

# THE RADICAL HUMANIST



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Sabeen Mahmud who was killed in Pakistan

## Murder of a Liberal

N.D. Pancholi

## Dr. Ambedkar's 125th Birth Anniversary – The Real Tribute

Rajindar Sachar

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Mahi Pal Singh

## What Does "Supernatural" Mean, Anyway?

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542

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### Founder Editor:

M.N.Roy

### Advisors:

Dr. R.M. Pal  
Dr. Narisetti Innaiah

### Editor:

Mahi Pal Singh

### Editorial Board:

Ramesh Awasthi, Dr. Deepavali Sen,  
Vidya Bhushan Rawat, Qurban Ali,  
N.D. Pancholi (Ex-officio Member)

### Publisher and Printer:

N.D. Pancholi

### Send articles and reports to:

**Mahi Pal Singh** at G-3/617, Shalimar Garden  
Extension I, Rose Park, Sahibabad,  
Ghaziabad-201005. (U.P.) Ph. 09312206414

### or E-mail them to:

[theradicalhumanist@gmail.com](mailto:theradicalhumanist@gmail.com)

### Please send Subscription/Donation Cheques in favour of

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**N.D. Pancholi**, G-3/617, Shalimar Garden Extn. I  
Rose Park, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad-201005 (U.P.)  
Ph. 0120-2648691, (M) 9811099532

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## CONTENTS:

### Editorial :

- Absurd and Illegal Order of the NGT Banning old Vehicles**  
– *Mahi Pal Singh* 3

### Articles and Features:

- Dr. Ambedkar's 125th Birth Anniversary**  
– **The Real Tribute**  
– *Rajindar Sachar* 5

- NGOs and agrarian crises**  
– *Kuldip Nayar* 7

- Murder of a Liberal**  
– *N.D. Pancholi* 9

- "I stand up for what I believe" Sabeen Mahmud**  
– Interview 10

- Relevance of Rama Manohar Lohia Today**  
– *K.S. Chalam* 13

- What Does "Supernatural" Mean, Anyway?**  
– *Michael Shermer* 16

- R.I.N. Mutiny1946**  
– *From the pages of History* 18

- From the Writings of M.N. Roy:**  
**On the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Defeat of Fascism** 23

- Mrs. Ellen Roy: Final Deprivation**  
– *Jawaharlal Jasthi* 24

- Secularism Revisited**  
– *Justice R.A. Jahagirdar* 26

### Human Rights Section:

- "Bill of Rights" in the Constitution of India:  
Updated**  
*G. B. Singh* 34

### Book Review:

- Radical Humanist Movement in A.P.**  
– *Book by Dr. Narisetti Innaiah* 38

### Report:

- Celebration of 128th Birth Anniversary of  
M.N. Roy in Kolkata, 2015**  
– *Ms. Anjali Chakraborty* 39

- News & Views:** 41-42

## **Editorial:**

# **Absurd and Illegal Order of the NGT Banning old Vehicles**

**Mahi Pal Singh**

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) headed by Justice Swatanter Kumar recently issued two orders, first banning of petrol vehicles older than 15 years old and the second one banning diesel vehicles older than 10 years. Though nobody can question the sagacity of providing clean and pollution free air to the people in Delhi-NCR, the way these two orders were issued without doing any research into the causes of pollution in Delhi and without taking into account a holistic view of the problem, the absurd, illegal and arbitrary orders seem to suggest the stringent remedy of cutting the head off for treating headache.

A study by Dinesh Mohan, a Volvo Chair professor emeritus at IIT Delhi, says that only 7 % vehicles in Delhi are more than 10 years old. He has also quoted a 2013 study that concluded that transport sector is responsible for only 17 % of fine, respirable particles which contribute to air pollution as against 15 % from brick kilns and 12 % from LPG or domestic sector.

It is also surprising that the order to ban old petrol vehicles came more than a month earlier than the order to ban diesel vehicles although a 2008 study commissioned by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) found that the particulate matter (PM) emissions from diesel vehicles was about 24 times and from light commercial vehicles (LCVs) 166 times that of the petrol-run vehicles. One wonders whether diesel cars were earlier spared because the SUVs and luxury cars run on diesel and belong to the rich, influential and affluent sections of the society. One also wonders whether the central government also went in appeal to stay the order only after a ban was imposed on old diesel vehicles. This order was stayed for 15 days, and later extended by 15

more days, by the NGT when truckers' unions threatened to block all supplies to the capital if their more than 10 years old vehicles were impounded at the borders of Delhi. What would have been the plight of the people of Delhi if the high-handed order had not been stayed is anybody's guess.

The NGT, in its over enthusiasm to clean the Delhi air instantly just by an order, committed many illegalities besides not imagining the social impact of the bull-dosing order. While issuing the order of banning more than 15 years old petrol run vehicles (and also the diesel based vehicles) it forgot that a very large number of such cars are now run on CNG which is supposed to be a clean fuel. All the vehicles are also checked for pollution every three months and issued Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates. How can such vehicles be banned when they do not pollute the air? If PUC certificates have no validity, then why does the government collect crores of Rupees every month as the fee for issuing such certificates? Since the motor vehicle law does not specify any age for the vehicles, they can run on the roads provided their road-worthiness is certified by the Road Transport Authority as specified in the law. Merely the age of the vehicle cannot determine whether it causes air pollution or not. The central government has also observed: "Parliament has enacted the Motor Vehicle Act and people buying vehicles are doing so in accordance with it. In implementing the law to protect the environment - The air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act - how can the right of citizens ensured in another Act be snatched?"

The social impact of such a ban has also not been

taken into account by the NGT. Most of these old vehicles are purchased and owned by middle and lower middle class people based on their need as they have to take their family members, who are physically disabled, heart patients or suffering from other serious diseases and very old members of their families, to hospitals in emergency situations and also elsewhere. For such people their vehicles are their ambulances. Is it not absurd to ban their vehicles on which their lives, and in many cases their livelihoods, depend? And that too without seriously assessing whether their vehicles really cause air pollution or not? Would it not have been better if the NGT had addressed problems like long traffic jams, in which thousands of vehicles keep idling and throwing out pollutants, the problem of affluent families keeping multiple vehicles and other factors that cause greater air pollution than the vehicles? Has the country really reached such economic development where the people can afford to buy new cars every 10/15 years? Does the NGT or the government have any plan to phase out old vehicles in such a manner that the

people do not feel the burden of replacing their old vehicles - at least those people who have somehow managed to get together the money to buy an old vehicle to satisfy their need? Why has the option of registering only those new vehicles in future which run on the 'clean' CNG fuel, and letting the present vehicles run as usual till they get phased out by themselves, not been explored?

The only beneficiary of the old vehicle ban order is going to be the vehicle manufacturing industrialists. This order will not, and cannot, ensure clean air to the people of Delhi-NCR which in any case is their right. A comprehensive and well-planned long term policy, based on proper research and in consultation with all the stake holders, including the government which has to provide the funds and the necessary infrastructure to implement such an ambitious but important plan, has to be devised for that. If the government has asked for six months to come out with such a plan, it is not too much considering the exercise it has to undertake to reach a viable solution of the problem.

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## Dr. Ambedkar's 125th Birth Anniversary - The Real Tribute

Rajindar Sachar

All newspapers on 15th April, 2015 were full of all parties in the country, though normally at each other's throat, vying with each other in their full throated praise for Dr. Ambedkar as one of the greatest Indian leader of the country. The tribute to Dr. Ambedkar is fully deserved, but one is skeptic of the genuineness and sincerity of this by most of these parties. Though the average person in the country unhesitatingly rightly accepts him as the leader in framing our Constitution, all parties except the Socialist Party of Jaya Prakash Narain, Dr. Lohia, ignored, rather, reviled his contribution.

Dr. Ambedkar was a multi-faceted personality which is quite rare. His massive treatise on Annihilation of Caste was the subject of ridicule by RSS, the ancestor of B.J. Party. Even now Modi Government's open encouragement of RSS in its campaign against the Minorities, especially Muslims, and their lowly behaviour towards Dalits can never allow them to bask in Dr. Ambedkar's social philosophy.

Congress party proclaims that Dr. Ambedkar will be remembered as a congressman - ironically it opposed him in his election to Lok Sabha in 1954. For Congress to claim that it made him the Chairperson of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution is factually wrong - it was only on Mahatma Gandhi insistence that Dr. Ambedkar headed the Drafting Committee. Moreover servility to the concept of a leader, as shown by the awe mysteriously being created on Rahul's rebirth so as to take on the leadership of Congress, is in the similar vein of a godly saint emerging from his cave of meditation to take on the battle against the demon of all other parties. This servile and undemocratic approach of Bhakti has been condemned by Dr. Ambedkar

thus; "The second thing we must do is to observe the caution which John Stuart Mill has given to all who are interested in the maintenance of democracy, namely, not 'to lay their liberties at the feet of even a great man, or to trust him with powers which enable him to subvert their institutions'. There is nothing wrong in being grateful to great men who have rendered lifelong services to the country. But there are limits to gratefulness. As has been well said by the Irish patriot, Daniel O' Connel, "No man can be grateful at the cost of his honour, no women can be grateful at the cost of her chastity and no nation can be grateful at the cost of its liberty. This caution is far more necessary in the case of India than in the case of any other country in the world. Bhakti in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul. But, in politics, Bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship." (emphasis supplied)

The Mayawatis like false followers of Dr. Ambedker want to deify him and in the bargain hope to conceal their own misdeeds of corruption by trying to instill the fear amongst their co-caste holders and try to mislead them by suggesting that their betrayal of the cause of Dalits should not be exposed for the sake of unity of caste. How cheap!

I am quite worried at a recent trend of debate and discussion in newspapers, T.V. raising question about the need for reservation of Dalits and OBC and even wrongly attributing that Dr. Ambedkar was against long time reservation. To me this thinking is heretically divisive. We must honestly recognize that Dalits have to be brought out of not only the financial but also social outcasteism to which they have been condemned for centuries.

It was only the Socialist Party of Jaya Prakash Narayan and Dr. Lohia which found a kindred spirit in Dr. Ambedkar philosophy as is clear from the writing of Dr. Lohia in the fifties wherein he wrote, "The gap between the hundred million Dvijas on the one side, and the two hundred million Dalits on the other is so wide that no political party has as yet undertaken to fill it up. It is futile to talk of revolutionary politics unaccompanied by efforts for social change and conscious effort to bridge the gulf between Dviya leadership and the Dalits."

In the pursuit of this objective Dr. Lohia on behalf of Socialist Party had correspondence to work together for this common goal. A meeting was also fixed between the two, but unfortunately Dr. Ambedkar died before the meeting could take place. The sorrow of Dr. Lohia was expressed in a letter addressed to Socialist leader Madhu Limaye wherein he wrote, "You can well understand my sorrow at Dr. Ambedkar's sudden death. Dr. Ambedkar was to me a great man in Indian politics and apart from Gandhiji is as great as the greatest of caste Hindu leaders." (emphasis supplied) This fact has always given me solace and confidence that the caste system of Hinduism can one day be destroyed. Dr. Lohia had expressed the hope "that Scheduled Caste Federation Forum of Dr. Ambedkar will contribute to have the symbol of Dr. Ambedkar for homage and his independence ..... Dr. Ambedkar who would be leader of all Indians and not Dalits only."

The homage paid by Modi government and UPA Government is ironic considering its pro corporate proximity and displacing peasantry to build industrial corridors and purporting to charm the simple public with one lakh crore Bullet train built by Japan - this clearly shows its total insensitivity and reminds one of Marie Antoinette's remarks which led to French Revolution, namely "If there is no bread why do not masses eat cakes." Let me in this context remind Modi and his admirers of the warning given by Dr. Ambedkar on conclusion of the Constituent Assembly on 26th November 1949, "In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of democracy which this Constituent Assembly has so laboriously built up".

The best homage to Dr. Ambedkar will be to heed solemnly this warning and act accordingly.

Dated : 25/04/2015

### **Search for Truth**

Truth resides in every human heart, and one has to search for it there, and to be guided by truth as one sees it. But no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his own view of truth.

**Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi**

## NGOs and Agrarian Crises

**Kuldip Nayar**

It is unfortunate that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is harassing and hounding NGOs. Probably, the party's leaders do not realise that many of their members were once themselves part of NGOs. When the Jana Sangh merged into the Janata Party after successfully resisting the authoritarian rule of Mrs Indira Gandhi, they were part of the struggle to uphold human rights, which the then ruling Congress Party had trampled upon mercilessly. How can those very people be anti NGO now?

Accounts of voluntary organisations are audited and checked by the Finance Ministry on a regular basis. All foreign funds come through official channels. There is little scope for any hanky-panky. The change of procedure is nothing but harassment. Prior government sanction means endless waiting for the funds urgently needed in the fields where the activists work.

I am surprised how the BJP has forgotten the Gandhi Peace Foundation was hauled over the coals after Mrs Gandhi came to power in 1980. The then Jana Sangh workers were chastised unnecessarily. The BJP is only a new avatar of the Jana Sangh, which took part in movements for the assertion of individuals' right to liberty and free speech.

