

# frontier

Vol. 58 : No. 13 | September 21-27, 2025 | RNI No 16516/1968 | PR KOL RMS/019/2025-2027 Price: Rs. 10

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Owner Germinal Publications Pvt. Ltd. of 44, Baram Dey Street, Kolkata-700006. Published by Sharmistha Dutta from 44, Baram Dey Street, Kolkata-700006, West Bengal. Printed by Abhijit Goswami at Laser Aid, 35A/3, Biplobi Barin Ghosh Sarani, Kolkata-700067, West Bengal.

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

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## *When Trade is a Weapon*

**T**RADE, FINANCE AND INVESTMENT HAVE INCREASINGLY BEEN weaponised in today's global order. Trump's tariff war on India has exposed the hollowness of Modi's self-reliance rhetoric. The bubble of so-called Modi-Trump bon-homie burst in the face of Trump's arbitrary and unjust action in doing business. Modi's Hindutva brigade in America mobilised Indian diaspora to support Trump in elections. Perhaps they are now enjoying Modi's humiliation! Indians are now paying price for Modi's wrong policy of too much dependence on America for export-led growth. In truth the Modis have not learnt anything from China.

Washington added an extra 25% duty on top of the 25% imposed last month, citing India's refusal to stop buying Russian crude and defence hardware.

The duties, which are 16 percentage points higher than China, 31 points higher than most south-east Asian countries and 35 points above South Korea, have pushed US tariffs on Indian goods to levels that the investment house Nomura likened to a "trade embargo".

While India has been subjected to harsh levy by the Trump administration for buying Russian crude, the largest importer of Russian oil—China and Europe—who has been buying considerable amount of energy products from Moscow, have escaped similar treatment at the hands of Washington. China can assert itself in any situation and American hegemonic posture doesn't matter much. In other words America knows its limits when it deals with China and Russia. His calculated policy of bullying doesn't work here. While discussing Ukraine war in Alaska, Trump had to greet Putin with red carpet felicitation.

The US is India's largest export market, worth \$86.5bn (£64.1bn) a year. Around two-thirds of shipments are covered by the 50% tariff, threatening jobs and growth across sectors reliant on US demand.

Trump's 50 percent tariff will most hurt India's labour-intensive products such as textiles and apparel, sea-food, gem and jewellery. And some states such as Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab face a disproportionate impact and their ability to mitigate fall-out on jobs is limited.

"No Indian product can stand any competitive edge under such heavy import taxes." Economists say the tariffs could erase up to one percentage point from India's GDP growth this fiscal year.

Unemployment is staggering. India's overall jobless rate stood at 5.6% in June, rising to 7.1% in cities. A major drop in US exports could hit millions of workers, particularly in small sectors.

India's giant generic pharmaceuticals sector and its electronics and petroleum products are exempt from the tariffs. Aluminium, steel and copper remain at 25%, but job-heavy sectors such as textiles, jewellery, seafood and leather are squarely in the line of fire.

India's \$179bn textiles industry includes \$37.7bn in exports, with the

US buying nearly \$10.3bn. Mithileshwar Thakur, of the Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC), said Indian exporters now faced a 30% cost disadvantage compared with Bangladesh, Vietnam and Cambodia.

"Competitors like China, Vietnam, Mexico, Turkey, and even Pakistan, Nepal, Guatemala and Kenya stand to gain, potentially locking India out of key markets even after tariffs are rolled back".

Narendra Modi's government has urged Indians to buy domestically made goods. "I appeal to the citizens of our country to prioritise pur-

chasing goods that are made in India," the prime minister said recently. The government also plans to shake up the nationwide goods and services tax, cutting most rates to 5% or 18% to boost spending. But where are domestic products? Modi's self-reliance cannot produce even camera lens, not to speak of chips for mobile phones. They depend precariously on others even for pharmaceutical raw materials. Surprisingly, Vietnam being a late comer in capitalist production and supply chain system is overtaking India in many areas. □□□ 02-09-2025

## COMMENT

### 'Click', 'Share', 'Like', 'Subscribe'

'CLICK', 'LIKE', 'SHARE', AND 'subscribe' are the new currencies of rent-seeking digital capitalism, where rapid consumption of digital content is driven by number of views and subscribers of the video shorts and clips. The relationship between digital content and its consumers is defined by quick browsing and the pursuit of instant fun, infotainment, pleasure, utility, satisfaction, or rejection. Such ideals in everyday life influence interpersonal human relationships in the real world beyond the digital sphere. Social life and relationships are becoming like instant coffee.

Friendship is a social, emotional, cultural, religious, moral, and ideological bond rooted in the aims, aspirations, needs, desires, and values of human beings. A relationship based on friendship promotes trust, understanding, and mutual support in everyday life. Friendships are often formed and sustained through shared hobbies. The idealism of friendship moves beyond the narrow silos of class, caste, gender, race, sexuality, religion, nationality and territorial identity. It breaks all such barriers to uphold the values of timeless friendship. Friendship can exist within all

types of relationships and can also transcend them. Both sinners and saints have friends in this world, which highlights the universal and indispensable nature and power of friendship. The nature of friendship shapes the character of society and the relationships within it. Whether a society is democratic, feudal, patriarchal, capitalist, hierarchical, egalitarian, or progressive, it is friendship that ultimately defines its nature, essence and spirit.

The rise of private property, as well as agricultural, commercial, industrial, colonial, and digital forms of capitalism and its culture of commodification, has eroded the collective foundations of friendship by atomising societies, individuals, and their needs, desires, and competing aspirations as consumers and their supercilious free choices and freedoms. This transformation has been further accelerated by the deepening digital capitalism, where social media connections and online presence form the basis of digital lives, rendering friendships as transient as browsing web pages in different platforms. The instantaneous nature of these online friendships and relation-

ships mirror the short attention spans of digital consumption—click, like, share, and subscribe—driven by utility, pleasure, and profit. Organic bonds of friendship are largely absent in these digital spheres. Yet, digital platforms hold the potential to transform such fleeting connections into meaningful human relationships, provided that impersonal algorithms and corporate logic do not dominate them. All forms of domination undermine friendships; therefore, meaningful, democratic, egalitarian, and progressive friendships cannot exist under feudalism, patriarchy, or any form of capitalist conditions in society.

All earlier forms of capitalism and its barbaric culture exists within digital capitalism which further deepening of everyday alienation, atomisation, and the commodification of human life and its relationship with the natural world. They create monetised and marketised social, political, economic, cultural and spiritual conditions that are unsuitable and inhospitable to meaningful friendships. Capitalism and friendship are incompatible with each other. Therefore, every effort to ensure meaningful friendship is, in essence, a struggle against capitalism and its inhuman and anti-social values. □□□

[Contributed by  
Bhabani Shankar Nayak]

## NOTE

## “Rich Man’s Trade Union”

*George Monbiot writes:*

**W**HY DOES CAPITAL love fossil fuels? They exist in a small number of discrete locations, where the right to exploit them can be owned and monopolised. Most can be extracted commercially only at scale, excluding small competitors. They can be stored and traded all over the world, allowing prices to be optimized across time and space. Renewable energy, by contrast can be generated almost anywhere, by almost anyone with a small amount of money to invest.

