

# frontier

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## August 15

**I**T WAS PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI'S 10TH INDEPENDENCE Day address from the ramparts of the historic Red Fort. Whether he will be there to address the 11th is anybody's guess. But Modi is hopeful. He exuded confidence that 'he will address the nation from the ramparts next year'. Quite expectedly he painted a rosy picture on all fronts with high claims of growth. He went a bit lyrical about the progress achieved by the country. Every Prime Minister had done so in the past. In the rhetoric of India becoming the third largest economy sounded impressive but he remained silent about India ranking 107 out of 121 countries in hunger index. Daily wage labourers find it increasingly difficult to earn Rs 100 a day in Modi's digital India. The gospel of an Indian becoming the second richest man in the world means little to them. In his speech Modi talked of inflation without delineating any way-out to contain it.

The figures released on a day before Independence Day—August 15—revealed that retail inflation jumped to a 15-month high of 7.44 percent in July on the back of soaring prices of vegetables and cereals affecting the lower income group people badly. Growth is not accelerating. Incomes are not rising and yet prices of almost all essential commodities consumed by common people are zooming. But Prime Minister was asking his countrymen to share the illusion of India becoming a 5-trillion economy, maybe, during his tenure!

For one thing he may derive comfort from the 'trillion stories' but India under his iron heel is regressing from a constitutional democracy to an authoritarian autocracy. Millions of people who live below the poverty line cannot afford to board his Vande Bharat train though he was eloquent enough about modernisation of railways. Why thousands of posts are lying vacant in the railways and other central government departments for years remained unanswered. Unemployment scenario is horrible and no amount of jugglery can create employment. Then dissent is a crime in this biggest show-case of democracy.

Modi has promised affordable housing to jhupri dwellers who are panicky. Private players are coming in a big way to demolish slums to make room for 'decent' urban space. The Adani group is said to be the promoter for Mumbai's biggest slum clearance operation. The poor have very little interest in his utopia of 'how the coming 5 years are of unprecedented development and a golden moment to realise the dream of India as

developed nation by 2024' when India celebrates 100 years of independence.

Luckily for the people of north east he didn't forget to mention the tragedy Manipur was facing. He just asked the people of Manipur to maintain peace and resolve the crisis peacefully. But how his party's divisive policy with subtle backing to a certain community created the burning problem in the first place was carefully avoided.

On 14th August Prime Minister Modi remembered those who lost their lives in the partition-related riots as the nation observed 'Vibhajan

Vibhisika Smriti Divas' [Partition Horror Remembrance Day]. Modi paid tributes to them and recalled the struggle of those who were uprooted from their homes during the partition in 1947. The day was first observed in 2021 but it was a low-key affair. This time they made it big to get media focus. But his government has not yet granted citizenship right to partition-victims of Bengal.

The partition of India was one of the most defining events in the sub-continent. Bengal and Punjab suffered most. In truth people on both sides of the fence suffered. Partition caused equal sufferings and loss to

Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. But observing partition day as 'horror day' in a dubious way in reality stokes hatred against the minority community in the country. Around 1 million people lost their lives while 20 million were displaced. The world witnessed the longest migration of refugees in the contemporary history after the Second World War. No doubts wounds of partition continue haunt the third generation of Bengal and Punjab. Instead of healing what Modi's party is doing is to spread communal passion with an eye to the next parliamentary polls in 2024. □□

16-08-2023

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## COMMENT

### Burning in the Dark

AS THE RIOT BEGAN, ON MAY 4, the Centre did what it has done time and time again when faced with internal conflict. It shut off the internet in Manipur.

The union government has the power to order telecom providers to stop providing fixed-line and mobile internet, using an emergency law. It did it 84 times in 2022 and 106 times in 2021, according to Access Now, a non-governmental organisation that tracks internet disruptions.

Most of the shutdowns were in Jammu & Kashmir, but they have been applied across the country. In December 2019, internet shutdowns were imposed in parts of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam, and Meghalaya after protests over a proposed citizenship law that would have rendered hundreds of thousands of Muslims in Assam stateless. In January and February 2021, the internet was disrupted around Delhi, where farmers were protesting agricultural reforms. It was done with a view to create fissures in the historic peasant struggle.

The justification for these shut-

downs is that it stops disinformation from spreading on social media and helps keep a lid on unrest. In May, in Manipur, the government said the blackout was "to thwart the design and activities of anti-national and anti-social elements and to maintain peace and communal harmony ... by stopping the spread of misinformation and false rumours through various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc..." But it didn't work. Violence spread like wildfire while the security forces who are supposed to maintain law and order remained passive. Their calculated inaction had definitely tacit approval of the local government dominated by the Meiteis.

On the first day of the shutdown, a Meitei mob went on a rampage in Imphal, seeking out Kukis to attack. As the violence spread, two young Kuki women in their early twenties huddled in their room above a carwash, where they worked part time. But the mob found them. Witnesses told the women's families that seven Meitei men barged into

their room and locked the door from inside. For two hours, the door remained shut. People outside could hear the screams of the women, which became muffled with time. When the door opened, the two women were dead. The families are certain their daughters were raped before being murdered.

The violence between the two communities has spiraled. Nearly 4,000 weapons have reportedly been stolen from the police, according to local media. "How did the mob burn down the ambulance in police presence?" "What did the police do to protect people?" In truth police behaved in partisan way, allowing the Meiteis to do whatever they would like to do.

Today there is almost complete separation between the two communities, both of whom have their private militias protecting their territories. Kuki areas in Imphal are completely deserted. Meiteis in Kuki-dominated districts have been driven out of the hills---they are in relief camps.

People have suffered economically as well. They don't have money to donate. Had the internet been operational in Manipur, NGOs could have tapped donors from outside

the state through social media, and raised money for medicines and other essentials.

In such a volatile atmosphere, shutting down communications doesn't stop misinformation. Rumours always spread fast in conflicts; blacking out the internet often just means that there's no way to verify whether the accounts are genuine.

The violence in Manipur has ruptured communities and left families with no way back to their old lives.

On July 25, the government partially lifted the blackout, allowing some fixed-line connections back online—with restrictions. However, most people in the state rely on mobile internet. Manipur is still mostly in the dark. And while the violence has subsided as both sides stay within their territory, it hasn't died out completely. In the border zones, shots still ring out. It's still smouldering, and could burst back into flames at any time. □□□

[Contributed]

## NOTICE

We are getting regular complaints from subscribers that they are not getting their copies by post. Postal dislocation is rampant. It is particularly endemic in greater Kolkata postal district. Local post offices don't really deliver in many cases because of acute shortage of staff. We request our subscribers to lodge complaints to the post offices of their localities and send their e-mail IDs, if any, so that we could also send our on-line version. —Fr

## NOTE

### Focus on Millets

*I Satya Sundaram writes:*

**T**HE UN-DECLARED 2023 AS the International Year of Millets at the suggestion of the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Currently, millets are being grown in more than 130 countries. In India, millets are primarily khaif crops. They are referred to as coarse cereals. It is true; the Green Revolution could solve the problem of famines. However, it provided food security only, not nutrition security. No serious efforts were made towards balanced and diversified diet.

