On October 3, an FIR was lodged against the 49 celebrities for raising concern in late July over the growing incidents of mob lynching. The FIR was lodged under several sections of the Indian Penal Code, including sedition. This is despite the Supreme Court’s stance that sedition charges cannot be invoked for criticism of the government. Supreme Court Justice Deepak Gupta also recently advocated the dilution—if not complete abolition—of the sedition law.

In response to the filing of this FIR, more than 1389 cultural and literary personalities have condemned the charges and endorsed the original letter. The full text of their statement is as below:

An FIR has been lodged against forty-nine of our colleagues in the cultural community, simply because they performed their duty as respected members of civil society. They wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister, expressing concern about mob lynching in our country.

Can this be called an act of sedition? Or is harassment by misusing the courts a ploy to silence citizens’ voices?

All of us, as members of the Indian cultural community, as citizens of conscience, condemn such harassment. We do more: we endorse every word of the letter our colleagues wrote to the Prime Minister. This is why we share their letter here once again, and appeal to the cultural, academic and legal communities to do the same. This is why more of us will speak every day. Against mob lynching. Against the silencing of people’s voices. Against the misuse of courts to harass citizens.

Full text of open letter written to Prime Minister Modi on 23 July 2019 by 49 eminent citizens:

We, as peace loving and proud Indians, are deeply concerned about a number of tragic events that have been happening in recent times in our beloved country.

Our Constitution describes India as a secular socialist democratic republic where citizens of all religions, ethnicities, gender and castes are equal. Hence, to ensure that every citizen enjoys the rights given to her/him by the Constitution, our submission is:

1. The lynching of Muslims, Dalits and other minorities must be stopped immediately. We were shocked to learn from the NCRB...
(National Crime Records Bureau) reports that there have been no less than 840 instances of atrocities against Dalits in the year 2016, and a definite decline in the percentage of convictions.

Further, 254 religious identity-based hate crimes were reported between January 1, 2009, and October 29, 2018, where at least 91 persons were killed and 579 were injured (FactChecker.in database, October 30, 2018). The Citizen’s Religious Hate-Crime Watch recorded that Muslims, (14% of India’s population) were the victims in 62% for cases, and Christians (2% of the population), in 14% cases. About 90% of these attacks were reported after May 2014, when your Government assumed power nationally.

You have criticized such lynchings in Parliament Mr. Prime Minister, but that is not enough! What action has actually been taken against the perpetrators? We strongly feel that such offences should be declared non-bailable, and that exemplary punishment should be meted out swiftly and surely. If life imprisonment without parole can be the sentence in cases of murder, why not for lynchings, which are even more heinous? No citizen should have to live in fear in his/her own country!

Regrettably “Jai Sri Ram” has become a provocative ‘war-cry’ today that leads to law and order problems, and many lynchings take place in its name. It is shocking to see so much violence perpetrated in the name of religion! These are not the Middle Ages! The name of Ram is sacred to many in the majority community of India. As the highest Executive of this country, you must put a stop to the name of Ram being defiled in this manner.

2. There is no democracy without dissent. People should not be branded ‘anti-national’ or ‘urban Naxal’ and incarcerated because of dissent against the Government. Article 19 of the Constitution of India protects freedom of speech and expression of which dissent is an integral part.

Criticising the ruling party does not imply criticising the nation. No ruling party is synonymous with the country where it is in power. It is only one of the political parties of that country. Hence anti-government stands cannot be equated with anti-national sentiments. An open environment where dissent is not crushed, only makes for a stronger nation.

We hope our suggestions will be taken in the spirit that they are meant—as Indians genuinely concerned with, and anxious about, the fate of our nation.

—India Cultural Forum

Note by Editors: On October 10, the newspapers reported that the Bihar police has ordered that the case of sedition against the 49 celebrities be closed and that it has decided to prosecute the complainant Sudhir Ojha for filing a false case.

Gandhiji and Lohia: An Intimate and Fruitful Relationship – Part 1

Prem Singh

The relationship between M.K. Gandhi (1869–1948) and Ram Manohar Lohia (1910–1967) was unique in many ways. One can perceive this as equilibrium of opposites. When Lohia came in direct contact with Gandhiji, he was merely twenty-three years old whereas Gandhiji, with his vast wealth of experience and ideas, was already sixty four. First of all, it was a relationship between a believer (Ishwarwadi) and a non-believer (Anishwarwadi). Lohia did not ever agree with Gandhiji’s religious invocation, his prayers, his support of the Varna system, his views on celibacy, etc. In his entire crusade, Gandhiji maintained cordial feelings towards his opponents, including the British, whereas Lohia usually adopted an aggressive posture towards his opponents, using intolerant and sharp language. Lohia used this kind of language even in his conversations with Gandhi. Lohia was not in total agreement with all the Gandhian ideas on socio-political subjects. Thus, there was a contrast between them not just in terms of temperament but also in terms of ideas. Despite all this, an intimate relationship developed between them. Lohia’s biographer Indumati Kelkar terms Gandhiji as the Manas Pita and Guru of Lohia. She also mentions that Lohia became an 'orphan' for the second time after Gandhiji’s assassination. In fact in his last few years, Gandhiji came very close to the socialists, particularly to Lohia. Among the crowd of Gandhians, Lohia saw himself as an heretic. Scholars have called him an extension of Gandhiji. A little later we shall discuss Lohia’s critique of Gandhiji’s ideas and methods of intervention.
To delineate the personal relationship between Gandhiji and Lohia, the main source could be an essay by Lohia himself in which he narrates the 'story' of their relationship. The title of the essay is 'Anecdotes of Mahatma Gandhi', based on his speech delivered at Hyderabad in 1952. (1) Lohia's first personal contact with Gandhiji took place at the time of the Non-Cooperation Movement when, at the age of nine or ten, he went to see Gandhiji with his father, who himself was a congressman. Lohia writes, "I touched his feet and he touched my back. I am proud of that, and on one occasion when Gandhiji asked me when I had first seen him, I related the incident. He said, 'Yes, of course, you would remember but I don't remember it....' I may here add that I never touched anybody else's feet outside of the family, and that too when very young." (2)

His first "live contact" with Gandhiji as an adult was established when he returned to India in 1933 from his studies in Germany. There was a meeting between Gandhiji and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya. Lohia could reach there with the help of Prabhavati Devi. He did not disclose his identity to Gandhiji on that occasion, using Prabhavati Devi as his shield. During the conversation between these two Congress leaders he was impressed by Gandhiji's reaction to Malviyaji on the question of sending a Congress delegation to England to plead the case of India. Gandhiji made his comment on the subject "in a very calm persuasive and yet very firm tone": "What are you talking about? Have we not come to that stage when it is no longer possible to think in terms of a deputation of the Congress Party going out to England to plead India's cause?" (3) Lohia was in full agreement with Gandhiji's understanding of the situation. Perhaps Lohia could see the strength of Gandhiji during the phase of "national depression". After a few days Lohia met Gandhiji through Mr. Jamnalal Bajaj who had perhaps already told Gandhiji about Lohia's intention of joining politics as a full time vocation. Gandhiji's direct question to Lohia was "Are you well off?" When Jamnalal Bajaj assured him on that account he felt relieved and said, "Then it is all right, we shall meet again." After that, the "whole thing was dismissed." (4)

Such a "rude" question in the very first meeting, Lohia recollects, did not strike him as being wrong because it came from a person like Gandhiji. In fact, to Lohia, it showed his caring concern towards political activists.

