

# frontier

Vol. 55 : No. 39

ISSN 0016-2094

March 26-April 1, 2023

Founder-Editor : **SAMAR SEN**

On Other Pages

Comment	2
Note	3
UNION BUDGET 2023-24 Reading between the Lines Ashok K Nag	4
THE ONSLAUGHT OF DIGITAL MEDIA A Tale of One Kalida Sukanta Sarkar	9
A TRIBUTE Sankar Roy—a Man of Many Traits Nityananda Ghosh	10
AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE Against Dogmatic Marxist Strategy Arup Baisya	12
THE JAWS OF POWER Of Secrecy and Democracy John Scales Avery	13
Letters	15

Editor : **TIMIR BASU**Assistant Editor : **Subhasis Mukherjee**

Published weekly for Germinal Publications Pvt. Ltd. by Sharmistha Dutta from 44, Balaram Dey Street, Kolkata-700006 and Printed by her at Laser Aid, 35A/3, Biplabi Barin Ghosh Sarani, Kolkata-700 067.

E-mail : frontierweekly@yahoo.co.in  
frontierweekly@hotmail.com  
Telephone : 2530-0065

[Typeset by THE D-COMLASER, 60 Sikdar Bagan Street, Kolkata-4, Ph : 98361-58319]

## *Caste Hegemony*

THE WORD 'CASTE' (JAAT) IS A WIDELY DISCUSSED SUBJECT in South Asia. It is still alive and exists in the 21st century. Mostly in India and Nepal, caste has been a problem for Dalits for ages. Often, the three organs of state—the legislative, the judiciary, and the executive—face questions regarding caste on many occasions. And the press usually disseminates information about incidents of caste-based discrimination.

Victims of this discrimination show caste and its consequences. And the media makes news. Reservations for Dalits make media news. Recently, the voices to reduce the quota for Dalits are rising, despite the fact that the state regards reservation as a tiny compensation for caste discrimination. The high castes of the 'Varna' system are undoubtedly the tormentors. They have been preserving and protecting the caste-specific footsteps of their ancestors. Comparatively, non-Dalits have gotten more education and exposure than Dalits. The ratio of literacy and exposure shows they might understand the need for equality and equity in society.

Education, degrees, dissertation, and exposure might reveal these lapses in society to them. But sadly, the so-called high caste hasn't understood the social trauma of caste discrimination for Dalits. They haven't seen the social-cultural exclusion and psychological problems caused by the caste system that affects the Dalit community as a whole. They haven't seen the status of Dalits in society. They just see a tiny opportunity without suffering pain. Beside this irrationality, this casteist mob has been practising caste discrimination while protesting against positive discrimination. This hegemony and misinterpretation of high caste has halted inbuilt equality and equity in society. Moreover, structurally, the caste system has ruined the Nepali society.

The casteist picture of the society is very divided, fragmented, and dangerous. People enjoying caste privileges and benefiting from structural inequality take the caste system as part of their culture. They act as if the system hasn't created turmoil in society. As most of the castes belong to the Varna system of Hinduism, all the Hindus, whether high caste or low caste, follow the same culture, religion, and tradition. These socio-cultural characteristics of religion seem to unite people socially. It looks fine from the outer layer. But when critically assessed, it shows how so-called cultural and social practices draw the lines between "us" and "them", touchability and untouchability among the Hindus, with utter disregard for rationality and humanity.

In Nepal's context, non-Dalits' caste hegemony is clearly seen in body

language, gestures, and the tones. The way of talking, tantrums, ethnocentrism, etc are the major characteristics of being from an “upper caste”. Mainly in villages, one can easily see and feel the high caste burden. There are many examples of this mob refusing to sit and eat with Dalits. In fact, they demand a separate party for non- Dalits at Dalit gatherings. Moreover, the thread-wearing community looks rigid on the

outside. Their behaviour and activities show they are proud to be members of a certain caste. Non-Dalits want to show and challenge Dalits that they are different and high. They have benefited from being an upper caste for ages as the positions of power they hold show. Besides it, their social activities, gatherings, unity, etc are filled with unbridled monopoly regarding caste hierarchy.

Contrary to Manusmiriti, today’s

Nepali society looks free on food, profession, and marriage. People are living as per their convictions. But regarding caste, they are a bit rigid. If people compare today’s cultural professional status with the history of caste as per the Manusmiriti, caste structure has already collapsed. The caste system is an illusion. It forces people to live in a dead world. □□□

[Contributed]

---

## COMMENT

### Double Standard

DOUBLE STANDARD IS PART OF the political game every political party indulges in. Even internationally some governments, particularly the US government is unique in maintaining double standard in accusing some countries of violating human rights while ignoring suppression of dissent by its client states, many of them are outright autocratic. Nearer home the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has a chequered history of speaking in multiple voices to further its political interests.

During the just-concluded Assembly poll campaign in Meghalaya, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah described its Chief Minister, Konrad K Sangma, as “most corrupt” and heaped charges of money laundering on him. But Sangma’s National People’s Party won 26 of 57 seats it contested and formed the government. The Bharatiya Janata Party won two of the 60 seats it contested but made a frenetic U-turn once the results were out and extended support to Sangma. Modi and Shah graced Sangma’s swearing-in ceremony at Shillong on 7 March—the same day Central Bureau of Investigation sleuths questioned the Rashtriya Janata Dal president Lalu Prasad Yadav at his daughter Miss

Bharti’s home in New Delhi. The corruption charges against Sangma would obviously not be discussed any more. Yadav’s party is not in alliance with BJP and it means more trouble lies ahead for him and his family.

The Prime Minister did not mention Adani even after the entire Opposition demanded a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe into the Hindenburg research report that claims to have exposed the group’s “misappropriations”, causing worldwide outrage. Repeatedly stalling Parliament on the issue didn’t move the Treasury Benches. Even an inspector-level official has not questioned Adani. People will never know how Modi’s corporate friend has siphoned public money from LIC. The media house Al Jazeera has, in the meantime, claimed to have exposed how the Adani Group was allotted a coal block in violation of the Supreme Court’s order.

Sangma and Adani are just the tip of the iceberg of countless politicians and businessmen who enjoy impunity because they are in the “good books” of the ruling BJP. It is an open secret that many top leaders who faced the CBI’s heat, or that of the Enforcement Directorate and Income Tax authorities, sud-

denly got freedom after joining the BJP. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Narayan Rane, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and former Trinamool Congress leaders Suvendu Adhikari and Mukul Roy are well-known among those with central investigating agencies hot on their heels until they joined the BJP. For one thing the BJP is ready to protect the corrupt if it suits its political interests.

It was in 2017 that the CBI filed two cases against Lalu, his family members and others. At the time, his RJD was in a Mahagathbandhan or Grand Alliance with Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar’s Janata Dal-United and the Congress Party. The Alliance had roundly defeated the BJP in the 2015 Assembly poll and was in power in Bihar.

The BJP is using central investigation agencies to break opposition leaders and coerce them to join it.

No doubt the BJP has evidently had some success in this ‘plan’, for many leaders in Maharashtra, West Bengal, northeastern states, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Goa, who had the agencies chasing after them in various alleged “scams” got a reprieve once they entered the BJP fold. These politicians have no scruples. Nor do they bother about ideology. What matters in their idea of ‘de-

March 26-April 1, 2023

FRONTIER

3

mocracy' is how to loot the exchequer and then defend the indefensible by way of taking the usual route of horse trading or one may call it donkey trading. It's a tragedy that these people get elected through

adult franchise. Of late election is being increasingly manipulated by the ruling BJP at the centre through yet another central agency—Election Commission working in tandem with Para-military forces. □□□

## NOTE

## International Women's Day

*CJP Team writes:*

**R**EVOLUTIONS DO NOT happen overnight; it takes years and years for positive changes to be implemented and progress to be made. Similarly, these revolutions and movements are not the result of a single person's efforts, but of collective resistance and solidarity. India has always followed a patriarchal structure, a hierarchical power relationship, in which men are dominant and women are subordinate. Women's subordination is visible in many ways, both in the private and public spheres, where women are denied rights and access to many things that men take for granted. Patriarchy, as a concept/tool, aids in the critical understanding of women's status in any society. Thus, while men in India were born with all the privileges and rights, the women of India had to fight for their basic rights, right to vote, right to education, right of autonomy on their own bodies.

