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PROUT

A Journal of Proutistic Views and Neo-Humanistic Analysis



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God Centred Economic Policy of PROUT

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In individual life, purity is equally necessary for both men and women, and for that, real spiritual vision is needed.

– Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

Fundamental Principles of PROUT

1

No individual should be allowed to accumulate any physical wealth without the clear permission or approval of the collective body

2

There should be maximum utilization and rational distribution of all mundane, supra mundane and spiritual potentialities of the universe

3

There should be maximum utilization of the physical, metaphysical and spiritual potentialities of unit and collective body of the human society.

4

There should be a proper adjustment amongst these physical, metaphysical, mundane, supra mundane and spiritual utilizations.

5

The method of utilization should vary in accordance with the changes in time, space and person and the utilization should be of progressive nature.

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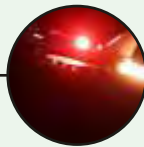
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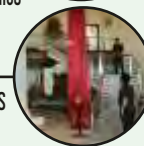
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Politics of Universal Cardinal Values

Since the late nineteenth century, political and societal polarization in India began with the question of nationhood from the colonial period. “An Indian nation developed as a result of the British, though they did not intend it. India, which had been split up into hundreds of parts, became united in the form of a country or a nation, which had never occurred in the past. India, which had innumerable languages, scripts, castes, races, manners, customs, diets, dresses, etc., had no history of its own. From time immemorial India had been divided into many kingdoms. Each had its own history. Neither the Pandavas, nor Ashoka, nor Kanishka, nor Samudragupta could form one government throughout India. But the British did. The Indian people learned a practical lesson from the national spirit of the British, and nationalism grew in them also. The Indian nation's fight for independence against the alien British nation began. In this fight the Indian leaders committed a blunder. They should have engaged themselves in an economic fight instead of starting a political movement”.

With polarization now reaching alarming heights, India may have entered uncharted waters, from which it is essential to steer away. But how? Today divisive political leadership—coupled with India's economic transformation, changes in the traditional media landscape with the extraordinary power of social media coming to the fore, and the rise of competitive caste politics—has steadily brought polarization to a boil. The corona virus pandemic has eased this polarization on the surface by engendering more unifying political leadership, yet at the societal level the crisis has only amplified, polarization in India is more toxic today than it has been in decades, and it shows no signs of abating. In reality as it appears this polarization at the national level as TV debates appear to indicate, may be summed up as — “pro Modi and anti Modi”, which further proliferates down to the state levels with polarization based on differences in caste, class, language, or region.

This politics of polarization is keeping India in a permanent state of turmoil, inflaming societal divisions.

There is a dearth of goodwill in India today. Even powerful leaders are looking after the interests of their own following, the basis being language, states, communalism, socio-religious sentiment or casteism etc. instead of thinking of the interests of India as a whole. None of these leaders are the leaders of India; they are all leaders of their own, the interests of others are not safe in their hands. To help check the fissiparous tendencies that exist in India requires something more as a nation-building element. Most of the people of India are poverty-stricken, they want to get rid of exploitation. Political independence has no value for them if it cannot give them economic independence. If an anti-exploitation sentiment is created among the poverty-stricken mass of India, not only will a strong nation be formed, but will continue for a long time. The leaders should, therefore, rectify the errors of the past and vigorously launch a fresh anti-exploitation campaign. There is no other alternative to save India. Unfortunately no effort was made to form a nation on the basis of a strong sentiment. On the contrary, the little bond of unity that was present in Indian society is being weakened by the unwise actions of these very leaders. It can be easily understood that giving any sentiment the opportunity to grow on the basis of these differences will be detrimental to the interests of the country.

So today, India urgently needs politics based on universal cardinal values. If leaders fail to do so, new leaders would be created in the future who would save India from destruction. “India will not die”. As soon as administrative power passes into the hands of moralists, then exploitation will cease to exist. What will happen then? The sentiment of spiritual inheritance and Cosmic ideology will keep people united. Along with the theory of spiritual inheritance, one Cosmic ideology will have to be propagated too, and that ideology is that one Supreme Entity, the Cosmic Entity, is the goal of all living beings. This spiritual sentiment will keep human beings united for all time to come.

Nationalism which may have been preponderant in the past is fast becoming outdated. Besides two disastrous world wars of the previous century and present ongoing wars and conflicts, which gave humanity rude shocks and continues to do so, yet social and cultural blending of the present age goes on showing its growing domination in world affairs. Vested interests, however, continue to cause certain divisive tendencies. These have to be resisted by a common constitutional structure to cement the solidarity of the world with one Cosmic ideology that one Supreme Father, the Cosmic Entity, is the goal of all living beings. This spiritual sentiment will keep humanity united for all time to come. It will, India included, not only form strong nations but also the entire planetary world and even the universe into a single entity for the human race — a World Nation. Nothing else can save the human race. ●



Socio Economic Movements

Exploitation of the weak by the strong has been going on for ages. It's time for it to stop. The suggestions by Prout's founder must be must be implemented. That can only happen when Proutists have political power.

- **Laltendanga, Nagaland**

Tunnel Rescue Heroes

An amazing feat of human endeavour. First those trapped miners who survived for so many days and secondly the rescue efforts that went on without stop despite bad weather and many failures.

- **Hari Thapliyal, Dehra Dun**

War Crimes in Gaza

Thank you very much for this insightful January issue, featuring: Baba's Socio-Economic Movements, Palestinian Lives Matter, and War Crimes in Gaza. I

am very dedicated to how to end this perpetrated genocide ignoring the UN appeals

- **Acarya Dhanjoo Ghista, USA**

Catastrophe and Transition

The article by Ravi Logan is informative and timely as humanity which is on the verge of major catastrophe needs to prepare itself to face the aftermath. Very pertinent suggestions have been made, which must be heeded to by all concerned.

- **Govind Sharma, Ghaziabad**

70 Hour Work Week

While the subject matter of the article is good and informative, the selection of pictures nowhere justifies the theme.

- **Meetu Singh by Whatsap**
Criticism with specific errors pointed out and suggestions made are always welcome as it helps improve the magazine. Eds

Palestinian Lives Matter

An excellent article by Alvin Botes with heart rending images should be an eye opener for all right thinking people who haven't yet lost their humanity. This is a dangerous situation and this war which no doubt was wrongly started by Hamas has blown out of proportion and can spread into a wider conflict out of control. The missile attacks on Red Sea shipping by Yemen to show solidarity for Palestine are glaring examples. World leaders must stop this war at once.

- **Natalie Rose, UK**

Indentured Labourers

A good historical perspective of how poor villagers from Bihar were duped by British colonialists

and forcibly uprooted from their homes and sent to far off lands to work on plantations practically as slaves.

- **Nandi Sud, New Delhi**

Mother Tongue

Yes mother tongue should be the first medium of instruction in schools. There can be no doubt on this issue. This way the education base of the children shall be strong. They can always start to learn in English after primary levels.

- **Gyan Singh, Indore**

Plastic Rice

Why should there be any such experimentation with artificial grain, especially in India one of the top food producing countries in the world. Even if testing problems are solved, why not stick to natural grains?

- **Sarika Saha, Kolkata**

The Forgotten Soldier

The story poignant about the forgotten soldier was very inspiring. It was amazing that this young brave heart sacrificed his life during the Kargil War of 1999 in the field of battle for his country. There is an old belief that a soldier who dies for a cause greater than his life, that is for an ideology a right cause, he is sure to get liberation. Captain Vijayant Thapar of the Indian Army is just such an example. His parents were distraught but were very proud of their son. His last letter to his parents is very touching indeed. I remember hearing his father Col Thapar saying on TV when a bullet in war hits a soldier and kills him, it also hits the heart of his mother 1000 kilometre away. Very true it is for so many mothers all over the world. ●

- **Arun Prakash, New Delhi**

THE COAT OF LOVE

An old man was fumbling around one day
In a women's clothing store,
He'd found his wife a Christmas coat
And was headed for the door.....
When he bumped into a little boy
That looked like he was lost
And he said "Mister can you help me
Find out how much something costs?"

'Here it is almost Christmas
And the nights are getting cold,
Winter time is on us
And my mom don't have a coat,
I've been working for the neighbors
And saving for some time"
And in his tiny outstretched hand
Was a dollar and a dime.

His gaze went from that big eyed boy
To that pretty Christmas coat,
And he finally cleared away the lump
That had gathered in his throat,
He said "Son that's just what this coat costs
We're lucky that we found 'er"
And he turned around and gave a wink
To the lady at the counter.

She put it in a pretty box
And wrapped it up just so,
And went off in the back
And found a big red Christmas bow,
He said "I thank you for your help sir
And I kindly thank you ma'am;
I hope y'all are gonna have a big Christmas
Cause now I know I am!"

Well the old man walked home busted
Except for the dollar and the dime,
Thinking he'd just have to buy
The coat another time,
He told his wife that Christmas this year
Wouldn't be much fun,
And he gently took her in his arms
And told her what he'd done.