After the formation of Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in 1934, Lohia was appointed the editor of its weekly journal. He wrote an article in the weekly, criticising Gandhi's 'constructive program' which started after the failure of 1932–33 movement. The 'young' Lohia was very harsh with 'old' Gandhiji's program. A copy of the journal was sent to Gandhiji for his comment. Lohia says that it was the only occasion when Gandhiji was really angry with him. Gandhiji wrote to Lohia, "You must never expect me to write because I find that you have not the slightest patience with your opponent's view point." Irritated by this answer Lohia wrote back to Gandhiji saying probably he was a little careless in the use of his phrases, but then Gandhiji should have tried to get at his meaning. This time Lohia received a sweet answer from Gandhiji. Lohia was impressed by that letter and recognised that "if one may not find it easy to accept the view point of an opponent, one should at least listen to it carefully and understand what he has to say and that is a faculty which we are singularly losing in the modern world." (5) Till the end Lohia was accused of being intolerant towards his opponents. Madhu Limaye has noted at one point : "Gandhiji's soft spokenness and his cordial and gentle behaviour with his opponents was a unique and fascinating quality. Lohia was greatly influenced by Gandhiji. But despite possessing a brilliant and impressive personality, Lohia's language was very sharp. While attacking his colleagues, he did not particularly care about their feelings. He made many enemies because of his piercing words. In fact, sharp words seem to be in vogue with us who belong to the left. The level of the debates even between Tilak and Agarkar could not remain of a very high standard. It would have been good if Lohia had adopted Gandhiji's new mode of debate. Gandhiji had proved that cordial feelings for an opponent was not an indication of one's weakness." (6) Indumati Kelkar also maintains that Lohia "did not possess any signs of the gentle and controlled language of his manas Pita and Guru. This was an unpleasant aspect of a personality which happened to be attractive in other matters." (7) Even with Gandhiji, Lohia often used, in his own words, "all the violent, rough, and sharp language."

Passing over "other occasions of an intimate character", Lohia mentions about the AICC session held a little before the Second World War broke out. In this session of AICC, a resolution drafted by
Gandhiji himself about the passive resistance of 'British Indians' in South Africa came up for discussion. Lohia moved his amendments to Gandhiji's resolution on two points and the same were passed. When Gandhiji came to know of the development he got very angry and demanded that "he would have the AICC pass his resolution or none at all." At the insistence of Gandhiji the AICC passed the withdrawal of the amendments suggested by Lohia and "the resolution was passed in its original form except that nobody tried to suggest that Indians should be called British Indians. At least that much was accepted without any debate." Lohia had suggested in one of his amendments "that Indians had better be called Indians, whether they lived in South Africa or India, and not British Indians."(8)

Lohia narrates another episode when he got angry with Gandhiji. It was over Gandhiji's 'tearful' statements, some months after the beginning of the Second World War, about the threatened destruction of Westminster Abbey. Lohia felt that by making such statements Gandhiji detracted "from his role as a world leader, because he had shown preference for one people over another." Lohia's reaction was based on the edited version of Gandhiji's statement on AIR. When he read it in full in the print media, his anger subsided somewhat. He gave a patient thought to Gandhiji's meaning and came up with the interpretation that 'while embracing a person we embraced a representative of the whole human race.' Lohia realised that "when he [Gandhiji] talked about the destruction of Westminster Abbey he was trying to embrace the whole mankind ..." To Lohia's joy, "Gandhiji immediately wrote out another statement for the Harijan saying it was so ..." (9) When Lohia later met Gandhiji, he gave him perfect freedom to express his views on his statements on national or international issues related to the war. During the war Lohia could press upon Gandhiji his idea of declaring all the Indian cities as open by the British Government. The idea was directed towards the full freedom of India. In this regard Gandhiji wrote a clear letter to Viceroy Linlithgow in which he mentioned Lohia as "a socialist with pronounced leanings towards nonviolence." (10) Somehow the letter was not sent to the Viceroy with the fear that the British Police will arrest Lohia after receiving such a letter.

Again Lohia tried to persuade Gandhiji to approach the various world governments "with a scheme of setting up the foundations on which the new world could be built." Lohia outlined four principles on this issue : "1. Cancellation of all past investments by one country in another; 2. Unobstructed passage and right of settlement to everybody all the world over; 3. Political freedom for all the peoples and nations of the world and constituent assemblies; 4. Some kind of a world citizenship." (11) Perhaps Gandhiji found the idea of writing a letter to the world governments somewhat impractical, but he reproduced Lohia's ideas in full in the Harijan.

It is worth mentioning that by this time, despite ideological differences between these two great personalities, a mutual faith building had taken place. In fact, the most intimate moments of the relationship between Gandhiji and Lohia came after the war when communal riots broke out in the country just before and during the partition. It was the time when Lord Mountbatten proposed his theory of partition resulting in communal riots all over the country. Lohia was in Goa at that time and "had done something there." Gandhiji, without confirming the facts from Lohia, immediately issued a statement supporting his action. Lohia writes, "He had begun to like me, and he assumed that my acts would be more good than evil. That put me under some kind of an obligation, and so when he insisted upon my staying on in Calcutta, I first resisted, knowing fully well that I was incapable of doing anything whatsoever with regard to the bloody riots between Hindus and Muslims, but on the third or fourth day I succumbed ..." (12) At the end of the essay, Lohia gives a detailed account of his efforts to check the communal riots. He worked day and night in communally hit areas of the country with Gandhiji and without him, at times putting his life at a great risk. Once he saved the life of Gandhiji from communalists.

Lohia wrote that Gandhiji, at this juncture, tried to explore the strength of the socialists so that he could rely upon them "in order to combat both the British Authority, and his own Working Committee." He further elaborated, "I must say that we must have been an unsatisfactory lot because he seems finally to have concluded that he could do nothing about it.... On one occasion Sardar Patel asked me forget all this talk about what will happen to India after the partition. He would talk to Mr. Jinnah in the language of the Danda." (13) According to Lohia, Nehru was also equally furious on this issue, saying that "we were obsessed with the view of Mr. Jinnah.
and were arguing with him all the time. What is the use of calling people brothers who are flying at each other's throat?" Astonished at this 'understanding' of Nehru, Lohia gave the example of America which had a civil war killing "300 thousand or 400 thousand persons or may be more on both sides, but they did not cease to be brothers." (14)

