

frontier

Vol. 57 : No. 20

ISSN 0016-2094

November 10-16, 2024

Founder-Editor : **SAMAR SEN**

On Other Pages

Comment	2
Note	3
HUMRA QURAISHI's COLUMN Attacks on Madrasas Humra Quraishi	4
GENDER GAP Narratives around 'We Want Justice' Abhijit Guha	5
A PIONEER IN INDIAN HISTORICAL STUDIES Suniti Kumar Ghosh: An Assessment of a Revolutionary Activist—III Amit Bhattacharya	7
G N SAIBABA 'They Don't Know How to Kill Me' Harsh Thakor	11
REJOINER 'The Great Betrayal of the ideal of Communism by Stalin, Mao and their Political Heirs' Kobad Ghandy	12
A CRUSADER FOR JUSTICE Rangayakamma is an Institution HT	13
Letters	15

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

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

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

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

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

India-China Ties

Four years after the deadly Galwan border clash in eastern Ladakh the ice cracked between India and China. They ended border impasse to some extent on October 21, and two days later Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping held their first bilateral meeting in five years on the margins of Brics summit in Kazan, Russia. What transpired between Modi and Xi was not made public but this kind of side-line diplomacy has very little impact on the ground reality. This time both sides have agreed on patrolling and grazing arrangement in traditional areas along the Line of Actual Control—LAC—which saw hand-to-hand clashes in recent years. The Galwan clashes were the first fatal confrontation between the two sides since 1975. They fought with clubs and sticks because as per 1996 agreement, the use of guns and explosives near the border is prohibited. Several rounds of talks between diplomats and military officials in the last four years had not really resulted any major breakthrough. So this 'October understanding' is hailed as a grand success. Due to strained border stand-off business and people-to-people relations suffered enormously much to the disadvantage of India.

The Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India has slowed down considerably since the Galwan crisis in 2020. In truth some of this slow-down started much earlier amid concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting India's high-growth industries. It remains to be seen whether new border deal could ease India's staggering trade deficit with China. Indian markets are full of Chinese goods and much publicised and yet less explained Modi's 'make in India' rhetoric remains a big joke.

The two sides are likely to move from the newly agreed disengagement to de-escalation and then to de-induction, meaning to restrict the number of forces deployed in a zone. While it is a long-drawn process, the decision to agree to restore a measure of normalcy on the border creates diplomatic and political space for both countries to re-engage on regional, global and other issues.

Whether they will be able to settle the boundary question in any foreseeable future is anybody's guess. The root cause is an ill-defined 3,440 km (2,100 mile)-long boundary in the wilderness of the Himalayas left by history. The original culprits were the British rulers of India. Then their Indian heirs inherited the British Empire's 'forward policy' and its adverse consequences as well. Rivers, lakes and snow-caps mean the actual line of

control often gets blurred and shifted, bringing soldiers face to face at many points, leading to violent confrontation. The Chinese and Indians as well are reportedly building infrastructures in 'disputed areas' to facilitate military movement easier, creating a situation of 'no war, no peace' for all seasons.

For one thing Modi never accused China of illegal incursion. On the contrary what he said regarding Chinese advance went against the hawks in the Indian establishment. After becoming Prime Minister Modi

made five official trips to China and held 18 meetings with Xi without raising any contentious issue on any occasion. In truth on 19th June, 2020 he gave his 'infamous' clean chit to China saying 'neither anyone entered our territory, nor any outsider encroached within our border'. Congress Party has been continually attacking Modi for his abject surrender to China without really substantiating their allegations. They are actually playing with the gallery with an eye to the vote market. The hard fact is that the Himalayan border

reality has not changed much since the days of Nehru. And it is unlikely to change radically anytime soon, no matter what the Modis and Rajnath Singhs are saying or not saying.

This border dispute cannot be resolved amicably to the satisfaction of all stakeholders concerned unless both sides agree not to disagree on some kind of accommodation. Tragically enough, neither India nor China would like to alter their stated positions on the volatile border. □□□

25-10-2024

COMMENT

Peace, Not Guns

PRAKASH SINGH, FORMER Director General of Border Security Force known for his rich experience and scholarship, has written an article titled 'Killer App(roach) Against Naxalites? Peace, Not Guns (*The Times of India*, October 18) which the government will do well to consider very seriously as it advocates a justice based peace approach that is much needed particularly for longer-term, sustainable improvements.

Mr Singh sets the tone for his analysis by stating right in the beginning that the government has lacked a holistic understanding in its approach to Naxalism affected areas. He objects to a minister's statement calling for a "ruthless" approach" by saying clearly that "ruthlessness should have no place when you are dealing with your own people."

Instead he suggests that after

any actions against Naxalites, "it is for the administration to fill the vacuum and provide necessary infrastructure to improve tribals' lives." This, he adds, "unfortunately has not been happening..."

While the government has been emphasising development, Mr Singh voices an important "note of caution—Development, while providing basic necessities to the tribals, should not disturb their traditional way of life. It should focus on local handicrafts and promotion of tribal art and culture and languages. Primary health centres and schools may be established, but any mega projects should be avoided because they lead to destruction of forests, alienation of land from the tribals and their displacement."

As for the real situation, Mr Singh draws attention to disturbing government data and reports. According to the environment ministry, from April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2023, over 88,903 hectares of forest land was diverted for non-forestry purposes. Mr Singh adds that land-alienation is a very sore point with the tribal communities. A rural development ministry report has stated that it leaves

"the tribal people totally exhausted, impoverished and traumatised."

Prakash Singh emphasises that genuine grievances of people must be removed. He says quite strongly, "Almost every Naxal has a grievance against the state, a story of discrimination, persecution or exploitation."

So instead of any ruthlessness Mr Singh gives very different advice to the government. He suggests—"The Government of India should consider declaring unilateral ceasefire for two months in all Naxal-affected areas, call upon cadres to surrender, promise them some immunity in cases against them, and assure them of rehabilitation. At the same time, the government should invite Naxal leaders for peace talks, listen to their grievances, address them to the extent possible, and persuade them to join the mainstream."

Mr Singh concludes by saying, "It is time to heal the wounds and win over the hearts and minds of the Naxals. That alone can ensure a lasting solution."

This approach is refreshingly different from the narrow, militaristic voices heard more commonly, and the government would do well to heed the far-sighted, peace with justice approach advocated by Mr Prakash Singh. □□□

[Contributed by Bharat Dogra]

For Frontier Contact

ALAIGAL VELIYEETAGAM

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

NOTE

Saibaba—'Anda Cell' failed to destroy His Spirit

Amit Bhattacharya writes:

MY ACQUAINTANCE WITH Prof G N Saibaba is of nearly three decades, as far as I can remember. It was at an International Seminar on the Nationality Question held in New Delhi during 16-19 February 1996 that I first saw him. It was attended by delegates from different countries; including Prof Ngugi wa Thiongo's from Kenya, who had been in exile in the USA. There on the Presidium I saw a man who was unable to stand on his feet as his both legs were affected by polio and who simply crawled on his hands to proceed to the chair nearest to his reach on the Presidium.

My father, too, was unable to walk because of polio from his childhood days. Later, he was able to walk slowly, but as a lame man with a stick as support. A stick in hand, he travelled by trams and buses to reach and teach in colleges. However, Saibaba's difficulties were far more intense than his.

Prof Saibaba could surmount all hurdles with determination and courage. Never did he talk about his physical disability. There was a time when he acted as the Warden inside the Delhi University campus and stayed at the Warden's Quarter. That abode was open for everyone. The hospitality we received from him and Vasanta, his life partner, is still vivid in my memory.

Prof Saibaba had all along been fighting for the rights of the oppressed people, stood against state repression, against draconian repressive acts such as TADA, POTA and the UAPA, joined and organised People's Conventions in support of the unconditional release of political

prisoners. He played an active role in the formation of the Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners (CRPP) in the LTG auditorium, New Delhi held during March 31-April 1, 2008.

