

frontier

Vol. 56 : No. 32

ISSN 0016-2094

February 4-10, 2024

Founder-Editor : **SAMAR SEN**

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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

Website : <https://www.frontierweekly.com>
Telephone : 2530-0065

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

Continuing Conflict

PEOPLE IN GAZA ARE SUFFERING FROM A LACK OF FOOD, water, medicine and adequate healthcare. Famine will make an already terrible situation catastrophic because sick people are more likely to succumb to starvation and starving people are more vulnerable to disease". That was World Health Organisation Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Who is listening? Nobody. At least not the warring parties in the conflict-Israel and Hamas. Urgent humanitarian appeals were made by both the Pope and the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres during their addresses at the World Economic Forum [WEF] in Davos. Perhaps they were delivering speeches at wrong platform because Davos people were more concerned about economic growth and technology, not 'war and peace'. Francis Pope urged world leaders to tackle the "injustices that are at the root causes of conflict, primarily hunger and the exploitation of natural resources for the benefit of few." Pope who has defended the poor and immigrants during his 11-year-old papacy cannot alter the very rules that justify the unjust world order.

Also, at the WEF the UN Secretary General expressed his concerns about violation of international law, in Israel-Hamas war. Guterres said both sides were ignoring rules of war trampling on the Geneva Conventions, and even violating the United Nations Charter. He even repeated his call for an immediate humanitarian cease-fire in Gaza, and a process that leads to sustained peace for Israelis and Palestinians, based on a two-state solution. But Israel has summarily rejected the idea of a Palestinian state. Major Powers and a large number of Arab Countries, including Saudi Arabia, are in favour of two-nation theory. But on this issue Biden and Netanyahu are at odds. The US administration is hoping to secure an Israeli-Saudi normalisation deal in exchange for a Palestinian state. Like the right-wing in Israel, the hard liners in the Arab World, backed by Iran are against two-state solution. They deny the very existence of Israel. Two parallel lines never meet.

The hidden agenda of Israel is to execute a plan of mass transfer of Palestinians out of their historic land either through force or by making Palestinian life in Gaza and occupied territories untenable or unbearable. The demographic reality Israel now faces is against its design to deny the Palestinians their legitimate right—the right to land and right to livelihood. The number of Palestinian Arabs in areas under Israel's control is now 7.4

million—greater than 7.2 million Israeli Jews inside Israel and occupied territories. What Israel wants is to transfer huge number of Palestinians out of territories under Israeli control from Gaza into Egypt and from West Bank into Jordan. In any future arrangement after the war Israel demands security control of all territory west of Jordan. This idea clashes with the idea of Palestinian sovereignty.

Israel doesn't want to end the war without retaining full control over Gaza and occupied territories. There is no end in sight to the fighting in Gaza, with the death toll surpassing 25,000. As Netanyahu has virtually ruled out the possibility of a Palestinian state after the war

ends, millions of Gaza residents are in limbo, having no future.

Talking about humanitarian crisis by the international community every now and then doesn't make the situation easier for the Palestinians who are the victims of Israel's planned ethnic cleansing programme. Without any lasting peace initiative mere harmless press statements won't change the ground reality—continued Israeli bombardment and ground offensive in the Palestinian enclave in response to the Hamas October 7 attack. 2.3 million Gazans have already been driven from their homes and more are likely to flee the war. 350,000 housing units have been completely or partially damaged in Gaza. It will take years to rebuild

them even if peace returns at this juncture, the possibility of which seems remote.

The current conflict didn't begin with the October 7 incident. Nor is it limited to Gaza alone. It all started with the 1948 war in which about 750,000 people were dispossessed of their homes. Then came the 1967 war which led to Israel's occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem and produced an estimated 300,000 new Palestinian refugees.

Unless Israel ends its occupation of Palestinian land lasting peace will never return to the region. In truth a sovereign Palestine is the only guarantee to Israel's existence. □□□

21-01-2024

COMMENT

Money Matters

IN ONE YEAR THE BHARATIYA Janata Party [BJP] spent Rs 19 crore (Rs 190 million) on Google Ads to attract voters and highlight Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi's achievements.

These advertisements were run across different Web sites, predominantly YouTube, from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023.

They were run mostly during the assembly elections held in different states last year.

The BJP spent Rs 7.2 crore (Rs 72 million) in Karnataka but lost the assembly election there.

In Rajasthan the party spent Rs 2.98 crore (Rs 29.8 million), and won the election.

In Madhya Pradesh, which too the BJP won, the expenditure incurred was Rs 2.81 crore (Rs 28.1 million).

They spent Rs 1.48 crore (Rs 14.8 million) in the Chhattisgarh assembly election and won, but after spending Rs 1.92 crore (Rs 19.2 million) in Telangana they lost.

In Assam and Meghalaya, the BJP spent Rs 66.4 lakh (Rs 6.64 million) and Rs 43.3 lakh (Rs 4.33 million) respectively.

In Tripura they spent Rs 34.5 lakh (Rs 3.45 million), and Rs 14.9 lakh (Rs 1.49 million) in Manipur.

Two advertisements were particularly shown more than 10 million times, incurring a media expenditure of Rs 30 lakh (Rs 3 million) on each.

These advertisements were run during the Karnataka assembly election and in Kannada.

They were run from March 20 to May 1, 2023, days before Karnataka went to polls on May 10.

Surprisingly, the BJP's nearest rival in ad spend was not the Congress, but the Bharat Rashtira Samithi, which spent Rs 12.1 crore (Rs 121 million) last year.

The BRS spent 11.9 crore (Rs 119 million) in Telangana state and Rs 16.5 lakh (Rs 1.65 million) in Andhra Pradesh.

In Karnataka they spent Rs 270,000 and in Tamil Nadu Rs 160,000.

In Maharashtra they spent Rs 92,000 last year.

Three BRS advertisements ran over 10 million times each from November 24 to November 28 last year. Despite this heavy spend, the BRS lost to the Congress in the assembly elections.

The Congress spent less, just Rs 4.59 crore (Rs 45.9 million), but all of this money was restricted to Karnataka alone.

In Telangana which the Congress won, they spent a measly Rs 3,250 crore whereas the BRS spent a whopping Rs 11.9 crore and ended up on the losing side.

The BJP spent 1.92 crore (Rs 19.2 million) on Telangana elections, according to the Google Ads Transparency Centre.

The Congress spent no money on Google Ads for elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

The Bahujan Samaj Party too tested the waters in this election by spending Rs 43,250 on Google ads.

Election funding is a complex issue. How the parties collect funds and big companies donate to cultivate their relations with the persons in power deserves serious attention. Then the “opaque” electoral bonds scheme for funding political parties will ‘destroy democracy’ as it promotes corruption and does not allow a level playing field between the ruling and opposition parties. Advocate Prashant Bhusan, appearing for NGO Association for Democratic Rights (ADR), told a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud that the electoral bonds scheme defeats the citizen’s right to be informed about sources of funding of political parties, which is a fundamental right under Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution.