In India, the incidence of malnutrition is high. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 5 conducted in 2019-20, 35.5 percent of children under the age of five in India are stunted (low height for age), 19.3 percent wasted ((low weight for height), and 32.1 percent underweight. According to FAO's The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2020 Report, about 190 million Indians are undernourished, comprising 14 percent of total population.

Millets have high nutritional value. Millets like bajra, ragi and jowar are a perfect food for Indians due to the high nutritional value

and high fibre content. Millets require little water, can withstand heat, and do not readily attract pests. Higher shelf life and balanced protein, fat and fibre content, make millets the best contender for addressing the consumer needs of the rising middle class.

Millets enjoy a low status in the world and also in India. The millets market globally is estimated at \$ 9 billion in 2019. India is the world's leading producer of millets accounting for over 40 percent of global production. Millet production has remained stagnant over the last decade. Millet cultivation is unprofitable for farmers, due to lower yields and the difficulty in processing millets on the farm. Due to high cost of millet procurement and processing as well as the commissions paid to multiple distribution channels, the farmer is forced to price his product at Rs 70 for a 150 ml pack. The average yield of millets is about 2000 kg/ha, which is half that of paddy due to lack of research on new seed varieties, seed banks, innovative scientific practices.

While millet yield in India tripled from 414 kg/ha in 1961 to 1,352 kg/

ha in 2021, the percentage of area under millets halved from more than 30 million ha to 13.6 million ha in the same period. The per capita consumption of millets declined by 38.6 percent between 1972-73 and 1987-88 in rural areas. India is one of the leading producers and exporters of millets in the world, with an estimated share of around 41 percent in global production. India's export of millets increased from \$59.75 million in 2020-21 to \$64.28 million in 2021-22.

Even though the minimum support price (MSP) of millets has been raised by 80 to 125 percent between 2013-14 and 2021-22, their combined production has dropped by 7 percent to 15.6 million tonnes during the last eight years. Of course, due to scarcity in cattle feed, jowar prices increased. Because of climate change, the yields are fluctuating.

The Centre has asked States to procure more nutri-cereals. It fixed the target of 7.5 lakh tonnes (LT) during 2022-23 (October-September).

**For Frontier Contact**

**PATIRAM BOOK STALL**

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Karnataka alone will buy 6 LT of ragi and 1 LT of jowar. Of course, States have been allowed to distribute surplus millets to other States. Schemes like ICDS, mid-day meal and PDS should be strengthened.

The start-ups too should take interest in millets. The Government has decided to provide incentives to food companies to launch millet-based new products that contain at least 15 percent millet. The Agricultural

and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) can incentivise commercial cultivation of millets schemes like "one district one product" or cluster farming for trade promotion. □□□

## THE LOHIA FACTOR

### Quit India Movement

*Prem Singh*

**D**R RAM MANOHAR LOHIA wrote a long letter to the Viceroy of India, Lord Linlithgow, on March 2, 1946. That letter is important and was appreciated by Gandhiji. The letter brings out the brutal and conspiratorial character of British imperialism. Lohia wrote that letter from jail. After playing an underground role for 21 months in the Quit India Movement, Lohia was arrested in Bombay on 10 May 1944. He was imprisoned first in Lahore Fort and then in Agra. He was given inhuman torture by the British police in Lahore Jail. After two years of imprisonment, Lohia was released in June 1946.

The Viceroy had accused the Congress leaders of planning armed uprising during the Quit India Movement. He also blamed that the people who took part in the movement were indulged in violent activities. In the midst of the intense global developments and debates at that time, the Viceroy was trying to show that British rule was a very just system and the Congress and the Indian people who opposed it were violent and autocratic. The Viceroy was pretending as if he had a birthright to rule India forever!

In the letter, Lohia, refuting the Viceroy's allegations, put forward the horrific atrocities of British rule on the unarmed people. He said that many JallianwalaBagh happened in the country while suppressing the

movement, but the people of India, showing divine courage, fought non-violently for their freedom. Lohia also rubbished the Viceroy's statement in which he said that less than a thousand people were killed in the Quit India Movement. Lohia challenged the Viceroy that he had actually killed fifty thousand patriots

Showing the Viceroy his barbaric face, Lohia wrote, "Your men have stripped Indian mothers naked, tied them up to trees, made play with their limbs and killed them. You talk of fascist reprisals; your men have raped and killed wives of patriots you could not seize. Yes, the time will soon be ripe for you and your people to face this evidence." The history of the unarmed common man begins from the Indian Revolution of 9 August."

However, several prominent leaders of the Congress themselves remained indecisive till the end for troubling the 'democratic' England fighting against the 'fascist' forces in the war. Lohia has mentioned them in his letter. But Lohia himself was not in any dilemma over his decision to drive out the British from the country. Had he had the same dilemma as the 'modernists', he would not have been able to engage in the struggle of the people with full devotion and strength. He clarified, "We are curious about the future. Whether you win or the Axis, there will be gloom and darkness all around. There is a glimmer for hope. Free

India might be able to bring this war to a democratic termination." (See, Collected Works of Dr. Ram ManoharLohia, Vol. 9, Ed. Mastram Kapoor, pp. 176-181)

In fact, in 1939, Lohia had urged Gandhiji to start a Satyagraha movement in protest against the war, suggesting a four-point plan in order to establish lasting peace in the world: "1. All enslaved countries should be freed and should have governments elected on the basis of universal adult franchise and panchayat system; panchayats should formulate their constitutions according to the same principle. 2. All countries should be treated equal, no country should have special privileges and every individual should be free to travel and settle down anywhere in the world without prior permission. 3. If any country invests or starts industry in another country, the invested capital and other assets should be taken over. 4. Complete disarmament should be adopted only after every country accepts these principles."

Indumati Kelkar, the biographer of Lohia, mentioned that in March 1939, in one of his articles in opposition to the war, Lohia clarified, "For enslaved India British imperialism is as sinful as German Hitlerism or Japanese imperialism. The world cannot be safe without ending imperialism; British imperialism is responsible for nurturing fascism. Therefore, India should fight against both fascism and imperialism. Only that will make it a real supporter of the world's enslaved nations.")

The Quit India Movement, popularly known as the August Revolu-

tion in the history of India's independence movement, has a very important and complicated period of about three to four years. This movement was country-wide in which the people of India participated on a large scale and showed unprecedented courage and tolerance. Lohia, while quoting Russian revolutionary thinker Leon Trotsky, stated that in Russia's revolution one percent of the population took part, while in India's August Revolution, 20 percent of the country's people took part.

However, the revolt of the people took place rapidly for the first three to four months only. The lack of leadership and far-reaching planning and the repression of the British government suppressed the rebellion. 'Quit India' resolution was passed on 8 August 1942; Aruna Asaf Ali hoisted the tricolor at the Gowalia Tank Ground; and on the night of 9th August, top Congress leaders were arrested. Due to the arrest of the leaders, the definite action plan of the movement could not be prepared. The relatively young leadership of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was active, but they had to work underground. JP wrote two long letters from unknown places to guide and encourage the revolutionaries and to explain the character and mode of action of the movement. One aspect of the importance of the Quit India Movement is that the people themselves were their leaders during the movement.

