thousands of ears. In such a scenario, B.R. Ambedkar ripped open Hinduism by exposing riddles in Hinduism. Unless and until Hinduism is questioned and exposed it is not possible to annihilate caste because for caste to survive it is Hinduism that serves as its base. For instance,

The worst of it is that all this injustice and persecution can be perpetrated within the limits of the law. A Hindu may well say that he will not employ an Untouchable that he will not sell him anything, that he will evict him from his land, that he will not allow him to take his cattle across his field, without offending the law in the slightest degree. In doing this he is only exercising his right. The law does not care with what motive he does it. The law does not see what injury it causes to the Untouchable. The police may misuse his power... deliberately falsify the record... disclose evidence to the side in which he is interested... refuse to arrest... The loopholes of law are many... It is open to the magis-

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 230.

trate to believe one side and disbelieve the other side. He may be quite arbitrary in believing one side... Such are the forces, which are arrayed against the struggling Untouchables...¹⁶²

Historically injustices of various kinds have been unleashed on the Dalits and even this in new formats they continue. In such a volatile scenario and to overcome and change the unjust terrains Ambedkar vociferously said, "...To overcome this inertia and indifference, it is necessary they should become charged with resentment of the injustice of their own condition. Without it, they cannot get rid of the factors that obstruct their progress."¹⁶³ The reason for saying was "... Hindu Social Order is to fall to the ground; it can happen only under two conditions. Firstly, the social order must be subjected to constant fire. Secondly, they can't subject it to constant fire unless they are independent of the Hindus in thought and in action."¹⁶⁴ He warns that

"The Hindus on the other hand are telling the Untouchables to depend upon the Hindus for their emancipation. The Untouchables are told that the general spread of education will make the Hindus act in a rational manner ...The Untouchables should therefore rely on the good will and sense of duty of the Hindus."¹⁶⁵

Decades passed by and we are in almost at the closure of the second decade of the 21st Century. The Hindu Social Order continues to dominate and influence each and every facet of our society. How could Dalits expect the dominant castes to show solidarity and enable the Dalits to

¹⁶² Ibid, pp. 270-271.

¹⁶³ Quoted by K.S. Chalam, "Dalit Emancipation through Education" in Sukhadeo Thorat and Arama, Ed., in *Ambedkar in Retrospect: Essays on Economics, Politics & Society*: New Delhi: Rawat Publication, 2007, p. 340

¹⁶⁴ Vasant Moon, op. cit., p. 396.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

liberate from the clutches of Hindu Social order? None believes their propositions because,

The Untouchables should bear in mind two things. Firstly, that it is futile to expect the Hindu religion to perform the mission of bringing about social justice. Such a task may be performed by Islam, Christianity or Buddhism. The Hindu religion is itself the embodiment of inequity and injustice to the Untouchables. For it, to preach the gospel justice is to go against its own being. To hope for this is to hope for a miracle. Secondly... the social barrier between them and the Hindu is much greater than the barrier between the Hindus and their men. Religion, however efficacious it may be within a community or nation, is quite powerless to break these barriers and (make)* them one whole.¹⁶⁶

System of caste backed by the Hindu religion has de-humanized and thus treated the Untouchables as sub-humans. One shall never expect equity, equality, liberty and fraternity in a stratified system of caste that designates who should be on top, middle, bottom and outside that maintains hierarchy and difference. Any religion that functions on the basis of discrimination and Untouchability shall never have basic tenets of humanity and therefore negates equality because it is premised on difference. For Ambedkar humanity is the core of everything be it religion, politics, economics, culture or whatever. If something impedes the worth or the sanctity of humanity then it should go or be dismantled.

B.R. Ambedkar skillfully analyzed the system of caste and its root propelling factor—Hinduism. For him humanity is the key to any ethics and by and large religions claims to function of ethical principles. And if any religion functions without basic mores that abhors the sanctity of human and thus treats people as lesser human beings and in the process de-humanizes it is not a religion at all. It is in this context, he decided

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 398.

that though he was born as a Hindu shall never dies as a Hindu and got converted himself to Buddhism. Humanity remained as a powerful concept that influenced Ambedkar to a large extent around which he weaved-in other concepts. John Dewey influenced Ambedkar when he was a student of Harold Laski in Laski concerning the issues that related social and philosophical. Dewey was a pragmatist and humanist, and happened to be a signatory to the first International Humanist Manifesto.

Indian society is a gradation of castes forming an ascending scale of reverence of descending scale of contempt, where there is no scope for the establishment of liberty; equality and fraternity are fundamental principles of humanity and democratic functioning. He saw the system of caste as the stumbling block. It was in this context B.R. Ambedkar, unfurled “the banner of equality”. Ambedkar in his analysis and interpretation clearly brought out that without demolishing the system of caste and Hinduism, there is no possibility of establishing humanity and democracy. And for Dalits, to realize freedom, liberty, equality, dignity and fraternity and authentic humanity, they should educate, agitate and organize. He was a pragmatist and a visionary. He realized that thousands of years of mental twist of the Caste Hindus would hardly be twisted and so resolved to renounce Hinduism and embraced Buddhism with millions of followers. After the conversion, B.R. Ambedkar remarked, “I am overjoyed, I am exalted. I feel I have been liberated from the hell.”¹⁶⁷

To regain the lost humanity which pre-supposes equality the Dalits in particular are engaged in egalitarian revolution. B.R. Ambedkar was categorical in his praxis that social equilibrium ought to precede eco-

¹⁶⁷ For better clarity See the foreword by former CM of Maharashtra, Sushilkumar Shinde in: *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 17, Part 1, New Delhi: Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, 2014, p, XX.

conomic equilibrium. It is unfortunate that in India there has not been social revolution because the monolith of pyramidal and hierarchical caste structure. Unless and until the system of caste is dismantled Indian society shall never be called as egalitarian. To realize egalitarianism, caste is the stumbling block and by all means it should be annihilated. Caste promotes difference, inequality, indignation and stratification. So, the Dalit movements and those who are antagonistic towards caste revolt against caste. Dalits are no more the vote banks and passive spectators to injustices and exploitation. History has shown to the Indian society and proven that Dalit uprisings have conveyed to the world that their struggles against the perpetrators of caste and custodians of Hinduism that Dalts in their resolve have decided to fight against the casteist forces.

Epilogue

Equality has always been one of the vital bases and widely used normative principles for B.R. Ambedkar. Since, Ambedkar faced all sorts of humiliation and discrimination in his early years, wherein he was negated equality. It was precisely against the historical experience that he and other underwent, he emphasized equality as one of the important ethical principles. Therefore, for him humanity thus became the overarching principle within which he centralized equality. Ambedkar revolutionized the concept of equality and made it as the functional principle for which he tirelessly pursued at all levels.

Babasaheb Ambedkar, a composite and integral persona weaved in social, economic, political, religious, cultural and other dimensions on varied issues that confront specifically Dalits, Indian society, India as a nation nations and organs of the State. He has always been profound and down-to-earth in his analysis, interpretation and evaluation. To conclude one of the most insightful message of B.R. Ambedkar which merits mentioning: “No one can hope to make any effective mark upon his time and bring the aid that is worth bringing to great principles and

struggling cause if he is not strong in his love and his hatred. I hate injustice... and humbug, and my hatred embraces all those who are guilty of them. I want to tell my critics that I regard my feelings of hatred as a real force. They are only the reflex of the love I bear for the causes I believe in.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ See B.R. Ambedkar, in his Preface to '*Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah*'.

ESSENTIALISING HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN DIGNITY IN THE WAKE OF RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM AND INTOLERANCE IN INDIA



Abstract

India is known for its religious plurality and cultural multiplicity and thus characterizes unity in diversity and harmonious co-habitation. However, in recent times, Hindu fundamentalism aided by the ruling dispensation the Bhartya Janata Party (BJP), a far-right conservative nationalist party and its ideological nerve centre Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) premised on the credo of “Hindu majoritarianism” is all set to realize its vision making India a “Hindu nation”. In order to realize its vision, BJP-RSS is engaged in polarizing and fuelling hatred against those who belong to other religions and cultures. As a consequence, human rights and human dignity of the minorities, the subaltern communities particularly the Dalits, the (Untouchables) have increasingly been violated and trampled upon. Plurality and inclusivity are undermined posing serious threat and contestation as the country keep witnessing a spate of incidences leading to intolerance and indignation. Over and above, spewing venom, fueling religious and communal

hatred against those who have different belief systems, political ideologies, value orientations, traditions and cultures have become the order of the day.

As against the backdrop, this paper brings to the foreground the ways with which the basic fundamental tenets of religion vis-à-vis Hinduism are abused and subverted. And in the process, the paper examines and analyzes the forms of intolerance perpetrated by the ruling party BJP, its cultural wing RSS and far-right Hindu outfits who are engaged in the program that violates the fundamental and constitutional rights of the citizens of India enshrined in the Constitution and UNDHR Charter. More importantly, this paper invokes, argues and essentializes one of the most core theological and ethical principles of human dignity within the broader notions of human rights.

Positing Plural and Diverse India

India is a constitutional democracy. For a Republic to function, the Constitution plays the most crucial part. India as a constitutional democracy is expected to adhere to the principles enshrined in the Constitution that prescribes to all its citizens of India. Nonetheless, a question arises at this juncture is: Do all the citizens of Indian Republic enjoy the fundamental principles enshrined in the Constitution? India's Constitution starts with "We the citizens of the Indian Republic ..." which is unique and distinct. However, the enshrined principles of the Constitution in spirit and practice are losing its essence and relevance and under intense contestation. The word 'citizens' appears in the preamble of the Constitution is under serious threat to those who belong to minorities, Dalits and other vulnerable communities. To run the government and to govern the basic requisites—principles, mechanisms and processes are meticulously elucidated in the Constitution. Therefore, the Constitution is the light house/a sacred book that constitutes each and every aspect of governance in comprehensive manner.

India's democracy is still alive by virtue of having its Constitution securing to all the citizens of the country—the basic fundamental and constitutional rights. The architect of India's constitution B.R. Ambedkar warned that however good the constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to make it work if they are a bad lot. For Ambedkar, those in power and authority are expected to translate in their governance and in the process the people gets transformed and thus become citizens. Citizenship and democracy go hand in hand and complement each other. But, in recent times the citizenship of those belonging to 'other' community and identities are being increasingly questioned and threatened. The current impasse sends signals that amplify whether the Indian republic is clouded with misplaced religious, political and cultural aberrations, fear and insecurity.

Shifting Terrains – Rising Populism and Hindu Fundamentalism

Majority of Indians are Hindus, but live side by side with others respecting each other's difference. Since 2014, we have been witnessing a radical shift taking place because of the fact that the ruling dispensation is engaged in divisive politics pitched on binaries: Majority vs. Minority, We vs. They. It has spread its tentacles against select communities spewing venom and hatred in the Indian society. The emergence and rapid rise of political ideology Hindutva is perhaps the most striking feature of contemporary Indian politics. An understanding of the origin of the discourse on Hindutva is particularly imperative in understanding the phenomenon as it is presented today. The discourse on Hindutva has to be located in the complex set of processes in motion with the onset of colonial rule in India.

The ideology of Hindutva is founded and constructed on "Hindu nationalism". The idea of a homogenous 'Hindu', 'nation', and 'culture', transcending caste, class and sectarian differences is a product of the

ideology of Hindutva. By homogenizing the Hindutva ideology, it hegemonizes the interests of certain castes and classes. The ideology of Hindu nationalism is being as an ideological tool that absorbs, assimilates, articulates as well as rewrites, reinterprets and reconstructs the nation's history in furthering its agenda of 'one nation', 'one culture', 'one language' and 'one religion'. It has even gone to the extent of opening its fold to Dalits and Tribals to establish a majoritarian democracy to further their own interests in creating Hindu Rashtra vis-à-vis pan-Indian raj. The construction of a nation based on the ideology of Hindutva in its definition, consolidation and articulation underlines "Hinduness".

For the past few years a series of lynching, inflammatory speeches, desecration of mosques and churches and distribution of highly provocative literature against the minorities, dalits and tribals, reconversion drives, bid to saffronise educational materials, attempt to rewrite the Indian history and tampering with the Constitution clearly portrays a well-planned political project of the Hindutva forces. It is deeply rooted in BJP-RSS ideology and political praxis. For instance, Savarkar, an ideologue of this tenet articulates, "Hindutva entails the religious, cultural, linguistic, social and political aspects of the life of Hindus."¹⁶⁹ It believes in establishing "one nation, one people, one religion, one language, one culture and one executive."¹⁷⁰ This "Hinduness" seeks to establish the political, cultural and religious supremacy of Hinduism and the Hindu nation.¹⁷¹ At the same time those who are outside the ambit of Hindutva, Christians and Muslims are labeled and identified as 'aliens', 'infiltrators', 'aggressors' and 'enemies'.

¹⁶⁹ Robert D. Baird, *Religion in Modern India* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1981), p. 466.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Amulya Ganguly, *Hinduism and Hindutva*, in "Hindustan Times" (February 8, 1999).

Golwalkar one of the architects and ideologues reiterates that “To keep up the purity of Nation and its culture Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic races...Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by.”¹⁷² For Golwalkar, Hitler’s Germany and anti-Semitic stance became tools for pushing the ideology of Hindutva. He was against pluralism and secularism enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Instead, he spoke for nationalism¹⁷³ and the preservation of pure Aryan culture engrained in the Hinduism. The same ideology and political project are being transplanted vis-à-vis using religion and politics for wrong reasons by the BJP-RSS combine. For example, Golwalkar emphasized that,

¹⁷² . Andreas D’souza, *Hindutva and the Indian Churches’ Response in Preparing for Women in Christ* by Jean S. Stoner (Ed.), Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1999, p. 185.

¹⁷³ Conceptions and notions of ‘nationalism’ by Hindutva forces contravene the majority consensus of nationalism. “True, nationalism as the embodiment of collective aspiration can move people and inspire them to engage in meaningful social reconstruction...But the real essence of nationalism, it has to be realized, is the tangible experience of togetherness, the ability to fight internal inequalities and divisions so that the unity of people can be felt in every sphere of life. In other words, true nationalism means, as Gandhi sought to argue, real Swaraj: creating a society that is egalitarian and free from inequality, exploitation and violence. Nationalism is not, as Tagore repeatedly warned us, chauvinism: a narcissistic assertion against the ‘external’ enemy. Nationalism is not wild passion. Instead, it is a sincere, honest, committed practice for constructing a just society. The irony is that the crude logic of election politics has killed this humanistic spirit of nationalism. Nationalism; has become particularly after Pokhran 11 and Kargil, a mighty weapon the ruling party need to assert the power of the narcissistic nation... by Avijit Pathak, *From Secularism to Nationalism: Fate of Grand Ideal* in “Deccan Herald” 27.8.99, p. 10.

...The non-Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and revere Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but the glorification of the Hindu nation...but also cultivate the positive of love and devotion... they must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizen's rights.¹⁷⁴

Chain Templates of India – Hindu Nationalism

Indian Constitution acquires secular character and credentials not only in letter, but from the collective reality of many provisions that appear in the constitution that guarantees citizens and community in letter and spirit. Indian society is secular wherein religions tend to co-exist side by side with other ideologies, belief systems, cultures and traditions. These principles are increasingly in contestation in recent times. For instance, on December 24, 2017, in a public address, Minister of State for Employment and Skill Development, Ananthkumar Hegde said, “Secular people do not have an identity of their parental blood” and we, the BJP, he added “are here to change the constitution.”¹⁷⁵ By this statement the fundamental guarantees such as right to freedom, right to religion, right to equality and right to dignity of those who belong to the ‘other’ without concomitant guarantees that people of all religion enjoy with equal rights be negated and under contestation.

What is happening in India is the absorption of religion into the ideology of Hindutva. The synthesis of religion and politics is deeply getting entrenched into the plural kaleidoscopic milieu. When the State attempts to prioritize and hegemonize Hindus of different shades of

¹⁷⁴ Quoted by Andreas D’Souza, op. cit., p. 186.

¹⁷⁵ Appeared in all the dailies the following day.

Hinduism in a religiously plural society like India, the minorities are bound to suffer. Since the communal political parties and organizations are prioritizing Hindu religion over the others, the secular fabric of the Indian society is now cracking up. This is the most disturbing trend, which gravely affects the fine balance, which India as a country maintained thus far. A secular democracy is bound to have the presence and practice of many religions and they can co-exist without any conflict unless the nation-state maintains its plural character by equally respecting, protecting and accommodating all religions. The Indian State under RSS-BJP is pushing its project of majoritarianism politics as its point of governance.

The present scenario has created insecurity amongst the minorities who feel threatened by the state-sponsored religious fundamentalism and cultural nationalism. What is happening now is the polarization of communities on the basis of religious persuasions to which they adhere. The communal parties to secure Hindu votes are polarizing the society and in the process creating Hindu vote bank. The Hindutva phenomena should not be reduced to political battle between “majority” and “minority” or be assumed that the problem has been exaggerated and therefore it is not an immediate threat. But what is at stake is India’s constitutional democracy – a project in which a wide range of social, cultural groups and identities have perennially been juxtaposed and interacted. Added to these is the capacity of the Indian nation to retaining its character vis-à-vis a plural entity is in jeopardy.

It is also equally important to observe that the secular character and composite nature of the Indian Constitution, which is democratic in its entirety, is in grave danger. The reason being, the very words that are being used by the proponents of Hindutva such as ‘nation’, ‘culture’, ‘language’, and ‘religion’ imply ‘uniformity’ and ‘division’. But in

reality, it is ‘diversity’ and ‘plurality’ that brings richness and beauty to the world and to human family. It is not ‘unity in uniformity’ but ‘unity in diversity’. As time and space gets constricted and conformed in the current political and cultural space that the Indians live-in, it’s is apparent that the domains of inter-relatedness, cultural diversity, plurality and inter-dependence between one another become obsolete and redundant. Only in polarization, BJP-RSS notions’ of homogenization and unification of Hindu culture be promoted and preserved, and in the process their vision of Hindu Nation will be realized. BJP-RSS is using religion and culture so effectively to realize its vision.

De-Coding the Complex the Terrains – Complex Web of Lynching

The spate of lynching across India since 2014 is on the rise. The social conditions presently prevails is so horrifying that characterizes intolerance and hatred. Those involved in such dastardly acts keep doing without any fear and restraint, because the current social and political climate favors them. Groups involved in lynching are well connected, highly organized and politically influential. Those who defy their political and socio-cultural and moral views belonging to the ‘other’ have to face their wrath. Mob lynching stems from its core ideological underpinning that the ‘other’ by all means ought to be eliminated. Mob killings have become the new normal in India that the people are considered as another normal. The mob quickly gathers, executes their lynching and then disappears. The ruling dispensation keep spreading the idea that Hinduism is under attack and for this the minorities are responsible spreading hatred. This has reposed “majority Hindus” to create their ‘other’ and treat them as ‘outsiders’ of the Hindu society. 97 percent of the incidents occurred after BJP came to power in 2014. 84 percent of those killed in the related mob lynching incidents were Muslims. The rest 16 percent accused on cow slaughter are Dalits and marginal sec-

tions.¹⁷⁶ The word ‘lynching’ has occupied the centre stage in all facets of the Indian society. This leads to ask: what then is ‘lynching’ is best described as “a pre-mediated extra judicial killing by a group. It is most often used to characterize informal public executions by a mob in order to punish an alleged transgressor, or to intimidate a group. It is an extreme form of informal group social control and often conducted with the display of a public spectacle for—maximum intimidation.”¹⁷⁷ Mob lynching is horrifying that creates frenzy and horror to the victims surrounded by a mob who systematically take on the victims who belong to the ‘other’.

