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Sacrifice at the Altar of Development

Medha Patkar and Sandeep Pandey

The legendary Professor Guru Das Agrawal, who got promoted from a Lecturer directly to Professor at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology at Kanpur after having finished his Ph.D. from University of California at Berkeley in two years, who had laid the foundation of India's anti-pollution regimen as the first Member-Secretary of Central Pollution Control Board, and who had become Swami Gyan Swaroop Sanand in 2011 at the age of 79 years, ultimately failed to convince a government about his viewpoint on rejuvenation of river Ganga and had to pay for this with his life. He died on 11 October 2018 after 112 days of fasting on lemon water and honey, last three days of which were without any water at all.

It may be intriguing why the government, which rode to power on a Hindutva agenda, did not listen to a Hindu saint, on an issue of ecological and religious significance of Ganga, which was at the core of Prime Minister's election campaign. Swami Gyan Swaroop Sanand had put forward a draft for National River Ganga ji (Conservation and Management) Act in 2012. The government came up with The National River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Bill in

2017 and updated it in 2018. The two draft Bills however, differed in their basic perspectives.

During his sixth and last fast, Swami Gyan Swaroop Sanand wrote to PM Narendra Modi on 5 August 2018 that whereas the National Environmental Appellate authority of the previous Manmohan Singh government had suspended the Lohari Nagpala hydroelectric project on his clearly articulated demands, despite some construction having taken place there, and declared a length of over hundred kilometres of Bhagirathi from Gangotri to Uttarkashi as an Eco-Sensitive Zone, which means no destructive activity could take place here, the present government had not done a thing for conservation of Ganga even after four and a half years of being in power. He repeated his four demands which he had intimated to PM before going on fast: (1) The draft prepared by him along with Advocate M.C. Mehta and Paritosh Tyagi, among others, be placed before and passed by the Parliament; (2) All under-construction and proposed hydroelectric projects on streams directly flowing into Ganga in the upper reaches, downstream and its tributaries be scrapped with immediate effect; (3) All mining and

deforestation activities be banned in the Ganga basin; and (4) Form a Ganga Bhakt Parishad whose aim would be to work to protect the interests of Ganga. He never heard from the PM till his death, even though during his fifth fast in 2013, Rajnath Singh as the then Bhartiya Janata Party president had promised to him that all his demands related to Ganga would be met if the BJP came to power at the Centre.

Professor Agrawal wanted Ganga to be declared a national symbol. His main emphasis was on conservation of Ganga in its natural pristine glory, unobstructed natural flow, which he called as *Aviral*, and unpolluted water quality, which he described as *Nirmal*. He wanted a ban on discharge of any untreated or treated sewage or industrial effluents in Ganga. Another of his demands was complete prohibition of incineration of any kind of solid waste, setting up of units discharging pollutants, deforestation, illegal stone quarrying and sand mining, building of river-front development structures and use of chemicals or hazardous substances in the vicinity of Ganga. These have become necessary if any river is to be protected against destruction and degradation. It is important to know that Professor G.D. Agrawal's important learnings emerged from his engineering experience with the Rihand dam while working for the Uttar Pradesh State Irrigation Department.

As a true scientist, Professor Agrawal precisely defined *Aviral* to mean minimum environmental/ecological flow at every place, including the downstream of each dam, and at all times with universal bed, lateral, open-to-air, longitudinal and temporal connectivities. He

believed that to preserve the unique qualities of water of Ganga—its non-putrefying, disease destroying, health enhancing and pollution destroying properties—it was necessary to ensure its *Aviral* flow. Similarly, *Nirmal* doesn't mean merely meeting the standards on water quality related to pH (measure of acidity or alkalinity), Dissolved Oxygen, Biological Oxygen Demand, Chemical Oxygen Demand, Total Dissolved Solids, Free Chlorine and Total Chlorine or water treated by Reverse Osmosis process and Ultraviolet rays. He concluded scientifically that the special 'self-cleaning' property of Ganga and its unique coliform destroying capabilities were because of the presence of bacteriophages, large amounts of exo-cellular polymers coming from trees present in Himalayan uplands, unique mix of heavy and radioactive metals, and ultra fine silt or micro nuclei in the water. It is essentially the rocks, sediment and vegetation, including medicinal plants or ecology of the upper region, that contributes to the special property of Ganga described as *Nirmal*.

Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Water Resources, Riven Basin Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, is known to have publicly said that he understands the concept of *Nirmal* but not that of *Aviral*. It is quite obvious that accepting Professor Agrawal's concept of *Aviral* would disallow construction of any more dams. Another view emanating from the ruling BJP government is that they don't care about the country, religion or its people but are only interested in 'Development.' It is very clear that the BJP's concept of 'Development' is clearly corporate driven and,

as is now well established, yields sufficient kickbacks to fund the next electoral cycle. Hence even though a senior functionary of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, who tried to mediate, said he agreed theoretically with Professor G.D. Agrawal's vision on Ganga, the compulsions of realpolitik sealed the fate of Professor G.D. Agrawal and by extension that of Ganga. This threat will loom large on life and livelihoods of people living in other river valleys too.

Professor Agrawal had fasted five times during the United Progressive Alliance regime. However, he never faced a threat to his life. The only time he fasted during the National Democratic Alliance government's tenure proved fatal for him. This also demonstrates that the development paradigm is not sensitive to socio-cultural issues, including religion, or environmental issues, in spite of the PM having won a United Nations award, and is more brazenly pro-corporate and less humane under the present government.

The vacuum created by Professor G.D. Agrawal's demise is unfillable. Where is another strong voice for Ganga? To many religious minded people, Professor G.D. Agrawal appeared to be in the mould of the mythological figure Bhagirath, almost single-handedly taking up the cause of Ganga.

A true condolence to him would be to brace ourselves for fight against governments which believe in concept of 'development' with attendant destruction of nature, corporations which implement such misplaced and misgoverned projects, and contractors plundering natural resources including sand from the river bed and its catchment area.

Unraveling the Truth: Gujarat Carnage 2002

Ram Puniyani

The fight for conservation of Ganga is far from over. Swami Shivanand, the chief priest of Matre Sadan, the ashram in Haridwar that Professor Agrawal chose as his fast site, has warned Narendra Modi that he and his disciples will ensure that the chain of fasting begun by Swami Sanand doesn't break. One Swami Gopal Das had also begun fasting soon after Swami Sanand started his fast on 22 June, 2018. Earlier Swami Nigmanand, also associated with Matre Sadan, laid down his life in 2011 on the 115th day of his fast—it is widely believed that he was actually murdered at the behest of a mining mafia associated with the then ruling BJP government in Uttarakhand. How many more lives will be sacrificed at the altar of development?