The Quit India Movement has several characteristics. The underground revolutionary movement that passed through many phases and leadership and the non-violent movement of the people led by Gandhiji united in the Quit India Movement. The threads of the Quit India Movement can also be linked with the first freedom struggle of 1857 regarding the points of similarity and difference between the two. There

has been a lot of debate about whether the Quit India Movement was violent or non-violent. Gandhiji, who gave the slogan 'Do or Die' and who was arrested the same night, had called on the public for a non-violent movement. This was a unique non-violent call from Gandhiji when the world was engulfed in the violence of the Second World War.

JP wrote two letters 'to the soldiers of freedom' from secret places in December 1942 and September 1943 respectively. In both his letters, especially in the first, he raised the question of violence-non-violence at length. Gandhiji and Congress have different views on the issue of violence-non-violence, he said in his letter. He slammed the British government that it did not have the right to tell what method the people of India used to fight for their freedom. He said that at the core of Quit India Movement has been the resolve not to kill and not to hurt.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's struggle to oust the British by forming the Azad Hind Fauj also comes under the scope of Quit India Movement. The work of placing check-board for the partition of the country by the British and the domestic divisive forces was also completed during this period. JP has thrown light on all these aspects in his letters. Hence, those letters should be looked at once again.

The Quit India Movement was the decisive conclusion of the overall national movement for the country's independence; it was the gateway to India's independence. The will to freedom and the strength to achieve it built in India from various sources, was finally demonstrated in the Quit India Movement. The Quit India Movement decided that even if the leaders shared the will to freedom, the power to achieve it was decisively with the people. However, the elements who considered the British

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rule as divine blessing and served their self-interests were fully active even during the Quit India Movement. Who were they, this information is found in the letters of JP?

When Soviet Russia joined the Second World War, the Marxist leadership of India decided to oppose the Quit India Movement and support the British. Not only did it become the cause of bitter confrontation between the Congress Socialists and the Marxists, due to that decision the Marxist activists had become confused about the definition and criteria of patriotism and sedition.

In the last months of the underground phase during the Quit India Movement, Lohia wrote his long essay 'Economics after Marx'. Indumati Kelkar writes, "In spite of the instability of underground life, continuous police pursuit, worry about the fate of the movement, lack of relevant literature, that thesis of Lohia has been considered a major contribution to the world on economics and to the views of Socialist movement. In his thesis he

has interpreted Marxian economics in an original and novel way."

Indumati Kelkar quotes Lohia about the purpose of this article: "In 1942-43 when the movement against the British was on, the socialists were either in jail or were being pursued by the police. That was also the time when communists, following their foreign masters, had given the slogan of 'People's War'. I was totally confused by the spectacle of Marxism in all its contradictions. Then I decided that I would discover the essential truth of Marxism and purge it from falsehood. Economics, politics, history and philosophy have been the four main

facets of Marxism and I deemed it necessary to analyse all these. But as I was in the midst of analysis of its Economics I was arrested."

Obviously, this comment of Lohia and the article 'Economics after Marx' must have proved distasteful to the party communists of India at that time, who considered Marxism to be an irrevocable universal philosophy.

Whatever the developments, impact and controversies of the Quit India Movement, its core was the explosion of the long cherished will to freedom of the people of India. Under the pressure of the Quit India Movement, from the modernist middle class of India to the feudal kings, it

was felt that the British would now have to leave India. Therefore, they felt concerned about protecting and strengthening their class-interest. Not only iron-screw of the bureaucracy/administration and the language that governed it remained of the British; the model of development was also kept the same. The 'democratic, socialist and secular' Constitution of India too could not completely escape the shadow of the nexus of capitalism and feudalism. The legacy of British glory and coercion, which instilled fear in the hearts of the people of India, was retained by the ruling-class of India. It also went on to strengthen it gradually. □□□

#### A DANGEROUS WORLD OF FAKE NEWS

## Disinformation Campaigns against China and Pakistan

*Ramakrishnan*

**N**EWSPAPERS ABOUT FOREIGN affairs and foreign policy in India's Mainstream Media (MSM) is dominated by almost daily tirades against China and Pakistan, by making allegations that they are colluding and conspiring against India, promoting terrorism, border violations, and by painting that they are a threat to peace in the region and all over the world. And that is one of the major components of 'foreign' news in India. Same or similar stories, accompanied by visuals, appear across dozens of media outlets, irrespective of the language. This has been going on for years.

For one thing such news is mostly false, "manufactured"—to borrow Noam Chomsky's classic usage—by an awful network created by the Indian Establishment, and disseminated widely by the Indian MSM, including reputed news papers and portals, online and offline. That a systematic and well orchestrated

disinformation campaign by India is behind this may surprise many but it is a fact. This should be viewed together with curbing India's own direct media presence in China, and then retaliation by China (Frontier July 16-22, Expelling Each other's Journalists).

The MSM almost never says how USA maintains for decades hundreds of military bases across the world, and how it killed millions of civilians in wars it waged and promoted across the world. And never tells of the crimes of US' allies, of NATO etc. But sees a looming threat in China that has an LAC with India where admittedly not a single bullet was fired for six decades, and a threat even from a weakened and crippled Pakistan. Such a threat perception, artificially created, is shown as a 'cause' for a huge, purposeless, under-stated and scam-ridden Defence Budget of over Rs 7 lakh crore yearly.

Going on since 2005 of UPA days, this operation is more and increasingly vicious today under BJP-led NDA than ever. They say it is quite common in 'Statecraft', maybe so, but there is notably more brazen disinformation than information, particularly by the USA and India, the unique 'democratic allies'. It's another matter that a recent PEW survey said 40% American adults said they never heard Modi's name, and majority said they do not approve his views.

This report of the 15-year long operation was largely ignored by MSM; an earlier edition of 2019 was covered by very few—online media like scroll.in Nov 14, 2019, and Caravan, Dec 9, 2020, and latest edition by thewire.in, and sabrangindia.in (Feb 23-24, 2023). Now a revised report of 2023 Feb compels one to take note of it.

In 2019, the EU DisinfoLab, led by Gary Machado and Alexandre Alaphilippe et al, uncovered a vast network of 265 coordinated fake local media outlets in 65 countries serving Indian interests, as well as multiple dubious think tanks and NGOs. An updated version of Feb 2023 (titled Indian Chronicles)

showed it grew enormously with around 750 media outlets in 116 countries, aided by ten plus UN-accredited NGOs. "There is no such thing as good disinformation, we are convinced" say the authors of the Report, who are specialists in exposing fake news, a growing international phenomenon.

The authors, usually focused on EU, clarified: "At first, we never intended to work on South-Asia related matters; it all began when we read a publication by the European External Action Service (EEAS)." Reputed academic bodies like Princeton University Library keep the EU DisinfoLab Reports.

A few lines from its Foreword reveal the depth and degeneration involved: "Throughout this investigation, we have been astonished by the multiplication of layers of fake, something we had never encountered in other investigations... The actors behind this operation highjacked the names of others, tried to impersonate regular media and press agencies such as the EU Observer, the Economist and Voice of America, used the letterhead of the European Parliament, registered websites under avatars with fake phone numbers, provided fake addresses to the UNO, created publishing companies to print books of the think-tanks they owned..."