The relationship between Gandhiji and Lohia further matured to the extent that in a meeting held in solitude, Gandhiji, putting his hands on Lohia's shoulders, expressed his concern about his over indulgence in cigarettes and in drinking coffee and tea, cautioning him against the ruinous effects of these on one's health. It came to Lohia as a "surprise." He had not expected that "after 13 years of rather long and intimate conversations" he would listen to Gandhiji's "private talk on cigarettes." Apart from health, Gandhiji further linked the issue with socialism. Lohia writes : "He said that as a socialist I must identify myself with the people, that I must become their spokesman, so it was a process of identification and spokesmanship, the two together. Then he asked me on what grounds I could possibly justify my cigarette smoking in India, which debarred me from completing this process of identification with and spokesmanship of my countrymen, the mass of the hungry and poverty-stricken." (15) In this solitary meeting between Gandhiji and Lohia, only Gandhiji did the speaking, and that too for a long time. He twice insisted that Lohia say something on the issue. Lohia kept mum. Then Gandhiji asked him if he wanted him to stop. An embarrassed Lohia asked him to continue. Gandhiji contemplated the issue further and raised the question of public and private life. He asked Lohia if he wanted him to confine himself only to his (Lohia's) public life. Lohia said that he did not draw a watertight distinction between private and public life and would certainly allow Gandhiji to ask questions on the former. As far as the habit of cigarette smoking was concerned, Lohia did not reply to the queries of Gandhiji that day but promised an answer very soon. After two months or so he informed Gandhiji that he had given up the habit of smoking. He later said that he did not "smoke again until the day Gandhiji was assassinated." However he did smoke that day. He felt betrayed by Gandhiji. The pain of Gandhiji's assassination was so deep that he contemplated at length the impression Gandhiji left on him even at the time of his death. He simultaneously experienced contradictory feelings: the feeling of imposing and practicing self-discipline in life and the feeling of complete freedom to do whatever he liked. In fact, "the problem of self-discipline, of character and knowledge" in human life struck him now in real depth and meaning. Adding a postscript to the affect Gandhiji's assassination had on him, Lohia gave an account of a conversation twelve years earlier when Gandhiji praised him not only for bravery and intelligence but also his endurance of character—sheel. Lohia however viewed Gandhiji's estimate of him differently : "Gandhiji sometimes made mistakes in his estimate of men. I sometimes fear that his affection for me and lack of full information about me may have vitiated his judgment, but, if what he said is true, I am deeply happy. Not bravery so much, not even intelligence or learning, but continuity in character is the abiding human value." (16) Beside endurance of character, the quality Gandhiji liked most in Lohia was his commitment to non-violence.

Lohia narrated an episode concerned with the question of violence–nonviolence. The Nagpur secret police made a report that Lohia "had recommended an underground campaign against the Indian Government and their assassination in the Aung-san fashion." In Burma, Prime Minister Aung-san was assassinated together with most of his cabinet members. Home Minister Sardar Patel went to Gandhiji and complained about the 'plan' of Lohia. Gandhiji asked Lohia if those were his views. Lohia, saying that during 1942 movement he had not indulged in the killing of even British soldiers, replied in the negative. But at the same time he descended very harshly on the present Indian Government. He described the government as "incompetent, inefficient, stupid, and without use or reason." (17) In full agreement with Lohia, Gandhiji asked him to write a letter to the Home Minister stating that he would not 'assassinate' his government. Ever ready to go to jail, Lohia refused to do so. Finally he agreed to write a letter to Gandhiji.

In his last days Gandhiji asked Lohia if he believed in God and if not, he could not be a good satyagrahi. Lohia replied in negative but at the same time he emphasised that he might best achieve his satyagrah without God. Gandhiji dropped the subject and never raised it again. Lohia ends the essay in the hope that he will be able to tell the stories of Gandhiji some other day. He also said that in the process of editing the
speech made eight years back "a lot has... been left out than brought in." It means that the account of personal interaction and relationship between Gandhiji and Lohia presented in this essay is a tip of the iceberg. Lohia could not tell the story of Gandhiji again. But the given account could form enough basis to understand the nature of intimacy of their personal relationship.

One can see the basis on which an intimate and trustful relationship between Gandhiji and Lohia became possible. Lohia was attracted to Gandhiji's immense concern for mankind by his people-oriented philosophy of life and most of all by his socio-political activism completely devoid of any desire for political power. Gandhiji too could see Lohia's genuine and selfless concern for the people. It may be remembered that with the strengthening of his relationship with Gandhiji, Lohia's relationship with Nehru went through a corresponding decline, with the result that eventually he remained wholly and solely with Gandhiji. Lohia was thirty-seven at the time of India's independence. In expressing his concern for Lohia's health, in saying that he should identify himself with the people and become their spokesman, and in praising his power of endurance, Gandhiji apparently voiced his desire to see Lohia as his political–philosophical heir after the Nehru–Patel generation. Lohia too responded, as it were, to Gandhiji's hope and sentiments.

Gandhiji had given India the treasure of his unique personality, ideas and method of intervention, which most of the Left thinkers not only left unexplored but also dismissed as reactionary. Lohia, on his part, interpreted the Gandhian ideas in his own way and also sought to revolutionise them.

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2. Ibid., p. 140.
3. Ibid., p. 142.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 144.
10. Ibid., p. 152.
11. Ibid., pp. 152–53.
13. Ibid., p. 164.
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A Frontal Attack on Labour in the Shadow of Hindutva

Prabhat Patnaik

The class function of Hindutva is becoming clearer by the day. In the lee of Hindutva, the Modi government is embarking on a massive programme of privatisation of the public sector, and of attack on the working class. Such a programme could not have been launched under the “normal” circumstances of capitalist rule; it would have aroused stiff opposition. But the government feels emboldened to attempt it when the nation is being divided in the name of Hindutva, when the combination of fear of the “other”, and hatred in consequence of it, are being inculcated among the majority.

Fear creates the need for a “saviour”; and if the so-called “saviour” is also doing the privatisation, then people are less strident in their opposition to it. They are too distracted by the Hindutva discourse to mount any challenge to the class agenda of the corporate–financial oligarchy in which such privatisation figures prominently. Hindutva, in short, brings about a discourse shift that works in the interests of the corporate–financial oligarchy.

Privatisation is being introduced in diverse ways. Some public sector enterprises are earmarked for outright sale, not just loss-making ones, but even those which make handsome profits. In others, the government intends to reduce its own share of equity below 51% through disinvestment. In still others, the idea is to break up the total activity into several different individual activities and to privatise some individual activities by divesting the public sector of those; this last route is what is being followed with regard to the Railways.

In addition to these ways of privatising the existing public sector, there is also an effort to bypass the public sector where it exists, to
reduce its scope as much as possible. In a sphere like coal mining, which had been hitherto kept more or less exclusively for the public sector, even foreign capital is now being invited to participate. In railway components, such as locomotives, imports from foreign firms are being resorted to, and domestic production in the public sector is being correspondingly curtailed; this is but a prelude to running down the public sector units to extinction.

Likewise, legislation to “reform” existing labour laws, that would make the sacking of workers easier, is likely to be introduced in the coming Lok Sabha session. In fact, only about 4% of the total workforce in the country is covered by whatever protection the existing labour laws provide, since even in the “organised sector”, casualisation of the workforce has proceeded remarkably fast. The real objective of the proposed change in labour laws, therefore, is to make trade unions impossible, since anyone unionising the workers would be sacked forthwith.

Privatising the public sector will have an exactly similar consequence. All over the world, workers in the private sector are less unionised than in the public sector. In the US, for instance, while only about 7% of private sector workers are unionised, the corresponding ratio in the public sector (including education) is 33%. The shift of a unit from the domain of the public sector to that of the private sector, therefore, will have a deleterious effect on unionisation.

The Narendra Modi government’s real objective, therefore, is a frontal attack on the working class, something which the corporate–financial oligarchy would dearly love, but which had not been easy to launch earlier. In the shadow of Hindutva this is being sought to be achieved.

The corporate gain in the shadow of Hindutva is by no means accidental. In fact, the economic ideology of the votaries of Hindutva is unblinkingly and unashamedly pro-corporate. This fact was expressed in the clearest possible terms by Modi himself when he said that the capitalists were the “wealth creators” for the country, which even capitalist economics would not claim.

Standard textbooks of capitalist economics mention four “factors of production”—land, labour, capital and enterprise—as coming together to undertake production, upon which the creation of wealth depends. This eclecticism on their part is suggestive of the fact that they want to show capital which the capitalists “contribute” as being no less important than labour in the process of wealth creation: the capitalists, in other words, far from being exploiters, as the socialists argue, are co-contributors to the creation of wealth.