For centuries, they have been purposefully denied opportunities for growth in the name of religion and socio-cultural practices. Even Mahatma Gandhi, a self-proclaimed champion of women's rights, had urged women to stop fighting for voting rights and instead concentrate their efforts on 'helping their men against the common foe' in 1920. On the social-political level, women faced denial of freedom even in their homes, suppression, persecution and unnatural indoctrination,

unequal and inferior status, rigid caste hierarchy, and even untouchability. Religious tradition and social institutions have a significant impact on the role and status of women.

Despite this, as more efforts were made to oppress women, an increasing number of Indian women's movements emerged, paving the way for intersectionality and catapulting gender violence into national discourse. Long before the #MeToo movement, and decades before the Indian government enacted any laws to protect women from violence, Indian feminists fought for women's right to exist unmolested and unscathed in public and private spaces. Even today, as people celebrate international women's day, their struggles remain the same, the battles even bigger.

Dr Ambedkar, the great fighter and deep thinker, has made significant contributions to the cause of women's liberation, rejecting Manu's definition of women. He recognised women's equality and worked to secure it legally at a time when few others did, beginning with opposing oppressive customs such as sati, child marriage, and widow remarriage restrictions.

While Babasaheb paved the way for women rights, the journey has been a long and tiring one, and the fight is still going on. Even today, as India has entered its 75th year of Independence, atrocities against women bodies have intensified, and

### BOOKS BY T VIJAYENDRA

Just Released

**REQUIEM FOR OUR TIMES** Rs. 100

**AFTER ALL IT IS ONLY HIM!**

**AND OTHER STORIES** Rs. 70

**AN INTELLIGENT BIRD'S GUIDE**

**TO THE BIRDWATCHER AND**

**OTHER STORIES**

Second reprint Rs. 80

**THE LOSERS SHALL**

**INHERIT THE WORLD**

Third Reprint Rs. 60

**REGAINING PARADISE:**

**TOWARDS A FOSSIL FUEL FREE**

**SOCIETY** Rs. 120

**THE TEACHER AND**

**THE CHILD LABOUR** Rs. 50

For Copies Contact :

**MANCHI PUSTAKAM**

12-13-439, St. No. 1 Tarnaka,

Secunderabad 500017

Email: info@manchipustakam.in

Cell: +91 73822 97430

so has the fight to break the cages that women are kept in. While some of these fights turn into movements and are fought through protest and dissents, such as the Shaheen Bagh women protest against CAA-NRC or the Pinjra todh movement against discriminatory curfews in hostels, some are fought in the court rooms.

In recent years, the courts have issued several significant celebrated judgments in cases relating to the women rights, such as the right to privacy, equal rights for daughters in coparcenary property, eligibility of women army officers in commanding roles and permanent commission, ban of two-finger test as medical examination, right of adult women to choose prostitution as her vocation, etc. All of these cases have aided people in seeking justice and maintaining their faith in courts as defenders of the rule of law. □□□

Readers are requested to note the changed address (new) of our website

[www.frontierweekly.com](http://www.frontierweekly.com)

## UNION BUDGET 2023-24

## Reading between the Lines

**Ashok K Nag**

**A**NNUAL BUDGET OF A large democratic nation like India is always a political statement couched in apparently neutral terms like investment, growth and welfare of general public, particularly vulnerable sections of them. In fact, the “political economy of budget” has been an important area of research for economists of all persuasions. The “political” aspect of the government budget making exercise is examined below from two perspectives—allocation of budgeted expenditure and financing of this expenditure. While examining a given year’s budget of any government, we need to underscore the fact that all components of this budget are not left to the discretion of its current maker. For example, interest payment is a legacy of past decisions and repudiation of the same can be ruled out in an electoral democracy. Similarly, not much discretion is left regarding expenditure for pensions to government employees. On the financing side of budget making also, the revealed preference of a political dispensation can be discovered only in evolving course changes.

### **Allocation of Resources**

James Buchanan, a staunch critic of deficit financing, and a Nobel Laureate, wrote in “Democracy in Deficit”—“Politicians necessarily confront a tragic choice setting, for, being unable to satisfy all desires, they must deny the desires of some”. Undoubtedly, this choice is not unconstrained—it would also depend on the state of the economy and any other external shocks like COVID-19 that must be tackled by the politicians in power. The financial year 2023-24 is expected to be

a normal year, and a year to be immediately followed by a general election. So, the revealed preferences of the politicians at the helm are expected to be more nuanced, than an unabashed show of preferences for their core constituencies.

Firstly, preferences can be discovered, albeit indirectly, from the occurrence of some selected words in a budget speech. The FY 23-24 budget speech is compared with the budget speech of FY 2015-16 below. The FY 2015-16 was the first full year when the current regime presented a full year’s budget.

**Table 1: Occurrence frequency of selected words in the budget speeches of FY 16 and FY 24**

Word	2015-16 budget	2023-24 budget
Employment	14	3
Unemployment	1	0
Growth	27	16
Inclusive	2	16
Investment	60	34
Poor	15	2
		(appearing in “poor prisoner”)
Poverty	9	0
Prime Minister	4	10
Welfare	8	4

Obviously, frequency of a word does not prove anything and there is no need to harp on it. It would be more worthwhile to look at the stated objectives in the budget of the above two years.

### **Quote from Budget 2015-16 para 16:**

The year 2022 will be the Amrut Mahotsav, the 75th year, of India’s independence. The vision of what the Prime Minister has called ‘Team India’, led by the States and guided by the Central Government, should include:

- i. A roof for each family in India. The call given for ‘Housing for all’ by 2022 would require Team India to complete 2 crore houses in urban areas and 4 crore houses in rural areas.
- iv. substantial reduction of poverty. All our schemes should focus on and centre around the poor. Each of us has to commit ourselves to this task of eliminating absolute poverty.

### **Quote from Budget 2023-24 para no 14:**

The Budget adopts the following seven priorities. They complement each other and act as the ‘Saptarishi’ guiding us through the Amrit Kaal.

1. Inclusive Development
2. Reaching the Last Mile
3. Infrastructure and Investment
4. Unleashing the Potential
5. Green Growth
6. Youth Power
7. Financial Sector

Even if one ignores the above corporate style classification of various proposals for allocation of resources, a reader would have preferred to be informed about the progress made in implementation of the objectives stated in the 2015-16 budget.

But poverty continues to be a social and economic issue in India and in a span of 7 years it appears to have been “lost in oblivion” in the speech writer’s mindscape. Be that as it may, it will be more useful to look at the allocation of resources to various purposes.

Grouping of items given in annexure. The category “State” includes Defence, Home affairs, External Affairs, Planning, Pension and Interest, Tax Administration, Transfer to states and Union Territories

It is apparent from the above four tables that a substantial share of resources mobilised by the state (Centre here) are used up in maintenance of the state itself. Many of

March 26-April 1, 2023

FRONTIER

5

the services rendered by the state machinery, like Law and Order are public goods and only limited discretion is available to any political regime to tinker with them. If one only considers the Establishment Expenditure of the Centre, it is seen that it has come down from 18.7% of the Centre's total expenditure for the FY2015-16 to 17.5% in the FY 2022-23 (RE) (data from Bag 6 of yearly budgets). Centre's expenditure on welfare measures like expenditure on health, education, agriculture etc. has remained higher than all other broad categories of expenditure. Although there was effort to curtail this category of expenditures, as reflected in lower budget estimates, the actual expenditure turned out to be higher than the budgeted one. The BE of 2022-23 for the Welfare Programs' share was cut by almost 5% but according to RE this share got cut by a little above 1% only. The BE for Welfare Programs' 2023-24 has been sought to be cut by 5.5%. The intention to cut is clear, but the reality may again turn out to be different.

A more granular analysis provides some interesting insights into the choices made by the budget makers.

