

“The Losers Shall Inherit the World”

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Vijayendra is familiar to the readers of *Frontier*. He has been writing regularly on various subjects. Some 11 essays published during the last eight years have been compiled in book form with a title “The Losers Shall Inherit the World”.*

First essay is titled “The Bihar Failure Syndrome: Myth and Reality”. The media present a dismal picture of Bihar making that the state appears to have failed on every front—economic, political and cultural.

The truth is that Bihar played a leading role in the formation of Kisan Sabha. After Independence Bihar was the first state to have a land reforms act. Crimes and atrocities against women are very low—Bihar ranks 18.

No suicide of farmers has been reported from Bihar - whereas number of peasants committing suicide is alarming in the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

Though State Transport workers have not been paid for more than 18 months (in October 2004) buses were running due to people’s cooperation. School teachers were not getting salaries for months yet no school was closed. People are taking care.

A record number of Biharis are working in major cities like Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai, Rubber gardens in Kerala—virtually in every state of India. They also dominate the All India services and get jobs in Army, Navy and Air Force. The state gets huge amounts as Money Orders from Biharis employed/settled in other states.

In the second essay titled ‘Coal, Mafia and Miners’ the author has furnished data about the collieries in the Public Sector and Private Sector in Bihar, Jharkhand, Bengal, Orissa, Chattisgarh and other states.

He traces the history of the coal mines - how the collieries in the Private Sector were nationalized in the early 1970s. The author describes the Mafia - its composition from Upper caste persons of Arrah, Ballia and Chhapra districts of Bihar. Collieries Kamgar Union (BCKU) was formed to meet the challenge of the Mafia under the leadership of AK Roy. The union was affiliated to CITU. Since AK Roy was somewhat supportive of Naxalite ideology he was chucked out of CPM. BCKU developed its own political front called Marxist Co-ordination Committee.

The third essay titled ‘Why Do Naxalites Survive’ is well written perhaps due to the leanings of the author for the Naxalite ideology. He traces the origins of the movement in 1967 and there is a good analysis of its ideology - contradictions etc.

In his concluding remarks Vijayendra observes: “Naxalites are effective in some areas in India because there are some glaring unresolved contradictions in our society... Naxalites have proved more successful than others because they have an ideology that inspires youth”.

In the fourth essay titled ‘Activists For the poor: Naxalites and NAPM’ the author gives some facts and figures about Naxalites—now called Maoists. They have an army of 12,000 cadres, spread over 170 districts— comprising a population of 100 million people and cover 25 percent of the land area in the country.

NAPM (National Alliance of People's Movement) grew around Narmada Bachao Andolan and now encompasses various such movements in India.

Similarities and differences between the Naxalites and NAPM are discussed. Both champion the cause of the poor and political parties which are mostly anti-poor oppose them. Surely the state is never friendly.

Differences are in their stand on violence. Naxalites are ready to resort to counter-violence against the violent oppression of the State and aim to overthrow the state. They enjoy poor people's support and live like fish in water.

NAPM do not resort to counter violence as a rule, have a critique of development and work with development outfits. Their life style is middle class - a campus culture keeping a distance from the poor. However many of them practise voluntary simplicity.

The author has emphasized a need for a dialogue between the two groups. He suggests the Quaker Method. He has also given out details of Quaker Practice.

The fifth essay titled 'The Logic of Ol Chiki' is about Guru Gomke Pandit Raghunath Murmu.

It is interesting to know that Murmu was a linguist knowing Santhali, Ho, Mundari, Oriya, Bengali, Sadan and Hindi. He invented a new script for Santhali language-called Opchik. He prepared wodden blocks of Santhali alphabets in the new script and printed his writings in his own press. He was a good singer. The new script was recognized by the West Bengal Govt. in 1978 for the instruction of Santhali children at the primary stage.

The author draws attention that there are 10 syllaberics (scripts)—Devanagari (Hindi, Marathi, Nepali and Sanskrit), Assamese, Bengali, Oriya, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Gujarati and Panjabi. He first thought India should have a common script either Roman or Devanagari. Later on, he realizes if that happens printed history of languages in scripts other than Deva-nagari would become irrelevant and lost. That way Ol Chiki could find its place of pride amongst the Santals.

The sixth essay titled 'Buddhisim in Modern India' gives some interesting information about Ambedkar, Dharmanda Kosambi and Anagarika Dharampala who established the Mahabodhi society in India in 1891 and brought Buddhism back to India.

Ambedkar embraced Buddhism and founded the Buddhist society of India. "His Buddhism was a product of New England Puritanism of Olcot and Deweyan rationalism, could only help the Dalit middle class to rise but could not help the Dalit poor.

Vijayendra disputes the established belief that Acharyas like Shankara, Kumarila and Udayan drove Buddhism out of India. These Acharyas were only arguing their points among pandits and common man was not aware of the proceedings. The real reason for the decline of Buddhism was due to the loss of patronage for Buddha Mutts- which were converted or captured by Hindu Shaivites.