The Hindu Right, however, has gone even further than standard bourgeois textbooks. It has eliminated labour completely from the list of wealth creators. It sees the capitalists not just as co-contributors alongside labour to the process of wealth creation: the capitalists, in other words, far from being exploiters, as the socialists argue, are co-contributors to the creation of wealth. A more craven apologia for the capitalists, and hence in today’s world for the corporates, can scarcely be imagined.

In fact, going beyond capitalist textbooks, we can say that human labour acting upon nature is the source of all things, or use-values. Some of these things are used in the process of man’s acting upon nature, as instruments of labour (capital stock). A group of persons, namely, the capitalists, make themselves the owners of these instruments of labour and, therefore, claim a part of the things produced without performing any labour themselves. They consume a part of what they appropriate, and use the other part to add to the stock of instruments of labour.

Let us, generously, interpret Modi as lauding the capitalists because they add to the stock of instruments of labour. Even then, to call them “wealth-creators”, because they do not consume everything they appropriate but also add to the instruments of labour, is to show complete ignorance of this total process.

Even greater ignorance is displayed by Modi in his remark that the tax concession amounting to Rs 1.45 lakh crore, which his government has just given to the corporates, is for the benefit of all; it represents, he claims, a “win-win situation” for 120 crore Indians!

Here Modi has gone even beyond his own view of capitalists being “wealth creators”. Even if corporates simply hoard the entire Rs 1.45 lakh crore without adding an iota to the stock of instruments of labour (which incidentally would produce massive unemployment because of a reduction in aggregate demand), even then it apparently constitutes a “win-win situation”!

It is clear that the Hindutva view of economics is a simple one: the more money is handed over to the corporates, the better it is for society. The limit to what can be handed over, however, is set by what must be given to the working people; hence, the Hindutva view would suggest that the less given to the working people, the better it is for society! The Hindutva view, in
short, is not just anti-minority, anti-Dalit, anti-tribal, anti-women, as is well-known; it is essentially and fundamentally anti-working people as well.

There is a vicious dialectic at work here. Hindutva’s solution to the economic crisis currently engulfing the country is to further increase the amount of money in the hands of corporates; in fact, given its economics, it can have no other conception. To do this, however, it will have to bring about an even more aggressive discourse shift, by engaging in even more “shock and awe” operations, like “one nation-one-language”, the National Register of Citizens, and the Citizenship Amendment Bill. Each of these will have a devastating effect on the lives of the people and the unity of the nation.

But additionally, since putting more money into the hands of the corporates, far from overcoming the crisis, will only have the effect of worsening it, the Hindutva government, instead of desisting from such dangerous measures, will only intensify them further. In other words, as the crisis deepens, and as the pro-corporate measures escalate in a futile bid to alleviate it, the communal assault on the hapless minorities, will also escalate.

While the Hindutva–corporate axis, which is built around this particular class understanding imbibed by Hindutva, unleashes this vicious dialectic, its Achilles heel consists in the fact that through this dialectic the crisis will only intensify, ultimately calling forth resistance that will overwhelm it.

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**India, Pakistan, Kashmir: Taking the War Option off the Table**

Zia Mian, Abdul H. Nayyar, Sandeep Pandey, M. V. Ramana

There is great concern about the increasingly hostile relationship between India and Pakistan. At the heart of the matter is the more than 70-year-old dispute that has led the two countries, born out of the partition of British India in 1947, to lay claim to and eventually divide, occupy, and dominate the people and land of Kashmir. The feud over Kashmir led them to war in 1947, 1965, and 1999, and war has been in the air again this year.

The situation in India, Kashmir, and Pakistan seems primed for a hostile action and reaction cycle, resulting in escalating confrontation driven by contested nationalisms, bitter shared histories, and exclusive visions of the future. Indian repression drives Kashmiri resistance fueled by a long-standing demand for freedom that has given rise to both peaceful protests and armed militant factions. Pakistan claims Kashmir and Kashmiris for itself, while restricting the liberties and rights of the Kashmiris it rules, and seeks to punish India for past sins. It now faces unrest from a nascent “growing independence movement” in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. As South Asian scholar and activist Eqbal Ahmad observed grimly, “New Delhi’s moral isolation from the Kashmiri people is total and irreversible…. [while] Pakistan’s governments and politicians have pursued policies which have all but disregarded the history, culture, and aspirations of Kashmir’s people.”

There is an urgent need for ways to prevent any eruption of armed conflict. One option is to resurrect an old idea proposed at various times by both India and Pakistan but never fully agreed: a binding commitment never to resort to war to settle their disputes.

**Drifting to war.** The immediate path to the present crisis can be traced to a fraught 14-day period earlier this year. As part of a renewed and increasingly home-grown Kashmiri insurgency, a suicide attack in late February by a young Kashmiri militant killed over 40 Indian paramilitary personnel in the town of Pulwama in India-administered Kashmir. India, then preparing for a general election, responded with an airstrike across the border in Pakistan. The target in the town of Balakot was said to be a training camp for the militant group that claimed responsibility for the Pulwama attack.

In retaliation, the Pakistan Air Force targeted an Indian site across the Line of Control that has divided Kashmir since 1948, shooting down an Indian fighter plane in the resulting dogfight and capturing its pilot inside Pakistani territory. The Indian pilot was soon released, and a further escalation was averted.

Using its forcefulness in this crisis as a campaign issue, in May, Narendra Modi’s Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won a decisive victory in the general election on a hard-line platform, returning to power with a larger majority in parliament. In August, in a surprise move, under the pretext of protecting Hindu devotees on a pilgrimage, the new government moved an additional 38,000 troops
into Kashmir and asked the pilgrims to leave. Parliament, acting on a BJP campaign promise, then abrogated Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution. These articles, largely overridden in practice, had been intended to confer special autonomous status to Kashmir as part of an agreement in 1949.

The new measure by the Modi government divided the state into two units and put them under direct control of the national government. To forestall protest, the Indian government took the extraordinary step of cutting off all communication links within Kashmir and imposing a blanket curfew that left Kashmiris “besieged, confused, frightened and furious”; the curfew has not yet been fully lifted, even a month later. This step has harshly reinforced an earlier image of Kashmir as “the country without a post office” offered by the late Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali from a time when repression and violence led to all the post offices there being closed for seven months.

It was in this heated environment that on August 16, Indian defense minister Rajnath Singh indicated that India may review its long-standing pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons in any confrontation, declaring that “India has strictly adhered to this [no-first-use] doctrine. What happens in future depends on the circumstances.” Many in Pakistan took this statement to be a clear sign of what the Pakistani foreign minister called “India’s irresponsible and belligerent behaviour.”

Some Kashmiri militant groups, which have long found in Pakistan a diplomatic champion for their cause and a source of covert military support, now see an opportunity for a war that will finally put matters to rest. Syed Salahuddin, a militant leader who heads an alliance of over a dozen groups fighting Indian rule in Kashmir, said in early September, “It’s binding upon the armed forces of Pakistan, the first Islamic nuclear power, to enter India-occupied Kashmir to militarily help the people of the territory.”

Imran Khan offered one measure of the current peril in a recent New York Times op-ed, where he threatened, “If the world does nothing to stop the Indian assault on Kashmir and its people, there will be consequences for the whole world as two nuclear-armed states get ever closer to a direct military confrontation.”

