

# janata

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## The Retrial of Godse: Forgetting the Facts

**Apoorvanand**

I imagine you believe that he was for the most part adored; in fact he was hated and he is still hated today. Hatred is still alive in India and he died of it. But the simple fact that he lived according to his own law—which was ascetic and demanding of himself was something people could not tolerate. French writer Hélène Cixous turns to Gandhi to compare his life with the ways of writing that “may hurt, may dissatisfy and give the feeling that something is taken away.” Gandhi’s life, like the rigorous writings of Clarice Lispector, Jean Genet or Marina Tsvetaeva, was a continuous exercise or struggle to live his life his own way, evolve a living principle that unsettled and embarrassed.

Gandhi’s first test of sacredness was the ability to clean the night soil of others. Similarly, he befriended the British while fighting against their unjust rule in India, reminding them that their stay in India was unethical by their own standards. He was a deeply religious man, refusing to separate politics from religion, and yet imagined a nation not based on the principles of any faith and chose the agnostic, if not irreligious, Jawaharlal Nehru as his successor. For this decision, his

disciples started hating him secretly. He declared that India would be partitioned over his dead body and yet asked the government of India to honour its commitment by giving Pakistan its share of assets from the treasury of undivided India.

This is the charge repeatedly brought against Gandhi—why did he not die for the “Akhandata” of Bharat, and why did he keep insisting that Pakistan be dealt with humanely? We are asked to understand and appreciate the decision to put him to death for his stubborn act of trying to help an enemy nation when it was at war with us. There is a widespread feeling that India would have achieved a much neater and cleaner self-identity as a nation, save for Gandhi’s insistence on equal status for Muslims and Christians living in a nation of Hindu majority. Gandhi is blamed for the confused Indian identity, or for making it “unclean”.

He had to die, then. Just 12 days before his final moments, he had returned from the verge of death. On January 18, 1948, Gandhi broke the fast he had commenced on January 13, as he could not bear to live in a Delhi where he could move around with ease but his

friends Zakir Hussain and Shaheed Suhrawardy were not safe. He could not allow his fellow Hindus to take over the properties of Muslims and drive them out, capture mosques and turn them into temples. Hatred was flowing on the streets of Delhi. Gandhi knew that it was a “do or die” moment for him. D.G. Tendulkar writes in his masterly biography of Gandhi, *Mahatma*: “We are steadily losing hold on Delhi,” Gandhi mentioned to a friend. “If it goes, India goes and with that goes the last hope of world peace.” He found that his appeal for peace and understanding had no takers. He felt that he had no other way but to put himself on trial once more, this time to protest against the wrong done by his society.

Delhi was sheltering Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan who had lost everything and had suffered the worst kinds of atrocities. To ask them to vacate Muslim properties was an audacious demand. Muslims in Delhi had left their colonies and taken shelter in Purana Qila and Jama Masjid.

Gandhi said about his fast, “It will end when and if I am satisfied that there is a union of hearts of all communities brought about without any outside pressure but from an awakened sense of duty.” Gandhi was very clear about the nature and objective of his mission. He said that he was fasting on behalf of Muslims in India and Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan, that he would rather die than be a helpless witness to the destruction of Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. This destruction was certain if Pakistan ensured no equality of status and security to people professing various faiths, and if India copied Pakistan.

The fast excited contradictory

passions. Slogans like *Marta hai to Marne do* (Let him die) were heard. He was criticised for undertaking a pro-Muslim fast. Gandhi was unwavering. He patiently dealt with all objections to his fast. But it also forced people to look inward and examine themselves. The fast did generate a lot of goodwill but it also hardened the hatred against him. A day before his killing, a group of refugees came to see him and some of them abused him, holding him responsible for their woes, and asked him to leave them to their miseries and retire to the Himalayas. Gandhi said that his Himalaya was always with him.

Is it surprising that there is no memory of this fast available though our school textbooks, which shun the mention of his killing by a man who was not mad at all? Why is it that schools take their young to Rajghat but seldom think of visiting Birla House, where he was killed? It was not surprising at all that, when the University of Delhi decided to have a course on him, it carefully avoided

everything that could be linked to his politics and did not even mention his killing. Is it because the killing of a Hindu by another purer, masculine Hindu embarrasses us? Why have Gandhians been only singing bhajans on this day, never daring to touch the real issue, the killing of Gandhi? Why do we not want to face this moment? Is it because there is no national consensus on how to describe the death? Is it because we want to evade the “why” part of it?

Long after his death, the act of “disembowelling” Gandhi continues. The “abominable” part of him is being removed.

We are trying to get rid of the Gandhi who keeps challenging us and want a Gandhi who, with his bhajan, would put us to sleep. But Gandhi was an eternal rebel. This rebellious Gandhi needs to be rescued. As a first step, we need to visit the moment of his death and gather the courage to face the ghost of Gandhi, who still wanders inside Birla House.

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## **Benami Voters and Laundering Elections with Aadhaar**

**Dr. Anupam Saraph**

The use of Aadhaar by governments fits the classical definition of electoral malpractice as it constitutes manipulation of electoral processes and outcomes so as to substitute personal or partisan benefit for the public interest. Such malpractice threatens the integrity of an election as it is extensive, systematic and decisive.

### **Electoral Malpractice**

Sarah Birch, author of *Electoral*

*Malpractice*, defines electoral malpractice as the manipulation of electoral processes and outcomes so as to substitute personal or partisan benefit for the public interest.

Does the Aadhaar linkage to the voter ID or the use of Aadhaar to deliver subsidy, benefits and services constitute electoral malpractice?

The then chief election commissioner, OP Rawat, does not appear to have asked this question when he declared in March 2018 that

32 crore Aadhaar numbers had been already linked to voter ID cards.

The government has been insisting that Aadhaar is necessary to target subsidies, benefits, and services and do direct benefit transfers to beneficiaries since the creation of Aadhaar in 2009.

The web portals of the chief electoral officer of various states have been providing voters the ability to link Aadhaar to Voter IDs. The Election Commission has also been linking Aadhaar numbers to voters ID in different states through a process of seeding Aadhaar numbers from other databases. At least till November 2017, Aadhaar could be linked to voters' ID cards.

### **Benami Voters and Voter Exclusion**

Electoral rolls are revised under Rule 25 or corrected under Rule 26 of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960. The process allows for filing of claims for inclusion and objections to the inclusion of anyone under Rule 13.

It also allows for the inclusion of persons inadvertently omitted (Rule 21) and deletion of persons who have died, or are not residents in the constituency, or not entitled to be registered (Rule 21A). This process is meant to ensure that each person on the rolls is a real person and a genuine voter.

What are the consequences of the use of Aadhaar for revision or correction of the rolls under Rule 25 or 26?

Section 4(3) of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 declares "An Aadhaar number, in physical or electronic form subject to authentication and other conditions, as may be specified by regulations,

may be accepted as *proof of identity* of the Aadhaar number holder for any purpose" [emphasis mine].

It is evident that the Aadhaar may not be used as a proof of address, age, gender or relationship. It is also evident that there is no authority with which Aadhaar becomes a proof of identity either. Section 9 of the Aadhaar Act declares "The Aadhaar number or the authentication thereof shall not, by itself, confer any right of, or be proof of, citizenship or domicile in respect of an Aadhaar number holder." However, the Aadhaar is currently used as a proof of age during enrolment as a voter.

With a view to preventing impersonation of electors and facilitating their identification at the time of poll, Rule 28(2) of the Registration of Electors Rules, requires the Election Commission to issue to every elector an ID card that is certified by the registration officer.

Unlike the Voter ID, that is certified by the registration officer in accordance with Rule 28(3)(d), the Aadhaar 'card' or the biometric or demographic data associated with any Aadhaar number is not certified by the UIDAI. Unlike the process of revising the electoral rolls, there is no process of revising Aadhaar database. In fact, there is no process for objecting to assigning an Aadhaar number to any combination of biometric or demographic data in the Aadhaar database. In the absence of such a process to clean the database, no verification or audit of the Aadhaar database has happened either.