Renewables might be now be cheaper than fossil fuel in the vast majority of cases, but this makes them less attractive to capital, not more. Fossil fuels are uncompetitive and highly profitable. Renewables are highly competitive and not very profitable.

As a result, fossil fuel extractors will fight tooth and nail to prevent market forces from operating. They demand the equivalent the royal monopolies granted by the English Crown centuries ago, excluding competitors and enabling old technologies to fend off newer ones. Their

enormous profits allow them to bend politics to their will, attacking and maligning their critics, sowing disinformation and denial and assisting the election of those who favour them. In Donald Trump, they have found the monarch who will grant them their exclusive charter.

This industry several methods to maintain its profit pipeline. These range from bank-rolling Trump’s election in order to extract the brutal environmental rollbacks he has ordered on its behalf, to the unprecedented congressional lobbying campaign it has funded, to the funding of secretive junk-tanks and the financial fuelling of the far right—which channels, as it has done throughout history, the demands of powerful corporations and oligarchs.

Around the world, oil, gas and coal companies use an ever-widening set of tactics to crush competition and opposition, including lawsuits that seem designed to shutdown environmental groups and punish them physically and financially.

Perhaps the most powerful weapon in the hands of the fossil

### AUTUMN NUMBER 2025

Autumn Number 2025 will be out in the 3rd week of September. This year our contributors include Marcello Musto, Neshat Quaiser, Abhijit Guha, Sumanta Banerjee, Sunil Ray, Bharat Patankar & K J Joy, Asok Chattopadhyay, Nilofar Suhrawardy, T Vijayendra, Arup Kumar Sen, Pradip Datta, Paranjay Guha Thakurta, Ranabir Samaddar, Pranab Kumar Basu, Asis Ranjan Sengupta, Madhu Bhaduri, Pranjali Bandhu, Harsh Thakor, Dhiraj Kumar & Keyoor Pathak, Manas Bakshi, Himanshu Roy, Vinod Mubayi, Alope Mukherjee, Arjab Roy, Pradosh Nath, Arup Baisya, K Murali, Nityananda Ghosh, Arun Kumar Sinha, Maitreesh Ghatak, Sumit Bhaduri, Sumit Chakrabarty, Sushil Khanna & Mritiunjoy Mohanty, Farooque Chowdhury, Sagar Dhara, Ranganayakamma, I Mallikarjuna Sharma, Lakshmi Subramanian...

fuel companies is the media. The billionaire press has defended their interests at every turn. It remains the principal outlet for their denial, disinformation and delaying tactics. Some of its proprietors have heavily invested in fossil fuels. As a body, they belong to what one of their editors once called the “rich man’s trade union”: they perceive an attack on any aspect of rapacious capitalism as an attack in themselves. □□□

*[George Monbiot, Guardian Columnist]*

### RELOCATION OF LABOUR

## Hazardous Migration

*Bhaskar Majumder\**

**C**AN INTER-STATE MIGRATION be hazardous? If the appeal of the Chief Minister of West Bengal in August 2025 for the migrant workers to come back to West Bengal is taken seriously, then it is hazardous. Because the apprehension is that the Bengali inter-state migrant workers are not safe in many of the other states in India that pledges

occupational freedom and migration. This needs elaboration.

Of late, it came through media that some of the Bengali workers in Delhi and elsewhere were assaulted for they were diagnosed to be Bangladeshi for their intonation in speaking supposedly reflected that of the people of Bangladesh. This raises questions.

Sections of people taking law in their hands in the public with serious socio-cultural consequences is extra-law adventure and the state silence on this may imply state support for this.

The core state has several institutions to identify who are the Indian nationals and who not. Or to make it more precise for administration, who are the citizens and who not. India being a federal country, it can rely on the states on the border of both east and west to advice how this is to be done rather than keep-

ing silence or accusing some specific ethnic group or some specific state. The migration question is more than a political question—it involves livelihood of the households of the migrant workers. In many cases, this is family migration like in brick kilns.

Migration is more than a relocation of labour by labour-hours; the migrants are ill-informed or non-informed in most of the cases about their accommodation and subsequent rent to be paid or wage-cut etc. There are issues related to getting food grains from the fair price shops at the destination and medical care, apart from scope for their children to get admission in schools if their families accompany them to the destination. In long-distance migration it is not easy to come back abruptly without earning adequate to support logistics. The Chief Minister of West Bengal has appealed in August 2025, if Media reports are to be taken seriously, the migrant Bengali workers to come back on the pledge to give each one of them Rs 5,000 as 'Bhata' (money assistance per person per month) that seems a Herculean task. This is not to be read as 'reverse migration'—it seems some sort of an attempt for 'migration reversed' because migration was understood to be linguistically hazardous.

Migration is nothing new in the

economic-cultural history of mankind. People had a natural tendency to know what were there beyond the given boundary of the country that they had been residing—even to cross the ocean and the Himalayas. Money-based economy subsequently offered the economists an opportunity to describe migration of people as migration of workers for positive wage-differential. Economists' assumption is very much myopic in absence of wage-work for the workers at the root—they migrate off-season to earn any wage rate.

The issue is bigger than economic migration of late. A sponsored unfriendly relation with the neighbour small country Bangladesh has taught many people to identify migrant Bengali workers as Bangladeshi workers who infiltrated into West Bengal that is a part of India and got engaged in any work. The nature of India's economy being unorganised or informal mostly, this speculation gains ground for they could easily mix with others.

The problem is much bigger than what is narrated above. People will move out from the poorer region to the less poor region that stands for rural to urban, intra-state migration, inter-state migration and as an extension cross-border migration. Pre-1914 there was no problem and it was not seen as unwelcome. In fact, labourers from poorer region were seen as means of asset creation in the colonising country. History started changing fast since the days of Great Depression (1929-1933). However, it is yet to be discovered how Bengalis come into the focus being unwelcome migrant workers outside West Bengal.

Relocation of labour is not linguistically determined. Workers of Orissa migrate to Gujarat; workers of Bihar move to almost everywhere in India that was mainly West Bengal till 1970s. Economists might not

have observed the whole of it, naturally. In many situations, workers of Bihar followed the Marwaris of Rajasthan, even if it was remote Meghalaya that was part of greater Assam. Bengalis migrated to Burma, now called Myanmar. Marital relations oriented and reoriented the family compositions so that at a later stage in history if some families move out from Myanmar or Bangladesh and search for their root in greater India, it might have been very much possible. In the state of Arunachal Pradesh that was part of greater Assam and partly known as North-East Frontier Agency may show different types of Adivasis and ethnic compositions. Force cannot homogenise them.

People were also drawn as indentured labourers, mainly from Bihar, by the British coloniser to fix in countries that Britain ruled. If some of these people come back in search of their root in India, what happens to the thinking and actions of the state and concerned non-state extra-law actors?

The countries called advanced today understood very well the cause of wealth of nations—it was labour-determined and many of these labourers were drawn from their colonies. The history of Asia, particularly India, may provide the evidence—Indian labourers added to the wealth of Britain documented as 'wealth of nations'. If the migration of Bengali or Bihari is juxtaposed inter-state, then the parallel is generation of wealth first in that destination. If this is so, there is no reason why a particular linguistic group is to be evicted or crowded out—economics argues for comparative cost in production and hence migration is no exception.

