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ETHICS OF INCLUSION AND EQUALITY

Politics & Society

Volume 1

John Mohan Razu

Globethics.net

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Globethics.net Readers No. 6

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ABBREVIATIONS

BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CNI	Church North India
CSI	Church of Southern India
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IMF	International Montary Fund
LPG	Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization
PM	Prime Minister
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (Parent organization of BJP)
TINA	There Is No Alternative
VHP	Vishva Hindu Parishad
WB	World Bank

To Amnu, precious lifelong lover and friend.

To two splendid children—daughter, and son, Amarantha
and Swithin, and Grandson Avishai.
Whom I love beyond measure and who teach me daily
the wonders of on this good Earth.

To my mentors—Professors James Massey, Hunter Mabry, Max
L. Stackhouse and George Ninan
who taught me how to enter into critical inquiry.

To my parent—Jeya Rao and Ratna Bai,
spirited givers of steadfast love.

INTRODUCTION

‘I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses.
Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.’
— Deuteronomy 30:19

‘If the imagination is to transcend and transform experience
it has to question, to challenge, to conceive of alternative,
perhaps to the very life you are living at the moment.’
— Adrienne Rich

‘There are times in life when the question of knowing
if one can think differently than one thinks,
and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary
if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all.’
— Michel Foucault

Since the beginnings of time, Homo sapiens have organized their societies in a variety of ways. For societies to survive they should get involved in production, consumption and distribution. Apart from these, others things that cover their culture and belief systems kept evolving and refining as the years passed by. In due course of time, as the societies progressed, their needs and necessities too keep growing such as cultures and other paraphernalia. So, it becomes abundantly clear that human beings have always been progressive and innovative and tend to move on from one stage to another leading to higher forms. Over the last 400 years, particularly in the last 200 years there have been fundamental alterations and stupendous transformations both in the base and super structures.

Since the last decade of the 20th Century, we have been witnessing massive expansion in productive capability and an important dimension of this appears in the development of Science and Knowledge about how, why and what things work, and the application of such knowledge to trade and in the production of goods and services. Flight of capital takes place by pressing a few buttons across the world; goods are produced in many countries and assembled in centres wherever desired; distribution of goods takes place at the fastest possible time. Undoubtedly, for all these developments science and technology has been playing a major role. Nonetheless, this new knowledge is also being used to wage war, to exploit natural and human resources, to produce more food and to combat diseases. As a consequence, over this short period of time, we have ravaged the natural resources and keep exploiting the human labour for selfish ends.

These changes that we see and part of it are called by different names such as 'development', 'progress', 'industrialization', 'modernization', 'urbanization' or 'growth' that implies and indicates more in terms of GNP and GDP. The process that brought all changes is in short called as 'LPG' (Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization). The names we use characterize conceptually and theoretically may differ technically, but mean the same in essence and content that falls within the gamut of socio-economic categories. Usually, people take these for granted and put them under the rubric of 'development'. These could be understood only when they are put within a historical perspective so that better knowledge is garnered in relation to changes happened in previous epochs. However, when we use a term 'transformation', there is a tendency to compare the modes employed in producing agricultural or industrial products and thus measured in terms of output whether increased or grown in multiple terms. Just imagine what happened in agriculture where less people with the applications of mechanized tools, pesticides, fertilizers and HIV produce abundantly for them and the

surplus is exported. Similarly, industrial revolution has transformed modes of production and thus altered the production processes radically.

Transformation towards one single shopping mall, one economic unit, one culture, and one language, borderless and flat world has been the pursuit of the neo-liberal protagonists. Their dream and vision undoubtedly helped a tiny section of the global and nations' population to increase their wealth and assets hugely, but failed to lift the majority of the population of the world from their miserable and squalid conditions. For the past twenty five year I have been deeply involved in grappling on a number of issues that the people and communities living on the margin face and experience in their day-to-day existence. Out of many a few questions hit me severely that centred on these starters: Why, How and What For me, this quest is born out of a contemporary moral crisis of profound changes at alarming proportions. It has assumed unprecedented dimensions of intense magnitude.

For many, two concepts—(1) poverty and (2) inequality—continue to confront the very core of global humanity. Poverty refers to lack of access to basic survival needs like food, clothing, education, health and shelter, while inequality refers to how income or wealth is distributed in the society. Poverty is measured in terms of a poverty line, and what fraction of the population is below that line. The latter is measured in terms of the gap between the rich and poor. As we are aware of the fact that poverty is an absolute concept, whereas inequality is a relative concept. Theoretically, it is possible to have zero poverty and high inequality or very high poverty, but low inequality. Most countries fall in between and some have both. The World Bank (WB) defines extreme poverty as living on less than $1.25 per day. Many have now started to use the definition offered by the World Bank.

Alongside, inequality within and between nations is glaringly widening. It is being measured in income earned or in wealth distribution.

Thomas Piketty's bestselling book, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* succinctly makes the case that unbridled capitalism leads to more concentration of wealth. It is innate in the nature and functioning of capitalism to further inequality in society. Less than 5 per cent of the global rich control almost all the production and distribution facilities and related activities *vis à vis* human and natural resources in absolute terms. Whether it was 'Occupy Wall Street' agitation or blockades of IMF, WB or G-7 summits, or whatever global capitalism and its bandwagon; forces of globalization meet has been vehemently challenged that eventually led to the present credo—de-globalization that gave rise to BREXIT, building walls across countries and increasing stringent immigration laws that are to be considered as a backlash against rising inequality.

Inequality is being believed by many as an 'inevitable part of any society' and assumed as if it is due to the 'competitive processes in any economy'. While in reality, everyone is not equally either with capital or know-how or skills or intellectual capital. Hence, the competition and race of daily life will create leaders and laggards. The job of the government is to periodically narrow-down inequality by redistribution of resources by evolving safety mechanisms so that inequality is contained and the gap is narrowed down. Nonetheless, for global capitalism inequality has always been the basic tenet and if allowed inequality would continue to widen. But, how much is too much inequality? Inequality within a country and between countries by all means should be addressed. Every society will have to decide and find ways and means to stop it. In terms of wealth concentration inequality in India fares far behind. And, if we employ metrics like access to healthcare, basic quality education and sanitation, Indian society is constructed on inequality that characterizes social and economic disequilibria. Those who belong to the lower rungs do not have access to education, sanitation and health and quality life.

Over and above, glaring disparities continue to exist that manifests the deep-seated unequal nature of the Indian society. The evidence is overwhelming and so the Indian government is still on denial modes to accept a socio-economic policy that focuses on reducing this inequality. For instance, the socio-economic indicators that define Dalit population in India remain dismal and appalling. Professor Amitabh Kundu, who headed a group in 2013 to study the implementation of the Sachar committee recommendations, said that over 33.8 per cent of Dalit population in rural India was below the poverty line in 2011-12. More than 60 per cent of the Dalit population does not participate in any economic activity. Of the working population, nearly 55 per cent are cultivators and agricultural labourers. Around 45 per cent of rural Dalit households are landless. Only 13.9 per cent Dalit households have access to clean water through pipelines as compared to 27.5 per cent among the general category and only 10 per cent have access to sanitation as compared to 27 per cent for non-Dalit households. A staggering 53.6 per cent among the general category and only 10 per cent have access to sanitation as compared to 27 per cent for non-Dalit households. Likewise, 53.6 per cent Dalit children are malnourished as compared to 39 per cent non-Dalit children.

Having experienced inequality in his life, the architect of India's Constitution cautioned the ruling cliché in his words and action to take note of inequality. B.R. Ambedkar in his speech in the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949, is worth recalling at this juncture. 'How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this (Constituent) Assembly

has so laboriously built up.' His prophetic and authentic words said decades ago are relevant now than ever as we celebrate his 125th birth anniversary.

In addition to the caste-class divides it is important to unfold Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG). Central to LPG which was introduced in 1991 should not be construed as 'retreat of the state' instead of state-regulated economy, but a change in the nature of the state. Since, the introduction of LPG the opening of India's economy entailed freer cross border flows of goods and capital, including of finance which is highly mobile and whose sudden outflow can precipitate a financial crisis. Therefore, the state under aegis of LPG should conform to the dictates of the international financial institutions which are in turn being controlled by the global capital located in the highly advanced capitalist countries. Therefore the protagonists state that 'There Is No Alternative' (TINA). This means that the state and its apparatus has become exclusively tows the interests of the global capital and the domestic corporate-financial oligarchs and crony capitalists aligned with it.

The issue at present is: whether globalization or de-globalization, what is important presently for us to go deep into important areas such as the place of religion, ethics, theology, politics, economics and culture in it. But the question is to identify the major forces that propels invites, allows or involved in the shaping of this phenomenon. Many of course, tend to believe that globalization, is essentially driven by economic interests. I have no doubt as regards that globalization is powerfully driven by economic interests which is not new. But our inquiry should lead to: why globalization is taking its present shape, and organizing the economic forces the way it does pushes me to go beyond an economistic view since it is narrow and limited as globalization extends to other dimensions—social, cultural, religious, theological and cultural phenomena.

Based on the dictates of IMF-WB, withdrawal of support of the Indian State from social sectors and agricultural sector has led to multiple crises leading to many farmers resorting to suicides. Agrarian sector has transformed itself into a market-triggered economy and in the process uprooted millions of landless agricultural labourers who are struggling for their survival. Further, increase in the prices of agricultural inputs, reduction in the subsidies and price fluctuations has led to series of crises wherein the marginal and middle farmers and those dependent on agriculture have to face the brunt; and the retreat of the government from providing essential services like quality education and health care that made the poor and the vulnerable suffer more and more. Reforms package promoted and backed by global capitalism and its instruments claimed and pitched its votary of 'development paradigm'.

The world capitalist crisis that commenced in 2008 is nowhere in sight of ending. It is undergoing a series of inherent contradictions and is digging its own grave. This crisis has certainly brought unease amongst the middle classes that benefited hugely through capitalism-triggered LPG. The neo-liberal development paradigm does not accommodate other paradigms and imposes its narrative as the narrative and thus dismisses other narratives. Those who have been marginalized by the 'neo-liberal propelled capitalist development model' have been pursuing an alternative development strategy which would protect the interests of the labouring classes, women, marginalized and the vulnerable. An alternative paradigm hopefully does transcend 'neo-liberal' capitalism though attempts to prevent such a denouncement through the formation of a corporate-'communal' alliance that seeks to divide the people will also gather momentum. There are important debates and disputes about the distribution of the benefits of development, industrialization and globalization.

An important subtext of the popular narrative of change in Indian politics has been the decline of caste. Caste has always been seen as a 'problem' for the functioning of democratic politics in India. However, caste configures and re-configures in tune to changes taking places in the Indian society, built on one principle which is the basic fulcrum: 'Once born in a particular caste segment or rung, one should stay on and so there is no exit'. Conspicuously, in the past three decades a new middle-class identity emerged composed of the middle-and bottom rung castes. In that the dominant castes have been benefiting. Consequently, caste is a tightly knit system that 'efficiently' and 'effectively' enforces control based on birth and occupation. Caste-stratified occupation continues even in the 21st Century as a functional category and dominant narrative.

Caste remains a mediating reality in all facets of existential domains of the Indian society, particularly material and cultural. Over and above, caste exists in our mind and thought processes. It has shaped right from knowledge and material distribution, culture and host of others. Those differences and disparities echoes who should get what and how much they should get that covers economy, polity and everyday social life. In such a hierarchical and stratified arrangement the Dalits face the brunt and are the worst affected. These incidents and the reactions posited above point to a larger trend. The gap between the narratives and actions of the politicians and socio-economic realities of India keep fuelling social conflicts that are presently reaching definite and clear show downs.

Dalits make up nearly 25 per cent of India's population. But even after seven decades of Independence, more than three-fourths of Dalits live in rural areas and 84 per cent of them have an average monthly income of less than Rs. 5000. At the same time Dalits' vote share in the electoral politics is huge and hence a determining factor. Nonetheless, the Dalits have now realized that political parties of all-shades employ

use-and-throw policy towards them. For the last one year protests by the Dalits is taking many forms. Ever since the suicide of Dalit scholar Rohith Vemula in Hyderabad Central University debates and discourses in the Parliament, media and other forums have become regular feature. After the Una incident, Dalit tanners in Gujarat dumped cow carcasses in government offices as the action of the 'cow protectors' had a direct impact on their livelihood. In Madhya Pradesh, 50 Dalit families asked their Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's 'permission' to kill themselves, alleging the dominant castes have occupied the land granted to them by the government 15 years ago. Less than 20 Dalit youth have attempted suicide across the country.

Political parties are involved in vote bank politics and in that BJP[1] leads by polarizing the Indian society on the basis of 'Majoritarian vs. Minoritarian: 'We the People' and 'You the Other'. Caste oppression has been going on for centuries but in recent times the oppressed classes and castes have started asserting themselves and the moves of the ruling dispensation back lashed. Indian society manifests its racist tendency where those from the African countries and North-Eastern states have been lynched and attacked in different parts of India. Identity politics is seeing phenomenal rise. This is the ground reality of India. Those who wear the blinkers fail to understand that India's survival lies in her diversity. On these lines, those who negate and narrate as there is no caste in the Indian society and make Dalit reality as sub-text should revisit their sources. The mass pledge taken by the Dalits in Amedabad in Gujarat recently shows their grit and determination to fight the diabolic forces that force them to live in caste-premised captivity and perennial bondage. Fury of the Dalits is spreading across the country like wildfire.

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[1] The Bharatiya Janata Party [Indian People's Party] is one of the two major political parties in India. As a right-wing party, its policy has historically reflected Hindu-nationalist positions. Note by the Editor.

However, the BJP-RSS is all out to realize their vision of Ram Rajya in India. In order to realize its vision, the BJP-RSS is engaged in sharpening the contradictions between Hindus and others on the basis of those eating cow meat and others who do not eat. 'Cow politics' has eventually become a handy tool for the ultra-fundamentalist forces. 'Cow politics' is part of Hindutva and RSS-BJP's political project. Systematically, RSS-BJP is enforcing their Hindutva ideology: what type of food Indians should eat, dress they should wear, education our children and grandchildren should have implies—one culture, one language, one religion and one narrative. On these lines, BJP-RSS and its ultra-rightist bandwagon have started to define based on their formulae that who is a national and anti-national, patriotic and unpatriotic. Polarizations of the Indian citizens keep taking place not just on the basis of majority and minority, but also on every small and big detail.

In recent times across the world we have been witnessing all sorts of turmoil positing the levels of human greed, lust for power and total decadence of moral values. Within and between nations, problems of varied nature keep looming. Conflicts of varied nature—religious, cultural, economic and ethnic rage across communities and societies and threat of war have become regular features of our times. Those crises have been elaborated in the diverse sections of this anthology. The issues are wide ranging—that threatens Earth's life systems, cultural integrity and diversity, and the lives of many who are poor in order that a few might consume exorbitantly and a tiny percent accumulate vast wealth. Political parties across the world with divisive ideologies tend to fragment and polarize societies to usurp and stay on in power employs all sorts of aggressive strategies and those who defy them have been branded as anti-nationals.

As a society, except a few, many acquiesce to the prevailing forms of macro-micro 'moral order'. They comply with their demands and accede to their 'truths' as if 'No Other Way Possible'. We have also miserably

failed to consider seriously the long-term social and ecological implications of the present world order, resist it, and forge alternatives. And the alternatives and paradigm shifts will have to be premised on the ideals of Jesus, Buddha, Gandhi and Ambedkar. This dearth of moral agency—and its awakening—is the concern of this undertaking. Insistent hunches and quest for justice, equality, human dignity and increasing resentment of modern dualism moved to consider the indwelling spirituality as a source of moral-spiritual power. The intuitions and ethical moorings that became integral to my theses and method were:

- The moral crises of global politico-economic injustices today are integrally ethical; they signal drastically something has gone wrong in the relationship between human beings and fundamental ethical principles that shed light to think and act as moral human beings and the things around them.
- Ethical reflection on 'what we are to do' and 'why we are to do' (normative and constructive reflection) is inadequate if it does not also address the question of moral agency, the power to 'do what we ought.' Therefore the 'ought' factor assumes greater significance and added value, because it is categorical and thus imperative as it is normative.
- Where individual, groups, communities and societies moral life is webbed with normative principles which ought to echo in their personal, communitarian relationships and the environment around them.
- Where moral life and well-being of the world in which we live by taking into consideration the present and future generations are held in dialectic dynamic. Here moral life is understood as being governed by ethical principles bound by just, humane, compassionate and sustainable ways of living.

Adhering to the above-said sensibilities in which they gel with spirituality that centres on morality. It is being pitched against modernity's persistent tendency that separates the two particularly in relation to the other—responsible self and relational responsibility. Relational responsibility and responsible self have been tainted by human constructed social, economic, cultural and religious divides that delves into distinctly inner, privatized and apolitical realms. In this dynamic, it is apparent that inter-connections of the terms moral-spiritual agency. In this anthology materials chosen and analysed that demystifies key dynamics that gravitate around corporate–driven globalization; caste-driven Indian social order; majoritarian-minoritarian Hindutva ideology; coloured mind-set triggered by racism and multiple phobia dominate Indian society in particular and the world at large. An attempt is also made to uncover and explore ways in which relationship with God may ignite and sustain the moral-spiritual power needed for resisting and subverting the dominant model of development and the single story by forging alternatives and thus lay groundwork for further inquiry so that new paradigms would emerge.

The undertaking is part of my larger desire to enter into critical areas that spreads across diverse contours and terrains of India. In that endeavour, critical analysis of many facets that the vulnerable people face and confront engender moral agency—the agency required to resist diabolic mechanizations and manifestations of hydra that support planetary flourishing, human dignity and equality. This project presupposes multiple threats posed by neo-liberal corporate globalization, caste system, xenophobia, right-wing ideology and many other human constructed walls and divides. I address the impending issues that confront those who live on margins, believe in common good and humanity by pitching moral agency for resisting anti-life forces and for moving towards A World Livable for the Present and Future Generations. To the issues I raised, I speak for the moral crisis in this culture of complicity is not

lack of knowledge. It is the failure to speak and speak loudly and boldly. We live in a period of crises.

The crises, I tend to deliberate, elaborate and evaluate in the pages of this anthology. In selecting the materials for this anthology I was guided by several things. Particularly, I wanted to give the reader a view of contemporary debates that covers contemporary social, economic, political, cultural, educational, theological and religious facets of the Indian society and other select crucial issues that confronts global humanity. The areas that have been delved into and argued out by and large echo injustices inflicted on individuals, groups, communities and societies in varied forms and shades. As against the backdrop, the fitting overarching principle that swings across and weaves through the issues articulated and argued obviously is justice, a pre-eminent moral principle, a negotiating and evaluating agency which has been pitched against the injustices happening at varied levels.

It is certainly not a collection of writings on mythology or classics, with something from each of the major epochs and schools which would limit the field and scope of inquiry. This was the triggering reason that prompted to cover vital issues that were multi-faceted and interconnected. Each of the five parts of the anthology serves a distinct aim. The first part —*Politics and Society* provides a background for contemporary debates. One of the major current debates is that between liberals and conservatives and how the Hindutva politics has trickled down other areas polarizing the Indian society such as *Economy and Environment* as evidenced in the second part, not necessarily in pure form but in ways that indicate how they have affected one another[2]. The State via its apparatus the Government, as is clear in the third part —*Education, Children and Sexuality*: is a central factor not merely in administering justice

[2] Present volume as the larger first part – *Politics and Society* leaves the remaining headings related to Economy, Education and Theology to a second separate volume published in the same Globethics Readers Series, as No. 7

but also in formulating standards of justice under pressures sparked by outrage at prevailing conditions. The justice of the base and super structures and how they ought to be ethically and theologically argued out are in the last parts —*Theology and Tolerance* and —*The Vision: Jesus, Buddha, Gandhi and Ambedkar.*

POLITICS & SOCIETY

DALITS AND THE CHANGING CONTOURS OF THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INDIA

Introduction

Free and independent Indian state claims that it is 'secular', 'democratic' and 'socialistic'. After sixty six years of its formation as a state, are these claims to become real and visibly present? How far has the Indian state interacted with, and shaped, its society and political economy? Why has decades of democratically guided state interactions not able to promote an egalitarian and socialistic society? And why, despite enfranchising the Dalits, has the state not mobilized their support to carry out enactments, legislated laws and reforms? Why are the Dalits, who constitute one-fourth of the population, not been able to influence social and economic policies to garner economic growth with equitable distribution? Why are the policies, social and economic are geared towards the socially privileged and economically powerful communities?

The Indian State

These were the questions that generated theories to the nature and character of the Indian state, assessed by the impact of state policies on different sections of the society, and its links with powerful societal interests. As against this background it is imperative to enter into serious interrogation into the nature and character of the changing contours of

governance of the Indian state and its political economy. The state as such is a social institution which evolves in tune to the socio-economic conditions of the society. And so, it should never be construed merely as a social institution. Undoubtedly, it is a political system, an activity and a process. However, there are numerous definitions and understanding about the state. Out of those, David Easton defines the state in the following way:

> 'One person sees the state as the embodiment of the moral spirit, its concrete expression; another as the instrument of exploitation used by one class against others. One author defines it as simply an aspect of society, distinguishable from it only analytically; another, as simply a synonym for government; and still another as a separate and unique association among a large number of other associations such as church, trade unions and similar voluntary groups … However, the Marxists continue to use the term 'state' as a form of political organizations. They use the terms pre-state society, stateless society, slave-owning state, feudal state, capitalist state, socialist/communist state. In spite of certain objections and suspicions, the concept of the state has not become entirely redundant for the study of political science.'[3]

Despite varied views and perspectives, the nation-states do exist with different forms of governments. Hence, the concept of the state has not yet been made redundant, rather becoming stronger than ever before. However, if the state represents as an abstract concept, the government is its concrete form. And so, the authority of the state is exercised by the government. Government is the visible agency or machinery of the state through which common policies, programs, goods and services are pre-

[3] Quoted by V.D. Mahajan in *Political Theory*, New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd, 1988, pp. 132-133.

scribed, implemented, produced and delivered. In this way, basic needs are regulated and common interests promoted. Functions of the state are dispensed by its organs such as executive, legislature, and judiciary. All the three organs of the state are connected with each other. Laws are legislated by the legislature, authenticated by the executive, and interpreted by the judiciary. The functioning of the state is mediated by the government. So, without a government, the state becomes a notion or an abstraction. And so, it is a necessary evil, and its necessity cannot be denied.

Another concomitant element that adds and authenticates the state is sovereignty. Sovereignty extends the legal status to the state. It is this which distinguishes the state from other organizations. Absence of sovereignty could lead to antinomianism, chaos and lawlessness. It is this sovereign nature of the state that keeps the society going. It is the final authority that adds value to the state. Sovereignty is the sole guarantor of the state that extends legitimacy and permanency to the state in order to exist. Governments may change, but the state remains. To quote Maclver, 'The state is an agency of human purpose and its character changes as it is directed more to the interests of this or that class within the community, as it serves more this or that set of aims, as its area or purpose narrows or widens.' [4] As rightly pointed out, there is no doubt that like other nation states, the Indian state is committed to serve the entire populace of the country. However, it is to be noted that as its character changes it is controlled by the vested interests belonging to the so-called 'high castes' in our society. As it continues to serve predominantly the dominant caste interests, its area of purpose widens.

The Indian state is vibrant and dynamic. From time to time as it assimilates, absorbs, and appropriates as castes and classes configures and reconfigures. So, its class and caste character changes. And therefore,

[4] *Ibid*, p. 158.

for the Indian state the basic and fundamental principle on which it is premised is caste, and it is this caste that plays as its instrument. Further, the state is not merely a legal entity, but operates efficiently and effectively in the society. If we look at the state within a broader framework, 'The state is required not only to achieve socio-economic goals, but also to act as an instrument of socio-economic change which will ultimately pave the way to the promotion of the greatest happiness of the largest number.'[5]

It is categorical that the state is bound to promote common good. From this perspective, the role of the Indian state is to be looked upon particularly by the vulnerable communities such as Dalits. Each citizen has the bounden duty to looks at the delivery systems of the state and thus evaluates: whether it is striving for common good for all and of all, or just for the privileged sections of the society. It has been always felt and thus become apparent that in the process of social and economic transformation, the Indian state is controlled by the so-called 'upper castes' who have not been allowing basic and structural changes that contravenes their caste interests. Therefore, the state acts as the protector and promoter of the castes interests' of the so-called 'upper castes' and apparently becomes the perpetrator of caste system. Instead of being the instrument of socio-economic change and as an agency to annihilate the system of caste, the state is the perpetuator of maintaining the status quo.

Human societies world over have been witnessing the rule of oligarchy, despotic regimes, military junta, totalitarian and fascist governments and other oppressive forms of governance. Even today, we see almost all the shades and forms are being present and in all these the people have no say or some say in the affairs of the administration. Those who usurp power have their own ways interpreting their rule, perceptions, vision, acquisitions, and expansions. The citizens were

[5] *Ibid*, p. 167.

treated as objects of their benevolence, be it benevolent or autocratic dictatorship or other forms. What is happening in all these is their failure in recognizing the power of the people who are the subjects and makers of history and their destiny. It is an irony that throughout the human histories we keep witnessing the anti-people regimes/governments, but they have been changed by the will of the people. So, the will of the people becomes supreme and absolute. Democratic forms of governments have been reinstated in most of the countries. The will of the people is to be kept at the highest pedestal and supreme than the will of the state/government. When it comes to our country we have a system called as parliamentary democracy and in that it is claimed that 'people are supreme'.

Democracy simply means 'of the people, by the people and for the people'. Democracy functions on the consent of the governed, viz. the people. The government represents the state. The state acquires legitimacy only through its sovereignty, by which it assumes the supreme power vis-à-vis the absolute authority. Who is endowed with absolute authority? In a democracy, both in theory and practice, the people or the citizens as a whole exercise the supreme power, and therefore, it is the people who have supreme power. But when it comes to practicalities and applications the rubrics changes and equations are different. Therefore, notionally and theoretically, democracy sounds good, but when at work it would cater to the hopes and aspirations of the dominant classes and castes, and not those who have bestowed their faith in democratic participatory process. This means that there must be some mechanism available to the people to participate in the decision-making and policy-evolving processes, so that their genuine hopes and aspirations. Therefore, the government technically speaking remains in power only as long as the people wish it to be in power.

But a question that is being raised: How is it regulated? Indian democracy functions and thus is regulated by the constitution, because the Constitution is a body of laws according to which a country is governed. The Constitution lays down the basic structure of the political system under which its people are to be governed. It clearly lays down the functions of the parliament, the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary, which defines their powers, demarcates their responsibilities and regulates their relationship with each other and with the people. Those who drafted the Constitution had the dream of an ideal Indian society. These ideals are reflected in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution which opens with the following words: 'We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign, Socialist and Secular Democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens:

- Justice (social, economic and political);
- Liberty of thought, expressions, belief, faith and worship;
- Equality of status and opportunity, and to promote among them all fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation … 1949, do hereby, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution.'

The opening words of the Preamble are 'we, the people of India,' which simply means that the Constitution has been declared in the name of the people who are the main constitutive subjects. The ultimate source of all power is the people who ought to be the real engine of democracy. For a democracy to work or function effectively, it is the people who are the fulcrum, the base, the centre, the means and the ends. Therefore, democracy is the base of governance.

The Multiple Dimensions of Governance

In recent times the term 'governance' is being used frequently cutting across caste, creed, and religion. 'Governance' as a concept is of

recent origin. Since the last decade of the twentieth century, many have started to use the term in place of government which remains as an exclusive prerogative of technocratic and elitist discourse. Over and above, this concept is imprecise because of its ambiguous nature. In view of its different usages in varied context-specificities, 'governance' is a 'post-political' connotation for effective regulation, accountability, transparency and efficiency as against corrupt, inefficient, and unaccountable governments, bureaucracies and quasi-governmental agencies. Nowadays, it proposes newer guidelines to stereotypical features of democracy. Governance is used by all sorts of collectives, networks, coalitions, consortiums and others, especially in the wake of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG). This concept primarily challenges the failure of the state by opening up all the essential sectors to corporate interests, corrupt politicians and unaccountable bureaucrats.[6] However, the term governance is used primarily in the following areas:

> '… It first seems to have gained currency in the field of economic development … by international development agencies and western governments of 'good governance' as a necessary component of effective economic modernization. The World Bank, for example, has been a leading advocate … Development economies came to recognize that institutions matter, that development is not just a matter of creating free markets, promoting investment, and adopting the right macroeconomic policies. … Good governance, therefore, means creating an effective political framework conducive to private economic action – stable regimes, the rule of law, efficient state administration … and a strong civil society independent of the state. Democracy is valuable in this context …'

[6] For more in depth discussion, refer Jon Pierre (ed.), *Debating Governance, Authority, Steering, and Democracy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.

> 'The second … is in the field of international institutions and regimes … world environmental problems like global warming and ozone depletion, the regulation of world trade and international financial markets … Much of the critical discourse on globalization fears that world markets and transnational corporations are beyond control ...
>
> The third usage of the concept of governance is that of 'corporate governance' … 'corporate governance' is the watchword of those who wish to improve the accountability and transparency of the actions of management, but without fundamentally altering the basic structures of firms …'[7]

In recent times, the concept of governance assumes multiple dimensions. For example,

> 'Conventionally, governance encompasses the manner in which the state and its various institutions negotiate and mediate with people, markets and civil society, through laws, policies, regulation and finance. Today governance is overarching with many dimensions including institutional and political manifestations. Governance refers to decision-making and the process through which power is exercised to utilize economic and social resources for development.
>
> The concept of governance, over the last 15 years, has evolved to transcend to the conventional area of the nation-state or government. Market forces as well as civil society processes and citizens' initiatives have increasingly started influencing the process of governance today. Many civil society

[7] *Ibid.*

> organizations (CSOs) strongly believe that governance is not just the effective management of economic resources.'[8]

The above quotation clearly shows that the citizens have the right to demand accountability, and public actors are obliged to be accountable to citizens. So, democracy operates with this fundamental principle. In this direction the civil society organizations empower and strengthen the capacities within government to make public institutions more responsive to citizens. Hence, 'democratic governance underlines the spirit of a contract – that rulers and people were bound by each other by reciprocal obligations … that entails accountability of the government to the citizens in lieu of the authority vested in it by the citizens.'[9]

Governance in this sense is a contractual obligation between the citizens and the public actors. In recent times in India good governance is highlighted in political discourses. For example,

> 'Reforms could help to come out of the morass of problems that our country faces, which includes bureaucratic inertia and inefficiency, corruption, public services and delays in delivery of justice. There is a need for the state to encourage private capital initiatives, and build capabilities rather than redistribute wealth … increased development effectiveness through improved public service delivery and better-informed policy design. The right to good governance is an essential part of citizens' rights that one can expect from the government.'[10]

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[8] George Cheriyan, '*Changing Face of Governance*,' in *Deccan Herald*, February 28, 2008, p.8.
[9] *Ibid*.
[10] *Ibid*.

It is apparent that democracy is the basis for good governance. Good governance stands on vibrant and dynamic democracy. People in general have diverse perceptions on 'democracy'. Their understanding of democracy varies and so their articulation of democracy tends to be different from each other. In such a scenario, what then is a working democracy?

Parliamentary Democracy and Inequality

B.R. Ambedkar, the Chief Architect, in framing our Constitution cautioned of: 'Beware of Parliamentary Democracy, it is not the best product as it appears to be.'[11] Ambedkar gives numerous reasons that 'Democracy is like a machine whose movements are slow and there is no swift action.'[12] He continues that 'In a Parliamentary Democracy, the Executive may be held up by the Legislature which may refuse to pass the laws which the Executive wants and if it is not held up by the Legislature, it may be held up by the Judiciary which may declare the laws illegal.'[13] Apart from this, '… it can be said in general terms that the discontent against Parliamentary Democracy is due to the realization that it has failed to assure the masses the right to liberty, prosperity or pursuit of happiness.'[14] For Ambedkar, Parliamentary Democracy could not check economic inequalities and in turn in the name of liberty, has continuously added to the economic wrongs of the poor, the downtrodden, and the disinherited class. Social and economic democracy is the axle and pivotal force of a political democracy. The tougher the tissues and fiber, the greater is the strength of the body. Ambedkar candidly

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[11] Valerian Rodrigues (ed.) *The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p.61.
[12] *Ibid*.
[13] *Ibid*.
[14] *Ibid*.

elaborates that democracy is another name for equality. If liberty fails to realize equality, then it has made democracy a mockery, a name and a farce.

Is the Indian Parliamentary Democracy a farce? Does the Indian democracy posit equality? Does liberty in our democratic settings subsume equality? Over the years, aberrations and distortions have taken place in the functioning, not only of the State, but also in the political establishment and administrative system. As a result, large sections of the people are unable to enjoy even the minimum rights the Constitution has enshrined for the subjects. The country's strength lies in democracy which is premised on justice, equality and fraternity. Mutual co-existence and co-habitation of diverse communities by respecting each other despite differences are the functional principles that enable the democracy to be vibrant and dynamic. Since, Indian social structure is premised on caste, paradoxically, caste is used at all levels to put different categories on different slots perpetuating hierarchy and difference. It reflects that,

> 'The lack of accountability in governing institutions and individuals is a great bane. The other major deficiency is the lack of transparency in the decision-making processes. An impression has gained ground that criminals with recourse to resources and influence can remain out of the reach of legal processes. There is a question mark also about the proper enforcement of our criminal justice system. It is only through commitment to constitutional objectives that we can bring probity back into the system.
>
> There is no better alternative to parliamentary democracy with adult franchise and a federal set-up. Parliamentary symbolizes the ethos of our country. It mirrors the country as a whole. It embodies and articulates the urges and aspirations of the people. Over the years, Parliament has come to be iden-

> tified, both in theory and practice, as the pivot of our political system. The responsibility for providing direction, momentum, and institutions for social engineering has been with our Parliament.'[15]

Probably former Lok Sabha speaker may have been influenced by Ambedkar[16]. Ambedkar believed in the effective functioning of democracy which is the foremost and vital component that ought to address the socio-economic disequilibria within the Indian society. As predicted by him, the socio-economic disequilibria have not narrowed down. The caste system has further strengthened and thus is embodied in socio-economic, religio-cultural, educational and political institutions. In the socio-economic sphere, Tables 1 and 2 amply demonstrates that.

Table 1: Theo Socio-Economic and Educational Profile of Dalits in Different Indian States

Sl. No	State	SC[17] Population (1991) %	SC literate population (1991) %	SC under poverty line (1993-94) %	Dropout rate SC at secondary stage (1990-91)
1.	Andhra Pradseha	15.93	31.59	34.92	86.00
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	0.47	57.27	-	-
3.	Assam	7.40	53.94	29.86	62.42
4.	Bilhar	14.56	19.49	62.91	89.36
5.	Goa	2.08	58.73	-	81.07

[15] Somnath Chatterjee, 'Constitution, Parliament and the People,' in '*The Hindu'*, 8.12.2004, p.10.

[16] The Lok Sabha (House of the People) is the lower house of India's bicameral Parliament. Note by the Editor.

[17] The Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are officially designated groups of historically disadvantaged people in India. Note by the Editor.

6.	Gujarat	7.41	61.07	38.62	71.29
7.	Harayana	19.75	39.22	35.07	78.12
8.	Himachal Pradesh	25.34	53.20	27.70	67.78
9.	Jammu & Kashmir	-	-	-	79.09
10.	Karanataka	16.38	38.06	54.00	75.03
11.	Kerala	9.92	79.66	34.01	51.05
12.	Madhya Pradash	14.54	35.08	55.41	61.58
13.	Maharashatra	11.10	56.46	52.10	71.96
14.	Manipur	2.02	56.44	-	81.70
15.	Meghalaya	0.51	44.27	-	30.57
16.	Mizoram	0.10	77.92	-	-
17.	Nagaland	-	-	-	-
18.	Orissa	16.20	36.78	48.20	81.54
19.	Punjab	28.31	41.09	25.02	79.34
20.	Rajashan	17.29	26.29	43.50	82.07
21.	Sikkim	5.93	51.03	-	91.51
22.	Tamil Nadu	19.18	46.74	52.77	77.32
23.	Tripura	16.36	56.66	-	87.29
24.	Uttar Pradesh	21.04	26.85	58.50	72.20
25.	West Bengal	23.62	42.21	41.51	88.81
26.	Delhi	19.05	57.60	-	65.36

Source: Kameshwar Choudhary, (ed.), Globalisation, Governance Reforms and Development in India, SAGE Publications, New Delhi, p. 312.

Table 2: Representation of SCs in Different services with respect to 15 per cent Reservation

Class of Service	Central Services	Public sector undertaking	Public sector banks & financial institutions	Insurance sector
A	11.29	10.35	12.51	13.67
B	12.68	11.05	14.88	12.40
C	15.72	18.93	24.46	17.24

Source: Ibid, 313.

When it comes to the social realm, the hierarchy-based difference is visible in all aspects of life. Caste continues to play a major role in India's social structure and those at the lower rung and outside the Hindu Varnasharmadharma system continues to face discrimination both in the social and economic spheres. As Ambedkar rightly pointed out, unless and until there is a level-playing ground based on equality and equity between humans democracy remains a maya, a ploy of the dominant class and castes.

In a parliamentary democracy there is the Legislature to express the voice of the people, there is the Executive which is subordinate to the Legislature and bound to obey the Legislature, and there is the Judiciary to control both, within the prescribed bounds. Parliamentary democracy has the marks of a popular government duly elected by the people, of the people and for the people. However, if the democratically elected governments failed to address the socio-economic disequilibria even after 66 years of free India, who would set it right. If the present Indian democracy fails to address the divides, there is all the possibility of authoritarian, fascist, communal and dictatorial forces taking over the country. As citizens we need to seriously introspect our own historical epochs and trajectories that have hardly touched seven decades. In such a short span there have been widespread discontent and dissatisfaction. If we as citizens do not plug the holes and employ checks and balances, then we

would eventually end up like what happened in other parliamentary democracies like Italy, Germany, Russia, and Spain.

The Need for Dalit Entrepreneurs

From the 1990s the governments at the Centre have been following the policies and programs dictated by the forces of global capitalism both in urban and rural areas. In urban and rural settings, the expansion of wealth and opportunities, through globalization for the middle, upper and dominant castes, has brought prosperity and affluence blatantly and conspicuously. Hence, globalization has neither altered the socio-economic status of the Dalits nor bridged socio-economic inequalities and inequalibria both in the rural and urban settings. Over and above, there is certain coalescence between the deepening crises and its perceived linkages with the processes of globalization that ought to be discerned as spaces given and dissenting voices accommodated by the forces of capitalism in the name of democratization.

In a world of market-backed free liberal economics, a sizeable capital is invested in speculative areas and service sectors, where returns are instantaneous and profit-maximizing. Those who are excluded by the market forces especially the Dalits have fallen into 'inequality traps' and in the process pushed to poverty and other related areas that depicts feminization and commoditization of women, migration, labour redundancy leading to unemployment, suicides, debts, and so on. With imperfect markets in power, wealth is translated into unequal opportunities, leading to concentration of wealth and resources in the hands of a few, while the majority has no choice, but to voluntarily opt for mass suicidal attempts. In sum, it is nothing but a genocidal project. Every day we keep reading, listening, watching, and witnessing shocking stories of the inequalities in income, opportunities, and life chances, faced by communities within and between nations.

On one side exclusion and marginalization of the Dalits are on the rise, while on the other India's Dalit business men have set up a venture capital fund with an initial Rs. 500-crore known as Dalit India Chamber of Commerce and industry. Dalits who comprise one-fifth of India's population control only 1 per cent of the country's wealth because they own very few assets. The initial corpus for the fund will come from the community's business elite. It would seek the support from Nabard, IDBI and the Asian Development Bank. Apart from other things, the fund aims to promote a plan for preferential purchases from business owned by SCs and STs. Those who mooted this initiative wanted to go beyond the government programmes that primarily augur employment opportunities for the Dalits rather than entrepreneurship.

This is an important discourse that has emerged anew in Dalit politics. It emphasizes and concentrates on the need for 'Dalit entrepreneurs', a category conspicuously absent in India's business history and its emerging political economy for more than 65 years. It has its philosophical and political roots in the so-called Bhopal document of 2002. Some of the leading Dalit intellectuals under the aegis of Digvijay Singh, former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh argued that 'the imagination of the post-Ambedkar dalit movement has been shackled … within the discourse of reservations' (Nigam 2002:1190).[18] Questioning the inadequacy of reservations for Dalit welfare in the context of Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization (LPG) in contemporary India, some of the intellectuals articulated the growing challenges faced by the Dalit community in India's rapidly growing political economy. Their rationale is that:

[18] See a special article by Lakshmi Iyer, Tarun Khanna, Ashutosh Varshney entitled 'Caste and Entrepreneurship in India' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol XLVIII No. 6, Feb 9, 2013, p. 52.

> 'In the new scenario of the state's retreat, when public employment is shrinking, does it make any sense to simply reiterate the old slogan of reservations – even if it is extended to the private sector, as is now being demanded? Will the dalits always have to remain content with the demand for such job reservations, which effectively means that they be employed as proletarians in the enterprises owned by others – in primarily upper-caste concerns or those owned by the state but nevertheless controlled by the upper-castes? Or must they now gird up their loans to play for fundamentally different stakes, making room for them in the new, free-market/global dispensation? Should they not also have their own bourgeoisie, their own millionaires and billionaires?'[19]

In recent times, it is claimed that Dalits' presence in the petty, medium and big entrepreneurial activities is gaining momentum. Over and above even the Planning Commission had invited the Dalit businessmen for a special meeting and discussed with them about the possibilities and opportunities in a growing business climate in the country. In tune to this a new Dalit Indian Chamber of Industry and Commerce has been formed. However, India's post-1991 reforms are thus connected to rising economic inequalities in which Dalits by and large have been affected. There are Dalit millionaires, but how far do they represent the general state of Dalit entrepreneurship in the country? This is indeed an important question. It is a proven fact that the system of caste functions on a scheme of social stratification that enunciates division of labourers. Each caste has been ascribed the duties or profession they should perform. As we moved into the 3rd millennium and boast of economic progress and prosperity in leaps and bounds, have the caste maps of entre-

[19] *Ibid*.

preneurs changed? On the whole, the relationship between caste and entrepreneurship remains the same. For instance,

> 'As late as 2005, SCs and STs were significantly under-represented in the ownership of private enterprises. For instance, SCs owned 9.8% of all enterprises in 2005, well below their 16.4% share in the total population. Such under-representation in the entrepreneurial sphere was widespread across all the large states of India, and was present in both rural and urban settings. Moreover, despite more than a decade of rapid nationwide economic growth, the share of SCs and STs in firm ownership and employment generation over the period 1990-2005 increased only very modestly.'[20]

It is abundantly clear that 'Enterprises owned by members of SCs and STs tend to be smaller, are less likely to employ labour from outside the family, and more likely to belong to the informal or unorganized sector.'[21] By and large, '… our results highlight that SC and ST entrepreneurs face significant obstacles in entering entrepreneurship and in expanding the scale of their enterprises.'[22] What are factors and causes that impede the Dalits more particularly not to enter into the entrepreneurial activities? We need to work on more nuanced hypotheses to understand the reasons that trigger the blockades for the Dalits. One such glaring non-representation of the Dalits in particular and the Trials in general in the enterprise ownership can be seen in Table 3 and Figure 1 below.

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[20] *Ibid*, p. 53.
[21] *Ibid*.
[22] *Ibid*.

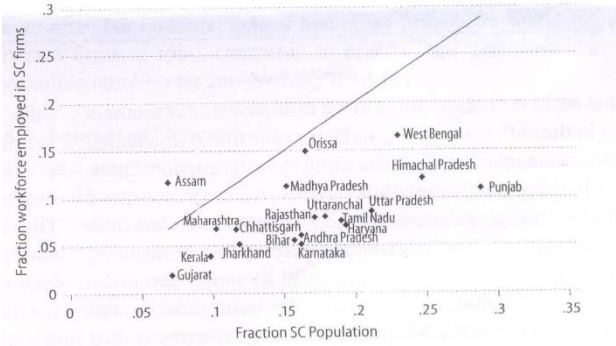
Table 3: Share of enterprises and employment by caste category, 2005

Cast Category of Enterprise Owner					No. of Private Enterprises
	General (%)	OBC[23] (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	
Population Share	33.2	42.7	16.4	7.7	
Rural			18.2	9.7	
Urban			11.7	2.2	
Share of enterprise ownership 2005	42.9	43.5	9.8	3.7	35,951,686
Rural	36.9	46.8	11.5	4.8	21,890,552
Urban	52.3	38.4	7.3	2.0	14,061,134
Share of Employment 2005	48.5	40.0	8.1	3.4	74,754,978
Rural	40.3	45.0	10.1	4.7	34,177,965
Urban	58.2	34.1	5.8	1.9	40,577,013
SC population share in NSS 66th Round was 19.6% and ST population share was 8.2%.					

Source: Lakshmi Iyer, Tarun Khanna, and Ashutosh Varshney, 'Caste and Entrepreneurship India', in Economic and Political Weekly, Vol XLV111, No. 6, p. 54.

[23] Other Backward Class (OBC) is a term used by the Government of India to classify castes which are economically disadvantaged. Note by the Editor.

Figure 1: Employment Share of SC Enterprises



Source: Ibid.

The facts and figures clearly show that the pattern of under-representation in enterprise ownership and employment generation is widespread even within states. Further, enterprise ownership share of the Dalits is less than the population share including the State of Maharashtra. It is a fact that Maharashtra is considered as a bastion of Dalits' assertion in politics because of the contributions made by Ambedkar, Phule, and Dalit movements, and yet under-represented in entrepreneurship as late as 2005. Politics and economics remained mismatched.[24] Another major finding that can be seen is that these differences in entrepreneurship persist across space and time. Caste differences in entrepreneurship continue to remain and have not disappeared. The share of enterprises owned by the Dalits in 2005 was the same as it was in 1990, while the employment shares in Dalit-owned enterprises increased by less than one percentage point. Table 4 below explains the trend:

Table 4: Trends in Enterprise Ownership and Employment Generation by Caste Category (1990-2005, in %)

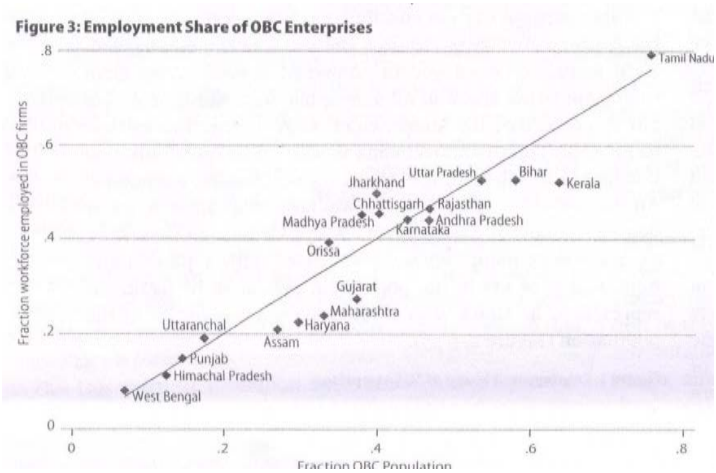
	1990	1998	2005
Population share	75.8	75.8	75.9
Non SC/ST			

[24] *Ibid*, p. 55.

SC	16.6	16.5	16.4
ST	7.6	7.7	7.7
Share of Enterprise ownership Non-SC/ST	87.5	87.3	86.4
SC	9.9	8.5	9.8
ST	2.6	4.2	3.7
Share of Employment Non-SC/ST	90.6	89.4	88.5
SC	7.4	6.9	8.1
ST	2.0	3.8	3.4

Source: Lakshmi Iyer, Tarun Khanna, and Ashutosh Varshney, 'Caste and Entrpreneurship in India' in *Economic and Political Weekly, Vol XLV111 No 6,* February 9, 2013, p. 55.

Figure2: Employment Share of OBC Enterprises



(Source: Ibid.)

Table 4 clearly reflects that starting and expanding the enterprises are difficult propositions for the Dalits in a caste-stratified society. Caste discrimination continues and certainly the so-called 'upper castes' do not want the Dalits to enter into their domains of political economy.

Another possible reason could perhaps be that the Dalits for centuries have been subjugated by the casteist forces that made them to toil manually and never allowed them to become independent. In view of these reasons the Dalits lack needed know-how in entrepreneurship and do not have basic finances to start with.

Undoubtedly, the Dalits have made significant progress at the level of political representation in independent India, but remains considerably underrepresented in the entrepreneurial sphere. The political gains do not correspondingly match with the entrepreneurial prowess. The rise of Dalit millionaires and the formation of Dalit Chamber of Commerce could perhaps be considered as an emerging phenomenon. As of now it has not succeeded and thus appears representative of the broader swathes of the Dalits' presence when compared to their percentage to the country's overall population. Such underrepresentation persists even in the states where progressive policies have been made towards the Dalits. As compared to urban India, the rural India suffers much more due to the rigidity of the system of caste.

The Intrinsic Tendency of Capitalism towards Caste System in India

The data shown overleaf in Table graphically describes the scale as represented by caste category:

Table 5: Firm Scale Characteristics by Caste Category

		Caste Category of Enterprise owner		
		Non-SC/ST	SC	ST
Average size of enterprise	2005	2.13	1.72	1.89
	Rural	1.89	1.63	1.79
	Urban	2.47	1.93	2.27
	1998	2.37	1.88	2.09
	1990	2.59	1.86	1.95
% firms with only one person	2005	56.9	64.7	55.9
	1998	52.1	58.9	48.4
	1990	55.3	60.8	50.1
% firms with institutional finance	2005	3.6	2.6	3.6
	Rural	3.6	2.5	3.3
	Urban	3.7	2.7	4.5
	1998	3.0	2.4	2.9
% unregistered firms	2005	77.4	88.1	87.4
	Rural	86.5	92.7	62.6
	Urban	64.3	76.7	67.8

*(*Source: Ibid, p. 56.)

The above Table clearly reflects that the Dalits are significantly under-represented in the ownership of enterprises and the share of the workforce employed by them. So, there has not been any corresponding change in Dalits' active participation in the economic sphere. In an era of free-market economy propelled by neo-liberalism it is important that more focus will have to be given to the relationship between caste and entrepreneurship. India's emerging political economy very much revolves around class-caste configurations. A chunk of the middle-class numbering 200 million that benefitted from the economic boom happens to be from the dominant class-caste categories. The emergent political economy has not impacted positively all sections of society and benefitted all sections of society. Obviously not all the sections of our society equally benefitted from economic growth, with inequality steadily rising over the past decade and still continuing.

However, there are a few who contend that caste map of entrepreneurship has significantly. Dalit India Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a representative body that reflect the emergent view those talks about Dalit capitalism in the country. Chandra Prasad and Miland Kamble while subscribing to Dalit capitalism state that:

> 'Capitalism is the surest means to fight caste. In 'Dalits' hands capitalism becomes an anti-caste weapon; little wonder that the traditional caste code prohibits Dalits from accumulating wealth. Dalit capitalism is the answer to the regime of discrimination. The manifesto demands promotion of Dalit capitalism through a variety of means-procurement, credit options and partnership.'[25]

The above quotation seems to shed lots of light and hope. But the question is whether Dalit capitalism can become the manifesto to end caste. Dalit capitalism or Dalit Chamber of Commerce tends to mutate Ambedkar as the free-market economist and thus puts him as one of the proponents of capitalism. Some of the Dalit thinkers tend to nuance his economic philosophy. As Ambedkar clarified on innumerable occasions that social would have to precede economic. Basically his social philosophy geared around three words: liberty, equality and fraternity. While articulating these, Ambedkar clearly pointed out,

> 'What should be the policy of the State, how the society should be organized in its social and economic sides are matters, which must be decided by the people themselves according to time and circumstances. It cannot be laid down in the constitution itself, because that is destroying democracy altogether. If you state in the Constitution that the social organization of the state should take a particular form, you are, in

[25] www.isd.in

> my judgment, taking away the liberty of the people to decide what should be the social organization in which they wish to live … I do not see therefore why the constitution should tie down the people to live in a particular form and not leave it to the people themselves to decide it for themselves.'[26]

The foremost objective of Ambedkar was to create a document that embodies the basic features of democracy that contains social responsibility while ameliorating the prevailing socio-economic inequalibria in our society. In a market-propelled society there is an automatic possibility of bringing about class-caste differentiation. For Ambedkar, the roots of democracy found in social relationship and therefore social relationships are the key to democracy. His understanding of political economy is in linking up liberty, equality, and fraternity. The concept of social democracy is linked and related to democracy in the form of government.

Political democracy is dependent on social democracy. It simply means resurgence of liberty, equality, and fraternity as the principles of life. So, democracy is a form and a method for the government to bring about revolutionary changes in the economic and political life. Politics is to be necessarily connected to the social issues. Ambedkar thus gave primacy to the social over political. His interpreted Indian social reality and political economy premised on top-down and hierarchical schema. And this arrangement would have to be changed. For him, the root of this stratification is the system of caste that not only creates division of labour but division of labourers in India. Ambedkar's critic on the caste system has not been aimed at challenging the hegemony of the upper castes, but more so broader connotation of economic growth and development.

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[26] For more in-depth analysis *see Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writing and Speeches,* Vol. 13, p.326.

One of the profound statements that Ambedkar made on private entrepreneurships is that 'Liberty from State control is another name for the dictatorship of the private employer'. Marx has rightly pointed out that in capitalism there is an inherent contradiction that antagonizes the two classes. Ambedkar connected caste and land ownership, caste and employment, and caste and entrepreneurship that go hand in hand. Ambedkar was totally against capitalism. In recent times there are a few who argue that Dalits could even become Brahmins and end the problems of casteism. By citing sanskritization and Dalit Chamber of Commerce they vociferously argue that the system of caste is gradually dissipating. For example, some Dalit communities literally believed MN Srivinas theory of upward mobility in caste system and thus imitated the Brahmins, but did not work in the real world. The proponents may sound preposterous, but these are the arguments posed by a section of Dalits who have been propagating Dalilt capitalism. Whatever may be our claims ought to concur with the facts. The Tables 6 and 7 amply reflects the reality:

Table 6: Percentage of Firms in Different Industrial Categories by Caste of Owner

	Cast Category of Enterprise Owner								
	2005			1998			1990		
	No-SC/ST	SC	ST	No-SC/ST	SC	ST	Non-SC/ST	SC	ST
Agricultural Activities	15.7	17.2	27.0	12.3	12.9	25.6	9.2	14.1	27.6
Manufacturing	21.0	23.9	24.8	19.1	25.0	25.6	20.0	29.0	28.1
Retail trade	38.3	35.5	30.8	39.0	31.7	27.8	33.1	23.0	17.7
Restaurants and hotel	3.8	2.6	2.8	4.4	2.7	2.6	8.5	3.7	6.1
Transport, storage, ware-housing, com-muncations	5.2	7.4	4.5	3.7	5.8	.7	3.0	5.0	2.4
Finance, insur-ance, real estate and business ser-vices	3.1	2.0	1.8	2.2	1.2	1.3	1.4	0.5	0.3
Community, social and personal ser-vices	4.3	3.1	2.8	15.6	17.2	10.6	17.1	16.3	7.6
Other	4.6	57	3.5	1.1	1.8	1.5	5.4	6.9	9.3

'Other' includes mining and quarrying, electicity, gas and water and construc-tion

Source: Ibid, p. 57.

Table 7: Determinants of SC/ST Shares in Enterprise Ownership and Employment

	Fraction of Enterprises Owned by SCs	Fraction of Workforce Employed in SC-Owned Enterprises	Fraction of Enterprises Owned by STs	Fraction of Workforce Employed in ST-Owned Enterprises
Panel A: Relationship with state level characteristics of SCs/STs				
Population SC (ST) share	0.581*** (0.162)	0.58** (0.155)	0.401*** (0.106)	0.413*** (0.121)
% SC (ST) urban	-0.126	-0.155	-0.049	0.049
% SC (ST) engaged	-0.056	-0.008	-0.00	-0.011
% of landless among SC (ST) farmers	-0.052	-0.050	0.009	0.014
R-squared	0.61	0.47	0.74	0.70
Observations	18	18	16	16
Panel B: District level relationship				
Population SC (ST) share	0.398*** (0.017)	0.46*** (0.016)	0.519*** (0.054)	0.475*** (0.005)
Fraction urban	-0.018 (0.017)	-0.030* (0.016)	0.003 (0.021)	-0.003 (0.022)
Fraction literate in farming	-0.009 (0.033)	-0.030 (0.022)	0.115** (0.055)	0.100* (0.058)
Fraction engaged among farmers	-0.034 (0.024)	-0.028 (0.022)	0.009 (0.027)	0.004 (0.029)

Fraction of landless	-0.001 (0.017)	-0.007 (0.017)	-0.010 (0.022)	-0.014 (0.023)
R-squared	0.68	0.63	0.75	0.70
Observations	516	516	481	481

Standard errors in parentheses, corrected for heteroskedasticity. ***, ** and * indicate significance at 1%, 5% and 10% respectively. District-level regressions include state fixed effects; regressions for ST limited to states and districts with non-zero ST population

Source: Ibid, p. 58.

If we look at the profile of the Dalits, 81 per cent of them predominantly live in rural areas linked with land as landless labourers and marginal farmers. The rest, i.e. a small 19 per cent, live in urban areas out of which a large part live in the slums and work as labourers in informal sectors. Out of which a negligible section who are the beneficiaries of neo-liberalism call themselves as urban Dalit elites talk in favour of capitalism. We live in a world of survival of fittest wherein the laws of the jungle roost. Capitalism may come out with a slogan of win-win situation, but the above Tables 6 and 7 reflect that those who belong to the dominant categories have benefitted and a tiny fraction of the Dalits seem to have benefitted.

Generalizing the whole community based on a tiny fraction cannot become a representative case for the total population. Dalits by and large are pushed and pulled by the forces of global capitalism via LPG. Generalizing a population that number around 200 million based on less than 1 per cent is nothing but sheer superficiality leading to methodological fallacy. Further as shown in the Tables, the state of Dalits who are both better-off and worse-off in relation to the non-Dalit population shows clearly that majority of the Dalits are worse-off in relation to non-Dalit population. By showing a tiny per cent of the Dalits which comprises of less than one hundred-odd individuals out of 200 million is nothing but a

little drop in corporate ocean. Using the data with escalated numbers in order to prove that globalization helped many Dalits in their entrepreneurial initiatives by employing a flawed method superficially over the entire community overlooking its woes and ownerships leads to fallacy of the facts and thus distorts the reality on the ground.

Ambedkar was crystal clear in his economic tenet and thought process. With regard to monetarism and free-market economics, he had comprehensively articulated and publicly professed his opposition to capitalism. If we recall his talking while addressing Railway workers in Manmad in 1933 he had declared that untouchables had two enemies: (1) Brahmanism and (2) Capitalism. Ambedkar followed the Fabian line of peaceful transition to socialism, but certainly abhorred capitalism. When it comes to the political economy of caste system and his analysis of economic system he based everything around caste system. For instance,

> 'Ambedkar examined in greater detail economic principles underlining the caste system and the role of social and religious ideologies in the origin, perpetuation and sustenance of the caste system and captured the nature of interaction between economic structure involved in the caste system and the role of Hindu social/religious philosophy in mutually enforcing each other. He also analysed the economic consequence of the caste system on economic development and income distribution (or equity).'[27]

Caste acts as a social capital in the Indian society. Each caste wants to help its caste groupings. The above Tables clearly point that caste and entrepreneurship goes hand in hand. Many may say that capital does not

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[27] Sukhadeo Thorat, 'Economic system, Development, and Economic Planning' in *ambedkar in retrospect: Essays on Economics, Politics & Society*, Sukhadeo Thorat and Aryama (eds.), New Delhi: RAWAT PUBLICATIONS, 2007, p. 39.

have race, religion, creed or even country. But in India it is not the same. Capital has its intrinsic tendency towards caste and so capitalism and casteism go together.

> 'Ambedkar's economic characterization of caste system is based on three interrelated elements, namely, fixed and hereditary occupation and economic rights by birth, unequal and hierarchical (or graded) division of these economic/property rights across caste groups and provision of strong instrument of social and economic ostracism to sustain the rigid system with ideological support from the Hindu religion.'[28]

The proponents who talk about globalization via neo-liberalism may have been benefitted by it, but fail to critically analyse the modes capitalism employed to marginalize the Dalits further.

Some do believe that in an age of globalization caste would eventually disappear. On the contrary it is growing stronger and stronger. Its intensity and pervasiveness in all spheres of our society is being glaringly seen and witnessed. As Ambedkar rightly observed that Brahminism vis-à-vis casteism and capitalism are antagonistic to Dalits' freedom, human dignity, and basic rights. They are basically premised on

> 'Exclusion and discrimination in occupation, and unemployment of labour, is thus internal to the system and necessary outcome of its economics … Labour market exclusion would, therefore, manifest itself in exclusion in employment from another caste's occupation. Immobility of labour, and capital, under caste-wise division, essentially means occupationally segmented …'[29]

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[28] *Ibid*, p. 40.
[29] *Ibid*, 41.

Global capitalism thus augments competition, demands professionalism, and prefers skilled labour. In tune to its dictates the so-called 'upper castes' are endowed with all these privileges. While on the other, the caste system continues to restrict the Dalits from individual choice and initiative, occupation and social status because all these have thus been associated with occupation, and dignity of labour. Basically 'The economic pursuit in caste system, as it exists, is not based on individual choice, sentiment and preference, as it assigns tasks to an individual in advance, and the individuals are selected not on the basis of training or capacities, but social status.'[30] Capitalism and casteism emphasizes on efficiency, Ambedkar responds candidly, 'What efficiency can there be in a system under which neither men's heart nor their minds are in their work.'[31] As the data clearly proves that the system of caste adversely affects the Dalits in terms of their mobility of labour from one occupation to other employment. For the so-called 'high castes', according to the occupation, it is clearly defined and thus determined. While for the Dalits, several restrictions imposed on them compel them to remain involuntarily unemployed.

Capitalism and casteism fail to meet with the equity and equality respectively. Ambedkar elaborates on this in the following ways:

> '… since the economic rewards under the caste system are determined by job assignment, the result is as income distribution generally skewed along caste line. In fact, … is based on the principle of hierarchy of economic rights and hence economic inequality … direct outcome of its governing principles, the core and centre of which is the doctrine of economic inequality and exploitation. In fact, the legitimate dislike for the caste system is due to the fact that the principle of equali-

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] *Ibid*, p. 42.

> ty is completely alien to its spirit. Ambedkar argue that the manner in which the customary rules and norming regards right to property … involved nothing, but inequality and immense exploitation of castes located at the bottom of caste hierarchy.'[32]

Ambedkar synthesized economic ideas by weaving in and through a number of facets such as the role of the state, religion, planning, and political economy of the caste system. More importantly, he categorically said that social development precedes economic development. Ambedkar right from the 1920 till the mid-1950s grappled with economic issues and thus systematically developed. Many tend to think that capital does not have race, religion, creed, country, or even caste and thus acts as social capital. But in reality, it is not true in our society. Capital sans caste is an impossible proposition. One of his penetrating and profound ideas is expressed in the following:

> '… For the evils are not due to machinery and modern civilization. They are due to wrong social organization which has made private property and pursuit of personal gain matters of absolute sanctity. If machinery and civilization have not benefitted everybody the remedy is not to condemn machinery and civilization but to alter the organization of society so that the benefits will not be usurped by the few but will accrue to all.'[33]

Market-ushered capitalism and its underpinning doctrine of neoliberalism intrinsically premised on privatization, liberalization, and globalization. It can never bring about equality and equitable distribution of resources. It is this social organization of capitalism based on

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[32] *Ibid*, p. 43.
[33] *Ibid*, p. 44.

absolute sanctity of maximization of profits and pursuit of personal acquisitiveness with its detrimental consequences for the Dalits prompted Ambedkar to look for an alternative economic and social system. Hence, the basic tenets of capitalism and casteism go hand in hand. In view of the insatiable greed and individualism, he favoured a particular type of socialistic economic framework. His came to a definitive conclusion that an alternative economic framework alone could help the Dalits because capitalism per se in any form would not liberate Dalits' emancipation. Because of these reasons Ambedkar favoured public sector undertakings and thus advocated the public sector initiatives to be and become efficient.

Conclusion

Populist debate currently advocates that capitalism is the only means to eradicate caste. Since this seems to be attractive, it is gathering momentum. But this debate on capitalism and caste misconceives the trend. This disconnect has consequences for how we understand history, political economy, and how we view capitalism and casteism. Their explanations and how they view capitalism fail to situate and thus mislead the conjunctures of history. Capitalism as an economic system based on private ownership of the means of production and capital goods and the production of goods and services for profit in a market economy. Capitalism characterizes the process of capital accumulation, competitive markets, and wage labour. The degrees of competition keep mounting, cut-threat, and eliminating one another. Therefore, capitalism cannot moderate on its own, because it is based on the survival of the fittest vis-à-vis laws of the jungle.

As we are aware of the fact that different economic perspectives that underpins capitalism emphasize specific elements of capitalism in their preferred definition, but the core essence and values of capitalism does

not change. While on the other, the critics', political economists, including Ambedkar primarily base their critique on private property, power relations, and the role of capital accumulation. Basically, capitalism is a social system based on the principle of maximization of its returns by ruthlessly employing any means to justify its ends. As Malcolm X, an afro-American organic intellectual and a revolutionary who was against capitalism and racist politics of the white political establishment of the United States from the 60s to 80s forthrightly said, 'You show me a capitalist, and I will show you a blood sucker.' In candid ways he weaved-in racism, capitalism, and Christianity and thus analysed the gravity of the sufferings afro-Americans, who were discriminated on the basis of their colour.

Ambedkar used a kind of 'dual systems' approach in which Brahmanism and Capitalism were seen as parallel systems of exploitation. So, we need to carefully look at the symbiotic relationship between casteism and capitalism. Capitalism in order to survive in our society covertly and overtly aligned with casteism. Big talk on capitalism has the potency to destroy caste order is nothing but a ploy of the casteist forces and a negligible number of millionaire pseudo-dalits. In line with this argument, the Indian Express published a transcription of the interview its Editor-in-Chief, Shekar Gupta had with Milend Kamble, founder of DICCI and Chandra Bhan Prasad, its mentor (Walk the Talk, IE, June 11, 2013), came out with a headline that capitalism is changing caste faster than any human being. And so, the Dalits should look at capitalism as a crusader against caste. On the other, capitalism (LPG) and casteism are intrinsically insulated with each other. This is why I call this as symbiotic. It is a sheer myth that capitalism can be and ever become an instrument or means or system to annihilate caste.

For Ambedkar, emancipation of Dalits never included capitalism. He wanted their emancipation in the broadest possible terms. Pseudo Dalit

intellectuals and Dalit Chamber of Commerce in India want India and others to believe that Ambedkar would have supported by joining the mainstream capitalism. For the protagonists of capitalism and pseudo Dalit claim that capitalism would eventually destroy caste order by creating machines and use of technology in all the occupation. This eventually would weaken the system of caste. In the process, there would be a radical transition in the rural economy and as a consequence more cities and towns would be created that eventually weakens the caste system and thus gradually caste dissipates.

These are the myths that the adherents of capitalism keep floating. Perhaps capitalism has elevated a few Dalits to the 'top of 500 of Forbes list' and the rest (majority) still live in wadas, cherries, and slums without any social and economic progress. One classic example is despite having the tag of an international city and silicon valley, Bangalore has the highest number of manual scavengers in the state and India continues lead the comity of nations with the heinous practice in a world of post-modern, capitalistic globalizing world.

We should know the background against which this practice continue in spite of passing laws and legislative enactments that the state governments should ban manual scavenging and rehabilitate those Dalits who are forced to get involved for centuries as prescribed by the system of caste. The Chief Minister of Karnataka Siddarmaiah who heads the SC/ST welfare did not refute the practice of scavenging as the welfare minister H. Anjaneya said his department conducted a survey and found the city has 202 manual scavengers, followed by Kolar Gold Fields which has 87.[34] It is abundantly clear that capitalism as a social and economic system shall never become an instrument to destroy caste; rather it further reinforces caste and its paraphernalia. In any system a few may be benefitted, but certainly at the cost of many. Hence, the true stories of the majority and their living standards should be the measure

[34] *Times of India*, 8th September, 2013, p. 3.

or criterion, and not certainly a few as samples, because they do constitute as the representatives of the majority, and so, facts will have to match with claims.

SAME LAW, DIFFERENT YARDSTICKS!

One for the Rich, Another for the Rest—Justice Splintered and Fairness Paralyzed

Barely 48 hours after the actor Salman Khan was found guilty at a sessions court of culpable homicide and other charges for driving his vehicle into a group of homeless men sleeping on the pavements of Mumbai in 2002, the Bollywood superstar's five-year prison sentence was suspended on Friday, the 8th of May, 2015, pending an appeal. For Salman the change of events in the legal battle has suddenly turned to his advantage and in his favour. Undoubtedly it is indeed a great relief for Salman who should have been behind the bars if the verdict was otherwise.

The print and visual media extensively covered Salman's case with debates and analysis extensively for three days. Salman's fans thronged near his Bandra house and showed their affection and unflinching support to their hero. In fact, Salman's fans conveyed to him that they stand by him at the time of crisis. They came from distant places such as Delhi, UP and other states just to see him and be part of him at the time of grave crisis that afflicted their hero. Long hours of wait and shifting drama of Salman's case did not deter their spirit. Sudden change of events clearly proves that Salman Khan is adored and loved by many across the country. He is undoubtedly a super-star and No. 1 in the Bollywood film industry. By virtue of these qualifications he automatically belongs to super-rich hub.

Salman Khan is a celebrity, an icon and a dream for many. He has the access to get acquainted to the people in high place. Further, if he wanted, he could create conditions which would lead him to get to know those he would like to become acquainted with. People of different segments and sectors know him because he is No. 1 in Bollywood. Undoubtedly the film media has a lot to do with the masses particularly creating awareness and entertainment. Salman is indeed a household name and a logo of India. The entire country witnessed the episode during the last three days. Millions of people were glued to their TV with rapt attention and intense anxiety over the fluctuating scenarios and see-saw battle between the prosecution and the defence.

The change of events in legal argumentation in this case should be located, observed and analysed carefully. The Bombay high court admitted his appeal against the conviction for culpable homicide not amounting to murder for killing one person and injuring four in 2002 when his Land Cruiser crashed into a bakery. The court suspended his sentence of five-year rigorous imprisonment and released him on bail on a bond of Rs. 30,000. Observing that the application of the charge of culpable homicide requires serious consideration, Justice Abhay Thipsay asked public prosecutor Sandeep Shine, 'Why will this … not be a case of only rash driving.' The Judge said, 'even on the basis that there is sufficient evidence to indicate the applicant was driving the vehicle in question, at the material time, certainly, a number of arguable point have been raised, which need serious consideration … whether the offence allegedly committed … would amount to an offence punishable under Section 304 ii of IPC and not merely Section 3-4A focusing on death by negligence…'

Salman's battery of legal experts came well prepared with clear and clever strategies. They attacked the 240-pages guilty verdict, delivered by sessions Judge D.W. Deshpande, with full force on the 8th May, 15 (Friday). They questioned the ways in which the prosecution highlighted

or downplayed beyond belief. The most crucial among them were Ravindra Patil the late police constable and body guard of the actor then who lodged the first information report (FIR) against Salman and his driver Ashok Singh, who even now works for the Salman's family. Salman's counsel Amit Desai appeared as he played out the early stages of the case to the crucial depositions, which the court erroneously believed as valid evidence, he said, 'That there was a fourth person, a driver in the car was known to the police from the start,' said Desai. This person was DW-1 (defence witness), Ashok Singh.

According to the law, a defence witness can only be called during trial after the turn of the prosecution witnesses are over. Desai questioned the 'unnecessary criticism' over the late introduction of the driver, and the Judge D.W. Deshpande seemed to question why had the defence not asked any witness about Singh's identity at the site and hence he disbelieved Singh's presence or deposition. 'Interrogated him but did not record his statement. How would victims and other bystanders identify the driver if they didn't know he was the driver? It is not a suggestion one could make.' Desai also attacked the conduct of investigating officer, who he said had met him few days later in October 1, 2002, interrogated him, but not recorded his statement. He has much to answer' said Desai, questioning why the police or prosecution team later chose not to throw light on the fourth person in the car.

