

# frontier

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On Other Pages

Comment	2
Note	3
A PIONEER Suniti Kumar Ghosh: His Contribution to Indian Historiography-III Amit Bhattacharyya	3
UKRAINE WAR How False Narratives were Created Bharat Dogra	7
DEFYING US SANCTIONS Cuba's Medical Internationalism Helen Yaffe	9
THE QUESTION OF AUTONOMY Lokpal: A Threat to Judicial Independence? Ahmed Raza	10
18 ARTISTS Third World of Art Exhibition Atanu Basu	12
INDIA'S LEFT-RIGHT CENTENARY Characterising Fascism Jawed Naqvi	13
Letters	14

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## *Trump the Peacemaker*

THE WAR IS UNLIKELY TO END FOR RUSSIANS AND UKRAINIANS anytime soon despite Trump's much publicised peace diplomacy. Trump the peacemaker is more like Hitler the "Chancellor of Peace". That's what Hitler was called before he started the Second World War. The ruling elites in Europe in those days thought Hitler was better than communists! While briefing the press about his peace plan in Ukraine Trump didn't rule out the possibility of Third World War which could not be anything but nuclear. And this same peacemaker loudly proclaims that he intends to take possession by "any means necessary" of Canada, Panama, Greenland, Gaza and who knows where else in the world.

The US-brokered ceasefire deal now hangs in the balance though Ukraine is not averse to the idea of a 30-day pause in fighting. But Russians are not interested as they see in this temporary arrangement an American ploy to allow Ukraine sufficient time to regroup as they are losing in the battlefield. Without rejecting the deal outright Moscow has given qualified support, giving a number of crucial conditions. For all practical purposes the US truce proposal is "nothing but a temporary respite for the Ukrainian military, nothing else". Kyiv and EU remain wary of any peace deal that doesn't come with US security guarantees for Ukraine, something both Putin and Trump have pushed back against. In truth Europeans who have recently formed a "Coalition of the Willing" to reduce their dependence on America and back Zelensky more fanatically than ever before are too eager to continue the war. They are least bothered about what is happening to Ukraine's present and future.

Both Moscow and Washington now cast the three-year-old conflict as a deadly proxy war with the deadly potential to trigger World War three. Unless Ukraine drops its ambitions to join NATO and allow Russia to control the entirety of the four regions it has claimed as its own, and the size of the Ukrainian army to be limited the talk of cease-fire is meaningless. Moscow sticks to the point that any agreement must address the root causes of the crisis, a caveat that suggests any cease-fire will not be that easy as Ukraine declines to concede any parcel of its territory that Russia is claiming for so long. Then there are other issues which are no less important for Moscow before accepting cease-fire after so much bloodbath and destruction. The Kremlin wants and quite justifiably Western sanctions eased and a presidential election to be held in Ukraine, which Kyiv says is

premature while martial law is in force. The peacemaker, however, cannot deny the just demands of Russia and finds it difficult to hammer out an agreed deal for ceasefire. For one thing Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff had to wait 8 hours to meet Putin in Moscow. In other words Russia is not in a hurry.

This conflict, in essence, is the culmination of Anglo-American policy to destroy the erstwhile So-

viet Union. Soviet Russia is history but its successor Russian Federation is there and they now want to subjugate Russia and loot its natural resources. Anarchists in Europe view this war as an inter-imperialist rivalry and they have no role to play other than demanding peace, and that too somewhat philosophically. Rivalry is there but it is also the existential threat to Russia. And neo-Nazi Zelensky who is living on bor-

rowed time, is primarily responsible for creating such a horrible situation. They have encircled Russia and would like to weaken it financially and militarily beyond repair. But all their plans have so far failed as the multi-polarity is a hard reality now. The left unlike the European anarchists must mobilise against the notorious "Coalition of the Willing" which is a new united front to crush Russia. □□□ 17-03-2025

## COMMENT

### Dallewal's Fast Unto Death

ON 5 MARCH 2025 ONE HUNDRED days have passed since Jagjit Singh Dallewal's protest fast. Discussions will continue on issues like minimum support price (MSP) for crops, other demands put forth under the aegis of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (non-political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, talks related with the government; and coordination with the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), and also will continue Jagjit Singh Dallewal's protest fast unto death.

As a result of the farmers' protest at Delhi's Singhu border in 2020-21, the government had withdrawn the three agricultural laws. Since then, the *yaksh prashn* has also stood out in the open about how the country's vast agricultural sector can survive with the rapidly increasing pace of corporatisation of education, health and service sectors including the public sector enterprises! Economists have not yet raised the question about the private capital that is being worshipped in corporate India, and how much of the private capital is looted public money! It is hoped that economists like Professor Arun Kumar, who have explained how much of the Indian economy is black money, will also consider this central question. Whatever be the case, a decisive point in

the clash between farmers and corporate powers is not expected to happen soon.

But for Jagjit Singh Dallewal's fast which has crossed 100 days, it can be said right now with certainty that it has become a kind of landmark in the history of nonviolent resistance to injustice. The importance of this fast increases even more when one finds that it has restored the credibility, dignity and strength of protest fasts. While the media covered Anna Hazare's 13-day fast in 2011 day and night, they have not paid even a fraction of the same footage to Jagjit Singh Dallewal's long fast.

In fact, this comparison itself is wrong. The truth had come out at the very beginning that Anna Hazare used to fast for the media. The powers involved in that fast-episode and their intentions were also not a hidden truth. Its result was also on the same lines - India's national and social life came under the tight grip of the corporate-communal nexus.

Seriousness, dignity and humility have always been maintained in Jagjit Singh Dallewal's satyagraha-fast. Jagjit Singh Dallewal and the farmer leaders/supporters involved in the movement did not make the fasting site a platform for speeches.

This has upheld the belief that the long-tested value of 'weighing before speaking' has not been lost entirely in the noise of ongoing verbosity. Needless to say, Jagjit Singh Dallewal had prepared himself for this fast.

With Jagjit Singh Dallewal's fast, there has indeed been a small revolution in the non-violent mode of resistance - a single person standing up fearlessly against injustice through satyagrah, civil disobedience, fasting. Mohandas Gandhi used this mode of resistance in India's freedom movement while taking inspiration from global sources. Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, describing Gandhi's "non-violent mode of action as the most revolutionary core of his teachings," writes, "The greatest revolution of our time is, therefore, a procedural revolution, removal of injustice through a mode of action characterised by justice. The question here is not so much the contents of justice as the mode to achieve it. Constitutional and orderly processes are often not enough. □□□

(Contributed by Prem Singh. *The contributor associated with the socialist movement is a former teacher of Delhi University and a fellow of Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla*)

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## NOTE

## Police Brutality Is Endemic

*MC writes:*

**I**N RECENT YEARS, THE Attorney General of India delivered a speech at the United Nations Human Rights Council during the country's Universal Periodic Review, stating that torture has no place in the governance of the nation. 'India, he said boastfully, 'believes in peace, non-violence, and upholding human dignity.' He added, 'As such, the concept of torture is completely alien to our culture.'

These words were meant to convey India's commitment to human rights. However, the reality of police brutality in India paints a starkly different picture. The issue of police violence, especially against marginalised communities, is a systemic problem that demands urgent attention.

For many Indians, particularly the poor and marginalised, the police are feared and distrusted rather than respected. 'You don't argue with police' is a common phrase heard across the country, highlighting the pervasive sense of intimidation that law enforcement strikes into the hearts of ordinary people.