Grotesque brutality once again hit the national headlines wherein the cow vigilantes lynched a 31-year old Muslim man from Haryana’s Me-wat district became its latest victim, in Rajasthan’s Alwar on Friday the 20th July, 2018. Rakbar Khan was attacked allegedly by a group of 8-10 cow vigilantes, succumbed to injuries in hospital after a few hours. In his dying statement, Rakbar told police that he and his friend Aslam were walking back with two cows they had bought when they came under attack in Alwar’s Ramgarh area by the mob which accused them of being smugglers taking the cattle for slaughter. It is an irony that a distance of 5 to 6 kilometers to the nearby hospital which usually takes less than 30 minutes, the Rajasthan police had taken more than 3 hours. He could have been saved, if they had brought him little earlier. Two ministers of the BJP Government at the Centre honored those accused of lynching; one stood vigil over the body of a lynching accused draped in the national flag, and the other garlanded several people accused of

¹⁷⁶ Jacob Pennik Parambil, *Mob Lynching Fuelled by WhatsApp* in “Indian Currents”, 16-22 Jul, 2018, p. 29.

¹⁷⁷ Quoted by Cedric Prakash, India @lynching.com in “India currents”, 16-22, July, 2018, p. 26.

lynching. Both of them honored because of the fact that they went all out went in defense of the cows, a goal.¹⁷⁸

Junior Union Home minister Arjun Ram Meghwal justified lynching to the “rising popularity” of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. ‘Cow Politics’ continues to polarize the Indian society with clear messages that until there’s a total ban on ‘cow slaughter’, lynching would continue. Lynching of the Muslims, Dalits and vulnerable identities and communities is certainly a big plan of the ruling dispensation and should not be viewed through the prism of the letter of law. Instead, these chauvinistic nationalists should be dealt severely for blatantly defying and violating the basic rights of the citizens. As Satwana Bhattacharya, rightly asks:

“...Who’s this threatening to usurp my identity? Tainting and twisting my faith and beliefs? Destroying the values I hold dear? Who’s this who kills merciless? ...How did they become the law unto themselves and the order of the day and arbiters of destiny and life and meaning, deciding what shall be eaten, how one has to dress, what health care to opt for...”¹⁷⁹

When mob lynching grows and thus become toxic then India’s democratic and secular fabric are undermined. In such context-specificities, the citizens are to invoke moral revulsion and seek justice under the provisions of basic and fundamental human rights. Nonetheless, “We see a macabre festival of violence around us a relapse into the baser human capacities, whether it is in Kashmir or Kerala or Jharkhand... where the usual constitution niceties do not apply and everything goes—is now beginning to be applicable everywhere.”¹⁸⁰ In the pretext of pro-

¹⁷⁸ T.K. Arun. *Politics to Stop Lynching* in “The Economic Times” (July 25, 2018), p. 16.

¹⁷⁹ For an in-depth analysis read the column article by Satwana Bhattacharya, political editor of The Indian Express, *Mobocracy in the Name of New India* in “The Indian Express, 30th June, 2017.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

protecting the cows, attacking Christians, Muslims and the Dalits is rapid spreading and has thus become toxic.

Essentializing Human Rights

In recent times India's democracy and the rule of constitutional law is increasingly being contested by the self-styled cow protectors conveying a clear message that cows have more value and precious than the minorities such as Muslims, Dalits, Tribals and Christians. According to the data released by IndiaSpend, 28 people were killed and 123 were injured in the attacks unleashed by the 'cow vigilantes'. What is more disturbing is that out of 28 deaths, 24 were Muslims, which is whopping 86 percent of the total fatalities. 97 percent of these attacks were reported after BJP taking over the government at the Centre in 2014. On similar vein, about half of the cow-related violence—32 out of 63 cases were reported from states governed by BJP, eight run by Congress and the rest by other political parties.¹⁸¹ India has drastically changed and thus symbolizes binaries based on religion, ideology and culture. Santawana Bhattacharya aptly characterizes that "the Indian cow [is] just an empty symbol then, an instrumental token for a society that is angry and brutalized... A society that does not know how to find legitimate mechanism to voice its angst—all the angst produced by the modern living and its alienating effect... has to resort to violence merely to find a sense of power and meaning..."¹⁸² Basic rights of humans have been violated and throttled.

¹⁸¹ See the Editorial of "The Hindu" entitled *Human Life is Less Than Cow*, 26th July 2018.

¹⁸² Santwana Bhattacharya, *Mobocracy in the Name of New India*, op. cit.

The gap between the rhetoric and practice in letter and spirit that we find in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)¹⁸³ evokes concern and dismay to the citizens as we look around the happenings in the world that we live. In all the spheres of our existence, particularly political and religious spheres, we cannot undermine or ignore the alacrity and gravity of human rights violation that manifests daily in the form of torture, genocide, social and economic asymmetries, custodial deaths, ethnic cleansing, custodial deaths, political prisoners, suppression of democratic rights and expressions and host of others. Although all the countries of the world are signatories of UDHR, the gap between words and action creates a sense of optimism and a feeling of pessimism. However, 'optimism' and 'hope' continue to ignite the simmering light/spirit. Discourses and actions should continue on human rights in the areas of historical, philosophical, legal, political, theological or ethical domains.

For more than sixty years discourses¹⁸⁴ at different levels on the legitimate claims for universal human rights have been justified and sus-

¹⁸³ Some opine that the Declaration as a resolution of the General Assembly has no legal binding effect, while others view that the Declaration is a living document that has acquired credible authority. In general there is an expression of hope (G.S.Bajma, *Human Rights in India, Implementation and Violation* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1995), p. 135. Nilanjan Dutta, "From Subject to Citizen: Towards a History of the Indian Civil Rights Movement" (in) Michael R. Anderson and Sunit Guha eds., *Changing Concepts of Rights and Justice in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.275. For example, K.M.Panikar, *Asia and Western Dominance* (New York: Macmillan, 1959); Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). Hence, we see a number of works that describe the colonial and imperial motif woven into the structures of popular culture, fiction and the rhetoric of history, philosophy and geography.

¹⁸⁴ J. Russell Chandran, *Christian Ethics* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1997), 138. The division of Human Rights into the three generations, namely the first world, second

tained. At the same time, it should be noted that the thrusts and foci of these discourses kept changing at each historical epoch. As the context changes the conceptual, definitional and perspectival understandings should change. In the 21st Century, new forms of atrocities and rights violations are taking place. Given the ambiguities and ambivalences of rights discourse, rights' discourse needs to be nuanced so that the responses that are offered will be apt and relevant. We live in a world wherein the perpetrators injustice and inflict all sorts of violations and yet justifies. Particularly, the State uses its machinery to silence those who use the provisions extended by the human rights' charter. However, it is important invoking rights of humans at this juncture because,,

world, and the third world was initially proposed in 1979 by the Czech jurist Karel Vasak at the International Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg. His divisions follow the three great watchwords of the French Revolution: Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. *Three Generations of Human Rights*- Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia. Cf. Jim Ife, *Human Rights Beyond the "Three Generation"*. Centre for Human Rights Education, Curtin University Technology. J.ife@curtin.edu.au; *Human Rights and Social Work: Towards Rights-Based Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Cf; Shimreingam Shimray, *Theology of Human Rights: A Critique on Politics*, 25-30. Cf; Naorem Sanajaoba, *Human Rights- Norms & Standard* (New Delhi: Osmons Publications, 1994), 28; Tissa Balasuriya, *Globalization and Human Solidarity* (Tiruvalla: Christava Sahitya Samithi, 2000), p.75. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights included all the three generations of rights. *1948-1998 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Geneva: The United Nations Department of Public Information, 1998); *Universal Declaration of Human Rights A Guide for Teachers*. It was enshrined at the global level by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Articles 3- 21 of the Universal Declaration and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It derives primarily from the 17th and 18th century political theories associated with the English, American, and French revolutions. Major political theory consisted of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, which favored limiting the government by placing restrictions on state action.

Analytically, a right is considered a 'remedial' category, a deterrent against the possibility, or a redressal of the fact, of some wrong being inflicted upon its bearer. As such, rights cannot but be relational since they imply, at the very least, a link between the bearer of rights and the state. Moreover, since rights never take shape in a social vacuum – other, competing rights are always already present in society – they are contextual in a readily visible fashion. Thus, when considered as theoretical categories, rights are not the essence-like, intrinsic attributes that they are often made out to be, but products of their milieu.

In a different, less obvious sense, rights can be shown to be context-dependent even when considered as historically-specific phenomena. Contrary to the universalistic claims ... all rights involve explicit (and more often implicit) exclusions. In other words, every historically-specific instance of a right carries within itself its own apparatus of inclusion/exclusion. These devices defining those endowed with or denied rights are the products of the particular conjunction of historical forces obtaining at the time, and it is in this sense that every right is inevitably contextual.¹⁸⁵

Any discussion on the challenges to human rights in the 21st century will be meaningful only when we look at the historical-contextual processes wherein each society's search for equality, human dignity and host of others are taken in realistic ways. The forces of equality, freedom and dignity countered by the ideological propaganda that there is no alternative (TINA) is a clever-strategy to push the matter into subjugation could perhaps be considered as the greatest challenge of the 21st century to the theory and practice of human rights. In a world populism

¹⁸⁵ See Satish Deshpande 'Current Impasse in Language of Rights: Questions of Context' in *EPW*, January 31, 1998, PE-11.

and nationalism the conceptual understanding of the ‘basic and fundamental rights’, ‘democracy’, and ‘freedom’ seem to be in danger. In a scenario where rights are violated, we need have clear understanding on the following:

When democracy becomes devoted to the maintenance of the existing structures of power, the first causality is, naturally, freedom: for without freedom to imagine, to dare to conceive alternatives –including also alternative ways of answering human need... To set ‘freedom to choose’ at the heart of our culture, and to deny the possibility of choosing any other way of being in the world is a denial of the ‘pluralism’ and ‘diversity’ to which the West asserts its devotion these are evidently mere ornaments decorations on the surface of an increasingly showy, image-conscious, appearance-manipulating culture...¹⁸⁶

Politics over lynching has reached alarming heights in India with slogans such as “Leave India, if you don’t like cows”; “Respect Cows, Love Hinduism”; “Respect Cow, Or, Leave Hinduism” and “Lynching will Continue Till Cow Slaughter and Beef Eating Stops”. Human life has value and in no way has lesser value than cow. Attacks are based on ideology of polarization leading to hatred and antagonism. In such a climate, it is important for Christians to invoke faith which is rooted in the authority of scripture... There is no direct reference or usage to ‘Human Rights’ in the Bible. But, the Christian Scripture brings out clearly the human wrongs and thus substantiates explicitly why they are wrong.

¹⁸⁶ See Jeremy Seabrook ‘Human Rights in Western Terms’ in *Deccan Herald*, February 13, 1996.

Human Dignity an Essential Component of Human Rights

The materials we find in the Bible need to be complimented by non-scriptural materials to address the contemporary issues concerning human rights. Humans represent the image of God and so it is implied that co-humans are treated with respect and dignity. Therefore, treating each other as co-humans is the core principle of God's creation. The essence of human rights acquires greater value and fuller meaning precisely due to this. For instance,

The atonement has been powerful grounding of human dignity and consequently of human rights for several reasons. It is universal, containing a dignity, which applies to all people. Human rights are claims any individual can place upon the community solely on the grounds of being human. The dignity of those for whom the Son of God died rests not on individual characteristics, which distinguish one person from another. No characteristic, which commends one person as being greater than another, provides status before God or a claim upon God's mercy. Those crushed by human power are able to know that neither color nor sex ...¹⁸⁷

Human dignity acquires a fuller status in and through incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. As human beings we have failed and also fallen short of representing God's image. We are clothed with human dignity and a set of human rights. It is embedded in us as God's gift from whom the rights flow. The God of righteousness is the provider of rights and expects us to respect the rights of humans because we are bestowed with human rights that are inalienable and inviolable. In this

¹⁸⁷ Stephen Charles Mott 'The Contribution of the Bible to Human Rights' in *Human Rights and the Global Mission of the Church*, Boston Theological Institute Annual Series, Vol.1, 1985, p.6.

sense, everyone before the sight of God is equal endowed with human dignity and human worth. Differences, exclusions, and segregations based on caste, color, gender and ethnicity are considered as unbiblical and un-Christian that violates the biblical mandates. Further,

Drawing upon dignity through the creation has the advantage of being more widely accepted and understood beyond the Christian circle. Those who do not respond to Jesus as the dying and propitiatory Son of God may accept the conception of a creating God. This basis of human worth thus provides a broader value basis for human rights. The advantage of drawing upon the atonement is that it brings human dignity and human rights into the very heart of Christian faith and experience, dispelling the dichotomy of piety and social commitment.¹⁸⁸

As human deprivations and violations of human rights are on the rise we need to commit towards the restoration of life. It begins with basic education, awareness, and commitment eventually leading to action. How to set-right the human wrongs, so that the human dignity and human worth be retrieved? Human rights is undoubtedly is one of the vehicles or instruments that could address the human wrongs effectively thereby the deprivations of millions of people are set right. We live in miserable times and our identities are questioned and challenged contested. In such a scenario, "Human rights are an expression, channel, and control of the power which limits and ameliorates exploitation. Because exploitation arises out of the depth and pervasiveness of sin, voluntary efforts are insufficient. Exploitive power is never adequately controlled by reason and conscience alone."¹⁸⁹ Concretely speaking,

Human rights are the Magna Charta for a global future in human dignity. They are the foundation for a new world order. They are

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p.7.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p.8.

also prerequisite for the transition to sustainable societies, where future generations can live in political and economic security... Partially due to this vigorous development some care must be taken of conceptual clarity, in order to better promote human rights. Oppression literally means, pushing people down “below a certain existential threshold or not allowing them to come” to satisfy existential needs – which need not be material needs. The victims of oppression suffer deprivation. They live below their existential threshold, and existential needs are not satisfied. One of the most vicious arguments of oppressors of all sorts is to call oppression normal and present it as a law of nature.¹⁹⁰

Rights of human beings are existential and real. But, in reality these rights hardly work and therefore rights have to be pursued all the times and by all means. The dominant and the powerful keep inventing new instruments, meanings and mechanisms to justify their wrongs. As people of faith, we are called to set right the human wrongs that the dominant and the powerful inflict upon the weak and the vulnerable. Those in power and authority wield their power in the socio-political and religious structures and systems that obstruct the rights that are due to every citizen irrespective of gender, caste, creed and class. Therefore, realizing fuller and authentic humanity and restoring their human rights that are due to them are of utmost importance. Those with power and authority continue to deny those in the bottom rungs their fuller and authentic humanity and negate their basic identity as persons of non-gratia ought to be defied and contested.

The very notion of human rights precisely entrenched on humans and thus upholds human rights as against human wrongs. Christian Scripture adds value to human dignity. It endorses infinite worth because the concept of ‘humanity’ is enmeshed in its letter and spirit. So, it

¹⁹⁰ See *Economic Human Rights: Their Time Has Come*, FIAN International Secretariat, May 1995, pp.14-15.

is expected that the victims are to be treated and respected as humans, persons and people whose stature is far above and far higher than other creatures. It is in this context, it is to be reiterated that the goal of human rights is to give people their dignity, regain lost personhood and reiterate peoplehood, so that they become as subjects of history and makes of their own destiny. M.M. Thomas, revered and renowned Indian Christian theologian has delved into human rights in-depth and thus offers two typologies that consist of the rights of people or “people hood” which in the Indian context refers to the minorities and other weaker sections of the Indian society.¹⁹¹

Two concepts surfaces more powerfully in M.M. Thomas theology i.e., ‘personhood’ and ‘peoplehood’ encompass—individual and community respectively. These two concepts have to be nuanced theologically because they candidly state that each and every individual before the sight of God is endowed with the highest order considered as the crown of God’s creation representing the image of God (*imago dei*). In that human dignity (self-esteem or self-respect) is indeed part and parcel of all humans. Hence, human dignity is intrinsic and inalienable and therefore no one has the right to take away. Accordingly, even the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Indian Constitution categorically insists that the core of these two concepts is humanity. ‘Humanity’ in this context becomes essential and central. In and around humanity ‘human dignity’ hangs on, so tightly and deeply entrenched since each and every human being represent the image of God, and therefore, are above all creatures intrinsic and thus sacred.

‘Human rights’ and ‘human dignity’ are value loaded and deeply entrenched and intertwined with each other and therefore inseparable concepts. Rights and dignity are within us and ingrained in us and so no one has given us because they are natural, indivisible and indelible. Amidst

¹⁹¹ See for more detail, M.M. Thomas, *Towards an Evangelical Social Gospel*, Madras: CLS, 1977, p. 37.

a number of facets in the sphere of human rights, human dignity is undoubtedly the most important because it touches upon the very being of each and every human. M.M. Thomas develops personhood theologically and thus reasons out that every human being dignity of every person is personified in personhood that adds to other related aspects of rights. Therefore, whether singular ‘personhood’ or plural ‘people-hood’ he/she or ‘they’ is embedded with self-esteem/self-worth. Accordingly, the minorities and the marginalized have been the victims of the rising majoritarianism and populism whose self-esteem is gravely hit.

The very purpose of creating humans in God’s image pre-supposes the worth and dignity extend only to all the humans and certainly not only to a select few. When the very purposes of God are violated and the basic rights of humans negated then to set the wrongs by employing the instruments of human rights. It further endorses the God’s covenantal relationship with humans symbolize God’s gracious mediating effort to redeeming the fallen world and created order. M.M. Thomas issues a clarion call to participate in establishing human dignity and thus restoring equality of all and for all.¹⁹² God so loved the world and the humanity and so sent His Son to the world in flesh and blood so that the fractured and alienated humanity by His birth, death and resurrection is redeemed, renewed and thus become a new community of persons.¹⁹³

According to M.M. Thomas reiterates that Christ brought anew the lost and fractured humanity. He substantiates the New Humanity as “the restoration of the human person in Christ as God’s free creative agent in the divine act of new creation to restore the wholeness of the entire universe throughout history.”¹⁹⁴ Reiterating further, “The new humanity revealed in Jesus Christ is the instrument of constant revolution in social

¹⁹² M.M. Thomas, *The Church’s Mission and Post-Modern Humanism: Collection of Essays and Talks*, 1992-96, Delhi: ISPCK, 1996, 31.

¹⁹³ Ibid,

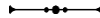
¹⁹⁴ Quoted by Jayaraj Rajaiah in *Dalit Humanization*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2017, 141.

history, exerting pressure aimed at creating universal brotherhood/sisterhood.”¹⁹⁵ Retrieving the lost humanity or redeeming the dehumanized humanity is possible in and through human rights that are inalienable and inviolable of all humans. Let us strive to reclaim the personhood and peoplehood at the individual (personal) and communitarian (community) levels that are premised in the human dignity because the worth is infinite and incontrovertible.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

MEDIA TURNS PREDATORY – PRIVACY, PROFIT AND CONTROL

PROPOSING A THEOLOGY OF RISK TAKING



Abstract

Media is the fourth pillar of democracy. For democracy to function, the role of media is apparent and vital. In tune to the changes taking place in the world, technology plays a vital part in revolutionizing the world in many facets including the media. Media in a rapidly changing world has occupied the center stage in such ways that it acts as carriers of information and messages that forms opinions and perspectives of the readers and viewers. In an age of information, people are eager and anxious to know the happenings in the world they live and are part-of. It is the media that disseminates information. Information is power and those who control information vests with power.

Media in recent years has undoubtedly acquired power at alarming levels. In such context-specifics, media is being perceived as an extension of the State, often resorting to sensationalism and hypes. Nevertheless, media has always been in the hands of big corporations (tycoons) who eventually control information and in the process accrue profits. Further, media per se has removed privacy and pitched everything into the public domains. Since there is no control for the social media, it is

now turned out predatory. Therefore, it becomes imperative that it should be brought under control and thus regulated.

As against the backdrop, the paper seeks to delve into the following:

1) Articulating the importance of media and the influence it exerts amongst its readers and viewers in the world in which they live; 2) elucidating the gamut of media—the print and visual—that covers apps that posts messages; analyzing the proliferation, power and profit media houses galvanizes; interpreting the challenges media poses wherein media becoming predatory; 3) Reasoning out the need for regulation and accountability and 4) Proposing a theology of risk-taking for the sake of truth and transparency, justice and objectivity..