He added, 'Patil has admitted that he gave an interview to a tabloid the day after the incident where he said there was a driver when they left Salman's house. He had identified the driver as Altaf, he was examined in court and proved the interview as the interviewee, but yet the court had discarded the interview, said Desai, on erroneous grounds that the reporter was not examined, even though such non-examination did not affect the admissibility of the interview. Desai also said many leading questions were asked to Patil by the public prosecutor which was al-

lowed by the session's judge.' Further, 'The cross of Patil by Salman's advocate Shrikant Shivade in the trial court had demolished his entire deposition, yet it was accepted by the judge,' said Desai. Desai added that the fundamental principle of prosecution proving its case beyond all reasonable doubts was not complied with and it appeared that the judge relied on the absence of a suggestion to prove a prosecution case, at each stage.

After the suspension of the jail sentence, bail and appeal for Salman, he was reprieved by members of his family, the film fraternity and many of his fans. Salman Khan's legal luminaries lauded Justice of being fair and treating the actor as any other convict pursuing his statutory rights of appeal. This is how they expressed: 'The HC judge by granting him bail till his appeal is heard, has, in fact, treated Salman as a common man. It would have been to the contrary had he been sent to jail. Salman's right to appeal to the higher court cannot be obliterated merely because he happens to be a celebrity and the general public sentiment of 'seeing the mighty fall', needs to be satisfied,' said lawyer Swapnil Kothari.

Justice Thipsay, while hearing the appeal and bail plea, said 'As a rule if an appeal is admitted and the sentence is not more than seven years, it can be suspended. We require reasons to depart from the procedure. We can't pass order against the accused just because the prosecution is asking.' Substantiating further, 'Most common law countries following the adversarial system of criminal jurisprudence are stickers for procedure and India is not different. In fact, in the United States, in most of its states, is known to give bail to convicts on their own cognizance,' said Kothari. Advocate Vibhav Krishna pointed out that even in the Navjot Singh Sidhu vs State of Punjab road rage case, the SC had suspended the sentence. Suspension of sentence is not improper, says the SC, under Section 389 (1) of Criminal Procedure Code provided that the facts of the case so warrant.

'However, suspension of sentence is not equivalent to suspension of conviction. While suspension of sentence permits liberty of physical movement to our appellant subject to such conditions as the appellate court may impose, suspension of order of conviction removes the constraints arising out of the order of conviction. It is only in rare cases and in exceptional and compelling circumstances that the court may be recording convincing reasons, suspend an order of conviction,' said Krishna. However, what happened a few days ago, in the case of Salman Khan, for many was beyond their comprehension and understanding.

Actually, when his sentence was suspended by the Bombay high court pending appeal, what happened in the media and amongst cross sections of our country was one of mixed feelings. The verdict that swung from one court to another with all sorts of possibilities and permutations on those three days finally culminated that gave sigh of relief for some and for others the sentence sent shock waves. Nonetheless, there are many pointers and cues one could draw from Salman's case. For instance, the change of events that we witnessed in Salmam Khan's legal battle from Wednesday through Friday (6-8th May, 15) opens up some serious aspects that warrants us to introspect and act on. To start with, the judicial process was set into motion and activated in such ways that the lower court's sentence was suspended and subsequently the high court extended bail for Salman Khan. All these happened so swiftly. It is fantastic to observe that Salman Khan was given the reprieve that he badly wanted.

In another classic case, AIADMK chief and former chief minister of Tamil, Nadu J. Jayalitha, has been acquitted of corruption and conspiracy charges in the Rs. 66.6 crore disproportionate assets case and the court also set free off a 19-year-old litigation. The Karnataka High in its verdict on the 11th May, 2015, not only acquitted but also rebutted every single charge for which she had been convicted by a special court on

September 27, 2014. The order, passed in less than two minutes, paved way for J. Jayalalitha to return as CM seven months after she had to quit.

While delivering the judgment, Justice C.R. Kumaraswamy said in his 919 page judgment on the 11th May, 2015, overturning the verdict of special court judge John Michael D'Cunha, that 'The trial court has failed to appreciate the evidence in a proper perspective. The immovable properties were acquired by borrowing huge loans, it is difficult to infer than the properties were acquired by means of ill-gotten money. Taking into consideration that overall circumstances and materials placed on record, in my view, the judgment by the trial court suffers from infirmity and it is not sustainable in law.' People across the country and political parties waited for a thoroughly worked out, heavily worded and prudently loaded verdict. But it was an anti-climax of all the expectations.

Despite the build-up over three days for the judgment by the appeals filed by Jayalilatha and three others in a disproportionate assets case, the hearing was over in two minutes. Justice CR Kumaraswamy walked in with a minute to go for the appointed hour of 11 AM, and straightaway read the order page of his voluminous 919-page verdict, acquitting all the four accused. Basically the judge used in his judgment a mathematical formula. The high court in its finding has recorded that the total income of Jayalilatha, her firms and companies is Rs. 347,665,654 and that she possessed DA amount of Rs. 28,236,812 while declining to accept the case of the prosecution that she had DA of Rs. 66.65 crore or the DA amount of Rs. 53.6 crore as per the special court.

So, 'the prosecution has mixed up assets of accused, firms and companies and also added the cost of construction Rs. 277,988,945 and marriage expenses at Rs. 64,504,222 and valued the assets at Rs. 664,473,573.' Justice Kumaraswamy set aside the order of the trial court relating to confiscation of the properties both movable and immovable. Everything boils down in this rubric wedding cost construction expenses

= prosecution mix-up. By and large, the judge justified that the properties both the movable and immovable had not exceed the tax frame and other laws stipulated by the land. Even as the judge was leaving the court, a counsel for the quartet screamed, 'It's an honorable acquittal'. For a brief moment, if not restricted, the court room would have become a room of celebration breaking away all the decency and decorum.

In pockets of Tamil Nadu there was celebration amongst the AIADMK leaders, cadres and Jayalailatha's supporters on the Karnataka high court acquittal, but the long term political ramifications of the verdict on the political future of Tamil Nadu merit deeper attention. With Jayalalitha's returning to the formal centre stage of Tamil Nadu politics and likelihood of to take over once again as the chief minister, the bargaining capacity of the state and the centre in both national and regional politics will gain momentum. At the same time there is also a possibility that she might go for a snap poll vindicating the court's acquittal taking on the political opposition in the state with greater vigor. However, it should be noted that former Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalitha may have won the battle, but not the war. The Government of Karnataka is seriously contemplating challenging her acquittal before the Supreme Court. Soon after the verdict, the government went into a huddle to decide the future course of action.

A senior minister in Karnataka said 'We decided to hold a series of consultations before taking a final decision. But as of now, we are keen to file the appeal.' Karnataka Advocate General Ravi Varma Kumar told TOI that 'Karnataka has the right to file an appeal in the Supreme Court. We are looking into it, but before that, all of us want to read the complete order. Karnataka along can file appeal as Karnataka is the sole prosecuting agency in this case,' he added. He also said that he has been going through the judgment copy and would give his opinion if the government wants it. The opinion of special public prosecutor BV Acharaya

holds significance since he has to submit the recommendation to him, he added. 'Based on his recommendation, I will submit my opinion to the government in consultation with legal experts. Ultimately, the Karnataka government will take a final call' AG Kumar added.

While superstar Salman Khan secured bail in barely three hours after his conviction in a hit-and-run case and J. Jayalalitha was acquitted in multi-crore financial embezzlement in less than two minutes, for majority of ordinary people under trials in the country it takes a minimum of three months to get bail. According to government data, over 60% of under trials spend more than three months in Jail before they can secure release. The prolonged incarceration is due to the inability of these under trials to get bail. Close to 1.75 lakh of 2.78 lakh people facing criminal charges are unable to secure bail before three months. Over 40% (1.1 lakh) of under trials take more than six months to secure bail, while over 30,000 spend more than two years and over 64,000 spend more than one year in jail before they are released on bail.

The figures point to deeper malaise in the criminal justice system as bail, pending conviction, is considered a right under Indian law. Even in cases of heinous nature, an under trial is entitled to bail, if not immediately, then after the charge sheet in cases under Indian Penal Code and up to six months under special laws such as Unlawful Activities Prevention Act and Maharashtra Control of Organized Crime Act. The fact that over 60% are incarcerated even after charge sheets are filed point to the fact that only those with deep pockets to hire talented lawyers and fight long drawn-out legal battles are able to secure bail for themselves. Colin Gonsalves of Human Rights Law Network said though bail was a right of every individual, it was mainly available to the rich.

The following data from The Times of India amply demonstrates the gravity and intensity of our system:

Table 1: Incarceration Time during Pending Trail Period

State	Up to 2 yrs	2 to 3 yrs	3 to 5 yrs	5 yrs and above	Total
Uttar Pradesh	1264	257	72	177	1,770
A & N Islands	548	0	0	0	548
Punjab	164	3	1	7	175
Maharashtra	65	12	21	11	109
West Bangal	84	2	0	0	86
Gujarat	43	1	0	16	60
Kerala	57	2	0	1	60
Delhi	34	1	1	0	36
Madhya Pradesh	35	0	0	0	35
Karnataka	17	3	0	3	23
Harayana	9	8	0	4	21
Jharkhand	0	6	1	12	19
Andhra Pra-desh	16	0	0	0	16
Chhattisgarh	14	0	0	5	14
Bihar	5	3	0	5	13
Himachal Pradesh	11	0	2	0	13
Odisha	13	0	0	0	13
Rajasthan	7	1	1	4	13
Others	18	1	1	0	20

(STATISTICS, 'Paying for Not Paying', *Times of India*, 11th May 11, 2015)

There are about 250,000 under trials languishing in jail in different parts of the country. Most of them have not been heard and properly sentenced. There are many who are falsely implicated; some on petty offences and others for varied offences. Incidentally, there are some individuals under trial whose jail time could exceed the length of their convicted sentence. The under trials spend years after years which sometimes exceeds their major part of life in jail. Since our jails have no basic amenities and short of cells the under trials sleep on floor. The scenario is so appalling and pathetic. The plight of the under trials has been well-articulated and publicized in the print and visual media from time to time.

This is the saga of the under trials and the conditions of our prisons. Those in power and authority keep talking about reforming the judicial system, especially speedy delivery of justice, but hardly much has been done thus far. In Salman's case we witnessed the speed at which judicial process worked almost like a super-fast bullet train. Everything went meticulously and precisely in tune to the urgency and expectation of the defence. Why shouldn't the same judicial system work in that way, when it comes to other cases? People, especially the commoners still have utmost faith in our independent Judiciary, which is considered as one of the major pillars of our democracy. It is unfortunate that there has been huge backlog of cases and, as previously mentioned, thousands and lakhs of people are languishing in jails. Why shouldn't the judiciary act the way with which it functioned in Salman's case.

Many tend to adopt the opinion that our judiciary has two yardsticks, vis-à-vis one for the rich and the powerful and the other for the poor and hapless! The poor who have been the victims of oppression, exploitation and other discriminatory practices approach the courts with huge hopes that they would be dispensed with justice and fairness. Increasingly people have come to realize and tend to ask: Is there any justice in this country? Is our judicial system just a farce? People in order get justice

and fairness especially the disenfranchised and dispossessed spend their time and hard-earned money running to courts for years. Very few somehow sustain the case, but many for want of money fail to pursue their cases. It is said that approximately 2 out 3 imprisoned as under trials are yet to be convicted. Who has to convict then? When will they be convicted? These are the questions that loom at large?

Can the justice system work little speedier and faster, so that the ordinary Aam Admi would benefit and the under trials know their status. If the justice system can work so efficiently and effective for some like Salman Khan and other wealthy individuals, why can't it work for the less well-off? The justice system will have to be overhauled, and the entire system needs thorough overhauling. The under trials that runs to millions are languishing longer than the sentences than the actual period if they were pronounced. They have no money, and so, fail to pursue and sustain their cases. In Salman's case many tend to say and raise serious questions that Salman Khan has money, influence and other paraphernalia, and so he hired the top solid legal minds and thus taken advantage of the available provisions within the legal system and got what he wanted at the fastest time possible and to his advantage.

When the commoners ask those who belong to the super-class and celebrities retort back: What is your problem? Then they say so what? To those who wear tinted glass should know that 'All are equal before the law of the land'. But their Indian is different, an India that runs super-fast and super-fixes as they want. They know and yet hide behind the tinted glasses and extract everything and use all the institutions of governance to their advantage. The law is of course the same for all and should not have different yard sticks. But, in reality, for those who are rich and powerful with tinted glasses view it that in our country there is 'Only one law and the same law operate with only one yard stick.'

With regard to Salman Khan and others wearing tinted glasses, they know how the system works and they work it to their advantage. It was so stupid that on the last day prior to Bombay High Court went for summer vacation all the legal processes and formalities including surrendering and bail releasing have been completed. The court worked for an additional hour or so and was kept open because of Salman Khan on the 8th of May, 2015. Would this happen to any ordinary citizen of this country? Not to the other citizens of India, but to tinted glass citizens of the country. Is it possible and can we ever imagine? One India treats the rich and the powerful in this and the rest of India's citizens are treated differently. So, it amounts to this: 'same Law, different yardsticks in different cases.' One set of laws for the super-rich and another for the hapless.

It clearly reflects that our society is unequal and lopsided having one rule with multiple yardsticks. The law may be the same, but the ways with which they are interpreted, merited and measured are different. Undoubtedly the yardsticks that are employed to measure the merit and judge the cases are different and through different yard sticks. When they say case by case it differs are the yardsticks that matter. They hire the services of the best legal brains in jurisprudence that can twist and turn the cases to their advantage. In Salman's case the team that worked consisted of top councils who charge on hourly basis. They came, argued and conquered and set the process in motion. All these happened like a fairy tale. They have sufficient time now to prepare and argue and move on. It is the money that counts. Does justice work across the board? It does not work in that way.

In Saman's case, it deals with a hit and run incident with one dead and four injured. It took 13 years implying 'justice delayed justice denied'. There were 48 bales which means there are serious loopholes and flaws in the system. Could Aam Aadmi get such raw deals? Would the courts in India take up Aam Aadmi cases? It clearly proves that the rest

of India is being treated differently. Law of the land is the same, but different yardsticks are being used in different cases. It clearly rips open one glaring deficiency: There are solid grey areas. In simple terms it is about injustices in the system. The system is unjust, and, so it is obvious and natural that there are inherent injustices. This is India. The things we witness day in and day out are indeed mindboggling, harsh, and ugly reality.

The factors that figure in various debates and perceptions amidst the competing and conflicting notions are the idea of justice and the role of punishment. The societal idea of justice defines itself broadly as being rooted in a context-sensitive view of the world, and thus tries to balance diverse variables at play. Basically it takes into consideration the following: who commits the crime, under what conditions and how they are committed? It is said that the punishment is given in tune to the offence committed. But the questions that arise, is the punishment accorded calibrated? What matters the most is whether the effect that the punishment creates consequential impact on the existing order? The verdict as far as possible should not disrupt the overall structure of our existing social reality.

We have seen this mental model that came out so glaringly in debates about Salman Khan and J. Jayalalitha. Their offences are acknowledged, extenuating reasons and evidence are presented—so and so are good and have a lot of good work for the people, so on and so forth. Both of them have got away. The point that is argued upon is not that we should get into legal framework that asks for legal pre-requisites or materials, so on and so forth, but makes us to think of justice within a broader framework and in-depth ways. The opposing view comes from imagining justice as an absolute idea that is blind to what might be involved. Whether Salman Khan or J. Jayalalitha is not the matter of contention or have no consequence here; whether he/she got away, but the

only thing that matters is if it can be proved that he/she is guilty in which case the law is enjoined to take its course.

IN THE WAKE OF MODI'S UTTERANCES

Unmasking Democracy, Governance and Development

Introduction

Human histories are filled with diverse contours. Even now some of the cruel and ruthless governance surfaces and prevails as against the will of the people. We see some shades of this in different parts of the world. In each instance citizens are treated by a regime as objects of their benevolence and dictates. The governing bodies have failed to recognize the power of the people and conclude that the people are not the subjects and makers of history and their own destiny, but their objects of charity. Through different forms and modus operandi, the anti-people regimes/governments changed. The will of the people has also prevailed supreme and absolute. The Lok Sabha 2014 shall certainly show to those who consider the masses as mere vote banks and sheer objects of benevolence.

Notionally, democracy sounds good, but practically speaking, there must be some mechanism available for the people to participate in the decision-making and policy-evolving processes. They should have the right to call back their representatives who do not perform. The government technically speaking remains in power only as long as the people wish it to be in power. The Constitution provides this guarantee.

The Constitution lays down the basic structure of the political system of our country for both those who govern and governed. It has three main organs, the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary, which defines their powers, demarcates their responsibilities and regulates their relationship with each other and with the people. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution which opens with the following words:

> 'We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens:
>
> - Justice (social, economic and political);
> - Liberty of thought, expressions, belief, faith and worship;
> - Equality of status and opportunity, and to promote among them all
> - fraternity assuring dignity of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation … 1949, do hereby, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution.'

The opening words of the Preamble are 'we, the people of India,' which simply means that the Constitution has been declared in the name of the people who are the main constitutive subjects and thus the ultimate source of all power that vests with the people. For a democracy to work or function effectively, it is the people who are the fulcrum, the base, the centre, the means and the ends. Therefore, democracy is the base of governance.

'Governance' as a concept is a fairly new one. Since the last decade of the twentieth century, many have started to use the term at the expense of the concept of government. As an alternative to government this concept is being used and remains as an exclusive prerogative of technocratic and elite discourse, and has yet to find its space in the

popular vocabulary of politics. Over and above, this concept needs more clarity as Modi is uttering quite often. In the context of the Lok Sabha polls and as against the background of Modi's usage of the term i.e., 'governance' we need to unpack it. 'Governance' is a 'post-political' connotation for effective regulation, accountability, transparency and efficiency as against corrupt, inefficient, and unaccountable governments, bureaucracies and quasi-governmental agencies. It goes beyond the conventional forms of democratic government or posits newer guidelines to stereotype features of democracy. Does Modi mean all these facets as part of 'governance'?

Conventional Understanding of Governance and Modi's Post-political 'not Government but Governance'

In the wake of Modi utterances, the concept of governance assumes greater importance. For example,

> 'Conventionally, governance encompasses the manner in which the state and its various institutions negotiate and mediate with people, markets and civil society, through laws, policies, regulation and finance. Today governance is overarching with many dimensions including institutional and political manifestations. Governance refers to decision-making and the process through which power is exercised to utilize economic and social resources for development.
>
> The concept of governance, over the last 15 years, has evolved to transcend to the conventional area of the nation-state or government. Market forces as well as civil society processes and citizens' initiatives have increasingly started influencing the process of governance today. Many civil society

> organizations (CSOs) strongly believe that governance is not just the effective management of economic resources.'[35]

The above quotation clearly shows that the citizens have the right to demand accountability, and public actors are obliged to be accountable to citizens. So, democracy operates with this fundamental principle. In this direction the civil society organizations empower and strengthen the capacities within government to make public institutions more responsive to citizens. Hence, 'democratic governance underlines the spirit of a contract – that rulers and people were bound by each other by reciprocal obligations … that entails accountability of the government to the citizens in lieu of the authority vested in it by the citizens.'[36] Governance in this sense is a contractual obligation between the citizens and the public actors. In recent times in India good governance is highlighted in political discourses. For example,

> 'Reforms could help to come out of the morass of problems that our country faces, which includes bureaucratic inertia and inefficiency, corruption, public services and delays in delivery of justice. There is a need for the state to encourage private capital initiatives, and build capabilities rather than redistribute wealth… increased development effectiveness through improved public service delivery and better-informed policy design. The right to good governance is an essential part of citizens' rights that one can expect from the government.'[37]

It is apparent that democracy is the basis for good governance. Good governance stands on vibrant and dynamic democracy. Does Modi's conception of governance fall within this frame? Modi has been eulogiz-

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[35] George Cheriyan, 'Changing Face of Governance,' in *Deccan Herald*, February 28, 2008, p.8.
[36] *Ibid*.
[37] *Ibid*.

ing in the past few weeks, 'It is not government, but governance'! What does he mean by that phrase?

Governance, Majority Rule and the Two Indias under the Garb of Democracy

When Modi uses the term 'Democracy', he does not mean constitutional frame, rather the majority should have the absolute right. For those who believe constitutionally based democracy, will disagree with Modi's conception of 'democracy'. It is an ambiguous term that contains a number of loopholes. It promises but at the same time fails in its promise and takes for granted the masses to give freedom, liberty, equity, and equality. Further, it can strangle the smooth functioning of the three organs of democracy. In such scenario a ruthless dictator manipulates and takes over the reins of governance by stating that he/she would deliver goods without a democratic frame.

Nevertheless, given the plural and heterogeneous character of our Indian society, democracy could hold the country together by providing sufficient space for its diversities to co-exist. But Modi's brand of democracy is something different. Therefore, there is no clear discourse on these issues. Invoking 'governance' for the sake of votes will not suffice, unless Modi adds flesh and blood to it. The country's strength lies in democracy which is premised on diversity. But the mutual cohabitation and co-existence are undermined by Modi's conception of democracy, governance and development. The ultra-fundamentalist forces tend to mix religion with politics arousing communal passion and frenzy, creating a vertical divide among the people. If Modi is elected to the profile he is vying for, it could lead to,

> 'The lack of accountability in governing institutions and individuals is a great bane. The other major deficiency is the lack

> of transparency in the decision-making processes. An impression has gained ground that criminals with recourse to resources and influence can remain out of the reach of legal processes. There is a question mark also about the proper enforcement of our criminal justice system. It is only through commitment to constitutional objectives that we can bring probity back into the system.
>
> There is no better alternative to parliamentary democracy with adult franchise and a federal set-up. Parliamentary symbolizes the ethos of our country. It mirrors the country as a whole. It embodies and articulates the urges and aspirations of the people. Over the years, Parliament has come to be identified, both in theory and practice, as the pivot of our political system. The responsibility for providing direction, momentum, and institutions for social engineering has been with our Parliament.'[38]

In a Parliamentary Democracy, there is the Legislature to express the voice of the people, there is the Executive, which is subordinate to the Legislature and who is bound to obey the Legislature, and there is the Judiciary to control both within the prescribed bounds. Parliamentary Democracy has the marks of a popular government duly elected by the people, of the people and for the people. However, the democratically elected governments have failed to address the socio-economic disequilibria even after 60 years of free India. Therefore, we have two Indias under the garb of democracy, one for the rich and powerful and another for the poor and vulnerable. If the present democracy fails to address the divide, there is all the possibility of the forces of religious fundamentalism taking over the country.

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[38] Somnath Chatterjee, 'Constitution, Parliament and the People,' in *The Hindu*, 8.12.2004, p.10.

Why Development Could Be Seen as Shapeless and Ambiguous

The usage of development is value-loaded, and therefore entails, economic, political, social and religio-cultural aspects. The discourse on 'development' ought to go beyond the conventional notions of 'trickle-down' and 'economic growth.' In recent times, development has become a shapeless amoeba-like word. Modi should clearly spell out what he means by 'development'. Gujarat model of development cannot be taken as a development paradigm for the whole country. His development model does not unfold anything because its contents are blurred and ambiguous. For Modi development might mean market and its fundamentals. But there are millions who live outside the market. The so-called 'development,' 'progress,' and 'prosperity,' can never be measured only through economic parameters, but also does include non-economic parameters too.

The general perception is that the poor are almost charity cases, and should sit and wait for the 'mythical trickle-down effect' to pour wealth. Modi's conception and contents of development to a larger extent is premised on 'trickle-down' theory. Can growth and equitable distribution of wealth and resources go together? Even if it is possible, can market regulate its processes, so that the combination of equity and market fundamentals keeps the momentum going? In most parts of the two-thirds world, the combination of re-distribution and neo-liberal policies has hardly worked. As a result, sustained economic development and productive economic initiatives failed to take off. Instead there are many spin-offs.

In the absence of productive economic activities, one can hardly expect sustained economic development. In a world of market-backed free liberal economics, a sizeable capital is invested in speculative areas and service sectors, where returns are instantaneous and not employment-

oriented, but profit-maximizing. Those who are excluded by the market forces have fallen into 'inequality traps' and in the process pushed to poverty, especially feminization of poverty, migration, redundancy of labour leading to unemployment, suicides, debts, and so on. Modi's discourse will have to be on these, not simply saying he for 'development', 'progresses' and 'prosperity'. How is he going to realize these?

With imperfect markets, inequalities in power and wealth translate into unequal opportunities, leading to concentration of wealth and resources in the hands of a few while the majority has no choice, but to voluntarily opt for mass suicidal attempts. In sum, it is nothing but a genocidal project. Every day we keep reading, listening, and witnessing shocking stories of the inequalities in income, opportunities, and life chances, faced by communities within and between regions. There is no clarity on these issues. Modi is not expanding on these and fails to enter into discourse on impending issues that confronts commoners.

People are fed up and have lost their patience on false promises. They will not wait and keep listening to false rhetoric any more. As said: 'In the long run people are dead'. It is again a myth that the sharing of wealth and opportunities more equally and equitably is not possible in a highly demarcated Indian society. Masses have the determination, resolve and resolute as they exercise their franchise to those who could deliver goods in the coming Lok Sabha elections.

> 'Actually, in front of the kind of fervent imaginations and political passions that revolutionary dreams evoke, the imagery of civil society is tame and practically bland. It promises no dramatic or radical change in the lives of people. What it does do is proclaim that ordinary men and women have the political competence to make their own histories in small but sure ways. By engaging in an activity called politics in a free civil society, they realize their selfhood and recover agency, even as they acquire the political confidence to bring the non-

> performing and non-responsive state to order and hold it accountable. The argument also excites the hope that a vibrant civil society, inhabited by concerned and ethically motivated citizens, may be able to restore the same political ardor that had roused masses to action during the anti-colonial struggles. But history has its own way of playing tricks with well-meaning projects and inspiring concepts…'[39]

Conclusion

The grammar of development, governance and democracy that fits all the citizens is not the one Modi is talking about. BJP via Modi's ideological and political connotations of development, governance and democracy are totally different. Hindutuva forces under the aegis of Modi frequently use 'democracy,' 'governance,' and 'development.' In the name of these three concepts, they are trying to woo the masses. All these concepts are value-loaded and thus political in character. Beware of these terms. They have clear underpinnings and ideological moorings. As a note of caution, one should be clear with regard to the ideological and political accent and content.

If we give in, there is every possibility of getting subsumed and eventually sucked into Modi's jargon. Therefore, it calls for careful interrogation and introspection of these terms before one decides to vote. Modi and its hindutuva bandwagon keep claiming many things as if they are the custodians of democracy, governance and development. In order to bring these three they may even use metaphors, symbols, and idioms. The question is: Can Modi be trusted for democratic, prosperous, transparent, and accountable good governance? It is indeed the question for all of us before exercising our franchise.

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[39] Neera Chandhoke, 'Civil society hijacked,' in *The Hindu*, 16-01-2002, p.10.

For Modi, 'democracy' is another name for 'Development of the Majority' and 'Governance of the Majority'. Therefore, Modi's understanding of development is lop-sided and topsy-turvy. He is least bothered about bridging the social and economic inequalities and inequities of our society. What we hear from Modi is nothing but jargons and slogans. Hence, it is imperative that the concepts namely democracy, governance, and development ought to be freed and thus be de-mystified. Words are important, since they are political in nature, ideologically loaded, given twists and turns, and thus nuanced.

BJP AND RSS'S POLITICS OF 'COW'—BACKFIRED

The very core of the Indian society since Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the English Indian People's Party, came to power is gripped under and revolves around the politics of 'cow'. The polity of India is influenced by the Hindu nationalist organisation called the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)[40] — cultural wing of BJP's mentor and ideologue in all fronts and facets—right from governance to personnel, to elections to economy, to education to religion and culture. So, BJP virtually is translating RSS's vision, mission and mandate in its polity *vis-a-vis* governance. It is natural, and therefore obvious that PM Modi as soon as he won the Lok Sabha elections openly declared and thanked RSS that he was the Pradhana Sevak of RSS and said RSS helped hugely for BJP's victory and thus made him to become the Prime Minister of India in thumping majority for which he would be ever grateful.

Hence, PM Modi's utterances clearly implied that for his Government RSS was of utmost importance and for no reason he shall antagonize it and ruin his political survival. In order to survive and to carry on he is obligated to listen and is bound to obey and thus carry out the agenda of RSS. For PM Modi, Amit Shah and others in BJP, RSS is Supreme and Apex Body. RSS's instructions, directives and commands by all means and at all costs should be carried out, failing which face the

[40] Full name of the BJP and RSS: note by the Editor.

repercussions. The classic example is the recent statement that RSS chief made during the Bihar elections that there should be a review of the reservation policy which totally altered and changed the BJP's social arithmetic and caste equation.

It is one of the crucial factors that led to BJP-The National Democratic Alliance (NDA)'s humiliating and dust-biting defeat[41]. The BJP leaders of Bihar and its alliance partners openly voiced their frustrations and sent their feelers that the RSS chief's comments were unwarranted and untimely. Nonetheless what was the reaction of BJP in their review meeting convened by Amit Shah, its President? As expected it was nothing but a 'white wash' and an 'eye wash' saying 'Bihar defeat should be owned collectively—the joke of the decade—a blatant lie beyond any doubt trying to protect RSS chief Mohan Bhawat. There is no other question of survival for PM Modi and Amit Shah.

Undoubtedly, and in all certainty Just concluded Bihar Election is referendum on BJP Government and PM Modi as well. The verdict was not fractured but a clear, thumping, landslide and categorical. Even the international media presented the Bihar results as a referendum on PM Modi and a setback to his government's reforms. In addition it also cited BJP's divisive campaign and the perception of deepening religious tension. Pakistan newspapers such as *Dawn* and *The Daily Times* said: 'Bihar steals Modi's firecrackers' with a prominent picture of Nitish and Lalu. The Daily Times commented 'Bihar voters put Modi out to pasture', commenting that it was a 'resounding verdict against 'cow politics' and that it would 'set agenda for the opposition regroup against his narrow nationalism'.

Siasat Daily reported that Bihar election proved that the 'cow gives milk not votes'. The News International's headline said 'Modi's BJP bites the dust for its extremism'. The BBC report minced no words and

[41] The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is a centre-right coalition of political parties in India. Note by the Editor.

observed the PM's luster has diminished and how the BJP campaign had 'ramped up the rhetoric, asking voters ... if they wanted a [Bihar] government ... that protects terrorists'. *The Telegraph* wrote about the successive defeat in third largest state in India—Bihar dampened the mood ahead of Modi's UK visit. *The Economist* blog stated that 'Modi's honeymoon is over'. *The Guardian* viewed BJP's strategy of 'simultaneously stressing both development at a national level and using more sectarian rhetoric at a local level may be becoming less effective'. It also highlighted BJP's Rajya Sabha minority which would enable the opposition to block Modi's reforms.

LA Times opined 'rebuke of BJP's often divisible rhetoric and of Modi's year-and-a-half in power, which critics say has failed to bring the economic reforms he promised'. *The New York Times* reported Bihar's 'overwhelming rejection' of BJP and detailed the backdrop a 'raging national debate over whether Mr. Modi's India is becoming increasingly intolerant of secularists, Muslims and political dissent in general'. The *Wall Street Journal* pondered the way forward for BJP—'whether it would push economic measures at the state level to get around an energised opposition, and whether it would curb the influence of Hindu nationalist organisations.' The common thread that cut across in the analyses and comments of these dailies, known for their objectivity and scientific inquiry, is the 'cow and beef politics' that dominates the BJP government and its governance deliberately pitched to polarise and divide the communities in the name of 'vegetarian and non-vegetarian', 'cow vs. animals, secularism Versus fundamentalism, majoritarianism vs. minoritarianism for the sake of votes.

Exactly 17 months ago, BJP under the leadership of Modi routed other political parties in the Parliamentary Elections in the state of Bihar. Electorates' en masse voted for Modi to head the government at the Centre. But to the surprise of everyone across the country BJP has been

decimated and bulldozed. How could this happen within 17 months? What made the electorates of the State of Bihar the third largest state in the country to change their minds? Different opinions and perceptions emerge, but the core factor that emerges is the 'Politics of Cow' that dominates the Indian society cutting across caste, class and creed.

In addition, Bihar polls clearly contested on two opposing planks: Forward vs. Backward, Secular vs. Communal, Progressive vs. Regressive, Cow vs. Reason, Tolerant vs. Intolerant, Inclusive development vs. Sectarian Development, Mandal 2.0 vs. Kamandal 2.0 and then OBC vs. Hindutva, Governance vs. Government[42]. Besides governance, Hindutva forces have beefed up their ranks and file to incite people and communities on 'cow' and thus inflamed venom and hatred against communities against those who eat and store beef and slaughter cow.

The BJP-RSS and its allies invoked 'cow politics' in irrational and absurd levels trying to whip up the emotions of people across the country and tried their best to divide the society by infusing intolerance, hatred and suspicion. 'Cow politics' and 'beef game' had backfired. BJP-RSS has goofed up Bihar election primarily because it shelved 'development discourse'. Instead BJP-led NDA centralized its 'cow politics' coupled with 'beef' as its template.

PM Modi promised Bihar a double Diwali gift, but the electorates of Bihar gave a memorable Diwali gift that Modi would remember for many more Diwalis to come. Incidentally, PM Modi had gone to wish BJP stalwart and the co-founder of BJP Advani on his 88 birthday which happened to be the day of Bihar results that turned out to be bitter for PM Modi. 'Cow politics' is going to escalate more and more problems and is certainly going to intensify the polarisation politics of the Hindutva outfits in the days to come. The 'cow politics' and 'beef manifesto' of BJP-RSS by all means resonate in varied forms and tones.

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[42] Other Backward Class (OBC) stands for castes which are economically disadvantaged. Note by the Editor.

The following caricatures unfold the current political landscape of our country. It throws immense light and deeper meaning to the 'cow politics' that the BJP-RSS is deeply involved. Only the secular politics and convergence of like-minded forces shall wilt the resolve of these fringes which is determined to alter the plural and inclusive fabric of our society. The secular character of India by all means is to be preserved and nurtured.



Source: unknown.

TENSIONS BENEATH

The event that was the most significant in the year 2014 was the outcome of the 16th general election in India, which saw a political party vis-à-vis the BJP[43], an ultra-fundamentalist Hindu right-wing party captured majority of seats in the Lok Sabha on its own[44].

BJP for the first time in three decades formed the government without the support of any alliance partners. The resurgence of BJP with an absolute majority was considered as unparalleled in the contemporary political history of India. However, beneath the apparent emergence of BJP government at the centre amidst a number of promises, there are strong subterranean tensions. The intolerance displayed by fringe elements belonging to ultra-rightist Hindu organizations such RSS, Bajrangdal, Hindu Maha Sabha and host of others spew venom at the Christians, Muslims, Tribals and Dalits.

Since May 2014, the whole country has been witnessing a spate of hate speeches, outrageous utterances and provocative statements by the BJP MPs, cabinet ministers, and fringe elements belonging to Hindu organizations that threaten the Christians and the Muslims. PM Modi thus far has not openly condemned these elements. Elsewhere, these outfits pretend and out rightly defy PM Modi. Everyone by now knows the game that the BJP government, its ministers, MPs and other ultra-rightist Hindu organizations play and what they are up to. It is nothing

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[43] See previous chapter 4 on BJP and RSS. Note by the editor.

[44] The Lok Sabha (House of the People) is the lower house of India's bicameral Parliament. Note by the Editor.

but creating psychological trauma in the minds of Muslims and Christians so that they would fall in line to the dictates of the Hindu fundamentalists.

The Government at the Centre failed to intervene. The levels of verbal tirade that fanatical mind-sets utter show their perverted attitude and in-built intolerance against the Christians and the Muslims. Modi's Government should reckon with the fact that the utterances and statement that the Hindutva forces made has definitely affected and thus derailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's grand plan of reviving the economy. If the same trend continues in the year 2015 the economy would further be affected. Certainly it would have its ramifying effects in other facets too. Their agenda on Hindu Majoritarianism pitched against Muslims and Christians as BJP's political project will boomerang. It is against the tenets of India's plural context enshrined in the Constitution. Divisive politics carried out by BJP and its affiliates shall not bring fruits that became evident in the recent elections in J&K elections.

Polarizing Indian society on religio-communal levels shall never succeed. Communal politics and spewing venom on some communities have been vehemently opposed in the recently concluded winter session of the parliament. Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha winter sessions were totally stalled. It clearly reveals the limitations of the Majoritarian political strategies currently being pursued by the ruling BJP. BJP's brand of politics polarizes Indian society. The classic example is J&K elections. The saffron party swept the Hindu-dominated region but totally failed to show its presence in the Kashmir valley. BJP hardly mustered one per cent of the votes polled where Muslims are in an overwhelming majority. Further it is glaringly visible that BJP has no Muslim and Christian presence as MPs. Talk of 'inclusive development' and 'inclusive governance' by PM Modi is just a gimmick and a farce. Presently, those other than Hindus are alienated and thus considered as 'non-Indians'.

PM Modi had refused to make statements about the verbal and physical attacks perpetuated by the Hindutva outfits. Recently in order to appease the minorities the BJP government seems to have hired Amitab Bhachan for his PR campaign to reach out to the minorities primarily to push BJP's slogan on 'inclusive development' and 'total governance'. PM Modi should know that the people have come to know his true colours. We will have to wait and see who is a better actor Amitab or Modi. Minorities numbering about 150 million are indeed huge in number. More importantly BJP cannot have a disturbed social atmosphere. Further, PM Modi cannot ignore this segment which would affect his image both inside and out.

His government at the Centre is filled with tokenism and symbolism, but failed in translating the promises in real terms. Frenzy Hindutva organization continue their attacks unabated. In the name of protecting 'Hindu culture' the fringe elements recently targeted a Hindi movie entitled PK in which Aamir Khan is the hero. A bunch of hoodlums from the ultra-right organizations attacked the theatres at various places such as Surandranagar, Ahmedabad, (Gujarat), Rajkot, Nagpur, Bhopal, Delhi and other places where the film is being screened. These hoodlums gave 24-hours ultimatum to the producers to cut 'anti-Hindu' scenes. The reason they gave was the movie hurt the religious sentiments of the Hindus and their religion. Prior to screening it went through the usual procedures such as the Censor Board and even the Supreme Court of India gave its verdict in favour of screening it. Despite Hindutva brigade bashes the phenomenal success of PK shows that for India 'Unity in Diversity' holds good than that of 'majoritarian-sectarian ideology'.

Prime Minister Modi somehow evaded condemning those in his party who were spewing hate speech in the name of Hindu nationalism. By deliberately abstaining to condemn could prove to be the weakest link

for the BJP government that lost its political will to provide better governance and cleaner administration in the coming years. BJP blaming the opposition particularly UPA and others, but when BJP was the principal opposition party for ten years it behaved in the same way[45]. BJP government is very fortunate that the fall in oil prices—as well as the prices of other commodities—has resulted in the inflation rate coming down to its lowest level in a decade.

BJP President Amit Shah claims in the public meetings that the present government should be appreciated and given the credit. His claims are baseless because the fall of oil prices at the global scale has obviously brought down the inflation and not because of BJP government. BJP government should at least now concentrate on reviving the economic front by inviting investments (FDI) and opening up employment opportunities. Since May 2014 the whole country has been witnessing BJP's tall claims, lofty pronouncement and brazen declarations. The language and the use of words such as 'haramazadon' or 'illegitimately born'—by Union minister Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti at a public function—cannot be accepted in democratic discourse. She openly declared that those who are not Ram followers are 'haramzadon' which means 'born to someone'. This is indeed the height of their arrogance that shows total callousness and intolerance.

The tendency to use abusive language is growing. BJP and its affiliates think that they could make irresponsible, irrational and nonsensical statements and escape. In a matured democracy like ours they should understand that their elevation as MPs and Ministers is purely because of the people who made them as the representatives of all Indians first and political activists next. This ought to be borne in mind. Defying the rules of the game, basic etiquette, civility and guiding principles could lead them to doom. People are watching them closely. Their statements

[45] The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) is a coalition of centre-left political parties. Note by the Editor.

and the way they conduct themselves are accessed in a world of mass media. And yet some MPs and Ministers of BJP and others from the ultra-rights' Hindu organizations keep issuing derogatory statements against the Muslims and Christians so that their political project can be realized. Nonetheless, we are witnessing today a deeply polarized polity that has led to alarming levels of abuse.

Over and above, RSS, Hindu Mahasabha, Shiv Sena, Bajrangdal and other elements of the Sangh Pariva want to make India into a Hindu Rashtra through mass conversions called 'ghar wapsi'. PM Modi could probably be referring subtly this to 'Make in India'. 'Mass conversions', or 're-conversion' or 'home coming' whatever one may call it, there are a couple of serious obstacles in achieving their objective. Apart from others, one major obstacle is the Constitution which clearly defines India as a secular republic. We should all understand clearly the project that 'ghar wapsi' campaign that the Parivar spear-heading is to wapsi-ing back to their ghar which did not belong to the ghar in the first place which makes it difficult, semantically at least for them to come back to it.

The Parivar is targeting tribal communities especially in parts of North-east for 'reconversion'. They knew very well that the Tribals by and large were animists and did not belong to the Hindu fold. The fringe elements in connivance with BJP targets Dalits. Dalits have been converted to other religions because of caste stratified heinous Hinduism that treated Dalits as outcastes. In view of the basic tenet and character of Hinduism, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar openly declared that he would never die as a Hindu and thus embraced neo-Buddhism along with millions of Dalits. He went to the extent of saying that Hinduism by all means should be annihilated because Hinduism reifies and reinforces casteism. Further, due to inhumane and oppressive nature of Hinduism Dalits en masse embraced Islam and Christianity.

It is totally ridiculous and improbable to think about 're-conversion' of the Tribals and the Dalits because of the fact that Hinduism enforced 'Untouchability' and looked down at the Tribals and Dalits as 'inferiors', 'avarnas' and 'vanachals'. How could the Hindutvaadis think that the Tribals and Dalits could be brought back to Hindu fold which excluded them for centuries? It is ludicrous to use the term that the right-wing organizations use—'home coming'—because Hinduism as a religion has never been the home of the Tribals and the Dalits. In the same way when it comes to representation (not by way of tokenism and symbolism) in leadership, ministerial berths, portfolios and MPs, we hardly see BJP accommodating the Muslims and Christians. So, 'inclusive development and holistic governance' is antithetical and diametrically opposing principles to BJP and its affiliates.

Declaring December 25th as Good Governance Day and many more such declarations are to follow in the Year 2015. Conversions, re-conversion and mass conversions in the pretext of 'home coming' being spearheaded by BJP and its affiliates are part of their strategy to Hinduise the Indian society. Let us not heed/bow down to anti-conversion law; continue to invoke the Constitution and the privileges extended to each one of us. Right to religion, profess, and practice are the fundamental rights enshrined in our Constitution. We are Indian Christians; we are Indian Muslims and we are Indian … This privilege is given to us as citizens of this country. This constitutional provision cannot be taken from us. Minorities constitute a huge number totaling up to 160 million.

The BJP and its Sangh Parivars are involved in 'reconversion' of Tribals, Dalits, Christians and Muslims. But what they have failed to do is to convert Hinduism so as to bring proselytizing within its purview. This is the biggest problem being faced by BJP and its fringe elements. Unlike Christianity and Islam, Hinduism has never been a proselytizing religion. In order to sustain and further the 'Majoritarian' identity and to absorb/subsume other religious identities, the BJP and its Sangh Parivars

are vigorously involved in 're-conversion'. Conversion should not be forced or by ways of luring or dolling or other means. As Indian citizens we are absolutely free to convert to any religion. Nobody has the right to stop us embracing any religion. The tensions are brewing in the terrains of Dalits, Tribals, Christians and Muslims. There is a limit. We should never sulk to the Hindutva brigade and BJP's bashings, rather, we should be firm and resolute. Let us struggle for our rights and freedom. Certainly, Year 2015 shall unfold new challenges and enormous possibilities for an Inclusive India.

In wishing Indians a happy and prosperous New Year, the President urged everyone to dedicate themselves to an inclusive society. Social cohesion is an essential prerequisite for inclusive development and growth. PM Modi and fringe elements should come to terms whether they like it or not that 'inclusive development' does not go hand-in-hand with majoritarianism. Hindutva and development in a plural democracy are in letter and spirit contradictory and shall never be complimentary. The tactics and strategies of BJP and fringe elements follow may yield short-term electoral gains, while the long-term consequences of such policy will be detrimental both for its developmental agenda and the composite fabric of India. Sabka saath, sabka vikas shall never take place if the Indian Muslims and Indian Christians; Dalits and Tribals are treated as second class citizens. Year 2015 will be a litmus test for PM Modi and the people of India are watching.

> 'Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instil in us.'
>
> — Hal Borland

GOVERNMENT VERSUS NON-GOVERNMENT

Submit or Perish!

Does Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) mean those that are opposed to the government or those that claim as alternatives or those who play corrective roles whenever the government derails/deviates from people-friendly/people-centric programs or initiatives[46]? Or those organizations that play as intermediaries or catalysts or interlocutors between the people and the government. Or those that are engaged in non-party political formation devoid of ideological or political affiliations with multiple foci such as pro-poor, pro-subaltern, pro-physical/mental challenged or pro-ecological/environmental or pro-life or pro-women/Dalit/Tribal.

Who are the NGOs? What do they do? Do they work as volunteers or are they paid for their work? How do they manage the expenses, such as paying salaries to the staff, office maintenance, travel and transport and the host of others things that running an organization involves? What are the NGOs motives and intentions; short and long term goals/vision? Are they genuine? To maintain and manage the basic paraphernalia, from where do they get funds and what are the sources? How do they get it? Why do the funding agencies based outside extend financial support to the NGOs? These are the questions that loom at large.

[46] This chapter is a reprint with authorisation from: *The Morung Express Dimapur*, Nagaland, India, 11 May 2015, p. 5.

For these questions there is a wide-spectrum of mixed perceptions and responses across people, beneficiaries, activists, NGOs, civil society, politicians, government and others.

NGOs are widespread across the country and involved in the urban and rural India. It is estimated that there are around 20 lakh NGOs in the country. Their presence in the areas of peoples' empowerment and development is visibly seen in the post-Independent India. Nonetheless, in the last four decades their growth and expansion is phenomenal and astounding. Their involvement and engagement in urban and rural India have been multi-faceted and integral. For example, right from education literacy, adult/informal education, saving and credit schemes (micro-credit), physically and mentally challenged, slum/urban/rural development, health care, relief and rehabilitation, women empowerment, social and economic development amongst the Dalits and the Tribals, ecological and environmental areas, orphanages and old-age homes and host of others.

A large section of people is involved in the activities of NGOs cutting across the barriers such as caste, class, race, gender, religion, political and ideological affiliations and other divides. The involvement of the NGOs in general seems to have been appreciated and lauded, but Narendra Modi's government has suspended the registration of some NGOs and cancelled the FCRA Numbers of thousands of NGOs[47]. Two big international NGOs faced the wrath of Modi's government instantaneously. One such NGO is Greenpeace India, whose license has been suspended under the FERA Act 2010 for 180 days, preventing it from receiving any foreign funds. Earlier it had frozen the bank accounts of Greenpeace for alleged financial irregularities. It has also placed Ford

[47] Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). Registration under FCRA gives Indian NGOs the authorization to receive donations from foreign sources. The Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) is a legislation that imposes strict regulations on them. Note by the Editor.

Foundation on its watch for allegedly funding organizations not registered under the FCRA. This came after the Gujarat government sought action against the agency for 'direct interference … in the internal affairs of the country and also of abetting communal disharmony in India.'

Causing inconvenience to the civil society organization and NGOs by denying FCRA clearance and freezing the accounts has been the regular feature of past and present governments at the Centre. Yet there is a renewed vigor with which the present government has been systematically targeting NGOs based on the reports of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) that accuses NGOs of 'using people-centric issues to create an environment which lends itself by stalling development projects'. Further, the Ministry takes over and employs all sorts of mechanisms tarnishing its credibility and image. With regard to some it could be true and with others false. Both the parties are involved blaming each other.

However, it is important to go back to the antecedents. PM Modi's anger and dislike of 'five-star NGOs' stems from his experience of activists taking up the cases of the 2002 Gujarat riots and of extra-judicial murders of alleged terrorists in the state. There could also perhaps be another reason that PM Modi who won the elections with the backing of capitalists with pro-corporate agenda. The government does not want to deviate from pro-capitalist path to people-centric development. So, the present government at the Centre is clear that its vision and notion of development and governance vis-à-vis pro-corporate and pro-rich and by all means should not be hampered by pro-poor and pro-people compulsions.

BJP and its main Hindutva affiliates have been antagonistic towards NGOs who at different times and in varied circumstances exposed the government's failures and apathy by not responding or even doing good works to the hapless and vulnerable communities. Even the UPA government headed by Congress came down heavily on some NGOs that

contested and questioned the then Central Government the ramifying effects on the communities that live around the Kudankulum Nuclear-energy Project[48]. In view of this, UPA targeted many NGOs and peoples' organizations. Nevertheless, the UPA during its regime included the experts and leaders of mass organizations and NGOs in the National Advisory Council (NAC) to fill the space of social inclusion at the heart of its policies.

During UPA regime NAC became an institutionalized space that gave voice to the marginalized and the dispossessed. Some of the notable enactments such as RTI Act of 2006, the Rural Employment Guarantee Acts of 2006, the Right to Education Act of 2009, the Food Security Act of 2013 and a few more became real and thus translated the dreams and aspirations of the vulnerable communities, All these portrays that the NGOs seemed to have filled the social space and offered its expertise so that the disadvantaged and disenfranchised whose spaces are brought in as part of inclusive development. But the other side portrays totally a different scenario. The BJP Government quite regularly comes down heavily on NGOs. PM Modi in recent times has not spared the NGOs and has been quite vociferous in the ways he thinks they function and spend their money.

The Home Ministry cancelled the FCRA Numbers of approximately 9,000 NGOs and forfeited their rights to receive funds from overseas because of rule breaking year after year. The Home Ministry has cited that many NGOs had failed to fill out the FCRA returns for 3 years (2009–12) and out of more than 10,400 only 299 responded. Of these 299 NGOs that did file their returns on time, a tiny per cent and the majority did not comply. Could we liken the behaviour of the Government and the response of the NGOs to that of a brewing war between them? The government sources say that since the NGOs failed to follow

[48] The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) is a coalition of centre-left political parties. Note by the Editor.

the rules, i.e. section 18 of the FCRA Act, they had to face the wrath of the government. The NGOs and the civil society organizations contend that the crackdown of the BJP government against the NGOs is like a witch hunt, implying political vendetta.

In the Home Ministry's list the NGOs that violated FCRA cover all shades and forms of NGOs. Conspicuously there are quite a number of church-based organizations and independent Christian organizations. Since UTC, Bengaluru, has already been served the notice, UTC's name does not figure. Basically the Home Ministry expects those NGOs that receive funds from abroad should furnish clearly the names of the agencies from whom they receive the funds and the amount they receive. Further, they should also state for what purposes they receive, the names of the bank, the account numbers, how they spent the money and for the purposes for which they received. They should have filed the returns promptly but have failed to file the returns for more than three years. Further, the Home Ministry is keen to know the source and the manner in which they money was received. Over and above, the Home Ministry wanted to know whether the money used for the right purposes.

The NGOs receives huge sums of money that amounts to several thousand crores of rupees, but less than 2 per cent have submitted accounts. It further reiterates that FCRA has a process that calls for accountability. Accordingly, the government has followed the due process. NGOs allege that the government is increasingly becoming intolerant against those NGOs that resist its pro-capitalist and pro-rich initiatives and projects. The BJP government is coming down heavily on the NGOs that empower the people and communities who in turn resist and defy the moves of the government's 'development' plans and projects. It is like war between the Government and the NGOs. The government is of the firm view and opinion that the NGOs deliberately obstruct the development road map of the BJP and thus instigates the people and com-

munities to act against the government. In order to curb the influence of the NGOs amongst the civil society and the communities the BJP clamped several checks and balances for the NGOs to follow.

If we carefully read and closely follow the names and addresses of the NGOs posted by the Home Ministry for FCRA violations and non-compliance of the rules and regulations, we observe that the churches, church-related organizations and Christian organizations figure in substantial numbers. What does it signify? Whatever may be the objectives, commitment and dedication of the NGOs, the laws, procedures and processes will have to be followed stringently. Some NGOs receive funds from overseas in crores; others receive in several lakhs for their activities in the stated areas. They receive huge funds from agencies located in the United States, advanced capitalist countries in the Western Europe, Asia-Pacific such as Australia, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and other developing countries.

The money given by the donor agencies is to help the communities via NGOs. The money is raised from the people out there and channelled through the overseas funding agencies exclusively for the people and communities who live on margins and hapless. So, the NGOs are accountable to the donors, the government and the people. The government expects the NGOs to submit the details how, when, to who the money received and spent. If the NGO fails to furnish the details within the prescribed period then there should be something wrong. Notices were served as per the procedures. Since the NGOs have failed to follow the rules and the stipulated time frame, there is a set of consequences to be faced.

All these are sheer technical standards which should be adhered to. If the NGOs, the theological institutions, churches, church-related projects and Christians institutions that figure in the list of Home Ministry's FCRA assume that they could go on flouting the rules and laws of the land then they should face the consequences. If these NGOs including

the church and its institutions think that they are above the law and consider as supra institutions who could flout the stipulated laws then the government will come down heavily. If the NGOs functions arbitrarily and irresponsibly by using the funds for administrative costs and to their own personal and familial benefits then they should be made liable before the law of the land.

Funds from overseas have become a big business. There are many actors involved in this game. The chief functionaries of the church such as the Church of South India (CSI) Synod, CSI Diocesan bishops, CEOs of theological institutions such as UTC, Chief functionaries of those organizations listed and others can no more hoodwink the government. The purposes for which the money is taken should be spent for purposes asked for. Unfortunately, there are quite a number of NGOs that spends more than $^{3}/_{4}$ of the moneys for administration than investing on the communities. There are some NGOs that have achieved a 'five-star' status and thus follow the 'five-star culture'. The life-style of the chief functionaries and their families do not match the causes they speak about. The communities they are engaged continue to remain the same.

NGOs' non-compliance of FCRA should not be converted into an issue of intolerance or political vendetta or crack down as voiced by NGOs and its chief functionaries have no substance, basis and merit. FCRA Act itself is a process that calls for accountability. The government has followed the due process. If the due process has not been followed by government then the NGOs have the right to question the government and the matter be taken to the court of law. If there are blatant violations of FCRA by the NGOs then in the course of time the government would certainly come down heavily on the NGOs. The government has already tightened the bureaucracy in the Home Ministry especially on FCRA. The Home Ministry has evolved tools and mechanisms to monitor those NGOs that violate FCRA.

It is indeed baffling and astonishing to watch those NGOs who act as five-star activists, all in the name of 'development', 'people' and 'commitment'. Their life style portrays entirely a different kind of note. What they say and how they live (life style) do not match. Since they receive funds from the overseas for development, progress, growth, prosperity of the marginalized and the vulnerable, is it not right that the poor and the vulnerable enjoy their life to the full? A few questions that arise are: From which account are the expenses of the chief functionaries met? How are their expenses accounted for? They lead luxurious life and the life style and the salary they receive do not concur.

In the name of 'service', people and communities are taken for big rides. Squandering the money earmarked the poor ought not to be allowed. It is the money of the public, both the givers and the receivers are public and therefore those middle agents should be taken to task. The five-star culture of those NGOs and their ways of living should be questioned. It is the peoples' money and the people have the right to question these money launderers. Since the government is the peoples' representative, it has the right to question and take actions. NGOs including the church should not think that they are above questioning. It is apparent that the horizons of NGOs, churches, theological institutions and others by and large show no accountability, transparency, honesty and relational responsibility.

MODERN DAY APARTHEID IN THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA

During the past few days[49] The Times TV News channel, under the dynamic anchor Arnab Gosawmi, has been intensively campaigning and creating awareness amongst the people of India on the growing VIP/VVIP culture being practiced in places where all citizens allegedly have 'equal rights and privileges'. The commoners of India are restrained, prohibited and heckled by these so-called 'super-species' because of the special tags 'Very Important Person' and 'Very, Very Important Person' (VIP/VVIP) being exclusively enjoyed by a select brand and class of people.

We are proud of our nation and call ourselves as Indians. Our Constitution guarantees equal rights and privileges on par with others. The Indian Constitution also reinforces equality and dignity for all. Further, it categorically states that there shall be no discrimination and distinction shown and practiced within and between individuals, groups and communities. Despite the constitutional guarantees, even after 67 years of Independence along with other 'isms', we have somehow failed to take notice of the trend and have ended with yet another form of subordination—VIP/VVIP status. It is modern day apartheid. We may have overlooked or undermined or even ignored the VIP/VVIP culture. Since we failed to address this VIP/VVIP culture it has now become a phe-

[49] This article was originally published in the *Nagaland Post*, 2015.

nomenon. Those who call and claim themselves as VIP/VVIP have taken undue advantage and taken the majority of Indians for big rides.

In recent times, it has assumed alarming proportions, therefore could be termed as modern day apartheid in Independent India. Having abolished the privy purses and colonial rule, inequality still persists. The union ministers, state chief ministers, ministers, judges, governors, MLAs and others who hold important portfolios in the names of 'security' and 'protocol' use the VIP/VVIP tags by violating basic etiquette and civility. For each individual that enjoy this status the government allots convoys, security and commandos. In Chandigarh there are two roads leading to the railway station with two big boards: (1) VIP/VVIP and (2) Ordinary Citizens. In most of the railway stations and even in the airports there are VIP/VVIP lounges. These lounges are well-equipped with all facilities of convenience and are restricted areas for non-VIPs/VVIPs.

The VIP/VVIP culture has crept into the mind set of our politicians, ministers and others in high places. In Chandigarh, the Badal families enjoy the privileges and abuse them to the maximum. Similarly, Chandra Babu Naidu, the chief minister of Andhra and KCR, the chief minister of Telangana, have also maximized their privileges because of the VVIP tag. During peak travel hours, from Banjara Hills to the Secretariat, or wherever Chandra Babu Naidu and KCR travel, the roads are blocked to enable them quick travel for hours. This occurs on a regular basis, where the main roads on which they travels are blocked and the commoners have no other choice than to waste on average four hours of their time. Karan Singh and Ministers such as Ram Vilas Pasvan also enjoy this privilege. Praful Patel's family was given a separate Air India plane when he was the aviation minister. Shamelessly they give all sorts of reasons to justify the arrangement, such as health grounds, business and so on and so forth. Even it seems that the CM of Bihar, Nitish Kumar, had applied for the status but whose application was rejected.

When interviewed by the reporters those who enjoy and think that they are among the super-species say that 'we are offered these privileges, so why not enjoy them'. They think that they are offered, but in real terms these privileges have been taken and almost grabbed. In addition to the VIP/VVIPs, their entourage, security, gun-toting muscle-men, sycophants and other *chumchas* also enjoy these privileges.

First and the foremost, how did these individuals get into these positions? If you go back to their past, most of them hail from humble background and have come up to this position by working hard. Once they get elected and given ministerial berths they think that they are superhumans. In reality, these privileges, though they have been allegedly 'given', they have been grabbed. Among the VIP/VVIP it is the bureaucrats who enjoy the most privilege. They use their privileges to the maximum because the politicians are at their mercy. So, the bureaucrats should be taken to task too.

Harish Salve, one of the renowned advocates of the Supreme Court of India, who is an active member of this campaign, reported that there is an exclusive a realm for VIP/VVIP that goes far beyond our imagination. It shows clearly the vestiges of feudalism, even though there has been a shift from hereditary maharaja rule to inheritance rights. Take Kolkatta or Chennai or even Pondicherry, they too have special roads and parking lots for MLAs, Ministers and so on. In Chennai airport these VIPs and VVIPs could park their vehicles anywhere and there is no time limit. Even the present BJP President of Tamil Nadu enjoyed VIP privileges prior to becoming the President. It is alarming to note that only VVIP cars are allowed into the arrival corridor at Chennai Airport. Furthermore, the VIPs and VVIPs need not pay the tolls. It is ludicrous. Why are they exempted and for what reason? They receive their salaries and enjoy the road, but need not pay, while the tax payers are expected to pay. There simply is no rationale or logic.

The Times TV Channel continues to cover many such incidences where VIPs and VVIPs have usurped these privileges and enjoy them shamelessly, which they don't deserve. When asked, invariably they say that it is their 'entitlement'. Who gave them the VIP/VVIP entitlements, for what reason, and why are they 'entitled'? The VIP/VVIP culture shall not be tolerated. People irrespective of the age go through all difficulties day in and day out, but these shameless VVIPs and VIPs have never been pushed over. The Supreme Court in its landmark judgment ruled out the use beacon (red light)—it also symbolizes VIP/VVIP culture. But some retorted back and said 'if red light is prohibited, we would then use blue or green or any colour other than red'.

It is in this context that the line of separation needs to be looked at and probed. It is bewildering that VIPs and VVIPs have private security and when they go for morning walks their security detail is present. Some thousands of security personnel are employed at the cost of the government exchequer to protect this elite few, while the commoner has one police officer for every 700 people. Their behaviour clearly manifests feudal and corrupt mind-sets, and this is just a tip of the iceberg. If the VIP/VVIP culture is not curbed and annihilated then it's likely that the commoners will revolt like that French Revolution. We are a Republic and citizen ought to enjoy the same privileges as the other.

The so-called VIPs and VVIPs think that they are a somewhat special species. Take for instance their background. The moment they become MLAs, MPs and Ministers they think endlessly of themselves. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. They do not know how to moderate power. The ways they behave and appropriate the privileges are appalling. It is strange when we see top people like UK's Prime Minister David Cameron travelling by tube train and Boris Johnson one of the most admired politicians and the Mayor of London travelling by bicycle when commuting to work or events. Every day we hear and see a number of cases. These top wigs continue to behave the

same and do not want to change. Who made them VVIP? It is not public and they made themselves as VVIP. Are they seriously embarrassed? We need to end the culture of entitlement.

BJP promised Aam Aadmi that the good days are ahead. Even after nine months Aaam Aadmi continues to suffer. In addition, consider the huge bungalows these collectors and bureaucrats enjoy. In small towns and districts these collectors and their deputies act like mini-maharajas. The British Raj is gone and yet an elite class continues in other forms. Politicians who enjoy VIP/VVIP should understand that a day will come when these VVIPs will leave office and eventually become ordinary citizens. By then it would be too late and heavy for them to realize. The whole system remains coloured. The mindset of these VIPs and VVIPs are corroded. Let the politicians, bureaucrats and ministers whether state or centre know that they are there to serve the people. They should not think that their job is to lord over the people, but to serve them. This is why they are called public servants. The politicians are elected by the people to serve them and not to entitle them with privileges by having VIP/VVIP tags. Let us remind them that they are appointed by the people.

Along with others, the Indian Church should also be included. The Indian Church has always been feudal. The feudal zamindars are well represented by their attires. When they come for important ecclesial-related programs and ceremonies, the use of scepter and different vestments and other paraphernalia depict the feudal age and feudal mind-set of the Indian Church. When they go out for functions the moment they step out of their cars people should carry their suitcases and show respect by kissing their rings and bowing before them. Use of terms such as Your Grace, Most Reverend and other titles show the colonial and pre-reformation age. Nowadays they also fit big plates above the car number plates indicating whether they are a bishop in a similar fashion

to government vehicles, which are fitted with fancy light-beams. The big cross they wear is to show that they are somebody important and supreme leaders, but in essence the cross means sacrifice and struggle.

The ecclesiastical episcopacy is no different than others. The VIP/VVIP culture has permeated into the Indian church especially amongst these figures. They thus equate themselves to ministers. They are elected to do the ministry following the foot-steps of Jesus and bear the cross of the adherents, not to lord over the church. The arrogance and abuse of power have crept into the top echelons of the Indian Church. They are ordinary people called out to serve the people nurturing and inculcating spiritual and ethical values to the believers. The cars they use and the wealth they amassed totally contradicts the ministry they are in. All but a few of the moderators, bishops and priests show their arrogance and insensitivity when they attend wedding receptions and other public functions. They are taken to exclusive halls and served dinner and looked after well. Mingling with the adherents and the public means lowering their VIP/VVIP status. Without any common sense most of them cut the queues to wish the couple well. It shows sheer arrogance, and if questioned or dared the Aam Admis of this world face the wrath of them both their muscle and money power. The VIP/VVIP culture is deeply ingrained in India's political and religious establishments.

It is astonishing the ways these VIPs/VVIPs behave in the airports and other public places. They do not have any decency; the moment they land/arrive they expect everyone to give them respect and pave way so that they become VIPs/VVIPs. Their psyche is filled with demanding and commanding respect and privileges from the public. They fail to understand that because of the public and the adherents they enjoy the VIP/VVIP status; without them they are nothing. Take for instance, the behaviour of the Indian politicians and the religious heads while on flights and at airports. There are many disturbing cases. Some years ago,

one of the top-ranked ministers in UPA government tried to cut the queue at Amsterdam airport. An ordinary security personnel stopped him and told that 'This is not India; follow the queue'. People across the globe find this type of behaviour strange and thus look at us as if something wrong with us and think that we are freaks. The behaviours of these super-species bring disgrace and shame to the Republic India.

The battle has just begun. The Times TV channel is pioneering the movement. It is the defining moment for all us and the public of the Indian Republic. A crusade has just begun against the VIP/VVIP culture and feudal mind-sets. Hundreds and thousands of Aam Aadmis are joining this movement. It is like another freedom struggle so that dignity and equality shall be restored to each and every citizen of this great Republic. The silent spectators and victims of these arrogant and insensitive VVIPs/VIPs are coming out openly with their pent up emotions and feeling. In unison the slogans are: 'Enough is Enough of Your Medieval and Feudal Culture'; 'If You Don't Stop & Change, We Shall Force You to Change and Remove Your VIP/VVIP Tags'.

For the last 67 years the VIP/VVIP culture has been part of the DNA of our political and religious leaders. They would not easily give it up and try their level best to resist because they are thick skinned and shameless. So we need to name them and shame them. VIP/VVIP culture is in their DNA. All those who claim themselves as VIPs/VVIPs are not VIPs/VVIPs by birth, they become VIPs/VVIPs by the positions they hold. It is the mind-set that is the problem. Robert Vadra and Rahul Gandhi are the serial offenders for having abused this VVIP tag. Because of the protocol many lives are lost. Ambulances are stopped for hours because of these insensitive super-species who are accompanied by large entourages and convoy. The BJP did not initiate a single thing to stop this VVIP-super class; rather many still want to enjoy this privilege. The BJP cannot snatch the privileges and do not want antagonize

its political class. The VVIP/VIP craze leads to genetic mutation because they behave differently.

Let us struggle to get rid of the VIP/VVIP culture from our society. It is also the movement of equality because all are equal. The words VIP/VVIP are to be made redundant. In order to get rid of these words from our parlance more stories and incidences should come out. The media such as The Times and others have taken up this struggle at different levels. PM Modi keeps chanting 'Achche Din and Achche Din', but when? So, we the Aam Aadmis need the resolve and resilience to bring about this change because this movement is about bringing about and thus establishing: 'one human race and not two', because 'we are all the people of this republic, equal and we are the democracy Aam Aadmi'. On this there shall be no compromise and no dilution in letter and spirit.

RAINBOW REPUBLIC UNDER SCANNER

The Politics of Identity — Its Spatial and Ideological Location

Nietzsche's wise words 'that which doesn't destroy you only makes you stronger, by having been tested and having passed the test' are apt to the current state of affairs happening in our society. India is a Republic known for its accommodation of diverse identities on its canvass. They are enshrined in the Constitution and so it is binding on each and every citizen of this country. These principles are vividly articulated in letter and spirit and thus enshrined in the Constitution.

The rationale behind these principles is that all are required to embrace and accept different colours, diverse cultures, multi-religious persuasions, ethnicities, communities and host of others as how the Rainbow accommodates all colours. In tune to this, Indians living in this Republic, we are all expected and required to accommodate and accept our fellow beings. Our Republic symbolically depicts a Rainbow that reflects the integral features of inclusiveness and accommodation of all cultures and varied ethnicities without any distinction and discrimination.

Apparently, at the notional and ideational levels all these ideals seem to be present and well-articulated. Certainly all these dictums sound fascinating and attractive. But in reality, does our society truly amplify the characteristics of the Rainbow? Does it reflect the features of the

Rainbow, so that it could be called a 'Rainbow Republic'? These are the questions that loom in the minds of free-thinking citizens of India.

The notion of a Rainbow Republic is under scanner in recent times. There have been spates of violence and discriminatory practices being reported and witnessed against particular identity groups in different parts of India. The People from the North-eastern states of India in particular are under attack. They are being targeted in diverse ways: either harassed, ridiculed, beaten up, sexually molested or even killed from cross-sections of our society. The physical and verbal attacks on the people of Northeast are on the rise, conspicuously in New Delhi and Bangaluru. Calling them with derogatory names and terms and looking at them as if they are from some other planet shows cultural decadence, frivolousness and callousness. Analysis of various utterances and actions of non-north-eastern people against the people of north-eastern states attributes to racism.

Racial remarks and actions against the people of north-eastern states keep growing. For umpteen numbers of reasons, as the citizens of this country, all of us have the right to go to any part of the country. Relatively a sizable number of young people from the north-eastern states go to places of their choice for studies and employment. Dalhi and Bangaluru seem to be their most desired destinations. A sizable number of young people from the northeast take up jobs in malls, retail outlets or the hospitability services or as security personnel or any job that are offered to them depending on the skills and preference.

Huge sections of people unskilled and under-skilled young people migrate to different places of our country predominantly from the underdeveloped regions to developed regions for want of jobs. The primary reason they move out is for employment and for basic sustenance. The exodus of people from northeast to different parts is one such phenomenon that needs to be taken seriously. The respective governments need to take this phenomenon more seriously by delving into the reasons and

factors of migration, so that the problems could be addressed and responded appropriately and comprehensively.

However, some of the recent racist overtones against the people of northeast merit attention. The horrific crime against a person of north-eastern origin happened on the 29th of January this year when Nido Tania, a 19-year old student from Arunachal Pradesh, was beaten black and blue because he protested against being ridiculed for his hairstyle. Nido succumbed to his injuries. Similar incidences continue unabated. Bangaluru is one such place where racist remarks and ridicules against the north-eastern people in public places take place. Even in educational institutions including theological colleges racist remarks in subtle ways operate.

Last year racism against the north-eastern people reached its peak in Bangaluru and there were large number of people desperately left Bangaluru for safety and security. It was indeed a mass exodus of north-eastern people packing their belonging and fleeing to their respective states.

Interestingly, for the first time a television channel labelled the Nido Tania episode a racial crime. After that the term 'racism' gained currency in the media. All the derogatory verbal utterances and physical assaults amount to racist overtones. Racism as an issue definitely entered the kaleidoscopic landscape of rainbow country. The word 'racism' has to be contextualized and articulated within the frame of Rainbow. It means 'prejudice based upon a race or colour and from practices of discrimination and segregation as details of justice and human dignity.'[50]

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[50] For more details See *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*Nicholas Lossky, et.al, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991, p. 841.

The government and the institutions of governance must take action against those who practice racial prejudice. In our context, racism is to be seen and linked with economic and political exploitation. We are aware of the fact that centre-periphery dynamic operates and the states of northeast continue to be peripheral and thus remain totally dependent on the Centre. There are centres and peripheries within and between, including the northeast region, where some states are prospering and developing, while the others remain under-developed.

Further, racism embraces 'ethnocentric pride in one's own racial group and preference for the distinctive characteristics of that group; belief that these characteristics are fundamentally biological in nature … strong negative feelings towards other groups who do not share these characteristics, coupled with the thrust to discriminate against and exclude the out-group from full participation in the life of the community.'[51] So, racism in the Rainbow Republic is real and thus operates in covert and overt ways.

Racial prejudices are seen in many forms and thus cover many facets. These prejudices manifests in the manner of inter and intra, between and within. So, racism is entrenched at the root that creates binaries such as 'ME' and 'YOU', 'WE' and the 'OTHER', 'I' and 'YOU'. The 'OTHERNESS' is being defined and understood within a particular biological and cultural construct. Those who fail to fall within the classified and specified parameters are considered as the 'OTHER'. It is in this dynamic and framework racism operates in big and small ways. It is another form of domination centred on privilege. Those who practice racism think that it is their privilege and so provided with the right to unleash and practice racism against the 'other' and the 'underprivileged'.

Those who belong to other parts of the Rainbow Republic with racist mind-sets look at the people of Northeast differently. Of course they are

[51] *Ibid.*

different and will look different because they are racially different. Their complexion and features tend to be different. Their eating habits and cuisines can be scrumptious for some and repulsive to others. Their ways of dressing and mannerisms are different. Their dances and socialization processes may not be the same like others. Their cultures, customs, traditions and practices are distinct, diverse and obviously are different.