"They misused the picture of a former UK Minister and a BBC Director on Facebook registered the names of deceased persons to attend events five years after their death, invented dozens of journalist identities. They used layers of fake media that would quote and republish one another. They used politicians who genuinely wanted to defend women or minority rights to ultimately serve geopolitical interests and gave a platform to far-right politicians when convergent objectives could be reached.

"We believe this astounding level of fakery is the reason why the operation could last for so long: how can a human being suspect or imagine that this is possible? Even our full report does not mention everything we uncovered; we had to leave aside many other fakes."

The Disinformation undermined the credibility of the Indian media: India's rank on World Press Freedom Index dropped to 161 out of 180 countries. India is ranked below Pakistan (150th), Afghanistan (152nd), Sri Lanka (135th) and Nepal (95th).

Indians should know and be conscious that the venomous news (increasingly outsourced to the western sources), and vitiated by Disinformation adversely affects Track-2 diplomacy, which is linked to media relations, vis-a-vis China and Pakistan. This in no way benefits the cause of truth, peace or stability. Nor they benefit the growing trade relations with China that are mutually beneficial and also useful to Indian businesses as well as consumers.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) harps against hereditary and 'parivar' politics. But this disinfo had roots in the Congress regime, and is organised with the help of three generations and two families: One is an obscure foreign business family of Srivastavas, described as a 'shadowy business conglomerate' that came into the spotlight in India after it organised a visit to Kashmir for far-right members of the European Parliament, in late 2019 (scroll.in, 2019 Nov 14).

The other parivar is of Smita Prakash, head of Asian News International (ANI), the rare journalist who could interview PM Modi, and accompanied several PMs in official visits to US. ANI is a key media player in this campaign, providing content(disinformation)for many well-established media across India, such

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as Times Group including Economic Times, Business Standard, The Print, and scores of news TV channels like Wion, Republic TV, ZeeTV, TV-9, that have outlets across India and in many Indian languages. They reach news to tens of millions of Indians. Often some of the reputed media outlets play safe by publishing disclaimers, which one can see, saying they did no more than adding a title to the reports from a 'feeder', and wash their hands.

Founded in 1971 Indira era by Prem Prakash, ANI was always close to the Establishment, produced numerous films for DD. Prem's son Sanjiv succeeded him and he married Smita Prakash, who had joined ANI around 1986. She is the daughter of Inna Rama Mohan Rao, former director, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. ANI emerged stronger as Ishaan Prakash, Smita's son, joined ANI in 2011, and entered into contracts with multiple state and union ministries, and expanded overseas bureaus: By late 2011, ANI accounted for about 99% of the Reuters feed. In 1993, Reuters had purchased a stake in ANI. The 'double-engine' relations immensely furthered ANI's access within the government, and thus across the world. Smitha did many stories for NPR News America and NHK Ja-

pan. Thus ANI's international clout grew enormously.

With such well-orchestrated efforts, they simultaneously air similar or same tirade against China, Pakistan, often bracketing them together, feigning 'credibility' to disinformation. In fact that is the staple source for 'foreign' news; which most media outlets can't afford otherwise. Exaggerated or concocted stories about minority persecution in Pakistan and China, violations along LoC and LAC, 'wolf-warrior diplomacy' of China, China-Pakistan collaboration and conspiracies through BRI etc against India are among pet themes of disinformation. "ANI remains the only press agency to extensively cover the activities of dubious NGOs in Geneva, though it is fully aware that it was misreporting".

UNI was a close competitor but

### URGENT APPEAL

This unique world law fortnightly—perhaps the only law journal in India which regularly publishes important foreign and international courts' decisions—as also provides copious information regarding the socio-economic/political conditions of various countries the world over and invites/publishes thought provoking articles on the pressing problems and crises faced by the people of the world in various spheres—is running on heavy losses and is IN DANGER OF BEING CLOSED DOWN SOON unless subscribers, admirers/well-wishers rise to the occasion and render crucial help in the form of causing many more subscriptions, advertisements (Rs 15,000 or more) and donations at the earliest and regularly. Hope and request all such sympathetic persons/institutions would chip in with their precious aid.

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outwitted by ANI that became a propaganda tool of the union governments, and acquired a dubious official aura. Post-2000, the era of private TV channels, now in hundreds, provided scope for massive expansion of ANI. As most channels would/could not invest much capital, ANI became a syndicated feeder with visuals for most of them, and had a meteoric rise. Asian Films TV was incorporated in 2000 to provide feed for newspapers and periodicals (this info on the family links is based on Wikipedia.) The Caravan notes that most of its foot-soldiers were low-cost recruits, who had little to do with journalism. ANI grew even closer to the government after BJP assumed power in 2014, crooning with BJP, and inimical to other parties.

Indian Chronicles showed dead entities were resurrected like 2020-reborn EU Chronicle, dead think-tanks and NGOs. These fabricated figures are used as 'experts' to provide opinions and analysis to further mislead readers and reinforce the false narratives. It even resurrected dead people: Former Chairman of Commission to Study the Organisation of Peace (CSOP), and "grandfather of international law in the US", Louis B Sohn, who passed away in 2006, "attended" a UN Human Rights Council meeting in 2007 and participated in an event organised by "Friends of Gilgit-Baltistan" in Washington DC in 2011!

ANI often quoted articles and reports by a think tank, International Forum for Rights and Security (IFFRAS), that was dissolved in 2014, but hijacked and revived as a fake entity. Another think tank frequently quoted by ANI is the Policy Research Group (POREG). However, three of its members quoted by ANI numerous times, on topics such as Pakistan's army doctrines and so-called China's "wolf warrior diplomacy", were never reachable.

So also failed efforts to contact Philippe Jeune, a claimed "Paris-based investigative journo with more than 10 years' experience". Asif Noor, founder of Pakistan's think tank, Friends of BRI Forum, also complained on the fakes.

#### Linked to

##### Indian intelligence services?

French media outlet Les Jours report suggests that Indian intelligence services could be behind the Srivastava group's misinformation operations. It cited various examples to justify this claim...e.g. Pramila Srivastava threatened a pediatrician for speaking about infanticide in Punjab in the UN Human Rights Commission. The pediatrician was soon questioned by the Indian intelligence services on her return to the country.

Les Jours also noted that a company run by Ankur Srivastava, makes malware which he said is only sold to Indian intelligence services. It also noted that the Srivastava group runs several fake news websites including Socialist Weekly, Khalsa Akhbar Lahore and the Times of Azad Kashmir, which are likely linked to Indian intelligence services.