Of the total increase in BE of 2023-24, "Transport" accounted for 67.7%. It is quite clear that the current political regime is shifting its focus from alleviation of poverty to meeting the need of relatively affluent section of the society who cherish swanky national highways, faster train and a place in the world's high table of economic powerhouses. The so called "aspirational India" now believes that a government's job is primarily to build world class infrastructure. The consequent economic growth will take care of the festering problem of poverty, malnutrition and hunger. Accordingly, the Centre's capital expenditure as percentage of

**Table 2: Major Item-wise Expenditure**  
[% share in total excluding Pension and Interest]

Major Items of Expenditure	Actual 2021-22	Budget Estimate 2022-23	Revised Estimate 2022-23	Budget Estimate 2023-24
Agriculture and Allied Activities Excluding PM-Kissan)	2.80%	2.99%	2.54%	2.64%
Commerce and Industry	1.72%	1.90%	1.25%	1.51%
Defence	13.42%	13.78%	13.64%	13.57%
Development of NE	0.10%	0.10%	0.09%	0.18%
Education	2.94%	3.73%	3.33%	3.54%
Energy	1.97%	1.76%	2.36%	2.98%
External Affairs	0.52%	0.62%	0.57%	0.57%
Fertiliser Subsidy	5.63%	3.76%	7.50%	5.49%
Finance	0.00%	0.76%	0.60%	0.43%
Food Subsidy	10.58%	7.39%	9.57%	6.19%
Health	3.08%	3.10%	2.58%	2.79%
Home	4.11%	4.54%	4.16%	4.23%
IT and Telecom	0.92%	2.86%	2.47%	2.93%
Others	3.97%	4.05%	3.60%	3.78%
Petroleum Subsidy	0.13%	0.21%	0.31%	0.07%
Planning	0.14%	0.20%	0.21%	0.20%
PM-KISAN	2.45%	2.43%	2.00%	1.88%
Rural Development	8.37%	7.38%	8.11%	7.47%
Scientific	1.02%	1.09%	0.85%	1.01%
Social	1.49%	1.85%	1.55%	1.73%
Tax Administration	6.48%	6.14%	5.91%	6.11%
Transfer to states	10.05%	11.95%	9.03%	10.18%
Transport	12.16%	12.58%	13.01%	16.21%
Union Territories	2.07%	2.10%	2.30%	1.92%
Urban Development	3.91%	2.74%	2.48%	2.40%

**Table 3: Share of Pension and Interest in total Expenditure.**

	Actual 2021-22	BE 2022-23	BE 2022-23	BE 2023-24
Total	3793801	3944909	4187234	4503096
Pension and Interest	1061802	1147783	1185431	1314330
Share of Pension and Interest	28.0%	29.1%	28.3%	29.2%

Source Budget at Glance (Bag 6 2023-24)

**Table 4: Share of Major Item Groups in total Expenditure including Pension and Interest Payments**

Major Item Groups	Actuals 2021-22	BE-2022-23	RE-2022-23	BE 2023-24
Energy	1.42%	1.25%	1.69%	2.11%
Industry	1.24%	1.35%	0.90%	1.07%
Miscellaneous	2.86%	2.87%	2.58%	2.68%
Science and Technology	1.39%	2.80%	2.38%	2.79%
State	54.48%	57.52%	54.41%	55.53%
Transport	8.76%	8.92%	9.33%	11.48%
Welfare	29.86%	25.29%	28.71%	24.35%

**Table 5: Share of Major Item Groups in total Expenditure excluding Pension and Interest payments:**

	Actuals 2021-22	BE-2022-23	RE-2022-23	BE 2023-24
Energy	1.97%	1.76%	2.36%	2.98%
Industry	1.72%	1.90%	1.25%	1.51%
Miscellaneous	3.97%	4.05%	3.60%	3.78%
Science and Technology	1.93%	3.95%	3.32%	3.94%
State	36.79%	40.09%	36.40%	37.19%
Transport	12.16%	12.58%	13.01%	16.21%
Welfare	41.46%	35.67%	40.05%	34.38%

**Note: Expenditure on "State" includes transfer by Centre to States and Union Territories**

its total expenditure has grown from 14.4% in 2016-17 to 17.4% (RE) by 2022-23. The budgeted growth in capital expenditure for FY23-24 has been estimated to be 22.2%.

However, increased capital expenditure by the Centre in the last few years has not generated commensurate increase in private investment. Between 2004-5 and 2013-14 the average rate of Gross Capital Formation as % of GDP at current prices was 37.5%. This rate came down to 32% between 2014-15 and 2020-21. In the FY 20-21, the rate reached a low of 27.3%. (see Chart 4 in the Annexure).

#### **Financing of**

#### **Budgeted Expenditure:**

For a democracy with a significant presence of private capital owned production system, the government has mainly two sources of revenue-tax revenue and borrowing. The interplay of both these avenues defines what is known as Fiscal Policy. Following enactment of Fiscal Responsibility and budget Management act, 2003 the government is expected to take appropriate measures to limit the fiscal deficit up to three per cent. of gross domestic product by the 31st March, 2021. Only in exigencies, the limit can be increased by 0.5 per cent. As regards borrowing, the Act states that the Central Government debt does not exceed forty per cent., of gross domestic product by the end of financial year 2024-2025. It can be seen from the Tables below that this limit was breached in 2018-19 itself, a year before the pandemic struck the country.

The tables and the graphs given in the Annexure clearly demonstrate the revealed preference of the present political regime regarding financing of its expenditures. These (views of Budget makers and not the author's) are summarized below:

1. To finance the large increase in government's capital expendi-

**Table 6: Top 2 Items by reduction /enhancement in expenditure allocations in 2023-24 Budget Estimates:**

Top 2 items for which BE for 2023-24 is less than RE of 2022-23	Amount of Reduction	Share in total of items witnessing reduction
Food Subsidy	89844	54.7%
Fertilizer Subsidy	50120	30.5%
Top 2 items for which BE for 2023-24 is more than RE of 2022-23	Amount of Increase	Share in total of items witnessing increase
Transport	126538	36%
Transfer to States	53705	15.3%

#### **Annexure: Tables and Graphs**

**Table A1: Categorization of Items of Expenditure of the Centre**

Item of Expenditure	Category	Item of Expenditure	Category
Pension	State	Commerce and Industry	Industry
Defence	State	Development of NE	Welfare
Fertiliser Subsidy	Welfare	Education	Welfare
Food Subsidy	Welfare	Energy	Energy
Petroleum Subsidy	Welfare	External Affairs	State
Agriculture and Allied Activities Excluding PM-Kissan)	Welfare	Finance	State
PM-KISAN	Welfare	Health	Welfare
Home	State	Scientific	Science and Technology
Planning	State	Social	Welfare
Rural Development	Welfare	Tax Administration	State
Transfer to states	State	Union Territories	State
Transport	Transport	Urban Development	Welfare

**Table A2: Shares of Major Heads of Revenue and Expenditure in corresponding total**

	2016-17 (Actual)	2017-18 (Actual)	2018-10 (Actual)	2019-20 (Actual)	2021-22 (Actual)	2022-23 (RE)	2023-24 (RE)
Tax revenue as % of Total Revenue	80.1	86.6%	84.8%	80.6%	83.2%	88.9%	88.5%
Capital receipt as % of total receipt	30.4%	33.0%	32.9%	37.3%	42.8%	43.9%	41.5%
Borrowing as % of Capital Receipts	89.1%	83.6%	85.2%	93.2%	97.6%	95.5%	95.5%
Tax as % of total receipt	55.8%	58.0%	56.9%	50.5%	47.6%	49.8%	51.8%
Centre's Capital expenditure as % total expenditure	14.4%	12.3%	13.3%	12.5%	15.6%	17.4%	22.2%
Interest payment as % of total expenditure	24.3%	24.7%	25.2%	22.8%	21.2%	22.5%	24.0%
Effective capital exp as % of total Exp	22.8%	21.2%	21.6%	19.4%	22.0%	25.2%	30.4%
Revenue Deficit as % of GDP	2.1	2.6	2.4	3.3	4.4	4.1	2.9
Fiscal Deficit as % of GDP	3.5	3.5	3.4	4.6	6.7	6.4	5.9

$$\text{Fiscal Deficit} = \text{Total Expenditure} - (\text{Revenue receipts} + \text{non-liability generating capital receipts})$$

March 26-April 1, 2023

FRONTIER

7

ture, increased borrowing is favoured, while income tax rates for companies have been cut.