She said "Why you old softie
I wouldn't trade you for a farm,
I've got two or three old coats with me
And your love to keep me warm!"
She put that money in a matchbox
And placed it beneath their tree,
And said "That is the grandest sweetest gift
You've ever given me!"

The years went by like years will do
When people are in love,
Their marriage was a golden bond
That was forged by God above;
Then one day came some bitter news
That filled his heart with fright
The doctor told the old man's wife
That she was going to lose her sight!

He said "There's an operation we can do
But it puts me on the spot....
Cause it's a quite complex procedure
And it's going to cost a lot"
The old man said "Doctor I'm a failure
I've made no preparation.....
We don't have the money
For that kind of an operation"

The doctor had the strangest look
And he sat there for a while,
And then he slowly nodded
And he broke out in a smile.....
He said "Why sir, you can't fool me
You're a very wealthy man!
You long ago invested
In the world's best savings plan"

I'll see she gets the best of care
She's going to be just fine!
And the total cost to you old friend
Is a dollar and a dime"
The old man stared in disbelief
Then he recognized that smile.....
The one he'd seen those years ago
On a loving thoughtful child.....

The man said "What you gave me that day
Was more than just a coat,
You gave me the gift of giving
And you gave my mother hope!
My mother'd been mistreated
Neglected and abused,
But she gave life just one more chance
And it was all because of you

Now every year she takes that coat
And lays it beneath our tree,
It represents to us the things
That Christmas ought to be.
She says that when we leave this world
For a better home someday,
The only things that we'll take with us
Are the things we gave away"

Author Unknown

GOD-CENTRED ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY PROUT

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

No two entities of this universe are equal in all respects or in any respect. This universe is a collection of a mesh of varieties. Diversity is the law of nature and identity is not possible. Although theories, propositions, hypotheses and different formula or formulae are the creations of different types of persons, they must not go against human psychology. One of the greatest treasures of human beings is rationality, and anything that goes against this human characteristic is bound to be eventually destroyed. The philosophies that human beings follow can be divided into four categories: (1) dogma-centred philosophy, (2) matter-centred philosophy, (3) self-centred philosophy and (4) God-centred philosophy.

People who follow dogma-

One of the greatest treasures of human beings is rationality, and anything that goes against this is bound to be eventually destroyed

centred philosophy believe in dogma, wrong sentiments and foolish ideas. In the past I said that many religions are dogma-centred, but in fact all religions are dogma centred. That is why no religion can tolerate any other religion. People who follow dogma-centred philosophy exploit others in the name of providence for their own self-interest. For example, the

proponents of dogma often claim that they have been blessed with divine revelation. They say that they had a dream in which God appeared before them and commanded them to do particular work, and on this pretext they exploit others to the full.

People who follow matter-centred philosophy want to enjoy anything and everything for their



own interest. The atom bomb is the creation of matter-centred people. In matter-centred philosophy, enjoyment of material objects is the main motive, as in Marxism. The proponents of matter-centred philosophies often resort to brute force to exploit others when it suits their purpose, as do the followers of dogma-centred philosophies.

The followers of self-centred philosophy do everything only for self-interest, self-pleasure. In this case, as in the previous two, the psychic radii may vary. A big radius means that one thinks about oneself in each and every sphere of life. In self-centred philosophies, individual selfishness is the motive, as in capitalism.

Dogma-centred philosophies are a blending of self-centred and matter-centred philosophies. A blended theory is not a cult. A cult has something to do with practice – where there is no practical reflection there is no cult.

Those who follow God-centred philosophy serve humanity and the entire living world with equal love and affection according to Neohumanism. Even amongst God-centred people the radius may vary, but the centre is God. In God-centred philosophy God is the nucleus, and the radius of one's selfless love and devotion goes on increasing towards God.

Of these four, dogma-centred philosophies are the worst. Next are matter-centred philosophies, followed by self-centred philosophies. Dogma-centred philosophies have been responsible for the greatest blood-baths in human society, followed by matter-centred philosophies then self-centred philosophies. There can be no blood bath in God-centred philosophy. In God-centred philosophy, human projection is the external projection of internal tranquility or composure, so there cannot be sanguinary clashes or bloodshed.



Common human beings are self-centred; missionary workers are God-centred. The work done by God-centred people elevates the standard of human beings. In the past they elevated humanity, in the present they are elevating humanity and in the future they will continue to elevate humanity. But until now, the world has not experienced any God-centred philosophy.

The scope, avenue and jurisdiction of the God-centred universe is far, far, far bigger than that of the other three. In any clash amongst these philosophies, finally the God-centred theory will win. Similarly, whenever there is clash between self-centred and matter-centred theories, the self-centred philosophy will win. The matter-centred theory will never win. It comes as it goes after creating enormous devastation, and it dies a black death.

Communism

Communism is an unhappy blending of matter-centred and dogma-centred philosophies – a theory of matter-centred and dogma-centred brutality. It is the worst type of demons' dance, and is on the threshold of a black death.

Communism is not logically based. It occupies a certain portion of the physical world, some portion of human sentiment and some logic. A few logical minds were influenced by it, but it is a highly defective philosophy which will cease to exist in the very near future. It will cease to exist within the range of this century. Communism is irrational, illogical, unscientific and unpsychological. What is the immediate cause of the demise of communism? There may be many causes, but what is the immediate cause? Take the example of a drunkard. If a man drinks much alcohol, he will contract liver disease and eventually die. But if one day he drinks an excessive amount, say ten bottles, this will be the immediate cause of his death. Communism should have died a few decades from now, but it is ultimately dying in the last decade of the twentieth century. Ravana's greatest blunder was that he abducted Sita. The greatest blunder of communism was that it attacked God-centred philosophy. This is the immediate cause of the death of communism.

Communism created a field at one time; now it has left a

vacuum behind. There is an ideological vacuum in the world – a physical, mental and intellectual vacuum has been created by the death of communism – but it will be filled up in a short time. This vacuum has to be immediately filled with a strong guiding and controlling force. You should fill it with your intellectuo-intuitional strength. If you sit idle some other demonic non-spiritual theories can become active and occupy that vacuum, so do not encourage lethargy and procrastination. You must leave the six defects of sleep, drowsiness, fear, anger, lethargy and procrastination if you want to work for the Self and for the society.

PROUT is the only panacea. If the God-centred philosophy of PROUT does not come forward immediately to fill this vacuum, some other ideology will, because it is a law of nature that something will fill a vacuum once it has been created. If this ideological vacuum is not filled by PROUT, a great catastrophe will take place in the future because other defective philosophies will come forward. Some dogma-centred, matter-centred or self-centred theories will occupy the space. We cannot allow this to happen. The ideas of PROUT are spreading throughout the world.

Self-centred philosophies create differences among human beings and balkanise the human society. Matter-centred philosophies create disparity, destroying peace in the universe. In the present world we are seeing two theories moving side by side – the self-centred theory of capitalism and the matter-centred and dogma-centred theory of communism. Capitalism cannot serve humanity, while communism failed to serve humanity. Both capitalism and communism are dying. Capitalism will die a natural death, while communism died an unnatural death.

Religion

What is religion? Religion is based on dogma-centred philosophy. Dogma-centred philosophy is a blending of matter-centred and self-centred philosophies. So religions are a blending of partly matter-centred philosophies and partly self-centred philosophies. Matter-centred philosophies are mostly pure dogma, while self-centred philosophies are a blending of dogma and sentiment.

Religions sometimes survive for a long time, even though they are full of dogma. This is because they know how to twist their teachings to deny the truth and adapt to different circumstances. Their purpose is to secure the

interests of a special, privileged class. Some religions have also survived because they have associated themselves with God-centred ideas, although they are not God-centred. They make some dogmatic propositions about God an important part of their teaching, and on this basis they sentimentalize the minds of the people. These sentiments penetrate deeply into the human psyche.

The main weapons of dogma-centred philosophies are:

- 1) The propagation of stories, myths and parables to create superiority complexes;
- 2) The propagation of stories, myths and parables to create inferiority complexes;
- 3) The propagation of fear complex and inferiority complex amongst the people, especially the Shudras.

All religions use these three types of complexes to inject superiority complexes, inferiority complexes and fear complexes into the minds of the people. They propagate parables, myths and stories to inject complexes into people's minds. Is it not a fact? All religions are based on dogma – they are not based on logic – and they propagate their dogma through stories, myths and parables. All religions propagate that “My God is the only true God.



Other Gods are false gods.” When some religions claim that their god is the only true God, it is an example of a dogma-centred proposition. All world religions are based on such dogma-centred theories.

To counteract the malevolent effect of dogma-centred philosophies, the two most important factors are the development of rationality and the spread of education. Merely attending school and university classes will not necessarily have the desired effect. Stress should be placed on education which produces a high degree of rationality in the human mind, and this type of education should be spread amongst the people.

