

# frontier

Vol. 57 : No. 22

ISSN 0016-2094

November 24-30, 2024

Founder-Editor : **SAMAR SEN**

On Other Pages

Comment	2
Note	3
HUMRA QURAISHI'S COLUMN Missing Children Humra Quraishi	3
A PIONEER IN INDIAN HISTORICAL STUDIES Suniti Kumar Ghosh: An Assessment of a Revolutionary Activist—V Amit Bhattacharya	5
AGONY TO ANARCHY Whither Bengal? Bhaskar Majumder	7
INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS, NOT EMPLOYEES Gig Economy: Opportunities and Challenges Ahmed Raza	8
THERE ARE SOME WINS TOO Every Movement Takes Its Own Path Anindya Bhattacharya	10
SMALL FILMS Dharamshala International Film Festival Nandini Ramnath	12
STALIN'S GENERAL Marshall Zhukov 50 Harsh Thakor	13
Letters	15

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

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

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

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

## *Trump is Back*

THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IS OVER. WHAT IS NOT over is post-election speculation about the course of events to be unfolded in the coming days. The Americans have finally chosen and they are returning Trump to White House, no matter how controversial a candidate he was, no matter what he has said and done. In reality it doesn't matter much in foreign policy orientation in the change of guard in America's bipartisan political culture. Experts worldwide are busy to define Trump's second innings as a shift that has already been signalled, towards a global order in which America exercises its power differently, more as a superpower to establish its hegemony. But the world has changed a lot in recent years. Trump or no Trump, the decline of American authority is irreversible as multipolarity seems to be replacing unipolarity slowly but steadily.

Government heads, including Russia's Putin and Ukraine's Zelensky, lost no time to send congratulatory messages to Trump for his emphatic victory. They are preparing for what they perceive to be coming down the pipeline: tariffs, trade wars, shifts on environment and a somewhat unorthodox approach to diplomacy.

The pro-establishment media in India is reading too much between the lines to see 'India better positioned than many powerful countries to deal with the new administration because of Modi's personal bond with Trump'. But prolonged hand-shaking is unlikely to work when it is the question of American business interests. In his campaign trail he didn't forget to single out India's high tariffs on American goods, saying in no uncertain terms, 'he would reciprocate'. Trump in his first term restricted the visas used by many Indians in the United States, who also make up the third largest population of *undocumented US immigrants* and Trump's threatened deportations could have a major impact on India-US relations, no matter how the cheer leaders of Modi-Trump bonhomie glorify his second comeback. For one thing what Modi and Trump have in common is disdain for democratic space and voice of dissent.

Progressives around the world are visibly upset with Trump's return as they see in his anti-science rhetoric and actions in his first term, a danger they will have to face shortly. Many scientists say they are bracing for negative impacts on science now that he has been elected for a second term. "In my long life of 82 years... there has hardly been a day when I felt more sad", says Nobel prize-winning chemist Fraser Stoddart, who left

the United States last year and now works in Hong Kong. But all are not unhappy with the return of Trump. Europe's far right leaders see a key ally, someone who shares their mix of authoritarianism, populism and extreme hostility to immigrants.

The moot question is whether peace will return in the Middle East and Russia-Ukraine conflict zone. As for Ukraine his formula to end war looks a non-starter as even Russians don't think it will work. He cannot stop the war abruptly by withholding military aid to Kyiv. After all billion-

aires are going to decorate his team. Then not for nothing the merchants of death who benefit enormously from the almost 3-year-old Ukraine war, reportedly financed the US elections in a big way. And it is unlikely for the Trump administration to desist the Jewish entity called Israel from bombing Gaza and Lebanon to the Stone Age.

Once Fidel Castro was asked about the 1960 US elections: "who do you prefer, Nixon or Kennedy?" He gave a very wonderful answer, saying, 'It is not possible to com-

pare two shoes worn by the same person. America is governed by only one party which is the Zionist party and it has two wings. The Republican wing represents the hard-line Zionist power, and the democratic wing represents the soft Zionist power.

There is no difference in the goals and strategies, but the means and tools differ slightly to give each president a kind of privacy and room for movement."

Castro's description of American presidency still stands today. □□□

09-11-2024

## COMMENT

### Humanitarian Crisis in Conflict Zones

IN RECENT MONTHS SEVERAL consensual aspects of humanitarian aid have been violated in ways that are perhaps unprecedented. This has happened particularly in Gaza and Lebanon as Israeli forces have repeatedly not hesitated to attack those engaged in the noble task of delivering most urgently needed food, medicines and other essential needs, including even the UN peace forces and relief agencies as well as other highly reputed agencies like Doctors without Borders and Red Cross.

The attacks on humanitarian aid workers at world level in recent times have increased to an unprecedented extent largely as a result of Israeli attacks in Gaza (which is not to say that serious problems do not exist elsewhere).

According to the data available till October 7 2024, as many as 986 medical personnel had been killed in this assault including 165 doctors and 260 nurses. 34 hospitals and 80 health centres had been put out of service. 162 health institutions and 131 ambulances have been hit.

James Elder, spokesman for UNICEF, spoke in the context of the situation in Gaza on October 15,

"Day after day, the situation for children becomes worse than the day before...August was the lowest amount of humanitarian aid that came into the Gaza strip of any full month since the war broke out...There had been several days in the last week (when) no commercial trucks whatsoever were allowed to come in...We see now what is probably the worst restrictions we've seen on humanitarian aid ever."

While this kind of a situation is of course disastrous for the people of Gaza, this is also likely to have a wider impact on other conflict affected humanitarian crisis zones as the kind of humanitarian crisis is increasing in many countries and as expected this is partly caused by increasingly adverse weather conditions in times of climate change. So this should have been a time of increasing peace and cooperation to cope with this serious problem. Instead what has happened is that during the same period war and conflict have increased at a very fast pace with the result that the climate change aspect of the humanitarian crisis has been pushed into background and these are being driven

more and more by conflict and war. In such situations, it is much more difficult to provide timely medical care and relief supplies, as it is difficult to travel to the worst affected areas with all the supplies and the safety of those providing this help is also involved.

So it is very important to have some conventions and consensual agreements to protect the healers and relief providers which should be honoured by all sides of various conflicts. All this has been violated widely and arrogantly in the assault on Gaza and as a result the overall situation in other conflict related humanitarian zones has also become more difficult and risky.

Yanchun Zhang, the chief statistician at the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), stated on October 17, "The 2024 Multidimensional Poverty Index presents a sobering picture: 1.1 billion people endure multidimensional poverty of which 455 million live in the shadow of conflict." It concerns relating to these 455 million that the world should be most attentive to. ooo

[Contributed by Bharat Dogra]

Readers are requested to note the changed address (new) of our website  
[www.frontierweekly.com](http://www.frontierweekly.com)

## NOTE

## Abusing Hindu Religious Festivals

*Ram Puniyani writes:*

**C**OMMUNAL VIOLENCE has been the bane of Indian society with increasing intensity. While in pre colonial era it was an occasional ethnic strife, from the period of British rule, it started to become a regularly occurring phenomenon. The communal historiography, looking at history through the prism of religion of the ruler, introduced by the British was the solid base of emergence of the narratives which formed the ground for emergence of the communal streams, Muslim and Hindu both.

A dogged journalist, Kunal Purohit in his remarkable path breaking book, 'H-Pop' brings to people's notice how popular culture is being shaped by pop songs which are spreading Hatred against the heroes of National movement like Gandhi, Nehru in particular, and against the Muslims.