The report also points to how NGOs and freshly restored international organisations linked to the Srivastava network worked as a lobby in the UN Human Rights Commission to whitewash state-led Indian atrocities (in J&K) and highlight violence in Pakistan. It says:

"From then on, we uncovered an entire network of coordinated UN-accredited NGOs promoting Indian interests and criticising Pakistan and China repeatedly. We could tie at least 10 of them directly to the Srivastava family, with several other dubious NGOs pushing the same messages. For example, European Organisation for Pakistani Minorities (EOPM), Baluchistan House and the South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF)—were directly but opaquely



created by the Srivastava group. They were repeatedly given the floor at the UN on behalf of the accredited organisations". Similar are three informal groups in the European Parliament, namely the South Asia Peace Forum, the Baloch Forum and Friends of Gilgit-Baltistan, WESTT—the Women Economic and Social Think-Tank. They are used for anti-Pakistan discourse, harping on minorities and women's rights. Such a role at UN is not possible without official support and co-ordination.

The Les Jours report notes that the SADF, a Brussels-based think tank, created in 2011, has the same address as one linked to the Srivastavas; its domain name was registered directly by the Indian company. It paid for visits to and media conferences on Kashmir.

It is natural that China and Pakistan exposed it in their media. China's Global Times came out with a report, Jun 20, 2023: GT investigates: How Indian media fabricates think tanks, journalists to churn out anti-China, anti-Pakistan news.

GT said: "On the one hand, the Indian media produces and spreads false narratives about China, and on the other hand, the Indian government restricts Chinese journalists' access to India and deny their rights of reporting a real India.. The presence of such disinformation campaign aligns with India's strained relations with both countries. What are the implications? "Fake news by Indian media can incite nationalist sentiment within the country and distract people from the real problems of the country and the poor performance of its government.

"Within the complex geopolitical context of South Asia, such disinformation campaigns can have far-reaching consequences, which can exacerbate tensions, strain diplomatic relations, and hinder regional cooperation efforts, observers warned."

Noam Chomsky et al (1988) exposed in great forensic detail how US MSM operate as propaganda agents for US governments. "CIA, Mossad and the like are role-models to the Indian entities which excelled the pioneers of disinformation, with their own 'manufactures'.

Then the report gave the modus operandi, with several specific examples: NGOs run by the Srivastava group lobbied members of the European parliament, or MEPs, to write op-eds taking pro-India stances, often against Pakistan or China, which were then published on the group's dummy news websites. ANI then quoted these as credible reports from European media, from where Indian media and news channels reproduced and disseminated them, unchecked" (the Caravan). Some appear to be written by bots. The copy-paste and dissemination operations now revolve around the Big News Network, a self-proclaimed "news agency" owning hundreds of media outlets...To summarize, a simple letter by individual MEPs, who are free to send any letter they want to send, is ultimately presented as an official position of the EU on China. Surgical strikes by the Indian Army in Pakistan", were shown as if supported by MEPs.

Though disinformation "has been part of the playbook of all countries", Alaphilippe (Director of the Lab) wrote: but this was a unique one : "The fact, that during 15 years, and even after being partially exposed last year, this operation is able to keep its activities shows the sophistication and the willingness of the actors behind Indian Chronicles.

"It is definitely the biggest network we've exposed.. Just imagine if the same operation would have been carried out by China or Russia. What would have been the headlines of the media?"

EU DisinfoLab in its Conclusion

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said: “the biggest failure from (the European) institutions would be, if another report is released next year on the same actors with the same techniques. This would mean that EU institutions...are OK with foreign interference.”

Despite such sustained

disinformation campaign and a Neighbourhood First policy, India suspects all its neighbours are closer to China, all had joined BRI and felt benefited. Evidently, the scary disinformation is not helping... except in misleading ‘voting cattle’ and domestic public opinion, and feeding

India’s Military-Industrial Complex (see Frontier, April 16 - 22, 2023).

Given the scale of sustained disinformation, anything against China and Pakistan in the media, needs to be taken, not with the proverbial pinch of salt but with a ton of it. □□□

## ANOTHER HISTORICAL CONSPIRACY

### Demolishing Gandhian Institute of Studies

*Chandan Pal*

**S**ARVA SEVA SANGH (ALL India Sarvodaya Mandal) is the national apex organisation of Gandhian thought. It was established in March 1948 at the Sevagram conference held under the chairmanship of Dr Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India. Top national leaders of the time like Acharya Kripalani, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Dr Zakir Hussain, Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan, J C Kumarappa and other leaders were present in this conference including the then Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

On the initiative of Acharya Vinoba Bhave and with the active cooperation of Lalbahadur Shastri, Jagjivan Ram, Radhakrishna Bajaj, Sarva Seva Sangh purchased a total of 12.89 acres of land from the Railways in 1960, 1961 and 1970 at Rajghat, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh having three Registered Sale Deeds signed by Divisional Engineer Northern Railway, Lucknow. The amount of land purchased in 1960 was Rs 26,730, the amount of land purchased in 1961 was Rs 3,240 and the amount of land purchased in 1970 was Rs 4,485. All the relevant documents relating to purchase are there.

Since the year 1956, the work of Sarva Seva Sangh has been going on in Varanasi. In the year 1960, when the Sarva Seva Sangh bought the

land from the Railways, the Sadhna Kendra complex was built and in 1964, this Sadhna Kendra was inaugurated by former Prime Minister Lalbahadur Shastri. Sarvodayi and senior Gandhian Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan and his wife Prabhavati, Achyut Patwardhan, Dharendra Majumdar, Balkova Bhave, Dada Dharmadhikari, Manmohan Chowdhary, Narayan Desai, Vimla Thakar, Siddharaj Dhadha, Krishnaraj Mehta, were present in this complex of Sadhna Kendra. It has been the work place of Shankar Rao Dev, Acharya Ramamurthy, K S Radhakrishna, Amarnath Bhai, Ramchandra Rahi etc. It is also worth mentioning that the world famous book 'Small is Beautiful' was composed by world famous economist Prof E F Shumakhar while staying at Sadhna Kendra.

In the year 1960, Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan suggested to Sarva Seva Sangh to establish a national institute for higher studies and research of Gandhian thought. Accordingly Sarva Seva Sangh established Gandhian Institute of Studies (Gandhi Vidya Sansthan) at Rajghat, Varanasi on its own land. Sarva Seva Sangh made available its purchased land for this institute and the buildings were constructed on this land by UP Gandhi Smarak Nidhi.

In this way, Sadhna Kendra

Complex has had historical importance and contribution in the field of nation and society building for the last 6 decades. In the premises, there is the publication department of Sarva Seva Sangh, from where the literature of the country's sages including 'Gandhi-Vinoba-JP' was delivered through the 'Sarvodaya' book stalls operated at 70 railway stations across the country.

Meanwhile, on April 11, 2023, a case has been filed against the Sarva Seva Sangh in the office of the Deputy Collector, Sadar, Varanasi by the Northern Railway Lucknow. According to this lawsuit, the deeds of all the land purchased by the Sarva Seva Sangh from the Railways in 1960, 1961 and 1970 have been prepared in 'a fraudulent manner and this is a criminal act'.

For one thing, to call it fabricated is to target personalities like Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan, Lalbahadur Shastri, Jagjivan Ram, Radhakrishna Bajaj and Dr Rajendra Prasad. This insult to the country's great freedom fighters and patriots is very shameful and reprehensible.