Linking a biometric with each Aadhaar number has created impression that there has to be a unique entry of each enrolment. This is clearly not the case as the UIDAI does not have any information about

the number of unique biometrics in its database. The UIDAI also indicates that it cannot retrieve a unique record with a biometric. This means that the UIDAI cannot guarantee that it has no duplicates or ghosts.

Almost all Aadhaar numbers are supposed to have been issued on the basis of other primary documents of proof of identity and proof of address. The UIDAI however has no information about the primary ID used, making it impossible to allow the verification of the uniqueness and validity of a Aadhaar number by anyone who uses it.

According to the Affidavit dated 30.10.2017 of UIDAI to the Supreme Court, at most 60 crore persons could have been issued an Aadhaar assuming everyone used the Election Photo Identity Card as one of their primary identification documents. No other combination of primary identification documents allows to generate even as many Aadhaar. At least 58.64 crore Aadhaar of the 118 crore numbers issued by the UIDAI are, therefore, duplicates and ghosts.

Furthermore, according to the CEO of UIDAI, 48% of the Aadhaar numbers have never participated in iris or finger matching. It is evident that Aadhaar is the worlds largest database of ghosts and duplicates. The use of these ghosts and duplicates gives rise to benami or fake identities and transactions.

With the dilution of KYC by the Reserve Bank of India in January 2011, it became possible to use Aadhaar as the sole basis for creating a bank account.

Aadhaar has also been widely used as the means to issue other primary IDs like passports, PAN cards, instant PAN and driving licenses.

This means that the continued use of Aadhaar can easily generate documents that serve as proof of address for Form 6 to apply for inclusion in Electoral Roll or for shifting from one constituency to another.

The use of Aadhaar as a proof of identity, proof of address or proof of age anywhere by the government, allows compromising the enrolment of voters in the Electoral Rolls. It allows the inclusion of benami voters in a manner that is difficult if not impossible to weed out.

The mandatory creep of voluntary Aadhaar has caused the exclusion of millions from accessing their rights. Millions have been deprived from birth certificates, school and college admissions, giving examinations, qualifying for interviews, getting jobs, receiving salaries, accessing healthcare, getting PAN cards, ration cards, water bills, electricity bills, gas connections, driving licenses, claiming pensions, and even a dignified burial and death certificates. This means people are even being denied not only the goods and services but also the primary identification documents that they otherwise could have, as well as their ability to enrol as a voter.

Those whose Aadhaar fails on authentication due to biometric change, technology failure or any other reason are also excluded. Even more serious is UIDAI's ability to deactivate Aadhaar numbers under section 23(g) of the Aadhaar Act. Deactivated Aadhaar numbers will allow automatic deletion of voters from beneficiary databases, including Electoral Rolls.

The use of Aadhaar to discover and delete duplicate or ghost entries has also allowed the exclusion of legitimate voters by treating those

without an Aadhaar or those whose Aadhaar information does not match as ghosts or duplicates. In Telangana alone, 2.2 million people were reportedly dropped from voter rolls, after Aadhaar based "verification" was done in 2015.

The use of Aadhaar to onboard, modify or purify electoral rolls is illegal, causes the inclusion of benami voters and excludes millions of legitimate voters. Furthermore, its use cannot be harmonised with the requirements of the Registration of Electors Rules or rule 35 and 49 of The Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961.

### **Targeted delivery as electoral malpractice**

In 2018, there was outrage across the world as Cambridge Analytica, a private company providing services to political clients, helped influence voters by targeting messages to voters based on their psychometric profiles. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg was grilled by the US Congress for enabling such psychometric profiling through the Facebook ecosystem.

Targeted delivery of subsidies, benefits and services is worse than targeted messaging to win elections. It is control of the electorate to ensure votes.

Part of the cost of providing a good or service to a beneficiary that is paid by the government is a subsidy. For seven decades, the government has delivered subsidies, benefits and services by providing beneficiaries access to subsidised food grains, cooking fuels, medicines, health services, education, seeds, fertilizer and other benefits and services. This has been accomplished by each ministry or department through its own

empowering legislation that defines the beneficiaries of its subsidies and the delivery mechanisms. This is done without prejudice to the constituency or political vote of the beneficiary.

In fact, traditional mechanisms of delivering subsidies, benefits or services provide no means to target a voter or a constituency. This traditional process cannot target only those who vote for the ruling party and exclude those who do not vote for the ruling party. Neither can the traditional process create the illusion of delivery of subsidised goods or services as the subsidised physical good or service is made available to beneficiaries. It cannot manipulate a beneficiary list as each ministry or department's delivery process is subject to physical verification and audits.

Targeted delivery, using Aadhaar, allows the inclusion or exclusion from benefits of persons from within a constituency. Linked to voter ID, it allows the inclusion or exclusion of voters. For inclusion of persons into beneficiary lists, their Aadhaar is seeded to beneficiary lists. Such included Aadhaar numbers are not subjected to certification, verification or audit of their real identity, qualification as beneficiary or even their receipt of the benefit. Neither the department, ministry, nor the UIDAI take any responsibility of the delivery to the rightful beneficiary anymore.

For exclusion of persons from beneficiary lists, their Aadhaar is de-seeded, seeded to benami Aadhaar numbers, deactivated or its authentication is caused to fail. The UIDAI takes no responsibility for the delivery and, in fact, it is an ecosystem of private players who can decide the inclusion and

exclusion of benefits.

Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) replaces the physical delivery of benefits by money transfers, of part of the cost of providing a good or service, to a bank account assumed to be that of a beneficiary. This means there is no longer any physical verification or audit of the subsidies. Prior to dilution of KYC by the Reserve Bank these bank accounts could not be opened by Aadhaar ghosts and duplicates. After the Department of Revenue regularised eKYC as a valid process for opening bank accounts, it became possible to regularise bank accounts opened merely by using Aadhaar numbers without any physical presence of the account holders.

Bankers across the country have disclosed, on condition of anonymity, that they have been subject to coercion by local political forces to open thousands of bank accounts in their branches solely with Aadhaar. The Jan Dhan accounts is one such category of bank accounts that are not verified as to whether they belong to real persons or as within the control of a beneficiary that they claim to bank. The beneficiaries receiving DBT to these bank accounts become virtual. The bank account becomes a surrogate for the beneficiary.

In February 2012, the Nandan Nilekani led Task Force on an Aadhaar-Enabled Unified Payment Infrastructure pushed for money transfers to Aadhaar numbers instead of bank accounts. This replaced the process of government payments to bank accounts of beneficiaries electronically through the Reserve Bank of India's national electronic funds transfer (NEFT) with payments to Aadhaar numbers using Aadhaar Enable Payment Systems

(AEPS) created and run by a non-government private organisation, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). According to Nilekani, who has been advising the NPCI, in violation of section 16 of the Aadhaar Act, over Rs 95,000 crore were transferred to beneficiaries in 2017-18 using AEPS.

The transfer of DBT using AEPS creates virtual and benami beneficiaries who become untraceable. For example, in April 2017, more than 40,000 DBT transfers to persons who were not beneficiaries of part of drought relief for farmers in Karnataka took place. Similar transfers have been reported across the country. Similarly Aadhaar eKYC and Aadhaar payments allowed Rs 168 crore LPG subsidy to be siphoned into 37 lakh bank accounts in Airtel Payments Bank. This enables subtle yet very large scale money laundering for election funding across the country.

This use of Aadhaar clearly constitutes corrupt practice under section 123(1), 123(2), 123(3), 123(6), 123(7) and 123(8) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

### **Laundering elections**

The biometric and demographic data associated with Aadhaar numbers are not certified by the UIDAI as belonging to the person who is being authenticated. It has been shown repeatedly that both the biometric and demographic data associated with the Aadhaar number can be changed by both legitimate and illegitimate processes outside the control of the UIDAI or anyone relying on using them.