Then parties in power resort to

dubious means to utilise government funds to advertise their achievements with the sole purpose of influencing voters. Very recently, even Arvind Kejriwal’s Aam Aadmi Party otherwise, a small party, running governments in Delhi and Punjab, has been issued a notice for recovery of Rs 163.62 crore for its political advertisements allegedly published in the garb of government advertisements. It can be easily guessed how much money big parties, rather ruling parties, spend for vote. Corporate funding of elections is an old disease and big companies will continue to grease the palms of the political stalwarts to secure undue business concessions.. In a way the licence and permit raj has not really ended! □□□

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NOTE

Survival Issues

B D writes:

IT IS RELATIVELY EASIER TO achieve wide agreement that those problems which threaten the basic life-nurturing conditions of earth—such as accumulation of weapons of mass destruction, climate change and other aspects of environmental crisis—constitute the most important issue before humanity. The more difficult part is to mobilise most people on this issue.

One serious obstacle is that most people are too preoccupied in their smaller day-to-day problems to be able to respond adequately to issues which, despite their undoubted importance, appear to be rather distant to people compared to their immediate preoccupations. This may be true for most people in different contexts, but this is perhaps most clearly seen in the context of poorer people involved in a daily struggle to meet basic needs.

Hence the most effective way to take forward the most important survival issues is to integrate them closely with the objective of meeting the basic needs of all people of the entire world with dignity. Once such integration exists and is explained to people clearly, what appeared to be distant concerns earlier now become issues which are close to heart and for which people are willing to work in a very committed way.

Secondly, social relations need to be improved at all levels. The deterioration in social relations has led to avoidable distress and tensions on a huge scale, eroding the capacity of people for assuming bigger responsibilities. On the other hand when relations of trust, sincerity, love and caring exist at various levels, then people are much more capable of taking up bigger responsibilities. When women are not held back by

useless social restrictions, then a community’s capacity for good work increases significantly. When there is inter-faith harmony and useless social divisions and discriminations are avoided, then the ability of people to take forward big responsibilities with unity and cooperation increase tremendously.

Thirdly, continuing efforts should be made, at the level of community and educational institutions and at other levels, to change human values that shape human behaviour in important ways—from greed to need, from high individualism to community commitments, from selfishness to much higher concerns for others, from a craze for luxury and grandeur to voluntary and happy acceptance of a simple life of limited needs and small comforts, from an exaggerated emphasis on one’s own faith and beliefs to inter-faith harmony and respect for beliefs of others.

Fourthly, care should be taken to remove misgivings regarding the changes that are envisaged. To give an example, talk about a no-wars

future may create a feeling among soldiers and members of all armed forces that they may lose their jobs. However if they are told that all their jobs, salaries and benefits will be fully protected and all that is involved is that they will be re-trained to shift to tasks such as disaster-rescue, disaster prevention and ecological rejuvenation of the planet, then they may extend their full support for the Road to 2024 as

they lose nothing while getting a safer future in jobs which involve protecting people instead of killing them. Similarly those workers who get their livelihood from fossil fuels can be assured that moves away from fossil fuels will be accompanied by strong efforts to ensure that they have alternative sources of employment and income.

A lot of good work is being done by several people and organisations

already for peace, harmony, environment protection, safety and justice. The efforts for protecting the essential life-nurturing conditions of earth should seek to involve and include them all but at the same time additional linkages need to be made in such a way that all these efforts can be linked also to the broader vision of protecting life-nurturing conditions within a framework of justice, peace and democracy. □□

ROAD TO 2024

Riddles of Ram Temple at Ayodhya

Shamsul Islam

ACCORDING TO THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA (Ayodhya Judgment dated November 9, 2019),

“The exclusion of the Muslims from worship and possession took place on the intervening night between 22/23 December 1949 when the mosque was desecrated by the installation of Hindu idols.” [Supreme Court Ayodhya Judgment, pp. 921-22] The idol of Ram Lalla (Ram as child) which was placed under the central dome of the Babri Mosque (claimed to be the exact place where RAM took birth) was made of metal and was of nine inches tall. It was the idol which was worshipped that time onward and continued to be worshipped after demolition of the Babri Mosque on December 6, 1992 in the make-shift temple by Hindus.

At the time of writing Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on his way to consecrate a 51-inch stone idol of Ram Lalla through a Brahmanical ritual called as ‘pran-pratishtha’ (putting soul into an idol ceremony) in the newly built Ram Temple at Ayodhya.

RSS and PM Modi glorify founder of Arya Samaj, Swami Dayanand Saraswati as barrage of the Hindu

nation. It will be pertinent to know what Swami said about idol worship and consecration of idols. All those interested must read chapter 11 of his masterpiece, Satyarth Prakash (Light of Truth). In this book dealing with this issue he raised following issues which RSS and Modi must respond:

“If as you say that the God comes into the image when invoked, why does not the idol show signs of consciousness and why does not the image also leave when the God is asked to depart? Whence does it come and here does it go? The fact of the matter is that the All-pervading Spirit can neither come into and idol, nor, leave it. If you mantras are efficacious that you can summon God, why can you not infuse life into your dead son by the force of the very same mantras? Again why can you not bid the soul depart from the body of your enemy?”

“The soul is possessed of consciousness, while idol is dead and inert. Do you mean to say that the soul should also lose its consciousness and become lifeless like the idol? Idol worship is a fraud.”

“There is not a single verse in the Vedas to sanction invocation of

the Deity and vitalisation of the idol, likewise there is nothing to indicate that it is right to invoke idols, to bathe them, to install them in temples and apply sandal paste to them.”

“The formless Supreme Spirit that pervades the universe can have no material representation, likeness or image.” YAJUR VEDA 32: 3.”

It was no ordinary religious inauguration of a grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya on January 22, 2024. It had clear political and polarising agenda attached to it. Underling this character of the inauguration PM Modi declared that “Ram Bhakts have waited for 550 years” to see it happen.

It is not only in India but almost 60 foreign countries where Hindutva organisations were active amongst Hindus to celebrate the January 22.

‘Hindu Americans organised car rally in Washington suburb to celebrate Ram Mandir inauguration’.

Such claims by Indian PM and his Hindutva co-fellows in the world are only spreading hatred against Muslims thus contributing to the Islamophobic narrative in India and abroad. Sadly, such statements are not only in contempt of the Supreme Court Judgment on Ayodhya but also contradict ‘Hindu’ narrative of history.

It may be interesting to note that RSS archives have no document to prove that during the British rule

since its inception in 1925 ever demanded building of Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Supreme Court in its 1039 pages long judgment did not admit that Babri Mosque was built on the ruins of any Ram Temple. It is sad that while religious poison is being spread openly the Supreme Court remains a mute spectator while its findings are being mis-reported.

So far as the 'Hindu' narrative is concerned there is no mention of it in the writings of the most prominent worshipper of Ram to date, Goswami Tulsidas who lived between 1511-1623. He was the person who penned the Epic, RAMCHARITMANAS (Lake of the Deeds of Ram) in Avadhi language which angered the local Brahmins as the story of Ram was not written in Sanskrit. This was the work which mesmerised Hindus of India with the story of Lord Ram and the latter became house-hold deity of every Hindu home, especially in northern India. He penned his above mentioned work during 1575-76. According to the Hindutva version Ram birth-place temple was destroyed during 1538-1539. Thus RAMCHARITMANAS written almost 37 years after the so-called destruction of Ram birth-place temple should have mentioned this destruction. But it did not mention it.