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Communal violence has been a major painful sour of our body politic. The post-partition violence not only shook the nation no end, it also resulted in the biggest ever mass migrations in the world. But that was not the end of the story as far as divisive violence is concerned. It resurfaced, and went on intensifying, more so after the decade of 1980s when the Ram Temple movement started deepening the emotions of a section of society. There was a parallel rise of the temple movement on one side and communal violence on the other. A series of ghastly episodes of communal violence shattered the fabric of the nation seriously, one such being the Gujarat carnage of 2002. This carnage was orchestrated on the pretext of burning of a train in Godhra. The real truth of who was responsible for the burning of the train is still mired in mystery. It led to the death of 58 innocent lives, those of Kar Sevaks and their families. At this point, it was the duty of the state, that is, the state government and administration, to undertake a damage control exercise and limit the future losses of lives and property.

Unfortunately, there are reports which indicate that the state government acted in the opposite manner. It appears that in the aftermath of the train burning, a meeting was called on the same evening by Chief Minister Narendra Modi. He allegedly told the officials to go soft against the possible reaction to the train burning. This has been stated by Sanjeev Bhat, a senior police officer who was present

in the meeting. Justice Suresh who was part of the Citizens tribunal to investigate Gujarat violence also confirmed that such a thing was said in the meeting. Now this has been confirmed yet again in the autobiography of Lt. Gen. Zameer Uddin Shah, *The Sarkari Mussalman*, which was released on October 13 by the former Vice President of India, Dr. Hamid Ansari.

In his memoirs, Lt. Gen. Shah states that on the instructions from General Padmanabhan, the then Chief of General Staff, he reached Ahmedabad in the night of February 28. As he was landing in Ahmedabad, he could see the burning city. From the airport, Gen. Shah went straight to the residence of Chief Minister Narendra Modi, where the then defense minister George Fernandez was also present. It was 2 am. He gave the Chief Minister a list of immediate requirements to enable the Army columns to fan out across the city to restore law and order. At 7 am on March 1, 3000 army jawans landed at Ahmedabad airfield. But the army jawans were forced to camp at the airport for one full day, as the Gujarat government did not provide them the necessary transport, even though the city was burning. It was only on the morning of March 2 that the army road columns reached Ahmedabad, and so did the requisitioned civil trucks, magistrates, police guides and maps. This seems to confirm what Justice Suresh commented in his report as a member of Citizens tribunal.

The 'Tehelka Stings' on Babu Bajrangji, who is in jail for his role

in the Gujarat carnage, had stated that Modi had given them three days to do whatever they wanted to do. Shah's memoirs reconfirms this. The delay in army deployment for a day clearly sent out the signal to the rioters that they could continue with their mayhem.

Shah also observes that once provided with support, the army brought the mayhem under control in two days time. This brings forth the question that why is it that in India, incidents of communal violence continue for several days? Why is it that they are not quickly brought under control? Dr. Vibhuti Narain Rai, a retired DGP, says in his path-breaking study, 'Combating Communal Conflicts', that no communal violence can go on beyond 24 hours unless the state administration is complicit in it. His study draws attention to the biased nature of our police machinery, a fact which is brought out in Gen. Shah's book also. The inquiry report by the Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigative Team (SIT) records that there was no delay in deploying the armed forces. However, Gen. Shah categorically says that the SIT lied; it never approached the army for its testimony on the matter. Gen. Shah affirms that these facts are recorded in the 'After Action Taken' report that he had submitted to General Padmanabhan, and are also mentioned in the military 'war diaries'.

There is also an impression that the SIT gave a clean chit to Modi. It's not true. The Court appointed amicus curiae Raju Ramchandran in his report to the Apex Court on the SIT report had stated that there is enough in the SIT report to prosecute Modi. While the SIT did say that there is no prosecutable case against Modi, it simultaneously also observed that

Modi had a communal mindset, he visited Godhra which was 300 km away but did not go to any refugee camp right within the city till much later when Mr. Vajpayee came to visit Juhapura camp. The SIT had also observed that the decision to hand over the bodies of Godhra tragedy to Jaideep Patel of VHP was harmful. The SIT also admits that Sanjeev Bhat had attended the meeting where the administration was told to go slow. Finally, the SIT had also criticised the transfer and prosecution of upright police officers like R.B. Sreekumar, Rahul Sharma, Himanshu Bhat and Samiullah Ansari, who were penalised by the Modi regime.

This shows that it is not just the communal mindset of the people, but also the decisions of those in power, that are responsible for the loss of lives and destruction of property in communal riots. We also need to take steps to tackle the communal

mindset of our police machinery.

It's time we as a society learn from the pangs of past, as recalled by the likes of Lt. General Zameer Uddin. The other experiences shared by him in his memoirs, both as an army man and a Muslim in India, are also very instructive.

In his endorsement of the book, General Padmanabhan writes that many eyebrows were raised when he assigned Lt. Gen. Shah the task for controlling the violence in Gujarat, but he stood his ground and told the seniors objecting to his decision that the choice of troops and their leader was a military decision and not open to debate. He also compliments the ability, impartiality and pragmatic decision making of Lt. Gen. Shah that quickly brought the situation under control.

A lot to learn and set right from the memoirs of an upright officer!

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Jayaprakash Narayan: An Idealist Betrayed – Part I

M. G. Devasahayam

The imposition of the Emergency in June 1975 by Indira Gandhi led to a general uprising across the country under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as JP. It also brought together strange bedfellows—the socialists and the Jan Sangh, the political face of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). In this personal epitaph on Jayaprakash Narayan, former civil servant M.G. Devasahayam, who was "the only person who had unrestricted access" to the late JP when he was prisoner during the Emergency, explains how the JP movement fizzled out due to what he terms the "betrayal of the RSS".

JP: The Quintessential Rebel

During the freedom struggle, JP was the frontline foot soldier of Mahatma Gandhi. He never sought power and did not enjoy it even for a day. Well before Indira Gandhi was anywhere near politics, JP had been offered the posts of Union cabinet minister, prime minister and President of India in quick succession and he turned down each one of them. Though considered the natural successor to Nehru as prime minister, JP chose to withdraw from power politics to engage in the more enduring struggle against poverty, social evils and violence. JP was

an iconoclast with compassion and a product of the Magadha legacy which "not only produced relentless fighters and exterminators of kings" but "hearkened at the same time to the devout teachings of Vardhamana Mahavira and Gautama Buddha".

The man who could have become India's second Prime Minister, and possibly finished off the Nehru-Indira dynasty rule for ever, unwittingly became its perpetrator by declining to take office. Instead, he became, after Mahatma Gandhi, the second redeemer of the nation, freeing the country from the shackles of a home-brewed dictatorship, which was imposed by an unprincipled Indira Gandhi. Sometimes, leaders scale such lofty heights of national eminence that they become too big for mundane office. In post-Emergency India, JP never occupied any official seat of power and was regarded as the nation's patron saint.

Jayaprakash Narayan was born on October 11, 1902, in Sitabdiara, a village on the border of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Because of the Ganga often changing course, JP's ancestral house has been shown alternately in Bihar and UP. He became a natural leader among the village boys. JP was married to Prabhavati, daughter of lawyer and nationalist Brij Kishore Prasad, in October 1920. Prabhavati was very independent-minded and, on Gandhiji's invitation, went to stay at his ashram while JP continued his studies. Because of Prabhavati's vow of celibacy while JP was away in the USA, and his honouring the same on return, the couple did not have any children and, therefore, had no immediate family.