Neither the UIDAI, nor anyone relying on Aadhaar, have any way of guaranteeing consistent, legal valid,

risk free outcomes with Aadhaar. Aadhaar is a Trojan horse that allows private interests to take control the outcome of elections.

It is evident that creating benami voters, excluding real ones, targeting subsidies to select voters, excluding select voters from subsidies, benefits and services, and laundering funds from the Consolidated Fund of India into benami bank accounts using untraceable money transfers are subtle and undetectable means for private interests to seek to alter the voluntary choices made by voters at the polls. The use of Aadhaar as a proof of identity by anyone citing section 4(3) of the Aadhaar Act is, therefore, sufficient to launder elections.

The use of Aadhaar by government fits the classical definition of electoral malpractice as it constitutes manipulation of electoral processes and outcomes so as to substitute personal or partisan benefit for the public interest. Such malpractice threatens the integrity of an election as it is extensive, systematic, and decisive.

The Election Commission of India is charged with unprecedented circumstances to exercise its powers in order to dismantle the extensive and systematic way in which the electoral mandate and the sovereignty of the people is being destroyed.

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## Whither Bangladesh

**Mrinal K. Biswas**

At the end of the post-poll cooling-off period, the Awami League set in motion the business of governance in Bangladesh. The decimation of the entire opposition in the elections gives the impression that the opposition is virtually non-existent in Bangladesh, but this is not actually true.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the Awami League gave little leeway to the opposition by systematically undermining its opponents, taking advantage of its control over the government. During her first term as the Prime Minister (1996-2001), Sheikh Hasina brought the assassins of her father Sk Mujibur Rahman and his family members present at Dhaka on 15 August 1975 to trial. Only a few could flee abroad. Some of the accused were acquitted, while five of the accused were sentenced to death and executed on 28 January 2010. After winning elections and becoming Prime Minister again in 2008, Sheikh Hasina set up an International Crimes Tribunal, a domestic war crimes tribunal, in 2009 to investigate and prosecute suspects for the genocide committed in 1971 by the Pakistan Army and their local collaborators, Razakars, Al-Badr and Al-Shams during the Bangladesh Liberation War. Consequent to the trials, some of the accused were executed and some others given life terms. Among those indicted were two leaders of the opposition Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and nine leaders of the Islamist fundamentalist party Jamaat-e-Islami, which had opposed independence in 1971.

The Awami League again won the Bangladesh elections held on 30 December 2018. After taking oath of office as Prime Minister for the fourth time on 7 January this year, Sheikh Hasina has expressed her desire to set up a special commission to identify and punish those who were behind the killings of four national leaders closely associated with Mujibur Rahman. These four, Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmad, M Mansur Ali and AHM Quamruzzaman, were all founding leaders of the Awami League and had been arrested and murdered in jail on November 3, 1975, three months after Sheikh Mujibur's assassination.

The divide between Sheikh Mujib's followers and other heroes of Bangladesh's liberation struggle took some strange twists and turns in course of time. In the elections held in 2018, the BNP—which was founded by Ziaur Rahman, an army general turned politician who was one of the leaders of Bangladesh's freedom struggle—formed the Jatiya Oikya Front (National United Front or NUF), comprising primarily of four parties, to challenge Hasina's bid for power for the third time in succession. Despite the Jamaat having opposed the freedom struggle, the NUF allowed Jamaat-e-Islami candidates to stand for elections on the NUF symbol (in 2013 the Jamaat-e-Islami was banned from registering and therefore contesting in elections by the High Court, on the ground that its charter was in violation of the constitution).

Despite the alliance with the fundamentalist Jamaat, hope for

a truly secular and democratic alternative emerging in Bangladesh had been generated when Dr Kamal Hossain, with his impeccable records of political and judicial achievements, agreed to become the convener of NUF. This octogenarian leader had left the Awami League in 1992 after differences developed between him and Sheikh Hasina to set up a small political party, Gano Forum, along with some star figures in the Bangla liberation movement. He is widely regarded as an icon of secular democracy in South Asia. Dr Hossain was close to Sheikh Mujib, had defended him in the Agartala Conspiracy Case in 1960s, was imprisoned along with Sheikh Mujib in West Pakistan during the war of independence, and became Foreign Minister after Bangladesh was born. However, during the 2018 elections, despite his popularity and secular and democratic image, the NUF campaign never really took off. The Gano Forum did not have many foot soldiers. Prime Minister Begun Khaleda Begum's BNP is the most important constituent of NUF, but due to her imprisonment on graft charges and with her son and acting BNP chairman Tarique Rahman living in exile in London for many years, the BNP was virtually a non-starter in the election battle. Moreover, the BNP rank and file became confused with the leadership's ambivalence about fighting the election or boycotting it (Tarique Rahman wanted to boycott). And so, the Awami League, buoyed with its government power, muscle strength and army loyalists, easily trounced the opposition. It swept the

elections, winning 288 out of 300 parliamentary seats.

The hope that truly democratic and secular forces would emerge to end the duel between the two family-led forces of Hasina-headed Awami league and Khaleda-headed BNP has thus been dashed. Kamal Hossain was the key figure who could have brought about that change. His BNP and Jamaat connection failed him, and the Awami League has stormed to power even stronger than before.

Question remains, whither Bangladesh? In a recent interview, Bangladesh's former Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha, a Hindu who now resides in the US, says that Sheikh Hasina used the judiciary to settle scores with Khaleda Zia. Sinha alleges that Hasina used military intelligence to harass him, finally forcing him to leave the country. He accuses Hasina of transforming Bangladesh into another Pakistan, saying that she is stifling free speech, giving unnecessary powers to the army and making it a police State.

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## The Political Roots of Falling Wage Growth

Jayati Ghosh

It's now official: workers around the world are falling behind. The International Labour Organisation's (ILO) latest *Global Wage Report* finds that, excluding China, real (inflation-adjusted) wages grew at an annual rate of just 1.1% in 2017, down from 1.8% in 2016. That is the slowest pace since 2008.

In the advanced G20 economies, average real wages grew by a mere 0.4% in 2017, compared to 1.7% growth in 2015. While real wages were up by 0.7% in the United States (versus 2.2% in 2015), they stagnated in Europe, where small increases in some countries were offset by declines in France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. The slowdown in "success stories" like Germany and the US is particularly surprising, given the former's expanding current-account surpluses and the latter's falling unemployment and tight labour markets.

In emerging markets, average wage growth in 2017, at 4.3%, was faster than in the advanced G20 economies, but still slower than the previous year (4.9%). Asia enjoyed the fastest real wage growth, owing largely to China and a few smaller countries such as Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. But, overall, wage growth in Asian economies mostly decelerated in 2017. And in Latin America and Africa, several countries experienced real-wage declines.

Moreover, the ILO report finds that the gap between wage growth and labour productivity remained wide in 2017. In many countries, labour's share of national income

is still below the levels of the early 1990s.

That raises an obvious question: Given the global output recovery of recent years, why have conditions for workers in most parts of the world not improved commensurately?

Neither of the usual suspects, trade and technology, is entirely to blame. To be sure, large labour-surplus economies' deepening integration into the global market, together with increased reliance on automation and artificial intelligence, has weakened workers' bargaining power and shifted labour demand into very specific and limited sectors. But these factors alone do not explain the lack of material progress for most workers.

The real reason workers are getting a raw deal is not so much economic as institutional and political. From country to country, legislation and court judgments are increasingly trampling on long-recognised labour rights.

For example, governments focused solely on improving "labour-market flexibility" have pursued policies that privilege employers' interests over those of workers, not least by undercutting workers' ability to organise. An obsession with fiscal consolidation and austerity has prevented the kind of social spending that could expand public employment and improve workers' conditions. And the current regulatory environment increasingly allows for large corporations to wield power without accountability, resulting in higher monopoly rents and greater bargaining power.