The inauguration of Ram Temple is blatantly being used to denigrate Indian Muslims. The building of the Temple is the defeat of 'Babarzade' (children of Babar) by 'Ramzade' (children of Ram). It is pertinent to know about the nature of 'Muslim' rule in India.

The Hindutva zealots demanding Muslim-free India must know that all 'Muslim' rulers survived due to the Hindu high Castes joining the 'Muslim' rulers in running their empires. How solid this unity was can be gauged by the fact that after

Akbar no Mughal emperor was born of a Muslim mother. Moreover, Hindu high Castes provided brain and muscles to the 'Muslim' rulers faithfully. Likewise, Mughal rule established by Babar who was invited by a section of Hindu kings to seize India was the rule of Hindu high Castes also.

Aurobindo Ghose who played prominent role in providing Hindu foundation to the Indian nationalism confessed that Mughal rule continued for over a century due to the fact that Mughal rulers gave Hindus, "positions of power and responsibility, used their brain and arm to preserve" their kingdom.

Renowned historian Tara Chand relying on the primary source material of the medieval period concluded that from the end of 16th century to the middle of 19th century, "it may reasonably be concluded that in the whole of India, excepting the western Punjab, superior rights in land had come to vest in the hands of Hindus" most of whom happened to be Rajputs. [Chand, Tara, History of the Freedom Movement in India, vol. 1, Publication Division Government of India, Delhi, 1961, p. 124.]

The contemporary records prove that Aurangzeb rule was also the rule of Rajputs and Kshatriyas [members of the two of the four Hindu Castes in order of precedence after Brahmins]. Aurangzeb never faced Shivaji in the battle-field. It was his commander-in-chief, a Rajput ruler of Amer (Rajasthan), Jay Singh I (1611-1667) who was sent to subjugate Shivaji (1603-1680). Jay Singh II (1681-1743), (nephew of Jay Singh I) was other prominent Rajput commander of the Mughal forces who served Aurangzeb. He was conferred the title of 'Sawai' [one and a quarter times superior to his contemporaries] chief by Aurangzeb in 1699 and thus came to be known as

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Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh. He was also given the title of Mirza Raja [a Persian title for a royal prince] by Aurangzeb.

Rajput commanders fighting for Aurangzeb was no exception. Akbar's battles against Rana Pratap were led by one of his brother-in-law, Maan Singh. Maasir al-Umara a biographical dictionary of the officers in the Mughal Empire beginning from 1556 to 1780 [Akbar to Shah Alam] is regarded as the most authentic record of the high rank officials employed by the Mughal kings. According to it Mughal rulers during this period employed around 100 (out of 365) Hindu high-ranking officials most of them being "Rajputs from Rajputana, the midlands, Bundelkhand and Maharashtra". Brahmins followed Rajputs in manning the Mughal administration so far as the number was concerned.

Another crucial fact which is consciously kept under wrap is that despite more than 500 hundreds of effective 'Muslim' rule which according to Hindutva historians was nothing but a project of annihilating Hindus or forcibly converting the latter to Islam, India remained a nation with an absolute Hindu majority. The British rulers held first census in 1871-72. It was the time when even ceremonial 'Muslim' rule was over. According to the Census

report: "The population of British India is, in round numbers, divided into 140½ million [sic] of Hindoos (including Sikhs), or 73½ per cent., 40¾ millions of Mahomedans, or 21½ per cent. [Memorandum on the Census Of British India of 1871-72: Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty London, George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, Her Majesty's Stationary Office 1875, p. 16.]

The inauguration of Ram Temple at Ayodhya is being aggressively used to declare Muslims as enemy of Ram. This kind of pervert Hindutva mind-set has little knowledge of India's past. Mohammad Iqbal penned one of the greatest poems in praise of Ram in Urdu which was titled "Imam-e-Hind" (spiritual leader of India).

Iqbal, accords Ram not only the status of philosophical fountain head of India but of the world.

Sab falsafi hain khita-e-maghrib ke Ram-e-Hind

(All philosophers of the west would have acknowledged India and are fan of Ram).

Deepavali (Festival of Lights) is the most popular Hindu festival in most parts of India. Deepavali is the celebration of Ram's return to his kingdom with wife Sita and his brother Lakshman after defeating Ravan of Lanka. It is celebrated as victory of truth over evil.

Now Deepavali for Ram has a competitor which can be named as PM Modi's Deepavali. Modi declared this plan during a road show in Ayodhya on December 31, 2023. According to him, "The whole world is waiting for the historic moment. With folded hands, I am requesting 140 crore people of the country that on January 22, when the consecration of Ramlalla's idol takes place, light the Ram Jyoti in your house and celebrate Deepavali. The entire

country should sparkle with lights on the evening of January 22."

Thus Deepavali for Ram is being substituted by Deepavali for PM Modi when he appears in the attire of a rishi or Brahmin saint to put soul into the life-less idol of Ram. Interestingly, the Hindutva zealots took this call very seriously by calling Hindus to celebrate January 22 as Maha-Deepavali (Great Deepavali); Deepavali for Ram and Maha-Deepavali for PM Modi!

Ram is known for protecting his people; uphold righteousness, compassion and kindness. Ram is equated with common women/men. His rule is described as Ram Rajya or a rule for the benefit of common people. According to Gandhi it essentially meant, "The land of dharma and a realm of peace, harmony and happiness for young and old, high and low, all creatures and the earth itself, in recognition of a shared universal consciousness."

However, common Hindus were not allowed to join the ceremony on January 22nd. It was made clear by none other than PM Modi who asked common worshippers of Ram not to crowd Ayodhya on January 22. He told them to come later at their convenience because "this time the navya, bhavya, divya (new, grand, divine) temple in Ayodhya is not going anywhere and 'darshan' will be available for centuries".

Sadly, PM Modi did not ask the rich, film actors, industrialists, leading sports persons to come later. In fact, 22nd celebration participation was restricted to a galaxy of Very-Very-Important Persons. PM Modi overlooked the fact that the first invites should have gone to those poor worshippers of Ram who despite miserable life had contributed to the coffers of VHP for building Ram Temple.

The Supreme Court of India has directly helped the VHP and PM Modi

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in becoming the only franchisees of Ayodhya Ram Temple project. The highest court of justice in India corroborated two important facts.

The apex court Judgment nowhere mentioned that Babri Mosque was built after destroying a Ram Temple in the past. [https://scroll.in/article/943337/no-the-supreme-court-did-not-uphold-the-claim-that-babri-masjid-was-built-by-demolishing-a-temple] Despite these findings which talked of “[The] egregious violation of the rule of law” and done not by a “lawful authority but through an act which was calculated to deprive them of their place of worship”, Supreme Court took a U turn handing over the site for Ram Temple building to the same group of Hindutva organisation who had conspired in both the cases. Supreme Court to ensure that no Hindu competitor of RSS-VHP is allowed any participation in latter’s Ram Temple project disallowed claim of Nirmohi Akhada, the original claimant of Ram Temple at the site of Babri Mosque. [Supreme Court Judgment p. 925].