In a subsequent interview Khan raised the spectre of a fifth and perhaps final war with India, declaring, “If say Pakistan, God forbid, we are fighting a conventional war, we are losing, and if a country is stuck between the choice: either you surrender or you fight ‘til death for your freedom, I know Pakistanis will fight to death for their freedom. So when a nuclear-armed country fights to the end, to the death, it has consequences.” These consequences, left unspoken, would be catastrophic not only for the people of India, Pakistan, and Kashmir, but for the entire world because of the long-range, long-term environmental consequences of the smoke from South Asian cities set ablaze by nuclear attacks.

A no-war pact. The possibility of a treaty rejecting war as an option between India and Pakistan has a long and surprising history, one full of missed opportunities. The notion is in fact almost as old as the two countries themselves.

After Pakistan’s first attempt to seize Kashmir by force in 1947 failed, ending in a cease-fire, a forced division of Kashmir, and a search for some kind of negotiated settlement, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, in 1949, offered Pakistan a no-war declaration. Pakistan’s Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan accepted, provided there was a timetable for settling all outstanding disputes through negotiation and arbitration. No timetable was forthcoming, and no arbitration was agreeable to India.

The two subsequent wars between India and Pakistan also resulted in promises that are in line with the ideas that might underlie a No War agreement. The first of these wars took place in 1965, when beefed up by US military aid and weapons and training, and feeling secure in its patron, Pakistan was ready to try again to force a resolution of the Kashmir issue. It sent in soldiers under cover as insurgents to try to instigate an uprising among Kashmiris against Indian rule. The plan failed and Indian troops invaded Pakistan in reprisal.

The war lasted only 17 days, and both countries looked for arbitration which was provided by the Soviet Union, and led in January 1966 to India and Pakistan signing the Tashkent Declaration, declaring that they would “settle their disputes through peaceful means,” commit to “the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of each other,” and “discourage any propaganda directed against the other country.” It was all for naught.

A few years later, in 1971, there was the third India-Pakistan war, the only one that has not been about Kashmir. This war resulted in a humiliating defeat for Pakistan and the independence of the former East Pakistan as the new
state of Bangladesh. In the Simla Agreement ending that conflict, India and Pakistan again agreed to settle differences peacefully through bilateral talks or any other mutually agreed-upon means. With India feeling victorious and dominant, there were no talks, and they could not agree on other means.

Having failed in war and with no prospect of negotiations on Kashmir, Pakistan resorted to supporting militant movements both in Kashmir and elsewhere in India. This option came into its own in the late-1980s after the Indian government rigged the state-level elections in Kashmir in favour of its allies. As frustrated Kashmiris protested and were terrorized by Indian forces, some became more militant and turned to armed struggle, creating an insurgency. Pakistan saw an opportunity.

Pakistan’s weapon of choice was to redeploy the Islamist militants who, with active US support, had fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. Once unleashed on Kashmir, the Islamists changed the nature of the struggle there, making it increasingly violent and brutal. Since then India has suffered attacks on numerous civilian targets, including the hijacking of a commercial airliner, an attack on its parliament, carnage in Mumbai, and deadly attacks on military camps and civilians. India started to pay back in the same coin by supporting militant movements in Pakistan, especially in Balochistan and in the Pakhtun tribal region adjacent to Afghanistan.

Amidst all this, the no-war pact proposal was put back on the table by Pakistan’s General Pervez Musharraf at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000. Once again, India declined. Coming so soon after the Kargil war, India’s reluctance to reopen talks was expected; Indians thought such an agreement would provide Pakistan a shield behind which to run its proxy wars in Kashmir without fear of large-scale reprisal. Musharraf, after all, was the architect of the Kargil war.

Things have changed radically since then, however. Pakistan has recognized that in a nuclear-armed subcontinent, Kashmir cannot be wrested from India by force. In addition to having suffered blowback from promoting Islamist militants as proxies, it also understands that no state can now be seen to support Islamist guerrillas without eliciting international censure. In fact, Pakistan is currently under scrutiny by the international Financial Action Task Force, which was formed to combat terrorist financing and money laundering. Such scrutiny puts Pakistan at risk of sanctions, which it cannot afford given its severe economic crisis.

India’s leaders seek desperately to focus on economic growth to give substance to their ambitions of being an emerging great power on a par with China and as a path to gaining public support to consolidate their hold on power. This was a key issue in helping bring Narendra Modi to power in 2014 and in his re-election in 2019. This effort has faltered as India suffers the worst rate of unemployment in 45 years and a slide in its economic growth rate to a six year low. Such nationalist and economic dreams are bound to stumble on the realities of an alienated population in Kashmir (and elsewhere in India), periodic bouts of civil unrest and insurgency, and proxy wars from across the border. This is no path to a robust social peace.

**Time to try again.** Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India and Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan should take a careful look at the idea of a no-war agreement to calm India-Pakistan relations for the long term.

The key to a viable no-war pact will be agreement on the definition of what would constitute an act of war. Making public the full record of earlier India-Pakistan discussions on a war pact would help set the table for trying again. Past experience and
current conditions suggest an initial list of prohibited acts under such an agreement might include:
• using or threatening the use of armed forces and weapons of war against the other country,
• invading the territory of the other country,
• supporting armed insurrectionary groups in the other country,
• committing or helping to commit acts of sabotage and disruption of civil life in the territory of the other country,
• blockading or obstructing in any way land, sea, or air access routes of the other country to the outside world,
• disrupting the flow of river water to the other country,
• disseminating or helping to disseminate hostile propaganda against the other country,
• joining trade wars waged by a third party against the other country,
• meddling in or exacerbating any internal dispute in the other country,
• entering into strategic alliance with any world power against the other party,
• any other action mutually agreed as constituting an act of war.

Since some of these are general categories and may be open to interpretation, so a no-war pact may need to include an adjudication commission for settling disputes over possible violations. Its rulings would have to be binding. The commission might include Indian and Pakistani officials, prominent members of civil society, and representatives from regional and international organizations. The two countries could also agree to accept the International Court of Justice as the arbitrator.

After the pact has been negotiated and entered into force, governments in India or Pakistan may find themselves still facing political strife, protest, militancy and insurgency. It will be for the Adjudication Commission to conclude whether or not these movements are inspired from across the border or reflect a home-grown failure of governance. No longer credibly able to blame resistance to their injustices on a foreign hand, leaders in India and Pakistan will need to find a way to deal with domestic unrest through democracy and politics.

A no-war pact as outlined here is not meant as a panacea. Rather, it offers a stable and secure security framework that can enable India and Pakistan to develop more peaceful and constructive relations with confidence.

It is possible that, with war taken off the table, the fears and misgivings India and Pakistan have nurtured for decades would begin to diminish. This would allow their arms race to subside. Economy, politics, and culture could begin to move away from a focus on mutual hostility and confrontation to accommodation and cooperation. The poor in both countries could hope to benefit from the peace dividend.

In the Idea of an 'All India NRC', Echoes of Reich Citizenship Law

Nizam Pasha

The Ministry of Home Affairs issued a notification on July 31, 2019, stating that the Central government has decided to prepare and update the population register in the rest of India other than the state of Assam. Meaning that the exercise to update the National Citizenship Register (NRC) in Assam will now be implemented throughout the country.

Much has been written about the flaws inherent in the NRC process. The very idea that every person who was born in the country and has lived here all of her or his life should be able to furnish documentary proof of residence and familial relations emanates from a privileged notion of home and family life.

For one, it does not accommodate the homeless. Assam, for instance, is a flood-prone state where every year, during the monsoons, the Brahmaputra and its distributaries flood the riparian areas. Each year, many who do not live in pucca houses lose all their possessions and escape with their lives to start afresh.