2. Through Taxation Laws (Amendment) Act, 2019 (TLAA), a concessional tax rate of 22% for existing domestic companies Income tax rate was introduced. The tax income foregone on account of this concession for 2 years, namely 2019-20 and 2020-21 has been estimated at 1.8lac crore. This “freebie” provided to large corporates formed 18% of total expenditure by the Centre on subsidies in these two years.
3. The share of subsidies in Centre’s revenue expenditure which had gone up from 9.7% in 2000-01 to 20.7% in 2012-13, reversed in trend and fell to 11.2% in the year 2019-20. Although it went up to 24.6% in the pandemic year (2020-21), it was again brought down to 11.2% by 2022-23. It is consistent with the economic philosophy that states “subsidies, or “soft budget constraint”, may distort firms’ incentives to innovate, raise quality, and reduce costs.” (OECD (2022), Subsidies, Competition and Trade, OECD Competition Policy Roundtable)
4. Income tax revenue from corporate sector show some interesting features. Effective tax rate on profit of companies in the highest profit basket (above 500 cr.) is much lower at 19.14% than the average rate of 22.2% for all companies (FY2020-21). Effective tax rate on profit for manufacturing companies was much higher at 25.68% as compared to 20.75% for non-manufacturing companies. A surrealistic picture emerges if we look at Industry-wise Effective Tax Rates on profits as it can be seen for some selected industries—Special and Super-specialty

**Table A3: Income tax forgone due to implementation of concessional tax rate**

Total Income under 115 BAA (2019-20)	Total Tax Collection At earlier corporate rate	Total Tax at concessional rate at under 115BAA	Revenue impact (2019-20)	Revenue impact (2020-21)
9,33,429.91	3,22,780.06	2,34,944.31	87,835.75	96,399.74

Source: 17th Report of Estimates committee

**Table A4: Tax Profile of Companies by Range of Profits before Taxes**

Financial Year 2020-21						
FY 2020-21 Range of Profits before taxes	No of companies	Share in profit before taxes	Share in total income	Share in total corporate income tax liability	Ratio of tax to total income	Tax to profit ratio
100 to 500 cr	1558	15.33	14.10	15.53	26.96	22.49
Greater than 500 cr	517	62.08	47.58	53.52	27.54	19.14
Total	961279				24.49	22.20

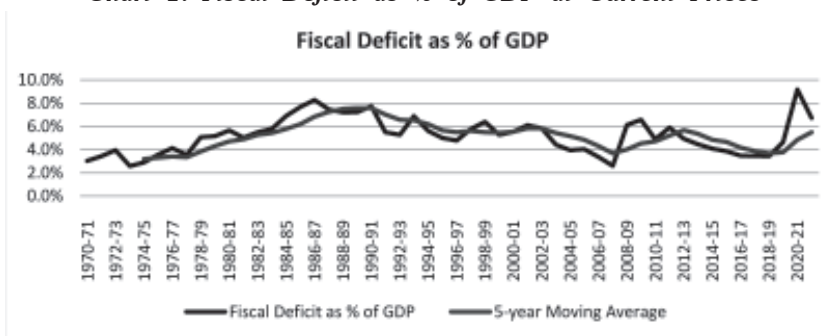
Source Table1: page 30 Receipt Budget 2023-24

**Table A5: Effective Tax Rate of Companies in FY 2020-21**

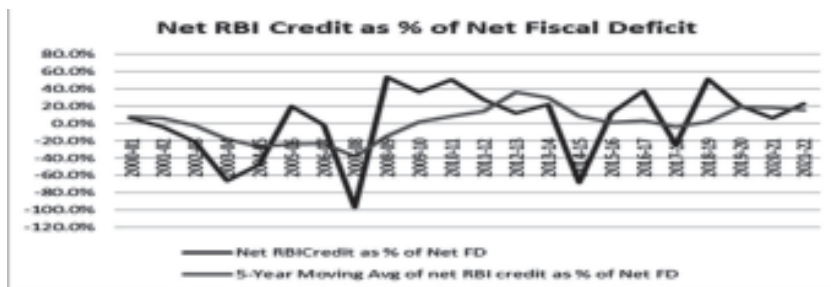
Manufacturing and Non-Manufacturing Companies			
Effective tax rate	No of companies	Share in total profits	Effective tax rate
Manufacturing	144141	29.46	25.68
Non-Manufacturing	817138	70.54	20.75
All Companies	961279		22.20

Source: Table 4: Page 31 Receipt Budget 2023-24

**Chart 1: Fiscal Deficit as % of GDP at Current Prices**



**Chart 2: Net RBI Credit as Financing Source of Fiscal Deficit**



Hospitals (94.43%); Health Care-Others (60.93%); Primary Education (54.36%); Research and Development (52.86%); General Hospital (37.31%); BPO services (28.23%); Manufacture of Tobacco Products (22.14%). There could be many reasons for inability of some industries to avail of the concessional rate, but it is incumbent on the Government of the day to remove such anomalies.

5. Indirect taxes are paid by poor as well as rich. When the share of indirect taxes in total tax revenue increases, it has a disproportional adverse impact on the relatively poorer segment of the population. The share of direct taxes in total taxes collected by the Centre increased linearly between 2000-01 and 2009-10 from 36.3% to 60.38%

The budget of 2023-24 is the last full year budget of the current politi-

গড়ালিকা প্রবাহ থেকে

বাংলা ভাষা তথা মাতৃভাষা বাঁচান

‘শুধু পূর্বাশা’

সাদা জাগানো বাংলা পাক্ষিক পত্রিকা

ও ‘পূর্বাশা এখন’ মাসিক পত্রিকা

এখনই সংগ্রহ করুন

সব স্টলে পাওয়া যাচ্ছে। ‘শুধু পূর্বাশা’ দাম ৫

টাকা মাত্র ও ‘পূর্বাশা এখন’ ২৫ টাকা মাত্র।

‘শুধু পূর্বাশা’-এর বার্ষিক গ্রাহক চাঁদা ১৭০

টাকা। ‘পূর্বাশা এখন’-এর গ্রাহকরা অতিরিক্ত

১০০ টাকায় পাক্ষিকটিরও গ্রাহক হতে পারেন।

কলকাতা কার্যালয় :

২৩, ডাঃ কার্তিক বসু স্ট্রিট, কলকাতা-৭০০০০৯

চলভাষ : ৮৪২০৮২৪২৮৬

email : editorpurbasha@gmail.com

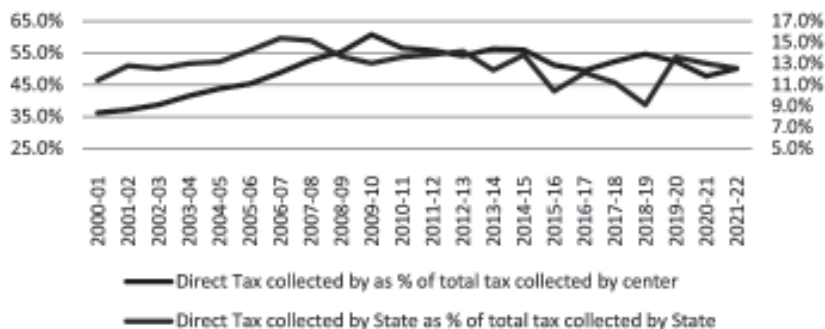
**For Frontier Contact**

**BOI-CHITRA**

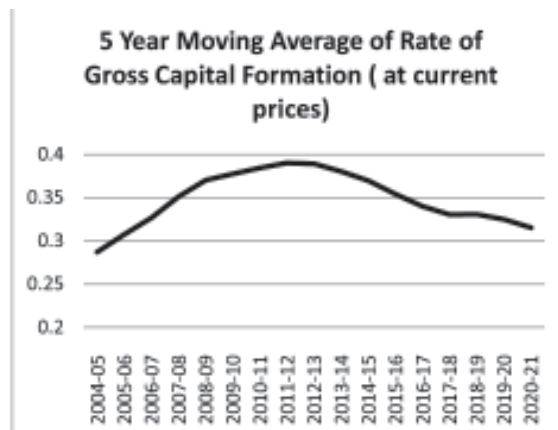
College Street Coffee House 2nd floor

**Chart 3: Share of Direct Tax in Total Tax Revenue**

**Share of Direct Tax Revenue in Total Tax Revenue- By Center and State**



**Chart 4: 5 Year Moving Average of Rate of Capital Formation: 2004-5 to 2020-21**



cal regime. It is generally expected that a political party will be more inclined to distribute “freebies” to win the electoral battle in such a year. Our analysis shows that this budget has deviated from this trend. But at the same time there has not been any effort to reduce budget deficit significantly. There are two possible reasons for this. Firstly, the regime is confident that the high approval rating of the current Prime Minister will be sufficient to win the coming general election comfortably. Secondly, the huge push to infrastructure related expenditure will make way for a new social compact encompassing those who have means and ability to be a part of “aspirational India”, leaving behind in lurch the marginalized people of

India. Let me end with a quote from P. Sainath’s book “Everybody Loves a Good Draught”.