He was attracted to Communist ideology, to Naxalbari struggle. His selfless work, modesty, honesty of purpose, dedication to the ideology he believed in, and love for the common people endeared himself to his friends, colleagues and students alike.

Prof Saibaba was a voracious reader interested in different subjects. Nothing related to the masses was alien to him. However, his thinking, writing and activities earned him the wrath of the State. He was arrested under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) on the charge of sedition—an act under which it is virtually impossible to get bail. He was sentenced to life imprisonment by Nagpur court. An appeal was made in the court against the verdict.

It had been a prolonged legal battle, with the state doing everything in power to keep him in life-long captivity. Ultimately, the Bombay High Court quashed the sentence as 'violation of the rule of law' and set him free. By then, Prof Saibaba had already spent ten years in prison. He breathed his last a few months after his release while undergoing surgery on 12 October 2024.

The despicable condition under which he had to pass his days in prison beggars description. Political prisoners of our generation are acquainted with the adverse environment and the loneliness under which they had to pass their days in soli-

BOOKS BY T VIJAYENDRA

Just Released

REQUIEM FOR OUR TIMES Rs. 100

AFTER ALL IT IS ONLY HIM!

AND OTHER STORIES Rs. 70

AN INTELLIGENT BIRD'S GUIDE TO THE BIRDWATCHER AND OTHER STORIES

Second reprint Rs. 40

THE LOSERS SHALL

INHERIT THE WORLD

Third Reprint Rs. 60

REGAINING PARADISE:

TOWARDS A FOSSIL FUEL FREE

SOCIETY Rs. 120

THE TEACHER AND

THE CHILD LABOUR Rs. 50

For Copies Contact :

MANCHI PUSTAKAM

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

Secunderabad 500017

Email: info@manchipustakam.in

Cell: +91 73822 97430

tary cells. Prison memoirs written by the Naxalite prisoners in the 1970s are full of horrific accounts of their days in prison. But the conditions prevailing in the *Anda Cells* of Nagpur jail surpass them all in brutality and dehumanisation. The specific purpose behind the creation of the *Anda Cell* is to slowly send the 'dangerous' prisoners to their doom every day, every hour. Prof Saibaba himself has related his day-today experience after coming out of the dungeons. The living condition in those dungeons is really difficult for even normal prisoners. But for prisoners with major physical disabilities, it is really impossible to remain alive.

But Saibaba could transform what is impossible into possible. His indomitable courage, his never-say-die attitude and his undying will to live raised his mental strength to unbelievable heights.

Stan Swami, the Roman Catholic Churchman, also arrested under the UAPA, unable to cope with the situation, appealed to the judges

with folded hands begging for release. But none paid heed to his appeal, He was not allowed to live, but forced to die. Prof. Saibaba's

will to live lifted his mental strength to epic heights. He will continue to live in the struggles of the people.

Let me pay my homage to the

departed soul and condolence to Vasanta, Mandira and Saibaba's other near and dear ones.

□□□

HUMRA QURAISHI'S COLUMN

Attacks on Madrasas

Humra Quraishi

WHY VERBAL AND ALSO non-verbal attacks on the madrasas in the country? Mind you, not just by the semi-sarkari men but also from the Right-Wing politicians, including chief ministers! Where are these critics when madrasas and the madrasa children get attacked by the Hindutva brigades?

In recent years one incident after another of madrasa children targeted not just in the BJP ruled–States of the country, but also in the capital city, New Delhi. In 2018, eight-year-old child Mohammad Azeem, studying in a madrasa situated in the South Delhi's Begampur, was lynched by the local Hindutva goons. Shockingly, this was not the first time that a madrasa child was targeted in that very locality of South Delhi. Around 2017, a group of madrasa children were brutally thrashed in a park, once again in the Begampur locality, by Right-Wing goons after forcing them to chant Bharat Mata Ki Jai! And to compound the tragedy there wasn't any reaction from the political setups or ministers or chief ministers, nor from the various Commissions and Child-Right forums!

And in the summer of 2019, on 11 July 2019, madrasa children were attacked by Bajrang Dal men, in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao... They were attacked with cricket bats and stumps and then stones pelted on them... And on July 16, 2019, national dailies carried another news report of yet another madrasa attacked in Uttar Pradesh's Behta village in the

Fatehpur district... I could go on, list out the very vulnerability of the madrasa children and also of the maulvis' manning the madrasas.

For the last over three decades, I have been visiting orphanages and madrasas... With that, interacting with the children. These visits to the madrasas got me close to the realities in which the children survive. During my visits I would talk to the children about their daily routine; what they ate, what they read, and also about their families and ancestral setups back home. With that, I could grasp the backgrounders to them. Many of the children orphans or semi-orphans, from economically deprived, socially disadvantaged families. It wouldn't be amiss to say that several sent by their relatives to the madrasas so that they get two meals and a safe roof over their heads and also the basic education. Now, with the Right-Wing coming up with one alibi after another, targeting the madrasas, even those basics could get snatched from these children!

In those earlier decades, madrasas were considered the apt institutions of learning and knowledge. Till, of course, the Right-Wing's ongoing propaganda, demolishing the very significance that ought to be have been given to these age old, traditional learning institutions. Madrasa critics haven't even bothered to enter a madrasa and see for themselves the exact realities. The very basics stand out—as a majority of the madrasas do not have televisions sets nor radios, nor any of the

modern day connecting gadgets, so the traditional conditions exist and with that the innocence to these madrasa children.

Today, the communally surcharged politics has heaped havoc to such an extent that every madrasa child or even a visitor to a madrasa is looked at with suspicion and disbelief and much more! There is an ongoing onslaught on psyches. Though this has been on for several years but earlier it was more along the subtle format but now all out there, blatantly aggressive.

Yet we don't seem to be reacting! I wonder why! Either we have become thick-skinned or brutally insensitive to the ground realities spreading out ...hitting the minority community. Not to be overlooked the facts that lynch victims happen to be Muslim men and their sons. They also happen to be victims of demarcations and disadvantages where jobs and livelihoods and housing are concerned. Not to overlook the other unsettling fact- the percentage of the jailed Muslim men is higher in proportion to the Muslim population in India. I wonder why?

Also, not to be overlooked the fact that over the years the Right-Wing has managed to spread out the most vicious propaganda against madrasas. And none of our politicians or even the community leaders have managed to counter any of this utterly bogus and vicious and third-rate propaganda... Madrasa bashing seems the order of the day. To link madrasas with terror activities has a fashionable ploy to attack, if not hound the young.

One should see the bare basics in the madrasas. The madrasas situ-

ated in Haryana's Mewat and even the ones in New Delhi are so basic that one felt as though entering an ancient setup. And on the several occasions when I visited the Lucknow situated Nadwa (one of the most sought after centres in India for Islamic religious studies) felt as though I'd come to a Gandhian ashram. Clad in cotton kurta-pyjamas, young students going about in that no-fuss manner, with the basic wooden furniture dotted in the rooms of this institution ...There were only few computers. And to the 'why' to the few computers, the answer was where are the funds for more, although the children seemed keen to use computers. What about the talks that Nadwa gets grants and aid from some Muslim countries? The Maulanas of Nadwa rubbished those reports and told me that it runs on whatever little the community can muster, including the *zakat* money which every Muslim ought to give from his or her earnings, for the needy and disadvantaged.

And to all those Hindutva characters who keep clubbing the madrasas with the Musalman phobias, it gets significant to point out that in the earlier decades middle class Hindu families would also send their children to madrasas. Yes, much against the popular perception that only Muslim families send their children to study in a madrasa,

fact is that in the traditional setups, when communal poisoning was not unleashed to divide and distance, even the non-Muslim families sent their children to madrasas for education. Our veteran and much loved writer Munshi Premchand was sent by his family for his early education, to a madrasa situated in his home state of Uttar Pradesh

And to compound today's dismal situation, the community leaders and the so-called politically and socially influential persons from the Muslim community are seldom seen interacting with the madrasa children. Their presence urgently needed; at least it would provide some level of cushioning which is very crucial for the very safety of the young children studying in the madrasas.