Within the Northeast we come across different ethnic communities such as Nagas, Mizos, Bodos, Garos, Khasis, Jaintias and others with diverse identities. India as a nation embraces diverse ethnic identities and this forms the Rainbow. Precisely because of these reasons it is called as a diverse country, Rainbow Republic and in that Northeastern region forms the perfect Rainbow. So, it is befitting that the jargon such as 'celebrating diversity' holds good. When we use the jargon 'celebrating diversity' we should understand the fuller meaning of it. It is a highly loaded jargon that calls for openness and greater awareness.

We proudly claim that we are unique because we are diverse which imply that in diversity we celebrate oneness. It is an irony that some of the happening that we came across reveal that select people singularly targeted that too from Northeast around the country clearly portrays that we are increasingly becoming intolerant to the 'OTHER'. If this is the scenario, then all our claims become a farce or even a jargon that contradicts our ideals. Invariably our actions have thus far proven just the opposite. If we continue to persist and push hard on 'I' or 'ME' and thus expect the 'OTHER' to be 'US' then it tantamount to racism which is counter-productive. The region northeast itself is a rainbow within the Rainbow Republic. It will be just a fascinating and beautiful exercise as we strive and endeavour and thus make an honest attempt to assimilate, appropriate and appreciate these diverse cultures by way of integration and accommodation.

As against the backdrop, the type of racism prevails in our country against the northeast people can be altered and eradicated. It is undoubtedly an alterable feature of human life. Certainly like slavery and other social manifestations of human constructions, those who are instilled with this type of attitude, mind-set and ideology will have to be countered. Racism has become a political ideology which is premised on social reality. It is interpreted in such ways that political and economic decisions are taken. We keep witnessing attacks on the people of northeast and we observe in those is the presence of power. As an ideology, the dominant groups exercise and impose their will and power upon others so as to exclude them from effective participation in decision making processes and in the process exploit them for economic gains.

Plurality of cultures is the hallmark of our civilization. When we say plurality it is the culture that plays the concomitant role. The centrality of our nation is not in 'Unity in Uniformity', but in 'Diversity'. It is in diversity we see the wholism, the fullness. Every community/race is distinct, and therefore is unique in its own right that needs to be acknowledged and appreciated. Claiming superiority over the others and by way of subsuming or appropriating the OTHER cultures within the dominant culture leads to cultural annihilation. Racist overtones of all sorts and in all forms shall by all means be contested and eliminated.

Northeast region splendidly displays the diversity and plurality of cultures and traditions. It is placed in a strategic geo-political landscape. The terrains posit the veracity of the region. Like others north-easterners are proud of their cultures and sensitive to those expressions that undermine their race, cultures and ways of living. They respect other cultures and other races. Likewise, they expect others to respect them. Continuance and furtherance of nefarious designs against the people of this region shall lead to the collapse of plural and diverse ethos to which we are proud of and cherish. The maxim: 'Live and Let Others Live' in a

landscape that has spaces for all. Region-based social and economic exclusion cannot go long way.

Added to these the region suffers from underdevelopment because the fruits of national growth have not trickled down to this region. This region has been neglected and suffers from total isolation and apathy from the Centre. Integration involves many dimensions. Integration means integral development. There are many sides to development and so all the sides be given equal weightage, failing which could lead to all sorts of turmoil paving way for disintegration. People are the means and end. Peoples' hopes and aspirations cannot be tested for long. They are the subjects of history and makers of their destiny. And so, they are the means and ends.

FOUR VARNAS OF BJP

One Book, One Religion, One Language and One Culture

Union Ministers and senior leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) seem to be thriving by making indiscreet statements that hurts communities belonging to other faiths and others who believe in the secular fabric of India. It has become a regular feature and a pattern for the BJP and its outfits such as RSS, VHP and Bajrangdal that makes all sorts of polemical utterances that creates controversies related to religion and secular credential of our country. For instance, Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj proposed that the Bhagavad Gita be declared 'national scripture'. By proposing Bhagavad Gita she did not enter into a discourse or debate about what should be the 'national scripture', instead prepared the stage for a communally polarised religio-political debate on a Hindu religious scripture. This is indeed a well-thought of and carefully devised strategy of the BJP.

It all started with the PM Modi who gifted a copy of Gita to a foreign counter-part during his recent visit and said that 'by now the secularists would be involved in making hue and cry'. To his surprise nothing happened. However, in order to keep the issue alive the external affairs minister followed it up. The BJP government at the Centre is regularly getting into trouble and has shown no semblance of being productive. The atrocious statement made by four-time MP glorifying Nathuram

Godse, Gandhi's assassin. The MP, a *sadhu* who has decided to become a leader, made the assassin famous, nationalist and a patriot for shooting an unarmed old man, a staunch believer of non-violence—venerated as Mahatma—called as the Father of the Nation. The entire country knows that this is the view of the Sangh which would create ripples and bring a stop to the proceeding of the parliament.

However, the other issue that surfaced recently is religious conversion. This is one of the major issues that have been irking BJP and Sangh Parivar for a long time since it concerns Hindus who gets converted to Islam or Christianity. So, conversion from Hindu fold to others troubled and disturbed the ultra-fundamentalists. Despite the fact that the numbers of such conversions today are very low in numbers, but certainly a worrisome factor for BJP's and RSS's ideology, vision and future. Keeping these intact and striving hard to revert the process, some days ago Muslims who were being supposedly converted in Agra, the former Mughal capital. The BBC reported that 'some 250 people had attended a *havan* (a basic ceremony). Most residents of the slum are poor, rag-pickers ... said that they had been promised ration cards (BPL) and other basic amenities by a local Hindu activist if they attended the event'.

For the ultra-rightists the whole act means a re-conversion to Hinduism, which they call 'home coming'. For the poor receiving money for the purpose imply: 'Money isn't God, but by God. So it's no less than God'. So, those who live in abject poverty and acute economic deprivation, money indeed are not less than God. Accordingly, the Dharam Jagran Samiti an RSS body is seeking donations for conversion – Rs 5 lakhs to convert a Muslim and Rs 2 lakh to convert to a Christian to Hinduism. Why is the difference? Has BJP's faith politics for sale? Its letter soliciting cash contributions claims that Christians and Muslims have become a 'problem' for the country and says, 'Bandhuwar (Friends) lots of money will be required in the 'ghar vapsi' because the

work of conversion is increasing – more workers and more people need to be covered.' It goes against the criticism of RSS and BJP of those Christian agencies and Muslim organisations that were/are involved in inciting and luring communities/individuals with cash or in kind. RSS is replicating the same strategy some of the Christian agencies and missions from abroad followed. The activities of the RSS in tribal areas have been funded by a US-based agency known as International Development Relief Fund (IDRF).

According to the Campaign to Stop Funding Hate, based in the US, 82 per cent of all IDRF funding goes to the RSS in India and 70 per cent of the monies are used for 'Hinduisation/tribal/education' work, aimed at spreading Hindutva ideology among tribals. The main focus of the RSS is the re-conversion of Christians. RSS, VHP and their outfits believe that re-conversion would lead to 'national integration'. This strategy paid dividends for the BJP – by increasing its influence in the tribal areas and by communally polarising the voters. Conversions activities among Muslims have been of low key and less publicised. Nonetheless RSS is deeply committed to bring them back to its fold. Re-conversion becomes mandatory for RSS and BJP because those who embraced other religions should 'confess' that their ancestors were Hindus which enables their return to the Hindu fold. RSS has allocated Rs.50 lakhs per month for conversion as well as re-conversion. In collusion with BJP, the BJP governments both at the Centre and the states abuse the government machinery by promising ration and adhar cards, and host of other incentives.

BJP is making deep inroads into different parts of the country that include West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Tamil Nadu. Kerala, parts of North-East and the pockets where the Dalits and the Tribals are densely located. Ultra-fundamentalists outnumber the moderates within the BJP. They do have a sway and form the majority in the current BJP govern-

ment at the Centre. For example, Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti who referred to all non-BJP supporters as 'illigetimate'; Giriraj Singh, who asked all opponents of PM Modi to go to Pakistan and Sanjeev Baliyaan, who stands accused of communal riots in Muzaffarnagar. Only Yogi Adityanath with his allegations of 'love Jihad' is yet to be accommodated. The government at the Centre allows openly some to indulge in reconversion; others to foment communal violence; a few to rewrite history and tinkers with the education system and the rest to keep trumpeting that the government is committed to inclusive governance and development.

Ever since PM Modi government assumed office, it is embroiled in a series of controversies over allegation of 'saffronishing' history, education system and language. Education has always been the RSS' prime target to 'saffronise' right from M.M. Joshi as HRD minister who asked the UGC to fund courses in Vedic astrology. Towards this end, it is Sanskrit which is yet again being used as the 'primary weapon'. The latest controversy to have hit the government is the recent order by Union Human Resources ministry to replace teaching of German with Sankrit in Kendriya Vidyalayas across the country. The move has indeed back-fired. BJP and RSS are firmly committed to the Hindu culture which for them its foundation is based on Sanskrit language. The RSS and Hindu fundamentalists want to expand the Sanskrit literature from less than to 5 five per cent to majority of the population because it is foundational to their claims of Vedic belief systems. BJP and RSS want to link the ancient language with a particular religion. The ultra-fundamentalists claim Sanskrit as pure, refined or perfect. Do they mean that other languages as impure and polluted?

In a world of rationality and logicality their claims posit irrationality and regressive thought-process. In conjunction to this, the HRD ministry of the BJP government has declared that the birthdays of former PM AB Vajpayee and Hindu Mahasabha leader Madan Mohan Malviya be ob-

served as 'good observance day' on December 25, which is the important festival for the Christians and others as well. Would the government dare to declare Dewali as a working day for schools or name the day as Inter-faith Day? To aggravate further more especially the Christians and the Muslims, the conversion ceremony of the Muslims and the Christians are to be held on the day of Christmas that too in the presence of the hard core MP BJP Yogi Adithyanath. The PM Modi has not addressed to these hate-speeches nor deterred nor stopped nor condemned these nefarious forces. PM Modi has been moulded by RSS ideology and thus started his political carrier as a staunch RSS cadre and so he uses other hard core leaders and MPs as his mouth piece. The real mask of BJP PM Modi is Hinduization of the Indian society and for that he needs the support of Sangh parivars.

Increasingly we keep hearing the voices of hatred and divisiveness that go all out to separate and divide communities. By words and deeds the Hindutva brigades spewing out ugly message to all those who do not conform to Hindutva' vision and idea of India. The BJP and RSS believe in cultural nationalism and so their stooges go all out against 'love jihad'. In the name of 'Indian culture' India portrays a mosaic of diverse cultures. India has always been a melting point of diverse cultures represented and characterized by diverse attires, cuisines, architectures, metaphysical and philosophical thinking, traditions, usages and cultural ethos. Now BJP and Hindutva outfits talk about one culture. Take for instance PM Modi and so-called the promoters of 'Indian culture': the way they and their children dress, the schools and colleges they studied and their children study, the way they think and the food they eat shows exactly the opposites.

Over a period of time Islamic and Christian cultures have spread through the breath and length of India, touching all sections of society and permeated into various spheres of our life. Who are these ultra-

rightists to dictate and classify some as Indian culture and others as alien? How can BJP, RSS and other cultural fanatics treat a cultural system—the livelihood of a nation—as anti-national? Debate and discourses should precisely be on this and not on who is a majority and who is a minority? The optimist in me continues to simmer with hope, resolve and resilience. As the tract record of the BJP government and its rampant fringe groups manifest total disrespect and callousness for an inclusive Indian society. The scenario that we witness is one of arrogance and intolerance of the ruling party at the centre.

BJP came to power on the plank and promise of 'development'. Did the PM Modi mean 'one language', 'one culture', 'one religion' and 'one book' as development? Now the nation should know that BJP's notion of development is not what Modi promised at the time of elections. BJP's conception of development has four varnas: One Book, One Religion, One Language and One Culture. All these varnas constitute BJP-RSS vision of a Hindu Rashtra. Hindu Rashtra is indeed diametrically antithetical to secular and plural fabric of India. For the majority of the Indians the Indian Constitution is the soul of India. Indian Constitution is the book on which the secular fabric, our ethos, ethics, culture, religion, language and host of others stand. Let us not speak about enacting anti-conversion laws which BJP and RSS are keen, but we should invoke Article 25 that settles all the debate: 'Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion.'

RACISM, CASTEISM & CLASSISM LOOMS

Rage from the Margins

Year 2014 is marked with many events, the good, the bad and the ugly. However, the human tendency is to sift and laud only the good. Countries and societies of the world keep boasting about the ways with which they achieved progress, growth, and prosperity. The leaders of the world point to the future embedded with all sorts of prospects terming as 'golden period' by assuring the people of good times ahead. The irony is, despite our claims as being rational and civilized, the landscape of our planet posit the presence and practice of racism, casteism and classism. These three categories glaringly loom in the 'civilized world' of the 21st Century. These human-devised obnoxious systems continue to regulate and regiment the people within and between nations as inferiors, untouchables, sub-humans and good for nothing. The visible manifestations of race divides, caste hierarchy and class connotations across the world are indeed antithetical to our claims as 'rational people' and 'civilized society'. The following paragraphs amply testify what has been said.

In August 2014, a police officer, Darren Wilson, pumped 12 bullets into an unarmed black teenager, Mike Brown, in a locale called Ferguson, a suburb in St. Louis County in Missouri, USA. 100 days later, a grand jury has given the verdict acquitting the police officer. The verdict

has infuriated protests across America. In the entire demonstrations one core message that caught the attention of many across the globe is: 'Fists Up, the Cops still Shoot'. Why are the African-Americans, so angry and outraged? The majority of the Afro-Americans considered and thus observed that the verdicts of the judiciary are unlikely to be fair in cases of black men and women who get killed by the police. A series of incidences reveal the naked truth of the American society which is premised on racism.

On July 17 this year, Eric Garner, a 43-year-old black father of six died after a New York police officer locked him in an illegal chokehold. A grand jury is yet to indict the police officers responsible for his death. A few weeks ago, 28-year old Akai Gurley was shot dead in Brooklyn as he descended the darkened stairwell of a housing block. He was also unarmed like Mike Brown, Eric Garner and Akai Gurley. In another cruel incident where a 12-year old boy, Tamir Rice, holding a toy gun was shot dead by the police outside a recreation centre in Cleveland on November 24, 2014.

Zeroing down to India caste does matter a lot as it has pervaded into all facets of Indian's psyche and in existential reality. Caste thus plays a pivotal role in the Indian society. The attitude towards caste is peculiarly schizophrenic one. As Louis Dumont in his seminal work *Homo Hierarchus* rightly pointed out that 'Purity' and 'Pollution' are the principal features of India's caste system, where the higher you go, the 'cleaner' or 'purer' you become. The lower you are in the caste hierarchy the 'dirtier' or more 'impure' you are. A few examples could perhaps strengthen the crux of the problem. In the month of October, 2014, 8-year old Santosh discovered when he went to Rudreshwara Swami Temple on Bazaar road in the city of Bangaluru. At the sight of the boy the angry priest bashed the little boy's head repeatedly against a pillar in the temple causing him to bleed. The priest suspected that the boy was a thief. Bhaskar Prasad, a Dalit Sangharsh Samiti (DSS) leader however

says that the boy was targeted because his parents were cobblers by profession and belonged to the scheduled caste (SC). The question that arises: Why would an 8-year-old boy go to a temple on a Sunday morning if he was not for prasadam? He was a poor boy and hungry.' As usual, Nelamangala town police station refused to register a complaint. Santhosh's father Sakabettaiah's thumb impression was taken on a blank piece of paper. Police denied they had even entertained such a complaint.

In line to the first one, Chief Minister of Karnataka Siddaramaiah did his early schooling in Higher Primary School in Kupergala village, 35 km from Mysuru where an incident took place in the month of November, 2014. A little girl studying in the same school refused to eat while other children had their mid-day meal on one of the afternoons since her best friend had not come to school that day. The girl belongs to Scheduled Caste and her friend, a Vokkaliga, belonging to a dominant caste. For about two months the Vokkaligas from the villages have not been sending their children to school because one of the three cooks preparing the mid-day meal is a Dalit. On one of the days 68 out of the school's 150 students were absent. Even the School Development Management Committee (SDMC) Chairma, Puttaswamy Gowda, from a dominant caste stopped sending his son to the school.

Dalits and Advasis are the most vulnerable and neglected sections of India who make up a significant per cent. From these sections quite a sizable number of people are languishing as prisoners in the Indian jails. Dalits make up 22 percent of prisoners where they account for 17 per cent of India's population. In most cases Dalits are targeted with false cases and thus face all forms of harassments and intimidation. Increasingly the Tribals from the Northeast are targeted in the big cities such as New Delhi and Bangaluru because they look different and their profiles do not conform to the specifications of 'Indians'. They are subjected to

verbal and physical attacks. Systematically they are ridiculed, abused and thus undergo psycho-somatic tortures with clear warnings that they should quit and get back to their domiciles.

Increasingly we see within and between a few families comprising of a tiny segment control almost all the production, distribution and consumption. They do control the economies of the nations and eventually world. They thus belong to a class determined by their colossal assets and wealth. By virtue of their economic power they enjoy status, privilege and prestige. The super-rich and the middle-rung classes belong to a cosy club. Classism is depicted in vulgar display of money manifested in their life style especially the ways they live, travel, marriages so on and so forth. These are the people who create the gap between the rich and the poor. Inequality is widening within and between countries leading to classism. For instance, US Federal Reserve Chief Janet Yellen was very much concerned over the widening gap between the rich and poor in the United States. Ms. Yellen said 'Income and wealth inequality are near their highest levels in the past hundred years' and have widened during the economic recovery'. While lamenting on the widening gap, she cautioned that 'In think it is appropriate to ask whether this trend is compatible with values rooted in our nation's history, among them the high value Americans have traditionally placed on equality of opportunity.' India and the others countries are no exception. The richest 85 people on the planet owned as much wealth as the poorest half of humanity. Interestingly Warren Buffet, the world's fourth wealthiest man openly admitted in a TV interview in 2011 that 'There has been class warfare going on for the last 20 years and my class has won'.

Our world is either gripped by all these three viz. racism, casteism and classism or combination of the two categories. In the United States and in parts of Western Europe racism and classism exists; in India casteism, racism and classism covertly and overtly operate; in other parts of the world either racism or classism or casteism or combination

of two is at work. While responding to the killings of the Afro-Americans writer Latoya Peterson pours out his feelings: 'Do I have to tell my son to accept being treated as less than human to preserve his life?' 'To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in rage almost all the time,' wrote the celebrated writer James Baldwin over half-a-century ago. It is not much different today, says McFadden: 'Fifty-three years later, the sustained rage restarts every28 hours because every 28 hours an African American is killed by law enforcement, or a security guard, or a 'vigilante' claiming self-defence' – or all three at once'.

'It could have been me, 35 years ago', President Barack Obama told his countrymen when in July 2013, a neighbourhood watch volunteer, George Zimmerman was acquitted of the charge of killing a black Florida teenager, Trayvon Martin, a year earlier. He urged Americans to understand the pain blacks undergo over the acquittals. Recalling his own experience of racism and racial profiling, he said, 'There are very few African-American men in this country who haven't had the experience of being followed when they were shopping in a department store. That includes me.' Columnist Gary Younge wrote: 'For far longer than it has been a 'nation of laws', the United States has been a nation of injustice. And in the absence of basic justice such laws can amount to little more than codified tyranny

American society is built on race, while the Indian society is marinated with caste. Every 30 minutes a Dalit woman is raped. It is a regular feature and has become a common phenomenon that Dalits either lynched or ridiculed or killed or their houses destroyed or ransacked. It is now abundantly clear that the visual and print media bring out the ways and means that racist profiling and overtones employed against the North-easterners. Further, racism is subtly practiced against those who

are on a darker complexion and classism is directed against those who are economically poor.

Even now in the 21st century the Dalits' terrains are called and designated as 'colonies' or 'cherries, while those belonging to 'upper-castes' termed as 'Ooru' or 'village'. In the United States usage of the terms 'white areas' and 'black areas' are common. All sorts of negative or derogatory attributes are being made against the Dalits and the Afro-Americans. Those Dalits who are languishing in the jails as under trials have been falsely implicated because of the fact that police force especially middle and top ranks are dominated by the so-called 'high castes'. These are the people who live in abject poverty, hunger and squalid conditions. America may boast of the abolition of slavery, but the legacy continues in other forms. American society functions on racism and the Indian society is regulated by caste system. So, we find great distrust among the Afro-Americans, the Dalits, the Tribals and the subalterns.

Americans may argue that racism has ended as they point out to Barrack Obama who became the President of the United States. But the irony is: If he takes up a position on any issues then the whites charge him: 'He is the black President and so he speaks for the blacks; if he reserves his comments, then the blacks retort: 'He seldom speaks for the blacks' or 'betrayed the community'. Barrack Obama is sandwiched and caught in-between. After the Ferguson incident, it is unlikely to see another African-American becoming the President of the United States in the years to come. People in the developed and developing world rationalise gradation of classes and reify class-based order. They do argue that class-based order is inevitable. Class is not just based on income, it adds to other paraphernalia such as education, accessibility and quality of life. The caste system is not just about organising society. It is an internalised system of ideas. 'Purity' and 'pollution' are not just principle of hygiene or the opposite, but determinants of social status. Will a Brahmin ever become a cobbler?

We live in the 21st century and call ourselves as 'rational' and 'civilized'. It is a sheer anathema to our claims. Nevertheless, those who dreamt for a world without race, caste and class divides relentlessly struggled and gave their life. Are the dreams of the visionaries such as Iyothee Doss Pandithar, B.R. Ambedkar, Martin Luther King, Jr, Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci and others who struggled for an inclusive world are alive in our times? The rage from the margins cannot and shall not be contained for long. The nation states with its brute force quell the uprisings, but how long. History reminds that the peoples' power, their resolve and resilience triumphs. People are the subjects of history. They are the means and ends.

The racists, casteists and classists in order to protect and further their interests use these mechanisms and thus effectively and efficiently divided the societies and world. We live in a world which is devoid of humanity, rationality, and civility. The systems that divide the communities and societies ought to be annihilated. Those who claim to be humane, rational and civil should strive for a better world devoid of these. These mechanisms and systems have been enforced upon of the Afro-American, Dalits, Tribals and others to oppress and subjugate. Sane and rational humans have always lived and live with rays of hope. It is that hope which sustains the oppressed and exploited for centuries. Let us be a part of and instruments for establishing a just, humane and inclusive world.

HINDUTVA + MODITVA = ‘GHAR WAPSI’!

It is a known fact that conversion is part of many religious tenets. Conspicuously, in Hinduism proselytizing is not part of it. Hence, Hinduism per se does not subscribe to it. However, for the past few weeks the topic on conversion has caught the attention of the media. The visual TV channels and the print media keep echoing on the issue of conversion. The debates in the TV channels and newspaper columns keep reporting about conversions/re-conversions of the Dalits, Tribals, Christians and Muslims to Hinduism. The fringe outfits of BJP call it as ‘home coming’. Consequently the ultra-rightists organisations are placed in the tight spot and want to wriggle out of it with some sort of justification. For the majority of the Hindus ‘conversion’ has never been an issue, but for the Hindutva groups and BJP is the issue and are bent on planting ‘Hindu Majoritarianism’ into the minds of all the liberal-inclusive Hindus, so that the project of ‘Hindu Majoritarianism’ be sustained and realized by invoking ‘home coming’ .

So, the basic question they ask is: If other religions can do it, why not Hinduism? The central issue for the BJP and its affiliates is: How to bring about conversion as part of their agenda and action? They need a rationale, discourse and legitimization to act upon. Their mission is to saffronize the country. In the initial phase they have been ‘successful’, but suffered a major setback where PM Modi’s Mission 44 in J&K crashed. Since then the Muslims, the Christians, the Dalits and the Tribals have been their targets. Subscribing to ultra-rightist ideology of ‘majoritarianism’ BJP and the ultra-rightists devised new mechanism vis-a-

vis 'ghar wapsi' as one way of getting into 're-conversion' debate and 'home coming' program.

Hindutva forces have constructed their logic around: why should Hinduism be barred from replicating what other religions have been doing all these years? For them inducements tantamount to 'coercion', and so Christianity and Islam employed 'coercive' means for conversions, and therefore, what is wrong in RSS, Hindu Munanni, Bajarang Dal and others dolling out 5 laks for a Muslim and 2 lakh for a Christian to get converted to Hinduism? Hindutva brigade and BJP assume that all conversions involve some sort of material incentive which is not true. They do not want to acknowledge that along with the change in an individual's belief system, it is also a well-thought decision to radically transform to one's social position.

There is no doubt that lots of money is being pumped from different sources for Christianity, Islam and Hinduism for conversion business. However, the lower rungs of society are usually targeted because of their socio-economic and educational backwardness. In the Indian society those who come from Dalit and Tribal categories by and large embrace other religions because of social stigmatization inflicted by Hinduism that ostracised these communities from the mainstream. Whatever may be the reason if individuals, families and communities wish to change their religion on their own accord: why should others be bothered? If someone wants to change their ideological/political affiliation from Congress to BJP or from BJP to the Left or to some other, we do not care. Likewise changing one's religious affiliation is left to that person's freedom, freewill and rights, and why these Hindutva forces bother? The recent discourse on 'conversion' irked many because of the fact that Hindutva brigade welcome others to embrace Hinduism, but when Hindus want to get converted to Islam or Christianity or some other a number of stringent clauses attached. Why these double standards – one for the majority and other for the minority?

The fringe elements want to somehow argue their case on conversion. How to go about and what is the best way to push their point of contention? Hindutva and Moditva combine constructed a novel term 'ghar wapsi' meaning 'home coming'. These fanatical groups are determined to get into this project because they feel threatened of the way people keep changing their religion from one to another and in some totally abdicating religion. They are worried about their ideological stance and political vision of 'Hindu majoritarian agenda' and 'Hindu Rashtra'. For the fringe elements at any cost they should be realised. This is why they are for an anti-conversion law to be passed in the Parliament. We should not fall prey to their nefarious designs. Our Constitution offers a number of guidelines and throws light to it.

When majority of the Indians is not bothered about conversion, why should fringe and minority ultra-right outfits are so worried? They are upset because of the derailment of their plans. Their intent and motive got exposed. If we connect various utterances, statements and speeches that the BJP and fringe elements made since May 2014 we would understand the real intent of these hate-mongers. This is why they did bring 'conversion', 'reconversion' and 'ghar wapsi' to the centre stage of our discourse today. Their contention will have to be viewed in proper perspective and thus be contextualised. For instance, take two incidences: 1) 'love jihad card' and 2) converting Christmas into 'Good Governance Day'. Both these symbolically have sent messages to the Muslims and Christians that 'we would decide what we want' and 'you have to follow by all means'. PM Modi is behind these moves clearly communicating 'cultural subservience' that the minorities adhere to.

Congress subtly, BJP openly and a few regional parties conveniently keep playing their vote bank politics with tokenism and symbolism. The politics of secular Vs communal, majoritarian Vs minoritarian, Indian Vs alien, swedeshi Vs vedeshi by pitching one against other is getting

sharpened and the contradictions are gradually getting exposed. What we have been witnessing in recent times should not be construed just as reaction to 'conversion' of the Dalits, Tribals and others from Hinduism to other religions, but be viewed as a sheer self-glorification of the Hindu right in India today. Further, Christians are no real threats because of their numbers and perceived as 'buckle and wilt under pressure'. They are 'peace loving' and 'amenable' and easily be 'handled' without much difficulty when compared to Muslims who number more and endowed with resolve and resilience.

The fringe elements after BJP's formation of government at the centre are all-out correcting the secular ambiance of the Indian canvass to Hindu ambit. They think that it is their historical task and responsibility to correct the blunder that has been caused by the secularists and modernists. Rationality and civility are kept aside or being put down by shouting and lynching those who ask for it. The classic example is *PK*. In the name of 'patriotism', 'nationalism', 'our land', 'our culture', 'our rule' and 'our way of living' these fringe out-fits resort to all sort of aggressive and intolerant behaviour and spew venom on those who ask for sanity and reason. Again Sakshi Maharaj, BJP MP has once again stirred a hornet's nest by saying all women must produce at least four children.

Addressing a gathering on the occasion of Sant Samaagam Mahotsava, he said, 'The concept of four wives and 40 children will not work in India and the time has come when a Hindu woman must produce at least four children in order to protect Hindu religion.' He added further that, 'Wait for some time,' he thundered, 'a law will be passed in Parliament in which anyone indulging in cow slaughter and conversion will be punished with the death sentence.' By covering another issue, he pointed out that 'ghar wapsi' was not equivalent to conversion.' On Ram mandir, he said, 'No power on earth can stop the construction of Ram man-

dir in Ayodhya.' For them, the BJP government has been extending tacit support.

Coming down heavily on minorities and others with all sorts'—physical and verbal attacks by the fringe elements has given rise counter-narratives. For instance, objecting strongly to the recent mock anti-terror drill in which 'terrorists' were made to wear skull caps and shout pro-Islamic slogans organized by the Gujarat police where the BJP governs, MMS leader Asaduddin Owaisi implied that deliberate attempts were being made to link terrorism with Islam. Addressing a big gathering in Hyderabad Owaisi said: 'The Gujarat police think that we should be afraid of practicing our faith. Why are you linking terrorism with Islam ... we are proud of our faith, we are proud of being Indian ...' Hitting hard at the fringe elements Owaisi elaborated that the real home coming was to return to the fold of Islam and invited the RSS and VHP to it. He added: 'We cannot offer you money as we have nothing. But we promise you success in this life and thereafter'.

He quipped that 'Every person who enters this world is Muslim. But circumstances and parents mould him into other faiths. You (Sangh Parivar) are free to disagree as Islam denounces the use of force.' Ridiculing the 'ghar Wapsi' conversion rate card of Rs 5 lakh for Muslims and Rs 2 lakh for Christians Owaisi exclaimed, 'Only Rs 5 lakh? What a joke! Prophet, Muhammad said that breeze is blowing from India. We are Indians by birth and by choice. We will not leave our faith even if the world were thrown at our feet.' Like this multiple narrative and counter-utterances would emerge from all quarters. Let not the fringe elements and BJP think that this is their country. This land has seen many diverse rulers with multiple faiths who ruled the country. This land has given rise to diverse faiths persuasions to be born, lived and flourished and others have been accommodated and respected.

Interestingly about 500 Hindus, almost all belonging to an intermediary caste known for vocal anti-Brahmanism embraced Buddhism at a special ceremony in Khanjapur village under Manpur block in Gaya district a few days ago. They also installed Buddha image at the village to proclaim their change of faith. As per reports, the conversions were engineered by a Lankan Buddhist missionary active in the area for more than 100 years and late Angarika Dhammapal, international known Lankan missionary led the revival movement at Bodh Gaya in 1891. It was Dhammapal who first raised the issue of Hindu control over Mahabodhi Temple, the seat of Buddha's enlightenment. The Buddhist missionaries organized indoctrination camps in Manpur area of the town to win over new converts. Most of the converts are said to belong to vegetable growing Koeri caste. A section of Koeris in the district has been boycotting Brahmanism for about 50 years and even the marriage rituals are performed by caste elders and not Brahmins.

As usual and as expected VHP state patron Udai Kumar Varma said that baptizing some people to the Buddhist faith does not amount to conversion. Buddhism is just another sect of the extended Hindu family and Buddha was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the preserver. We all know the past and what happened to Buddhism and other religions that were born, grew and threatened. Basically Brahmanic Hinduism has tendency to appropriate religions like Buddhism and interpret as if they all belong to extended family. The fringe elements and custodians of Brahmanic Hinduism should understand the reasons for leaving Hinduism.

At last although late a few Indian churches woke up. Church of North India (CNI), Roman Catholic Church and Salvation Army accused the PM Modi of extending 'tacit support' to 'ghar wapsi' program of saffron outfits, and thus threatened to take to the streets if the government does not impose a ban on the practice. The leaders of these churches candidly said Modi should give a clear-cut statement on 'ghar

wapsi' program. Substantiating further, the moderator of CNI said: 'Keeping silent on such a sensitive issue construes his silent approval.' All these leaders also added that they would hold a meeting by inviting all the leaders of the Indian churches by taking up the issue of conversions at the national level. During which, they added 'We will also write to chief ministers and governors of all the states regarding truth of re-conversion program.' However, when would other churches such as CSI, Baptists, Methodist, Lutherans and other independent churches join others and show solidarity with others?

Baffled with the growing criticisms and challenges the fringe elements continue to defend the controversial the 'ghar wapsi' campaign, BJP Kerala state vice president M T Ramesh said a few days ago that 'conversion of those who had left the Hindu fold is legitimate.' He added that 'Ghar wapsi' is not a new phenomenon. Converted Hindus coming back to their faith is a continuing process. If conversion is legitimate, reconversion is also lawful.' While making the most interesting point he add that 'Prime Minister Narendra Modi was not against 'ghar wapsi' and said 'People who wished to come back to their original 'dharma' will not face any legal or social hurdle.' We will receive such kinds of statements from the perverted mind-sets, but the struggle is on.

This type of frivolous and weird elements continues to make bizarre statements provoking minorities and other communities. We should never shudder and lose our resolve. This is our country and shall never bend to the dictates of the fascist forces. India has always been regarded as the converging point of all religions. People of diverse faith, cultures and spiritualties live with mutual harmony and respect. If the fringe elements ably supported by BJP continue to utter and act in irresponsible ways counter-narratives and counter-discourses will sprout. Once it goes beyond our control it will be very difficult to contain it. In such a scenar-

io people expect judicious governance and impeccable leadership. Do we have one?

RSS QUESTIONS MOTHER TERESA

Backing BJP? Not taking action?



It is cat and mouse play. BJP and RSS keep playing by uttering atrocious and damaging statements and then keep quiet. This type of game has been going on and on and on since BJP came to power in May 2014. On and off, the ultra-right fundamentalist organizations utter provocative and insinuating statements against the Christians and the Muslims leaving in between some breathers. They play the game with perfect coordination, impeccable rhythm, game rules and outcomes clandestinely worked out between RSS and BJP the two major actors that are involved. However, in this game they are other side actors such as RSS, Bajrang Dal, Hindu Munanni and Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP). Their game by and large involves uttering/making controversial statements against the Indian Christians and Indian Muslims and catch fishes in troubled water. All their utterances have indeed created insecurity and unease amongst the Christians and Muslims.

This time RSS's Chief Mohan Bhagwat picked a noble soul and made the most callous remark against Mother Teresa. His remark against Mother Teresa was unwarranted and has drawn lots of criticism and condemnation within the country and across the world. Mother Teresa, a Nobel laureate and a recipient of the nation's highest civilian

award Bharat Ratna is widely known as a symbol of sacrifice and selfless love; being praised for her relentless service to the weak and the neglected for many decades. She is no more and yet is now being questioned for her conversion motif. Mohan Bhagwat is known for his subtle games and cunning moves. Notably, she cared for the people and struggled to bring respect and dignity for those who were ostracized and neglected by the society.

Her philosophy was that the poor and the needy long for respect and love. So, she went all out by extending due dignity and self-esteem. She mocked the idea of conversion. She was vociferous in her belief that her notion of conversion was to make better Hindus, better Muslims, better Christians so on and so forth. More importantly, Mother Teresa had left to the discretion of individuals to find God and follow in whatever religion they are comfortable. She firmly believed that the moment they find the way vis-à-vis God it was up to them to followers to choose their own path. But the ultra-rights and the fundamentalists baselessly concoct all sorts of allegations by bringing Vatican and say that its sole purpose is soul-harvesting. Further, they say that she collected millions of dollars from all sorts of people for the purposes of conversion.

RSS should reckon with a fact that conspiracy theory does not work. The theories these fundamentalists create and float are baseless, illogical and without substance and material. More importantly, it is a well-known fact that Mother Teresa firmly believed in secularism and mutual co-existence of diverse religious and faith persuasions. A question that arises: Is RSS the supplier and provider of reason for Modi and BJP? The fringe elements have no other work, but keep inventing new theories and frivolous ideas such as Ghar Wapsi, Love Jihad and now Mother Teresa. These frivolous and lumpen elements have no productive work except creating division within and between communities. Let me raise a few questions: Is spreading the words of Jesus tantamount to conversion? If a Hindu priest quotes from Ramayana or Maharabharatha

or other scriptures, is he automatically involved in conversion? Mother Teresa was crystal clear in her view that once anyone found God it was better for him/her. Nevertheless, she was very much influenced by the words and works of Jesus Christ and so she in turn in her words and actions spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How is it spreading the Gospel of Jesus tantamount to conversion?

Who is RSS to question Mother Teresa? What is their *locus standi* on this? Mother Teresa was involved in the spreading of the good news of Jesus by showing love and respect to those who were deprived by cutting across the socio-religio-cultural and economic barriers and divides. She was following the foot-steps of Jesus and till her death she continued with unconditional love and unflinching faith in Jesus. If a Hindu priests quotes from the Hindu scriptures it is not conversion, but a Christian quotes from the Bible it is conversion. Why this double-speak and why double standards: one for Hindus and the other for Christians.

PM Modi employs double standards and wears two masks. Not even a week passed by PM Modi promised the minorities that he would not allow those who hurt the religious minorities and promised the Christian leaders that they would be protected and asked them to enjoy the freedom of religion. PM Modi and co is unwilling to contain the RSS! Why playing Jackal and Hyde. Is BJP backing indefensible and invincible RSS? Why is BJP backing, why is BJP not acting? It is a known fact that Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Urban Development Minister Venkiah Naidu categorically said that his allegiance to RSS cannot be questioned because he belongs to RSS and even PM Modi too confirmed his RSS leanings and PM Modi owes to RSS because what he is now is certainly due to RSS.

BJP is reluctant to condemn what RSS chief said. His statement is obnoxious and posits insanity. There is no use of pleading and always be at the mercy of PM Modi. BJP and RSS have larger game plan. Former

PM Atul Vajpayee's BJP government that ruled the centre 12 years ago was much stronger in governance than the present BJP government with 282 MPs. The present government is spineless because RSS chief Bhagwat is the boss and BJP should dance according to RSS tunes. PM Modi appears and disappears as per the dictates of the RSS. Nagpur is ruling and certainly not Delhi. Some fringe elements ask for the funds that Mother Teresa collected? Who are they to ask? Let the government and the departments involved should initiate if there is misappropriation or dubious deals and not these outfits. What then is VHP's budget? How much BJP received as part of international donations? All these prompt me to ask these fringe elements that they should clear their mind-sets. People voted for BJP and certainly not for RSS. Cleaning the lepers, rescuing children from the gutters and bins, helping the poor and the needy are considered as service. Taking a person or a community promising them they would get BPL card, Adhar card and others incentives are nothing but conversion. PM Modi should condemn it and should not back it. Who is the boss: Modi or Mohan Bhawat?

BJP is tolerating bigotry and venom spewed on minorities. It has lost its moral credibility and sense of governance. This government is not keen in pursuing development and growth rather interested in going after Missionaries of Charity. Not keen in bringing back black money stashed in European countries, rather keen in promoting ghar wapsi, love jihad and others. BJP is not interested in curbing corporate corruption, but encouraging people to taint the services Mother Teresa rendered to the global humanity. Does PM Modi have the courage to take on RSS chief Mohan Bhawat? PM Modi should condemn it, not back him. PM Modi is not Vajpayee because Vajpayee kept sangh parivars in their place and he concentrated on governance. PM Modi who is heading the BJP has no spine because he is accountable to RSS and other ultra-right outfits and not the people of India who elected him.

There is no depth in their logicality and rationality of sangh parivars. They only show their shallowness in their arguments. Mother Teresa clearly pointed out that people of various religions are saved according to their faith and beliefs. People believe in Rama, Allah, Jesus Christ or Buddha seeks their path for salvation. She never make their compelled anyone to embrace Christianity or get converted to Christianity but left to the individuals to make their own choice. Mother Teresa was keen in spreading Jesus' words and works in her words and actions. What is the problem? She had all the right to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Mohan Bhawat's utterance shows sheer ignorance and lacks depth.

Her actions symbolized the unconditional love and deeper spirituality. She was one amongst those who were unwanted, unloved and uncared. She embraced those who lived in squalid conditions, filth, sick, dying, orphaned and neglected. She in dynamics ways transcended all the human laid barriers and divides. For her religion never came in the way. She lived in a pluralistic context like India and thus served people from all persuasions. She was indeed a global humanitarian and served the global humanity with unconditional love and total dedication. There is no iota of doubt that Mother Teresa was associated in the spreading Jesus' self-giving, self-emptying and self-sacrificing love to all human beings irrespective of caste, creed, colour and race. What was wrong in it? Would anyone point with data and empirical evidence that Mother Teresa involved in conversion?

Mother Teresa is a symbol of simplicity, service, dedication and love. She cannot be constricted within certain frameworks and boundaries. She is global and continues to revered and imitated by many for her service to the world wide humanity. In such a context petty-minds think in small ways and do not see the worth of any person such as Mother Teresa. Now it is a proven fact that RSS is ideological mentor for BJP.

PM Modi we now know your game. Jackal and Hyde play can never go on and on. People of India have now understood your intentions. Minorities should never beg him asking for few protective packages. It is our right and he should respond failing which the struggle for our rights continues.

RSS-BJP programs intrinsically meant to divide the country on the basis of minority and majority. Like fascist Germany at the time of Hitler they tend to systematically attack the political parties that have the inclusive leanings and the Indian constitution which is entrenched on the ideals of secularism and socialism. Further, the sangh parivars' verbal and physical attacks on the Muslims and the Christians show their perversion and corroded mind-set. By making this sort of utterances they think that minorities and other secular parties would give in to their anti-conversion agenda and the passage of enacting a law in the Parliament be realized.

The secular minded people and inclusive Indians should never give-in to their ploy because constitutionally we have the right to proclaim and profess our religion. It is our constitutional right and nobody has the right to question. While on the other we should question BJP to enter into debates on national issues. It is apparent that BJP continues to duck to debate on important problems that our people are undergoing. For instance, take the recent bill on land acquisition that was tabled in the Parliament. BJP Government has been under attack by its allies and opposition parties on many aspects that seem to against the interests of the farmers.

In addition, BJP in its manifesto promised many things, but having come to power BJP has hardly translated except meddling with the constitutional guarantees given to the people of India. BJP-RSS and their affiliates keep adding more insults and appalling remarks time and time again. There is no reprieve from those who cause verbal hurt to people. PM Modi too seems to have given them the tacit support and approval to

them. The only option is to intensify our struggles thereby aligning with other secular forces thwarting these nefarious forces that come in our way.

THE STATUS OF THE CHILDREN REFLECTS THE STATE OF THE NATION



> ‘We do not inherit the world from our ancestors. We borrow it from our children’.
>
> — A Native American Proverb

Each and every citizen of this country dreams about India becoming one of world’s super-powers and economic hubs. Are these just dreams or tall claims? Does India have the potential and prospects of becoming the centre of global power? The dreams could perhaps become true provided the status of our children improves. However, as of now the state of the nation when compared to the status of our children shows appalling figures. They are disturbing and pathetic.

In 2009, the number of reported cases of polio in India stood at 741 children, more than any other country of the world. On January 13, 2012, India had successfully recorded one year without a single reported case of polio. We could proudly say that World Health Organization (WHO) appreciated India for having accomplished this herculean task. The pride and the laud get dissipated within a fraction of a second as we look into the big picture. Every year, India loses more than 14 lakh children under the age of five to diseases that are fully preventable through immunization. The cruellest fate for parents is to outlive their own children. Quite often this fate is reserved for the poorest segments of our

society. Parents who could afford premium vaccines do not depend on government sponsored immunization program.

Poverty and hunger contribute because those who are afflicted by these diseases have no means to treat or prevent them. Children who are afflicted with diseases such as diarrhoea and pneumonia need expensive ongoing treatments in order to save their lives. So the burden of childhood diseases on the poor only serves to worsen their conditions, driving them into intense poverty and debt. By and large parents with their limited resources try their level best to save the lives of their children, but invariably pushed to more debts and the treatment fails and eventually majority of the children die. Among those who live in the slum and in rural areas especially the Dalits and the Tribal witness the death of children under the age of five. This has become all too common. Precisely due to these reasons many name their children who have completed five years. India has become the site of nameless children. These are preventable diseases, and what is needed simple act of immunization that can save hundreds of children.

Healthcare in India is nothing but a long litany of insufficient resources and poor outcomes. GDP and other focused investments on health are way down as compared to other areas. So India falls way down the guidelines of WHO both in quantitative and qualitative terms. For example, bed density is low (less than 1.5 beds per 100 persons as compared to WHO guideline of 3.5), doctors few (less than 1.8 per 1000 as compared to WHO guideline of 2.5), and out of pocket spend high spend high (86% as compared to an average of around 40% for low income countries). Rural India lags even further behind, with around 30% of the rural population having to travel over 30 km for treatment.

Furthermore infectious and chronic diseases continue to prevail. Health indicators continue to lag; healthcare spending is growing lower than GDP growth. In tune to this, hospitals also have failed to translate better health care. More and more multi-specialty hospitals have and

thus catering to the rich and the poor continue to depend on government hospitals. States with more doctors have done better in health indices than the states that have better infrastructure. Doctor to population ratio had a far higher impact on infant mortality rate (IMR) or maternal mortality rate (MMR) than better infrastructure. To cite a few examples Tamil Nadu has few primary health centres (PHCs), one per lakh of population, as compared to Chhattisgarh and Odisha that have two PHCs is better placed in health outcomes.

Tamil Nadu has one doctor for 789 patients and an infant mortality rate of 21 and maternal morality of 97. In sharp comparison, Chhattisgarh has one doctor for 6,221 patients and witnesses 47 infant deaths for every 1,000 live births and 269 maternal death per 1,00,000 live births. Odisha that has one doctor for 2,500 patients, too, suffers from high infant and moth deaths. It has IMR of 53 and MMR of 258, respectively. Interestingly, states like Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu alone account for 42% of all medical colleges in India, thereby producing most of India's doctors. Not surprisingly, these states also have the best Doctor Population Ratio (DPR). These states show no shortfall of doctors at PHC level and have already met the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). At least three of the five – Kerala, Goa and Tamil Nadu – have IMR below 21. Incidentally, West Bengal has one of the highest per capita coverage of primary health centres – nine per lakh population. However, it has just one doctor for 1,508 patients and IMR of 32 while MMR is 145.

In comparison, North Indian states of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Chhattisgarh have very few medical colleges, a fact which reflects in the DPR. By and large, most states with poor DPR also had a relatively high shortfall of doctors at the PHC level. For example a state like Bihar has one doctor for every 2,785 people. This translates to IMR of 43 and a MMR of 261. When these numbers are viewed against

the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) target of 27 for Infant Mortality Rate in India by 2015, it becomes clear that these states need to act urgently to improve their performance in public health. All these parameters reflect clearly that the nation and the states should go beyond merely having doctors and invest in improving the quality of healthcare professionals in India. The Centre and the states should go further greater public investment in healthcare, and improve the quantity and quality of healthcare in India while reducing regional disparities. Along with these factors there should be efficient utilization of funds, good quality of human resources in health care and finally awareness among people.

Connected to ill-health is illiteracy and absence of quality education. With over 300 million students and 6.5 million teachers, India's education system touches most families. Parents face a number of problems in organizing education for their children. Increasingly it causes great concern for families. Nationally, nearly half the students who enter class 1 are out of school by Class 10. This varies across states – 77% in Assam, nearly 70% in Jharkhand and Rajasthan to a more manageable 16% in Himachal or about 25% in TN and UP. Dalits suffer a dropout rate of 56% and Adivasis 71% amongst the most disadvantaged sections in India. In villages over 51% of the poorest is illiterate and only a minuscule 0.4% goes beyond higher secondary. In cities, 42% of the poorest remain illiterate, just 1.5% complete higher studies. Incidentally, more than three quarters of schools in the country do not have fully equipped science laboratories for students in class 11 and 12 from a survey that stretched out to 2.4 lakh secondary and senior secondary schools. In other category where an integrated science module is taught to students, over 58 per cent schools do not have the required laboratories.

About 2.3 crore children in India, up to 6 years of age are suffering from malnourishment and are under weight. This staggering number amounts to over 28 per cent of the 8 crore children who attend anganwadis across. In Bihar, the proportion of under-weight children is

nearly 50%, Andhra Pradesh (37%), Utter Pradesh (36%), Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh (both 32%) are some of the other large states with a high proportion of children being malnourished. Delhi reported that a shockingly high 35% of the nearly 7 lakh children who attend anganwadis were underweight. This shows that the extent of poverty and malnutrition amongst the urban poor is comparable to rural areas despite all the advantages the cities. In all the north-eastern states except Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya, less than 10% of children were underweight children. Other large states with a comparatively low rate of malnutrition are Maharashtra (11%) and Tamil Nadu (18%).

The state of the nation is very much dependent on the status of the children. The state has failed translating health and education to the deprived and vulnerable communities. Majority of children in India have no access to quality education and health. In such an appalling scenario how could be talk and dream of India becoming one of world's economic and military super power. Children are nations' future and this segment is handicapped without quality education and health. A nation with poor health and literacy indices cannot dream and visualize a better future. The governments both at the Centre and the states should give more emphasis to these two sectors. Without these two the state of the nation could perhaps be termed as poor nation because society is obviously is sick.

These deprivations are reflected in multiple forms such as children working as domestic helpers, seen in two wheeler and four wheeler mechanic shops, dishwashers in hotels and tea stalls, helping the parents in the construction sites, rag pickers, maimed and turned into beggars, trafficked for a number of purposes. Children are precious and centre of everything. Exploiting them for human greed and selfish aggrandizement reflects sick and pervert mind of the society. Any civilization or culture or ethos is primarily gauged by the status of children. As of now

the state of the nation is in dire straits and so let us first talks about the status of children and then others will automatically follow suit.

TOWARDS CULTURAL HOMOGENIZATION

BJP-RSS Formula via Bans



Following Mumbai's ban on meat due to Jain festival, five more BJP-ruled states followed suit and thus ordered abattoirs, meat and fish shops in the state to remain closed during festivals, triggering a series of protests across the country particularly in the social media. Social media scathingly criticized the ban formula as *'shoving saffron agenda down people's throats'*. Shiv Sena and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) defied the ban on meat and chicken by setting up temporary meat and chicken stalls in their pockets in and around Mumbai. Speaking in the presence of BJP's city president Asgusg Shelar, Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray said his party will thwart attempts by any community to 'enter my kitchen'.

Appeasing one community as against the other has always been counter-productive and would lead to dire consequences. Less than 30 hours, *Saamna*, the Shiv Sena's mouth piece warned the Jain community against imposing its vegetarian code on others during observance of the Paryushan Parva festival. Urging Jains to live in peace and harmony with others in Maharashtra, it voiced, '…your financial empires will be nowhere if you sow enmity.' Over and above, it reminded in its editorial to the Jains that how Shiv Sena had 'protected' during the post-Babri

flare-up in Mumbai in 1992-93.It pointed out in write up that 'Our Gujarati-Jain brothers were safe because Marthis countered the violence of religious fundamentalists with violence. And the Jains then praised the violence which saved them.'

Echoing Sena's communally belligerent mouthpiece and its daily *Saamna* reported, 'Till now, fundamentalist Muslims were flexing their religious muscles. If Jains too want to follow the path of religious fundamentalism then God alone should save them.' It added that the community 'is indulging in uncalled for activities as it has wealth'. *Saamna* continued by saying that 'Muslims have their Pakistan, but you (Jains) have nowhere to go…You are an integral part of the larger Hindu cultural framework … Tell us if you feel ashamed to call yourselves Hindus.' Whereas *The Times of India* views the current ban in the following way: 'It makes no sense of ban meat consumption in an entire municipal area for several days on the ground that those days happen to be a fasting period for one community. Quite apart from the fact that the Jains, in any case, are not a meat eating community, why should all other communities deprived of their dietary preferences? Even if this has happened in the past, that does not make it right. A past wrong cannot be used as a precedent for unreasonably curtaining anybody's basic rights.'

Bans on red and white meats have been imposed in all the five-BJP-ruled state-governments. The Jammu and Kashmir high court ban on the sale of beef in the state hit the headlines. The state, because of its special status, has two penal codes, the Indian Penal Code and the Ranbir Penal Code, both of which have almost all sections in common except for a few. The 'meat ban' row has to an extent altered and further polarized the pockets of vote bank politics that the BJP, Shiv Sena and MNS desperately attempting to consolidate their community strongholds. It is predicted that the BJP in the aftermath of the meat ban crusade might lose a large chunk of Marathi votes, wherein the MNS would portray the BJP as a party of Jain builders and Gujarati traders 'Don't step into my

kitchen,' Sena President Uddhav Thackeray's one-liner has created ripples and thus made dent into the vote-bank pockets of the BJP. The votes are shared on community-caste-basis by these right-wing political parties in Maharashtra.

The arguments and views put forth by the politicians and some community leaders have no substance and so they are bizarre. Slaughter of animals and birds such as bulls, buffalos, calves, goats, lambs and killing of chickens are banned and sale of meat of these is prohibited. When asked, why the sale of fish is allowed, the response received: Once the fish is out of water it dies and so it doesn't go through a process of slaughter/killing. The levels of irrationality and illogicality have crept into the mind-set of some political parties. Bans are not a formula for modern age and India. India is not a banana republic and so bans are uncalled for. 'Ban wagon' is nothing but appeasing communities for vote-bank politics.

The High Court of Mumbai commenting and questioning the ban said 'Ban is whimsical'! Why there has been no ban on sea food and fish? The standard reason that is given slaughtering and sale of animal and meat during religious festivals of a particular community 'hurts the religious sentiments'! In India there are more than one religious community living and is a country of many cultures and many religions. If this is the fact when others are celebrating their festivals, observing fasts and so on, would the government ban certain things that do not subscribe to their religious sentiments? Political parties especially the Congress, BJP and others by imposing bans have shown their archaic mindsets clearly and clandestinely dividing religious communities with appeasement politics for their political survival. The core reason given at different epochs is: 'not to hurt their religious sentiments'. If it is so, how about others and their sentiments!

RSS being a cultural organization with political intentions is desperately attempting to bring India under larger Hindu cultural framework. Food plays the most vital and significant role in any individual, familial and community life. Since its agenda is to Hinduise and saffronise the country, banning the red and white meats so that communities can be polarized and in the process categorization between majority and minority be created. By creating divisions on the basis of religion and its food allowance and restrictions are demarcated and so RSS via BJP has initiated bans on meat slaughtering and consumption on festive seasons in five states.

RSS through the BJP deliberately wants to keep the people busy by side-tracking other major problems that the BJP government failed to deliver. RSS's main agenda is to homogenize Indian society via culture by categorizing religious communities based on vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism. Through this process, minority communities such as Muslims, Christians, Dalits and the Tribals automatically fall into minority and 'non-vegetarian' while Hindus fall 'majority'-'vegetarian' bracket. Within the broader cultural rubric of 'Hinduism', the RSS and the BJP, Shiv Sena, MNS and others wants to rope in Jains and Buddhists openly challenging and luring them to join their fold because they too belong to 'Hindu' fold. Parties such as Shiv Sena and MNS went to the extent of saying that the Muslims have Pakistan and Christians have the Christian West and what about you, the Jains! Mind-set of the fanatical political parties and organizations reached its lowest ebb. We are Indians and at no point and under any pressure we shall sacrifice our constitutional and fundamental rights. Views and justifications given for the bans reflect total irrationality and illogicality. REASON SHOULD PREVAIL.

BJP + RSS = PM MODI'S INDIA CLASHED WITH OTHER'S INDIA



BJP, RSS and other ultra-right fundamentalists consider 2014 as the year of the Modi wave; the year 2015 would have been the year of celebration and translation of PM Modi's promises and hopes to the electorates who reposed their faith on PM Modi. It was an unprecedented electoral triumph for BJP + RSS + Fringes + Modi. What happened during these 19-odd months when PM Modi's BJP government wanting to translate the hopes and promises he made have failed to clash with the grim realities of India, and so PM Modi's BJP Government is caught up with the new political challenges because of the growing gap between promise and delivery. Politically 2015 was a bad year for PM Modi, BJP and RSS, since BJP was decimated in Delhi b AAP and routed at the hands of Nitish-Lalu coalition in Bihar politics.

Year 2016 seem to have forged alliances of the like-minded political parties culminating into opposition political unity which could stump the BJP juggernaut. New alliances of the secular parties and political formations could pose more problems to BJP and PM Modi. In the year 2016 five assembly polls are due in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Assam and Kerala. Except in Assam, in other states BJP may not be the key player. If BJP wants to become a key player in the forthcoming assembly elections, it is time for the BJP central govern-

ment to bring together the nuts and bolts together for effective delivery. India continues remain the fastest growing economy among major countries, but growth has been slower than expected. Moreover, it is jobless growth. There has been a sharp fall in the exports and the banking sector remains under stress due to the problem of non-performing assets.

Someone metaphorically said 'Indian economy is now running like a car on two wheels, private investment and exports are lagging behind. More money is being spent on infrastructural development and new schemes but job creation and rural wage growth have not been paid due attention that would cause serious problems to the Government at the Centre. 2016 budget will be more crucial and the Government should deliver and cannot once again deflect its promises to the electorates and people of India by engaging in unnecessary wrangling with the opposition or by invoking divisive and sectarian problems. The year 2016 will be a critical test for PM Modi and his government. Last year was engulfed with issues such as bans, intolerance, review of reservation and bashing at minorities. So in different quarters debates on the concept of tolerance was highlighted, including award wapsi by many writers including the President Pranab Mukherjee who reiterated tolerance as the bedrock of Indian civilization followed by Naryana Murthy, Raghuram Rajan and leading cultural figures like Aamir and Shah Rukh Khan who delved into the inherent meaning of Indian-ness.

BJP + RSS = PM Modi's India revolves around Hindu Raj enmeshed in Majoritarianism. The entire 2015, the BJP + RSS + Hindutva Bandwagon spent on initiating divisive and hate politics between people and communities. BJP is gradually losing its grip with the masses and PM Modi has lost his popularity and the Indian electorates have come to know BJP + RSS + Ultra-rightists' ideology, mission and vision, while the majority of people view India differently which is antithetical to BJP + RSS + fringes. For them: In unity and tolerance lies the heart of India. The politics of hate, polarization, divisiveness and intolerance do not

represent the ethos and fabric of India. There are other issues that would create more problems in the year 2016 for BJP Government such as growing agrarian distress, escalating food prices, business climate seem to have been badly hit by the drop in commodity prices internationally including oil prices and centralization of power in the PMO have added to the government's woes.

More importantly, BJP's arrogance reflected in party's affairs where just a few decide for the party although it claims to be more democratic and transparent. Increasingly it is becoming more centralized and autocratic. Infighting and the differences keep surfacing openly by defiance when BJP lost miserably both the Delhi and Bihar elections. Sycophancy and cronyism have crept into BJP's corridors of power. PM Modi's image as a development icon that helped him to secure 282 seats and a 31% of vote share in 2014 seems to be be plummeting as the months and years pass by. Year 2019 may be little far away but the ways with which the BJP Government at the Centre functions cannot be ignored.

The 'beef' controversy and Dadri lynching raised serious questions about the BJP + RSS + Fringe politics. People across the country became restless and held national discourse on 'rising intolerance' that affected the image of PM Modi's government internationally and thus raising serious questions about his notion of 'governance'. PM Modi promised too many things to the electorates, but when it comes to translating the promises he is somehow hard pressed. People especially the poor and the vulnerable with high hopes voted for BJP particularly for PM Modi. It was PM Modi's face that gave BJP the astounding victory. The hapless and the toiling masses want their issues at least some the survival needs to be translated at the earliest. PM Modi on many issues has failed to walk the talk. Since there is an increasing level of centralization the government could not move swiftly. Due to high levels of

bureaucratization and centralization the schemes and programs announced for the masses are stifled.

BJP + RSS's idea of India is clashing with the idea of the majority. If BJP + RSS think that by polarizing and communalizing India on the basis of Hindu vs. others, it would certainly boomerang and is undoubtedly counter-productive. The idea of India is inclusive and all-embracing. Combining politics with religion that the Hindutva forces and other fringes involved with will lead to reductionist politics such as this is what 'Indian Culture', 'Indian way of life', 'Hinduism says'; then 'India belong to Hindus', Indians should eat only these, dress like this; study Sanskrit and astrology and number of do's and don'ts would not work in a free, democratic and secular nation. The politics of intolerance and hate could work for some time with some people, but not with the majority. Indian democracy has matured and becoming vibrant and dynamic. People of India want to live in harmony and peace irrespective caste, colour, creed and other barriers. It is this togetherness and mutual co-existence that enhanced our cultural and civilizational moorings to greater heights. Respecting all with one value, one person and one vote are the hallmark of Indian-ness. Indian Constitution has enshrined to its citizens democratic and egalitarian principles as part of basic and fundamental rights. Let not BJP + RSS + others tamper with it.

POLITICS OVER SUICIDE – CASTE IN NEW AVATAR – 21ST CENTURY INDIA

The suicide of Rohith Vemula, that happened on the 17th of January 2016, a research scholar belonging to an oppressed community, of Hyderabad University, was due to seemingly strong arm-twisting administrative methods by the university authorities and other powerful lobbyists that cause shock waves as well as abhorrence on the casteist avatar that resurged in places of higher learning. This horrifying incidence has evoked protests by students across the nation and condemnations of most of the political parties reached the state capitals and national capital as ministers of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Union government appear to be at the centre of the storm, not just the controversial vice-chancellor. Since FIR against some of the union ministers and a BJP-MLC and a leader of the ABVP, BJP.RSS affiliated student body and the Vice-Chancellor. They are booked under sections atrocities against the Scheduled Castes and Tribe including abetment to suicide.

Since a union minister is involved, and other BJP functionaries too implicated, the investigation should not be influenced by the political big-wigs. Whatever forms and shapes the case takes, the facts that have emerged as of present place Dattatreya, Union Minister of Labour and Employment and HRD Minister Smriti Irani, to poor light and in dire straits. In fact, the HRD Minister looks to be fast acquiring a reputation

for meddling in the affairs of universities and institutions of higher learning, breaching and flouting their independence and autonomy.

Rohith Vemula associated with a student body named after the Dalit national icon and the main architect behind drafting the Indian Constitution B.R. Ambedkar which was politically at logger heads with the ABVP whose one of its leaders complained to the Union labour minister that he had been assaulted by the Dalit students. Instead of allowing the issue to be settled at the university level, Dattareya, the Labour Minister wrote Irani, the HRD Minister, accusing the Dalit students of being casteist, extremist and anti-national—without any data and proof. The HRD Minister denies all these accusations, but her issuance of email and several letters stating that action should be taken against the five students (including Rohith) based on the complaint of the ABVP leaders. As against the backdrop Rohith Vemula who dreamt of becoming a scholar and writers resorted to an extreme step of ending his life. I am moved by Roth's letter that amplifies his dream and hopes that he wrote before taking such an extreme step that appeared in the Indian Express[52]:

> Good morning,
>
> I would not be around when you read this letter. Don't get angry on me. I know some of you truly cared for me, loved me and treated me very well. I have no complaints on anyone. It was always with myself I had problems. I feel a growing gap between my soul and my body. And I have become a monster. I always wanted to be a writer. A writer of science, like Carl Sagan. At last, this is the only letter I am getting to write.
>
> I always wanted to be a writer. A writer of science, like Carl Sagan.

[52] The full text of the letter can be read at: http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/dalit-student-suicide-full-text-of-suicide-letter-hyderabad/

I loved Science, Stars, Nature, but then I loved people without knowing that people have long since divorced from nature. Our feelings are second handed. Our love is constructed. Our beliefs coloured. Our originality valid through artificial art. It has become truly difficult to love without getting hurt.

The value of a man was reduced to his immediate identity and nearest possibility. To a vote. To a number. To a thing. Never was a man treated as a mind. As a glorious thing made up of star dust. In every field, in studies, in streets, in politics, and in dying and living.

I am writing this kind of letter for the first time. My first time of a final letter. Forgive me if I fail to make sense.

My birth is my fatal accident. I can never recover from my childhood loneliness. The unappreciated child from my past.

May be I was wrong, all the while, in understanding world. In understanding love, pain, life, death. There was no urgency. But I always was rushing. Desperate to start a life. All the while, some people, for them, life itself is curse. My birth is my fatal accident. I can never recover from my childhood loneliness. The unappreciated child from my past.

I am not hurt at this moment. I am not sad. I am just empty. Unconcerned about myself. That’s pathetic. And that’s why I am doing this.

People may dub me as a coward. And selfish, or stupid once I am gone. I am not bothered about what I am called. I don’t believe in after-death stories, ghosts, or spirits. If there is anything at all I believe, I believe that I can travel to the stars. And know about the other worlds.

If you, who is reading this letter can do anything for me, I have to get 7 months of my fellowship, one lakh and seventy five thousand rupees. Please see to it that my family is paid that. I have to give some 40 thousand to Ramji.

He never asked them back. But please pay that to him from that.

Let my funeral be silent and smooth. Behave like I just appeared and gone. Do not shed tears for me. Know that I am happy dead than being alive.

'From shadows to the stars.'

Uma anna, sorry for using your room for this thing.

To ASA family, sorry for disappointing all of you. You loved me very much. I wish all the very best for the future.

For one last time,

Jai Bheem

I forgot to write the formalities. No one is responsible for my this act of killing myself.

No one has instigated me, whether by their acts or by their words to this act.

This is my decision and I am the only one responsible for this.

Do not trouble my friends and enemies on this after I am gone.

(01/18/2016)

Based on six letters over a period of six weeks from the HRD Ministry to the Hyderabad University, five students including Rohith Vemula were suspended from the university and later expelled from the hostel. The fast track actions clearly show that the powerful Hindutva lobby at the Centre wanted to wilt the resilience and break the resolve of the dreams of the students belonging to the oppressed community with an abnormal speed track communication that ever witnessed in the HRD ministry. The right-wing ultra-rightists might think that they won by twisting the arms and wilting the resolve of the students belonging to the oppressed community. Through this vindictive act more and more resistance and protests will emerge from the oppressed people as against the dominant oppressors in the months and years to come. The oppres-

sors might have achieved whatever they wanted at present by forcing Rohith to end his life.

Undoubtedly, the oppressed community lost Rohith Vimula who had the potential of becoming a great leader, researcher and an organic scholar. The letter he wrote is indeed a living testimony before embracing death. However, the last letter he wrote needs careful exposition, analysis and interpretation. His letter is studded with bitterness, hopes, dreams, helplessness, despair, anger, frustration, resolve and resilience. As a young thinker who was aware of himself and the things around him in his letter unfolded the contradictions in him and around him. Being a science PhD scholar went beyond his discipline and thus conscious of the interplay between social, economic, religio-cultural and political forces and amazingly expresses the journey he made that pitches the hopes and agony he lived with. A small human frame in the name of Rohith Vemula carrying the human body burdened with multiple contradictions within himself and things around him.

Rohith Vemula was metaphorical and philosophical. He starts his last letter by absolving everyone but unpacks the deep seated growing gap between ‘soul’ and ‘body’ that fails to converge, but increasingly contradicts. Since these two never converged he became a ‘monster’ instead of becoming ‘human’. It throws open many things and diverse meanings to those who reads his letter. What does he mean or infer when he used the key terms ‘soul’, ‘body’ and ‘monster’? Did he infer his ‘body’ to India and ‘soul’ to constitution? The notion of India for him must have been inclusive that resonates in the Indian Constitution which is indeed the ‘soul’. In reality for Rohith Vemula both the body and the soul did not or could not converge. It is this he saw in his being leaving a huge gap that tore him to pieces and thus in the process became a ‘monster’. His riddle amazingly gravitates between ‘humanity’ and ‘monster’.

The idea of India is more inclusive and plural, but not divisive and exclusive for Rohith. Hailing from an oppressed community he did go through all sorts of shame and humiliation that split the ingrained humanity and thus made him to become a 'monster'. The agony and pain bottled up all through urged him to write this last letter that horizontally and vertically splits his notion of India. As I read and re-read his letter several times I feel the intensity of anguish and isolation he suffered with the mainstream India. A candid description of the Indian society that functions on the basis of the 'you' and the 'other'; the 'centre' and 'margin'; the 'touchables' and the 'untouchables' so on and so forth. Further, he wanted to become a writer but began and ended with this letter. As a research scholar in science he felt that he has been divorced from nature; living on 'constructed love'; 'coloured belief system' and 'originality validated through artificial art'.

His life was myriad with variety of existential experience that repeatedly and consistently hurt his very core of being. So he felt that it became truly difficult to love without getting hurt. Loving self and the others is a dialectic process which is mutual and human. In a society we live true ways of expecting love from other truly became difficult without getting hurt. Those who are ostracized and marginalized continue to live in isolation and exclusion should not expect love and if they expect should be prepared to get hurt. Rothith reveals the pathetic conditions of the caste-stratified society and thus weaves the intricacies and dynamics of the social structure we live in a matured way.

Then he articulates that reality of the Indian society that 'The value of a man was reduced to his immediate identity and nearest possibility. 'To a number. To a thing. Never was a man treated as a mind. As a glorious thing made up of star dust. In every field, in studies, in streets, in politics, and in dying and living.' As an Ambedkrite, Rohith believed in the value of the human as the highest value but in the Indian society the ostracized had no value and so the identity of a person had more

value than any other be it on streets, in studies and in every field and therefore the status of the Dalits was like a star dust or like dirt. Consequently, the Indian society is reduced those who come from oppressed background without any value and thus treats them as good for nothing. This is what James Baldwin says as the paradox of education: 'one begins to be conscious and the other begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.' It is true and should be taken more seriously.

By and large in the Indian Universities and higher education of research and learning the paradox that James Baldwin pointed out prevails blatantly. One section seems to be conscious of their social identity and the others have started examining and analysing the society they live in and around. In most of the major higher institutions/institutes of learning and research identity politics exists in the hostels and in the class rooms. To a larger extent the professors at the doctoral and post-doctoral research levels shows their prejudices and favouritism. Some of the Institutions and Institutes have become almost like 'suicide centres' and the University of Hyderabad is a classic example. Rohith Vemula was desperate to start his life but the Indian society has its dynamic and moved on its own pace. In such a context, Rohith Vemula narrates 'My birth is my fatal accident. I can never recover from my childhood loneliness. The unappreciated child from my past.'

Narrative of Rohith Vemula concurs with other oppressed people as well who too face similar treatment. Should the Dalits be treated because they are born as Dalits. Rohith Vemula's childhood was filled with loneliness and isolation. We live in an unequal world and the society treats Dalit children as someone sub-human, dirty and wretched. Vemula had not received any appreciation right from his childhood and came to the doctoral level because of his merit and hard work. The ways with which he and others hunted and hounded shows the wretched and

nasty mind-set of the dominant caste grouping. If this sort of things continues to happen more and more Dalits would enter into radical politics and radicalization of Dalit consciousness would continue to grow and no one can stop it.

Social exclusion has always been the strategy of the dominant caste people. Rohith along with others were excluded, secluded and denied of access in the campus. They had to spend most of the time on the streets. There are some theological colleges that characterize similar features as that of Hyderabad University campus. Dalits have not been treated on par with others. Social exclusion and discrimination continues in the campuses. Favouritism and well-oiled caste-hegemonic promotions are practiced openly. Those Dalits who pursue higher education (secular and theological) by and large belong to first or second generation. How are they treated? Some of them due to financial and 'academic pressure' from the dominant categories had to discontinue. And those Dalit who excel better than the dominant caste groups have been targeted by the professors in subtle ways. So, basically the so-called 'high castes' do not want young Dalit scholars.