“Extremely poor people go into destitution making way for firing ranges, jet fighter plants, coal mines, power projects, dams, sanctuaries, prawn and shrimp farms, even poultry farms. If the costs they bear are the ‘price’ of development, then the rest of the ‘nation’ is having one endless free lunch.”

The FY 20-21 has been omitted because it was the year of pandemic and the Fiscal deficit jumped to 9.2% of GDP at market prices. □□□

**Reference:**

Buchanan J.M. and R. E. Wagner (1977): Liberty Fund edition 2000, Democracy in Deficit.Pp190, Chapter 12.



## THE ONSLAUGHT OF DIGITAL MEDIA

## A Tale of One Kalida

*Sukanta Sarkar*

**T**HE PLIGHT OF KALIDA relates to a northern suburb bordering Kolkata on the west bank of the Ganga. The locality is dominated by lower-middle class and middle class people. Now it is a small town with about two million inhabitants. There are shops, markets, branches of several banks, ATMs, post offices, primary, secondary, higher secondary schools. There is also a very old library. Then there is a small newspaper stall in the market of this town. 65 years old Kalipada Ghosh has been running this stall for the past 45 years. Even 10-12 years ago, this small stall used to see quite a large crowd in the morning and evening as well. In addition to daily newspapers, Bengali and English magazines were also available in the stall. Hardworking, honest and decent Kalipada Ghosh is popularly known as Kalida to all the locals. In the morning, he opens his stall after delivering daily morning news papers from house to house. By doing this business of newspapers hawking, he gradually built a house of his own in this town. Kalida's family is full of wife, two sons, a daughter-in-law, granddaughter and brother. This very Kalida is not feeling well lately. He looks distressed almost all the time. Because, his business is gradually declining. And it reached its peak during the time of Corona in 2020. At that time many permanent customers stopped taking paper at home due to the fear of 'infection'. As a result of the lockdown, the stall of Kalida also had to be closed for several days. Then after the opening of the stall, he noticed that the number of people coming to the stall started

decreasing, somewhat abnormally. Even after the official lifting of the Corona warning over a year ago, the picture has not only remained the same, but has become even grimmer. Although, some people come to the stall in the morning, it is not at all comparable to what was the scene before. And very few people come to buy magazines in the evening. The number of magazines in the stalls has also reduced a lot. English magazines are now rare at the stall barring a few related to competitive exams. When asked why they don't keep English magazines, Kalida said with a disappointed tone, "Now nobody even looks for these magazines ". Selling of daily newspapers is also getting worse with every passing day. A few years ago, he used to deliver more than 400 papers at home daily, now it has come down to around 300. "Often, one or the other house says, don't give paper from tomorrow or from next month. No one reads the paper at home." He said, "where there are elderly people, they still read newspaper. Youngsters at home all read paper on mobiles these days. They don't even touch the newspaper."

Print media is facing the onslaught of digital media through internet every moment. There are 10-12 more people like Kalida in this small town. They sell newspapers and periodicals. Their condition is also very deplorable. Kalida said, 'some people are thinking of alternative livelihood by leaving this line'. Tired of coping with the decline of the business Kalida is now even telling to his close friends and well-wishers about winding up the business. A sense of hopelessness haunts him all the time.

Before the internet spread its net, print media, mainly newspapers were the only means of getting news and information. But, especially in the last two to three decades, it can be said that there has been a rapid revolution in the field of information technology. And it is going strong. No one knows at this moment where this revolutionary action will lead the world in the future. Digital media or new media, especially social media is the biggest threat to newspaper or print media in today's world. Not only in India but all over the world. Dozens of print journals have stopped publication; both here and abroad. A newspaper or a magazine that readers hold and read upside down is technically called hard copy. And what is read on social media on digital platform mainly through smartphone, laptop or computer is called soft copy. Access to digital media has become almost essential for the new generation and even for a large section of the elderly, especially in cities for work and education. While lying in bed in the morning, on the way to office, on the way to work, whenever one wants to go back and forth, it has become a habit for most of the young and urban middle-aged people to check not only the country's news, but also the news of different countries on their smartphones. A recent survey claims that around 40 million people in India now own smartphones. The number is increasing every day. The number of people reading with paper in hand is decreasing horribly.

Print media is also using this revolutionary change in information technology in various ways. With the help of modern technology, unexpected changes have taken place in the field of printing. Millions of copies are being printed quickly with a few working hands in a very short time. Technology has penetrated the

very inner working arrangement of newspapers. In the newsrooms too the old scenario has changed. Today, journalists no longer write news on paper. Copy is written on desktops, laptops and even on smartphones. Besides, editing, page-make-up is also done on computer. Therefore, there is no denying the fact that the revolution in information technology has also revolutionised printing and all aspects relating to printing.

If one talks about digital media, first of all it is said that the latest status and updates are available in moments. If one wants to know that update through the newspaper, he or she will have to wait for a day. Another big thing is that, apart from the papers that are available in the newspaper stalls, the news of the country and abroad can be seen or read at any time on digital media. In digital media, especially in social media, the reader can directly present their own opinion and exchange opinions if needed. It is interactive. Another thing is that news in digital media is very brief. But, the arguments against digital media are not weak at all. First, digital media is not yet accessible to all and most people in a backward country like India are computer illiterate. Hackers can easily distort news or information by attacking digital media and spreading false or fake news very easily which is not easy for the

reader to verify. Any news can be easily deleted or erased in digital media. There is another area of great concern; several studies have shown that prolonged exposure to smartphones, laptops or tablets has adverse effects on the eyes.

On the other hand, in print media, be it newspaper or periodical, the text that is printed cannot be altered or distorted in any way. News or matter written by print media remains from century to century. That writing cannot be deleted in any way. Reports in print media which means in newspapers or magazines are very detailed and in-depth. In today's fast-paced and busy era, digital media has become an essential part of people's lives, but print media is still number one in terms of credibility.

However, seeing the growing popularity of digital media, almost all newspapers operating in the country have also started their digital editions since several years ago. There have also been layoffs in almost all departments, throwing many journalists and staff out of employment, arguing that newspaper sales have declined due to the use of information technology and the introduction of digital media. Journalists or non-journalists are undoubtedly in trouble. Retrenched journalists are now working for various news portals or book publishers for very low wages and some have changed their profession

altogether. Most of them also have no permanent jobs. Laid-off non-journalists are also forced to work many odd jobs for paltry sum in small private firms or spend their days doing piecemeal business, insurance agencies etc. Apart from journalists, non-journalists, there are hawkers in the world of newspapers. Without them there is no alternative to reach the people for the newspaper. Hawkers are an integral part of newspapers establishments. So, if paper sales decline due to digital media, Kalida's existence is really in jeopardy. The people like Kalida will soon be members of a vanishing tribe. In this situation, hawkers' organisation leaders suggest changing careers. Hawkers, who have been selling newspapers for twenty, thirty, or even forty years are now in their mid-forties, fifties or mid-sixties like Kalida. How can they take up any new profession at this stage and mobilise some capital to do something else! Leaders of hawker organisations are absolving themselves of responsibility by suggesting a change of profession. Then who will stand next to Kalida? But still, there is only one place of hope in this dire situation--- the reader. Every day some money is wasted by everyone. Dear readers, remember newspapers are still available for at least a rupee less than the cheapest cigarettes available in the market!