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In short, neoliberalism's intellectual capture of economic policymaking across a wide range of countries, is resulting in the exclusion of most wage earners from the gains of economic growth. But this was not inevitable. China, after all, has achieved rapid wage growth, and the share of national income accruing to labour is rising, despite the country's pursuit of trade and rapid labour-displacing technologies.

China's success may vindicate a model advanced by the late Nobel laureate economist W. Arthur Lewis, which explains how employment in new, more productive sectors can absorb surplus labour and push up wages over all. But, more to the point, China has augmented this effect through systematic state policies designed to improve labour conditions.

As a result, the average nominal minimum wage in China nearly doubled between 2011 and 2018, and wages for workers in state-owned enterprises rose even faster. At the same time, the government has expanded other forms of social protections for workers, all while pursuing industrial policies geared toward boosting innovation and productivity growth, thus moving the country up the global value chain.

True, China's political economy is unusual. The government's concern for workers' wellbeing could simply reflect the Communist Party of China's need to secure its domestic political position. In that case, it has forged a Faustian social bargain that is typical of East Asian autocracies.

Still, if China can buck the trend

of declining wage growth, other countries can, too. First, though, economic policymakers around the world will have to shake off the neoliberal paradigm, which has left them incapable of imagining alternative policy approaches. As a political project, neoliberalism has run its course. If workers are going to partake in the gains of growth once again, governments will need to start adopting more progressive policy alternatives.

Fortunately, the ILO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development have begun to put more sensible policies back on the agenda, as have some politicians in the US, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. But ensuring that the economy serves the bulk of society will require a much bigger push across the board.

## From the Missing Archives of a Lost War

Nick Turse

*It was nearly sunset on Easter Saturday when I met Marie Dz'dza. She was sitting on a set of steps in a hospital compound in the town of Bunia. Near her was her mother, Jesinne Dhewedza, and her niece, six-year-old Irene Mave. Two weeks earlier, I might have noticed any number of things about them—Dz'dza's prominent cheekbones, Mave's smile, Dhewedza's graying hair. Instead, my attention was focused on what had been taken from them when men with machetes fell upon their village. Dhewedza now had six fingers instead of 10; Mave, one arm instead of two; and Dz'dza's arms ended just below the elbow.*

*They were victims of an outbreak of hyper-violence that had swept*

*through the Democratic Republic of Congo's Ituri Province in the first months of this year, part of a constellation of conflicts affecting a country long plagued by such violence. The three of them were also among the millions of victims of the wars of the last century that have disproportionately affected civilians.*

*The end of World War I, that war to end all wars a century ago, marked the passing of conflicts in which soldiers' deaths outnumbered those of civilians. Since then, noncombatants, people like Dz'dza, Dhewedza, and Mave, have borne the brunt of war. As it happens, this grim anniversary year coincides with one of my own. While I didn't realise it at the time, my recent*

*reporting on an ethnic-cleansing campaign in the Democratic Republic of Congo for Vice News marked roughly 12 years since I first began interviewing people who had lost parts of themselves to armed conflicts. Over that span, I've regularly witnessed the way war's barbarism is inscribed on the bodies of men, women, and children. I've seen civilian victims who have lost eyes and ears, hands and feet, arms and legs—people who are now a living testament to our inhumanity.*

*While I've spoken to many hundreds of war victims and chronicled atrocities from Afghanistan to Cameroon to South Sudan, interviews with people whom war has literally reshaped have*



*often stuck with me, though few more vividly than those in the 2008 TomDispatch piece reposted below. A decade ago, reporting from Vietnam for this website, I interviewed two men who had lost legs to the "American War" almost 40 years earlier. The generosity of readers led to a happy result: those two survivors received new prosthetics—hardly compensation for what they had lost, but perhaps the bare minimum we owe to the civilian casualties of our conflicts; the bare minimum, in fact, that the world owes all the victims, including Dz'dza, Dhewedza, and Mave, from conflicts that were supposed to have been over and done with a century ago, but which, sadly enough, churn on today, from Afghanistan and Syria to Yemen and Congo.*

*The article that follows flowed far more from the questions those survivors of war asked me than the ones I asked them. It also taught me something about another bare minimum we owe to the victims of our wars: listening to them. Sadly, since this piece was published in 2008, a decade's worth of new war victims have been added to the pages of humanity's most appalling ledger. Who will chronicle all of their stories? And even if someone did, would we have the courage to read them? Nick Turse*

### **America's Forgotten Vietnamese Victims**

Nguyen Van Tu asks if I'm serious. Am I really willing to tell his story—to tell the story of the Vietnamese who live in this rural corner of the Mekong Delta? Almost 40 years after guerrilla fighters in his country threw the limits of US military power into stark relief—

during the 1968 Tet Offensive—we sit in his rustic home, built of wood and thatch with an earthen floor, and speak of two hallmarks of that power: ignorance and lack of accountability. As awkward chicks scurry past my feet, I have the sickening feeling that, in decades to come, far too many Iraqis and Afghans will have similar stories to tell. Similar memories of American troops. Similar accounts of air strikes and artillery bombardments. Nightmare knowledge of what "America" means to far too many outside the United States.

"Do you really want to publicise this thing," Nguyen asks. "Do you really dare tell everyone about all the losses and sufferings of the Vietnamese people here?" I assure this well-weathered 60-year old grandfather that that's just why I've come to Vietnam for the third time in three years. I tell him I have every intention of reporting what he's told me—decades-old memories of daily artillery shelling, of near constant air attacks, of farming families forced to live in their fields because of the constant bombardment of their homes, of women and children killed by bombs, of going hungry because US troops and allied South Vietnamese forces confiscated their rice, lest it be used to feed guerrillas.

After hearing of the many horrors he endured, I hesitantly ask him about the greatest hardship he lived through during what's appropriately known here as the American War. I expect him to mention his brother, a simple farmer shot dead by America's South Vietnamese allies in the early years of the war, when the United States was engaged primarily in an "advisory" role. Or his father who was killed just after the war, while

tending his garden, when an M-79 round—a 40 mm shell fired from a single-shot grenade launcher—buried in the soil, exploded. Or that afternoon in 1971 when he heard outgoing artillery being fired and warned his family to scramble for their bunker by shouting, "Shelling, shelling!" They made it to safety. He didn't. The 105 mm artillery shell that landed near him ripped off most of his right leg.

But he didn't name any of these tragedies.

"During the war, the greatest difficulty was a lack of freedom," he tells me. "We had no freedom."

### **A Simple Request**

Elsewhere in the Mekong Delta, Pham Van Chap, a solidly-built 52 year-old with jet black hair tells a similar story. His was a farming family, but the lands they worked and lived on were regularly blasted by US ordnance. "During the ten years of the war, there was serious bombing and shelling in this region—two to three times a day," he recalls while sitting in front of his home, a one-story house surrounded by animal pens in a bucolic setting deep in the Delta countryside. "So many houses and trees were destroyed. There were so many bomb craters around here."

In January 1973, the first month of the last year US troops fought in Vietnam, Pham heard the ubiquitous sound of artillery and started to run to safety. It was too late. A 105 mm shell slammed into the earth four meters in front of him, propelling razor-sharp shrapnel into both legs. When he awoke in the hospital, one leg was gone from the thigh down. After 40 days in the hospital, he was sent home, but he didn't

get his first prosthetic leg until the 1990s. His new replacement is now eight years old and a far cry from the advanced, computerised prosthetics and carbon fiber and titanium artificial legs that wounded US veterans of America's latest wars get. His wooden prosthetic instead resembles a table leg with a hoof at the bottom. "It has not been easy for me without my leg," he confides.

When I ask if there are any questions he'd like to ask me or anything he'd like to say to Americans, he has a quick response. He doesn't ask for money for his pain and suffering. Nor for compensation for living his adult life without a leg. Nor vengeance, that all-American urge, in the words of George W. Bush to "kick some ass." Not even an apology. His request is entirely too reasonable. He simply asks for a new leg. Nothing more.