It is, however, not obvious in the zone where Bengalis are being diagnosed as Bangladeshis and inhumanly treated what the reaction of the capi-

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tal controllers is for the reason may be that the issue is in extra-law hands and because it has become a political-ethnic issue. Also, this silence may be because most of the migrant workers are in the unorganised segment of the economy.

The workers are not beggars—they ask for ‘Roji-Roti’, not only ‘Roti’. That dignity of labour associated with the labourers need to be ensured by the state. The question is not if he/she is a Bengali labourer or a Bihari labourer. Labour needs

safety just as capital needs safety. This labour safety is different from economic returns on labour—this includes safety of dignity of labour and the labourer. □□□

[\*Professor of Economics (Retd.), G.B.Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad-21101]

## CAPITALIST ALIENATION

# Structural Roots of Student Violence

*Bhabani Shankar Nayak*

**S**TUDENTS ARE AMONG the most idealistic members of society. Their youthful pursuit of ideals, fuelled by passion, innocence and creativity, represents limitless potential that society can harness for its progressive transformation. Throughout history, students have not only participated in but also shaped progressive movements. What defines them is their selfless sacrifice for the greater good of society. Through their everyday experiences, students learn, reflect, and analyse, offering alternatives that challenge dominant knowledge traditions while resisting all forms of authoritarianism, both within and beyond the classrooms. In doing so, they generate new ideas and progressive ideals that contribute to the radical transformation of society.

The question then arises: why do students resort to violence, bring guns into classrooms, and adopt violent methods to express themselves? It is time to think beyond an essentialist culture of causality that merely blames and criminalises students.

In a rare incident of gun violence in India, a ninth-grade boy shot his Physics teacher. In stark contrast, gun violence in schools is a daily tragedy in the United States, where an estimated twelve children are killed and thirty-two students are shot and injured every day. A study titled “*Gun Violence in the United States-2022: Examining the Burden*

*Among Children and Teens*” by the Center for Gun Violence Solutions at the Johns Hopkins University reveals that firearms are now the leading cause of death among children and teenagers between the ages of one and seventeen. The same study found that, on average, seven young people die each day in the US due to gun violence. According to the *Washington Post* school shooting database, more than 390,000 students have been exposed to gun violence in schools between the Columbine High School massacre in 1999 and 2024.

Student violence is not confined to the United States, but the country experiences the highest levels, largely because students face intense forms of capitalist alienation both in American schools and in society at large. Unfortunately, the epidemic of gun violence among students in the United States—and the broader crisis of student violence, including suicide amongst students, across the world—is unlikely to decline. On the contrary, it is likely to intensify as the marketisation, commercialisation, and privatisation of education for profit deepen under capitalism. This process fosters widespread alienation, affecting students in particular and society at large. *Student violence is not a starting point; it is a response to a violent capitalist system.*

The commercialisation of education has transformed teaching and

learning into a marketplace of essentialist interactions aimed primarily at securing grades, degrees, qualifications, certificates, and limited employability skills. This functionalist approach has eroded the critical culture of learning—one that once encouraged self-discovery, exploration of the world, and the development of a global consciousness that promotes mutual understanding of human desires, needs, and uniqueness. The objectified digitalisation of education in the post-pandemic era has further diminished organic interactions between students and teachers. Learning is increasingly reduced to a means of securing employment, while its broader purpose—to cultivate critical, scientific, humanitarian, and secular consciousness capable of challenging and transforming society—has been undermined. As a result, the traditions of democratic knowledge that sustain democracy and universal human rights across the globe are being weakened.

A democratic classroom enables students to learn, understand, and develop the skills necessary to interact and innovate—both as individuals and as members of a critical community of learning masses committed to knowledge traditions that address human needs and the desire for emancipation from all forms of marginalisation, inequality, and exploitation. Such educational traditions have transformed university campuses and academic institutions into centers of resistance against power, authoritarianism, and reactionary ruling classes. From anti-colonial struggles to move-

ments against apartheid, imperialist wars, capitalism, feudal oppression, and caste-, class-, race-, gender-, and sex-based exploitation, students have consistently stood at the frontlines of radical and progressive struggles throughout history of the past and present.

The commercialisation and commodification of education—often justified in the name of modularisation for essentialist skills, employability, and efficiency of delivery within fixed timescales to maximise profit—has undermined the emancipatory foundations of education. It has entrenched a culture of compliance concomitant with the requirements of capitalism and its narrow educational framework of employability. The marketisation of education has also fuelled the empire of student loans, turning access to education into a source of lifelong debt trap that stripes away the dignity of students and their creative abilities.

This framework has deepened crises not only within the educational sector but also among students, eroding their potential to think critically as a community of learn-

ers. The combined forces of marketisation and digitalisation have dismantled the collective foundation of education, knowledge production, and knowledge dissemination, and reduced teaching and learning to isolated, individualised experiences. The net outcome of this model is widespread alienation across educational communities—including students, teachers, and non-teaching staff members within educational institutions all over the world.

The capitalist framework of education, along with its alienating conditions, is deeply embedded in different forms of violence. Capitalism, feudalism, and patriarchal structures of control continuously produce and reproduce the conditions that sustain such violence. Student violence emerges as an outcome of these systemic injustices, a manifestation of a criminalising environment that forces students to adopt violent means to express themselves.

The criminalisation of students and the deployment of armed policing cannot resolve issues of student violence, as these are not merely law-and-order problems. Nor can they

be adequately addressed by reducing them to mental health issues. The roots of student violence run far deeper than surface-level explanations suggest. Casual analyses that link student violence solely to mental health or criminality represent a grave injustice, perpetuated by narrow and essentialist legal frameworks.

Therefore, creating free, fair, and accessible education, along with a creative and democratic learning environment, is central to addressing various forms of violence. The struggle against the alienating conditions of capitalist education is inherently a struggle against capitalism and its structures shaped by profit, patriarchy, and power. Peace within the student community cannot be separated from peace in society at large. Consequently, the struggle for peace is inseparable from the fight against the commercialisation and marketisation of education and the alienation and violence these conditions produce. Peaceful and fair society produces peaceful campus that enables students to think and express freely to achieve their creative abilities without any forms of barriers. □□

#### “FILTER BUBBLE”

## The ‘Crisis’ of Freedom of Thought

**Arun Kumar Gond**

**T**ODAY, PEOPLE ARE LIVING in a time where platforms like Google, YouTube, Instagram, and other social-media are not just sources of entertainment; they deeply influence people’s thoughts, decisions, and even health choices. Whenever one searches for something; whether it’s about child vaccination, home remedies for headaches, or ways to manage mental stress; the information one receives is not simply based on query. It is shaped by past behaviour, preferences, location, social-network, and even the likes of friends.