□□□

---

## A TRIBUTE

# Sankar Roy—a Man of Many Traits

*Nityananda Ghosh*

**V**ETERAN JOURNALIST, once the card holder of Communist Party of India (CPI) and a man of many traits Sankarda (Roy) died on 21st February—the international mother tongue day at a private hospital near east-

ern metropolitan bypass in Kolkata after prolonged sufferings from a undiagnosed disease. This correspondent embraced deep grief during the month of January and February 2023 with the demise of international Marx scholar professor Paresh Chattopa-

dhyay who had contributed to Frontier for nearly about five decades, Debashis Bhattacharya (one of the pioneer activists in the field of human rights movement in Bengal and a noted journalist both in print and electronic media), Ashoktaru Chakraborty (a documentary filmmaker working in All India Radio as a political correspondent), Sankarda and lastly Nilmoni, this correspondent's youngest brother. All these

March 26-April 1, 2023

FRONTIER

11

personal losses are irreparable. Frontier readers are very much acquainted with the writings of Paresh Chattopadhyay and of Sankarda and also of Debashisda (who had contributed occasionally). Is it a coincidence that all of them departed within a short span of one month? Whatever it may be, the readers recollect them for their contribution in their own field. Pareshda came to Kolkata (his native place) last time in the year 2012 when senior friends like Sankarda and Prof Sovanlal Dutta Gupta had arranged two lectures of Pareshda, one in Conclave hotel near Park Circus and the other at Presidency College. Before 2022 Sankarda and his close associates did not meet Pareshda face to face although he was very much familiar with his in-depth writings on Marx which had been published either in the Autumn Number of Frontier or in the regular issues and also in the Economic and Political Weekly (EPW). Sankarda too contributed to Frontier on various issues both in regular issues and Autumn Numbers.

In true sense Sankarda was a Calcuttan born in Bhabanipur of south Kolkata. Completing matriculation from South Suburban School he got admitted to St Xavier's College to obtain I Sc Certificate. Then he got admitted to Indian Statistical Institute and obtained diploma from this Institute of excellence. He joined Communist Party in the sixties, became a whole-timer and acted as personal secretary of Dr Ranen Sen, once the secretary of CPI, Bengal Provincial Committee, and an ex Member of Parliament. In the mid-sixties his carrier took a turn and he joined the 'Kalantar', the CPI organ, as a reporter. Once he also started his carrier working in the Government of West Bengal Agricultural Planning Department as a statistician, but that was short lived. He

worked at Kapoxil too and from there he joined Capital in which the legendary communist leader Jolly Mohan Kaul was the editor. More or less six decades he continued his carrier as a journalist associated with so many national dailies, including 'Business and Political Observer' of Ambani group (which later on changed into only 'The Observer'), 'New Indian Express', 'The Hindu', 'The Statesman', 'The Telegraph', 'The Deccan Herald', 'The Sakal Times' and to name a few. Besides, he contributed in weekly, fortnightly and monthly journals viz. 'Frontier', the 'Mainstream', 'Darpane Muktamon', 'Saptaha', 'Janaswartha Barta', 'Ajker Desobrat', 'the Liberation' the 'Parliamentarian', 'Techno junction's', 'Muktaneswsa' (published from Bangladesh) etc. His write-ups had been referred either or reprinted in neighbouring countries' journals. He was a living encyclopedia and generous in helping the young journalists, politicians, NGO's. Anybody can gauge his prodigious knowledge on so many subjects e.g. politics, communist movements, history, political history, political economy, music, sports, art and culture, Marx thoughts, environment, climate change, agriculture, poetry etc. His lineage with D L Roy, the great man of the 19th century Bengal, was never being exposed. Once he contributed the assigned news items of late Baren Bhattacharya for six months while he was seriously ill suffering from liver cirrhosis and pancreatitis. He least bothered about maintaining his family and boudi (Sankarda's wife) had to take the family burden while his life was dedicated for other's benevolence.

Several times this correspondent had requested Sankarda to write books to share his vast experiences he had gathered during his long journey of 82 years but he was not interested. Albeit he had edited five

books in his life e.g. 'Bipanna Paribesh' (endangered environment) published from Nagarik Mancha, 'Marx, Paris Commune O Leninbad' (Marx, Paris Commune and Leninism) published from Calcutta Marx Circle, 'Anya Ek Marx' (Other Marx written by Marcello Musto of York University, Canada and translated it in Bengali by Sankarda) published by Aakhar, a North 24 Parganas based publication, 'Marx, Marxbad O Anyanyo' (Marx, Marxism and Others) Published by Anustup, a Kolkata based periodical and 'Probing and Re-probing' essays in Marxian reawakening—published by Aakar, Delhi (jointly edited by Sankar Roy and Saibal Gupta). Except the last book (published in the year 2022 and in English) all other books are written in Bengali. Sankarda's experiences and knowledge were vast but all those were untapped.

Once this correspondent had interviewed Pareshda (Chattopadhyay) on 'The Unexplored Marx' which was published in the Frontier (April 8-14 2012, pg. 6-7) and Sankarda took the cudgel to translate it from Bengali to English. In this interview a question was put before Pareshda how he had tried to bring together Marx's theorisation—workers' self authority or self activity—and world famous poet Rabindranath Tagore's 'Sammilito Atmokortritwa' ('Self-governing society'). His answer was—"The momentary goal of Marx's 'self-activity' is self earned liberation of workers—male and female. The perspective of Rabindranath Tagore's 'Sammilito Atmokortritwa' is apparently greater. No particular class, but common men and women were in his mind. For one thing Rabindranath's idea stated in his "Swadeshi Samaj" (patriotic society) took shape in an environment of British imperialist rule in early twentieth century if read attentively. It will be evident that

ultimately, the two ideations are essentially the same in subsequent years, Rabindranath told of self-activity to the dwellers of Santiniketan without class array. To mention this particular part of Pareshda's interview is to make apprise the readers of Frontier that Sankarda along with Pareshda mooted an idea to write a book on Marx and Rabindranath's

ideations about human being's emancipation but the work remains unfinished.

Sankarda generously helped so many young and old friends who are familiar to him even in the era of social media; he was very much net savvy and very often put anybody's article in the face book which had pro-people contents. He

lived in a family just like a bachelor. Such a big hearted and open-minded man's demise left a huge vacuum. He is survived by his only son Yudhajit, daughter-in-law Amrita, wife, daughter like Savitri, grand daughter Mahi, beloved ones, friends, comrades and many persons who are used to like his forte and fortitude. □□□

#### AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

## Against Dogmatic Marxist Strategy

*Arup Baisya*

**T**HE STATICITY OF MIND-set in Marxist praxis emerges from two mutually exclusive theoretical underpinnings. Marx explained the laws of motion of modern society as both the laws of motion that produce society and the laws of motion produced by society. But the practising Marxists either end up being mechanistic or constructivist by positioning themselves on one side or the other. Marxism is neither Newtonian natural law nor Hegelian dialectical law.

While analysing Capital as social relations, one of Marx's historical abstractions is the law of value. From this Marxist understanding of the law of capital on the production of surplus value, it is presumed that in a capitalist system, wages are at least equal to the value of labour-power and this is valid for every historical moment. But in the history of capitalism as a global system, it is seldom found that the capitalist production system follows this formulation. Marx also indicated that "we must stop for a moment to examine" how this presumption is negated in the historical unfolding of capital. The law of value and its negation form a 'unity of opposites' whose motion determines the actual social reality in every moment of time.