Let me bring the excerpts of Shiv Visvanathan an eminent sociologist of our country who wrote a piece to Rohith as he was moved by Rohith Vemula's last letter as a tribute entitled *Rusticating dreams:*

… You wanted to write and you felt the desperation of not writing. You wanted to write like Carl Sagan and travel to the stars. Yet, you felt that the magic of writing was still an impotent wish. Sagan had dreams of a different kind – of astronomy, of life on Mars, dreams which he expressed with words that added a literary touch to astronomy where number and distance acquired a touch of intimacy. To write lika Sagan was a dream-like vision because astronomy and science fiction went beyond the everyday darkness of politics. Every reformer battling odds needed a second, even a third self to sort out the utopias in him. Your

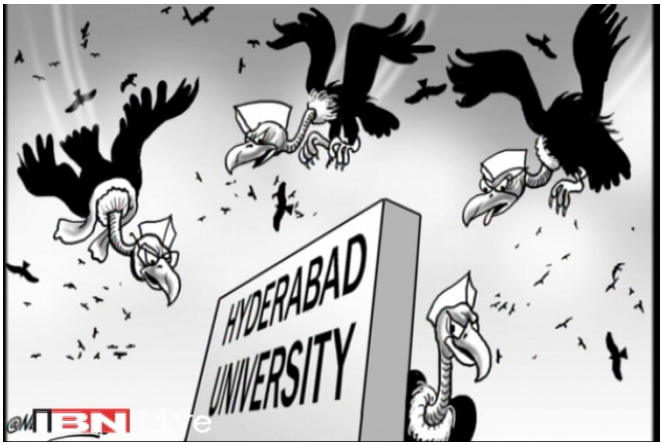
dreams were not limited to the world of the backward class alone but the worlds yet to come.

One senses that beyond the stars the mystique of writing haunted you. For you, it was not politics that screamed of impotence. Politics only reeked of corruption. It was not being able to write. One senses you felt the act of writing inside you, experienced the textures of thought that link word and feeling. Writing haunted you and for you a book, a manifesto would have been the beginning of liberation. You understood the meaning of the book and one must pay tribute to that. Reading and writing are the dream of a university. One must have sensed your feeling of loss that you lacked a room of your to write. All we have now is your lost note and your silences. You died in silence in a season of literary festivals. I hope next year that they dedicate a special session to the sense of the writer in you. I cannot wave you as a flag. I wanted to see you as friend, wished to see as a person – who wanted to preserve his individual self, who 'wanted to be more than a vote or a number' who felt he had 'never been treated as a mind'. Sociology you felt, could not exhaust you, because you know you were 'a glorious thing made of stardust'. Yet you were part of the community, its politics. But your letter warns people not to stereotype you, collectivise you. You were lonely and along, and yet a part of many collectives, drawing your inspiration from many a group. Your dream is not a dream. It is a dream of all dreamers can share and in invoking the citizenship of the dream and the commons we call protest, you have a chord, becoming a tuning fork for the unfilled dreams of today. Your silence became a symphony of the unsaid and the unfilled.

Yet your text, the letter, the fragment you left behind meant so much. It was your first and yet final letter. It is a toast to life, which mentions the lives lost in you. You did keep the vision intact without your belief

being coloured, 'untouched by filters of artificial art'. I hope they name a star after you. That much the world owes you.

I have never met you. But your absence will haunt all the universities I know. One hopes the university stops being a rusticator of dreams. Shiv Visvanathan rips open the way the Indian universities and those head our educational system: 'You and I know how universities function. They are bureaucracies which forget to pay scholarships, but demand research reports regardless. They are hypothecated to politicians who decide the fate of students. Expelling five students who are from the backward classes makes little difference, especially when a regime classified you as cateist, extremist and anti-national – three stigmas which have become three signs of grace. It is a pity that no report told me what your thesis was about … I would have loved to talk to you about it. You have dealt with vice-chancellors and ministers as dictators, and I sense your helplessness and humiliation at being suspended unfairly and treated without dignity because you were an easy target. Your vulnerability colours the place … Bureaucrats forget that the hostel is more than a residence, a locality; it is home, refuge, it is community, a student utopia … By denying it to you they were eating into your vulnerability.'







Indian educational system is caught up in the malady of deep-seated casteist mind-set. Those who head the Universities and the politicians who govern the apex educational bodies have tinted vision and see through their caste lens. The BJP and its allies through AVBP want to control and regiment the Indian Universities. The death of Rohith Vemula and the protests across the country clearly portrays the intensity with which the saffron politics has crept into our Indian educational system particularly higher levels of learning. To dismantle a contrarian view and a bunch of students who oppose the saffron and Hindutva

politics Union ministers along the Vice-Chancellor and the AVBP their student wing connived and went all out to crush the spirit of an opposing student body resulting in the suicide of a bright young scholar.

The saffron and casteist agenda have been exposed now. BJP-RSS and its allies should know that the idea of India is bigger than what they conceived; notion of democracy is much larger than them and for the sake of justice and equality young India like Rohith Vemula are prepared to pay the price. Rohith Vemula had to pay the price and killed by the heinous and fanatic caste system that has no moral fibre and spine. Rohith Vemula's untimely demise has generated more ripples and evoked the consciousness of the oppressed people. He has kindled the spirit to struggle, protest and agitate against the forces of oppression and exploitation.

NAGASAKI REMEMBERED

70 Years since the Nuclear Attack

Few days ago the global humanity observed the dropping of the first atom bomb on Hiroshima. Today we are commemorating yet another one—second atom bomb dropped on Nagasaki. Japan had to face the brunt of it. Nagasaki informs us many things. Apart from remembering, it is important for all the thinking and rational people to introspect and ponder over across the board by going deep into the aftermath. These two atom bombs were dropped and exploded. From the perspective of the allied forces the evil will have to be crushed and eliminated at all cost. The allied forces justified by informing and thus acting that if left unchecked the evil forces would take over the world and so the only option left was to drop two atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Accordingly they carried out and the war came to an end.

These two episodes happened seventy years ago. So, some may ask and leave it with a question: So what? While others will get engaged by probing not just the reasons but also the consequential impact and what is to be done now. It happened 70 years ago and by next decade most of the survivors of the atom bomb that blasted spewed nuclear radiation and particles within the vicinity of city of Nagasaki may not be there. So these historical conjectures shed light to us. History tells us many things, gives us valuable information and teaches us where we went wrong. We learn from history such as how empires, colonial powers, the powerful

rich countries acted on different fronts and different epochs. So we learn from history and that learning should not lead us to commit the same mistakes or wrongs.

Precisely because of these reasons, year after year, decade after decade, we remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The narratives and stories of the victims are nerve wrecking, hair splitting/chilling and mind boggling. Their stories and sufferings are repeated again and again so that the present and future generations would be careful and do not rush to speedy decision-making process. Those who are suffering have nothing to do with the then Japanese administration that went for World War 11. They are not party to that decision. But the irony is they suffer of no fault of them. Suffering goes on and on of varying intensity and magnitude.

As soon as the atom bomb hit the ground of Nagasaki there was heavy explosion. After some time the left side skin was peeled off and the rib and the muscles were scooped. The dress he was wearing vanished. There was no bleeding of blood and pain. His heart was hanging near the ribs. It took several decades and yet his heart is not in the place where it should be. A number of stories and narratives of the survivors are told and retold time and time again. Human memory is short and we tend to forget. Therefore, these stories and their narratives help us to be cautious and responsible. They are all ordinary citizens of Japan. Their consent may not have sought before waging the War. What wrong did they do and why should they face such difficulties? Why should they undergo such suffering for which they have not been anyway responsible? When nations go to war or wage war the political authority/establishment take decisions on behalf of the people should be responsible.

Conservative estimates state that more than a lakh of people would have died. Some say that at least 70,000 had lost their lives. The atomic bomb that fell completely devastated the city of Nagasaki. The city of

Nagasaki was in ruins. Those who escaped the catastrophe suffer different side effects. Horror of nuclear destruction has been horrendous. Nations of the world should remember the devastating effects of nuclear weapons. It is not resurrecting the city of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by constructing roads, buildings and infrastructural facilities and telecommunications. Japan emerged from the ruins of the World War 11 and now one of top five industrialized and post-globalized nation. Nevertheless, the episode that happened 70 continue to linger in the memory of many. It shows human callousness and arrogance.

What is the use of achieving modernization, industrialization and globalization when we have before us the faces that suffers because of the rash actions of some other? Nuclear bombs are our creation and that creation 70 years ago propelled us to commit that action. We responded to it and dropped that atom bomb not just once but twice to display to the world that whoever has the piles of nuclear arsenals will be the world's mightiest power. Once any country acquires nuclear missiles, nuclear facility and nuclear arsenals and war heads could frighten its neighbours and world at large. This message is spreading across the world and so to counter it we need to bring in the stories and narratives of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Nagasaki resurrected the conscience of the people of the world to strive for peace. Discourses should not be between nuclear Vs non-nuclear, but nuclear-free and non-nuclear world. Nuclear weapons should be abolished. The graphic description of the survivors' stories and powerful images moves us to work for peace. Pursue peace and work towards realizing a world without nuclear weapons. Value of peace has become imminent and important as against the horror of nuclear devastation. Sanity should prevail by sending strong messages to world leaders to strictly monitor and enforce stringently non-nuclear treaty in letter and spirit. Production and sale of nuclear weapons by the

powerful countries should be questioned and stopped. On the one hand we talk about non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and missiles but those who are saying continue to get involved in the production and sale of these weapons.

Nagasaki should be our last and no more. Let us take pledge in this direction. NO MORE HIROSHIMA AND NO MORE NAKASAKA. We should join hands with those who are advocating hope for a better world. Once we are free from nuclear threats it is clear that there is all the possibility of free world without any nuclear threats. We have the will that should be exercised for a world without any intimidation from the nuclear powers. The present world will have to give guarantee to the future generations that the sanity of the present prevails and triumphs over irrational and hasty action.

HIROSHIMA—A REMINDER AND A WARNING TO THE PRESENT AND FUTURE

History teaches many lessons to us vis-à-vis the good, the bad and the ugly. Some of the historical events keep surfacing because they are to be re-told, re-looked, remembered and re-viewed. Historians interpret the events that happened through their own ideological-political prisms. Are the interpretations of the historians of important and most significant events that happened and humanity experienced objective? Can history be objective without any colours? Should history be seen without any bias and prejudice? Undoubtedly history is myriad with interpretations, but certainly unfolds many things as years, decades and centuries pass by. History should never be interpreted at superficial and peripheral levels, but be sifted and probed with clear methodological considerations and universal normative principles.

70 years ago, Hiroshima was devastated and pulverized by the United States of America dropping an atom bomb on Hiroshima. The act of the United States has altered the global techno-strategic framework in an inexorable manner. The pounding and devastating effect of the bomb marked the end of World War 11. The United States of America categorically and vociferously claims that the use of atom bomb and dropping the same in Hiroshima was inevitable and indispensable for the comity of nations and the global humanity to stop the evil powers that kept advancing. Justifications and legitimizations to dropping atom-bomb to save the global humanity have been going on for decades.

However, after 70 years how do those living in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and other parts of world perceive the actions of the United States now?

It is indeed a blessing and we are fortunate that the world has thus far not seen any country involved or any global power exercised or any one attempted or experimented so far by using a nuclear bomb over the last 70 years. The tract record of these seven decades seem to good, but in between some of the countries keep threatening to use the 'nuclear facility' to destroy a country or group of countries. Given the global scenario the strategic re-alignment of power equations configures and re-configures be it NATO or regional power blocks or the multi-polar polarizations for strategic reasons. However, it is uncertain that the world could look forward to the next decade with similar degree of confidence and hope.

The world we live is so fragile and the 'probability factor' in the following decades cannot be ruled out and the trend seem to be not benign as developing and under-developed countries spend millions and billions of dollars and major portion of their moneys for the purchase of armaments and nuclear arsenals. The cold-war scenario came to an end after the disintegration of USSR. The United States claiming its unipolar status and omnipotent privilege is fast receding. The strategic alignments and arrangements are taking place within the regions and between countries. Still 'nukes' are considered for the security of nations and so massive build-up happening despite the fact that monitoring process goes on. Nevertheless, many countries having piles and piles of nuclear weapons and armaments because of certain privileged status and powers. C. Uday Bhaskar analyses the current scenario clearly that Hiroshima let the nuclear genie out leading to technological advances by increasing the lethality of nuclear warheads that would strike with precision at the targets. The super powers have warheads ranging from diminutive suitcase bombs to monstrous mega-tonnage hydrogen bombs

(100 times the power of Hiroshima) with the super-powers controlling more than 95% of the global arsenal.

Global comity of nations could not enforce arms reduction and nuclear disarmament in substantive and significant ways. The nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty seem to moving on at snail's pace and some of the countries such as India, Pakistan and others continue to defy and breach NPT. Currently the global nuclear weapons is estimated at 15, 695 warheads. The US and Russia own with more than 7,000 each account that accounts for 93%. The others are: France (300), China (250), the UK (225), Pakistan (120), India (110), Israel (80), and North Korea (below 10). As against this scenario what is to be done and what would be the grammar that becomes meaningful and apt. Having piled up nuclear arsenals the developed countries want the next 'catching up' countries who resist signing up NPT black mail the countries that have piles of nuclear armaments and so all the countries jointly sing chorus 'deterrence' 'deterrence' …

The post-Cold War reality is that nuclear weapon is perceived as the greater equalizer and asset. Most of the developing countries believe that once nuclear power is achieved automatically economic power follows. Hence, almost all the countries of the world spend their major chunk of GDP on defence. As we commemorate 70 years of Hiroshima it should become synonymous to disarmament of nuclear arsenals rather than accumulation of nuclear weapons. But the reality is rather distressing and disappointing. The future is bleak and not that promising. Managing nuclear weapons should be the highest global priority as of now. Hiroshima continues to illumine and thus warns the present and future generations about the consequential effects of nuclear arsenals and weapons.

Hiroshima is a pointer and thus teaches the most serious lesson to all of us: be it the present and the future generations. Nuclear arsenals shall not make a nation or nations more powerful and could make it or them

super-power (s). No nation would like to disarm and dismantle its nuclear programs or facilities, rather want to preserve and further their programs and facilities. Instead they should equip the populace in the areas of human development indices (HDI) and should make them more proud in literacy, skills, health parameters and enhanced per capita income so that they improve their quality of life. Invest in people, rather than investing in nuclear arsenals and building. The World Wars 1 & 11 continues to remind us the sagas that the humanity faced and faces even now. The present and the future depend not in weapons, but in peaceful co-existence and quality of life that each and every global citizen enjoys here and now.

AMBEDKAR AND GANDHI

Dr B.R. Ambedkar's Quest for Social Justice: Introspect and prospect

Introduction

Dr. Ambedkar's understanding of social justice is scattered and ubiquitous, to the extent that one cannot firmly locate or pitch him within one concept or a monolithic concept of social justice. Yet he cannot be avoided in a discussion of social justice and to arrive at his understanding of social justice it is appropriate to see the inter-connections, linkages, inter-play and the dynamics within and between his various concepts of social justice. Such an exercise would, further unravel the contradictions that are embedded in our caste-ridden and caste stratified society. For Dr. Ambedkar societal justice as an integral and interdependent concept and category ought to start by critiquing the notorious and heinous SYSTEM of CASTE because it is the base of our overall structure that regulates other organs of our society for the last 3,000 plus years. The system of caste is intrinsically woven into and pervades all the facets of our society. In this sense, caste system is the regulating principle of our society on which other sub-systems revolve around. Hence, caste is real and existential.

By looking into the historical trajectories, the maze of issues that surround the Indian society and the ways with which various problems are addressed and the country is governed, the concept of 'Social Jus-

tice' articulated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar assumes great relevance and importance at this juncture. Therefore 'social justice' i.e., *'Samuga Needhi'* continues to illumine and ignite new meanings and kindle fresh ideas as time goes by. And certainly, it is none other than Dr. Ambedkar who has translated the concept of 'social justice' from theory to praxis and contextualized pertinently on the canvas of the Indian societal terrain.

B. R. Ambedkar's Legacy

The pivotal role played by Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar has left an indelible mark on the social tapestry of the country since Independence, and ripped open the socio-economic, religio-cultural and political contours of India to-day. India would have been entirely a different country if not for him. Dr. Ambedkar portrayed the underside of India's reality by exhuming the deepening inequities and glaring injustices. He relentlessly struggled and single-handedly fought by forging India's moral and social fabrics together and built a political order and civilized governance of constitutional democracy. Because of the constitutional safeguards and guarantees introduced under his leadership, those who are socially ostracized, politically disempowered, culturally silenced, religiously polluted and economically weak are protected and benefitted. He had an extraordinary brilliance to nuance the concepts as well as to de-construct theories in order to negotiate and mediate the material world.

By synthesizing the theory-praxis-theory process Dr. Ambedkar's works showed intellectual clarity and practical brevity. In his scheme, dogma was made redundant. His philosophical, ideological and epistemological orientations and constructions showed sheer pragmatism. He was well versed in all the areas of humanities, economics and jurisprudence. His vast and critical knowledge of socio-politico, religio-cultural

and economic problems such as the caste system, the pernicious practice of untouchability, poverty, the manipulations of religious dogma and creeds, economic deprivation and legal bottlenecks and ramifications and a host of other issues made him the most widely acknowledged scholar, organic intellectual and messiah of the 'untouchables' of his time, and his stature among other vulnerable communities and progressive intellectuals have grown over the years. He had shown his critical faculty by de-constructing the Indian social and political history and in the process opened-up counter-discourses that revolved around the so-called 'untouchables'.

Dr. Ambedkar handled a variety of subjects and traversed some of the most difficult topics brilliantly. His experience as an 'untouchable' and exposure to liberal education helped him to enhance his horizon of understanding and contributed to his intellectual acumen in specialized areas such as comparative religion, history, constitution, economics, politics, anthropology and law. All his writings have been meant not for literary purposes, but for transformation and change of the socio-economic, politico-religious and cultural segments of India. His methodology has always been multi-disciplinary and composite. The grip he had on diverse subjects made him to comprehensively deal with any subject authoritatively and resorted to various modes of expressions such as dissertations, documents, research papers, statements, briefs, memoranda, documents, disputations and investigations as he was involved in different aspects of public life.

Undoubtedly he was different and distinguished himself from others. The written world during his time was monopolized and usurped by the Brahmins. Ambedkar countered the Brahmins with his written submission before committees and commissions in areas like Hindu scriptures, jurisprudence and others. Dr. Ambedkar was a voracious reader and a prolific writer. He had meticulously planned the outline of his own texts

and critiqued those sources that he considered inimical to his perspective, such as the *Manusmriti*, with coherent arguments and logical progression. One of the most striking elements worth mentioning is the way he nuanced wide ranging concepts. In the process, by de-ciphering and de-constructing the hidden motives he challenged them with counter-perspectives by de-mythologizing the content and meaning of the text. Dr. Ambedkar dealt with different types of concepts by situating them within the context-specifics. He also skilfully contrasted them by simplifying the concepts with examples and counter-symbols. With examples and illustrations Ambedkar demolished the concepts of the dominant that appeared to be justifying the actions of the dominant categories.

Dr. Ambedkar is one of the most prominent and distinguished personalities of all time on three counts: First, he was a distinguished scholar, social revolutionary and statesman—a rare combination we seldom come across. The range of topics he wrote and dealt with covers the width of vision, depth of re-search, sophistication of analysis, rationality and humanism and made him different from others then and now as well. Second, all his writings, speeches and deliberations echoed and reflected the raw material that undergirded his convictions towards finding a lasting and permanent solution to the Indian society: be it the question of minorities, reorganization of states, partition, constitution or the political and economic framework of India, reservation or annihilation of caste. His razor-sharp analysis and solutions to numerous issues baffled others. The third distinctive aspect was the intensity with which Ambedkar raised questions which disturbed many and made them uncomfortable. With his argumentative ability he made them to accept the crucial issues that the dominant caste categories had scuttled and pushed under the carpet as non-issues or as if they were non-existent. He lived in a period marked by events which ultimately shaped the political, social and economic fabric of our country.

Justice in the Context of India

The term 'social justice' is frequently used in the academia, administrative, political and judicial circles more than ever in recent times. Many tend to use this term without knowing what the term really means. However, people generally use this term in different contexts, for different contexts and for different purposes. When asked to explain, the response we get by and large is vague and too simplistic. Therefore, before embarking on Ambedkar's notion of 'social justice', let me delve into the conceptions 'justice' and 'social justice' independently by going through its conceptual and definitional derivations. The quest for social justice has always been in motion and runs throughout human civilization. In such a situation, the approach to 'social justice' could start from the standpoint of justice. What then is justice?

> 'Justice' … regarded … an important social virtue … Later, when the 'rule of law' was established … identified with the observance and enforcement of the law. Justice then was interpreted as protection of legal rights... As such, justice came to be defined in terms of right-dealing necessarily involving the moral principle of right doing … the principle of equality under the law became the hallmark of justice… Aristotle said: 'justice is equality, as all men believe it to be quite apart from any argument'. But the idea of equality plays an essential part in the scheme of justice only in the sense that all individuals are entitled to an equality of consideration … True, justice demands equality of treatment … The conception of justice as the equal treatment of all persons except as in equality is re-

> quired as social necessity, is in incomplete conformity, to the just-making consideration of justice.[53]

The term 'justice' did undergo a series of definitional and conceptual variations and even now some are into it. Right from the Utilitarian's to Rawls' Theory of Justice to Sen.'s the Idea of Justice, the meaning and content of justice have changed drastically. At the same time, when it comes to 'social justice' out of many, the following articulation on 'social justice' seems to be comprehensive and adequate:

> Hierarchical societies cannot have the conception of social justice which finds a natural place in the primitive societies. The reason is simple: these societies are driven by in-built differences of the superior and the inferior. They have a defined social hierarchy which legitimizes the structures of inequality … The function of justice then is to preserve the existing hierarchy, rather than to provide the criteria of social reform … Justice in these societies is so conceived and so implemented that it always serves to maintain the existing order of inequality. It stabilizes social hierarchy in the interest of the social order it legitimizes as fair and just … Radical or drastic options to bring about equality are conveniently avoided in the interest of the 'order' which the people in power want to protect and preserve. Our (the Indian) conception of social justice is more or less of the same order.[54]

Whenever we enter into discussions or debate on 'social Justice' Dr. Ambedkar's scathing critique of the Hindu religion that accommodates more than two-thirds of the population within its castes and sub-castes is

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[53] S.P. Srivastva, 'Towards Explaining the Concept of Social Justice' in Mohammad Shabbir (ed.), B. R. Ambedkar: Study in Law and Society, New Delhi: RAWAT Publications, 2008, pp. 28-29.

[54] *Ibid*, p. 40.

important. The caste system poses serious problems to the society per se, with regard to its integration, unity, progress and development. Therefore a close study of Hindu society reveals that caste forms the inner citadel of Hinduism. It is the anchor of Hinduism. The outstanding features of Hindu society are: '1) Segmental division of society; 2) hierarchy; 3) Restriction of feeding and social intercourse; 4) Civil and religious disabilities and privilege of the different sections; 5) Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation; and 6) Restrictions on marriage.'[55] This is the context that we need to look into. In this context, Ambedkar's in-depth analysis of Hindu social and religious order clearly delineates that the roots of 'untouchability' and discrimination lies in social and material sub-structure of the Hindu social and religious order. Hence, Ambedkar firmly believed that,

> 'Hindu observed untouchability and caste not because they are inhuman or wrongheaded. They observed caste because they are deeply religious. People are not wrong in observing caste … In my view … what is wrong is their religion, which has inculcated this notion of caste … If this is correct then obviously it is the enemy, you must grapple with, not the people who observed caste, but the Shashtras, which teach them this religion of caste. Criticizing and radicalizing people … is a futile method of achieving the desired end. The real remedy is to destroy the belief in the sanctity of Shashtras … how do you except to succeed, if you allow the Shashtras to continue to mould the belief and the opinion of the people … Shashtras and the people will not change their conduct until

[55] A.M. Rajasekhriaqh, B. R. Ambedkar – The Quest for Social Justice, New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 1989, p. 5.

> they cease to believe in the sanctity of the Shastras on which their conduct is founded.[56]

To this, Ambedkar suggested that 'To agitate for and to organize inter-caste dinners and inter-caste marriages is like forced feeding brought about by artificial means. Make every man and woman free from the thralldom to the Shashtras, cleanse their minds of the pernicious notions founded on the Shashtras, and he or she will inter dine and inter marry, without your telling him or her to do so.' [57]

India's Caste-Stratified Social Milieu

In Ambedkar's view the root of the problem of untouchability is the system of caste which is legitimized and reinforced by Shashtras and the social relations governed by the caste system is to be replaced by the one based on equality. It is in this context, Ambedkar favoured the social philosophy of Buddha which in turn would help to restructure the social, cultural and political relations to promote common good and well-being of majority of people. This is why,

> 'Ambedkar is critical and relevant. Notwithstanding the current academic notions of nuances and subtle distinctions and criticality, even today, the dalit social reality is regrettably black and white. To emphasize the critical importance of caste Ambedkar remains unrivalled till date. The issues and problems of dalits were presented as they were and still are in India, in Ambedkar's account. However, his description of dalit reality is not paralyzing, despite the horrific and inhu-

[56] Quoted by Sukhadea Thorat and Aryama (eds.), ambedkar in retrospect – Essays on economics, Politics andSociety, New Delhi: RAWAT Publications, 2007, p. 16.
[57] *Ibid*.

> man reality within which Dalit lives are confined. Ambedkar provides an enabling, emancipatory and liberating schema, an egalitarian vision and a promise that has remained largely unfulfilled. Ambedkar's critical analysis of Hindu social order and the hold it had over the masses was unmasked layer by layer, through the sophisticated and nuanced analysis that marked his writings. His insight about its operating ideological mechanisms and day-do-day machinations that sustains the Hindu social order emerges in a clear and concrete terms in his accounts. Nuances and subtle distinctions cohere in the systematic treatment that Ambedkar brings to the topics and themes he took up during his lifetime.'[58]

In conjunction with the above quotation Ambedkar critiques the four-fold division of the society as described by Manu, the ancient Hindu law-giver. The Varnashrana arrangement recognizes the principle of division of work based on birth as the basis of social organization. It pre-supposes that a man's or woman's occupation as well as his or her social and economic status, is determined by his/her birth alone. According to this doctrine, once you are born within a Hindu fold there is no exit and you should remain in a caste essentially. Hence,

Ambedkar's understanding of caste and the caste system underwent certain significant changes over the period of his writings. Initially he had argued that the characteristic of caste was endogamy superimposed on exogamy in a shared cultural ambience. He suggested that such evils as sati, child-marriage and prohibition on widow-remarriage were the outcome of caste. Further, if a caste closed its boundaries other castes were also forced to follow suit. The Brahmins closing themselves socially first gave rise to the system of castes. Ambedkar continued to empha-

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[58] *Ibid*, p. 19.

size the endogamous characteristic of caste but roped in other features such as the division of labour, absence of inter-dining and the principle of birth which he had earlier largely absorbed within endogamy. He also found that the caste name is an important feature which keeps the solidarity of caste intact. He increasingly argued that graded inequality is the normative anchor of the caste system:

> 'Graded inequality restricts the reach of equality to members of the caste at the most. Ambedkar thought caste is an essential feature of the Hindu religion… the vast majority of Hindus breaking the codes of caste is a clear violation of deeply held religious beliefs.'[59]

As against this backdrop, Dr. Ambedkar's conception of social justice is broader and comprehensive because he captures the meaning and content in totality as against India's caste-stratified social milieu. He looks into all the dimensions and facets of our society. He was totally against the Brahmanical Hindu social system because of its antagonism towards Shudras and the 'untouchables' for the following reasons:

1. graded inequality between the different classes;
2. complete disarmament of the Shudras and the untouchables;
3. complete prohibition of education of the Shudras and the untouchables;
4. ban on the Shudras and untouchables occupying places of power and authority; and
5. complete subjugation and suppression of women.[60]

In view of this, he suggested the following:

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[59] Valerian Rodrigues, The Essential Writings of B. R. Ambedkar, New Delhi: OUP, 2002, p. 26.

[60] Surendra Singh, 'Dr. Ambedkar's Contribution to Social Justice' in Mohammad Shabbir (ed.), B.R. Ambedkar_____, p. 81.

1. There should be one and only one standard work of Hindu religion acceptable to all Hindus and recognized by all Hindus.
2. Priesthood among Hindus should be abolished.
3. No ceremony should be allowed to be performed by a priest who does not hold a legally valid *sanad*.
4. Priests should be servants of the state and should be subject to disciplinary action; and
5. The number of priest should be legally limited according to the requirements of the state.[61]

He was coherent and logical while dealing with the Indian social structure. In his scheme of analysis he maintained that 'the root of untouchability is the caste system, and the root of the caste system is religion attached to Varnashram; and the root of Varnashram is the Bahmanical religion, and the root of Brahmanical religion is authorization or political power.'[62] For him, Shudras and the 'untouchables' in Hindu Varna system were worse than slaves. He was very clear in his writing that,

> '… in slavery the master at any rate had the responsibility to fee, clothe and house the slave and keep him in good condition lest the market value of the slave should decrease. But in the system of untouchability, the Hindu takes no responsibility for the maintenance of the untouchable. As in any economic system, it permits exploitation without obligation. Untouchability is not only a system of unmitigated economic exploitation, but it is also a system of uncontrolled economic exploitation. That is because there is no independent public

[61] *Ibid*.
[62] *Ibid*.

> opinion to condemn it and there is no impartial machinery of administration to restrain it. There is no appeal to public opinion for whatever public opinion there is it is the opinion of the Hindus who belong to the exploiting class and as such favour exploitation. There is no check from the police or the judiciary for the simple reason that they are all drawn from the Hindus and take the side of the exploiters.'[63]

Because of the oppressive and exploitative character of Brahminical Hinduism coupled with the Brahminical social order, Dr. Ambedkar exhorted Shudras to embrace any religion other than Hinduism as he vociferously exhorted that 'I was born as a Hindu and shall never die as a Hindu'. Accordingly, a few months before his demise he embraced Buddhism along with his followers. To dismantle untouchability, Ambedkar proposed for a 'secular status based on the principle of 'one man, one value, and one vote, instead of socio-religious or ritual status.'[64] Towards this end, he organized protest marches to create public opinion. In his opinion social justice can never be realized without the eradication of untouchability and caste system. The reason for all the problems whether it stems out from social, economic, cultural, religious and political conditions is either untouchability or the caste. It is because of this fact that each of these problems has a caste dimension and its implications are disastrous for the untouchables, social outcastes, economically slaves and politically handicapped. Along with these as an addendum he added as that the caste system continues for centuries because of the subjective prejudices such as purity-pollution, touchable-untouchables, we the citizens and you the aliens, self and the other and so on. For its sustenance and endurance is its materials bases, that are being reinforced and sanctified by the Hindu religious scriptures. Like

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[63] *Ibid*, p. 82.

[64] *Ibid*, pp. 82-83.

other discriminations, the prejudices, attitudes and biases are deeply entrenched and internalized. For example, To begin with, the caste system played an ascriptive role inasmuch as it allocated economic functions in society … The unique feature of the caste system, however was that it assigned an occupation not to an individual but to a group of individuals. A particular individual was to undertake a particular occupation just because he belonged to a particular group, by birth.

But that is not all. The effects of birth-based occupational arrangement on different castes was entirely opposite in nature. It proved to be a divine privilege of the upper castes to enjoy the exclusive rights to education, industry, trade, commerce and so on. On the other hand, it spelt disaster for the lower castes. This is because the latter were assigned to take involving only 'menial labour'. Thus, absence of freedom of occupation, low earnings, implicit restriction on needs and stigma on menial labour destroyed the economy of the lower castes. They came to be wholly dependent on the upper castes for bare subsistence.[65]

Democracy and Social Equilibrium

According to Dr. Ambedkar, democracy means 'a form and method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed'.[66] His desire was to dismantle the contradiction ushered by economic and social inequalities. The principle of one man, one vote and one value engrained in political democracy should also be accompanied in social democracy reflecting similar principles. What he implied was that the

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[65] See Bhalchandra Mungekar, 'Quest for Democratic Socialism' In Sukeda Thorat & Aryama (eds.), op. cit, pp. 133-134.

[66] Quoted in I.S. Vidyasagar, Concept of Humanism of Dr. Ambedkar, Jaipur: ABD Publishers, 2005, p. 142.

freedom of the people is not automatically given by the state because the power of the state and its machinery were concentrated and controlled by a particular class of people and their status was based on birth and not on the capabilities and calibre of the people. He condoned that the very vibrancy of the Indian social life had been eaten by the religious dogmas and creedal expressions and the societal functionality was based on graded inequality and difference. He writes that 'It is common experience that certain names became associated with certain notions and sentiments which determine a person's attitude towards mean and this, the names Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudras are names which are associated with a definite and fixed notion in the mind of every Hindu, the notion is that of a hierarchy based on birth, so long as these names continue.'[67] In such a situation where disequilibria prevails Ambedkar gives a fitting response:

> 'The second wrong ideology which has vitiated parliamentary democracy is the failure to realize that political democracy cannot succeed here there is no social and economic democracy … To those who are disposed to question it, I will ask a counter-question. Why did parliamentary democracy collapse so easily in Italy, Germany and Russia? Why did it not collapse so easily in England and the USA. To my mind there is only one answer. It is that there was a greater degree of economic and social democracy in the latter countries than existed in the former. Social and economic democracy are the tissues and the fibre of a political democracy. The tougher the tissue and fibre, the greater the strength of the body. Democracy is another name for equality. Parliamentary democracy developed a passion for liberty. It never made even a nodding acquaintance with equality. It failed to realize the significance

[67] *Ibid*, p. 143.

> of equality and did not even endeavour to strike a balance between liberty and equality, with the result that liberty swallowed equality, and has made democracy a name and a farce.'[68]

While talking about social justice, Dr. Ambedkar was crystal clear in his postulates that unless and until there is equality and equilibrium both in the social and economic dimensions, the so called 'parliamentary democracy' is bound to fail because according to him '… parliamentary democracy has never been a government of the people or by the people and why it has been in reality a government of a hereditary subject class by a hereditary ruling class…It is because of this parliamentary democracy has not fulfilled the hope it held out to the common man of ensuring to him liberty, property and pursuit of happiness.'[69]. This is what democracy entails. Dr. Ambedkar read different types of 'democracy' and carefully analysed and brought out clearly what should constitute our discussions when we talk about democracy. His analysis goes deep into the functionality of democracy by unmasking a superficial view of it by making it clear that constitutional morality, exercise of franchise and conducting elections would not suffice democracy. It is much more than that. The ruling classes cannot hoodwink the vulnerable and the exploited in the name of 'democracy' for long. After sometime it would become counter-productive and farce. When it fails to address and resolve the socio-economic disequilibria, democracy whether parliamentary or representative or participatory, would as Ambedkar predicted, result in what happened in some of the Western societies. The same would also happen in India. However, he was the firm believer of parliamentary system of government that takes into account and addresses glaring inequality in the society. There must not be an oppressed class

[68] Valerian Rodrigues, The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar, op. cit, p. 62.
[69] *Ibid*, p. 63.

and suppressed class and two classes juxtaposed as one privileged and the other carrying all sorts of burdens. If these conditions were met then democracy would function effectively.

Dr. Ambedkar was a firm believer of equality, fraternity and liberty and this trinitarian unity he weaved in the form of socialism which was context specific.

> 'The idea of socialism to be realized according to Dr. Ambedkar is one man, one value in all walks of life, political, economic and social … (which) is to be achieved by stopping religious economic and social exploitations in any form … socialism does not only embrace economic equality but also social and political equality.'[70]

His views of state socialism to a large extent echoes collectivism. Following are the essential features of Dr. Ambedkar's socialism:

> 'First, a condemnation of the existing social, political and economic order as unjust, second, an advocacy of a new order based on one man one value are one vote, third, a belief that this ideal is realizable in state socialism and parliamentary democracy, four, the conviction that immorality of established order is traceable to the attitude of Hindus and to corrupt social institutions, five, a program of actions leading to the ideal to be achieved through constitutional means only, and six, a revolutionary will for establishing social democracy to carry out the program of social solidarity.'[71]

As pointed above, Dr. Ambedkar was the first Indian political thinker who came out clearly that the Western pattern of democracy would not suit India and proposed an entirely new paradigm. He opined that,

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[70] I.S. Vidyasagar, Concept of Humanism of Dr. Ambedkar, op.cit, p. 189.
[71] *Ibid*, p. 191.

'For the successful function of democracy there must be statutory provision to mitigate the suffering and to safeguard the interest of the suppressed and oppressed people, the society must be based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity in order to ensure social endosmosis.'[72] He also believed in opposition, vetoing power and that those who are elected every five years must be subjected to a scrutiny by the people and they should decide their continuance. Another noteworthy point he suggested was that of equality in law and administration. He had repeatedly remarked that 'Democracy is not only a form of government but the way of life though which social justice can be established, social justice demands that society should promote the welfare of all and not merely the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Otherwise the interests of the majority might gain precedence over those of the minorities.'[73]

A Constitution for Social Justice

Dr. Ambedkar's exposition on social justice has been comprehensive. His ingenuity was shown in the way in which he had synthesized the economic, social, judicial, constitutional, religious, political and cultural dimensions by integrating and inter-weaving all these aspects in his interpretation and usage. He gave a fillip and new horizon of understanding keeping in mind those who were at the bottom of the social order. For him, the primary locus of social justice was to remove all inequalities and provide equal opportunities to all in social and economic realms. His proposition was original authentic and relevant to our situation and therefore his proposal showed preferential options for the

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[72] *Ibid*, 192.

[73] *Ibid*, 193.

[22] See P.S. Lathwal, 'Dr. Ambedkar's Concept of Social Justice: Contemporary Relevance-oriented Analysis' in Mohammad Shabbir, B.R. Ambedkar – Study in Law and Society, op. cit, p. 102.

Dalits and the oppressed people in terms of equity, equality and fraternity surpassing the dictates and assumptions of the utilitarian's proposal of 'greatest happiness to greatest number' which they considered the key to the meaning of social justice and *Laissez faire's* doctrine which emphasizes for a place of social welfare and common good.

The architect of the Indian constitution, Dr. Ambedkar, keeping the disadvantaged, disenfranchised and disempowered in mind, guaranteed to the citizens of India justice implying social, economic and political rights. Towards this end the state takes the responsibility and thus pledges to maintain the dignity and decency of every individual and assures all the basic necessities of life, namely food, education, health care, shelter and quality of life. Therefore, 'Social justice takes within its compass millions of people living a life of want and it destroys inequalities of race, sex, power, position, wealth and brings about equal distribution of social, political and material resources of the community. Simply defined, social justice is a balance between social rights and social control.'[74] The cardinal principles that are enshrined in our constitution and the very essence of the constitution have not been fulfilled effectively because of poverty, hunger, illiteracy, malnutrition, ill-health, homelessness and millions of people living in squalid conditions and unemployment. These are the crucial issues that are manifest in diverse forms and haunt our society both in the rural and urban milieus. The constitution is clear in its mandate of equality and has urged the state to bring socio-economic equalities to all without any discrimination and exception.

The framers of our constitution devised ways and means to remove social and economic inequalities, oppression and exploitation of the marginalized and discriminated people of society by incorporating in the constitution rule of law, equality before law, the present of independent and autonomous judiciary without any intervention, safeguarding the rights of the minorities and vulnerable and those who do not have any

status and power in our society. Our constitution is almost a social document because it is based on social justice to all without any distinction and difference and social, economic and political aspects are its key features. What Dr. Ambedkar had envisioned in and through the constitution was that

> '"… it embodies the desire of every members of the house and this constitution should have its roots, its authorities, its sovereignty from the people." He believed in the principle of one man, one vote, and one value. Affirmatively and positively speaking, "we the people of India" in the preamble mean we the poverty stricken people of India who are a forgotten specimen of humanity, thousands of contract labourers, the real makers of modern India, thoroughly exploited by their fellow human beings. Constitution is made in the name of millions and for the millions, but not for the millionaires… Self-respect, social equality, human dignity and fraternity… were incorporated in the preamble of our constitution.'[75]

The preamble of our constitution clearly reiterates securing to all its citizens – justice, liberty, fraternity and equality ensuring dignity of all in a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic India. Even after 60 years of being a Republic and an independent nation, millions of people belonging to the subaltern category have not realized and appropriated social justice. Nevertheless, it is the central focal point and the primary goal that is well-defined and articulated in the preamble of our constitution. Due credit should go to Dr. Ambedkar. One classic example Dr. Ambedkar strategically devised was by incorporating the emancipation of women within the constitutional framework. He not only wanted to

[75] *Ibid*, p. 103.

ensure social equality between man and man but also equal status and dignity between man and woman. For example,

> 'He criticized the traditional and conservative values and made Manu, the Hindu law giver, responsible for the decline of the status and dignity of women in India. "According to him, egalitarian principles prevailed during Buddhist period and it was a revolutionary act on a part of the Buddha and to the Buddha to having allowed women to take sannyas or parivraja (nunhood) as a member of sanglra; under the Brahminic theory women and shudras were not eligible for knowledge and thus, for sannyas. In allowing women to become Bhikkunis (nuns) the Buddha not only opened for them, the way to liberty he also allowed them to acquire dignity independent of sex?", thus the effort of Lord Buddha was the beginning of the revolution and liberation of women in India. Dr.Ambedkar championed the cause of women as well as the miserable plight of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes throughout his career. He discussed a number of problems for Indian women and sought for their solutions in Bombay legislative debates. His arguments on the maternity bill and on birth control were quite relevant to recognize the dignity of women.'[76]

Dr. Ambedkar was undoubtedly a rationalist. For him reason and empiricism played a major role in all his debates, discourses, contestations and polemics. He was the ardent critic of superstitious beliefs, customs, usages and traditions which were used as a means of exploitation and oppression of the Dalits and other subaltern people. In order to dismantle these rituals and practice he empowered women giving them equal rights in the political and social domains and bringing changes in

[76] I. S. Vidyasagar, Concept of Humanism of Dr. Ambedkar, op. cit., p. 194.

favour of women under Hindu Marriage Act. Likewise, he strived for political equality and vigorously argued for social and economic equality. His concept of social justice is an ideal and practical solution to all the social evils in our country.

Concluding Remarks

In India, as Dr Ambedkar rightly pointed out, social justice is being negated and denied for Dalits and instead social injustices have been inflicted based on caste, creed, religion, class, etc. The socio-economic terrains and the landscapes of the Dalits posit volatility and vulnerability. What Dr. Ambedkar said continues to be highly relevant even today. For instance, India on Tuesday the 26th of January, 2010 celebrated 60 years of its constitution that guarantees fundamental rights to all its citizens. It is an irony that the Dalit women of a small village in Karnataka's Chitradurga district virtually could not exercise their rights. Acute poverty and unemployment have forced them to silently suffer rape and sexual harassment. The village *Budihalli* in *Chelakere* Taluk of Karnataka State is dominated by landlords. The Dalit communities as in other villages go as wage labourers in the farms owned by the landlords who belong to the dominant castes. Their wages have been meager and for the past few months they were without any employment. The landlords used the men to cut wood and sell them. When the Dalits decided to sell wood by themselves and started farming on government land, the landlords prevented them. Some of these gestures were just the beginning of a major conflict due to take place between these communities in due course of time.

On December 22, 2009, men from the so called 'upper castes' forcibly entered into the houses of the Dalits and sexually assaulted their women. The matter came to light the next day when about 22 women with children protested in front of the deputy commissioner's office in

the *Chalakere* taluk. When the press visited the village they were shocked to find out that women in all the 30 Dalit families living in *Budihalli* had either been raped or sexually harassed by the landlords. They openly confessed that when their men go out for work the dominant caste enter their houses and either rape or harass them. Due to these reasons they all had expressed that they wanted to shift from the current location to some other place. Over and above all this they had to listen to verbal abuses linked to their social identity. They are paid Rs. 30 or Rs. 40 per day or three to four *ser* of rice or ragi (one ser is 1.33 kg), and not allowed to sit while they travel on the bus.[77]

Similarly, as India was celebrating its Republic Day this year, the Dalits of *Lakshmisagara* village, 18 km from *Chitradurga* in Karnataka State had to spend days together in fear due to an attack from a so-called caste community. The Dalit community prior to the attack was under fear because of the fact that a 25 year old woman from the Dalit community was allegedly beaten up by about 50 men for reportedly helping a young couple to run away from the village. The men reportedly belonging to the *Nayak* community stripped and paraded Bhagyamma in public, dragging the hapless woman through the streets of the village. Her husband, who went to her aid, was also beaten up. A group of men from the *Nayak* community started punishing Bhagyamma for helping a boy from the Dalit community to elope with a girl from the *Nayak* community from *Lakshmisagara* in *Challakere* taluk. Though a complaint was registered against a group of men more than a week ago, the suspects were yet to be arrested.

Recalling the incident, Bhagyamma said that about 30 to 40 men from the Nayak community barged into her house on the morning of January 17, 2010. 'They came to my house around 8 in the morning and beat me up for more than two hours and stripped me. Then they dragged me by my hair to the panchayat office. No one came to my rescue, ex-

[77] See Daily New Analysis, 27-1-2010, pp. 8 & 20.

cept panchayat member Rajanna Sidappa,' She said. Bhagyamma and her husband were taken to the *Bharamasagara* police station at about 11 in the morning, where they were kept till evening. She later underwent treatment a government hospital in *Chitradurga* for more than four days. Having been insulted and humiliated, Bhagyamma refused to go back to her village, instead she opted to stay with her sister in another village, and requested the press not to reveal her new location. She was afraid of the consequences and said they would burn down our houses because a Dalit boy eloped with a girl belonging to their community. No one should undergo the humiliation I was put through that day,' Bhagyamma said.

Following the incident, a large group of men from the Nayak community threatened the Dalit, a witness said. 'They threatened to burn down the houses of the Dalits. Several Dalit families fled the village on that day. People are still scared,' Ravi Kumar said. Hanumanthappa, a member of the Nayak community dismissed the incident as a minor one. 'It was only a skirmish between the two communities,' he said. Gram panchayat member Summithramma, however, supported the punishment meted out to Bhagyamma. 'She should not have helped the couple from different castes to elope and she deserved it. Till now, no inter-caste marriage has taken place her. How can a Dalit boy elope with a girl from another community?'[78]

[78] *Ibid*, p. 5.

COMMONALITIES IN THE DALIT AND THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLES

Towards a Search for Truth

Introduction

Often we tend to laud our progress and achievements. Civilizations of different regions and continents have made remarkable strides and tremendous progress. Societies all over have shown progression from primitive to feudal to semi-feudal to capitalist and shows the prospect of moving further. There is no doubt that the humanity did move up from one phase to another in its civility and grandeur. And yet, our civility and all that we claim as achievements are under serious test and continue to remain as a point contention, if we examine and analyse the terrains around us. They are impregnated with anger, hatred, humiliation, shame, injustices, exploitations, killings, brutalities, massacres, and devastations. Their locales portray violations of basic rights. They are given scant respect and thus negated from their human dignity and personhood.

The very sight of these terrains is nauseating. The ways with which they are treated prompts us to raise some fundamental and basic questions about our common heritage, our civility, our claims and our achievements. And, these are the terrains that bewilder us when we utter ‘advanced’ and ‘civilized’ on the one hand, and on the other keep talking about their survival and future. When we talk of ‘common future’ for all the humanity, then why should some enjoy the progress and pros-

perity in the name of 'civilization' at the cost of many? The reason is not complex and complicated, but rather simple. 'We live in a period on which Empire and globalization, hierarchy and justificatory universalism rule the day. The net result is the creation of a world gripped by insecurity and devoid of hope. This is true as much of the developed world as of the developing one, albeit originating from different sources.'[79]

As rightly pointed out that the world in which we live is dominated by the powerful clichés and in that the inner-circle take decisions and make decisions for all. This cliché has an agenda, a vision, and a long-term goal. It is this empire-building cliché that furthers and unleashes its brutal force in such ways that it breaks the resolve of those who stand against it. And yet, the defiance and resistance against the forces of empire-building continues. The history of the world and human civilization are made up of these struggles and those who stood and stand up for human dignity and basic human rights. Out of many, in this essay two locations will be dealt, i.e., (1) the Palestinians, in the Middle-East, and (2) the Dalits (Pan Indian). The geo-political locations vividly show the inhuman treatment meted out by them in all fronts and in all sorts, and their relentless struggles against the forces of dominations are the testimonies that need proper treatment. More importantly, both the terrains portray a numbers of similarities. The major concerns and foci of this essay are to identify and bring to the fore the convergences that the Palestinians and Dalits have in common and also to articulate about 'truth' as well as to locate the constituents of 'truth'.

The Terrains of the Palestinians and the Dalits

In 1920, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in World War 1, Palestine fell under the Western occupation. After its occupation,

[79] Felix Wilfred, The Sling of Utopia, Delhi: 2005, p.1.

political boundaries were forced upon the region for the first time in nearly 2000 years under the British occupation, conveniently named 'Mandate'. And this demarcated geographical area as of now is divided into Israel (established in May 1948 over land carved out of historic Palestine by western powers using the UN without consulting the local Palestinian population, the West Bank residents including Eastern Jerusalem and Gaza Strip, situated on the South Western corner of the country bordering Egypt both of which have been occupied by Israel since 1967. on the Gaza Strip.

Historically, the land of Palestine was inhabited by the Palestinians. Palestinians have always been religiously diverse, with the Muslim majority, followed by Christians and Jewish. At the turn of the 20th Century, an ultra-fundamentalist rightist ideology called Zionism called for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. During this time the Jews scattered around the world particularly in Europe started to migrate to Palestine, making the Jewish population to grow in numbers. However, a sizable number of Palestinians reside in the West bank, Gaza Strip and Eastern Jerusalem, and many are scattered in as Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and other countries.

The struggle between the Israelis and the Palestinians is one of the longest, the most enduring and explosive of the entire world's conflict. For the Palestinians the last hundred years have brought about devastation, a sense of hopelessness, colonization, expulsion, military occupation, followed by a long search for self-determination. For the Israelis, their God Yahweh brought them back to the 'promised land' that belongs to their forefathers, after centuries of persecution around the world. 'The fight and expulsion of the Palestinians had fulfilled the old Zionist slogan: 'The land without a people for the people without a

land.'[80] 'But this was attained at the price of enormous suffering—physical, material and psychological—of the principal 'non-Jewish communities' in the Palestine: the Palestinian Arabs.'[81]

Living under the surveillance of the Israelis who have forcefully occupied their land for decades should never be undermined. The Palestinians have been denied of their basic freedom and dignity. In such a scenario, their consistent struggles and uprisings against the Israeli occupation have brought about various peace negotiations the first of which was the Oslo (Madrid) process. Palestinian cities, villages and most of 19 official refugee camps were transformed to a Self-governing Palestinian Authority under the Oslo 'peace processes'. The area, however, remained under Israeli occupation even now with full Israeli military control. There have been frequent skirmishes between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The quantum of destruction that the Palestinians experience both in terms of human and material terms are staggering because that runs thousands and thousands of lives and billions of dollars. For instance, the destruction of Palestinians' olive trees by the Jewish settlers under the watchful eyes of Israeli army costs some billions of dollars.

The land is the source of empowerment to millions of Palestinians. It is about their rights, their history, and their identity that are firmly rooted in their land. They need to remember their names of their ancestors and their stories. Their stories will be re-told and narrated to the present and their future generations. All these are required for fairness, justice, and lasting peace. The extent of damages that the Israelis caused to the Palestinians (physical and material) is colossal. To what extent the Palestinians uprooted themselves and how far they are pushed to the margins by the Israelis only the history will have to re-tell. It is from the

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[80] Michael Christopher King, *The Palestinians and the churches*, Vol. 1: 1948-1956, Geneva: WCC, 1981, p. 2.
[81] *Ibid*.

under-side, from the margins, and from the peripheries. The quantity of their belongings is gradually decimating. The world they knew and the milieu they lived with had disappeared. There is no trace of their homes they owned which they thought would be their permanent valuable possessions. This is the current status of the Palestinians. The Dalits terrain also amplifies similar setting.

About 3500 years ago, the original inhabitants of India suffered the first blow through the Aryan conquest. The first descendants of this land were defeated in battle and made slaves of the conquerors. In order to consolidate the assumed social status, the conquerors used religious myths to further and preserve their hegemonic interests. The famous Purusasukta hymn in the Rigveda (around 1000 B.C.E.) describes the creation of the four castes coming from the mouth of God. Those who did not fall within this rubric or scheme were considered as outcastes, i.e., born outside the purview of the so-called 'divine body'. Later writings in the Upanishads (around 800-600 B.C.E.) refer to these outcastes as Chandala being compared to dogs or swine. The two great epics, Ramayana and the Mahabharata (600-500 B.C.E.) describe the further degradation of these outcastes of society. Bhagavad Gita lends further leverage to this myth, by saying that the four castes were created by the lord himself. Manusmriti (around 700 B.C.E.) gave final and definitive form to the Hindu law. Through it, the status of the Dalit has been reduced to the level of the non-human, namely a non-person. The casteist forces systematically deprived and denied the Dalits of all their basic and fundamental human rights—religious, cultural, economic, political, linguistic and educational.[82]

[82] For more details see the paper of Tom Kunnunkal, 'The Emerging Dalit Identity' presented at a National Seminar on Dalits: Problems and Prospectus' on 18-07-2005, p.1.

Caste happens to be India's social reality for more than 2000 years and has pervaded into all the segments of life, i.e., social, economic, religio-cultural, and political. The Dalits go through all forms of discrimination and humiliation in their day-to-day existence. Caste in the 21st Century manifests in much worse ugly forms and shapes than the past. Whether urban or rural, the harassment and humiliation the Dalits face is appalling. Kuldip Nair pointedly brings out that,

The fate of the Dalits has not changed at all … Dalits, the lowest rung of the caste system, face discrimination every minute and at every step of their life. The Government has done little to fight the caste system. Untouchabililty has been banned but not the caste system whose product untouchability is. All the pronouncements of equality or social justice in the preamble of the Constitution make no sense when the Dalits are not better economically … and no higher socially, the result of 2000 years of discrimination. Colour has however reprehensible, is better than the caste system. A Black (sic) can cross the colour limits. A Black (sic) can marry a white. After two to three generations, their descendants can pass off as Whites. But a Dalit cannot escape the caste system. His disability is in birth itself. Dalits remain Dalits … No democratic system should be ashamed of discussing at any forum its practices which disable its own people. A free society owes its existence to the tenets of freedom. The Dalits have had a break of freedom in the suffocating Hindu society. The Dalits are a wounded people, battered and broken. India is strong enough to admit that it has failed somewhere, despite all the guarantees in the Constitution to provide the same glow of freedom which the upper castes enjoy …[83]

Thus, caste manifests as a pernicious vestige of India's hierarchical discriminatory history. In this history, Dalits continues to face the worst physical and verbal onslaughts one can imagine. One of the leading Human Right counsel and organic intellectual succinctly articulates their

[83] Kuldip Nayar, 'Facing up to the Facts' in The Hindu (August 31, 2001), p. 11.

plight as 'you were born into a society, which spelt out with brutal clarity in as many ways as possible, that you were a worthless human being. You were not expected to aspire to excellence; you were expected to make peace with mediocrity.' India is indeed caste-stratified society where discrimination based on descent and occupation reflects inequality and difference. The Dalits who comprise one-fifth of the India's population face humiliation and discrimination at different level be it rural or urban. The gravity and severity of their experiences vary from one to another.

Palestinian Struggles Born out of External and Internal Factors

The context in which the Palestinian struggles as a whole evolved is due to some factors which are unique and fundamental. First, it originated in response to Israeli colonization and annexation. Second, Israeli colonization has a combination of external as well as internal factors. Second, although it is socio-political, it is also economic and religio-cultural too. These aspects are central to the emergence of the Palestinian struggles. Third, due to the two-way migration and displacement of Palestinians communities, the Palestinian struggles have assumed an extra-territorial character. Hence, it is,

… an example of an entire populace, forcibly displaced from its traditional land, attempting to recover land, identity, nationhood and territorially located political coherence. The account given in … demonstrates how an initially incoherent, spontaneous and relatively unor-

ganized mass movement developed itself into a major political phenomenon.[84]

The most essential and rudimentary factor is that the Palestinians are being ruled and dictated by the Israelis and their land is being occupied. So, it amounts to both the external and internal colonization by the Israel State. It is in this context the recurring repression of all political self-assertion by the Palestinian people and denial of freedom and basic human rights that are due to the Palestinians aroused their consciousness for freedom and self-rule. The dispersed and scattered Palestinians in the neighbouring countries and far-off came together because the struggles of the Palestinians in their own land evoked national identity particularly among a populace that is territorially dispersed. All these cumulative factors culminated in different shades and forms of struggles. It is against such a complex backdrop the Palestinian struggles will have to viewed and analysed.

The converging element of the Palestinian struggles is its class dimension. The working-class and poor masses lower and middle-classes, and others joined in the struggles for their nationhood and self-determination. The class dimension adds mass character to the Palestinian struggles. Apart from the economic and political factors, Sayigh mentions two socio-psychological factors that the Palestinians faced. These were:

1. Social isolation from the host society caused by being labelled refugees—a
    a. connotation which carried a social stigma of inferiority.
2. Loss of social status, which left deep scars in the Palestinian personality, an

[84] Bassem Serhan, 'The Palestinian Social Movement' in Ponna Wignaraja (ed.), *New Social Movements in the South: Empower The People*, New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1993, p. 165.

a. effect that came close to loss of self-respect.[85]

In view of all these factors, 'The Palestinian masses have rejected the settlement projects because they saw in it a real threat to their identity and to their aspirations for return to their country as well as a way of consolidating the Israeli state.'[86] As the years passed by even the struggles of the Palestinians changed its form and content. Struggles of diverse ideological and political orientations and persuasions emerged to struggle against Zionist Jewish State of Israel. The Palestinians residing in Israel in 1948 became Israeli citizens as a non-Jewish minority in a Jewish state. Despite becoming the citizens of Israel they did not gain equal rights along with Jewish citizens of Israel. Under these circumstances, they would have to fight for equal status and equal rights as citizens of Israel, and to flight to protect their land from Jewish takeover. In 1951 the state property law was passed and in that Article 2 of this law states that 'Property of the Palestine authorities, situated in Israel, is property of the state of Israel as from 15th May 1948.'[87]

The State of Israel has further consolidated by passing stringent laws, so that the Palestinians are put in tight spots and corner. For example, After seizing refugee lands and public lands, the Israeli authorities turned to the lands of Arab citizens of Israel. The principal means of confiscation of such lands was through various provisions of the emergency regulations. These granted the military governor the power to declare specific areas 'closed areas' or 'security zones … Arab areas in Israel were divided into three districts, each under a military governor.[88]

The struggle for the Palestinians in Israel for equal rights and human dignity is carried out by the Palestinian people's movements, political

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[85] *Ibid*, p. 167.
[86] *Ibid*.
[87] *Ibid*, p. 168.
[88] *Ibid*, p. 168.

parties, and other solidarity groups of all shades. Their struggles have not been isolated from the overall Arab struggle for independence. As part of the Arab world, the struggle of the Palestinians is not an isolated one but of all Arabs. So their struggles will have to be connected as against the Zionist colonialist project in Palestine with imperialist interests in the Arab world that zeroed down as the struggle against Zionism into a cause of all Arabs rather than a cause of Palestinians alone. The forces of the Empire have employed different strategies and tactics to sabotage the will of the people, but the resolve of the Palestinian show unmistakably that the Arab masses have not given up their support of the Palestinian people.

Dalit Struggles Born out of Internal Factors

Dalit struggles in India have their origin in the struggle against the caste system that stratifies and divides the society into a hierarchy of rigid social groups as 'touchables and untouchables', 'pure and impure', 'once born and twice born', 'we the people' and 'you the other'. Dalit struggles as social processes have dared to challenge the Brahmanic Hindu social order, puranas, sastras, and Vedas. The struggles are rooted in inequality and exclusion that are based on gradations being reinforced by the caste system and sanctified by Hinduism. Dalits struggles continue to maintain the same tenor that any religion including Christianity operates in similar fashion should be opposed and denounced. Hence, religion ought to act as a social force with an ideal to change that dehumanizes and segregates people. As Ambedkar rightly pointed out that 'The primary things in religion are the usages, practices and observances, rites and rituals. Theology is secondary, its object is to rationalize them.'[89]

[89] Quoted by Antoniraj Thumma in *Dalit Liberation Theology: Ambedkarian Perspective* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000), p. 1.

Despite the protective clauses enshrined in the Indian Constitution and prohibitive laws, the casteist forces continue to unleash the worst forms of oppression and exploitation against the Dalits. In the post-Independent India the locales of the Dalits bear testimonies to the forms and gravity of atrocities committed by the casteist forces. Over and above, the so-called 'upper castes' have evolved new forms discriminatory practices that manifest the worst levels of human behaviour in the 21st Century. It is ironic that are a number of constitutional protective measures such as:

- Article 17 of the Constitution abolished untouchability, and forbids its practice in any form.
- Articles 330 and 332 provide for reservation of seats of SC and ST candidates in the Lok Sabha (Art. 330), and in State Legislatures (Art. 332).
- Articles 16(4), 4(A), and 335 provide for reservations and safeguards with regard to jobs in government services for SC and STs. In central govt, PSUs, and banks, reservation are 15%. At state level, reservations are prescribed on the basis of SC/ST population percentage within the state.
- Reservations are also provided for admission to educational institutions, allotment of houses, and other govt. schemes.
- Articles 338 establish monitoring and overseeing of the working of the safeguards though a Commissioner for SCs and STs. A full Commission was set up in 1978, and its powers strengthened in 1990, with powers to summon any person before the commission, and the production of documents in trying a case.

Nevertheless, the majority of Dalits continue to live in poverty and in squalid conditions. Atrocities against the Dalits continue to rise. Exterminating the Dalits is the major pre-occupation of some of the ultra-rights fundamentalist forces. Once considered as the original natives of

the land, now live on the margins and peripheries. Development and welfare schemes meant for the Dalits have hardly impacted them. The situation of Dalit women is frequently described as thrice alienated—by economic poverty, caste, and gender. They experience high levels of violence in the work place and society at large. The problems that are faced by the Dalits more particularly are as follows:

6. The extent to which the experience of oppression resulting from marginalized status under fixed social hierarchies is a common experience, that binds together marginalized groups from South Asia, Japan, West Africa and elsewhere.
7. The ways in which fixed social hierarchies—often dignified by culture, and the passage of centuries millennia, and even sanctioned or accepted by religion—have worked systematic oppression upon marginalized communities and stand today in direct contradiction of both basic principles concerning human dignity and the legal obligations of human rights.[90]

Indian society is premised on the system of caste, and thus stratified. It is based on vertical schema that prescribes who should be on top, middle, low, and outside. The system known as caste has survived for about 3,500 years and therefore entrenched into all the facets of the Indian society. So, Brahmanism as an ideology supports an assimilationist view of identities, while it has no difficulty in maintaining a hierarchically ordered society according to the principle of purity and pollution. This itself shows the inner contradiction of Brahmanic ideology. From an idealist point of view Brahmanism would hold that the different identities are only apparent, since the ultimate reality is One pervading the entire reality. This deep religious and spiritual principle is contradicted on the social plane where identities are hierarchised into high and

[90] Peter N. Probve, 'Liberation of the Oppressed', in NCCI Review, Vol. CXXIII, No. 03, April 2003, p. 210.

low, according to the grade of their purity. This makes suspect the Brahmanical assimilationist view which works almost invariably in favour of the dominant groups in a society, in spite of the manifest profession of equality.[91]

In a world of Empire, naming is very important because it is an expression of power. Two major breakthroughs that happened in the Post-Independent India are 1) the rejection of the names as 'untouchables' or 'Harijans' (people of God) and embracing and affirming their identity as Dalits the broken and oppressed people that denotes a resilient, vibrant, empowering, and emancipating identity; 2) the assertion of the Dalits in the socio-economic, relgio-cultural and political realms of the Indian fabric. Dalits who used to be treated as sub-humans and vote banks by the political parties are now in responsible decision-making positions. Dalit identity politics has pushed them to higher levels of bargaining. This can be called as assertion of difference where the Dalits distinguish themselves from other, where the dominant forces tend to subsume their identity within the assimilationist politics/politics. Hence, in this situation, the affirmation of difference is a weapon against facile integration. Difference also become the entitlement, especially when this difference is the result of a history of discrimination and disadvantages. More importantly, the assertion of difference is the way through which the marginal peoples come consciously to perceive and acknowledge their collective selves. In other words, the difference is crucial for the construction of their subjecthood as the principal agent of their emancipation.[92]

The struggles of the Dalits in all fronts since the post-Independent India by the Dalit movements and Dalit political parties have created a major dent in the polity, economy, culture and religious domains. Nonetheless, casteism as an ideology in order to survive keeps inventing new

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[91] Felilx Wilfred, *The Sling of Utopia*, Op.cit, p. 33.
[92] *Ibid*, p. 34.

modes and new ways. Annihilation of caste is the only way to eradicate divides and differentiations. For this the struggles of the Dalits should continue, so that the system of caste is uprooted.

The Palestinians and Dalits Struggles are Distinct, and yet posits Commonalities

It is to be noted that the Palestinians and the Dalits have been the original inhabitants of their lands for more than 2000 years, but live like refugees. For the Palestinians the internal (the Jewish State) and external (the Empire and allied forces) impede their self-assertion and freedom. For the Dalits, the internal factors (the Indian State, casteist forces, and the system of caste) retard their dignity freedom. Both the identities live in settlements whose freedom of movement, speech, autonomy, and free-will are curtailed. Constantly they are monitored and under surveillance. Their existence is paradoxical because it is assumed that 'they are free, and yet not free; everyone knows that it is their land, and yet they are refugees.'

The struggles of the Palestinians and the Dalits basically resonates the human pain and pathos. Their struggles are for human dignity and self-determination. It is that yearning that keeps the struggles going. They struggle for the restoration of their basic rights, human dignity, and personhood. Their struggle is rooted in reclamation of their identity vis-à-vis land. Land is the chief source that gives them their identity and security. Their struggles by and large are connected to religions i.e., Judaism and Brahmanic Hinduism. In the name of 'chosen people', the Jews look at the Palestinians as those who have occupied their land. They are looked upon as 'foreigners', 'aliens', and 'settlers'. Likewise, 'casteism' treats the Dalits as 'polluted', 'untouchables' and 'sub-humans'. Therefore, it is also a political problem. It is not possible to solve outside politics to find solutions to these issues. There have been

so many pressing problems with dire consequences that global comity addressed and found solution. These are the problems that could be solved politically because they are human constructed and created, and thus politically and religiously perpetuated.

The locales of the Palestinians and the Dalits are demarcated. The Palestinians domiciles are guarded by the Israeli military. Each and every move of the Palestinians is monitored. They are under surveillance and under strict scrutiny. Their social, economic, relilgio-cultural and political spaces are controlled and dictated. On similar lines, the settlements of the Dalits called as 'colonies' or 'Dalit wadas or cherries' are delineated meticulously as prescribed by the system of caste. Their habitats can easily be identified because they are isolated, parched, thatched, rugged and hideous lacking basic survival needs and amenities. In some of the Dalit colonies or settlements that are walls built around and even electrified by the so-called 'high castes' so that the 'pollutants' shall not enter into their vicinity and purity will thus be maintained. The practice of untouchability unleashed against the Dalits is horrendous.

The narratives of the Palestinians and the Dalits testify the ways and modes employed by the dominant forces to throttle their very existence, be it economic, social, political, religious, and cultural. All aspects and segments of their lives are being touched upon. The dominant and ruling elites who orchestrate and employ all sorts of oppressive mechanisms the Jews and the so-called 'dominant castes' are governed by the ideologies of Zionism and Casteism respectively. The Israeli and the Indian socio-political system are premised on pillars of Zionist and casteist ideologies. Zionism and casteism have pervaded into all facets of the Israeli and Indian societies. They are thus ubiquitous and deeply seated in the psyche of many Israelis and Indians.

The Palestinians and the Dalits are treated as settlers and outsiders, and thus treated as 'refugees' in the land of their own. Their existential

experiences reveal psychological trauma, torture, lynching, genocides, deprivation, insecurity, and all sorts of humiliation and shame that makes many to wonder what is it that makes the Palestinians and the Dalits to survive as against all odds and hopelessness. In spite of the comprehensive assaults and all-out war to subjugate and silence the Palestinians and the Dalits, these two identities along with their communities managed to survive thousands of years. Certainly there should be some strong reasons for that.

The Palestinian and Dalit agenda for integral liberation should not be viewed primarily towards acquisition of resources and power. On the other, their struggles predominantly address the fundamental questions of their identity, freedom, self-rule and basic rights as people of their lands. The core issue in their struggles is they as Palestinians and Dalits have the right to be treated as dignified co-humans on par with others both as individuals and as people. So, in the final analysis, discourses on their struggles will have to be grounded within a framework of inclusive ideology that promotes the Palestinians and the Dalits to be co-humans with others. Their struggles are directed towards annihilating the ideologies of Zionism and casteism, so that their human dignity is restored. Towards this vision, both the communities continue their struggles and are moving with optimism, so that a new humanity with a common future would emerge.

As we peel the layers of their sufferings they are indeed gruesome and heinous. If we scan through the psychological trauma and the physical pain inflicted upon these communities we tend to question our so-called understanding of ‘civility’. Nonetheless, their prolonged history of their struggles can never end till they realize their vision. They are targeted and attacked in such a way that:1) the Palestinians and the Dalits are the hapless victims of Zionist and caste repression, 2) the Palestinians and the Dalits are the assertive subjects of their own history, and 3) the Palestinians and the Dalits strive and struggle for their land, free-

dom, and just peace. In all their struggles whether contextual or inter-contextual, the cumulative historical effect and impact are so horrendous, and yet the world at large and international comity are groping for truth.

'Truth' Shall Set You Free!

Historiographies of everyday life refer to peoples and groups who refuse to be objects of history but want to be the active subjects in creating their own narratives. The history is not the eventful ones associated with powers and thrones, but the 'uneventful' history of everyday life. At this level of history, the various communities and groups of the nation are united by shared experiences of life than by a homogenized past imposed upon them. The suffering and struggle of everyday and the day-to-day human inter- relationships hold the victims together. In the process of production and exchange, the narrative of everyday human inter-relationships binds the people together.[93]

The happenings, the episodes, the stories, and the narratives of the Palestinians and the Dalits as said in the above quotation unfold their yearnings in crystal clear terms. The whole world knows their plight, and yet pretends in naming the real culprits and aggressors. For instance, 'On the political aspects of the Palestine problem and the complex conflict of 'rights' involved we do not undertake to express a judgment. Nevertheless, we appeal to the nations to deal with the problem not as one of expediency—political, strategic or economic—but as a moral and spiritual question that touches a nerve centre of the world's religious life.'[94] This is of course the statement of the World Council of Churches. Similarly, the Government of India, some churches in India, and

[93] Felix Wilfred, *The Sling of Utopia,* op.cit, p. 86.

[94] Michael Christopher King, *The Palestinians and the Churches*, op.cit, p.123.

other institutions of governance have been blatantly negating that there is no such thing as caste. On the contrary, the world knows about the oppressive and exploitative nature of caste and its ramifying effects on the Dalits. And yet, many continue to pretend and contend that there is no such thing such as caste, untouchability, hierarchy, discrimination, and so on. This prompts us to ask an important and pertinent question: what then is truth, and what are its constituents?

The people across the globe know that the sufferings of the Dalits and the Palestinians are horrendous and hideous. Inequality and injustice inflicted against the Dalits and the Palestinians in particular have to do with the deprivation of their land. After taking their lands forcefully they were uprooted from their domiciles that belonged to them for thousands of years. When the Dalits and the Palestinians talk about injustices, they are talking about how the dominant castes and empire-building expansionists systematically expropriated their lands. When they narrate their stories, they are filled with all forms of brute cruelties that the fanatic Jews and the casteist forces inflicted on them. At the same time, the Zionist Jews and the so-called 'high castes' do not share their personal or communitarian stories of how they lost their homes or land because whatever they have now is through loots and forceful occupation. Any ideology or faith confession or expression must necessarily address the issues of inequality and injustices. They are, after all, the crucial issues for the Palestinians and the Dalits regardless of their religious affiliation.

The global community is aware of the massacres, forceful evictions, and deprivations that the Palestinians and the Dalits undergo in their day-to-day existence. And yet, they show their resolve and resistance as against the State of Israel and the Indian State. The ruling cliché comprised of Zionist forces and casteist forces consistently attempt to scuttle their grit and determination. This is why the forces of domination go all out to curb and eliminate the uprisings and thwart their attempts to realize their dreams and hopes. The factual information, the stories and

narratives of the Palestinians and the Dalits are selectively censored and fabricated, and often ridiculed to suit their standpoints and perspectives. The dominant forces and agencies of the Empire in their writings, audios and visuals subvert the facts and present in such ways that they speak the 'truth', nothing but the 'truth'. In such scenarios, questions concerning 'truth' emerge.