Back in 2011, author Eli Pariser, in his well-known book *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*, explained how search-engines and algorithms on the internet are gradually leading people into a world where they mostly see and hear things that align with what they already believe. The content that appears is filtered based on previous searches, browsing habits, and social connections; and often ends up reinforcing existing opinions. This creates a “filter bubble” around searchers. What makes this

bubble truly dangerous is that it’s invisible, and people often don’t even realise they are trapped inside it. This filter is so clever and subtle that people don’t even realise the information is being filtered. For example, when one searches for something related to a health issue, the search engine decides what to show; and that decision is based on supplied data. Clicking on the same kind of results again and again, one unknowingly strengthens that bubble even more. The problem isn’t just that people are getting limited information; it’s also that this process can lead one toward false or misleading information, especially if the profile leans toward content that promotes misinformation.

And because these algorithms are highly complex and opaque, the average user neither understands them nor has any real control over them. In fact, some researchers have described this situation as a “*gravitational black hole of information*.” That is, once someone gets caught in the pull of misinformation, getting out of it becomes as difficult as light escaping from a black hole. Every new piece of information only reinforces existing beliefs, pulling the person deeper into that bubble. Technology alone isn't to blame for this. People's personal biases, cultural perspectives, and sources of information all play a significant role. But as the internet learns more about people's habits, it begins to shape those personal biases into its algorithmic systems; making access to information more one-sided and imbalanced. By searching for something on the internet, watching a video, or commenting on a post, one leaves behind traces of preferences. This information builds a digital profile; what's known in technical terms as user data. Then, the algorithms working behind the scenes of the internet analyse this data and decide what one will see next.

Apps like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts select videos for people based on age, gender, location, and past behaviour. If you've watched a few videos related to health or yoga, your feed will soon be filled with only that type of content. You may feel like you're watching things by your own choice, but in reality; Google is no longer searching for you, it's searching about you. Gradually, you get surrounded by a digital world that only shows you things that align with your existing thoughts; while hiding everything else. This is the filter bubble, a quiet and invisible trap that people fall into on their own.

Social-media has now become a part of daily lives. On apps like Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and Tik Tok, the content people view is what they are shown again and again. For example, if you've watched reels related to home remedies, Ayurveda, or beauty tips a few times on Instagram, your feed will soon be filled with similar content. The same happens on YouTube Shorts. If you watch a video about religious miracles or a particular ideology, you'll start seeing more content that reflects that same line of thinking.

On TikTok, emotional stories; like someone healing from an illness without medication often go viral, and people start believing in them. Gradually, people find themselves surrounded by content that only reinforces their old beliefs. There's barely any room left for new or different perspectives. This is what's called the *Information Black Hole*; it silently pulls viewers in, and they don't even realise that they are now living in a very narrow world. Back in 1961, a researcher named Stoner explained that when people stay only among those who think like them, their views tend to become even more extreme and one-sided. This is known as *Group Polarization*. Think about it: if you keep hearing the same opinions on social media every day; like people who are against vaccines, or those who believe in a single ideology; eventually, those views start to feel even more right to you. You stop listening to different perspectives, or you start thinking they must be wrong.

This has an impact on the society too. Where once conversations helped find common ground, now arguments and divisions are growing. People stop listening to each other. And truth is no longer measured by whether something is actually right or wrong; but by whether

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people in the “group” believe it. This is called *truth based on social trust*; and it can sometimes lead people away from real truth. To escape the filter bubble, the most important things are awareness and understanding.

In this era of new media, social-media platforms are constantly refining their algorithmic recommendation systems; aiming to keep users engaged and spending more time on their platforms. But when this very

technology begins to filter information based on a user’s personal preferences, behaviours, and networks, it creates an invisible wall; what is called the *filter bubble*. This filter bubble traps people within similar types of information, limits the diversity of thought, and gradually leads to issues like group polarisation. As a result, people not only become cut off from new or opposing views, but also start believing that their own opinions are the only truth. To over-

come this challenge, one needs more than just technical fixes; one needs social and educational efforts as well. People must work to increase algorithmic transparency, promote media literacy, and encourage users to develop the habit of seeking information from a variety of sources. □□□

*[The author is deeply grateful to his research supervisor, Dr. Keyoor Pathak, for his Suggestion.]* [Author: Arun Kumar Gond, Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Allahabad, India. His research focuses on the implications of social-media in rural society.]

## BJP’S DISENFRANCHISING CAMPAIGN

### After Bihar Voter Exclusion Moving to Bengal

**Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury**

*[The ECI’s sudden release of the earlier SIR-based voter list of 2002 for West Bengal and the hasty attempts at training booth-level officers suggest that the next revision of electoral rolls will take place on the eve of the polls.]*

THE ELECTION COMMISSION of India (ECI) has released the voter list for West Bengal based on a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls carried out in 2002, stirring a hornet’s nest.

The political slugfest going on in the state of Bihar over the deletion of 6.5 million voters from the electoral rolls following a similar exercise is a precursor to what is likely to follow in West Bengal.

The battle lines for the next state legislative assembly elections in West Bengal, now less than a year away, therefore, seem to have been drawn.

The ECI’s sudden release of the earlier SIR-based voter list of 2002 for West Bengal and the hasty attempts at training booth-level officers suggest that the next revision of electoral rolls will take place on the eve of the polls.

The 2002 SIR in West Bengal set the total number of voters in the state at 45.8 million, spread over 80,000 polling booths. However, the political debate has heated up as the voter list for the Kulpi Assembly seat in the South 24 Parganas district was found

missing from the published list.

Similarly, the voter lists of about a hundred booths in the Gaighata Assembly constituency, and a few others in South 24 Parganas, Birbhum and Howrah districts, were also found missing.

SIR is not new in the context of electoral rolls in India. However, the 2021 census could not be conducted because of the COVID-19 pandemic. With elections around the corner in Bihar and West Bengal, the recent steps of the ECI have raised many eyebrows. While the census and the SIR are separate exercises, the voter population in the two lists can otherwise be tallied.

Although polls are also going to take place for the legislative assembly in Tamil Nadu, the southern state is unlikely to have an SIR.

Given the Bihar developments, there are apprehensions about the potential disenfranchisement of many resident Indians through the process of SIR.

The insistence on proving the citizenship of voters has drawn attention in West Bengal, as there is a perceptible rise in the harassment, humilia-

tion, and curtailment of the basic right to life and livelihood of Bengali-speaking migrant labour working in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR), Haryana, Maharashtra, and other states in India ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Bengali-speaking individuals are being hounded and dubbed as ‘Bangladeshis’ and ‘illegal immigrants’, implying that they are not citizens of India. Bengali migrant workers from West Bengal not only have to prove their citizenship in the rest of India but will now be asked to do so in their home state when the SIR is conducted.

While the neoliberal economy has facilitated the mobility of capital and technology, the movement of labour has been severely restricted, coupled with the gradual retreat of the state from the economy to assist corporate capital.

These developments in recent decades have not only securitised cross-border migration, including that of Indian labour, across the globe but have also raised walls within India.

This time it is the Bengali-speaking Muslims who are facing the wrath of the police, administration, and local populations of the migrant-receiving states of the country. Earlier, especially in Mumbai, migrant workers from South India and Northern India have faced the wrath of the local Maharashtra political parties.

The BJP's targets are Bengali-speaking Muslims whom they suspect to be Bangladeshi migrants. However, even Hindu Bengalis, mainly belonging to the so-called lower castes, have not been spared. Hearing them speak the Bengali language has been triggering suspicions of their being 'Bangladeshis'.