On the back of this book comes another important book, 'Weaponisation of Hindu Festivals' by Irfan Engineer and Neha Dabhade (Pharos Media). Both these researchers are part of 'Centre for Study of Society and Secularism', which was founded by legendary Asghar Ali Engineer. This centre has constantly been monitoring and studying the nature and intensity of communal violence. In the wake of violence being orchestrated around Hindu festivals, particularly Ram Navami, the author duo has focused on the mechanism

as to how festival celebrations have been made intimidatory and aggressive to the Muslim community, mostly leading to violence and polarisation.

This book is based on the in-depth inquiry into the violence instigated by the religious processions as a part of celebrations of festivals, Ram Navami in particular in years 2022-2023. It seriously analyses the incidents following the inquiry by the teams in which they participated. The violence covered in the book relates to Howrah and Hoogly (2023), Sambahji Nagar (2023), Vadodara (2023), Biharsharif and Sasaram 2023, Khargone (2022), Himmat Nagar and Khambat (2022) and Lohardagga (2022).

This book is relevant as its observations can be of great help in preventing the violence by ensuring that the pattern which is coming into being should be prevented for maintaining peace among communities. What needs to be understood for prevention is that most of the time these processions, which are well armed; deliberately decide to pass through Muslim majority areas, with loud music and provocative and abusive slogans. It has become a pattern that someone will climb over the mosque and replace the green flag with saffron flag and the crowds down below dance and give a big applause. Such a phenomenon has seen a boost particularly after the 2014 with the BJP coming to power

### 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

at the centre. The Khargone incident is very revealing in this regard. A minister of the MP Government said stones were thrown on the procession, which have come from Muslim Households, so these Households are to be turned into stones.

In addition to Ram Navami other local religious *Yatras* (processions), *Ganga Aarti*, (Prayer for river Ganges), *Satsangs* (religious meeting), and other religious programmes are being started with similar goals.

The festivals, times to enjoy and celebrate, are being used to instill fear and violence. The book is very relevant as it calls upon the state to take measures by anticipating the moves of communal organisations planning such processions. □□□

### HUMRA QURAISHI'S COLUMN

## Missing Children

*Humra Quraishi*

**N**OVEMBER 14. CHILDREN'S Day. Speech after speech from the political rulers of the day, but beyond those

typical speeches nothing very substantial in terms of the much needed search for the missing children of the country. India's missing children.

The grim fact is that thousands of children are missing yet we sit a bit too quiet! A large percentage of the missing are girls; their percentage higher than the boys.

Today's rulers might claim this or that achievement in their shrilly synthetic speeches but cannot overlook

the fact that hundreds and thousands of our children are in the missing slot! Where are they? Who will find them? And when? Have these children been kidnapped or stolen and sold? Who are the masterminds? Who operates this entire nexus of stealing kids and then using them for the various deals and deeds?

Though some of the missing kids are said to be traced and found. In what condition, even if found? One is not sure in what condition. What happens if they are unable to live with their parents or grandparents? What happens to their general up-keep? Are the government 'homes' where they get lodged, safe in the actual sense of the term? Why are senior citizens not involved with the day-to-day interactions with these kids? How transparent is the system? Above all, who is accountable for the checks and balances and to ensure that these hapless children are not abused, inside and outside the shelter homes?

And if one were to confront the bigger and broader picture of the general condition of our children, then once again a dismal picture emerges. A disturbing reality emerges even of those kids who are not missing! Tragically, missing is their very childhood!

Not sure how many even man-

age to reach adulthood. Yes, that's the case as a substantial percentage of our children are malnourished, facing severe health related issues. Their survival at stake. Compounded by the fact that their parents cannot afford to pay for the required medical treatment nor give them adequate diet to battle the various ailments.

The school dropout rate is high and many don't reach the college stage. Financial and social and health hurdles come in way. Many become victims to the political poisoning spreading around. Grabbed and kidnapped and picked up by the political mafia on the prowl; on the look-out for fresh recruits. Foot soldiers, to unleash hate poisoning amongst the masses!

Many teenage boys face severe crisis when picked up by the cops. Even as and when released, their names in those police records and registers. Next time even if there's a cracker burst they are the first ones to be rounded up for questioning and much more. Communal biases compound the situation.

Not to overlook the fact that the young are attacked during rioting and civil strife. Goon brigades out to hound and pound them. After the Gujarat pogrom of 2002, I met mothers in Ahmedabad and they told me they'd shifted their children to relatives' homes residing outside the State. Even during the Muzaffarnagar riots of 2013, children were sent off, away from their homes, so that they could survive ... quite obviously, with that shift, school dropout rate peaked. Ruined their childhood...leaving imprints on the lives of hundreds of innocents

And now with bulldozers destroying homes, the poverty graph sure to peak, affecting the very well-being and survival of our children. Isn't it time that the concerned citizens of this country play a role to halt the

blatant destruction of homes and with that of entire families? Once a home is bulldozed it's akin to demolishing an entire family or a clan. Gone not just their dwelling but their very vital base for day to day survival. With bulldozed homes gone are the children's school books and uniforms and clothes and the very kitchen... also hit the very wish to carry on, to take on challenges. Entire families and clans ruined! Many more children and their childhood will be destroyed, if homes get destroyed.

On this Children's Day let's focus on the stark reality. It is time we sit up and ask the whereabouts to the country's missing children.

- *A matter of grave concern is that girls constitute a significantly higher proportion of missing and kidnapped children in India. In 2022, of the total 83,350 missing children 62,946 were girls. That means more than 75% of missing children were girls. The proportion of girl children in total missing children has been rising from about 65% in 2016 to 75% in 2022 at the all-India level. This has been the trend for all the states mentioned above.*
- *NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) figures for the five years up to 2022 also show a mostly rising trend in the figures of missing children — a spike of 7.5 per cent in 2022 in comparison to 2021, a significant surge of 30.8 per cent in 2021 against 2020, a drop of 19.8 per cent in 2020 against 2019 and again an increase of 8.9 per cent in 2019 against 2018 and of 5.6 per cent in 2018 against 2017.*
- *174 Children Go Missing In India Every Day, Half Of Them Remain Untraced!*
- **CHILDREN OF PALESTINE!**
- **Facing the most traumatic childhood; each day dripping with**

### 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



sorrow in the backdrop of killings and more killings. The ongoing bombardments and targeted attacks on them and on their homes, tents, shelters, schools, mosques and hospitals, by the Israeli forces.