The seventh essay titled 'Dakhni' narrates how this language from Deccan proved to be the inspiration for the development of Urdu and Hindi. Incidentally Urdu language has some 300 years of literary tradition and Hindi just 150 years. The progenitor of both these languages is Braja Bhasha, a

dialect spoken in areas around Delhi, Mathura and Agra. With the invasions of Allauddin Khilji around 1325 and with the transfer of capital by Tughlaq from Delhi to Devagiri in 1326, thousands of families, soldiers, fortune seekers, traders and scribes travelled to Deccan. The Braja Bhasha brought by these people mixed with local languages like Marathi, Kannada and Telugu and a new language *Dakhni* was born. Dakhni flourished for some five-six centuries - later declined due to various reasons.

It was Wali Dakhni the poet from Deccan who sang his gazals in Delhi in 1700. Both the poet and his language mesmerized Delhi. Dakhni got a new name 'Urdu' and got royal patronage. The first famous poets of Urdu were Mirza - Jan-I Jaman Mazar, Mir Taqi Mohd Rafi and Mir Dard.

The author gives an interesting information that a Tamilian Kazi Mohammed Bahari in 17th century used the word Hindi for Dakhni in his sufi poetry called Manlagan.

The eighth essay is titled 'Language of Bio Geography'.

The author points out that Telengana is a geographic region separated from the coastal Andhra by the Eastern ghats, by Tungabhadra and Krishna rivers in the south. It has a different dialect. Telugu language brings political domination in its wake to Telengana State. The author says that there is a biogeo-graphic logic for the demand for separate Telengana.

In his concluding remarks the author makes a U turn and says: 'If Telengana is created today, it will go the same way as Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. These mineral rich regions are attracting rapacious capitalist sharks. The ruling politicians in these states are not equipped to deal with them and will sell the resources cheap.... So the demands for these identities (Telengana) can give good results only if they are achieved along with socialist or libertarian demands of freedom from exploitation, equality and rational uses of resources'.

The Ninth essay is titled 'Dumping on the Environment Class, Caste and Gender'.

It is a well known fact that environmental crisis - due to the pollution of soil, waterways and air - is the greatest challenge mankind is facing since the last three decades. The author has identified a new trend in India - where the contradiction among classes - castes and gender are correlated and dumped on the environment.

One set of NGOs, govt. officials and scientists put the blame for the destruction of forests on the people - mainly Advasis surviving on forests. There is another set of NGOs and specialists who argue about the rights of Adivasis and their livelihoods which they got out of the forests.

In many small towns and villages of Andhra Pradesh (Tamil Nadu as well) separate glasses are kept outside the Tea shops for the Dalits. They have to wash the glasses themselves. Tea will be poured from a distance. When many NGOs opposed this practice, Tea shops introduced disposable plastic cups - an environmental hazard.

It has been a sort of culture that women, especially in rural areas fetching water from 'Panghats' - be it a river, pond or a common well. With the introduction of taps on a large scale in rural areas water consumption and wastage has risen manifold impacting the environment. This is argued as a case of removal of drudgery for women.

There is a funny observation that today there are more environmentalists than marxists.

The tenth essay is titled 'Prolonging Death, Capitalism and Old age'.

The author's point is that old age is a new phenomenon of the twentieth century. Majority of people from poorer nations and the less privileged sections of the developed nations do not live long. It is only the affluent and rich people live or are kept alive by medications. They are a burden to the society since they do not contribute anything positive. Continuing the argument he says that old age is a racket created by medico-industrial complex.

The author quotes Ivan Illich "death is defined as a stage where the patient is unable to pay". In fact Ivan Illich had also ridiculed the death delaying drama of the modern medical practitioners. On the other hand, millions of young people are dying all over the world from curable diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, cholera and diarrhoea. But they cannot pay and hence they have to die.

The author's wish is that there should be a system of a national health care and old people should be allowed to die with dignity.

The eleventh and last essay is titled 'Vegetarianism and Communalism'.

The author makes a point that mankind for millennia was dependent on proteins from animals. Vegetarianism came to India in the wake of Buddhism and Jainism. Jains were traders mostly. They consume milk of cows and buffalows - yet claim to be vegetarians. Genuine vegetarians - there is a very small number in every country who do not consume milk. In many African nations and in a number of tribal societies milk is not consumed -though they take meat from cattle and poultry.

Gandhi comes from Bania community which imitated the Jains and practised vegetarianism. Gandhi made vegetarianism an important component of his non-violence. People from coastal areas and Bengal are mostly non-vegetarian. Whereas a sizable number of Hindus in central India practise vegetarianism. Since Muslims take meat and when they take beef it becomes a communal issue and people get killed. The author suggests a saner view—where vegetarianism is not imposed on others.

In the preface the author has stated that his essays challenge some popular notions, beliefs and theories. He also hopes to educate the activists. One can say that the essays are a vindication of his statement and hope. This is the plus point. The minus point is that the author has a tendency to digress. The points he make in such digressions are, nevertheless interesting. □□□