Keywords: Media Social Media Democracy Fourth Pillar Information Technology Print and Visual Media Information Technology Predatory Profit Control Privacy Ethics Context-specificities Society Sensationalism Hypes Fake-news Proliferation Theology of Risk-taking.

Media, the Tool, Message, the Medium

The world we live-in is primarily influenced and driven by information technology. Increasingly geo-politics is being controlled by media and its technological apps. As we progress and advance including developed societies like the USA or Germany or India, media and its apps have gone to the extent of influencing the electorates. Now it is proven that those who control media control politics and vice versa. Media as the tool and the message is now the important medium that forms opinions and views. The messages that we receive through the media forms our perceptions, Based on our perceptions on issues we act and our actions are invariably determined by the opinions and views that we form. Nowadays we are increasingly influenced by the media. There are two classic examples that explain 1) macro and 2) micro scenario wherein media is involved.

In the year 2014, Hungary's leading news website, Origo had a juicy scoop: a top aide to the far-right prime minister, Victor Orban had used state money to pay for sizable but unexplained expenses during secret foreign trips. The story embarrassed Orban. Now Origo is one of the prime minister's dutiful media boosters constantly attacking on migrants and on George Soros, the Hungarian-American philanthropist has been demonized by the far right on both side of the Atlantic. As most media that drifts not based on convictions but on convenience, even Origo once was a staunch critic of Orban's government and now the most loyal supporter, protector and propagator and never spares and constantly attacking his political opponents.

One of the captions read as "Let's look at the affairs of Laszlo Botkal" that wrecked and devastated the mayor of a Hungarian major city not aligned with Orban's party Fidesz who was alleged "Serious scandals, mysteries surround the social mayor of Szseged."¹⁹⁶ Origo's editors have never imprisoned and its reporters were never beaten up. In secret meetings including the most important one held in Vienna—the website's original owner, a German-owned telecommunications company, relented. On the surface, everything looks normal and fine, but in reality, it's not true. The catchy slogan being used "We would never sink so low," Orban said, "as to silence those with whom we disagree."¹⁹⁷

"But below the surface, the system has been degraded. The Constitutional Court is stacked with judges appointed by Fidesz. The judiciary and the prosecution service are headed by two... the electoral system and the electoral map have been altered to favor Orban's party."¹⁹⁸ Moving from website to social media, the current new-age battlefield has

¹⁹⁶ For more details, Benjamin Novak and Patrick Kingsley column article entitled *The website that shows how a free press can die* in "Deccan Herald", November 28, 2018, p.11.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. I

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

totally transformed the conduct of the Indian politics. The use of social media by the PM Narendra Modi during 2014 election campaign was a stunning eye-opener. Karnataka, the IT hub of the country is became a hub to politically capitalize on the digital space. It became a war zone to analyze, maneuver and strategize by manipulating the digital space so that the electorates would vote for the BJP. We live in the world of tweet and hashtag wars. Social media has radically transformed the ways in which they connect with the electorates and their messages are delivered.

The social media especially tweets and hashtags should not be construed as just tools of communication, but providers of spaces for free expression. Almost all the political parties hire top analysts and have their IT cells and those who have expertise in giving information about the electorates, their expectations and positions and also extending strategies so woo them to their side. A review of the role of social media in the forthcoming Parliamentary election in Karnataka rips open many things. Social media is being used as tools by political parties to influence voters. Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, blogs and WhatsApp are seen as campaign tools and potential opinion-creators.

In the may 2018 held Assembly elections, BJP young wing general-secretary Tejasvi argued that Twitter set the political agenda, WhatsApp acted as a distributional channel and Facebook helped disseminate information in Kannada.¹⁹⁹ The process started almost a year prior to the elections that involves three phases—field research, handling social media and electioneering. In the last May, 2018, assembly elections, Facebook were the social media partner of the Election Commission. As Chief election Commissioner Om Prakash Rawat point out, “any aberration

¹⁹⁹ MJ Vinod, *Social media in Karnataka politics: hype or game changer?* In Panorama, “Deccan Herald”, November, 28, 2018, p. 11.

tion cannot stop the use of modern technology. Bank frauds have taken place, but we don't stop banking"²⁰⁰.

What is inferred in that statement is: "In that sense, a social media is a given."²⁰¹ Some studies suggest that almost 3% of the votes in the May assembly elections in Karnataka accrued as a result of social media influence. Most politicians and political parties are now in search of data, analytics and technologies to enhance their electoral prospects."²⁰² Almost all the political parties in India nowadays are vigorously involved in social media and thus enhance their prospects in online platforms. IT cells display and disseminate photos of their leaders and their messages on hashtags and tweets frequently. The challenge before the electorates is to handle the huge flow of information and misinformation.

Campaigns are driven by data about voters and target groups. In this the most important aspect is the messages that are sent to targets groups—micro-context specifics. Further, based on the changes in the electoral dynamics of a constituency, electoral strategies will change. Politics and religion are one's personal prerogative and right, but now gradually influenced and being controlled the media. Even the social media war continues even in the post-election scenarios. The political parties exaggerate the failures and downplay the achievements of each other. We live in a setting wherein social media becomes an additional and the vital new tool to engage the electorate.²⁰³

Allegations of social media sites and analytics firms harvesting user data to help political parties to plant election strategies raise serious question about the safety of personal information. The time has come to reassess digital pervasive domination on the privacy of people. It's is

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

just a select few whereas “Both the public and the private sector are collecting and using personal data at an unprecedented scale and for multifarious purposes ... the unregulated and arbitrary use of data, especially personal data, has raised concerned regarding the privacy and autonomy ... centralization of databases, profiling of individuals, increased surveillance and a consequent erosion of individual autonomy.”²⁰⁴

Media Controls, Maximises Profit & Erases Privacy

The media in general and communication technologies in particular have been maximizing huge profits out of personal data. Media apps extract data of different kinds for different purposes. Each segments such as business companies, political establishments, government agencies and host of others keep sending a numbers of messages that the consumers prefer. For instance, in the year 2013, Edward Snowden gave us a graphic narrative of big games that the governments played to tap and hack data for different purposes. He cautioned everyone that the surveillance state is active collecting large amounts of personal information about everyone and then be used for different purposes.

In March 27th 2018, Christopher Wylie, former employee of British data analytics (CA) was alleged to have stolen the data of 50 million Facebook users in 2014, claimed that Congress party was its client in India. Later the Congress had alleged that Narendra Modi mobile application (NaMo app) launched by PM Modi in 2015, had been stealing data of those who downloaded the app and sharing it with a third party based in the US. According to media reports, the app sought 22 permissions, including access to contacts, camera and location. BJP rejected these allegations accusing the Congress mobile application shared users’

²⁰⁴ Kaushik Deka, *The End of Privacy*, in “India Today, April 9, 2018, p. 28.

data with the party's "friends in Singapore."²⁰⁵ The most worrying things the security of digital data of the citizens in the country—be it in the hands of government platforms such as Aadhaar or provide service providers such as Amazon and Uber or the social media giants such as Facebook and WhatsApp that have overwhelming access to personal data leading to breaching the right to privacy.²⁰⁶ Currently, in India over 250 million active users considered as the largest national users base for Facebook. WhatsApp and Instagram, two other entities owned by Facebook, have over 200 million and 53 million users in the country respectively.²⁰⁷ Privacy is dead and everything is coming out in the open. It is predicted that the next 300 million who will go on line by 2020 belong to the lower socio-economic pyramid with no digital literacy.²⁰⁸ The following facts and figures amplify the magnitude and gravity of digital age in which we live and the ways in which we are being controlled:

The above data clearly portrays that media has certainly made to dispatch one's message in a targeted manner and are invariably influenced and to a larger extent controlled by them. Media is with purpose and the purposes are varying—control, profit and smash privacy. This is why we are all the time bombarded with all kinds' messages.

The multinational corporations that control information technologies sift the information so that their objectives and motives are met and fulfilled. Accordingly, the formats—content, target groups who and how tailored in such ways to hit their overall objectives. The MNCs that control information and its modes by which information is disseminated appropriates power. In order to maximize profits, the big corporations engaged in keep maximizing its profits out of personal data. In this way the state and corporate connive to control people by controlling infor-

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Prasanto K. Roy, *Why the 'Breach' may be good for India*, in Ibid, p. 42.

mation and through this acquired enormous power because we live in a world where information is power. As against the backdrop media went hay way asking its customers and consumers: Why do you need privacy and why do you want the right of privacy?

Moving little further, if you have committed any ‘wrongdoing’, why do you get suffocated and suffer with that guilt? Above all, why do you hide? And by concealing you continue to live with that guilt that gradually gets thrust upon you? This is why you should get rid of privacy. The best ways to go public use social media that erases ‘privacy’. Presently we live in a world of ‘public’—transparent and open. Privacy is dead and now what matters are control, commerce and profit be pursued unhindered. For example, after closure of Disney a deal to acquire Rupert Murdoch-controlled 21st Century Fox’s major global assets—including Star India—for over \$71 billion, the promoters of Zee Entertainment unveiled a share sale plan that could lead to a block buster biggest merger and acquisition deal in the Indian media industry. Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) as part of a “strategic review of its businesses in the changing global media landscape.”²⁰⁹

The potential buyers are Mukesh Ambani’s Reliance Industries, which is on the hunt for content to feed Jio, US cable giant Comcast, Alibaba, Apple, and Google. Nonetheless Zee’s is looking for a “partner” for up to 50% of promoter holdings, investment, bankers and media insiders believe it might be persuaded to sell its entire stake. “If you want a global players or even Reliance they’ll want control if they’re going to pay a strategic premium.”²¹⁰ By this, Zee could command a 30% premium over its current market valuation of about Rs. 42,000

²⁰⁹ See *Zee’s promoters Seek buyer for up to half their 42% stake* in “The Times of India”,

²¹⁰ Ibid.

crore, or about Rs. 55,000 crore. Chandra's 42% stake would be about Rs. 23, 5000 crore."²¹¹ “

The company has been doing well in its domestic business but given our global ambitions, we are looking for a partner with expertise in technology,” Chandra's son Pundit Goenka, who is ZEEL's managing director and CEO, told TOI: “Gone is the time whom we could do it on our own. From a context company we want to become a context and technology company,” he said.²¹² Zee's consolidated revenues were Rs. 7, 126 crore in 2017-18 and profit after tax was Rs. 1,486 crore.²¹³ Media is the most fast growing industry with huge stake and high returns. It's now multi-billion industry and there are many media-corporate houses vying to expand their empires by swooping into information technologies for in the closest-ever competition that we have been witnessing in recent times.

Media on the Edge – ‘Predatory’ at Present

About 1.4 billion people on an average log onto Facebook daily; every second on average around 6,000 tweets are tweeted on Twitter; since its inception, over 40 billion photographs have been posted on Instagram.²¹⁴ The data candidly conveys that the world we live in and where we aren't only consumers of information, but creators as well which has given us a misplaced sense of control. It is of course misplaced because we live today on social media in filter bubbles and echo chambers, and our experiences are directed by algorithms. As we approach the fag end of second decade of 21st Century, social media and Internet have drifted from their promise of closing distances and expos-

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ See comment column article Advaita Kala, *Is Social Media Polarizing Society?* in “The Hindu”, December, 2018.

ing us to the views of those who existed beyond our personal networks. Instead, we find ourselves to be more rigid versions of our former selves.²¹⁵

Fake news has become an industry and found great resonance with people. Its rise corresponds with the growing distrust in the mainstream media. Apparently, fake news has even slipped into traditional media outlets and is often circulated by prominent individuals. People nowadays seek only ‘informal opinion through filters from who they trust and look for news that conform their world view. This results in people cultivating rigid opinions of issues that they would have probably been willing to discuss more in the past.’²¹⁶ In conjunction to this, Indian media has turned India as a fertile and breeding ground for biased, distorted and polarized one which is being controlled and taken over by vested interests who are keen in promoting hostile environment of abuse and violence against those journalists who believe in reporting what exactly happened and speak the truth.²¹⁷

Sites of the social media are known to promote hypes and thus push abetment and in the process become predators. Twitter, for example, consistently prompts its consumers to follow people who are in agreement with their views; bombards with ‘wants-based messages’ that lead to consumerism; prompting narcissistic impulses encouraged by Instagram; prompting biases and polarization on Tweeter and Facebook.²¹⁸ Today, social media platform such as Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp and host of others have proliferated and thus have taken over or even substituted the mainstream media as powerful tools to disseminate news. As observed by a research initiated by BBC reveals that identity politics

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Milind Deora, *Pressed Against the Wall* in “The Economic Times”, 18th May, 2018, p. 16.

²¹⁸ Advaita Kala, op. cit.

has become the determining force propelled by nationalism and populism. Democracy, governance and rule of law are undermined, throttled and subverted.

For all these happenings media is one of the prime contributors to changes in people's perceptions. "Within a truly democratic and secular framework, the media is conceptualized and the 'fourth estate', which must be allowed to function independent of government to maintain a system of check and balances on the power of the State, and to objectively observe, report, analyze and critique its actions to communicate to the people at large."²¹⁹ On the contrary, media by and large take positions and indulge in their news and messages that lack objectivity, analysis, interpretation and evaluation. However, "Unfortunately, in India, the media is increasingly perceived to have morphed into an extension of the State, often resorting to sensationalism at the cost of visibility to issues crucial for the welfare of the people, with its bands of cheerleaders and blanket critics."²²⁰

As seen in the previous sections media aided by information technologies (IT) polity, economy, religion, culture, education and other facets of the Indian society keep changing at alarming levels. Society is undergoing sea changes that have not been seen before. "Contemporary social media in India—increasingly the platform of choice for untrammelled and unchecked discourses, and exchange dissemination of information and 'news'—is chock-full of 'fake news', gross distortions of facts to serve political ends, and sensationalism. Mainstream media, in this context, runs the risk of becoming the proverbial 'second paper' for a gullible readership/viewership. News that can be trusted is under serious risk."²²¹ The state is coming down heavily on the media and in different ways heckles the media to fall in line. For instance, "...the

²¹⁹ Milind Deora, Op. cit.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

silence against State tyranny at worst, and ‘leaning heavily on the media’, at best, in India, is a manifestation of the extreme fear of persecution in civil society, which to the phenomenon of self-censorship.”²²²

Media ably supported by information technology is endowed with power. Those in power and authority have monopolized media to further control over people. Information and messages of all sorts keep floating and thus become viral. Barring a few, media per se used for spreading fake news and lies blatantly that have dire consequences to families, communities and societies. The word polarization means different thing to different people, but certainly does mean create divisiveness. So, media has an immense responsibility to reclaim the public sphere from deliberate falsehood, the disinformation avalanche and social-media driven hate content. Our social fabric is totally fragmented and further fragmenting. It has resulted in the erosion of empathy and absence of truth. Currently, media increasingly employs its power by gradually shutting and occupying the public space information silos and out rightly denying the due space of the people by amplifying prejudices and binaries.

Towards a Theology of Risk-Taking

The locus of theological conversations and discourses about God tends to shift often. Whatever may be the templates, everything revolves on how one conceives, articulates and communicates. Therefore, this shift in communications, messaging and informing revolves around theological, political, religious, economic and cultural and certainly more to do with power equations. Therefore, any theological activity will have to emerge from the locale of communicating logos by taking into consideration how and with what means and methods. Therefore, critical theology of risk-taking takes the context of lynching and polari-

²²² Ibid.

zation more seriously. Further, it takes the contemporary context more seriously for theological reflection and action. In the case of theology of risk-taking contextual reinterpretation of text plays the vital role. Therefore, context here is described as “locale” which is essential to “contextuality” of social interaction or structural knowledge... It is here the critical theology rips open the underside of the scripture and communicating the Gospel not just as sources of reflection—but as the bases. Hence, more emphasis is given to the context.

For a critical theology of risk-taking the social context forms the basis and acts as an episteme. The social context of those who live for truth and transparency is filled with human-experience and thus ignited by Christian faith and perennial struggles that those journalists and media-persons face in their day-to-day vocation. In such a scenario, contextualization is nothing but an inherent dynamic of Christian faith and critical-praxis. So, a critical theology of risk-taking is rooted in concrete experience. Therefore, a theology of risk-taking is a critical theology which is not something optional, but a Christian mandate. A critical theology of risk-taking embarks by removing the theological blinkers, so that the raw brutalized body and the battle-field of those journalists and writers who stood for truth and objectivity.

Critical theology of risk-taking emerges to articulate the raw and rugged experience of the media persons and to critique the fake news and blatant lies that the media covers. It provides the required language and basic materials for theologizing. It is their raw flesh and blood thus acts as the anchor and foundational stone of the very nature of theology of risk-taking. In this sense, risk-taking theology is a radical critique of classical/systematic and Indian Christian theology. Peeling the social and political contexts of the media layer by layer and as the layers gets cracked off, the materials that come out forms the constitutive element for a theology of risk-taking. A theology of risk-taking emerges from this inter-subjective world of the media.

It is important to affirm that those who work for the media and concerned about truth and objectify have cumulative value as being members of the shared subjective world. Their existential experience is mediated by a language that the kith and kin and others who happened to be the victims of the media speak should be the language of the theology of risk-taking. The language that is used does constitute multiple meanings arising out of diverse context-specificities. The context is engulfed by a set of circumstances and conditions that determines their ideas, theories, theologies, propositions or concepts, thought processes and frameworks. These circumstances could be spatial, temporal, situational, social, economic, political, cultural, and religious.

The terrains are impregnated with anger, dejection, resolve and resilience their language. Their actions can only be understood when their social context is understood comprehensively. Only then, the interaction with text is plausible and meaningful. However, the nature of the contexts of the victims is dynamic and vibrant. It is influenced by both the internal and external factors. Therefore, context is necessary which really determines everything. In such a ruptured, devastated, ravaged and besieged context where the victims have been living with fake news, resulting in lynching and intimidation. Many succumbed to the forces of domination, while the others went all out defying and resisting.

In such context modes of resistance and defiance involve risk-taking. Succumbing or avoiding or remaining passive or being silent in the long-run is counter-productive and will further strengthen the mobocracy Democracy in the context of fake news and mobocracy is not a reality. For them avoiding dangers is no safer in the long-run than outright combating. Faith involves risk and courage. This is where the theology of risk-taking emerges. Risk-taking theology involves disappointments, failures, betrayal, insecurity and loneliness, desperation, exclusion and dejection. Many have been living in life-threatening locales and yet keep risking their lives. A theology of risk-taking goes beyond defining and

elaborating about God within a complex system of ideas. God is not something relatively fixed and untenable to be studied as a pre-formed and pre-fabricated body of knowledge.

Critically commenting on the modes of theologies such as Karl Barth's Trinitarian Christology and Christological Trinity, A.P.Nirmal said, "If Barth were to be alive, I would have argued with him that his understanding of the richly diverse and inexhaustible nature of God and the sovereign and free love of God necessarily implies that God in his freedom is free to save men and women in more ways than one."²²³ For him, "although theology is in pursuit of the Transcendent Truth, its conceptual and heuristic tools have to be derived from empiric and immanent realities."²²⁴ Theology in the final analysis is what we mean and regard God in our lives and what is God doing in a world of untruth and falsities.

Therefore, "The 'given' in theology is neither some creed or doctrine handed down from the past nor a theology imported from outside, but our life. The 'original' and the 'given' in our context is our own situation, our own history, our own struggles, our own aspirations, our own fears and our own hopes. God is dynamically present in these. He is active in these."²²⁵ Out of these encounters has emerged a critical theology of risk taking. Their risks arise due to many factors. The risks those who take stand for truth, objectivity, accountability and transparency. As we continue to engage countering the fake news and blatant lies that the institutions of governance, its instruments and its processes churn out, the risks keep multiplying, aggravating, and intensifying.

Etymologically, the term 'risk' is derived from the Italian '*risco*' or '*rischio*' meaning 'danger'. Knowing the impending "danger", "if" someone jumps into it by succumbing to or venturing into or embarking

²²³ J. Russell Chandran, "A.P. Nirmal – A Tribute", Op. cit. p. 144.