- Leaving you readers with this verse of Faiz Ahmed Faiz—'Song for a Palestinian Child'. This verse is tucked in the volume—'A Song For This Day—52 poems of Faiz Ahmed Faiz' (Sang-E-Meel Publications). Translated from Urdu to English by Shoaib Hashmi, accompanying images from the works of Faiz's daughter Salima Hashmi, the verse stands out, along a diverse range...This vol-

ume was published around December 2009, but holds out to this day. Here goes this verse by Faiz Ahmed Faiz:

**'Song For A Palestinian Child**  
*Be still child!*  
*For your mother too is still, in sleep/*  
*Having poured out all her pain in*  
*tears/*  
*Be still child! /*  
*For it is but a moment since/*  
*Your father laid down his burden of*  
*woe/*  
*Be still child! /*  
*For your loving brother/*  
*Has left the home of his father's/*  
*To go seeking the beautiful butterfly*  
*of his dreams/*  
*And your sister too has left the*

*hearth/*  
*To set up home in an unknown land/*  
*B still child!/*  
*For here, in your little courtyard/*  
*They have bathed the lifeless sun of*  
*days/*  
*And interred the lifeless moon of*  
*the night/*  
*Be still child!/*  
*For your mother and father/*  
*And brother and sister/*  
*And the sun and the moon/*  
*If they hear you weeping/*  
*They will weep with you, and you*  
*with them/*  
*And if you smile, then perhaps/*  
*One day, transfigured/*  
*They will all come back, to be with*  
*you.' □□□*

#### A PIONEER IN INDIAN HISTORICAL STUDIES

## Suniti Kumar Ghosh: An Assessment of a Revolutionary Activist—V

*Amit Bhattacharya*

**G**D BIRLA PLAYED AN important role in arranging the 'Poona Pact' and on the Harijan front, helped in terminating civil disobedience (as Nehru said) and in guiding the Congress along the constitutional path. Ghosh spells out the new tasks that lay ahead. The new constitution that would be imposed by the British raj had to be worked, ministerial offices under the constitution had to be assumed and the role of "partners in this repression and in the exploitation of our people" (to borrow Nehru's phrase) had to be played by the Congress in the coming days.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee's Report, which formed the basis of the Government of India Act of 1935, appeared towards the end of 1934. He wanted the British government to talk to Gandhi before the framing of the constitution. But all his appeals for a 'per-

sonal touch' were fruitless. Ghosh points out that early in 1935, helped by Anderson; Birla saw the Viceroy, Commerce Member Joseph Bhore and Home Member Henry Craik. Birla said to the Viceroy:

*"There must be a proper understanding between the rulers and the ruled so that leaders like Gandhiji and his lieutenants may begin to teach people to treat the Government as their institution"* (Cited in Ghosh, *ibid*, p.92).

Birla told Joseph Bhore that "If there was sincerity and goodwill, Mr. Gandhi may find a formula to work the constitution" (Birla to Gandhi's secretary, Mahadev Desai, 18 December, 1934, *Bapu a Unique Association*, p.456; II, 11, 9, 14, 17. *Emphasis added*). Birla told Henry Craik, the Home Member, that *Gandhi endorsed Birla's view "that the proposed scheme could be worked successfully and to the ad-*

vantage of India, if there was sympathy and goodwill from both the sides". He stated to the Home Member:

*"There is already a section growing up gradually which believes that even the best should not be achieved by constitutional means...Gandhiji is fighting against this mentality...It is essential that some settlement should be made in Gandhiji's life time which may bring the government and people closer to each other. This would be the beginning of the new kind of education which would teach people to believe that the Government is their own institution, which should be mended and not ended".*

Birla warned that, otherwise, "A revolution of the bloody type may become an inevitable factor. And this would be the greatest calamity not only to India but also to England. Tories may say this would be India's funeral. I say it would be of both" (*Ibid*, 10-14. *emphasis added*).

Ghosh remarks: Birla was right. As the interests of the Birlas and those of imperial Britain were tied

together, the ruin of one would spell the ruin of another" (*Ibid*, p.93).

Ghosh has summed up the situation in the following words:

"First, before the Government of India Act of 1935 was enacted in August of that year as well as after, Birla on behalf of Gandhi and the other Congress leaders repeatedly gave the raj the assurance that it would be worked by the Congress. Gandhi approved of the commitment that Birla made to the raj.

"Second, on behalf of Gandhi and the other Congress leaders, Birla assured the raj that they would abandon the path of mass action 'once and for all' and take to the road indicated by the raj—the peaceful, constitutional road to self-government and expect to be guided there by British imperialism.

"Third, Birla held that an understanding between the raj and Gandhi and the other Congress leaders was necessary so that the latter could teach people that 'the government is their institu-

tion, which should be mended and not ended'. Such understanding would also create the proper atmosphere in which the constitution could be worked. In the absence of such an understanding a violent revolution might spell "the funeral" of both Tory Britain and the Birlas' India.

"Fourth, Birla, who held that imperial Britain and colonial India were bound together by destiny, urged that the raj and the right-wing of the Congress should combine to crush the left-wing" (*Ghosh, II pp.95-96*).

It is important to note that Birla's views and commitments to the raj received Gandhi's unqualified approval.

The constitution bristled with things like "reserved subjects", "special responsibilities" and "safeguards". The British-owned industry, trade, banking etc. were protected by the "safeguards" against any interference with their right to fleece the country as before.

As Ghosh points out, the Act was devised to build up a constitutional alliance between the imperialist masters, princes, big landlords and the compradors—all reactionary forces, foreign and native—to thwart the aspirations of the people.

When the Act was at the stage of preparation, an article in the *Communist International* observed: "In its scheme of a pseudo-federal colonial India British imperialism seeks to create such a system as would enable it to preserve and consolidate in the safest possible manner its rule over India, by utilizing to the utmost the feudal relics and all the different contradictions (of a national, religious character etc.)...The constitution which imperialism seeks to introduce is aimed not only at strengthening the British yoke but at consolidating all exploiting classes for the struggle against

the Indian people, against the Indian revolution" (Valia, "The Economic Crisis and the Policy of British Imperialism in India", *Communist International*, 15 May, 1932, in *Radical Periodicals*, 1932, p.285, cited in Ghosh, II, p.97.

Gandhi and his close associates and the Indian big compradors like Birla were optimistic. Even when the constitution was under consideration in the British Parliament, he "realized that the 'Bill' was capable of producing benefit, if worked in the right spirit". As Ghosh observed, indeed the Act which Gandhi later described as "the creation of the best British brains: and behind which "there were honorable motives" was capable of producing benefit for the classes Gandhi represented. To Birla, the Act "did contain seeds which were to germinate, blossom and bear fruit giving us ultimately the full independence that we aspired for". According to Ghosh, Birla was right as he added: "we have embodied large portions of the Act, as finally passed, in the Constitution which we have framed ourselves which shows that in it was cast the pattern of our future plans. (Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, p.131; Bapu III, p.268, cited by Ghosh, p.98).

Before leaving England, Birla wrote to Anderson" ...so I am returning now to India with the blessings of the new Viceroy, the Secretary of State and those others who count" (Birla, *Bapu*, II, 140—emphasis added, cited in *ibid*). On his return to India, Birla went to Wardha to Give Gandhi a first-hand report of his impressions as well as the messages from Hoare, Halifax and others. Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's personal secretary, was sent to Bombay to bring Birla and Patel. Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari had also arrived. □□□

[To be concluded]

## 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

## AGONY TO ANARCHY

## Whither Bengal?

*Bhaskar Majumder*

IT'S ALARMING TO THINK that what was once considered the cultural capital of India is now being overshadowed by rampant issues of violence and sexual assault, as highlighted by recent media reports. Since the tragic events of August 9, 2024, the civic society seems to be grappling with an unsettling reality. Despite the valiant efforts of the 'Junior Doctors' at medical colleges in West Bengal, who have rallied alongside passionate citizens in protest against the heinous murder of a young lady doctor at R G Kar Hospital in Kolkata, this crisis demands serious attention. It's a situation that calls for a deeper exploration and understanding of the roots of such violence.