The French philosopher Michel Foucault while grappling with the notion truth and its constituent aspects unpacks the complex relationship of truth to power by analysing the power mechanisms which govern the production; suppression and the repression of truth. He categorizes it as the 'political economy' of truth. Foucault's analysis prompts me to examine the power dynamics underlying such questions as: what is truth and who owns it?[95] How it is interpreted and with what perspective? The questions particularly shed light while trying to investigate how Hebraic texts and the Hindu Vedas endorse, and reinforce the domination and exploitation of the Palestinians and the Dalits by the powers that dominate and exclude those who are the original inhabitants of the land. For example, 'How can the Bible, which has apparently become a part of the problem in the Arab-Israeli conflict, become a part of its solution? How can the Bible, which has been used to bring a curse to the national aspirations of a whole people, again offer them a blessing? How can the Bible, through which many have been led to salvation, be itself saved and redeemed?[96]

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[95] Kwok Pui Lan, 'Discovering the Bible in the Non-biblical World', in R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Voices From The Margin*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991, p. 300.

[96] Naim Stifan Ateek, 'A Palestinian Perspective: The Bible and Liberation' in *Ibid*, p.282.

Precisely due to these reasons, most of the Palestinian Christians and other Arab Christians view Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament with suspicion after the creation of the State of Israel because of the fact that,

The God of the Bible, hitherto the God who save and liberates, has come to be viewed by Palestinians a partial and discriminating. Before the creation of the State, the Old Testament was considered to be an essential part of Christian Scripture, pointing and witnessing to Jesus. Since the creation of the State, some Jewish and Christian interpreters have read the Old Testament largely as a Zionist text to such an extent that it has become almost repugnant to Palestinian Christians. As a result, the Old Testament has generally fallen into disuse among both clergy and laity, and the Church has been unable to come to terms with its ambiguities, questions, and paradoxes – especially with its direct application to the … Palestine … How can the Old Testament be the Word of God in light of the Palestinian Christians' experience with its use to support Zionism?[97]

The above question opens up a series of contradictions that lie in the Hebrew Scriptures. Those who are on the margins who experience humiliation, shame, exclusion, and discrimination question the Hebrew Scriptures and its conception of God. In view of these factors understanding the existence of God factor by the communities who experience all sorts of problems and perennially living under such inhuman situations eventually pose all sorts of problems. Consequently, God for them becomes the problem, and therefore, tend to doubt. So,

… What has been seriously questioned is the nature and character of God. What is God really like? What is God's relation to the new State of Israel? Is God Partial only to the Jews? Is this a God of justice and peace? Such questions may appear on the surface … Their answers may seem obvious. Nevertheless, they are part of a battery of questions that many Christians, both in Israel-Palestine and out of it, are still debating.

[97] *Ibid*, 283.

The focus of these questions is the very person of God. God's character is at stake. God's integrity has been questioned.[98]

Similarly, the Brahmanic Hinduism that subscribes to hierarchy and difference, discrimination and exclusion on the basis of jati and varna is no religion at all, be it Christianity, Islam or any other. Brahmanic Hinduism stratifies people on the basis of descent and occupation. Any religion that segregates people on the basis of pure and polluted, touchables and untouchables cannot be called a religion, since it does not function on any ethical imperative. Paradoxically, the dominant and the forces of Empire claim that they own the 'truth'. For them, their scriptures come handy to legitimate their claims. They even go to the extent of saying that theirs is 'authentic', 'absolutist', and 'authoritative'. The Western construction has been superimposed on other cultures by setting the norms which according to them as 'rational', and 'superior'.

Those who are living in multi-cultural and plural settings tend to view the Western notions of truth as partial, narrow, and exclusive. So, those who believe in human dignity, mutual respect, co-habitation, and equality are disturbed by Zionism and casteism. In this sense, the politics of truth can never be fought and contested at the epistemological level. The Palestinians and the Dalits are interested whether their 'truth' would bring about humanization, so that everyone is treated on par with each other. In reality, their so-called 'truth' has not brought about 'human dignity' and 'equality' with others thus far. The dominant categories invoke their sacred texts to justify their claims in the name of 'truth'. The texts are manipulated and interpreted in such ways that the inhuman treatment meted out by the Palestinians and the Dalits are in accordance to directive of the sacred scriptures, and therefore, falls within the scheme of 'divine order'.

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[98] *Ibid.*

Accordingly, their interpretations are to justify their actions and so solely to subvert 'truth', so that their power and domination will be preserved and furthered. Dealing on this pragmatically, Robert Detweiler aptly articulates that 'A Text becomes sacred when a segment of the community is able to establish it as such in order to gain control and set order over the whole community.'[99] This is true when it comes to the context specificities of Palestinians and Dalits. The Palestinians and the Dalits do know about truth, what is truth, whose truth, and where does that truth lie? Since the so-called 'truth' is linked to power those who are at the receiving end do not have the power and needed paraphernalia to go ahead with their truth. It is an irony that the oppressors interpret what is truth for the oppressed. In doing so, they invoke the Vedas, puranas, the Jewish texts and others as 'sacred' and thus contribute to Zionist and casteist consciousness. They are indeed termed as false and pseudo 'consciousness'. It should be countered and challenged by counter-ideologies and organic consciousness which in pragmatic terms would act as counter-veiling power equations. How to do go about? Both the Palestinian and Dalits struggles have demonstrated diverse means and methods. For a theoretical frame work Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory elaborates in detail the intricacies and complexities of truth.

What Then is 'Truth'?

There are a lot of commonalities between the Palestinians and the Dalits in their sufferings and struggles, hopes and aspirations. Their relentless struggles are for equity, equality, fairness and justice. Their faith in the realization of inclusive and casteless society is unshakable. They are of the firm belief and hope that shackles of oppression and domination shall be broken only through the annihilation of casteism

[99] Kwok Pui Lan, 'Discovering the Bible in the Non-biblical World', op.cit, p. 310.

and Zionism. It does mean that their truth shall set them free. How can that happen? Is it possible or even viable? It ought to happen, because it is grounded on the principle that '… liberate … from a hierarchical model of truth which assumes there is one truth above many. This biased belief leads to the coercion of others into sameness, oneness, and homogeneity which excludes multiciplicity and plurality.'[100]

If the dominant categories, the powers and principalities rely on twisting and tampering their version of 'truth' by suppressing the communities and identities who also keep countering the falsity involved in their claims. The locus of the struggles of the Palestinians and the Dalits is to establish their side of truth in a world of contradictions and manipulations. Precisely because of these reasons, 'To the Jews who believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples' (Jn 8: 31). For what and why should they hold on to truth? 'Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free' (v 32). The Jews were annoyed with Jesus because Jesus' statement had raised a number of questions about 'truth' and how does that 'truth' will set them free?

As usual the Jews had started to defend. 'They answered him, 'We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free' (Jn 8:33)? For that Jesus brought them to their senses that that you were captives, refugees, aliens, and wanderers. You were nobody, and now somebody. This is the truth which should not be forgotten, and so, do not pose yourself as if you hail from a stock of great repute having a legacy of nobility. Nonetheless, the Jews held on to the lies that have never been slaves. They are aware of the fact that historically they were under the captivity of the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and at the time of uttering this statement they were under the Romans. Under these circumstances Jesus had to use this statement that 'Truth will set you free'.

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[100] *Ibid*, p. 313,

This statement of Jesus is very important particularly for those who toe the line of Zionism and casteism. 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin' (Jn 8: 34). It is true that those who practice apartheid like that of Jews and the so-called 'high castes' are committing sin, and so they are the slaves to the sins that they are indulging. Further, the Jews keep invoking the name of Abraham as their father, but do not follow the deeds of their father. For instance, in Genesis 18: 1-5 Abraham shows humility and accommodative qualities. As soon as he saw the three men he went all out providing them a space under a tree to rest in that heat, gave water to wash their feet and to quench their thirst, and served them delicious food since they were hungry. Abraham received and accepted those three guests who were unknown to them. Abraham's gesture edifies how a host would have to be to strangers when it comes to the point of receiving and accepting.

It is an irony that the Jews and the so-called 'high-castes' invoke and claim that 'Abraham is their father' as if they are the 'Abraham's children'. But in their words and acts nothing of Abraham's quality is reflected. Similarly, if we closely get into the text and contextualize the heated exchanges between the Jews and Jesus on 'truth', during which the fallacies of the Jews and the so-called 'high-castes' are ripped open. Unable to tolerate the bundles of contradictions of the Jews and the so-called 'high castes', Jesus forthrightly states 'I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death' (Jn 8: 51). It simply means that keeping the Word of God in letter and spirit and in words and deeds is truth. Since the Jews and other dominant categories have failed to follow the 'Truth' God has told them to comply with. So, Jesus says, 'Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God' (Jn 8: 45-47).

Having failed in all counts Jesus said, 'You do not belong to God'. For that 'The Jews answered him, 'Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon possessed?' For that 'I am not possessed by a demon,' said Jesus, 'but I honour my Father and you dishonour me. I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. 'I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death' (Jn 8: 48-51). At this the Jews exclaimed, 'Now we know that you are demon-possessed? Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he never taste death. Are you greater than the father Abraham? He did, and so did the prophets. What do you think you are (vv 52-53)? Having heard this, the Jews were taken aback and charged Jesus as demon-possessed. But Jesus was firm. 'I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, 'before Abraham was born, I am!' At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds (vv 58-59).

Conclusion

The encounters between Jesus and the Jews clearly underscores that the Jews come from a pure lineage and so they are the 'chosen people', and all 'others' according to the Jews including Jesus hail from 'inferior' lineage, 'polluted', 'Samaritans' and 'demon-possessed'. Even the so-called 'high castes' in India think and behave in similar fashion. The whole world knows the truth, but the untruth continues to sway and thus throttles the truth. It is not too far that the truth shall triumph. Towards this end people across the world continue to struggle in different ways in support of the Palestinians and the Dalits with resolve and resilience. One such recent example is that of a renowned American writer Alice Walker who did not permit an Israeli publisher to release a new Hebrew edition of her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The colour Purple*.

In a letter to Yediot Books she said that Israel practices 'apartheid' and must change its policies before her works can be published in Israel. Substantiating further, 'I would so like knowing my books are read by the people of your country, especially by the young and by the brave Israeli activists (Jewish and Palestinian) for justice and peace. I have had the joy of working beside,' she wrote. 'I am hopeful that one day, may be soon, this may happen, But now is not the time.'[101] The chief editor of Yediot Books, Netta Gurevich, said that she regretted Walker's decision to bear the release of a new Hebrew-language edition of her book, a tale about black women's struggle against their miserable status in the American South in the 1930s.[102] Incidentally, Walker is a supporter of a movement that seeks to pressure Israel to end its rule over the Palestinian people through boycotts, disinvestment and sanctions. There are many more individuals, groups, movements and alliances involved in advocacy, networking, and lobbying across for the emancipation of the Palestinians and the Dalits across the globe.

[101] See 'Times of India', 21.6.2012, p. 20.
[102] *Ibid.*

DIALECTICS[103] BETWEEN SHRINKING GLOBALIZATION AND RISING NATIONALISM

Introduction

We live in tumultuous times. Changes are happening at rapid pace. In the light of the unprecedented changes for the last three decades the academia, policy analysts, and politicians offered their analyses and evaluation on the converging contours of the forces of globalization and their advantages for the developing countries and under-developed societies. It was in this context *The World is Flat*[104] by Thomas Friedman acquired phenomenal relevance for the protagonists of globalization. The central argument of Friedman was ' … more people than ever to collaborate and complete in real time with more other people on more

[103] I look at these two categories as polar opposites and so it would be correct to view their 'identity'—although the differences between the terms whether convergion or divergion, unity or oppositional is not particularly important here. In certain sense recognition of contradictory, mutually exclusive and oppositional tendencies in all phenomena and processes of globalization and nationalism in its very essence and nature are present. The dialectic of globalization and nationalism in this essay is being viewed as decrease and increase in terms of tendencies respectively. Decrease and increase dynamics should be construed as the division of unity into mutually exclusive opposites and their reciprocal relation.

[104] Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Globalized World in the 21st Century*, London: Penguin Books, 2005.

different kinds of work from more different corners of the planet and on a more equal footing than at any previous time in the history of the world.'[105]

Friedman's analysis underlines multiple factors out of which increasing acceptance of economic reforms and liberalization throughout the world coupled with the innovation of new technologies led to the emergence of a flat world wherein connectivity was made possible. The globalizers firmly believe that the world has been 'flattened', 'connected' and 'integrated' through the Internet, workflow and open-source software, out-sourcing, off-shoring (FDI, SEZs, EPZs), supply-chaining, in-sourcing, Google and wireless communication. And in the process globalization has brought about their vision of a seamless and borderless world. According to the 'flatteners' that the forces of globalization have transformed into less hierarchical, more prosperous and equal, more transparent and democratic and less prone to conflicts and wars, integrated, open, equal and transparent. .

As opposed to their claims in recent times we have been witnessing and experiencing a spate of incidences that draws dialectics and inference between globalization and nationalism. As against the backdrop an appraisal will be made in this paper to the factors that contribute and the implications leading to the shrinking space of globalization and increasing presence of nationalism.

Shifting Trajectory—Globalization & Its Discontents

The influence of neo-liberalism has been strongly evident in the last few decades of the last century and also during the initial years of the 21st Century. The world is plunged to the verge of a grave financial crisis during the 2008 manifesting itself in the rapid and unpredictable fluctuating stock market that initially hit the USA and other parts of the

[105] *Ibid.*

world by deepening the real crises such as rising unemployment, inflation and trade deficit. In addition to the existing crises in social, religio-cultural and political facets, we have now been witnessing BREXIT which marks a right-about-turn a staunch and market defiance against the seamless and borderless world that has thus altered the unhindered movement towards globalization. The landscape that globalization has created in now under contestation. For instance, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT BREXIT is a seminal event. That rare occasion when everything comes together to signal together to signal a major shift in international affairs and the way we organize and do things. It represents a turning point in the continuous trend of globalization that we had seen for the last three decades. Everyone through the globalization had become one-way street. Brexit has changed all that.[106]

At this point of juncture visiting our recent history becomes utmost important as it would shed more light to the current impasse. There have been several factors, of which, political and technological reasons figure more prominently than others that triggered the world to plummet. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the signal was gradual move towards democracy. Some of the theories and predictions such as end of history, meta-narrative and end of ideology we heard and knew about it. However, 'It also said the rise of China, and its entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001 made it among the world's leading exporters. The boom in software exports made India a globalised country.' [107] Nandan Milekani while deepening his inquiry asks:

> 'What made the rise of these two populous nations possible were two underlying technological factors which enabled the

[106] Nadan Nilekani, 'The New Road To Nirvana' in India Today, July 11, 2016, p. 20.
[107] *Ibid.*

> globalization of both goods and services. One was the containerization of global shipping. The container or 'Box' was invented about 60 years ago, and soon began to dramatically lower the cost of international shipment containers more for global trade than any other single factor. China, with its cheap labour, benefitted hugely from that development. You could put a bunch of garments in a box in China and deliver it to a mall in Kansas at a much lower cost because you could make the whole process known as internmodel transport—from shipping to rail and to roads—seamless and automated. So contanerisation led to the globalization of goods. The second major factor was the dotcom bubble around 2000 that spurred the massive investments in fibre optics that saw cables being laid across the Atlantic and elsewhere. This enabled Indian companies to export software and led to the globalization of services.'[108]

Thomas Friedman twelve years ago must have observed, examined and analysed the phenomenal growth of these two most populous countries as potential economic powers due to globalization and thus attributed that how globalization brought the level playing field through technology. This inspired him to write *The World is Flat* which eventually became an international bestseller that sold millions of copies and captured the attention of the globalizers. Having said the levels of economic growth and pinnacle these countries achieved due to globalization should be seen In the light of what is happening now. The happenings are just the opposite and traumatic.

The classic case is Brexit. Brexit has evoked a spate of comments. Several analysts have described the move for Britain to leave out of European Union (EU) is of course a severe blow to globalization. What-

[108] *Ibid.*

ever, it may be real or superficial, globalization being interpreted in many ways is under scanner, particularly after Brexit mandate. The backers of globalization contend broadly that globalization denotes the free movement of goods, services, capital, funds, technology and people across countries. It is not a recent phenomenon, but manifests in different forms and faces. 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. It has to be part of comity of nations wherein economic activities, free movement goods and services and trade are being carried out between nations and across the continents for the societies to subsist and grow. EU has become a bureaucratic organization spanning its jurisdiction to many activities. When Euro was introduced as EUs common currency, Britain opted out of it.

Further, the European Central Bank enforces a common monetary policy to all its member countries which has irritated many member countries, particularly during the Greek crisis. More than half of the British got infuriated when the EU has furthered its aspiration from the idea of 'common' market to 'single' market. It is this transition which annoyed many in Britain. The complex set of rules and regulations emerging from Brussels has made a huge section of the British people feel that they have lost 'independence' because the control has moved to unelected bureaucrats in Brussels. Apart from the elites, the non-elites composed of a sizable percent of the population voted for Brexit because of EU's migration policy.

Free movement of people across Europe particularly from Eastern European countries has been one of the primary reasons. The low-paid jobs in the U.K. have been taken over by migrants predominantly from the Eastern Europe. Although Britain is the second largest economy in

EU, it is caught up in a fierce cut-throat competitive market dynamics in 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 amongst the people of Britain. The British nationals feel that they have been cheated by the migrants from Asia and Africa which constitutes a significant proportion of the population. These things happened when the economy of Britain was strong and growing. All these factors led people to utter that globalization is the culprit because EU attempted at greater economic integration that has been interpreted as a loss of sovereignty and rise in inequality. Brexit is a direct attack to globalization per se. It is a vote against greater economic integration beyond the free flow of goods, services, and capital.

Brexit Marks A Turning Point—A Classic Case

The reversal is happening in the last few years particularly amongst the middle class in Western countries. Their benefits are increasingly getting reduced in an era of globalization. The working classes have been resisting the forces of globalization all along. Now the nationals and the natives joined the fray as their jobs have been taken away by the immigrants and non-nationals. So they are seeing their incomes drop and jobs being lost. They are witnessing migrants and refugees from countries with different traditions and cultures. So, 'The signal from Brexit is that there is going to be a lot more slowing down of globalization, and more and more countries will create barriers for immigration and the movement of labour. It is a defining moment in the journey of the last 40 years.'[109] The critics of globalization vociferously say that the world has been further fragmented by the forces of globalization and certainly globalization did not make the world flat or levelled as Friedman and others claim.

[109] *Ibid*, p. 21.

The protagonists of globalization claimed that there would be win-win situation to all, but Brexit showed to the world that the claims of the globalizers were false. The critic of globalization reiterated that the fruits of globalization and the logic of free-market economics helped only the top-layers and the super-rich. It is in this context we need to examine Brexit. So, 'The Brexit vote presents both challenges and opportunities. It has proved that countries will have to be stronger domestically and not rely on exports as a vehicle for growth.'[110] The pro-Leave camp claimed that Britain needed to quit the EU to close its borders to more EU migrants, since the country had reached a 'breaking point'. Despite every well-known economist, including 10 Nobel Laureates in Economics opposed Brexit and issued several statements pointing out that the British economy would go into a tailspin if the Leave campaign won the day. But the leaders of the Leave movement brushed aside the dire warnings. On the contrary, the Conservative Eurosceptic camp contemptuously brushed aside their warning and thus rebutted that 'People in this country have had enough of experts.'[111]

This time their prediction came true. As a consequence, if we look at 'the economic scenario in Britain is, if anything, gloomier than that painted by the economists who advised against the divorce from the EU. The pound has sunk to its lowest value in 31 years against the U.S. dollar. The devaluation of the pound will mean that imported goods and services will be costlier for the British public. Trillions of dollars have been wiped off the global stock exchanges, with U.K. shares naturally taking most of the beating. Major agencies have downgraded Britain credit rating.'[112] The ramifications are huge. Hundreds and thousands of

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[110] *Ibid.*

[111] Bhaskar Dutta, 'A Brexit from economic wisdom' in The Hindu, July 5, 2016, p. 10.

[112] *Ibid.*

job losses particularly in the financial sector, because London and other big cities in Britain are the financial hubs of Europe and World. According to the 'European passport scheme' under which financial services firms located in one member state can carry out business activities in another member state without having to incur the additional costs that are normally associated with being a 'foreign' entity.[113] Once Brexit is formalized it would lose this privilege.

Having left EU, 'Britain will become a significantly less attractive destination for all foreign investors that have favoured the country because it is such a convenient gateway (partly) because of the English language) to Europe… Since the EU market is so much larger than the U.K. market, major manufacturers may well move to Ireland since that is still a part of the EU. So, Dublin could replace London as the gateway to Europe for these foreign firms. All this suggests that the U.K. economy will take several years to get back to 'business as usual' mode.'[114]

Britain is not the only country with growing anti-EU sentiment. Even other countries such as Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Spain, Sweden, Hungary and Poland follow suit. Many right-wing political parties such as in France, Le Pen who is the most prospective contender to become President in 2017 has pledged to hold a 'Frexit' referendum. The populist Alternative fur Deutschland party is swinging the Germany politics to the right. In Italy, a candidate from the Protest Party Five Star Movement has been elected as the Mayor of Rome. Anti-EU parties in the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Austria are making headlines. Portuguese newly elected government has rejected EU sponsored austerity measures.[115] All these put together could lead to further disintegration of Europe will inflict lasting damage to the alliances and co-

[113] *Ibid.*

[114] *Ibid.*

[115] Iam Bremmer, 'Bracing for a Western Disturbance' in India Today, July 11, 2016, p. 27.

operation between countries. As C. Rangarajan, former Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister and former Governor of RBI opines that 'Brexit is not a blow against globalisation per se. It is a vote against greater economic integration beyond the free flow of goods, services, and capital. Labour does not stand in the same category as capital, even though both are factors of production … The sociological economic implications of this phenomenon are yet to unravel.'[116] Nonetheless, some commentators have interpreted the results of the referendum as a vote against globalisation, pointing out that an integrated Europe has failed to raise living standards in much of Europe. The Italian economy is apparently not much bigger than it was when Euro was creaked, while the Greek economy has shrunk appreciably. In Britain itself, the austerity drive of the Tory government has slashed welfare budgets. But is this all due to globalisation itself or the wrong set of policies followed by member states in Europe?[117]

Amidst converging and diverging positions, 'One can argue that till the cows come home. But the post-referendum surveys show clearly that xenophobia was the dominant reason explaining the vote in favour of Brexit. This is surely reason enough to desist from giving any positive spin on the referendum.'[118]The morning after Britain voted to pull out of the EU, US President Barack Obama said 'the development was reflective of the fear and changes brought about by globalization.'[119] While speaking at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) held at the Stanford University campus, he said in his opening remarks that the world has shrunk and become interconnected. And while that promises to bring

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[116] C. Rangarajan, 'Making sense of Brexit' in The Hindu, July 14, 20016, p. 9.

[117] Bhaskar Dutta, 'A Brexit from economic wisdom' in The Hindu, July 5, 16, p. 10.

[118] *Ibid.*

[119] SanitdaSharma, 'Globalisation fears sparked Brexit' in The Times of India, June 26, 2016, p. 15.

extraordinary benefits, there are many challenges, too the president said.[120] Substantiating further, he said, 'It evokes concerns and fears. And so part of why this GES has been so close to my heart, because I believe all of you represent the upside of an interconnected world,'[121] when he addressed 700 entrepreneurs and venture capitalists from across the world. Those who endorsed globalization few decades ago now say that the outcomes have been horrendous that points to the hegemony of globalised finance, in the form of neo-liberal policies that brought crisis and unemployment, increasing inequality and absolute poverty and cuts in the Welfare State.

The outcome of the economic stagnation is seen in the continued increase in inequality resulting in the breakdown of communities and a pervading sense of hopelessness among people within and across the continents, who have started to feel that they are no longer able to control their own destiny. Low and receding employment prospects, precarious work contracts, falling of liveable wages, escalation of insecurity in material life, inaccessibility to health and education due to spiralling costs and a general sense of insecurity in all facets of life have become pervasive features, even though these are by and large visible in prosperous societies cross the globe. All these aspects not only prevalent in advanced and developed societies, but also in most parts of the world as a result of economic policies favouring the rich and large capital and suppressing the rights and aspirations of ordinary people on the grounds that 'there is no alternative' (TINA).[122]Huge number of people eventually became the victims of financial globalization are unable to pick on their real enemy. 'Instead, the tendency has been to pick on others, who are equally or even more the victims but can be isolated and made into

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[120] *Ibid.*

[121] *Ibid.*

[122] Prabhat Patnaik, *A stone at a hornets' nest* in 'Frontline', July 22, 2016, pp.16-17.

scapegoats because of some apparent differences …'[123] It is interesting note that the enemy who is responsible for having created the situation is visible and identifiable, but the perpetrators deflect the issue on something else. For example, 'The vote in both England and Wales indicates and further strengthens an increasingly right-wing surge across Europe, in which 'nationalism' is little more than a fig leaf for open or suppressed racism and intolerance to ethnic/cultural differences.'[124]

Across the globe the right-wing surge is sweeping fuelling its politics on 'nationalism' and has the potential to become a veritable tsunami not only in Europe but across the world. New York billionaire and the Republican Presidential candidate Donald Trump in his acceptance speech said 'Americanism, not globalism, will be our credo,' in an epic, full-blooded, 72-minute speech before a partisan crowd on the final day of the Republican National Convention in Cleveland. 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 and stands up to countries that cheat.' He reiterated that 'Our horrible trade agreements with China and many others will be renegotiated. That includes renegotiating NAFTA to get a better deal for America—and we'll walk away if we don't get the deal that we want indicating that 'America first' negotiating tactics that will characterize a Trump administration. He added that 'I am going to bring our jobs back to Ohio and 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.'

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[123] *Ibid.*

[124] *Ibid.*

Nationalism and Its Many Faces—India A Case In Point

There are no limits to the perceptions on nationalism. We come across extreme levels of understanding on nationalism. Those of my generation remember the aggressive and genocidal nationalism of Nazi Germany, and due to this some of us continue to think that nationalism as a political project close to fascism. Apparently we are appalled in recent times by the outbreak of nationalism in different shades and forms of fascism in several parts of the world. The campaigns and the narratives across the world by and large unfold the latent meaning and content of nationalism. It is being employed covertly as well as overtly primarily to whip up the passion of the masses in order to meet their political ends.

The notion of 'nationalism' has been there in the last few centuries that helped the demagogues, fascists and tyrants. Disguised under 'patriotism', 'nationalism'—one's love for country, it harvests on the frenzy and ferocity of the masses. The ruling classes and dominant castes use these as tools to destroy or annihilate those who defy and oppose their regimes or views. Our history is filled with a number of incidences that covers a variety of horrors that shows the evil and wicked nature of the fascists, dictators and tyrants who went to the extent of exterminating millions of innocent civilians and citizens to satiate their egos, whims and fancies. Convincing the citizens of a country can easily be done by whipping up the passions and sentiments of the masses by using the slogans of 'nationalism' and 'patriotism'.

Let me at this point bring in Erich Fromm candidly elaborates that 'Nationalism is our form of incest, is our idolatry, is our insanity. 'Patriotism' is its cult'. Fascists, tyrants, dictators and oligarchs did use 'Nationalism' as their tool to take over the government and country. Even to wage wars and to annihilate the political opponents 'nationalism' has been used by the rulers to legitimize their actions. One of the classic

examples was Adolph Hitler. He said that 'The effectiveness of the truly national leader consists in preventing his people from dividing their attention, and keeping it fixed on a common enemy.' However, there should be clarity on 'nation' because 'nationalism' derives its essence and significance from it.

What exactly does the term 'nation' mean? Oxford dictionary traces back the origin of the word comes from Latin *natio*, which is from the verb *nasci*, meaning 'born'. Further, it expounds that 'A large body of people united by common descent, history, culture or language, inhabiting within a particular state or territory.' If we go by the specified categorization as Indians we are hardly bound by common descent, history, culture or language. India is diverse and plural, and therefore we are not one, but different and heterogeneous. If this is so, and if at all we go by the stated definition and criteria it thus raises three fundamental questions: Is India a nation? If the answer is No: How can there be a term which is widely and persuasively called 'nationalism' operative without a nation? So, does it simply mean 'nationalism without a nation'?

Further, how can a country that hardly meets the requirements of nationhood claim to be a nation? Based on the rubric that questions the very notions of 'nation' and 'nationalism' we come across frequent usage of a term in India 'anti-national' pitched against 'patriotism'. How come it is sweeping the breath and width of the country like a wild fire? 'Nationalism stems from an imagined, unbreakable bond that we in India never really had. It is a contrived idea that cannot contain our effusive, multicultural, multilinguistic, multireligious, multicaste motherland. Fortunately, you don't need nationalism to love your country or be love to it.'[125] The concept and project of 'nationalism' is being under serious scrutiny and has been critiqued on several grounds.

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[125] Antara Dev Sen, 'To be a nation, follow Constitution', in Deccan Chronicle, March 11th, 2016, p.9.

We are a country of diversities and have never characterized homogeneity. Antara Dev Sen substantiate her point on the very notion of 'nationalism'[126] without mincing words. Seventy years after Independence, India all of a sudden started to invoke nationalism. At a recent meeting of its National Executive, the BJP affirmed nationalism as its guiding philosophy. Its leaders categorically said that refusal to chant 'Bharat Mata ki jai' signifies disrespect to the Constitution. Since then nationalism has all of a sudden surfaced more strongly than ever and thus occupied the centre stage. Not addressing to the pressing problems that the masses of our country face, the Government at the Centre seem to have placed as its highest priority is identifying who is anti-national and unpatriotic. It is in this context the gamut of nationalism debate surfaced within the Parliament and outside that employed an array of terms to describe the brand of nationalism invoked by the BJP (NDA) government primarily to identify who are the anti-nationals. As a consequence we do find a variety of brands: 'pseudo-nationalism' to 'aggressive nationalism' to 'Hindu nationalism', 'cultural nationalism', 'chauvinistic nationalism', 'hyper nationalism', 'regimental nationalism' and 'partisan nationalism'.

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[126] A century ago, in 1917, Tagore had rejected the idea of a nation because it attempted to make a whole population into a mechanical, soulless organization that can only serve political purposes. It obscures our humanity and makes 'the moral man, the complete man' into 'the man of limited purpose'. It forces actions and behaviour patterns on us, overrules our conscience and makes us less human. 'This nationalism is a cruel epidemic of evil,' he said. Thirty years before India became free, Tagore told the West: 'You who live under the delusion that you are free, are every day sacrificing your freedom and humanity to this fetish of nationalism …' Besides, India was too diverse to be one nation. He takes caste: 'Have swe an instance in the whole world where a people who are not allowed to mingle their blood shed their blood for one another except by coercion or for mercenary purposes?'A detailed analysis is found on Antara Dev Sen, 'To be a nation, follow Constitution', *Ibid*.

Nonetheless, hardly we have come across except a few using fascism as part of nationalism, even though we come across in history that fascist government could be voted to power or even democratically elected. If someone uses fascism to describe what is happening in this country, BJP is not comfortable with it. They tend to negate it as exaggeration and reiterate that those who connect the present happenings to fascism are involved in a misguided attempt to revoke the moral legitimacy of the government in power. On the contrary, those who do not see the semblances and closer proximity to fascist tendencies fail to understand or willing to accept the very fact that in a constitutional democracy it is also possible to adduce evidence in support of the government's democratic credentials.

In the prevailing situation of our country it is important to interrogate whether the particular kind of nationalist ideology espoused by the ruling dispensation has anything in common with the ideology of fascism. For this type exercise it is important to go back to the father of fascism, Benito Mussolini and his seminal work, *The Doctrine of Fascism* published in 1935. Mussolini identifies five principles as central to a fascist ideology and they are as follows:

The first and the fundamental is the primacy of the state's interests over an individual's rights. As he writes, 'The fascist 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'. At the heart of the brand of nationalism that is currently seeking to establish its hegemony over India's cultural and political landscape is the idea of the anti-national. No doubt purely by coincidence, Mussolini's five principles – primacy of the over citizen's rights and the nation, contempt for democracy, investment in a national religion, and a belief in the nation-state as a moral agent – converge neatly in the discourse of the 'anti-national'. The microphone that amplifies this discourse is the sedition law.[127]

Human history posits a bundle of contradictions. It co-exists by accommodating two oppositional ideas/images knowing that they do not agree with each other and yet subscribing to both. Whenever we want we bring the other in place of the one we believe and at times replacing the one we never believed in place of the one we believed. Indian political landscape is premised on contradictions rotating on two polar ideological oppositional extremities—inclusionary and exclusionary, secular vs. majoritarian. Accordingly the BJP Government at the Centre has invoked majoritarianism on which its notion of 'nationalism' is premised. For example, there are two important features of nationalism, one cultural and another political. No version of nationalism has never been culture neutral, whether, German or Italian or , Pakistani or Indian, they all tie citizenship and rights to certain necessary cultural traits that their nationals should possess. The emergence of fascism in Italy and Germany which saw the most significant nationalist movements is not as much a coincidence as inevitability. When a country is created for giving sov-

[127] Quoted by G. Sampath in his column article titled 'When the state becomes the nation' in The Hindu, March 24, 2016, p. 13.

ereignty to a religious or ethnic group, then those who aren't part of it are naturally viewed with suspicion.

The most overarching preoccupation of the Sangh Parivar was to unite Hindus under Hindutva nationalism and yet, the Sangh conception of nationalism excludes the cultural, political and economic history and concerns of the oppressed castes of India. Much of the historic commonalities that they allude to are more a modern invention than historic fact. The language of Sanskrit, for instance, is considered a great relic of Indian history, for Dalits, Sanskrit is, a symbol of oppression.[128]

BJP-RSS notion of nationalism has always been cultural-specific and political-centric. Its Hindutva nationalism invokes the majoritarian 'Hindu cultural ethos' and thus combines with the dominant Hindu sentiments and aspirations leading to Hindu Rashtra. Towards this end it uses binaries by pitching one against the other. For instance,

Reservations were vehemently opposed by many in India and clever and innovative ways are found to propagate caste discrimination against Dalits/SCs in educational institutions … The fact that the majority of students who have committed suicide recently have been Dalits points to a deeper malady … Apart from the broad right wing discourse on anti-nationalism, even sub-nationalist movement have served as tools of discrimination and oppression against Dalits and SCs … Unlike the complex and contradictory implications of nationalism on Dalits, the relationship of Hindutva nationalism with Muslims is quite straightforward, they're simply not a part of it.[129]

The nature and character of nationalism we have witnessing is hyper because it is programmed in order to polarize the society on the basis culture, religion, language and caste. The hyper nationalism as envis-

[128] For more details See Prathan Sagar and Pavan Korda, 'Losing humanism in nationalism' in Deccan Chronicle, March 25, 2016, p.9.
[129] *Ibid*.

aged by the RSS-BJP is totally opposed to the Indian nationalism that we experienced during the Freedom Struggle. As Mridula Mukherjee rightly pointed out 'This was because Indian nationalism, as articulated in our freedom struggle, was a progressive, revolutionary, humane, compassionate, pro-people, anti-colonial nationalism.'[130] She brilliantly draws the notions of nationalism comparing with free-struggle and the present one. She draws parallels to the then and the present now in the following ways:

It was not the aggressive jingoistic nationalism of the fascist Mussolini or Nazi Hitler which was used in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s to crush democracy, and commit genocide on bonafide citizens by declaring then anti-national. Neither was it the homogenizing nationalism based on language (and often religion), as in 19th century Europe, examples being French-speaking Catholic France and German-speaking Protestant Germany. The nationalist vision that inspired millions of Indians was of an independent, multi-lingual, multi-religious, secular, democratic, civil libertarian and egalitarian republic.

The hyper-nationalism witnessed in India in recent times is not the nationalism of our freedom struggle. It misuses nationalism … to polarize, to divide, and to suppress individual freedoms … Our nationalism is meant to unite, to harmonise, to guarantee freedom of speech, freedom of the press … civil liberties, as this is one of the strongest elements in the legacy of the freedom struggles which is under grave threat today… These attacks on freedom of expression, of movement, on freedom to eat and earn your livelihood, bring home to us the urgent necessity of resisting these attacks, and that only be done by defending civil liberties, by defending this legacy as an integral part of our nationalism, and by declaring these attacks as anti-national.[131]

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[130] In her column article Mridula Mukerjee, analyses in depth 'What it means to be independent' in The Hindu, August 15, 2016, p.8.

[131] *Ibid.*

As India celebrated 69th years of Independence, it is shrouded with a peculiar paradox. On the one hand, India's ballooning middle class which is bigger than the entire Europe and while on the other there is a virulent eruption of a chauvinistic nationalism aggressively pushed which is rather ironic by the same classes. The middle-classes have benefitted the most as soon as India opened its flood gates to the globalizing forces. The beneficiaries of globalization (middle classes and dominant castes) who are at present subscribe to the aggressive and chauvinistic nationalism. It is apparent these are classes and castes that take advantage of both.

BJP-RSS brand of nationalism in recent times displayed its gory and ferocity of aggressively translating its brand of nationalism against the Dalits and the minorities. In the last two years a number of incidences in varied forms and shades have been displayed in different parts of the country. Gurucharan Das in such a volatile terrain draws distinction between a patriot and a nationalist that 'Both patriots and nationalists wish for a successful India but the patriot wants all Indians to succeed, especially its minorities, while the nationalist is mainly concerned with the whole. A nationalist places his country over everything; a patriot is likely to choose justice over his country.'[132]

BJP Brand of Nationalism Nuanced and Contested

The history and the idea of nation-states are relatively new. Although India as a nation is secular in concept, in recent times has almost became closer to a divine-entity under the present dispensation. BJP's conception and interpretation of nation and nationalism are on different tan-

[132] In his column titled 'Independence Day quiz: Are you a patriot or a nationalist?' in Sunday Times of India, August 14, 2015, p. 21.

gents. The present trend resonates some of the things that Karen Armstrong in her recent book *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* (2014) traces that 'The new nation-state would labour under a fundamental contradiction: the state (the government apparatus) was supposed to be secular, but the nation ('the people') aroused quasi-religious emotions … If we can define the sacred as something to which one is prepared to die, the nation had certainly become an embodiment of the divine, a supreme value.'

In tune to it BJP President Amit Shah, who was in Mangaluru recently to inaugurate the Tiranga Yatra made a scathing attack on those who have consistently opposed BJP's views on national and nationalism said 'In certain parts of the nation, a few people have started questioning nationalism. At many places, theories are being planted against nationalism. They are questioning nationalism with the help of freedom of speech. A section has launched on line campaigns questioning nationalism through social media. I would like to tell those people that Independence and Constitution are the outcome of nationalism. It was nationalism that inspired our national leaders like Jhansi Rani to fight for the nation.'[133]

RSS-BJP brand of nationalism is another name for Hindu majarotarianism and has little to do with Indian nationalism that was forged in the course of the struggle against British colonial rule, from which the Hindu nationalists kept aloof. Moreover, it is important at this juncture to re-state that Indian nationalism unlike the idea that prevailed in Europe is not bound to a language, religion, or race. And so let us not reduce or belittle our understanding of nationalism to suit our political ends. Con-

[133] Times reported under the caption 'BJP trains guns on K'taka govt for backing anti-national ideologies' in The Ties of India, August 22, 2016, p.7.

necting the thread between shrinking globalization and rising nationalism, the rage of the poor and working classes against globalization three decades ago was due to outsourcing jobs of mining and steel industry to China, South Korea and other parts of Asia, the migration of mining. Some of the incidences such as 9/11, or even 1999 or the World Trade Organization conference in Seattle was marked by street protests by American Trade Unions wherein the protesters were forced President Bill Clinton to acknowledge it in his official speech were the events of the past.

The following year, the angry and unemployed blue-collar workers in the US heartland became a focus of left-leaning presidential candidate Al Gore. Four years later, this very segment was moved not by economic considerations but by patriotism, in the aftermath of 9/11 that voted decisively for George Bush. In addition, wherever the IMF, WB, G7 or G8 met for their meetings and summits the protesters thronged at the venues in thousands and millions shouting against the havoc that corporate globalization does to the poor and working classes. Nevertheless, it was a period that the United States and other rich and developed nations and also developing countries such as India particularly the middle classes and dominant castes enjoyed unprecedented prosperity and growth, and certainly was tech-boom that lasted for a more than two decades. From 2008-2012 there was a global financial meltdown that punctured the boom wherein the top global finance corporations crashed resulting in the development of cracks within corporate capitalism that hit badly the citadel of American capitalism happened to be somewhat old narratives.

We need to carefully look at the clichés such as: ‘What Trump has done is to hijack the economic trauma of globalization’s have-nots from the left, and conflate these with identity politics. European national parties are beginning to act similarly, and some of those instincts found

resonance in the Brexit campaign.'[134] Similarly, 'Indeed some older-generation South Asian in Britain (including Hindus and Muslims of Indian and Pakistani origin) voted like their white peers and against the EU competition.'[135] Globalization is increasingly being challenged be it Brexit or Donald Trump or whatever. 'In sum, more than the de-globalization this was a contest between older and newer templates of globalization, and an attempt to tackle questions of whose globalization and globalization on which terms.'[136] The struggle is tussle between globalizers and de-globalizers, patriots and Hindutva 'nationalists'. Nuanced debates on nationalism in recent times have further unfolded the inherent contradictions that the ultra-right wing protagonists of Hindutva nationalists argue about. Their understanding of nationalism is diametrically opposed to the notion of many who have been experiencing for decades in the free and independent India. As Romila Thapar articulates comprehensively that,

Nationalism was not something problematic. It was an identity with the nation and its society. The identity and consciousness of being Indian did not initially need to be defined. We understood nationalism to be Indian nationalism and not Hindu or Muslim or any other kind of religious or other nationalism, and a clear distinction was made between nationalism and other loyalties. Nationalism could only be Indian. And Indian meant that which was above all the smaller loyalties to religion, caste, ethnicity and region. Nationalism meant differentiating between the nation and the state, and it was clear that no government could take upon itself the rights of a nation. Sovereignty resides with the nation and not with the government. A nation referred to the people that inhabited a territory who saw themselves as an evolved community, one that was

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[134] Ashok Malik in his column article 'Trump, Brexit and India' in The Times of India, July 23rd 2016, p. 16.

[135] *Ibid.*

[136] *Ibid.*

created by drawing upon the range of communities that existed prior to the nation. It was on a shared history, interests and aspirations frequently expressed in a common culture in turn dre from multiple culture.[137]

Romila Thapar comprehensively points to the basic characteristics and features of nationalism. Just like that according to her one cannot utter who is a national or anti-national. 'Nationalism, therefore, cannot be without its limits and the limits have to be carefully worked out.'[138]

The term should be carefully treaded upon. On the contrary the RSS-BJP has concocted and thus designed its own brand of nationalism. So, 'The nation is different from the state and from government. The state can have different forms of government … The use of the term 'nation-state' qualifies the kind of state. Nationalism is a function of the nation … it consolidates aspects of the nation such as democracy, territory and power and endorses the value systems that ensure equal rights an justice…In other words, ultimately, it is the people who determine the nation.'[139]

The concepts such as nation, nationalism and nation-state are so complex and ambiguous and therefore should be approached and articulated carefully. Prime Minister Modi on the 23rd of August 16 in his concluding remarks at the meeting of core group leaders of BJP state units exhorted them to continue focusing on 'nationalism', which he said was the saffron party's 'identity'. This statement he utters when his government and the party is facing severe criticism over their 'aggressive nationalism'[140]. He continued by saying that 'We are continuously

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[137] Romila Thapar's essay on *The Colonial Roots of Hindutva 'Nationalism'* in 'Outlook',11th July 16, pp. 49-50..

[138] *Ibid*, p. 50.

[139] *Ibid*, p. 51.

[140] Correspondent of Deccan Chronicle, New Delhi, in his write up titled 'Nationalism our core, PM silences critics' appeared in Deccan Chronicle, dated 24th August, 16, p. 7.

working for development but there are some elements who do not like it. They are trying to divert our and the people's attention. We will have to inform the common man that our sole aim is nation,'[141] said a BJP statement quoting Prime Minister Modi.

PM Modi seemed to have fallen short of further de-coding the concept of 'nationalism' when he addressed the BJP's core committee that deliberated poll strategies on the 23rd of August, 2016 in New Delhi. He wanted to stress more on nationalism, but deviated to 'nation-building' since the RSS-BJP affiliates have hijacked it to their advantage and used it against the Dalits and the minorities that rocked the nation. As a consequence the image of the BJP and its governance plummeted to its low that might work against their electoral prospects in the coming years. To salvage the situation the PM Modi went on using nationalism and nation building on par with each other. Is PM Modi after demolishing the 'gau-rakshaks' as anti-social elements and other characterization and as a result received threats from the VHP, Hindu Mahasabha and other RSS-oriented diehards on an appeasement mode, so that the destructive nationalist brigades would not work against him. However, Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS head, said in Agra recently that 'Hindutva' was the same as 'nationalism'.

More than 'nationalism', the debate the RSS wants to keep it alive is 'Hindutva'. At the core it is all about uniting all sections of what RSS calls 'Hindu' against the minorities. When we face a plethora of such difficult questions, the Prime Minister's articulations should be more circumspect. RSS-BJP's brand of 'nationalism' is not conducive to the majority of Hindus and minorities. RSS-BJP's 'idea of India' does not concur with the majority of Indians. So, there is a clash of the 'idea of India'. In reality what we see is the glaring social and economic inequalities in the real India. The social and economic indicators show abysmal gaps between the privileged and underprivileged classes and the domi-

[141] *Ibid.*

nant castes and oppressed communities. The architect of our Constitution B.R. Ambedkar based on the existing reality prevailing in India said:

> 'How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting out political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.'[142]

Conclusion

We have been witnessing that globalization is shrinking and many have started to speak about de-globalization. At the same time the notion of nationalism is on the rise that spreads like wild fire across the world. Undoubtedly the dialectic between shirking globalization and rising nationalism is more visible than before. Each country wants to protect its ethnicity, resources, defined borders and its majority identities. The notions of 'nation' and 'nationalism' in this context become problematic. As Earmest Gellner points out that 'nations do not create nationalism; it is the other way round; nationalism creates nations.' Further, 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist,' says Benedict Anderson.

Based on these two expositions 'The invention of the nation is contingent upon the ability to imagine a political community on the basis of

[142] Quoted on the cover page of *The Movement of India*, Volume 10, Issue 02, March-April 2016.

perceived common interests.'[143] The spirit of nationalism that we observe and experience in Indian in recent times is different. The present dispensation is propelled not by Indian nationalism but Hindu nationalism and openly admits as 'Hindu party' which rejects 'secular policies' and openly strives for the establishment of Hindu Raj so that 'Hindu interests' shall prevail ('rue India'). This, of course, is not Indian nationalism but Hindu nationalism, which BJP calls Hindutva or 'cultural nationalism'. RSS-BJP's ideology of aggressive nationalism is premised their ideologue V.D. Savarkar's vision. 'It is that Hindus constitute a separate 'nation'. Hindutva is another name for the two-nation theory—a 'Hindu nation', as distinct from other Indians, over whom it rules to promote 'Hindu interests'.[144]

So, by all means '… nationalism is more or less defined as a political movement and an ideology embodied in a national 'identity'. In a democratic country like India, this identity is analysed more often in terms of the inclusion and exclusion of ethno-cultural minorities.' [145] The nationalism the Hindu nationalists believe without a nation. In that Dalits, women and minorities are not part of it and do not constitute. Apparently, Hindu nationalism that the Hindtva outfits propagate does not believe in diversity and plurality that India is blessed with. RSS-BJ's brand of Hindu nationalism polarizes segments and excludes more people. PM Modi's new jargon of nation- building is pinched to camouflage Hindu nationalism to wooing Dalits and other oppressed communities stand exposed. 'Hindu nationalism' is not cohesive and thus exclusive of cultural, ethnic, religious and gender differences. BJP-RSS's construct of nationalism and nation is skewed and dangerous.

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[143] K.N. Panikar, *Nationalism, then and now* in 'Frontline', April 15, 2016, p. 98.

[144] A.G. Noorani, *Nationalism Vs Hindutva* in 'Frontline, April 29, 2016, p. 107.

[145] Navneet Sharma and Pradeep Nair, *Kilvenmani to Javkheda: An Antithesis to Ambedkar's Nation* in 'Mainstream,September 11-17, 2015, p. 31.

ESSENTIALIZING HUMANITY AMIDST PLURALIT

India A Case In Point

Abstract

The landscape of India is unique positing plurality of cultures, languages, traditions and religion. Hence, India characterizes unity and oneness in its diversity, portraying co-habitation, co-existence and interdependence. Apparently, 'Live and Let Live' continues as an overarching theme in India's life and witness. However, in recent times the word 'plurality' is under serious threat and contestation as the country keep witnessing a spate of incidences that portrays and thus covers the word 'intolerance'. Nonetheless some say that India has always been a 'tolerant' country, while the others claim that India has never been 'tolerant' and shown the height of 'intolerance' in one way or the other. As against this backdrop, this paper will make an attempt delving into the factors that arouse 'intolerance' and in the process essentialises the concept 'humanity' that inter-faces and inter-plays with the plurality that the country enjoys as part of its civilization, ethos and unifying fabric. In such a worrisome scenario, being and becoming human in multi-cultural and multi-religious settings becomes more appropriate, timely and essential as our society is enmeshed with intolerance and prejudices.

Introduction

The world we live is gripped with fear and insecurity. The events such as 9/11, Mumbai terror attacks and others happened in and around India does prompts us to probe into complex and yet intricate relationships between religion and politics adding fuel to intolerance, insecurity and thus intensifying conflict and animosity amongst communities that makes many to think: Whether religion triggered politics responsible for the promotion of tolerance? Whether political ideologies backed by fundamentalist religious tenets such as religious fundamentalism and ultra-conservatism subscribe to polarization and divisiveness in the society?

Combination of conservative political ideologies couched with religious fundamentalism seemed to have captured some of the countries such as India, the largest democracy in the world and now with the United States where conservative party's candidate Donald Trump wave seem to be catching up in the primaries and may become the next president of the United States of America. So, religion is being used increasingly to polarize the nation-states and societies and thus playing vital roles in political arenas. In such a situation notion of humanity is gradually waning. Why and what are factors that contributes to the current fiasco should be the main concern particularly for the academia.

Religion and Religious Fundamentalism

If we flip through the world history it reminds us heinous atrocities of war and terrorism have been perpetuated in the name of religion. One wonders how religion could orchestrate such acts of extreme intolerance that are antithetical to its basic tenets. If this is the case, how could religion become a force promoting greater understanding and mutual respect across cultures, faiths, communities, fellow-human being and nations? To address these questions requires a clear and precise concep-

tion of what constitutes 'religion'. There have been many conceptual and theoretical understanding of 'religion'. Out of which, some merit elucidation. Going back to origins of religion,

The earliest forms of religion were shamanistic (Kellett 1962; Elade 1964, 1978). These are small-scale, personalized forms of religion that are directly experiential in nature (… involve 'doing' something that is experienced, usually associated with trance states triggered by dancing and journeys in a spirit world), lack any formal theology (especially beliefs in gods that have absolute power over the fate of men), and are mainly associated with hunter-gatherer societies. Doctrinal, or world, religions are believed to have emerged later. These typically involve the existence of one or more gods, some- thing more like a theology, formal ritual space (e.g. temples), ritual specialists (e.g. priests), and an emphasis on ritual practices (Eliade 1978).[146]

It is interesting to observe that it started as a small-scale phenomenon and over the centuries grown substantially and thus became organized. However, 'Arguably religion is not a single coherent entity but only a loose assemblage of patterns of thinking and behaviour that has been conceptually very differently over time and across different language groups and cultural traditions (Asad 1993).'[147] Based on it we have diverse sects, denominations and cults. 'In short, religion is a slippery category that changes over time and is used for different purposes in varied contexts.'[148] As rightly pointed out be Semitic religion or others have shown their aggressive character in different points of history of different countries in the world.

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[146] R.I.M. Dunbar, 'The Origin of Religion as a Small-Scale Phenomenon' in *Religion, Intolerance, and Conflict—A Scientific and conceptual Investigation,* Steve Clarke et.al, Oxford: OUP, 2013, p. 53.

[147] Harvey Whitehouse, 'Religion, Cohesion, and Hostility' in Op.cit, p. 36.

[148] *Ibid*, p.37.

In recent times we have been witnessing all forms of aggression inflicted by the fanatical religious groups against those who they do not agree. Religious fundamentalism is on the rise. Who is to be blamed? 'So, it is not that 'religion' per se is responsible for our attitudes towards others, whether rational or fanatical, tolerant or judgmental. Instead, we must carve up the ill-defined category of 'religion' and use the dissected parts as our units of explanation.'[149] Nonetheless, religion in its fundamentals resonate the values of love, peace, humanity, mutuality, inclusivity and togetherness. But religious fundamentalism pitches one against the other in the name creedal, confessional, doctrinal and sectarian differentials associated with 'boundary setting' elucidating moral, behavioural and conceptual rigidity.

Religious fundamentalism takes deep roots and manifests in intolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty leading to conservatism, dogmatisms, ethnocentricism, religious fundamentalism and authoritarianism. Therefore, '… religious fundamentalism (RF) and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), which are positively correlated with one another and are consistently associated with high levels of intolerance and prejudice toward out-groups.'[150] Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992:118) define Religious fundamentalism as:

the belief that there is one set of religious teachings that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is fundamentally opposed by forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable practice of the past; and that those who believe and follow these fundamental teachings have a special relationship with the deity.[151]

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[149] *Ibid.*

[150] Russell Powell and Steve Clarke, 'Religion, Tolerance, and Intolerance: Views from Across the Disciplines' in Op.cit. p. 15.

[151] *Ibid.*

Religious fundamentalism is intensely associated with an unwillingness to extend civil liberties and constitutional rights to minorities and others with different religious persuasions other than the majority. The connection between religious fundamentalism and intolerance is due to several factors such as claiming theirs is the only and exclusive endowed with absolute truth, and so, salvation is possible only in their religion. In this they do employ scriptural literalism and majoritarianism, perceiving the human social world as part of a larger cosmic battle between good and evil, and a general distrust of human nature that leads to a perceived need for authoritarian social institutions. All of these characteristics are pervasive in religious terrorist rhetoric and justification.[152] In such a context,

Many fundamentalists claim to possess knowledge of the absolute truth concerning mattes of morality, and they perceive dissenting perspectives as threats to eternal salvation. Fundamentalist churches are more likely to encourage ethnic and religious inclined to support and defer to the prejudices from the pulpit, and they are inclined towards political theocracy … individuals are inclined to support and defer to the divinely sanctioned right to rule of theocratic leaders that impose and enforce legal regimes grounded to exclusive revelatory doctrine … The cultural isolation and high internal homogeneity of fundamentalist groups can exacerbate pre-existing dispositions toward intolerance. Finally, religious fundamentalism (RF) is associated with increased levels of aggression, especially toward values-violators … Thus, it seems that the prosaically effects of religiosity are overridden when a religious person is a fundamentalist who is confronted with an individual who threatens his or her core values …[153]

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[152] *Ibid*.

[153] *Ibid*, pp.15-16.

Opinions on 'Rising Intolerance'

Religious fundamentalism is at its peak in India. If we carefully examine the factors that propelled a spate of incidences, the levels of prejudice and intolerance perpetuated by right-wing extremists, and those in authority not addressing to those, show the authoritarian component of the construct of religious fundamentalism. As long as the ruling regime either totally silent or occasionally issuing assurances would not help the growing levels of intolerance subside, rather extend signals to go on in aggressive manner. The ultra-rightist band wagon that continues to get the tacit support from the party in power—right wing authoritarianism have been considered as bigots because of their mind set that negates fundamental political and civil rights to minorities and others.

This is how the bigots have understood religion they subscribe to, rather than following the content of it that transcends prejudice and intolerance. For instance,

> 'Most major world religions include norms of tolerance, forgiveness, and equality… these norms are motivating when internalized, but show the negative correlation between Christian Orthodoxy and some types of prejudice … For example, there are Biblical passages denigrating … and condoning the subordination of women. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the religion-intolerance link may hinge on the specific prejudice under investigation.'[154]

The battle in our Indian society in recent times is pitched one against another: 'Tolerance of the intolerant' or 'intolerance of the tolerant'. It has been pitched on these lines and being battled to establish the supremacy over one against the other. These two statements are to be nuanced by situating few narratives and cases in order to acquire better

[154] *Ibid*, p. 17.

clarity. The Bollywood icon, Aamir Khan, commented on 'rising intolerance' sharply divided polity sparking heated debates. Aamir Khan commented that his wife Kiran had asked him whether they should leave the country as 'she fears for her child'.

Responding to actor Aamir Khan's comments on the 'growing disquiet' in India, many via Twitter and Facebook expressed in the following ways: Sameep Parekh wrote:

> 'Hello Mr Perfectionist ... the fact that you can condemn India on such a large platform and not get thrown out of the country reveals volume about our tolerance level. I challenge you to try speaking this in any country where you feel safe. We the youth of this country are working out ass-off to get our lives and economy back on the development track; we will not allow few of you to hold it back.'

Sumedha Saravadaman said:

> 'Only those who never considered India their own country would speak of leaving it, based on a completely fabricated 'intolerance' story. Get lost Mr. Khan ...'

While Dil Bahadur added:

> ' ... I think you should be in Syria or Pakistan or any Arab country to know what is intolerance ... What is intolerance ... you have been accepted, loved and applauded and now you are saying we are intolerant ... I did not know you were so stupid.'

The harshest attacks were from within the film fraternity. For instance, actor Anupam Kher who tweeted,

> '... Did you tell Kiran that you have lived through worse times in this country and but you never thought of moving out.'

Film maker Ashoke Pandid:

> 'Now that Aamir Khan also feels we are in intolerant Nation. Let us now go all out and prove once for all that we are really intolerant.'

Director Ram Gopal Varma tweeted that

> 'India is the most tolerant country in the world. Such statements send a wrong signal.'

Answering questions from the media and the audience at NFDC's Film Bazaar at the 48th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) at Panaji, AR Rahman, Oscar-winning composer said,

> 'I had gone through something similar a couple of months ago … Nothing should be violent. We are all ultra-civilized people and we should show the world that we are the best civilization.'

The Hindu Mahasabha reacted after the Bollywood superstar joined the debate on 'rising intolerance' during an awards ceremony for journalists. He remarked that

> '[Khan] should go to Pakistan for the benefit of India'

And its national secretary Munna Kumar Sharma said,

> 'A case of treason should be filed against Khan and other traitors like Shah Rukh Khan, who too has made such statements before.'

As they gathered in Meerut at the party office to discuss Aamir's statement suggested the actor should go in for 'ghar wapsi' (conversion),

especially in light of the fact that both his present wife and former one (Reena Dutta) have been Hindus. 'If not move to Pakistan, he should indulge in 'ghar wapsi' to free himself from the crimes of 'love jihad' said Sharma.'

Parliamentary affairs minister M Venkaiah Naidu said,

> 'Some people are misleading and some people are misled ... Some are propagating wrong things, some are coming under wrong propaganda. My suggestion is that the situation in India is better than any other country. People of India are tolerant.'

Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi tweeted that

> 'the Centre should try and figure out why people were feeling insecure, instead of branding all those who question the government and Modiji as unpatriotic, anti-national or motivated, the government would do better to reach out to people to understand what's happening what's disturbing them.'

Kiran Raju, Union Minister said,

> 'The record shows that the number of incidents of communal violence in the country have come down since NDA came to power. Just to make a blatant statement that during NDA rule, the country has become intolerant; it unnecessarily tarnishes the image of the country.'

Digvijaya Singh, one of the Congress General Secretaries opined that

> 'It's sad Aamir Khan, who is an icon among film actors not only in India, but across the world. Is feeling the same thing (rising intolerance) ... His wife is Hindu, she has also felt it, that with this kind of uncultured and intolerant atmosphere, it

> looks like those who are fighting against this will have to leave the country. This is a serious issue. Aamir Khan is a brand ambassador for tourism – incredible India – and that what's incredible ... that he can be a brand ambassador for our govt. and he can be on a platform in front of the I & B minister and speak his mind shows that free speech thrives ...'

Union HRD Minister Smriti Irani said that

> 'I am a living example of Modi's intolerance he forgave me though I publicly attacked him'

Actor Rishi Kapoor said to Aamir Khan and his wife that,

> 'When things are going wrong and the system need correction, repair it, mend it. Don't run away from it. That's Heroism.'

Aamir Khan's comment on 'rising intolerance' has generated heated debates across the spectrum and the saffron party linked his statement to a 'deep political conspiracy' of Congress to malign the country, while others said 'he was speaking the truth'. Wadding into the debate on 'intolerance' particularly on Aamir Khan's utterance AIMIM chief Assadudin Owaisi said that Muslims will not leave India under any circumstances as they are Indians 'not only by birth but by choice.'

Cutting across the spectrum a number of opinions and statements surfaced in the wake of Aamir Khan's comment. All the comments would certainly fall within the gamut of these two clusters: 1) Tolerance of the intolerant and 2) Intolerance of the tolerant. Both the statements convey messages that: we are tolerating although we are intolerant and others say that since we are tolerant we are tolerating the intolerance. Aamir Khan, as an ambassador of *Incredible India*, a government's campaign to promote tourism, Khan was at the centre of a debate a day after he expressed 'alarm and despondency' over the rise of incidents of

intolerance in the country. He made this statement before a galaxy of the VVIP and union ministers particularly from I & B. He was bold and forthright that must have put the BJP government to shame. He said whatever he wanted to say.

Since it was an open statement from an icon and celebrity known world over for his creative acting and critical inquiry, the spokespersons of BJP and others came down heavily on him, while others belonging to different political parties and other streams tried to defend him. The base question that emerges is: Is India tolerant to the intolerance? Those who subscribe to ultra-rights' parties such as BJP and political fundamentalist ideologies say that India is tolerant and thus tolerates to intolerances. They argue the case in such ways that the freedom of expression has not been negated and those who want to say can express freely and therefore India is tolerant.

Substantiating their standpoints, Hindus are in majority in India. Despite the majority status, Hindus continue to tolerate others such as Muslims, Christians and others and are treated on par with others. Therefore, India is tolerant to the core as compared to many other countries. To prove their point Bollywood is dominated by the Muslims and so India is tolerant. A question that arises here is: what wrong did Aamir Khan commit by that statement? He joined the debate over 'Rising Intolerance' saying his wife Kiran Rao had asked if they would move out of the country as she feared for the safety of their son. The Bollywood star was speaking at the Ramnath Goenka Awards function of The Indian Express Group that 'When I sit at home and talk to Kiran, she says 'should we move out of India.' That's a serious statement. She must be thinking of their future, particularly of their child.

Aamir Khan being a serious person and a creative artist openly shared that his wife said. He added that 'You feel why this is happening, you feel low. That sense does exist'. Then he cited a number of inci-

dences that happened in the last six-seven months. Why should there be huge hue and cry over Aamir Khan's utterance. He has all the freedom to give his opinion. He never backed out rather he firmly endorsed it. If we take the socio-political climate of our country in recent times what we see is the total degradation of civility in our society. For instance, Rajasthan chief minister Vasundhara Raje apologised to the artist after an art installation called the Bovine Divine was taken down in rage. The Jawahar Kala Kendra in Jaipur displayed the installation – a plastic cow suspended from a balloon – in an open area. The artist Siddharth Karwal was trying to draw attention to the plight of cows eating plastic waste. However pro-cow activists—a new power group in India—misunderstood, took offence, called the police who took the installation down. Is that tolerance of intolerance or the intolerant ruling the roost?[155]

Our country has reached a point where political parties tend to extend patronage to those groups that echo their sentiments and ideology. These are the groups and people who decide and determine our cultural, political and social discourse and way of life. For every damn thing: be it writing, statements, art, cartoon, opinion, songs and host of others there will be several groups of people who take offence. What happened in Jaipur shows the growing intolerance that the cow on a balloon was offensive because it was a cow and cows are holier than holy at the moment.[156] Incidences that portray intolerance in small and bigger ways are on the rise throughout the country today. There are high voltage points of the frenzy atmosphere we live in. These perverse mind-sets do not look for reason and logic, but are endowed with outrage that blurs common sense and rationality, but only 'cow politics' or something else that is linked to their majoritarian political agenda.

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[155] For more details See Ranjona Banerji's article 'The cult of Intolerance' in 'Deccan Chronicle' 25th November, 2015, p.8.

[156] *Ibid.*

Intolerance in its zenith in our country and so counter-discourse are thwarted or even thrashed which apparently reduces the freedom of expression. Obviously, it does imply that we are unable to combat the forces that want to take us to a closed society.[157] So, the ideology of Hindutva and the political program of RSS-BJP are to make our society 'closed' in tuned to Hinduraj. The level of fanaticism manifested the way the plastic cow was later brought back out of storage and worshipped. It is an irony that the idea of the artist in naming his installation 'The Bovine Dine' was completely topsy-turvyed in the end.'[158] In the same state of Rajasthan a renowned sculptor Anish Kapoor also on the receiving ends of intolerance. Two days after his appointment to a cultural panel set up by the Rajasthan government, he was removed because he made some scathing, uncomplimentary comments about PM Modi.[159]

The Hinduva forces are disturbed by the recent happenings such as returning of their awards, open statements on the rising intolerance by the celebrities and icons. The crux of the matter is not whether he/she a Muslim or Hindu or Christian or Congress or some other party, but who has done the killings or who has done the threatening. Aamir Khan's candidly stated that disquiet and unease are on the rise. Instead of looking into the statements uttered by analysing whether there is truth in it or not, the Government at the Centre and its allies in the state governments pay no heed to it. India is still tolerant and their tolerance cannot be taken for granted. In sum the word 'tolerance' is to be nuanced as against 'intolerance'. Those who talk of 'tolerance' bring in patriotism and nationalism into the argument and thus zero down their argument to

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[157] *Ibid.*
[158] *Ibid.*
[159] *Ibid.*

Pakistan or sedition or anti-national. They want certain sections to vote for them.

Intolerant India

We have been witnessing several incidences of intolerance in India. The list keeps ascending. In the year 2015, some of the intolerant happenings posit the deep-seated religious fanaticism and hatred against those who subscribe their adherence to other religions. The following list reflects diverse dimensions of intolerance perpetuated by those considered as bigots:

- August 30, 2015: Kannada scholar M.M. Kalburgi shot dead by unidentified assailants. Rationalists Narendra Debholkar and Govind Pansare also killed in Maharashtra the past two years.
- September 25, 2015: Abdul Malik, an unemployed outh, was arrested after he reputedly stabbed a policeman outside a mosque in Yavatmal district of Maharashtra. The policeman survived.
- A local maulana had allegedly instigated Malik to stab the cop to protest the state government's beef ban. The state's counter-terrorism agency is now looking for the maulana.
- September 28, 2015. <pja,,ad Alj;aq. 52, lynched by a 200-strong mob in Dadri in Uttar Pradesh for allegedly slaughtering and eating a calf.
- All ten people named in the FIR arrested. Six of them reportedly related to local BJP leader Sanjay Rana.
- October 8, 2015 Kashmiri trucked Zahid Bhat attacked with petrol bombs by Hindu groups following rumors that he killed cattle. He succumbed to injuries nine days later. Protests broke out throughout the State. On October 20, 15, Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front chairman Yasin malik, who planned to stage a protest

was taken into preventive detention with four others. The Public Safety Act slapped against five of the seven people arrested.

- October 9, 2015 Independent MLA Sheikh Abdul Rashid assaulted by JBP MLAs in the Jammu and Kashmir assembly for hosting a beef party. On the October 19, Hindu Sena members blackened his face with ink in Delhi during a news conference.
- October 9, 2015 Six person on motorcycles hacked to death Bajrang Dal member Prashant Poojar in Moodabidri in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka. He had been involved in raids on illegal slaughterhouses. Eight persons were arrested in connection with the murder.
- October 12, 2015 Shiv Sena workers doused in ink former BJP leader Sudheendra Kulkarni, who organized the release of a book by former Pakistan foreign minister Khurshid Kasuri in Mumbai. Case registered against half a dozen unidentified persons. A few days, earlier threats from the Shiv Sena, organizers had called off a concern featuring Pakistani ghazal singer Ghulam Ali.
- October 12, 2015 A torn-up copy of the Guru Granth Sahib founds in Faridot district of Punjab. In the following days, six other similar incidents took place in the state. Police arrested two brothers and took 52 people into preventive detention.
- October 16, 2015 A mob in Himachal Pradesh's Nahan district lynched Noman Akhtar, an alleged cattle smuggler. Police arrested to skin Matt Keith, 21, who wore the tattoo. He was forced to write a letter of apology.
- October 17, 2015 An Australian couple allegedly harassed in Bengaluru over a shin tattoo of the goddess Yelamma. Police threatened to skin Matt Keith, 21, who wore the tattoo. He was forced to write a letter of apology.

- October 18, 2015 Shiv Sena members stormed the BCCI headquarters in Mumbai to protest the talks with Pakistan Circked Board chairman Shahryar Khan. They were arrest. In response, the International Cricket council pulled Pakistani umpire Aleem Dar from the ongoing India-South Africa ODI series. Commentators Wasim Akram and Shoab Akhtar pulled out from the fifth ODI amid security worries.
- October 20, 2015 A Dalit couple and their toddler and infant were set afire in Faridabad in Haryana allegedly by upper-caste Rajputs. The children died and the mother was critically injured. The father's hands were burnt.

Source: 'The Week', November, 2015, p. 35.

The above chain of events occurred in the year 2015 prompts us to ask a question: Is India tolerant? For this question some say India is 'tolerant', a few say 'intolerant', while others say we have never been 'tolerant'. However, many tend to say with certainty that India in recent times has become intolerant. We have seen the ways with which intolerance manifest and so we need to clarify what we mean by 'tolerance'. Powell and Clarke construe tolerance 'as the willingness to accept or even defend the rights of others to engage in behaviour that we ourselves eschew.'[160] However, a more comprehensively is means 'An attitude of tolerance is only possible when some action or practice is objectionable to us, but we have overriding reasons to allow that action or practice to take place.'[161]

The country in recent times clearly witnessing in utmost clear terms pragmatic intolerance as a means to more intolerant end that emanates

[160] Harvey Whitehouse paper entitled 'Religion, Cohesion, and Hostility' in Op.cit, p. 37.
[161] *Ibid.*

from ideological expressions premised on political project. Ideological warfare is clearly unfolding between: fundamentalism vs. secularism, between majortarianism vs. minoritarianism, ultra-rightism vs. liberalism, and sectarian values vs. all-encompassing values. So, tolerance by all means is to be observed and furthered in religious and political establishments. But the ultimate by all means will have to be realized through penultimate means. What is happening as of now is the ultra-rightist ideology of RSS-BJP is all out to polarize and communalize the society, so that the Indian society could very well be divided on the basis of: self and the other, we and they. The other will have to be like the self or get converted to the self or assimilate to the self-failing which face the consequences.

We live in volatile ideological terrains. Ideological intolerance has to be contested by all means via ideological tolerance. Arguably, the extension of such ideological tolerance could perhaps be difficult to pragmatically put forth before the humanity and be made viable and realizable as against an aggressive ideology of intolerance which believes in polarization. Nevertheless, Ideology of tolerance believe in the injunction of love, peace, fairness, human dignity, equality, social, economic, cultural, gender and political justice. It was an empirical questions but the empirical answers proved that such ideals have indeed served continues to serve to counteract our pan-human and pan-Indian aspirations as against ideology of polarization, divisive, and majoritarian inclinations.

Let us not stereotype India as tolerant always. We will have to acknowledge the very fact that India is gradually moving towards intolerance. The state seems to be a silent spectator to the recent happenings that does not reflect the attitude and atmosphere of ‘tolerance’. Paradoxically, PM Modi talks about ‘tolerance’ on British soil. The signals and trends that we are in now show the disturbing picture. It is alarming. It is incredible to see India becoming intolerant. Indians are tolerant, but how

long is the question. More than 80 per cent of Indians want the freedom to practice their own religion. Only a minuscule wants ghar wapsi. The beauty of India is multiplicity and plurality of races, religions, cultures, communities and ethnicities. The duty of the Government at the Centre is to protect and promote tolerance. India is a country of great civilizations, cultures and religions. The politics of polarisation will by all means disintegrate one India that enjoys unity amidst plurality and diversity.

An ideology entrenched in extremities is bound to affect the larger unit of humanity. Humanity is not about maintaining a cordial relationship between one another in the society, but it is about building bond amongst communities comprised of larger units that make up society with sustaining and sustainable values. Humanity is much more than showing passion or empathy to each other at times of need, but treating others as co-human acknowledging their dignity and placing them in highest esteem in all facets of life. Humanity does not just a word symbolising the human compassion and civilization, but goes beyond the horizons of human nature. It is all about total commitment to keep intact the humanity that is not trivialized and tinkered by human nature. It is all about combining minds and hearts in all the endeavours of human endeavours.