Also, community leaders ought to see to it that the madrasa children get enrolled in regular schools so that they are not lagging on the education front. Whilst residing in the madrasa they could or should attend the regular schools. This would only be possible if the community leaders help out, in guiding the madrasa children with admissions and also looking after the connected educational requirements.

It gets significant to mention here that several children's 'homes' situated in the Kashmir Valley (where orphaned and even semi-orphaned children reside and in most cases

attend a regular school and also spend hours pursuing religious studies) are comparatively better off than most of the madrasas I have visited in and around New Delhi and also in Uttar Pradesh and in Haryana's Mewat belt... This is because several Valley situated orphanages/ homes have adopted this 'via media' between the madrasa and the regular mainstream education, where the children attend a regular school (many a time an English medium school) but in the evenings and early mornings (that is , before setting off for school or after attending school) they read the Quran and tend to other religious text.

This, according to me is the best possible combination, but quite obviously for obvious reasons not affordable. Not to be overlooked the fact that unlike in the Mughal era or even in later decades when the Zamindari system was not abolished, madrasa teaching was funded and taken care of by this ruling class, today the madrasas are maintained on meagre resources; mainly put together by community members or at times by the waqf boards.

It is time for the community leaders to reach out to the madrasa children. Help them, guide them to upgrade their educational skills, and perhaps see to it they get enrolled in regular schools and colleges so that they stand at par with other children. □□□

GENDER GAP

Narratives around 'We Want Justice'

Abhijit Guha

HISTORY SOMETIME brings people closer to the present, although in an ironical way. Here are the famous lines of a poem by Birendra Chattopadhyay:

*Raja ase jae raja badlaye
Nil jama gaye lal jama gaye*

*Ei raja ase oye raja jaye
Jama kaparer rang badlaye...
Din badlaye na.*

(<https://www.kobikopolota.in/raja-ase-jay-kobita-lyrics/>)

Freely translated:

*Kings come and go
One in blue shirt the other in red*

This king comes and that one goes

Things never change.

A lot has been written on the violence on women, a huge amount of data have also been collected by the researchers on the positive role of women in the preservation and conservation of the environment but the gender gap remained at the global, regional and local levels. The gap points to our failure to look at women as equal to men and that gives rise

and justification to silence the voice of the 'second sex' often by brute violence including the most heinous of all—sexual violence. A leading international medical journal *Lancet* in one of its recent *editorial* perceptively searched for the 'structural roots' of violence. The *editorial* revealed frightening data across the globe. For example, 62% of health workers suffered physical violence or non-physical violence at some point. *Lancet* editorial, however warned that this was not only an attack on a doctor, it was an attack on a woman and this misogynistic nature of the crime has thus far being underappreciated (*Lancet* 2024: 907). On the top of it, women made up around 67% of global employment in the health and care sector but ironically they held just 25% of leadership roles in health and care service, although they were overrepresented in dangerous, undervalued and underpaid front-line roles (Ibid). The *editorial* further added:

'But it is impossible to isolate the health-care sector from the wider society in which it is embedded. Misogynistic beliefs that women are inferior to men, which are prevalent in but by no means unique to Indian society, make

women a target for aggression. India ranks 129th of 146 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index, but no country have full gender parity'.

This is the wider context under which one may view the narratives around the incident at the R G Kar Medical College & Hospital at Kolkata.

Aldous Huxley, the celebrated British intellectual once wrote:

'There are some writers for whom the income is more important than the art; others for whom propaganda is more important than either' (Huxley 1954: v-vi).

In the wake of the R G Kar incident some of the leading Indian intellectuals have written for or against the movement of the junior doctors in the state of West Bengal for whom propaganda was more important than earning money.

Here are three such writings. Then there is a piece which is a detached analysis of the situation. The first sample is an English article by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a professor at Columbia University and the second sample is a Bengali post editorial by a notable economist Professor Sugata Marjit, a former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta while the third one is an article in English by a distinguished biologist and anthropologist Professor Partha P Majumder, a National Science Chair, Govt. of India. The fourth one is an article by Professor Tapan Kumar Chattopadhyay of the Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta.

The first narrative

A leading intellectual of the modern period Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her recent article published in the Autumn Number of *Frontier* 2024 'Containing Sexual Violence: A Persistent Revolution' began from a most unorthodox, yet fearless path. She stated:

After rape and murder of a trainee Doctor of R G Kar Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata, on August 9, 2024, I heard a news item that bits of the perpetrators' skin had been found under her nails (Spivak 2024:6-8).

Spivak said that this news item was not repeated but she will never forget it!

She was not a victim. She fought but brute force won. Her fight must be continued, is being continued (Ibid).

So, violence, particularly sexual violence on women by men is not the last and the final word. It is just the beginning and the junior doctors through their valiant struggle for justice have shown it, which Spivak was trying to highlight.

The second narrative

The post-edit article of Professor Sugata Marjit published in a well circulated Bengali daily named *Ei Samaya* on 27th September 2024 makes a nice contrast to Spivak's narrative. Marjit is a well-known economist and tried to view the movement of the junior doctors as a kind of outburst by the urban elite groups against the pro-subaltern Trinamul government of West Bengal. He mentioned in a humorous vein 'surveys have proved that the introduction of the health scheme named *Swasthya Sathi* by the Trinamul government has posed problems for the health insurance plans run by the corporates' (Marjit 2024:8). He further questioned the belief that social media is in favour of the subaltern, it is not. So, if a lie is repeatedly propagated people may gradually come to believe it to be true. The main theme in Marjit's narrative lay in viewing the movement of the junior doctors as a perennial conflict between the subalterns and the elites and he finally left the matter in the hands of the researchers doing 'critical studies'.

For Frontier Contact

D.K. AGENCIES (P) LTD.

Booksellers, Publishers & Subscription Agents since 1968

CIN: U74899DL1983PTC017169

"DK" is a registered trademark

Regd. off: A/15-17, D.K. Avenue,
Mohan Garden, Najafgarh Road,
New Delhi-110059. INDIA

Metro Station: Nawada (Blue Line)

Web: <http://www.dkagencies.com>

Ph: (011) 25357104, 25357105

Fax: (+91-11) 25357103

The third narrative

Professor Partha P Majumder in his article 'Social degradation must end' published on 7th September 2024 in the Perspective page of *The Statesman*. Professor Majumder searched the historical roots of male dominance and identified the root of the shocking crime in the R G Kar Hospital. He says:

As societies evolved from hunting and gathering to organised agriculture, division of labour became gender-based. This in turn resulted in male dominance because tasks performed by men were considered to be of greater social value. Patriarchy became the rule rather than the exception. Male dominance has become a social evil. Many men now exhibit aggressive behaviour and oppress women. That's the root of the heinous crime in the R G Kar Hospital (Majumder 2024:7).

Undoubtedly, Professor Majumder's account provides a counterpoint to Professor Sugata Marjit's narrative and one should not miss the point that Majumder unlike Marjit did not leave the matter to the researchers. Instead, he after expressing serious skepticism towards the promulgation of laws opined in favour of 'appropriate education' to teach the evils

of historically entrenched patriarchy in homes, schools, colleges and workplaces.

The fourth narrative

In his article Professor Tapan Kumar Chattopadhyay has made an attempt to delineate the salient features of the agitation by characterising it as a "pressure group" movement with an overwhelming participation of women of all ages and complete rejection of existing political parties in their protest against the crime. What is new in the article is an *imaginative suggestion* advanced by the author:

These pressure groups, in different places of Bengal, may unite to form a statewide non-party civil society organisation with local branches. The objective of these broad organisation would be to keep a vigil on governmental activities, cooperate and help the government in implementing good policies and fighting against the government whenever it commits or supports wrongful actions (Chattopadhyay 2024:7).

It is a different question whether Professor Chattopadhyay's dream may come true or not, his ideas are germane and novel which may raise new hopes for the ordinary citizens of West Bengal.