One cannot escape the agony of undivided Bengal which now has two parts, one East Pakistan or Bangladesh and the other West Bengal, because of the unwelcome partition of Bengal as a 'gift' of the 1947 transfer of power. The agony started since then. One may also glorify the pre-1947 days because of the cultured jewels of Bengal like Raja Rammohan Roy, Vidyasagar, Ravindranath Tagore, Vivekananda and other unnumbered visionaries who took India to international heights. The historical-spatial advantages of Bengal in British India were undeniable facts that included the first opportunity to be westernised by languages learnt and the mobility of people. Education created both revolutionaries and reactionaries.

Instead of concentrating only on the well-known cultural history that many people in West Bengal are familiar with, it is important to explore the deep-rooted struggles that

have persisted since 1947 and contributed to the current state of unrest. This struggle began even before the end of World War II and well before India gained independence. A significant turning point was the famine of 1943 in undivided Bengal, which was paradoxically a food-surplus region at the time.

Following independence and the partition of India, there was a massive influx of refugees into West Bengal from East Pakistan, many of whom could not be rehabilitated outside the region. This sudden movement resulted in a sharp increase in both population density and poverty levels. Although the flow of refugees slowed over time, it continued due to linguistic ties and economic factors, as people migrated from high-poverty areas to those with more opportunities. This influx exacerbated unemployment, strained resources, and disrupted the land-man ratio, further deepening the region's struggles. The pain and suffering of this situation have been profound and ongoing.

The processes and the consequences of agony started manifesting themselves in hunger during the mid-1960s, the illegal market in foodgrains, political turmoil during the late 1960s often termed as Naxalism, lumpenisation of politics or cultural degradation during the mid-1970s, an Internal Emergency declared in 1975, and a little cultural revival in end-1970s. Some of these led to the killing of youth uncounted, some imprisoned, some disappeared, education obstructed, institutional or public health crises and all that. Neither Left nor Right took adequate care to un-trap West

Bengal from its low-level of cultural trap. Even the civil society was truncated as pro-Left and others during the long rule, rather misrule of 34 years by the CPM-led Left.

The agony continued, the political party voted to power and did not learn from cumulative agony. One single issue was probably pointed out for the fall of the Left rule which was the Singur land acquisition issue. With or without Singur, the state of West Bengal could not, or did not try to, come out of agony. Be it the mid-1960s or mid-1970s, or by the continuation of the 2020s, the agony took the shape of organised anarchy. This anarchy during the past decade was composed of lawlessness, sycophancy, biased public administration, criminals ruling the cultural space, unquestioned atrocities on women and probably protection of criminals by the core state.

During the past decade, ending in 2024, there was a rise in absolute anarchy, where power seemed to reside with criminals. This period marked a troubling trend of the criminalization of politics and culture. In eastern India, the government implemented measures that appeared to support criminal behaviour. The main branches of the executive, particularly the police and public administration, often relied on the visible support of criminals to maintain control over crime.

While the media had previously been less proactive in disseminating unbiased information, it has recently become more active in sharing news, particularly through electronic platforms. Reports have surfaced concerning regular incidents of rape, gang rape, and occasional murders of girls and women of all ages, both married and unmarried, in a state that once prided itself on the dignity of women.

Civil society, particularly the middle class, had mostly remained silent during these troubling times. However, there was a notable shift when members of this community found the courage to protest, spurred on by junior doctors from R G Kar Medical College and Hospital after August 9, 2024. The fear that had previously silenced civil society was evident, particularly among those who had been rewarded or acknowledged by political powers, as well as those hoping for recognition.

Let there be no surprise that the state government or the core state on the circumference tried its best to conceal the social disease that remained concealed because of fear-indifference-miseducation and all that. It will not be wrong if a conspiracy theory is floated that many of the organized crime were state-sponsored. Why and how? If the government cannot provide regular jobs, then the fulfilment of basic needs is assured from the public domain like public authority allowing lumpens to steal public property, allowing them to search for women's bodies that may be raped and murdered and go unpunished for the absence of evidence. The police may be used or misused to frame cases based on a collection of 'no evidence' that probably is a reflection

of pressure from political power to protect the rapists or murderers.

Cultural disease, thus, gets converted into political disease once the culprits know they will remain protected even if they rape murder. The public witness does not matter much in crimes committed when the ruling power is strong enough to strangle the public voice either by the provision of free food, housing, cash transfer or by direct intimidation at the local level. The state government can do this for the state is not an ethical unit. Because of 'Parivartan', it is the mono-power with no credible challenge from the polity. The state government can do this for the indifference of the civil society that often waits for awards and rewards from the government.

The ruling political power in West Bengal post-Left rule learnt more and better than its predecessor in capturing the local government like Municipalities and Panchayats and capturing the cultural clubs and governing bodies of educational institutions. All these were done better and faster under authoritarianism. The voters and lumpens accepted, or had to accept, the 'Parivartan' for a part of it was waiting to come out from prolonged Left Rule. Obstructed education helped the process.

If poverty can be prolonged, if

miseducation can be prolonged, if cash transfer can be introduced to ensure loyalty and create a vote bank, if cultural clubs can be given doles in cash to organise Durga Puja and so on, 'Parivartan' remains unchanged and unchangeable. The core state representing the centre seems least bothered in examining the appropriateness of 'Parivartan' because of its political cost-benefit calculations. Why should the Centre intervene if West Bengal suffers from anarchy for the Centre has nothing to lose if the state that experienced a renaissance and showed a culture path to the rest of the country now experiences culture-retardation?

It may not be an exaggeration if the core state of West Bengal is accused of protecting the lumpen class that it nurtured and nourished. The lumpen class, not aware of human rights and delinked from education, violates the law of the land. If the lumpen class having only nuisance value is protected by the political administration, anarchy is the natural outcome.

No light at the end of the dark tunnel is visible for the concealed collusion of power between the centre and the state for the common purpose of maintaining the status quo or of cornering the wise people.

□□□

---

## INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS, NOT EMPLOYEES

---

### Gig Economy: Opportunities and Challenges

*Ahmed Raza*

**T**HE GIG ECONOMY REFERS to a labour market characterised by short-term, flexible jobs typically facilitated by digital platforms. In India, the gig economy has grown exponentially, with platforms like Uber, Ola, Swiggy, Zomato, UrbanClap, and others providing work opportunities for millions of people. According to a re-

port by the Boston Consulting Group, the gig economy in India is expected to grow to \$455 billion by 2024, creating up to 90 million jobs over the next decade.

Several factors have contributed to the growth of the gig economy in India. First, the widespread adoption of smartphones and affordable internet access has made it easier

for workers to connect with gig platforms. Second, the increasing demand for services such as food delivery, ride-sharing, and home services has created a vast market for gig work. Third, the flexibility offered by gig work has attracted a diverse workforce, including students, homemakers, and retirees, who value the ability to choose their work hours and earn supplemental income.

The gig economy offers several advantages for workers and businesses alike. For workers, gig jobs provide a source of income and



November 24-30, 2024

FRONTIER

9

flexibility that traditional employment often cannot match. Many gig workers appreciate the autonomy and control they have over their work schedules, which allows them to balance other responsibilities, such as education or caregiving. Additionally, gig work can serve as a stepping stone for those entering the workforce or transitioning between jobs.

For businesses, the gig economy offers a cost-effective way to meet fluctuating demand without the need for long-term employment commitments. Companies can quickly scale their workforce up or down based on market conditions, reducing labour costs and increasing operational efficiency. Moreover, the gig economy enables businesses to tap into a diverse pool of talent, allowing them to access specialised skills on an as-needed basis.