### **Ignorance Means Never Having to Say You're Sorry**

I ask Nguyen Van Tu the same thing. And it turns out he has a question of his own: "Americans caused many losses and much suffering for the Vietnamese during the war, do Americans now feel remorse?" I wish I could answer "yes." Instead, I tell him that most Americans are totally ignorant of the pain of the Vietnamese people, and then I think to myself, as I glance at the ample pile of tiny, local potatoes on his floor, about widespread American indifference to civilians killed, maimed, or suffering in other ways in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Even those Vietnamese who didn't lose a limb—or a loved one—carry memories of years of anguish, grief, and terror from the

American War. The fall-out here is still palpable. The elderly woman who tells me how her home was destroyed by an incendiary bomb. The people who speak of utter devastation—of villages laid waste by shelling and bombing, of gardens and orchards decimated by chemical defoliants. The older woman who, with trepidation, peeks into a home where I'm interviewing—she hasn't seen a Caucasian since the war—and is visibly unnerved by the memories I conjure up. Another begins trembling upon hearing that the Americans have arrived again, fearing she might be taken away, as her son was almost 40 years earlier. The people with memories of heavily armed American patrols disrupting their lives, searching their homes, killing their livestock. The people for whom English was only one phrase, the one they all seem to remember: "VC, VC"—slang for the pejorative term "Viet Cong"; and those who recall model names and official designations of US weaponry of the era—from bombs to rifles—as intimately as Americans today know their sports and celebrities.

I wish I could tell Nguyen Van Tu that most Americans know something of his country's torture and torment during the war. I wish I could tell him that most Americans care. I wish I could tell him that Americans feel true remorse for the terror visited upon the Vietnamese in their name, or that an apology is forthcoming and reparations on their way. But then I'd be lying. Mercifully, he doesn't quiz me as I've quizzed him for the better part of an hour. He doesn't ask how Americans can be so ignorant or hard-hearted, how they could allow their country to repeatedly invade

other nations and leave them littered with corpses and filled with shattered families, lives, and dreams. Instead he answers calmly and methodically:

"I have two things to say. First, there have been many consequences due to the war and even now the Vietnamese people suffer greatly because of it, so I think that the American government must do something in response—they caused all of these losses here in Vietnam, so they must take responsibility for that. Secondly, this interview should be an article in the press."

I sit there knowing that the chances of the former are nil. The US government won't do it and the American people don't know, let alone care, enough to make it happen. But for the latter, I tell him I share his sentiments and I'll do my best.

Nguyen Van Tu grasps my hands in thanks as we end the interview. His story is part of a hidden, if not forbidden, history that few in the US know. It's a story that was written in blood in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos during the 1960s and 1970s and now is being rewritten in Afghanistan and Iraq. It's a story to which new episodes are added each day that US forces roll armored vehicles down other people's streets, kick down other people's doors, carry out attacks in other people's neighbourhoods and occupy other people's countries.

It took nearly 40 years for word of Nguyen Van Tu's hardships at the hands of the United States to filter back to America. Perhaps a few more Americans will feel remorse as a result. But who will come forward to take responsibility for all this suffering? And who will give Pham Van Chap a new leg?

## The ‘Green New Deal’ Just Might Work

**Ellen Brown**

With what author and activist Naomi Klein calls “galloping momentum,” the “Green New Deal” promoted by Rep.-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., appears to be forging a political pathway for solving all of the ills of US society and the planet in one fell swoop. Her plan would give a select committee of the US House of Representatives “a mandate that connects the dots” between energy, transportation, housing, health care, living wages, a jobs guarantee and more. But even to critics on the left, it is merely political theater, because “everyone knows” a program of that scope cannot be funded without a massive redistribution of wealth and slashing of other programs (notably the military), which is not politically feasible.

That may be the case, but Ocasio-Cortez and the 22 representatives joining her in calling for a select committee also are proposing a novel way to fund the program, one that could actually work. The resolution says funding will come primarily from the federal government, “using a combination of the Federal Reserve, a new public bank or system of regional and specialised public banks, public venture funds and such other vehicles or structures that the select committee deems appropriate, in order to ensure that interest and other investment returns generated from public investments made in connection with the Plan will be returned to the treasury, reduce taxpayer burden and allow for more investment.”

A network of public banks

could fund the Green New Deal in the same way President Franklin Roosevelt funded the original New Deal. At a time when the banks were bankrupt, he used the publicly owned Reconstruction Finance Corp. as a public infrastructure bank. The Federal Reserve could also fund any program Congress wanted, if mandated to do so. Congress wrote the Federal Reserve Act and can amend it. Or the Treasury itself could do it, without the need to even change any laws. The Constitution authorises Congress to “coin money” and “regulate the value thereof,” and that power has been delegated to the Treasury. It could mint a few trillion-dollar platinum coins, put them in its bank account and start writing checks against them. What stops legislators from exercising those constitutional powers is simply that “everyone knows” Zimbabwe-style hyperinflation will result. But will it? Compelling historical precedent shows that this need not be the case.

Michael Hudson, professor of economics at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, has studied the hyperinflation question extensively. He writes that disasters such as Zimbabwe’s fiscal troubles were not due to the government printing money to stimulate the economy. Rather, “Every hyperinflation in history has been caused by foreign debt service collapsing the exchange rate. The problem almost always has resulted from wartime foreign currency strains, not domestic spending.”

As long as workers and materials are available and the money is added

in a way that reaches consumers, adding money will create the demand necessary to prompt producers to create more supply. Supply and demand will rise together and prices will remain stable. The reverse is also true. If demand (money) is not increased, supply and gross domestic product (GDP) will not go up. New demand needs to precede new supply.

### **The Precedent of Roosevelt’s New Deal**

Infrastructure projects of the sort proposed in the Green New Deal are “self-funding,” generating resources and fees that can repay the loans. For these loans, advancing funds through a network of publicly owned banks would not require taxpayer money and could actually generate a profit for the government. That was how the original New Deal rebuilt the country in the 1930s at a time when the economy was desperately short of money.

The publicly owned Reconstruction Finance Corp. (RFC) was a remarkable publicly owned credit machine that allowed the government to finance the New Deal and World War II without turning to Congress or the taxpayers for appropriations. First instituted in 1932 by President Herbert Hoover, the RFC was not called an infrastructure bank and was not even a bank, but it served the same basic functions. It was continually enlarged and modified by Roosevelt to meet the crisis of the times, until it became America’s largest corporation and the world’s

largest financial organisation. Its semi-independent status let it work quickly, allowing New Deal agencies to be financed as the need arose.

The Reconstruction Finance Corp. Act of 1932 provided the financial organisation with capital stock of \$500 million and the authority to extend credit up to \$1.5 billion (subsequently increased several times). The initial capital came from a stock sale to the US Treasury. With those resources, from 1932 to 1957 the RFC loaned or invested more than \$40 billion. A small part of this came from its initial capitalisation. The rest was borrowed, chiefly from the government itself. Bonds were sold to the Treasury, some of which were then sold to the public, although most were held by the Treasury. All in all, the RFC ended up borrowing a total of \$51.3 billion from the Treasury and \$3.1 billion from the public.

In this arrangement, the Treasury was therefore the lender, not the borrower. As the self-funding loans were repaid, so were the bonds that were sold to the Treasury, leaving the RFC with a net profit. The financial organisation was the lender for thousands of infrastructure and small-business projects that revitalised the economy, and these loans produced a total net income of \$690,017,232 on the RFC's "normal" lending functions (omitting such things as extraordinary grants for wartime). The RFC financed roads, bridges, dams, post offices, universities, electrical power, mortgages, farms and much more, and it funded all this while generating income for the government.