Suddenly on May 15, 2023, the Magistrate and the officials of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts came to the campus with a heavy police force. No information was given to the Sarva Seva Sangh by the Commissioner in this regard. Seeing the heavy police force that came to the campus, the leading officer was asked, why and how did he suddenly come to the complex. After a little while it became clear

that according to the order of the Divisional Commissioner, the library, administrative building and premises of Gandhi Vidya Sansthan have been given to the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. The order of the Divisional Commissioner was also not given to the Sarva Seva Sangh.

Meanwhile, in the case of the land made available for Gandhi Vidya Sansthan as per the registered lease deed, the Hon'ble High Court, Allahabad (Case No. 29975/2007) in its order dated 16.05.2023 gave a clear decision and directed the District Magistrate, Varanasi, to act. It is that within 2 months the documents related to the land should be verified and handed over to the Sarva Seva Sangh. According to the instructions of the Hon'ble Court, the District Magistrate Varanasi had to give a decision regarding the land given on lease for Gandhi Vidya Sansthan, but in contempt of the order of the Hon'ble Court, he asked for evidence related to the land of Sarva Seva Sangh, which was, however, presented. Ignoring the evidence completely, he said in his order that the 'land purchased by the Sarva Seva Sangh in the years 1960, 1961 and 1970 belongs to the Railways', while all the registered documents related to the land in question are available with the Sarva Seva Sangh.

By attracting the attention of Gandhians across the country against such unethical and illegal act by the

Uttar Pradesh government and administration, J P Virasat Bachao Sangharsh Samiti started Satyagraha from 15 May, 2023. In this Satyagraha the followers of Gandhi, Vinoba, JP and likeminded people and organisations from all over the country continued to participate for justice. This Satyagraha movement gradually intensified throughout the country.

July 22, 2023. It was the 63rd day of Satyagraha. Suddenly around 6.30 am, a large number of UP police, railway police (about 1000) entered the ashram premises without any information and kept threatening to vacate the premises immediately. When the police officers were asked to show written instructions to vacate the premises they didn't answer. Instead they began to dismantle the Satyagraha Manch. At this point some workers including Sangh's president and veteran Gandhian Ramdhiraj protested peacefully by sitting in front of the police force against injustice and atrocities. At the same time news came that all the workers living inside the campus were being instructed to vacate their houses. On the other hand, all the goods were thrown out from the office of Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan Samiti; many valuable books of the library were destroyed. New and old books worth crores of rupees of Sarvodaya Prakashan Department are now lost forever. Then they forcefully removed all the protesters and herded them into prison van.

Sarva Seva Sangh's entire Varanasi campus, which is on about 13 acres of land, was locked by the police (or by the railways). For the last 63 years, this heritage which spread Gandhi's thoughts in and outside the country is the place where Gandhiji's creative work spread. Like the Sabarmati Ashram, Gujarat, this place too will soon be used by the corporate houses in the name of development. The campus will soon house luxurious hotels, malls etc.

The message is clear: the people in the government of the country want to establish a dictatorial regime by destroying all the democratic institutions and by creating an atmosphere of fear-psychosis. The government has nothing to do with inflation, unemployment, violation of dignity of women, violation of rights of tribals, problems of farmers etc. Seeing the interest of the corporate tycoons with the money of the general public has become the main duty of the present government.

It is a well thought out plan to erase Gandhi's idea completely from the minds of the people of India. Sarva Seva Sangh sincerely hopes that the progressive, non-communal, secular, democratic, pluralistic culture-rich people who have faith in the Constitution of the country will raise their voice against this heinous conspiracy and will show the way to remove the autocratic persons in power. □□□

[Chandan Pal is President of Sarva Seva Sangh. chandanpalsecre44@gmail.com]

## THE FACE OF MANY STRUGGLES

### Gaddar—a Legend in his Own Lifetime

*Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd*

**F**OLK SINGER GADDAR, born Gummadi Vittal Rao, also popularly known as 'people's singer' and 'Praja Yuddha Nauka', died on 6 August in Hyderabad. The poet was an or-

ganic legend as a lyricist and singer belonging to the productive masses who reflected the power and pain of labour and humanity.

A Maoist, pro-Telangana movement and pro-Mandal activist, poli-

tician, Dalit, and later an Ambedkarite and Buddhist—Gaddar was the face of many struggles.

The poet's most famous song, which he wrote when he was still maturing as an organic lyricist and singer in the 1970s, goes as follows:

*"Sirimalle Chettukinda  
Lachumammo, Lachumamma  
Yuvvu Chinaboyi Kusunna  
Vendukammo*

*(O mother Lachumamma,  
Why are you sitting  
Under jasmine tree with such  
a sad face and body)"*

This song depicts Gaddar's mother's life of labour and all its torture when she worked on a paddy field yet wasn't paid and starved for days. It moved readers.

Gaddar belonged to a Marathi (Mahar) Dalit family that migrated to Hyderabad. His father, Toopran, an Ambedkarite, educated him and admitted him into the prestigious University of Engineering, affiliated with Osmania University, in the early 1970s.

But Gaddar didn't complete his course—he was soon drawn into radical student movements and dropped out of college, taking up a job as a clerk at a national bank only to leave it soon after. Then he became a full-time singer associated with the communist revolutionary struggle, popularly known as the Naxalite movement.

Gaddar gradually came to be recognised as the face of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) or CPI (ML) through his songs, which he sang in the streets, at public gatherings, and before audiences numbering in lakhs—mobilising all. He took India's cultural realm by storm with his new genre in which he wrote and sang about agrarian productive masses and exploitation in novel style. For a long time, his alternative to the existing corrupt system was only the armed revolution.

The poet adopted the name 'Gaddar' as a tribute to the pre-Independence Gadar party, which opposed British rule in Punjab. The moniker soon became the Indian symbol of Maoist struggles. The songs that Gaddar wrote on the red flag, guerrilla strategies, and armed struggles shook the State apparatus.

In 1997, the folk singer was shot

by five unknown assailants at his Venkatapuram residence in Secunderabad. While surgeons managed to take out four bullets from his body, one had gotten lodged into his spinal cord that they didn't remove to avoid further complications—and the poet reportedly called it a "symbol of State repression". The bullet sat within his body till he died.

A man of courage, conviction, wit, and humility, and yet was child-like, Gaddar felt strongly for the Dalit movement. In the 1985 Karamchedu massacre, when Kamma landlords, the dominant caste group in coastal Andhra Pradesh, brutally murdered six Dalits and raped three Dalit women, he wrote a mass mobilising song that went as follows:

*"Karamchedu Bhoosamulatoti  
Kalebadi Nilabadi  
Poruchesina Dalit Pululamma  
(The Dalit tiger that fought  
against Karamachedu  
Landlords like tiger)"*

This song became a weapon to mobilise Dalits in the entire state. From then onwards, Gaddar started writing songs on untouchability, Ambedkarism, and constitutionalism.

The poet's sympathies for the Dalit cause heightened in 1990 when Mandal Commission protests erupted all over the country and the VP Singh government received heavy criticism. Social justice versus merit had become the ideological anchors of pro- and anti-Mandal forces. Even the communist revolutionaries under the leadership of mostly upper castes wavered and avoided a clear stand.