Conclusion

The non-party civil society move-

ments generated in West Bengal centering on the brutal rape and murder of a female trainee doctor in a government hospital revealed the failure of the present Trinamul government to address the genuine concerns of the people. The attempt to defocus the attention of the public by trying to label it as an expression of anger by the elites against the subaltern may further alienate the pro-government intellectuals from the medical fraternity in particular and public in general. □□□

References:

- Chattopadhyay T K (2024). 'Civil society has a role to play'. *The Statesman*, 26 September 2024, p.7.
- Huxley, A (1954). 'Foreward'. *Aldous Huxley's Stories, Essays, & Poems*. PP. v-vi. The Aldine Press, Letchworth, Herts. First published in this edition 1923. Last reprinted 1954.
- Majumder, P P (2024). 'Social degradation must end'. *The Statesman*, 07 September 2024, p.7.
- Marjit S. (2024). 'Ucchabarger roshanal ebong samakalin Bangasamaj'. *Ei Samay*, 27 September 2024, p.8.
- Spivak, Chakravorty, G. (2024). 'Containing Sexual Violence: A Persistence Revolution'. *Frontier*, 57 (15-18): 6-8.
- The Lancet* (2024). 'The structural roots of violence against female health workers'. Vol. 404, September 7, 2024, p.907.
- [Abhijit Guha, Former Professor in Anthropology, Vidyasagar University, E-mail: aguhavu@gmail.com]

A PIONEER IN INDIAN HISTORICAL STUDIES

Suniti Kumar Ghosh: An Assessment of a Revolutionary Activist—III

Amit Bhattacharya

TO MEET THE REVOLUTIONARY situation the government introduced two repressive legislations—the Public Safety(Removal from India)Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill. In the face of opposition in the Central Legislative Assembly, the first bill was promulgated by the

Viceroy as Public Safety Ordinance 1929. On 20 March 1929, a number of communist and other militant leaders were arrested and elaborate preparations were made to launch the Meerut Conspiracy Case. Militant working class actions—led by the communists took place in the

textile workers belt in Bombay, jute mill workers in Bengal, GIP Railway workers and the carters' strike in Calcutta in 1929 and 1930. But the working class organizations were gradually disrupted.

However, because of severe repression as well as Comintern directives, the Workers and Peasants' Party(WPP) gradually withered away. The young Communist Party was divided into groups. In Bombay, two rival factions appeared—one led by B.T. Randive and the other by S.V. Deshpande.

By then, the national revolutionaries were organizing themselves in different provinces, especially Bengal and the Punjab. A band of revolutionaries under the leadership of Surya Sen drew up plans to stage an armed uprising in Chittagong to liberate it from the shackles of British rule and hoped that their example would be emulated in other places. On 8 April 1929 Bhagat Singh (aged 24) and Batukeshwar Dutt (aged 22) dropped two small bombs and fired some shots from the visitors' gallery in the Central Legislative Assembly. The sound of the bombs and revolver-shots resounded throughout India. The shots were not intended to hurt anybody. The Red Pamphlet which they dropped on the floor below expressed their revolutionary optimism that "from under the seeming serenity of the sea of humanity a veritable storm is about to break out... the sacrifice of individuals at the altar of a great revolution that will bring freedom to all rendering exploitation of man by man impossible, is inevitable. Long live Revolution". In the midst of panic they had a good chance of making good their escape. But they threw away their revolvers and waited for their enemies to capture them.

What was the role of the mahatma? Gandhi repeatedly condemned Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt and put them in the same category as a Muslim fanatic who had stabbed a Hindu. And forgetting his gospel of love and forgiveness, he wrote: "The assassin will, I expect, in due course pay the last penalty for his deed" (CWG, XLI, 225, 260, cited in Ghosh, p.332).

The government launched the Lahore Conspiracy Case against Bhagat Singh, Batukeshwar Dutt, Rajguru and other revolutionaries whom they had captured in the

meantime. The revolutionaries transformed the court into a platform for giving the widest publicity to their political ideals, and the accused became the accusers and indicted the entire imperialist-capitalist system. Even their days in prison were full of struggle. There they defied their tormentors who subjected them to cruel physical torture and humiliation and went on hunger strike demanding their rights to be treated as political prisoners. The fast roused the people of the country and their hatred for imperialism grew. Political prisoners in other jails observed sympathy hunger strikes.

On 13 September 1929, after 64 days of fasting, and after suffering indescribable torment, Jatindranath Das, a young revolutionary died a martyr. He showed how the spirit of man, moved by great ideas, can triumph over all physical suffering and the terrors of slow, lingering death.. The epic fast shook the whole of India. Everywhere there were mammoth demonstrations, and in Calcutta there was a mass demonstration in which 5 lakh people (D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, p.473)—an inconceivable number in those days, took part. The entire country paid to his memory the tribute of its deepest love and respect.

Of course, except one. The only critic was the mahatma. He had described the epic fast undertaken by Jatin Das, Bhagat Singh and others on the issue of the political prisoners' rights as "*an irrelevant performance*" and "preferred to observe silence over the self-immolation of Jatindranath Das because I feel that by writing on it I would have done more harm to the country's cause than good" (CWG, XLI, 152-3, 528, 534, cited in Ghosh, p.333).

The Myth

Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev

had been sentenced to death and were hanged on 23 March. At that time, as Sitaramayya has said, Bhagat Singh's name was "as popular as Gandhi's". In its publication the Intelligence Bureau, GOI, observed that for a time Bhagat Singh "bade fair to oust Mr. Gandhi as the foremost political figure of the day" (P. Sitaramayya, *op.cit.*, I, 456; *Terrorism in India*, cited in Ghosh, p.367).

The people did not take the executions lying down. "The cry, 'Bhagat Singh Zindabad' as Gandhi's disciple Tendulkar writes, "resounded throughout India. March 24 was observed as the day of mourning... In Bombay and Madras, there were angry demonstrations. Armed flying squads patrolled in Calcutta. A large number of people were killed in police firing and many more wounded and arrested.

People, as Ghosh points out, have been fed on the myth that during his talks with Irwin before signing the agreement, Gandhi had tried his utmost to get sentences on Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev commuted. This myth had been spread by Sitaramayya, Jawaharlal, Tendulkar and the mahatma himself. On 26 March, three days after the executions, the mahatma himself, greeted by hostile demonstrations, declared at the Karachi Congress: "There can be therefore no excuse for suspicion that I did not want to save Bhagat Singh...I had pleaded with the Viceroy as best as I could. I brought all the persuasion to bear on him". (CWG, XLV, 349, 351 cited in Ghosh, p.367)

Suniti Kumar Ghosh argues that although Gandhi emphasized that these were the words of a life-long votary of truth, facts tell a different tale.

In his article "Gandhi and Bhagat Singh", D.P.Das writes: "Alan Campbell-Johnson, in his book *Lord*

November 10-16, 2024

FRONTIER

9

Halifax... referred to an understanding between Gandhi and Irwin that Bhagat Singh should not get any reprieve" (Das, 'Gandhi and Bhagat Singh', *Mainstream*, Independence Day Number, 1970, p.15, cited in Ghosh, p.367). In his record of his meeting with Gandhi on 18 February 1931, Irwin noted that at the end of it Gandhi casually mentioned the case of Bhagat Singh. Irwin wrote: Gandhi did *not* plead for commutation... But he did ask for postponement in present circumstances" (CWG, XLV, 196; see also D.P. Das, op.cit, cited in Ghosh, p.368). The correctness of Irwin's version is borne out by Gandhi's own report on this meeting. It states that there was a third "*titbit*" which both he and Irwin had greatly enjoyed. It was about Bhagat Singh. "I told him: 'This has no connection with our discussion, and it may even be *inappropriate* on my part to mention it. But if you want to make the present atmosphere more favourable, you should suspend Bhagat Singh's execution'. The Viceroy liked this very much. He said: '...Commutation of sentence is a different thing, but suspension is certainly worth considering'. The mahatma said that he desired 'suspension of sentence in order that there may not be unnecessary turmoil in the country... I would not take it ill even if you do not give any reply on this issue'(CWG, XLV, p.200 cited in Ghosh, p.368). Gandhi did not raise this question again before signing the pact with Irwin on 5 March.