I know both Teesta Setelvad and Javed Anand. They enjoy an impeccable reputation for integrity. Their relentless fight against communal forces is the bright chapter in the annals of secularism. That the BJP is tilting towards Hindu ideology is unfortunate, to say the least. But that does not mean those who are fighting against parochialism to underline the secular spirit of our Constitution should be getting the wrong end of the stick.

After winning freedom, the constituent assembly

discussed many forms of governance. But what came to be supported by all sections of the society was a secular polity. To undo that would mean mocking at the sacrifices which millions of people made to establish a democratic, secular republic.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was reportedly behind the Gujarat riots which killed thousands of Muslims, has himself realised the futility of dividing the society on religious basis. It is a healthy development that Modi himself now publicly says: sab ka sarkar, sab ka vikas (Everybody's government for everybody's progresses). Unthinkingly some BJP members, who are under the influence of the RSS, are picking on members of minority communities and going to the extent of vandalising churches or indulging in conversions in the name of ghar wapsi .

Modi should intervene at some stage to stop them from bringing a bad name to India which is admired for its spirit of tolerance and sense of accommodation. I remember a Jews' delegation calling on me when I was India's High Commissioner at London. The delegates wanted to convey their gratefulness for the tolerance India had come to signify.

They said that it was the only country in the world where Jews had never faced any kind of discrimination. At that time New Delhi had not given recognition to Israel. Still they did not make any issue of it. What is disconcerting is that secularism which should have deepened its roots by this time has failed to do so. India has developed economically as it should have in the last 68 years since independence.

Maybe, rapid economic development is the answer. In this context, the backwardness of

villages testifies to our failure. Farmers are the backbone of India's economy. But they are suffering the most. Their countrywide suicides indicate that the benefits of production have not reached them. Even a basic amenity like clean drinking water is a mirage.

Another farmer has committed suicide in the well-off state of Maharashtra. He is the ninth since March. The news from other states is too distressing. The farmer cannot afford the rising cost of production at the farm. After a farmer from Rajasthan committed suicide at a public meeting in New Delhi, I thought that his death would touch the respondent chord and the nation would focus its attention on how to improve the plight of the farmers. I must admit that I was wrong. There was a furore in parliament all right. Prime Minister Modi too expressed his grief. Yet, it was business as usual soon after. The farmer was forgotten. I have not been able to draw up a blueprint on how to improve the farmer's lot.

In fact, the introduction of land acquisition bill in parliament showed that the corporate sector has had its way. The concerns of the farmers, a pre-requisite, have been dropped. The matter has been pushed into the background. Even the opposition's march, led by Congress president Sonia Gandhi, is an event of the distant past. I

*(Kuldip Nayar is a veteran syndicated columnist catering to around 80 newspapers and journals in 14 languages in India & abroad. kuldipnayar09@gmail.com)*

do not have to remind that some 67 per cent of the people in the country depend on fields which are increasingly becoming killing fields.

Showing preference to the corporate sector, which no doubt provides jobs, will be against the ethos of the freedom struggle. Mahatma Gandhi focused attention on people in rural areas and moved from a bustling city to a small place, Wardha, which later became an important town in the country. NGOs are carrying on the work of the Mahatma. The sanction to some 900 NGOs has been withdrawn because they have not kept accounts properly. The purpose of auditing their accounts should be to see whether there is an overall pilferage of funds.

Expecting them to maintain accounts is not wrong. But checking even the last paisa spent is asking for a little too much because these activists are engaged in day to day work at the grassroots level. The task which Teesta and Anand have embarked upon may not be to the liking of the ruling party because ideologically they are poles apart. One stands for a composite society while the other is engaged in a task which is divisive. Both cannot coexist. Freedom was won for a secular democratic society and the society should stay with that purpose.

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— **Mahi Pal Singh, Editor, The Radical Humanist**



## Prominent Civil Liberty Activist Sabeen Mahmud killed in Pakistan

N.D. Pancholi

Sabeen Mahmud, a prominent Pakistani social and human rights activist was shot dead in Karachi, Pakistan on 24th April, 2015. Mahmud, 40, had founded T2F (The Second Floor), a café in 2007 which served as a 'meeting place' for the social and human rights activists in Karachi. She was shot four times at close range by unidentified gunmen.

Mahmud was coming out after hosting a discussion on Balochistan's "disappeared people" at her café. Her mother also got seriously injured in shooting. She was one of the Pakistan's most outspoken human rights activists - a voice of reason, secularism and progress. Raza Rumi, one of her friends and civil liberty activists, said, "In her work, she was neither a political partisan nor a power seeker but Pakistan's state and non-state actors are averse to any form of dissent. This is why she had to be killed."

Sabeen knew that she could be attacked any time by Islamic radicals, but that did not deter her in her mission. This article is followed by one of her interviews in which she says that more people have to stand up against obscurantist ideas.

Rumi Raza, the prominent liberal TV host, narrowly escaped a gun attack on his car in Lahore that killed his driver last year, while another anchor, Hamid Mir, survived being shot in the stomach in Karachi shortly after hosting a TV programme about Balochistan. Rumi had to leave Pakistan and is residing abroad.

No perpetrators have been brought to justice so far.

Mohammad Shakil Auj, 54, dean of Islamic Studies at the University of Karachi, known for his liberal religious views, was shot dead in

Karachi on 18th September 2014. The professor issued fatwas pronouncing, for example, that a Muslim woman could marry a non-Muslim man, and that women need not remove lipstick or nail polish before saying their prayers

Salman Taseer, the governor of Pakistan's Punjab province, was one of the few Muslim officials liberal enough to oppose Pakistan's insane blasphemy laws. He was shot dead on 5th January, 2011 by one of his own guards. His assassin, Mumtaz Qadri, was then treated by most of the population as a national hero!

Another journalist, Mohd. Shoib Adil, had devoted significant portion of his life in publishing a magazine 'Naya Zamana' in Urdu having a liberal outlook. An "Ahmadis hunting group" found that seven years ago he had published an autobiography of a High court judge who claimed being of 'Ahmedi faith'. Adil had showered upon the author some praises. Soon his office was raided by the group along with the police who detained him for sometime but allowed him to escape in the night when the 'group' people had left. Police advised him to leave the city forever. Adil is in hiding since then in another city and his journalistic career has come to an end.

Most journalists in Pakistan instinctively treat discussion of the army and militancy with great caution. Najam Sethi, Pakistan's most high-profile liberal commentator, has taken to travelling in an armoured vehicle.

The ordinary citizens are faced with daily dangers which include militant attacks, drone strikes, military operations, and suicide bombings. Yet, war victims are not properly recognized or helped by the State.

Sabeen Mahmud's assassination shows that dark clouds continue to hover over Pakistan. We cannot sit back and gloat over the misfortune of our neighbor. Liberal and progressive forces in India and also elsewhere have a duty to raise their voices in support of the progressive

movements in Pakistan. One of the way could be to redouble our efforts in checkmating and opposing regressive ideologies propagated by Obscurantist 'Hindutva groups and other similar elements of different shades operating in this country.

### ***An Interview of Sabeen Mahmud:***



***"I stand up for what I believe in, but I can't fight guns" - Sabeen Mahmud interview by Karima Bennoune***

*Sabeen Mahmud alleviated intellectual poverty until the day she was murdered, 24 April 2015. In an interview with Karima Bennoune in 2010 Mahmud explained why she founded a politico-cultural space in Karachi.*

*Sabeen Mahmud, founder of the NGO Peace Niche and director of Karachi's cultural institution, T2F, was assassinated on Friday night while leaving the centre with her mother, who was also gravely injured in the attack. T2F had just hosted an event about human rights in Balochistan, and Sabeen had reportedly been receiving threats.*

*This interview is published today in memory of Sabeen Mahmud*

**Karima Bennoune:** What made you decide to found T2F?

**Sabeen Mahmud:** I was studying in Lahore, and when I came back I was working in technology. But my mother works for an educational non-

profit. This sense of social justice and standing up for what you believe in started becoming a part of everyday life for me, just thinking about what, as individuals, we are supposed to do about issues that confront society. I finished college, after trying to drop out for four years, unsuccessfully. I started working. By 2006, I was getting very restless and wanted to do something in development. The companies that were our large clients - Unilever, Shell, - I realized that I am helping them sell more toothpaste or more oil and I am angry about what they are doing in certain parts of the world. It started getting more difficult to reconcile my ideas around activism with the work I was doing.

I am deeply interested in arts and music and technology and science. So, I thought, how about creating a space that would be able to host all kinds of events, would be a talent incubator, a platform for emerging artists, graphic designers, singers, poets, or other people who don't have a platform? Then, I thought, when we talk about how young people are the future, what are we doing to create future leaders? We are not challenging them.

There were coffee shops, but a lot of them were expensive. It was very businesslike. You go and have your meal and leave. Coffee houses used to be centers of intellectual activity and discourse. I know that was decades ago, but surely people still have things to say.

In Pakistan, we don't have bars. How are people supposed to meet new people? Then, one day I just decided I would do this. I wanted to set up a non-profit not to make money but to make meaning, with a quadrangle for theatre, and other

things around it. But, we didn't have money. It was a crazy idea. My uncle had sent some money. My mother and grandmother and I live together - three generations of women. I took the money my uncle sent and set up T2F which stands for "the second floor" because it was on the 2nd floor of a building.

**KB:** When did you open your doors, and how?

**SM:** May 13, 2007. It took a few months to set up. If you tell someone you've set up an NGO, no one is going to come. You want to reach out to young people. I wanted to think about how we could be self-sustaining. People will come here and sit for six hours and have one cold drink. And that does not make a space like this function. But others will come and just drop off a 1000 rupee donation. We operate on an honor code. People who understand and value will keep eating and drinking. Others will sit here all day and not even order that one cup of tea. The landlord served us notice in 2009. We had to vacate. And then somebody wrote about it in the newspaper and this wonderful man donated these two floors to us. It is rented out to us for 1 rupee a month. It took 9 months to build. I took loans, begged, borrowed and stopped just short of stealing to keep going. My mother said, "what are you doing?" I have developed gambler's nerves.

**KB:** What is the mission of T2F today?

**SM:** Changing minds does not happen in a week - especially with regard to the kinds of issues we were talking about at the forum you attended here on combatting violence against women with new technology [Take Back the Tech]. You do not get people to start thinking a certain way because you sat down one day and talked about it. What may be obvious to you and me is anathema to another person. You need that time and that engagement to hear out the other person as well as to present your viewpoint. Amartya Sen spoke of the many faces of poverty. Intellectual poverty alleviation is what we do. We work in three areas: 1) arts and culture, 2) science and technology and 3) advocacy.

We are open every day from noon to 10 PM. Initially, in the original space there was just me and I used to be in for 14 hours a day. Today, we have Hindus and Muslims and Christians working together. They sit and eat together.

**KB:** How do you keep T2F going?

I do not earn any money from this. I work nights in graphic design and technology consulting to pay my bills. When I say nights, it is actually in the middle of the day, and it could go on until 3 in the morning. I remember this one project we worked on - an interactive CD on Faiz Ahmed Faiz, a revolutionary Pakistani poet. I spent 30 days and nights in the office. I only went home to bathe. I used to be of the opinion that we can convert one day into two, if we work non-stop. Now, it is all catching up. I am 36.

We have a few volunteers and interns, and a lot of young people, and I feel so maternal to them. This is exciting because you feel the hard work pays off - like these "First Fridays" that we instituted. The first time we did it someone from one of the leading radio station came and he heard these two sisters who were playing together for the first time in public, and they were on the radio the next weekend.

**KB:** What have been some of T2F's most memorable events?

**SM:** No matter what happens, I am a geek. So, one of my favourites was with a guy who was the first Pakistani to get an application into the Apple apps store, and about his approach to business and risk. The people he hires are supposed to dedicate a certain percentage of their time to work for social justice. That was one of my favorites. But, we have had over 250 events [as of December 2010]. Another really memorable event had to do with Faiz Ahmed Faiz. We got his daughter on the phone, and then an Indian singer and a Pakistani singer. They're both very famous. They sang and told stories on Skype. We were able to use technology and show you can bridge boundaries in this way. Music transcends everything. If you go to our website, the events page has an archive back to 2007.

**KB:** What do you feel you have achieved here?

**SM:** I have no grand illusions. I was brought up in a home where my mother's focus was changing one teacher at a time, by changing the way she thinks. My mother was rebellious from the day she was born. She is not a get-out-on-the-street-and-protest kind of person. Instead, she has done incredible work in government schools changing mindsets. It takes so long and it takes so much effort. I am who I am because of her, undoubtedly.

**KB:** To what extent has the issue of fundamentalism impacted your work?

**SM:** There are certain buzz words, "combatting fundamentalism through fashion," that get attention, publicity, donor money. We have never done anything like that. We try to quietly go about our business. By its very nature, we are doing all those things. But, you don't have to shove it down people's throats. Or give press releases to that effect. "We have had twenty musicians so we have changed everything." We have changed nothing. We gave twenty people an opportunity to breathe for two hours. Maybe they would never able to do that otherwise, and I am very happy we were able to do that for them. And, I hope they can find ways to do that for other people.