So, to counteract religious dogma we have to adopt a two-fold approach. First, the path of logic and reason must be adopted, and for this we have PROUT and Neohumanism. Simultaneously, the spiritual sentiment must be inculcated in human minds as this is more powerful than the religious sentiment. For this people should be properly educated in the way of

spirituality. So what should be our proper strategy? First, we should work to oppose matter-centred philosophies, which are already on the verge of extinction. Once matter-centred philosophies have been vanquished, the strength of religious dogma will be naturally weakened and finally eliminated. This will be the proper step-wise approach.

So, a vacuum has been created by the sudden, unnatural death of communism. The reason behind this is the sudden expansion of consciousness among human beings, among human minds. That sudden expansion of consciousness was created due to PROUT, Neohumanism and spiritual philosophy. Communism has almost died everywhere. The stage of convulsion is going on, so we have to fill up the vacuum.

In human life socio-economic items are very important, but they are not the only thing. Those dedicated to the service of humanity and the establishment of God-centred philosophy should be strong in PROUT, especially in

those countries where there was the brutal rule of communism. But socio-economic life is not the only life. There are other aspects of life, other spokes of expansion. Through PROUT and selfless service we may render temporary service to human beings as they move along the flow of life, but our spiritual philosophy is above the flow of life. Spiritual philosophy is the hub. By propagating spirituality, implementing PROUT and rendering selfless service to suffering humanity, you will be able to elevate the standard of human beings in a very short time. So you should prepare yourself physically, intellectually, morally, intuitionally and spiritually to fill up the vacancy of the dogma-centred theories of religion, the matter-centred theory of communism and self-centred theory of capitalism. Time will not wait for us. Time will not wait for our convenience, our feasibility. This moment is the most opportune moment. There is no need to look at the calendar. Do not wait for tomorrow. ●



People once believed that the movement of collective life through time is without qualitative change, that “there is nothing new under the sun.” Life moved in cycles, or in waves, but not upward; it did not advance. In the present age, however, there is a belief in progress. The path of progress may not be straight but looked at from a broad vantage humanity's social existences surely advancing. But what is the proper measure of this progress? At present, the most common measure of progress is that of material growth. Society is said to be progressing when there is an increase in the availability, variety and sophistication of consumer products, or when there is growth in the economy.

Equating progress with material advances has two problems. First, advances in the material realm have both positive and negative consequences. Auto transport gets us to our destinations with greater speed, but may also cause air pollution, urban congestion, accidental deaths, and climate change. Unless guided by proper values, the negative effects of material advancement cancel the positive. In fact, at present the negative impacts of industrial civilization are significant enough to degrade the biosphere and threaten a decline in the quality of human life.

A second problem with equating progress with material development is that this makes no reference to our subjective experience of life. It does not consider whether more and better things bring more happiness, more fulfillment, more inner peace. It doesn't assess whether material advance enriches our social connectivity. And it doesn't

NEOHUMANISTIC PROGRESS

Ronald Logan

There will always be further opportunities to promote universal welfare. Neohumanistic progress is the goal of society; spiritual liberation is the goal of individuals.



appraise how our materially affluent lives alienate us from the natural world, from our primal longings to experience stars in a clear night sky, breath deep the pure air, drink from crystal waters, and smell the spring wildflowers.

Many thoughtful people are aware of the need to rethink how we conceive of progress. They recognize the limitations of material progress to satisfy the human heart and to sustain planetary life.

“PROUT” is the acronym for the Progressive Utilization Theory.

As the foregrounding of the word “progressive” implies, PROUT starts from articulating a conception of progress.

Implicit in the question of how to define progress is the question, “What is the goal of progress? What are we to progress toward?” In giving its answer to this question, PROUT first distinguishes between the goal of individual progress from the goal of collective progress, of social progress.

PROUT rests on the value base of neohumanism, and it is

neohumanism that provides a context for PROUT's conception of progress. Neohumanism gives value to welfare — to welfare that is holistic, that is for all, and that does not harm other life. So, for PROUT, social progress is indicated by improvement in the opportunities for all members of a society to develop their physical vitality, expand their intellects, and evolve spiritually, all while respecting other living beings.

Rationality and Neohumanistic Progress

Human beings possess an inherent desire to expand our human expression — to liberate ourselves from bondages and limitations. We seek extension of our life span, greater clarity of knowledge, new realms of exploration, expanded capacity for creative self-expression, and the freedom of our human spirit. This desire to overcome limitations and to expand our expression produces an impetus for development in different spheres of life.

Because of this innate drive for expansion, intellectual development is very important. Intellectual development occurs readily when our minds are open and our thinking unimpaired. It is blocked when irrational constraints are imposed on our thinking. Constraining the natural expansion of mind is the role of dogma. Dogma imposes mental boundaries. Intellectual exploration or analysis is allowed to proceed up to these boundaries, but not beyond. In the 1500s and 1600s, religious dogma blocked acceptance of Copernicus' heliocentric view of the solar system. Today, anthropocentric dogma inhibits humans from recognizing the existential rights of nature. Dogma is the enemy of clear and expansive thinking.

If human progress is to proceed free from dogmas, there must be the rule of rationality.

Neohumanistic Progress and Human Evolution

Neohumanistic progress promotes universal welfare and facilitates the attainment of successive stages of intellectual liberation. With neohumanistic progress, society becomes increasingly responsive to the needs of all people and will readily develop newer and better understandings of the world. In the process, many limitations and bondages in individual and collective life will be overcome. Humanity will attain to creative powers now exercised by nature itself. Already we are able to control disease, splice genes, and create artificial intelligence. We can move people and goods throughout the planet. We can access a planetary web of information in ways that build collective awareness, the rudiments of a collective mind.

However far neohumanistic progress takes humanity, it will never take the human race as a whole to a final destination. There will always be new horizons for physical and intellectual expansion; there will always be further opportunities to promote universal welfare.

While the journey through history for humanity as a whole is interminable, the journey of individuals is not. Through the expansion of spiritual awareness, individuals can become spiritually realized. For individuals, progress is the measure of their movement toward spiritual liberation.

Neohumanistic progress is the goal of society; spiritual liberation is the goal of individuals. These two objectives — of individuals and of society — are intertwined. The neohumanistic progress of society creates a supportive environment for the spiritual progress of individuals, and the spiritual progress of individuals creates a compassionate and expansive awareness that furthers the neohumanistic progress of society.



Rationality is an essential requirement for what PROUT calls “neohumanistic progress”. But the increase in rationality alone does not define neohumanistic progress. Rationality must be combined with an increased concern for universal welfare — not only human welfare but the welfare of other life as well.

Neohumanistic progress ensures unimpeded scope for the expansion of intellect, but

expansion toward what end? When our intellect expands to a state in which we feel free from doubt and uncertainty, we experience what can be termed intellectual liberation. But intellectual liberation is a relative state; it has no absolute standing. Freedom from doubt does not endure as the world is ever-changing, and new questions and new problems inevitably arise for our minds to resolve. ●

LOAN WRITE OFF BY BANKS

■ Ganesh Bhat

MASSSES FACE THE BRUNT WHILE CORPORATES REAP THE BENEFITS



Writing off loans by Banks which was not a frequent affair a few decades ago has now become not only a regular exercise but the amount has multiplied many folds. Banks had written off bad loans worth over Rs 2.09 lakh crore during the year ended March 2023, taking the total loan write-off by the banking sector to 15.32 lakh crore since FY2012-13 as per official figures. But, as per RTI information, the loan written-off during the above period is Rs 25 lakh crore which includes the amount from other unlisted Banks.

What is a Loan write-off

Loan write-off means the lender institution removes the specified amount from its books as receivable and reflects the same in its balance sheet. It is a tool used by banks to clean their balance sheet. Loans that have been bad loans for four years can be dropped from the balance sheet of a bank by way of a

Benefits of Loan Write-off

- Any recovery made against a bad loan after writing off is considered as a profit for the bank in the year of recovery.
- It helps the bank to make its balance sheet clean

The Government has set up National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL) as an asset reconstruction company to resolve stressed assets above Rs 500 crore each. NARCL is also called **the bad bank**, which buys NPAs, or bad loans, from banks. In October 2021, the NARCL got a license from the Reserve Bank of India to start operations.

write-off. Even after a bad loan is written off, the borrower remains legally liable for loan repayment, and the lender **may take** legal action against the borrower and recover the outstanding amount.

To write off any bank loan, the financial asset in the banker's book has to be first classified as a 'Non-Performing Asset' (NPA). An NPA is any loan or advance taken from a bank on which interest and/or principal has remained overdue for 90 days from the date of payment of the installment. Bad loans are those where the chances of recovering the loan amount

from the borrower are less. Banks should make 100% provision for bad debts every year from their profits; this means the profits of the Bank will reduce with the increase in bad debts. Government permission is needed for Public Sector Banks (PSB) before writing off big loans.