That it was a political judgment was made clear by the current Chief Justice of India, D Y Chandrachud (who was one of the Justices in the Bench which gave unanimous judgment for building Ram Temple) when he stated: “The case has a long history of conflict, of diverse viewpoints based on the history of the nation and all those who were part of the bench decided that this will

be a judgment of the court.” [‘A judgment of court’: CJI Chandrachud on why Ayodhya verdict was kept anonymous’. The Week, Delhi, January 1, 2024. <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2024/01/01/a-judgement-of-court-cji-chandrachud-on-why-ayodhya-verdict-was-kept-anonymous.html>] His above statement was, in fact, re-phrasing of propaganda material by Hindutva organisations. This Judgment legitimised the criminal acts of the Hindutva zealots; what Hindutva goons could not achieve on December 22-23, 1949 and December 6, 1992 was got delivered to RSS through this Judgment!

Today Ayodhya is being presented as a case of perpetual war of Hindus against Muslims. There cannot be a shoddier lie than this. During India’s War of Independence 1857 Ayodhya, it was the same Ayodhya where Maulvis and Mahants and common Hindu-Muslims stood united in rebelling against the British rule and kissed the hangman’s noose together. Maulana Ameer Ali was a famous Maulvi of Ayodhya and when Ayodhya’s well-known Hanuman Garhi’s (Hanuman Temple) priest Baba Ramcharan Das took lead in organising the armed resistance to the British rule, Maulana also joined the revolutionary army. In one battle with the British and their stooges, both of them were captured and hanged together on a tamarind tree at the Kuber Teela (razed for the new temple) in Ayodhya.

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This region also produced two more great friends, belonging to different religions that made life hell for the British sponsored armies. Acchhan Khan and Shambhu Prasad Shukla were two such friends who led the army of Raja Devibaksh Singh in the district of Faizabad. Both of them were able to defeat the Firangee army in many battles, inflicting heavy losses on them. It was due to the treachery again that they were captured. In order to desist anyone from such companionships between Hindus and Muslims both these friends were publicly inflicted prolonged torture and their heads were cruelly filed off.

The Hindutva rulers of India led by PM Modi must understand that existence of Indian democratic-secular polity must not be sacrificed for securing victory for ruling India for 5 more years. □□□

BEHIND THE VEILS

Invisible Workers

Joydip Ghosal

BEHIND THE VEIL OF ALGORITHM : Invisible Workers’ —a report on workers in the ‘Gig’ economy published by PUDR (Peoples Union for Democratic Rights)

is a valuable document that brings forth the conditions of the gig workers, the predicament they face and the exploitation the companies indulge in. This report stressed that

‘gig’ economy is a phenomenon of the last decade or so. Swiggy, Zomato, Ola, Uber, Urban Company and Amazon appeared to provide ‘employment’ and ‘service’ in the form of ‘gigs’. Some of these are international while others are of Indian origin.

In order to decipher different issues that mired people’s vision and

understand the phenomenon PUDR conducted a fact finding mission. It was conducted over September - November 2021 into the terms, issues and working conditions that affect 'gig workers'. The fact finding remained confined to Delhi NCR. But it was able to provide a holistic picture. The team spoke to the workers of Zomato, Urban Company, Swiggy, Ola and Uber. Gig is a slang used by entertainers to term a one-time performance. Merriam -Webster dictionary included the phrase gig economy in April 2019. It was defined as "economic activity that involves the use of temporary or freelance workers to perform jobs typically in service sectors."

In this process the team consulted technical experts, official company publications. Judgements in court cases in India and abroad

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CONTACT

I. BALAMANI

Publisher **Law Animated World**

6-3-1243/156, M.S. Makta,

HYDERABAD-500082, India.

Ph: 040-23300284

Email: mani.bal44@gmail.com

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were also taken into cognizance. They perused academic studies and reports and interacted with organisations that were trying to mobilise the gig workers across the country. Over the last few years gig workers demonstrated against the apathetic working conditions. Swiggy workers started a strike in September 2020. Urban Company workers protested in October 2021. Internationally the workers went to court and snatched away some rights. Fortune India in an article titled 'The gig economy and India's changing workforce' clearly indicated that participation in the gig economy is more in developing countries. In this fact finding report researchers drew reference from the book of Jeremias Prassel titled Humans as a Service: The promise and Perils of work in the Gig Economy which showed that in 2017 alone \$ 12 billion were pumped into Uber Company.

This report threw light on the business model of gig economy where excess supply of workers gave birth to a situation where workers kept waiting for hours for orders or deliveries. According to this fact finding instead of physical supervisor, they were under overarching reach of ratings, algorithm and app. They were subject to continuous surveillance. Frank Field and Andrew Forsey in their pioneering research work Sweated labour :Uber and the Gig Economy showed that in USA Uber drivers were "at risk of taking home less than a third of national living wage ". Lack of regulatory institutional check effectively enabled the company to unleash pressure on the workers. Companies exerted supreme control while presenting them as 'partners'. This report also pins the blame on state machinery for abetting the companies passively or actively for failing to hold them accountable. Sometimes the burden of speedy delivery makes the accident

unavoidable. In case of grievous injury or fatal accident as the report points out companies intervention is minimal.

This research showed that some companies even decided the form through which workers received their wages. This happened despite the fact that they remained on the road for extended period of stay. Long shifts enabled the companies to have access to large number of workers. Gig workers bore all the expenses related to the job. The workers the researchers spoke to were forced to adopt drastic steps to eke out a living "such as 44 percent borrowed, 45 percent reduced their essential expenditure and 83 percent used their savings." This report unequivocally stressed that the uncertainty of earnings could be borne as long the earnings were additional to other regular wages. Algorithm regulation over the employees was a far cry from the world of free entrepreneurs who worked in perfect autonomy. One Swiggy / Zomato worker told the fact finding team that declining an order meant a black mark, a kind of stigma for him. He would have to complete 100 deliveries without any complaint to extricate himself from that vicious tag. Even the workers who worked for UC expressed the fact that if they refused to do any job for some reason their chances of bookings or being assigned work went down. Through this report one comes to know how technology as double-edged sword exercised all -pervasive control over gig workers. Needless to say all workers had to maintain the bikes, cars and fuel cost. Some forced to sell off the car due to increasing precarity related to job and dip in earnings. This report shed light on the fact that the contractual agreement with the companies prevented them from striking an independent bargain with the customers. Repeated refusal to

accomplish or undertake a task can led to deactivation for a period. If one compares them with the workers of nineteenth century one would be able to find out that the situation of gig workers is worse because as

the report indicates they are deliberately excluded from labour rights. Misclassification and evasion of rights usher more predicament for them.