The rounding up, violent questioning, and physical harassment by the local administration of such people continued in many cases even after the migrants produced their photo identity cards, including voter cards, Aadhar cards, and sometimes income tax Personal Identity Number (PAN) cards.

The hapless migrants wonder which document can show their Indian citizenship, while the administration seems to indicate that these documents they possess are mainly for accessing different services and benefits provided by the government, and that does not necessarily prove citizenship.

Therefore, the SIR in West Bengal will take place in the context of the dispossession of the right to livelihood of migrant labour from the state.

There may be a number of Bangladeshis living in India without valid documents. However, can the identification of those Bangladeshis be possible through the exclusion of Indian Bengalis? In fact, through this process, the space for migrant workers from West Bengal in low-paid jobs is shrinking further within the country.

Migrants from West Bengal, Bihar, and eastern Uttar Pradesh, among other states, move into the more prosperous urban areas in other parts of India, attracted by employment opportunities in the industrial or service sectors. They do so as they are pushed out of the agricultural sector due to adverse human-land ratio and because of lower agricultural yields due to climate change.

However, as modern industrial production increasingly requires fewer workers in the industries, these migrants become dependent on low-productivity-low-wage employment in the urban informal sector.

With the expanding platform economies in India, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more migrant labour is getting associated with those precarious jobs. The migrant women largely work as housemaids.

The poor economic conditions of these migrants compel them to huddle together in the slums of cities such as Delhi, Noida, Gurugram, or Mumbai, only to be identified as potential 'Bangladeshis'. This results not only in harassment but even deportation to Bangladesh, as the local police and people fail to distinguish between Indians and Bangladeshis.

As Bangladeshis without valid travel documents are perceived as dangerous threats to the state security, in this dominant security discourse, the security of the Bengali-speaking migrants and their right to livelihood and human dignity get easily eclipsed.

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In this context, it is clear that there are political connotations underlying the decision of the ECI about SIR.

The present situation may benefit different political parties in different ways to mobilise selective sections of the electorate. However, in the long run, this attempt at proving citizenship in order to avoid disenfranchisement, and that too just before the elections, will only erode Indian democracy and marginalise migrant labour across the country.

□□□

[Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury is a Member of Calcutta Research Group. This article was originally published by 360info.]

VED PRAKASH GUPTA

## Remembering my Naxalite Uncle

*Manu Kant*

**M**ANY FIRSTS ARE TIED to the memory of my maternal uncle—Ved Prakash Gupta, who in the 1980s earned the sobriquet "Bathinda da

Bahadur Bania" from Khalistanis. It was with him that I had my first hunting experience in the desert on the outskirts of Bathinda, a place that no longer exists. Of course, it

wasn't lion hunting, but something more plebeian—a wild rat hunt. I also had my first taste of rat meat, cooked immediately after the hunt. And it was my uncle who first taught me to shoot a revolver, all at the tender age of thirteen or fourteen—a big deal for a middle-class lad from the 'City Beautiful'!

My uncle was a genius. He had

built a workshop in the backyard of his house, where constructing a bicycle from scratch was child's play. In that 'secret' workshop, he actually made much more dangerous things—pistols, crude bombs, and high-intensity Diwali firecrackers. He could also single-handedly renovate his house without the help of masons, plumbers, carpenters, or electricians.

His reputation suffered a severe jolt when he was suspected of planting a bomb in the town's cinema house. Fortunately, no one was hurt or killed. To this day, it remains a mystery how he escaped police attention. Interestingly, my great uncle Balwant Gargi expressed his disapproval to my mother, saying, "It was a wicked thing to do."

Yet, for me, my uncle remained a hero. Every Diwali, I would wait with bated breath for the arrival of his messenger from Bathinda. Each year, two 'pipas' would be delivered to our house in Chandigarh—one tin filled with 'attapinnis' and the other

with high-intensity Diwali firecrackers. These 'biggies' were the highlight of our Diwali celebrations. At midnight, we would start "detonating" them, once the entire neighbourhood had fallen silent.

The turning point in his life came when Indira Gandhi declared Emergency on 25th June 1975. My mamaji was arrested, and the threat of his liquidation in police custody was real. To prevent this, influential contacts from the CPI and CPI(M) known to our family were mobilised to ensure his safety. After two years in jail, he was finally released in 1977 when Indira Gandhi called off the Emergency.

Thus ended my uncle's brief stint as a Naxalite. His two-year incarceration, however, brought rewards. The Akali government awarded him a 'Tamra Patra' in recognition of his suffering during the Emergency and announced reserved seats in medical colleges across Punjab for the children of 'victims' of the Emergency. As a result, both his son and daughter

were admitted to medical college.

Much wiser after his ordeal, my uncle took up human rights work. He became a relentless critic of low-ranking, corrupt Punjab government officials, exposing them in newspapers and pushing for their suspension or dismissal over minor and major misdemeanours. When asked why he abandoned the 'Maoist revolution,' he would simply say, "Beta, the modern state is too strong to be defeated."

As he grew older, my uncle visited Chandigarh less frequently and settled into a comfortable, petty-bourgeois life in a posh house built by his son, who by then had become a renowned doctor. His mornings were spent poring over newspapers with tea and cigarettes—his one indulgence that he never gave up. Evenings were spent with his grandchildren. The last I heard, before he passed away, he had begun reading Indian epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana, alongside the Vedas. □□□

## RECALLING CHIPKO AND APPIKO

# Saving Himalayan Forests in Tehri Garhwal

*Debiparna Chakraborty*

ONE OF THE MOST INSPIRING efforts that this writer has covered in nearly five decades of development journalism is that of the saving of Himalayan forests in Tehri Garhwal district approximately during the period of 1977-80.

At the time of visiting Tehri Garhwal district for the first time, several actions of the Chipko movement in other parts of Uttarakhand (which was then a part of UP state) had already made news, but these had emphasised more the aspects of local forest rights and village-level, small-scale, forest product based units. It was in the nearly a dozen

actions to save forests in Tehri Garhwal district that the ecological aspects got most emphasised.

While these efforts ultimately succeeded in saving Himalayan forests over a vast area from commercial exploitation (however large-scale felling of trees for various development projects continued), these efforts are also important for contributing to the emergence of several new social movements in this as well as other regions.

The core group of activists here were those inspired by Mahatma Gandhi to follow the path of non-violent struggles, the most senior being Sunderlal Bahuguna and

VimlaBahuguna, very ably supported by highly dedicated activists like Kunwar Prasun, Dhum Singh Negi, Vijay Jardhari and Pratap Shikhar. Several village women like Sudesha Devi, Bachni Devi and Saumpa Devi emerged in important activist roles in the course of these movements and chipko actions with their courage and determination to protect forests even in very adverse conditions (which also involved going to jail). The great folk poet and activist Ghanshyam Sailani who was present at several movement sites and above all the great disciple of Mahatma Gandhi Sarla Behan who was like a mentor for leading activists.

These activists had a worldview based on combining ecological and justice concerns. Some of them, particularly Kunwar Prasun, were very firmly committed to rights of op-

pressed communities like Dalits. Chipko activists maintained good relations with forest workers and also took up the cause of their rights and welfare.