**KB:** How dangerous is your work?

**SM:** I stand up for what I believe in. But I can't fight guns. I know that much, and nothing is worth dying for. You have to live for these causes. We do things on the blasphemy law and we do things on AIDS. You have to take calculated risks.

You were asking about fundamentalism. We did this thing recently on the blasphemy laws. The people who were sending us the speakers said you might not say it in the title. I said, "all our lives we have been fighting against this." We've marched on the streets for it. What will happen? We are talking about its [the blasphemy law's] repeal. It is important to talk about this. Those kinds of risks we are happy to take. More people

need to stand up.

There are people from the [security] agencies who come. It's quite clear they are from the agencies. I am sure a dossier has been prepared somewhere. They attend. They say, "don't take my photograph." They have a cup of tea.. You just have to work within what you have, and try and do as much as you can.

**KB:** How has the broader security environment in Karachi affected you?

**SM:** There are days when the guys can't come to work, because there is no transport. We can cancel an event or have it the next day. We have had to close down on occasion. There have been riots, there have been strikes. The security situation has always been awful in Karachi.

But, this year [2010], Karachi has had a lot of violence. What upsets me is there is a huge gun shop at the end of the lane. It is awful. There is talk of a de-weaponizing Karachi campaign. But, I feel it is a battle we can't win. We should focus where we can attain some victories, and feel empowered to move on.

**KB:** What battles do you want to focus on?

**SM:** The blasphemy law is something that I really want to see gone in my lifetime. We need more people to rise up and take a stand.

Sabeen Mahmud defied terror in multiple forms to champion the right to culture. She embodied the spirit of the line from Faiz Ahmed Faiz which insists that "tyrants... cannot snuff out the moon, so today, nor tomorrow, no tyranny will succeed."

Though she is gone now, Sabeen's light - which she bequeaths us all - cannot be snuffed out either.

*Karima Bennoune interviewed Mahmud at T2F in December 2010 while doing research for the book "Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here: Untold Stories from the Fight Against Muslim Fundamentalism."*

(Courtesy -Open Democracy & South Asia Citizens Web)

## Relevance of Rama Manohar Lohia Today

K.S. Chalam

History is always dispassionate about personalities and detach from emotional connect. It is proved time and again that individuals and personalities are mercilessly thrown in to oblivion when their work and ideas are menace to the contemporary society and brought to limelight those whose sacrifices for the wellbeing of mankind are eternal though they might have desolated during their lifetime. The relevance of the ideas and opinions of some Intellectuals may be far reaching and visionary during their lifetime might be felt incredible by their contemporaries but that does not mean they remain lay waste forever. There is another group of evangelists whose profession is to make irrelevant ideas significant and earn a living whether they are useful or useless to common people. Religion and faith based on hypocrisy and hegemony might make a few ideas always appear in public domain but with little relevance to aid the victims of unkindness of time. We have in India some great men like Mahatma Phuley , M.N. Roy, Ambedkar, Ram Manohar Lohia etc in the modern times whose ideas are found relevant whenever the society is dragged in to chaos and bigotry . Lohia whose 105th anniversary is celebrated on 23rd March is an occasion to review some of his ideas along with one of our greatest patriots Bhagat Singh who was hanged by the imperialists on 23rd March.

There are interesting happenings that are significant in the recent past to remember Lohia. The collapse of Soviet Union experiment, the crisis in Europe, the emergence of neoliberal policies along with the resurrection of fundamentalism, control of caste and corporate media and the inconsequence of the poverty of Indians in public debates call for a reflection on the ideas of Lohia once again. Though some scholars have published fascinating papers and books on Lohia during the centenary year in

2010, it is an occasion not burdened with any obligations to remember him as a custom, but to really understand his relevance today.

Unlike several other Indian leaders, Lohia did not go to England for his higher studies as he abhorred the Anglo-Saxons (though Germans do come under Saxons, they never claim so). He was trained by one of the foremost economic historian of his times Sombart and his contemporaries included the famous Schumaker whose 'Small is Beautiful' derived ideas from Gandhi and Buddha. His approach to the study of Indian problems is indigenous and critically drawn from Indian philosophical thought. It is very illuminating to read his 'Marx, Gandhi and Socialism' one of his very important contributions to Indian thought, Lohia used several examples from Indian thinkers like Shankara to illustrate his point. He was very critical about Marx being at the same time being a Marxist and used his theory of surplus value for his analysis. His major criticism against Marx was that he had used his European background for the study of Asian or Indian problems that are different. He was of the opinion that his lack of knowledge about the Asian society made him to draw extreme generalizations that did not allow him to draw meaningful conclusions and in a way made him irrelevant in the Indian context. One of the examples that he used to attribute to Marx is about the economic crisis and the appropriation of appropriators. This did not happen in the capitalist advanced countries of Europe, but only occurred in Asia and Russia. In fact this criticism is taken by some of the followers to an unconstrained extent to denounce Marxism. Lohia's criticism about Soviet Union of Stalin era did not last long. It is here I think we need to revise some of our reflections on Lohia to make him relevant.

The critics and admirers of Lohia should not hesitate to recognize that the limitations of Marx and Soviet model and even China do not exist anymore to extend the logic. If we do not realize this fact we would be fighting only with a shadow. Similarly the Marxists who were critical about Lohia's approach to Communism may consider the changed circumstances in the World and the relevance of Socialist programme advocated by Lohia and the need for a reassessment of his ideas to bring all the progressive forces on one platform to fight capitalism and its Siamese twin fundamentalism. The frequently cited metaphor of Marxism by most of our Indian activists and intellectuals is about the base and super structure. It is gone to such an extent that some of the materialist interpretations of history has rejected the blatant reality of caste and hoodwinked intellectuals like Ambedkar and Lohia as those who squandered time and resources on a super structure issue that will blow off once economic emancipation of the poor is achieved. We know now what has really happened to that interpretation today. That is why some critiques attribute this wrong or injudicious interpretation as mischief played by those who really belong to the other camp but tactically worked with the left to give vigor to the fundamentalists. It may not be precisely the matter of fact of the criticism, but some of the interpretations and marginalization of Lohia and his ideas by the mainstream left have caused great damage to the foundation of democracy, secularism and socialism in India. We have seen four decades of left active participation in the parliamentary form of democracy and their demands , activities, implementation of policies etc that are in no way different from what Lohia advocated? Then where is the point of departure? It may be in the analysis and interpretation of Marxism. Now the objective and subjective conditions and the assumptions about India have changed. It seems both the left and the socialist groups have lost precious time and energy in coming to terms to mitigate the miserable

conditions of the poor and the socially deprived. Is it because of the lack of realization of this phenomenon, the space kept open ended is now occupied by the opportunistic and hegemonic compradors?

Lohia has spelt out his socialist agenda in terms of 6 programmes as 1 maximum attainable equality, 2 social ownership, 3 small and indigenous technology, 4 four pillars of state, 5 decetralisation of industry, and 6 world parliament and government. These goals perhaps Lohia thought could be achieved through his seven point revolution or 'sapta kranti'. They are; equality between men and women, shun colour discrimination, annihilation of caste and status based on birth, revolution against colonialism, revolution against private capital, revolution against armaments and creation of world parliament. Unfortunately very few left thinkers seem to have taken these ideas very seriously and never interrogated them. However, his ardent followers are also to an extent responsible for this apathy who failed to raise these issues for public debate at all India level. The followers of Lohia were confined to Hindi belt and a few pockets of social groups, though they were supported by the bahujan majority (may be due to the Lohia legacy).

Some of the intellectual contributions of Lohia are found to be still valid after the emergence of North Atlantic hegemony which Lohia detested during his lifetime. Let us look at three of his important ideas like capitalism and Imperialism, limited personality of Rama and capitalist production relations. Lohia unlike the Indian Marxists was one with the Latin American scholars who have developed ideas as to how imperialist centre of USA was responsible for underdevelopment of the periphery. Lohia has questioned Marx's formulation that imperialism comes in at the final stage of capitalist expansion. He did not agree with it and said that British imperialism was responsible for the development of British capitalism and both are

interrelated. He was perhaps anticipating the Latin American scholars like Wallerstein, Gunter Frank, Cardoso, Arrighi etc when he said that the exploitation was like the village being exploited by the town. Though Lenin has elaborated on Imperialism as a continuation of Marxist analysis, interestingly both M. N. Roy and Lohia gave a different analysis to this as far as India is concerned. This needs to be further studied to make Lohia relevant today.

The greatest price the Marxists and the so called materialists of India have paid for disregarding the potential of Hinduism to derail the agenda of socialists can be seen in terms of tolerating it. It was Lohia who has taken the Hindu ethos to task by questioning the limited personality of Rama and making him as their ideal. Lohia being a critique might have in the process pricked Gandhi's Ramarajya? The Indian Intellectual class due to their control over media and public discourse has never allowed any indigenous thinker to come to limelight who questioned their social hegemony. They have been doing it from time immemorial and we could see it in the case of Phuley, Ambedkar, Periyar, Lohia and several others during the last century. We are witnessing the same in the contemporary period as well with the support of technology and at the same time diabolically even questioning its credence?

One of the important contributions of Lohia in the area of mode of production debate is his criticism of Marxist overemphasis on the destruction of production relations rather than the productive forces. It is seen that the collapse of Soviet Union could be related to the continuation of productive forces that became necropolis of socialist regime and the development of bourgeois class who diverted social surplus to USA and Western Europe and ultimately pulled down the system. It is to be examined to what extent Lohia was right in this prophecy.

The recent debate in the Parliament about color

and gender discrimination and targeting Sharad Yadav and Lohia seem to have been distorted in the media. But the fact of the matter is that Lohia spoke about the beauty of black people and explained the splendor of the personality of Draupadi. He was right in saying had the African blacks rather than the British whites were our colonial masters, black color could have taken the place of white in our public discourse. You can see this now in our electronic media and the ad industry with which our self styled protectors of Indian culture are comfortable eulogizing white and European color and blondness. This reminds that their primordial relations with Anglo-Saxon and Aryan link being displayed in their subjugation to white power but glossed over by their caste media. In order to hoodwink some of these ideas they bring a pet black cat from the opposition camp.

Lohia was one of the ardent supporters of democratic decentralization and power to the victims of caste system. Perhaps it was in this context he has encouraged the lower castes in the positions of party and power politics to provide adequate representation to the real proletariat. Unlike the Marxists who proclaim the nonexistence of caste and the presence of class in India, Lohia being an indigenous thinker correctly strategized his political move to bring equity and equanimity (samta and samtvam) in a caste ridden Hindu society. In this process Lohia is far ahead of his caste man and mentor Gandhi and also Marxists. Sadly both the groups are now considered as irrelevant and there is wide spectrum of scope thrown open for building a united struggle to make India a democratic socialist and secular country with all the left and democratic forces coming together. The life and mission of Lohia would definitely enrich all of us in this direction.

*(Excerpts of Speech delivered at Sundarayya Vignana Kendram, Hyderabad on 23 March 2015).*

## What Does "Supernatural" Mean, Anyway?

Michael Shermer

Ever since my *Scientific American* column appeared last year about the anomalous experience my wife Jennifer and I had on our wedding day involving her grandfather's long-dead radio that mysteriously began to play music at an opportune moment (never active again), much discussion has ensued regarding the implications for belief in the supernatural, for which I penned a longer explanation and analysis on *Slate*. In a March 5 *New York Times* essay Tanya Luhrmann wrote about her own experience involving a bicycle light that mysteriously melted in her backpack, she concluded "Who's to say that this had some natural explanation rather than a numinous one?" In response I wrote a letter to the editor at the *New York Times*, which they published on March 10:

### To the Editor:

Re "When Things Happen That You Can't Explain" (Op-Ed, March 5): T. M. Luhrmann opines that when things happen that cannot be explained, it opens the door for the possibility of supernatural or paranormal phenomena being real. She cites several examples of powerful personal experiences that people have had, including my own, which I recounted in my *Scientific American* column.

As interesting as such experiences are to read about, from a scientific perspective they mean nothing because there is no such thing as the paranormal or the supernatural. There is just the normal, the natural and mysteries we have yet to solve with normal and natural explanations. Until such time as we can provide natural explanations for apparently supernatural phenomena, we need do nothing with such stories because in science we will never be able to explain everything.

There is always a residue of unexplained phenomena, and in science it is O.K. to simply say "I don't know" and leave it at that. Unexplained does not equal supernatural.

The always insightful biologist and skeptic Jerry Coyne wrote an analysis of both Luhrmann's essay and my letter in which he concluded:

I mostly agree with what Shermer said, although part of the letter is confusing: "there is no such thing as the paranormal or the supernatural." One could take that as a tautology: that such phenomena, because they can be investigated by the tools of science and reason, must be natural *by definition*, as they're part of nature. But I think Shermer means more than that: that there is a natural explanation for everything that *seems* paranormal or supernatural. While everything we know about what happens in the cosmos supports this conclusion, it's still logically possible that there is a God—a supernatural being—who uses forces outside of nature to interact with the world. If that were true, those interactions would not have "normal and natural explanations." (I find the *paranormal* a bit more "natural-ish", since if we could, say, move objects with our minds, there would almost have to be some natural but unexplained reason for that.)