As he grew up and cut his teeth in public life, JP wanted to overhaul

the entire Indian society. For him, the political system had to be responsive to the aspirations of the poorest of the poor; the glaring inequalities that our economic system breeds had to end; the educational system should be geared to the needs of the nation; the canker of corruption in India's political and administrative system had to be eradicated; the various social ills that afflict our country had to end. This, in simplistic and pragmatic terms, is what JP meant by "Total Revolution". The kind of sweeping reforms JP had in mind appear like a utopian abstraction, but nobody can contest their fundamental desirability. Evidently, the initiative for such a revolution has to come from society as a whole, not just the government.

JP was a dreamer and an idealist to a fault. It was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's fiery oratory and his call to "lift up to the skies like leaves before a storm" that drew JP to the freedom movement. Jayaprakash took the Maulana's words to heart and left Patna College with just 20 days remaining for his examinations. He joined the Bihar Vidyapeeth, a college run by the Congress. After exhausting the courses at the Vidyapeeth, Jayaprakash decided to go to America to pursue his studies. To pay for his education, Jayaprakash picked grapes, packed fruits, washed dishes, worked as a mechanic, sold lotions and accepted teaching jobs. All these jobs gave Jayaprakash insights into the problems of the working class.

JP's sojourn in America for seven years at the prestigious universities of Berkeley, Iowa, and Wisconsin only increased his passion for freedom. He was a student of Professor Edward Ross, the father of sociology, and, while

at Wisconsin, was introduced to Karl Marx's *Das Capital*. His Ohio professor observed in the young man "germs of leadership" and "aggressiveness of thought". When he returned to India in November 1929, he was "a mature young man with an enquiring mind, original in his thinking, and with the fierce, idealistic desire to devote himself to serve society". And he fully involved himself in the freedom struggle.

In February 1940, JP was arrested for speaking against Indian participation in the Second World War and sent to the Deoli detention camp in Rajasthan. He was again arrested in 1942 for participating in the Quit India Movement. In November 1942, Diwali night, JP, along with five others, escaped from the high-security Hazaribagh jail by scaling a 17-foot-high wall while the guards remained distracted by the festivities. A reward of Rs 10,000 was offered for JP's capture, dead or alive. This electrified a languishing Quit India Movement, eventually leading to independence. But JP had to pay a very heavy price for this. After nearly one year of hunt, he was arrested in Amritsar on September 18, 1943 while on his way to Rawalpindi to meet Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. He was taken to Lahore Fort, notorious as a "torture chamber". Sixteen months of mental and physical torture followed. JP was put in solitary confinement for the first month. Then came interrogations, physical torture and humiliation. He was released on April 12, 1946.

A.P. Sinha, a jail-mate and close friend whom JP tried to persuade to join the Hazaribagh escapade, had this exhortation to make to the latter prior to the escape:

"J.P., I am sorry I cannot make

the break with you. I want to come for the love of you and keep you company and support you. But my health is poor and I'm not sure I could be effective. I'm too deeply Gandhian. All I'll do is to hide myself. I'm only used to attending political meetings and passing resolutions. I would not be able to give you the help you need. Let me help to cover your getaway. You have got the passion that can make people's spirits soar up. You can inspire them to self-sacrifices, to accept sufferings. You are a great national leader."

Independence finally came on August 15, 1947. Within a year Gandhiji was assassinated. The Socialists lost to the Congress in the 1952 elections. Nehru invited JP to join the Cabinet. When Nehru could give no assurances on the implementation of JP's 14-point plan to reform the Constitution, the administration, the judicial system, nationalise the banks, redistribute land to the landless, revive swadeshi and set up cooperatives, he refused the offer.

On the attainment of independence, when people scrambled for loaves of office, JP stood apart, concentrating his efforts on leading the Congress Party towards the socialist path. Those were the years when some of the finest intellectuals-turned-activists in the national movement, like Narendra Dev, Yusuf Meherally, Achyut Patwardhan and Rammanohar Lohia joined hands with him, or more correctly, spurred him on in the new endeavour. He politely turned down Pandit Nehru's repeated invitations to join his cabinet. Instead, he turned his attention to the trade unions he led. With the help of the unions, he was able to get many facilities for

the workers, such as minimum wage, pension, medical relief and housing subsidy. Seeing the totalitarian ways and bloody purges unleashed in Soviet Russia, JP turned away from Communism.

From Swarajya to Revolution

He decided to dedicate himself totally to Mahatma Gandhi's ideal of 'sampoorna swarajya' and pursue his efforts towards 'people's participatory governance' and corruption-free, value-based public life. In 1954, he blended himself with Vinoba Bhave's Sarvodaya movement. He gave up his landed property and withdrew from all political activity to devote the rest of his life to the movement. He set up an 'ashram' in poor and backward Hazaribagh, trying to give Gandhian concepts a new dimension by using modern technology to uplift the villages. Even Prime Minister Nehru's suggestion in the late fifties that JP could be his successor did not lure him back to politics.

JP believed that every village should be like a small republic—politically independent and capable of taking its own decisions. It was a marriage of Gandhian-Indian concepts and modern Western democracy. His thoughtful, well-researched and brilliant book, *The Reconstruction of Indian Polity*, won him the Ramon Magsaysay Award. He was involved in the resolution of the Naxal and Naga issues and was also a key person in acquiring the surrender of dacoits in the Chambal Valley. On April 15, 1973, Prabhavati died of cancer, leaving Jayaprakash alone and devastated.

This man who had turned a recluse refusing positions of high power and authority returned to active politics in 1974 at the ripe

age of 72 when student unrest against corruption, unemployment, and high inflation spread like wild fire, threatening to turn violent and go beyond control. In the face of terror and repression unleashed on the students by the governments of Bihar and Gujarat, JP took charge and thus was born the 'JP Movement' that shook corrupt and authoritarian governments to their very foundation.

As part of the movement, on April 8, 1974, JP led a silent procession at Patna. The procession was lathi-charged and this created a mass upsurge against corruption and autocratic rule. On June 5, 1974, riding the crest of a popular upheaval against all that was rotten in governance and public life, JP declared at a massive rally in Patna:

"This is a revolution, friends! We are not here merely to see the Vidhan Sabha dissolved. That is only one milestone on our journey. But we have a long way to go. . . . After 27 years of freedom, people of this country are wracked by hunger, rising prices, corruption . . . oppressed by every kind of injustice . . . it is a Total Revolution we want, nothing less!"

When, on June 12, 1975, the Allahabad High Court held Prime Minister Indira Gandhi guilty on charge of corrupt practices in the election, JP advised her to resign until her name was cleared by the Supreme Court. Instead, she clamped the Emergency on the nation. JP was the first to be arrested under the Defence of India Rules.