However, humanity is scarce and hardly seen in our day-to-day existence. Inhumanity has grown in different form. It has become the central point of our existence. What Gandhi said and lived is worth remembering and practicing now. For instance Gandhi wrote in *Young India* in 1924 that 'I want to identify myself with everything that lives.' Jesus Christ and Gautama Buddha also revealed and practiced love and care to all irrespective of what and who they were. Purely because of these reasons even now they are considered as tallest symbols of humanity. Currently, the whole world in filled with greed, acquisition, distrust,

envy, consumerism, ill-will and high-tech life. As the saying goes that 'Serving humanity is serving God'.

Humanity is endowed with the resources, means and collective to live and lead a quality life on this plant. In this connection let me once against invoke Gandhi who long ago said when he saw many who live in appalling conditions and some living in luxury observed the nature has plenty and everyone could live well 'not according to the greed, but the needs'. The gap between the haves and have-nots keep widening within nations and between nations. About 22,000 children die every day of poverty and thousands of malnourished children we have in our country. Statistics and data we are nowadays used to. I can only bring statistics which is damning but really what else I can do or we can do.

The micro-macro scenarios portray depressing accounts day-by- day. UN in its reports keeps publishing country-wise crimes against humanity. They include all forms of inhumanity perpetuated against humanity—genocide, racial, ethnic, religious, casteist and host of others. Other forms inflicted such as bonded labour, systematic practice of summary executions, disappearance, torture or any kind inhuman acts be its mental, or physical, racial, gender or psychological are also considered as violation perpetrated against humanity. The intolerance is most pronounced when it comes to matters concerning identity—not just religious identity alone, but every kind of strongly believed identity such as caste, ethnicity, region. Rising intolerance inevitably reveals its violent nature. As intolerance grows, liberal thoughts, pluralism and scientific temper suffer. Society will automatically be polarised.

The term 'plural' means many—different or dissimilar. Pluralism is the co-existence of plural cultures, where culture includes racial, religious or cultural groups and is manifested in customary behaviours, cultural assumptions and values. Pluralism is the practice of giving equal attention to many different backgrounds in a particular setting. Pluralism

is a multi-faceted concept that needs to nurtured and promoted. The face of India is tolerance which is embedded in realising common humanity. Common humanity is the ultimate vision where communities and societies mutually respecting each other and in the process acknowledging each other's distinct identities and differences. Only in diversity and plurality common-humanity can come to reality and thus be promoted and practiced.

Conclusion

Essentializing humanity should become one of the major preoccupations of our endeavour. Since we live in an inhuman and de-dehumanized world, retrieving and essentializing humanity warrants utmost importance as we move on in a world of marginalization and oppression in all forms and shades. The world we live is increasingly becoming plural and multi-cultural. In such a rapidly changing world where we have witnessing xenophobia, ethnic conflicts, racism and casteism, summary killings, human rights violations and numerous crimes perpetrated in covert and overt forms being and becoming human is more important now than ever. Apart from others agencies, including the institutions of governance, academia should strive in reiterating the concept of human and thus essentializing humanity in all forms and facets of existence.

FALLACY OF THE CONCEPT OF 'MAJORITARIANISM'

Interrogating Through the Lens of Plural Identities

Introduction

Between the World War 11 and 1980s, the nation-state has been regarded as the sole authority by its political system and ideology. Since then, the nation-states by and large, appear to have lost its authority and legitimacy in many parts of the world. The reasons are many and complex. However, the notion of 'nation-state' has drastically changed/changing as the world in which we live is increasingly being integrated. Nevertheless, the following questions could perhaps be asked at this point of history: Can the nation-states guarantee, protect and offer security, social justice, human rights and participatory democracy? Do the nation-states have the will/moral authority to prevent international/civil wars or ethnic conflicts or religious fundamentalism or authoritarianism happening across the globe?

In most cases, the nation-states have failed to assert their authority. But, on the contrary, the nation-states quite often acted imminently and repressed the genuine demands expressed/represented by the communities. Its sole justification is to protect the sovereignty and security of the country whenever they are challenged. In the name of national unity,

territorial integrity, equality of all citizens and communal[162] (sic) parity, the State can mobilize all its powerful resources and machinery to reject the genuine demands of the communities. If the circumstances demand, it may even go the extent of invoking genocide or ethnic cleansing to ensure that their interests are protected.

In recent times the subaltern communities in different parts of the world are awakening and affirming their identities and are getting empowered. Therefore one cannot ignore the context in which identity issues arise. It is now an impossible proposition to suppress or repress the hopes and aspirations of different identities of the subalterns like before as the civil society has assumed greater significance on a global scale. Likewise, in an era of globalization/de-globalization which is accompanied by glaring inequalities and deepening divisions between communities, groups and regions within and between nations, people are mobilized to assert their right to exist, participate, share the resources, to use their creativity as well as to play an active role in the national and international life.

In a country or region or continent where there is no peaceful co-existence and democratic climate in which subaltern aspirations and hopes can find no meaning then there are all the possibilities of the emergence of resistance and liberation movements to assert their claims and identities. In other cases, it would take probably the form of militant armed revolution, terrorism and insurgencies. More and more voices from the below are suppressed and unheard; where people are pushed towards isolationism and exclusion; where their rights are disrespected and negated; then the identities of the subaltern communities gets the utmost primacy and importance. As against this backdrop, this paper has four-fold purposes: 1) the concept of identity examined; 2) the falsity

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[162] *Communal* as a concept or a term in the Indian context means parochial, exclusive, partisan and sectarian. Therefore, it is narrow and partial. It expresses negative connotation. In India '*communitarian*' has a positive connotation.

and fallacy of the concept of 'Majoritarianism' interrogated; 3) the notion of Hindutva examined and 4) the relevance of pluralism proposed**.**

Perceptions on 'Identity'

In an era of globalization or de-globalization, the term 'identity' has assumed a number of meanings and is being interpreted in different ways. 'Identity' in an objective material world in a fast changing be it globalizing or de-globalizing world is discussed as subject matter amidst academics from all disciplines. In a context where globalization or de-globalization is the order of the day, we need to take the term 'identity' more seriously because 'identity' connotes different meanings to different people who belong to a variety of cultures and so varies from one to the other. Further, identity has its specificities that come under social, religious, cultural, national and global parlance. It has become one of the major vocabularies and terminologies in our current theoretical and practical usage especially in the Indian sub-continent. Considering a wide spectrum, one basic question that arises at this juncture is: What then is identity? Without a proper understanding of this term, we may not get to know the nuances and subtleties whenever we enter into a discourse on the conception of identity.

The first meaning is that of complete equality. There are two forms of complex equality. One may expect two examples of the same product to be alike in quality…They are numerically identical. And that is the second form of complete equality. Even identical twins are different, singular persons, though in respect of qualities (…character, appearances), they have much in common…

The second meaning of identity is singularity, they by which someone or something from persons or things, but that is too limited an approach. It is above all the characteristics which make someone or some-

thing what they are, and thus include the characteristics that they have in common with other persons or things.

The third meaning of identity is unity. First of all in the sense of an integrated whole of parts, which go together, unity or wholeness; then unity in the sense of what binds together the different phases in the existence of entities which are subject to change – especially living things.[163]

Explaining further, Paul Ricoeur summarizes the notion of identity as, 'the identification of something or somebody over time…The identity of a person requires both dimensions, which are of course bound up with each other. Without identification and extension over time, we are just unable to speak of the identity of a person as we are without the self-image, the idea of identity, that which defines us in our existence, which, however, can be captured conceptually only in terms of life histories.'[164] Can identity render the great promise of happiness, purpose and the ultimate meaning of human existence, which every human being longs for? Therefore, identity has always been considered as an ideal model that continues to be evolving and civilizing as a paradigm, culture and a way of thinking.

In all these diverse meanings and perceptions, national identity could perhaps subsume the group and other identities in the name of national interests and patriotism. Presently, 'nationalism' in the guise of 'patriotism' has much relevance than before. Nationalism is increasingly being used as an integrating principle to unify the diverse identities embracing class and castes, gender, social, economic, religio-cultural and political processes. The convergence of these identities in recent times is con-

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[163] . Albert W. Mussehenya, 'Personalized Identity in an Individualized Society,' in *Creating Identity*, Concillium 2000/2, edited by Hermann Haning et.al., (London: SCM Press, 2000), pp. 23-24.

[164] . Hille Haker, 'Narrative and Moral Identity.'

structed under the name of patriotic nationalism, invoking external threats, terrorism and unity thereby equating 'national identity' to 'majority identity'.

Pluralism and Identity Politics in India

India is one of the largest democracies in the world. It is also blessed with a variety of identities. Thus India has been a pluralistic country all along. Indeed, pluralism has been India's heritage and the unifying principle. What has been a moving force in upholding and maintaining the democratic pluralistic tradition? It is the Indian Constitution that has the endurance and resilience because of its sense of secularism[165] shared by more than a billion people across the Indian part of the sub-continent regardless of their ethnic, linguistic, caste and cultural affiliation. The Constitution clearly enshrines a vision for the maintenance of secular and democratic republic. India has successfully managed numerous challenges to its identity and governing authority.

The secular, plural, moral and political inspiration emanating from the political vision enshrined in the Indian Constitution enabled India to successfully respond and manage to survive and sustain as a cohesive civil society and also to retaining a strong and unchallenged national identity. However in the last few years, the Hindutva phenomenon has been causing increasing concern. For me 'Hindutva' per se is no more a phenomenon but a phenomenona since it entails socio-economic, politi-co-cultural and educational processes. Particularly, one of the most striking trends in recent years is belittling and denigrating the core es-

[165] . *Secularism* is not to be equated with negation of religion, but it is an acceptance of beliefs, practices and rituals of all religions as long as they do not conflict with certain human values, ethical and moral behaviour. It simply means co-existence, accommodation, respect and mutually cherishing the religious belief systems of one another.

sence of the democratic and secular vision enshrined in the Constitution. The ultra-fundamentalist groups and political parties negate India's multi-cultural and plural identity premised on its historical inheritance. This trend posits a grave threat to secular and pluralistic values.

Indian democracy seems inexorably to be moving towards the politics of identity groups who represent the dominant class and castes and thus continue to perpetuate their class and caste interests. There is a growing polarization and hegemonization amongst the dominant caste categories that in turn gets subsumed into Brahminic Hinduism. Theoretically, majority rule does mean democratic governance provided by the majority. In this sense, the term *'majority'* does not imply creed, caste, sex or any other circumstance of birth. In a working democracy, majority must be defined on the basis of acceptance or rejection of programmes of action that would be in the interests of the nation as a whole. This principle is even echoed in the U.N. Charter of Human Rights which states that 'A democratic country is that the Constitution of which commits the nation to secularism and equality for all its citizens without discrimination, and guarantees its governance to be totally delinked from all divisive activities such as religion.'

India has one of the largest democracies in the world. The constitution in letter and spirit empowers its citizens to the democratic values and scientific temper, which, by definition, demands that one rises above religious dogma and learn to think, live and work within a framework of reason, without bias, prejudice and hatred. In recent years, the Hindutva fundamentalist organizations and communal political parties keep defying the constitutional, moral and ethical obligations of Indian democracy. Further, they tend to misconstrue and misinterpret the concept of majority rule as a principle of democratic governance. To derive clarity on this:

The terms, majority and minority have been given meanings and used in contents, which would be alien to a true democracy. Thus, we

have minority educational institutions, a minority commission, and one kind of 'majority'(of no consequence in a real democracy) wishing to cleanse the nation of all those who don't belong to it, unless such 'minorities' are willing to live de facto, as second, third or fourth-class citizens under the dictatorial rule of the so-called majority.[166]

The rise of ultra-fundamentalist organizations such as RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal and about 31 fanatic communal Hindu organizations in tacit agreement with the BJP-ruled Governments both at the Centre and in other States continues to operate within the premise of *'Majoritarianism'* and keep annihilating the minorities and subalterns. These organizations and political parties function and operate within this cultural-ideological and political framework. To substantiate,

Before it all gets out of hand, we and the rest of the world must recognize the fallacy of the terms, 'majority' and 'minority', with the meaning that is being increasingly given to them out of context of the principles of democratic governance. In the world of today, no matter what we do, we can never do away with 'minorities', for if we remove one kind of minority, other kinds will immediately spring up on the centre-stage. Let us assume that we get rid of all religious minorities in the country. To think that India will then be a homogenous nation – one unified Hindu Rashtra – is, to say the least, the height of stupidity. The Hindus themselves are far from being a homogeneous community. Replete with divisions and subdivisions, the Hindus have no less heterogeneity than there is between various religions, so much so that even today, amongst the true (die-hard) Hindus, it is considered a sacrilege to have marriages across divisions of caste, creed, sub-caste, linguistic groups, familial profession, social status and so on. Therefore, if we were to be a 'pure' Hindu nation, 'cleansed' of all our so-called obnox-

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[166] . Pushpa M. Bhargava & Chandana Chakrabarti, 'Fallacy of today's concept of Majority,' in 'The Hindu' (3-9-2002).

ious, unpatriotic non-Hindu minorities, we would still have Majority-minority equations of other kinds. What about Brahmins versus non-Brahmins? One has only to look at the history of Tamil Nadu in the last century in this regard. What about the Hindi-speaking versus the non-Hindi-speaking? What about the Kapus and Kammas of Andhra, and the Yadavs and non-Yadavs or the Thakurs and non-Thakurs of the North? One does not have to go back long in history to recall the Bengali-Assamese divide. The north Indian and south Indian divide is only too well known.[167]

It is purely on this construction of *'Majority-Minority'* all the Hindutva outfits operate. The organic intellectuals will have to be concerned about the disturbing implications of the majoritarian assault on the fundamental premises of Indian's governance and democracy. What is at stake is India's political democracy – a project in which a wide range of social and cultural groups and communities have been effectively participating. In addition, there is the erosion of the secular fabric of the Indian nation-state. In view of the growing threat it is unable to retain its credibility as a meaningful entity. Ultra-fundamentalist organizations and parties revolve around definitive philosophic-ideological underpinnings that keep arousing communal passion and frenzy.

Hinduvtva and Hindu Nationalism

The emergence and rapid rise of the right wing 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 phenomenona 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. Though the ideology of Hindutva is a recent phenomenon, it is founded and constructed on

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[167] . *Ibid.*

'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 hegemonises 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'.

The Hindutva forces, in order to consolidate its social control, launched a process of standardization of Hindu code to categorize and exclude all those who could not be considered on the grounds of Christians, Muslims and so on. In addition, the Hindutva hegemony has launched the census as a categorization device wherein the lower rungs of the Hindu Varna system/social ladder are given the option to clearly identify themselves as to one or the other. This is deliberately done to polarize and consolidate a homogenous 'Hindu community' in the pretext of having transcended the Varna system. It is also a ploy to lure the Dalits and tribals who practice their own gods and goddesses into the homogenized Brahminic Hinduism.

The Hindutva in letter and spirit is vertically hierarchised and dominated by the dominant and backward castes and classes. It has even went 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'. In recent times, it is also accommodating the oppressed castes and even communities belonging to other religions by overlooking internal contradictions within its philosophic and ideological framework.

For the past few years a series of assaults, killings, molestation, inflammatory speeches, desecration of mosques and churches and distribution of highly provocative literature against the minorities, dalits and tribals, reconversion drives, the 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. The recent one is the Gujarat incident, which shook the nation and the global community. What is that force which unleashes hatred, intolerance and violence? Savarkar, an ideologue of this tenet articulates, 'Hindutva entails the religious, cultural, linguistic, social and political aspects of the life of Hindus.'[168]

For them, a Hindu nation should be exclusively for Hindus who are the true sons of the soil. It believes in establishing 'one nation, one people, one religion, one language, one culture and one executive.[169] This 'Hinduness' seeks to establish the political, cultural and religious supremacy of Hinduism and the Hindu nation.[170] Hindutva as an ideology and political project accommodates a number of dimensions in order to establish supremacy thereby realizing the ultimate goal of Hindu Rashtra. At the same time those who are outside the ambit of Hindutva premise namely Christians and Muslims are labelled and identified as 'aliens', 'infiltrators', 'aggressors' and 'enemies'.

Drawing parallels from history the present state of affairs coincide with fascism under Adolph Hitler. The Hindutva ideologues have drawn much from the fascist ideology. For example,

…how essential anti-Semitism was to the Nazi Party Program from the very beginning. Already in 1920, claims were made that only those

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168 . Robert D. Baird, *Religion in Modern India* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1981), p. 466.

169 . *Ibid.*

170 . Amulya Ganguly, 'Hinduism and Hindutva', in 'Hindustan Times' (February 8, 1999).

German blood, i.e., those who belonged to the Aryan (German) race, could be considered and claim rights as citizens. Others, such as the Jews, could only be regarded as guests and came under law for foreigners. In a private letter written by Hitler in 1919 he made it clear that the anti-Semitic rationale envisaged the planned elimination of all rights of the Jews. Hitler elaborated his anti-Semitic position in his book, *Mein Kempf*, published in 1924…This strong racial prejudice and the violent anti-Semitism of Hitler and his Nazi were thus a fundamental feature of their world view…[171]

On the basis of the above quotation, Hitler and his party had translated the ideology of fascism in the following way:

> '… A program of 'Aryanization' led to the expropriation of Jewish property and its transfer into suitably Aryan hands. Schools and universities expelled Jewish students. Jewish families became subject to house searches and individuals subject to arrest. Jewish stores were defaced, and Jews were required to take the name of 'Sarah' or 'Israel' and have the letter J stamped on their identity card … Nazi thugs smashed windows in Jewish shops and homes throughout Germany, burnt and destroyed almost all synagogues, humiliated and beat countless individual Jews, and arrested ten thousand Jewish men, who were, then sent to concentration camps.'[172]

On similar lines the Sangh Parivar one of the main wings of the Bharthiya Janatha Party (BJP), the ruling party at the Centre has literally adopted Hitler's fascist ideology to its mould. For instance … In 1940s and 1950s, the boudhik (intellectual discourse) given to swayammsevaks

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[171] . *Ibid.*

[172] . Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel (eds*), German Churches and the Holocaust: Betrayal* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), p. 6.

invariably used to contain a reference to the World War 1 German plan, which was praised as the most brilliant strategic military plan devised by human imagination…The RSS was unashamedly patterned on Hitler's Nazi Party in ideology, uniform, drills and bands, parades and display of strength, its attitude towards women and minorities and its organizational structure, its principle of one supreme leader and its slogan of 'one nation, one people, and one culture'. In fact, the slogans find an honored place in the BJP manifesto. Indeed Guru Golwalkar wrote approving of Nazi action and observed that India must learn from Germany that two cultures and two civilizations cannot co-exist in one nation.[173]

Apparently other ideologues of Hindutva followed suit. 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 lesion for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by.[174]

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 nationalism[175] and the preservation of pure Aryan culture engrained

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[173] *Ibid.*

[174] Andreas D'souza, 'Hindutva and the Indian Churches' Response' in *Preparing for Women in Christ* by Jean S. Stoner, editor, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1999, p. 185.

[175] The understanding of 'nationalism' by Hindutva forces contravenes 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:

in the Brahmanic Hinduism. However, with regard to other religious identities Golwalkar emphasized … 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.[176]

What we have been experiencing in recent times is nothing but the translation of the agenda of the BJP, the Sangh Parivar, the VHP, the RSS and other communal Hindutuva organization who are bent upon in pushing the project of Hindu raj, a theocratic State envisioned and articulated by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (who coined the word Hindutva in early 1920), Guru Golwalkar, Swamy Chinmayanand and others. Therefore, a question could perhaps be raised:

How can these two contradictory aspects of identity be reconciled? First, we must bear the arbitrary nature of identity categories in mind, not with a view to eliminating all forms of identification – which would be unrealistic since identity is cognitive necessity – but simply to remind ourselves that each of us has several identities at the same time. Second,

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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 …(Avijit Pathak, 'From Secularism to Nationalism: Fate of Grand Ideals' in 'Deccan Herald' {27.8.99), p. 10.

[176] . Quoted by Andreas D'Souza, op.cit., p. 186.

since tears of nostalgia are being shed over the past, we recognize that culture is constantly being recreated by cobbling together fresh and original elements and counter-cultures. There are in our own country a large number of syncretic cults wherein modern elements are blended with traditional values or people of different communities venerate saints or divinities of particular faiths. Such cults and movements are characterized by a continual inflow and outflow of members which prevent them from taking on a self-perpetuating existence of their own and hold out hope for the future, indeed, perhaps for the only possible future.[177]

Hinduvtva: A Communalism Project

Hindutuva[178] forces in recent times are instilling the doctrine of 'majoritarian rule' in the minds of Hindus and thus whipping up the communal passion and frenzy. Strident calls are given for asserting 'majoritarian rights'. Elections would hitherto be fought on basis of medieval religious premises such as 'superiority' and 'majority'. Particularly, in recent months, the nation has been projecting an extraordinary socio-religio and political turmoil against the minorities. During a visit to

[177] See for in-depth discussion Imtiaz Ahmad, 'The two faces of Identity' in 'The Hindu' (15-9-99), p.12.

[178] The term 'Hindutuva' first appeared in socio-political literature when Veer Savarkar entered politics. The Hindu Mahasabha was founded in 1917 for the protection and promotion of Hindu interests. The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh founded in 1925 by Dr. K.B. Hedgewar. Its theoretician was M.S. Golwalkar who in his book *We or our Nationhood defined* articulates that 'Indian unity in terms of a geographical, racial, religious, cultural and linguistic synthesis'. He observed that 'All those…who have no place in the national life unless they abandon their difference adopt…completely merge themselves in the national race…as they maintain their racial, religious and cultural difference, they cannot but be only foreigners…'

United States, former Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has publicly admitted that the recent vicious communal violence in Gujarat was an *'aberration'* and a situation that *'forces us to bow our heads in shame before others'*. Whereas on the other, the Gujarat, a BJP-ruled State whose Chief Minister, Narendra Modi[18], known for his frivolous behaviour, recently made an outrageous and blatantly provocative remarks during the first leg of his *'Gaurav Yatra' 'we five, ours 25'* against the minority community did evoke strong criticism from different quarters.

According to him the metaphor simply means *'5-25-625'*, to explain the exponential growth of population over two generations. With the blessings of BJP hard-core leadership Modi has been let loose make such remarks against the minority communities. Proponents of Hindutva, critique the secularists subscribing to pseudo-secularism. For example, Ram Jethmalani, one of the leading experts on Constitution, a noted Supreme-Court attorney and former Union Minister of Law in the BJP Government gives entirely a different discourse on 'Hindutva'.[179]

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[179] Hindutva, said the Supreme Court, is a way of life or a state of mind and cannot be equated with or understood as religious Hindu fundamentalism (Para 40 of JT 1995 (8) SC 407 on page 637). What is distinctive about this way of life is what Hindutva has imbibed from its root the Hindu religion. Hindu thinkers had realized since the beginning of human thought that truth is many sided, that different views contain different aspects of truth, but which not one can fully express. They took it for granted that there is more than one valid approach to truth and salvation and that these varied approaches are not only compatible but also complimentary. This conviction bred a spirit of tolerance and willingness to understand and appreciate rival points of view. No wonder, the Hindu religion did not and does not claim any one doctrine. It does not worship any one god. It does not adhere to one prophet. It does not subscribe to any one dogma. It does not believe in any one philosophical concept; and does not follow any one set of religious rites or performances. It has therefore no resemblance to any; denominational religion and can only be described as a way

This is how all those who tow the lines of Hindutva interpret. Gandhi's sayings have been appropriated for their political ends. Gandhi visualized a secular state from an inclusive perspective. For instance,

{Delhi} is the heart of India. Only a nit-with can regard it as belonging to the Hindu or the Sikhs only. It may sound harsh but it is the literal truth. From Kanyakumari to Kashmir and from Karachi to Dibrugarh is Assam, all Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parses, Christians and Jews who people this vast sub-continent and have adopted it as their dear motherland have an equal right to it. No one has a right to say that it belongs to the majority community only and that the minority community can only remain there as the underdog. Whoever serves it with the purest devotion must have the first claim. Therefore, anyone who want to drive out of Delhi all Mussalmans as such must be set down as its enemy No. 1 and, therefore, enemy No.1 of India.[180]

Gandhi's dream was for a composite Indian State where conglomeration of different religious communities and identities mutually live and co-exist in peace and harmony. He was against the notion of making India into different compartments based on 'majority-minority' configuration. Further, 'the real essence of nationalism has to be realized, in 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

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of life and nothing more. Mahatma Gandhi was the greatest exponent of Hindutuva. He practiced it in though, word and deed. He found no conflict in reading and reciting the scriptures of all religions in his prayer meetings. He is not only the political and father of the nation, but also in ethical and philosophical preceptor. To respect Gandhi is to respect Hindutva. (Ram Jethmalani, 'The damage is irreparable: Hindutva on Weak Knees-1' in the 'Indian Express' (23-10-2000), p. 10.

[180] . Taken from *Selected Letters* and this one when Gandhi addressed the people of Gujarat on 14th January 1948 (Navajivan Trust, p. 326).

inequality, exploitation and violence.'[181] Further, their critique of secularism ought to be critiqued on the following grounds:

Under a secular government, individuals are free to pursue their religion unhindered. What the people profess is their business. Take the case of Portugal, which is a 100 percent Catholic country. Yet, their Civil Code is totally secular. They implanted that Code in Goa during their rule. In Goa, there is a Common Civil Code, Laws relating to marriage, succession or even partition of property are common to Hindus, Muslims, Christians or any other, though 35 per cent of the Goan population is Catholic. What it means is that people may profess any religion, but the laws that govern them have a secular content. It is easy for a country which is cent percent Christian (or Muslim or Hindu or Buddhist) to have a Civil Code that is totally secular. Britain is Christian; the royalty belongs to the Church of England. The ruler is crowned by the Archbishop of Canterbury. But nobody has yet described Britain as a communal country. The United State is a country largely inhabited by Christians. Its President takes his oath on the Bible. Can it, by that token, be dismissed as a communal nation? Obviously not. Taking an oath on a holy book (the Bible, the Gita, the Koran) is merely an expression of faith and a promise to uphold secular law.[182]

Purely because of these reasons, Godse, who belonged to a Hindu fundamentalist organization, assassinated Gandhi. These forces did not want Gandhi to be an inclusivist as well as a pluralist. Nationalism is increasingly being concocted and trivialized through illusory symbols and images for the promotion of cultural nationalism. Instead of creating

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[181] . See Avijit Pathak, 'From Secularism to Nationalism: Fate of Grand Ideals' in 'Deccan Herald' (27-8-99), p. 10.

[182] . See an in depth article by M.V. Kamath, 'Setting Secularism on the Right Track?' in 'Deccan Herald' (April 25, 1993) in the Sunday Supplementary.

a just society or pursuing for the genuine Swaraj, they are creating euphoria amongst the Indian polity.

In the Indian context, religion plays the most crucial and critical function. Indian society is a pluralistic society and thus lays its faith on pluralism. Religions have been co-existing with many other ideologies. Therefore, in a secular society religions operate with full autonomy and the State never prioritized or tried to politicize religion. What is happening now Indian is the absorption of religion into the ideology of Hindutva. This is where the contradiction lies. The synthesis of religion and politics is deeply getting entrenched into the plural milieu. When the State attempts to prioritize and hegemonize Hindus of different shades of Hinduism in a religiously plural society like India, the minorities are bound to suffer whether they are religious minorities or sectarian minorities.

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 a 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 plural character by equally respecting, protecting and accommodating all religions. The Indian State under BJP is pushing its project of majoritarianism as its point of governance. It is gaining momentum. 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. It is in line with their vision and manifesto that in a civil society when majority community belongs to Hindu-

ism ought to appropriate the existing political and institutional processes. What can be done?

In the light of the impending threat to minorities and other subaltern identities, should we abdicate our responsibility? 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 here is India's political 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 at present than before. The reason being, the very words that are being used by the proponents of Hindutva such as *'nation'* and *'religion'* imply *'uniformity'* and *'division'*. But in reality, it is *'diversity'* and *'unity'* that brings richness and beauty to the world and to human family. It is not *'unity in uniformity'* but *'unity in diversity'*. Can any country or race or caste or community exist as an isolated island? We live in an era of plural and multi-religious world. As our time and space gets constricted, our inter-relatedness and interdependence between one another should become stronger. This is possible only when we are prepared to transcend from our parochial, sectarian and communal identities. Although the world has become closer through technology, the dominant identity advocates for exclusivism, which is partial and narrow. Therefore those who believe in secular principles and pluralistic values across religio-cultural, class-caste and gender divides should resist and oppose the present project of Hindutva before it becomes a monster.

Conclusion

In a religiously polarizing country like India it is important at this point of historical juncture to retrieve some of the utterances of the great Indian minds. Swami Vivekananda had highlighted the dangers embedded on all narrow interpretations of and approaches to religion in a series of lectures he delivered at the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. In the past, he said that 'in the past, such 'irreligious' aberrations were responsible for the infliction of those unholy 'scourges of God' ironically called the 'holy wars' such as jihads, crusades and so on perpetuated upon humanity.'[183]

It has become a common feature and phenomenon that we have been witnessing the inter-religious and intra-religious conflicts in various parts of the world in general and spate communal riots in India in particular. Recapturing of Vivekanda's vision becomes more pertinent and relevant today than before as the world observed the 109th anniversary of the Chicago addresses on September 27. The concept of 'Majoritarianism' keeps breeding and aggravating religious fanaticism and fundamentalism pushing aside the fundamentals of different religions such as love, truth, honesty, compassion, social justice, peace, human dignity, mutual respect and accommodation. Religion has always been a mode for elevating and enhancing human pre-occupation. But often religion is being politicized and vulgarized on a mass scale. These prophets did stress to get rid of bigotry, which is the mother of fanaticism, and exhorted people to shun away with sectarianism and exclusiveness.

Vivekananda had reiterated, 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control or philosophy – by one, or more, or all of those – and be free. This is the

[183] . Quoted by O. P. Sharma, 'Dangers of Narrowing down Religion' in 'Deccan Herald' (27-9-2002).

whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'[184] More succinctly, Vivekananda points out that … there never was my religion or yours, my national religion or your national religion; there never existed many religions, there is only the one. One Infinite Religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist, and this Religion is expressing itself in various countries in various ways'. Elucidating further, he says that '…purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his (sic) own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him (sic) from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him (sic) that upon the banner of every religion will one day be written, in spite of resistance 'Help and not Fight', 'Assimilation and not Destruction', 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.'[185]

On similar vein, addressing the Manchester University in June 1963, Dr. Radhakrishnan said:

> 'Our culture has been able to survive all the shocks which it has encountered for the simple reason that it has the quality of self-renewal: It met different cultures – the Aryan and the Dravidian, the Hindu and the Buddhist, the Christian and the Jew. The Hindu and the Muslim, the British and the Western influences – all these things have been made part of one common culture, which we call the Indian culture. It is neither Hindu nor Muslim nor Jewish nor Christian. It is Indian to its outlook and in its spirit and every one of us must try to see the spirit of that culture, which accepted differences, which never looked at diversity as a source of discord but as

[184] . *Ibid.*

[185] . *Ibid.*

something that contributes to the richness, variety and the majesty and the scope of the world.'[186]

[186] Source: n.a.

INTER-FACING DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

This paper unpacks and appraises widely and frequently used key words ‘democracy’, ‘governance’ and ‘development’. These terms occupy important spaces in the socio-economic, politico-religio-cultural spheres of India. Hence, usage of these terms finds equal weightage and importance in our every daily parlance. They are being used more frequently in recent times by the politicians, academicians, policy-makers and bureaucrats. These concepts are inter-dependent and thus acquire fuller meaning when they are woven and inter-phased with each other. More importantly, these three words occupies important place particularly amongst the poor and the vulnerable because for them they are life affirming hope enlivening vocabularies. So, they are to be delved judiciously with caution. For any society to function efficiently and effectively these terms play significant and crucial roles as they reflect human yearnings and aspirations.

An Absolute Framework for Society

While visiting the histories of different countries and continents we come across different names of the Emperors, Queens and Kings who have ruled and continue to rule. In addition to monarchical rule, human societies have also witnessed the rule of oligarchy, despotic regimes and

military juntas, fascist and other forms of dictatorial rules and so on. Even today, we do witness shades of these rules where dominant form rules, laws and policies to suit their whims and fancies, while the majority has no say and hardly included in the policy and decision-making processes. The quality of government depended on their perceptions, vision and power acquisition by furthering and expanding their power-base. The citizens have been treated as objects of their benevolence and dictates. They deliberately failed to recognize the power of the people who are the subjects of history and makers of their destiny. Through different forms and modus operandi, the anti-people, racist, fascist, dictatorial and oligopolistic regimes/governments changed. The will of the people became supreme and absolute. As against the backdrop, a cursory look at the three terminologies and inter-phasing them will adequately help us to the context we are in.

Democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. The government functions on the consent and consensus of the governed. It is a government where the people reign supreme. Whenever we come across the term 'government', it means the supreme power is given it to take decisions on behalf of the people. So, the power and authority are entrusted to a government by the people. In a democracy, the people or the citizens as a whole exercise the supreme power. Notionally and in principle, democracy sounds good, but practically speaking, do the people have any mechanism to participate in the decision-making and policy-evolving processes? The government technically speaking remains in power only as long as the people wish it to be in power. But in reality, once the people in a democracy elect a government whether they like it or not, they continue. For democracy to function, it should have a body of principles called as constitution, considered as the soul of democracy.

The Constitution is a body of laws according to which a country ought to be governed. The Constitution lays down the basic structure of

the political system under which its people are to be governed. It establishes the organs of governance of the State such as Legislature, Executive and Judiciary, which defines and delineates each of its functions; demarcates responsibilities and regulates the relationship with each other. Those who drafted the Constitution had envisioned an ideal society. These ideals are reflected in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution which opens with the following words:

> 'We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens:
>
> - Justice (social, economic and political);
> - Liberty of thought, expressions, belief, faith and worship;
> - Equality of status and opportunity, and to promote among them all fraternity assuring dignity of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation … 1949, do hereby, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution.'

The opening words of the Preamble are – 'we, the people of India,' which means that the Constitution has been written and authenticated in the name of the people who are the main constitutive subjects and also the means and ends. Therefore, the people are the core and so all power vests with the people. For a democracy to work or function effectively, it is the people who are the fulcrum, the base, the centre, the means and the ends. Therefore, democracy is the base structure of governance.

The Emergence of 'Governance'

'Governance' as a concept is a recent one. Since the last decade of the twentieth century, many have started to use the term in place of government. As an alternative to the usage of the term government this concept is being used and thus remains as an exclusive prerogative of technocratic and elite discourse. It is yet to find its due space in the popular vocabulary of politics. However, this concept is often used by people's movements, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society who act as pressure groups by taking up impending issues that the people face and urging the government to act. In view of its different usages in varied context-specificities, 'governance' is a 'post-political' connotation for effective regulation, accountability, transparency and efficiency as against corrupt, inefficient, and unaccountable governments, bureaucracies and quasi-governmental agencies. It goes beyond the conventional forms of democratic government and thus offer newer guidelines to stereotype features of democracy.

Governance is used widely especially by the political parties, NGOs, churches, church-affiliated agencies, technocrats and civil society organizations especially in the wake of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) order. This concept in recent times continues to challenge the State because of its policies and programs that go in line with LPG. The state also abdicated its responsibility by opening up all the essential sectors to corporate interests, corrupt politicians and unaccountable bureaucrats.[187] However, the term governance is used primarily:

> '… It first seems to have gained currency in the field of economic development … by international development agencies and western governments of 'good governance' as a necessary component of effective economic modernization. The

[187] For more in depth discussion, refer Jon Pierre (ed.), *Debating Governance, Authority, Steering, and Democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

> World Bank, for example, has been a leading advocate … Development economies came to recognize that institutions matter, that development is not just a matter of creating free markets, promoting investment, and adopting the right macro-economic policies. … Good governance, therefore, means creating an effective political framework conducive to private economic action – stable regimes, the rule of law, efficient state administration … and a strong civil society independent of the state. Democracy is valuable in this context …
>
> The second … is in the field of international institutions and regimes … world environmental problems like global warming and ozone depletion, the regulation of world trade and international financial markets … Much of the critical discourse on globalization fears that world markets and transnational corporations are beyond control ...
>
> The third usage of the concept of governance is that of 'corporate governance' … 'corporate governance' is the watchword of those who wish to improve the accountability and transparency of the actions of management, but without fundamentally altering the basic structures of firms …'[188]

In addition to the above, in recent times we come across diverse notions of governance that have assumed multiple dimensions. For instance,

> 'Conventionally, governance encompasses the manner in which the state and its various institutions negotiate and mediate with people, markets and civil society, through laws, policies, regulation and finance. Today governance is over-

[188] *Ibid.*

> arching with many dimensions including institutional and political manifestations. Governance refers to decision-making and the process through which power is exercised to utilize economic and social resources for development.
>
> The concept of governance, over the last 15 years, has evolved to transcend to the conventional area of the nation-state or government. Market forces as well as civil society processes and citizens' initiatives have increasingly started influencing the process of governance today. Many civil society organizations (CSOs) strongly believe that governance is not just the effective management of economic resources.'[189]

The above quotations clearly show that the citizens have the right to demand accountability and transparency that the public servants are obliged and mandated to follow and abide with. So, democracy ought to function with these fundamental values. Toward this direction the civil society organizations empower and strengthen the capacities of the people so that the public institutions become more responsive to citizens. Hence, 'democratic governance underlines the spirit of a contract – that rulers and people were bound by each other by reciprocal obligations … that entails accountability of the government to the citizens in lieu of the authority vested in it by the citizens.'[190] Governance in this sense is a contractual obligation between the citizens and the public actors. In recent times in India good governance is highlighted in political discourses. One such example is an idiom that Prime Minister Narendara Modi used in recent Parliamentary Elections, 'Maximum Governance and Minimum Government'. A comprehensive understanding entails that,

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[189] George Cheriyan, 'Changing Face of Governance,' in 'Deccan Herald', February 28, 2008, p.8.

[190] *Ibid*.

> 'Reforms could help to come out of the morass of problems that our country faces, which includes bureaucratic inertia and inefficiency, corruption, public services and delays in delivery of justice. There is a need for the state to encourage private capital initiatives, and build capabilities rather than redistribute wealth … increased development effectiveness through improved public service delivery and better-informed policy design. The right to good governance is an essential part of citizens' rights that one can expect from the government.'[191]

So, it is apparent and mandatory that democracy forms the basis for good governance. Good governance stands on vibrant and dynamic democracy. So, we need to get into the functionality of democracy and how it works.

Democracy and its Weaknesses

B.R. Ambedkar, the Chief Architect in framing our Constitution cautions: 'Beware of Parliamentary Democracy, it is not the best product as it appears to be.'[192] Ambedkar gives numerous reasons for this: 'Democracy is like a machine whose movements are slow and there is no swift action.'[193] 'In a Parliamentary Democracy, the Executive may be held up by the Legislature which may refuse to pass the laws which the Executive wants and if it is not held up by the Legislature, it may be held

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[191] *Ibid.*

[192] Valerian Rodrigues (ed.) *The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p.61.

[193] *Ibid.*

up by the Judiciary which may declare the laws illegal.'[194] He forthrightly warned that,

> '… it can be said in general terms that the discontent against Parliamentary Democracy is due to the realization that it has failed to assure the masses the right to liberty, prosperity or pursuit of happiness.'[195]

He was of the view that parliamentary Democracy could not check economic inequalities and in turn has continuously added the economic miseries to the poor, the downtrodden, and the disinherited castes and classes. Social and economic democracy is the axle and pivotal force of a political democracy. The tougher the tissues and fibre, the greater is the strength of the body. Democracy is another name for equality. If liberty fails to realize equality, then it has made democracy a mockery, a name and a farce.

Is our Parliamentary Democracy a farce? Does Indian democracy truly characterize equality? Or does governance in the name of democracy subsume equality? Given the plural and heterogeneous character of our Indian society, the visionaries thought that the parliamentary system could hold the country together by providing sufficient space for its diversities to co-exist. The over-riding consideration was to ensure the citizenry of our people in our Constitution. Over the years, aberrations and distortions have taken place in the functioning not only of the State, but also of the political establishments, governance and administrative system. As a result, large sections of the people are unable to enjoy even the minimum rights the Constitution has enshrined for them. Teeming millions live in abject poverty, hunger, child mortality, unemployment, non-availability of pure drinking water, and lack of health care have undermined the constitutional and fundamental rights of the people.

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[194] *Ibid.*

[195] *Ibid.*

The country's strength lies in democracy which is premised on secularism that is unity in diversity, but in recent times the very secular fabric is undermined. The ultra-fundamentalist forces have mixed religion with politics arousing communal passion and frenzy, creating a vertical divide among the people. Caste is used at all levels to put different categories on different slots perpetuating hierarchy and difference. It thus reflects that,

> 'The lack of accountability in governing institutions and individuals is a great bane. The other major deficiency is the lack of transparency in the decision-making processes. An impression has gained ground that criminals with recourse to resources and influence can remain out of the reach of legal processes. There is a question mark also about the proper enforcement of our criminal justice system. It is only through commitment to constitutional objectives that we can bring probity back into the system.
>
> There is no better alternative to parliamentary democracy with adult franchise and a federal set-up. Parliamentary democracy symbolizes the ethos of our country. It mirrors the country as a whole. It embodies and articulates the urges and aspirations of the people. Over the years, Parliament has come to be identified, both in theory and practice, as the pivot of our political system. The responsibility for providing direction, momentum, and institutions for social engineering has been with our Parliament.'[196]

The above quotation by Somnath Chatterjee concurs with B.R. Ambedkar. B.R. Ambedkar believed in the effective functioning of

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[196] Somnath Chatterjee, 'Constitution, Parliament and the People,' in 'The Hindu', 8.12.2004, p.10.

democracy which is the foremost and vital component that ought to address the socio- economic disequilibria within the Indian society. As envisaged, predicted and analysed by him the socio-economic disequilibria have not been narrowed down. The system of caste is getting stronger and shows its resilience in socio-economic, religio-cultural and political institutions. In the socio-economic sphere, the data published by the Human Development Report (HDR) of the United Nations, India ranks 126 among 193 nations despite phenomenal achievement in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) last year.

HDR entails Quality of Life that comprehensively includes nine categories such as cost of living, culture, and leisure, economy, environment, freedom, health, infra-structure, safety and risk and climate. In this categorization India ranks 133 in the world. Further, 39 per cent of our adult population continues to be illiterate, 35 per cent live below the poverty line, over 25 per cent have no access to safe drinking water, and almost 60 per cent have no access to sanitation even after 60 years of Independence. India's share of poorest people in the world, which was about 25 per cent in 1980, has increased to 39 per cent.

The greatest impact of abject poverty and inequity is in India's rural areas, which carry over 65 per cent of the nation's population, but contributes to just 18 per cent of our GDP. India's rank in the Human Development Index (HDI), which is a composite measure of life expectancy and adult literacy, and standard of living, has not been encouraging. India's economic and social well-being indicator scores are among the lowest at 187, which is lower than sub-Saharan Africa. The last round of the National Family Health Survey found that mal-nutrition had reduced by just 1 per cent from 47per cent to 46per cent in the last 8 years. Every second, a child under 6 years of age is under-weight.

India has roughly one-third of all poor people in the world. It also has a higher proportion of its population living on less than $2 per day compared to sub-Saharan Africa. This latest estimate comes from the

World Bank (WB) Report on global poverty. It is a paradox that the rate in the decline of poverty in India was faster between 1981 and 1990 than between 1990 and 2005. This clearly shows the failure of economic reforms of the post-90s propelled by neo-liberalism. India, according to the new estimates had 456 million people or about 42 per cent of the population living below the new international poverty line of $1.25 per day. The number of Indian poor is pegged at 1.4 billion people. India also had 828 million people, or 75.6 per cent of the population living below $2 a day. Sub-Saharan Africa considered the world's poorest region, is better-it has 72.2 per cent of its population (551m) people below the $2 a day level. The estimates are based on recently recalculated purchasing power parity (PPP), exchange rates, which make comparisons across countries possible.

The Neo-Liberalism Lie

For all the ills and failures of our systems, institutions, instruments and processes we do blame the politicians, bureaucrats and government machineries and so on. This is why the people at large invoke a few powerful principles of governance such as transparency, accountability, integrity, professionalism and common good. In order to bring in equality, equity and narrowing the disequilibria, NGOs, people's movements, civil liberty groups etc., have been involved in empowering the masses, creating awareness, initiating economic and welfare projects, taking up issues that fall within the human rights domain, lobbying, networking, advocacy and many others. By and large all these fall within the gamut of development. Many have accepted the undergirding doctrine of neo-liberal free-market capitalism on which LPG is premised, which they think, would usher growth, progress and prosperity. They firmly believe that neo-liberalism is the absolute, and so, there is no alternative (TI-

NA). On the contrary, the claims and promises of globalization have failed to match the data, facts and figures we have before us.

The term development is value-loaded, and therefore embraces economic, political, socio-religio-cultural aspects. The discourse on 'development' ought to go beyond the conventional notions of Rostowian 'modernization-take-off-trickle-down' paradigm that automatically leads to 'economic growth' and 'prosperity'. In recent times, development per se is being used and understood in different ways. And so it has become like amoeba that escapes because of its flexibility to change its colour and shape. Nevertheless, the Government at the Centre and state governments believes that LPG via its market-geared model of development could bring about progress and prosperity to all.

Market has become the new development paradigm and not people, or nations. What are the modes to be employed to realize the envisioned? And how is to be realized? These are questions that surface and responses tends to be contestable. In the name of 'development', 'progress', 'prosperity', 'limitless growth', 'cut-throat competition' 'maximization of profits' and 'insatiable greed' ruthless exploitation of natural and human resources takes place in India and around the world. For me, development is nothing but a cover-up or an alibi of market-backed neoliberalism premised on the ideology of global capitalism.

From the 1990s the governments at the Centre and State have been following the policies and programs ushered in by the forces of globalization both in urban and rural areas. The new focus on poverty and hunger is possibly a response to a number of emerging factors. While the effects of globalization in urban and rural areas are significant as manifested in the suicide of farmers, loss of agricultural lands, migration, urban-rural poverty, increase in the growth of pavement and slum dwellers, commoditization of under-class, feminization of poverty, redundancy in unskilled and semi-skilled workforce, escalating inequities, is seen more sharply in urban and rural areas.

In urban and rural settings, LPG has augmented wealth and opportunities for the middle, upper and dominant castes and classes. LPG has brought about prosperity and affluence in conspicuous manner. Their affluence is displayed in vulgar ways and uncivilized ways. Hence, LPG has neither altered the socio-economic status of the vulnerable such as women, Dalits and Tribals, nor offered significant opportunities or choices for the urban and rural poor. Over and above, there is a certain coalescence between the deepening crises and its perceived linkages with the processes of LPG, civil society, judicial and NGO activism around these issues which seemingly leads to a recurring critique in urban and rural spaces of market economy and need to be construed as spaces given and dissenting voices accommodated in the name of democratization.

Civil society activism has centred on project-related activities relating to socio-economic empowerment or improvement. Such activity frequently has a single theme or focus such as water supply, or sanitation, or schools, or health, or non-formal education, that rarely situates the socio-economic disequilibria as a comprehensive issue, closely related to broader questions of political economy and rights and therefore are structural and global. Unless and until activism against the life-negating forces is connected and linked within the broader political ideological frameworks, the efforts pursued posits disconnect.

The general perception is that the poor are almost charity cases, and should sit and wait for the 'mythical trickle-down effect' to pour wealth. Some tend to think of an alternative between policies to redistribute, and policies to grow, but it is not possible to bring in both the extremes. Can growth and redistribution go together? Even if it is possible, can market regulate its processes so that the combination of equity and market fundamentals keeps the momentum going? In most parts of the two-thirds world, the combination of re-distribution and neo-liberal policies has

hardly worked. As a result, sustained economic development and productive economic initiatives failed to take off. Instead there are many spin-offs.

In the absence of productive economic activities, one can hardly expect sustained economic development. In a world of market-backed free liberal economics, a sizeable capital is invested in speculative areas and service sectors, where returns are instantaneous and not employment-oriented, but profit-maximizing. Those who are excluded by the market forces have fallen into 'inequality traps' and in the process pushed to poverty, especially feminization of poverty, migration, redundancy of labour leading to unemployment, suicides, debts, and so on.

With imperfect markets, inequalities in power and wealth, translate into unequal opportunities, leading to concentration of wealth and resources in the hands of a few while the majority have no choice, but to voluntarily opt for mass suicidal attempts. In sum, it is nothing but a genocidal project. Every day we keep reading, listening, and witnessing shocking stories of the inequalities in income, opportunities, and life chances, faced by communities within and between nations. The proponents of neo-liberalism claim that for everyone to enjoy the fruits of LPG, people will have to wait. The question that arises here is how long? For, in the long run, people will die. It is again the myth that the sharing of wealth and opportunities more equally is not possible within the scheme of LPG and therefore, ought to be demythologized. The advocates of neo-liberalism claim that the poor and the vulnerable will have to be peaceful, patient, and wait for the market revolution, for it is a long haul.

However, the concepts and ideas of 'civil society and governance' gained momentum in the 1980s both in the political vocabularies and activism in order to shape political visions. The astonishing breakthrough the civil society organizations made was to capitalize on the failure of the State to deliver basic conditions for human well-being. At

one point of time, many thought that a developmentalist State would be able to carry a 'revolution from above' and thus people's lives and destinies would be transformed. But the State colluded with the neo-cons and neo-liberals that formed a hegemonic force and used Parliamentary Democracy in furthering its own class-caste interests.

It is in this context, the accent such as 'democracy', 'governance' and 'development' from below resurged and echoed strongly. Apparently, the civil society offered an attractive third option, but however,

> 'Actually, in front of the kind of fervent imaginations and political passions that revolutionary dreams evoke, the imagery of civil society is tame and practically bland. It promises no dramatic or radical change in the lives of people. What it does do is proclaim that ordinary men and women have the political competence to make their own histories in small but sure ways. By engaging in an activity called politics in a free civil society, they realize their selfhood and recover agency, even as they acquire the political confidence to bring the non-performing and non-responsive state to order and hold it accountable. The argument also excites the hope that a vibrant civil society, inhabited by concerned and ethically motivated citizens, may be able to restore the same political ardour that had roused masses to action during the anti-colonial struggles'.

> 'But history has its own way of playing tricks with well-meaning projects and inspiring concepts. For the idea of civil society was to be quickly hijacked by a relatively new set of actors that emerged on the national scene. These were non-governmental organizations, which were to intervene increasingly in areas crucial to collective life. In fact, these actors

were to proceed upon their tasks on the blithe assumption that civil society means the non-governmental sector. Even as we saw NGOs subcontract for the state in areas that have traditionally fallen within the provenance of state responsibility such as the social sector, civil society, proclaimed many scholars and activists, represented a third sector of collective life. The other two are the state and the market.'[197]

'Hence, civil society organizations, groups, and NGOs seem to have provided an alternative to both the state-centric global polity as well as the exploitative economy. They have expanded the agenda of international concerns in major ways. They have the advantage of networking across the globe. These actors are seen to possess moral authority and gone global on issues that range from human rights records, to nuclearization, to ecological concerns, to people-friendly development. But …

What is important is that all this provided an unprecedented opportunity for NGOs to organize the social reproduction of communities faced with an indifferent state. The entry of global civil society organizations (GCSOs) is further facilitated by the fact that globalization has drastically eroded people's capacity to order their own affairs. These developments are in turn legitimized by the globalization of liberal democratic ideology, which, it is suggested, is the only ideology available to societies in the aftermath of the collapse of communism. In sum, the emergence of … dovetails neatly with the consolidation of the neo-liberal consensus, globalization, and the diffusion of democratic globalism via aggressive foreign policy of Western states and political conditionalities. …

[197] Neera Chandhoke, 'Civil society hijacked,' in *The Hindu*, 16-01-2002, p.10.

> For, the claims that have been made by global society actors – the kinds of human rights that are on offer for instance – reflect perfectly the values of the most powerful states in the western world. After all, it is political and civil rights not social and economic rights that have been globalized today. Therefore, even as we recognize that global civil society actors articulate a new moral vision for global politics, there is nothing to suggest that this vision transcends the norms of powerful Western states. Arguably, the imaginings of global civil society actors seldom move beyond the space of liberal, even neo-liberal projects, and the agents themselves remain mired within the limits of liberal thought. In any case, the overlap justifiably gives us cause for thought.'[198]

Conclusion

In an increasingly globalizing world the concepts and terms that we use are intertwined in complex and ambiguous ways which needs careful scrutiny. Prior to globalization, the usage of vocabularies and their meanings bore clearly particular philosophical and ideological moorings. But now the grammar of those ideological and political connotations has been hijacked by neo-conservatives and neo-liberals to suit their empire-building vision and global market. The rich and the powerful capitalist countries including the global financial institutions, apparatus, instruments and agencies frequently use 'democracy,' 'governance,' and 'development.' In the name of these three concepts, they are allowed to wage war against any sovereign nation or can impose economic programs or bring in sanctions and moratorium if any sovereign nation defies their dictates.

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[198] *Ibid.*

In such a scenario, the civil society organizations, churches, church-affiliated agencies and NGOs picked up these terms and assume that they are the third alternative. As a note of caution, one should be clear with regard to the ideological and political accent and content, while applying these concepts in addressing the problems and articulating these issues. All these terms are value-geared, ideologically-loaded and politically-grounded. If given in to, there is the possibility of getting subsumed and eventually sucked into the process. Therefore, it calls for careful interrogation and introspection of these terms and activism. The globalizing forces could claim that they are the custodians of democracy, governance and development. In order to bring these three they may even use as their ideologue, Thomas Friedman, who in his book, *The World is Flat*, said that globalizing forces have dismantled inequality, inequity, hierarchy and divides, and thus made the world more democratic, prosperous, transparent, and accountable with good governance.

As against his claims as well as others, one is bound to assess the ground reality with facts and figures. For me, the world is neither democratic nor flat nor level playing ground. 'Democracy' is another name for exploitation and exclusion. India ranks first because without social and economic parity we cannot call ours as democracy. The nations that profess democracy and claim that their nations are democratic need to know that unless and until they bridge the gap both in the social and economic facets they cannot talk of democracy. What we hear is nothing but jargons. Hence it is imperative that the concepts namely democracy, governance, and development are to be re-interpreted and thus be re-constructed in order to become authentic and integral.

INDIA'S SHAME

Democracy in Shambles! Beef Barbarianism on Rise

In a column article 'The Crisis of Indian Democracy' by Pulapre Balakrrishnan (published July 27, 2016) in *The Hindu*, draws readers' attention with contextual episodes that have been happening across the country to the fore. One of the most striking is as follows:

Whatever may have been the vision of India's founding fathers, Indian democracy has not lived up to their expectations. As a matter of fact, it has done far worse. In the past year it appears to have added heightened violence towards the marginalized to its sedentary character. The incident four Dalit youth being beaten in full public view in Gujarat is only the most recent instance of this. Parliament reportedly heard accusations and defences the next day but it is not yet clear what impact. It will have and how civil society will respond.

The debates on the TV channels for the past two years revolved around one crucial issue wherein political parties started blaming each other and 'passing the buck' on others. Instead of finding the culprits and punishing them, the political parties across the spectrum have failed to nab the perpetuators. As a consequence, the cow vigilantes have taken the law into their own hands and inflicted punishments in whatever manner they want to. In such a scenario questions that arise are: What is happening to the law enforcement agencies? Have these fringe elements and so-called 'cow vigilantes' been given license to do whatever they

want by the political establishments? The 'cow vigilantes' running amuck and are given free hand to do whatever they want. Who are they lynching, assaulting and humiliating? Are they above the law? Can't they be punished? Gau Raksha Vigiliantism is growing and is deepening. Have Gau Rakshas taken democracy for granted?

In the name of 'cow protection', Dalits, Muslims particularly women and minorities have been hounded. VHP, Bajrang Dal, Shiv Sena and other fringe elements intimidate Dalits, minorities and women verbally and physically. The victims are increasingly being threatened by the 'cow vigilantes' not to speak to media. The government of Madhya Predish claims that the women were caught while smuggling the meat. Whether you skin a dead cow or carry meat or be near cattle corpses these 'self-styled' gau raksha brazenly take the laws in their hands and do whatever they want to. The questions are: Who is protecting the 'cow Vigilantes'? Are the gau raksha emboldened by the BJP-RSS politics currently in power? Have they been tacitly supported by BJP-RSS? From where do they get the leverage?

These 'gau raksha' vigilantes want to make cow as the national animal and these fringe elements say that they are social organizations and thus offering 'social justice'. The Indian middle class react to racial prejudices and attacks when it happens to Indians in other countries. There would be hue and cry when news of Indians subjected to racial indignity overseas. Incidentally, when PM Modi visited South Africa last month where he consciously traveled in the train by taking the same route that de-boarded M.K. Gandhi out of a first class compartment a century ago.

Gandhi was thrown out because of the colour of his skin. Revisiting and at least consciously wanting to experience what the Father of our nation experience should certainly been a moment of going back to Gandhi's times reminiscing the pain and stigmatization Gandhi faced that might have reinforced resolve and resilience for the PM Modi. But

when similar incidences happens to Dalits, Muslims and Christians or worse than what happened to Gandhi 100 years ago, did PM Modi to break his silence or instructed the government and other agencies to act swiftly? He is yet to break? Why this binary and double standards?

However, the landscape of the Dalits posits volatility, anger, fear and insecurity. Pulapre Balakrishnana, bridges the then and the now in the following ways:

The scenes from India come a full century later. And the Dalit youths had, going by public sources, only skinned a dead cow, a task to which Indian society historically confined them.

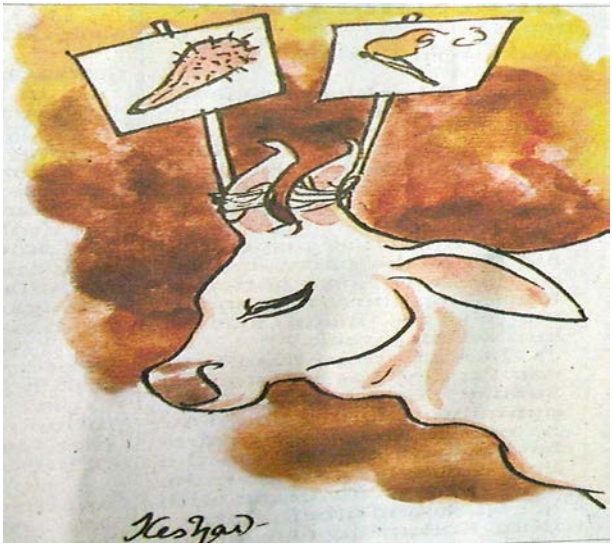
By assaulting them for undertaking it, not only has their dignity been denied but their livelihood snatched away. In any civilized society the perpetrators of this crime would not just be grasped by the long arm of law but publicly shamed.

The pattern and trend of atrocities are almost the same across the country, be it BJP or Congress or other political parties. Nonetheless, in recent times the forms of discrimination against the Dalits are horrendous and on the rise, more in the BJP-ruled states. Pulapre Balakrishnan elaborates that 'Gujarat is of course only one of the sites of violence against Dalits. It is important to recognize that it has been widespread across northern India and not absent from south either, with Tamil Nadu featuring prominently. It is also important to recognize that acts of violence against Dalits are not of recent origin. Their oppression is systemic and deeply rooted in India … When in power, middle caste-based parties have replaced their invective towards the top of the caste pyramid with suppression of those at its bottom.'

The present scenario vividly portrays in the words of Pulapre Balakrishnjan that 'The historically outcaste were left to fend for themselves, a stance morally equivalent to allowing the devil to take the hindmost.' The cow vigilantes target minorities and Dalits who run meat business-

es. More than anyone, the cow vigilantes have become new security threat. As many as 200 cow vigilante groups have sprung up in Gujarat. They have become a law and order problem in Gujarat because of their aggression and the way they take law into their hands. The Chief Secretary G.R. Gloria told *The Hindu* recently that 'We are going to take strong action against such groups. These vigilantes are self-proclaimed gau rakshaks but in actual fact they are hooligans.'

Their outfits are growing from the village-to-taulks-to-district-to-state capitals-to-nationals level. These outfits have taken law into their hand to deal with minorities or Dalits who run slaughter houses or meat businesses. A senior government official in The Hindu (July 22, 16, p. 11) characterized them as 'local level lumpen elements who have emerged as extra-judicial forces and operate with impunity. They have become a real nuisance.'



Source: The Hindu, 25th July, 2016, p. 8.

These 'self-styled outfits' are armed. They even go to the extent of intercepting vehicles that transports animals and raid slaughter houses

wherever cows are being slaughtered. In recent times we have been reading and hearing their periodic interceptions of vehicles or raiding slaughter houses in Gujarat. General Secretary of Peoples Union for Civil Liberties Gautam Thakker said 'Earlier, there were only few animal protection groups in the state and they were mostly Jains because Jainism believes in absolute non-violence. But lately, such forces have come to every nook and corner of the state and their main activity is to terrorize minorities and Dalits.' The State of Gujarat has now become the headquarters of gau rakshaks and the 'model' for others to replicate. If not contained there are all possibilities for it to grow.

A question which is being asked by many is: Why now? Balraj (56) who has been selling beef recalls:' I sold beef on the streets in my youth for Rs.2.5 a kg. Consuming beef or slaughtering cattle, according to him a 'crime' only in recent years when the Bajrang Dal and other Hindutva groups became active in the taulk of Shantipura, Chickmanguluru. For says, 'For these people, beef is not the issue. They are playing politics.' One of the five Dalits who was part of a group gathered outside the house of Balaraj who was attacked on July 10 by a Hindutuva group on the charge of stealing and slaughtering a cow asked: 'If they are Hindus, who are we then?' Dhanush (23), another injured in the incident, told The Hindu (July 26, 16, p. 5):

'Yes, beef is part of our diet and food culture. If consuming it is against law, let the police take action. How can anyone else beat us up?' Balraj and the other Dalits of Shantipura village said that beef had been part of their food culture for ages. 'We can't afford mutton (sheep or goat), which costs more that Rs.400 a kg,' said Sarasu, Balaraj's wife. None of the Dalit families in the village have land to till. The youth work as labourers in plantations to earn their livelihood. Others work as drivers, painters and in construction. 'The upper caste people in the village do not tolerate if we move around wearing good clothes. They

look for some reason to assault us,' said Gurumurthy. The current episodes recurring with impunity make the Dalits in particularly deeply frustrating. Some event went to the extent of ending their lives. Shiv Visvanathan analyses the trend in *The Charge of the Cow Brigade* in The Hindu, July 25, 16, p.8 that, in all this, one realizes the vigilante-sponsored violence is not sporadic but involves organized networks. They even patrol highways looking out for trucks ferrying cows and then attack those in the vehicle, using weapons to mete out instant justice. In turn, the Centre remains silent, almost tacit in what it considers an informal validation of government policy. It is not sacred cows that the regime is protecting. What it is tacitly desacralizing is the Constitution.

The so-called rights of a cow are getting precedence over the rights of Dalits. They very sacred idea of a cow which seeks harmony between nature and culture now stands emasculated. It is

here that fundamentalist movements get some of their energy from. It appears that the Modi government is operating on split levels, with one entity suggesting modern proposals for policy, while the other wants all of this to be anchored to a fundamentalism. It is this which makes the violence so overt. Oddly, the function of policing is being handed over to these groups and the regime sees them as arms that are helping to consolidate the ideology of the government.

Vikas Pathak and G. Sampath with Nistula Hebbar in their write up *U.P., Rajasthan lead in crimes on SC*s in The Hindu (July 25, 16, p.11 presents a detailed account that are summarized in the following paragraphs. Atrocities against the Dalits are growing at alarming levels. The social, print and visual media cover the inhuman treatment perpetrated against the Dalits and yet there is no reprieve. Data shows shocking figures. Atrocities are unleashed in brutal and barbaric manner. The Dalits are the targets and the perpetrators belonging to dominant castes and ultra-right fundamentalism keep devising and enforcing e their crim-

inal mind-set in crude forms and thus inflict upon the Dalits and minorities. Our democracy has reached a point that the cow brigades have taken the law into their hands.

The political and the law enforcements are yet to decide to weed out the growing menace. In any democracy the citizens should be given the utmost importance and certainly not the others. Democracy centres around Human life and the citizens' safety and security. In any democracy the Government the organ of the State has to ensure its citizens the fundamental rights and privileges. The number of crimes inflicted and atrocities unleashed against the Dalits across our country question the very notion of democracy and its legal and law enforcing institutions. The following data corroborate with the ground reality. Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan lead the country in the number of crimes registered against the Dalits as per the data of 2013, 2014 and 2015. The National commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) counts these States among those deserving special attention. U.P. with 20 per cent of India's Dalit population accounts for 17 per cent of the crimes against them. The numbers – ranging from 7,078 to 8,946 from 2013 to 2015 – are high, but so is the population of Dalits in the State.

Fifty-two to 65 per cent of all crimes in Rajasthan have a Dalit as the victim despite the fact that the State's SC (Dalit) population is just 17.8 per cent of its total population. With 6 per cent of India's Dalit population, the State accounts for up to 17 per cent of the crimes against them across India. The state of Bihar has a poor track record, with 6,721 to 7,893 cases in the same period, contributing 16-17 per cent of the all-India crimes against Dalits with just 8 per cent of the country's Dalit population. With 6 per cent of India's Dalit population, the State accounts for up to 17 per cent of the crimes against them across India. While the state has 15.9 per cent Dalits, 40-47 per cent of all crimes registered there are against Dalits. The State of Gujarat has shared cor-

rected figures of crimes against Dalits with the NCSC after an abnormal increase in the figures pertaining to crimes against Dalits in the State. The Commission noted that 'The anomaly and sudden increase in respect to Gujarat and Chhattisgarh are abnormal and are being highlighted so that these States can provide actual data in case there was a mistake in reporting,' said the agenda note for an NCSC review meeting with the States held recently. Further, Gujarat's numbers of crimes against Dalits had jumped to 6,655 in 2015 from 1,130 in 2014, which made the NCSC officials suspicious.

There was also a statistical impossibility in the data the State shared: the crimes against Dalits were 163 per cent of the total number of crimes in the States. 'Gujarat officials corrected the data in the meeting, and these are like previous years,' an official present at the meet said. 'Chhattisgarh officials have done the same. Gujarat's officials, sources said, were worried that 'inflated' data would further damage the State's reputation regarding Dalit atrocities when it is in the eye of a storm over the Una incident of public beating of Dalits and the subsequent suicide attempts by Dalits across the State.

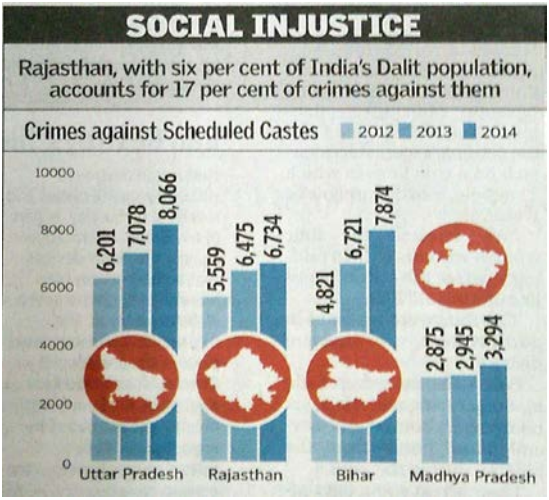
In an attempt to salvage the image, the Gujarat government has also released figures claiming that crimes against Dalits in the state have 'gone down' under the BJP. The corrected figure for 2015 in this set of data is 1,052, which is lower than 2014. The data also claim that while there were on an average 1,669 crimes against Dalits per year in the State from 1991 to 2000, the number declined to 1098 between 2011 and 2015. So far as the atrocities reported to the NCSC by Dalits who feel the authorities are not giving them justice are concerned. Uttar Pradesh accounts for the highest number at 2,024 cases and Tamil Nadu comes next at 999 cases. 'This could mean both laxity of the authorities and greater consciousness of rights among Dalits,' an NCSC official said.

The data provided by State Governments have not been objective. Methodology employed could be manipulated in such ways either to

inflate or deflate the numbers. NCSC became suspicious of it and thus asked the respective governments to re-work on it. Those governments that tops in the Dalit atrocities showed laxity of the authorities whenever the numbers went up and whenever the number went down than the previous years they point to greater consciousness of the Dalits. In tune to the need of the Government it tampers with the data or manipulates it. However, our democracy is caught up with the issue of 'Holy Cow' leading to 'unholy politics'. Cow vigilantes have taken over and thus rein terror particularly against the Dalits and minorities. Hindutva politics has taken the centre stage wherein 'love jihad', 'Ghar Wapsi' and 'Dalit annihilation' are its programs. The divide between Hindutva and non-Hindutva is not vertical, but segmented.

From Dadri to Una, pattern and method is the same. The Prime Minister's deafening silence in such horrendous incidences makes many to doubt whether he is emboldening cow vigilantes. Does our PM mean the present happenings as 'transformational agenda'? We have reached a situation that points out to 'love for leather and hate for Dalits'. Further, our intolerant level reached a point where: 'leather products touchable and those who produce those products vis-à-vis Dalits—Untouchables'! Rise on atrocities against Dalits across the country show that the caste system has becomes very sophisticated unlike earlier times where it was crude and blunt. However, caste system continues to be more pernicious. Statistics that we come across is very distressing and totally shocking. For example, there has been a 15.5 per cent rise in crimes in 2015.

Two Dalits are killed and 3 Dalit women are murdered at an average every day; 37 per cent of Dalits live below poverty line; 28 per cent of Dalits are now allowed to enter into places meant for the public; 84 of 1000 Dalit infants die before they enter into first birthday; 47 per cent of Dalits live without any access to clean water and 54 per cent of Dalit children are undernourished.



Source: The Hindu, July 5, 2016, p. 11.

Above mentioned figures amplifies one thing: caste bias/prejudice which is indeed 'India's shame'. It clearly shows the negation of social inequality, economic inequity and political injustice. India reels under caste politics which has fragmented and polarized our society. When Dalits are treated as sub-human as and valued lower than cows, then the very essence of human life and esteem is lost. What else is left when so many Dalit youth resort to committing suicides? Indian politics has not gone beyond caste politics. Each political party is evolving and trying out new combinations and mathematical formulae by polarizing the Indian society further. Therefore, caste matters for the 21st Century India. The caste system has institutionalized social discrimination.

In the 21st Century India, the so-called casteists express their love towards leather products, while on the other show hatred by lynching, lashing, discriminating and hounding the Dalits, involved in skinning and tanning the leather used to produce the leather products for those who are involved in 'hate politics' against the Dalits. With what name they should be called and what is the right term to be used so that such

perverted mind-set and psyche be understood? They are those who show scant respect to other humans and treat them as 'lesser human beings'. If we look at the cases registered, the cases against the Dalits should be on top. The root cause is the caste system—that regulates our society for more than 5000 years. In the caste schema, who should fall where and the reasons are clearly articulated and justified. . One of the major support systems is none other than the theory of karma—doctrine of predestination. Such belief system has no rationale and no scientific basis and yet continues and plays the most important in the day-to-day life of many Indians.

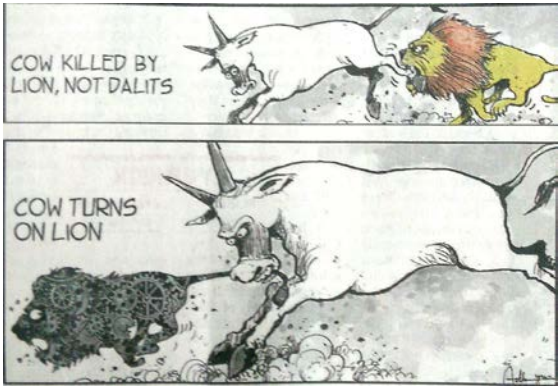
Even in the 21st Century India continues to live in such an irrational and nonsensical social system. We profess that we believe and value human life more than anything. Sanctity of life is the most important normative principle. And in that human life assumes its sacredness and thus adds more value than any other. If we claim, believe and profess that sanctity of human life is our credo, then why the Dalits should be hounded, lashed and lynched? Those who are involved in such activity offer their justifications, but falls short of reasonable rationality leading to total absurdity. The paradox these Hindu fringes attack Dalits who are also Hindus in the name of 'protecting' Hindu dharma displays their clouded corrupt mind-set. The leather industry has a turn over of more that Rs. 80,000 crores. Dalits do this job and those who lynch, lash and hound them would hardly do the job that the Dalits are engaged for thousands of years. Let us not think that it is not post-Independence phenomenon, but has been there for thousands of years.