Despite the opportunities it presents, the gig economy also poses significant challenges, particularly for workers. One of the most pressing issues is the lack of job security and benefits. Gig workers are often classified as independent contractors rather than employees, which means they are not entitled to benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, or retirement savings. This classification also leaves gig workers vulnerable to sudden changes in demand, which can result in unpredictable income and financial instability.

Another major challenge is the lack of legal protections for gig workers. Without a clear regulatory framework, gig workers often face exploitative working conditions, including long hours, low pay, and unsafe working environments. Many gig workers are paid on a per-task basis, which can lead to situations where they earn below the minimum wage after accounting for expenses such as fuel, vehicle maintenance, and platform fees. Additionally, the ab-

sence of collective bargaining rights makes it difficult for gig workers to negotiate better terms and conditions with their employers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the precarious nature of gig work. During the pandemic, many gig workers faced significant health risks while continuing to provide essential services such as food delivery and ride-sharing. However, they received little support in terms of personal protective equipment (PPE) or access to healthcare. The pandemic also exposed the lack of social safety nets for gig workers, many of whom lost their livelihoods overnight due to lockdowns and restrictions.

The rapid growth of the gig economy has outpaced the development of regulatory frameworks designed to protect workers' rights. As the gig economy continues to expand, there is an urgent need for comprehensive regulation that addresses the unique challenges faced by gig workers. Such regulation should focus on three key areas: classification, social security, and worker rights.

One of the first steps towards ensuring fair treatment for gig workers is to reconsider their classification. Instead of being classified as independent contractors, gig workers should be recognised as employees or a new category of workers with rights that reflect the realities of gig work. This would entitle them to essential benefits such as minimum wage, health insurance, and paid leave.

Gig workers should be included in social security schemes that provide access to healthcare, unemployment benefits, and retirement savings. The government, in collaboration with gig platforms, should create mechanisms to ensure that gig workers contribute to and benefit from these schemes. This could in-

## 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.	1500
Life Subscription [Inland]	Rs.	5000+

Make payment by Cheque/Draft in favour of FRONTIER or 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: CBININBBCAL

**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, WB

Contact Number : 8240016324

volve setting up a mandatory social security fund for gig workers, funded through contributions from both workers and platforms.

Gig workers should have the right to organise and bargain collectively. This would empower them to negotiate fair wages, reasonable working hours, and safe working conditions. Additionally, gig platforms should be held accountable for ensuring the safety and well-being of

their workers, including providing necessary PPE and training in case of emergencies.

The gig economy represents a significant shift in the labour market, offering both opportunities and challenges. While it provides flexibility and income for millions of workers, it also exposes them to risks and uncertainties that must be addressed through thoughtful regulation. As India's gig economy continues to

grow, it is crucial that policymakers, businesses, and labour organisations work together to create a fair and sustainable framework that protects the rights and well-being of gig workers. Only then can the gig economy truly contribute to inclusive and equitable economic growth in India. □

[Dr Ahmed Raza, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration, MANNU, a central university, ahmedraza@manuu.edu.in]

---

## THERE ARE SOME WINS TOO

---

# Every Movement Takes Its Own Path

*Anindya Bhattacharya*

IT WAS OBSERVED THAT IMMEDIATELY after the meeting with the Chief Minister, when the junior doctors withdrew their hunger strike at the request of Abhaya's parents, several political parties and personalities were visibly annoyed and disappointed. It's difficult to ascertain exactly what they wanted from this united movement of junior doctors. However, some found in it the potential for a radical revolution, even if such hopes were unfounded, and this wasn't entirely unclear. Some were even daydreaming that the Chief Minister would escape by helicopter from Nabanna's rooftop, in a scene reminiscent of Bangladesh. Such immature and juvenile behaviour was overshadowing the core demands of Tilottama's justice, gender equality, and the somewhat understated call for restructuring the healthcare system to serve public health better, which was raised by the junior doctors' movement.

However, the events following August 9 sharpened three main directions across the state like a spearhead:

1. A spontaneous outburst of public anger triggered by the horrific murder of Abhaya, which had a profound impact on the public consciousness.

2. A broad and well-organised expression of the long-standing and intense dissatisfaction among medical students and junior doctors against the rampant corruption and malpractice in RG Kar and other government healthcare facilities.

3. *In the backdrop of these two public protests, the active involvement of citizens and various political parties.*

It's undeniable that in a government institution, where the highest level of security is expected, such an atrocious assault and murder of a working doctor places moral and political responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the government and its administration. In that sense, any expression of anger is initially directed against the ruling and governing parties. Additionally, it's hard to ignore the reputation of the ruling party in the state for corruption, especially concerning this issue. Thus, when on the midnight of August 14, the intense anger of at least a hundred thousand ordinary people, especially women, erupted in more than 350 locations across the state, the government and ruling party had no choice but to witness it helplessly. They had already read the

writing on the wall and quickly realised it did not bode well for them. Meanwhile, the junior doctors of RG Kar had also organised and taken to the field, gradually being joined by junior doctors from other hospitals. The parents of the murdered doctor filed for a CBI investigation in the Calcutta High Court and were granted approval, and amidst all this, to attract the attention of the IMA, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court took the entire matter into *suo motu* cognisance.

At that time, discussions about RG Kar were heating up everywhere. Mainstream and social media were filling up with a mix of truths, half-truths and exaggerations, along with some sheer madness. People were somewhat agitated and confused. The ruling party, in an attempt to downplay its responsibility, started taking various administrative steps and party-level initiatives. However, once the investigation was handed over to the CBI, the ruling party began to withdraw, with the Chief Minister announcing that only she would speak on behalf of the government regarding RG Kar. Meanwhile, following the unprecedented success of the "Reclaim The Night" on August 14, a few other "Reclaim The Night" marches were organised here and there under the banner of "civil society" and various social and cultural organisations. However, gradually, attendance and public

November 24-30, 2024

FRONTIER

11

participation in these gatherings began to wane. Nonetheless, a few stubborn opposition political forces, with the help of certain YouTubers on social media, quickly created a so-called “student community” and called for a “Nabanna Occupation” on August 27 with the slogan “One Demand, One Goal / Resignation of the Chief Minister.” However, this fizzled out as a minor event, with a few hundred people skirmishing here and there in Kolkata, quelled by tear gas and water cannons from the police. Meanwhile, the junior doctor protesters clarified that they had no connection with the “Nabanna Occupation” initiative.

In the meantime, the junior doctors had managed to organise themselves well over these days, and following the rampage by outside miscreants at RG Kar on the midnight of August 14, they launched a full-scale movement with five main demands, initiating an indefinite strike. This put the public healthcare system under a significant challenge. Doctors from all levels of society stood by their movement. Corporate and private hospitals were encouraged by this, and with public medical services in short supply due to the strike, their business grew by nearly 40% within just a few days. It is fair to acknowledge that public healthcare services in this state had seen some improvement in recent years, with various free services established. As a result, those profiting in the healthcare world had a vested interest in weakening these public systems. The junior doctors’ movement and their strike presented them with an unexpected opportunity. Consequently, corporate hospitals, the pharma lobby, and health insurance companies spared no effort to make the most of this chance. Shortages and patient harassment in government hospitals only continued to increase, with even reports emerging

of patients dying due to lack of treatment.