Arun Shourie, who was then the editor of The Indian Express, was leading the anti-Mandal movement. Gaddar responded to Shourie through a song that became a weapon for pro-Mandal forces. It went as follows:

*"Arun Shouriego Neeku Akaali  
Bademeruka*

*Neyyi Kada Nuvvunte  
Piyikada Memuntam  
(O Arun Shourie, what do  
you know about the pain of  
hunger  
You live in the society that  
eats ghee  
Whereas we live a life that  
lifts your community's shit)"*

The song was disliked by many 'upper' caste revolutionaries, but Gaddar went on singing it in public meetings to inspire the marginalised to fight and get reservation implemented.

#### **Toward Telangana movement**

Later in the decade, Maoists decided to rekindle the Telangana movement when the Telugu Desam Party was in power. Gaddar became the inspiration for the movement, writing several songs on the exploitation of the state's resources. His most powerful song had the following lyrics:

*Podustunna Poddu Meeda  
Nadustunna Kalama  
Poru Telanganama....Bale...  
Bale...Bale*

*(On the rising sun the time is walking*

*The Telangana struggle is a  
time walker on the sun)*

Today, the song is remembered as the symbol of the Telangana movement. Although Gaddar was never an open supporter of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (now Bharat Rashtra Samithi), he led parallel radical pro-Telangana groups with Maoist support.

Despite his Maoist sympathies, Gaddar differed with the ideology on one aspect—class struggle was not enough, caste struggle should be taken up too. He saw the several strengths of the Constitution. The singer tried to convince Maoists to change their approach toward the Constitution and BR Ambedkar. Obviously, they refused to change their old line of class struggle.

Gaddar exited the CPI(ML), dis-

sociated from the Maoists around 2010, and started working with other forces to defend the Constitution.

After the Telangana state was carved out in 2014, Gaddar moved closely with diverse political and ideological forces. Several cases against him—filed when he was a Maoist—still lay pending. His health was getting precarious. For some time, he worked with the Bahujan Left Front (BLF), supported by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), along with this writer. But at the same time, he maintained good relations with the Congress, participating in public meetings that Rahul Gandhi conducted in the state. Gaddar met Rahul and Sonia Gandhi in Delhi too.

Gaddar's life was a saga of restless wandering, singing his own songs except for two that he popularised. One was Bandenaka Bandikatti (Bul-

lock cart after bullock cart), a famous one against the Nizam and written by Yadagari during the anti-Razakar and Nizam struggle in the 1940s.

The second one was Vuru Manadira, which had the following lyrics:

*"Eevuru Mandira, Eevada*

*Mandira*

*Dora Yendiro Vani*

*Peekudendiro*

*(This village is ours, this*

*locality is ours*

*Who is this landlord, What is*

*his torture over us)"*

This song was written by another famous Dalit singer and writer, Guda Anjaiah, during the revolutionary movement in the early 1970s. Gaddar took this song to almost every village in Andhra Pradesh. As he kept singing the chorus at processions, thousands would join him, charging

up the feudal atmosphere in the villages and towns.

Gaddar was both a sophisticated and rustic thinker. When he turned toward Ambedkarism, he wrote several ballads against the caste system and untouchability. A feminist, he wrote philosophical songs on women's life, labour, and humanity, speaking against kitchen drudgery and the pain of cleaning streets and homes. His song on the great service of the broom conveys deep meanings.

Gaddar adopted Buddhism, leaving his earlier communist affinities, to follow in the footsteps of Ambedkar.

The folk singer is buried in the school compound that he built for poor children. Gaddar's love for equality and his songs that talk about the struggle for liberation will remain.

□□□

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## CLOSE OF AN ERA

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# Mourning Samar Bagchi

**Asit Roy**

**S**AMAR BAGCHI, A LEGENDARY science educator and human rights activist is no more. He passed away on July 30, 2023. So many people have paid numerous eloquent tributes to Samar Bagchi with tearful and introspective pens after his physical demise. More of his writings and lessons of life would be discussed in all its facets. Literally, how many hundreds of things he has left his signature on, this writer does not have the ability to recount these in this small space. Only recently, this 91-year-old young man joined hands with Dipankar Bhattacharya in front of Hazra Park on the black day of Babri demolition on December 6, at the call of Medha Patkar, and chanted "Save the country", "Save the constitution", "Save democracy". Again it was him,

who responded to the call of Greta Thunberg and joined the huge procession of students to save the Jalangi River in Kolkata. The late, tireless and colourful man is our beacon in dark times. He is Samar Bagchi, none other than a character of the epic "Dhodai Charit Manos", authored by his neighbour Satinath Bhaduri born in Mongyer in Bihar. The city of Kolkata is mourning in tears due to his death. His memory was so sharply revealed when I came back from the Puri conference of "NAPM" he asked what happened. One of our friends replied by singing an old time song "Waqt Ki Awaaz Hai Milke Chalo". He immediately told the name of the lyricist of the song during the anti-fascist days. I have heard many of his poems memorised. He loved Arun Mitra's

poetry. He said in a high-pitched voice "I have left my deepest words and sorrow at the root of the tree,"

An older story will reveal another side of Samar Bagchi's character. When he was the director of the Birla Museum, he built a pet library, from which children could take home a few pet animals. It had to be returned within the due date. Once so taken a rare species of bird fled out of a member's cage. The child's mother and father, could not buy back lost bird, went to Samar Babu and begged for forgiveness and asked how much compensation should be paid. Samar Babu, asked the child - didn't he fly away, did you blow him up! Seeing that the boy was silent, he took him to the next room, why did you do this? The boy said, he had a hard time in the cage! After hearing this answer, Samar Babu came and told his parents, you don't have to pay compensation, but my project has been successful so far. Launching this library

was to instil a love of animals among children!

When a natural person with such a compassion flies out of the cage of this world, it is difficult to bear the deep pain of his loss.

Dr Samar Bagchi began most of his experiments in popularising science while at the museum. He joined in 1962, became Director in 1968 and retired from there in 1991. After retirement, his activities gained momentum. To popularise science among students, he actively participated in science model competitions, umpteen seminars and science fairs across the state. He used to run out to different villages across the state. And had trained students in hands-on science. He started innovative science training called the Quest of Doordarshan. His fans still remember this project with deep respect. Once I met him suddenly in Khanjanpur village near Santiniketan, which is the village of tribals called Kora. Working with them was an enthusiastic young man named Rahul and his British wife Kirsty. Now these

Koras speak almost the same language as the Santals. There are many other language groups close to Santals such as Ho, Birhar, Munda etc. He was listening to this analogy with great interest. Rahul-Kirsty couple published many textbooks with the help of locals on the advice of Dr Bagchi. Teaching was also done in their own language. In this context, I was reminded of the "Khelaghar", an educational and cultural institution for Santal girls, established by Rabindranath's beloved Maitrey Devi, at Badu, near Calcutta. Dr Bagchi was the chief advisor there. With what wonderful skill they performed Rabindranath's poems, dances, songs, dramas. When asked why there was no cultural programme in their own language, Dr Bagchi remembered pondering the debate with keen attention. Later this was told to this writer. Readers can find many of his hand-drawn examples of hard science teaching on YouTube.