While chipko actions in Tehri Garhwal district took place in several places, Henvalghati (valley of Henval river), on Rishikesh–Chamba road, particularly its nearer villages like Jajal and Nagni, became a hub, while in the higher and more interior areas Badiyargad was another hub. Around 1977 some contractors here had resorted to excessive extraction of resin from *chir pine trees* and due to this the trees had been weakened. Chipko activists drew attention to this, organised protests and also symbolically applied mud on tree wounds to protect them. On investigation these complaints were found to be correct and some remedial actions were also taken.

However the bigger challenge was that of the forests being auctioned for commercial felling by contractors (and sometimes by the government's own forest corporation). Activists and villagers asked the officials not to axe these trees, mostly located on steep slopes, due to the resulting high risk of landslides and floods, loss of water and soil conservation capabilities, as well as shortage of fodder and other essential needs for people. When officials did not agree and went ahead with auctions, people said that they'll launch chipko movement to protect these trees. Officials and contractors responded with threats.

To mobilise villagers a leading activist Dhum Singh started a fast in a forest. Women responded by assuring him that they'll do all they can to save trees. They then tied sacred protective threads on trees as a symbol of their resolve. At another spiritual gathering in Advani, villagers repeated this resolve and also said in daily life they'll take all precautions not to harm trees in any way.

In Salet forest the contractors

shrewdly gathered Kashmiri migrant workers to start felling of trees. Villagers took out a protest demonstration inside the forest and stopped it. Later villagers went back but two activists Dhum Singh Negi and Hukum Singh stayed behind. When later another attempt to axe trees was made, they could stop it by hugging trees. The Kashmiri workers were so impressed by the chipko movement that sacrificing their earnings, they moved away from the area.

When forest officials came to investigate why felling is being opposed, people greeted them with lanterns in daylight to symbolise their surprise that officials are unable to see the obvious need for stopping axing of trees.

In Advani forest villagers hugged trees to stop felling and took out demonstrations. When one villager sided with tree-fellers, his 13-year-old son Kunwar Singh went on a fast and did not eat food till his father agreed to protect trees. On 31 January, 1978 the PAC police entered the forest so that felling of trees could take place with its support, but villagers and activists kept shouting slogans to protect forests and when efforts to axe trees were made they quickly moved to hug trees. Women were very active in hugging trees, and sometimes children also went with them. This continued for over two hours. Finally the police and the contractor withdrew from the forests. The gathered people shouted, "The Himalaya has awakened today, the cruel axe has been chased away."

Despite these successful protests, the officials again resorted to auctions of forests in early February, 1978 at a hall in Narendranagar. On 8 February villagers assembled here to protest, joined next morning by more women from Hanvalghati. Now when they entered the auction hall peacefully, the contractors ran away. At night the police arrested 23 of them, including 9 women. They were

released only after 15 days, when the auction process was completed.

The next scene of tree-hugging to save 742 auctioned trees was in Amarsar forest, near Kangar village. In December 1978, Dhum Singh Negi, Pratap Shikhar and some students played an important role in protecting these trees from being axed, although the contractor managed to cut some trees. Later many villagers including women came in a big procession to stop tree felling.

Next, forests in Badiyargad belt, particularly Malgaddi appeared to be a big challenge as over 2000 trees had been marked here for felling by the forest corporation on its own. People were alert regarding saving forest here as in recent times landslides had caused huge damage in this area (which was caused by earlier tree-felling). Activists including Kunwar Prasun and Vijay Jardhari went to many villages to mobilise people. In the last week of 1978, villagers took out processions in forests and announced their determination to save these trees.

Despite this, felling of trees started in the first week of 1979. Villagers stopped this on some occasions, but on the whole felling continued. As the consciousness to protect trees spread beyond Malgaddi to dozens of other hamlets of Badiyargad, activists like Rajeev Bahuguna started a new way of connecting to people by asking all families to donate one roti (home-baked bread) each for the cause of protecting trees, as activists in forests would survive on this.

On January 9, Sunderlal Bahuguna started a fast in a remote forest of Badiyargad to demand the stop of tree felling and also wider change of forest policy. In the early stage of the fast Sunderlal continued to rush and hug trees like other activists, but soon he became too weak for this. Meanwhile his wife Vimla too had come to the forest while daughter Madhuri had participated

in hugging trees to save them.

It is an indication of the great moral strength of the movement that activists continued in the middle of intense struggles to maintain good relations with forest workers and later also helped them to realise their pending wage payments.

On 22 January Sunderlal was arrested. There were several protests against this. On January 31 the government finally announced a ban on the felling of green trees in Badiyargad and Amarsar. Sunderlal's fast also ended after about 24 days, amidst assurances that the government will consider a wider ban on felling of green trees.

Later in 1979 there was a movement to save the forest of Laasi. Here too there was a fast by Sunderlal. The villagers formed a forest protection committee. The contractor made several attempts to cut trees but was chased away by the villagers. Trees could not be cut despite bringing in the police. Finally before the end of the year the attempts to cut trees here were given up.

Around the same time there were successful efforts to save trees in Khurel village, which later led to wider efforts to end the water scarcity of this village.

A big danger appeared as plans to fell nearly 9000 trees were announced for Loital forest near Ranichauri. A campaign was launched to protect these trees in which Yogesh Bahuguna played an important role. Wisdom prevailed and

these tree-felling plans were given up.

Meanwhile talks continued for wider policy steps. This was helped by the fact that the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, while she was in power, was very sympathetic to these demands and particularly to the efforts of Sunderlal Bahuguna. Finally a wider moratorium on green felling of trees in Uttarakhand was announced by the government.

Some years after this, a new threat appeared in Henvalghati as the government announced that thousands of trees will be felled in Henvalghati for laying down the power lines from Tehri Dam Project. Once again people mobilised, with Kunwar Prasun playing a leading role. A large number of trees could be saved, as the government agreed to significantly reduce the trees marked for felling.

These movements were also followed by efforts for regeneration and recovery of forests in degraded areas in Henvalghati, which had encouraging results.

These movements also created a support base for future work relating to opposition to Tehri dam project. After a stage, Sunderlal Bahuguna and VimlaBahuguna devoted their life mainly to this for several years.

Meanwhile Vijay Jardhari and Kunwar Prasun became more active in BeejBachaoAndolan (save the seeds movement) dedicated to saving traditional diverse varieties of various crops.

Sunderlal organised Kashmir to Kohima foot march to take the mes-

sage of the Chipko movement to the entire Himalayan region, also drawing in younger activists like Sahib Singh.

Pandurang Hegde, a gold medalist student from Delhi School of Social Work had come here during the movements. He learnt from here and started the *appiko* movement to save forests in Karnataka, achieving great success in saving the forests of the Western Ghats region.

Thus while these movements were great in their own way, these also had a much wider impact.

However the tree felling for development projects continued to increase in Uttarakhand or in Karnataka Western Ghats, and some of the gains made from stopping commercial exploitation in vast areas for a long time were undone by this.