The Blame Game

In the process of the mutual blame game, the BJP government argues that most of the write-offs and bank frauds have occurred on loans granted during the Congress regime.

Even if one considers that the loans were granted before 2014, the question arises as to why those who were earlier paying installments regularly began to default during the BJP regime. What did the Government do after 2014 to recover these sub-standard assets?

Loans written –off by Banks during the BJP-led NDA rule between 2015 and 2019, are three times more compared to the figures of bad loans written off during the previous Congress-led UPA regime from 2004-2014, as per an RTI revelation.

The media reports observed that similar to bank write-offs, bank frauds have been mounting at a rapid rate after 2014, and the country is losing Rs. 100 Crore each day on average.

Many of these bank defaulters have been absconding for years and the government has also admitted that it has caught only two of the 72 fugitives in the past five years. This proves the soft corner of the present regime towards these wilful defaulters. The majority of defaulters didn't face any criminal action by the lender.

The PM who is noticeably silent on these absconders is concerned about the amount spent on subsidies, he has recently

termed the subsidies as 'Revadies' (sugar-coated sweets).

Questions that Need Answer

Out of the total Rs 14.56, lakh crore, written off loans in the last nine financial years starting 2014-15, Rs 7.40 lakh crore, (around 51%) pertains to large industries and services. Why do Banks and the Government prefer write-offs rather than, attempts of restructuring, moral persuasion, strict enforcement of recovery process, etc., to ensure relief to the common masses instead of select corporate houses and bankrupt businessmen? Though the Banks have the option of requesting the court to arrest the borrower after initiating legal action why did they not exercise it in the case of large borrowers, whereas it is applied in the case of common people?

In theory, loans that are written off can be recovered, but in practice, proper follow-up/attempts are not made to recover for bulks of the loans that are first written off, which is nothing but simply waiving off, because they will never be recovered. Loan write-offs are often equal to money that will never be recovered. One reason for this is a substantial number of defaulters are wilful, and most of them are large borrowers; they never had any intention to repay.

This is proved by the fact that the rate of recovery of written-off loans during the last decade is hardly 14%.

Why not the Government/ RBI tell the public when these loans were sanctioned, who are the borrowers, and when exactly these loans were written off, in full detail and also a summary of its assessment of the problem?

Bank officers of PSB are vested with loan sanctioning powers up to certain limits at different levels. Generally, loans above 500 crore are sanctioned by the board of directors who are appointed by the central government. The possibility of the central government influencing the large loan-sanctioning authority cannot be denied.

Banks take sufficient security from the small borrowers (except those specifically exempted by the government by becoming a guarantor), why the same rule is not applied to big corporate borrowers?

Whenever a loan turns into a bad loan and cannot be recovered, the officer at the branch level who had sanctioned the loan is held responsible and his/her retirement benefits are delayed till it is recovered. Why the same principle is not applied in the case of top-level executives and board members?



What is Loan Waive-off

In loan waive-off, the borrower is technically exempted from that repayment. It means there is no chance of recovering a loan from the borrower by the lender or bank. Loan waiver or loan waive-off is primarily a selective provision. This is usually extended to priority sector lending (e.g.- agriculture, fisheries, etc.,) who have gone through stressful situations like the poor monsoon, abnormal conditions, floods, earthquakes, natural calamities, etc., due to which they are unable to repay the debt. Banks waive off loans in individual cases, but the government decides for the benefit of certain categories of borrowers.

Using Depositors' Money to Bail out Defaulting Creditors

A bank's balance sheet gets 'cleaned' at the expense of ordinary depositors of banks who are being made to bear the cost of reduction applied to the value of an asset extended to defaulters in return for 'timely settlement' of debts.

Corporates have defaulted on debts and liquidated their companies after enjoying substantial concessions by the Banks and the Government. This burden is not only borne by ordinary depositors but also by the public exchequer since Rs. 3.10 lakh crore has been allocated for recapitalization of PSBs for carrying out this process of 'cleaning the balance sheet'. The establishment of a bad bank also costs the exchequer.

Interest rates on fixed deposits which was around 9% during 2011-12, have been continuously declining and were around 5% during 2021-22, and a little upward now. Interest rates on saving accounts are also steadily declining, but the Bank charges on various services are hiked regularly. It is the common people – the depositors and the small borrowers who pay for the process



Banks wrote off 14.56 lakh crores since 2014-15

of write-offs of big loans; because the Banks tax these regular customers to retain and enhance their profit.

PROUT's View

“The banking system is indispensable for promoting both collective welfare and the all-round economic advancement of people; the fundamental aim of the banking system is, “Keep the money rolling”. The banking system must continue; otherwise, the mobility of money will be hindered.

The banking system must be vigilant about two important points. First, the intrinsic demonic greed of the banks must not be allowed to jeopardize the lives of the common people. Secondly, the banks must not allow unwise administrators or governments to print monetary notes indiscriminately without reserving a proportionate amount of bullion in their treasuries.

The first defect not only ruins low and middle-income groups but also impoverishes wealthy people. The second defect destroys the very life of society. It leads to widespread inflation, which in turn jeopardizes internal trade and commerce as well as foreign trade and barter. Even if there is abundant production in a country,

the common people do not benefit. The rich become richer and get more scope to continue their merciless exploitation.

The banking system will have to be managed by **cooperatives**. The central or federal bank will be controlled by the immediate or local government. Ownership of the Banks by individual capitalists or corporates should not be allowed.”

The need of the hour

It is essential to turn around the process of privatization of Public Sector Banks and resist the loot of public money. A few crony corporates of the present regime must not be allowed to first loot the banks by not paying their debt, and then to be rewarded for this crime by being the owner of the same banks. The roles such as financial inclusion, development of banking networks in rural hinterland, and priority sector lending, will not be played by banks if they are handed over to profit-seeking private bodies. Encouraging cooperatives in the banking sector on Proutistic ideas is the way to save the Indian economy and Indians as well. This cannot be expected from a regime that is surviving at the mercy of crony capitalists and helping them by looting common people; a powerful anti-exploitation movement on Proutistic principles is the solution. ●

In this world today, which globalization has turned it into a village, there is abundance of exploitation, with women being the greatest of sufferers. American President Jimmy Carter who wrote 'Losing my Religion for Equality' said, "This view that women are somehow inferior to men is not restricted to one religion or belief. Women are prevented from playing a full and equal role in many faiths. Nor, tragically, does its influence stop at the walls of the church, mosque, synagogue or temple. This discrimination, unjustifiably attributed to a Higher Authority, has provided a reason or excuse for the deprivation of women's equal rights across the world for centuries. At its most repugnant, the belief that women must be subjugated to the wishes of men excuses slavery, violence, forced prostitution, genital mutilation and national laws that omit rape as a crime. But it also costs many millions of girls and women control over their own bodies and lives, and continues to deny them fair access to education,

Exploitation of WOMEN

Of all things upon earth that bleed and grow, a herb most bruised is woman.

■ Arun Prakash

Euripides in Medea 431 BCE

health, employment and influence within their own communities.... The truth is that male religious leaders have had -- and still have -- an option to interpret holy teachings either to exalt or subjugate women. They have, for their own selfish ends, overwhelmingly chosen the latter". And quite recently President Barack Obama said, "The best judge of whether or not a country is going to develop is how it treats its women. If it's educating its girls, if women have equal rights, that country is going to move forward. But if women are oppressed and abused and illiterate, then they're going to fall

behind". Under Saudi Arabia's conservative Islamic code, women suffer severe restrictions on daily life. They are not allowed to appear before a judge without a male representative, or travel abroad without a male guardian's permission, and they are not allowed to drive. Under Islamic law, rape can only be proven if the rapist confesses or if there are four male witnesses. Women who allege rape, without the benefit of the act having been witnessed by four men who subsequently develop a conscience, are actually confessing to having sex. If they or the accused happens to be married, then it is considered to be adultery.

All this shows that exploitation of women exists all over the world in countries both rich and poor, liberal or dogmatic and has a long history behind it. Some historians believe that the history of violence against women is tied to the history of women being viewed as property and a gender role assigned to be subservient to men and also other women. In ancient Greece their father controlled them before they were married, their spouse controlled them once they were married. Besides the slaves, women in ancient Rome were citizens, but could not vote or hold political office. Because of their



limited public role, women are named less frequently than men by Roman historians. But classical Roman laws did not allow domestic abuse and a man of status during the Roman Republic was expected to behave moderately toward his wife and to define himself as a good husband. In ancient Egypt the subordinate status of women was epitomised on monuments by their statues being placed in a less honorific position when they were shown in the company of their husbands or sons, but black women were exploited. While in ancient Mesopotamia the woman's role was strictly defined just like in Greece. She was the daughter of her father or the wife of her husband. Women rarely acted as individuals outside the context of their families. Those who did so were usually royalty or the wives of men who had power and status. But in one respect they were better off compared to other civilizations. Women could act independently, buying and selling houses, acting as a guarantor for another person. They could also become involved in court cases. From recent history we know that in women bear the most severe brunt of violence and abuse during war and tyrannical regimes. During medieval ages rape was officially allowed as an instrument of conquering armies to coerce the defeated populace into submission. During World War II, in German occupied many women suffered extra judicial punishment in Nazi labour camps, with Jewish women forced into camp brothels. The Japanese during the occupation of Indonesia had established military brothels forcing thousands of young women to 'comfort' the soldiers. In a world that is now being rocked by war, in some countries women are stoned to death for being raped.