JP and India's Second Freedom

India's first freedom, achieved on the midnight of 14/15th August 1947, ended on the midnight of 25/26th June 1975, when the then

President of India signed a crisp four-line proclamation virtually on command from the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi:

“In exercise of the powers conferred by clause (1) of Article 352 of the Constitution, I, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, President of India, by this Proclamation declare that a grave emergency exists whereby the security of India is threatened by internal disturbances.”

This extinction of freedom in the country brought about an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation between Indira Gandhi, the self-appointed dictator, and Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as JP, the congenital democrat. While the former was the epitome of power and pelf, the later abjured all desire for power, but wielded immense moral authority. By the time the confrontation ended in March 1977, JP had won with India regaining its Freedom.

Acknowledging this, veteran journalist Kuldip Nayyar said in his 24th JP Memorial Lecture:

“He wasn't built to be a hero: slight of figure, racked by illness, battle-worn. Yet, he proved to be the outstanding hero who won us the second freedom in 1977, 30 years after the first one.”

Freedom has been India's path ever since independence, a path chosen by the founding fathers of our Republic under extremely trying circumstances. Despite all trials and tribulations and its many imperfections, India today is being lauded as the largest democracy on earth practicing freedom, however imperfect it may be. For JP, considered among the greatest revolutionaries of the last century, freedom had always been a passion.

JP had ‘worked and marched,

fought and died for the triumph of freedom’ in a country wherein live one-sixth of the human race. And he did it not once, but twice—as a fiery fighter for freedom from alien rule under Gandhiji's leadership and later winning it back from a native ‘darbar’ under his own stewardship. Elsewhere in the world, such a man would be celebrated with gratitude. But here in this ‘Republic of Jumlas’ and land of ‘cash-and-crime politics’, he is near-totally forgotten.

During the 20 months of active Emergency spanning the years 1975 to 1977, people moved in hushed silence, stunned and traumatised by the draconian goings on. Across the nation, groveling academicians, advocates and accountants vied with each other to sing paeans of glory to the Emergency rulers, some signing pledges of loyalty and servitude in blood! The bulk of the civil service crawled when asked to bend. Higher judiciary was willing to decree that under the Emergency regime, citizens did not even have the ‘right to life’. Politicians of all hue and colour, barring honourable exceptions, lay supine and prostrate. There was gloom all around and it looked as if everything was over and the world's largest democracy was slowly but surely drifting into dictatorship.

But through this all, one single soul, one lonely spirit continued to stir in anguish and agony, for the first few months in captivity at Chandigarh, later attached to a dialysis machine at Bombay's Jaslok Hospital, and then in a spartan house in Patna. Yet, this defiant, indomitable spirit in the person of Jayaprakash Narayan dared the might of Indira's dictatorship and defeated it, thereby restoring

freedom and democracy to India. This he did despite being in the frailest of health and living on borrowed time.

All nations, most of all India, need an icon to which they can cleave when times are bad, which can unite them across barriers of caste, creed, clan and language. The mid-seventies were bad days and through the draconian and repressive regime of National Emergency and the ‘era of discipline’ positioned against ‘anarchy and chaos’, Mrs. Gandhi was building herself up as that icon.

If she had succeeded, she would have got a clear mandate in any ensuing election, since majority would have voted for her instead of opting for a vacuum. When firmly in saddle, with Emergency endorsed by the people, the ‘iconship’ would have passed on to Sanjay Gandhi who was waiting in the wings. With age in his favour and his known dislike for the democratic process, India would have drifted from ‘direct democracy’ to ‘directed democracy’, a euphemism for dictatorship. An alternative icon was needed to prevent this tragedy from happening and JP with his towering personality and his aura as the hero of ‘Quit India Movement’ eminently filled the bill.

JP's emergence as an alternate icon to take the nation back to freedom and democracy was not an easy task. The Sarvodaya leader was out of circulation and public view for several years before he surfaced in 1974 to lead an uprising, which mostly involved the youth. Mainly students spearheaded this uprising, popularly known as the “JP Movement”. Outlining its *raison d'etre*, JP wrote:

“The movement was started

with certain specific demands. The chief among them were: removal of corruption, curb on inflation, solving the problem of unemployment, and basic changes in the system of education.”

Emphasising on the movement’s main thrust, JP said, “We have always raised our voice against corruption. Prevention of corruption was the main aim of our movement.” These were indeed genuine and unassailable demands and should have received positive response from any government run on democratic principles. Instead, a power drunk ruling coterie chose to respond brutally with harsh repressive measures resulting in the strengthening and spreading of the JP movement.

The Allahabad High Court judgement of June 12, 1975 unseating Mrs. Gandhi from Parliament for ‘corrupt practices’ gave a big fillip to the movement, which was poised to sweep the country. But before it could gain momentum, Mrs. Gandhi struck and in one swift move declared Emergency and incarcerated all leaders who commanded public following.

On top of the list was ‘enemy-number-one-of-the-state’ Jayaprakash Narayan. By this time, JP had come to symbolise the conscience of the nation and uncompromising opposition to corruption and despotism which had become the hallmarks of Congress party and governments. By locking up an ailing JP in confinement, the ruling coterie thought they could break his body and spirit and thereby eliminate the only hurdle they had in enjoying uninterrupted and unfettered power.

What ‘man proposes God disposes’. In this case it was a

woman proposing to be the icon of 750 million people and the unquestioned leader of the vast subcontinent of India for years to come and then pass it on to her progeny. Using the Emergency as a whip to ‘discipline the nation’ and building her up as “Indira is India”, she would have eminently succeeded with individuals and institutions collapsing one by one and falling by the wayside. Barring sporadic murmurs of dissent, she had no opposition whatsoever and all roads were clear as far as eyes could see. But God has his own way of disposing.

During the initial days of the Emergency, within the confines of the yet to be commissioned intensive care ward of Chandigarh’s Post Graduate Institute of Medical

Education and Research (PGI), JP was a haggard and ‘defeated’ individual who felt that all hopes were gone and freedom in India stood extinguished. He had also mentally reconciled himself to die in confinement ‘as a prisoner of Indira Gandhi’. But the Almighty and the Ultimate Arbiter had other ideas. He wanted this man, who once symbolised all that was fiery in India’s freedom struggle and all that was noble in pursuing a cause, to resurge, rise again and re-emerge as the nation’s hope and the alternate icon to lead the people back to freedom and democracy. As the then District Collector & Magistrate of Chandigarh and custodian of JP-in-Jail, I had the privilege of witnessing this history-in-the-making first hand.

Under the Yoke of Neo-Imperialism: A Fake War of Patriotism and Treason

Prem Singh

Civil life in India, especially during the last two decades, has been afflicted by the twin war cry of patriotism (*rashtrabhakti*) and treason (*rashtradroh*). The four pillars of the Indian democracy—the legislative, the executive, the judiciary and the press—as well as the education and research institutions as well as independent and committed intellectuals of the civil society and activists working in different fields / peoples’ movements have been actively participating in this war of words. Even the country’s defense establishment is these days seen voicing its opinion on this subject. There is no reason to believe that the lower and lower-middle stratas of the society have not been

affected by this phenomena.