According to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC),

between 2018-19 and 2020-21, over 1,189 individuals were tortured in police custody, and 348 died as a result of police brutality. Many believe that these figures are grossly underestimated. Tragically, the Indian government's failure to ratify the United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT) and pass a national anti-torture law further reinforces the cycle of abuse and impunity.

One of the most significant issues contributing to police brutality in India is the lack of accountability. The country has yet to criminalise torture as a distinct crime despite numerous calls for legal reforms.

The Law Commission of India presented the Prevention of Torture Bill in 2017, but it remains without a clear and enforced legal framework to hold police officers accountable for acts of brutality; the system encourages abuse and perpetuates impunity.

Between 2005 and 2018, despite the deaths of more than 500 individuals in police custody, there was not a single conviction in these cases. The situation is made even worse by the widespread corruption within the Indian police force.

Despite the shocking prevalence of police brutality, many people in India, particularly those from more privileged backgrounds, view the use of excessive force by the police as a necessary evil.

In a country where the criminal justice system is often slow, inefficient, and bogged down by bureaucracy, many view police brutality as a shortcut to justice. According to the 2018 'Status of Policing in India' report by Common Cause and the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 44 per cent of respondents expressed fear of the police. Many have reported direct knowledge of police torture, arbitrary firing, and the use of excessive force.

Paradoxically, however, the same report also found that nearly half of Indians felt police brutality against criminals was acceptable. This mindset is particularly problematic when considering the systemic abuse faced by marginalised groups.

According to a report by the National Campaign Against Torture (NCAT), 60 per cent of those who died in police custody in 2019 were from impoverished and disadvantaged groups, including Muslims, Dalits, and Indigenous tribal communities. These groups, who are already socially and economically disadvantaged, are disproportionately targeted by law enforcement. □□□

## A PIONEER

## Suniti Kumar Ghosh: His Contribution to Indian Historiography—III

*Amit Bhattacharya*

**T**HE QUESTION THAT NOW naturally arises is: How 'green' has been India during the 'green revolution' period? Firstly, initially for some years after the application of the costly 'green revolution' technique, there was almost a

spectacular rise in the production of cereals in the wheat belts of Punjab, Haryana and western UP. Later it spread to rice belts, too. Wherever possible, landlords and rich peasants have made use of subsidized inputs to improve yields of their

land. However, soon the growth tapered off and then began to decline. (See: article by M.V.Nadkarni, 'Crisis of increasing costs in agriculture', *EPW*, 24 September 1988).

In December 1988, a note entitled 'Agricultural Price Policy in India', released by the Punjab, Haryana and Delhi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) stated: "In the post-Green Revolution period and from the period when price support schemes have

been active, there has been a significant fall in production growth rate...the growth came down from 3.1 per cent to 2.5 per cent per annum [which hardly kept pace with population]. Decline in index of per capita production has been even more significant" (Cited in Ghosh, p.36). That, according to Ghosh, means that the rate of production in the pre-Green Revolution period declined after the application of new technology. David Selbourne in his book, *An Eye to India*, noted that the pre-budget Economic Survey of the Government of India of March 1976 had admitted the failure of the Green Revolution.

Secondly, according to S.K.Ghosh, the Green Revolution has accentuated the differences between class and class, between region and region. It is the landlords and rich peasants who have mainly taken advantage of the large investments made by the state, 'loan-melas', etc.' and reaped the benefits of this 'revolution' to the detriment of the interests of the poor and landless peasants. The benefit from subsidies—open as well as hidden—on account of inputs hardly trickles down to the bulk of the peasantry. The landlords and the rich peasants make large investments in land with generous assistance of the state and have surplus stocks to cereals to sell. The poor and the landless peasants, even lower-middle peasants—the overwhelming majority of the peasantry—have achieved few gains. Rather, their conditions have worsened. In reality, they are net buyers of food at ever-increasing prices; they are also deprived of access to co-operative credit societies and banks for loans for their inability to furnish collaterals (Ghosh, pp.34-35). They have to seek consumption and other loans from village money-lenders at high interest. As S.S.Gill noted, "Many small and marginal

holdings [in Punjab] have become unviable. Between 1970-71 and 1980-81, a large number of such holdings have disappeared". ('Contradictions of Punjab model of growth and search for an alternative', *EPW*, 15 October 1988).

Thirdly, Dipak Lal, in an article has argued on the basis of his study of only three years—1956-57, 1964-65 and 1970-71 that except in West Bengal, the 'real wages' of agricultural labourers has increased in all other states of India ( See his article captioned 'Agricultural Growth, Real Wages and the Rural Poor in India', *EPW*, June 1976). Rohini Nayyar has made an on-the-spot field study of several villages of UP as also factual analysis of the yearly statistics, money wages and price index for the years 1955-56 to 1973-74 and came to the conclusion that in Western UP, in 1973-74, real wages have not only not increased but decreased to a large extent. ('Wages of Agricultural labourers in Uttar Pradesh A note', *EPW*, November 6, 1976).

Fourthly, Amarjit Chandan has pointed out that as a result of the Green Revolution, many harijan agricultural workers in the Punjab lost their limbs in the thresher machine. At the beginning of the GR, when there was a surge in wheat production, more threshing machines were needed to make *atta* from wheat. In place of old machines, new machines were introduced, which were low in quality. As a result, accidents took place at intervals that led to mutilation of limbs. Moreover, rich Jat peasants, in their quest for more profit, engaged Harijan peasants for extra time. In order to lure the poor Harijan workers, they provided them opium and hard drinks for free. This addiction to drugs and drinks led to decrease in eye-sights; they were forced to work throughout the day under the blazing Sun and at night

in a drunken state like a beast in dim light. Due to physical weakness and poor eyesight, they met with accidents, and mutilation of the limbs and were left virtually unattended. ('Victims of Green Revolution', *EPW*, 23 June, 1979).

Fifthly, Suniti Kumar Ghosh has dealt with the decrease in the nutritional quality of food-grains. He has argued that the much trumpeted self-sufficiency in food, achieved as a result of the 'green revolution' is a myth. "The fact is, about 40 per cent of the people or more go to bed or to untimely grave semi-starved. About 65 per cent of our children, who are not victims of infant mortality, are malnourished and underweight". (Ghosh, p.38).

Ghosh has referred to the Planning Commission's Ninth Plan (1998-2003) Approach Paper, which has adopted the Lakdawala Committee's criteria for calculating the number of people below poverty line. It shows that 37 per cent of the total population is under poverty line (*ET*, 25 December 1996) that is does not get the minimum food required. And this official figure is in all probability an underestimate.

Quite rightly does Ghosh aver that while estimating the growth of or decline in food production under the impact of the 'green revolution', one should take into account not only certain cereals but also other food—pulses, fruit, fish and so on. We have seen that it had an adverse effect on the growth rate of pulses, the main protein of the poor in India. The fish which, in the past, grew abundant in the rice fields during the monsoon months and in the tanks and streams—a very valuable food for the people in many regions of India—is killed by the pesticides, used for the protection of imported plant varieties.

That the 'green revolution' technique had failed to produce the

desired result was acknowledged even by *The Wall Street Journal*, the mouthpiece of UD monopoly capital, as early as 1978. It stated on the front page of one of its issues: "There isn't anything left in the Green Revolution's bag of tricks. The Revolution, in fact, has turned against itself." (Pat Roy Mooney, *op.cit.*, pp.37-38).