Jerry makes a good point here, but let me add one final point on the matter as it seems to turn on what one means by "supernatural" and "paranormal".

When I say that "there is no such thing as the paranormal or the supernatural," I mean that these words are just linguistic placeholders to talk about something for which we do not as yet have a normal or natural explanation.



Analogously, when cosmologists talk about “dark energy” and “dark matter” they don’t mean those words to be an explanation, only linguistic placeholders until they figure out what exactly is causing the as-yet unsolved mysteries (rotation of galaxies, accelerating expansion of the cosmos). But whereas cosmologists do not stop searching for the underlying mechanisms of the observed phenomena just because they have a label, religious believers and New Agers treat words like “paranormal” and “supernatural” (or “miracle”) as if they were causal explanations.

If it turned out that, say, people really could read other peoples’ minds and that they were able to do so because inside our neurons are tiny microtubules in which quantum effects happen that allow thoughts (patterns of neural firing) to be transferred from one skull to another at any distance (like “spooky action at a distance” effects that quantum physicists have measured in experiments), that would not be ESP or PSI, and we wouldn’t need to call it a “paranormal” effect because we would then know that the ability to read minds was due to the properties of neurons and atoms, and it would be subsumed under the sciences of neuroscience and/or quantum physics (quantum neuroscience?). (This is, by the way, an actual theory.)

As for the possibility that a God could be using other forces, “forces outside of nature to interact with the world” as Jerry says, if a God did that (through intercessory prayer, miracles, or whatever) in a way we could measure the effects of such interactions, wouldn’t that mean that God must be using forces measurable by our scientific instruments? Here I am reminded of the analogy drawn by the great British astronomer Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington in his classic 1958 book *The Philosophy of Physical Science*:

Let us suppose that an ichthyologist is exploring the life of the ocean. He casts a net into the water

and brings up a fishy assortment. Surveying his catch, he proceeds in the usual manner of a scientist to systematize what it reveals. He arrives at two generalizations:

1. No sea-creature is less than two inches long.
2. All sea-creatures have gills.

In applying this analogy, the catch stands for the body of knowledge which constitutes physical science, and the net for the sensory and intellectual equipment which we use in obtaining it. The casting of the net corresponds to observations.

An onlooker may object that the first generalization is wrong. “There are plenty of sea-creatures under two inches long, only your net is not adapted to catch them.” The ichthyologist dismisses this objection contemptuously. “Anything uncatchable by my net is *ipso facto* outside the scope of ichthyological knowledge, and is not part of the kingdom of fishes which has been defined as the theme of ichthyological knowledge. In short, what my net can’t catch isn’t fish.” (1958, p. 16)

Extending the analogy beyond the physical sciences to all fields, regardless of what forces a God may use outside of our universe, if he’s interacting with our universe in a way we can measure it, then he must be using forces measurable by scientific instruments or our senses, so by definition they must be natural. What our scientific nets catch are natural fish. If one were to argue that God’s forces are non-natural (or supernatural) and they can still effect the world but in a non-measurable way (because our scientific nets only catch natural fish), then what’s the difference between an invisible God and a nonexistent God?

Courtesy **eSkeptic**

**From the pages of history of Independence:**

## **R.I.N. MUTINY 1946**

**The 1946 rebellion of the sailors of the British Indian Navy by Lal Khan on the website of the International Marxist Tendency, Monday 15 September 2003**

One of the most spectacular episodes of the intense revolt against the British Raj was the uprising of the sailors of the British Indian Navy in 1946. On February 18 of that year the sailors and shipmen of the British Indian Navy battleship HMS *"Talwaar"* went on strike. They invited the masses of Bombay to join in the struggle they had started. As a result, anti-British imperialist sentiments started to spread like wildfire throughout the region.

One of the most spectacular episodes of the intense revolt against the British Raj was the uprising of the sailors of the British Indian Navy in 1946. On February 18 of that year the sailors and shipmen of the British Indian Navy battleship HMS *"Talwaar"* who were at the time posted to the Bombay harbour, went on strike. They were protesting against the bad food and adverse conditions.

Although on the first day it was limited to a peaceful hunger strike, the signs of an imminent and much bigger rebellion against the British rulers were evident. On February 19, the sailors announced the strike to the Naval personnel stationed in the fortress and to those in the Naval Barracks. They took over the Naval trucks, boarded them, hoisted red flags on them and started patrolling the city of Bombay. They were inviting the masses of the city to join in the struggle they had started. As a result, anti British imperialist sentiments started to spread like wildfire throughout the region.

On the eve of February 19 1946, much wider layers of the Naval personnel had joined in this revolt. The union jacks on most of the ships of the Royal Indian Navy in the Bombay harbour were torn down and the rebel sailors hoisted red

flags along with the flags of the political parties that were involved in the struggle for independence.

Within 48 hours the British imperialists were faced with the largest revolt ever of their Naval units. The message of this rebellion started to spread by word of mouth and then over the radio (the radio station had been taken over by the rebels) to military garrisons and barracks across India. Some of the leaders of the sailors broadcast the message of the uprising and revolutionary songs and poetry were also broadcast round the clock. The revolt spread to 74 ships, 20 fleets and 22 units of the Navy along the coast. It involved Bombay, Calcutta, Karachi, Madras, Cochin and Vishakhapatnam. On February 20 only 10 ships and 2 naval stations were not in complete revolt.

In the beginning this revolt was considered to be spontaneous but that is not completely true. On the eve of February 19 a strike committee had been formally set-up. Signalmen M.S Khan and petty officer telegraph operator Madan Singh were elected unanimously to the positions of president and vice president of the committee. Both of them were under the age of 25. One was a Muslim and the other a Sikh, and this was a conscious act to reject the religious divide being injected into the liberation movement by the native bourgeois leaders and their British masters.

Apart from the other tasks charted out for the strike committee, one of the important objectives agreed upon was to involve the political parties in this movement and gain their support. Tragically the Communist Party of India (CPI) had lost the leadership of the independence

movement due to its disastrous policy of supporting the British imperialists under the so-called “anti fascist front” policy dictated by the Stalinist elite in the Kremlin. This had led to a rapid diminishing of support for the CPI in the liberation movement. The nascent Indian bourgeoisie and their leaders were at that time negotiating a settlement with the British. They were as hostile as the British to any revolutionary upsurge at this delicate juncture in the history of the subcontinent.

Gandhi reflected this by openly condemning the uprising of the sailors. The CPI leaders once again lost the opportunity to link up with the revolutionary masses. They did nothing to connect the Naval revolt with the strikes which were taking place in the textile industry, on the railways and in other sectors throughout India. Even leaders like Subhash Chandra Bose were unable to connect this movement with the revolt taking place in the British Indian army. He was rather more involved in an adventurist binge and had gone too far in launching the INA (Indian National Army) to fight British forces, under the auspices of the reactionary Japanese regime!

Congress and the Muslim League were not prepared to back the revolt for they feared the penetration of revolutionary and class struggle ideas into the movement which they had done so much to tear apart along religious lines with cunning and deception. In spite of this betrayal and contemptuous attitude of the national bourgeois leaders, the revolutionary momentum of the uprising gave it an impetus of its own. Revolutionary zeal, sentiment and passion were booming. The whole country was filled with the echoes of the slogan, *“long live the revolution”*.

These slogans electrified the whole of Bombay. One of the poets of the era, Josh Malihabadi wrote enthralling verses an example of which was:

“My task is my growth; my name is martyr.

My slogan is revolution, revolution, revolution.”

On the February 21 the British shock troops opened fire with live ammunition on the sailors as they came out of their barracks in the Bombay fortress. This provocation changed a peaceful uprising into an armed rebellion. There were armed clashes between the British elite troops and the rebellious sailors throughout the day. On the first day one death was reported in Bombay, but on the second day 14 sailors were martyred in Karachi. The industrial workers who had joined the revolt with the sailors were subjected to brutal attacks by the British forces.

On February 22 and 23, 250 sailors and workers were slaughtered by the imperialist forces. According to various eyewitnesses interviewed, on February 21 it seemed that the oppressed masses of the whole subcontinent had risen up in a revolutionary movement against British rule. In these events the revolutionary strike committee had shifted its command to the “Narba” fleet. The sailors had now aimed the barrels of their guns on the ships and were now targeting the British Naval installations and command centres on the coast. Sirens were being sounded from all the ship decks. They were announcing through the loud speakers that to defend their comrades in the cities and in the harbour they would destroy the British military bases and installations if they dared to attack.

The British government in London was in shock. The British Labour Prime Minister Clement Atlee, in sheer desperation ordered the uprising to be crushed through brute military force. The commander of the British Indian Navy, Admiral Godfrey threatened the rebellious sailors with “surrender or be perished”. The so-called leader of the independence movement and one of the stalwarts of the Indian National Congress, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, openly came out on the side of the British. He denounced the uprising and supported the imperialists’ ultimatum. In this uprising the national leadership of India, both

Hindu and Muslim, became allies of the British imperialists. This exposed their real class character and their collaborationist role in the saga of transition from British to native rule to independence.

Meanwhile the British fighter aircraft were carrying out threatening sorties over the rebellious fleet. In such conditions Sardar Patel gave the following infamous statement: "Only a small band of insolent, hot headed and insane youngsters are trying to get involved in politics through these acts, when they have nothing to do with politics."

Isolated, disillusioned and desperate after the treacherous role and attitude displayed by the "national leadership" towards the uprising, M.S. Khan put before the strike committee, the proposal of surrender. But the 36-member committee rejected this plea. Several tense hours passed. The mainstream "national leadership" intensified its efforts to isolate the Naval uprising from the mass movement for independence that was surging across the subcontinent. Demoralization was setting in amongst the members of the strike committee.

Another session of the committee commenced in the early hours of February 24 on the battleship HMS *Talwaar*. Now it had become more evident that there was no option but to surrender and lay down arms. At 0600 hrs on February 24, 1946 black flags were raised from the deck to announce surrender. In its last session the strike committee passed a resolution that was the last message of the revolutionary sailors to the toiling masses of the South Asian subcontinent. The resolution stated, "Our uprising was an important historical event in the lives of our people. For the first time the blood of uniformed and non-uniformed workers flowed in one current for the same collective cause. We the workers in uniform shall never forget this. We also know that you, our proletarian brothers and sisters shall also never forget this. The coming generations,

learning its lessons shall accomplish what we have not been able to achieve. Long live the working masses. Long live the Revolution".

After the surrender most leaders and activists of this uprising were prosecuted incarcerated and executed in spite of their surrender. The nationalist bourgeois leaders refused to raise any protest. Not a squeak not a whimper came out from these nationalist parties masquerading as the stalwarts of independence.

However, this episode stands as one of the greatest chapters in the story of the struggle for independence from British rule. In spite of the fact that this uprising was defeated the movement showed the British what was in store for them in the future. One of the effects of this uprising was that the British Prime Minister Clement Atlee was forced to announce that the British would leave India before June 1948. Such was the blow inflicted upon the confidence of the British rulers by this naval uprising that they were forced to beat a retreat. The British, in connivance with the native bourgeois leaders, hastened the process of partition along ethnic and religious lines. After this episode they maneuvered in such a way as not to leave the subcontinent united in any form whatsoever, either as a confederation or whatever political superstructure they may have envisaged before these revolutionary events.

The policy of divide and rule, that the British had learned from the emperors of Rome, now came into full play. The living body of a culture that was thousands of years old was cut in half and the blood of 2.7 million innocent souls was shed.

There is a criminal silence and elusiveness about the details of this glorious episode in the education syllabi in both India and Pakistan. Several other similar events and great episodes have yet to see the light of the day. Still, the memory of that naval uprising haunts the echelons of power from London to Islamabad to

Delhi. The task of learning and carrying out the message and the aspirations of the sailors' strike committee of the February 1946 falls to today's rising generation of youth and workers. This can only be accomplished by carrying out a successful Socialist Revolution in any of the present day countries of the subcontinent. A socialist victory in any of these states would inevitably lead to the formation of a voluntary Socialist Federation of the South Asian Subcontinent.

(Source: In defence of Marxism. This is the website of the International Marxist Tendency).

<http://www.marxist.com/1946-rebellion-indian-navy150903.htm>

**Note:** The mutineers in the armed forces got no support from the national leaders and were largely leaderless. Mahatma Gandhi, in fact, condemned the riots and the ratings' revolt. His statement on 3 March 1946 criticized the strikers for revolting without the call of a "prepared revolutionary party" and without the "guidance and intervention" of "political leaders of their choice". He further criticized the local Indian National Congress leader Smt. Aruna Asaf Ali, who was one of the few prominent political leaders of the time to offer support for the mutineers, stating that she would rather unite Hindus and Muslims on the barricades than on the constitutional front. Gandhi's criticism also belies the submissions to the looming reality of Partition of India, having stated, "If the union at the barricade is honest then there must be union also at the constitutional front."