### **How Japan Is Funding Abenomics with Quantitative Easing**

The Federal Reserve is another Green New Deal funding option. The Fed showed what it can do with "quantitative easing" when it created the funds to buy \$2.46 trillion in federal debt and \$1.77 trillion in mortgage-backed securities, all without inflating consumer prices. The Fed could use the same tool to buy bonds earmarked for a Green New Deal, and because it returns its profits to the Treasury after deducting its costs, the bonds would be nearly interest-free. If they were rolled over from year to year, the government, in effect, would be issuing new money.

This is not just theory. Japan is actually doing it, without creating even the modest 2 percent inflation the government is aiming for. "Abenomics," the economic agenda of Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, combines central bank quantitative easing with fiscal stimulus (large-scale increases in government spending). Since Abe came into power in 2012, Japan has seen steady economic growth, and its unemployment rate has fallen by nearly half, yet inflation remains very low, at 0.7 percent. Social Security-related expenses accounted for 55 percent of general expenditure in Japan's 2018 federal budget, and a universal health care insurance system is maintained for all citizens. Nominal GDP is up 11 percent since the end of the first quarter of 2013, a much better record than during the prior two decades of Japanese stagnation, and the Nikkei stock market is at levels not seen since the early 1990s, driven by improved company earnings. Growth remains below targeted levels, but according to Financial Times, this is because fiscal stimulus has actually been too small. While spending with the

left hand, the government has been taking the money back with the right, increasing the sales tax from 5 percent to 8 percent.

Abenomics has been declared a success even by the once-critical International Monetary Fund. After Abe crushed his opponents in 2017, Noah Smith wrote in Bloomberg, "Japan's long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party has figured out a novel and interesting way to stay in power—govern pragmatically, focus on the economy and give people what they want." Smith said everyone who wanted a job had one, small and midsize businesses were doing well; and the Bank of Japan's unprecedented program of monetary easing had provided easy credit for corporate restructuring without generating inflation. Abe had also vowed to make both pre-school and college free.

Not that all is idyllic in Japan. Forty percent of Japanese workers lack secure full-time employment and adequate pensions. But the point underscored here is that large-scale digital money-printing by the central bank to buy back the government's debt, combined with fiscal stimulus by the government (spending on "what the people want"), has not inflated Japanese prices, the alleged concern preventing other countries from doing the same.

Abe's novel economic program has done more than just stimulate growth. By selling its debt to its own central bank, which returns the interest to the government, the Japanese government has, in effect, been canceling its debt. Until recently, it was doing this at the rate of a whopping \$720 billion per year. According to fund manager Eric Lonergan in a February 2017 article: "The Bank of Japan is in

the process of owning most of the outstanding government debt of Japan (it currently owns around 40%). BOJ holdings are part of the consolidated government balance sheet. So its holdings are in fact the accounting equivalent of a debt cancellation. If I buy back my own mortgage, I don't have a mortgage."

If the Federal Reserve followed suit and bought 40 percent of the US national debt, it would be holding \$8 trillion in federal securities, three times its current holdings from its quantitative easing programs. Yet liquidating a full 40 percent of Japan's government debt has not triggered price inflation.

### **Filling the Gap Between Wages, Debt and GDP**

Rather than stepping up its bond-buying, the Federal Reserve is now bent on "quantitative tightening," raising interest rates and reducing the money supply by selling its bonds into the market in anticipation of "full employment" driving up prices. "Full employment" is considered to be 4.7 percent unemployment, taking into account the "natural rate of unemployment" of people between jobs or voluntarily out of work. But the economy has now hit that level and prices are not in the danger zone, despite nearly 10 years of "accommodative" monetary policy. In fact, the economy is not near true full employment nor full productive capacity, with GDP remaining well below both the long-run trend and the level predicted by forecasters a decade ago. In 2016, real per capita GDP was 10 percent below the 2006 forecast of the Congressional Budget Office, and it shows no signs of returning to the predicted level.

In 2017, US GDP was \$19.4

trillion. Assuming that sum is 10 percent below full productive capacity, the money circulating in the economy needs to be increased by another \$2 trillion to create the demand to bring it up to full capacity. That means \$2 trillion could be injected into the economy every year without creating price inflation. New supply would just be generated to meet the new demand, bringing GDP to full capacity while keeping prices stable.

This annual injection of new money can not only be done without

creating price inflation, it actually needs to be done to reverse the massive debt bubble now threatening to propel the economy into another Great Recession. Moreover, the money can be added in such a way that the net effect will not be to increase the money supply. Virtually the entire US money supply is created by banks as loans, and any money used to pay down those loans will be extinguished along with the debt. Other money will be extinguished when it returns to the government in the form of taxes.

*Press Release: Socialist Party (India)*

## **On 10% Reservation to Economically Weak Sections in General Category**

**Prem Singh**

Mr. Kotha Prabhakar Reddy, Member Parliament, on 8 January 2019, sought a reply from Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, to the question (No. 4475) on 'Reservation for Poor'. Mr. Reddy's question was : (a) whether the Government is exploring the scope of providing reservation for poor candidates from forward communities for education and employment; (b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons thereof; (c) whether the Government has received any demands from sections of forward communities like the Marathas in Maharashtra, Rajputs in Rajasthan and Thakurs in Uttar Pradesh to give reservation for economically weak members of their groups; and (d) if so, the details thereof and the action being taken by the Government in this regard?

The Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Mr.

Krishan Pal Gujar replied : (a) and (b) : At present, no such proposal is under consideration. (c) and (d) : No such proposal has been received by the Government.

On January 7, 2019, the Constitution (124th Amendment) Bill 2019 on 10 percent reservation to the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of the general category in education and employment was approved by the Central Cabinet. On January 8, the last day of the Winter Session, this 'historic' Amendment Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha and on January 9 in the Rajya Sabha by extending the Session by one day. And yet the Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment gave the above information in response to the question in Parliament at around 11 am on January 8!

In the view of the Socialist Party, these facts tell us that the Modi

government does not care about the parliamentary system, its dignity and its sanctity. The government did not put the Bill for debate in the arena of civil society nor did it send it to a Select Committee of the Parliament. Of course, the Government has declared this decision to be a 'master stroke' with the intention of winning the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. This 'master stroke' of the government reminds one of V.P. Singh's decision to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations in one stroke. V.P. Singh applied that 'master stroke' with the goal of finishing off his mentor Devi Lal in the battle of political dominance. But the difference in both the decisions is that the Mandal Commission was constituted by the Parliament and the Mandal Commission's recommendations on reservation were in line with the basic structure of the Constitution and the concept of social justice as provided for in the Constitution. This decision of the present government is totally opposite to the basic structure of the Constitution and the constitutional concept of social justice, wherein reservation is given for socially backward communities who have suffered in the past.

The Socialist Party perceives this decision of the Modi Government as "historic" in the sense that now the political parties and the governments in India will not formulate their policies on the basis of the Directive Principles of the State (i.e. socialist system) as enshrined in the Constitution, that are aimed at building an egalitarian India by removing economic disparity and erasing caste discrimination. Rather they will continue to pursue the goal of making a 'New India' of the rich at the expense of the working classes

under corporate capitalism.

Almost all opposition parties have supported the Bill in both the Houses. The political leaders who have opposed it are guided by the electoral politics. They do not have a fundamental opposition to the government's intention of destroying the basic structure of the Constitution.

The authenticity of those who are opposing this decision outside political parties, would be based on the criterion whether they are decisively opposing corporate capitalism or not and whether they are willing to understand the truth that Brahmanism-Manuism have been completely transformed into capitalism.

The Socialist Party would further like to state that with this decision the BJP has firmly embedded caste (apart from religion) in the political

discourse of the country. It has therefore pushed the country into the pit of counter-revolution. Even after 70 years of Independence, there is no progress in the meaning of citizenship; rather it is progressively disappearing. In 'New India', the identity of a person will not be that of a citizen, but he/she will be recognised on the basis of religion and caste.

The Socialist Party opposes the Amendment Bill on two grounds: 1. This is contrary to the concept of reservation perceived by the makers of the Constitution; and 2. The government's decision is the protection shield for neo-liberal policies under which the commercialisation of education and elimination of employment is being done.