These persons are now required
to produce papers to establish their residence before March 24, 1971, or their relationship with parents or grandparents who can so establish residence. If they fail to do so, they will be declared illegal immigrants. Similarly, the process does not take into account orphans, abandoned children or youngsters who ran away from home to escape abuse and built their lives elsewhere.

The idea that for every citizen, there is a loving parent who has maintained birth records is deeply flawed. Therefore, the NRC, at every stage, excludes the most underprivileged. While the process excludes persons without reference to their religion (although going by the Sachar Committee report, there is a disproportionate representation of Muslims in the weakest economic classes), the government is, in parallel, pursuing the Citizenship Amendment Bill, which amends the Citizenship Act, 1955 to make undocumented migrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan—basically anyone who is not a Muslim—eligible for citizenship.

Putting the two together, the overall effect is that Muslims who are unable to establish citizenship will be declared illegal immigrants. And going by the state of laws recently passed by the Rajya Sabha, not much stands in the way of the Bill becoming law.

In a recent development, the Supreme Court on August 13 passed an order clarifying certain queries raised by the state coordinator of the NRC and dismissing a batch of applications filed by affected persons on the same issue. The question before the court was regarding the status of children born in India after December 3, 2004, one of whose parents was a “doubtful voter” or “declared foreigner” or whose case was pending before the Foreigners Tribunal or some other court, though the other parent was validly included in the NRC.

Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, speaking for the Supreme Court, held that even if one of the parents of such children was unable to establish citizenship in the NRC process, the child would not be entitled to have his or her name included in the NRC. The court noted that these very questions were pending before the constitution bench and would be decided in that case. Meanwhile, the state coordinator could proceed based on the above understanding for purposes of the NRC exercise for the present.

Parallels with the Third Reich

The entire NRC process, and particularly the August 13 order, is eerily reminiscent of the Reich Citizenship Laws passed by the Nazi government in 1935. Historians mark the passing of the ‘Nuremberg Laws’ on citizenship as the beginning of the series of events now known as the holocaust. The Reich Citizenship Law defined a citizen of the Reich as “that subject only who is of German or kindred blood”.

The status of a citizen was acquired by the granting of citizenship papers by the government of the Third Reich. All political rights were available only to citizens granted papers under this law. The regulations that followed these laws struggled to define who a ‘German’ was and differently classified individuals of mixed Jewish and German parentage.

To begin with, persons with one or two Jewish grandparents were classified as German while individuals with three or four Jewish grandparents were classified as full Jews. Gradually, the laws moved on to become less and less tolerant of persons of mixed parentage, termed ‘Mischling’, and demanded purity of blood.

Children and grandchildren of Jews who had married Germans and in some cases had even converted to Christianity and who thus far had seen themselves as German found themselves unable to pass the test and were denied citizenship.

Under these laws, an Ahnenpass (literally, ancestor pass) was issued to those found to be of “Aryan blood”, which was a record of the family tree of the individual and entitled the holder to citizenship rights. This again bears a striking similarity to the NRC process, where the family tree of each individual is being constructed, which will be reflected in the NRC extract, and will show that the ancestors of the holder have been verified to be ‘of Indian origin’. This will then entitle the holder to rights available to a citizen under the constitution.

In Nazi Germany, since the question of who qualified as a German came to depend on religion (Jewish or Christian), the Nazis had to rely on birth, baptismal, marriage and death certificates for issuance of citizenship papers. People scrambled to obtain these certificates typically maintained in churches and government offices, to establish their relationship with German (meaning Christian) grandparents.

With the NRC in progress in Assam and now with the issuance of the notification by the Ministry of Home Affairs for implementation of a population register throughout
the country, as people scramble to collect birth certificates, ration cards and other documents establishing their connection with Indian parents and grandparents, one cannot help but sense a glimmer of past events.

The only difference being that the Indian NRC does not identify persons ‘of Indian origin’ based on religion or ethnicity. However, as mentioned above, if the Citizenship Amendment Bill in its present form comes to be passed, those who are denied citizenship will solely be Muslims and all others will be granted refugee status and allowed to remain in the country.

What is most inexplicable about how the Supreme Court has conducted these proceedings is that—as the court itself mentions in the August 13 order—questions that form the very basis of the NRC process have been referred to a constitution bench and are still pending adjudication.

**Lack of judicial urgency**

The fixing of March 24, 1971, as the reference date for the exercise of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act is itself the major plank of the challenge before the constitution bench. So someday, after the entire population of the state is asked to demonstrate that they came to India prior to March 24, 1971 in an exercise that has taken years and hundreds of crores of the public exchequer and in which lakhs of people are likely to be declared stateless, the Supreme Court will sit to decide, in hindsight, whether that date had any constitutional basis.

Another question to be decided is whether, after over 40 years of living in India, a person can be displaced even if found to be an illegal immigrant. The constitutional validity of Sections 3(1)(b) and (c) of the Citizenship Act which form the basis of the August 13 order is itself under challenge in another writ petition and has again been referred to a constitution bench, which again has not yet been constituted.

To put the court’s sense of urgency around the formation of that bench into perspective, of the many cases referred to five-judge benches of the Supreme Court, two cases, in particular, were jostling for a hearing in the summer of 2017. The Supreme Court decided that while the constitutional basis for the NRC exercise could await its turn, the practice of triple talaq that persisted for 1400 years could not be tolerated for another summer and the issue of the constitutional validity of the practice required the immediate attention of the court.

And so, that challenge was listed for hearing before a specially constituted 5-judge bench that held hearings over the summer vacations and pronounced the well-known Shayara Bano judgement that is now part of our recent constitutional history. Meanwhile, the NRC exercise—which is likely to render lakhs of people stateless—was allowed to go on without any examination of its constitutional basis.

The upshot of the above discussion is that the very basis on which the NRC exercise is proceeding is still to be adjudicated upon. Further, there is no clarity on what will happen to persons declared as illegal immigrants in this exercise. At present, there is no scope of deporting them since there is no existing agreement with Bangladesh to accept immigrants, nor is Bangladesh likely to suddenly accept lakhs of persons, that it has no record of—most of whom were born in India.

The Supreme Court is considering this question in a separate petition filed by activist Harsh Mander and meanwhile has asked the state of Assam to submit a report on the number of its detention centres and their capacity. These detention centres again remind one of concentration camps.

The homes of Jews who were taken away to concentration camps were looted and often occupied by their ‘German’ neighbours. Would the same not happen to persons who are declared illegal Bangladesh immigrants and removed to detention centres? Should not an adjudication on the question of the consequences of exclusion from the NRC, therefore, be the focus of attention of the Supreme Court before declaring lakhs of people as non-citizens and visiting the social consequences of statelessness on them?

Instead of discharging this judicial function, why is the court expending its energies in issuing day-to-day directions regarding the implementation of the process like an administrative authority? Unfortunately, these questions cannot be asked of the court, because while it may have taken upon itself to discharge executive functions, it is still not answerable to the people.

(Nizam Pasha is a lawyer practising in the Supreme Court and has appeared in the NRC matter.)
A mental-health crisis is sweeping the globe. Recent estimates by the World Health Organisation suggest that more than three hundred million people suffer from depression worldwide. Furthermore, twenty-three million are said to experience symptoms of schizophrenia, while approximately eight hundred thousand individuals commit suicide each year.

Within the monopoly-capitalist nations, mental-health disorders are the leading cause of life expectancy decline behind cardiovascular disease and cancer. In the European Union, 27.0 percent of the adult population between the ages of 18–65 are said to have experienced mental-health complications.