Nevertheless the work of Chipko and Appiko activists remains a very inspiring example. As someone visiting these areas, particularly Tehri Garhwal, again and again could see, these activists and villagers were working for protecting trees with great dedication, sacrificing and risking a lot, year after year.

At a time when Himalayan environment is so badly threatened leading to several disasters, it is all the more important to recall these inspiring experiences. □□□

[The writer is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books including Planet in Peril, Protecting Earth for Children, Man over Machine, A Day in 2071 and Guardians of Himalayas-Vimla and Sunderlal Bahuguna.]

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## FASCISM IN ACTION

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### Sorry, Stan!

**Cedric Prakash S J**

**Dear Stan,**

I WRITE THIS TO YOU WITH A heavy heart: shocked and saddened; upset and angry. This letter to you, is perhaps to ease the angst in me; I really don't know

what to say and how to say it! But I am sure that what I write, is also the sentiments, the emotions of many, from all over: Jesuit companions, colleagues, collaborators, alumni well-wishers and friends who

knew you so well and particularly, the Adivasis and other sub-alterns, whom you loved so much and gave your life for. This letter comes from the bottom of my heart (and our hearts) to say "Sorry, Stan!" On 9 August, St Xavier's College (SXC) Mumbai, (through their Department of Inter-Religious Studies) was scheduled to hold 'The Annual Stan Swamy Memorial Lecture'. The topic

was 'Migration for Livelihood: Hope Amidst Untold Miseries'. It was to be delivered virtually by Jesuit Fr. Prem Xalxo, currently Associate Professor of Moral Theology at the Gregorian University, Rome. The speaker was a renowned personality and the topic timely and relevant. On 4 August, representatives of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) met the SXC authorities, and in a written letter 'strongly condemned' the organising of the lecture and demanded its cancellation. Very sadly, the Jesuit management and other officials caved in to this pressure and cancelled the lecture.

In their letter (which they have put on their facebook page) the ABVP said "organising a lecture in memory of a person who was a key accused in serious crimes, like UAPA, including contact with the banned CPI (Maoist), financing and recruiting armed Naxalite groups, and seizure of documents containing a conspiracy to overthrow the constitutional government through armed uprising, is glorifying the Naxalites..." it is extremely sad that prestigious colleges like St. Xavier's are trying to encourage Naxalist ideas by glorifying a person accused of committing anti-national conspiracies. We demand that the principal cancel this lecture immediately." All this is patently false and it has been proved that even the so-called 'incriminating documents' were planted in your computer. Besides for an 'alleged' crime, the law stipulates

that one is innocent, till proved guilty. That you are innocent is without doubt. Judges after judges have rescued themselves from your case, for the simple reason, is that they will have to declare you innocent! For the falsehood and slander you are still subject to, "Sorry, Stan!"

Stan, you are aware that SXC is my Alma Mater. I spent cherished years as a Xavierite from 1968–1972(1969 was our Centenary year). At that time, we had Jesuits who were stalwarts, Staff who were excellent and a great student body! It was a joy to be a Xavierite. It was at that time I first met you in a Social Analysis Programme—and ever since, you have been to me a hero, mentor and guide. In 1974, (and later), after entering the Society, together with my companions, we readily accepted the faith–justice mandate under the leadership of Fr Pedro Arrupe. Over the years, I learnt that you heroes were Dom Helder Camara, Paolo Friere, Ivan Illich and Arrupe. Your knowledge on their writings and works, rubbed off on many. As a good friend of yours, as an SXC alumnus and as Jesuit, feel duty bound to say, "Sorry, Stan!"

Ever since the news broke out of the cancellation of the Memorial lecture, I have been literally besieged with calls and comments; in the many groups, I belong to, on social media, there are innumerable comments against the Jesuits, and particularly against SXC (some of the comments are even offensive) From

across the board, people (including several alumni and Jesuits) are feeling angry and let down. They say that SXC has failed to see the big picture: cancelling the lecture means giving in to the anti-national and anti-Constitutional fascist forces; acquiescing with these forces means that they are

emboldened and will continue to call the shots. It means negating the academic freedom which is the essence of every institution of higher learning; it means that the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech and expression is not important. In the past, when there were such threats, we are aware that, SXC called in the police and continued with their programme. Today's (10 August) Mid-day reports, "We are surprised that the college has shown cowardice and yielded to pressure tactics. We teach our students about the values of justice, democracy, and peace, but when it comes to taking a stand, we bow down to the pressure, even when Stan has not been proven guilty. This has been the general pulse of the St Xavier's alumni and the community," said a source from the St Xavier's College Society.

Forgive us, dear Stan, and intercede for us from your eternal abode, Your

**Brother Cedric  
10 August, 2025**

*[Fr. Cedric Prakash SJ is a human rights, reconciliation & peace activist/writer]*

## REVIEW ARTICLE

### "Clausewitz and People's War"

**Harsh Thakor**

CARL VON CLAUSEWITZ IS one of the most innovative military thinkers of all time. His analysis transcends the domain of specific historical experiences and elevates military theory to a high

plane of generalization. Exploring the relationship between war and politics—the mutual relationships between the military command, the civil government, and the people, as well as the phenomena that determined the

escalation of violence, Clausewitz amassed a substantial and original body of work, which gained increasing recognition from the end of the 19th century. But it was not within the ranks of the military command that Clausewitz's thinking had the greatest impact. Instead, his closest readers were discovered among the theoreticians and practitioners of people's and revolutionary war. While

Clausewitz's influence on Lenin was highlighted, the influence of his ideas on Engels, Mao, Giáp, and others has remained relatively unknown. The first French edition of "Clausewitz and the People's War" showcased this influence and transcended the history of ideas, to tackle aspects of revolutionary warfare from unexplored perspectives, and creatively engage in current and historical military debates.

Two decades after it was first published by Aden, and after a year's work in close collaboration with the author, Foreign Languages Press is pleased to present the new, final edition of *Clausewitz and the People's War And Other Politico-Military Essays*.

The republication of *Clausewitz and the People's War* will usher a new phase of debate on the revolutionary military question. Dedicated chapters on Giáp and Mao were grossly lacking, and the recent publication of important sources, such as General Giáp's Memoirs or Mao Zedong's reading notes, which have since become viable, have compensated this gap.

T Derbent's work capitalises on a long tradition of integrating Clausewitz's theories into Marxism in general and Marxism-Leninism in particular. Several decades of research has established him as one of the leading experts on the military question in its relation to historical and contemporary revolutionary movements. His work (books, articles, conferences) addresses both the historical aspect of this incorporation, with a study of the influence of Clausewitz's writings on Marxist theorists and leaders (Jaurès, Mehring, etc)—as well as on the theoretical

aspect of this assimilation—both in terms of the profound bondage between these thoughts (their dialectical character, their articulation of the relationship between war and politics) and in terms of the direct influence of Clausewitz's theses on the Marxist-Leninist literature.

The book dissects the correlation between Clausewitz's ideas and military theories of leaders like Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Mao and Che Guevara., tracing the origins of their military concepts to ideas of Clausewitz, even if not directly attributing.

The main role of Clausewitz and the People's War is , its side-by-side presentation of the great revolutionary military-political legacy that has, in one way or another, practised people's war. It is built around and through a complex history whose internal tensions the author boldly projected. The narration of those traditions makes it possible, perhaps for the first time, for the informed reader to evaluate the different military strategies of the revolutionary movement on a scientific basis.