In Capital, Marx emphasised that

competition is the fundamental characteristic of a capitalist production system. Due to this competition, the 'organic composition of capital increases and thereby causing both over-production and profit rates to fall. Capital then moves from one space-time continuum to another where the organic composition is low and the pre-capitalist relation of production is predominantly present. But the movement of capital from its core entails that the social relation that signifies capital is already set free in the periphery where capital moves in the form of money, machine, or technology. Capital as dead labour engages the living labour to extract surplus value from the living labour and as such, it transforms all hitherto existing pre-capitalist social relations as a global system of uneven and combined development. The dynamics of capitalist expansion set the labour doubly free, free from all previous bondages, and also free to die. But with its fundamental category of competition inherent in the capitalist mode of production, capitalism cannot sustain itself without the presence of pre-capitalist relations transformed to be under the dominant role of capital, and even without the support of the state. In reality, there is no laissez-faire economy. This dynamic movement

of capital to arrest the falling rate of profit is directed toward transferring more value to the core than the value it transfers to the periphery. The mechanism that transfers value in such a fashion gives rise to a dependent economy within capitalism as a global system. This also indicates that capitalism is inherently imperialistic from its birth.

The dialectical unity of opposites of the law of value and its negation and its motion in time determine the form of capitalism. As Marx said, "We must stop for a moment to examine", in today's world, this dialectical relation is ubiquitous with diverse forms of capitalism in developed and dependent economies. The diffusion of new finance-led growth regimes creates among developed and less developed economies, contradictions that are linked to the diversity of capitalism. A school of practising Indian Marxist revolutionaries cites the presence of pre-capitalist social relations as a mark of a society that is not capitalist. Thus they distort Marxism as a static formulation and ignore the dynamics of capitalism as a unity of opposites in motion. Keeping an eye on the ground will enable followers of Marx to notice that the development of capitalist social relations from within and the influence of penetration of capital from above has transformed the character of pre-capitalist relations like the caste system in India in such a way that these have changed to burn their bridges and

cannot go out of the domination of capital without a revolutionary change under the leadership of working class to do away with capitalism per se. The Indian caste system which exists within an institutional underpinning of the family cannot be dismantled even if India becomes a developed capitalist country.

Marx expected that large factory production will eventually eliminate all small and petty manufacturers and producers, but it was a mere expectation, he did not indicate it as a thumb rule of capitalism. This has not happened in reality. In Marx's economics, sectors such as manufacturing or services are not the basic categories of analysis. Marx divided commodities between Department I and II, depending on whether the commodity is a capital good or wage good; however, he discussed manufacturing at some length, particularly in the context of the production of relative surplus value. The proposition of further development of Marx's analysis of Capital and a new law of value that can analyse the present moment of time should not be left out in the cold. When observations become so large that existing laws cannot explain them, there becomes a paradigm shift in natural science, why it should not be in social science too? But even if the new law is devel-

oped, it also becomes a 'unity of opposites' with its negation.

The Communist Manifesto derided the bourgeois discourse on traditional family ties. He wrote, "The big industry by dissolving the foundation of the traditional family and corresponding family labour has also dissolved the traditional family ties". Far from holding the family division of labour as an institution fixed forever, Marx emphasises that "it is naturally as absurd to hold the Christian-Germanic form of the family as absolute as it is to hold the old Roman, the old Greek or the old Oriental form of the family as absolute—capitalism has become the radical dissolvent of the hitherto existing family." According to Marx, exchange value-producing labour is abstract labour and use value-producing labour is concrete labour. Marx considered use value-producing labour as real labour and the process of producing new use values with existing use value by useful concrete labour is the real labour process. Health and education are the two important sectors where the struggle for creating new use value of labour outside the purview of the market for exchange can be envisioned as an immediate goal to achieve.

The feminist discourse gives an insight into the question of women's labour and rights, but their criticism

of Marx for considering women's domestic labour as unproductive is unfounded. Furthermore, a section of the revolutionary left who considers the pre-capitalist mode of exploitation based on family structure and caste-division of labour as a static category and formulates a strategy of struggle against caste and women oppression and exploitation as political and cultural and the struggle against capitalist relations as economic is completely against the basic tenet of Marxism which rests on the premise of motion in time. The proponents of promoting diversity as a form of struggle for systemic change also do not delve into today's reality where such struggle is not fundamentally anathema to capitalism that promotes diversity in form that Marxism does not rule out as a possibility of capitalism as it unfolds in time. But it is not extravagant to think that the law of value of the capitalist mode of production does not include the additional value which is expropriated by the capitalist as profit in the exchange process of wage-labour from domestic and caste and identity-based labour. The women and the oppressed castes are doubly oppressed and exploited in the capitalist mode of production itself. A strategy needs to be evolved for generating class-struggles against capitalism in its entirety. □□

---

## THE JAWS OF POWER

---

### Of Secrecy and Democracy

*John Scales Avery*

**A**CCORDING TO THE NUREMBERG Principles, the citizens of a country have a responsibility for the crimes that their governments commit. But to prevent these crimes, the people need to have some knowledge of what is going on. Indeed, democracy cannot function at all without this knowledge.

What is to be done when governments make every effort to keep their actions secret from their own citizens? One can only conclude that although they may call themselves democracies, such governments are in fact oligarchies or dictatorships.

At the end of World War I, it was realised that secret treaties had been

responsible for its outbreak, and an effort was made to ensure that diplomacy would be more open in the future. Needless to say, these efforts did not succeed, and diplomacy has remained a realm of secrecy.

Many governments have agencies for performing undercover operations (usually very dirty ones). One can think, for example of the KGB, the CIA, M5, or Mossad. How can countries that have such agencies claim to be democracies, when the voters have no knowledge

of or influence over the acts that are committed by the secret agencies of their governments?

Nuclear weapons were developed in secret. It is doubtful whether the people of the United States would have approved of the development of such anti-human weapons, or their use against an already-defeated Japan, if they had known that these things were going to happen. The true motive for the nuclear bombings was also kept secret. In the words of General Groves, speaking confidentially to colleagues at Los Alamos, the real motive was “to control the Soviet Union”.

The true circumstances surrounding the start of the Vietnam war would never have been known if Daniel Ellsberg had not leaked the Pentagon Papers. Ellsberg thought that once the American public realised that their country’s entry into the war was based on a lie, the war would end. It did not end immediately, but undoubtedly Ellsberg’s action contributed to the end of the war.

In a democracy, the power of judging and controlling governmental policy is supposed to be in the hands of the people. It is completely clear that if the people do not know what their government is doing, then they cannot judge or control governmental policy, and democracy has been abolished. There has always been a glaring contradiction between democracy and secret branches of the government, such as the CIA, which conducts its assassinations and its dirty wars in South America with-

**For Frontier Contact**

**ALAIGAL VELIYEETAGAMI**

4/9, 4th Main Road,  
Ragavendra Guest House  
United India Colony,  
Kodambakkam  
Chennai 600 024

out any public knowledge or control.

The gross, wholesale electronic spying on citizens revealed by Snowden seems to be specifically aimed at eliminating democracy. It is aimed at instilling universal fear and conformity, fear of blackmail and fear of being out of step, so that the public will not dare to oppose whatever the government does, no matter how criminal or unconstitutional.

The Magna Carta is trashed. No one dares to speak up. Habeas Corpus is trashed. No one dares to speak up. The United Nations Charter is trashed. No one dares to speak up. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is trashed. No one dares to speak up. The Fourth Amendment to the US Constitution is trashed. No one dares to speak up. The President claims the right to kill both US and foreign citizens, at his own whim. No one dares to speak up.

But perhaps this is unjust. Perhaps some people would dare to protest, except that they cannot get their protests published in the mainstream media. One must remember that the media are owned by the same corporate oligarchs who own the government.

George Orwell, you should be living today! People need your voice today! After Snowden’s revelations, the sale of Orwell’s “1984” soared. It is now on the bestseller list. Sadly, Orwell’s dystopian prophesy has proved to be accurate in every detail.

Nobody knows what will happen to Julian Assange. If his captors send him to the US, and if he dies there for the crime of publishing leaked documents (a crime that he shares with the New York Times), he will not be the first martyr to the truth. The ageing Galileo was threatened with torture and forced to recant his heresy—that the earth moves around the sun. Galileo spent the remainder of his days in house ar-

rest. Gordiano Bruno was less lucky. He was burned at the stake for maintaining that the universe is larger than it was then believed to be. If Julian Assange becomes a martyr to the truth like Galileo or Bruno, his name will be honoured by generations in the future, and the shame of his captors will be remembered too.