Sixthly, the greatest loss to India and mankind, according to Ghosh, is the loss of genetic diversity caused by the 'green revolution'. Infinite is the variety which every crop possesses. For instance, the number of rice cultivars was till recently more than one hundred thousand. One feels astonished to know that when Dr. R.H.Richharia, an eminent rice scientist, was director of the Madhya Pradesh Rice Research Institute at Raipur in the nineteen seventies, over 17,000 rice cultivars were collected from one region of Madhya Pradesh—Chhattisgarh—under his guidance (Bharat Dogra, *The Life and Work of Dr. R.H.Richharia*, p.34). This precious collection of rice cultivars, as Ghosh points out, was taken away to the International Rice Research Institute in Manila and his great work was abruptly ended under pressure of the World Bank. But the 'high-yielding' dwarf varieties—IR8, Padma, Jaya, Pankaj and a few more—have widely spread, eliminating the rich genetic diversity. In Bengal, there were a large number of varieties, some of which were of the scented type. They have almost disappeared, yielding place to much inferior exotic varieties—inferior as regards nutritional quality, taste etc.

Ghosh correctly points out that agro-climatic conditions differ from region to region. Even within the same district the conditions of the soil are not the same in different areas. The rice variety that suits one area may not suit another. Till re-

cently, peasants with their intimate knowledge of the soil conditions of their fields and careful selection of seeds, knowledge of which had been handed down from generation to generation, planted the varieties of rice most suitable to their fields.

As Mooney states, "Subsistence farmers in the Third World have been cultivating today's major food crops for over ten thousand years. By observing the natural process of mutation and by careful seed selection over the centuries, these farmers have developed an astonishing range of crop variability. This diversity has been necessary for survival. No one wheat or rice variety can provide adequate protection against monsoon failures, pests, rusta or blights". (Mooney, *op.cit.*, pp.4-5). However, with the wide propagation of a very few exotic HYVs, irrespective of agro-climatic conditions, this wonderful genetic diversity, a gift of Nature, is being destroyed and genetic takes its place. Mooney also points out that "this genetic uniformity of a crop amounts to an invitation to destroy that crop" (*ibid.*).

Seventhly, the pesticides kill not only harmful pests but also worms and insects that are good for the soil. Harry Cleaver Jr. points out that "dictated by capitalist competition, agrichemical corporations try to minimize research costs while developing new pesticides in their laboratories and that their products are both under-tested and designed to kill a broad spectrum of pests". The results, quite naturally, are catastrophic (cited in Ghosh, p.41).

Eighthly, as Ghosh points out the dependence of a few exotic HYVs which require heavy chemical fertilizers and pesticides also leads to the degradation of the soil. The fertility of the soil is eroded through the application of increasing doses of chemicals. The indigenous method of replenishing the fertility of the soil

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relied on the use of organic fertilizers at almost no cost and rotation of crops. This age-old method has been discarded. Because of the application of heavy doses of chemicals, without which the exotic HYV seeds refuse to respond, soil conditions have deteriorated considerably in many areas.

Ninthly, besides the food that grows with the help of large amounts of chemical inputs contains very harmful residues in them. As B.D.Nag Chaudhuri, a reputed scientist, said, "excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides and pesticides contributes substantially to ecological disturbances...Excessive use of nitrogen fertilizers, for example, can lead to leaching of these excess fertilizers into water bodies. These can be transformed by micro-organisms into nitrites and carcinogens...which can find their way back to men and animals through the food chain...Similarly, pesticides, besides killing unwanted pests, insects and birds or small animals, can enter the human system" (B.D.Nag Chaudhuri, *Introduction to Environmental Management*, New Delhi, 1983).

Tenthly, the disastrous effect of the 'green revolution' was felt in cases of innocent victims afflicted with arsenic poisoning. According to scientists and government officials, the water in eight districts of West Bengal is contaminated with arsenic and about 200,000 people in West Bengal have already exhibited the tell-tale lesions. The *Chicago Tribune* quoted a New Delhi-based WHO official who had stated that nearly 15 million people of Bangladesh and 30 million people of West Bengal, including Kolkata, are exposed to the risk of arsenic poisoning. Ghosh also refers to the survey conducted by the School of Environmental Studies, Jadavpur University, which reveals that the

situation in Bangladesh is much more grim. The groundwater of 34 out of 64 districts of Bangladesh is felt to be arsenic-contaminated and more than 50 million people are at risk. It is the 'green revolution' that has given rise to this situation. This 'revolution' has required numerous tubewells to be dug up. The over-exploitation of underground water has led to the dropping of the water level and has brought up the embedded arsenic. Willard Chapel, an environmental expert at the University of Colorado, visited the affected areas and commented: "It is by far the biggest mass poisoning case in the world" (*STN*, 6 January, 1997; Dipankar Chakraborti, 'Courting Disaster', *STN*, 20 April, 1997, cited in Ghosh, p.44).

Who profited from the 'green revolution'? According to Pat Roy Mooney, "The Green Revolution had been undeniably profitable for agribusiness. By the sixties (1960s), agricultural enterprises were in need of a new market to maintain their growth. Bilateral and multilateral aid programmes made expansion into the Third World financially possible. Twenty years later, major agrichemical firms have achieved a world-wide distribution system able to market successfully in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The Green Revolution was the vehicle that made this possible.

#### **Green Revolution: Phase 2**

The second phase of the Green Revolution began in the 1990s with the Indian government signing in the GATT i.e., General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. This GATT was conceived as a member of the 'Holy Trinity', the tools of world imperialism led by the USA, at Bretton Woods Conference in 1944, the other two being the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The GATT was signed by 23 countries including India in 1947. Its object

was to ensure the domination of world trade between advanced capitalist countries by breaking down trade and other external trade barriers in the name of free trade.

As Ghosh observes, the "Final Act" of GATT 1993 goes far beyond GATT's jurisdiction and spells ruin for the people of India and those of other underdeveloped countries. Among other things, the GATT agreement, in conformity with the demands of the agri-chemical TNCs, requires that 'intellectual property right' (IPR) be protected and *product patents, not merely process patents, be granted to new innovations including drugs, chemicals and plant varieties*. Moreover, the life of a patent must be extended to 20 years instead of 7 years as it was then under the Indian Patent Law of 1970.

The "Final Act" which will have a far-reaching impact on the lives of the Indian people, was signed ironically by the government of the 'Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic' of India on 15 April 1994. Ghosh draws our attention to the fact that "this act was passed *without any reference to the people, without even consulting the Indian parliament and the constituent states of India and even though the chief ministers of Tamil Nadu, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal had asked for it* (p.63: emphasis ours). There is no doubt that this "Final Act" ensured the all-pervasive domination of Indian agriculture, like other sectors of Indian economy, by TNCs and their legalized loot.

In the new period, a significant move had been initiated by several state governments—Karnataka, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab etc.—to amend the land ceiling acts and raise the ceiling of landholdings that one may legally own. It is the policy of the ruling classes to encourage TNCs to ac-

quire large plots of land for this purpose, develop horticulture and floriculture for export of their products. Handing over peasant land to capitalists for conversion into plantations (as in the northern districts of West Bengal) or for other purposes is part of the policy. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the West Bengal government, in accordance with the advice of McKinsey & Co—an imperialist body—has taken initiative to turn agricultural land into land for the cultivation of fruits. The imperialist agencies involved in the process are Rallis, Pepsi, Cargill and HLL.