In his record of a meeting with Gandhi on 19 March, Irwin noted that as Gandhi was leaving, he said that "he had seen in the Press the intimation of his [Bhagat Singh's] execution for March 24th. This was an unfortunate day, as it coincided with the arrival of the new President of the Congress at Karachi and there

would be much popular excitement." Irwin explained to him why he had rejected the possibility of postponement till after the Congress". Irwin noted : "He appeared to appreciate the force of the arguments, and said no more" (*Ibid*, pp.315-16).

In his note on his meeting with Gandhi on the same day—19 March—Emerson, the Home Secretary, wrote that Gandhi "did not seem to me to be particularly concerned in the matter". Gandhi promised to cooperate to prevent outbreaks of disorder of which Emerson was apprehensive. When Emerson informed him next day that a protest meeting was going to be held under the leadership of Subhas in Delhi that evening and asked for his assistance, the mahatma replied "I have already taken every precaution possible.... I suggest that there should be no display of police force and no interference in the meeting. Irritation is undoubtedly there. It would be better to allow it to find vent through meetings etc" (*Ibid*, 440, 446, 316 cited in Ghosh, pp.368-68).

On 23 March, barely a few hours before the executions of the revolutionaries were to take place, Gandhi appealed to Irwin for commutation or suspension of the sentences. The situation was getting explosive. So, Gandhi entreated the Viceroy: "Since you seem to value my influence such as it is in favour of peace, *do not please unnecessarily make my position, difficult as it is, almost too difficult for future work*" (*Ibid*, 333). Ghosh observes quite sharply: "Perhaps the mahatma felt that though this belated appeal was sure to fail, he might be able to use it, as he actually did (*Ibid*, p.177), to prop up the myth that he had tried his best to get the sentences commuted" (Ghosh, p.369). It is pertinent to point out that about this time, as Ghosh mentions, Gandhi also wrote in his Gujarati paper: "The govern-

FRONTIER

44, Balaram Dey Street, Kolkata-700006

Phone: (033) 2530-0065

Mail: frontierweekly@yahoo.co.in

frontierweekly@hotmail.com

Site: www.frontierweekly.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

India [Annual]	Rs.	500
Frontier Associate [Annual]	Rs.	1000
Life Subscription [Inland]	Rs.	5000+

Make payment by Cheque/Draft
in favour of

GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.

or

FRONTIER [GERMINAL
PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.]

MO should be addressed to Frontier
Please add Rs. 50/- to inland outstation
cheques towards bank charges, all
remittances to FRONTIER

Payment could be made directly to
our bank accounts as given below.

Check the bank details before
transferring money. Also inform us
through e-mail after sending money.

Beneficiary Name:

GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.

Bank Name: CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA

Address: 8, Lenin Sarani, Kol-700013

Branch: Esplanade Branch

Current Account Number: 3116713216

IFSC Code: CBIN0280098

Swift Code: CBININBBICAL

OR

GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.

Bank Name: PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK

Address : 223, C. R. Avenue, Kolkata-6

Branch: Jorasanko Branch

Current Account Number: 0085050001319

IFSC Code: PUNB0008020

Branch Code : 0008020

Swift Code: UTBIINBBOBC

OR

**FRONTIER (GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS
PVT. LTD)**

Bank Name: PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK

Address : 223, C. R. Avenue, Kolkata-6

Branch: Jorasanko Branch

Current Account Number: 0085050001378

IFSC Code: PUNB0008020

Branch Code : 0008020

Swift Code: UTBIINBBOBC

*For MO, Regd. Post and Speed Post mailing
address should be written in the following
fashion :

To

FRONTIER

C/o Durbar Mahila Samanawya Committee

44, Balaram Dey Street, Kolkata-700006

West Bengal, Contact : 8240016324

ment certainly had the right to hang these men.” “Hence our dharma is to swallow our anger, abide by the settlement and carry out our duty” (*Ibid*, pp.360-1) was the constant refrain of his speeches.

What was the role of Jawaharlal? Ghosh asks. In a statement issued on the day *after* the executions, Jawaharlal said: “I have remained absolutely silent during their last days lest a word of mine may injure the prospect of commutation”. Since his release he had been afraid that a word of his in favour of commutation might endanger its chances and so he remained discreetly silent! In his usual rhetorical style he added that “when England speaks to us and talks of a settlement there will be the corpse of Bhagat Singh between us.” (SWN, IV, p.500, cited in Ghosh, p.369). The reality, according to Ghosh, is that Jawaharlal was saying this when he had already made provisional settlement and were yearning for ‘permanent peace’ with the British raj.

Before his execution, Sukhdev, Bhagat Singh’s comrade, wrote from his prison cell to Gandhi that Gandhi’s *open* calls to the revolutionaries were helping the colonial rulers to isolate them from the people and hunt them down. Pointing out that Gandhi’s “appeals amount to preaching treachery, desertion and betrayal among them”. Sukdev suggested that, if Gandhi did not really want to join hands with the alien rulers, he should either discuss the problem in detail with “some revolutionary leaders—there are so many in jails—and come to terms with them” or he should “stop these appeals”. In his open reply to Sukhdev’s letter *after* his execution, Gandhi, condemning the Sukhdevs as “political assassins”, refused to do either of the two things suggested by Sukhdev (CWG, XI, V,322; XI, VI, 250, 256, 272-

73, 405, cited in Ghosh, Vol.2, p.29.)

The call for civil disobedience which the Congress leadership issued when the revolutionary wave was rising, as Ghosh points out, “did contribute to the rousing of the sections of the people who were untouched by it and helped it to rise higher. The leadership chose to ride the wave to bring it under control and to project its own anti-imperialist image while seeking all the time to stem and disperse it and anxiously waiting for some concessions both as a pretext to ditch the movement and as a gain for the big bourgeoisie”. (Ghosh, p.370)

Global Economic Depression and the Indian Big Bourgeoisie

According to S.K. Ghosh, the world economic crisis of 1929-33, instead of giving rise to antagonistic contradictions between imperialist capital and Indian big capital, as V.I. Pavlov and others have argued, helped to bring them closer than before. In fact, the 1930s were a period of unprecedented growth and expansion of Indian big comprador capital. While the old, or relatively old, big bourgeois groups like the Tatas, Birlas, Shri Rams, Singhanias and Walchands vastly expanded their industrial activities, there were several new entrants into industry who had previously been *banians*, brokers and big speculators, like the Goenkas, Dalmia Jains, Thapars, Chettiars and Naidus. Many of the new entrants like the Goenkas and Chettiars were diversifying from trading and indigenous banking into cotton textiles and other industries. Even during the depression years, profits were quite handsome. Between 1931 and 1939, the Birlas, Dalmias, Mafatlals, Sri Rams, Walchands and so on had a meteoric rise (Claude Markovits, *Indian Business and National Politics*, Appendix I, pp.190-193, cited in Ghosh, Vol.II, p.6).

Gold Drain: Role of Thakurdas and Birla

During this crisis, a huge amount of Indian gold was exported to Britain with the connivance of the Indian big bourgeoisie to help the foreign rulers tide over the crisis. Speaking in the House of Commons on 29 February 1932, Samuel Hoare said: “More gold has been exported from India since last September at a higher rate than it has even been exported from the gold fields of South Africa” (Cited in Ghosh, *ibid*, p.7). R.J. Moore has observed that “Suspicion was rife that Britain had manipulated the rupee to snatch the vast private hoards of Indian gold...”. (R.J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity*, p.268, cited in *ibid*)

Who actually were the Indian accomplices of British finance capital in this massive spoliation of India? The bullion trade of the whole of India, as Ghosh points out, passed through Bombay, and the firm of Sir Chunilal B. Mehta, cousin of Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas and the “king of the bullion trade in Bombay”, along with four others, served as “the sole links between the London bullion merchant brokers and the ‘orthodox’ bullion merchants of Bombay”. Among the leading brokers in the Bombay Bullion Exchange were the G.D. Birla Brothers (C. Markovits, *ibid*, 111, fn.47; ADD Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics*, pp.70,80, cited in Ghosh, p.7).