Shri PR Sarkar writing on the subject provides a historical analysis. "In the primitive age,



society was matriarchal. Although in that ancient society both men and women were granted equal freedom, in practical life women were given greater importance. As women's dominance increased more and more in the course of time, the whole social structure came to be matriarchal and founded on a matrilineal order. In that prehistoric age, as I have said on earlier occasions, people would identify themselves with their mothers. While introducing themselves they would mention the names of their mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers. These are signs of a matrilineal order. Together with that came the matriarchal system, that is, property was handed down from mother to daughter. Thus the

matrilineal order as well as the matriarchal system continued for quite a long time. Traces of the matrilineal order and matriarchal social system can be found even today in south India, especially in Kerala, Mizoram and some other hilly regions of eastern India. With the establishment of male dominance in the society, all power was concentrated in the hands of men. Women were gradually deprived of all their rights – social, cultural, religious, political and economic”.

However, “In the Kṣatriya Age women were the partners of men; that is, they shared both good times and bad times, and shared the same social status. But in the Vipra Age, after the intellectual defeat of women, their social status declined. Men toyed with the prestige of women: sometimes men glorified them and sometimes they neglected them. In the Vipra Age, as the dependence of women on men increased, the vipras turned women with vipra intellects into wageless slaves. Conspiring to cripple women in every sphere of life, they wrote "divine" commandments, many kinds of scriptural injunctions, many kinds of specious logic, and imaginary tales of pāpa [vice] and puṇya [virtue]. To hear or read such things one would think that men, especially vipra men, were alone blessed by God and that others were born only to provide them the wherewithals of enjoyment. The matrimonial system of the Kṣatriya Age regarded women as both the assistants and co-workers of men, but in the Vipra Age, though on paper women were considered sahadharminī, in practice they became servants or slaves. A woman's social status lasted only as long as the man maintained her in style. Today in countries where the women work and the men only sit around and eat, the status of women is similar; the women of such countries are

restless because they are strictly controlled by the men. In the developed countries, although women are called the "fair sex" and are shown respect through language and people's conduct, men are not prepared to accept that women should have equal rights. The strict control that men exercised over women in the Vipra Age continued unchanged in the Vaeshya Age".

In a discourse on social philosophy he continues to describe the plight of women. "As in most other living species, in the human society females are physically weaker than males. Nevertheless, their value in society is not a bit less than that of men. Selfish men, however, have exploited feminine weakness to the limit. Although they publicly declare women to be a community of mothers, they have actually relegated them to the level of domesticated cattle and sheep. In every sphere of life these men have either substantially curtailed women's rights, or have kept them wholly subservient to men's whims and caprices. If half the society is steeped in inertia and prejudice, the other half will undoubtedly find the journey

tough going, since it must carry this beast of burden along. In individual life, purity is equally necessary for both men and women, and for that, real spiritual vision is needed. But this is impossible as long as injustice to either of the two sexes exists. The Vipra Age was the age of male opportunists. While men had the opportunity to divorce their wives or to be loose in character, women had to follow a very strict code of conduct. If any such lapse or defect was found in a woman, she would lose all respect not only as a woman, but also as a human being. Yet when men committed the same crimes, they strutted about arrogantly as leaders of society".

Further Shrii PR Sarkar questions, "What sort of treatment have women received so far? It is very true that women have gradually lost their rights or freedom in certain cases due to lack of competence. There are those who think that, because of this, special abilities are the only criteria for having rights. Such people, however, actually want women to be wageless slaves under the strict supervision of men. But is it merely due to their lack of competence that women have lost

their rights? Have not the overflowing sentiments of their hearts also been partly responsible? Have not women, swayed by their emotions, ignored their own petty interests and gradually given everything – even the high social status that fascinates them – to their husbands, sons and brothers? Is it not reasonable to expect human beings (certainly human beings are not animals) to pay proper respect to such humility and large-heartedness? If a guest arrives unexpectedly, who volunteers to forgo a meal to feed the guest? Who deprives herself first when a delicious dish is prepared? Who leaves home to keep house for others, giving up her paternal property rights (regardless of what the law says)? Are not these observations applicable throughout most of the world? I do not say that men are ordinary human beings and that women are angels; I have only focused on women as human beings and mentioned their special qualities. Does a husband, when his wife is ill, nurse her with as much care as she nurses him when he is ill?

On the subject of widows remarrying he goes on to add, "If men wish to prevent helpless widows from remarrying by taking advantage of their sentimental female hearts, they convince those widows that they will be reunited with their late husbands after their deaths – so how can they consider remarrying? Shame on such men! Perhaps such tales may make women, already sentimental, even more so. The prospect of being reunited with the spirit of their deceased husband after their death may induce helpless widows to undertake rigorous lifelong penance, and to fast on every ekadashii [the eleventh day after each new moon and full moon]. Are not those who want to keep women slaves to dogmatic ideas



guilty of acting against the dictates of their consciences?”

On the subject of the so called oldest profession in the world, he explains the causes, “In the Vipra Age prostitution became a profession for the first time, because women were faced with loss of respect in society, economic difficulties and other worldly problems. It should be kept in mind that the profession of prostitution was not a phenomenon of the Shudra or Ksatriya Age. This sinful occupation is the creation of selfish vipras. Due to economic dependence on men, a section of forsaken women is forced to take to the profession of prostitution. When women will enjoy economic independence and equal status in society this practice will cease to exist. Society will have to offer an honourable position to those women who will give up this nasty business and rectify their character. In the Ksatriya Age, a woman was considered to be the valuable property of a man. Although women did not have the same rights as men, they still commanded considerable respect. But in the Vipra Age the position of women became like that of cows, sheep and goats, no better than the other essential items of a household ... a woman had no existence in society without a husband. In society men are in an advantageous position”.

Finally he concludes by proclaiming, “Those who are sympathetic to all humanity will surely admit that all animate and inanimate entities are the creation of the Supreme Father. He gave to everyone intelligence, competence and physical power. Hence, all men and women have the right and opportunity to establish themselves in society, depending on their sincere endeavour. Today that opportunity has come to women. The common masses will awake, their self-confidence and intelligence will increase. The way



of writing history will be changed. Already it has started to change”. Finally he cautions “Those who take advantage of people’s simplicity or ignorance are veritable demons in human form, and those who deceive people by exploiting their sentiments of sacrifice are even worse than demons. ... Freedom is attained through struggle. No one offers it on a platter, because freedom is not a gift; it is one’s birthright. But as far as the rights which women have lost today, at least so it seems in most countries of the world, I should say, that women have not really lost their freedom; rather, they have trustingly placed their destiny in the hands of men. This is the plain truth. Although it is universally true that no one gives anyone rights – rights have to be established by one’s own efforts”.

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) states that “violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms

by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men”. Still, those never ending news articles about sexual abuses, rape, murders and assaults on women and children as well as plight of women and children who become the easy targets of lusty savages makes us to feel deeply, yet social apathy is disturbing. In India alone millions of women, and children become victims of sexual exploitations, rape and murder and the scenario through out the world is equally horrifying. The trauma of rape and such heinous experiences lead most of the women and children to mental disorders and they cannot find any solace from the society.

We may end this piece with few lines of a poem and another saying of Shrii PR Sarkar that gives hope for the future of mankind:

*Thanks to You benign mother mine
For bearing the burden of my sins
awhile
Those of the world I carry forever
Yet You did so with a smile.*

“Women are the mothers of society and therefore men have a duty to serve women. Men are greatly indebted to them. This is the age that gives importance to the intellect. In this changed social atmosphere, the future of women is bright”. ●

A REMARKABLE RESCUE

On January 2, an Airbus A 350 of Japan Airlines (JAL) flight 516 with 367 passengers and 12 crew members on board collided with a smaller Japan Coast Guard plane a De Havilland Canada Dash 8 on the runway of Tokyo's Haneda airport while landing. Five of the six people on board the smaller aircraft died. It had taxied on to the runway and was to take off to deliver aid to victims of the powerful New Year's Day earthquake - died. But everyone on Flight 516 survived, with the flawless evacuation from the cabin as it filled with smoke astounding the world and winning praise from many, with the last person escaping just before the aircraft was engulfed in flames on the runway.