In the Green Revolution belt spread over Punjab, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and other states, a large number of peasants were forced to commit suicide because of very low yields over the years. Sukhpal Singh, in his study of Punjab agriculture, has pointed out that the number of indebted peasants had grown so much that by the year 2000, the total debt of the Punjab peasants reached the figure Rs.5700 crores ( See his article, “Crisis in Punjab Agriculture”, *EPW*, 3—9 June, 2000).

In such states as Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Karnataka, Maharashtra, particularly the Vidarbha regions, many people committed suicide because of debt trap. During the period from May 2004 to April 2006, 2,261 peasants committed suicide (*The Telegraph*, 6-4-2006). From the Vidarbha cotton belt of

Maharashtra, hundreds of peasants reportedly died by committing suicide. The disaster in cotton cultivation, inability to pay off the debts and to get the market price of cotton, the indifference of the government—all these factors were responsible for such a crisis (*Times of India*, 01/07/2006).

The crisis in Indian agriculture was aggravated further by the invention of sterile seeds or terminator seeds. A number of foreign agencies had acquired patent rights, viz, Novartis, Delta and Pine Land, Purview Research, Monsanto, Dupont etc. In our country, before the ‘green revolution’ period, peasants could use the same seed in the next year. These new sterile seeds, however, could be used for one year only. These cannot be used next year. So peasants would have to buy wheat, rice, soya or oil seeds every year. Scientists apprehend that in an agricultural country like India, these terminator seeds would spell disaster in the lives of millions of Indian peasants and lead inevitably to suicides.

In the later period, as Ghosh points out, the discovery of G.M. (genetically modified) cotton has aggravated the crisis. In 2002, the European Union made research on G.M. cotton and concluded that its use in the field would contaminate it, produce large weeds which would destroy those jungle plants that maintain ecological balance (‘GM crops are environmental risk: EU Study’, *TOI*, 26/1/2002).

What are the net effects of the GR? Ghosh has summed it up while he was writing on this theme in 1998. The grip of foreign imperialist agencies on Indian agriculture is tightening. Falling yields of food grains and their souring prices, the ever-rising costs of production, the ecological and environmental damage, the erosion of genetic wealth, the pauperization of large masses of peasants, more hunger and more malnutrition—all these and more are the prices the people are paying for the policies on the Indian’s ruling classes.

Like a true scholar and activist with visions towards the future, Suniti Kumar Ghosh concludes his work with the following words:

“Today, agrarian relations in India are like a tangled skein: a farmer who makes large capital investment in land to produce for the market may employ bonded labour. Because of uneven development, regions differ from one another: even production relations in areas within the same region may vary. It is not uncommon for the same farmer practising the capitalist mode of production in one part of his holding and the feudal mode in another. Reports and books may be of help but it necessary for interested persons and organizations to undertake class analysis in different areas to grasp the complexities and obtain a correct understanding” (see Ghosh, *op.cit*, page 90). □□□

[Concluded]

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## UKRAINE WAR

### How False Narratives were Created

*Bharat Dogra*

**A**T THE TIME OF THE break-up of the Soviet Union and unification of Germany a promise was made at very high levels by representatives of

the USA, Germany and others that the NATO will not advance even an inch eastwards towards Russia. This promise was hastily broken, despite opposition by dozens of senior west-

ern statesmen who foresaw the dangers inherent in this, and several new members joined NATO in the course of its eastward journey.

However membership of Ukraine was still regarded as a red line. At the 2008 summit of NATO this too was crossed as the USA spoke strongly for this. This was initially opposed by such senior European leaders as the

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the French President Nicholas Sarkozy on grounds that this will significantly increase chances of NATO's direct confrontation with Russia. However the USA prevailed on them to drop their opposition, and henceforth they started going along with the USA on this issue.

This persistence of the NATO to incorporate Ukraine as a member ignored the fact that a number of polls from early 1990s to 2014 revealed that only a small minority of about 20% of people in Ukraine favoured the membership of NATO. The vast majority of people instead favoured a balancing of friendly relations with both Russia and the West. An important section of the 20% of the population who favoured NATO membership comprised the extreme right, neo-Nazis bent on hostility with Russia who have always been a threat to finding a peaceful future for Ukraine. Hence the percentage of peace-loving people who favoured membership of NATO till 2014 was even less than 20%.

In 2014 the USA and close allies instigated a coup in Ukraine which ousted the democratically elected president and disrupted the democratically elected government. Soon after this the USA started playing a key role in the appointments and dismissals at key posts in Ukraine. The new intelligence chief started functioning in close collusion with US and UK counterparts to promote anti-Russian activities. Several actions against the recognition of Russian language and all things Russian were taken and the interests and safety of the Russian speaking citizens of Ukraine, particularly those concentrated more in the eastern and southern parts of the country were harmed in very serious ways. A violent confrontation developed into civil-war type conditions. Before this in conditions of increasing hostility

Russia moved to take over Crimea with the apparent consent of most people of the region. The Minsk accords were initiated to settle the civil-war type conditions with the help of Germany and France but Angela Merkel later openly said that this was more of a cover-up to give Ukraine enough time to get more heavily armed. Thousands of Russian language speaking people in eastern parts of Ukraine died in the attacks on them and there was clear drift towards separation from mainland Ukraine as well as pressure on Russia to intervene on their behalf.

This pressure was resisted for months by Russia and instead there were pleas to the USA and NATO to get some sort of peaceful settlement. When all this failed and there were increased attacks on Russian language people in eastern Ukraine, Russia invaded in February 2022 but within weeks also initiated serious peace negotiations. These were close to ending the war till these were sabotaged by the West, as reflected in a rushed personal visit of the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to Ukraine. After this there were several statements by senior US and western leaders to the effect that Ukraine's war with Russia and western support for Ukraine will be helpful to achieve weakening of Russia and it is all for the good if the Ukrainians can be used for this purpose.

However after some initial success in battlefield, Ukrainian losses and casualties increased rapidly and it was clearly in the interests of the Ukrainians to end the war as soon as possible but it continued due to the collusion of hawkish elements in the Biden led team in the USA (with Biden himself being very aggressive in this context) and allied countries and NATO with the hawkish elements in Ukraine led by the far right forces in the Ukraine in the background and President Zelensky upfront ( in fact

there are instances of Zelensky at an earlier date being more willing for peace but being threatened by the neo-Nazis against this.

Biden crossed one redline after another to keep giving more and more destructive weapons to Ukraine, in the process at times bringing the war threateningly close to becoming a direct confrontation between Russia and NATO/USA, and hence the risk of a nuclear war and the Third World War became unacceptably high during certain periods of this war.

Estimates differ, but it is likely that close to a million people have died or have been seriously injured and disabled in this war, while perhaps ten times this number have been displaced externally and internally. As the war became growingly unpopular and risks increased, democratic freedoms were curbed drastically in Ukraine and many young men were forcibly sent to the battlefield without proper training. There was big loss of territory and huge accumulation of national debt. A large number of people lost access to basic needs and a safe future, although massive corruption enabled a very small minority to increase its wealth.

Thus while the people of Ukraine suffered very heavily in this proxy war, the background conditions were prepared by the 2014 coup and the subsequent instigation of Ukraine policy relentlessly towards opposition of Russia and all things Russian as well as by the sabotaging of early peace accompanied by increasing curbs on democratic freedoms in Ukraine. All evidence shows that the enormous loss of life, all the tragic disabilities and displacements could have been avoided if Ukraine had been left alone to pursue the policies of being friendly to both the West and to Russia which were best suited to the interests of Ukraine.