Even in such a tense situation, despite the Supreme Court’s directive that, if junior doctors did not end their strike, the state government could impose punitive measures, the government chose the path of dialogue. After two or three failed attempts, the first round of talks was held at the Chief Minister’s residence, where almost all of the five main demands were agreed upon, except for the removal of the Health Secretary. The junior doctors ended their strike. However, they soon returned with a ten-point demand and began a hunger strike at the heart of Kolkata’s Dharmatala. This continued for a few days. Eventually, as people know, nearly all of their demands (barring one or two) were accepted, and the junior doctors ended their hunger strike and resumed work.

But the question is, after all this, did the general public (or patients) and healthcare workers gain anything from both sides? Certainly, they did. Although not all their demands were fully met, there were several significant gains worth noting. :

- 1) Due to the sustained movement by civil society and junior doctors, the CBI became more proactive and submitted an initial charge sheet in the Sealdah Court after 58 days.
- 2) Following the Supreme Court’s *suo moto* intervention, special task forces were formed at both the national and state levels to address the safety and security of healthcare workers. During the meeting between the Chief Minister and junior doctors on October 21, it was ensured (at the insistence of the junior doctors) that doctors would be represented in the state task force. The government has already issued guidelines regarding this.

3) Perhaps the most important achievement, which was part of the junior doctors’ ten-point demand, was the introduction of the central referral and digital bed vacancy systems. These dual systems will not only ensure better treatment from the doctors’ side but also prevent unnecessary harassment of patients and curb admission-related corruption. The government has announced that these systems are already in pilot testing and will be implemented statewide starting November 1.

4) Another vital issue raised by the junior doctors to curb corruption in the healthcare sector was the establishment of democratic practices within colleges, meaning the election of representatives to all democratic bodies, including student unions. Both sides have reached a consensus on this, and the government has committed to completing the election process by March 2025.

5) Filling all vacant positions in healthcare services was another major demand, which the government has agreed to in principle. However, an existing legal complication regarding an OBC-related court order and a case in higher court has temporarily stalled this. Both sides are hopeful that positive action will be taken once the legal entanglement is resolved.

These achievements are by no means insignificant. For those sections of the affluent and middle classes who never set foot in public hospitals and proudly purchase healthcare services with their wealth, these demands may mean nothing. But for the common people who regularly depend on public services, these gains are invaluable. These changes (especially the third point mentioned above) are expected to further improve the public healthcare system.

However, two problems remain:

- 1) Regarding the “threat culture,” the Chief Minister raised questions in the October 21 meeting about the ethics and authority of the college academic council’s policy of expelling dozens of students or junior doctors. The next day, the Calcutta High Court also revoked the penalties for 51 punished students and junior doctors from RG Kar, questioning this policy and directing the state government to review and decide on it.
- 2) During the junior doctors’ strike, the Chief Minister accused 563 junior doctors of working in pri-

vate hospitals to earn money—a claim for which a response is still awaited from the junior doctors. Aside from these, the public’s vocal demand for justice for Abhaya, the junior doctors’ unified and strong movement for safety at work, democratisation, and quality care for patients, along with the government’s patience and flexible response (implicitly accepting its own shortcomings and choosing not to suppress the movement) have collectively helped to progress toward a partial solution to the issues.

But this does not mean everything is resolved. Movements often have their beginnings, pauses, and

as well as ups and downs, and the authorities, in turn, have various ways of handling them. The question is whether the processes led by both the ruling and the ruled sides are becoming increasingly unbearable or if there is room for understanding. Those who fail to grasp this dialectical rule become true promoters of the “threat culture,” often resorting to trolling and bullying, isolating themselves socially, as they are unable to gain acceptance for their agenda and frustration, rely on hate and violence. □□□

[Originally published in Bengali Online Magazine *Ekak Matra*. Translated by Sagnik Roy]

## SMALL FILMS

# Dharamshala International Film Festival

**Nandini Ramnath**

THE 13TH EDITION OF THE Dharamshala International Film Festival [DIEF] in McLeod Ganj is a reminder of how precious and precarious such events are. In a country in which a film festival is often the only way to access the latest international cinema, DIFF has stayed on course by opting for selective rather than expansive curation and keeping its ambitions in check.

Founded by the filmmakers Ritu Sarin and Tenzing Sonam in 2012, DIFF has built up a loyal following beyond McLeod Ganj for eclectic fare that includes Indian art house cinema.

“The festival has retained independence because it’s not a slave to funds,” pointed out DIFF’s Artistic Director Bina Paul.

This year, DIFF rolled out 80 titles across long and short formats between November 7 and 10. Payal Kapadia’s Cannes-decorated *All We Imagine As Light* inaugurated DIFF ahead of its theatrical release on

November 22. The line-up includes Sandhya Suri’s police procedural *Santosh*, Shuchi Talathi’s *Girls Will be Girls*, Rima Das’s *Village Rockstars 2*, *Onir’s We Are Faheem & Karun* and Dibakar Banerjee’s *Tees*.

Among the documentaries are Kinshuk Surjan’s *Marching in the Dark*, Achal Mishra’s *Chaar Phool Hain Aur Duniya Hai*, the Bhutan-set *Agent of Happiness* and *Nocturnes* by Anirban Dutta and Anupama Srinivasan and *A Fly On The Wall* by Shonali Bose and Nilesh Maniyar.

In the international list are Pedro Almodovar’s *The Room Next Door*, Truong Minh Quy’s *Viet and Nam*, Aizhan Kassymbek’s *Madina*, The Maw Naing’s *MA – Cry of Silence* and *In the Land of Brothers* by Alireza Ghasemi and Raha Amirfazel. Short and animated films round off the programme.

“DIFF is a bit of a best of – we come towards the end of the festival year in India and the world, so we have a sense of what’s happening all over,” Bina Paul said about the

selection. “There is also a strong mountain presence that we look for, and small films. It’s nice for the audience here to get a sense of what’s happening in the world, to discover small films.”

Film festivals often base their reputation on quantity—how many premieres or titles, how many stars on the red carpet, how many sidebar events. They are expensive affairs that require sizeable organisational support and hefty sums of money. When the tap is turned off, when a sponsor walks out, the effect is immediately reflected in a crimped line-up—as happened with the recently concluded MAMI Mumbai Film Festival.

“While Dharamshala has become extremely popular, the organisers have been very conscious of the fact that there are only a certain number of films that they can accommodate,” observed Paul, who took charge of DIFF in 2023 after several years of heading programming at the sprawling, massively attended International Film Festival of Kerala.

“Festivals get greedy in terms of wanting more star power, more publicity, more delegates, more premieres—these are part of a sort of



November 24-30, 2024

FRONTIER

13

competitive edge,” Paul added. “Dharamshala has not fallen for that. It’s a modest, boutique kind of festival that stays within its resources –by cutting its coat according to its cloth.”

In India, film festivals have a pedagogical aspect. In the absence of art house cinemas that can regularly screen international cinema without worrying about government censorship, the film festival is often the only place to encounter the

movies that are creating waves globally. It is where cinephiles can make connections between a filmmaker’s latest effort and previous ones, appreciate the classics through retrospectives, and learn about the modes of filmmaking in practice around the world.

More than funding, film festivals need thoughtful curation, Paul said.

“The biggest challenge is replication—every festival begins to look the

same,” she added. “You need trained, well-informed curators. Travelling to other festivals is also very much part of programming. Artistic vision comes only through interactions. The programmers are not only looking at links sent by sales agents. It’s not about the money but the people who run a festival and want it to happen.” □□□

[Source: Scroll.in]

---

## STALIN’S GENERAL

---

# Marshall Zhukov 50

*Harsh Thakor*

**M**ARSHALL GEORGY ZHUKOV was arguably the greatest all-round general of World War II, who had his 50th death anniversary this year on 18th June. His sheer tenacity, courage and military genius is arguably unparalleled in military history.