CCTV footage showed a fireball erupting from the aircraft, with the JAL plane leaving a fiery trail as it travelled down the runway for about 1 km before coming to a stop on the grass apron beside the runway. Smoke filled the A350's cabin quickly after the incident. Firefighters arrived at the scene in about three minutes, with

What the crew of JAL 516 achieved is harder than one can imagine.

■ Karunakshim Vatsalam



around 70 fire trucks. According to an official statement from JAL, the three pilots felt a sudden shock immediately after landing and lost control of the aircraft while trying to maintain its course along the runway. They were unaware that a fire had broken out on board until they were informed by a cabin attendant that the left engine was

on fire, and one of the pilots later said that he had seen an object that had caused him concern before the collision. With the right engine still running, all 367 passengers and 12 crew members on board JAL516 evacuated through three of the plane's eight evacuation slides.

Although all passengers and



crew on the Airbus A350 were evacuated with few minor injuries, the plane was damaged beyond repair, with JAL estimating the operational losses from its destruction at 15 billion yen (\$105 million), which is set to be covered by insurance. The aircraft following immediately behind Flight 516 — JAL 166, a Boeing 737-800 had to go around at 1,150 feet (350 m) before diverting to Narita International airport. The incident occurred as millions were travelling for the New Year holidays, one of the busiest travel periods of the year. All runways at Haneda Airport were temporarily closed following the crash, and many flights were diverted to nearby Narita Airport. An investigation led by the Japan Transport Safety Board is going on to ascertain what caused the runway collision in Tokyo but, according to transcripts of conversations with the control tower which emerged on Wednesday, the coastguard plane had not been cleared for take-off while the passenger plane was given permission to land.

The remains of those killed aboard the coast guard aircraft were sent for autopsy and were handed over to their families on January 8. A tribute was held by their colleagues at the Japan Coast Guard base in Haneda. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida extended his condolences to the dead, referring to their service to the victims of the 2024 Noto earthquake. Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike also expressed sadness over the fact that one disaster led to another disaster. JAL released a statement about the runway collision and sent condolences to the families and friends of the five people killed. It also apologized for the inconvenience and distress caused to passengers, friends, families, and everyone affected by the incident,



According to aviation experts and industry professionals this miracle happened because of the well trained staff on board putting their rigorous training into practice and "well-behaved" passengers who obeyed safety protocols and left their valuables behind was the major factor for this speedy evacuation.

Said Prof Ed Galea, director of the fire safety engineering group at the University of Greenwich in London, "If people tried to take their cabin luggage, that's really dangerous because they would slow down the evacuation". In the crash landing of an Emirates Boeing 777 in Dubai in 2016 passengers panicked and clambered to grab their possessions, before they exited the aircraft down emergency slides.

The crews were praised for their efforts to evacuate passengers, and luckily all 300 on board the Dubai flight survived.

A former Japan Airlines flight attendant said the flight - which had departed from Sapporo's New Chitose airport at 16:00 local time and landed at Haneda shortly before 18:00 - were "incredibly

fortunate".

In the end, just one passenger on board flight 516 sustained bruises and 13 others requested medical consultations due to physical discomfort, the airline said. "I felt relieved to find out that all the passengers were safe," the former flight attendant said. "But when I started thinking about the emergency evacuation procedure, I suddenly felt nervous and fearful." Depending on how the two planes collided and how the fire spread, it could have been a lot worse." All new crew members undergo stringent evacuation and rescue training for up to three weeks before they are allowed to serve in commercial flights. The training - which extends to how you control the tone and volume of your voice so you can be best heard by passengers - is repeated every year.

They go through a written exam, case study discussions and practical training using different scenarios, such as when the plane has to make a water landing or if there is fire on board. Maintenance staff are also involved in such training. Besides this, all aircraft

manufacturers have to show that everyone aboard can leave the plane within 90 seconds for their planes to be internationally recognised. But even so, in real-life situations, it may turn out to be difficult to ensure that no passengers panic.

What the crew of JAL 516 achieved is harder than one can imagine. The fact that they managed to get everyone to escape was a result of good co-ordination among crew and passengers following instructions.

It is all the more impressive when you take into account the position and condition of the aircraft, which - according to Prof Galea - would have made the evacuation all the more tricky.

About escaping from the fireball that engulfed the plane, a South East Asian airline pilot agreed that the flight crew's rigorous training was key to the passengers' escape. He said, "I must say it was amazing. You really don't have time to think in a situation like this, so you just do what you were trained to do. This accident was far from ideal. The

aircraft was nose down, which meant it was difficult for passengers to move," he said.

Only three inflatable slides could be used to evacuate passengers, but they were not properly deployed because of how the jet landed. The rear slide was very steep, which could have been dangerous.

The aircraft's announcement system also malfunctioned during the evacuation, so the flight crew had to convey instructions using a megaphone and by shouting, Japan Airlines said. The aircraft design was also complimented and showed that it was working to give those on board the best chance of escape, and to protect the occupants and allow a fast evacuation.

The role of the airport's fire crews on the ground - who, according to Prof Braithwaite, aim to get to any fire within two minutes - would also have been key in ensuring there was time to escape.

"The fire service focus will absolutely have been on protecting the exits and making sure there was a clear path for people to

evacuate," he said. The larger fire, he explained, would only have been dealt with after the last person escaped. Lessons have also been learned from the past, with aviation safety regulations significantly strengthened after previous accidents, said the pilot.

For instance, the collision of two Boeing 747 jets at Los Rodeos Airport in Tenerife in 1977 - which killed 583 people and remains the deadliest accident in aviation history - led to a review of cockpit procedures and radio communications. The crash was found to be due to miscommunication between flight crew and air traffic controllers.

In August 1985 Japan Airlines Osaka-bound Flight 123 crashed into a mountain shortly after take-off from Tokyo Haneda and only four out of 524 people on board survived the crash. It was later attributed to faulty repair work by Boeing, the aircraft manufacturer. The airline's record has been "blemish free" since then. Every staff member is reminded that valuable lives and property are entrusted to them in their work. ●



WAR AND MILITARY'S Environmental Impact

War and Military's Environmental Impact

We are living in an era of global conflicts big and small in several regions of planet Earth. Senses horrified we watch numbed disturbing footage on television dished out day in and day out on prime time. As wars crumble to dust humanity's moral architecture, tearing asunder human dignity lives, ruining children's lives, shattering homes, hospitals and human dignity. All this aggression effects the economy tremendously, prices rise, acute shortages of essential supplies and miseries all over the world.

What is less known and often ignored is the environmental impact of war. From ancient times 'scorched earth policy' was a military tactic. In the Peloponnesian war of 431 BCE Sparta's army destroyed farms of

What is less known and often ignored is the environmental impact of war

weapons were manufactured and deployed, bombs, shells and craters dotted once fertile agricultural fields and peaceful wooded forests. World War II, atomic weapons started the era of war hot and cold with no peace in sight, and their poisoning effects on human beings, land water and air remained evident even decades later. Horrifying chemicals were used in the Vietnam conflict, leeching into fields and forests, while the Iraq War fought over oil was also fought with oil, deliberately released into marine and marsh ecosystems choking life. Today with the Ukraine war and more recently the Israel Palestine war, military strikes shatter homes and deepen pollution while nuclear catastrophe lingers among shredded peace in the shadows.

Broadly military emissions are of two types, direct emissions from operating aircraft, ships and vehicles and from the destruction that occurs in war. Then come emissions from supply chains of the military industry and those caused by rebuilding with concrete, another major greenhouse

Athens and forests, in a bid to starve it into defeat and submission. Later wars caused greater horrors on Earth. With colonization European armies sought timber for militaries, destroying massive forests across South America and Asia. By the First World War a military industrial complex emerged, exponentially boosting destructive ability. Huge numbers of deadly

emitter. Scientists for Global Responsibility in a study found military emissions come to around 5.5 of all global emissions in a year –if military emissions were a country, it would be the fourth largest emitter on earth. The United States military is the US single largest energy consumer –its direct emissions are the largest in the US government and around 1.5% of American emissions. Its emissions are thus larger than most countries.

Despite their size military emissions are hardly discussed because of national security and are taken for granted and most countries almost always give what their militaries want and rarely question fuel use or military industrial activities in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. During negotiations for the Kyoto Protocol intense lobbying especially by the US military succeeded in excluding military emissions from the common reporting format for the UNFCCC. So from beginning of the counting of emissions, there has been no category where emissions from bases, air operations etc, can be included. All multi lateral operations, whether authorised by UNSC or NATO are not required to be reported so they are not.

In the 19th century there was

a transition from human and animal power to steam. Then came oil, this impacted the very perception of the need for fuel. The US and Britain, the first having hegemonic aspirations, the second an empire, wanted bases where fuel was prepositioned for use, which needed commercial or diplomatic arrangements or to control the territory itself. The US took over British dominance in the Persian Gulf in the 1960s. After the oil embargos, the fall of Shah of Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, it increased its military presence to ensure the supply of oil. These bases and forces themselves required fuel so fossil fuel was used protect access to fossil fuel.