²²⁴ Ibid, p.143.

²²⁵ Ibid.

upon for a cause is said as “risk”. So, “risk” is something which has to do for progress, change or advancement. Therefore, risks are ‘human-made constructs’ that combines politics, economics, socio-cultural, religio-ethical and technological dimensions. In this way, ‘risk’ has to do with social relations and political arrangement. Risks are thus inseparable from the ‘object realities’ of hazard or danger. Risks are varying in dimensions and degrees, and so can never be uniform or the same. The degree, veracity, intensity and alacrity of ‘risk’ keep changing from one context to another.

Despite knowing the unpredictable, complex and conflicting nature of the human beings, God has taken the “risk” by elevating ‘humans’ to such an extent that we shall have dominion over creation not by our domination but by our servant hood and stewardship. God indeed has taken risks despite knowing the human nature. Nonetheless, the world in which we live and all its resources are indeed the gifts from God. It is unfortunate that the core principles of which the whole created order hangs on has been trampled with. The rich and the powerful have appropriated information and technology and thus exercise their monopoly over it. If God is all-knowing and all-powerful, can God be held in such a state of vulnerability to His creation?

God is aware of the sinful nature of humans and their institutions of governance Creator-God went ahead giving dominion over creation who would act responsibly as stewards of creation. But, the contrary humans failed to dispense truth and behaved in erratic manner. And yet, there are rays of hope. In its entirety God is the prime source of risk. In tune to this John Sanders²²⁶ has thus argued that the idea of a risk-taking God is consonant with several biblical traditions. These materials form the basis for a theology of risk. It is this theological principle which is the core of

²²⁶ Careful, profound theological queries and challenging arguments expounded on the God who Risks by John Sanders, *The God who Risks: A Theology of Providence*, Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1998.

the riskiness in risk-taking theology. A critical theology of risk-taking has reached a new phase in history that the principle of risk as the surer way for freedom and emancipation, since God being the prime mover of risk-taking.

Throughout the Biblical narrative we come across people of God both women and men in faith have taken risks not for them but for the sake of others to establish quality of life for all. In Genesis, we see degrees of risks involved in the divine creation of human beings. In the Old Testament when Abraham was asked to leave Ur and leave everything i.e., all his possessions including his family (Gen 12). He had to take risks to edify his faith before God cf. Heb: 18-19. Abraham was a risk-taker. Moses represents a long list of risks who heeded to God's call in leading the people. In Exodus Moses had to confront Pharaoh on numerous occasions and safely led the Hebrew people out of Egypt and into the 'Promised Land'. His risks were significant and daring. Likewise, Joshua and others in Maccabees had taken great risks for the people. Prophets spoke against the oppressive empires, admonished the rich and the powerful, and daringly preached that 'another way was possible'.

Standing upright before the Kings or Emperors and looking straight into their eyes and on the face uttered that their ways and modes were unjust and righteous God does not like and certainly they be punished. They went all-out and edified daringness and boldness to speak before the emperors, kings, powers and principalities without fear and favor for the poor and the needy. In this sense, they had taken risks at the cost of their lives. Truly they were the risk-takers. In the New Testament although Peter at the first instance hesitated to walk on water eventually jumped from the boat the moment he saw Jesus. Further, Peter denied Jesus three times, but instantaneously took the risk of going to the court yard. He did edify his faith by taking risks. Likewise in the New Testament we come across a number of personalities who have taken risks.

Therefore, risk-taking is an instrument and God's sign that characterizes God's covenant and our response representing the larger cause of God's care and human continuum.

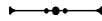
The list culminates in Jesus Christ who is the last Adam, the first born of the new creation. The ultimate risk-taker is God's Messiah who came to proclaim the Kingdom of God which is at hand. Jesus was the paradigm knowing well what would happen and yet took risks throughout his life and ministry. Jesus is the risk-taker for the last and least (Lk 4:16-21; Mt 9:31-38; Jn 8: 2-11). Those who have risked suffered the most in their personal, familial and professional life for seeking and speaking "truth". There are a number of people within the Christian and secular domains who have taken all types of risks. Why would they search for truth involves great risk? What motivates them to go ahead even prepared to die? Taking positions against the dominant belief, fabricated news, and exploitation calls for risks, sacrificing one's profession and sometimes even life. As Christians the implications of risk-taking should be affirmed with full theological confidence that we are striving for 'New Heaven', and 'New Earth'.

Jesus' incarnation as human in flesh and blood is the birth of "New Humanity" "New Humanity" shall strive for realizing and establishing a new humane and just order reflecting God's righteousness and Truth. The "New Humanity" in its effort will strive relentlessly dismantling the shackles of lies, fakes news and subjectivity. Risks are not something that exists out there, so that we can grab or enter/force into, but risks are rather always exists for somebody in a given situation. God in creation and redemption has taken numerous risks and continues to take risks even now in restoring the created order. The more risks God in Jesus takes, the more God is able to absorb the risks while restoring the lost and least, the hapless and the vulnerable. It is this saving activity that restores the fractured and tormented creatures. If not for this, the divine

risk-taking and human venturing into a critical theology of risk taking loses it meaning, value and essence.

It is this divine-human confluence that makes a critical theology of risk-taking more vibrant and dynamic. It is apparent that God often bears and endures the risks whenever humans out of greed and other compulsions abuse the free choices and responsible freedom. Therefore, cross and resurrection symbolize an ongoing life-affirming continuum for a theology of risk-taking. Jesus Christ is the unifier who represents the victims of risks signifying that God in Jesus actively involved in transforming those who lose while taking risks. We are reminded time and time again that we should be prepared or willing to lose life in order to gain it. Therefore, a critical theology of risk-taking is clearly grounded on the dictum that ‘unless the seed dies it cannot bear fruits’ meaning ‘fullness of life is not possible’.

WATCH OUT: CASTEISM ON WHEELS A PENAL OFFENCE



Indian society is casteist and caste-ridden. Casteism manifests in all areas of the Indian society. Names of Indians by and large end with caste names that they belong to. Over and above, caste names are written on two-wheelers and four-wheelers that denote that they belong to particular caste configurations. Caste is surviving for ages in India and hardly have we come across anyone who is serious of annihilating caste. Caste is also going strong in polity, religion and in other facets as well. A few get annoyed when they see that caste names inscribed or written in the number plates as well on the front and rear wind-shields of four wheels. It's just crazy and weird that the Indian psyche is so much embroiled and enmeshed with caste.

Caste per se adds prestige, privileges and honor, and so, displaying of caste names wherever is possible caste names are accommodated. Over and above, it conveys a clear message to those when caught in traffic offences or to convey to the law enforcing agencies or when caught in the crowd the caste names plays the most crucial part in influencing those who stand as active participants as well as onlookers. Mob frenzied and mob psychics act on caste basis. Therefore, for varied reasons caste names are written or inscribed on wheels. It is so nauseating

to read even on wheels that too while driving on the roads. Hotels, cafeterias, schools, educational institutions and host of others are named after caste names, which include Aryan, Brahmin or Kshatriyas so on and so forth.

At last we did receive some good news that came after seven decades in a free independent India in one small form from a small part of our country. It is a welcome move, but we will have to wait and see how many would follow the law because it involves their caste names, prestige, privileges and honor. There would certainly be some kind of ripples and hiccups, but should not be deterred. Annihilation of caste at one stroke cannot be done because Indian psyche is filled with caste and no political executive had the daringness to introduce with such a radical and transformative legislation or dared to utter against the system of caste.

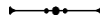
Writing caste names on the vehicles should go. It's horrifying and so bizarre that we are proud to have our caste names on our wheels. Even in the 21st Century we continue to have our names, so that it has given many the 'identity' and so caste attaches 'identity' that ascribes everyone that caste names galvanizes identity and in return power. And so, most of the Indians do not want give away their caste tags and as far as possible would like to display their caste identity in all the places. It is in such a context, a small initiative and move that came from the transport department in Noida that caste tags on the wheels shall never be entertained and accordingly be fined and about a few hundred vehicles having the caste tags were penalized.

Caste should go and it is possible on two fronts: 1) in small and big ways by ways of legislation and 2) creating awareness on the consequential and adverse impact of caste. Casteist names and words should gradually be abolished and for those initiatives be implemented in all the states of India. There should be concerted efforts taken and be implemented that casteist displays in whatever formats be condemned and

countered with punitive measures. To start with, it would be meted out with stiff resistance and by all means those casteist elements would try to thwart the good moves of some people. No society with such things that demarcates individuals and communities on the basis of homo-hierarchicus or structured who should be on top, middle and bottom can realize social equality.

Caste should go and by all means it should go. Caste on its own shall never wither or wane away. Despite modernism, globalism and developmentalism, caste has not waned yet, rather manifests in all the facets of our society. And so by employing diverse means and methods caste should be countered. How should caste be annihilated and by what means? What happened in Noida is a small initiative but in the right direction. By initiating progressive legislations and punitive actions caste will have to be addressed and countered. Gradually initiatives such as these should enter into educational institutions, hotels and other public arena where caste tags are increasingly being used. Caste is a regressive category and antithetical human progress and growth. India shall never make greater inroads and breakthrough in other sectors if the society is entrenched in caste. In such a scenario a plausible response is initiating small and big breakthroughs.

INCREDIBLE INDIA: 'PURIFIED' COW DUNG CAKES



Indian economy is in dire straits and is going through a serious crisis. Investments in productive sectors and in other segments by and large have been affected. It has triggered unemployment, crisis in cash inflows and out-flows and above agrarian and industrial crises. Exports play the vital role in the earnings of foreign exchange reserves and thus help the countries' to handle the balance of payments such as India. When exports are hit badly it would automatically affect the commoners and others. It has chain effects which would pervade other segments as well.

What happened to 'Make in India'? It continues to remain as 'rhetoric', and yet to take-off because investors are not confident to invest. A number of factors could perhaps be cited for this impasse. The logic is simple, be it foreign capitalists or Indian capitalists, they look out for returns. Without returns no one is prepared to invest anywhere. Therefore, maximizing investments is based on maximization of profits, and so investors because they are selfish and we cannot expect them to be 'charitable' or 'selfless', because for them 'greed is good'. In such a scenario, a novel export scheme has been launched—exports of 'cow dung cakes'.

My Take

We live in an ‘incredible India’ where cow-dung cakes are exported for religious purposes. It shows that this type of venture is certainly ‘innovative’ and thus yields. However, beef is exported which yields huge returns to our exchequer. Likewise export of cow dung to one part of the United States where the Indian population is large and the tag is quite amusing ‘for the religious purposes only’ which implies ‘not for eating’—a warning, unlike ‘cow’s urine for drinking only’. Hope in due course of time exports of cow dung cakes would pick up and yields good return so that our economy grows stronger. We live in a world wherein religions are used to make money—be it Christianity, Islam, Judaism or Hinduism. Religion is capitalized for selfish goals and thus packaged in such ways for money.

IS IT RIGHT TO CALL THE POLITICAL CLASS OF INDIA AS ‘SNOLLYGOSTER’?



A vocabulary has been tweeted in 2017 by a Member of Parliament (MP) belonging to Indian National Congress (INC) representing Trivandrum constituency of Kerala, “snollygoster”, an American dialect which means “a shrewd, unprincipled politician” which was first known to have been used in 1845. Even in 2019, the term “snollygoster” is apt to the Indian socio-economic, politico-religio-cultural settings. What is happening in India in recent times show that there have been total breakdown of constitutional propriety, moral authority and political integrity amongst those who govern and get elected to responsible positions of governance in all spheres of life. Those elected to positions of authority particularly the President, Governors, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the Prime Minister should uphold the constitution and not to deviate from the obligations enshrined in the Constitution of India. Their positions require bi-partisan approaches and should transcend narrow human-made barriers. The office of the President is the most important Constitutional position and he/she happens to be the custodian of the Constitution. Though proposed by the ruling party he/she gets elected by the majority votes polled cutting across the political parties. Once elected, the President of India she or he is being considered as the first citizen of India empowered with numerous responsibilities. Likewise, governors are picked up by the ruling government at Centre and are the constitutional heads posted to the capitals of state governments and union territories and should abide by the constitutional obligations. Similarly, the office of the Prime Minister who happens to

be the top political executive of the country though represents a political party, once elected to the top office is the PM for all in the country. Equally the judiciary is an important pillar and the Chief Justice of India adds more significance when it comes to interpretation of law and dispensation of justice.

India is known for many things and the recent happenings are just incredible. What happened last week was indeed a living testimony, an outright sham and a blatant mockery to our democracy. To substantiate these, Maharashtra is a classic case and has been in the limelight for more than a month. We did witness several twists and turns, political maneuvering and bickering, shunting and shuttling, betrayals and home coming and what not. The results of the recent assembly polls were announced and the government would have to be formed. While forming the government, the games that the BJP played to install its own had exposed the ruling dispensation. The duos at the Centre used right, center and left and whatever they had under their command but ended in futility. It ripped open the lust for power and arrogance that they employed all these years. The people (We the People) of the country were watching the ways with which these people in responsible positions behave and abuse their powers. During the wee hours (dark hours) when the citizens of this nation were fast asleep, revoking and invoking order whichever suits them and bypassing the procedures and processes in clandestine ways like fast-track everything was changed in order to facilitate the interests of the ruling political party. Next morning many were under shock saying how could this happen. The aggrieved parties had challenge the so-called mid-night coup in the Supreme Court and set the wrongs right. The ways with which the ruling dispensation used the government machinery and the organs of the state makes one to believe and wonder that under this regime anything could happen—absolute power is dangerous. We would have read in the news papers and seen some in the TV channels about the political developments prior to our

sleep and the following morning what we read and saw on the screen was something entirely different. What had happened? In darkness and during wee hours something like a coup happened—what we witnessed this week was something like that. It is like bulldozing which clearly testifies and communicates that nothing is indispensable for the ruling dispensation which thinks that they are invincible. The message is loud and clear all along to those who oppose that we would do whatever we want and no force on this earth could stop us, forgetting that they are susceptible and prone to fall—and there are checks and balances.

How long and how far this well-oiled machinery spearheaded by the duos who think that they are shrewd, strategic and knows the rules of the game and also how to break the rules now caught and thus facing turbulence. The word snollygoster is apt and fits very well to the current context filled with a number of fiascos we have been witnessing in recent times that are spread over—political, economic, religio-cultural and social spheres. Snollygoster means shrewd and unprincipled politician. Being shrewd is not the problem because it is a positive aspect which means astute, sharp, perspective, insightful, wise and clever. For the leaders these are essential and certainly the meaning conveys lots of positive aspects. How many of our politicians, religious leaders and others who are in responsible position wielding power and authority are endowed with these qualities? However, snollygoster extends other meaning “unprincipled” or unpredictable nature. The political fiascos in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana, Goa and in others parts of the country clearly reveals the unpredictable nature of our politicians who can be poached and for the sake of power they could go to any extent that we saw in Maharashtra. They win from a political party and from a constituency promising all sorts of things. Having won then when something goes wrong then most of our politicians have tendency to go astray for money or other incentives. Nowadays what is happening is that the leaders of political parties like shepherds should protect their MLAs from

the opposition and so they are whisked to undisclosed destinations because they would cross over. This is the characteristic we find in recent times. This tendency or the phenomenon is growing particularly in the Indian polity. It is a menace. If the government is formed on a slender majority with the help of the alliance partners then it is fragile and susceptible and the opposition like hyenas or vultures would wait or do some damages in order to create cracks in the flock. When the opposition says that the government would fall by its inherent contradictions, it is not due to ideological or programmatic contradictions or on common minimum program, but on the “unprincipled” MLAs who do not subscribe or committed to the party’s ideology or vision, which means that they are not grounded on solid rock, but weak without any principles or commitment. Therefore they become easy preys to the vultures. Even in recent times we observe is two diametrically opposed political parties could come together and form alliances and even governments

However, Maharashtra is another classic case because this time somehow it did not fall to those vultures and hyenas, but it is not yet over, the game is just begun and we need to wait and see. What we are witnessing in India is political play. As Rabindranath Tagore rightly points out that “The nation’s bagpipe of righteous indignation has so often changed its tune according to the variation of time and to the altered groupings of the alliances of diplomacy, that it can be enjoyed with amusement as the variety performance of the political music hall.”

GANDHI AT 150: HIS RELEVANCE TODAY



On Wednesday, the 2nd October, 2019, the country in particular and the world in general as a whole celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Gandhi, the father of the nation, a composite persona whose thoughts and works continues to spark in the formats of—spoken as well as written. Known for his ethical ideals and normative principles that cover multiple facets such as polity, economy, ecology, environment, religion and culture, his thoughts and works continue to illumine many across the world. As we commemorate an epoch and a momentous occasion of Gandhi @150 years, it is important at this juncture to retrieve and invoke the ideas, ideals, philosophy and ethical moorings of Gandhi that sheds more light to the present than ever before.

To start with, one of the most striking points as far as I am concerned that Gandhi reflected deeply and intensely the modes of human behavior, contents of words and actions particularly the degree of oppression unleashed and more importantly the parties and actors involved in the whole process. He categorically said that the victims of oppression were never innocent. In fact, he emphasized that they were complicit in their own oppression. What he said was true even in the present times particularly what we have been witnessing. For instance, when the British ruled India with the help of the Indians, we come across numerous instances.

Jallianwala Bagh massacre was the classic example wherein the Indian soldiers fired their fellow Indians.

When we de-code his argument and thus zero down Gandhi's view of the conception of 'power', he adds that it acquires and gains its momentum and fuller significance as it is put to functionality. Power when trickles down and while translated and seen practically, power in fact gains fuller shape only when it engulfs and assumes flesh and blood only in and through the cooperation of the victims, without which it remains hollow and void. There are people who enjoy power in this way, but for Gandhi in order to achieve liberation and freedom, one should have the courage to assert and deny their masters cooperation and any obligation. He said most of us were too nervous or afraid to defy. Rebuking Indians in South Africa, Gandhi said that those who behave like this were like worms, and therefore, should not blame others for trampling on them. He warned that more the people gave in more force and exploitation took place.

Gandhi asked the Indians to learn to 'rebel' against themselves. Gandhi's notion of courage was entwined with self-respect and he considered it one of the greatest human virtues. Throughout his life, he kept invoking self-respect of those who were subjected to all forms of humiliation and exploitation and to those not knowing about the essence and meaning of self-respect who suffer from varied forms of injustices. Gandhi reiterated that people should not behave like worms and warned them not to blame others for trampling, because they should be blamed for allowing others to trample down. He also exhorted that courage and self-respect were like two-sides of the same coin. These are the important values that Gandhi emulated in his life—highs and lows.

Throughout his life he strived for those who had lost their self-respect and dignity. Gandhi's vision and mission by and large revolved around arousing the self-dignity and self-respect of those who were living under de-humanized conditions. Another facet where Gandhi had

profound influence was his practice of *ahimsa*. On this concept of Gandhi there have been many deliberations and interpretations attributing—non-violence to a large extent meant ‘compassion’ and ‘love’ and these two concepts influenced many as they reflected the basic fundamental core principles that the humanity ought to imbue. Further, these two concepts not only linked to physical, but also Gandhi extended to psychological, moral and environmental facets as well.

Gandhi was very open to ideas and views and respected other faiths. For him, moral principles and noble thoughts flow from all the directions and so allowed new horizons of understandings that breaks new grounds and fresh ideas. He did not constrict himself to singular view, but open to all kinds of positions and perspectives. Due to these things, he respected multi-culturalism and allowed creative and critical ideas across the cultures and religion. More importantly, the world in which we live where the right-wing populists and nationalists keep saying that globalism and multiculturalism are dead, and patriotism is the only way and by doing that they are keen to shutting down the borders, engaged in citizenship, enumeration and debates over patriotism and majoritarianism and host of others.

Gandhi visualized that India at one point or other was moving towards this trend and so keeping the future of India said:

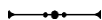
“God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.”

Gandhi’s forethought proved to be right wherein crony capitalism is now the order of the day. Approximation of productive assets and monopolization of capital are in the hands of a few between and within the countries. Currently, the world order is in another phase of imperialism.