Cow vigilantes are basically driven by Hindutva ideology which is antithetical to the very existential philosophy of Dalits and minorities. Thus, Dalits who belong to Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities and minorities are considered as 'other' in the Hindutva project, and so, targeted by the gau rakshaks. What does this mean for future Indian

politics? Ideology of ultra-right religious fundamentalism that the BJP-RSS tows has gripped the nation, causing havoc to the very fabric of our society. Beef politics is emboldening the BJP-RSS polarization project. We live not in 2016, but in 1916, where Dalit youth tied to the back of a car and being lashed. Dalits are being made to eat cow-dung. There are many more and all these have happened across the country recently. It is simply nauseating and despicable. It is indeed a national shame.

Happenings of this magnitude will certainly bring about a new language of Dalit politic. Dalits have been at the receiving end for long. How long and how much can the Dalits remain tolerant and passive takers? Dalit anger is mounting and could explode in different forms. Day in and day out Dalits are subjected to lynching, lashing and hounding in their country where B.R. Ambedkar gave the Constitution that enshrines liberty, equality and fraternity. Dalits had dumped dead cattle at the collectorate and if more pressed Dalit shall resort to many others. As part of their preliminary defiance, in Gujarat they left the cattle carcasses in front of the government offices. It clearly implied that the gau rakshaks should do the needed rituals. In another expression, Dalit youth attempted suicide. Symbolically or as a mark of their resistance they left the cattle carcasses to rot. The casteist forces should now realize that if such types of defiance spread across the country or should realize the aftermath would be devastating. Annihilation of caste will have to start one day or the other.

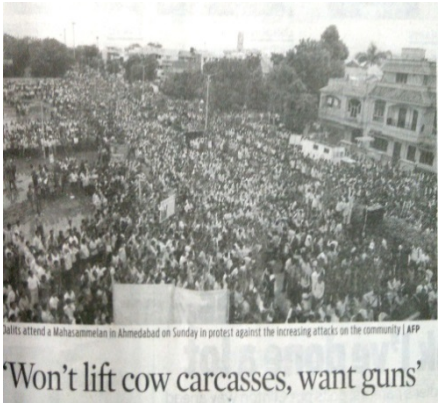
LINE OF NO CONTROL Sandeep Adhwaryu



(Source: 'Line of No Control': The Times of India, July 29, 2016, p. 6)

All this cumulatively is going to change the grammar and the very language of Dalit politics and discourse. Let the Gau rakshaks and their band wagon including BJP-RSS should realize that the inherent contradictions of Hinduism would soon be ripped open and now has started in full swing—sooner the better. Apparently, it is going to expose the basic tenets and theology of Hindutva, the very political, religio-cultural philosophy—the very articles of faith they are seeking to defend. At the same time even the casteist forces are devising new assertion against Dalit discourses and uprisal. Dalit politics has entered the centre stage. Dalits have become the subjects, the power, the force and expression for people's movements and political parties. Dalits are indeed the force to reckon with Series of episodes unleashed against the Dalits and the minorities across the country vividly portrays that the Indian democracy is in crisis.





Dalits attend a Mahasammelan in Ahmedabad on Sunday in protest against the increasing attacks on the community | AFP

'Won't lift cow carcasses, want guns'

(Source: The New Indian Express, 01.18.2016, p. 09)

The hallmark of democracy is to protect its citizens and promote their basic rights in letter and spirit. If a section of its citizens face humiliation and oppression by those who in the name of law control and thus deprive and negate others' rights and freedom, and those in power do not take action against the miscreants imply that the democracy is in shambles. As the architect of our Constitution has rightly pointed out that social democracy is part of overall democratic framework and in those socially ostracized and religious minorities should not be discriminated on any grounds. If deprived then democracy is in serious crisis point.

LABOUR POWER GARMENT WORKERS' PROTEST IN BENGALURU: VENTING IRE!

> 'At the best, man is the noblest of all animals, separated from law and justice he is the worst.'
>
> — Aristotle

18th of April, 2016, the city of Bengaluru witnessed a sudden, un-precedented and spontaneous uprising by the garment workers which was never expected and also not experienced in recent times. Bengaluru is the second largest city in India next to Gurageon that accommodates largest garment units in the country. According to Prathiba, President of garment and Textile workers Union (GATWU), a Mysuru Road-based union for garment workers in Karnataka says 'the industry employs over 5.5 lakh workers, out of which around 4 lakh (around 80-85%) are working in the age group of 20-40 years. Government records put the total number at 3.5 lakh.'[199] According to the government estimates, there are around 800-900 units in Bengaluru, Srirangapatna, Mysuru, Ramanagaram and Tumauru, with 400-500 employees each earning Rs. 7000-8,000 per month as wages. Out of that, 85-90 per cent of them are

[199] See the write up by Deepka Burli titled 'Slogging to keep home fires burning, women garment workers in a double blind' in The Times of India, May 2nd 2016, p. 2.

women. However, GATWU, says, there are around 1,500 units with over 1,000 employees each.[200]

For the garment workers the day starts early in the morning. They leave at about 5 or 6 early in the morning depending on the distance of their garment manufacturing factory located. If they went late by a few minutes they would have to stand at the gate for an hour until their supervisors gave them a piece of advice and then allowed them to enter. As part of punishment they will have to skip lunch or stay back after work for some time till they meet the target for the day—around 100 pieces of apparel for international brands. This has been the life of many garment workers for years. This is the state of affairs of the 4 lakh garment workers in and around Bengaluru who toil for about Rs.7,000–8,000 per month.

Draconian Conditions of Garment Factories

In the 1970s, Bengaluru witnessed a boom in garment manufacturing industry. With substantial increase in wages in Europe in the 80s forced most of the companies particularly the Transnational Corporations (TNCs) involved in garments. A few of them have virtually monopolized the garment sector headed towards the South Asian countries like India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in search of cheap labour. Today, Bengaluru is the second largest exporter of garments in India after Gurgaon. Women are preferred in the garment factories because of many factors such as they are honest, total dedication to work, usually do not retaliate, nimble, hard-working and submissive, refrain from trade union activities, easily 'oppressed and exploited'.

People, especially women, have started going to garment factories in search of work and employment. As the numbers swelled in thousands and lakhs, the grievances too started growing in garment factories. Al-

[200] *Ibid.*

ternate Law Forum (ALF) and Vimochana in association with GATWU brought out a report in January on the harassment faced by these women. According to the report, supervisors even prohibit workers from talking to co-workers. And if workers fail to meet production target, they will be insulted by the supervisors. 'Being scolded privately in the managers' cabin is one thing and in front of everyone is another. Besides, they must not use abusive words,' says Rathnama.[201] It simply means that the management uses abusive language.

The report adds further that women workers complaining about not getting enough toilet breaks. 'If we exceed even two minutes, the manager would ask questions like 'are you giving birth in there?' Our lunch breaks are supposed to be for half an hour, but sometimes our supervisors makes us work for its first 20 minutes,' says Geetha R (name changed), working in the industry for four years.[202] According to the report, the most common kind of physical harassment is supervisors dragging the worker away from the work station. There are also reports of sexual harassment with supervisors 'inviting the woman to go out for an outing … Constantly touching/dashing against a woman.

They are also entitled to about 2 per cent of the maximum retail price of apparel they stitch, which is exported to the west. But forget these benefits; they are often even denied overtime payments. The report says many workers are forced to punch in their exit and get back to work, so that there is no record. 'When they demand overtime payment, they are told their payment was cut because of failing to meet targets'[203] According to GATWU, most women put with all these problems because many of them are the sole bread winners for their families. The above narra-

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[201] *Ibid.*

[202] *Ibid.*

[203] *Ibid.*

tives reveal the disturbing plight of the garment workers at the work place.

Substantiating further, the fact finding report titled 'Production Torture' prepared by Garment Mahila Karmikar Munnade in association with several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) underlined the abuses and their deleterious impact on the workers, thereby suggesting measures for redressal of complaints. The report consists of 27 interviews and eight Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) of at least 25 workers each. The working conditions at the factory are market by lack of amenities, resulting in inhumane and hostile working conditions. The study points out lack of clean drinking water, clean toilets, absence of proper commute to factory, poor crèche facilities, unsatisfactory medical facilities, no communication with family/outside world, substandard safety equipment among others in the garment factories.[204]

Raising similar problems, Vinay Sreenivasa of Alternative Law Forum, who was part of the study, said 'The workers are also subjected to both subtle and more tangible forms of mental harassment over a prolonged period of time. It includes extreme pressure to reach the production targets, which sometimes leads to poor quality of the garment stitched. The workers, however, are expected to meet both quantity and quality, failing which they face humiliation and insults from the supervisor.'[205] In the report he cited that the common form of harassment was to make the worker stand in the presence of supervisor and other garment workers for hours. The women workers have also said that they are being subjected to sexual harassment and made to endure sexually-coloured remarks and jokes, including comments on their appearance.'[206]

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[204] Deccan Herald News Service in its column 'All's not smooth and silken for these unfortunate lot', 25th April, 16, p.

[205] *Ibid.*

[206] *Ibid.*

The study comprehensively made note of financial exploitation and harassment during the interview conducted for the study. The study as part of its recommendations to the state government that proper audit and check by the brands as well as Labour department and inspection of the facilities. It also urged the government to constitute living wage tribunal to curb exploitative financial practices of the management such as extracting unpaid work often beyond the working hours, overtime without compensation.

An Uprising

The agitation by over a lakh garment workers, mostly by women on city road on Monday and Tuesday (25th and 26th of April, 2016), exposed the total apathy and care-a-damn attitude of agencies and departments attached to this sector. It has been boiling underneath for long and therefore should not be construed as a surprise. It eventually reached the bursting point after years of bottled up feelings in factories that are no better than slave labour camps, employing mostly women. The agitation over the Centre's new rules on provident fund (PF) was just the trigger. The uprising of the garment workers on the 25th and 26th of April 2016 had created deep cracks within the administration and law enforcement authorities. The agitation had undoubtedly created nightmare on the entire major roads causing inconvenience for thousands of techies who wanted to go to work and then return back to their homes.

Thousands were left stranded for nearly four-five hours as the agitating garment factory workers held the IT hub to ransom. Employees of Infosys, Bicom, Wipro, HP and others were the worst hit with traffic coming to a grinding halt on the road and the BMTC withdrawing its services to Electronics City as a result. Private buses too stopped plying over Hosur Road in view of the traffic hold-up, worsening their plight. Employees of IT hub naturally must have been infuriated and frustrated

as they went to office several hours late and returned back home very late. However, it is a reminder to those who are part of the IT hub that garment workers too are part of the working class and they thus need better treatment and facilities.

The recent agitation of the garment workers has brought their grievances from the periphery to the Centre. The readymade garment industry in Bengaluru goes back over four decades and in the seventies was recognized as the readymade clothing hub of South India. Many branded and non-branded garment factories mushroomed all over the city due to the easy availability of women belonging to one layer above the poverty line. Initially, the workforce was made up largely of men, but women were later increasingly recruited as they provided cheap labour. Over the years Bengaluru became or emerged as the leader in garment industry in South India. Today the city has around 2,000 garment factories employing around five lakh people of whom 85 per cent are women. It is said that about 40-50 companies control the entire industry, with each having the ownership over 50 or 75 factories.

Most of the readymade garments made are exported to Europe, the United States, UAE, South Africa, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia and other countries. Even the international brands are tailored here and exported,' says a manager of a garment factory.[207] In fact, Bengaluru is the third largest readymade garment exporters of the country. The industry is growing beyond the city with hundreds of factories coming up in other districts as well. Though the official number of factories in the state is around 1,700, industry experts say there are over 2,500 in reality and of them around 2,000 are located in Bengaluru alone.[208] The industry may have provided economic empowerment by employing the unskilled rural women. When asked they say job alone

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[207] M.G. Chetan, Deccan Chronicle reporter in a column 'Underpaid, harassed since the 70s in 'Deccan Chronicle', April 20, 16, p.4.

[208] *Ibid.*

does not matter, but the way they are treated matters. 'Starting from gender bias to sexual harassment, women employees face several problems. They are supposed to work for only eight hours, they put in at least ten hours, complains Ms. Pretiba R President of the Garment and Textile Workers' Union'.[209]

Slaves not Workers

Garment workers undergo humiliation despite toiling for hours stitching clothes that are sold in markets across the globe. The factories tend to squeeze their labour to the maximum and the workers have not been treated with due dignity and respect. Everything is geared around maximizing the production/target. Although it is estimated that there are around 4 lakh women employed in the garment manufacturing companies in and around Bengaluru, but only around 12,000 workers are part of the Garment and Textile Workers Union. This is due to the fear that the management instils on the workers, says Pratiba R, President GATWU.[210]. 'Also, most women break their service every two years in order to withdraw their PF, so we are hardly able to keep track of the employee strength and flow,' she adds.[211]

Vinay Sreenivas of Alternative Law Forum says, 'The moment the management realizes a worker has joined a union, she is thrown out on flimsy grounds or made to work over time. Or, they have false cases filed against them. Garment factories hire women who have little education, semi-skilled and are vulnerable it is difficult to get job elsewhere. The vulnerable socio-economic profile of women makes it difficult for them to overcome the intimidation and join unions. Many of them are

[209] *Ibid.*

[210] Deepika. Burli, in The Times of India, May 2, 2016.

[211] *Ibid.*

the sole-bread winners of their families; they do not have the means to go to court.'[212] The history of GATWU goes back to 200 as an off-shoot of Garment Mahila Munnade (a membership organization, not union) to bring in an independent trade union for garment workers. But it took almost four years for it to get data on the number of units and employees, to give women the choice of joining the union or to just seek its guidance discretely.

It took six years for the union to understand their multi-faceted grievances. 'I used to go to factories and wait outside until women came out so I could tell them about the union,' says Prathiba. The then president of GATWU, Jayaram KR, says, 'We were given away pamphlets near factories about the union and inviting the workers to our meetings. While many of them showed up, they withdrew soon out of fear.'[213] Pratibha says, 'Today, most cases are resolved at the union level and workers ask us to not register a complaint with police.'[214] They are by all means treated as slaves and certainly not as workers. To meet both the end they comes to work particularly to educate their children.

The Provident Fund

For a couple months it has been simmering in the minds of the textile workers close to 5 lakh toiling for longer duration for paltry wages in about 800 units. Since various curbs and bottlenecks have been imposed on withdrawal of money from their Provident Fund accounts, the workers went on a two-day agitation. Lack of clarity on these also would have irked the garment workers. The NDA government's scrapped budgetary proposal to tax cut of PF contribution at the time of withdrawal didn't help much. They were given the understanding that from

[212] *Ibid.*
[213] *Ibid.*
[214] *Ibid.*

May 1st onwards 2016, a host of restrictions were on the anvil. It was a matter of time before things exploded. Bengaluru-based garment units have a global market. Unemployed youth, predominantly women, from the peripheries of Bengaluru provide a vast human resource pool for this industry.

The sweatshops are rife with stories of exploitation, often bordering on wage and sexual exploitation. Most of the garment units are located in the Peenya belt in the northwest and Housur Road belt, southeast Bengaluru. According to the new rules on withdrawal of Employees' Provident Fund, beginning May, 1, 2016, employees would not be allowed to withdraw the entire Provident Fund (PF) amount if they do not fall within the prescribed retirement age (58 years). The rule states that should the employee withdraw the amount after quitting by remaining jobless for two months, will he/she be eligible to withdraw that too the contribution made towards the PF by the employee and the interest earned thereof. The person, however, won't be able to withdraw the entire amount. He/she will get the employer's contribution only at the age of 58.[215] A member of the garment Labour Union said, 'The amended PF rules will cause many problems for the working class, especially women who have their families behind in villages and have children to look after.'[216]

The garment workers are paid less and the job security is non-existent. Further, these garment units are prone to shut down their operations for varied reasons. Almost all the garment workers consider that the provident fund and gratuity as their financial security and savings for emergency purposes. Under provident fund, an employee contributes 12% of their basic salary and the employer matches. Out of the employ-

[215] Deepka Burli, TPO correspondent in the 'Times of India', April, 19, 2016, p.3.
[216] *Ibid.*

ee's contribution of 12%, 8.33% is locked up in the Employees' Pension Scheme. The existing rules allow withdrawal of the remaining 3.67% if an employee remains jobless for two months. The new rules propose locking up this 3.6% until retirement. With garment workers poorly paid. Over and above, lack of access to 3.6% of employer's contribution means a great deal to them.[217]

Radha M, a garment worker in Peenya, articulates the whole gamut of PF in this way: 'Most of the employees are women who work in deplorable conditions, do not have enough leave and have to toil very hard. Many of them are not on the payroll and work like labourers.'[218] She added that her present employer, whom she did not want to name, was the fifth firm she had worked for. Two firms closed down because of losses while she worked part-time in the previous firms at a low salary.[219] VJK Nair, a leader of garment workers' union, said that 'most of the women workers were young and yet to marry. They earn to save for their marriage as they cannot depend on their parent.'

Adding more to it, 'All that they have in the name of savings is the provident fund. Withholding the amount means snatching their livelihood.'[220] Elaborating further, he said that no employee was retained for more than four years. Retaining a worker for five years means the employer has to pay the gratuity.'[221] Jayaram Gatwu, another union leader, blame the Central government for forcing the workers to protest. 'The decision of withholding the employers' contribution till the employee attains 58 years of age was taken without taking the workers into confi-

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[217] For more details See 'Stir highlights low-pay, insecure jobs of garment workers' in 'Deccan Herald', April, 20, 2016, p. 5.

[218] *Ibid.*

[219] *Ibid.*

[220] *Ibid.*

[221] *Ibid.*

dence. Ironically, the new rule will come into effect on May1; the day labour laws protecting the rights of working class were enforced.'[222]

He voiced his concern that the new provident fund withdrawal rules would affect all employees, but garment workers would be the worst hit as they formed the unorganized sector within the organized sector.[223] According to Gatwu, there are about six lakh workers in Karnataka's 1,200 garment factories with Bengaluru along having 4.5 lakh people in about 900 factories.[224] The protesters in thousands gathered in front of the Employees Provident Fund office in Singasandra as the workers pelted stones and besieged for more than three times endangering the safety of the PF employees at the office who were literally under siege. The employees of the PF office had to run for life and given the protection at the ground floor. Then the Regional PF Commissioner Amardip Mishra, went to Bommanahalli junction and explained to the protesters that their PF money is safe, but we could not find a leader who could convince them.[225]

The violence that rocked the city of Bengaluru prompted the Labour Ministry to cancel the February 10 notification which put restrictions on 100% withdrawal from the provident fund (PF) account. The employees can now withdraw 100% amount from their account, if they are continuously unemployed for 60 days. The amount will include contributions from the employee and the employer and the interest accrued on them. Reiterating further, the Labour Minister Bandaru Dattatreya said at a press conference in Hyderabad that 'The notification issued on February 10 is cancelled. Now the old system will continue.'[226] The February 10

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[222] *Ibid.*
[223] *Ibid.*
[224] *Ibid.*
[225] *Ibid.*
[226] 'Deccan Herald', April 20, 2016, p.1T.

notification had put restrictions on the withdrawal of PF amount to the contribution of employer along with the interest accrued on his/her contribution. According the employer's account could only be withdrawn after attaining 58 years, the retirement age.[227] The February 10th notification was under attack from trade union right from the beginning. The notification was published in the Gazette on February 26 and created technical problems. The ministry decided to implement it from May 1 but deferred it by three months, till July 31. The trade union activists were already campaigning online against the new rules and the violence in Bengaluru force a complete withdrawal of the notification. There are elaborate rules for withdrawal of PF deposits which allows the employees to withdraw both their contribution and the contribution of the employer. The withdrawal could be made in case of purchase of house, children's education and severe illness.[228]

Clout of the Working Class

Garment workers' uprising came ahead of the May Day, but certainly brought to light the power of the labour. France showed to the world the power of the working class on the 1st of May where workers showed up in thousands and lakhs their disgruntlement over labour reforms, while similar fears of eroding rights sent tens of thousands onto the streets of South Korea. From Moscow to Marseille protests were held in cities across the globe to celebrate the Labour Day as the working classes battle economic crises and unemployment that have fuelled anti-government sentiment.

International Workers Day was started in Chicago in 1886 by a union demanding an eight hours work day. Since then it is being celebrated around the world. In Moscow some 100,000 workers joined a May Day

[227] *Ibid.*
[228] *Ibid.*

parade on Moscow's Red Square, waving Russian flags and balloons near the Kremlin walls. In Istanbul, security measures were beefed up with some 25,000 police on duty and numerous roads closed for an occasion that regularly witnesses clashes between Turkish protesters and the police. Demonstrations and rallies by trade unions and employees' association at several places in the Bengaluru city market the May Day.

The recurring theme in all these demonstrations was a demand to withdraw cases against garment workers who were arrested following violent protests in the city in mid-April. Separate rallies were carried out by CITU and AITUC demanding facilities for the working class and the release of arrested garment workers. In response to their demands, Chief Minister Siddariamaiah in a program hosted by Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) assured support. He said he would consult the police and see if any innocent garment workers were arrested. The Chief Minister also had said the decision taken by the Union Government eventually resulted in violent protests. Elaborating further, he said. 'The Centre had taken such a decision without consulting the working class. It shows the capitalistic nature of the government.'[229]

The popular notion is Bengaluru is the nation's IT capital (Information Technology) that helps the nation in terms of exports, foreign exchange, employment and host of other paraphernalia was rudely shaken on the April 18 when thousands and lakhs of garment workers took to the roads and streets, reminding that the city is the capital of garment manufacturing. For two days, the garment workers predominantly women laid siege to the city of Bengaluru demonstrating their anger and power of women to the government in power at the Centre. As against the assumptions of many that women were passive and docile, the sud-

[229] For more detail, Deccan News Service covered under the column 'On May Day, trade unions call for release of garment workers' In Deccan Herald, May 2, 16, p.8.

den agitation of the garment workers blocked the city's main arteries, choked the movement of vehicular traffic and other activities in protest against ill-conceived moves of the policy mandarins in New Delhi to restrict withdrawals from the Provident Fund (PF) accounts.

Two major sectors that co-exist in the city side-by-side are polar opposites: 1) IT units, and 2) garment factories. In both the sectors a huge workforce is engaged but when it comes to infrastructure, basic facilities, remunerations and host of other the worst affected ones is the garment workers. The strike b the garment workers, whose lives are characterized by paltry pay scale, pathetic work conditions, job insecurity, exploitation of labour and other exploitative tendencies. The alarming living and horrifying work conditions of the garment workers has further exposed the underside of Bengaluru's working-class life.

The protests that lasted for two days had brought the city to the grinding halt as the agitating workers belonging to Bommasandra areas blocked Hosur Road, a key nerve-centre that not only serves the city but connects it to Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Kerala, while those who work in the manufacturing units such as Mysuru Road, Yeshwantpur, Jalhalli and Peenya industrial area jammed the roads that goes to Mangalore and parts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Media as usual gave a kind of news that blames the protestors who made the Bengalurians to undergo all sorts of suffering especially IT professionals.

The protests were termed as 'untruly' and 'violent'. The media with photo and heavy captions gave lots of coverage that showed the loss the public had to face when the protesters burned the vehicles of the people and the government and also those police personnel who were injured while on duty. No adequate coverage was given to the ways that the police force used their brute power to contain the striking women. The striking garment workers let-off their steam when they saw the local Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) office, near Bom-

masandra. They pelted stones to an extent that it damaged the offices and its premises.

Ongoing Plight of the Garmet Workers

The uprising of the garment workers was spontaneous, not trade union or union sponsored or organized and above when the concerned departments wanted to meet the leaders or representative (s) they hardly got any name(s) as their leaders or representatives. The very fact that it was spontaneous and yet focused and issue-based. The agitation sprung suddenly, which the government both the Centre and the State including its machinery was caught in the melee unaware came to a realization especially the government at the Centre, the Finance and Labour Ministries. These ministries thought that several lakh crores of rupees should be brought under their domain by imposing strict regulations. They did not realize that their action would boomerang.

The agitation gained momentum and yielded desired results because of the fact that the majority of the strikers about 80-85 percent of them were women. Benjamin, whose mother was also a garment worker, said, 'A woman worker is also someone's sister, wife or daughter; her work is a critical part of the family's livelihood, even if, for cultural or social reasons, she may not be the primary breadwinner… To stay away from the protests as if it does not concern them are far removed from the reality of working class life in this city.'[230] He pointed out that the availability of the PF facility was traditionally one of the key reasons why workers, especially women, entered the garment industry.[231] 'Since the tenure is totally insecure, the working conditions are onerous and sexual

[230] V, Sridhar, *Class outburst in* 'Frontline', May 13, 2016, p. 120.
[231] *Ibid*, p. 121.

harassment is widespread, women are often forced to quit one unit and move on to another at a later time,'[232] said Benjamin.

The government at the Centre subscribing to crony capitalism recklessly meddled with the Employees Provident Fund Scheme, 1952. When the protest was intensified and started to widespread the government rolled back its modifications. Earlier, workers were entitled to withdraw full provident fund (both Employer and employees) after quitting the job. Once the amount is withdrawn the PF account will automatically closed. The revised rules are more anti-worker and heinous because only worker's share of contribution to PF along with accumulated interest can be withdrawn at the time of reigning. Applications for withdrawal will be considered only when a worker is not continuously employed (in a factory or establishment to which the Act applied) at least for 2 months from the date of such request, but, this rule does not apply to female workers resigning on account of marriage or pregnancy or child birth.[233] The amendments or changes made in the new rule show feudal mind-set and anti-women overtone of the present government. Women workers joined the garment industry because of the PF facility. Their tenure is highly insecure and other vulnerabilities as women make them to quit from one unit to another.[234]

The government although assured that the revision was made to promote workers' welfare; the protest towards modified rules was almost spontaneous and widespread in several places including the social media. The government while introducing revision was firm and thought it could sail through but the agitation of the garment workers that ignited so much pressure and received wide-spread attention that ultimately led to the rollback of PF reforms. There are a few questions that emerge

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[232] *Ibid.*

[233] Rajasekhar and R. Manjuta, 'Reason for Garment workers stir against PF rule changes' in 'Deccan Herald', 11th May, 2016, p.11.

[234] *Ibid.*

need to be put forth and answered. What made the garment workers to get so upset the new provident fund rules? Why did the women become the rallying point of the whole struggle? For these questions one has to under the characteristic features of garment workers. For instance, 'The primary data collected from sample garment workers in Karnataka including Bengaluru show that about 2/3 of workers are women. They belong to the disadvantaged caste groups. Typically, they are poor living in rented houses. The distribution of garment workers by their age and sex shows an interesting trend, and this throws light on why women garment workers protested by coming to the streets. The number of women working in the industry declines as the age increases. Most of the women work only for a few years and discontinue their jobs soon due to variety of personal, social, birth of a child, etc.'[235]

The above quotation clearly shows that the women when they are young joint the garment work and leave in their mid-thirties. Many with the paltry salaries support their families partly and save for their marriages, including paying dowry for which the PF and gratuity helps. Hardly a few stay till their retirement age. Most of them also leave before they become fully skilled in their respective areas of work. For them if they continued for five years would in return give them about Rs. 1lakh of PF and gratuity. This money for them is huge would help them to meet several economic problems they encounter. One added reason for them to leave the job is a kind apprehension about the stability of the industry and also on the employer.[236] In addition, over 70% of garment workers, especially women, faced health problems due to nature of work which typically involved long hours of standing or sitting and constant focus on the work, without much break for drinking water or go to the toilet. Added to these, they also experience psychological

[235] *Ibid.*
[236] *Ibid.*

problems on account of constant exposure to abusive language of supervisors. Those who suffer with these ailments prone to withdraw full PF amount to meet health expenditure.[237]

Given the enormity of the problems that the garment women workers face there two divergent perspectives emerge: (1) From the women workers, and (2) from the vantage point of the government. The garment women workers have no decent salary and the salary they receive hardly meets both the ends. In such a context, for them the only avenue is to withdraw their PF. While on the other, the government views their life-span and life-cycle on a longer duration vis-à-vis beyond their retirement phase. The PF and gratuity would eventually become income security workers. In a hostile environment where there the garment women workers face all sorts of problems including meagre salary for the labour they put-in unpacks the layers of inequality that the women in India, particularly the garment workers face day-in and day out in our country. The government has relaxed labour laws and given umpteen concessions for the foreign capitalists to venture in India. Garment sector is one among them. Almost all the major global brands have set up their subsidiaries in India, particularly in Bengaluru.

The Garment Industry and Crony Capitalism

It seems that the government at the Centre is more concerned about the post-retirement phase of the garment women workers. Accordingly, it may have brought about the amendments that fall within its ambit, but failed to take note of the non-implementation of the minimum wages, working hours and conditions of the work place, infrastructural facilities and other privileges as guaranteed in the Labour Act. India is no more a welfare state and now towing the path of crony capitalism. In such a situation, usage of the term 'social security' has no relevance. There is

[237] *Ibid.*

hardly any 'social' in the accent of the government and so no social security is being extended by the State. The State does not guarantee jobs and offers minimum livelihood incentives for those who live on the margins.

Women go into the garment units on their own, from unskilled to semi-skilled, facing all sorts of humiliation and exploitation as they struggle for their living. If this happens to be the behaviour and insensitivity of the government, it has no right to impose changes in the workers' Provident Fund forcing them to wait till they turn 58 to avail it. PF money runs to several lakhs of crores and the Government forcibly wants to impose something in the name of 'security' and take over the money the labouring class saved for years.

The garments that are produced in different units of Bengaluru known for their brand-names across the globe, priced and exported to different parts of the world sold for exorbitant price. In the name of generating employment, exports and foreign exchange, the garment oligopolies with huge capital go to various parts of the world in search of cheap labour. Most of the internationally acclaimed brands are located in Bengaluru and in South Asia. Crony capitalism works in this way. The Indian government and the state governments for want of foreign capital openly extend invitation to invest in varied sectors so that exports, jobs and technological know-how will automatically boom leading to growth and prosperity.

While on the other, those who control foreign capital want to maximize their profits and thus enforce certain pre-conditions. Accordingly, the government enforced stringent labour laws, diluted labour-friendly policies and conditionalities in favour of crony capitalists. The state governments and the government at the Centre extend their support to these garment corporations, so that the workers would be given some employment which would help them to eke out their living. Be it UPA-1

or UPA-11 or BJP, their political economy irrespective of ideological moorings revolves around crony capitalism.

If we carefully analyse the narratives of the garment women workers and the statements of the functionaries of the Unions used shows a common thread or convergence and the degree and magnitude of exploitation. The garment women workers for each and every small thing have been penalized such as, for coming late by few minutes or not meeting with the target agreed upon so on so forth. For these, the punishment invariably is to put-in some extra hours of work. By and large, they are expected to compensate their late-coming or whatever it may be, irrespective of the faults of the workers or sheer allegations, the punishment is that they are expected to put-in extra-hours of work.

Women workers are made to work during lunch time or after the regular duty hours they are expected to stay back in their work place after 5 or 6 in the evening for some time. The labour they contribute—cumulatively speaking runs to in huge volume, if converted into monetary terms, it is colossal. But the crony capitalists expropriate the labour of the women garment workers without any remuneration in economic terms mean—unpaid labour vis-à-vis exploitation of labour by depriving wages. The unpaid labour automatically adds to the surplus value. It cumulatively adds to profit accumulation. Labour is the concomitant principle that transforms the material to finished products. Without the input of labour, the material remains the same and fails to add any value. Therefore, human labour is vital for any society to survive, because human society is involved in production, consumption and distribution. Without the touch of human labour there is hardly any possibility of any material being converted to solid usable product.

The 21st century characterizes alarming expansion of crony capitalism across the globe. Global capitalism via crony capitalists have horizontally expanded their enterprises and vertically integrated their products. Garment industry is being controlled by a few major oligopolies

that originate from the West and moved to poorer destination where armies of cheap labour available. Cost of production works out much cheaper and therefore most of the big garment enterprises have their affiliates and subsidiaries in the countries like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and other South Asian destinations. The assets and profits of these companies have grown substantially, but those who work in their factories have not shown any significant difference.

The flight of US dollars or Euros to other cheap-labour and cost-effective destinations take place with great speed for the dollars and Euros to multiply. In their locations dollars and Euros cannot and will not multiply to the extent as compared to South Asian locations, because of the fact that the cost of production including wages is exorbitant. So, the profit ratio may not be huge. In such situations the only way is the flight of capital in search of places where exploitation of cheap labour and ravaging of raw materials becomes easier and possible. The following two charts amplify the phenomenon of cry capitalism which is entrench and growing in alarming proportions in India. In such a context what is the way out? Resistance is the only option left before the workers and the garment workers did exactly that by defying the nefarious designs of the Centre and the state government that went all out to deprive the rights of the workers. The recent defiance and resistance of the women garment workers clearly manifests their resolve and determination.

The following data shows how the status of India after having embraced crony capitalism:

EXPRESS READ

India among top 10 crony capitalist nations

Study by Economist ranks India 9th among 23 surveyed for favouritism, state intervention

3.4% Of India's GDP came from crony sector wealth this year

18% Of the country's GDP sourced from crony sector in 2008

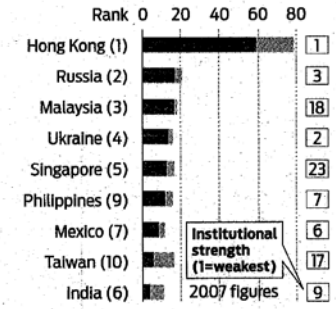
65% Of global crony capitalism happens in developing world

16% Drop in combined fortunes of crony capitalists since 2014

$1.75 trillion is the wealth of crony billionaires around the world

GLOBAL INDEX

Billionaire wealth as percentage of GDP ranked by crony-sector wealth in 2014

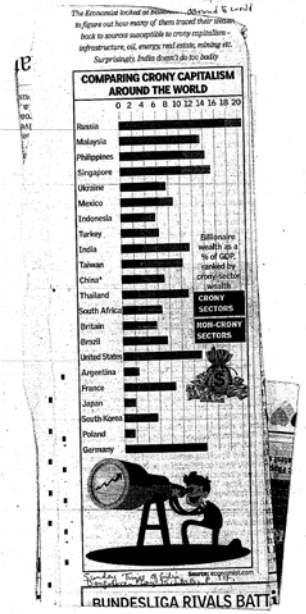


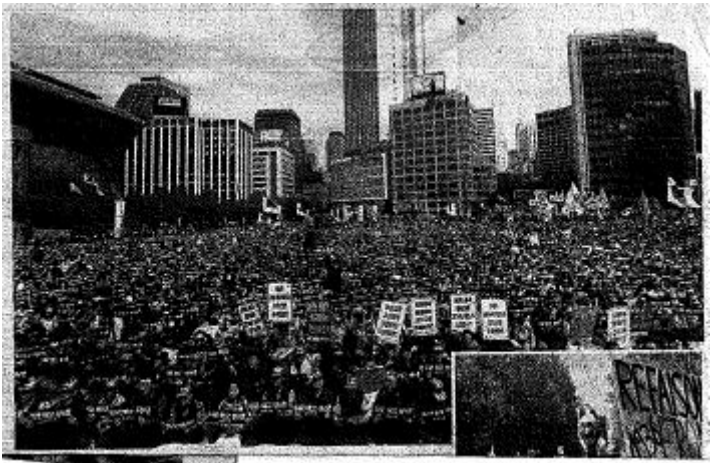
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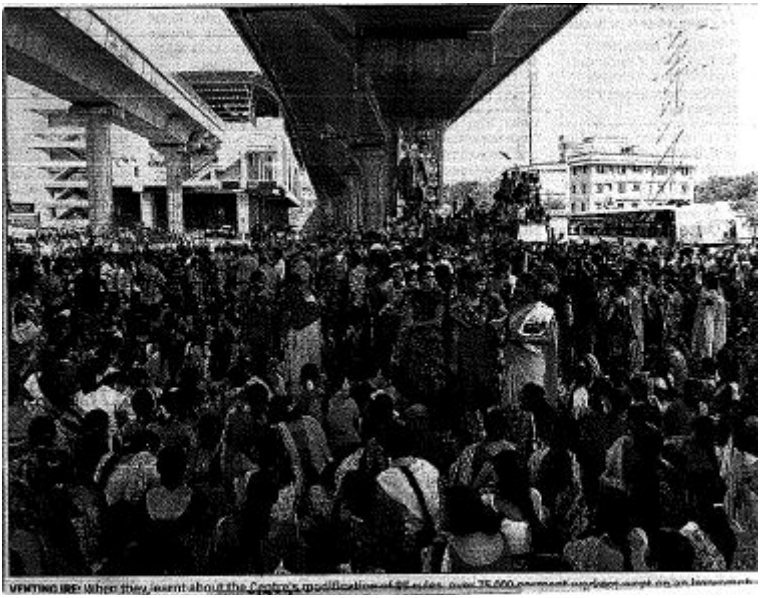
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34 PAGES, INCLUDING 16 OF Edex (TABLOID) and 4 of City Express

SOURCE: Times of India, Bengaluru, May 15, 2016, P. 17.







‘MANUFACTURED REBELLION’ OR ‘SPONTANEOUS RESISTANCE’

For the first time in the independent India distinguished intellectuals, thinkers, celebrities, icons, artistes, writers, producers, directors and scientists who have contributed in various fields that gave the them recognition in the form of cash and citations have returned the awards in protest as against the growing intolerance perpetrated against diverse sections of people which the BJP government led by Prime Minister Modi has failed to take action. Return of the awards continues to escalate. Arun Shourie, former finance minister of India, ideologue and influential personality during Vajiyapee’s government who drove reforms in the previous NDA government, had launched a stinging attacked on the Modi government characterizing ‘Congress scaled plus a cow’. The very next day the whole country and the world witnessed an absurd police action at Kerala House in the national capital, allegedly because it served beef.

One-and-half year of PM Modi’s regime started of high voltage point combined with foreign jaunts and jibes and yet to concretize his electoral promise of ‘sabka saath, sabka vikas’. Subsequently the present government had to give up ‘land acquisition bill’ and frequent disruption of parliament sessions of scams, abuse of power and authority, frivolous utterances and statements by the BJP ministers, MPs, functionaries and also its ideologue RSS and other extreme-fundamentalist organizations. This government is known for bans. Its regulatory bodies and mechanisms have given undue discretionary powers to the administrative sys-

tem. Police and bureaucracy have assumed too much of power. Stringent details and execution process have been added to the list of the consumption of beef, accompanied by a politically orchestrated hate campaigns and vigilantes against those who are alleged to have slaughtered, stored, eaten and carried beef. All in the name of 'cultural annihilation' by fringe elements.

Lynching of people from minorities, Dalits and others have become regular features these days. Large sections of the intelligentsia feel revolted by the spreading of intolerance climate. Incidentally, Shorie, a strong supporter of Modi during the Lok Sabha election campaign last year, had sad the Centre believes that managing economy means, 'managing the headlines' and that people had started recalled the days of former Prime Minister Manmohan singh'. Rejecting the charge, Naidu, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister said there has been 'no scam, no scandal and not even one mistake' under the government and BJP had been winning elections across the country. He added that 'We are a democracy, he (Shourie) has his opinion, but the country's opinion is different'.

In an unusual move, scientists have demanded PM Modi's government to take action against saffron bigots. In an unprecedented move over 135 scientists signed online plea addressed to the President. P.M. Bhargava, the founder of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology and Molecular Biology and a former vice chairman of the National Knowledge Commission informed the reporter of TOI as part of the excerpts that he return the Padma Bhushan award as a mark of protest against 'the government's intolerance and the attack of reasoning and science'. He elaborated in his excerpts that 'reasoning and rationalism which are the bedrocks of science, are under attack. This government has no respect for science. But for space and atomic energy allocations for science have been cut. People with rationalistic views are being

killed. The Padma Bhushan had a special place in my collection of 100 awards, but now I feel no sentimental attachment to it'.

While elaborating 'The attack on beef-eaters is an example, how can a government decide on what people should eat? Charaka (principal contributor to ancient ayurveda) has spelled out the benefits of eating beef, and had prescribed it for people with severe disorders. Functionaries of the government include a lot of people, including the ministers for science and technology'. A large number of scientists feel that this government is systematically curbing the scientific temper. If everyone joins there will be a cultural revolution because these bigots impose their understanding of culture over others. He categorically said that 'Don't mix religion with politics. Keep your belief personal; never ever try to institutionalize them. Don't tell me what to eat, what to ear and whom to love'.

T.R. Govindarajan, emeritus professor at the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, was among the few scientists from Chennai, Pune and New Delhi who initiated the first on line campaign against the rising intolerance and communal hatred in India. Out of many things he said in his excerpts he urged 'the government has to put out a firm statement that it will not tolerate such acts … We should be proud of our great work and there is nothing wrong in projecting that. But it should be based on scientific background. Instead of that, mythological stories are being given too much credence, which is incorrect. Our work on history of science is very minimal, but that should be rational not based on speculative ideas'.

Never in the history of independent India a galaxy of more than 135 scientists across the country has signed an online petition addressed to President Pranab Mukherjee against 'the systematic spread of intolerance and communal hatred in the country>' A couple of factors that led to online petition of the scientific community who candidly expressed

the zenith of intolerance and the ways in which science and reason are being eroded in the country. Their statement echoes 'The Indian Constitution in Article 51A (h) demands … that we develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform. Unfortunately, what we are witnessing instead is the active promotion of irrational and sectarian thought by important functionaries of the government'. Declaring solidarity with writers who returned their Sahitya Akademi awards, the statement said, 'We scientists now join our voices to theirs, to assert that the Indian people will not accept such attacks on reason, science and our plural culture. We reject the narrow view of India that seeks to dictate what people will wear, think, eat and who they will love. We appeal to all other sections of society to raise their voice against the assault on reason and scientific temper who are witnessing in India today'.

Twelve renowned film-makers have also followed suit over 'growing intolerance' in the country. In a letter to the President and the PM announcing their decision to relinquish their awards have expressed their dismay over the manner in which the government 'stone-walled as students' peaceful protests and ignored their demands, while the students were publicly disgraced and discredited'. Their letter indicted I & B Ministry over appointment of people 'with a narrow vision' to head institutions. Further, their letter also indicated growing atmosphere of intolerance, murders of rationalists and the Dadri lynching. 'Condoning deaths without interrogating forces that scripted those murders reveals a tacit acceptance of the ugly forces distorting our country' it said. Amazingly the intellectuals did raise their voice against intolerance which cannot be ignored or taken lightly.

On similar vein, an arm of global ratings agency Moody said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi must keep' his party members in check' from making controversial statements 'or risk losing domestic and global credibility', an arm of global ratings agency. The agency urged the government to focus its attention on the reforms agenda. The analyst of

Moody added that 'In recent times, the government also hasn't helped itself, with controversial comments from various BJP members, While Modi has largely distanced himself from the nationalists' gibes, the belligerent provocation of various Indian minorities has raised ethnic tensions'. In a convocation address at IIT Delhi, from where he graduated in electrical engineering 30 years ago. Rajan, the Governor of Reserve Bank of India called for tolerance, mutual respect and protection of the right to question and challenge and t behave differently so long as it does not hurt other seriously. He clearly implied that 'This means encouraging challenge to all authority and tradition, even while acknowledging the only way of dismissing any view is though empirical tests. What this rules out is anyone imposing a particular view or ideology because of their power,' he said.

As an Alma Mater the RBI Governor, reiterated that 'The first essential is to foster competition in the market place for ideas. This means encouraging challenge to all authority and tradition … the only way of dismissing any view is through empirical tests'. Second essential is to offer 'protection, not of specific ideas and traditions, but the right to question and challenge, the right to behave differently'. It simply means that 'If what you do offends me but does not harm me otherwise, there should be a very high bar for prohibiting your act … Excessive political correctness stifles progress as much as excessive license and disrespect'. In sum, his address echoed to the emergent climate that 'A quick resort to bans will chill all debate as everyone will be anguished by ideas they dislike. It is far better to improve the environment for ideas though tolerance and mutual respect'. Even Infosys co-founder N.R. Naryana Murthy coinciding with other statements expressed concern over rising intolerance in the country by saying that there is a considerable amount of fear in the minds of minorities in India. He asked governments to bring back the sense of confidence. He emphasized that the first priority

of this government is to bring back the confidence, the trust in the minds of every Indian that this is our country.

For the third time in about a month, President Pranab Mukherjee called for preserving India's multiplicity and pluralism and said the nation has thrived due to attributes of assimilation and tolerance. Prime Minister Narendra Modi a few days ago invoked Sardar Vallabhbhabai Patel to call for unity and harmony saying that Patel did display stellar role in unifying the country. This is the second time in a week PM Modi did speak on the theme of national and social unit emphasizing 'India's diversity being its pride' echoing radio address 'Mann Ki Baat'. Inaugurating the 140th birth anniversary of Patel under the theme 'Run for Unity' at Rajpath in New Delhi, 'If 125 crore Indians with the mantra of unit, peace and harmony together walk one step shoulder to shoulder, then the country will move 125 crores steps in one go'. His comments came against the backdrop of protests by writers, academics and scientists against what they describe as a 'growing climate of intolerance'.

Pushing aside these narratives and protests including that of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the President Prnab Mukherjee, BJP's ideologue and mentor RSS stoked the debate over religion and democracy urged PM Modi's government to 're-formulate' the national population policy because of the 'demographic imbalance' caused by the rise in Muslim population as reflected in the latest census data on religious communities. In its meet it observed that 'Bharthiya origin (Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh)' had declined, whereas the spurt in Muslim growth rate, particularly in some areas of the north-east, points to 'unnatural growth'. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley as usual is trying to defend the government by undermining the protests of the intellectuals as 'manufactured mutiny' and in the process the PM happens to be 'a victim of intolerance'.

The gravity and intensity of intolerance is growing and seem to be poised for the worst. It is certainly an attack on rationalism and scientific

temper. The level of intolerance has reached the highest pitch and point that the freedom of expression is being choked. The government and those agencies that choke the freedom of expression should go back to history and learn what happened to the regimes that curbed the freedom of expression of the intelligentsia. Eminent persons of different fields cutting across the political, religious, ideological, philosophical and academic disciplines and persuasions including the Governor of Reserve Bank and the co-founder of Infosys expressed their views on the present scenario vis-à-vis intolerance. It is ironical and whimsical to read and hear the Finance Minister's response 'manufactured mutiny'. Over and above, his statement about PM Modi as the 'victim of intolerance'- seem to be over exaggerated having no substance. The Prime Minister cautioned the fringe elements and could perhaps be taken as warning and spoke in depth about the unity and tolerance. The problem with him is he has failed to take action. If the warnings remain at the verbal and not accompanied with stringent actions it would result the way the RSS has just asked the Modi-government to re-look at the population policy.

The far-right organizations and political parties are desperately involved and thus attempting to divide India. Intellectuals of great eminence and repute have written to the President and the Prime Minister to intervene at this point and set the track straight. Protests are mounting that has reached the peak. These protests particularly by the intelligentsia have taken the toll of the ruling dispensation like an avalanche that damaged the image of India. The clouded and fractured mind-sets are all-out to take over the idea of India from liberal democracy and tolerant ethos. India is not a Hindu nation according to our Constitution. Majority of the populace claim to be Hindus but it remains a constitutionally secular republic which it does not officially recognize any religious identity as a defining characteristic and yardstick of an Indian.

BJP-RSS shall not impose their definition on us and thus offer definition that characterizes who is an Indian and what makes him/her as an Indian. The height of intolerance going on in this country can never be dismissed by the BJP. People are gradually losing their confidence on PM Modi and pathologically showing their aversion to Modi's government. PM Modi and his government seem to be supporting different forms and modes of intolerance. The tirade goes on unabated. One should carefully watch and discern the timings, patterns and symbolism of the fringe groups. All these combines configure and thus inter-mingle with each other.

People at large do not want to buy the argument of the BJP government that the growing protests by the intelligentsia as something 'manufactured'. On the contrary, people of standing and reputation have been demanding the PM to intervene and put a stop to the growing menace of 'intolerance'. People are gradually losing their faith on PM Modi because he has not taken any action on those who makes inflammatory and derogatory statements and remarks. He calls them and warns when under pressure, but hardly have we seen PM Modi taking stringent action. PM Modi should walk the talk. Simply talking without punitive action will not help the nation to move on. If intolerance continues growth, development, progress, prosperity, governance and above all democracy and humanity will be affected.

LE PEN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

The entire world is gripped with fear and under shock as the fundamentalists attacked and killed well-known satirists of the French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo on 7 January 2015. The French weekly, known for its critical stance on political and religious tenets and its establishments tends to make scathing critique of the super-rich and well-known celebrities who gained their popularity through dubious means and are undeservedly given undue recognition. It lampoons Islam, Christianity, Judaism, socialist programs that the current government subscribes and the capitalist policies that the previous government followed. The people of France who via the French Revolution gave to the world the maxim: 'Equality', 'Liberty' and 'Fraternity' are totally shattered and dismayed by this incidence along with those who believe in the freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of expression and democracy.

The Jihadists attack in broad daylight the office of the satire journal Charlie Hebdo in which 12 people that includes the editor, prominent cartoonists, and two policemen were brutally gunned down shows the vulnerability of our world in which we live. It is said to be amongst the worst atrocities in France since World War 11. It was nothing short of senseless outrage committed against the freedom of expression and the spirit of democracy. This carnage would continue to haunt and linger in the memory of humanity because it is grave and senseless massacre. Those who believe in the freedom of democracy and democratic values have expressed their views and showed their solidarity to the people of France. Nonetheless this brutal killing conveys number things to us.

France is known for its secular tradition which rejects the display of religion in any form in the public sphere. France passed a number of laws as against some religious traditions and practices that separates them from others. Undoubtedly the journal is a classic example of that tradition. Some of their cartoons had irked the fundamentalists such as drawing cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad and then making fun of ISIS that seem have occupied some parts of Iraq and Syria and highlighted the slaughtering Muslims and non-Muslims alike. In France there is a sizable Muslim population, primarily of North African origin. A section of its youth seems to have been radicalized by the jihadists. They are given orientation to fight against those Western countries and others who stand against their ideology, belief and vision. In recent times ISIS has become the epitome of Islamist politics.

France has well-established traditions that promotes and furthers individual liberty and individual freedom of expressions that tended to clash with minorities. Certainly the most affected ones are the ultra-right jihadists whose ideology, belief systems, vision, value systems, traditions and customary habits are diametrically in opposition to the majoritarian ideals of individual liberty, freedom of expression and democracy. Many say that Charlie Hebdo did function within its limits and operated within its purview. Its involvement to a large extent has been in the publication of satirical forms of expressions. But some say that Charlie Hebdo has crossed its limits and should have employed the principle of moderation and judgment. The moment the satirical journal crossed its limits it is natural and obvious that those responsible should face the wrath of fundamentalists.

On similar lines a few argue that the West violated the rights of others by trespassing into the countries such as Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and some others with rationales of establishing democracy and human rights. They argue that the gruesome attack that happened in France is to be considered as a backlash as to what the Christian West did to others.

But those who believe in freedom of speech, freedom of religion, democracy and individual rights do not want to accept the arguments put forth by the extremists. Stephane Charbonnier, the editor, who was killed in the recent attack believed in making satirical expressions about jihadist violence or lampooning any institution including Christ and Christianity the faith of the majority in France and Western Europe and North America without any compromise. He went overboard cutting across all sorts of pulls and pressures and expressed total freedom and liberty.

Those who love individual freedom, freedom of religion, speech and expressions are shattered. They contend that the forms of violence unleashed are pure barbarity that cannot be justified. For them, the carnage is an attack to the world of free expressions and literature. Those who were liquidated by the fanatics were of extraordinary talent and creative cartoonists – who were part of intellectual landscape who triggered the thought process of many. Those who do not want to think and lost the capacity of reasoning capacity resorts to violent forms of expression. They do not know their boundaries. But the fanatics say even the cartoonists should function within boundaries. If they go beyond their bounds then the response would be what the world is experiencing as of now.

In a world of intolerance and violence should non-interference and non-committal be a response? Should France re-think of its policies where the minority rights such as religio-cultural be erased in the name of secular ideals? What happened in Paris represents the inevitable backlash that shows the levels of extremism. The global scenario portrays fluid scenario. It has definitely moved from liberal to ultra-conservative leanings where religion and politics merge. Barring a few, the mainstream media and intelligentsia have become extremely conformist.

Religious and political forces and its establishments have become all-powerful and beyond scrutiny and accountability.

In such a scenario questions that arise are: Should freedom of speech be absolute? Should freedom of expression be absolute? Are provocative cartoons that hurt the sentiments of a particular community or religious adherents be allowed? Are the writings of those that provoke and demean the religious affinity of a particular followings be encouraged? In such situations what should be role of the state/government? What happened in Paris raises a bundle of questions to us as Indians as well as to the Government at the Centre. For the past seven months we have witnessing intolerant and hate speeches and violent behaviour of the ultra-right outfits. The fringe groups that subscribes to ultra-fundamentalist ideology of Hindu Rashtra in collaboration with the BJP make all sorts of derogatory statements against the minorities. Majoritarian political projects are being unleashed against those who are considered as minorities.

In such a situation, what should be the response of those who have been constantly lynched and discriminated? Should the fanatical forces be allowed without questioning or any response? However, the kind of behaviour these outfits display is totally unacceptable. Should the State of France buckle under the threat these Jihadist outfits put forth? Should the minorities subdue to the fanatics of Hindu fundamentalism? Should there be responsible restrictions and moderations on the part of freedom of religion and expressions? Should there be absolute freedom of speech? Or should there be no such absolute freedom of speech? Should there be reasonable restrictions or moderations?

Freedom of rights and freedom of expressions are non-negotiable. If anyone tries to offend these rights in the 'Name of Right to Offend' then it is our 'Right to Defend'? In our country, all kinds of extreme fundamentalist forces are on the move. Even the government with right-wing ideological stances would employ measures to curb the freedom of ex-

pressions, speech and religion in due course of time. Those who have been denied of opportunities and victims of socio-economic disparities easily fall prey to the radicalization of fundamentalist religio-political tenets that we find in all the religions. The Jihadists in their final spree attacked Jewish stores and killed four Jews which reflect the rise of anti-Semitism.

All those who have fallen prey to various shades of fundamentalist forces characterize some commonalities. Their hatred and intolerance reflects their social pathology propelled and motivated by hatred. All these fundamentalist forces represent its minuscule extremist fringe. This should be kept in view while articulating narratives. Satires, caricatures, riddles, demythologizing and demystifying the sacred books are not meant to arouse communal passion and violence. They are just meant to unfold the intricacies and in the process disclose the ambiguities that lie underneath that eventually help us to think or think differently. They thus bring critical and creative distance, irony, laughter—which the fundamentalists hate. If people consider offensive, they counter it with words or in other forms, not with brute force/killings. Ideas are to be countered with ideas, and not with swords and bullets. Ideas continue to live even after those who contributed are gone.

Some in our world strive and struggle for equality, equity, fairness, justice, freedom of expressions, socio-economic, religio-cultural and political and democratic freedom and basic constitutional and human rights. In return the price they pay is death that comes to them in violent forms and ways. However, their ideas and the purpose for which they laid their lives continue to cherish and enliven. The world is maturing and thus becoming more civil, democratic and liberal because of those who lay their lives.

NGOS VS GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY OR CRACKDOWN?

Introduction

The government and the political parties are not the only bodies at work in India in the fields of relief, development and social action. Hundreds and even thousands of voluntary agencies (VAs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), action groups (AGs) and non-party political formations (NPPFs) have indeed become involved in a wide variety of activities: aid, development, health care, education, feminism, environment, human rights, conscientisation, organization, etc. These NGOs and AGs represent 'a bewildering mix of ideologies, objectives, working styles, social composition, funding and support sources, size of organization and operation…' Their members – and inspiration – come from one or many of the following backgrounds: RSS, Gandhian, sarvodaya, Christian, humanitarian, Marxist, naxalite, new left, etc. The scene of AGs is moreover very fluid.[238]

The scenario for the NGOs at present is fluid. The NGOs blame the government for witch hunting and for entering into their space by clamping stringent regulations. While on the other, the Government says that the NGOs should be made accountable for the money they receive from overseas. Accordingly, the government has been tightening by introducing numerous rules and regulators. As against the backdrop, this

[238] Joseph George & John Desrocher, *Development, Human Rights, & Action Groups*, p.34.

essay delves into the intricacies involved and thus analyses their claims and disclaims.

Thousands and lakhs of NGOs with different approaches, methodologies and action-plans are involved in urban and rural settings of India. The goals, objectives, commitments and value-orientations vary from one to another. However, the NGOs by employing diverse approaches address the problems that the communities and masses face both in the urban and rural landscapes of India. The NGOs are propelled by a number of factors and value premises—religio-cultural, political or ideological. In all these, there have been different guiding principles that reflect in their programmatic content and intervention. 'Charity' 'Development' 'Welfare' and 'Re-construction' are some of the major thrusts and foci in their vision-mission statements. Nevertheless, the Government at the Centre especially the Ministry of Home Affairs involved in scrutiny: whether the NGOs engaged functions within the stated objectives or going beyond? Do they utilize the funds received from the donors properly?

The Indian state having realized the gravity and magnitude of the problem that the people face particularly the poor and hapless allowed the entry of NGOs to provide and assist and to play a supportive role to the state in redressing and alleviating the problems they face day in and day out. This has also altered the nature and the composition of voluntary action. For example,

Today, when the majority of persons working with NGOs are doing full time jobs it is unrealistic to expect that they would be working without seeking any reward. More pragmatic is the questions why should they? In these materialistic times, everything has a price and so is voluntary action. There is nothing wrong, immoral or unfair on the part of voluntary workers to receive rewards (monetary or otherwise) for the jobs done. Those who still think that voluntary workers should, like hermits, are indeed living in a world of unreality. The only immoral

thing is to gobble up the grant money received from national or international source. Unfortunately, many new and upcoming NGOs certainly do that. The findings of the Kudal Commission testify the financial mismanagement and corruption in the Gandhian NGOs. Similarly, CAPART, a government initiated funding agency has blacklisted the NGOs, which were found to have misappropriated their funds. In recent years, a big new class of so-called social activists has emerged who feel that voluntary action is a big business, a lucrative activity and self-serving endeavour at best. There is a big spurt in the number of isolated or even invisible NGOs formed with mercenary motives under the patronage of politicians and bureaucrats.[239]

The range of activities that NGOs have undertaken are diverse, ranging from education, training, awareness-raising, mobilization, capacity-building, organizing the poor, promoting social change, equipping the people for political empowerment and human rights issues, Dalit liberation, economic upliftment and problems concerning the children. Most of the NGOs and others falling in this spectrum have been funded by foreign sources. Have these agencies brought about any significant change? The following would amplify:

…Fragmentation of NGOs is a common refrain that underlines the problems of bickerings, mutual suspicion and jealousy, down playing of each other's role and hurling of charges of malicious and maligning nature. There is little unity, cooperation or coordination amongst the NGOs even when they are working in the same sector and maybe in the same region. All these have weakened their collective strength and the development of a vibrant unified NGO movement in the developmental arena. The other problem is that of empire building. The established groups dominate the development discourse and impress the funding

[239] See S.P. Srivastava, 'Nature of Voluntary Action in India Today: A Critique' in *Social Action*, Jan-Mar 1999, Vol.49, No.1, pp.6-7.

agencies (Pandey 1991:246). In an increasingly competitive environment the smaller NGOs (particularly of remote regions) get placed in a vulnerable position. The more powerful and well-connected manage to get access to government aid, leaving the smaller ones starved of supportive facilities and funds. Small groups find it difficult to plug into the 'system of government funding (the grants-in-aid game) and many of them consciously opt to become part and parcel of the patronage network of larger and more powerful groups (Ramachandran 1996).

…Another point of criticism centres around the role of voluntary action groups in structural transformation. Many NGO watchers do not believe that voluntary action outfits have played any significant role in structural transformation. On the contrary, there are many other (Aaftab 1981; Muricken 1982 and Omvedt 1980) who find lot many developmental NGOs as extensions of middle-class sensibilities, pro-establishment, illusion-creating agencies and heavens for misguided do-gooders who stand in the way of social change and have reinforced the exploitative system. These NGOs, by and large, fail to attack the root causes of the problems and to tackle the questions of structural transformation. These NGOs have only been able to create own spaces outside the sphere of organized political parties, outside the structure of power politics and also outside the institutional framework of State (Dhanagare 1988). While it is true that many NGOs are making important contributions in the fields they are working, however, they are still far from making a significant dent in the old order of poverty and inequality.[240]

However, there have been significant changes in the structure and functioning of big and medium NGOs. Once known for their credibility, accountability, and transparency, the NGOs are increasingly becoming bureaucratized, privatized, undemocratic, and hierarchical. For instance,

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[240] *Ibid*, pp.11-12.

Leadership in NGOs has turned out to be a matter of debate and concern. Not only in India, but also in Asia as a whole, most NGOs are started by one person or a few individuals who retain their charismatic control over the organization. In the typical Indian experience, a leader takes the initiative to form an organization and he/she remains the key person of the organization. By and large, they are one-man organizations. They are neither appointed nor elected. The activities in such organizations centre round a key person and his/her chosen team, and naturally the organizations collapse when the leaders depart or lose interest in it.

The process of decision-making becomes a mockery as the leader himself makes the decisions for the organizations. Participation of the locals in the programmes of the NGOs has diminished. Even the role of the workers in decision-making has become passive in many NGOs. Some have become highly centralized with one or two individuals taking all the major decisions leaving the inconsequential ones to the members. Naturally, in this kind of leadership, the styles of functioning are rather a mixture of the authoritarian and the democratic and are concentrated in the hands of the elders. This has serious implications in the life cycle of an organization which is bound to fail in the absence of the key person. Studies show that at the higher echelons there is monopolization and interlocking of leadership. The same person is president in one organization, secretary in another, treasurer in the third and a member of the executive committee in the fourth. This interlocking has its own advantages and disadvantages.[241]

Availability of funds, in turn, raises a number of questions—transparency, responsibility and accountability. The critics view that the primary concern of the NGOs is not the people, but the survival of the units with uninterrupted flow of grants and funds. Consequently, those

[241] See R. Sooryamoorthy, 'Have NGOs lost the spirit of voluntarism?'

organizations become mere implementing agencies of the donors. Therefore, the impending and real issues are sacrificed at the cost of donor-driven activities. In addition,

> 'Of late, the NGOs are found to be handling a number of programmes simultaneously. More often than not, this is not in due consideration of many things: the relevance of and the benefits the programme would bring to the people, the infrastructure and resources at disposal. In the process, NGOs, lose their credibility, Studies have proved that the organizations which undertake several programmes simultaneously would register a low member-accountability vis-à-vis the organizations that concentrate on a single programme. Attraction of funds and projects may help widen the area of operation of an organization but may not multiply the benefits for the people.'[242]

Over the past few years, resistance to the rightward shift in the political discourse as well as in economic policy has been pronounced in several cases where these outfits have been in the forefront. Medha Patkar and the Narmada Bachao Andolan (as well as several such resistance movements to displacement) had managed to build a popular movement involving several thousand ordinary people at a time when even the Left parties (with their strong and well-knit trade union organization) have been forced to restrict their agenda to mere symbolic actions against the establishment.

> 'Such movements, be they the resistance to displacement in the Narmada Valley or the struggle against the mining activities in Jaduguda or against the setting up of production units that are bound to affect the environment adversely in many

[242] *Ibid.*

> parts of the country, are, however, finding it difficult to take on the mighty establishment. The forces of status quo, after all, are not restricted to one political party or combine but are spread across civil society.'[243]

On the contrary, the status-quoists who thwart and even distort the agenda of such movements argue for the development paradigm or agenda of the government. The critics view these NGOs act as agents of international institutions and donor agencies and thus merely serve as centres for disbursement of from the west because of the following reasons:

> '1. Attractive employment opportunities to the elite, and
> 2. Unable to fall within the category of new social movement because of the fact that,
>
> The new social movements were the response of a whole generation of young men and women, whose transition from adolescence to youth happened to take shape when political parties and platforms were being reduced to mere instruments of self-preservation by their leaders, and, even where the distortions were not as bad – the mainstream Left for instance – the leaders were united in resisting any critical evaluation and free thinking. This was true not just in India but across the world…
>
> The new generation refused to accept the stated positions of the political parties as the truth and instead held human development and the right to life and livelihood as ethical concerns. Democracy was not just a political formulation for

[243] See V. Krishna Ananth, 'A new role for NGOs', in *The Hindu*, 28 January 2003, p.10.

> them and it was this attitude that laid the foundations for the new social movements of the early 1980s…
>
> The strength of the new social movements in India was that they did not have any ideological baggage. The mainstream Left, for instance, was caught in celebrating technology as long as it came from the Soviet Union. It could not oppose the concept of huge industrial establishments or big dams for the Soviet Union too celebrated this as development. But then, such an autonomy as well as the distinct advantage the new social movements had of not having to explain their movements from within the confines of stated positions did have its weakness too. By deliberately alienating themselves from the electoral arena, these movements also left themselves to be weakened significantly. In other words, the forces of status quo have occupied the institutions of political democracy – ruling as well as the Opposition – and the new social movements are having to stay out of the policy-making process.'[244]

In a context like this, what then is the role and relevance of these organizations? The world in which we live is rapidly changing. Are the changes we are witnessing moving in the right directions or what? Do the poor and the vulnerable benefit from these changes? How do we discern these changes? What are the factors that contribute to these changes? How do we understand the roles and activities of these organizations? These are the questions that loom at large.

We keep witnessing communal clashes, religious and ethnic conflicts at different levels. In the name of 'development', 'progress' and 'growth', some of the self-styled NGOs have mushroomed as agents of representing the ideological moorings of the extreme right and also as part of global capitalism receiving crores of rupees from foundations

[244] *Ibid.*

such as Ford, Rockefeller, international financial institutions, EU, European, US, Japanese, other capitalist countries' agencies and local governments.

Those that receive big funds the so-called Chief functionaries receive salaries and perks and enjoy lavish life-style. There are some jet setters, representing the causes of the poor and vulnerable. Their presence, especially in the two-third world projecting as social actors to alleviate poverty, hunger, to redress the problems of the poor both in rural and urban pockets. Has there been any impact? Could they able to make any dent or significant change? Whatever may be their intentions or goals, the money received in the name of poor; have they been benefitted or the project holders?

On the contrary, peoples' movements representing different sectors keep generating popular discontent against the macro-economic agenda and structural adjustment policies. This is where the NGO and the others come into the picture, to mystify and deflect the peoples' discontent away from direct attacks on these institutions, agencies and instruments. These organizations could perhaps be conceived as neo-comprador group primarily exists as service-agencies for and on behalf of the donor countries, trading on hunger, poverty, alternative development, progress, emancipation, economic empowerment and social change. They claim as if representing a 'third way' and assume themselves as the vanguard of 'civil society'. More and more injustices are meted out by the workers (industrial and agricultural), Tribals, Dalits, women, children, staggering unemployment, environmental degradation, so on and so forth. So, 'Globalist' rhetoric provides a cover for a kind of ersatz 'internationalism' devoid of anti-imperialist commitments. In short, this new petit bourgeoisie forms the 'radical wing' of the neoliberal establishment. Politically the NGOs fit into the new thinking of imperialist strategists. While the IMF, World Bank and TNCs work with domestic elites at the

top to pillage the economy, the NGOs engage in a complementary activity at the bottom, neutralizing and fragmenting the burgeoning discontent that results from the savaging of the economy. Just as imperialism engages in a two-pronged macro and micro strategy of exploitation and containment, radical movements must develop a two-pronged anti-imperialist strategy.

Nevertheless, one should be careful before passing on such generalizations and unfounded charges against all the NGOs. However, the Government of India vis-à-vis the Home Ministry for the last two years is tightening its noose on NGOs by enforcing different Acts against the NGOs. Recently, the Government at the Centre has invoked Lokpal Act to harass or to bring about accountability! Swaminathan Anklesaria Aiyar analyses the present government's attack on NGOs: 'An anti-corruption agitation by NGOs in 2011 forced the government to enact a law setting up a lokpal. In an outrageous twist, the government now seeks to use that same Lokpal Act to harass NGOs in ways unprecedented in democracies'. He elaborates that whenever politicians and their governments are under attack they in their own ways attack the accusers. Tehelka is a classic case.

In recent times we have been witnessing a repeat performance. NGOs led by Anna Hazare agitated for a strong lokpal that would investigate corrupt politicians on a fast-track basis and sentence those who are found guilty—politicians and bureaucrats. Three years passed by we are yet to see the appointment of lokpal. The law makers and the government are not that keen to create an independent institution to expose their crimes. On the contrary, the Government at the Centre is stepping up its scrutiny of NGOs, especially meddling with their financial dealings.

The Centre has made mandatory that obtaining unique identification numbers and registering them on the NITI Aayog portal, including the details of the Aadhaar and PAN numbers of their trustees and office-

bearers, mandatory for them to apply for grants from any ministry. The decision was taken by the Aayog at its meeting on My 9, 2016, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired following which all ministries have been directed to process the proposal for grants and releases to the NGOs only through Aayog's portal, according to minutes by *The Hindu.* At the meeting to review the progress in providing unique identifiers to entities, Aadhar enrolment and provision of direct benefit transfer and services, it was also decided that a system should be developed to give unique entity numbers to charitable trusts and societies.

The minutes added that 'As Aadhaar Act has already been passed by Parliament; it was felt that further steps t use Aadhaar in various schemes … should be initiated in accordance with the provisions of the Act.' In a significant move, on the 26th of June, 2016, the government notification said if an NGO receives government funding in excess of Rs. 1 crore, those handling its day-to-day operations will be treated as public servants under the Lokpal and Lok Ayukta Act (2013). In the event of foreign funding, this limited has been pegged at Rs. 10 lakh a year. The notification also said that managers, directors, board members of NGOs will have to declare their personal assets, jewellery, cash, and movable immovable property by July 31, 2016. They will also be subject to rules and regulations for government officials under the Prevention of corruption Act.

Number of notifications and stringent rules and regulations initiated by the Government at the Centre seem to have caused considerable anxiety and unease amongst NGOs and others who tend to view the actions of the government that the government is bent on enforcing its mandate on NGO leading to raise questions: whether the actions of the Government be construed as vendetta politics or serious efforts on the part of the government to bring in transparency and accountability in the functioning of the NGOs that receives local and foreign funds. This is

what the officials maintain that the order is only to pave the way for making NGOs accountable.

Further, the officials clarified that the recent move aims to smoothen the process of identification, verification and facilitation – at both ends: for beneficiaries as well as contributors. The available sources state that 'Whether contributors or beneficiaries, all will be able to access the money trial and the bank accounts … that is the idea behind the registration with unique identifying numbers'. The recent stringent enforcement of rules and regulatory mechanisms prompted N. Ramakrishnan, Executive Director Ideosync Media Combine, said this was only one in a long series of 'impositions designed to harass and prevent dissent'.

Even after three-odd years no lokpal has been appointed. By not creating an independent institution to exposé their crimes whoever it may manifests the reluctance of the political establishment –could be out of fear or something else. While on the other, the public servants have been asked to file annual returns on assets owned by them, their spouses and dependent children. Over and above, Government's notification that came in June, 2016, has defined as a 'public servant' any official of an NGO that has received any grant of over one croe rupees from the government or Rs 10 lakh from any foreign organization. All officers of such NGOs must file complete returns of assets by the end of July or face prosecution for having used 'corrupt means' to accumulate assets.

A law initially devised to persecute politicians and bureaucrats is now being converted into and aimed for persecuting thousands of NGOs. The government by all means would use this provision against NGOs that receives funds from abroad—all in the name of 'subversion activities' and promoting 'anti-national activities'. BJP-RSS combine wants to totally root out the NGOs that questions and defies Hindutuva ideology and BJP-RSS's political project. At present the BJP Government thinks that it is a better mechanism that they have within their means. By using it BJP-RSS wants to wilt the resolve and resilience of

some of the NGOs that takes up the cause of the poor, disenfranchised, disempowered and minorities.