The dependence on cheap fuel thus also shaped US domestic economy which grew to be very energy intensive. To shift military industrial supplies across the US a huge interstate –highways system using cement was developed. This also allowed civilians to move to suburbs which generated more fuel for cars, larger buildings and other civilian requirements. These highways were also to be used for evacuation in case of nuclear conflict –the idea of conflict thus drove the conception of needs and shaped US development.

Anxiety about fuel and

growing demand for it caused the US to continually worry about supply a cycle formed where one had to supply fuel which was used to develop in a fuel intensive way and then increase military presence to ensure supply. Having more bases and troops often destabilised regions, which caused more anxiety about access to fuel. The only way to get off that is to reduce overdependence on fossil fuels. After the cold war ended US military emissions began declining as overseas bases and installations decreased. Troops and exercises reduced, emissions dropped but in 2001 with Afghanistan and Iraq emissions increased until 2005-06. They then started to reduce with America becoming more fuel efficient and using less air power. The peak of post 1975 direct emissions was 1991 Gulf War at about 110 million metric tonnes. In 2022 US military emissions were around 48 million metric tonnes..

All this comes at a heavy price for planet earth. Scientists estimate US military operations since 2001 amount to 1.2 billion metric tons of greenhouse gasses, equal to the annual emissions of 257 million passenger cars. The US defence Department is the World's single largest oil consumer among the biggest greenhouse gas emitters. Military bases tanks and transport don't just mirror heated minds. They also reflect a heating planet. Ironically such global warming is now feared to cause more instability and wars.

However there are solutions. Foremost is getting the military worldwide to reduce using fossil fuels and ultimately to stop, this ironically is one of the causes of conflict. Another is public awareness of the ecological costs of battles while a third is greater empathy for war's ravages on non human beings. That is also a subject of serious debate and consideration. And that is Neohumanism. ●





The Civil War in Yemen started in 2015 between the Saudi backed government and the Houthi rebels, it has caused an estimated 3,77,000 deaths and untold misery to the people with about 4 million people displaced according a UN 2022 report. Led by Malik al – Houthi, the Iran backed group of Shia rebels has been fighting Yemen's government for nearly two decades and now controls the country's north west and capital Sanaa. Houthis along with Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza constitute the 'Axis of Resistance' — an anti Israel and anti West alliance of regional militias backed by Iran.

On October 7, 2023 when Israel Hams war started the Houthis declared their support for Hamas. Since November Houthis have launched 27 attacks with drones and missiles on commercial vessels in the Red Sea area where about 12% of global seaborne trade passes, causing havoc. The attacks concentrated to the south of the Arabian peninsula in the Bab al Mandab Strait. To counter this new

New Year's New Air Strikes

Escalation in West Asia is likely to increase

■ Bhupendra Singh

challenge the Combined Maritime Forces, a multinational maritime partnership led by the US from Baharain warned all ships to stay well clear of the area. These attacks have affected ships of over 40 countries, and the world's biggest container companies, Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) and Maersk have started avoiding the region, Vessels are being rerouted around Africa which involves adds 4000 miles and 10 days to shipping routes and requires more fuel which increases costs. Adding to the heightened tensions in the area was the seizure of a tanker close to the Strait of Hormuz by Iran. The tanker carrying Iraqi crude oil was bound for Turkiye.

US helicopters hit Houthi

forces for the first time on New Year's eve sinking three boats and killing fighters attempting to board a ship. On January 9, US and UK shot down 21 missiles and drones in what was believed to the biggest Houthi attack directly targeting warships. Finally came the major offensive. On January 12, US and British warplanes, launched dozens of air strikes across Yemen with precision guided munitions (more than 150 missiles and bombs) hitting over 60 specifically chosen targets targets at 16 locations in retaliation to hit Houthi's ability to threaten merchant ships widening the regional conflict originating from Israel's war in Gaza. This was followed by another strike the next day by Tomahawk missiles from



The day after these air strikes, Houthi rebels fired a missile hitting a Greek ship Zografia 76 nautical miles north west of Yemen's port Saleef causing damage. This shows that the massive US air strikes have not diminished Houthi's resolve to continue the fight.

USS Carney US President Joe Biden said that these targeted strikes are a clear message that attacks to imperil freedom of navigation would not be tolerated.

These air strikes have outraged West Asian countries, even traditional allies of the West, and this has put Saudis in a tight spot. Saudi Arabia has led an anti Houthi coalition since 2015 but is now hoping for a ceasefire and military exit from the Arabian Peninsula's poorest nation. Iran's foreign ministry have denounced these strikes as violation of international law and that they would have no result other than fuelling insecurity and instability in the region. Even close US ally Oman which often mediates between Houthis and international parties, expressed concern, a reflection of the fear that the American led action would not deter the Houthis but would inflame regional conflict. "It is impossible not to denounce that an allied country resorted to this military action, while Israel is continuing to exceed all bounds in Gaza without any consequence", said Oman's foreign minister. At the time of writing this piece during this war 23,843 have been killed and over 60000 wounded.

Meanwhile even the West is divided. France, Italy and Spain have not supported the air strikes. Yemen's Saudi backed government blamed the Houthi rebels for the strikes and accusing them of dragging the country into international military confrontation with their Red Sea attacks.

Houthis admitted five fighters were killed and said that these would not go unpunished and resolved to continue attacks on ships. Late the same night Houthi missiles narrowly missed a Russian oil carrier in the Gulf of Aden. It is of interest to know how a ragtag militia in sandals led by Abdul Malik al Houthi, enigmatic

leaders of Yemen's Houthi fighters to challenge global powers. He established a reputation as a fierce battlefield commander before emerging as head of the Houthi movement, mountain fighters who have been battling a Saudi led military coalition since 2015 in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands and devastated Yemen's economy and left millions hungry. The movement was formed to fight for the interest of the Zaydi Shia minority sect that ruled a 1000 year kingdom in Yemen until 1962 but felt progressively threatened by the 1990-2012 rule of Ali Abdullah Saleh.

In his 40s the group has acquired thousands of fighters and a huge arsenal of armed drones and ballistic missiles. In 2022 he said that his goal was to be able to strike any target in Saudi Arabia or the UAE, both major OPEC oil producers who view Iran and its proxies s major security threats to the Middle East and beyond. Yemen experts say the Houthis are motivated primarily by a domestic agenda though they share a political affinity for Iran and Hezbollah. The Houthis deny being puppets of Teheran and say they are fighting a corrupt system and regional aggression.

Since October 7, 2023 all eyes are focused to see how events unfold in the broader Iranian front; more precisely on Israel's northern front. Will Hassan Nasrullah secretary general of Hezbollah decide on a full scale war? Would

Iranians actually want a full scale war, not limited only to Gaza and Hamas? Since November Houthis have also challenged Israel's missile defence systems. Time and again, they launch missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) towards Israel , aiming to target thousands of kilometres away from Yemen. But despite their fighters are in sandals like ragtag militia they cannot be dismissed. For years Saudis tried to eliminate them militarily without success. Even with their military superiority, billions went up in flames in Saudi oil fields after 10 UAVs allegedly sent by Houthis hit Aramco's facilities in Abaqaiq and Khurais in September 2019. This had the immediate effect of reducing Saudi oil production.

These US led air strikes are cause for significant change in West Asia all round. It is not yet known that the Houthis would back down and stop attacking merchant shipping in the Red Sea. Even Egypt has been affected. Suez Canal revenues have dropped 40% since the beginning of the year as compared to 2023 and ship transit traffic has dropped by 30% between January 1-11. This is huge considering that Egyptians earn about \$ 9 billion a year from Suez canal activities.

But one thing seems to be apparently clear — escalation in West Asia is likely to increase unless matters are immediately solved politically based on human cardinal values. ●



Protests in Yemen after air strikes

Illegal Fishing is a Global Threat

John C Vann



Fishing provides a critical source of food and income for many countries, but much of it occurs unlawfully, harming vulnerable populations and eroding maritime governance. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing—known as IUU fishing—is a global scourge. Carried out by malicious actors in the shadows of the world’s oceans, it can devastate ecosystems, degrade food stocks, and undermine fragile fishing economies. A broad network of international partners, including U.S. civilian and military agencies,

should work to eradicate this threat to the world’s shared prosperity.

What is IUU fishing

Illegal fishing refers to fishing activities in contravention of applicable laws and regulations. Unreported fishing refers to fishing activities that are not reported or are misreported to relevant authorities. And unregulated fishing is done by vessels without nationality or that are not regulated by their flag state, the country in which a vessel is registered. It also occurs when vessels fish in areas or for stocks for which there are no applicable

conservation or management measures.