This fact finding report by PUDR highlights the complexities and the

hazards the gig workers face. PUDR demands that immediate measures must be taken to fix the accountability of companies towards the workers. The government of the day cannot evade its responsibility. □□□

GEORGE THOMSON

From Marx to Mao

Harsh Thakor

[George Thomson, one of the founders of the British China Study Group, was the author of "From Marx to Mao Tse-Tung" (London: China Policy Study Group, 1971). 2023 was George Thomson's 120th birth anniversary and 50 years since he wrote 'From Marx to Mao Tse Tung'.]

THOUGH WRITTEN OVER 50 years ago and a compilation in major part, this is a most comprehensive, incisive and lucid, study of revolutionary dialectics of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought. No book in that era, better defended and preserved the skeleton of the polemics or added meat to the bones of Marxism-Leninism. Subtitled, "A Study in Revolutionary Dialectics", it most surgically grafts or dissects quotations from Marx, Lenin, Mao and others, all organised to manifest the coherence and integral link of MLM theory. It was translated in many languages and received a wide circulation in the international communist movement.

This is a Marxist interpretation of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Chinese Revolution of 1949, constructed to illustrate their unity and continuity as two successive stages in the world socialist revolution. It paves the way for the reader to transcend the path of the two revolutions traversing the minds of those who led them, and at the same time they provide him with an insight into the basic principles of dialectical and historical materialism; as that theory can only be analysed in the context of the revolutionary struggles out of which it has sprung and in which it finds its fullest and most vivid personification.

Its chapters comprise the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, From the Bourgeois to the Proletarian Revolution, The Proletariat and the Peasantry, The National Question, Socialism in one country, The Party, the First Socialist State and the Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

Thomson most illustratively projects the symmetry and continuity between the teachings of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse Tung.

In very lucid language and congealed expression he sums up why Marxism is the most progressive philosophy in history and the weapon for the liberation of the oppressed.

Thomson formulates or explains the co-relation between diverse factors and conditions, which the teachings of Marx, Lenin and Mao, integrated.

Dwelling into history of pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary Russia and China, he traced how Marxism evolved or how history shaped it. Thomson in all spheres demonstrated how in both Russia and China revolutionary democracy touched heights untranscended in history and the sheer futility of bourgeois parliamentary democracy.

He encompassed the methods of Lenin in confronting reactionary or un-Marxist elements and illustrated how Lenin waged fierce struggle against right opportunism, tracing

the Bolshevik war against Mensheviks.

Thomson summarised how Lenin combated alien trends of Bernstein, Kautsky and Leon Trotsky or constructed 2-line struggle within the Bolshevik party, how Stalin confronted reactionary elements like Zinoviev and Bukharin and how Mao Tse Tung waged 2-line struggle against capitalist roaders.

Most logically or dialectically Thomson reflected on how both in Russia and China it was not crimes that were performed against humanity, but enemies of genuine democracy that were eliminated, basically.

He synthesised how Mao advocated the role of the peasantry in a revolution, thus being the founder of peasant-based revolution, and how he assessed the nature of the Chinese bourgeoisie, to formulate concept of 'New Democratic Revolution.'

Thomson illustrated how in the realm of philosophy all the great Marxist teachers, overshadowed contemporary philosophers, in role of human liberation.

In a most balanced manner he appraises Stalin, highlighting major achievements and errors. He stressed how Stalin failed to permeate democratic movements from below and solely relied on using secret police to counter forces of reaction, thus negating mass-line.

Thomson denoted how the creation of the Leninist party was the turning point in history and even the CCP created by Mao was in essence a Leninist party.

Thomson dealt with aspects of proletarian democracy and mass-line, illustrating how they constituted

the principles of Marxist theory, and how Marx, Lenin and Mao left no stone unturned in showing in practice that they were not mere idealistic concepts.

He traced instances of Trotsky violating Leninist ideology and why it was imperative for Lenin to perform acts like signing the Brest Litovsk treaty, calling for New Economic Policy and outlawing reactionary parties.

Due focus was given on sprouting of revisionism in USSR under Khrushchev, and how and why dictatorship of the proletariat was toppled.

He elaborated how Mao constructed his formula of People's Democratic Dictatorship, professing the alliance of working class, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie.

Thomson summed up the imperative need for a Cultural Revolution, which Mao Tse Tung foresaw, unlike Stalin, and analysed the blunders or gross errors of Stalin, in dealing with opposition. He illustrated how China was on the road of revolutionary experiments in proletarian democracy, at heights never reached.

Thomson negated or paid scant attention to subject of democracy within a proletarian party or scope of dissent within a Socialist State. In truth, he initiated no criticism of the bureaucratic practices of the Soviets under Lenin, errors of the Chinese Communist Party in mass-line or negation of proletarian ideology in Socialist Construction period and Great Leap Forward. If anything Thomson over-estimated transition of Communism in China from Socialism. This was illustrated by the reversal or toppling of the Socialist state in 1976. □□□

RWA THEME PAPER

Constitutionalism in the Context of Fascism

Rivera

[The Revolutionary Writers Association's 29th State Conference was held on 27-28 January, 2024 at Vijayawada. Following is the abridged version of the theme paper issued before the conference for discussion. Rivera is secretary of RWA.]

IN THE LAST SPEECH THAT Ambedkar gave to the Constituent Assembly, one can discern his hopes as well as his doubts. Ultimately, his doubts became the reality. The Constitution that starts with the words "We the people of India" could not in practice bring about a fundamental change in the lives of people. This is because the Constitution was framed to act as a protective armour to the Indian State that took the form of bourgeois parliamentary democracy during the British rule and firmed up after the exit of the British. The Constitution became necessary to establish the legislative power of comprador bourgeoisie on the Indian State that functioned in the name of people's representation. The Constitution was prepared to ensure that this class that had ownership over means of production also obtained power over Constitutional apparatus as well as social relations. As a consequence, Indian Constitution became an ant-hill of contradictions. Ambedkar had

to face these contradictions even while framing the Constitution and he had to make many compromises. As far as possible, he incorporated the processes to achieve social justice and rights for the oppressed people into the Constitution. Despite that, the Indian Constitution was naturally framed for the benefit of the exploiting classes. Powerful examples of it are the inclusion of right to property and legalising exploitation in the Constitution. This is the reason why whenever there is a contradiction between people and the rulers, the Constitutional bodies are always on the side of the rulers. This is not because there are evil persons in the governing structures. This is the nature of the Indian Constitution. The method of formation of the Constituent Assembly, the way the Constitution was written and had been implemented in the past seventy years are all clear proof of this matter.

At the same time, the Constitution has the ability to bring about

modern changes in the society. Those changes may be minor. But, they are crucial to the downtrodden people who have not seen even a ray of light for thousands of years. In that sense, the Constitution played a role in slightly improving the life of oppressed people in the past seventy years. The Constitution is providing them a semblance of legal security. Even though it barred them from active political participation, it gave them an opportunity to exercise their vote every five years.

The Brahminical Hindutva fascists are diluting even these limited aspects that are favourable to people. The fascists don't like the liberal values in the Constitution. The Sangh Parivar that swears by Sanatana Dharma, the Caste system and Patriarchy would like to change the Constitution. In the initial days after the framing of the Constitution, the RSS leaders declared publicly that they do not accept it. Now that they are in power, they are destroying its aspects, processes and institutions that are favourable to people.