While all this was happening, the



discourse which was widely promoted and accepted in the West was largely based on the myth of the good and weaker Ukrainians being threatened and attacked in the most unjust way by the stronger and evil Russians, highly aggressive and expansionist almost like Hitler, and hence in this good vs evil fight the good West must help Ukraine as much as possible, most notably by providing more and more deadly weapons and in fact every redline crossed in this context was a matter of achievement regardless of the high risks involved. It was repeatedly stated by senior leaders of West that help for Ukraine will always

be available no matter how long the war continues, ignoring how costly the war was proving for Ukraine in terms of loss of life.

The discourse that was artificially and falsely created in place of the actual ground reality was a discourse which would have prolonged the war regardless of the high risks increased by this prolonging for a nuclear war and the Third World War.

It is extremely disturbing that all this distortion took place despite all the claimed freedom of expression, strength of independent media, high level of scholarship and other supposed democratic strengths of the

West. As many popular media as well as scholarly journals in the West are widely followed in the majority world and help in forming elite and public opinion there, the distortions on Ukraine had an even wider reach. In India, for instance, several of these writings are also translated into Hindi to reach a much larger number of people.

For anyone committed to world peace, it is deeply disturbing that such false discourses can be spread so rapidly and so widely so as to impact public perception of ongoing events so drastically, allowing falsehoods to prevail over the reality. □□

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#### DEFYING US SANCTIONS

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## Cuba's Medical Internationalism

*Helen Yaffe*

ON FEBRUARY 25, US SECRETARY of state Marco Rubio announced restrictions on visas for both government officials in Cuba and any others worldwide who are “complicit” with the island nation’s overseas medical-assistance programmes. A US State Department statement clarified that the sanction extends to “current and former” officials and the “immediate family of such persons.” This action, the seventh measure targeting Cuba in one month, has international consequences; for decades tens of thousands of Cuban medical professionals have been posted in around sixty countries, far more than the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) workforce, mostly working in under-served populations in the Global South. By threatening to withhold visas from foreign officials, the US government means to sabotage these Cuban medical missions overseas. If it works, millions will suffer.

Rubio built his career around taking a hard line on Cuban socialism, even alleging that his parents

fled Fidel Castro’s Cuba until the *Washington Post* revealed that they migrated to Miami in 1956 during the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship. As Trump’s secretary of state, Rubio is in prime position to ramp up the belligerent US-Cuba policy first laid out in April 1960 by deputy assistant secretary of state Lester Mallory: to use economic warfare against revolutionary Cuba to bring about “hunger, desperation and overthrow of government.”

Cuba stands accused by the US government of human trafficking, even equating overseas Cuban medical personnel to slaves. Rubio’s tweet parroted this pretext. The real objective is to undermine both Cuba’s international prestige and the revenue it receives from exporting medical services. Since 2004, earnings from Cuban medical and professional services exports have been the island’s greatest source of income. Cuba’s ability to conduct “normal” international trade is currently obstructed by the long US blockade, but the socialist state has succeeded

in converting its investments in education and health care into national earnings, while also maintaining free medical assistance to the Global South based on its internationalist principles.

Since 1960, some 600,000 Cuban medical professionals have provided free health care in over 180 countries. The government of Cuba has assumed the lion’s share of the cost of its medical internationalism, a huge contribution to the Global South, particularly given the impact of the US blockade and Cuba’s own development challenges. “

However, Guatemalan researcher Henry Morales has reformulated Cuba’s international solidarity as “official development assistance” (ODA), using average international market rates and adopting the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) methodology, to calculate the scale of their contribution to global development and facilitate comparison with other donors. According to Morales, the monetary value of medical and technical professional services, Cuba’s ODA, was over \$71.5 billion just between 1999 and 2015, equivalent to \$4.87 billion annually. This means that Cuba

dedicated 6.6 percent of its GDP annually to ODA, the world's highest ratio. In comparison, the European average was 0.39 percent of GDP, and the United States contributed just 0.17 percent. Since the US blockade cost Cuba between \$4 and \$5 billion annually in this period, without this burden the island could potentially have doubled its ODA contribution.

These costs exclude Cuban state investments in education and medical training and infrastructure on the island. There are also considerable losses to Cuba from either charging recipients below international market rates or, in many cases, simply not charging them at all.

In 2017, Cuban medics were operating in sixty-two countries; in twenty-seven of those (44 percent) the host government paid nothing, while the remaining thirty-five paid or shared the costs according to a sliding scale. Where the host government pays all costs, it does so at a lower rate than that charged internationally. Differential payments are used to balance Cuba's books, so services charged to wealthy oil states (Qatar, for example) help subsidize medical assistance to poorer countries. Payment for medical service exports goes to the Cuban government, which passes a small proportion on to the medics themselves. This is usually in addition to their Cuban salaries.

In 2018, the first year Cuba's Office of National Statistics published

separate data, "health services exports" earned \$6.4 billion. Revenues have since declined, however, as US efforts to sabotage Cuban medical internationalism have succeeded, for example in Brazil, reducing the island's income by billions.

Already in 2006, the George W Bush administration launched its Medical Parole Program to induce Cuban medics to abandon missions in return for US citizenship. Barack Obama maintained the program until his final days in office in January 2017. By 2019, Trump renewed the attack, adding Cuba to its Tier 3 list of countries failing to combat "human trafficking" on the basis of its medical internationalism. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) even launched a project to discredit and sabotage Cuban health care programs. In 2024, the US House Committee on Appropriations bill included exposing the "trafficking of doctors from Cuba," withdrawing aid from "countries participating in this form of modern slavery," and prohibiting funds to Cuban laboratories. Meanwhile it allocated \$30 million for "democracy programs" for Cuba, a misnomer for the regime change that Mallory strategised in 1960.

Today Cuba is in the midst of a severe economic crisis, largely resulting from US sanctions. The public health care system is under unprecedented strain, with shortages of resources and of personnel following massive emigration since 2021.

Nonetheless, the government continues to dedicate a high proportion of GDP on health care (nearly 14 percent in 2023), maintaining free universal medical provision, and currently has 24,180 medical professionals in fifty-six countries.

Revolutionary Cuba was never solely concerned with meeting its own needs. According to Morales's data, between 1999-2015 alone, overseas Cuban medical professionals saved 6 million lives, carried out 1.39 billion medical consultations and 10 million surgical operations, and attended 2.67 million births, while 73,848 foreign students graduated as professionals in Cuba, many of them medics. Add to that the beneficiaries between 1960 and 1998, and those since 2016, and the numbers climb steeply.

The beneficiary nations have been the poorest and least influential globally; few have governments with any leverage on the world stage. Recipient populations are often the most disadvantaged and marginalised within those countries. If Cuban medics leave, they will have no alternative provision. If Rubio and Trump are successful, it is not just Cubans who will suffer. It will also be the global beneficiaries whose lives are being saved and improved by Cuban medical internationalism right now. □□□

[Helen Yaffe is a senior lecturer at the University of Glasgow. She is the author of *We Are Cuba! How a Revolutionary People have Survived in a Post-Soviet World* and *Che Guevara: The Economics of Revolution*]

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## THE QUESTION OF AUTONOMY

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### Lokpal: A Threat to Judicial Independence?