### **Mahatma Gandhi's statement on 3 March 1946 on RIN Mutiny, From CWMG**

#### CONFLICT OF IDEAS

*She was unable to understand Gandhiji calling upon R. I. N. ratings to resign, if their condition was humiliating. If they did that, they would have to give up their only means of livelihood. Moreover, they were fighting for principles. If*

*they resigned now, there would be hundreds in these days of unemployment to take their places who would be subject to the same discrimination and treatment and the R. I. N. ratings would not have achieved anything. It simply does not lie in the mouth of Congressmen who are themselves going to the legislatures to ask the ratings to give up their jobs. It does not help the cause of the country at all.*

Every one of the statements quoted above from Arunabehn's Press interview is contrary to the views generally held by or attributed to Congressmen. Whether she really holds or does not hold the views put into her mouth, is irrelevant here. For the moment it is enough to examine them on their merits and to show that they are wholly inconsistent with Congress resolutions.

The first principle of non-violent action as propounded in the Congress resolution of 1920 at its special session in Calcutta under the late Lala Lajpat Rai is that of non-co-operation with everything humiliating. It must be remembered that the R.I.N. was founded not for the benefit of the ruled. The men went with their eyes open. Discrimination stares one in the face. It cannot be avoided, if one enters the service which is frankly organized to keep India under subjection. One may, one ought to, try to mend the conditions. That is possible only up to a point. That cannot be achieved through mutiny. Mutiny may conceivably succeed but the success can only avail the mutineers and their kin, not the whole of India. And the lesson would be a bad inheritance. Discipline will be at least as necessary under *swaraj* as it is now. India under successful mutineers would be cut up into warring factions exhausted by internecine strife.

India of the Congress has made little headway in the appreciation of the fight for *swaraj*, if it is true that hundreds would take their places if the present ratings resigned in pursuance of their campaign against humiliation. Can we have

*swaraj* for the masses, if we are so degraded that hundreds of us are ready to swallow humiliation even to the extent of taking the place of humiliated fellowmen? The very thought is unworthy of Congressmen and that too at the moment when *swaraj* is believed to be within sight.

Those who hold that enlistment in the R.I.N. is their only means of livelihood must have a very poor opinion of them. A soldier's is a hard life. He is disciplined to work in co-operation and trained to work with the pick axe and the spade. Such a one will disdain to think that apart from soldiering he has no means of livelihood. We have a poor opinion of soldiers, if we think that they cannot earn their bread by the sweat of the brow. A labourer is any day worthy of his hire. What is, however, true is that a soldier out of his calling will lack the glamour and the amenities provided for him. We have wasted precious twenty-five years, if we have not yet stripped the profession of killing and destroying the thick coat of varnish that has covered it for so long.

Aruna Asaf Ali had been reported to have said that the ratings would have gained nothing by resigning. Well, they would have gained honour

and dignity, if they had manfully given up their job, and taught the citizens of Bombay the way to save honour and dignity, and they could have spared Bombay the senseless destruction of life, property and very precious food-stuffs. Surely this would have been an achievement not quite beneath notice.

The last statement in the reported interview is surely a confusion of thought. Congressmen going to the legislatures for conserving the honour and liberty of the country is not the same as ratings serving for their livelihood with the possibility of being used against their own countrymen and their liberty. Congressmen who go to the legislatures are representatives elected by their voters and they go even if it is only to prevent those from going who will misrepresent the voters. Going to the legislatures may be altogether bad, but there can be no such comparison as has been just adverted to.

POONA, March 3, 1946, Harijan, 10-3-1946\*  
Vide "Congress Resolution on Non-Co-Operation"

CWMG VOL. 90: 25 FEBRUARY, 1946 - 19 MAY, 1946

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From the writings of M.N. Roy:

## **On the occasion of the 70th anniversary (May 2015) of the defeat of the fascist powers i.e. Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan in the Second World War (1939-1945)**

It was on 8th May 1945 that Nazi Germany was defeated by the democratic powers which brought an end to the threat of 'Fascism' overtaking the world. The Fascist powers i.e. Germany, Italy and Japan - called as the 'Axis powers' had become scourge of the world for almost a decade. This day is celebrated in most of the Western countries every year but it goes almost un-noticed in the "countries of the Third World, who" as said by late V.M.Tarkune, "were the main beneficiaries of the enormous sacrifices undergone during the prolonged hostilities. 'The Second World War' was in retrospect one of the greatest revolutionary events in the history of the world, for it was the defeat of international fascism in that war which led to the national liberation of India and the end of colonialism from most other parts of the world." From the very beginning i.e. September-October 1939 M.N. Roy had advocated that in the war between fascist powers on the one hand and the democratic powers like France and Great Britain on the other, all those who were interested in the defence of democracy and freedom, should support the latter against the former. He emphasized that if British empire was broken by the victory of the fascist powers, India will not be free. "If fascism wins," he observed, "not only will the world go to the dogs, but together with the world, India will sink into barbarism. Therefore not only for the freedom of the world, of the victims of fascism abroad, but also for the very chances of the eventful success of our own struggle of freedom, we must see that this greatest menace to all freedom is destroyed." (India and the War by M.N. Roy page 240). On account of these convictions he opposed the 'Quit India movement' launched by the Indian National Congress in 1942 and was condemned by its leaders as 'traitor', but inspite of all kinds of criticism and attack on him and his colleagues, Roy continued to actively support the war efforts of the Britain and its allies. On this occasion we publish one of the quotes of M.N. Roy on this celebrated occasion.

(N.D. Pancholi)

### **“Anti-Fascism and a Free Society”**

"We stand for a thorough reconstruction of the national life. Our political objective is the establishment of democratic freedom which will mean effective political power for the people. We strive not only for national freedom, but also for the social emancipation of the toiling masses. Our task is to spread enlightenment which will dispel obscurantism in the political and the spiritual life of the country. We advocate modernism in every walk of life against revivalism. We want the disinherited to come to their own and enjoy the richness and fullness of life on this earth. We want man to be the master of the world and the maker of his destiny.

"This is why we radicals favour India's active participation in the war against Fascism. Fascism stands for the destruction of the political, social and cultural ideals of democracy...The war against Fascism can be won only by rousing in the people their urge for freer and fuller life. The supreme task of our movement is to develop that urge, and thus while defeating Fascism, to lay securely the foundations of a free society which is not only free of foreign rule, but also free of native tyranny, exploitation and injustice.

*(The above statement was issued during the Second World War 1939-1945)"*

## **Mrs. Allen Roy: A Life Dedicated to New Humanism Movement**

### **7. FINAL DEPRIVATION**

**Jawaharlal Jasthi**

As usual Roys went to Mussourie to spend the summer in 1952. Mr.Tarkunde and Mr.Richard Park also were there at that time. After a few days Tarkunde returned to Delhi. It was a habit to have an evening walk over the hilly terrain among the wild growth. After the walk the couple was returning to their camp on the evening of 11 June 1952. It was an untamed area and all the stones were spread haphazardly on the path. By the side of the walk way was a valley about fifty feet below. While walking that terrain Roy happened to step on a stone on the edge and it rolled down immediately. Roy lost balance and he too fell down the valley to the depth of fifty feet. Ellen was shocked and cried allowed running down to the valley where he was lying motionless. Hearing her cry the other revelers and those who were staying there gathered around the body of Roy at the bottom of the valley. There was no motion in him. Ellen was afraid of the worst. People there sprinkled water on his face and there was some motion on his face. Ellen got her hopes revived. He was shifted to the camp with the help of others. There were facilities for first aid but no other facilities for any treatment. He was in senses feeling the severe pain, but he could not make any move as it would only enhance his pain. There was no way of knowing the nature of damage suffered by him. With great difficulty and care he was shifted to his residence in Dehradun from Mussourie. On 20th June, ten days after the fall X-ray equipment was brought to his bedside. The examination revealed that his right leg was broken and four ribs were also broken. It was only then that the seriousness of the damage

could be understood. Even a bandage to the affected parts was not possible until ten days after the examination, that is, twenty days after the fall. In addition to the breakage of bones the inner parts also were affected due to fall over fifty feet. Naturally it fell on Ellen to keep a round the clock vigil over him. The doctor friends took care of him. The wife and sister of Mr.Tarkunde, and Mrs.Indu Parikh gave company to Ellen for some days. They advised her to arrange for a nurse to share her burdento some extent and also to have professional attendance on the patient. A nurse was arranged and the doctors were watching his condition regularly by rotation and with mutual consultation.

Before the accident happened there was a proposal to visit America. They had plans to address universities and also to seek financial support to get his works printed. She planned to spend some happy time with her brother and sister. Harvard University offered to accommodate her in their Russian Research Center. California University in Stanford also invited her. There were offers from Hoover Library. There was possibility of visiting Yugoslavia on invitation from Tito himself. All those plans were shattered. There was no hurry for it. All those possibilities encouraged Ellen and gave confidence that she will be abler to get effective treatment for her illustrious husband. But now the need for an effective treatment was sincerely felt. It involved long procedures like getting visas and making travel arrangements. Doctors ruled out journey by plane. They had necessarily to go by ship only. The journey



expected for 1953 could not take place as the required visa was not obtained from the American authorities. Ellen thought of leaving before the onset of the cold season, that is, in October itself. When her brother and sister came to know of it they told her to bring him to the States for better treatment. It could be possible only if she could take him there. There was no justification for such delay on the part of American authorities to issue the necessary papers. Deliberate delay could not be ruled out in view of leftist leanings of Roys.

The time for booking space for next year in the ships was also over. Even then she was confident, if only the visa was received, she could buy accommodation with the help of Nehru. But there was no visa.

During that period there was a bit improvement in the sense that was feeling the pain bearable and was in the bed somewhat more comfortably. It made Ellen happy and more optimistic. But the optimism was shortlived as he had a stroke of paralysis. It has aggravated the helpless situation for Ellen. Her house has become a hospital and the room a medical shop. In spite of all her care and of doctors, the paralysis was followed by a heart attack on 24 January, 1954 and he breathed his last on that night. An era in the ideological revolution came to an end. The unipillared edifice of Ellen came down crashing as the only pillar broke down.

It was a disaster to the movement of New Humanism. But the damage suffered by Ellen was more personal and more severe. Within a short time she gathered herself with a heroic effort. She realized she had to stand by herself and also for the movement. She took care to see that the followers were not discouraged and get scattered from the path of the movement. She took charge of both the movement and the

journal. She looked composed, but within her the heart was like an ocean suffering a tsunami. She built her life around the pillar. Now the pillar is collapsed. Now she was left alone. She was reminded of her brother and sister. When she called them to convey the news they told her again to come over to them. She wanted to go but not to settle there under their solace, but to renew her contacts in the Western world. She did not know when she would be able to take the journey.

Meanwhile she could not afford to sit idle shedding tears over her loss. She wanted to prove that she is a wife worth of Roy. The only way for it was to ensure that the movement of New Humanism started by him goes on without losing momentum. She wrote back to all the friends who sent condolence messages reminding them of their responsibility to the movement which has increased because of his absence. Roy's lectures and writings were lying there in heaps to be sorted, edited and printed. She was on that work all those days in addition to her regular day-to-day duties. Still there was a lot more to do. She took all that responsibility on herself. She became the center for the movement. She assumed full responsibility for the journal along with Mr. Sib Narayan Ray. She has activated many of the followers in the movement.

It was hard for her to forget Roy for whom she dedicated her entire life. To forget, she took upon herself more and more work. Even then the loss continued to haunt her. She brought the bones of Roy after his cremation and built a memorial in her garden. She used to sit alone by its side in the darkness and shed tears. She has grown so sentimental. She tried to keep up his memory by spreading his suit on the bed by her side. There was nobody else to hear her silent cry.