However, they are not the only ones doing this. In the past, the Congress Party did its bit. Within a month of the adoption of the Constitution, the Congress government

brought about the first amendment imposing limits on civil liberties. The Congress Party did its utmost to dilute the Constitution by not implementing its aspects that are favourable to people and by bringing about amendments destroying the ideals specified in the preamble. The remaining electoral parties also contributed to this. The Sangh Parivar that is the Hindutva fascist group of the comprador bourgeoisie is now giving a final blow to the Constitution.

This is the reason why "Save Constitution" came forward today as people's aspiration throughout the country. In fact, the constitutional consciousness among oppressed castes, religious minorities and Adivasis increased in the context of the Constitutional ideals being diluted at all levels in the last twenty five years and they are fighting for their self-respect and social justice. There are people's struggles being carried out for the implementation of rights enshrined in the Constitution. The fascist forces are resorting to the destruction of constitution even to oppose such struggles. In opposition to all this, protection of Constitution became a strong expression of the anti-fascist movement.

At the same time, the aspiration to protect the Constitution gave rise to a strong assertion that the Constitution is the ultimate solution for all issues. This resulted in total lack of

critical outlook of the Constitution. Due to this, the notion that if the Constitution is saved, it will save India in turn is gaining traction. The worship of the Constitution is becoming like the idol worship in the Hindu religion. The realistic understanding that the Constitution has many aspects that act as protective armour for extremely undemocratic and tyrannical ruling class interests is diminishing. Those who are banking on the Constitution are ignoring the seventy year history of it working primarily for the upper caste, Brahminical Bourgeois class interests. If one casually states that 'the Constitution has to be enforced', the society will end up experiencing more of losses due to its anti-people aspects than benefits due to its positive aspects.

The recent Supreme Court judgment that abrogation of Article 370 is compliant to the Constitution actually violates the Constitution. In the future, people may see judgments saying UAPA, uniform civil code, citizenship amendment bill, air warfare on Adivasis and handing over properties to Adani ... are all constitutional. The guidance to provide such judgments is present in the Constitution itself. Such judgments are a result of its inherent nature. Some of these judgments could have come even if the Congress or any other liberal, bourgeois party was in power. The current history is proof that bourgeois dictatorship and con-

stitutional Hindutva fascism expanded so much on the basis of the Constitution.

The Constitutions that emerged out of bourgeois democratic revolutions and anti-colonial struggles, provided legal form to the social and political changes that took place at that time. Modernity is the touchstone for the values behind those changes. All those changes provided legal form to tyrannical dominance of the bourgeois class and to inhuman exploitation. If people don't stop at what the constitutions provide but attempt to bring about further change, the bourgeois class will suppress them using the same constitution by claiming that what they are asking for is unconstitutional.

There is no rule that people should struggle within the limits prescribed by the constitution. They also express their aspirations and resort to forms of struggle beyond it. Constitution is not given by one person or a group. The constitution of any country is a result of its historical, political and economic developments. Democracy is deeper, broader and more meaningful than the constitution but it is snipped and cut short by it. If constitutionalism becomes stronger under these circumstances, the doors to democracy and socialism, that are to be historically achieved by the productive people, will be closed. In the fascist context, all the forces must unite to defeat the main enemy. □□□

FLOODS AND CYCLONES

Living in Harmony with Nature

Bharat Dogra

ONE OF THE MOST WORRYING manifestations of climate change relates to the higher possibility of more people being exposed to more destructive and torrential water flows. India with

its record of frequent inland floods as well as a long coastline exposed to cyclones is particularly vulnerable in this respect.

The fear of higher frequency and intensity of cyclones in times of

climate change is by and large confirmed in the context of the experiences of India in recent decades. At some places people said that they have seen cyclones in the past but never so intense and so high.

Another cause of worry is that cyclones often tend to bring heavy unseasonal rains over a large area much beyond the coastal region. If this is after some of these areas

have already suffered from seasonal monsoon floods, then this can create a very difficult situation.

What brings hope is that despite increasing difficulties some states like Odisha have achieved increasing expertise and actual disaster-time success in timely evacuation of people and accommodating them in the many shelters that have been constructed. As a result the death toll even in some cyclones of high intensity could be avoided or minimised to very low levels. However the success has not been the same in all coastal areas and higher intensity or height of flood waves will continue to pose a serious challenge.

The National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project, a World Bank assisted project which has several components, is a leading effort of India in this context, contributing 535 shelters and 88 km of saline embankments in its first phase.

With its vast network of rivers India annually faces widespread floods in rivers which are heavily concentrated in the monsoon months. In times of climate change these can be aggravated due to several factors including the concentration of high intensity rainfall in a few heavy rain episodes.

Dams and embankments have been often considered the more important aspects of flood-control but limitations and precautions relating to this should be highlighted too. There should be a high state of alert

in issues relating to dam-management and careful handling of water-flows by dams. There should be clear instructions to dam management authorities that in the middle of various competing objectives the avoidance of catastrophic damage should always get top priority. There should be arrangements for water-flows to be coordinated in such ways that catastrophic damage can be avoided under all circumstances and downstream areas are well-informed of the extent of water releases and the cautions related to this.

The authorities and particularly the dam management authorities should be prepared to handle situations which are worse than the norms to which they have been used in the past. The mountain areas including the Himalayan region as well as other hilly areas have become very vulnerable to higher damage from floods and landslides due to a mix of climate change related factors as well as local floods resulting from flawed development policies and projects.

India is not alone in experiencing the paradox of more area becoming exposed to floods even as the expenditure on flood protection goes on increasing. Many countries have experienced this. A review of basic thinking related to flood protection is urgently needed.

There are some floods which are very highly destructive and/or prolonged. Clearly people need to give more attention to check such floods or reduce the harm from them. Some of the most destructive floods in recent years have been those caused by embankment breaches and sudden release of huge quantities of water from dams. Such floods can be checked to a very significant extent by adopting appropriate policies, in the short-run and in the longer term. Some of the most prolonged floods or water-logging cases

are those caused by the obstruction of natural drainage. These can also be checked to a significant extent by adopting appropriate steps in the short-term and in the longer-term.

However while checking the more destructive and prolonged floods, people must also learn to co-exist with the natural process of rivers spilling over their banks when there are heavy rains. There are ways of making this co-existence much more bearable and even turning the flood-flows to several beneficial uses.

Firstly, forests and green cover in the catchment areas should be very well-protected. There is a lot of difference between natural dense mixed forests and man-made plantations. It is natural mixed forests with their good share of more dense, broad leaf species that one needs, as well as plenty of other indigenous growths that can protect soil and conserve water effectively.

In the immediate flood-plains nearer to river costly infra-structure and those crops which can be destroyed easily by floods must be avoided. This is the place for conserving water and for fruit orchards or other useful trees which are capable of absorbing as well as tolerating excessive water and moisture, for grass fodder as well as livelihoods based on this.