**Ahmed Raza**

**T**HE RECENT DECISION TO include High Court judges under the Lokpal's anti-corruption purview, outlined in its 27 January order, has raised concerns

about the potential threat to the independence of India's judiciary. This decision, which was initially aimed at improving accountability and reducing corruption, has been met with

mixed reactions, particularly following the Supreme Court's intervention. The Supreme Court's decision to stay the Lokpal order, citing the disturbing interpretation it might set, brings to the forefront the delicate balance between ensuring judicial accountability and protecting the independence of the judiciary. The issue lies not just in the technicalities of the legal interpretation, but in the

broader implications for the relationship between the judiciary and other branches of the government.

The judiciary has long been considered a pillar of democracy, with the ability to act as a check on the executive and legislature. The independence of the judiciary is fundamental to the effective functioning of this check-and-balance system. When judges are subjected to external oversight mechanisms like the Lokpal, which primarily focuses on corruption within governmental bodies, it raises concerns about how this could erode public confidence in the judicial system.

The Lokpal's jurisdiction covers the Prime Minister (PM), Ministers, Members of Parliament (MPs), and Central Government officers from Groups A, B, C, and D. It includes the PM except in matters related to international relations, security, atomic energy, space, and public order. The Lokpal does not have authority over Ministers and MPs concerning statements made or votes cast in Parliament.

The Lokpal also has jurisdiction over civil servants and bureaucrats, including directors, managers, and secretaries of entities set up by central law or financed/controlled by the central government. It extends to those involved in bribery or abetment of corruption.

Additionally, the Lokpal Act requires all public officials to declare their assets and liabilities, along with those of their dependents. The Lokpal holds the power of superintendence over the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and can direct its actions. If a case is referred to the CBI by the Lokpal, the investigating officer in the case cannot be transferred without the Lokpal's approval.

The SC judges are public servants under Prevention of Corruption Act but are not public servants under Lokpal Act. The SC was established by the constitution. The HCs pre-

existed the constitution and are only 'recognised' by it. A judge of an HC is established by an Act of Parliament will come within the ambit of expression 'any person' in Section 14 (1) (f) of the Lokpal Act. Hence, the fundamental question is whether such external scrutiny could lead to undue influence on judicial decisions, with the potential for political or other extraneous factors to affect impartiality. While the goal of tackling corruption in all arms of the state is noble, the manner in which this is proposed could inadvertently compromise the sanctity of the judiciary.

The Lokpal order, in its bid to include judges under its ambit, seems to be driven by the perception that no institution should be beyond scrutiny. This includes the judiciary, which plays a crucial role in interpreting and enforcing laws. The Lokpal order says that High Court judges were 'public servants' and came within the ambit of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act of 2013. However, the proposal to bring judges under the anti-corruption ombudsman could set a troubling precedent for the relationship between the judiciary and the executive. Judicial independence is safeguarded by a series of constitutional provisions and norms, ensuring that judges are insulated from any external pressures that could influence their decisions. If judges were to be subjected to the scrutiny of an external body like the Lokpal, there is a risk that their decisions could be questioned or influenced by factors unrelated to the case at hand. This could fundamentally alter the way the judiciary functions, not necessarily for the better, but in ways that could compromise its impartiality and integrity.

The Supreme Court's decision to pause the implementation of the Lokpal order has raised important concerns about its impact. The Court's action highlights the need to protect the independence of the judiciary and prevent unnecessary outside interference. While it is important to

hold all sectors accountable, the idea of subjecting judges to external scrutiny by an agency like Lokpal could weaken judicial authority. This is a serious issue because the judiciary must be free from outside influences that could affect its fairness and impartiality. If judges are influenced by political pressure or other factors, it could lead to decisions that are not based on the law but on external considerations. Judicial independence is essential for upholding the rule of law, as it ensures that legal decisions are made based on facts, evidence, and legal principles, not on outside pressures. Without this independence, the entire legal system could be in danger, as people might lose trust in the fairness and integrity of the judiciary. Therefore, the Supreme Court's decision to stay the Lokpal order is an important reminder of the need to safeguard judicial independence and ensure that judges can make unbiased decisions.

In conclusion, while the aim of tackling corruption within the judicial system is undoubtedly a worthy cause, the proposed inclusion of High Court judges under the anti-corruption ombudsman raises significant concerns.

The Supreme Court's stay on the Lokpal order serves as a reminder of the delicate balance that must be struck between transparency and judicial independence. It is imperative that we find ways to ensure accountability within the judiciary without jeopardizing its autonomy. Any attempt to undermine this independence can have detrimental effects on public trust in the system, and ultimately, on the very foundation of the rule of law. Hence, it is essential to consider alternative mechanisms that maintain the sanctity of the judicial process while ensuring that corruption, wherever it may exist, is addressed with due care and respect for the fundamental principles of the Indian Constitution. □□□

[Dr Ahmed Raza, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration, MANUU, Gachibowli, Hyderabad-500032]

## Third World of Art Exhibition

*Atanu Basu*

**B**IRLA ACADEMY HAD JUST hosted an Art Exhibition in 2024 showcasing 18 artists from various countries like Turkey, United States of America and Bangladesh. One is overwhelmed by the potpourri of art works in all the departments and the media; pieces of these attractive presentations gave a relief to the viewers after a long time. Most of the artists had mastered their chosen media, which was apparent when one views their pieces of art. There were altogether 60 exhibits in this exhibition.

Sayendur Rahman is an American, who chose his medium to be water colour and pen; the pieces were just excellent. The artist displayed a remarkable sense of proportion. One gets a feeling of restraint on the part of the artist, scrupulously avoiding the pitfall of over-doing, as one views his compositions and the use of soft colours.

Dr Aylin Coskum, a Gynecologist by profession, hailing from Turkey, mother of two children, is an excellent photographer, painter and graphics designer. Her works were presented in more than 70 exhibitions in Turkey. In this exhibition her colour woodcut, entitled "untitled" bears the hallmark of the techniques of modern woodcut. One is amazed to see the use of colours, like black and sky-blue

in her works as well as the textural quality would rivet the initiated viewers.

Shyamal Ray Chowdhury of Bangladesh is known for his abstract painting which bears the typical signature and great influence of Bangladesh's tradition of modern abstraction. Though Shyamal was a citizen of erstwhile Bangladesh, he is now a resident of this part of Bengal for a long time. He offers a deep and penetrating observation through his paintings as regards space, the arrangement and the distances among the objects in his art works. The equilibrium, maintained among small objects and non-objects and the quality of paintings are simply amazing. His command over composition displayed his fantastic ability.

Bapi Pal is a sculptor. His prowess over his medium is quite high, particularly when one views his piece of work in bronze, entitled "The Awakening".

Uttam Kumar Ray seemed to have been inspired by the famous poem of Sukanta Bhattacharyay, which depicted a fried "roti", half burned. Obvious name of this acrylic painting can't be other than "Hunger and Full Moon", though one must say that the work is a relatively weak one, compared to his other works presented here.

Syed Mohammad Shamim's piece in thick acrylic colour in mixed media, "Reflection of Time" is a brilliant example of an abstract painting.

Ambarish Brahmachari used 10 small of square-shaped papers, divided into two vertically separated space presented a fantastic exhibit which carries quite a modern understanding. There are many objects with minute details, each small details mingled perfectly with colour and tone, offering a quality reminds one of some impressionistic expression.

Rupkala Chowdhury's work centred on various vehicles and associated objects in white fibre, where one sees many symmetric boxes amidst a carriage, a car wheel lying in the mud, contrasted with an artificial tree, dancing by means of an electrical motor.