## Secularism Revisited

Justice R.A. Jahagirdar

*(Since the BJP led government has taken over at the centre, the forces of Hindutva have started raising their communal agenda. On more than one occasion, Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS supremo, has said that Hindustan (and not 'Bharat' as the Constitution calls us) means the land of the Hindus and all those living in it are Hindus. A few days after asking why all Hindustanis (Indians) should not be referred to as "Hindus," the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Sarsanghchalak again on Sunday, 17th August, minced no words in stating that "Hindutva is the identity of India and it has the capacity to swallow other identities." "We just need to restore those capacities," he added. More than one minister in various BJP governments in the States has said that the Modi government will lead the nation towards the formation of the 'Hindu Rashtra'. M.P.s of the BJP belonging to the Hindutva outfits advise Hindu women to produce four children each to overtake supposed faster growth of Muslims; Conversions are being conducted in the name of 'Ghar Vapasi' through allurements, inducements and bribes by them; burning of Churches is taking place: all under the very nose of the Prime Minister who neither condemns them nor stops them from doing so. Nathuram Godse, the murderer of Mahatma Gandhi, is being glorified and projected as a patriot and hero by these very people. The forces of intolerance have become more aggressive and the secular fabric of our multi-cultural society has come under serious threat. Hence the debate on the secular character of our country, as mandated by our Constitution,*

*has again begun afresh. It has become all the more important for us to understand what secularism really means and how we can protect it.*

*Late Justice R.A. Jahagirdar, a leading Radical Humanist like Justice V.M. Tarkunde, both of whom valued secularism as an essential ingredient of a truly democratic society, gave three enlightening lectures on Secularism. As part of the ongoing debate, we are going to publish all the three lectures. The following is the first one, which was delivered as the Eighth Smt. Bansari Sheth Memorial Lecture delivered under the auspices of The Asiatic Society of Bombay on Wednesday, 26th April 2000 - Editor).*

*Continued from the March 2015 issue...*

Secularism operates on three levels. State as secular; society as secular; individual as secular. A secular society may exist under a non-secular State. In United Kingdom, for example, the State has an established Church, the Anglican Church, but barring a few exceptions the State excludes all considerations of religion in dealing with the citizens. In France, after the Revolution of 1789, Church has been separated from State, but the French citizens may not be so separated. It may in passing be mentioned that in France the census figures do not disclose the population religion-wise because no one is asked, at the time of census, what his religion is. In America, which boasts of a secular Constitution, a large number of people seem to belong to one Church or another. In addition, there are different types of weird cults and evangelists. Ronald Reagan threatened to introduce prayers in educational

institutions and legislative bodies. His wife advised him by consulting, not very secretly, an astrologer. A truly secular society will give rise to Secular State but not vice versa.

That is why M.N. Roy was rightly skeptical about India becoming secular. At one stage Roy assumed that constitutionally India would be Secular State (Independent India, Aug.1, 1948). This was before the Constitution of India was framed. Of course, Roy proceeded to add in the same article that he doubted whether political life in India would be secular. He noted that religious ritualism has been always associated with public functions. "Ceremonious State functions on the occasion of the transfer of power were religious, according to spiritually prescribed rules. In some places it went to the extent of selecting the auspicious moment according to the advice of priestly astrologers"

(Ibid. re-published in *Secularism in India*, Ed. V.K. Sinha, p.148, Pub. Lalvani, Bombay).

In a later article in *The Radical Humanist* - May 14, 1950 (also republished in *Secularism in India*, p.152) Roy noted several non-secular and anti-secular features of Indian polity and society. He exclaimed in exasperation "all profession of secularism is meaningless". Referring to the large number of Sadhus and Sanyasins roaming across the country, Roy said:

"A secular State should not tolerate a vast, many million strong, army of holy loafers who outrage the ethical and aesthetic sense of its cultured and educated citizens". (p.157)

I must now proceed to consider secularism vis-à-vis main religions of India.

Hinduism is the religion in which the

majority of Indians are born and it is but natural that what Hindus believe and how they behave are bound to affect the complexion of Indian polity. What is Hinduism? Why does one say one is a Hindu? If you ask me, I would answer by saying that -

- (a) I am born in a caste which is and has always been a part of Hindu system.
- (b) I am born in a society or a group which has been recognised as Hindu.

I do not believe in Dashavatar; I dislike the caste system; I do not accept the authority of the Vedas and Upanishads. I enjoy Puranic stories just as much as I enjoy the Greek mythology but I do not believe in their truthfulness.

But still I am dubbed a Hindu. This is the beauty and despair of Hinduism. That this is so is recognised by the Supreme Court in one of the early decisions. In *Sastri Yognapurushdasji v. Muldas Bhudardas* (AIR 1966 S.C. 1119) the Court inquired into the questions as to who are Hindus and what are the broad features of Hindu religion. The Constitution Bench over which presided an eminent scholar, after referring to writings of scholars, including Dr. Radhakrishnan, found it difficult, if not impossible, to define Hindu religion or even to describe it. Unlike other religions Hinduism does not claim one Prophet, does not worship any one God, does not subscribe to any one dogma, does not believe in only one philosophic tenet. The population regarded as Hindus does not even follow one set of religious rites or performances.

Ten years later, in *C.W.T. v. R. Sridharan*

(AIR 1976 S.C. 489), the Supreme Court said:

"It is a matter of common knowledge that Hinduism embraces within itself so many diverse forms of beliefs, faiths, practices and worship that it is difficult to define the term 'Hindu' with precision."

By and large one can proceed on the basis that all those who are called Hindus worship one, or more, or all of the pantheon of Gods. They also subscribe to the theory of Karma - namely that your sufferings in this life are attributable to the sins you have committed in your previous life. The large quantity of Bhakti literature also indicates that man's life is only a sojourn in the world and he should prepare himself for a better life hereafter. This is obviously an anti-secular attitude.

It is necessary to deal with 'Hindutva' which as a concept and an idea was developed by V.D. Savarkar. Before I proceed to examine 'the Hindutva' of Savarkar, let me refer to the Supreme Court judgment in *Dr. Ramesh Yashwant Prabhu v. Prabhakar Kunte* (1996-1 SCC 130). In paragraph 39 of the judgment, the Supreme Court mentioned:

"Ordinarily, Hindutva is understood as a way of life or a state of mind and it is not to be equated with, or understood as, a religious Hindu fundamentalism."

Justice Verma delivering the judgment curiously quotes Maulana Waliduddin Khan for the correct understanding of 'Hindutva'. The Maulana, in his "Indian Muslims - The Need for a Positive Outlook", has formulated his understanding of 'Hindutva' in the following words :

"The strategy worked out to solve the

minority's problem was, although differently worded, that of Hindutva or Indianisation. This strategy, briefly stated, aims at developing a uniform culture by obliterating the differences between all of the cultures co-existing in the country. This was felt to be the way to communal harmony and national unity. It was thought that this would put an end once and for all to the minority's problem". (p.159)

Justice Verma quotes this opinion approvingly and says:

"that the word 'Hindutva' is used and understood as a synonym of 'Indianisation' i.e. development of uniform culture by obliterating the differences between all the cultures existing in the country". (p.159)

One country - one culture.

In a later paragraph viz. 44, Justice Verma says that:

"it is a fallacy to proceed on the assumption that any reference to 'Hindutva' or Hinduism in a speech makes it automatically a speech based on Hindu religion as opposed to other religions or that the use of the words 'Hindutva' or 'Hinduism' per se depicts an attitude hostile to all persons practising any religion other than Hindu religion." (p.162)

On the contrary, says Justice Verma, it may well be "that these words are used to promote secularism or to emphasise the way of life of the Indian people and the Indian culture or ethos. ..." (p.1262)

A brief reference to 'Hindutva' of V.D.

Savarkar is inevitable. Savarkar's exposition of the subject is to be found in his essay "Essentials of Hindutva" which is included in Vol.VI of Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya (1964) published by Maharashtra Prantika Hindusabha, Poona.

In this essay of 90 pages, Savarkar surveys the history of India and points out that all those who have lived and shared the glories, trials, tribulations, sufferings as the inhabitants of this land are Hindus and the awareness of belonging to this land and to this community of Hindus is 'Hindutva' which, he says, should not be equated with Hinduism. At some places (e.g. p.58) he uses the word Hinduness. The descendents of these persons also share the 'Hindutva'. The scenes of their history are also the scenes of their mythology. As you read this essay you cannot help being impressed by the almost mystical concept of 'Hindutva' developed by Savarkar. The concept as developed includes Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs and also tribals and excludes Muslims, Christians and Jews. Mr. Savarkar does not use religion as a unifying factor for 'Hindutva' - if he did he would have to exclude Jains, Buddhas and Sikhs but uses religion as an exclusionary factor. This is not secularism.

Savarkar specifically excludes Musalmans for whom Mecca is a sterner reality than Delhi or Agra. "Some of them do not make any secret of being bound to sacrifice all India if that be to the glory of Islam or could save the city of their prophet". (p.87). Savarkar also lashes out at the Jews who despite the hospitality they have enjoyed in other countries have no sense of gratitude and they are attached more and more to the land of their prophets. (p.87)

Can Islam be secular? Some scholars have attempted to argue that Islam, as revealed through Koran, is secular inasmuch as Islam

recognises the legitimacy of other religions and says that there is no compulsion in the matter of belief. That Koran was revealed to Mohammed and that Mohammed is the last prophet are the cardinal principles of Islam. If Koran is revealed by God, none other than God can change it. If God wants to send a new message, he cannot do it simply because there cannot be any prophet after Mohammed. Therefore Koran is the last book for all peoples and all times. Koran is the seal of faith; Mohammed is the seal of prophethood.

In support of the claim that Koran does not sanction compulsion in the matter of belief, the scholars quote earlier revelations in Mecca when Mohammed was struggling against the idolatrous Meccans.

In later revelations in Yathrib, that came to be called Medina, there are clear indications that views contrary to Islam could not be tolerated.

This apart, those who believe in a book as the last word which is infallible and unchangeable cannot by any stretch of imagination be called secular. What you should eat, what you should drink, whom you can marry and whom you cannot marry, whom to believe as a witness, how many witnesses are necessary for proving a contract, how property should devolve -- these and other matters which are wholly secular in character are the subject matter of mandates in Islam.

The question of marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims has been dealt with Sura 2 and Verse 221 as follows:

"And marry not the idolatresses until they believe; and certainly a believing maid is better than an idolatress even though she

please you. Nor give believing women in marriage to idolaters until they believe, and certainly a believing slave is better than an idolater, even though he please you".

This Verse should be read with Verse 5 of Sura 5 (Perfection of Religion in Islam) which permits Muslims to marry women who profess a revealed religion.

There is an express mention of a Muslim man marrying a non-Muslim woman. Islamic scholars have agreed that a Muslim woman cannot marry a non-Muslim man. That was the real reason for the furore over Mani Ratnam's "Bombay".

Koran and Islam do not separate the religion and State. What is ordained in Koran has to be implemented by the State. Iqbal has argued that the Mussalmans are organised in Ulmma and not in national States.

Syed Muhammad al Naquib al Attar is a well-known Islamic scholar of Malaysia. He specifically addressed himself to the question whether secularism is consistent with Islam in a book "Islam and Secularism" (Hindustan Publications, Delhi, 1984). I would strongly recommend this book to those who are interested in the subject and especially to Muslims. In this book Syed Muhammad has shown his familiarity with the history of secularisation and of course his profound knowledge of Islam. It would take too much time that is not permissible at this juncture to review the book in details. Let me be content with relevant quotations and please accept my assurance that I am not giving quotations out of context. After a brief outline of the rise of secularism in the West, the learned author says :

" Islam totally rejects any application to itself of the concepts secular, or secularisation, or secularism as they do not belong and are alien to it in every respect...." (p.23)

"A revealed religion as we understand it is complete and perfect in its adequacy for mankind from the very beginning. The Holy Quran says that Islam is already made complete and perfect for mankind...." (p.27)

One more quotation (p.38):

"Not only is secularisation as a whole the expression of an utterly un-Islamic world view, it is also set against Islam and Islam totally rejects the explicit as well as implicit manifestation and ultimate significance of secularisation".

Desacrilisation of politics and society is inconsistent with Islam as in fact it is inconsistent with any religion. There are, however, a couple of things which may commend themselves to secularists.

First, Koran enjoins upon the Muslims to enjoy the fruits of this world which is created by God and in which man has been placed. This life and this living - one should love hundred-fold. Asceticism is not a virtue as it is ostensibly among the Jains. But Koran warns against consumerism which is equivalent to indulgence - this is something akin to environmental protection. Seek happiness and not pleasure.

Secondly, celibacy is disallowed by Ch.24/ 32 in Koran. Thirdly miracles are not envisaged in Islam. Mohammed refused to perform miracles when challenged to do so to confirm his prophethood by simply pointing out that the

universe itself is a miracle made by Allah. Mohammed showed the necessity of charity and not its desirability.

Why secularism? That is a question that legitimately be asked. I am tempted to quote Mr. M.C. Setalvad who has in a small paragraph beautifully summarised the secularists' viewpoint :

"A different view in relation to religion is the basis of 'secularism' understood in the sense of what may be called 'a secular attitude' towards life. Many of us, Hindus, Muslims and others, are in our way of life and outlook on most matters largely governed by ideas and practices which are connected with or are rooted in our religion. The secular attitude would wean us away from this approach so that in our relations with our fellow beings or in dealings with other social groups, we have less and less regard for religion and religious practices and base our lives and actions more on worldly considerations, restricting religion and its influence to what has been called its 'proper' sphere i.e. the advancement of the spiritual life and well-being of the individual. Secularism of this character is said to be essential to our progress as human beings and as a nation because it will enable us to shake off the narrow and restrictive outlook arising out of casteism, communalism and other like ideas which come in the way of our development".

(Patel Memorial Lecture, 1965, on Secularism quoted in S.R. Bommai, p.2000).

My view is that State as a State has to do

with secular problems and therefore a secular State is necessary. Secularism has a very vital link with democracy. The State must be independent of classes and ethnic groups to make democracy real and effective. The Indian political and social scene for the last decade tormented by the Ayodhya issue, pre- and post-demolition, demonstrates the necessity of secularism.