This war has picked up speed since the present government came to power. The reasons are obvious. The idea of patriotism and treason are closely linked with the idea of nationalism. Nationalism, on its part, is associated with capitalism. Aggressive capitalism, in order to flourish, needs aggressive nationalism. Exploiting the national identity and spirit of people, this aggressive nationalism is being used as a cover to hide the capitalist loot of national resources. In this process, a fake enemy is constructed before the people and given the label of traitor. People forget about the real enemy of the nation, which in the present era is corporate capitalism, and

start fighting against that imagined enemy. The emergence of aggressive nationalism in India and many other countries in the world is a manifestation of this very aggressive capitalism, in one or the other form.

The ongoing false war between patriotism and treason in India does not have at its core a well-thought-out and serious ideological content concerning the nation. There is no need to give extensive details of the various ideological–strategic contexts and dimensions of this war to prove its truth. The way the roles, characters, thoughts, narratives, issues, symbols, goals, strategies etc. change every moment make self-evident the futility as well as craftiness of the war of patriotism and treason. The absurd and ridiculous nature of this war becomes clear by looking at just three episodes related to it. One, the attempt to keep a military tank in the campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in the name of inculcating patriotism in the students and teachers; two, the binding of a citizen to the bonnet of a military jeep by an army officer in Kashmir while confronting the protesters; and three, the bizarre diktat given to the Muslim pilgrims from India going to Mecca to perform Haj to display the national flag.

The concept of nation, in modern India, is essentially linked to anti-colonialism. If any narrative of the nation does not address today's neo-imperialism, then it is clearly fake. This is not to say that politics alone exists in the center of national life; but politics is important. Politics can be real, but can also be fake. When fake politics prevails collectively and with pomp and show, everything goes fake in national life. This has been happening in India for the last nearly three decades. The arguments propagated by those who face the

allegations of treason, those who claim to be the true defenders of the Indian Nation, are often as shallow as those who believe in the *Hindu Rashtra theory* (and who are always ready to provide the certificate of patriotism to themselves).

A recent example would be quite adequate to explain the point. There was a considerable debate about the former President, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, agreeing to deliver a speech at the headquarters of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). When his speech was over, those who opposed him for accepting the invitation immediately changed their tune and began to build a monument of praise upon him. They explained that Shri Mukherjee had taught a good lesson on the idea of the Indian Nation to the RSS, right at its headquarters.

The important question, as to why has the concept of *Hindu Rashtra* become so dominant today, despite the presence of the far more meaningful idea of the Indian Nation and the large number of its intellectual supporters, was not even touched while eulogising Shri Mukherjee's speech. The idea of a fanatic *Hindu Rashtra* has been present in the country for the last 80 years. Notwithstanding the presence and influence of the supporters / adherents of the Indian Nation in all the academic, educational, literary, artistic and cultural institutions and big NGOs of the country, one needs to seriously ask as to why have the educated and well-off Indians, in India and abroad, along with the ordinary masses, come to support the Hindu-fascist mindset today?

To a large extent, the defenders of the Indian Nation are themselves responsible for this situation. However, they do not want admit this. Admitting their mistakes will require introspection and maybe

some self-criticism. But that can take place only when one does not consider oneself beyond criticism. However, the Marxist, modernist and libertarian defenders of the Indian Nation are simply not ready for this kind of discussion that would call for owning up responsibility. They only want to make strategic use of the idea of Indian Nation in order to oppose the *Hindu Rashtra* of the RSS. Their strategy is to portray the RSS as the sole enemy. Ironically, this applies to the RSS as well because it too wants to pursue the strategy of limiting the debate to around this issue.

The idea of the modern Indian nation had been discussed and nurtured from the time of colonial domination to the time of independence. This idea, with its strengths and weaknesses, is still being discussed and continues to take shape. Unfortunately, many Marxists, modernists, libertarians and even liberals do not want to come clear about their faith in it. They seem to be more interested in intellectual manoeuvres so that the debate remains focussed only on nationalism, so as to allow the conflict between the defenders of the Indian Nation and the advocates of the Hindu Rashtra to drag on. Most of these English-language bred intellectual elites are not ready to understand that the toiling masses of India have paid a heavy price for such intellectual manoeuvres, and these masses have now become victims of a variety of misconceptions.

In the context of Shri Mukherjee's speech, the defenders of the Indian Nation did not make the remotest effort to raise the pertinent question that every camp seems to be joyfully accepting the yoke of neo-imperialism. The opponents of RSS may oppose fascism and plead for democracy. But the RSS knows that

the BJP government will not always be there. It therefore has no problems with inviting any defender of the Indian Nation to its headquarters, provided it has gathered adequate political strength. This is not an appropriation. This, to say the least, is a unity of two fake groups working in favor of neo-imperialism. The collaboration between the two has been strengthened since 1991, the year when the New Economic Policies were imposed.

* * *

It is not without reason. Both these ideas of nationalism are unrealistic in the context of modern India. The 'Golden Age', fetishised by the supporters of *Hindu Rashtra*, is located in a distant time and age. The one created by communists, modernists and libertarians is situated somewhere in a remote 'place', which keeps changing according to their convenience. Not surprisingly, the journey of these two unrealistic ideas of the Indian nation essentially culminates at the doorsteps of corporate capitalism. As a result, *Manuvad* is tagged on to the *Hindu Rashtra*, while, on the other hand, the defenders of Indian Nation tag on to a bizarre mix of many isms while aspiring to build a 'digital India'. In the process of struggle and dialogue with colonialism, the historic enterprise of redefining, reinterpreting and reorganising the spirit of Indianness (*bharatiyata*) in the midst of global developments has almost come to a dead end. The stagnant idea of 'nation' often turns into a mentality, which can be simultaneously violent, conspiratorial and cowardly.

As capitalist oppression intensifies, people ultimately rise to resist it. To dilute their struggle, capitalist regimes have created a network of NGOs. But there is no end to the devastation being wrought

on the people of India by capitalism. People cannot be cloistered for long by putting NGO fences. Sooner or later, their anger is bound to erupt—if they do not come together as citizens in a political battle against capitalism, their anger will erupt in the name of religion, caste, region and language. All conflicts between the defenders of Indian Nation and believers in the *Hindu Rashtra* aim at channelising this anger of the people in their favor. They do not want to leave a middle path. It is not surprising that India is turning into a 'mob-nation'.

It is a matter of concern that the civil society activists who are defenders of the Indian-Nation call upon caste / religious communities (Dalits, Muslims, tribals, OBCs etc.) to come together on one platform against the fascist attack of the RSS–BJP. These intellectual defenders of the Indian Nation think that all wisdom / knowledge is their sole property. The strategy of the RSS since its inception has been to mobilise communities along identity lines and that makes the RSS the biggest hurdle in the path of creating in the people the modern sense of citizenship. Have the civil society activist defenders of the Indian Nation also decided that the *Hindu Rashtra* of the RSS is not contrary to the idea of a citizen-nation? There was a time when, during the early years after the imposition of the New Economic Policies in 1991, serious efforts were being made to create an alternative politics by bringing together various issue-based resistance movements of different areas in order to defeat the neo-imperialist attack. Now we are witnessing calls given by those ensconced in the lap of corporate politics to various communities to unite in the name of Indian Nation!