Apparently, it seems those organizations that supported Hazare's agitation; others engaged in mobilizing the tribals and vulnerable sections for their basic rights and keep raising voices in favour of the protection of eco-system and pro-people initiatives are being increasingly targeted. It is not just selective targeting, but in totality BJP-RSS wants to create more stringent surveillance on NGOs that come in their way. Their message is clear: 'fall in line. If you defy you are crushed'. It could be a kind of diversionary tactics or to shut the free expressions of the NGOs or to taint the NGOs per se as corrupt. When they 'public' the NGOs too should consider as 'public servants' and be subject to complete scrutiny. The following texts, minutes and data will amplify the Centre's recently introduced rules:

NGOs, Their Executives to Give Annual Income Details to Lokpal

Under the new rules, office bearers of such NGOs will be treated as 'public servants' and charged under the anti-corruption law in case of financial irregularities.

NEW DELHI: All foreign and domestic-funded Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) will be under Lokpal, which will initiate an enquiry against them in the event of their involvement in corruption. Besides, both the NGOs and their top executives will have to file details of income and assets before the proposed anti-corruption.

As per the rules notified recently by Department(DoPT), NGOs receiving more than Rs one crore as government grant and donations above Rs 10 lakh from abroad will be under the ambit of the Lokpal. Under the new rules, office bearers of such NGOs will be treated as

'public servants' and charged under the anti-corruption law in case of financial irregularities.

These rules will apply to the NGOs, Limited Liability Partnership firms (LLPs)—which can be a law or real estate firm—or any such group partly or wholly financed by the central government. However, big corporates will be out of the ambit of Lokpal. Anti-corruption activists have expressed concern over the government's move to allegedly ignore private sector bribery by exempting such companies from the Lokpal's jurisdiction.

NGOs To Be Treated As 'Public Servants', Have To Declare Assets:

1. Rule applies to NGOs receiving over Rs. 1 crore from government
2. The rule also applies to NGOs receiving over Rs. 10 lakh from abroad
3. This is the first time assets of non-profits will be looked into

NGOs or non-profit organisations, that receive more than one crore rupees in government funds or more than 10 lakhs as donation from abroad and their office-bearers will now be considered public servants and will have to declare details of their assets and liabilities and those of their spouses and dependent children by July 31 this year, the Centre has said.

This follows its decision to bring such organisations under the jurisdiction of the Lokpal or national ombudsman. The Lokpal law provides that every public servant must make public his assets and liabilities and that of his spouse and dependent children.

It will apply to 'any person who is or has been a director, manager, secretary or any other officer of a society, association of persons or trust

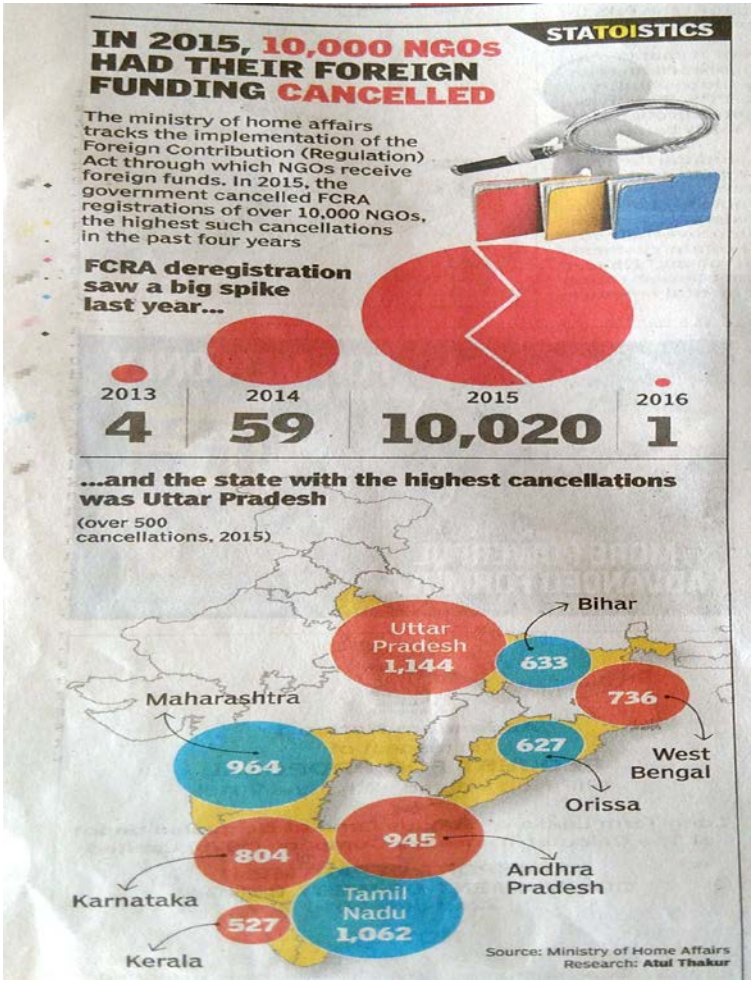
wholly or partly financed by the government and the annual income of which exceeds Rs. 1 crore,' a senior personnel ministry official said.

NGOs say they have grounds to challenge the order. Sources say the NGOs have reached out to the Prime Minister and are hopeful of a resolution.'We respect the core idea of transparency, but this notification misses the fundamental point and ends up penalising individuals doing pro bono service, 'said Amitabh Behar of the National Foundation of India.

He hoped that the deadline, now five days away, would be extended while NGOs reach out to the government and 'try and make them understand our concerns'. Mr Behar said they were also considering challenging the act. He said the Lokpal law was brought by the previous Congress-led UPA government and 'so this notification per se is not an act of the current regime. But there is a larger climate of NGOs' space in the country shrinking.'

Last year, amid a crackdown on foreign charities, the Home Ministry put the $12.5 billion Ford Foundation on watch list. In 2015, the registrations of more than 10,000 NGOs were cancelled. Currently, 18 foreign funding agencies and donors are on the watch list.

In June, the Centre said activist Teesta Setalvad's NGO, the Sabrang Trust, which works with Gujarat riot victims, cannot accept foreign funding anymore. The home ministry had suspended its license last year, asking it to explain its foreign funding.



(Source: The Times of India, 26th July, 2016, p. 6)

RECONFIGURING MANITHANEYAM

Injustice, Inequality and Violation of Personhood of Manual Scavengers

Abstract

Manual scavengers as part of the divisions of labourers created by the system of caste are faced with one of the most horrendous challenges that confront their human dignity and personhood. Their forcible occupation has been legitimized and reinforced by the heinous system of caste that continues to dominate the Indian social structure. Abused and deprived of their human dignity, their dreams and hopes have not been translated into reality for centuries. Hence, this paper examines and analyses the practical challenges that the manual scavengers face from a perspective called Manithaneyam. In Tamil language it means essentialising humanity as its core working principle by pitching humaneness at the centre consequently leading to common humanity. Manithaneyam as such implies cultivating the right conditions for personal and communitarian ethic of co-existence respecting each other with equality and quality of life within the parameters of equitable and egalitarian rubrics of institutional frameworks.

Key Words: Manual Scavengers, Manithaneyam, Injustice, Personhood, Caste System, equality, Human Dignity, Dalits and Human Rights.

Rationalization of the Theme

As an Indian hailing from a downtrodden social category, the social milieu to which I belong taught me innumerable lessons. My existence, thought processes and consciousness have also been shaped by the social milieu that the Dalits[245] as a community experience. I learned from them the abiding value of simple human decency and civility. I have rebelled against the oppressive and exploitative ideologies, doctrines, philosophies, theologies and values that de-humanize and segregate the people as 'we, the people and you, the other'; 'we, the touchable, and you the Untouchable'; 'we, the main-line, and you the by-lane'. I am a firm believer of the enlightenment ideas of freedom, justice, democracy, human rights, equality, equity and inclusivity as those universal normative principles that everyone practices and follows, but the reality portrays just the opposite. There have been visible representations of many in the academia, church and society who justify the system of caste, hierarchy and difference, against which I take a stand.

Nelson Mandela of South Africa and B.R. Ambedkar of India are part of egalitarian thinking. They subscribed to the rationale that each of us is born with equal value and worth, and so entitled to dignity and equality. Their radical and progressive ideas had created ripples in their time and in return provided the ethical grounding, intellectual rigor and moral prowess for further development. Their ground breaking ideas thus gave the momentum to anti-apartheid struggles and Dalit human rights movements. Since then, the ideals of equality, fraternity and liber-

[245] Those who belong to outside the caste system (varnas) are called by different names. The government in its notifications and gazettes use Scheduled Castes (SCs). Those against whom some of the terms and names used found them derogatory insinuating instead started using Dalit(dal) which means in Hebrew and Sanskrit as oppressed, exploited, dissected, torn apart so on and so forth. Dalits are meant as those oppressed communities experiencing discrimination because of their status enumerated in the system of caste.

ty have inspired millions of Dalits in India, South Africa and the world at large to struggle against all forms of inequality and discriminatory practices.

Caste System and Inequalities

The age-old maxim of equality has become the universal norm now it is premised upon the notion: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights'. Although we find this ideal almost in all the international and national covenants and also in the preambles of the Constitution, the concept of equality is under attack and faces opposition whenever people try to translate it in concrete terms. Therefore it makes many to wonder whether 'Equality has become the 'endangered species' of political ideals'. And yet, there are people who continue to strive for equality and human dignity.

The terrains of the Dalits present mixed picture of caste atrocities and discriminatory practices, hopes and aspirations. Though their formats and forms keep changing, the severity, intensity and veracity of oppression continues due to the Hindu Scriptures that reifies, justifies and legitimizes the caste schema. For instance, the loyalty of Hindus to the theodicy of Karma, a theory which provides metaphysical explanations and legitimization of each individual's social situation and the sufferings as said by Max Weber in his seminal work on *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* was complete and unassailable rendering any change of heart and attitude of Hindus towards the so-called 'untouchables'. This pessimistic analysis impelled particularly B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of India's Constitution, a Dalit by birth who decided to totally sever with the ideological, theological and religious mores of Hinduism as the only way to ensure social and spiritual emancipation of the so-called 'untouchables'.

B.R. Ambedkar makes a succinct analysis of the philosophy of Hinduism from the point of view of justice discloses clearly the ways with which 'Hinduism is inimical to equality, antagonistic to liberty and opposed to a fraternity' (Moon2014, 66). He explores further by digging deeply into these concepts and comes out candidly that,

Fraternity and liberty are really derivative notions. The basic fundamental conceptions are equality and respect for human personality. Fraternity and liberty take their roots in these two fundamental conceptions. Digging further down it may be said that equality is the original notion and respect for human personality is a reflexion of it. So that where equality is denied, In other words it was enough for me to have shown that there was no equality in Hinduism. But as Hinduism has not been examined so far in the manner I have done. I did not think it sufficient to leave it to implication that Hinduism was denial of Fraternity and Liberty as well (Moon 2014, 66).

Hinduism is the Root of Discrimination

Having examined the basic philosophy and tenets of Hinduism, B.R. Ambedkar categorically opines that, 'For in Hinduism inequality is a religious doctrine adopted and conscientiously preached as a sacred dogma. It is an official creed and nobody is ashamed to profess it openly. Inequality for the Hindus is a divinely prescribed way of life as a religious doctrine and as a prescribed way of life; it has become incarnate in Hindu Society and is shaped and moulded by it in its thoughts and in its doings. Indeed inequality is the Soul of Hinduism. And he thought could happen only by a change of faith' (Moon 2014, 66). B. R. Ambedkar probed and dissected Hinduism so deeply and thus exhumed the inherent contradictions and riddles entrenched in Hinduism.

His vision of religion was that it should accord primacy to morality, and not God. For him, religion must be in accordance with science,

which is a synonym for reason. Religions which surrender reason to transcendental gods and dogmas are an anathema. It must recognize the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality, and fraternity; religion must not sanctify and ennoble poverty. Ambedkar valued human beings and morality as the means of all things.

> 'If these conclusions are sound, how can a philosophy which dissects society in fragments, which dissociates work from interest, which disconnects intelligence from labour, which expropriates the rights of man to interests vital to life and which prevented society from mobilizing resources for common action in the hour of danger, be said to satisfy the tests of Social Utility …
>
> B.R. Ambedkar systematically peeled Hinduism layer by layer and unpacked the inherent contradictions and thus exposed the riddles. So, 'The philosophy of Hinduism therefore neither satisfied the test of social utility nor does it satisfies the test of social utility nor does it satisfy the test of individual justice.' (Moon 2014, p. 71)

Hence, Hinduism for Ambedkar could never be considered as the religious heritage of the Dalits, because of its peculiar scheme that stratifies people because of the fact that … Manu preached the sanctity of the Varna … is the parent of caste … In the scheme of Manu the Brahmin is placed at the first in rank. Below him the Kshatriya … the Vaishya … the Shudra and … is the Ati-Shudra (the Untouchables). This system of rank and gradation is, simply another way of enunciating the principle of in-equality so that it may be truly said that Hinduism does not recognize equality … Manu has introduced and made inequality the vital force of life (Moon 1989, p. 25).

Hinduism is built on the solid foundation of caste. This being the foundational principles of Hinduism, the only option left for Ambedkar was to rip open the fallacies, riddles, and irrationality of Hinduism by intensifying and deepening the in-built contradictions by pointing out,

… In Hinduism you will find both social inequality and religious inequality imbedded in its philosophy. To prevent man from purifying himself from sin!! To prevent man from getting near to God!! To any rational person such rules must appear to be abominal and an indication of a perverse mind. It is a glaring instance of how Hinduism is a denial not only of equality but how it is denial of the sacred character of human personality (Moon 1989, p. 36).

Caste System and Social Stratification

Caste is a vicious form of social stratification. It revolves around creating differentiation between human beings by segmenting those who are bound to control the materiality of production and those who by virtue of being born as 'untouchables' are required to contribute labour for menial jobs. Those who are at a higher rung of caste are regarded as inherently pure, intelligent, and worthy of respect as the rungs descend are inherently impure, stupid, dirty, dumb and worthless. Therefore, 'The spirit of caste unites these three tendencies, repulsion, hierarchy, and hereditary specialization (Bougle 1958, p. 64).' As pointed out in caste there is no division of labour, but divisions of labourers. Certainly all these tendencies form the basis of caste system incarnating as hierarchy. Therefore,

To begin with the notion of hierarchy implicated in the caste system tends to relativize inequality. While it is obvious that you cannot have hierarchy without inequality; social anthropological modes of caste stress the systemic nature of this inequality: almost everyone in the system is unequal with respect to almost everyone else, being above

some groups and below others. Because everybody is unequal they are also in a certain sense equalized by this fact. For instance, in the most sophisticated theoretical model of the caste system we have, that of Louis Dumont, the key feature is the subordination of the (Kshatriya) king to the (Brahmin) priest. This means that even the highest secular power (the king) requires religious sanction from the priest; and even the caste with the highest ritual rank (Brahmin) is subject to the secular power of a caste of lower rank. Thus, the anthropological understanding of caste as hierarchy blunts the sharp edge that inequality often acquires in other contexts (Deshpande 2003, 102-103).

The ideal of caste cannot be construed as mere ideal because the ideal those dominant castes speak will have to be tested by its results. B.R. Ambedkar offers the following conclusion: '1) Caste divides Labourers, 2) Caste disassociates work from interest, 3) Caste disconnects intelligence from manual labour, 4) Caste devitalises by denying to him the right to cultivate vital interest and (5) Caste prevents mobilization. Caste System is not merely division of labour. It is also a division of labourers (Moon 1989, 67),' B.R. Ambedkar by critically analyzing Hinduism he penetrates into the fallacies of Hindu Society and brings to the fore layer by layer the latent aspects of it. Intensifying his logical and scientific analysis, B.R. Ambedkar elaborates,

Civilized society undoubtedly needs division of labour. But in no civilized society is division of labour accompanied by this unnatural division of labourers into water-tight compartments. Caste system is not merely a division of labourers—which is quite different from division of labour—it is an hierarchy in which the divisions of labourers are grded one above the other. In no other country is the division of labour accompanied by this gradation of labourers … This division of labour is not spontaneous, it is not based on natural aptitudes. Social and individual efficiency requires us to develop the capacity of an individual to the

point of competency to choose and to makes his own career. This principle is violated in the Caste System …' (Moon 1989, 67-68).

Terrains of the Manualscvangers

Vidisha, the thriving trade centre of ancient India, is the well-known tourist attraction maintains the banned practice of manual scavenging. It is still a forced occupation for several Dalit families. Over 200 families in this district continue to bear the brunt of caste discrimination through the practice of manual scavenging. For instance, 'Every morning, I go to eight to ten households, collect the garbage in a straw basket and dump it a mile away from the village. When it rains, the water oozes through the basket over to my hair,' says Guddi Bai (38) of Nateran tehsil'(The Hindu, 16.12.2010). The waste she is talking about is human excreta, euphemistically called 'night soil'. Guddi belongs to the Valmiki community, relegated by the caste system to practice manual scavenging as their traditional occupation.

Vidisha District Collector Yogendra Sharma accepts that the practice still continues. He says that 'All these families have alternative livelihood options; most of them fall under the category of Below Poverty Line (BPL). The only reason, I understand, they are still doing it for generations, because it is easy money for them compared to jobs that require hard work like agriculture,' says Mr. Sharma, the Collector. What else can we expect from Sharma? The job she is doing since her marriage she gets around 20 to 50 kilos of grain annually, a few old clothes on occasion. When asked, why doesn't she quit then? 'If we quit, the upper caste women ridicule us by saying 'Tum to panditaain ho gayi ho' (you seem to act like a Brahmin woman) (The Hindu 16.12. 2010). It is dehumanizing, but the patron-client system has given its legitimacy and sanction. It has firmly entrenched into the psyche of those who

benefit and make the Dalits to perform this degrading job in the name of descent and occupation.

However, manual scavenging exists in many States despite an Act of Parliament banning it. 'Shameful,' 'degrading,' 'disgusting,' 'obnoxious,' 'abhorrent'/ a 'blot' are some of the words used to describe 'manual scavenging'. It just means people lifting human excreta with help of the scraper with their bare hands and carrying the load on their heads, hips or shoulders. Over the years, many Commissions have been set-up; laws have been enacted; millions of rupees spent to eradicate manual scavenging, but even after six decades of Independent India, the nation continues to dehumanize, degrade and shame the Dalits, in particular the Valmikis (Dalits). Governments in several States have staunchly denied in Courts the existence of manual scavenging, but the ground reality shows the naked practice of it.

Experiences of Dalit women who are involved in manual scavenging correspond to the lived experience of each other's inter-subjective world. The experience and understanding are to be mediated for which language plays an important and vital role. Dalits do express their feelings, sufferings, pain, pathos and hope in varied ways. Thus, the language of the Dalits, their idioms, and narratives are to be brought to the centre for any discourse on Dalits. Making the Dalit women to carry the shit of others; watching these women who undergo the traumatizing process as they carry human excreta in bamboo baskets which gradually slip into their mouth and yet continuing the practice for centuries tantamount to the pathological sick mind-set.

These experiences are not isolated, but cumulative. These are the real life experiences that the scavenging communities face in their day-to-day existence. Are there any methods that would measure, qualify and understand what is happening to them in their psyche?

However, articulating the experience in a proper context still requires language and theory. After all, a dalit cannot tell (if we accept Guru's argument) how a non-dalit experiences the sight of a dalit woman carrying human excreta. His response cannot be anticipated and taken as a priori in the sense that he/she would not bother. Even if it seems natural, there is reification involved in which the ideology of caste has been so powerfully internalized that something inhuman is perceived as natural (Judge 2010, p. 6).

The so-called 'upper castes' perceive these as natural. It is also interpreted that the physical and mental labours as two functions juxtaposed with each other in which Brahmins are supposed to do the mental work and Dalits the physical labour. 'What lies beneath this purity-pollution is the hierarchical separation of the manual labour from that of the non-manual Judge 2010, 6).' Within this scheme, jobs are clearly delineated based on caste. The so-called 'upper castes' would look at Dalits who carry human excreta as something normal and natural because they are indoctrinated with the ideology of caste that justifies the means.

Squalid Conditions beyond Human Habitation

For Dalits, their locales play the most crucial role. Context does emphasize not just one part of the reality, but all. Context presents concretely all the dimensions. Hence, context not only gives rise to holism of the milieu, but also pre-empts the arguments put forth against it. Context portrays all the features sufficiently for the analysis, interpretation and theorizing. Face-to-face encounters and periodic visitations with the manual scavenging communities unfolded the inherent contradictions and fallacies of Hinduism which happened to be their religion and their belief systems is entrenched.

In a horrifying incidence that killed three unprotected manual scavengers namely, Kutti Prasad, Nagendra and Ravi, due to suffocation as

they were working in a septic tank in Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) in Karnataka brought to light our society's heinousness. A house owner who hired these three who belong to the scavenging community to clean the septic tank and when they failed to come to the surface, the house owner reported to the fire brigade who rushed to the spot, by then they were dead and their bodies were removed from the septic tank. Kutti Prasad has two sons (Ajit and Nitish) studying 6th and 4th standards, Nagendra was married two years ago and has a month old child, while Ravi got married just three months ago.

Karnataka's former Urban Development Minister S. Suresh Kumar in his routine visit had visited KGF on the 21st of June, 2011 and had promised to rehabilitate those who were involved in manual scavenging. When I visited after that i.e., in November and December, 2011, nothing had changed and the inhuman practice continues. The terrain is just 100 kms from Bangalore. However, the district administration in the beginning of the year 2011 gave alternative employment to nearly 140 manual scavengers as daily wage labourers in the municipality for three months, but stopped them from work abruptly saying that the job was temporary in nature and due to lack of funds they should be terminated from work. The Commissioner of the Municipality asked them to take loans from the Ambedkar Corporation, but the manual scavengers demanded work.

For the sake of subsistence whoever calls them to clean the cesspool or sewerage or septic tank they attend to them. One day, a group of three men received a call from a private house owner to remove night soil. Accordingly, they went to the spot and was about to start their work. As one of them by name Prasad was standing at the edge of the septic tank slipped and fell into the tank, and the other two jumped into the cesspool to rescue him. Along with him, they also died of suffocation. This incident had happened during the last week of October, 2011. Almost all the dailies had flashed this horrifying news. In an exclusive interview with

one of the leading dailies 'The Times of India' as soon as this incident took place, on the 25th October, 2011, Kutti Prasaid had explained the circumstances which were forcing his community members into this inhuman practice. 'We don't have any other alternative. Manual scavenging is the only work we know and no one gives us better jobs.'

He further said that 'In Kennedy Telugu 6th Main along, there are 109 families and at least one member of each family works as a manual scavenger. Many people are dead, a few are handicapped, yet the others continue their work.' As usual the bureaucracy and casteist mind-set go all out by giving all sorts of excuses and defenses. In the same interview to TOI, Robertsonpet City Municipality Commissioner V. Balachandra said 'though the civic body had taken steps to create awareness among safai karmacharis against engaging in manual cleaning of tank, they had violated the directions of the civic body.' He went on adding that 'despite awareness programmes, safai karmacharis engage in such jobs due to pressure from middlemen who want to make money through such work.' The fact of the matter is the practice of the divisions of labourers rooted in the system of caste that the casteist psyche does not want to accept, but keep offering flimsy excuses.

In Kolar District alone some decades ago about 50,000 Adi-Andhras migrated and have three settlements. Within the activity of manual scavenging, there are clearly demarcated areas with which each one has a specialized activity such as headers, lifters, scrapers, loaders, and disposers. This community is both with Hindu as well as Christian. Their problems have further precipitated due to the closure of mines. So, many commute to Bangalore in search of job. Those who got converted to Christianity do not enjoy the reservation privileges. Those who belong to Christianity are widely spread out to the Church of South India (CSI), Baptists and non-denominational viz. Indian Pentecostal Assembly, Assembly of God and other para-churches. Their economic and educational profiles remain way behind compared to other communities.

The next striking narrative comes from Bangalore, the Silicon Valley of India, the Premier Outsourcing Hub; the Cosmopolitan City with other dubious distinctions is plagued with manual scavenging. Within the proximity of the Silicon Valley, a place called as Electronic City, known also as Silicon hub sewerage disposal is practiced. Nearby to the Silicon hub, a small colony called as Rammurthy Nagar, a group belonging to the manual scavenging community is involved in manually removing human excreta from publicly maintained cesspools. Waste is transported on busy roads and is dumped at a convenient spot, usually in one of city's lakes. Those who are involved over 600 of them engaged in this occupation use simple methods. Their only tools are a few drums, buckets, and pickup vans to transport the filth. Residents who reside in and around the city of Bangalore, have to make phone calls to have their cesspits cleaned or blocks cleared.

When asked for the details, Vincent, a 28 year old who has been cleaning cesspits for over five years said that many in Bangalore call them over cell phones whenever their sewage tanks or pits gets filled up they go in batches to attend the work. They work in batches of three. One gets into the pit and then hands over the filled bucket to another standing on the edge of the pit. He in turn hands over to a person on the pickup van who empties it in one of the drums of the van. For this, they charge between Rs. 700-Rs. 900 to clean a single pit. Having come to know of this heinous practice when the Times of India reporter by name T.S. Srinivas succinctly described his conversation and observation in a column entitled '*Scavenging is Big Business'* (September 3, 2010, pp. 1&4).

On several occasions particularly in Nellore and Ongole Districts of Andhra Pradesh, I observed that those women when they carry the water oozes through the baskets and passes through their hair and then touches their lips and sometimes enters into their mouth. As the men enter into

the septic tanks the gas and smell that they inhale, and when they clean the sewerages and septic tanks the sight they see, materials on which they stand and hold in their hands raise a number of questions. If we recapture those terrains and bring them before our eyes it chills and in the process numbs our body, it creates nausea, it raises our hair, and it shames us. The topography of these communities who are involved in manual scavenging evokes yearnings for dignity and equality. In Hinduism they did not get, and so, they embraced other religions such as Christianity or Buddhism or Islam. But, did Christianity live up to their expectations.

Inequality and Equality Examined

The social structure of the Indian society revolves around caste within which each individual is measured by the social status (caste) premised on binaries (purity and pollution) to which she/he belongs. If we go by that standards caste then automatically becomes the measuring rod to value and qualify individuals, groups and communities. In this scheme how could anyone expect equality? Rather, it promotes, difference, hierarchy and stratification leading to inequality and people as unequal. Therefore, according to B. R. Ambedkar, 'Inequality is the soul of Hinduism. The morality of Hinduism is only social. It is unmoral and inhuman to say the least … This is what Hinduism has become. Those who doubt this or deny this proposition should examine the social composition of the Hindu Society and ponder over the condition of some of the elements in it' (Moon 2014, 87). However, for centuries political philosophers have been grappling with the term 'equality' that elevates those who fall at the lowest ebbs or outside the scheme of caste hierarchy, differentiated and marginalized. 'Equality' as an ethical principle and a political concept should be made to work because it is rich in meaning and essence because,

At the heart … the notion of equality lays 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 than differences of colour, gender, class, creed, wealth, intelligence, nationality and so forth. This conviction should colour our attitudes and relationships and should shape social structures, which are networks of relationship and distribution. We recognize other people's equal worth by our attitude towards them, out 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. To affirm human equality is both to say something important about what human beings are, and also how relationships and social institutions should be arranged, and how we should behave to one another (Forester 2001, 30).

So, equality is an all-embracing and holistic concept because it adds an important value that cuts across other considerations and thus pervades into political, social, economic and cultural domains. Basically equality is a far superior category than others because it revolves around two key questions: What is the ground for affirming that equality is good, desirable and proper? What is the basis of equality? For both these questions the underlying principle that governs all of us is that all human beings per se are equal on grounds of our common humanity. Equality does not function on the basis of social, economic, cultural and political distinctions and considerations as part of its valuation. So, what is the starting point and from where do we start with?

How do we create equality in a stratified and hierarchical society? Or at any rate reduce the injuries of inequality? 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 … There is constant structuring and re-structuring of social inequality. Inequality is a 'relational' rather an 'absolute' phenomenon … Also criteria such as income, occupation, education and competition alone cannot explain the entire gamut of social inequality (Sharma 1995, 16).

The system of caste is merely an ideational phenomenon but effectively explains, reifies and justifies the notions of hierarchy and difference and in the process legitimizes inequality. By doing so it insulates normative or value aspect of hierarchical relations of those born within the system of caste. Inequality that operates in the social structure of the Indian society is structural and thus permeates the existential conditions and differential distribution of and access to resources. Inequality that is present in India is premised on norms that justify inequality and the forms, manifestations and degree of inequality keep evolving, changing and influence social relations. Nevertheless, amidst a maze of definitions we need to articulate clearly how inequality affects different layers of society. The following will help us to derive clarity on this aspect:

Inequality reduces economic efficiency and traps societies in bad development paths through inequality-perpetuating institutions in three ways:

- *Inequality* reduces the participation of vulnerable and disenfranchised people in the political processes, both directly and indirectly. This in turn reduces the livelihood that poor people have access to education, health care, and other services that would contribute to growth..
- *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.(World Development Report 2003:Sustainable Development In A Dynamic World-Transforming Institutions, Growth And Quality of Life 89).

Manithaneyam A Categorical Imperative

In an inhuman and stratified Indian society, Manithaneyam is a viable and feasible component, a process and a praxis that restores those who are dehumanized as non-entities or non-persons relegated to menial occupations such as manual savaging. Manithaneyam has to do with restoring the sense of humanness and instils awareness within those who treats others as lesser humans. The caste-minded oppressors continue to perpetuate the system of caste and in the process stripped people of their worth as humans and tear away their personhood and in such appalling landscape Manithaneyam enables them to become humans and persons from such dehumanizing forces.

Everyone is born free and thus enjoined with basic human rights. The Constitution of India guarantees to its citizens basic rights that insulates personhood, dignity and equality. Despite these, dehumanization in varied forms and degrees exist nakedly all over the world within which caste manifests as the highest form of apartheid function in effective ways in India. In such a de-humanized Indian milieu manithaneyam could certainly become a tool and a proposition. There are some engaged in establishing a just, humane, egalitarian and inclusive embedded with equality, dignity and fairness invoke manithaneyam since it bound by these intrinsically linked as constitutive elements of manithaneyam. So, the concept of manithaneyam is central and pivotal to the dignity and self-esteem of manual scavengers.

In the Tamil literature I find Thiruvalluvar who wrote Thirukural(form of couplets) that convey noble thoughts. Some of the Thirukurals exposits the essence and significance of manithaneyam Thirukural is considered to be a book of ethics for the ordinary folks, the administrators, kings and the ascetics. It is indeed offers an universal perspective. It also affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of fulfillment that leads to the greatest good of humanity. Thiruvalluvar was a rationalist informed by science and motivated by compassion. The couplets talks about all facets of life including the goals of life that embarks from human needs Thiruvalluvar categorically asserts that humanity must take the responsibility of whatever happens in the society.

However, the section on virtue is entirely dedicated towards moral values and ethical behaviour. Thiruvalluvar believed in the equality of all human beings, and denounced any system that dehumanizes. He declares 'All human beings are equal by birth but distinctions arise only because of different qualities of their actions' (Kural 972). He emphasizes the importance of love and compassion in several kurals. He says 'Love is the quintessence of life, without it, a man (sic) is nothing but a frame of bones covered with skin' (Kural 80). He substantiates that 'The soul is born with the body because of its inborn bonding with love' (Kural 73).

He categorically states that everyone should have empathy for his/her fellow human beings. He wonders if one cannot treat others' suffering as his/her own, what benefit one gained from intelligence (Kural 315). He invokes reason by comprehending 'Why does a man (sic) inflict upon other human beings those things he found harmful to himself' (Kural 318). Thiruvalluvar's idea of equality, empathy, avoiding evil thoughts, harsh words and harful deeds towards others are based on rules of socially acceptable good conduct and ethical behaviour of any rational human being.

In Tamil it goes this ways: 'Anbum, aranum uddaithyin illvalkai, panbum payanum adu'. If love and virtue in the household reign then the life manifests perfect grace nd blessing. In another thirukural 'Anbin vazlya thuir neli akthilaku anbuthol pootraudambu' which means bodies of loveless man are like bony frameclad with skin. Then is the body seat of life only then love resides within. That body alone which is inspired with love contains a living soul. 'If void of it', 'the body' is just the bone.

Manithaneyam encompasses the rich ethical values that ought to be the governing principles of any individual, community or even society. Manithaneyam touches the core of humanity that respects human esteem, human dignity and human rights. In the case of manual scavengers their self-esteem is torn apart and self-dignity is thrashed by making them to remove the excreta. The very thought and act of those who involve a sizable population belonging to a Dalit community with that type of job tantamount to gross injustice. The caste-stratified Indian society in the name of 'karma' and 'caste duty' offers all kinds of justification. Nonetheless, there are no ethical basis and moral justification for treating a community as manual scavengers for centuries. It should be condemned and annihilated.

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UK INQUIRY ON IRAQ WAR

The entire world knew about the war waged against Iraq by the West, led by the United States of America, and that its allies were flawed and unjustified. And, yet, the West, particularly the United Kingdom, the closest ally that acted as the mouth piece of the United States of America, led by the former Prime Minister Tony Blair, lied to the people of Britain and the world at large that it was a just war. Nonetheless, truth shall not be hidden for long. One day or the other, truth would have to come out and undoubtedly truth shall triumph. In tune to this, the much-awaited Chilcot report confirms what was known all along – Iraq war was unjustified and unjust. Based on flawed intelligence and other consideration blamed the then UK PM Tony Blair for rushing the troops without exhausting peaceful options and thus opines Saddam posed no imminent threat.

The report was a long wait of many years for many. Hundreds and thousands of people died both from the countries that waged war against Iraq and innocent Iraqis including its leader Saddam Hussein and some in his cabinet. Known for his oratory, diplomacy and political acumen, former Prime Minister Tony Blair took his country into a badly planned, miserably executed and legally questionable war in Iraq in 2003, according to the findings of a long-waited and delayed inquiry. The Chilcot report candidly came out without mincing words said Britain joined the US-led invasion before all other options had been exhausted and on the basis of false intelligence that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction.

Even during 2003, the popular perception was the same. The people of Britain and others criticized Blair for pledging Britain's support to the then US President George W. Bush, the year before the invasion, writing: 'I will be with you, whatever'. These two joined by the others fooled the world including the British citizens went for war. The report reiterated that Blair failed to ensure 'there was a flexible, realistic and fully resourced plan' and found that preparations for occupation after the initial invasion were 'woefully inadequate'. Short-sightedness, arrogance and quest to conquer ignited these two leaders to go all out by bluffing and hoodwinking the rest of the world that cost—more than 150,000 Iraqis lives by the time most British troops withdrew in 2009, while 179 British soldiers also lost their lives.

Because of the foolishness of these two leaders, Iraq is at the verge of disintegration. The Islamic fundamentalist forces have filled in the vacuum because of the absence of a strong leadership. There was no remorse on the part of the former president Bush who even now continues to believe the world is better off without Saddam. And there was no strong ally than the UK under Tony Blair. Even Tony Blair joined Bush and said 'I believe we made the right decision and the world is better and safer. With the same information, I would take the same decision again'. Nevertheless, Chilcot report ripped open the concealed facts which took seven years in the making on the Iraq war. It contained 2.6 million words which are three times as long as the complete works of Shakespeare. The report went deep into the reasons for war and dug the fallacies that the world did not know.

The report contains 31 private letters sent by Blair to Bush. The letters show how the duo planned the invasion months before the war began without the knowledge of the British PM's cabinet colleagues. Excerpts from these closely guarded letters now open to the public after years of long wait: 'It would be excellent to get rid of Saddam … An extremely clever plan would be required' (3rd Dec, 2001); 'I will be with

you, whatever. But this is the moment to access bluntly the difficulties … The military part of this is hazardous but I will concentrate mainly on the political context for success' (8th Jul, 2002); '… though Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD is the immediate justification for action, ridding Iraq of Saddam is the real prize' (26the March, 2003); 'The task is absolutely awesome and I'm not at all sure we're geared for it. This is worse than re-building a country from scratch … and if it fails apart, everything falls apart in the region' (June 2nd, 2003) '… by this time next year, it better be going right, not wrong. For us and the world' after no Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) were found' (5th October, 2003); 'It was a brilliant speech', Bush gave a talk that made the case for action in Iraq' (12th September, 2002); 'I believe we made the right decision and the world is better and safer. With the same information, I would take the same decision again' said Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister during the war.

The letters and its contents show that so much of lies couched with sophisticated untrue narratives went during the pre-war period between these two leaders. However, the enquiry found that 'military action in Iraq might have been necessary at some point. But in March 2003 there was no imminent threat from Saddam Hussein.' Britain's decision to go to war in Iraq and the experience it garnered during and after the war made Britain not to venture into military intervention in countries like Syria and Libya. Unveiling the 2.6 million-word report, which took seven years to complete, inquiry chairman said it was 'an account of an intervention which went badly wrong, with consequences of this day.' 'We have concluded that the UK chose to join the invasion of Iraq before the peaceful options for disarmament had been exhausted. Military action at that time was not a last resort,' he said.

The report clearly confirms suspicion in the minds of many billions around the world that the West was lying and hoodwinking the world at

large including its own citizens as early as July, 2002. The Inquiry was called under pressure from relatives concerned about the justification for the war as well as poor military equipment, over which the Ministry of Defence was strongly criticized. The war, at one point saw 46,000 British troops deployed mostly in southern Iraq, still looms large over British politics. The report falls short of calling Tony Blair a liar, but clearly states that he misled the country and kept his colleagues in the dark. Thoroughly shaken Tony Blair finally apologizes for the war, takes full responsibility without exception and without excuses. On the contrary, former US President George W Bush celebrated his 70th birthday on the 6th of July, 2016 bicycling with wounded veterans at his Texas ranch.

Protesters gathered inside the building where John Chilcot delivered his damning Iraq War Inquiry report. Father of a dead serviceman said 'My son died in vain'. Sarah O'Connor, whose brother Bob was killed in Iraq in 2005, told a press conference following the publication of the report demanded that Blair explain his actions directly to relatives of the 179 British troops killed in the invasion of subsequent occupation. 'Why is he not here looking at us? If he is so sure of his decision, why is he not here looking at our eyes and seeing our faces?' She further said that 'There is one terrorist in this world that the world needs to be aware of and his name is Tony Blair, the world's worst terrorist.' The families were determined to see Blair and those government officials responsible for. 'If state officials determined to have acted unlawfully or in excess of their powers, then the families will decide on whether to take any necessary and appropriate action,' said Matthew Jury, who is representing some of the relative.

A cross party group of MPs is also looking into the possibility, including taking the case to the International Criminal Court. Blair, however, in a passionate defence of the 2003 war said, 'I believe we made the right decision and the world is better and safer.' In a two-hour press conference, his voice cracking with emotion, Blair resolutely stuck to

his defence and said he had 'more sorrow, regret and apology than you may ever know or can believe' for some mistakes in the planning of the war and subsequent occupation. 'I accept that especially in hindsight, we should have approached the situation differently,' said the former Labour leader, who was prime minister from 1997 to 2007. He continued by saying that 'There were no lies, parliament and cabinet were not misled, there was no secret commitment to war. The intelligence was not falsified and the decision was made in good faith.'

The West particularly the Bush and Blair are solely responsible to the present fiasco in Iraq. They cannot absolve from the mess they created in Iraq. The report categorically indicted Blair and how he fooled the people of Britain. Another revelation comes from the US President Barack Obama. He says the biggest mistake of his presidency was the lack of planning for the aftermath of the fall of late Libyan leader Moamer Gaddafi, with the country spiraling into chaos and grappling with violent extremists, Reflecting on his legacy in a *Fox News* interview aired on the 3rd of July, 2016, Obama said his 'worst mistake' was 'probably failing to plan for the day after what I think was the right thing to do in intervening in Libya.' In the month of June 2016, Obama made a searing critique of British Prime Minister David Cameron and former French leader Nicolas Sarkozy for their roles in the bombing campaign they led in Libya. Cameron became 'distracted' and Sarkozy wanted to promote his country during the 2011 NATO-led military intervention, Obama said in an interview with *The Atlantic* magazine.

The political establishments commit all sorts of blunders and have never been made accountable. The West, particularly Western Europe which includes NATO and the United States are responsible for the crises that the Arab and Islamic countries in particular facing today. The leaders both in US, UK and other dominant powers in the Western Europe wanted to liquidate Sadam and Gaddifi who in their own ways

defied the western imperialism. By flouting all the requisites of waging just wars they unilaterally decided projecting all sorts of things against them. Chilcot report unfolded the lies these leaders spoke and the media created hype. Both of them knew the landscape well. The Western hegemony liquidated Sadam and Gaddafi. In the process, the Western forces allowed the ultra-rightist and religious fundamentalists such as ISIS occupied these countries for their operation.



Source: The Hindu, July 5, 2016, p. 10.

Now they are all regretting including Obama because they do not know how to handle the crises. Their sole motive was to remove them and by their removal they thought the world would be safer and better. Because of their blunders and lack of foresightedness the whole world is gripped with fear and insecurity. The religious fundamentalism and fanaticism are growing at alarming speed.

The world is treading in dangerous path. We live in a world of uncertainties. Because of the blunders of a few particularly by the elected representatives who want to satiate their own egos and super-egos, the innocent people become prey to the fanatic suicide bombers. The world in which we live is highly polarized. The war against Iraq and Libya amply proves it is immaterial whether Conservative or Labour, Republican or Democrat. Ideology hardly matters in a situation where personal

ego and ambition overtakes. In a fluid scenario it is obvious that the fundamentalist forces will take over the political establishments. The reasons that Bush and Blair gave were bizarre and there were not merits and substance. When it comes to others countries the West talks about the principles of just war. But in their own cases they flouted all the principles by telling lies and exaggerated the cases and went all out to wars. Wars on Iraq and Libya were unjust and they failed to establish any justifications to them.

Because of their mistakes and poor foresight the innocent people around the world face difficult situation. It has given rise to religious fanaticism and prompted many ultra-fundamentalist forces to sprout. Young minds are attracted to religious radicalization and join the groups and in the forefront waging wars in different parts of the world. Many laud the UK's Inquiry Report of Chilicot. It clearly nailed Tony Blair and those in power along with him. Politicians responsible for the death of innocent lives be it small or big in numbers should be made liable for their actions. The report is a clear indication that power given by the people to be exercised prudently with hind thought and forethought. Lives of the people are precious. Let now the politicians and those in power think that their lives alone is previous. Power will have to be moderated with prudence and responsibility.

WHO IS AT FAULT: JUDICIARY OR LEGISLATURE?

> 'It is also often heard that some good recommendations have been rejected on occasions. The difficulty is in not assigning reasons for rejections. Courts often strike down executive decisions on grounds of 'arbitrariness' but do not want to apply to themselves. Reasons are a link in the chain and give us a clue to whether a particular decision is arbitrary or not. In the absence of reasons, we will be tempted to think the process is not free from arbitrariness.'
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> V.Sudish Pai, Constitutional expert

One of the major Indian dailies 'The New Indian Express' continuously for two days (May 9-10th 2016) covered intriguing write-ups titled 'Judiciary vs. Executive by GS Vasu on its first page that unfolded the simmering tussle between the judiciary and the executive, particularly the problem areas that prevails presently between the main organs of the State. The coverage that appeared in the daily was intriguing. Both the issues candidly dealt with the defined powers they are entrusted with and should not stretch beyond. They further delved into the tussle between the organs of the state. It triggers many questions and therefore will have to be viewed by contextualizing the scuffles we keep witnessing in recent times. The Uttarakhand High Court on the 20st of April, 2016, struck down the decision to impose central rule in the state and restored CM Harish Rawat's government, asking it to face a floor test.

The court said 'even the President can be terribly wrong ', delivered in its judgment with strong critical remarks about central rule being the last resort. Declaring that the 'draconian 356' should not have been imposed, the High Court bench said: 'The said party (BJP) was a direct beneficiary of Article 356, which was not justified as there was no riot or violence in the state. The central government has to work in a completely non-partisan manner and without bias.'[246] . The underlined once again that Article 356 was a 'matter of last resort' and that removing a democratically elected government 'breeds cynicism in the heart of citizens.'[247]

As we are aware of the fact that the emergency powers of Article 356 are to be used when there is a lack of majority in the assembly or constitutional breakdown. On many occasions it has been used and abused over the decades, as the Supreme Court in its landmark judgment regarding Bommai in 1994, laid down clear standards for its invocation. The governor should carry a floor test to determine the legitimacy of a state government, rather than relying on his or her subjective judgment. It clearly shows that a state government's existence could no longer be subjected to the whims and fancies of the central government. And yet the government at the Centre recommended President's rule without conducting the floor test.

The High Court observed that there was no basis for the Centre to intervene on the day before Rawat government was to prove its majority. Instead of following procedure, the governor warned of political volatility and pandemonium on the day of the trust vote, the Prime Minister called an emergency Cabinet meeting, and the President's rule was proclaimed. 'How can it be said that the 35 MLAs would have voted against the government unless and until it is actually done?' the court asked.

[246] For more detail see 'The Times of India', April 22, 2016, p. 1.
[247] *Ibid*.

'The only constitutional way to test majority was to hold the floor test,'[248] it stressed.

The Uttarakhand high court judgment, establishes that constitutional procedure should by all means followed and never be abandoned while dismissing the state government thereby imposing the President's rule. Once again the high court of Uttarkhand stressed that Centre should heed this rebuke and respect institutional propriety. It is a clear case that categorically amplifies the powers vested with the legislature and the executive and the and how sometimes judiciary intervenes to sets right by interpreting and employing the Constitutional provisions.

In another classic incident, Chief Justice of India T.S. Thakur, almost broke down on the 24th of April, 16, as he lamented that the judiciary had been made the scapegoat for the mounting pendency of cases, prompting PM Narendra Modi to offer a closed-door meeting with the judiciary to sort out the problem. 'It is not only in the name of a litigant or people languishing in jails but also in the name of development of the country its progress that I beseech you to rise to the occasion and realize that it not enough to criticize. You cannot shift the entire burden on the judiciary' an emotional CJI said at the conference of chief ministers and chief justices.[249].

He brought to the attention of man at the Conference that the law panel had recommended in 1987 that the judge-population ratio be increased to at least 50 judges per million population. Three decades passed by, the ratio remained an abysmal 15 judges per million people in a country which he added 25 crore in population since then. He added that, 'if in 1987, the Law Commission, had recommended the judge

[248] *Ibid*, p. 13.

[249] 'The Times of India', April, 25, 2016, p.1.

strength to be at 40,000 (at 50 judges per million population), how do you think the judiciary's present strength of 18,000 can dispose of case pendency of three crore.'[250] PM Modi recalled when he was the CM that he had suggested reducing the vacation period of courts and increasing the daily working hours. For this suggestion he was in trouble as some judges questioned the idea. He added that he remained in awe of the judiciary ever since[251].

The chief Justice of India pointed out that the problem had historical roots and also as against the backdrop of the confrontation between the government and judiciary over who should have primacy in the appointment of judges to the SC and the high courts – a dispute which has delayed filling up of vacancies. The CJI also drew Modi's attention towards one of the government's projects on judicial reforms and pointed out the inherent flaws in the scheme. 'Hon. Prime Minister, the commercial court project is one of your prime agenda but what's happening? These commercial courts are being designated out of the existing courts. Will that serve the purpose when the concept was to provide a different environment for commercial disputes? Simply putting old wine in a new bottle will not serve the purpose,'[252] Justice Thakur said.

As said, this problem has been simmering and should come out one day or the other. Recently, the Finance minister Arun Jaitley who is also a renowned legal luminary spoke recently about the encroachment of executive space by the judiciary in the Raja Sabha. Demanding a discussion over the issue in the monsoon session of Parliament, Ram Gopal Yadav, an MP, said MPs are concerned over encroachment on legislature's right by the judiciary. The Constitution, he said, had given Parliament the right to legislate laws and make budget. 'If the judiciary does it what is our relevance,' he asked. 'Parliamentary honour, strength and

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[250] *Ibid*, p. 8.
[251] *Ibid*.
[252] *Ibid*.

supremacy have to be maintained. Constitution has drawn clear lines,'[253] He said..BSP chief Mayawati supported Yadav saying, 'We should act unitedly, especially, on important issues and rise above political affiliations.' We should look within on why judiciary is taking advantage. We should sort out our differences,'[254] she said.

Jaitley once again emphasized on the need for preserving parliamentary supremacy in the making of law and budgets. 'The House (Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha) has the primacy in law making and budget-making. Law making and budget-making cannot be decided by any third party,' Jaitley said in an apparent reference to the Judiciary[255]. 'If the right to law making and budget making goes out of here, it will weaken parliamentary democracy as well as democracy itself,'[256] the Leader of the House, Jaitly warned. He said the 'seriousness' of this issue has to be considered by all segment of the society. 'I believe that the maturity of institutions in the country will one day decide the way forward keeping the logic of Constitution makers in mind,'[257] the minister Jaitley said.

The ongoing tussle between the executive and the judiciary over many things particularly over the appointment of judges to High Courts and the Supreme Court is likely to continue.. 'This follows the apex court collegiums more or less rejecting the recommendations made by the government of India in a revised Memorandum of Procedure (MoP for selection of judges. In other words, the Supreme Court appears reluctant to remove the veil of secrecy that has become integral to the process of appointment of judges to Constitutional courts ever since it vested the

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[253]'RS MPs express concern over overreach of Judiciary' in 'The Times of India', May 14, 2016, p. 13.

[254] *Ibid.*

[255] *Ibid.*

[256] *Ibid.*

[257] *Ibid.*

power in itself back in the 1990s.'[258] A revised MoP was suggested by the apex court after the removal of the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act (NJAC) last year on the grounds that it infringes on the freedom of judiciary of the CJI. The crux of the matter, it appears, is that decisions taken by the SC collegiums in regard to appointments cannot be 'called into questions'.[259]

On and off the judiciary categorically invokes its autonomy and distinct feature and so rejected close to one-third of the recommendations made by high court collegiums have been rejected/remitted by the Supreme Court suggests that the current system governing the appointment of judges is not alright. By striking down the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) last year ; the apex court retained the power to appoint judges without anyone from outside the system being involved in the process. Further, the SC collegium recently has turned down even modifications to make the system transparent, while retaining the primacy of the judiciary.[260]

Under the current system, appointments to a High Court are recommended by the Chief Justice of the court after informally consulting members of the respective collegiums and are routed through the Union government to the apex court. Then the SC collegium takes the final call after which a recommendation is made to the President. In the given system it is still ambiguous that the basis on which someone is selected as well as rejected. It throws open some ambiguities that it reflects sadly on the quality of recommendations and by implications, on those who made the recommendations. But, votaries of the collegiums system can argue that 'rejections' also mean that there is an inherent checks and

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[258] GS Vasu, 'Split wide open as SC spikes ideas to reform judiciary' in 'The Times of India', May 9, 2016, p. 1.

[259] *Ibid*.

[260] GS Vasu, 'SC collegiums rejects a third of HC judge picks' in 'The New Indian Express', May 10, 2016, p.1.

balances mechanism in the current process and, therefore, there is no need to tinker with it.[261] Both the Union government and the SC continues to differ on how to 'reform' the current procedure without doing away with the primacy of the judiciary, serious questions are being raised with regard to the six recommendations.[262]

For clarity and interpretation we need to go back to our Constitution. The Constitution is a body of laws according to which a country is governed. The Constitution lays down the basic structure of the political system under which its people are to be governed. It enumerates and assigns the duties and power to the main organs of the State vis-à-vis the Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary. It also defines their powers, demarcates their responsibilities, and regulates their relationship with each other and with the people. The architect of our Constitution Dr. B. R. Ambedkar might have anticipated the tensions and power struggle the organs of the State enmeshed with. Therefore, he warns that 'Beware of Parliamentary Democracy, it is not the best product as it appears to be.'[263] Dr. Ambedkar gives numerous reasons for this: 'Democracy is like a machine whose movements are slow and there is no swift action.'[264] He continues by saying that 'In a Parliamentary Democracy, the Executive may be held up by the Legislature which may refuse to pass the laws which the Executive wants and if it is not held up by the Legislature, it may be held up by the Judiciary which may declare the laws illegal.'[265] Apart from this, '… it can be said in general terms that the discontent against Parliamentary Democracy is due to the realization that

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[261] *Ibid.*

[262] *Ibid.*

[263] Valerian Rodrigues (ed.) *The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p.61.

[264] *Ibid.*

[265] *Ibid.*

it has failed to assure the masses the right to liberty, prosperity or pursuit of happiness.'[266]

For Dr. Ambedkar, Parliamentary Democracy could not check economic inequalities and in turn in the name of liberty, has continuously added to the economic wrongs of the poor, the downtrodden, and the disinherited class. Social and economic democracy is the axle and pivotal force of a political democracy. The tougher the tissues and fibre, the greater is the strength of the body. Democracy is another name for equality. If liberty fails to realize equality, then it has made democracy a mockery, a name and a farce. The country's strength lies in democracy which is premised on secularism that is unity in diversity but the very secular fabric is undermined. The fundamentalist forces have mixed religion with politics arousing communal passion and frenzy, creating a vertical divide among the people. It reflects that, the lack of accountability in governing institutions and individuals is a great bane. The other major deficiency is the lack of transparency in the decision-making processes.

An impression has gained ground that criminals with recourse to resources and influence can remain out of the reach of legal processes. There is a question mark also about the proper enforcement of our criminal justice system. It is only through commitment to constitutional objectives that we can bring probity back into the system. There is no better alternative to parliamentary democracy with adult franchise and a federal set-up. Parliamentary symbolizes the ethos of our country. It mirrors the country as a whole. It embodies and articulates the urges and aspirations of the people. Over the years, Parliament has come to be identified, both in theory and practice, as the pivot of our political sys-

[266] *Ibid.*

tem. The responsibility for providing direction, momentum, and institutions for social engineering has been with our Parliament.[267]

In recent times our parliamentary democracy is severely critiqued and ridiculed as it is locked with too many tussles. Whenever the Legislature fails, it is either the judiciary or the Executive intervenes or makes necessary amends and vice versa. More than ever, the organs of the State seem to be in serious contestation with each other. In this context, it is interesting to draw parallels what the Finance Minister Arun Jaitley continues to reiterate time and again that the judiciary should draw its own 'Lakshman rekha' implying that judiciary should not take decisions that fall in the domain of the executive. After some time, the Minister remarked in Parliament that 'step by step, brick by brick, the edifice of India's legislature is being destroyed' due to judicial activism, he asserted that 'activism' has to be blended with 'restraint'.[268] He added that 'Judicial review is the legitimate domain of judiciary but then the *Lakshman rekha* hs to be drawn byu all the institutions themselves. Lakshman rekha is very vital.' Jaitley asserted that 'executive decisions are to be taken by the executive and not the judiciary.'[269]

Replying to questions during a media interaction at Indian Women's Press Corps (IWPC) in New Delhi, Jaitley reasons that there are different kinds of recourse and 'layers of accountability' available when the executive take decisions and people have options of seeking changes in the decision taken by the executive besides voting out the government. The courts can also strike down a decision taken by the executive if it is found to be unconstitutional but all these options are not available when

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[267] Somnath Chatterjee, 'Constitution, Parliament and the People,' in 'The Hindu', 8.12.2004, p.10.

[268] 'Judiciary must draw its own Lakshman rekha' in 'The New Indian Express', 17th May, 2016, p. 11.

[269] *Ibid.*

the court ends up taking executive decisions.'[270] Substantiating further, 'Courts cannot substitute the executive and say I will exercise the executive's power. If you do so, the three options will not be available, which are there when the executive takes executive decisions,' he said.'[271] When asked to explain the ways with which the judiciary had been encroaching on legislative and executive authority he explained that 'Just as independence of the judiciary is part of basic structure, the primacy of the legislature in policy making is also part of basic structure. In the name of the independence of judiciary, we cannot compromise the other two basic structures,' he said, asserting that to protect one basic structure is not enough'.[272] The same principle should be applied in letter and spirit when it comes to Legislature or Executive.

He emphasized that the correct course is taken when the two are balanced. Again speaking in Hyderabad, Jaitley said that while he respects the court, 'one should not try to interfere in others' areas'.[273] The reasons and arguments put forth by Arun Jaitley are to be contextualized and viewed objectively. His point of contention is that the judiciary was tending to ignore the constitutional separation of powers between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. When he was in opposition he said that judiciary is straying beyond interpreting laws and virtually making them. Even, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said that he used to have arguments with one of the former CJIs in public forums about the thin line between judicial activism and judicial over reach. Manmohan Singh repeated said that it was a delicate issue and should be handled carefully. The fear is the judicial overreach has been seen to be steadily encroaching upon executive functions.

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[270] *Ibid.*
[271] *Ibid.*
[272] *Ibid.*
[273] *Ibid.*

When Arun Jaitley often emphasizes 'restraint', he means the courts getting carried away by the popular perception of their actions. A wide-ranging issues—from complex constitutional matters and the public sector banks bad loans to the dancing in the bars of Maharashtra and IPL in times of drought tended to end up in the country's courts. The apex court has retained total control over the judicial appointment process with the CJI objecting to any recommendations from the collegium being questioned. All these have evoked serious questions about the physical functioning of one of the three great arms of democracy. The independent judiciary is like a giant wheel on which the country is rolling now, but the question is: Whether it is impeding the other two basic structures or not?

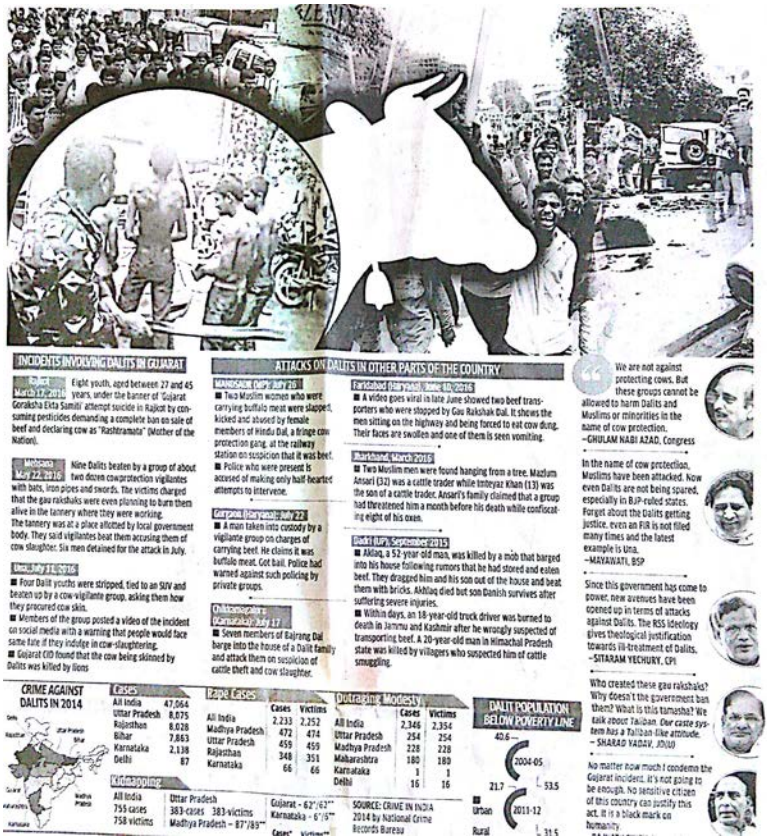
However, from the legislature and the executive there have been mounting criticisms against judicial activism which the judiciary cannot ignore. At the same time, it also should be taken note of that the executive-legislature combine on the one hand and the judiciary on the other, the growing perception that the executive had ceased to be the first frontier of justice has taken the centre stage. This perception is now the dominant perception which cannot be undermined. If people wanted relief they immediately approach the judiciary and get directions issued than just waiting for the government to act which obviously not going to materialize. Now commoners both in the rural and urban areas straightaway approach the judiciary for civic amenities and other basic needs. Gradually, the legislative institutions have become redundant to the people since they hardly deliver the goods that the people want.

As Dr. Ambedkar has rightly pointed out that parliamentary democracy should never be taken for granted assuming that it is well-oiled machine, but needs constant moderation and for this the organs of the State will have to function keeping in mind its constitutional roles and functions, autonomy and responsibility.

DALIT RESISTANCE AND ASSERTION

Surinder S. Jodhka, professor of sociology at JNU, Delhi, de-codes the usual narrative which is being commonly used in our society that: 'An important subtext of the popular narrative of change in Indian politics has been the decline of caste. Caste has always been seen as a 'problem' for the functioning of democratic politics in India. In popular view, its presence in public life has been an indication of India's continued backwardness. Wily political entrepreneurs have kept it alive because of the ignorance and tradition-bound behaviour of the Indian voter.' However, caste configures and re-configures in tune to changes taking places in the Indian society, built on one principle which is the basic fulcrum: 'Once born in a particular caste segment or rung, one should stay on and so there is no exit'—which means 'Once entered there is no exit'. Conspicuously, in the past three decades a new middle-class identity emerged composed of the middle-and bottom rung castes. In that, the dominant castes have been benefiting. Consequently, caste is tightly knit system that 'efficiently' and 'effectively' enforces/ controls based on birth and occupation.

Caste-stratified occupation continues even in the 21st Century as a functional category and dominant narrative. The following episodes graphically illustrate the gravity of our country caste-premised social structure:



(Source: Deccan Herald, July 31, 2016, p. 7)

The above episodes vivifies that caste remains a mediating reality in all facets of existential domains of the Indian society, particularly material and cultural. Over and above, caste exists by and large in the mind and thought processes. It has shaped right from knowledge and material distribution, culture and host of others. Those differences and disparities echoes who should get what and how much they should get that covers economy, polity and everyday social life. In such a hierarchical and stratified arrangement, the Dalits face the brunt and are the worst affected. Incidents and the reactions posited above point to a larger trend. The

gap between the narratives and actions of the politicians, and socio-economic realities of India keep fuelling social conflicts that are presently reaching definite and clear show downs.

Dalits—make up nearly 25 per cent of India's population. But even after seven decades of Independence, more than three-fourths of Dalits live in rural areas and 84 per cent of them have an average monthly income of less than Rs.5000. At the same time Dalits' vote share in the electoral politics is huge and hence a determining factor. Nonetheless, the Dalits have now realized that political parties of all-shades employ use-and-throw policy towards them. For the last one year protests by the Dalits is taking place across the country in many forms. Ever since the suicide of Dalit scholar Rohith Vemula in Hyderabad Central University discourses in the Parliament, media and other forums has become regular feature. After the Una incident, Dalit tanners in Gujarat dumped cow carcasses in government offices as the action of the 'cow protectors' had a direct impact on their livelihood. In Madhya Pradesh, 50 Dalit families asked their Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's 'permission' to kill themselves, alleging the dominant castes have occupied the land granted to them by the government 15 years ago. Less than 20 Dalit youth have attempted suicide—to kill themselves across the country.

According to a renowned sociologist Dipankar Gupta, the fire is being stoked by the growing resentment among upper castes against sharing social and political privileges with Dalits. 'When oppressed classes start to assert themselves, backlashes happen. In the United States, the lynching of Blacks started in the later part of 19th century when they began asserting their rights. The same is happening with Dalits as they are increasingly participating in the social and political process.' When the Blacks were lynched and ridiculed by the white racists their racist moves back lashed—that too in horrendous proportions. Similarly, Dalits' resistive and assertive participation adds to the political relevance as

the assembly elections are due next year in UP, a state with 40 million Dalits or 20 per cent of India's total Dalit population; in Punjab, which has a 32 per cent Dalit population. Political parties of diverse ideological shades and formats have drawn up extensive strategies to consolidate and woo Dalits. National and regional political parties have drawn a number of formulae and social engineering and in that the votes of the Dalits is the most defining and determining one.

And yet, Dalits have been lynched and thus undergo all forms of oppressions—assumed a variety formats—medieval and feudal. For example, the socio-economic indicators that define Dalit population in India remain dismal and appalling. Professor Amitabh Kundu, who headed a group in 2013 to study the implementation of the Sachar committee recommendations, said that over 33.8 per cent of Dalit population in rural India was below the poverty line in 2011-12. More than 60 per cent of the Dalit population does not participate in any economic activity. Of the working population, nearly 55 per cent are cultivators and agricultural labourers. Around 45 per cent of rural Dalit households are landless. Only 13.9 per cent Dalit households have access to clean water through pipelines as compared to 27.5 per cent among the general category and only 10 per cent have access to sanitation as compared to 27 per cent for non-Dalit households. A staggering 53.6 per cent among the general category and only 10 per cent have access to sanitation as compared to 27 per cent for non-Dalit households. Likewise, 53.6 per cent Dalit children are malnourished as compared to 39 per cent non-Dalit children.

This is the ground reality of India. Those who negate and narrate as there is no caste in the Indian society and make Dalit reality as sub-text should be ashamed of the data projected above. 'Political parties don't see these as problems. They want to keep deprivation among Dalits an issue which they can exploit for electoral benefits,' as Sangmitra Acharya, Director of the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, Delhi, rightly points out. Resonating similar view, Sukhadeo Thorat, Chairman of the Indian

council of Social Science Research and a research specialist in the economics of caste-based discrimination laments that Dalit upliftment has remained just a jargon and adds that '… We need to create organizations to fight against the cast system.' If we examine and carefully analyse the atrocities perpetrated against the Dalits right across the country, the backdrops change, but not the event itself. The casteist forces systematically exercise brute power embedded in the caste-based notion of social hierarchy has been expressed in its ugliest form in recent times. The pretexts have been varying—from temple entry to love affairs to marriage to ownership of assets to performing traditional jobs! The atrocities that we read in the print media and see in the TV channels portray the live testimonies of dehumanizing behaviour meet out to Dalit, reflects the social pyramid of India base structure—the caste system.

Why is it the casteist mind-sets the moment hear about Dalits gets provoked, then intrigued and finally rage? If we trace back all the episodes and narratives almost all the incidents of violence and dominant narratives underpins the very fact that whenever the Dalits ask for equality, parity and humanity on par with others, the caste-stratified and caste-premised Indian society go hay-way and loses it rationality. The dominant narratives clearly echoes that the Dalits have no right to ask for parity to enter into worship places or ask for equal wages or own land or accrue assets or dream for becoming the Prime Minister or to take up leadership positions or falling in love with so-called 'high castes' and ending up in marriages. So, the only way out is to keep them in the same sphere by carrying on and on the discrimination and enforcing humiliation in all walks of life. So, the casteist mind-set shall never tolerate or even accept when ask for their due rights and privileges. Whenever the dominant forces find opportunities they explode and the explosions we see have different forms and tenors.

For the past 5,000 years different types of carnage and rage against the Dalit communities have been systematically carried out. Whenever Dalits are lynched and humiliated netas of political parties express their solidarity with the victims. For instance, on the June 1, 2016, BJP President Amit Shah traveled to Jogiyapur, a Bind-dominated village in PM Modi's constituency. He sat on the floor to have lunch with a group of Dalits. Everyone knows that the gesture is for the 2017 UP elections. He knows that this type of gesture hardly be accepted, instead be challenged by Dalits' counter-narrative. A month later in Gujarat, the home state of Shah and Modi, the police allegedly did not intervene as four Dalits boys were flogged by a group of self-proclaimed 'cow protectors' from the Gujarat unit of the Shive Sena, one of the BJP's NDA allies. Then, on July 17, 2016, in Karnataka, a state-ruled by the Congress party, whose vice-president Rahul Gandhi has virtually earned his political rebuttals by posing for photo-ops in Dalit households, where 40 Bajrang Dal activists viciously attacked a Dalit family on charge of eating beef. On July 20, 2016, in Bihar a state ruled by the Janata Dal (united) and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) both vociferous exponents of the rights of backward castes—two Dalit boys were thrashed and urinated on by a mob of so-called 'upper caste' men for allegedly stealing a motorbike. Hence, Dalits have become the 'targets' for the political parties of all shades.

Incidentally, political parties are now on race to own Babasaheb's legacy. Leaders of all shades and ideologies are now on a mad rush to appropriate the legacy of B.R. Ambedkar, the nation's most celebrated icon. Even *Organiser,* the RSS mouthpiece of BJP and ultra-right fringe outfits hails B.R. Ambedkar as the 'ultimate unifier'. RSS announced outreach programs marking the 100th birth anniversary of former RSS chief Madhukar Dattatreya Deores. RSS workers have been instructed to 'adopt' Dalit families and eat meals with them. It also coined the slogan 'one well, one temple, one crematorium'. Although the Brahmanic Hin-

dutva bogey in theory and practice could not digest because it goes against their philosophic-ideological framework—'with the Dalits' and to give up 'caste discriminatory politics' as prescribed in Varna system.

It is quite surprising that during his visit to London in November 2015, PM Modi inaugurated a memorial at the site where Ambedkar lived during his London School of Economics and also, PM Modi laid the foundation stone for an Ambedkar memorial in Mumbai, and on March 21, for an auditorium to be constructed at 25, Alipur Road, Delhi, the house where Ambedkar had died. He also paid homage to the father of the Indian Constitution at his birthplace in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh, observing it as Social Harmony Day, and got the United Nations to observe Ambedkar's 125th birth anniversary. Although Ambedkar aligned with the Congress to frame the Constitution, but Congress party has failed to own his legacy until his 125th birth anniversary. BJP, Congress and all the political parties have appropriated B.R. Ambedkar. Except a few most of the parties except want to appropriate his ideals—what he said and strived for.

Dominant narratives that tend to justify the verbal and physical attacks against the Dalits have been thoroughly exposed—imploded by its inherent contradictions. A plethora of ideas used to camouflage the latent motives and clandestine intentions have come to the open and the Dalits see-through-and-through. A spate of attacks against the Dalits have pushed the Dalits to come to the open with counter narratives that surprised many particularly the dominant oppressive casteists and caste mind-sets. Emerging Dalit narratives have totally paralyzed particularly the RSS-BJP and other Hindutva bandwagon. A spate of attacks against the Dalits; RSS-BJP's polarizing, accommodating and appropriating game-plan thus far cleverly executed seemed to have been totally smashed. The ways with which Dalits responded to heinous and brutal attacks meted out in recent times merit examination.

Dalits' assertion is on the rise. They are on warpath over the issues of public humiliation and flogging and scores of others. The political establishments are now worried, especially the Government at the Centre. The RSS-BJP is working out new formats and strategies to salvage the back lash. The BJP government at the Centre has even gone to the extent of exploring the possibilities of including reservation policies for the Dalits in the private sector. Accordingly they want to form a high level coordination committee to meet with the industry association including Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Velocity and voltage of assertion of the Dalits is going on and will go on and therefore should be taken note of and be seen as transformative and ground breaking.

The mass pledge taken by the Dalits in Amedabad in Gujarat recently shows their grit and determination to fight the diabolic forces that forced them to live in caste-premised captivity and perennial bondage. Dalits nowadays keep asking the state loudly and clearly that 'You must provide us licensed firearms to protect ourselves, since the government has failed to provide us security', said Jignesh Mevani, converner of the joint front. 'We have had enough. We will break their hands and legs if the upper-caste exploiters torture us anymore,' he asserted. Resistance and assertion are on high pitch and went to the peak point that 'Won't lift cow carcasses, want guns'. Fury of the Dalits is spreading across the country like wildfire.

Resistance and assertion of the Dalits has dug big holes and created cracks in the RSS-BJP's carefully constructed Hindutva wall for the untouchables of Hindu society—the Dalits as they are called in current political literature—somehow for the benefit of the so-called 'high castes' considered as an integral part of Hindu society—their game misfired as Hindu vigilantes attacked Dalits in Saurashtra's Una village for

pursuing their ancient caste-triggered caste-based occupation of skinning dead cows. Casteists and tainted mind-sets have been using the RSS-BJP's Hindutva ideology to their advantage by lynching and humiliating the Dalits in varied forms. Their aim has been to sharpen the contradictions between Hindus and others on the basis of those eating 'cow meat' and others 'who do not eat'. 'Cow politics' has eventually become a handy tool for the ultra-fundamentalist forces. 'Cow politics' is part of Hindutva and RSS-BJP's political project. Counter-narratives and alternative politics to the dominant keep emerging.

Human constructed walls/divides/ barricades will have to come to be dismantled. It is an irony that the Indian society hangs on the system of caste reified by Brahmanic Hinduism. Brahmanic Hinduism devised a schema that stratifies the Indians on the basis of Varna—constructed layers that vertically hangs and designates who should be on top, middle and at the bottom. For thousands of years this nonsense has been going on and many Dalits were forced to believe that carrying the dead cattle, removing its skin, burying them and cleaning the human excreta were their divinely-designated duties that ought to be carried out with reverence. Everything will have to come to a close/end and shall never be allowed to go on and on forever. As instructed by B.R. Ambedkar caste by all means should be annihilated. He candidly argued that Hinduism has been the regulating, propelling and justifying principle which is behind the system of caste. He approached it scientifically. Dalits' resistance and assertion is gaining momentum in full swing in diverse ways and forms across the country. They are to be consolidated and shown solidarity by the right-thinking people from all walks of life.

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