Ghosh points out that when Gandhi, Patel and other top Congress leaders were in prison in 1932, the *Bombay Congress Bulletin*, issued by the Emergency Council, the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, branded Purushottamdas Thakurdas and G.D.Birla as traitors. It stated:

“SIXTY MILLION POUNDS WORTH OF INDIAN GOLD was exported from this country to England during the last year. IT HAS

November 10-16, 2024

FRONTIER

11

BEEN A VERITABLE WINDFALL TO BRITAIN... By helping to send Indian gold to England at a time like the present when India is fighting a desperate fight for liberty and life, the Indian Bullion merchant has literally supplied our enemies with valuable ammunition *at our own expense to be used against us*. By helping in the dangerous flight of gold from this country, the Indian traitors dealing in bullion have deliberately impoverished us to enrich the enemy... Sir Purushotamdas and Mr. Birla have made lakhs recently from

this immoral traffic... Meanwhile, we shall fight both the enemy and the traitor" (*Bombay Congress Bulletin*, No.247 of 17Oct. 1932, PT Papers, File 101; see also *Bombay Congress Bulletin*, No.241 of 10 Oct.1932, *ibid*, cited in Ghosh, Vol.II, p.8).

However, the fact is that their fight against the traitors had to be abandoned almost as soon as it began. When the news of their demonstrations in front of Sir Purushotamdas's palatial residence in Bombay reached Vallabhbai in

prison, he immediately sent instructions to withdraw the Congress pickets. In fact, as Ghosh writes, Patel was quite right in claiming that Sir Purushotamdas was "more our man than anyone else's" (Frank Moraes, *Sir Purushotamdas Thakurdas*, p.202, emphasis added. Cited in Ghosh, p.8). As it stands, with the help of the big compradors the British imperialists were able to shift some of the burden of their financial crisis on to the shoulders of the Indian people. □□□

[To be continued]

G N SAIBABA

'They Don't Know How to Kill Me'

Harsh Thakor

*I still stubbornly refuse to die
The sad thing is that
They don't know how to kill me
Because I love so much
The sound of growing grass.*

—G N Saibaba

PROFESSOR G N SAIBABA is no more. It is a mortal loss to the Indian democratic movement.

Unquestionably he was one of the boldest voices, sharpest intellectuals and most courageous crusaders against the tyranny of proto-fascism of which he himself was a victim. Saibaba is manifestation of how those who represent or manifest the aspirations of the wretched of the earth are criminalised and subjected to brutal terror. Saibaba may have physically perished but his soul still lives in the oppressed masses of India, whether in the forests, plain areas or cities.

His very presence and guidance inspired oppressed sections of all categories to overcome clutches of adversity. Ironical, that In spite of facing the adversity of polio and functioning within formally legal backgrounds, his exposing the op-

pressive social order at the very root, sent more shivers down the spine or was a greater thorn in the flesh to the ruling classes, than the armed squads of the Maoists.

Indirectly, he was killed within the prison bars itself, by the inhuman treatment he received at the hand of jail authorities, violating all norms of human rights.

The 57-year-old succumbed following post-operative complications after undergoing surgery for gallbladder stones. The wheelchair-bound Saibaba had been undergoing treatment at Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences in Hyderabad, where he was admitted 10 days ago due to ill health. His aides said he suffered a heart attack around 8 pm and was declared dead at 8:30 pm.

Saibaba was acquitted by the Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court on March 5, nearly 10 years after he was first arrested in an alleged Maoist link case. He was arrested along with some others on May 9, 2014, by Gadchiroli Police in Maharashtra on allegations that they were members of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist)

and its frontal organisation Revolutionary Democratic Front.

The death of former Delhi University professor G N Saibaba was to a considerable extent a result of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, which allowed charges to be confined in prison for lengthy periods.

In his political career Sai waged battles in diverse spheres, be it amongst the tribals, peasantry, students, Muslim minorities, Dalits, Kashmiri people etc. No voice in this country as boldly spoke out against the tyranny of Operation Greenhunt, where he linked the menace of globalisation with displacement and resistance of Maoist forces. Sai was also one of the most relentless fighters for the self determination of the Kashmiri people and for opposing capital punishment to Afzal Guru. He played a groundbreaking and pivotal role in defending all the mass movements against tribal displacement, be it in Orissa, Chattisgarh, or Jharkhand. Sai also played an instrumental role in shaping the resistance for civil liberties, most intensively combating the black laws. With relentless spirit, he stood by all the struggles waged by students from privatisation, fee hikes to freedom on the campuses. Saibaba was one of the strong advocates of caste annihilation, banging every nail in

the wall to extricate dogmatism or mechanical approach towards caste question and integrating caste aspect with class struggle. Painstakingly, he dipped ink in analysing caste oppression.

Saibaba was one of the finest and most penetrative Marxist or Maoist scholars of India.

Even if he denied personal affiliation Saibaba was one of the most fervent admirers of the CPI (Maoist), and most logically, defended its formation in 2004 as a landmark in the history of liberation. In interviews he most lucidly and logically, with intensive depth, summed up the genesis of the Maoist movement from the days of Naxalbari, and how areas of resistance struggle or guerrilla zones sprouted and how people's power was established in Janatana Sarkars.

Saibaba in talks and writings most acutely analysed why India was semi-feudal and why important aspects of Chinese path were still important for the Indian revolution. In a non-mechanical manner he gave Maoism a cutting edge.

He maintained fascism in India would take a different form from the classical forms, earlier in Italy and Germany, backing the thesis of Zhou en Lai in 1943.

As the editor of 'People's Resistance' from 1996-2003, Saibaba with utmost consistency and resilience defended revolutionary resistance struggles encompassing India., amongst peasantry and the nationality struggles of the people of Kashmir.

Saibaba intensively worked on integration aspect of caste oppression with class struggle and gave

due respect to writings of Anand Teltumbde on BR Ambedkar, challenging mechanical approach to Marxism and caste.

In months confined behind prison bars Saibaba battled with the relentless spirit of an iron man, resurrecting the resilience and courage of the bravest revolutionaries in history. His jail poems and writings manifested the spiritual and creative dimension of a revolutionary prisoner. In spite of being subjected to the most merciless repression under degrading conditions, his spirit was never quelled and he never yielded or bowed down to the authorities. His writings reveal the inner transformation which he underwent in jail, like a new man being born. □□□

[Harsh Thakor is freelance journalist. Met Professor Saibaba numerous times in Delhi from 2012-2015.]

REJOINDER

'The Great Betrayal of the ideal of Communism by Stalin, Mao and their Political Heirs'

Kobad Ghandy

SUMANTA BANNERJEE Article in the Autumn issue of *Frontier* (Vol 57, No. 15-18, Oct 5-Nov 2, 2024) entitled *The Great Betrayal of the ideal of Communism by Stalin, Mao and their Political Heirs* unfortunately criticises one and all (no self-criticism) while presenting no alternative. It is nothing but a recipe for disillusionment, as surely the very purpose of criticism should have been to evolve a better project? With just a few years of practice nearly a half century back he goes so far as to slander (there is little attempt at analysis) leaders like Stalin and Mao merely through negation of the individuals. His one obsession is the lack of democracy, which may be true, but it has to be seen within the overall framework of the class struggle against a neo-fascist ruling class.

Besides such individualistic intellectuals are themselves far from being democratic, normally extremely intolerant of any who dare differ with them.