In capitalist society, biological explanations dominate understandings of mental health—such as theory of chemical imbalances in brain. Such an approach—which not only dominates the medical profession but has also infused public awareness, is largely unsupported—but is being propagated because it benefits pharma companies manufacturing anti-depressants. Another popular effort is to identify genetic abnormalities as another cause of mental-health disorders—this may explain particular cases, but cannot give a broad explanation for the widespread mental-health problems.

In all this, what is obscured is the fact that it is the social, political, and economic organisation of society that is a significant contributor to people’s mental health, with certain social structures being more advantageous to the emergence of mental well-being than others. At the root of the widespread mental-health problems today is the capitalist society. As professor of social work and social policy Iain Ferguson, a well-known socialist, has argued, the alleviation of mental distress is only possible “in a society without exploitation and oppression.”

In what follows, I briefly sketch the state of mental health in advanced capitalism, using Britain as an example and utilising the psychoanalytical framework of Erich Fromm, a German democratic socialist, which emphasises that all humans have certain needs that must be fulfilled in order to ensure optimal mental health. I argue that capitalism is crucial to determining the experience and prevalence of mental well-being, as its operations are incompatible with true human need.

**Mental Health and Monopoly Capitalism**

As Baran and Sweezy have argued in Monopoly Capital, the monopoly capitalist system fails “to provide the foundations of a society capable of promoting the healthy and happy development of its members”. For the majority, work is a thoroughly unsatisfactory experience, and leisure too becomes boring. Instead of fulfilling passions, it has become synonymous with idleness—with books, television, and films inducing a state of passive enjoyment rather than demanding intellectual energies. Moreover, leisure has largely coalesced around increasing consumption—as it is used by corporations as an opportunity to promote the sale of their products. With consumption basically becoming reduced to a competition to establish one’s social position, the acquisition of products also soon becomes meaningless.

With both work and leisure losing their inner content and meaning, and with the working class movements not powerful enough to challenge the system, the result is that the system continues to decay, leading to spread of psychic disorders. Modern monopoly–capitalist society continues to be characterised by an incompatibility between, on the one hand, capitalism’s ruthless pursuit of profit and, on the other, the essential needs of people. As a result, the conditions required for optimum mental health are violently undermined, with monopoly–capitalist society plagued by neuroses and more severe mental-health problems.

Fromm constructed his theory of psychoanalysis based on Marx’s theory of alienation—which says that alienation is the estrangement people feel both from themselves and the world around them, including fellow humans. Capitalism creates a distinction between human essence and existence; humans become divorced from their own nature—this is at root of mental problems.

Human nature, Marx argued, consists of dual qualities and we “must first deal with human nature in general, and then with human nature as modified in each historical epoch.” There are needs that are fixed, such as hunger and sexual desires, and then there are relative desires that originate from the historical and
cultural organisation of society. While basic biological needs, such as hunger, sleep, and sexual desires, are important aspects of human nature that must be satisfied before all else, nonetheless, as humans evolve from animals to human beings, they found it increasingly easier to satisfy their basic biological needs, largely as a result of their mastery over nature. Therefore, the urgency of their satisfaction gradually became less important, with the evolutionary process allowing for the development of more complex intellectual and emotional capacities.

Fromm identified five central characteristics of the human condition:

i) Relatedness: Aware of being alone in the world, humans strenuously endeavor to establish ties of unity. Without this, it is intolerable to exist as an individual.

ii) The dominance of humans over nature allows for an easier satisfaction of biological needs and for the emergence of human aptitudes, contributing to the development of creativity – this now develops into a core human characteristic that requires fulfillment.

iii) Humans, psychologically, require a sense of belonging – which can only be achieved in a society built on solidarity.

iv) Humans crucially desire and develop a sense of identity. All individuals must establish a sense of self and an awareness of being a specific person.

v) It is psychologically necessary for humans to develop a framework through which to make sense of the world and their own experiences.

According to Fromm, the satisfaction of these drives is essential for the mental well-being of the individual. Rejecting a psychoanalytical understanding that emphasises the satisfaction of the libido and other biological drives, Fromm stated that mental health is inherently associated with the satisfaction of needs considered uniquely human. Under capitalism, however, the full satisfaction of the human psyche is thwarted.

Work and Creativity

Human beings have an instinctual desire to be creative, and this can best be expressed through work. Therefore, labor should be a fulfilling experience, allowing individuals to be freely expressive, both physically and intellectually. This requires that workers should be able to relate to the products of their labor as meaningful expressions of their essence and inner creativity. But under capitalism, workers are alienated from their labour; in the word of Marx: “labour is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being ... therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies (subdues/crushes) his body and ruins his mind.”

For Fromm, the realisation of creative needs are essential to being mentally healthy. Having been endowed with reason and imagination, humans cannot exist as passive beings, but must act as creators. However, under capitalism, work only leads to general unhappiness, dissatisfaction, and despondency—and therefore it causes mental problems, such as stress, depression, and anxiety.

In Britain, there is widespread dissatisfaction with work. A recent survey in early 2018 found that 47 percent were thinking of looking for a new job during the coming year. Among the reasons given for this were: paucity of opportunities for career advancement, not enjoying work, and the feeling that they were not needed in their jobs. All this is only an expression of their alienation from work, for all these people, work had little meaning, it provided them few opportunities for personal fulfillment and expression.

In 2017–18, this discontentment with work constituted 44 percent of all work-related ill health in Britain, and 57 percent of all workdays lost to ill health. An additional study in 2017 estimated that 60 percent of British employees had suffered work-related poor mental health in the past year, with depression and anxiety being some of the most common manifestations.

With more than half the workforce suffering from mental health problems due to work, it has now become normalised, it is no longer considered as an illness.

Loneliness

There exists a close relationship between positive mental health, meaningful personal relationships in the form of both love and friendship, and expressions of solidarity. As mentioned above, building meaningful relationships to escape loneliness is a fundamental human characteristic, but under capitalism, this becomes difficult. And under monopoly capitalism, much of social interaction is typified by superficial conversation and a falsity of pleasantness.

As a mild mental disease, loneliness has debilitating
consequences. Individuals may resort to alcohol and drug abuse to numb their misery, while persistent experience increases blood pressure and stress, as well as negatively impacts cardiovascular and immune-system functioning. While it is a mental health problem in its own right, loneliness leads to other mental-health problems too, and is often the root cause of depression.

In 2017, it was estimated that 13 percent of individuals in Britain had no close friends, and a further 17 percent said they had poor quality friends—meaning an essential 30 percent did not really have friends. No wonder that 18 percent people said they frequently felt lonely, and 45 percent said they felt lonely at least once in the past two weeks. Even though a loving relationship acts as a barrier to loneliness, 47 percent of people living with a partner said they felt lonely at least some of the time and 16 percent often.

Loneliness has become such a major public-health concern, that the British Government in 2018 established a Minister for Loneliness.

For capitalism, the principle of individualism has always been supreme. The notion of individual has its origins during the time when nascent capitalism was fighting the feudal mode of production, and its emphasis on greater collectivist methods of labor—such as within the family or village; in contrast to this, capitalism put forth the principle of individuals who had to be free to sell their labour power on the market. The celebration of individuality led to members of society feeling more and more lonely. Another principle of capitalism is competition; competition divides and isolates individuals—other members of society are not considered as sources of support, but rather obstacles to personal advancement; ties of social unity are therefore greatly weakened. This further exacerbates loneliness. Finally, another factor increasing loneliness is when the socialist alternative arose in opposition to capitalism; capitalism strongly opposed the ideals of collectivity and solidarity put forth by socialism. Thus, loneliness is embedded within the structure of any capitalist society as an inevitable outcome of its value system.