Zhukov’s life was one of rising from rags-to-riches who rose from a peasant lad who rose to become a great general of the Second World War. Zhukov was the Soviet Union’s indispensable commander shaping all the critical turning points of World War II. Zhukov saved Leningrad from capture by the Wehrmacht in September of 1941; led the defence of Moscow in October of 1941; spear-headed the Red Army’s march on Berlin and formally accepted Germany’s unconditional surrender in the spring of 1945. Zhukov made errors in some campaigns but had few equals when it came coping with complex strategic situations.

Geoffrey Roberts biography *Stalin’s General* was the first complete critical biography of Zhukov based on independent evidence and engulfing his pre-war life and post-war career. In view of Geoffrey Roberts the Soviet Union was responsible for some of the most epic achievements and most gross misdeeds of modern age.

Roberts never backed away from the condemnation of the Soviet system’s terror and repression but persisted that force and terror were not the only factors conveying the truth about his life and the great events in which he took part. Zhukov’s memoirs were highly factual, sounding more like a historian than a memoirist.

Zhukov was born on December 2, 1896, in the peasant village of Strelkovka, Kaluga Province, in Central European Russia. Between the ages of 7 and 10, he received three years of primary education at his local parish school before serving as an apprentice to a Moscow cobbler to train for that trade.

In 1915, Zhukov enrolled into a Tsarist cavalry regiment where he acquired the skill of using large mounted formations on Russia’s flat steppes. Operating as a spy behind enemy lines, Zhukov captured a German officer before receiving a concussion to the head from an enemy mine, and was awarded his second St. George’s Cross. In 1918, he decided to join the newly formed Soviet Red Guards and met Stalin during the Russian Civil War while fighting at Tsaritsyn (later Stalingrad and Volgograd). Fighting alongside the Reds, Stalin and Zhukov both played a determining role in the ultimate

defeat of, right-wing White forces.

Stalin’s purge of the officer corps paved way for younger men like Zhukov and the rest of the Soviet World War II-era marshals to rise to the top ahead of their time. In June 1939, Zhukov became commander of the 1st Soviet Mongolian Army that defeated the Japanese Kwantung Army the following August.

Zhukov’s partnership with Stalin was a turning point to Soviet success in defeating Hitler and the Nazis. Zhukov’s generalship shaped the outcome of all the great battles of the Soviet-German war — Leningrad, Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk, and Berlin. In his memoirs, Zhukov praises Stalin for having saved Moscow: “By his strict exactingness Stalin achieved, one can say, the near impossible.”

On the eve of the battle for Stalingrad, Stalin appointed Zhukov his Deputy Supreme Commander. Zhukov’s mission was to save Stalingrad and to prepare counteractions to halt the enemy offensive.

He firmly believed in Stalin and his leadership but when the dictator attacked him after the war he confronted him. He expressed his loyalty but denied any wrong-doing with dignity. The same thing happened when he was dismissed by Khrushchev, except that he held Stalin’s successor in far lesser esteem. Zhukov was close to Stalin but he was also an independent figure in the Soviet high command that tried to get the dictator to do the right thing during the

war but was often overruled.

“For me personally, the word of the party was always law,” Zhukov reflected.

Zhukov was outstanding in both attacking and counter-attacking roles in war games the Soviets held in January 1941. When the Germans attacked in June 1941 plans to counter-attack were chalked with devastating results as the Soviet forces' advances shattered their morale. During the war the Red Army's doctrine crystallised and Zhukov tended to favour encirclement operations like the one at Stalingrad in November 1942. Stalin expressed doubt over such operations because of the number of times the Germans escaped encirclement and preferred to advance steadily across a broad front and to occupy and hold territory.

When the Germans attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941 Zhukov ordered a series of counter-offensives but these actions exposed Soviet troops to encirclement and compounded the disaster of an invasion that inflicted on the Red Army one of the greatest defeats of any army in history. By the end of 1941 the Red Army had lost four million soldiers and had been pushed back to the gates of Leningrad and Moscow.

Zhukov relinquished post as Chief of the General Staff at the end of July 1941 and was given command of a reserve army of about 50 divisions, tasked to mount a major counter-offensive in the Smolensk region. At Yelnya in August 1941 Zhukov launched the Red Army's first successful large-scale counter-offensive against the Germans, recapturing a big tract of territory and blocking Hitler's path to Moscow.

Zhukov's next operation rescued Leningrad from imminent capture by the Germans in September 1941. In December Zhukov launched a counter-offensive in front of Moscow driving the Germans back 100 miles and

ending Hitler's dream of conquering the Soviet Union in a single Blitzkrieg campaign. In summer 1942 Hitler tried again to inflict a devastating defeat on the USSR by seizing the Soviet oilfields at Baku on the other side of the Caucasus. It was this southern campaign that led to the siege at Stalingrad later that year. On the eve of the battle for Stalingrad, Stalin appointed Zhukov his Deputy Supreme Commander. Zhukov's mission was to save Stalingrad and to prepare counter-actions to halt the enemy offensive.

In November 1942 Zhukov unleashed a multi-pronged counter-offensive at Stalingrad. Operation Uranus broke the back of the Hungarian, Italian and Romanian armies defending the Germans' flanks, encircled 300,000 German troops in Stalingrad and threatened to cut off Wehrmacht forces heading south to Baku. When the battle was over the Germans and their Axis allies had lost 50 divisions and suffered a million and half casualties. The Germans were able to withdraw their other troops from the south but, by early 1943, were back in the very area to where they had launched their war for oil in June 1942.

Zhukov also played a central role in the Battle of Kursk in July 1943 when hundreds of German and Soviet tanks clashed in open warfare, inflicting a mortal blow on Germany with the loss of Hitler's Panzer reserves. Kursk paved the way for the German retreat all the way back to Berlin. Incidentally Kursk is again in the news because of Ukrainian incursion into the region and Putin is on trial. Russians don't find a second Zhukov to save them! Nor is there any Red Army.

Triggering the Soviet strategic offensive of 1943–1945, in November 1943 he rode into Kiev with the Soviet forces that had just recaptured the Ukrainian capital. A few months later Zhukov administered

Operation Bagration which liberated Belorussia from Nazi occupation. Bagration took the Red Army into Poland and to the outskirts of Warsaw. Zhukov captured Warsaw in January 1945 after the Soviets launched an operation that advanced the Red Army from the Vistula to the Oder – the two great rivers bisecting eastern Poland and eastern Germany respectively.

Zhukov aimed to seize the German capital in February 1945 but was forced to divert forces to confront enemy dangers on his northern flank. In April it was Zhukov's troops who triggered the capture of Hitler's last installation, albeit at the cost of 80,000 Soviet soldiers' lives. It was Zhukov who formally accepted Germany's unconditional surrender on the Soviet behalf on 9 May 1945.

In the victory parade in Red Square in June 1945 Zhukov delivered the victory speech and then stood alongside Stalin as 200 captured Nazi banners were piled against the Kremlin wall.

Zhukov was startled to be sacked as commander-in-chief of Soviet ground forces and dispatched to a provincial military command in Odessa.