Surajit Giri in his black and white woodcut once again excels which is at par with his reputation.

Small print and drawing, assembled in an expert manner is the special virtue as well as the beauty of the works presented by Somdatta Banik. Her approach was quite realistic.

Simson Prasun Das presented in black and white in paper, a rickshaw-puller in a drizzling day in a lonesome street, a work which is bound to remind one a work by Wasim Kapoor that dated back to 1970s.

Swarnali Raha, Papiya Ckakraoty, Mohammad Wahiduzzaman, Sangita Sarkar, Sumit Kumar Bera, Uttam Kumar Talukdar, Swarup Halder and others presented their works as well. □□□

## Characterising Fascism

*Jawed Naqvi*

**C**OMMUNIST PARTIES IN India are quibbling over the characteristics of fascism, wondering if Antonio Gramsci's views on the scourge from his Italian experience are relevant to the challenge of vacating the threat in the country.

The debate comes at a time for the communist movement as it marks 100 years of its transformation into an organised Communist Party of India (CPI) in the leather and textiles working class hub of Kanpur in 1925.

Not entirely by coincidence, the seeds of India's organised fascist movement also sprouted the same year with the founding of the Hindu revanchist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS]. Its political branch, the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP], is ruling India for a third consecutive five-year term under the dubious leadership of Narendra Modi. The RSS was inspired by both Mussolini and Hitler who its leaders had de-

scribed as the model for dealing with India's minorities. It's thus the centenary year of India's left-right battles, though tragically for the left, the journey also witnessed moments of self-harming collusion with the right.

In the first general elections in 1952, communists became the main opposition to Nehru's Congress government. Since then, they have had their electoral highs and lows. In the recent polls, they were reduced to the margins, not far from being rendered negligible in the electoral fray that shores up Indian democracy. Their vote share against Nehru's 50 per cent in India's first elections was 3.29pc, but they had 16 seats over the next opposition group, the socialists, who won 12. By a quirk of India's electoral system, although the socialists had fewer seats than the communists, they had a higher vote percentage of 10.59 pc. In the 2024 elections, three communist parties won two seats each, none in West Bengal, with a joint national vote share of an embarrassing 2pc.

On their day, the British beat Indian communists and jailed their leaders, most notably following the infamous Meerut conspiracy case when its Hindu, Sikh and Muslim leaders were charged with plotting to overthrow British rule. The Hindu right at the time had become apologists for colonialism. Arun Shourie in a new book on V.D. Savarkar, author of the Hindutva doctrine, describes Savarkar's numerous apologies to the British from his jail, offering to work for them if released. Hindutva's hatred of Gandhi was not less than that of Nehru. On his part, Nehru instinctively assessed Savarkar's Hindutva and its kindred spirit, the RSS, as a graver challenge to secular India than the communists.

The colonial experience spurred communist partisans to launch a

gallant but eventually botched liberation war in 1946 in the province of Telangana, part of the Nizam's feudal territory. Many poets, writers and actors cut their teeth in the romance of the peasant struggle against feudalism. The CPI spawned a cultural renaissance of progressive theatre, cinema and literature in the movement. The Telangana uprising ended tamely in 1951, and the party split in the 1960s in keeping with a familiar communist habit.

Impelled by the Telangana fiasco, the focus of communist leaders gravitated to electoral politics. It resulted in the world's first elected communist government in Kerala. Since then, most communist leaders have embraced the provinces of Bengal and Kerala as their hub for struggle, where electoral success was more readily attainable.

When a political contingency offered communists a chance to rule the country, not just their two provinces, and have their leader Jyoti Basu as prime minister following inconclusive elections in 1996, the party developed cold feet. An Urdu verse aptly describes their terror: "Woh ghareeb dil ko sabaq miley ki khushi ke naam se dar gaya/ Kabhi tum ne hans ke jo baat ki to hamara chehra utar gaya" (Courting adversity and fear of failure/ I was pulverised by the prospect of happier tidings.) Basu would describe the party's refusal to accept the challenge as a historic blunder.

A desirable quest for the increasingly marginalised communist parties at the current juncture, to the ordinary Indian's mind, should be to help re-establish the secular democracy the nation had set out to be. In seeking this goal, the communists would be required to work, kicking or screaming, with willing bourgeois allies who are numerically stronger than them. Naturally, the more radical ideologues would for their own

legitimate reasons see this as an embarrassment if not an outright betrayal of their elusive revolution. Do they have a better plan?

The current discussion on fascism arose from the reluctance of the Communist Party of India (Marxist, CPI-M) to accept that the country is already in the throes of the scourge under Modi's regime. Instead, ahead of its party congress in April, it speaks of features of neo-fascism as stalking the country-features.

The CPI-M has lost power in the tribal state of Tripura to the BJP, West Bengal to Mamata Banerjee with room for the BJP to grow stronger. It is tenuously holding on to power in Kerala where its challenger, Rahul Gandhi's Congress expects to win the state polls in mid-2026. Gandhi is working hard to defeat the twin challenges of BJP's oligarchic rule and against its polarising hostility towards Sikhs, Muslims and Christians and less open support for assaulting Dalits.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist), a smaller but more militant offshoot of India's communist struggles, posits that the country is likely facing full-blown fascism, and that it is time to collectively mint a strategy to combat and defeat it. Being equidistant from the BJP and the Congress was once the CPI-M's convenient stand. It allowed the BJP's vertical rise to power. How long would the CPI-M continue to fight INDIA allies in West Bengal and Kerala and hope at the same time to join an opposition campaign to defeat fascism, or by whatever name it chooses to call the challenge? A hundred years of communist movement in India should have given the party all the time it ever needed to learn how not to score self-goals. □□□

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## LETTERS

## Spread of Pseudo-Science

In recent years, India has witnessed a troubling rise in the promotion of pseudoscience by celebrities, ministers, and organisations—an issue that poses a serious threat to the nation's intellectual integrity and progress. From Bollywood stars endorsing unproven health practices to politicians making unscientific claims about ancient technologies, this growing trend undermines rational thought and critical engagement with real scientific issues.

Even more alarming is the influence of unverified practices in educational curricula and the tacit support from the government, which inadvertently legitimises these myths. The spread of pseudoscience, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, has exacerbated public confusion and harm.

To secure India's future, fostering scientific temper is essential. Public figures must be held accountable for policies prioritising evidence-based inquiry and critical thinking. Only then can India progress as a modern, rational, and scientifically advanced nation.

*A Reader*

## 4th Dalit Literature Festival

The 4th Dalit Literature Festival (DLF) concluded on a profound note on March 1, reaffirming its commitment to amplifying marginalised voices and fostering meaningful discourse on social justice. The event saw the participation of over a thousand individuals from various states.

The festival was organised by the Ambedkarwadi Lekhak Sangh (ALS) in collaboration with Aryabhata College, University of Delhi, and Dalit Adivasi Shakti Adhikar Manch (DASAM), among other organisations. The final day of the festival featured impactful discussions, literary tributes, and cultural performances

that underscored the struggles, resilience, and contributions of Dalits, women, tribals, and LGBTQIA+ communities. The event was moderated by Prof Parmod Mehra, Prof Anuj Kushowaha, and Prof Seema Mathur.

The second day of the festival included a series of panel discussions that addressed critical social and cultural issues affecting Dalits, women, tribals, and LGBTQIA+ communities. The key topics included the significance of the Indian Constitution in relation to Dalit rights and empowerment, the exclusion and empowerment of women, with a particular focus on Dalit women, and the challenges faced by minority communities, including tribals and LGBTQIA+ groups.