At one time it was believed that

the caste-equation (OBCs–Dalits–Muslims) politics is an antidote to communalism in elections. It was cloaked in nomenclatures like 'politics of social justice'. However, the RSS went ahead and turned that idea to its own advantage, because the defenders of the Indian Nation did not place the politics of social justice on the constitutional–ideological axis of socialism, secularism and democracy. 'Social justice' politics became confined merely to 'social engineering' with the sole aim of winning elections. The rest of the 'task' was completed by the casteist–dynastic leaders!

There is no need to explain that the worst kind of misery in this 'mob-nation' is being faced by Muslims. The majority of the Muslim society, being isolated from the process of politicisation, is bound to become a lackey of this or that caste-equation under this or that political party/leader. There is no place for them in the Hindu Rashtra, at least with equal status. Unfortunately, even in the Indian Nation, they do not have an equal status as Indian citizens. They are treated even by their so-called saviours with a scornful charity mentality. Such behavior is accepted as secular and comes in handy to encash for posts, awards and grants from willing regimes.

* * *

All narratives of the Indian Nation are together in their opposition to Gandhi. They sometimes beat Gandhi with the stick of Bhagat Singh, sometimes with that of Ambedkar, sometimes with the whip of Subhash Chandra Bose, sometimes under the pretext of Jawaharlal Nehru and sometimes even with Jinnah. But as soon as they confront the RSS, they all start to rail against the organization for its role in the assassination of Gandhi. While doing so, they do not mean

the Gandhi who blasted the evil face of capitalist industrial civilization even when it was at the heights of its popularity worldwide, nor the Gandhi who gave a new meaning to politics and a new mode of protest against injustice / suppression in a violence-ridden world. Both the defenders of the Indian Nation and the supporters of *Hindu Rashtra* are unanimous in their support for corporate capitalism and thus deny Gandhi's political philosophy and vision. The *Hindu Rashtra* supporters openly oppose the tag of 'Father of the Nation' for Gandhi. Even if the defenders of the India Nation do not declare it openly, the tag of 'Father of the Nation' for Gandhi is not acceptable to them too. The latter should actually immediately release Gandhi from the shackles of 'Father of the Nation'. There will be no problem in building a consensus in the country on this subject. The Hindutva-minded people, who still derive vicarious pleasure, however unexpressed, in the killing of Gandhi will readily accept the idea of removing Gandhi from that position.

Gandhi had successfully linked the collective consciousness of the vast Indian society, which had been divided into varna-caste for centuries and was weakened by imperialist loot, with the anti-imperialist spirit. Gandhi went further and forced the then various intellectual streams to unite with the anti-imperialist spirit of the people. Gandhi's unique contribution to the modern Indian nation was that in this venture he did not have the sentiment of hostility towards the imperialist British rulers, and also tried to prepare fellow Indians for the sentiment of antipathy-less opposition. From Martin Luther King Jr. to Nelson Mandela, many activists the world over have been

thankful to Gandhi for this teaching. However, in India, the country's intellectuals hate Gandhi. There is no such example in the world where a person who devoted his life to the freedom struggle and did not want or take anything in exchange for his role in freeing the country from the colonial yoke, got boundless hatred and disregard from that country's intellectuals.

* * *

It is not surprising that almost all the defenders of the Indian Nation do not even talk about any political alternative despite the intensity of the crisis posed by the corporate-communal nexus. Rather, they have successfully destroyed all the possibilities of an alternative politics built up after 1991 by building complete solidarity with the anti-corruption movement of India Against Corruption (ICA) and the resulting party of that movement. It may be noted that *Bharat Mata* and Tricolor were made brand-equipment of patriotism in the public domain by the mentors of the anti-corruption movement and the subsequent Aam Aadmi Party. Intellectuals used to enjoy a huge reputation and praise in India from the very beginning. It is ironic that despite the worsening crisis before the nation, these very intellectuals today do not show any inclination for chalking out a new path of resistance.

When the Congress introduced the New Economic Policies in 1991, Atal Bihari Vajpayee had said that now the Congress has adopted their ideology and work. The corporate friendly decisions of both the BJP-led coalition governments that have come to power at the Centre, first under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1999, and now the present one under Narendra Modi, have thoroughly exposed the reality

of the RSS. All of its 'cultural' and 'nationalist' pomposity was only meant to grab and capture the left-overs of capitalist markets. The RSS's 'Hindu Lion' Mohan Bhagwat, who roared in Chicago recently, did not even raise a whimper on the government's decision of allowing 100 percent Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the defense sector. The small and medium traders have given their physical, mental and material resources to the Jana Sangh and now the BJP from the very time of the establishment of these political parties by the RSS. However, as soon as RSS became a crony of multinationals and corporate houses, it abandoned them, and is now permitting FDI in retail.

There is no discussion among the defenders of the Indian Nation about the phenomenon of neo-imperialism spreading in India and all over the world, of which communal fascism is a by-product. They are not concerned about the loss of our freedom that was earned through huge sacrifices. Their basic concern is only to defeat RSS's fascism. In this exercise, the defenders of the Indian Nation do not hesitate to misguide the whole debate. They take away attention from the neo-imperialist attacks by presenting the debate as fascism versus democracy, Hindutva versus Hinduism, Brahminism versus Dalitism (or *dalitwad*), Brahminism versus Backwardism (*pichhadawad*), etc. Their whole emphasis is on making strategies to fight these conflicts. It is a fact that due to democracy, some deprived castes and communities have got political power. They are struggling to maintain and consolidate their hold on power. They should use democratic means only to advance their struggle, as whatever gains they have made have been because of

democracy. But it is seen that some intellectuals seek to find 'militant' elements in these communities and want to connect them with violent resistance against the Indian state. Is the intention behind this kind of strategy against fascism honest by any stretch of imagination?

* * *

At the time of imposition of the New Economic Policies in 1991, Kishan Patnaik tried to provide and delineate a relevant perspective and direction to the debate on patriotism and treason. He based his thoughts on the experience of two centuries of colonial occupation of India. He linked the beginning of neo-liberalism in India with the beginning of slavery once again, and blamed the intellectuals of India for this. He argued that the minds of Indian intellectuals are unable to work freely against neo-liberalism and neo-imperialism. Kishan Patnaik proposed a formula of 'economic nationalism' (*arthik rashtrawad*) to counter neoliberal economic subjugation. According to him, the real patriots were those who opposed the plunder and loot of the country's resources by domestic and foreign corporate houses, while the traitors were (though he did not say so explicitly) the supporters of neo-liberalism.