I am not unaware of the argument that secular State cannot be built-up by anti-secular or non-secular citizens. But this argument is belied by the American experience. U.S.A. has a secular Constitution but non-secular or anti-secular society. That is why you find in U.S.A. innumerable sects and cults. Born again Christians and Moral Majority, PTL, evangelical movements - these are prominent and stronger in America than any other country - not excluding Islamic countries. The birth of fundamentalism took place in U.S.A. in the 1920s.

U.S.A. has a secular State but not secular society; England has a non-secular State but a secular society; it is the fate of India to have neither a secular State nor a secular society. As I have mentioned earlier, secularism operates at three levels - State, society and the individual.

A secular State can be established by law but the process of secularisation cannot be promoted by legislation. For this you need inculcation of secular moral values. The process can be helped by legislation and by the conduct of men at the top. The President, the Governors, Ministers at different levels making pilgrimages at the expense of the State and conspicuously taking part in public religious ceremonies do not set a good example for the citizens. Nor are they

giving heed to their fundamental duty "to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform". [Art.51A(h) of the Constitution]

The provision in the Representation of Peoples Act prohibiting appeal to the electorate in the name of religion is a welcome measure. Its validity has been upheld by the Supreme Court in *Dr. Ramesh Yashwant Prabhu v. Prabhakar Kunte*, cited above. The restriction thus placed upon the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression was held to be a restriction permissible on the ground of decency and morality. Seeking of votes, the Judges said, on the ground of the candidate's religion in a secular State is against the norms of decency and propriety of the society.

The long-term approach to make India a truly secular State and society is to make the Indians secular in their outlook and temperament. This can be done by demonstrating that the religions which grip their minds are of no cultural value and also of no practical value, if they believe in them.

Secularism is the product of a process by which society has moved away from control by the Church so that science, education art and politics were freed from conformity to theological dogma and priesthood. The secular spirit is seen in the fact that scientific knowledge and education in general are today tested by reason, by experiment and experience rather than by religious criteria. Secularisation is a historical process which is sought to be reversed by fundamentalists everywhere, though Copernicus and Darwin have been rehabilitated by the Pope.

In the West, secularism has faced several threats. Immediately after the Second World

War, Vatican-sponsored Christian political parties were established and have played no insignificant role in countries like France, West Germany and Italy. After the Second Vatican Council, the process of dialogue with non-Catholics and even non-Christians was envisaged. Despite this, in the U.S. there is an informal alliance between the Catholics and Protestants to assail secular approach to such issues as abortion, prayers and teaching religions in schools.

What is the future of India which we envisage? There are several religions in India whose followers try to cling to their identities as followers of those religions. These identities are brought to their notice and also to the notice of others at every step. Some eminent thinkers have opined that secularism is not suited to the temperament of the people of South Asia in general and Indians in particular - that is the opinion of Prof. T.N. Madon who is the leading proponent of this view point. Social Scientist Ashish Nandy has taken a stand that secularism is not desirable at all. This latter point is broadly answered by what I have said about the birth and growth of secularism.

Is secularism incompatible with the genius of Indian people? My answer is that the Indians are no more religious than the Americans, who are being accused of materialism and non-spiritual values. The American Colonies were founded by the religious people. At least the early life of the Americans was steeped in religiosity. That was the time when the Amendment regarding establishment of religion was passed. From time to time, different religious movements have taken place in America. Apart from the traditional Churches, there are other Churches or groups founded by one or the other



self-styled preachers. The world's first fundamentalist movement was born in America in the 1920s. From time to time there have been calls for re-amendment of the Constitution to allow for religious teaching in aided schools. The Supreme Court of the United States has consistently upheld the interpretation placed by Thomas Jefferson on the First Amendment. There is no basic structure concept of the American Constitution. Yet the American legislators have not thought it fit to suitably amend the First amendment. This is because the country has realised the importance of keeping the Church and the State separate in the context of the existence of several sects in that country.

Why is it not suited to Indian polity? The schisms between the different religions in India are not narrower than those among the different denominations of Christianity in America. The need for a secular Constitution is greater in India than in America. I do not envisage the rise of secularism in India in the French manner; I do not desire secularism to be established in Kamal Pasha's manner. The only way in which secularism can be introduced in India is by way

of total separation of religion and the State in the Constitution. And there are certain areas where secular laws without impinging upon the religious autonomy of the people can be enacted. One prominent example is the law of adoption. Today thousands of children are given in bogus adoption. A non-religious, non-communal adoption law should be a good beginning. Adoption is always optimal - depending upon the willingness of the adopter and the consent of the person giving in adoption. Yet this simple piece of legislation has not found its way to the statute book by obstruction of obscurantists. Instead of showing secularism its place, show religion its place.

Ultimately secularism has to be inculcated in the minds of men. Secularism at the political level should be brought about by law and Constitution; secularism at the individual level can come out by enlightenment. Then secularism can take root in the society.

The secularism I am speaking of will not render Indian society into a stew. The Indian society can remain a bowl of salads.

*(Concluded)*

### **The Danger of War**

From time to time we are told that the next war would be the end of civilization; or more hopefully, that another war would so obviously be the end of civilization that it will never happen. The warning has come from the highly placed of every nation in Europe. The fact that, none the less, the highly placed of every nation should contrive to prepare for the next war is not surprising; for, however uncultured a dictator maybe he can still translate the profit motive of armament firms into his own language. Five thousand pacific aeroplanes and ten thousand well meaning tanks is a contribution to the upkeep of civilization of which every nation may be proud!.....

*(By Ellen Roy: Independent India -23.05.1937)*

## **Human Rights Section:**

# **"Bill of Rights" in the Constitution of India Updated**

**G. B. Singh**

## **Introduction**

Many admirers of India often go out of the way to depict India as the "world's largest democracy" and a "secular" state, which through its constitution guarantees fundamental human rights to all Indians -- the implication being that such rights are in practice as a matter of routine. Yet, dismaying as it may seem, I have never come across any piece of written information analyzing the Indian Constitution itself, let alone all those enshrined fundamental rights that it guarantees to its citizens. Coupled with aggressive Soviet-style "active measures" channeled by the Indian government, several intellectuals outside India have fallen prey to the media hype. Included on this list are the key members of US Department of State who upon my inquiry a number of years ago hadn't even seen what the Constitution of India looked like, let alone read it! Our academia-based "India Watchers" and think-tank specialists have also dismally failed to undertake this task: assessing independently the contents of the Indian constitution. Instead what I have noticed is this: they just parrot out what they pick from other sources; obviously without checking the facts. Before analyzing the rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution, a few words on the constitution would be helpful to readers. The Indian Constitution (promulgated in 1950) is the longest constitution ever written. As of December 2007, the Constitution of India comprised 395 Articles, 12 Schedules, 2 Appendices, and constitutional amendments totaling no less than ninety-four in number.

Include to this list are amendments of previous amendments -- often each amendment encompassing multiple smaller amendments within its charter. India's constitution can safely be characterized as one of the most complicated of all modern political documents available.

Highly placed Indians with some insight into their constitution will often take delight in saying that it is based on sound fundamental principles derived from the constitutions of no less than five great Western democracies: Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, and of course, the United States. It all sounds great. Even more impressive is when we hear that the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution has made its way into the Indian Constitution. This is always followed by a note of special thanks to the framers of India's Constitution, with particular tribute paid to the likes of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (well-known leader of India's supposed 'Untouchable' community), who chaired the drafting committee that devised the Indian Constitution. Justifiably, a question begs to be asked: Are all things mentioned above true?

To answer that question, one must at least procure the most recent copy of the Indian Constitution, read it, understand it, and then present the facts as they stand. I did exactly that, which is why I am writing this article.

I hope the reader is familiar with the first ten amendments (commonly called "The Bill of Rights") of the U.S. Constitution, which were ratified in 1791. This information is important since these rights were purportedly imported into

the Indian Constitution. For the purpose of this article, it will be worth the effort to reproduce the First Amendment of U.S. Constitution, which states:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

### **The Substance**

Part III of the Indian Constitution (Articles 12 through 35) constitutes the entire minutia on fundamental rights. Of these total of twenty-four articles, Articles 19 and 25 are the only ones that truly correspond to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Allow me to reproduce Article 19 in its entirety:

Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech, etc.

- (1) All citizens shall have the right:
  - (a) to freedom of speech and expression;
  - (b) to assemble peaceably and without arms;
  - (c) to form associations or unions;
  - (d) to move freely throughout the territory of India;
  - (e) to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India; [and]
  - (f) deleted
  - (g) to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business.

- (2) Nothing in sub-clause (a) of the clause (1) shall affect the operation of any existing law, or prevent the State from making any law, in so far as such law imposes reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.
- (3) Nothing in sub-clause (b) of the said clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it imposes, or prevent the State from making any law imposing, in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India or public order, reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause.
- (4) Nothing in sub-clause (c) of the said clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it imposes, or prevent the State from making any law imposing, in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India or public order or morality, reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause.
- (5) Nothing in sub-clause (d) and (e) of the said clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it imposes, or prevent the State from making any law imposing, reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clauses either in the interests of the general public or for the protection of the interests of any Scheduled Tribe.
- (6) Nothing in sub-clause (g) of the said

clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it imposes, or prevent the State from making any law imposing, in the interest of the general public, reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause, and, in particular, nothing in the said sub-clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it relates to, or prevent the State from making any law relating to -

- (i) the professional or technical qualifications necessary for practising any profession or carrying on any occupation, trade or business, or
- (ii) the carrying on by the State, or by a corporation owned or controlled by the State, of any trade, business, industry or service, whether to the exclusion, complete or partial, of citizens or otherwise.

Granted much of the above narrative is redundant; nobody doubts the clarity of Clause 1 of Article 19. However, given what is written in Clause 2 and onwards, everything changes. The fundamental rights given in Clause 1 have been for all practical purposes nibbled away one by one, thanks to Clauses 2 to 6. The reader must have noticed that Clause 1f, which had been "to acquire, hold and dispose of property," is missing. The 44th Amendment expunged that portion in 1978, most likely enacted to usher political India in tune with Communism, former USSR being at the time India's close ally. Things get even more complicated when you encounter Articles 352 through 360 of the Indian Constitution, which essentially deliver the emergency provisions. Since numerous geographical areas of India frequently have

fallen under these emergency provisions, the reality of the fundamental rights supposedly guaranteed under Article 19 and others is revealed, as citizens have been forced to live under the enacted draconian laws.

What makes the fundamental rights problem even more tendentious is that according to the 40th Amendment, the draconian laws may not be challenged before any court on the ground of violation of fundamental rights. If one or more groups of people have suffered terribly from the repressive hands of the State, the 41st Amendment nails a potential litigant right back to his/her proper place. This amendment has provided that the President, Prime Minister and State Governors are immune from criminal prosecution for life and from civil prosecution during their term of office. What about the Press in India? The exuberant Indian Press exercises its freedom of speech freely, as the apologists reminds us with regularity. But the facts are otherwise. Indian journalists have learned too well how to kowtow to the ruling Indian leaders.

Now, let us take a look at Article 25:

**Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion –**

- (1) Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.
- (2) Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law -
  - (a) regulating or restricting any economic, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice;

- (b) providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus. Explanation I - The wearing and carrying of kirpans shall be deemed to be included in the profession of the Sikh religion. Explanation II - In sub-Clause (b) of clause (2), the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly.

In a historical sense, Article 25 is unique. Even though Hindu hands wrote it following the British departure in 1947, future Hindu hands have spared it thus far from additional amendment. Those responsible for writing Article 25 were no less cunning and deceptive - they knew how to shelter it behind the barrage of words that only a few could understand. I have attempted to unravel the mystery of Article 25 to the best of my abilities.

Teachings such as peaceful co-existence, high morals, high ethical values, and respect for fellow humans are integral to any true religion. Given that, why is religious freedom contingent upon factors of public order, morality, and health with respect to religion in India as in Clause 1? Is there such a religion that violates the norms of decent human morality? If indeed there is any such religion, one would think the framers of the Indian Constitution would have alerted us or perhaps would have "banned" that particular immoral religion. Would Hinduism, Islam or for that matter any other religion fall under that category?

With Hindu leaders in charge of Hindu India, the name of the game is unchecked fundamentalist Hinduism, however undesirable it might be to a reasonable mind. But during British-India, this unchecked Hindu fundamentalism came very close to being curbed as recorded in a superbly written book, *Mother India* by Katherine Mayo (Greenwood Press Publishers, 1927), which states:

It is true that, to conform to the International Convention for the Suppression of the Circulation of and Traffic in Obscene Publications, signed in Geneva on September 12, 1923, the Indian Legislature duly amended the Indian Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure; and that this amendment duly prescribes set penalties for "whoever sells, lets to hire, distributes, publicly exhibits ... conveys ... or receives profit from any obscene object, book, representation or figure." But its enactment unqualified, although welcome to the Muhammadans, would have wrought havoc with the religious belongings, the ancient traditions and customs and the priestly prerogatives dear to the Hindu majority. Therefore the Indian Legislature, preponderantly Hindu, saddled the amendment with an exception, which reads:

This section does not extend to any book, pamphlet, writing, drawing or painting kept or used bona fide for religious purposes or any represented sculptured, engraved, painted or otherwise represented on or in any temple, or on any car used for the conveyance of idols, or kept or used for any religious purpose.