Now let's come to philosophy. Marx, Rabindranath and Gandhi

were his most favourite haunts. As a result, he was in the progressive camp. Always he spoke for human rights and social justice. He got much inspiration from the Narmada movement against dams. Social activist Medha Patkar and his associates were his natural allies. He was the advisor of West Bengal NAPM. Once here too the organisation was quite strong. History will not only remember him as a dedicated person who carried the spirit of science in an atmosphere of false science. He represented an era. In him one finds the foot soldier who has taught people to be strong in the work of life and not to give up. He would continue to walk like a restless youth in the fields and paths of Bengal through lessons of life and work practices. Time will heal all the sorrows accumulated in your broken ribs Samarda. The poem you used to frequently recite. Such a humanist and visionary ever remains with us in the struggle for justice.

□□□

## LETTERS

### Save CHS Library

This is an appeal to the national and global academic community at large, including JNU alumni as well as teachers' associations, student bodies and individual professors and students across the world. This is also an appeal to all relevant public officials.

In a huge blow to the student and research community, the administration of Jawaharlal Nehru University, India has decided to shut down the library of Centre for Historical Studies (CHS). As such, the Centre is a world-class department for the study of Indian history, and the library is an indispensable, life-long resource for scholars.

The library is being vacated and replaced by a new Special Centre

for Tamil Studies. The foundation of a new Centre is welcome, but it cannot be at the cost of academic resources of existing centres.

Rs 10 crore (100 million) have been allocated to the university (out of which 5 Crore had been handed over in December 2022) by the Government of Tamil Nadu for the establishment and construction of the new Tamil Studies centre. Those funds should be utilised adequately to create a separate infrastructure for the new centre as was expected and implied in the Tamil Nadu Government grant.

Facilities built for a particular purpose with public funds cannot at will be transferred for other purposes. It was in the 1980s that the UGC scheme for awarding special

funds to department of excellence, which was called Departmental Special Assistance Programme (DSA), was mooted and CHS applied for the assistance and it was given the grant after very rigorous process of scrutiny and evaluation where the publications of the faculty as well as the research which was done by the students as well as the teaching played a very big role. The grant was utilised to build and expand the library as no good institution can survive without a library.

The library houses tens of thousands of books and rare documents, many of which are out of print or unavailable elsewhere. Many of these have been donated or sourced from the private collections of legendary scholars such as Bernard Cohn, Satish Chandra, and DD Kosambi.

Liquidation of archived private collections would be a loss in the eyes of any institute. The library collections of CHS are being reallocated and dispersed and with the risk of imminent disposal of the rest.

Hundreds of books are being packed and shifted to EXIM Bank library, which barely has a few dozen shelves. There is also the issue of seating space and access for the students from the department and visiting researchers. This amounts to destruction of one of the best department libraries in all of India for history, and a lifelong resource for students, alumni and visiting scholars. The decision was made without any consultation and knowledge of the CHS student community.

Student Community appeals to the JNU Teachers' Association, to all JNU faculty members and teachers' bodies across the world to intervene to help prevent the destruction of the CHS library.

**Student Community,  
Centre for Historical Studies, JNU  
Oil in Manipur Hills**

Discovery of oil is another reason attributed to the ongoing clashes in Manipur. The southern part of the state is believed to be sitting on a bowl of oil estimated at being almost five trillion cubic feet in size.

This is said to be covering the hill districts of Churachandpur, Tamenglong and Jiribam, all of which are inhabited by the Kuki-Zo people.

The responsibility for oil exploration was given to Jubilant Energy, a Netherlands-based company while government firms like the ONGC which is drilling in Upper Assam were ignored.

It is reported that 30 oil well locations are said to have been identified and many more could still be located. However, the deal has been questioned by environment experts who feel that it would disturb the rich soil conditions that

exist in these areas besides harming the flora and fauna.

The Kuki-Zo people are aware of this rich resource available in their areas. Many think the Meitei push for ST (Scheduled Tribe) status is because of this reason.

Being granted ST status would allow the Meiteis access to these tribal areas and with governance being dominated by them anything would be possible thereafter.

**Gonsalves and  
Ferreira on Bail**

People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) welcomes the Supreme Court order granting bail on merits and release of Vernon Gonsalves and Arun Ferreira, two of the accused in the infamous Bhima Koregaon case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

In a significant judgement, on 28 July 2023, the top court granted bail for two primary reasons: the fact that the accused had already been incarcerated for 5 years with the trial not having commenced yet, and that the NIA had been unable to justify, even prima facie, the allegations against them. The UAPA effectively prohibits bail to persons accused of terrorist activities and association if the State is able to show, prima facie, that they are guilty of the alleged offences. In this case, besides observing that no electronic evidence was recovered from their devices, the court has maintained that mere possession of literature does not constitute an unlawful activity; that collection of funds for legal aid for undertrials cannot prima facie be treated as an instance of terror funding; and that it is not sufficient to simply call an organisation as a front of a banned organisation as the links have to be proven.

The Supreme Court judgment,

significantly, rolls back the stringency of its 2019 judgment in NIA v. Watali, which effectively gags the accused at bail proceedings by preventing them from challenging the materials of the prosecution, or bringing forth their own defence. The present judgment allows an examination of the probative value and reliability of materials in NIA's charge-sheet.

However, the court has created a set of bail condition for both based on the fact that Vernon Gonsalves was once convicted and that there is a pending criminal case against him. Among the seven conditions imposed by the top court, including the conditions that they do not leave the state of Maharashtra, the instruction that the duo use one mobile phone each with its location available to the investigating authority all 24 hours is disturbing as it places Vernon Gonsalves and Arun Ferreria under constant surveillance. Such tracking suggests that their release from prison is at the cost of their movement and privacy, a point which further curtails the licensed liberty available under bail.

However, what is even more disturbing is that the apex court has allowed for further conditions to be set by the special trial court, conditions that the latter may "consider fit and proper". Accordingly, on July 31, the special NIA court has set further stringent conditions making the bail unfair and unjust.

**Joseph Mathai, Paramjeet Singh  
Secretaries, PUDR**

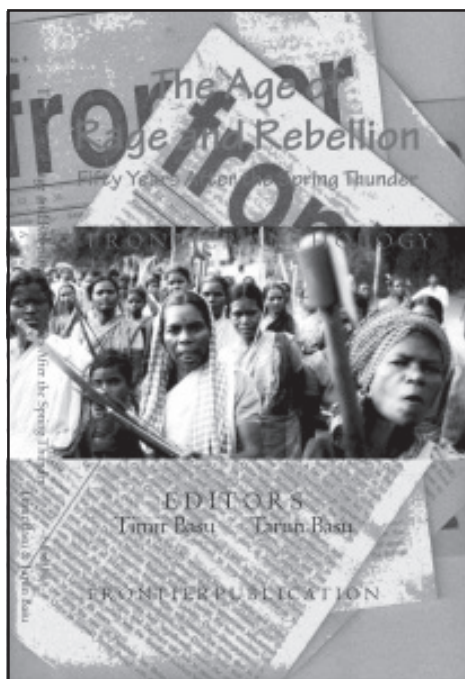
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