More flood-tolerant varieties of crops can also be found, based on indigenous biodiversity which has been neglected. The drainage paths should be kept so free of obstructions that flood waters find their path easily to natural depressions, lakes, ponds and tanks, filling them up to provide water later in the rain scarce months. Free drainage paths devoid of obstructions will allow water to clear quickly, at the same time leaving behind fertile silt which will help farmers to get good crops without chemical fertilisers.

All this requires very good under-

For Frontier Contact

**ALAIGAL
VELIYEETAGAM**

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

standing of local conditions and a highly decentralised approach, with communities empowered and resourceful to take and implement decisions and also having the understanding to resolve differences and work for common good.

While a broad understanding at a wider level is very useful, the implementation must be as per local conditions and realities, and for this decentralisation and empowerment as well as harmony of local communities are very important.

To bring such changes in flood policy, the perception about rivers and floods should change in very basic ways. A narrow engineering based perception and dominance based perception should change to a perception based on living with nature, understanding nature and its ways and trying to live in harmony with them, as well as the related

vision of largely free-flowing rivers. Such a vision also involves giving adequate importance to all life-forms which thrive in and around rivers. Such a vision involves wider and longer-term thinking based on harmony with nature, while giving up narrow and reductionist approach based on dominance.

Another important aspect is to give more importance to more vulnerable people living in flood-prone areas including the poorest households and women. The weaker section households live in houses which can be completely destroyed by torrential water. In many flood-prone areas there is high migration of men so that there are many women-led households. These need special attention. When people seek shelter on higher grounds at flood-time, the sanitation needs of women deserve special attention.

India has a system in place for compensating flood and disaster affected people and while the compensation may not be adequate considering the high damage in many cases, it is in many cases an important source of support for people affected by disasters, including floods and cyclones. India also has a reasonably well-established system of providing immediate relief to disaster-affected people. However, there is certainly room for improving these relief and compensation systems. To give an example, when farmers get compensation, it is not just the land-owner but also the sharecropper (where sharecropping is involved) who should also get a part of the compensation. □□□

[The writer, a journalist and author, is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Protect Earth Now. His latest books include Planet I Peril, Man over Machine, A Day in 2071 and Protecting Earth for Children.]

THE CUBA OF "BEFORE" 1959

Revolution Finally Came to Zoila

Alejandra Garcia

MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER Zoila Martinez did not forget that May downpour when the rural guard threw her out of her house, back in 1931. Until the last day of her 104 years, she remembered the same image, standing with five children clutching her sack, a few wooden belongings, and a mattress on a mud puddle in Jagüey Grande, Matanzas. It was the image of her worst nightmares.

After that day in May, when she was still in her 20's, she knew the same thing she suspected when she looked out of the window of her former home and saw her parents working from sunrise to sunset at the plow when she was still very young: in the Cuba of "before" (before 1959), honest people, poor people, were not worth a penny.

She decided to work, to make her own home, never again to go through the humiliation of seeing herself and her small and sick children in the muddy streets of Jagüey. She sold slippers knitted by her own hands, cleaned and ironed the laundry of the wealthiest families in the area from Monday to Monday.

Years later, after paying the price of sugar at her neighborhood grocery store, she stood in front of the vendor waiting for her change. The man, with disdain, told Zoila how could she expect him to give her back a single cent, which was all that was left over from her purchase. Without saying much, she pointed to the white-columned house halfway down the block. "That house is mine, and I built it penny by penny," she said without a muscle trembling in her face.

Homelessness was not the only painful experience my great-grandmother lived through. Her eldest daughter Mercedes died in her arms when she was only five years old, when they were returning on horseback from the only medical center within several kilometers.

The doctor who saw her, without much examination, told her that the girl's fever was probably a cold and gave her a couple of pills to reduce it. Zoila was suspicious that it was just that, she had already heard about the diphtheria that plagued Jagüey, and feared the worst. "Don't worry," said the doctor, paying no attention to her concern, "with these pills she will feel better. Thirty minutes later, the little girl died.

Then, during the seventh of her pregnancies, labor pains came in the seventh month. Zoila's mother was the midwife for this and her other six children, once again in the living room of her home. This is how she gave birth to Sergio.

I can almost see her describing the size of the baby to me, with the old woman's hands joined together to form a shell. "He was so tiny," she told me, "that he fit in the shoebox that I lined with white sheets, where he slept for only two nights, and then he died, because in those days doctors did not take care of premature babies, especially if they were born to poor parents.

Another of her sons, Lázaro, died later of leukemia, also at the hands of Zoila, who accompanied him in his last hours of agony. Another of her sons, Oscar, hanged himself at the age of 20 because of the depression caused by seeing a friend die while being a victim of forced labor in the Zapata Swamp. Lázaro sang like the gods, but whose poverty could not take him very far in the singing industry.

The Revolution came to Zoila on January 1, 1959, and the children who survived the Cuba of "before" were able to study beyond sixth grade. She even managed to see her grandchildren graduate from the university. She hid the pain of the preceding years with the strength of her hands. She planted avocados, mangoes and lemons in her backyard, and then sold them on the streets of the neighborhood, which gradually turned from dirt to asphalt.

She spent her last days in the hospital of her town, built after 1959, attended by a dozen doctors who did not believe that she could remain so lucid at 104 years of age. One of them, in the last consultation Zoila would receive, in March 2015, wanted to know what kept her alive in the hardest years of her existence. "I never stopped working," she answered.

Mirta Ramirez, my grandmother, arrived in Havana in 1959 to become a nurse when she was about to turn 24. She brought from Jagüey Grande a half-filled briefcase and, within it, the memories of a childhood of sacrifices. Her mother, Zoila, instilled in her since she was a child that life must be faced with hard work. That is why, since her adolescence, she helped her take care of the house and the rest of her siblings, cleaned houses and ironed clothes for the wealthiest in her hometown, and was for a while the maid of a hostile family that, on more than one occasion, when she was ready to leave, threw buckets of water on the clean floor just for her to dry everything again.

She became a nurse two years later, in 1961, thus fulfilling a possible dream. She had a son and kept her upbringing together with her

housework and the areas she worked in to assist and check the health condition of the inhabitants of several communities in the capital.

At 90 years old, photos of her mother, her son, her granddaughters, her nursing days, are the only few luxuries that hang on the walls of her house. She overcame the pain and after-effects of a recent heart attack, thanks to the will and attention of the island's health system. A few years earlier, when she was strong and healthy, she used to sew and read for fun, and went out every day to the streets, both to buy bread and to tell anyone who would like to hear what the Cuba of "before" was like, the Cuba of her childhood and early youth.

"There are a lot of ungrateful people out there," she sometimes grumbled after arriving from the grocery store or market. "Whoever thinks they can come to speak to me against the revolution is mistaken. Everything in life has cost me sacrifices, but I owe a lot to it. When something seems impossible, my grandmother Mirta remembers her mother: "If she could be useful at 100 years old, then I too have the strength for more". □□□

[Alejandra Garcia is a journalist writing from Havana, Cuba. Courtesy: Resumen: Latinoamericano and the Third World.]

LETTERS

Escalation of Mid-East War

Yemen's Houthis, a militant rebel group partially in control of that country and backed by Iran, have launched dozens of attacks on commercial shipping vessels in the Red Sea in recent weeks in protest of Israel's bombardment of Gaza.