The final day of the festival set a powerful tone with a stirring performance of the Bheem Geet (Ambedkar Anthem) by a musical ensemble, honouring the legacy of Dr B R Ambedkar and emphasising themes of resistance and empowerment. Jai Prakash Kardam highlighted the invaluable contributions of Dalit women in advancing Dr. Ambedkar's ideals of equality and justice.

A panel discussion on media exclusion was marked by Sumit Chauhan, who emphasised the caste bias inherent in mainstream media, stating, "This is not just about caste; it is a race against systemic oppression." He highlighted the growing influence of Dalit literature in shaping public discourse.

A parallel session, "Sewer Workers and Literature," addressed the challenges faced by manual scavengers. Legal expert Vinod Sonkar advocated for policy enforcement, dignified employment, and the recognition of sanitation workers as integral to urban infrastructure.

The festival concluded with an awards ceremony, recognising exceptional contributions to Dalit literature, social justice, and advocacy. In

their closing remarks, Dr Suraj Badatiya and Sanjeev Danda, founder of the Dalit Literature Festival, emphasised the necessity of inclusive literary platforms and broader representation in mainstream discourse.

The theme of this year's festival, "World Peace is Possible Through Dalit Literature," resonated throughout the two-day event, reinforcing the notion that Dalit literature has the potential to drive social change. In addition to panel discussions, the festival featured cultural performances and book stalls, providing attendees the opportunity to engage with literature, art, and music that address caste discrimination, gender inequality, and the rights of minority communities.

*Mooknayak*

## Information Obesity

PM Narendra Modi in his *Mann Ki Baat* spoke about obesity but now people have one more reason to worry about—information Obesity, excess information.

In an age characterised by unprecedented access to information, many individuals find themselves grappling with a phenomenon often referred to as "information obesity." This state arises from the overwhelming volume of data available through the internet, social media, and various digital platforms. But people are unable to digest so much data. While the digital age has democratised knowledge, it has simultaneously created an environment where the sheer volume of information can lead to confusion, anxiety, and decision paralysis.

Unlike traditional forms of learning, which often emphasise depth over breadth, the modern landscape encourages a superficial engagement with content. People amass vast quantities of information without the skills or time to process and synthesise it effectively. As a result, many individuals struggle to discern valuable insights from the noise, leading to a

dilution of wisdom. Knowledge becomes fragmented, and critical thinking skills may stagnate.

Moreover, this relentless pursuit of data can foster a dangerous illusion of intelligence. Individuals may feel informed merely by having access to information, yet without the ability to apply and contextualise that information, wisdom remains elusive. Consequently, information obesity not only impedes personal growth but also undermines societal progress by fostering a culture of reactionary or ill-informed responses to complex issues.

To combat information obesity, it is essential to prioritize quality over quantity.

**TS Karthik, Chennai**  
**Stop World War 3**

Despite the cruel genocide, Israel lost the Battle of Gaza. The victory achieved by the Palestinian Resistance will remain engraved in the history of humanity.

However, the War will continue, as shown by the Zionist policy of colonisation of the West Bank, and because of the Trump administration's open support for Israel.

Trump and the White House seem to press ahead with the attempt to make peace with Russia. This is only possible because Russia resisted successfully to the imperialist pressure. Meanwhile the European Union is continuing their war drive against Russia, embarking on an incredible hubris which is destined to implode.

The more and the longer they continue, the deeper will be the fall. This eventually can tear down the entire European Union opening up new possibilities for the struggle of the popular classes. Therefore, we pledge our full support for immediate peace with Russia and the full withdrawal of NATO from Eastern Europe while we need to continue fighting US imperialism.

It is an error to think that the new Stars and Stripes administration will want to adopt an isolationist policy. The White House rather wants

globalisation to be under its domination, so it will try to block the way for the BRICS and strike at any Anti-Imperialist Resistance.

In a global context in which threats to humanity are destined to increase, it is an absolute priority for popular resistance, democratic and socialist forces to join forces to counter imperialism and build a great global movement for peace.

The Tangier Forum (2-4 May 2025), Morocco, organised by the International Initiative for Peace, aims to be another step towards this operational international unity to stop World War 3.

**Anti-Imperialist Camp**  
**Fascist, Proto-fascist,**  
**Semi-fascist**  
**or Neo-fascist**

This abiding concern for the most precise label—"fascist", "proto-fascist", "semi-fascist" or "neo-fascist" appears to be a bit funny.

It, perhaps, emanates from a certain type of intellectual laziness and the fond belief that once the right label is determined, the right solution is very much available on the shelf, if only one cares to search. The holy texts do offer solutions to all problems, but for that people have to find the right label.

For them, Lenin's advice: concrete analysis of the concrete problem.

Even Italian Fascism and German Nazism were not exactly the same. Mussolini was captured by his country people and treated like a despised criminal. Hitler committed suicide to avoid being captured by the Allies. He was perhaps still popular among the Germans. Anyway, both had to be defeated by external forces. They were, to be sure, not defeated by any "Popular Front", or any whatever Front from within.

Right here in India, the authoritarian rule of Indira Gandhi was ousted electorally by a mishmash coalition of hard Right, Centre and Pink Left—backed by the bulk of the Reds. Not exactly a "Popular Front".

Nonetheless "democracy" was put back on the rails.

The issues of the moment need to be clearly identified. It is far more crucial than an endless chase for the right label.

**Sukla Sen**  
**Tibetans Protest**

Dozens of Tibetan protesters clashed with police outside the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi on March 10 as Tibetans living in exile marked the 66th anniversary of their uprising against China that was crushed by China's People's Liberation Army.

Hundreds also marched in Dharamshala, the seat of the exiled Tibetan government and home of Dalai Lama, their 89-year-old spiritual leader. Separately, about a hundred Tibetan women gathered at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, an area designated for protests close to Parliament.

The protesters shouted anti-China slogans, carried Tibetan flags and played the national anthems of Tibet and India.

The Tibetan government-in-exile in India accuses China of denying the most fundamental human rights to people in Tibet and trying to expunge the Tibetan identity.

China claims Tibet has been part of its territory for centuries, but the Tibetans say the Himalayan region was virtually independent until China forcibly occupied it in 1950.

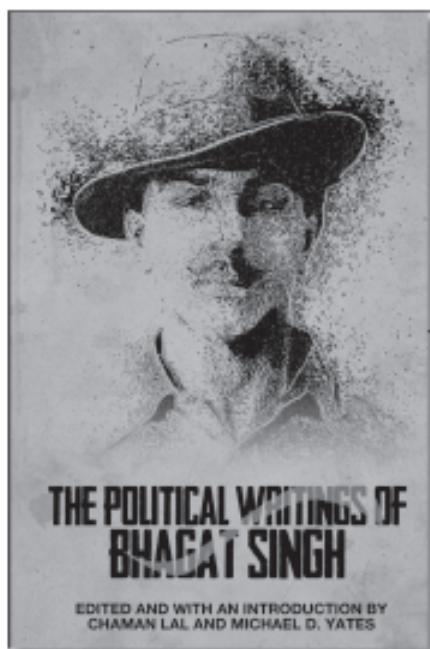
The Dalai Lama denies China's claim that he is a separatist and says he only advocates substantial autonomy and protection of Tibet's native Buddhist culture.

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