As against the back drop, Gandhi's legacy and profound declarations should all the time be invoked. We are aware of the fact that Gandhi's life was his message, a rare one that testified and manifested his belief and actions. This is how Gandhi developed his synthesis. Out of many sharp proclamations one edict of Gandhi continues to remain so powerful and influencing: "In the midst of death, life persists; in the midst of untruth, truth persists; in the midst of untruth, truth persists; in the midst of darkness, light persists." Gandhi, is indeed a phenomenon, a legacy, a composite persona and a rarity that we as Indians should be proud of

None can take his place as the Father of the Nation— neither in the present or in the future. A few make history and transform history for the betterment of humanity and Gandhi is one among them. Precisely because of these reasons he continues to illumine and occupy in the minds and hearts of Homo sapiens across the world. Gandhi still matters particularly to India in the present turbulent times because the principles Gandhi stood for are still invoked and challenged across India and the world. On this occasion as Indians all of us as Indians not just by invoking his principles and maxims only in words, but let us try to practice and put them into actions. This is what Gandhi stood for and lived for. He practiced what he preached that makes Gandhi one of the greatest living icons ever in human history.

GLOBALISATION AN IDEOLOGY IN DISGUISE AND A THEOLOGY TO LEGITIMIZE THE GLOBAL INEQUALITY



Globalization: Reality and Propaganda

Globalization continues to occupy a major accent, a vocabulary and thus has assumed a scale of alarming proportions even in today's world. The word "globalization" is ambiguous and therefore it posits ambivalence, and thus is interpreted in different ways, perhaps loosely or arbitrarily. Everyone is confronted by the term "globalization". What does "globalization" mean? As Richard Munch succinctly defines:

"...Globalization means that everything that happens anywhere in the world has an impact on events in every place in the world. What other people do in another place influences the possibilities for action open to us and vice versa. Economic transactions, political conflicts, changes in cultural traditions are no longer confined to one particular place but can affect a whole range of peoples and countries. Advancing globalisation has bridged the "distances of time and space" to such an extent that "barriers to action now scarcely exist." ²²⁷

²²⁷ Karen L. Bloomquist, *Engaging Economic Globalization as Churches* in "the ecumenical review," volume 53, no 4, October 2001, p.493.

However, the terminology and the interpretation differ from one to another. Therefore, Globalization has several dimensions. Although economics is one of the core factors, we should not think that everything is moved and controlled by economics. Undoubtedly economics is playing the most crucial role behind globalization. It fosters to increase profits, to maximize the returns and to conquer new markets. Nevertheless, globalisation as a project encompasses other dimensions too. Global capitalism translates its vision through globalisation.

The Changed Context

With some exceptions, economists, technocrats and corporate managers view it as an expansion in the volume and variety of cross-border transactions in goods and services, a drastic increase in global capital inflows and rapid diffusion of technology. To be more precise, globalisation for some represents an epoch of opportunities and choices. In concrete terms, the foreign direct investment (FDI) grew three times faster than trade and four times more than the world output annually. This has enhanced foreign investment and facilitated greater scope for the market forces. Further globalisation has integrated the time and space by revolutionizing technology with the help of scientific advances and know-how and thus made the earth as a 'global village'. Connectivity is being made possible irrespective of time and space.

This transformation has enhanced foreign investment and facilitated greater scope for the market forces. The proponents of globalisation push their discourse by saying that the jobs created by the transnational corporations (TNCs) and increased flight of foreign capital; the productivity gains from transferring the latest technologies and technical and managerial know-how to the less developed countries (LDCs); the participation of masses in stock markets through equity funds; to maximize the comparative advantage between nations; the efficiency gains from 'contracting out' and more flexible labor market; the fiscal

discipline enforced for favourable investment climate with an assumption of helping the developing nations in the long-run.

Globalization could perhaps be the fact of life. For a number of critics, it is a phenomenon and process without real meaning or conscience or human face; an economic force that has aggravated inequalities, injustice and poverty for billions all over the world. In addition, the workforce in the formal and informal sectors faces job insecurity because of greater competition, which is invariably 'downsized'. Re-location of production centers from place to place on the basis of labor costs. This is indeed one of the major threats for the workforce. In the industrialised countries, globalization and increased competition are seen as contributing to widening income deferrals; the rise in unemployment and debate over the continuance of social security system or not; the erosion of union influence and host of other issues between and within countries.

In concrete terms the critics point out that the West's gain has been at the expense of developing and poorer countries. The market-propelled globalization has created increased insecurity in the workplace in the developed world. In an era of globalization inequality is on the rise. While booming stock markets, giant mergers and frantic financial speculation provide unbelievable rewards to a tiny globalized minority; the majority of the world's population is yet to be connected with globalization. For many, in fact, living standards have stagnated or declined, while the burdens of work and insecurity have grown. A glimpse of the global and national scenario will help us to look at different dimensions of inequality as well as the increasing concentration of wealth both within and between nations in the following paragraphs.

The report entitled *Public Good or Private Wealth* released ahead of the World Economic Forum in January 2019, in Davos, Switzerland, said while billionaires' fortunes globally increased by 12 per cent last year at \$2.5 billion a day, while 3.8 billion people who make up the

poorest half of the humanity saw their wealth decline by 11 per cent.²²⁸ Describing the Indian scenario Oxfam International Executive Director Winnie Byanyima said, “It’s morally outrageous that a few wealthy individuals are amassing a growing share of India’s wealth, while the poor are struggling to eat their next meal or pay for their child medicines.”²²⁹ “If this obscene inequality between the top 1 per cent and the rest of India’s continues then it will lead to a complete collapse of the social and democratic structure of this country.”²³⁰ To make the matters worse, according to Oxfam CEO that “top 10 per cent of India’s population holds 77.4 per cent of the total national wealth”.²³¹

The glaring widening gap between rich and poor showed that “Indian billionaires” wealth grew daily by Rs. 2,200 crores in 2018. The divide is so appalling that top 10 per cent of India’s population holds 77.4 per cent of the total national wealth. It further shows that the wealth of top 9 billionaires is equivalent to the wealth of the bottom 50 percent of the population. The fortunes of Indian billionaires grew by an astronomical 35 per cent per day last year, or by Rs.2, 200 crores daily, while the poorest 10 per cent of the country have continued to remain in debt since 2004”,²³² according to Oxfam report of 2019.

Further, “The contrast is ever sharper for the top 1 per cent that holds 51.53 per cent of the national wealth. The bottom 60 per cent, the majority of the population, owns merely 4.8 per cent of the national wealth. Wealth of top 9 billionaires is equivalent to the wealth of the bottom 50 per cent of the population” the global rights group said.²³³ The report reveals that India added 18 new billionaires last year raising the total number of billionaires to 119, and their wealth cross the \$400 billion

²²⁸ For more details, see “Morung Express”, Jan 21, 2019.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

mark for the first time. It rose from \$325.5 billion in 2017 to \$440.1 billion in 2018. This is the single largest annual increase since the 2008 financial crisis,”²³⁴ Oxfam report added.

The report further revealed that “India’s combined revenue and capital expenditure of the Centre and states for medical and public health, sanitation and water is Rs. 2,08,166 crores, less than the wealth of India’s richest billionaire Mukesh Ambani at Rs. 2,80,700 crore. It also analyzed that the ways which the government escalating the crisis inequality by underfunding the public services such as health care and education, on the one hand, while undertaking the multinational corporations and the wealthy, and failing to clamp down on tax dodging”²³⁵ Oxfam India CEO Amitabh Behar said in a statement.

The survey also found that “Cutting taxes on wealth predominantly benefits men who own 50 per cent more wealth than women globally, and control over 86 per cent of corporations. Conversely, when public services are neglected poor women and girls suffer most.”²³⁶ Notably, “Economic inequality plagued by caste, gender and religion need to be tackled on a war-footing. Government must now deliver real change by ensuring the super-rich and corporations pay their fair share of tax and invest this money to strengthen public healthcare and education,”²³⁷ Behar said. The global scenario clearly posits a divide between the globalised class and the victims of globalization. The existing gap would further widen and disparities continue to escalate in the ensuing years. We live in an unequal world where there are inequalities and injustices. Globalization has created a wedge between the haves and have-nots.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

Discourses: Convergent, Divergent and Overlapping

Discourses on the impact of globalisation have generated enormity of meanings and multiplicity of perspectives. We are almost at the fag end of the second decade of the 21st century wherein these transformations and processes should undergo intense scrutiny. Nonetheless, the questions at this juncture emerge are: 1. How to discern the phenomena (a) and process(s) of globalisation? What should be the framework to counter it? Globalization is the engine of the present state of global economy. The transnational corporations (TNCs), global financial institutions namely the IMF, WB and WTO and the rich capitalist countries are the instruments of this process. It 'claims' to unify and integrate the distanced economies and market mechanisms into one single market. It encompasses all aspects of human activities. Globalization has thus far produced predators and prey, winners and losers, victors and victims. This process is like the 'law of the jungle', which means the 'survival of the fittest'.

We need to understand the forces behind globalization, if it is to be countered at a theoretical and practical ways. Economics play a major role in moving and controlling globalization. Economics certainly do influence social structures and thus politics. Nevertheless economics alone cannot be considered as the axis or the driving force of globalisation. Behind globalisation there are underlying forces and processes that are complimenting and navigating the globalization project in the 'right direction' and 'at the right pace'. In this paper an attempt will be made to posit the interplay between ideology and theology in globalisation, which is furthering inequality between and within nations. After having deliberated the above-mentioned aspects a modest proposal will be offered that undergirds a theology of action to counter globalization.

The emergent ruthless competition amongst nations often leads to compare and compete with one another as how oligopolies compete and swallow the weaker ones. It is precisely for these reasons the supporters

of globalization use the terms such as ‘borderless’ and ‘seamless’ world. For them, nation-states are just imaginary entities. According to them they are ‘one economic unit’ and ‘one global center’. The neo-liberals attribute to these changes as: “The changes in the techno-industrial base of the world economy would have been ineffectual without the rise of neo-liberalism and financial liberalization. The reification of the ‘market’ as a neutral and natural institution, apolitical and ahistorical has now become common in academic and policy circles.”²³⁸

Neo-liberalism as the ideology of “Globalization”

Some political scientists have periodised or enumerated different phases or epochs of globalization and accordingly identified its processes and normative behavior. Virtually every group from the left, green or direct action politics has stated their opposition to ‘globalization’ or went ahead saying that it is one of the serious problems confronting majority of people across the world. Hence, we need to have clarity on the ideological underpinning of ‘globalization’. Neo-liberalism is an advanced phase of capitalism, which under girds globalisation. It is a specific form of capitalism, corresponding to the phenomenon of globalization.

Globalization and neo-liberalism are to be seen as a single global project. They are not just simply descriptive terms, but rather operational in an objective material world expositing subjective meanings. Like all ideologies they infer meanings and thus refer to actual processes of change. Global capitalism as a system is backed, reinforced and legitimized by a brand of theology. This theology is popularly known as

²³⁸ Quoted by Don D. Marshall, *National development and the globalisation discourse: Confronting ‘imperative’ and ‘convergence’ notions* in “Third World Quarterly,” vol. 17, no.5, p.887.

“Prosperity Theology”. Jerry Falwell, one of the proponents of Prosperity Theology comments:

“The free-enterprise system is clearly outlined in the Book of Proverbs in the Bible. Jesus made it clear that the work ethic was a part of His plan for man (sic). Ownership of property is Biblical. Competition in business is Biblical. Ambitions and successful management is clearly outlined as part of God’s plan for His people.”²³⁹

This theology is in conjunction with neo-liberal ideology of globalization. Further, the element of choice, an integral component of freedom is grounded in the neo-liberal ideology and prosperity theology. This value is justified and legitimized as if individual choice and freedom are the natural process of human beings and thus innate. These values in turn help in self-serving and apparently benefit market forces.

The market although is an abstract entity endowed with powers and therefore ascribed to God. It pre-supposes the basic faith in market absolutes and fundamentals. It is assumed and believed that the market forces will “never go wrong” and “there is no alternative” are based on the ideology of neo-liberalism. It pushes the values of materialism and consumerism that are not grounded on world-Human-God construct, rather rooted in commodity fetishism, money fetishism and capital fetishism. The basic problem lies in a value system where money assumes greater importance and is treated as absolute.

In an era of globalization Mammon has become an absolute. It is being encapsulated by the values of Mammon. Mammon is divinised. The technology and visual media create false consciousness, which is grounded on commodity fetishism. In this process there is no critical questioning, but only absorption and assimilation. The belief system is

²³⁹ Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1980, p.13.

based on “acquisitiveness”, “consumerism” and “individualism”. One of the major myths that are floated persuasively is that the “invisible hand” regulates the market. What is this “invisible hand”? Is it God or Mammon? There we need to look at the inter-play between God and Mammon.

Global capitalism manifests itself in a sophisticated way and involved in rapid transformations {e.g. restructuring the global political economy and market, free trade organizations, international financial institutions, creating regional trade blocs and the power wielded by TNCs} means that capitalism entirely reached a new phase. Until and unless we take into consideration the core, which propels and activates our writings and actions would remain dichotomized. In the ensuing years globalization would unleash its forces in its ugly forms. And this process needs to be stopped because historically capital has never moderated itself. The only way is resistance, which can stop and thus civilize capital.

A Perspective of Resistance

Discourses on the merits and penalties of globalization have been intense in recent years. They do not even pertain to a particular country, region or continent, but is global as witnessed in Seattle, Prague, Washington D.C., Genoa or New York, which drew protests against globalization. Global resistance has tended to confront its all-encompassing relations. However, the fact remains that these protest movements have often been, in many ways shows a continuum, consistency, constructive and progression, in forcefully drawing attention of the global hegemonic powers, its institutions and instruments to the problems of inequality in the world.

How do we discern these resistance movements? Indeed the discourse on globalization ought not to be about the efficiency of markets

or the advancements of technology. The discourses are about diametrically opposing frameworks. One framework is consolidating its globalizing hegemonic economic, religion-cultural and ideological arrangements. And the other, which is also becoming increasingly globalized, tends to resist the emergent global capitalism. For the global political resistance movements, globalization, in its basic form, is neither particularly new nor an accident. Globalization has been there but manifests in different form in each historical epoch. Its form and processes tend to change in each historical epoch. Therefore, its ideological hegemonic global capitalism as a one-sided movement that simply reflects an asymmetry of power, which needs to be resisted. The rationale behind global-local protests is rooted in the understanding of the processes of globalization as they are unfolding today.

Nurturing Resistance

The resistance against globalisation is contested and qualified. And yet, the interpretations given by the protesters or resisters are being questioned. It is clearly a question of articulating from an ideological, theological and political position about a spate of resistance we have been witnessing in the past years. The boundaries are no more blurred and cannot be negotiated. Therefore,

“The resistance employs both old and new strategies. There is nothing new about counterbalancing state power; plying symbols such as placards, leaflets; Relying on the residual power to refuse; or networking in order to galvanize. The efforts of different groups up against a variety of form...these tested strategies remain important... there is no single model of resistance. Yet globalization is transforming the parameters, redefining constraints... Innovative strategies specifically crafted to resist globalization are not merely stabs in the dark at an amorphous phe-

nomenon. Some—by no means all—groups that countering self-organizing have engaged in self-conscious strategizing about countering globalisation. These resisters have thought out a question: what kind of political interventions can be adopted to subject neoliberal globalization, often mediated by national and local programmers; to social control?”²⁴⁰

The resistance movements against globalization are gaining momentum and also global attention. For example, in Genoa the resisters numbering up to 150,000 were the largest since Seattle in 1999. As the French President Jacques Chirac, while acknowledging said: “There is no demonstration drawing 100,000 or 150,000 people without a valid reason.” In Portugal, Prime Minister Antonio Gutierrez said: “Calling G-8 to abandon their egotistical, short-term vision of international relations” and for the process of globalization to be more humane, he warned that “the rich should be concerned with the health of the poor, otherwise one day it will be the poor who will take care of the health of the rich.”

In the 32nd World Economic Forum held at New York in February 2002 the UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan said: that “...business leaders and governments must do much more to address poverty and redress social justice – now has greater urgency. Too much power and wealth is concentrated in the hands of too few people and countries,” Anan said, “Creating a perception that globalisation is to blame.” He continued that “I believe that perception is wrong – that globalisation, so far from being the cause of poverty and social ills, offers the best hope of overcoming them,” he said. “But it is up to you to prove it wrong, with actions that translate into concrete results for the downtrodden, exploited and excluded.”

²⁴⁰ James H. Mitt Oman, *Globalization and Environmental Resistance Politics* in “Third World Quarterly,” vol. 19, no 5, 1998, p.864.

Forms of Resistance

Neoliberalism organizes the economy very effectively and thus creates new problems to the vulnerable and workers. Neoliberalism and globalisation are posing new threats because the problems they create are quite different than the past. Nevertheless, people all around the world are determined to resist globalization and its processes. Faced with a global force people resist locally and globally. People all over keep challenging the instruments, institutions and the G-8 consistently and relentlessly.

Apparently some tend to dub these resistances as violent and undemocratic. Questions of different shades are being posed and asked. To do this, it is important to consider that the analysis and critique of neoliberalism take concrete form in specific resistance actions attacking the symbols of their ideology and theology the two powerful dimensions in a striking and imaginative way. It is always that action involves politics and in this dialectic theory-action will help us how to advance.

Towards a Theology of Resistance

As practioners of theology and students of social ethics we should look at the politics/ideology behind the resistance and protest movements where there is deepening hostility of hundreds of millions—in the advanced capitalist countries and poor nations who strive for a more just and humane world order. As informed people these protests and resistance actions need to be theologically and ethically formulated and reflected. Undoubtedly, historical perspective is by no means simply a theoretical abstraction. It must become the guiding thread for the programme of political struggle against the deepening social and economic crises, which confronts the mass of the world's people in the advanced and poor countries alike.

The political representatives of global capitalism or neo-liberalism cannot resolve this crisis. This is because the globalization of production, transnationalisation of capital, internationalization of labor, homogenization of culture, mammonisation of Divine and divinisation of the Mammon driving people for markets, profits, goods and services, far from lessening the conflicts within and between the rich countries and poor countries which intensifies these struggles.

A Theology of Resistance

Whether one is in agreement or not, capital – national or global, economic aberrations like un-employment, inflation, poverty, hunger, migration, structural adjustment, redistribution of income, external trade – are all ideologically conceived and politically driven. What then is the role of Christian theology in a context we are placed with? For me, “Christian theology may not start from a body of Church doctrines, lest it become insensitive to the situation around it, and the context from which it speaks. Theology’s starting point cannot be an idea such as revelation, reason, nature, or church doctrine; its point of departure rather be specific social relations, the hopes, and fears of people – the context.”²⁴¹

Theology should move beyond the conventional and doctrinal and epistemological preoccupations. It ought to create awareness and thus plunge us into the context, which posits the micro-macro realities. For the organic intellectuals deeply enmeshed in the struggles and hopes of the masses, theology ought to be concerned with urgent issues of life and death, especially the circumstances that dictate who lives and who dies. Theology ought to place humanity at the center since they repre-

²⁴¹ Nicholas Lossky, et al. *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, p.1004.

sent the image of God. God became incarnate in flesh and blood through Jesus Christ who identified himself with humanity.

In God's being we derive our being. In our being we manifest God's being. These two statements complement each other. It is dialectical and inherently linked with one another. Any system, ideology, theology or phenomena that relegates or reduces human beings from human to sub-human, from person to non-person, from the center to the periphery should be condemned. Any attempt by any force to minimize human worth and human dignity that ought to be challenged.

Human beings per se occupy a unique position before God. They are the subjects and ends of God's creation. Therefore, "Theology's goal... is to make clear God's identification with the disenfranchised, who have no one to speak for them, and to bring about those reforms necessary to ensure their full participation in society."²⁴² The theological extension of this statement is that theology, ideology or economy ought to enhance the personhood i.e., economic and non-economic factors of human beings. Theology and ideology should be complementary to each other; when political economy is at variance with theology, we are called upon to bring economy in line with theology-ethics and not the other way round. In this way economics and ethics play a crucial role.