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## **Sangh's Latest Attacks on Academic Institutions**

*In his convocation address to the University of Allahabad in 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru said, "A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards even higher objectives. If the universities discharge their duties adequately, then it is well with the nation and the people". In 2018, are the universities with the nation and the people? Or should we ask, is the nation and the people with its universities?*

On October 31, eminent historian and author Ramachandra Guha announced via twitter that he will not be joining Ahmedabad University in the coming year.

Just two days before that, Rajiv Malhotra, a US based author and prominent Hindutva ideologue, was appointed as an Honorary Visiting Professor in JNU. On November 2, Arnab Goswami was appointed a member of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) Society in place of eminent political scientist Pratap Bhanu Mehta who had resigned from the Society earlier this year. All three events are being widely seen as a part of the on-going saffronisation of higher education and research institutions across the country.

Ramachandra Guha tweeted, "Due to circumstances beyond my control, I shall not be joining Ahmedabad University." The academic was offered an

appointment to join the university as the Shrenik Lalbhai Chair Professor of Humanities and director of the Gandhi Winter School at the School of Arts and Sciences. Since the university made the announcement public on October 16, it witnessed a wide range of protests staged by the Akhil Bharti Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student's wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The ABVP submitted a memorandum to the registrar of the university, B M Shah, objecting to the appointment of the historian on the grounds that he had "anti-national" views.

According to reports, after receiving threats from ABVP, the AU administration reached out to Guha on Monday to discuss the possibility of deferring the date of his joining. He was supposed to join AU on February 1, 2019. In another tweet, Guha expressed his disagreement with the decision and said, "A biographer of Gandhi cannot teach a course on Gandhi in Gandhi's own city."

Calling the historian a "communist" for his views, Pravin Desai, secretary of the Ahmedabad unit of the ABVP, said, "We want intellectuals in our educational institutes and not anti-nationals who can also be termed as 'urban Naxals'. If he is invited to Gujarat, there would be a JNU like anti-national sentiment."

Dhananjay Rai, an Assistant Professor at the political science department of the Central University of Gujarat said, "I think academic freedom is sacrosanct in a way. The binary between national and anti-national is not just precarious but also antithetical to creative imagination and the pursuance of higher education. I think there is a difference between dislike and

disagreement, one can agree or disagree, but to let this affect the enrichment of university is not a good thing as universities without academic freedom would account for the end of higher education. I think it would have been beneficial for Ahmedabad University had Ramachandra Guha been there and his presence would have been enriching both in terms of agreement and disagreement."

This is not the first time universities in Gujarat have seen violent protests from right-wing outfits. Last year, Maharaja Sayajirao University (MSU), Vadodara, had to cancel a day long workshop by Prof. Ghanshyam Shah titled "Reading the Margins: Politics of Caste and Social Movements in India", after Hindutva groups threatened to disrupt the workshop. In response to the fiasco over Ramachandra Guha's appointment, Shah said, "All academic institutions in Gujarat, including the private ones, are under pressure and that might be one of the reasons why Professor Ramachandra Guha withdrew. This is exactly what happened with me in MSU. The same pattern is continuing. I think this is how it is going to be, since there is no resistance in academic circles. This has been going on for more than six–seven years. There is nobody in the major universities to raise their voices. Everyone is silent. When I heard that Guha is joining Ahmedabad University, I thought that will be good for the students, but the administration backed-off at the last moment. There must have been pressure from above."

Over the past few years, we have seen how the education sector has been privatised in the hands of the right-wing groups. The Hinduisation of education, erasing history from

the textbooks in the name of religion and the continuous, almost planned attacks on academicians and free-thinkers clearly shows the right-wing's fear of liberal thought and freedom of expression.

Sahil Kureshi, a research scholar at Oxford University studying the saffronisation of campuses in Gujarat said, "This whole episode sheds light on what has been happening in universities in Gujarat for over two decades now. The Sangh has been in complete control of the universities and no voices of dissent, no matter how mild, are tolerated. And of course, what they mean by anti-national is anti-Sangh, they're not even trying to hide or disguise this anymore. All the excerpts provided as 'proof' are critical of the Sangh or the Hindu Rashtra. Also, the reaction of the university administration is, not in the least, surprising. It would be naive to expect anything else from the university administrations in these times, especially from private universities."

While in one university an eminent academic has been forced to relinquish his appointment, in another university a bigot and Hindutva apologist has been handed a plump post. The appointment of Rajiv Malhotra has caused much outrage. Historian S. Irfan Habib wrote in a tweet, "I don't think JNU deserved this insult. A pretender, a plagiarist and Hindutva proponent Rajiv Malhotra appointed honorary visiting professor at JNU." US based historian Audrey Truschke too condemned the move and tweeted, "A hate monger, plagiarist, without academic credentials, best known for his identity-fuelled attack on scholars has been appointed." Rajiv Malhotra, who has emerged as one of the most prominent ideologues

of the Hindu Right, has himself been known for vicious attacks and diatribes against free-thinkers and other voices of reason in India. Accused of plagiarism on multiple occasions, his appointment is being seen as nothing but an attempt by the ruling dispensation muscling its way into academic spaces.

Commenting upon Malholtra's appointment, Dhananjay Rai said, "Rajiv Malhotra is known for his extreme and non-academic interventions in academic sphere, and anyone who would talk about reason and rationality and humanity and universality and universalism would be antithetical to his cause. He speaks like a religious person in the attire of an academician and his various books and articles are based on binaries and the binary is very clear. I think this is a very

unfortunate development—in place of finding serious academic scholars in universities, people who are known for their illiberal and extreme views regarding various communities including minorities are being appointed."

Arnab Goswami's appointment, too, is a part of the same trend. Many senior journalists said that his appointment was not a good idea as it is a place for scholars and not for votaries of the ruling party.

All three incidents are a part of a new academic culture that is more concerned with appointing personnel politically or ideologically affiliated with the ruling regime, and using power to curb voices, rather than creating a socio-economic environment that encourages young and creative minds to think and critically engage. The problem with

the development of this "hinduised" academic culture is that dissent which questions the right-wing definition of nationalism is considered dangerous and is immediately labelled seditious or anti-national.

"On one side, anyone who is liberal would also be construed as a marxist or communist without understanding anything about marxism or communism, while on the other hand, any other space will be offered and provided to those who are not even engaged in serious discussions on history, economics, sociology or politics. They are only forming a common sense about history and sociology and political science. But this common sense has to be theorised as the knowledge," Rai concluded.

**Courtesy:  
Indian Cultural Forum**

## 'Reservation Is Not Poverty Alleviation Programme'

*P.S. Krishnan, the former secretary to government of India, was one of the crucial people behind the enactment of several historic laws regarding social justice. He spoke to the Wire on the Bill moved by the government to provide reservation to economically weaker upper castes in jobs and education. This interview was conducted before the Bill was passed by both houses of Parliament.*

### **How do you react to the government's decision to give 10% quota in jobs to economically backward upper castes?**

There are poor people among upper castes who need help. This should be appropriate and constitutionally sustainable. Our

constitution introduced reservation and other social justice measures for those who were excluded collectively from education and entry into services of the state and better opportunities because of the caste system. They inherited the caste system.

The writers of our Constitution deeply and poignantly considered the caste system and the harm it has done. They realised it had to be eliminated and those who suffered by it needed support to achieve equality.

These were the victims of untouchability i.e. scheduled castes and schedule tribes. They were socially and educationally backward classes. This was the basic structure. It was not a programme to eliminate

poverty. It was part of a national enterprise to remove the inequalities created by the caste system.

Now, there are poor people in all castes. They are poor Brahmins, poor Thakurs, poor Syeds and poor Baniyas who need help to complete their education. So, they need comprehensive scholarships, education loans, skill development assistance. They are economically backward, not socially. They require only economic support, not reservation.