Those attacks were repeatedly denounced by Western powers—but had only led to some military posturing rather than outright violence, until January 11 night.

The US and UK struck over 60 Houthi targets in Yemen in what President Joe Biden said was a "direct response to unprecedented Houthi attacks." US Air Forces claimed Houthi "command and control nodes, munitions depots, launching systems, production facilities, and air defence radar systems" were destroyed.

The US's actions could risk stoking regional escalation of the war in Gaza. Given that the Houthis have vowed to retaliate and that mass protests broke out in Yemen

characterising the strikes as "terrorism," they seem to have only stoked anti-US sentiment. The US is involved in a direct armed conflict with the Houthis that only benefits the Houthis as they will have leverage in discussions over the future of Yemen following a 2022 UN-brokered ceasefire in the country's civil war.

Mohammed Huwais

"Shun EVM, Save Democracy"

India is the world's largest democracy with regular elections. But, over the last few years, there have been

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serious concerns regarding the country's electoral process due to lack of public trust in EVM/VVPAT voting and counting which does not comply with the essential 'Democracy Principles'—that each voter should be able to verify that her vote is cast-as-intended, recorded-as-cast and counted-as-recorded. Though the Election Commission has arranged for all EVMs to be accompanied with "Voter-Verifiable Paper Trail" this device has been reduced to the level of a 'bioscope' which shows up a tiny 'paper slip' for seven seconds which then vanishes and is NOT counted....

The Citizens' Commission on Elections, headed by a former Judge of the Supreme Court of India, after consulting top national and international experts on the subject has come to this conclusion: "Due to the absence of End-to-End verifiability, the present EVM/VVPAT system is not verifiable and therefore is unfit for democratic elections".

Holding elections with EVM therefore poses clear and present danger to India's Electoral Democracy. We therefore demand that India returns to voting through ballot papers as all democracies have done so that people's mandate is not hijacked and stolen.

Socialist Party (India)

Rally for Gaza

The South African government just urged the International Court of Justice to order an immediate ceasefire for Gaza, alleging Israel is committing genocide. But Netanyahu's government looks set to fight tooth and nail to delay a decision.

As millions of innocent people trapped in Palestine hold their breath, hoping for a quick verdict, we have an urgent mission: persuade our governments to support South Africa's push to end the bloodshed.

Wherever you are, whatever your political views, if in the next 24 hours,

we, citizens of the world, unite to unleash a cascade of national support to halt the bombing over Gaza, we have a chance to help stop what an expert UN Panel warned could be a "a genocide in the making". It might be the last one.

Israel denies atrocity crimes against the Palestinians, saying its actions are necessary to defeat Hamas after its ruthless attack on October 7th. But there is a rising global fear that Israel's brutal onslaught on Gaza constitutes major war crimes and even a risk of genocide. Over 23,000 Palestinians have already been killed, including reports of at least 10,000 children dead.

Now South Africa has brought a ground-breaking case to the ICJ arguing for the court to stop the war. The lawsuit, spanning 84 heartrending pages, accuses Israel of genocide, and cries out for immediate intervention. Every line screams with urgency: stop the killing, end the suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

We can't let these words fall on deaf ears.

If our nations stand together, filing declarations of support for South Africa's request to bring an end to this war, we can face down Israel's attempt to discredit the case, and try to hasten the court's decision to order an end of the suffering. Every second counts.

Let's be the voice that Gaza desperately needs.

We've fought for human rights worldwide—from Sudan to Myanmar to Ukraine. Our united voices have overpowered military might before. Let's rally again for Gaza. Let humanity, peace, compassion, and justice prevail.

With unwavering determination,
**Fadi, Ruth, Patri, John,
Will, Abdelrahman, Bieta, Mo,
and the Avaz team**

Disinformation and Hate Speech

Indians live in peculiar, hate-filled times when the climate of targeted othering, hate, segregation, and even socio-economic boycott, has reached unprecedented levels. The State, purportedly wedded to the Indian Constitution and its ideals of an egalitarian, non-discriminatory social order, has abdicated itself from its responsibility to protect all citizens, and is allegedly encouraging mobs to violate the fundamental right to a life of dignity of some of India's most vulnerable and marginalised people.

Disinformation is false or misleading information that is spread intentionally to deceive people. It can be spread through various channels, including social media, news outlets, or spread by political leaders in their speeches. The impact of disinformation can be severe, leading to confusion, distrust, and even violence. Disinformation can also undermine democratic institutions.

Hate speech any speech that attacks a person or group on the basis of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, or any other characteristic. It can be subtle or overt, and can have a profound impact on the targets of the speech. Hate speech can lead to stigmatisation. Societal discrimination, physical and other kinds of harassment, and violence, including gendered violence where women and children are vulnerable. Hate speech does and can create a climate of intimidation, fear and division in society.

**Citizens for Justice
and Peace [CJP]**

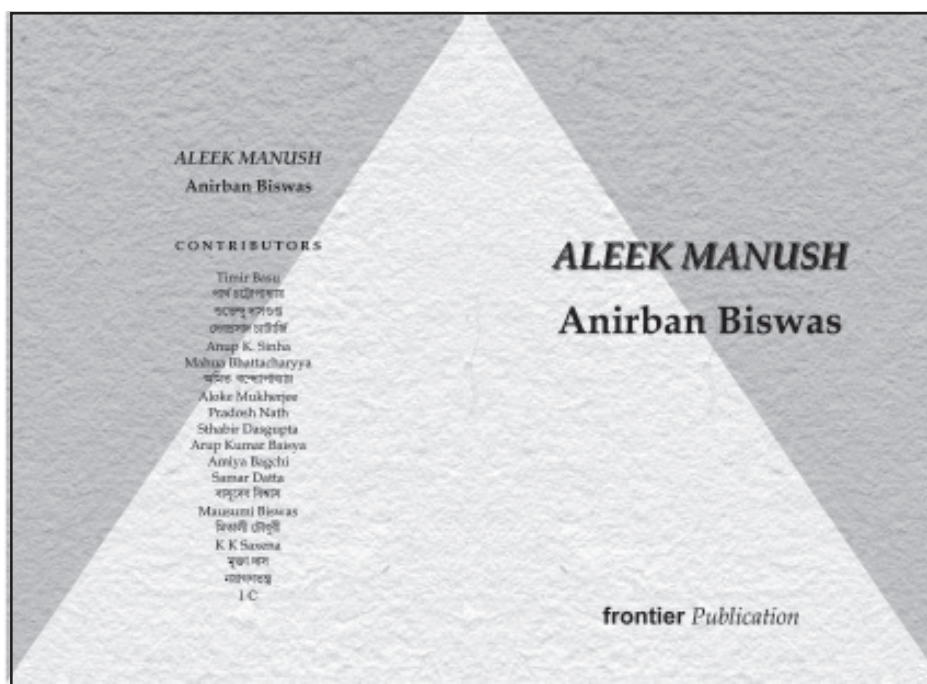
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Anirban Biswas

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

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