He concludes his comment saying: *"In these challenging circumstances, the Stalinist-Maoist camp of the Left has to get rid of its lingering nostalgic loyalty to Stalin and Mao, a tendency which quite often encourages it to support the misdeeds of the present political heirs of those two states (this is outright false). The future of the Left movement lies not in the resuscitation of the Stalinist-Maoist legacy, but in its rejection (and of dialectical materialism I suppose). It has to be replaced by a new innovative Leftist set of strategy and tactics to meet the country-specific requirements of*

the Indian people and voice their demands-to be framed not according to the advice from abroad (like Stalin's in the 1950s during the Telangana struggle, or Mao's in the 1960s during the Naxalbari peasant uprising), but that will arise from the experiences of daily struggles at the ground level. It is by this only that we can overcome the betrayal that we suffered at the hands of Stalin, Mao and their political heirs".

He gives no inkling of what has to replace the old with this new innovative Leftist set of strategy and tactics. The imperialists have consistently attacked revolutionary leaders like Stalin, Mao, etc. They are never honest in assessing the shades of grey in such revolutionaries. Mao was probably more accurate in his assessment of Stalin giving a 70:30 ratio to good and bad. There have been no towering revolutionaries to do an assessment of Mao though much has been written by western philosophers with quite a level of accuracy. Anyhow one need not break one's head into going into the

fine details of how much a person is correct or not, but to take what is positive from one and all for our own analysis of the concrete situation not only in India but also in the varied states which have seen different levels of development—like in the southern states as there is probably more capitalist developments, while states like UP, Bihar and the rest of the Hindi belt would be mired in greater feudal backwardness. But SB does not seek to delve deeper....

Such critiques therefore tend to be irresponsible and meaningless. They contribute little to trying and understanding what is the situation on the ground and on that basis what needs to be done. Besides why does he confine himself to such 'leaders' instead of dwelling on the needs of the actual movement? The future of the left movement, in fact, lies neither in such abstract formulae but in actual analysis of the concrete situation at the ground level and working out a revolutionary practice on that basis, that can counter state repression. This will require deep analysis, where, one aspect of such a study could be the history of other revolutions that achieved success.

What has the likes of SB achieved in their lives that they can so flip-pantly condemn gigantic revolutions (no doubt, with all their flaws) like those in Russia and China? At least those like William Hinton have elaborated on the causes and reasons for the reversals, but not Indian SBs who merely issue *fatwas* from the pulpit

without any in- depth presentation. No painful analysis, no detailed lessons of what to draw from the experience—both negative and positive—and not even attempt to find out a more effective path for change.

What purpose does such criticism serve except to create a negative atmosphere and pessimism. If he was honest, after his failed revolutionary practice of a few years way back in the 1970s he would have experimented with a revolutionary practice in accordance to his thinking. But no! Living an utter bourgeois life far away from practice, he sits in splendid isolation and tells one and all what is right and what is wrong with revolution. He needs to first analyse where he went wrong and the reason for his inactivity for the last 3 to 4 decades.

Such pomposity could be only found in India, due to the Brahminical intellectual 'superiority' asserted by many an upper caste 'communist'. In fact, many of these upper caste communists in India do not even recognise caste as a specific form of oppression in India (conveniently) — when any sensitive person, let alone a Marxist, would have considered this an important aspect of oppression in India, given the level of its cruelty and inhumanity. Fortunately, on this count SB has been one has taken a position, but he even does not link intellectual arrogance to Brahminical superiority.

SB must appreciate that class struggle or socialist construction is

not as simplistic as made out by him in the article. Sitting in splendid isolation one can continue to criticise, but what is more important is a concrete alternative. There are so many classes and, in India, castes at play which have to be considered while effecting a strategy. From tribals at one extreme (which are outside the caste hierarchy) to the untouchables, to the OBC and then the three main upper castes who dominate most aspects of this country.

The crucial thing which needs to be addressed is how then does one face the brutality of the rulers? There is no attempt at even trying to analyse this. Is his silence on this key question a mere oversight or is it wanton capitulation to the powers that be? Surely a person of SB intellectual calibre cannot be oblivious to this reality? The present system is destroying every aspect of society — people, human relations, environment, everything. But not a word on this or how to fight it, from SB. Surely the critique of any policy should not be in the abstract but in countering policies that are fighting against these forms of oppression (in his eyes incorrectly).

True there have been many shortcomings in the Indian communist movement, but SB throws out the baby with the bathwater. The important thing is to try for a creative alternative if he views the present policies as incorrect. His critique is not only dishonest but also ahistorical. □□□

A CRUSADER FOR JUSTICE

Rangayakamma is an Institution

HT

RANGANAYAKAMMA, commonly known as RN, stands out as a transformative figure in promoting Marxist thought, democratic ideals, and

anti-caste principles through her remarkably clear and engaging writing style. A trailblazer in literary innovation, her works span a broad array of topics, from critiques of Indian

mythology and revivalism to discussions on civil liberties, the Indian Communist Movement, and Maoism in China.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of her seminal piece on Ramayana. Then she turned 85 this year on September 21st. Incidentally Ranganayakamma has never celebrated her birth day. In this con-

nection her observation as published in the *'Andhra Jyothy'* [20-2-2021] is self-revealing: 'In fact, Birthday is simply a method of calculating age. If a person considers his birthday a day of celebration, why celebrate once a year? He must celebrate it every day. Birthday is like yesterday! Like tomorrow'.

Her fearless approach to writing is akin to a ship bravely navigating through tumultuous waters, tirelessly pushing back against dogmatism and infusing Marxism with fresh vigour.

Born on September 21, 1939, in Bommidi village, Andhra Pradesh, RN's family background was steeped in literary culture. Her father, Lakshmi Satyanarayanayya, ran a small printing press and published a caste-oriented magazine called "Padma Nayaka", while her mother, Lakshmi Narasamma, was a housewife. RN is the eldest of six siblings, with one brother and three younger sisters.

RN's literary journey began in the late 1950s, when she started receiving letters from readers discussing an array of social, economic, political, and cultural topics, including personal issues for which they sought her advice. She contributed regular columns to various popular magazines, such as "Prajatantra" and *"Andhra Jyothy"*, addressing reader queries. Her compilation, "My

Acquaintance with Some Readers," captures the diverse impressions from her correspondence and interactions. "Connection to Marxism." In 1974, RN aligned herself with Marxist ideology, starting with her influential work, "Ramayana Vishavruksham".

Alongside fellow intellectuals, she joined the Unity Centre of Communist Revolutionaries of India (Marxist-Leninist), resonating with its political documents. However, after experiencing isolation from the group and ideological conflicts within *Jana Saahithi*, an organisation formed in 1978, she resigned in 1979. Subsequently, RN opted to publish her work independently, maintaining her Marxist perspective without associating with any specific Communist group.

In 1965, the Sahitya Academy awarded RN a prize for her novel "Balipeetham". Initially unaware of the political significance of such accolades, she later understood that honours often supported prevailing social norms, which do not necessarily challenge the ruling class's interests. Following her embrace of Marxism, she declined various awards, voicing her critical views on accolades in several writings. For instance, her critique of Kalipatnam Ramarao's acclaimed story "Yagnyam" revealed how its themes undermined the interests of the impoverished.

RN's analysis of scriptures like the Ramayana and Mahabharata reveals her commitment to rationalism and social progress

RN pioneered translations of English novels into Telugu, starting with "Spartacus", "Freedom Road", and "Uncle Tom's Cabin". Her efforts in translating Charles Bettelheim's works further enriched Telugu literature, as she produced valuable insights to help readers connect with the political and theoretical contexts of Bettelheim's analyses.

An unwavering critic of religious mythologies, RN's analysis of scriptures like the Ramayana and Mahabharata reveals her commitment to rationalism and social progress. Her extensive critique, "Ramayana Vishavruksham," argues against the feudal and exploitative elements in the text, drawing considerable attention to the socio-economic implications of its narratives.

RN's writing is celebrated for its lucidity, empowering her to communicate complex ideas to readers from various backgrounds. Her criticism of convoluted Marxist texts illuminated the need for accessible language, as exemplified in her essay "Are We Writing in Colloquial Language?" which sought to reshape journalistic writing into a more reader-friendly format.