To sum up, aggressive capitalism is not only looting our resources and labour, but also hollowing our national spirit (*bodh*). Actually, it would be more appropriate to say that since our national spirit has become hollow, it has enabled the loot of the country's resources and labor. Our national life cannot be enriched if there is no national spirit. In fact, the present aggressive nationalism is a futile exercise to fill the hollowness caused by the enfeebled national spirit. While it is true that the present scenario

appears depressing, and the loot of our wealth and natural resources by corporate houses is going to continue for some time, however, this loot cannot continue indefinitely. Sooner

or later, rejuvenation of the national spirit is bound to take place, and then people will rise and throw away this yoke of neo-imperialism.

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How South Africa's Shack Dwellers' Movement Is Fighting Back

Celina della Croce

In one of few appearances since he was forced to go underground, S'bu Zikode, a founder and leader of the Shack Dwellers Movement of South Africa (Abahlali baseMjondolo), spoke at the People's Forum in New York a few days ago. This is not his first time in hiding—he has faced threats and attempts on his life throughout the years—and many leaders of his movement have been assassinated. In New York, S'bu spoke of the struggle of his people and how they are moving forward in the face of brutal repression. How, in his words, they are not only living but marching forward “in the shadows of death” despite frequent raids, evictions and assassinations. Despite what he faces at home—violence, separation from his family and his community, betrayal by his comrades—S'bu is calm, collected and kind. He walks into the room with the confidence and wisdom of a leader and the humility of a soldier.

The movement that S'bu belongs to, Abahlali baseMjondolo, is among South Africa's largest social movements, with 50,000 members in 40 settlements throughout five of South Africa's nine provinces. The movement started in Durban in 2005 when public lands that had been promised to shack dwellers for public housing development

were instead given to a private developer. Shack dwellers took to the streets to protest, blockading major roads. The uprising “was out of anger, hunger and frustration. It was out of need,” says S'bu. “There weren't any clever individuals that sat around the table and thought of building this movement.” Since 2005, however, the movement has developed structures to strengthen and grow its membership and set a vision that goes far beyond their initial demand for housing.

While South Africa's constitution—a victory of the anti-apartheid movement that elected its first democratic president, Nelson Mandela, in 1994—guarantees the “right to adequate housing,” at least 13.5 percent of South Africans continue to live in shacks in informal settlements without access to basic services such as roads, sanitation and electricity. There is a large gap between the rhetoric around human rights and the reality of people on the ground. Despite claims from the African National Congress (ANC) government, which has been in office since 1994, that the development of public housing “normally takes about 30 days,” many families have been in temporary camps for years. Residents complain of corruption, harassment and bribery if they

attempt to gain access to public housing, the allocation of which currently lies at the discretion of those in power. Residents allege that every election season, government officials appear and paint the shacks with numbers with the promise that houses are coming—if they count the shacks and families, they will know how many houses to deliver. But year after year, houses have not appeared for many of South Africa's shack dwellers, and the old numbers are crossed out and replaced with new ones as the settlements grow and promises of public housing fade. In the interim, the same government officials surface only to destroy the shacks and force residents from their homes, using the number system to indicate which shacks have appeared between election seasons and are to be torn down. During these raids, the shack dwellers' homes are destroyed, and some residents have even been killed.

The threat of violence looms over the lives of Abahlali members, many of whom have been killed at protests, during evictions, and in targeted assassinations. S'bu says this is why, when members want to join the movement, they make sure they understand what the risks are: "We tell comrades from the onset when they sign up that you die here. We make sure that people are clear about the terrain that they are entering, that it is not just risky, but we have buried comrades, and we continue to bury comrades." They know the risks. But what choice do they have? S'bu continues: "Comrades will take that risk, because they do not want to die slowly and surely." The choice that they face is slow and certain death—to succumb to extreme poverty, violent land invasions, lack of access to proper infrastructure,

health care, and education, constant assaults on their dignity—or to risk dying fighting, in S'bu's words, "because we have no choice but to live like human beings."

At the heart of Abahlali's demands, and a key part of what makes them such a threat to the current system, is something much deeper than the demand for land and dignified housing that attacks the core of the profit-driven capitalist system not only in South Africa, but across the world. S'bu explains that "we are opposed to the idea that land should be bought and sold, and we struggle from below to allocate land on the basis of human needs rather than private profits. We have come up with a principle in Abahlali that the social value of land must come before its commercial value, and our lives as such must come before profits. The land was stolen from the black majority people in South Africa, [and] the majority of land in South Africa is still in the hands of minority white farmers. So, as a way to redress that, then occupation becomes key. Because how do you buy something that belongs to you? That's the political intervention: to say, we were dispossessed of our land, now it's the time to slowly, slowly get our land back." Abahlali threatens to expose the reality of many of the country's most marginalised voices and question the very value system on which it is based. This is not a demand that can be settled with a mere parcel of land.

Despite the attacks that Abahlali has faced—both from the state and from within the movement—they have remained firm in their demands and have continued to grow. S'bu attributes much of their success to a structure that gives power to the many rather than the few, and to deep organising rather than surface-level

mobilisations. "We try to make a distinction between organising and mobilising," he explains. "People will tell you, 'we have 100,000 members.' But if you ask them just to call a meeting, people don't show up. Because people happen to sign up a few years ago, you think they are part of you. They're not following you. That's why we try to make a distinction between organising and mobilising. If you mobilise people, they will come for that particular day because somehow you have managed to attract them. But you have not organised them because you have not been able to sustain such a gathering of them." In Abahlali, he says, "our movement belongs to its members. We are committed to building the democratic power of the oppressed from below."

S'bu stands before a small audience in Manhattan. He is wearing a suit, dark blue and freshly pressed. He has a small frame but the presence of a giant, carrying with him the voices of tens of thousands of shack dwellers. "I have always likened Abahlali to a sea, as waves in the sea which reject any trash you put in it. If you put trash in the sea, the waves will kick it out," he tells the audience, speaking of the trials that Abahlali is facing. S'bu returned to South Africa shortly after the event. He worries about the risk for his wife and young children. But he believes in the power of Abahlali's membership. The waves will cleanse the sea. "We have no choice but to live like human beings," he says.

On Sunday, October 14, after months in hiding, S'bu was welcomed back by his fellow shack dwellers in what marks a return to his public life. The threats have not dissipated. But, S'bu says, "I have taken a decision that I will rather perish than bow to my oppressors."

Letter to Editor

Ambedkar and Capitalism

Nischay Mhatre

Prof Anand Teltumbde's two-part article, "Babasaheb Ambedkar and Neo-Liberal Economic Reforms" that appeared in the September 30 and October 7 issues of *Janata* were a necessary rebuttal to those who are fraudulently using Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's name and aura to promote an economic model which he despised. I would like to give here three additional statements by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar in support of that article. In these statements, he explicitly denounces capitalist economy and supports socialist economy.