Following Stalin's death in March 1953, Khrushchev became Zhukov's political patron, and took the leading role in eliminating NKVD Secret Police Chief Lavrenti P. Beria. Zhukov promoted Khrushchev's dominance, only to be demoted once again by him and sent into a renewed exile. Zhukov had been accused by Khrushchev of creating “a cult of personality” and being a “Bonapartist” (one seeking to become a political general).

At the 20th Party Congress in 1956 Stalin's war leadership was targeted by Khrushchev in the so-called Secret Speech, with Zhukov falling out with Khrushchev. A particular target was the Soviets' failure to be fully prepared for the German attack

in June 1941. Khrushchevites argued that Zhukov shared with Stalin the responsibility for the military disaster when Red Army lost millions of men, and the Wehrmacht pushed forward to Leningrad, Moscow and Rostov. Zhukov rebuked that allegation stating that Soviet defences were as prepared as they could be in the given circumstances.

In unpublished drafts of his memoirs Zhukov was less defensive and

expressed more readiness to admit mistakes.

In October 1964 Khrushchev was toppled, and the following day Marshal Zhukov was resurrected once more standing atop the red marble mausoleum of Lenin's Tomb during the 20th VE-Day celebrations. He felt Khrushchev's betrayal of him in 1957 was greater than Stalin's in 1946. A gradual rehabilitation occurred under Brezhnev, and after a battle with the

censors, his memoirs were published.

Marshal Georgi Zhukov died on June 18, 1974, at age 77, with his ashes were buried in the Kremlin Wall in Moscow. Wrote his friend Marshal Vasilevsky, "One can only envy a man who so closely identified his life with that of the people." □□□

[Harsh Thakor is freelance journalist. Thanks for information from Geoffrey Roberts' "Stalin's General" and 'Warfare History network' by Blaine Taylor]

## LETTERS

### Yasin Malik

Mushal Hussain Malik, wife of Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chief Yasin Malik, has written a letter to the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, urging him to raise the issue of her jailed husband in Parliament.

On the issue of human rights and women empowerment, Mushal, former assistant to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, on her letter has drawn his attention to the ongoing case against Malik in a three-decade-old sedition charge.

Kashmiri separatist leader Malik is himself arguing the petition filed against him by the NIA in the Delhi High Court in this case related to terrorist money laundering. The NIA has filed an appeal in this case while requesting the court to give death penalty to Malik.

The NIA had filed a charge-sheet against several persons including Malik in this 2017 case. In 2022, a lower court sentenced Malik to life imprisonment. Yasin Malik has reportedly been on an indefinite hunger strike since November 2 in protest against inhuman treatment in jail. This hunger strike will further adversely affect Malik's health. It will endanger the life of a person who chose to follow the path of non-violence by giving up arms.

Mushal said, 'Malik is being tried for waging war against India in a 35-year-old case and now the NIA is seeking death penalty for him in fabricated cases registered against him'.

**Ruchir Shukla (Hindi News)**

### Fear of Missing Out

The term "FOMO" or "Fear of Missing Out" was introduced in 2004 as a way to describe the anxiety that arises from the fear of missing out on experiences, events, or opportunities. This phenomenon has been gaining traction in India, especially among the younger generation. With the growth of social media platforms and the desire to be constantly connected, Indians have increasingly become victims of FOMO.

India's vibrant and diverse culture, with its numerous festivals, events, and gatherings, has always been a hub of social interactions. However, the increasing prevalence of FOMO has led to an unhealthy obsession with wanting to attend every event and engage in every activity. This, in turn, has resulted in individuals feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, and unable to take a step back and enjoy the moments they are already experiencing.

One prime example of FOMO in the Indian context is the rise of social media influencers. With millions of followers, these individuals have the power to make or break a trend. The pressure to keep up with their every move has led to fans feeling the constant need to be in the loop. This drives them to attend every event, wear the latest fashion, and try out new experiences just to stay connected and relevant.

Another example is the craze surrounding New Year's Eve parties in India. Every year, people across the country compete to find the most ex-

travagant and exclusive party to attend. In cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore, FOMO has become a major factor in the high demand for tickets to these events, often leading to sell-outs and a heightened sense of exclusivity.

In the business world, FOMO has also played a role in the rapid growth of the startup ecosystem in India. With numerous startup events, conferences, and networking opportunities, entrepreneurs and investors are constantly trying to stay ahead of the curve. This has led to a cutthroat competition, where missing out on a single event or opportunity could mean losing out on a game-changing connection or investment.

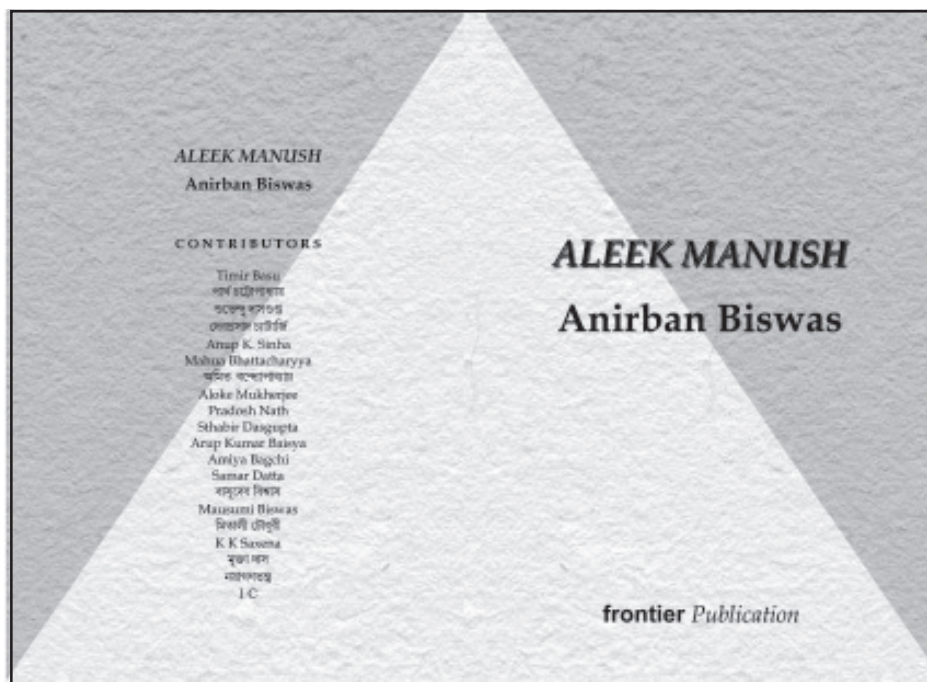
As FOMO continues to grip the Indian society, it is crucial to understand its implications and find ways to mitigate its impact. Mental health experts suggest focusing on self-awareness and setting realistic goals to combat FOMO. By taking a step back and evaluating the importance of experiences, individuals can make more informed decisions about their activities and avoid the pitfalls of constant FOMO.

FOMO is a phenomenon that has taken root in India, driven by the desire to be connected and relevant in a fast-paced, ever-changing world. It is essential for individuals and society as a whole to recognize the potential negative consequences of FOMO and find ways to strike a balance between staying connected and maintaining a healthy, fulfilling life.

**T S Karthik, Chennai**

# A **frontier** Publication

Just Released



## **ALEEK MANUSH**

**Anirban Biswas**

**COMPILATION TEAM:**

TIMIR BASU, ARUP SEN, NABINANDA SEN, TARUN BASU

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

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

Available at:

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

**Contribution: INR 100**