The magical power of globalization is where people ascribe to commodities produced, money acquired and capital expanded has idolatrous status in capitalist societies, a status being questioned by a few, more importantly seldom analyzed and understood by Christians. We are aware of the fact that the complex relations of the conditions under which commodities are produced, the ways in which money is acquired, and the means in which capital is expanded.

Theologians and ethicists who are in favor of globalization have by and large uncritically accepted global capitalism. Nevertheless, if they are to come to terms with the ground realities vis-à-vis life-and-death

²⁴² Ibid.

issues of our times they are pushed to reckon with. Therefore, the context pushes us to reflect upon these realities so that we would be meaningfully engaged in grappling with complex relations being pushed by classical and neo-liberal economic theories. For example,

- Ideological weapons of death deployed by globalization.
- Theological-ethical categories of the framework we use for interpreting that reality.
- We discern only the reality – that becomes apparent with the theological and ethical categories we use. It is within this framework that the phenomenon of globalization derives some meaning.
- The categorical frameworks within which we interpret the world and within which we perceive the possible goals of human activity are present.

Therefore our theologico-ethical frameworks and the categories we use to interpret the societal reality are based on the system of theology and set of values we adhere to. In this, our ideological premises are hidden and we interpret the society on the basis of the categories we use. Whatever may be our theological position and ethical convictions, when it comes to globalization we interpret the present global order on the basis of our ideological premises. Now the problem that arises is the dichotomy we draw between opposition and resistance.

These two terminologies are not exclusive but rather mutually inclusive. They are often intertwined and interrelated. As Robert Beckford succinctly puts it, “In other words, we might talk about a resistance-opposition syncretism... involves a complex interplay between styles of resistance and opposition... In short, there is not one form of resistance, but numerous resistances.”²⁴³ On similar lines while explaining about ideology, he says, “...Ideologies draw groupings together; they help to

²⁴³ Robert Beckford, *Dread & Pentecostal*, London: SPCK, 2000, pp.95-96.

constitute and unify congregations, supporters, and participants; they cement social alliances.”²⁴⁴

It is therefore apparent that resistance is not alien to the Bible or faith affirmation or Christian experience. The Bible, History of Christianity and the witnesses of many around the world amply demonstrates that acts of resistance were common particularly in the context of unjust socio-economic and political arrangements. Given the all-pervasive neo-liberal logic that under girds and directs globalization as a totalizing system, there are two questions that surface: 1. Is our faith at stake? 2. What should be our faith response? For the first question,

“But if this is the case, then an enormous challenges faces churches: to nurture people in the Christian faith in comprehensive ways that empower them to resist the logic and assumptions underlying ...globalization. This necessitates moving beyond the spiritualized, privatized interpretations of the faith which are pervasive in most churches of the region, and do not readily lead to engagement with social, economic and political realities.”²⁴⁵

For the second question, “A more “Galilean” perspective on Jesus is required, one conscious of the resistance to empire inherent in what he was saying and doing.”²⁴⁶ Enumerating further,

“The Galilean struggle with empire, together with the conditions that nurtured a tradition of independence, meant that resistance to empire was a mark of the Galilean ethos... an ethos that bred opposition and resistance... Galileans did not have the luxury of standing in some pure non-imperial space, so as to fight the empire... As is the case with many subordinated people. Galileans

²⁴⁴ Ibid. P.98.

²⁴⁵ Karen L. Bloomquist, *Engaging Economic Globalization as Churches* in “the ecumenical review “ vol 53, no 4, Oct 2001, p.494.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

also had to adapt to the imperial ethos even while resisting it... Accommodation is but a necessary feature of resistance.”²⁴⁷

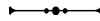
It is not only Jesus but also Paul communicates a way of life that resists the incursion of imperial rule, which structures people lives. For instance,

“When Paul held up the crucified Christ as a central to a salvific message, he was stealing the show, spiriting away the cross, as it were, from the theatre of terror maintained by Rome for subordinating peoples and putting that executioner’s advice to use as a tool for the gospel’s subverting of imperial power... To be defined by a message about a crucified Jesus was to be defined as a tool for the gospel’s subverting of imperial power... To be defined by a message about a crucified Jesus was to be defined as an adversary to the Roman empire and all that it held to be good... Paul’s adversarial politics of Jesus seeks to nurture new fundamental forms of social relation against the stream of imperial control that shape body, mind and spirit.”

In order to retrieve the theologico-ethical norm of resistance, it is important to effectively communicate the gospel and transform the faith understandings and practices of people in the churches, theological institutions and other ecumenical bodies by interpretations such as these. Our theological and ethical pursuits must move beyond academic or high rhetorical or discourses, rather the substances what is taught and lived out at the grassroots where people struggle against the forces that negate life.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

GLOCAL ETHICS FOR RADICAL SOCETITAL CHANGE



Ethics has always been the core and centrifugal principle for all human engagements and deliberations of our world—local as well as global. Nowadays it's gaining momentum and is being given more weightage as we and our societies face enormous problems that require ethics. As we live in a knowledge society and it is increasingly being churned and transmitted at appalling levels every day. For these, technology and its apps contribute to the changes. Knowledge is power and those who control technology and its apps domains are vested with power. It is not the countries or societies that control technologies and societies, but the corporations with billions of dollars at their disposal have the power to get into technological innovations of various kinds. They are the invisible and invincible non-state actors behind power. Power flows and trickles down to layers of power that we see and experience.

Ethics pervades into all areas of study, human involvements and engagements. Therefore, whether one likes or not, ethics shall never be averted or ignored because without ethics everything comes to a grinding halt or to put it simply is thus incomplete. Therefore, we come across ethics as an important mediating discipline being added in almost all the disciplines and transactions. Whether individuals, communities, societies or nations of the world follow ethics or not, ethics is the most used as well as abused key word in our day-to-day life. Nonetheless,

individuals, communities, societies and nations of the world keep talking about ethics. Almost all the areas and facets of science, disciplines and areas of study emphasize on ethics.

Individuals, communities and societies are faced with numerous problems arise out of indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources resulting in climate changes, floods and tsunamis, temperatures behaving in erratic ways leading to all kinds of diseases, ailments and physical and psychological infirmities. Those who control production, distribution and consumption the important sources for any society to survive keep exploiting the human labor and natural resources to maximize their profits. Inventions and advancements are part of human desire and aspiration, but should fall within ethical guidelines that bring moderation to the human wants and desires. For *Homo sapiens* sky is not the limit and they want to go higher and higher; wants are unlimited and keep growing and multiplying the human greed which is part of human nature which would never be satiated and in such situations ethics is the only leveler that brings about moderation.

Technologies and its applications are bound to create issues and problems and by all means should be responded. However, the challenges that we face from these makes us to get confounded. Super-computers, AI and robots are now considered as super-machines and seem to have surpassed human intelligence and if this trend continues the super-machines would eventually take over the *Homo sapiens*. The momentum has begun and shall never be reversed. It's gaining rapid momentum and where would it stop no one knows. It's going to affect all the sectors including the labor force. Those with super-skills and higher-levels of professionalism would perhaps fit into the world that we are going to inherit. The future world is going to be highly robotized and super-computerized and thus become super-intelligent as we have heard and read thus far in the fictions and now a virtual reality.

Moral values are depleting and decisions based on ethical principles are dwindling at all levels and in all the spheres of governance, individuals', communitarian and societal life. Take for instance, business or enterprise nowadays lacks ethics and therefore those concerned about the falling standards emphasize on business ethics; hospitals and those involved in medical sciences by and large engaged in all sorts of dubious transactions—flout the standards prescribed by medical ethics; likewise environment/ecology is also going through serious crises and the future of the present and future generations seem to be at stake and therefore talk about eco-justice/environmental ethics.

Take any discipline or areas of study or any activity including religious institutions or organizations involves in religio-spiritual activities by and large are immersed with serious problems that concerns ethics and morality. Therefore, be it individuals, communities or societies, ethics thus occupy the centrality of living and life, since unethical practices and immoral activities are on the rise. For example, when it comes to investment or profit-making we ought to ask for ethical investments or the means with which profits have been accrued. Further, in politics electorates keep asking the politicians about 'political morality'. Hence, in all the spheres of human engagements and activities ethics and morals are inter-changeably used. This shows that ethics and morals play the most essential part in our personal and work life.

The ethical side and moral sense of a person is invariably based on values that a person is governed by and entwined with and being propelled by sensitivity and responsibility towards community and society as well. Moral traits, character building and ethical moorings does manifest in our decisions making be it local or global, small or big matters. Once governed and rooted in solid ethical principles, moral awareness and value-orientations, the decisions we make and the ethical choices we opt for in which we are solidly grounded supposed to inform and thus illumines all our decision-making processes—personal and professional.

This can be seen in one's work ethic that reflects commitment, honesty and responsibility.

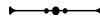
Those insulated with normative principles and moral aggrandizements that explain rationale, process and the structure on which decisions are taken certainly leading to higher sense of accomplishment with clear conscience in all their dealings that include personal and professional endeavors. Ernest Hemingway expounds that "I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after." However, it is not feeling bad or good based on your feeling but it is much more than that. It is important what constitutes "good" and "bad" or "right" or "wrong". Likewise, the word 'ethics' encompasses large domain of human behavior in which decisions are taken all the time. Ethics is premised on eternal virtues and values that entail justice, truth, love, equality, freedom, dignity, fairness, temperance, generosity and host of others. Virtues lead to higher levels of ethical living in which moral life of a person, community or society is enmeshed.

Being virtuous, living and leading a moral life enhances the quality of life not just that individual, but also the family, community and society. Everyone wants to live and lead a good, virtuous and moral life, but only a few could translate in their life. It is difficult because one should be grounded on a set of ethical values that edifies in his or her decision making processes. Moral degradation is cancerous and it starts with individuals and gradually percolates to other sections of society. Take for example alcoholism, substance addiction, corruption, casteism, tribalism, xenophobic tendencies, violence, hatred, injustices and many others are structural and systematic as well. It tears apart individuals, communities and societies in appalling ways. Whether secular or sacred, individuals or communities or societies there have been total breakdown of ethical values and moral attributes we find amongst diverse categories of people.

Having good and virtuous life would have to be grounded on solid ethical premises and moral principles. They are needed for peace and harmony, love and caring, right from familial settings to societal settings. Decisions that we make are out of many choices that we have before us. A question that arise is how do make those decisions and on what bases? Not just on the basis of our conscience. As Spinoza pointed out that “No one neglects anything which he judges to be good, except with the hope of gaining a greater good.” Ethics is a critical reflection of our actions. It is not just a descriptive science, but also prescriptive and evaluative. Changes are needed and transformation from the total chaos and degradation of our society become absolutely mandatory.

Material and technological transformation are happening at stupendous manner, but do we have adequate checks and balances leading to all sorts of uncertainties. Take the apps and social media, do we have proper mechanisms that would filter or eliminate unnecessary materials? Nowadays many governments and citizens are asking for it. This is why ethics and morals are the most important agencies that bring moderation to value-based functioning of the societal fabric. In a fast changing world we need glocal (global+local) ethics premised on ethical parameters and normative principles that would galvanize and moderate the world in which we live.

GOD AND IDOL FACTORS: CONTOURS OF PERCEPTIONS



The Supreme Court of India in its judgment on Ayodhya land dispute categorically said that “In Hinduism, physical manifestation of the supreme Being exists in the form of idols to allow worshippers to experience a shapeless being. The idol is the representation of the Supreme Being. The idol, by possessing physical form, is identifiable.” It simply means, God per se does not have any identity that hardly posits any identifiable feature and therefore has no legal entity or authenticity to claim as it is not a juristic person, whereas an idol has. And so, the court does not have the right to confer legality on divinity.

The observations of the apex courts raise queries to those religions that have no objects or idols of worship as well. The scanned material below though brief, but sheds more light to some of the assumptions that the believers who have not seen, touched and felt. And yet, believes and live by faith alone. This is the crux and the crunch—sheer faith, *sola fide* meaning by faith alone.

NATION THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2019

God is not a juristic person, but idol is, says apex court

Court Cannot Confer Legal Personality On Divinity, It Says

Dhananjay Mahapatra
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New Delhi: God or 'Supreme Being' may be omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent but has no juristic personality, but an idol, worshipped by believers as a physical incarnation of God, is a juristic personality.



In Hinduism, physical manifestation of the Supreme Being exists in the form of idols to allow worshippers to experience a shapeless being. The idol is the representation of the Supreme Being. The idol, by possessing physical form, is identifiable – SC

sent) and it is for this reason that the law has steered clear from adopting the approach". The SC said the Hindu practice of dedicating properties to temples and idols had to be adjudicated upon by courts for the first time in the late 19th century. "The doctrine that Hindu idols possess a

Further, it has been observed in the origin and development of religion that humans beings needed someone to cling on whenever tragedies and catastrophies occurred. In such unpredictable and volatile moments of life the tendency of humans is to prefer or long for someone who's beyond their understanding and comprehension to what they think and consider as "God-factor" or something "supernatural-power" or "the force that gravitates" to which they believed and affirmed out of belief. It is sheer faith in that object or "God-factor or person. These are the factors that drives majority of human beings and nothing else for which there can be any logic, reason and objectivity, but only sensibilities.

It is natural and obvious that the faith and belief that the Homo sapiens have on the One thus becomes the Absolute having attributes such as Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omnscent. These attributes candidly distinguishes between the one who is called as "Immortal", "Creator", "All-Knowing" and "All Powerful" as against the ones as "mortals" subjected to all sorts frailties and deficiencies with tendencies to be totally dependent on someone who they believe in absolute terms. The crucial issue that emanates from the Ayodhya judgment is to ponder over is: "God is not a juristic person, but idol is".

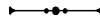
It is in this context those religions considered as Semitic religions such as Judaism, Islam and Christianity have no idol worship and

monotheistic. These religions believe in only one God who is beyond juridical and other boundaries—which pre-supposes that these religions do not constrict their God within certain parameters or boundaries and thus believe that all-knowing and all powerful One shall never be contained within particular geographical boundaries. God-factor or entity posits beyondness and all-encompassing qualities, whereas in Hinduism idols play the most significant role and can be brought within the geographical or territorial boundaries around which they are placed, despite the fact that in Hinduism there are gods and goddesses.

The Supreme Court of India in its judgment opined that the Supreme Being having an attribute of omnipresent (present everywhere) should not be reduced to a particular space and time because of the all-encompassing and infinite characteristics of God factor, whereas an idol has physical form and structure and definitive locale. It is at this point let me go back to Karl Barth who responded in his perplexity picked up Epistle to the Romans and the reason for that was he discovered that the rope had rung a bell which could be heard all over. He further added that the “Epistle to the Romans was all about—that God, the living God, had come to deliver perplexed, self-contradictory men like him from the sins through the power of Jesus Christ.”

Faith in God is grounded on one’s total reliance and affirmation on the One who she or he believes as everything—the beginning and ending, the Alpha and Omega. The ground of being and becoming are within the ambit of the Creator and so God as the Supreme Regulator of cosmos under who all things keep moving. This is the framework on which those who believe and affirm in God which in turn religion as an entity with all the paraphenlia and prefabricate doctrines, traditions and confessions translates the adherents hopes and aspirations.

MHA VS. NGOS: TRANSPARENCY OR CRACKDOWN



The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in its recent briefing reported that over Rs. 50,000 crores were received as foreign contribution by various NGOs and association in India over a period of three years, during the period from 2015-16 to 2017-18. While detailing or breaking down the figures it observed in the case of the foreign contributions that it increased in the year 2017-18 to Rs. 16, 894 crores from Rs. 15, 343 crores in 2016-17, even though the government said it had cancelled the registration of over 14,800 associations under the Foreign Contributions (Regulation) Act (FERA) in the last five years.

Substantiating further, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai in reply to a written question in the Lok Sabha said that foreign donation received by FCRA-registered bodies in India went down drastically from Rs 17,803 crores in 2015-16 to Rs 15,343 crores in 2016-17 could be due to cancellation FCRA licenses of a large number of NGOs, but gradually had risen in 2017-18. However, it has been reported that registration of more than 14,800 associations were cancelled during the last five years due to the fact that these organizations had flouted the provisions laid out by the FCRA, 2010.

In addition to the prevailing clauses and regulations in FCRA, the Home Ministry has further tightened with additional clauses to those organizations receiving foreign funds such as that the office-bearers and

the members will have submit proving that there have not been any criminal records and also organizations they represent not involved in any conversion or evangelistic activities as well as not engaged in any nefarious designs or activities against the state. In addition, it also clamped another clause that those going abroad for health-related trips should declare the reasons, channel and mode of payment of money. The additional clauses introduced by the Ministry of Home Affairs are for reasons that the NGOs would become more accountable and transparent to the government as well as to its stake holders.

Nonetheless, the reasons cited by the Home Ministry are viewed with great concern as well as grave suspicion. Under these circumstances, introduction of additional provisions and clauses that the Ministry of Home Affairs evolved needs intense scrutiny. New rules further tighten the NGOs enforcing more accountability and transparency in the functioning of NGOs. Nevertheless, there is also a larger motive and bigger stakes in this entire exercise with which the Home Ministry under the aegis of Amit Shah need careful examination. We are aware of the fact that during Modi's first term i.e. 2014-2019, the Government of India came down heavily on NGOs and cancelled the FCRA Nos. This time, in the second term, the BJP Government especially the Minister of Home Affairs Amit Shah wants to consolidate the gains thus far achieved--especially against those NGOs engaged with the Tribal development initiatives.

Behind this new move, RSS is very much involved. Though Home Ministry offers a number of explanations, there is another side to it. BJP-RSS wants to contain those Christian and Human Rights NGOs working amongst the tribals in the tribal belts in North-east and in other parts of the country. BJP-RSS is of the view that those NGOs particularly being run by the Christian minorities engaged in conversion, evangelism and other Christianizing activities through luring the tribals by offering incentives. RSS and other Hindutva outfits are aghast that the

tribals were originally “Hindus” and they have converted to Christianity or other religion due to allurements and other material benefits. Their arguments and assumptions are wrong. Tribals have their own customary laws, belief systems, traditions, culture and way of life and world view. However, RSS and Hindutva outfits think that they were originally Hindus and now involved in garwapsi (home coming). This is why, the Home Ministry has added ‘no conversion’ clause in the Act.

In the year 1976, the Congress Party did introduce primarily to curtail NGOs’ getting into political actions or activities of political nature, so that, the foreign governments would not get indulged in internal politics. Again in 2010, Congress further strengthened the Act and anti-conversion laws became widely prevalent in most of the states. Certainly everyone would agree that that the money received from abroad should not be used for any personal, communal, divisive or anti-government or actions that involve violent activities against the government/state. Those who think and assume that foreign money is involved in alluring the tribals is not right because the population of the Christians remains static in the last five decades.

North-east region where the indigenous communities live have their own customary and traditional ways of life and world view. BJP-RSS notion of ‘induced-conversion’ by all means be rejected because most of the NGOs run by Christians are involved in literacy, skill-development and economic initiatives amongst the weak and the vulnerable. And so, the entire exercise is vote bank-majoritarian politics. RSS in particular is all out to hinduize the Indian society. It cannot tolerate the cultural and religious diversity. BJP-RSS is determined to curb and in due course of time wants to eliminate the Christian and minorities-run NGOs involved in educational, cultural and health initiatives. It’s vindictive action by the Home Ministry clamping numerous bottlenecks, so that the minority-run NGOs would gradually vanish. There is clearly a double-standard wherein RSS claims that it is a cultural organization, but yet to be regis-

tered. There are far-right Hindu outfits involved in all sorts of things receiving funds, but free from scanner.