**Consumerism**

For monopoly capitalism, promoting consumption is vital for surplus absorption, and this has expanded to such an extent today that along with work, consumption can be said to have become integral to life under capitalism.

With consumer goods valued for their conspicuousness rather than their intended function, people have gone from consuming use values to symbolic values. Under monopoly capitalism, consumerism is no longer about satisfying inherent biological and psychological needs, but is all about constructing a personal identity, ‘showing off’. To quote Fromm, “consumption should be a concrete human act in which our senses, bodily needs, our aesthetic taste … are involved: the act of consumption should be a meaningful … experience. In our culture, there is little of that. Consuming is essentially the satisfaction of artificially stimulated phantasies.”

And in this competition of showing off, there is no limit, therefore, the desire to consume becomes insatiable, it can never be satisfied. Therefore, the monopoly capitalist society, despite all its affluence, breeds widespread dissatisfaction—and also contributes to neurosis.

**Resistance as Class Struggle**

While not denying the existence of biological causes, the structural organisation of society must be recognised as having serious repercussions on people’s mental health. Monopoly capitalism functions to prevent many from experiencing mental well-being. Yet, despite this, the medical model continues to dominate, reinforcing an individualistic conception of mental health and obscuring the detrimental effects of the present mode of production.

Aware of their oppressed status, users and survivors of mental-health services are now challenging the ideological dominance of the medical model and its obfuscation of capitalism’s psychological impact. They are increasingly coalescing around and putting forward as an alternative the need to accept the socialism-inspired social model of mental health.

In 2017 in Britain, the mental-health action group National Survivor User Network unequivocally rejected the medical model and planted social justice at the heart of its campaign. As part of its call for a social approach to mental health, the group explicitly denounces neoliberalism, arguing that austerity and cuts to social security have contributed to the increasing prevalence of individuals who suffer from poor mental health as well as to the exacerbation of existing mental-health issues among the population. The action group Recovery in the Bin positions
itself and the wider mental-health movement within the class struggle, pushing for a social model that recognises capitalism as a significant determinant of poor mental health. Representing ethnic minorities, Kindred Minds vigorously campaigns on an understanding that mental distress is less a result of biological characteristics and more a consequence of social problems such as racism, sexism, and economic inequality “pathologised as mental illness.” For Kindred Minds, the catalyst for deteriorating mental health is oppression and discrimination, with ethnic minorities having to suffer greater levels of social and economic inequality and prejudice.

Capitalism can never offer the conditions most conducive to achieving mental health. Oppression, exploitation, and inequality greatly repress the true realisation of what it means to be human. Opposing the brutality of capitalism’s impact on mental well-being must be central to the class struggle as the fight for socialism is never just one for increased material equality, but also for humanity and a society in which all human needs, including psychological ones, are satisfied. All members of society are affected by the inhumane nature of capitalism, but, slowly and determinedly, the fight is being led most explicitly by the most oppressed and exploited. The challenge posed must be viewed as part of the wider class struggle, as being one front of many in the fight for social justice, economic equality, dignity, and respect.

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There is But One Race: Human

Richard C. Gross

Want to blame something for differences in skin color, blame the sun. It’s all in the melanin.

The concept of different races is a farce, largely concocted as “scientific racism” by an American physician before the Civil War, as noted in a fascinating special April 2018 issue of the National Geographic, “Black and White.” It is devoted solely to the variety of shades of the human skin, which are caused by gene mutation and evolution, all dependent on where one lived.

There is but one race: the human one, Homo sapiens.

When the results of the first complete human genome were unveiled in 2000 during the presidency of Barrack Obama, Craig Venter, a pioneer of the sequencing of DNA, the microscopic code of life, said, “The concept of race has no genetic or scientific basis.” He was quoted in the Geographic’s lead article, “Skin Deep,” by noted journalist, author and staffer at The New Yorker, Elizabeth Kolbert.

The publication appeared during the Trump administration’s barring of Muslims and restricting people of colour from entering the United States in a bid to appeal to the president’s base of white supremacists and others opposed to diluting the country’s majority white-skinned population, which the Census projects will become a minority in 2045. President Trump made it abundantly clear this year that he is a racist.

Kolbert’s piece deserves to be highlighted at a time when the ugly polarization of America has been heightened by unfounded racist animosity promulgated by an ignorant president and a sycophantic Republican-led Senate that has no interest in uniting a widely diverse nation, once the leader of the free world.

Kolbert says that the ideology of scientific racism can be traced back to an American scientist named Samuel Morton. Samuel Morton, born in Philadelphia in 1799, collected skulls from around the world, measured them and believed they represented five different races, with Caucasians, or whites, being superior to the others. Then came East Asians, Southeast Asians, Native Americans and blacks (“Ethiopians”).

So was the thinking of one doctor when the knowledge of medicine was limited compared to today. But those who defended slavery adopted Morton’s ideas. When Morton died in 1851, the South Carolina Charleston Medical Journal lauded him for “giving to the negro his true position as an inferior race”. We live with this absurd nonsense today, all based on lies.

What is true based on genetic research, when people today can trace their origin through DNA, is that humans are more closely related than chimps and that, as Kolbert wrote, “in a very real sense, all people alive today are Africans.” Yes, all of our ancient ancestors once were black.

Eumelanin, a type of melanin, is what darkens skin, as in a suntan among lighter skinned people. Black skin evolved among humans in Africa about 1.2 million years ago.
to compensate for the loss of body hair, which increased the harmful effects of the sun’s ultraviolet rays on bare skin. Migration out of Africa between 80,000 and 50,000 years ago led to interbreeding with other human species (Neanderthals and Denisovans), now nonexistent, as people moved into Europe and Asia.

Once in those cooler climes, eumelanin production in the body decreased because the sun’s radiation was less intense. People’s skin became lighter. “This eventually produced the current range of human skin color,” according to a Wikipedia chapter on melanin.

There are more differences among Africans than on all other continents combined because modern humans lived there the longest, giving them more time to develop genetic diversity, including skin color.

“Near the Equator,” Kolbert wrote, “lots of sunlight makes dark skin a useful shield against ultraviolet radiation; toward the poles, where the problem is too little sun, paler skin promotes the production of vitamin D. Several genes work together to determine skin tone.”

Mutations in a particular gene, 370A, gave Native Americans and East Asians thicker hair. Another gene, SLC24A5, gave Europeans lighter skin.

Anita Foeman, who directs the DNA Discussion Project at West Chester University in Pennsylvania, told Kolbert several interesting stories about the latest participants in the project. One young woman, whose family had lived in India as far back as anyone could recall, was shocked to discover some of her ancestry was Irish. Another young woman, who had grown up believing one of her grandparents was Native American, was disappointed to learn that this wasn’t so. A young man who identified as biracial was angry to discover his background was, in fact, almost entirely European. Several students who had been raised in Christian households were surprised to learn some of their ancestors were Jewish. Even Foeman, who identifies as African-American, was caught off guard by her results. They showed that some of her ancestors were from Ghana, others from Scandinavia.

“I grew up in the 1960s, when light skin was really a big deal,” Foeman told Kolbert. “So I think of myself as pretty brown-skinned. I was surprised that a quarter of my background was European. It really brought home this idea that we make race up.”

(Richard C. Gross, a longtime journalist, is a former op-ed editor of The Baltimore Sun. We are also publishing Kolbert’s article in the National Geographic in the Janata Blog.)
"We are, what we repeatedly do, Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Aristotle

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