The issue of caste has long been a contentious topic within the Indian Communist movement, sparking ongoing debates between Ambedkarism and Marxism. A significant ideological current suggests a potential convergence between these two perspectives. In her book 'Caste and Class: A Marxist Viewpoint', RN articulately lays out the radical solutions that Ambedkar proposes for addressing the caste issue and the goal of its annihilation.

She skilfully counters the criticisms from Dalit intellectuals who argue that Marxists overlook the caste question and fail to honour Ambedkar, providing a Marxist interpretation of caste and refuting Ambedkar's ideas. Most of the articles in this collection are polemical pieces that respond to the critiques and accusations directed at the Marxist analysis of caste, particularly those raised against her writings.

While RN's critiques are rooted in a Marxist framework, her critics note, she has at times exhibited an eclectic approach that raises questions about her understanding of

Subscribe & Read

PURBASHA EKHON

A Monthly Literary & Progressive Bilingual International Magazine

SUDHU PURBASHA

A Bengali Fortnightly Tabloid
Chief Editor

NIRMAL BRAHMACHARI

Published from:
INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATION
85, B.B. Ganguly Street, Kolkata-12
Phone: 7980937798
Email: nirmal_brahmachari@hotmail.com
News.purbasha@gmail.com

November 10-16, 2024

FRONTIER

15

revolutionary practices. Her analyses of figures like Chairman Mao highlight her singular focus on failures without sufficiently acknowledging the broader socio-political contexts and complexities involved, they insist.

This tendency to overly scrutinise individuals rather than systems can sometimes overshadow the contributions of those within the revolutionary movements. In closing, Ranganayakamma is a quintessential

figure whose works continue to inspire and provoke thought among new generations of readers. Her distinct voice and courageous critique of societal norms make her an essential part of India's intellectual landscape. □□□

LETTERS

'D-Voters' of Assam

In Assam, thousands of women face a relentless battle for their identity, disproportionately impacted by the state's complex citizenship verification process. Many are labelled as 'D-voters' (Doubtful Voters) or 'doubtful foreigners,' categories that strip them of their basic rights and subject them to a precarious existence. These women, often from marginalised communities, find themselves entangled in bureaucratic nightmares, struggling to prove their Indian citizenship despite having lived in the country for generations.

The crisis in Assam is deeply gendered. Women, especially those who are poor or illiterate, are often the most vulnerable. With limited access to formal documentation, many face an uphill battle in the courts, forced to defend their nationality against a system that disproportionately targets them. They lack access to legal representation, are uninformed of their rights, and often face harassment and social stigma. Many of these women are left stateless, their lives in legal limbo, unable to vote, access government services, or secure livelihoods.

CJP

Dockers Blocked Bullets Bound for Israel

On Thursday 17 October, COSCO Dockers at the Port of Piraeus detected a container full of bullets that had entered the country via North Macedonia and was bound for Haifa, Israel, to be used in the massacre of the Palestinian and Lebanese people. The COSCO Dockers, led by their trade union, the Container Handling

Workers' Union at the Piers of Piraeus (ENEDEP), took decisive action to prevent the container from being loaded onto the ship and demonstrated on the spot, calling on the people of the region to join the demonstration.

Other workers of Piraeus, the Labour Centre of Piraeus, the Union of Metal Workers of Attica and the Shipbuilding and Repair Industry of Greece, the Shipwrights' Union and a representative of the Union of Palestinian Workers took part in the demonstration.

The working class has shown its strength and is standing on the right side of history. On the side of the people of Palestine and Lebanon and not on the side of the "strategic allies" of the bourgeoisie who support the murderous state of Israel and the other Euro-Atlantic butchers of the peoples. This message makes the entire working class proud, and echoes the feelings of the Greek people who stand with the people of Palestine, Lebanon and the other peoples of the region.

Communist Party of Greece 'Sumanta Banerjee's Great Betrayal...'

This has reference to Sumanta Banerjee's article "The Great Betrayal of the ideal of Communism by Stalin Mao and their Political Heirs" that has appeared in the Autumn Number of *Frontier* [Vol 57, No. 15 - 18, Oct 6 - Nov 2, 2024] is in bad taste as his pontification on the 'failure' of the Great Revolutions of Russia and China and his dark portraits of Stalin and Mao awfully lacks any substantial back-up material to prove his

case. He seems to be one who puts his faith in the 'Western Marxists' who have the tendency to fetishise the 'purity' of the basic tenets of Marxism and Communism laid out by Marx and Engels. In truth it is a crude analogy but communists would like to argue that there could be no pure revolution excepting in Plato's Cave. Mao said that the revolution is not a dinner party and one can add that it would have ups and downs and what is needed is a thorough study with a historical and philosophical perspective to understand why a revolution went wrong or how it could not stand up to the promises made without denigrating the great leaders that led them and thousands and thousands of men and women who martyred themselves to keep the revolution move forward.

S V Rajadurai

DOORSTEP COMPOSITOR

[Contact for Bengali DTP Operator at your Doorstep]

At present, we have started a new facility, throughout India. The Bengali language is now used in many places. Thus, there is a need now to have Bengali Computer Operators for publishing in Magazines, Books, Periodicals, Souvenirs. Further, we have created this new facility for preparing Question Papers for Schools, Colleges and Universities. So, you need not send the confidential works to outside. We can go to your Office or Institution to complete such works. We shall also make them in printable formats. Moreover, the translation to Bengali is also done. You may contact us for these types of work.

However, you have to arrange or pay the expenses for our Travel and Stay. We thus also accept some amount as Honorarium; it depends on the importance and quantum of work. We sincerely expect that you will use the facility.

Please contact: **THE D-COMLASER**

BHASKAR DAS (Proprietor)

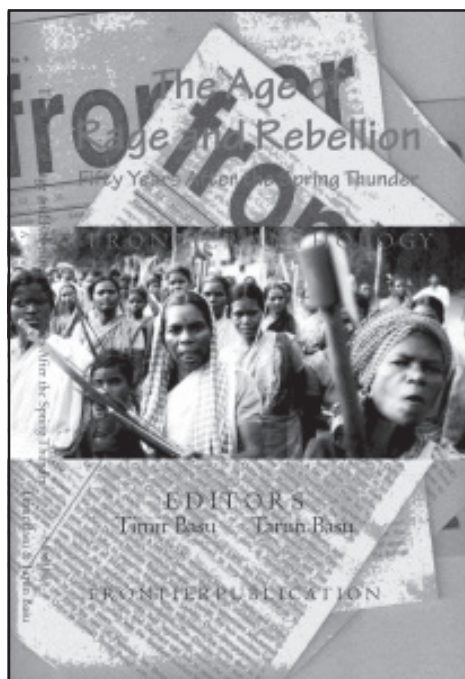
39A, Nalin Sarkar Street, Kolkata 700004

Mobile : 98361-58319

Email : bhaskar_sananda@yahoo.com

A **frontier** Publication

Just Released



THE AGE OF RAGE AND REBELLION: 50 YEARS AFTER THE SPRING THUNDER

[Price: INR 300+ 100 for postage]

(An anthology of articles and interviews published in frontier to commemorate and re-assess the Naxalbari uprising)

Editors:

Timir Basu and Tarun Basu

Contributors: Santosh Rana, Debabrata Panda, Arup Baisya, Farooque Chowdhury, Jan Myrdal, Harsh Thakor, Bernard D'Mello, Timir Basu, Gautam Navlakha, Lawrence Lifschultz, Ranabir Samaddar, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Nazes Afroz, Subhendu Dasgupta, Sumanta Banerjee, Varavara Rao, Ramachandra Guha, Dipanjan Raychowdhuri, Alope Mukherjee, T Vijayendra, Mallikarjuna Sharma and Nirmal Brahmachari

Available at: FRONTIER Office and PATIRAM STALL (College Street) MANISHA, DHAYNBINDU (College Square) and other book stalls selling regular issues of frontier.