### **So what about the government's current step?**

This has not been done appropriately and may be questioned in the Supreme Court. The issue here is that whether it is in



accordance with the basic structure of the Constitution. It may be found violative of the basic structure and on that ground, struck down.

**Several socially powerful castes such as Jats, Marathas and Patidars have been seeking reservation. How do you see this step in the light of this development?**

They all have a high social status. Firstly, they can't be called backward classes. In the Bill, they are not being called backward classes. They are being called economically weaker sections. The Constitution does not provide for reservation for the economically weaker sections.

**When the P.V. Narasimha Rao government tried to provide reservation to the economically weaker sections, the Supreme Court struck that down. How is it different this time?**

Narasimha Rao's government only passed an executive order. Now, parliament is considering a Constitutional amendment. Therefore, the government hopes that it will withstand judicial scrutiny. But that scrutiny will still ask if this Bill or law is violative of the Constitution's basic structure or not.

So, I don't think making a Constitutional provision or including it in the ninth schedule will make it immune from judicial scrutiny. It will definitely follow.

**But Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said in parliament that the 50% ceiling was for caste-based reservation. Here, the government is proposing reservation for the economically poor. Do you agree with that?**

That isn't the main problem. The question is whether the Constitution's basic structure was violated or not. The Constitution has a special provision for victims of the caste system. The economically backward are not victims of the caste system.

## New Era for Mexico's Zapatista Army

“We're the product of 500 years of struggles: first against slavery and the war for independence against Spain, then avoiding being absorbed by North American expansionism, then promulgating our Constitution and expelling the French Empire from our territory, then against Porfirio's dictatorship that denied the fair implementation of the Reform Laws . . .”

Those were the opening lines of the first public statement by the National Liberation Zapatista Army (EZLN), published on the day of the uprising on January 1, 1994, the day when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect. The agreement binded the United States, Canada and Mexico into a single commercial zone, that has since impoverished the working classes while making the capitalist classes even richer.

In that first statement, the EZLN announced they would walk into Mexico City and defeat the national military, inviting people to rise up and join them in the fight. Since then, the Zapatistas have come an incredible distance, drawing various sectors of Mexican and international society, regardless of their background and skin color, into a struggle that continues till today.

Their stance is different now. Perhaps the invitation to rise up in arms was a “bluff” to intimidate the

You are creating a percentage of reservation for people who are not the victims of the caste system. What the Supreme Court will ultimately say, we will have to see.

Courtesy: **The Wire**

government, but we will never know. In the early years, they negotiated the San Andres Accords with the federal government that established that Indigenous peoples' autonomy would be respected. The agreements, however, were soon violated by the administration of Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon, so the Zapatistas decided to implement them on their own, forever eschewing mainstream politics, including the new National Renewal Movement (Morena) led by Mexico's newly inaugurated President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.

### Support Networks

Claudia T., one of the founding members of a collective named 'Mujeres y la Sexta', was in Mexico City at the time of the uprising, 900 kilometers away from San Cristobal de las Casas. Sympathisers quickly organised protests to stop military action against the insurgents, and out of those connections were born new support networks in urban and rural areas. Some of those people formed brigades to bring aid to Chiapas, where the uprising took on new life. Luz y Fuerza del Centro, a state-owned electricity company with a combative union, even sent workers to install electricity in Zapatista villages where the government had been completely absent.

“There were several ways to help

them. People from the educational or nursing departments used to go and support them,” Claudia told teleSUR. “We would rent a bus and go as far as we could, then walk through wet mud to reach the communities, in order to help them. Everytime we went there, we brought back more than we took. They would give us their love, their teachings, their humanism.”

Those were some of the first relations established between the insurgent group (or communities) and civil society living in the cities and towns outside of the Zapatista rebel territory. In the subsequent years, collectives—a network of organisations and sympathisers—would establish long-standing relations with the Zapatistas. These collectives in turn influenced the Zapatistas too.

“Then the Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona came. They explained their six points and asked us: What is your opinion?” said Claudia.

“The relation that was initially established by going there and supporting the struggle was transformed. It was not any more a ‘come and help me,’ but a ‘let’s be partners in struggle’. The relationship has now changed. We now participate in their meetings, they invite us to forums, seminars. Scientists, artists, all of us participating in this process—we are all enriched by this participation. Simultaneously, their youth, the people in their communities, are enriched by our participation.”

This process took place in parallel with a transformation in the Zapatistas’ own internal political organisations. The ‘Aguascalientes’ were transformed into ‘Caracoles,’ each governed by

a ‘Good Governance Committee’. In this new political structure, the local or base communities are grouped into municipalities, which in turn are grouped into Caracoles. Each Caracole includes one or two delegates sent by each of the constituent municipalities. And each of the municipalities are run by committees to which each of the constituent base communities send their representatives.

According to the late Subcomandante Marcos, the movement’s most prominent spokesperson, the new political system created by the Zapatistas aimed to make the Caracole answerable to the local communities. The representatives sent by the local communities are not professional politicians. Instead, everyone is encouraged to participate and learn how to represent without substituting popular demand.

The focus of the Zapatistas has shifted since the time of the uprising. In 1996, they called for a meeting of Indigenous people from all across Mexico, which led to the formation of the National Indigenous Congress (CNI). The CNI is not just an organisation, it is rather a space to share information about community struggles, build their unity, and discuss vision of a possible future for the country. Indigenous people’s organisations from all over Mexico, who are not a part of the EZLN and who have not taken up arms, have joined the CNI and while continuing to organise resistance in their own areas, participate in CNI to share / build capacities and exchange worldviews.

The support networks played a key role in perhaps the CNI’s most widely known project, the formation of the Indigenous Government

Council (CIG) and election of Maria de Jesus Patricio Martinez, better known as ‘Marichuy,’ as their spokesperson and presidential candidate for the 2018 elections. They were in charge of organising Marichuy’s visits to their respective communities and cities, collecting signatures to approve her candidacy and include her in the ballots, and contributing to a collective reflection exercise on revolutionary praxis.

### **Charting Ever New Paths**

The Zapatistas’ slow but steady development in revolutionary theory and practice has made them one of the main reference points for an alternative to capitalism in Latin America and the world. By refusing to take part in the mainstream economic and political system and actually proposing and executing alternative ideas, the movement is moving forward positively.

The Zapatistas believe that every individual and group should find their own path for liberation. “In 1994, the Zapatistas called for an uprising, and have since turned to other forms of struggle,” says Gogol, a writer and activist living in Mexico. “They are anti-vanguardist, and thus believe that each movement and social struggle needs to decide how it will organise and what form its struggle will take, without being dictated from above.”

This thinking has influenced Gogol and pushed him to write and organise study circles with colleagues to analyse today’s reality, while taking part in Zapatista-led initiatives and supporting the CNI and the CIG and its spokeswoman, Marichuy.

Now, the EZLN and other revolutionary Indigenous organisations are at a turning point.

Marichuy didn't make it to the ballots for the 2018 elections, won by the center-left Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO), but the CIG continues organising a national movement in which Campesinos and the working-class—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—are integrated, to topple capitalism and the ruling class.

Lopez Obrador and his team have promised to respect the San Andres Accords signed by the EZLN and the government in the 1990s,

but reality seems different. Even though the accords establish that Indigenous communities should be consulted over anything related to their territory, one of Lopez Obrador's first announced projects, the Maya Train, has been approved without proper consultation, and Indigenous organisations from the Yucatan peninsula are rejecting it.

In late December, support networks from across Mexico, along with representatives of the CNI, the CIG and the EZLN, met

in Guadalupe Tepeyac, part of the Zapatista autonomous territory in Chiapas, to discuss the next steps in the struggle. On January 1, they will be at 'La Realidad,' the first Caracole, to commemorate 25 years of the uprising.

Taking into account the outcome of the last assembly, this has the potential to produce an inclusive national plan, a new step in the long road to autonomy, liberty, life and dignity.

Courtesy: Telesur

# Footprints of A Crusader (The Life Story of Mrunal Gore)

by

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