The Government of India of day should acknowledge the contributions of the minorities who did play a laudable role in the nation-building and even now engaged in a number of fields. Isolating and targeting minorities with stringent punitive regulations assuming that they are involved in conversion, evangelism and host of others tantamount to subjectivity and prejudiced mind-set. Any government irrespective of ideological persuasions and political differences once in power should act bi-partisan manner and impartial in its governance. The current dispensation seems to be showing duplicity and callousness on many things against the minorities, and FCRA happens to be one among them.

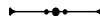
NGOs that receive money within or outside ought to be accountable and transparent with regard to the money they receive, how they spend and there is absolutely no qualm about it. Nevertheless, based on a few instances punishing NGOs run by minorities show slanted political objectives that subverts the essence of good governance. In a parliamentary democracy there should be room of dissent and accommodation of diverse views. If the purpose is to bring transparency, responsibility and accountability it should be for all—whether majority or minority, because all are equal before the law. Constitution guarantees right to profess and adhere to any religion and if luring is employed to convert individuals and communities take action as per the law and similar situation also exists where the far-right outfits and Hindutva organizations involved. The government should take note of it and act appropriately.

Why not similar law be implemented or initiated concerning the political parties. Everyone knows that political parties receive huge sums of money. We have been witnessing in recent times how money is being used to lure MPs and MLAs to defect their political parties on which they got elect to form governments or to destabilize the others. Those

elected representative who sit in the parliament and legislative assemblies think that they are the ones who formulate and implement laws and so above the law. This type of thought process undermines the constitutional democracy. The recent one is nothing but vindictive action targeting particular types of NGOs. It is anti-democratic, unilateral, partisan and authoritarian.

Let the Home Ministry invite some representatives and have open discussions on the proposed move and bring in consensus and then implement whatever may be the clause or addition. The current government has brute majority and should not be afraid of democratic voices. Democracy is all about dissent and consensus-building. Already most of the BJP-ruled states and others have anti-conversion laws and by adding one more tantamount to inflicting fear and control. The government should also be transparent and accountable in its policy-making and decision-taking processes. Government at the Centre is democratically elected one and if it is so, “it is of the people, by the people and for the people”. Citizens are always at the centre of democracy and citizens are the ones that make democracy to work.

HEALTH SYSTEM IN INDIA IN SHAMBLES: BIHAR A CASE IN POINT



From Uttar Pradesh, the attention of the public on health care is now turned to Bihar. Building up the system concerning health in the country should have been one of the basic core priorities of the Governments both for the States and the Centre, since it is considered as one of the basic human and core fundamental rights. Both the Centre and the state governments have failed miserably in not giving utmost importance to it. As a result, the poor and the vulnerable who should have free access and liable to exercise basic health have been denied or to say bluntly deliberately neglected. The gross neglect of the Government of Bihar in particular has resulted in the death of about hundred-plus of children—so dear to their parents, kith and kin.

To be precise, as of now, it is about 177 children whose lives could have been saved, but lost or rather killed due to the gross negligence of the hospital authorities which tantamount to ‘criminal negligence’. If neglected further, the numbers as the days go by could grow. For about two weeks the Government of Bihar did not bother. Neither the CM Nitish Kumar nor the Health Minister of Bihar had the courtesy to visit the hospital to find the reasons for the death of children and then set the system right and properly working. For them, life of the poor and hapless hardly matter. Busy with their own agenda, priorities and other high

level engagements that might be yielding popularity and prominence. Visiting the hospital is now the ‘New normal.

A few years ago, it was Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh which hit the headlines of gory—almost like ‘massacre’ wherein many children died and now it is Muzaffarpur in Bihar currently hitting the headlines. The opportunist CM Nitish Kumar may be good in making political calculations to retain his CM post with his masterly calculations and configurations, but when the children of his own state of Bihar consumed by the deadly disease he should have had the basic courtesy when the disease hit. Ten years ago, CM Nitish Kumar went Muzaffarpur and promised the people of that area that he would develop the hospital into something glowing with good infrastructure and medical care. The place where the hospital is located is also not far from him and certainly if there’s political will, he could have translated his promise into a reality. Now it’s too late.

Hospital in Muzaffarpur in Bihar bears a look and made to look like a haunted structure or empty tomb where things are not supposed to be present, but they are the ones prominently figures. Bikes and cycles are parked inside the hospital. It’s paradoxical that the hospital accommodates along with the out-patients and in-patients, it also turned into cattle shed by accommodating sheep and cows. It was reported that human skeletons and other human wastes from the hospitals dumped in the backward—forest like area turned out as a dumping ground where the medical college is located nearby. Sometimes even dead bodies have also been burnt in the dump-yard. It came to light that there’s no proper infrastructure and the hospital buildings are dilapidated, and is in a state of collapse any time. So pathetic, unhygienic, nauseating and horrible is the hospital.

CM Nitish Kumar might have made several solid promises that there would many bedded hospital in Muzaffarpur, but as of now four children occupy a single bed. What kind of promise that he made and how

could the electorates repose their faith in him again and again continuously failed in his promises? With this track record he makes all sorts of assurances in order to retain his CM position. The allies do not want to talk about this because it would ruin their political future and dismantle their power equations. Nonetheless, this is the state of India's health care system and is in ICU and in shambles. CM Nitish Kumar do want to be questioned and thinks that he's unquestionable and beyond everyone. His so-called 'clean image' like mask is torn and punctured further in this issue.

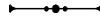
People are angry and agitated because they lost their children particularly those villages close by to the hospital who want to make avail the facilities in that hospital which may have propelled them to vote for Nitish Kumar when he promised a quality health care. But what is happening is that they have been losing their children. He has been there for the last 15 years and if he cannot diagnose the recurring illness that devours hundreds of lives of children with medical experts, why should he be there? Education and Health Care should be the priority and by all means more attention be given to these two sectors. The governments at the Centre and states have miserably failed in furthering the need of these sectors. Their priorities are on other things. The present and future India are dependent on the children. Healthy India would produce healthy minds, failing which India eventually turns into a sick society and weak India.

We keep hearing a powerful narrative 'New India' which has become the 'New Normal'. Everyone is supposed to believe in this narrative. It's highly ludicrous and just sloganeering, because there's no essence, content and material in it. In the last few years episodes of this sort keep happening and somehow pushed under the carpet. Occurrences of such thing periodically recurring clearly manifests that once in five years these netas come and promise they make to the citizens believe

and vote and after that it's left to the netas to translate those promises made or not. This is what exactly happened and happening.

These netas think that they are not accountable and responsible to the people and if and when they want or feel like or when there is benefit they might consider. This is the political culture we are into in India. Tall promises are made, but not even a few translated. The so-called 'New India' can never be built on advanced defense systems, metros, tall statues, mega-malls and good infrastructures alone—for all these we need human resources--healthy, innovative and strong generation which is the base for the present and future, failing which it won't be 'New India', but 'Backward India'.

HOARDINGS BE REGULATED AND BANNERS BE BANNED



It has been a common sight a few years ago that the campuses of some Christian institutions, church premises and its affiliated institutions including the cemeteries wherein hoardings were put up. Amongst those, CSI-KCD was well-known for that, because there was a hefty money involved to the tune of lakhs of rupees. Hoardings are more common in Bangaluru, especially in the cemeteries, because higher and lengthier are the hoardings those who own the land get more money. Christian cemeteries have lots of space to allow hoardings and the rate is being worked on square-foot basis. It's a big business and lots of kick-backs for those who control these premises. Private premises and government owned building including railways and others have hoardings. Even on the highways we see huge hoardings displaying all kinds of things.

Hoardings are erected and stand on concrete structures. If the concrete foundation caves-in the whole structure falls and one can expect or visualize the damages it could cause. Like political parties and politicians, nowadays the religious netas including those who head the churches are into 'banner culture'. Barring a few, most of the CSI netas are into banner culture. They prefer huge cut outs-outs. Their cronies

and sycophants cater to their egos and 'image-building' displaying banners and cut-outs. The following substantiates:

The pervasive lack of governance in India's cities has claimed the life of another citizen, this time in Chennai. A banner put up on a road divider by a functionary of the AIADMK to celebrate a wedding fell on a young woman riding a two-wheeler, sending her off-balance and under a tanker lorry. Subasri, 22, joins the list of hapless citizens whose lives were ended by civic neglect, police indifference, and, in Tamil Nadu especially, a political culture that dominates public spaces through exaggerated displays of cut-outs, crude arches and flags at the cost of safety. Only two years ago, Raghu, a young engineer, died under similar circumstances in Coimbatore and another youth, Babu, was electrocuted in Udthagamandalam when he touched a party flag that was in contact with a wire; both instances involved ramshackle structures placed along roads. That political parties of all hues and motley groups see no need for restraint, even after many directions from the Madras High Court to stop endangering public safety goes to show that there are no serious consequences. Evidently, they are not persuaded by the orders issued in February this year by a division bench, impleading 11 political parties and reminding them of its many earlier orders that prohibit threats to public safety through banners and boards. The government must fix accountability and make individual members of the executive liable for lack of public safety.

Anti-flexboard Vigil

There are disturbing aspects to the official response to the incident in Chennai, and the inquiry must go into the reported reluctance of the police to proceed against the AIADMK member who was responsible for the banners being put up. The Revenue Department and the local body must explain their failure to prohibit the dangerous structures, when there are clear orders in force, and acts of omission and commis-

sion should attract strong action. Even two years ago, the Madras High Court had ruled in a case that “the erection of arches, placards and display boards, banners with poles, etc., abutting into public streets and pavements, which obstruct free and safe movement of traffic or free and safe movement of pedestrians or obstructs visibility of drivers is patently illegal.” It is clear, therefore, that even where limited permissions could be given, the structures cannot affect public safety. Considering the long history of illegal political banners and religious displays, often involving theft of electricity, the court can bring about compliance with the law through a special panel, similar to the Supreme Court’s committee on road safety headed by a retired judge. Strong action is needed against recalcitrant politicians and lumpen groups who use banners as displays of power or fealty.

As progressive beings we are endowed with faculties such as reasoning, discerning, probing, inquiring, critiquing and exploring. Nowadays we could proudly say that ‘sky is not the limit’ and human aspirations is such that to get to know and get into the unexplored terrains and conquer everything at one point of time termed as ‘mysteries’, now a reality. With the application of our critical and creative faculties and questioning and exploring capacities we keep moving on to greater heights. Inquiring and questioning mind and reasoning power are the greatest components endowed in human beings that enable and extend the urge in us to move forward and higher. Homo sapiens per se have been innovative, creative and ground breaking. Science and technology contributed to approximate these achievements.

Parallel to these developments, side by side, religion co-exists. Organized religion from time to time instills or refills its adherent not to drift from the basic tenets, rituals, religious practices, traditions and belief system. The belief in God as the center of being continues and for this the organized religion sustains their belief in varied ways. In trials and tribulations and frustrations and hopelessness, the leverage of hope

is extended only by religion apart from cementing the individuals, families and communities with normative principles and values to be adhered for the smooth functioning of diverse layers of society.

The most pressing question that surface at present is: Can religion and science co-exist? Certainly these two can go exist, but how about those with scientific temper that requires application of reason coupled with critical inquiry believe in what the religion says or subscribes in letter and spirit? Is it not antithetical? Does it not tantamount to contradiction? As these two are poles apart and how can they complement each other? A person who says he/she believes in something which she/he not seen or felt, but believes in the existence of that who she/he believes goes beyond human senses and beyond human comprehension. Can a person who is rational and scientific in his/her thinking and thought process be religious which is premised on faith and sheer belief on something which is supposed to exist and yet none is seen or felt but believes as if that the object or subject-matter exists? This is the dilemma that many are facing.

How can those who are religious be scientific? Is it a matter of conditioning of thinking and thought process right from infant to childhood stage wherein belief in something get entangled into one's psyche or mental system? We have come across sociologists of religion such as Max Weber, while tracing the origin of religion, its need and necessity of it views "... strictly in the scientific sense, striving for objectivity attempting to ignore value judgments, and to understand religion as those human responses that give meaning to the escapable problems of existence, such as birth and death, illness, aging, injustice, and suffering" (Wikipedia). Viewing from a different prism Kavin J. Christans describing Marx's view on religion says "... replace faith by reason and religion by science." But, he "did not believe in science for science sake... he believed he was advocating a theory that ...be useful tool" (Ibid). For Marx, religion promotes 'false consciousness'—those who

while cultivating their spiritual wealth will be rewarded in the Heaven. Hence Marx's famous line—"religion is the opium of the people"—dulls their senses to the pains of oppression.

Not precisely against the above or mediating between or whatever a short write up in *The Speaking Tree* by Ashok Vohra titled "Nehru's 'Religion' was Scientific, Rational Humanism" appeared in TOI (August 31st, 2019) unfolds something interesting that responds to diverse queries raised in the previous paragraphs by bringing to the foreground Pandit Nehru considered by many as agonist/atheist as "the greatest lack in him was his inability to believe in God." He adds that "Nehru remained a hardcore rationalist throughout his life. Nehru found the concept of God itself unintelligible and incomprehensible." While substantiating by citing the classic work of Nehru *The Discovery of India* "I find myself incapable of thinking of a deity or of any unknown supreme power in anthropomorphic terms, and the fact that many people think so is a source of surprise to me. Any idea of a personal god seems very odd to me."

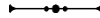
At the same time, for Nehru it was intriguing that the ways with which the conception of God had penetrated the inner consciousness of humanity which "brought peace and comfort to innumerable tortured souls" (Ibid). Countering the views and arguments of those who believe in God, Nehru held on to his position that, "...even if God exists, it may be desirable not to look up to Him or to rely upon him." He argued that "too much dependence on supernatural factors may lead, and has often led, to a loss of self-reliance in man." It would, according to him, ultimately resulting in "blunting of his (man's) capacity and creative ability". Nehru out rightly rejected the notion of God because of the fact that "... some reliance on moral, spiritual and idealistic conception is necessary, "for without such a belief "we have to anchorage, no objective or purpose in life" (Ibid).

A firm believer in scientific temper and innovative capacity of human kind that had brought about huge progress and development in the world we live. Human spirit believes in the progress and innovation and thus advocated ‘scientific humanism’—synthesis of humanism and scientific spirit. Ashok Vohra quotes Nehru while explicating scientific humanism “is practical and pragmatic, ethical and social, altruistic and humanitarian. It is governed by a practical idealism for social betterment” (Ibid). Continuing “Scientific humanism treats humanity as its god, and social service as its religion” Adding further, “every culture has certain values attached to it, limited and conditioned by that cultures” (Ibid). Religion promises many things but tends to be illusionary and is devoid of translating hopes and aspirations of its adherents. While on the other, scientific humanism is concrete, real and represents our belief and faith in the objective reality.

More value and weightage are given to Homo sapiens in view of the enormous potentials and capabilities who continue to transform the world in and around them. Nehru believed in higher levels of innovative capacities that pushed the undaunted and indomitable spirit of Homo sapiens spearheading to higher level of achievements. For Nehru, religion happened to be an obstructive agency that deterred human efforts to explore new avenues and vicissitudes—by promising many things not in this life, but beyond this life and thus keeps the humans in false-consciousness.

IF RELIGION FAILS TO LIBERATE THEN GET RID OF RELIGION

WHEN RELIGION AND POLITICS RIDE IN THE SAME CART, THE WHIRLWIND FOLLOWS



There should be some purpose derived/realized or there must be some minimal benefit that the adherents should receive or some kind of utilitarian value garnered by the worshippers who adhere to religion. If religion fails on the aforementioned counts, why do we need religion? Religion is considered as an agency/institution/ organization formally entwined with the commands: DOs and DON'Ts that are intrinsically insulated within its pre-fabricated dogmas, traditions, doctrines and host of others. So, the very purpose of each and every religion is supposed to 'unite' or 'bring together' or 'cement' individuals/groups/communities for higher levels of spirituality and ethical values. Further, it assumes that the Homo sapiens per se are not mere material entities alone, but spiritual too—wherein there's an inner quest/ urge simmering in him/her to approximate higher values. So, religion per se basically and fundamentally takes care of spiritual enhancement of its adherents.

Given the conditions, sociologically and theologically speaking, the claim religion makes sounds good. But, the incidents that happened recently at Christchurch Mosque shooting where many Muslims died; on the Easter Day, a series of bombings in three churches and three hotels

in Sri Lanka killing hundreds of worshippers and others who were present within the vicinity perished. These incidents convey clear messages that the religious extremists of different religion have resorted to terrorism. Religions have become the core of what's happening irrespective of their shades, belief systems and theological variants. These incidents clearly convey that the fundamentalists have taken over religion to kills and intimidate people. At this juncture, we need to view religion not solely on the basis of religious and doctrinal parameters, but see through the ways with which religion is webbed with culture, politics, economy and other societal facets.

Religion is placed at the crossroads, where religion is dubbed as the most pernicious tool placed in the hands of fanatics and far-right extremists. Therefore, it becomes mandatory to reflect on the survival of the present and future generations. Many tend to follow without reflecting: why one should go to church or mosque or temple or whatever? They blindly follow the crowd or as generations pass by traditions and practices are set and belief systems formed and thus have become part of our rituals. Whether the meanings or values offered by religion make any sense or difference in the life and witness of its adherents or not—many do not want to know? If religion fails to instill values and teach how to be good, then the rituals that the worshippers adhere and follow through their life time have no value and no use. Obviously, the religious beliefs and practices have become routine and mundane and lost its significance.

If we look at the evolutionary theory we notice that there were phases in which humans with their reasoning capacity kept elevating from one phase to another. *Homo sapiens* per se are given the capacity to think and act rationally. By entering into critical inquiry they have ability to transform themselves and the world around them. So, human beings are not just geared towards materiality, but also in search of higher levels of life—spirituality which religion is supposed to offer. Religion

apart from facilitating spiritual nurturing should imbue ethical values that are grounded in the religious texts pushing towards highest good by transforming the adherents to become moral beings. In recent times religious institutions and establishments are filled with moral decadence that mirrors exactly what's happening in the society. Religious establishments fail to offer corrective measures as they are soaked with all kinds of misdeeds and nefarious activities. And so, religion fails to play any corrective role in the society as it is soaked with many ills. Nowadays religion mirrors the society, which means whatever happens in the society happens amongst those who claim to be the custodians of religion. If this is the state of affairs, how could one expect religion to be functioning light the light house to guide the society or providing normative principles for making the society—morally grounded.

Religious establishment ought to impart moral values and engage in promoting eternal virtues and ethical principle such as peace, justice, sharing, freedom, love, equality, dignity, so that its adherents would understand how to lead a life—as moral beings. Religion must become a pivotal force that galvanizes moral accountability and ethical responsibility in all the societal functioning. On the contrary, those who are at the helms of affairs in the religious institutions indulge in all sorts of things that negate the basic core and tenets of religion then religion has failed in its function. And so, religion in recent times mirror's what's happening exactly in the society. The moral values that are part of the religious tenets are gradually waning. As a consequence, violence, intolerance, hatred and lynching taking place—in the name of religion.

Religion is like two-edged sword—can be used for destruction as well as for edification. In a world of insecurity and unpredictability, religion ought to have offered or guided the people and those in power the ways and means of protecting the lives of people thereby moving towards establishing common humanity. While on the other, the fundamentalists of religion and its establishments are heavily engaged in the

destruction of human lives with all sorts of diabolical designs and so now religion and its agency are construed as the core of all contestation that triggers and thus posing major problems in the world—involved in inhumane activities such as liquidation and intimidation. If religion and its agencies fail to promote common good and common humanity, then its use and presence in the society needs careful scrutiny.

Religion is one of the most powerful tools and as an agency/institution which should get engaged in the transformation of society. On the contrary, we have increasingly been witnessing hostilities and conflicts—all in the name of religion. Wherever there are conflicts and whatever may be the political slogans, rhetoric and narratives religion and identity are nuanced in such ways instilling hatred and venom against others. The entire discourse is premised on nationalism whipping up the passion by invoking ‘religious majority’ as against the ‘religious minority’. If the core values of religion are not followed and promoted; if religion and its establishments are used to furthering political projects by distorting its basic tenets and if it is used to abuse women and children; amassing money and accumulating properties, then those who believe in religion have lost their case and by all means should get rid of religion.