The first statement was made at an early stage of the Constitution making process. It was when the "Aims and Objectives Resolution" was taken up for debate on the floor of the Assembly on December 13, 1946. Babasaheb made the following remark in his speech:

I do not understand how it could be possible for any future Government which believes in doing justice socially, economically and politically, unless its economy is a socialistic economy.

The second statement is a part of the excellent explanatory notes which he included as an appendix in his Memorandum submitted to the Constituent Assembly in March 1947 and that was later published under the title of *States and Minorities*. One could say that this memorandum reflects the vision of India as Babasaheb saw it on the eve of independence. In the explanation of Article 2, Section 2, Clause 4, titled "Protection Against Violation of Fundamental Rights: Protection Against Economic Exploitation", Babasaheb wrote,

Anyone who studies the working of the system of social economy based on private enterprise and pursuit of personal gain will realize how it undermines, if it does not actually violate, the last two premises on which Democracy rests. How many have to relinquish their constitutional rights in order to gain their living? How many have to subject themselves to be governed by private employers? Ask those who are unemployed whether what are called Fundamental Rights are of any value to them. If a person who is unemployed is offered a choice between a job of some sort, with some sort of wages, with no fixed hours of labour and with an interdict on joining a union and the exercise of his right to freedom of speech, association, religion, etc., can there be any doubt as to what his choice will be. How can it be otherwise? The unemployed are thus compelled to relinquish their Fundamental Rights for the sake of securing the privilege to work and to subsist.

What about those who are employed? Constitutional Lawyers assume that the enactment of Fundamental Rights is enough to safeguard their liberty and that nothing more is called for. They argue that where the State refrains from intervention in private affairs—economic and social—the residue is liberty. What is necessary is to make the residue as large as possible and State intervention as small as possible. It is true that where the State refrains from intervention what remains is liberty. But this does not dispose of the matter. One more question remains to be answered. To whom and for whom is this liberty? Obviously this liberty

is liberty to the landlords to increase rents, for capitalists to increase hours of work and reduce rate of wages. This must be so. It cannot be otherwise . . . In other words what is called liberty from the control of the State is another name for the dictatorship of the private employer.

Such an explicit criticism of capitalism is more than any 'liberal' would dare venture, let alone a 'supporter of neo-liberalism'. It is worth noting that from Ambedkar's perspective, a capitalist economy was an enemy of liberty and social justice. As far as he was concerned, the scheme of 'State Socialism' was by no means a dirigistic scheme to prepare the ground for Indian capitalists. It was necessary for Democracy itself. Thus, one may rightly say that while his struggle was not for 'bread alone', it is clear that he recognised the impossibility of achieving human dignity and liberty without resolving the question of 'bread'.

The need to reach a consensus on the Constitution may have led him to tone down his insistence on using the word 'socialism' explicitly until the Constitution was approved. But in May 1950, just months after the Constitution came into force, he made a telling statement during an informal interview with the famed author Mulk Raj Anand:

Indeed liberty so far seems to be the liberty of the landlord to increase rent. The capitalist always wants to reduce wages and increase hours of work. Capitalism is dictatorship of the private employer."

Can there be stronger words with which one can denounce capitalism?

Scientists Warn Extinction Now Outpaces Evolution

Cheyenne Macdonald

Humans are now driving mammals to extinction at rates much faster than Earth's species may be able to recover from, a new study warns. Even in the best-case scenario, worrying new estimates suggest it will take upwards of 5 million years for mammal species to bounce back to current biodiversity levels following the extinctions expected to occur over the next five decades. The researchers say evolution will not be able to keep up with the rate by which mammal species are dying out unless we ramp up conservation efforts.

While Earth has experienced five mass extinctions in its history, the current phenomenon is unique in that it is caused by humans, not natural disasters.

In the new study, researchers from Aarhus University and the University of Gothenburg used an extensive database of mammals both in existence today and those that have gone extinct since the rise of *Homo sapiens* to assess the future of mammalian biodiversity.

Large mammal species, the researchers warn, are disproportionately at risk of dying out altogether.

"Large mammals, or megafauna, such as giant sloths and saber-toothed tigers, which became extinct about 10,000 years ago, were highly evolutionarily distinct," says palaeontologist Matt Davis from Aarhus University, who led the study. "Since they had few close relatives, their extinctions meant that entire branches of Earth's evolutionary tree were chopped off." Davis says, "There were hundreds of species of shrew, so they can weather a few extinctions. There were only four species of saber-toothed tiger; they all went extinct."

According to the study, it will take mammals 5 to 7 million years

to recover from the biodiversity losses they have incurred since the emergence of modern humans. And, it would take 3 to 5 million years to reach the levels they're at now, even if humans cease destructive practices.

In the next 50 years, we could lose several species, with the black rhino and Asian elephant both feared to be at risk of dying out before the end of the century.

When were Earth's 'BIG Five' Extinction Events?

Traditionally, scientists have referred to 'Big Five' mass extinctions. Of these, perhaps the most famous mass extinction was triggered by a meteorite impact that brought about the end of the dinosaurs 66 million years ago. But the other major mass extinctions were caused by phenomena originating entirely on Earth, and while they are less well known, we may learn something from exploring them that could shed light on our current environmental crises.

1. *The Late Ordovician*: This ancient crisis around 445m years ago saw two major waves of extinction, both caused by climate change associated with the advance and retreat of ice sheets in the southern hemisphere. This makes it the only major extinction to be linked to global cooling.
2. *The Late Devonian*: This period is now regarded as a number of 'pulses' of extinction spread over 20m years, beginning 380m years ago. This extinction has been linked to major climate change, possibly caused by an eruption of the volcanic Viluy Traps area in modern-day Siberia. A major eruption might have caused rapid fluctuations in sea levels and reduced oxygen levels in the oceans.

3. *The Middle Permian*: Scientists have recently discovered another event 262 million years ago that rivals the 'Big Five' in size. This event coincided with the Emeishan eruption in what's now China, and is known to have caused simultaneous extinctions in the tropics and higher latitudes.

4. *The Late Permian*: The Late Permian mass extinction around 252 million years ago dwarfs all the other events, with about 96% of species becoming extinct. The extinction was triggered by a vast eruption of the Siberian Traps, a gigantic and prolonged volcanic event that covered much of modern day Siberia, which led to a cascade of environmental effects.

5. *The Late Triassic*: The Late Triassic event, 201 million years ago, shares a number of similarities with the Late Permian event. It was caused by another large-scale eruption, this time of the Central Atlantic Magmatic Province, which heralded the splitting of the supercontinent Pangaea and the initial opening of what would later become the Atlantic Ocean.

"Although we once lived in a world of giants: giant beavers, giant armadillos, giant deer, etc, we now live in a world that is becoming increasingly impoverished of large wild mammalian species," says Professor Jens-Christian Svenning from Aarhus University, who heads a large research program on megafauna. "The few remaining giants, such as rhinos and elephants, are in danger of being wiped out very rapidly."

We need to identify and prioritise at risk species before it's too late. "It is much easier to save biodiversity now than to re-evolve it later," Davis says.



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