[*G. B. Singh is the author of Gandhi: Behind the Mask of Divinity (Prometheus 2004) and Gandhi Under Cross Examination (Sovereign Star 2009)*].

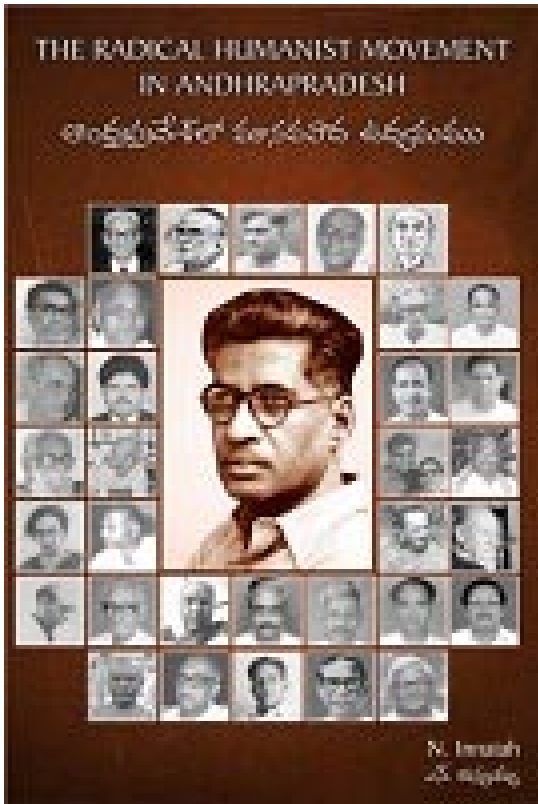
*To be continued....*

**Book Review:**

**Radical Humanist Movement in Andhra Pradesh**

Book by **Dr. Narisetti Innaiah**

**A special personal intelligent book reading recommendation from Kinige!**



The Radical Humanist movement played a significant role in Andhra Pradesh during the freedom struggle days in early 1940s. It started as a political party under the leadership of M.N. Roy. He attracted many outstanding intellectuals

in Andhra. Abburi Ramakrishnarao was the state organizer of the party: Radical Democratic Party. In the pre-independence first elections the party contested a few seats but lost.

From 1940 to 1948 the party conducted innumerable study camps, political meetings, and published journals. Intellectuals like Avula Gopalakrishna Murthy, M. Sastry, Pemmaraju Venkatarao, Malladi Ramamurthy, Tripuraneni Gopichand, G V Krishnarao and others published several books, edited magazines, and brought out pamphlets. The party took a different stand on many issues with rational background.

After bitter experience with the political party, they dissolved it and formed a Renaissance group to organize Humanist movement. It is historic that a political party dissolved itself willingly and turned into a movement. That continued for two decades. They contributed to bring social change, marriage reforms with oath taking in mother tongue instead of Sanskrit. The movement stood against superstitions, and propagated scientific outlook.

The persons who contributed in the party and movement are numerous. Some of the pictures are provided on the cover page itself. They have translated several books from English to Telugu.

## Report:

# Celebration of 128th Birth Anniversary of M.N. Roy in Kolkata, 2015

Venue : Radical Humanist Association Hall, 15 Bankim Chatterjee Street, Kolkata-73

Time: 5.p.m to 7.p.m.

On 28th March, 2015, the members of Association showed their respect to Roy in the memory of his birthday on 21st March, 1887. To observe the occasion there was an arrangement of a Seminar. Speakers were from the Association but some were invited:

Sri Aniruddha Bhattacharjee, Sri Dipak Dan, Sri TapashMitra, Mrinalkanti Biswas, Shuvendu Bhattacharjee, Sri Bhaskar Sur, Sri Jugalkanti Roy, Sri Indranil Saha and Mr. Pravin Patel. Meeting was anchored by Ms Anjali Chakraborty. The theme of discussion was fixed on the basic principles of Roy's thought e.g. Freedom, Rationality, Science and danger of religious fundamentalism.

The number of presence was insignificant (only 15) but sincerity was not to be denied.

### Highlights of discussion:

- The Communist movement, internationally, was deviated from Justice-its starting point, while Roy insisted on Justice throughout his career.
- Roy was the first man to think of people's revolution to skip out the bourgeoisie revolution as the middle stage between feudal and socialist state. Later, Mao-tse-tung applied this in China but denying Roy.
- Roy might have not met Karl Popper (1902-1994), the European philosopher of Science and socio-political ideas but Roy was well conversant of his discourse-the Open Society and its Enemies (1945). Popper was less discussed by the Indian scholars except Shibnarayan Ray. Greek Philosopher Plato and German Philosopher Hegel were regarded as anti -open society thinkers. H. L. Bergson (1859-1941) used the word 'open- society' first and told that future of mankind was moving towards open society because human knowledge is dynamic.
- M.N. Roy apprehended, by his political prudence, the danger of religious fundamentalism and people driven to close society and this was a greater threat than communism which was on the way of decline.
- J. Nehru and many others desired for Hindu-Muslim amenity but they did not how but Roy outlined the way of this unity. Historical Role of Islam is a great book.
- Muslim fundamentalists are spread over the world-from Morocco to Indonesia. Now the Muslims have to choose the option between close or open society.
- Hindu fundamentalism is not less dangerous to the Indians. People are divided not only by religion but also by castes and economic inequalities. This invites crimes in a weak governance and less-effective judiciary.
- Roy was a great thinker like Raja Rammohon Roy and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar who were respected for their rationalist approach. What Roy did more?

He thought for freedom of man- mental and physical, political and socio-cultural; hurdles to freedom were identified- fanaticism based on caste and religion, determinism of fate by planet and stars, irrational politics and slavery to party-politics etc. Roy presented a theory of New Humanism.

- But where is the practical application of theory? Without practice and proof, no theory can survive. Are all the theories of Mathematics proved?
- Why was Roy losing his control over the Communists of India (many of whom were his direct recruitment)? Do we know the role

of CPSU (USSR) and CPGB (UK) to destroy the political career of Roy in his motherland even before he reached India? Discovery of Roy's contribution to German Socialist Democratic party and his un- tired efforts to unite the entire socialist element in India may open a new history with new approach.

- Despite all the negative efforts against him, the infinite vitality of Roy's intellect and his genuine love for human beings could not be stopped till his sudden death in 1954.

Report by: **Ms. Anjali Chakraborty**

## **An Appeal to the Readers**

Indian Renaissance Institute has been receiving regular requests from readers, research scholars, Rationalists and Radical Humanists for complete sets of books written by M.N. Roy. It was not possible to fulfil their demands as most of Roy's writings are out of print. IRI has now decided to publish them but will need financial assistance from friends and well-wishers as the expenses will be enormous running into lakhs. IRI being a non-profit organization will not be able to meet the entire expenses on its own. Initially, following 15 books have ordered for print: New Humanism; Beyond Communism; Politics, Power and Parties; Historical Role of Islam; India's Message; Men I Met; New Orientation; Materialism; Science & Philosophy; Revolution and Counter-revolution in China; India in Transition; Reason, Romanticism and Revolution; Russian Revolution; Selected Works - Four Volumes; Memoirs (Covers period 1915-1923).

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We make an earnest appeal to you to please donate liberally for the cause of the spirit of renaissance and scientific thinking being promoted in the writings of M.N. Roy.

Thanking you.

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## News & Views :

### **Nepal Earthquake: Indian Media shames India**

Indian Media while covering earthquake tragedy in Nepal has behaved in a shameful manner. 'Times Now' reporter asks an injured woman, "Did someone of yours died?" She answered, "My ten year old daughter". He asks her the same question six times!

Another reporter asked to a mother crying uncontrollably over her dead child's body, "How does it feel.... what are your emotions right now?" What a horrifying callousness!

The most of the Indian Media journalists were behaving as if they were shooting a film or a tv serial. Without knowing the history, demography and nature of the Nepal and its people, they started making comments as if they knew every fact. They were behaving as if they had come from a big nation and could go anywhere they liked, treating Nepal as a small nation. When Pakistani government sent beef to help the suffering people, Indian media made a big hue and cry!

"Desi Media - Hai Hai. Murdabad... Murdabad..."

"Dear vultures, you've picked the bones of the dead clean. Go home now." This was one of the

politer tweets from Nepal that fired up social media over the week.

"Even enemies forget their national interests during disaster. See what you are doing!"

"Indian media, Stop your media-quake."

"When you turn another nation's tragedy into an opportunity for self glorification, such kind of things happen."

"Dear Nepalese brothers and sisters, Indian media does not represent India. We Indians are with you" - An Indian.

were some other tweets.

We already are accused of having a big brother attitude in the region. Our patronising attitude touched a new high. The April earthquake and its aftermath have tested the limits of the fragile 'friendship' between the two countries. Indian govt. and Indian people have been doing their best to provide help to suffering Nepali people, as a good neighbor should do, but such efforts seemed to be obliterated when most of Indian media indulged in cheap chest thumping.

Battle of TRPs during monumental human tragedy!

### **GRAPEVINE: Out of Favour Arun Shourie Attacks PM Modi, Swamy Sulks**

#### **ANONYMOUS**

Arun Shourie and Subramanian Swamy are sulking. Both tried but were unable to get close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. And as everyone knows, both have a nuisance value if they choose to exercise it. Shourie seems to have taken the first plunge having just given an interview to a television news channel where he has attacked the "directionless" economic policy of the government. Mincing no words the former journalist and BJP ideologue has claimed that the

coterie of Modi, Amit Shah and Arun Jaitley is running the government at the expense of all others. Subramanian Swamy has shown more patience. From a statement a day he has fallen silent, as no one is really listening to him. In fact the spoof Facebook Page called Unofficial: Subramaniam Swamy keeps him alive, with more about him there than anywhere else these days. BJP leaders are waiting breathlessly for Swamy to erupt too, for added excitement to their currently shackled lives.

*(Courtesy: The Citizen)*

## Wadham students object to "nationalist" and "offensive" Union Jack

By **Luke Mintz** on 30/04/2015

College flew Union Flag from its main flagpole to commemorate the Queen's birthday, provoking student anger.

Several students at Wadham College have expressed concern over the College's decision to fly the Union Jack last week.

The College flew the flag from its main flagpole on April 21st of this year to commemorate the Queen's birthday, and also on November 11th to mark Armistice Day. The flag has provoked anger from some students, who have criticised the decision as a "nationalist" statement, "offensive" to the victims of British Imperialism. History fresher Peter Morgan brought a protest motion to Sunday evening's Student Union meeting, in which he urged students to fly the Soviet Flag to commemorate the 70th anniversary of Nazi Germany's surrender to the Soviet armies.

The motion was, according to Morgan, an attempt to "draw attention to the current national flag-waving policy at Wadham". The SU is likely to consider a motion condemning the flag-flying at its next meeting.

Morgan told *The Oxford Student*: "I have no objection to flying the British flag as an act of commemoration in itself. I have relatives who died at the Somme. My objection is to the inconsistent application of the moral reasoning drawn along national lines."

He went onto to claim that his Soviet Flag motion was designed to address the "moral hypocrisy" of the College's "nationalist" flag waving, and "provoke explicit support for its abolition".

Morgan also noted the "manifold moral outrages committed under the Union Flag", such as the Peterloo Massacre and the "systematic neglect" of famine-victims in Ireland, and he expressed doubt as to whether they "can be divorced from the banner on these moments of remembrance".

Other Wadham students expressed similar anger. Second-year student Ailbhe Rea said the flag has become "associated with a particularly nasty strain of English nationalism", and expressed discomfort with the flag "being flown over Wadham as a symbol of our community's values".

English student Niamh McIntyre tweeted: "Can't [believe] Wadham is flying Union Jack for Queen's bday, so embarrassing."

Several colleges recently flew the St George's flag to celebrate St George's Day.

Some students at the Wadham SU meeting criticised the manner in which Morgan's protest had been made, with one drawing attention to the "mass sexual violence" of the Nazi-Soviet war, described as the "greatest mass rape in history". Not all students criticised the Union Jack. One second-year undergraduate, not at Wadham, described the anger as "ridiculous" and "hilariously Wadham".

"Apparently flying the flag of our country is racist now," they commented, "these students are so absurdly cut-off from the real world it's almost funny".

These students are so absurdly cut-off from the real world it's almost funny

Another student, who wished not to be named, noted the "undeniable class dimension" of the outrage: "Let's face it, Wadham's overwhelmingly middle-class student population can't understand why their (working class) porters have such a silly attachment to a piece of cloth. The snobbery inherent in this classic student 'outrage' is clear to see. This is Emily Thornberry laughing at white-van-man all over again. Some people are patriotic, they need to get over that."

Wadham College was not available for comment.

*(Courtesy: 'The Oxford Student')*

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