IT'S ISLAMOPHOBIC AND MYSOGYNISTIC: PREMIER INSTITUTIONS INFESTED WITH PREJUDICES



It has always been, but some thought at least in the 21st Century, Indian society would change from casteist, male-chauvinistic and xenophobic, but along with these our society has added some more dubious credentials such as—Islamophobic and misogynic. The paradox that we face in recent times is that the lower rungs of the Indian society by and large seem to be doing better when compared to the dominant castes. However, those young research scholars from dominant castes pursuing their higher levels of research and academics are infested with corroded minds push those belonging to opposite sex, castes and other religious communities to end their lives.

The suicide of young research scholar Fathima Lateef is not an isolated incident, but reflects the societal structural asymmetries and thus is systemic. It characterizes the deep-seated prejudice and divisive tendency of many which includes those young scholars and others involved in the administrative and academic levels. Those who come from minority communities, poor, vulnerable and downtrodden castes and classes do face all sorts of humiliating treatments from the co-students and faculty. In recent times it has become a new-normal. Brilliant young minds who want to pursue their higher levels of research are pushed to such gravity

that makes them to end their lives. The following write up adds more facts and data to what has been said:



Fathima had joined IIT-M in August.

Describing the recent suicide of a student at IIT-Madras as “institutional murder”, students of IIT-Bombay on Tuesday held a protest on the campus while accusing the institute administration of indulging in “casteist and Islamophobic behaviour” and of harbouring other discriminatory attitudes.

The suicide of Fathima Latheef, a first-year student at IIT-Madras on November 9, resonated with IIT-B, where a student, Aniket Ambhore, had committed suicide in September 2014. “We call the case of Ms Fathima an institutional murder because institutions of higher education have failed to provide constitutional safeguards and institutional mechanisms for students from SC, ST, OBC, Muslim, LGBTQ and other minority communities, who enter these premier institutes despite lack of socio-cultural capital,” said a statement issued by the students.

Just as Fathima’s parents have alleged that communal attitudes of faculty-led their daughter to take her life, Ambhore’s parents had also claimed that their son faced caste harassment on campus. Ambhore, a student of electrical engineering, had fallen to his death from the sixth floor of hostel 13, on September 4, 2014. An SC student, he was alleged to have committed suicide. After his parents wrote to the IIT director, a three-member committee was set up by the administration, led by pro-

fessor A K Suresh (department of chemical engineering). The committee had submitted its report on November 10, 2015. It is yet to be made public.

While demanding that the report be made public and also the action recommended, the students have launched a 'Forum for Justice' to address and give voice to their grievances.

My Take

The myth that perpetuated for hundreds of years that those born in higher and dominant castes such as Brahmins and allied castes are brilliant and endowed with the intellect to pursue higher levels of research; whereas others down the caste ladder should not aspire higher levels of learning, rather settle down with basic education, and certainly not such as IIT, JNU and other premier institutions because those are meant only for the dominant castes. But, the myth has been punctured and dented as those from the Muslim, Dalit, Tribal and Christian and other backward communities started to enter into competitive examinations and excelled and stood on par with others. For example, Fathima was a brilliant student and got admission in other institutions as well, but preferred to join IIT-Chennai thinking that there would more accommodation, less prejudice and discrimination, but her assumptions went wrong.

IIT-Chennai is castist, islamophobic and misogynic institution. Like many others, Fathima also fell into the same trap. The dominant communities do not want others to come up to their levels and push those from vulnerable communities to resort to take away their lives. If we take these premier institutions, the faculty and other related departments are being controlled by the dominant communities. There are some faculties with corroded mind-sets. What is there to spoil the reputation of IIT-Chennai? It is proven beyond doubt that IIT-Chennai is also casteist, misogynic and islamophobic. By all means this type of tendency should be exposed and resisted.

DE-CODING WHAT CONSTITUTES 'INTERNAL MATER'!



The Government of India in recent times has been hitting the headlines for a variety of reasons. Two days ago it added one more feather to its cap. For the first time in India's judicial history, a United Nation's body—the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR)—on Tuesday, the 3rd of March, 2020, sought to intervene as *amicus curiae* or friend of the court, to assist the apex court in adjudicating the constitutional validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. It said that CAA has a “worthy and commendable objective”, it appears to discriminate against persecution of Muslim communities. UNHCHR brought to the fore the objective of the CAA and the intention of the Government, wherein it has isolated the Muslim communities. This is where the caveat it presents.

Responding to this move, the Ministry of External Affairs (MOEA) said it was an “internal matter” and so “no foreign party has any locus standi on issues pertaining to India's sovereignty” and “the Indian Parliament's right to make law”. The triggering points are the constitutionality of CAA and Constitutional validity of CAA. Chief of the UNHCH added that the law “raises a number of issues related to India's wider human rights obligations in the context of fundamental principle of *refoulement* that is no forced repatriation of refugees to their home country.” Countering UNHCHR, the spokesperson of MOEA, Raveesh Ku-

mar uttered, “We are clear that CAA is constitutionally valid and complies with all requirements of our constitutional values. It is reflective of our long standing national commitment in respect of human rights issues arising from the tragedy of the Partition of India.”

He added that “India is a democratic country governed by the rule of law. We all have utmost respect for and full trust in our independent judiciary. We are confident that our sound and legally sustainable position would be vindicated by the Supreme Court.” GOI came to know only after India’s permanent mission in Geneva was informed by the Office of the UNHCHR that it was filing an intervention plea against CAA in the Supreme Court seeking to present itself as *amicus curiae*. In the wake of conflicting versions whether such application has been filed or not, a spokesperson for the UN body said UNHCHR Michelle Bachalet Jeria, first women President of Chile decided to file on CAA in the SC in accordance with court’s established procedures. Jeria has a background of human rights activism and represented the socialist party in Chile views CAA as one such Act that segregates communities that contradict all are equal before law.

On this, there were some who raised questions about the authenticity of such a move for which Jeria said she and her predecessors “have filed *amicus curiae* briefs on issues of particular public importance within proceedings before a diverse range of international and national jurisdictions, including at the international level – European Court of Human Rights, Inter-American Court of Human Rights, International Criminal Court – and at national level—US Supreme Court and final appeal courts of states in Asia and Latin America.” She made it clear that she intends to intervene in the CAA proceedings as an *amicus curiae* in the SC, but would not give up her diplomatic privileges and immunity which means she would not submit to the SC’s jurisdiction and not be liable for any adverse order against her.

Referring to the CAA promising expeditious citizenship for persecuted minorities, Jeria said, "The factual basis for the arguments provided in the statement of Objects and Reasons for the introduction of CAB for such preferential treatment, also find support in pronouncement by the UN human rights mechanism regarding the situation of religious minorities in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan." Substantiating further, "However, recent reports by the UN human rights treaty bodies, special procedures and other mechanism ascertain that there exist a number of religious groups considered religious minorities in these countries, especially of the Muslim faith, including Ahmadi, Hazara and Shia Muslims whose situations would warrant protection on the same basis as that provided in the preferential treatment proposed by the CAA," she added.

There are some who point out that UNHCHR has failed to intervene where minorities live in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Responding to this, "The question also arises as to whether the differentiation made with regards to persecution on religious grounds, as opposed to other grounds, is sufficiently objective and reasonable, in particular taking into account the prohibition of refoulement and India's obligations under international human rights law," she said. She in her brief was objective by invoking India's role in championing the human rights to 'equal protection of law' in 1949 for 'International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights'. She added that "It is remarkable that after sixty years, this very issues lies at the heart of the SC deliberations as it examines CAA. This presents SC with a historic and unique opportunity to give practical meaning to this fundamental right (equal protect of law) at the domestic level."

As against the backdrop, CAA being the central issue keep unraveling a number of innate contradictions such as it has been passed by both the Houses of parliament—supreme law legislating body comprised of peoples' representatives and yet being questioned on the constitutional-

ty of CAA to which the Supreme Court's verdict is awaited. By evading questions and seeking protection under "India's internal matter" shall not suffice. As pointed out by UNHCHR India has been the signatory to the International Human Rights Charter and is committed to protecting its citizens as per the laws enshrined within its legal framework. She also requested the apex court to take into account international human rights law, norms and standards in proceedings relating to CAA and thus offered numerous examples whereby UNHCHR intervened in judicial forums of other countries in human rights issues.

India, the largest democracy in the world believes in the rule of law that requires protection of all citizens guaranteed by the Constitution and UNHCHR. CAA has created unease amongst people who have been continuously defying the GOI as they view it as antithetical to democracy and their fundamental and constitutional rights. GOI should respond in such ways that CAA is "inclusionary" and proves its argument. We are part of the global comity of nations and shall never deflect from our obligations. It is unfortunate that institutions of governance and its mechanisms by and large have failed to deliver justice and fairness. Over and above, narratives such as "Let Normalcy Dawn" are such an ambiguous and ambivalent inflicts more damage to the current impasse in which we live. We keep hearing a world "normalcy" which should be restored. What is it and how to gauge "normalcy"? What is the "period" or "duration" those who say can give to concretize? These are the questions that loom at large. India is known for its credentials of being governed by the Constitution vis-à-vis constitutional democracy.

Institutions of governance that dispenses rule of law by employing instruments and mechanisms on ground levels such as the bureaucracy, police, judiciary and political machinery posits laxity, prejudice, partisanship and biases. CAA has exposed and thus opened the Pandora box and so it is obligatory for the GOI to respond to the queries that are posed. Usage of the words and saying the current fiasco as "Internal

Matter” could only be considered as an escape route which is bizarre because it is not just UNHCR, but others such as EU, US Congress, UK House of Commons, Iran, Malaysia and host of others. In recent times, India is reeling and sliding back in its image within and outside primarily in terms of its governance. To regain its credibility, transparency and accountability GOI by all means respond to the queries and should not push them under the guise of “Internal Matter”.

VISION OF THE VALLEY OF DRY: IT'S IMPLICATIONS 'HERE' AND 'NOW'



Symbolism is important because it carries something and conveys many meanings. For example, poets, novelists, philosophers, literary figures and prophets express whatever they want to say or convey directly or straight forward, sometimes subtly by using some other forms. They use their articulation and expressive skills to communicate which could only be understood or perceived not instantaneously—just like that, but only through probing, analyzing and interpreting. The beauty in that is those who use symbolism which is a language as it connects many things such as the past-present and the future, the time, space and people and many such things.

One such episode is what prophet Ezekiel in chapter 37:1-14 does as he expounds and passes on the message as mandated by God. Whatever it may be, whether symbolic or real, it is certainly one of the most powerful passages that creates unease, vibration and for some evokes their consciousness that raises a few question such as: what's happening and what are we doing? It has that sweeping power and massive force instantly re-connecting us to many trajectories.

Valley of the Dry Bones—a brilliant narrative that explains something that happened in the past—thousands of years ago and the Prophet Ezekiel stands right in the midst of the valley of the dry bones as he explains in a metaphoric language showing the possibilities and promises that lie ahead. It's striking and penetrating as Ezekiel's utterances binds together the flesh and blood that tears open to believe the impossi-

ble things can only happen if we believe, obey and act, on the one who we affirm and trust.

This passage is all about a vision revealed to the prophet Ezekiel, conveying a dream-like realistic—naturalistic depiction. In his vision, the prophet sees himself standing in the valley filled with dry human bones. He is commanded to carry a prophecy, where the bones gets connected into human figures, following which the bones are covered with tandem tissues, flesh and skin. Then the prophet Ezekiel comes to know that the bones happened to be the people of Israel while in exile and God commands the prophet to convey the prophecy in order to revitalize the human figures, to resurrect them and to bring them to the land of Israel.

This is the prophecy and thus prophetic and by all means ought to be believed—"I will bring you alive and I will put my breath and you will come back to life". Prophecy is such that even from the tombs the dead bodies buried would rise as the God shall open the tombs and the dead bodies rise up as the God breathes into the nostrils and the life enters. So powerful, immensely assuring and by all means promising.

Ezekiel 37: 1-14 is such a powerful text, over a passage of times and at every epoch of human histories it comes back to human life-situation and resurrects the human conscience and reminds to respond to human tendencies that have stooped so low in the forms of anti-Semitism, Islamo-phobia, xenophobia, white supremacy, tribalism, casteism, religious fundamentalism, fascism, patriarchy and many such things.

Precisely because of these reasons we have the memorials, commemorative functions and host of others rekindling our memory and to pass on the stories and messages to the other generation that present so that occurrence or repetition of those shall be prevented and not contemplated. The traumatic experiences of the survivors would shed more light. For instance, 75 years passed by, the world remembers the holo-

caust—millions of Jews and others were brutally killed and many others went through horrible forms of violence and tortures.

As I write, I keep reading many such stories of the survivors and the TV channels cover some of the horrendous crimes that the Nazis under Hitler committed. It makes many to think about the human nature and we do come across how low some humans could stoop down. As a result thousands and millions go through such heinous process wherein pains and sufferings are inflicted to other human beings—all in the name of religion, race, caste, superiority of all sorts and what not. Another glaring example is slave trade—wherein one particular race had to go through; racial and caste discriminations that are still prevailing in parts of the world; Islamophobia and xenophobia have now cropped out manifesting in diverse formats.

Anti-Semitism is gradually showing its face in parts of Germany and other parts of Europe in the name of 'superior race' and patriarchy continues to dominate and is widely prevalent that controls and regulates women. Religious fundamentalism is almost spreading like wild fire all in the name of religion on which one's identity and citizenship are determined. The past has taught many lessons to us and as thinking human being should refrain from those that created misery of all sorts. The sufferings and onslaughts meted out by co-humans were and are horrendous and by all means and on all counts despicable. Hatred continues to roost the world in which we live.

For some, their nature is such that they cannot be mended, and so it is hard that their thought process be moderated. In such context specificities, there are some who boldly come out and show resistance and defy their aggressive policies and postures. Their boldness and defiance could emanate due to various factors, but certainly comes out of their love towards humanity, irrespective of race, caste, religion and nation. They dare to question and challenge their moves that are detrimental to the whole of humanity.

The victims of holocaust, mass killing due to ethnic conflicts and those who became victims of unjust wars and religious fundamentalism show that the world we live is so fragile and susceptible because there are the 21st century fascist, religious fanatics, casteists and white supremists. In such a context, prophetic traditions such as Ezekiel help us to renew and rededicate our commitment to challenge those nefarious forces that tends to cause enormous damages to the humanity.

We live in a world where a sizable population lives in hunger because of rising prices and low wages. In India, a mass of people barely survive because they do not get livable wages and live in hunger—managing with watery dhall and rotis. They could perhaps be classified as “living dead”, as they barely survive. Further, those belonging to particular religious communities face problems in their respective countries and beyond and live like refugees and many live in detention camps.

Ezekiel 37 reminds us that the dry bones gets energized and become alive because of the Yahweh’s breath that gushed into the dry bones of the skeletons that came back to life and started to march towards those oppressive forces that trampled and killed. It is this assurance and symbolism that galvanizes the spirit of those who boldly defy unjust structure and diabolical systems run the world. Some of the narratives and symbolisms shed light to us.

PUBLIC SPACES OF PROTESTS: BANNED FOR THE PUBLIC



My journey thru four decades and the roadmap that I travelled is studded with lots of curves and hair-pin bends. As a social activist and an ethicist my engagements were primarily revolved around in organizing and participating protests and dissents on diverse issues that the vulnerable and the disadvantaged have been facing since 1972, right across the cities of India—Chennai, Bengaluru and Mumbai continues, not robustly like before. Expressing solidarity for the poor and disempowered on pressing issues are subject to in their day-to-day existence; by accompanying them in the protest rallies, sitting on hunger strikes to pressurize the authorities on problems and expressing dissents in my academic papers, writing articles as a columnist and pamphlets. These I do consider as my social ministry and Christian vocation.

The plural climate in which I live and move on to diverse locales has instilled me the confidence and courage. Certainly by virtue of the fact that these are the basic requisites for me that translate fundamental rights that are foundational to my being candidly enshrined in the Constitution, and so, the right to protest and to express dissent falls within constitutional frames that I enjoy as the citizen of India. Born to liberal and free thinking parents @ Chennai and raised in a liberal and open milieu, I have been influenced by liberal thought, critical inquiry and argumenta-

tive tenors. Having worked in the urban and rural settings of Tamil and with the urban poor in Mumbai, I moved to Bengaluru in the year 1976.

Urban and Rural exposures and engagements with those who live on the margins have undoubtedly deepened my preferential option. Identifying with them have also enhanced my commitment garnering all the experiences within theoretical and theological frames. Action-reflection synthesis has gradually started shaping my consciousness that underpins deeper quest for common good and maximum happiness for maximum number of people apparently leading to common humanity. The underlying factors that triggered the momentum have been embedded at the deeper levels of hope and faith that runs through and thus embrace the basic dictum that reverberates the very essence that we are one though diverse and yet belongs to one humanity.

This is the hope entrenched deep down that enlivens for a better, humane, just, inclusive and sustainable world, despite all odds and obstacles. Shouting slogans, writing short articles and distributing pamphlets, carrying placards, walking through the main lanes and by lanes of Bengaluru; being interrogated and detained by the police; addressing the audience gelled with my political consciousness and faith commitment—all in the air manifesting one thing—the hope and ‘another world possible’ at all moments in conjunction to what Bob Dylan in his lyric wrote and sang—*The Answer is Blowing in the Wind*

Dissents and protests are part of and essence of democracy. Propelled by liberal values and eternal ethical principles for about four decades and moved by faith and ideological commitment participated and showed solidarity with those who struggled for quality of life, meaning in life and existence. Struggle for betterment and walking along with those who suffer has been part of one’s choice. The choice is shaped by one’s consciousness. The context or the locales or the terrains shapes the consciousness of humans. It could also be the system of ideas and politics shapes one’s consciousness. It is certainly risk-taking and

yet those committed for a better world risk and thus participate in the struggles of the people. At this juncture a question that surfaces is: struggles and protests have not ended in successes and mostly some have been successful and yet the human spirit continues because it is that righteous anger that makes them to commit for.

The questions are in the air and the outcome of the dissents and protests do not know or have any iota whether their problems be solved or not, and yet continue to occupy the public space—vis-à-vis Town Hall and other sites. However, along with the dissenters and protesters I inhaled the air with resolve and resilience. We assembled sites like Town Hall, Mahatma Gandhi Statue, Vidana Soudha, Cubbon Park and few others to air our demands and to make the issues public despite all odds. Unless the issues are brought to the open and citizens take those by ways of protests the ruling dispensation would not take them into consideration. Democracy is all about showing the citizens rights to the ruling dispensation within the confines of the Constitution.

This is what I have been expecting whenever I walked the main lanes and by lanes of Bengaluru with others. The air was filled with the slogans and narratives, anger and hope—cumulative expression of gut-level feelings of many—combination of feels—reasons and emotions and the wind that blows must have had answers or more questions I did not know—could be anything and yet along with other protesters and dissenters I walked with them in the struggles with hope. Gradually the voices of the protesters and dissenters are throttled and gagged; some of the sites have been taken away and being considered as not public spaces and so not any more public.

The State considers protests and dissents as dangerous and thus might weaken their power base. They fail to understand that protests and dissents are good for democracy and governance. Whenever the State vis-à-vis the government come across any protests and dissents invoked Section 144 clamping ‘unlawful assembly’ that prohibits assemblage of

five persons. In recent times the Governments both at the Centre as well as States somehow wants to curb protests because for those in power and authority protests are inimical to the ruling establishments. In recent times, in India we come across the shut-down of public space where the protesters and dissenters of various shades used to assemble.

Across the world the nation-states show their brute face against its citizens. The state machinery and its apparatus is unleashed in brutal ways. The innocent citizens and protesters often meet with all sorts of brutalities from the police and paramilitary forces. They are indeed ruthless and brutal while handling the protests and usually go all out with the intent of quelling the protests. Despite the loss of life, injuries, imprisonment and judicial custody protests and dissents go on. Protests and dissents are part of human expression and shall never be curbed or crushed.

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