The republication of ' Clausewitz and the People's War' will usher a new phase of debate on the revolutionary military question. Dedicated chapters on Giáp and Mao were grossly lacking, and the recent publication of important sources, such as General Giáp's Memoirs or Mao Zedong's reading notes, which have since become viable, have compensated this gap.

Derbent notes how Engels was the first 'attentive reader of Clausewitz' in the revolutionary tradition, and showcases how much of his ground-breaking work on military strategy was influenced by this reading. Secondly, Derbent discusses methods in which Franz Mehring, who was instrumental in unfurling Engels' work on military strategy out of the wilderness, was also a disciple of Clausewitz, recognising him 'as a genius theoretician' while also 'exposing his limitations. Thirdly, Derbent investigates

Lenin's comprehensive study of Clausewitz's *On War*, and diagnoses it as the first concrete analysis of military strategy from a Marxist perspective. That is, correctly understanding the meaning of Clausewitz's famous maxim, 'Lenin added a new dimension: by examining the political nature of war—in the final analysis, its class character—we can understand its historical and moral character, and thus distinguish between just and unjust wars.' Indeed, Lenin's interpretation and implementation of Clausewitz was developed according to the concrete aim of making revolution and, commanding the ways the Red Army would defend the revolution in 1918.

Trotsky, who did not think there could be an axiomatic approach to warfare, dismisses Clausewitz, rejecting the possibility of a specifically proletarian methodology of war that Lenin was indicating in his studies. Most baffling however, was Stalin's 'gross misrepresentation' of Clausewitz directly following World War II, associating his theory with the military strategy of the Nazis.

Mao Zedong's theorisation of protracted people's war would serve, according to Derbent, as the most accurate and complete conception of military strategy from the revolutionary camp, and it was largely influenced by Mao's reading of Clausewitz alongside Sun Tzu. Moreover, Mao's ability to reaffirm significant Clausewitzian principles was due to the fact that 'they had similar methods of thinking and theorising.' Mao also critiqued the Soviet rejection of Clausewitz as one of 'the weaknesses of Stalinist dialectics.' After Mao, Giap became an ardent disciple of Clausewitz in his theorisation of anti-colonial guerrilla warfare in Vietnam. Like Mao, he was not a mechanical disciple, but a revolutionary who read Clausewitz thoroughly while he 'applied or reinvented Clausewitzian doctrine in the specific light of revolutionary warfare'. □□□

[Harsh Thakor is a freelance journalist]

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## LETTERS

**'Full of Tears'**

On August 19, over 1,000 orphans at the *Al-Wafa Orphan Village* in Gaza graduated from school. The children wept, as no parents were there to share the moment—their parents had been killed by the Israeli army,

S Shankar

**The Spectre of Naxalism**

Home Minister Amit Shah has accused the Opposition's vice presidential election candidate Justice B Sudershan Reddy (Retd) of *supporting Naxalism* by passing a judgment that ended the practice of appointing Special Police Officers to fight the Maoists in Chhattisgarh. What was the context of the case, what did the state argue, and what did the SC rule?

Justice Reddy, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, headed the Bench that in 2011 delivered the landmark ruling in *Nandini Sundar v State of Chhattisgarh*, which ended *Salwa Judum*, the practice of using tribal youth as Special Police Officers (SPOs) to counter the Maoist insurgency in Chhattisgarh. Nobody is safe in Modi's India. Those who oppose government policies may be conveniently described as naxalites and erased from the political landscape.

Amaal Sheikh

**Trump—the Bully**

Trump, despite his highly personalised approach and considerable degree of unpredictability, is apparently bent upon working out a working relation with Putin, the Kleptocrat, and ceding him a limited sphere of exclusive influence in order to obtain a relatively freehand in respect of the rest of the globe.

His ways are largely similar to that of a street bully who's ready or even keen to cut deals with one or two other (smaller and yet dangerous) bullies to stabilise his reign over a much larger territory.

In that schema, Ukraine is just an insignificant pawn to be sacrificed without batting an eyelid.

That's precisely why Ukraine was uninvited to a summit meant to decide the fate of Ukraine.

Unfortunately, despite some valiant noise by Macron and a few others, Europe, as a whole, has turned out to be an extremely weak-kneed entity.

That makes Trump look even more intimidating.

Sukla Sen

**Two Victories**

In Assam, citizenship is not just about documents—it is about dignity, belonging and survival. Every accusation of being a "foreigner" tears lives apart. Two landmark victories illustrate how work of Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP) matter.

A 56-year-old Bengali-speaking Muslim woman living with disability, Banasha Bibi, was accused of being a Bangladeshi in a case filed back in 2002—but shockingly; she was served notice only in 2022. Despite decades of valid documents, she was dragged into a tribunal battle she could barely fight alone.

With full legal and paralegal aid from CJP, her lifelong Indian identity was proven beyond doubt. On June 25, 2025, the Foreigners' Tribunal in Bongaigaon declared her an Indian. For Banasha, this was more than a verdict—it was the restoration of dignity after years of state-inflicted trauma.

Sukumar Baisya, a 64-year-old Bengali-speaking Hindu, has lived through unimaginable hardship—his home was burnt down during the Assam Movement in 1983, and decades later, he was accused of being a foreigner.

CJP's team meticulously gathered evidence proving his roots in Assam stretching back generations, including his father's 1956 citizenship certificate. On February 7, 2025, the Tribunal cleared Sukumar of all al-

legations, affirming him as an Indian citizen by birth. He wept as he received the judgement, saying CJP had restored not just his rights, but his very sense of security.

Banasha and Sukumar represent thousands still caught in Assam's citizenship dragnet. Their victories are rays of hope—proof that with strong legal defence and community support, truth and justice can prevail.

But this fight is far from over. Each case takes months of painstaking legal work, dedicated field investigation, and the courage of people like Banasha and Sukumar. And CJP cannot do it without people's support.

**Citizens for Justice and Peace**

**'Don't cry at my Funeral'**

Who was Mariam Dagga, the Palestinian photojournalist killed by Israel's double-tap strike on Nasser Hospital? Working as a photojournalist for over a decade, Mariam Dagga had spent the past 23 months documenting Israel's war on Gaza for Independent Arabia and the Associated Press. Remembered as a "role model" with "unparalleled energy", Dagga worked tirelessly throughout the war, even as her mother died from cancer and an Israeli strike killed her best friend. Her murder marks a huge loss not just for colleagues and friends but the millions of human stories Mariam sought to elevate through her work. Aug 27 2025

S Shankaran

**The Club of Octogenarians**

As a senior member of the club of octogenarians, let me congratulate and welcome Ram Puniyani on his entering our club. I'm sure the club will benefit from his invaluable writings, which I hope he'll continue to engage in.

Best wishes for a long life of a brave compatriot.

Sumanta Banerjee, Hyderabad

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*'I am very sorry to hear that he has passed away. I do indeed remember him and our exchanges in the course of his translating my book. Please convey my condolences and sincerest sympathies to his family'*  
—Romila Thapar

□ □ □

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