What is the excuse for the massive spying reported by Snowden, spying not only on US citizens but also on the citizens of other countries throughout the world? “We want to protect you from terrorism.”, the government answers. But terrorism is not a real threat, it is an invented one. It was invented by the military-industrial complex because, at the end of the Cold War, this enormous money-making conglomerate lacked enemies.

Globally, the number of people killed by terrorism is vanishingly small compared to the number of children who die from starvation every year. It is even vanishingly small compared with the number of people who are killed in automobile accidents. It is certainly small compared with the number of people killed in wars aimed at gaining western hegemony over oil-rich regions of the world.

The revelations of Edward Snowden and others have shown that the number of people involved in secret operations of the United States government is now as large as the entire population of Norway: roughly 5 million. The influence of this dark side of government has become so great that no president is able to resist it. □□□

[Many of the author’s freely downloadable books can be found at the following web addresses:  
<https://www.johnavery.info/>, <http://eacpe.org/about-john-scales-avery/>

John Scales Avery is a theoretical chemist at the University of Copenhagen. He is noted for his books and research publications in quantum chemistry, thermodynamics, evolution, and history of science.]

## LETTERS

**No Peace**

Recently Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov repeated Moscow's stance that it is open to peace negotiations but Kyiv and its Western allies must accept Russia's annexation of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions after referendums last September that most governments said were illegal.

"The constitution of the Russian Federation exists, and cannot be ignored. Russia will never be able to compromise on this, these are important realities", Peskov told reporters.

Despite several battlefield setbacks, Russia still controls about a fifth of Ukrainian territory. Kyiv has so far ruled out talks with Moscow and has demanded that Russian troops withdraw to Ukraine's borders in 1991—the year the Soviet Union collapsed.

Meanwhile the International Criminal Court's top prosecutor Karim Khan was in Ukraine to investigate Russia's campaign of missile and drone attacks on power and other infrastructure that killed hundreds of civilians and left millions with no electricity or water.

DP

**'The Trillion Dollar Silence'**

It appears that the military-industrial complex has complete control of the government of the United States, which recently voted to give the Pentagon roughly a trillion dollars of the tax-payers money. This was done by cutting back on social programmes which would have helped poor working families.

Recently Joan Roelofs published a book entitled "The Trillion Dollar Silencer: Why There Is So Little Anti-War Protest in the United States" (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2022). In this book, she points out that the US military-industrial complex has located military bases in regions

where the local economy is entirely dependent on them. The vast river of money flowing into the pockets of the military-industrial complex implies that very many people earn their living, directly, or indirectly, from the manufacture or use of weapons.

Why is there bipartisan support for sending many billions of dollars worth of advanced weaponry to Ukraine, thus gradually escalating the war into an extremely dangerous proxy war between Russia and the United States together with its NATO allies? The great danger is that the escalation of the conflict will result in nuclear war. However, politicians from both US political parties are so blinded by nationalism that they believe the risks to be necessary in order to "weaken Russia", thus asserting American global hegemony.

As if the proxy war with Russia were not enough, the US government, driven by the greed of the military-industrial complex, has begun to threaten a war with China.

To justify obscenely enormous government spending on weapons, the military-industrial complex does not need actual war—only the threat of war. But threats can lead to actual war, even if no one wants it, as one should have learned from the outbreak of World War I.

*John Scales Avery***G20**

As India assumed G20 Presidency in November 2022, as a representative of the countries of the Global South, it can play a vital role in the face of extreme wealth inequality, increasing ecological devastation, pro-corporate regulatory regimes and criminalisation of dissent.

The G20 was constituted by the finance ministers of the G7 group of countries in 1999 in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis to unite finance ministers and central bankers from twenty of the world's largest economies. At a primary level, its

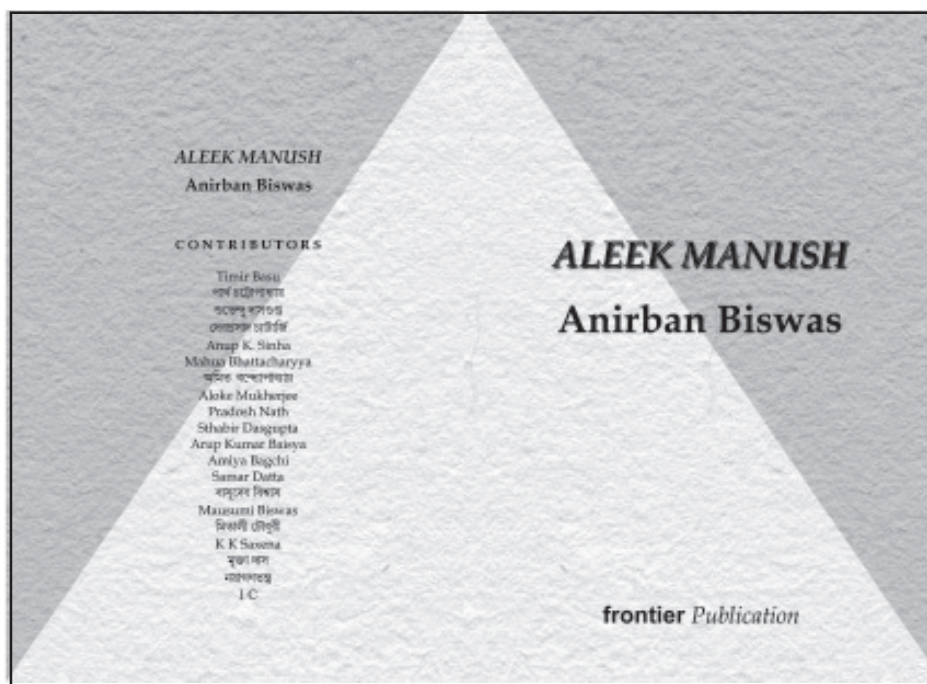
mandate was to discuss monetary, fiscal and exchange rate policies, infrastructure investment, financial regulation, financial inclusion, international taxation etc. With time, G20's appetite to discuss more issues (beyond finance and economic policy) increased with the Sherpa track (such as issues like health, education etc.) and various engagement groups. With the Sherpa track the ensuing presidency keeps forth its priorities, while the engagement groups and the processes associated with them are supposed to be independent of the government. However, several of these engagement groups often turn into a platform for corporations (for example, kicking the can down the road with more loans and debt suspension instead of looking at debt cancellation) and their allied interest groups. Over the years, the year-long presidency becomes a popular networking event for the rich and the powerful under the pretence of saving the world, leaving very little space for groups that are critical of neoliberalism to put forth any alternative paradigms. Over the years, the Sherpa track, Finance track, and the engagement groups have stayed in the realm of being high-end talk-shops with no representation of people's agenda.

G20 has remained as an exclusive club, a forum to save capitalism at the highest political level through the promotion of neoliberal policies. This provides an important imperative for the progressive civil society groups to raise questions around G20's accountability and more importantly its legitimacy as a forum of global economic governance.

**Endorsed by:**  
**Jawhar Sircar, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha**  
**Medha Patkar, Narmada Bachao Andolan/National Alliance of People's Movements**  
**Teesta Setalvad,**  
**Sabrang India & others**

# A **frontier** Publication

Just Released



## **ALEEK MANUSH**

**Anirban Biswas**

**COMPILATION TEAM:**

TIMIR BASU, ARUP SEN, NABINANDA SEN, TARUN BASU

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

TIMIR BASU, PARTHA CHATTOPADHYAY, SHUBHENDU DASGUPTA,  
DEBAPROSAD CHATTERJEE, ANUP K. SINHA, MAHUA BHATTACHARYYA,  
AMIT BANDYOPADHYAY, ALOKE MUKHERJEE, PRADOSH NATH, STHABIR  
DASGUPTA, ARUP KUMAR BAISYA, AMIYA BAGCHI, SAMAR DATTA,  
BASUDEB BISWAS, MAUSUMI BISWAS, MITALI CHOWDHURY, K K SAXENA,  
MUKTA DAS, NAYAGANATANTRA, I C

Available at:

Frontier Office, Patiram Stall (College Street), Dhyانبindu  
and other book stalls selling issues of frontier.

**Contribution: INR 100**