Where is it happening

IUU fishing is a global problem, occurring in the South China Sea, off the west coast of Africa (where estimates put illegal catch at 40 percent), off both coasts of South America, in the eastern Indian Ocean, throughout Oceania, and around Antarctica. According to the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime’s IUU Fishing Index, which benchmarks countries’ vulnerability to, prevalence of, and response to IUU fishing, four of

the top five worst-scoring countries are in Southeast Asia. China tops the list, and Russia is the sole non-Southeast Asian country, at number four.

In one particularly egregious example last year, a fleet of 350 Chinese vessels was observed conducting predatory high seas fishing around Ecuador's Galapagos Islands, a UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage site. The fleet was targeting squid and scooping up other valuable and vulnerable marine life. Locals sounded the alarm, fearing the vessels were depleting fish populations, hurting the livelihoods of small-scale fishermen in the islands, and devastating the sensitive ecosystem. Ecuador called for help, and the U.S. Coast Guard deployed a national security cutter to help patrol the area.

What are the concerns

IUU fishing threatens ocean ecosystems, including sustainable fisheries, which are critical to global food security, and it puts

those that abide by the law in the United States and abroad at a disadvantage. In 2020, the U.S. Coast Guard said that IUU fishing has replaced piracy as the leading global maritime security threat. It is estimated that up to one in every five fish caught around the world is obtained through IUU fishing, representing about a \$23 billion annual loss for the legal fishing industry. And, in large part, the poorest countries in the world, which depend on fisheries for food and livelihoods, are hit the hardest.

Fish is an essential protein source for over 40 percent of the global population. IUU fishing can decimate fish stocks, undermining a country's ability to feed its people. Further, IUU fishing can disrupt and destabilize fragile economies of coastal states. Small island nations are particularly vulnerable, in that many have vast ocean resources but very limited capacity to patrol their exclusive economic zones, or EEZs. Many of these small nations also struggle to apprehend and prosecute transgressors.

What is the threat beyond the illegal fishing itself

IUU fishing often happens along with other unlawful activities, including human trafficking and forced labor. Interpol reports that fishing vessels are often used to smuggle people, drugs, and weapons, as well as to carry out acts of piracy and terrorism. IUU fishing activities are highly mobile, increasingly sophisticated, and sometimes conducted with logistical and security support from fishers' flag states. These acts undermine internationally recognized fishing regimes, the work of regional fisheries management organizations, and international bodies such as the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's Fisheries Division. Broadly speaking, it erodes collective global maritime governance.

How does the United States work to combat IUU fishing

Various U.S. government agencies work with foreign partners or participate in different multilateral forums to combat IUU fishing. For



instance, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration works with the United Nations and regional fisheries management organizations. The U.S. military, particularly the coast guard and navy, provides maritime security assistance and training to coastal state partners in regions around the world. At the same time, the United States works to model responsible maritime behavior through a strict fisheries management program and ranks in the top five countries in the world in responding to IUU fishing.

What can other governments do to fight IUU fishing

Roles and responsibilities for a government vary depending on its relationship to the vessel and the catch. A vessel's flag state has exclusive authority over it on the high seas, including with regard to matters such as labor standards and ship safety. Therefore, flag states must ensure that regulations are in place and enforced to deter IUU fishing and associated crimes from occurring on their vessels. Ignoring the duties of being a flag state can, and often does, allow illegal activity to take place. In addition, there are particularly concerning cases where flag states willfully abet IUU perpetrators by encouraging or assisting vessels that encroach on sovereign waters and EEZs of other nations or intimidate local fishermen.

Port states also can play a significant role by blocking vessels engaged in IUU fishing from using their ports and landing their catches. Governments have a framework to do so pursuant to the Agreement on Port State Measures, a UN treaty that came into force in 2016 and was the first binding international agreement that specifically targets IUU fishing. Approximately one-third of the world's countries are party to it, but UN members should collectively work to increase that number.



Meanwhile, coastal states have a responsibility to assist in curbing IUU fishing. They are responsible for conservation and management of the ocean resources to which they have sovereign rights (within their EEZs). Finally, market states, where the fish are sold, should work to ensure that their seafood is coming from legal, legitimate sources.

What other multilateral efforts are there

IUU fishing can only be combated by a whole-of-world approach, presenting an opportunity for state-to-state cooperation. Regional fisheries management organizations are working with the International Maritime Organization to boost accountability requirements aboard commercial fishing vessels across the globe. Other international bodies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are contributing to the fight as well.

Interpol's Project Scale is succeeding in catching much illegal fishing. Technology initiatives such as the Pew Charitable Trusts' Overseas Ocean Monitor and Global Fishing Watch's satellite-based platforms have been highly effective tools for spotting suspect activity across large spans of the ocean. And NGOs such as the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society and Greenpeace, which operate on contributions from private donors with vessels crewed by volunteers, also help build maritime domain awareness.

The world needs to collectively continue to fight the scourge of IUU fishing in order to protect sensitive marine environments and food sustainability, prevent irreparable damage to coastal economies, counter corruption and associated criminal activity, and uphold the sovereignty and security of the world's maritime nations. ●



Arthur Miller (1915-2005) was amongst the great playwrights and screenplay-writers of Hollywood. This article is about a sentence that he wrote in his acclaimed play *The Crucible*; and the wider implications of his words for the political scene in Pakistan. Arthur Miller wrote in the beginning of Act One of this play, and I rephrase, “The repressions of an order are sometimes heavier than warranted by the dangers against which the repression was organised.” The sentence reflects keen observation of history and society. This overreaction happens in family affairs, in the business world and in international relations – it affects family members, business partners, state organisations and dictators. It can happen that revenge exacted is far more excessive and counterproductive than the original perceived wrong.

It is commonly observed across history that the authoritarian (over)reaction causes more grief to society than

In The Crucible That Is PAKISTAN

Parvez Mahmood

In Pakistan, over last seven decades, thousands have been incarcerated and hundreds killed at the hand of military rulers and religious fanatics

the original threats would have; and a few incidents are quoted here. The internal and external reaction to the protests of initial phase of French Revolution gave birth to Robespierre's Terror which was the bloodiest episode of the French Revolution. This violent response against the suspected opponents of revolution stymied all notions of Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité; the original motivation of revolution. In the US in early 1950s, a terror was unleashed in politics and academia by

McCarthyism. In an attempt to eradicate all symbols and sympathizers of Communism, many innocent people were hounded and maligned; some simply to settle personnel scores. In Iran, the Shah regime's violence against the Islamic factions led to the more fierce revolution led by Imam Khomeini. The theocracy in control of Iran now appears more violent and dictatorial than the order it replaced.

Pakistan has experienced this phenomenon multiple times, from

the Ayub era to the present times, of one bad government being forcibly replaced by a far worse order; more dictatorial, divisive and corrupt than the previous had been. In a rephrasing of Miller's words in the same play, the witch-hunt that our society has witnessed is a perverse manifestation of the panic which set in among the elite and privileged classes (read 'establishment') when the balance appeared to be turning towards an end to corruption and elitism, amid loud demands for greater individual freedoms. This causes concern in the establishment, as it perceives weakening of its control of the country.

The slippery road to a politico-social bottomless pit started with the second Martial Law (the first was in 1953 in Lahore) imposed by President Iskander Mirza with the backing of General Ayub Khan, the Army Commander-in-Chief. Within days, the General had sacked the President and imposed martial law. That extinguished the fledgling flame of democracy and led to dismemberment of the country thirteen years later. Ayub Khan cited inefficiency and incapacity of politicians as the cause of stagnant government since



independence. Tragically but purposely, he didn't state that it was the interference of the bureaucrats in government and manipulation of judiciary that had brought the system to a halt. The dismissal of the East Pakistan government in 1954, illegal dissolution of constituent assembly in 1954, Maulvi Tamizzuddin case of 1955, and suspension of the 1956 constitution were a series of bureaucratic actions that brought the political system to an impasse.

In the Maulvi Tamizzuddin case, eight years after independence in 1955, the Federal Court led by Justice Munir even held that Pakistan was not an

independent country and that the Governor General – and not the constituent assembly! – was sovereign. This ridiculous judicial manipulation was moral turpitude that has cast a long dark shadow over the nation. This is a shadow that refuses to recede. In each of these cases, the West Pakistani feudal class and the migrant elite desired to retain power in their own hands and to exclude East Pakistan from the power circles. The result, however, has been that not only East Pakistan ceded violently but the real power passed on to the military, where it resides ever since.

In a similar era of oppression



A homeless woman in Pakistan

during General Zia-ul-Haq's era, following the dismissal of Bhutto government in 1979, the hypocritical leader of the then military junta drove the country to a cultural and political wasteland because he wanted to erase the party of his political nemesis, whom he had already murdered through manipulation of Punjab High Court and Supreme Court. By the time the C-130 crashed near Bahawalpur (with one of my classfellows in its cockpit), the nation had been irremediably divided along sectarian and linguistic lines, corruption had proliferated, guns and drugs has permeated in the society and clergy had been unleashed. The country has not recovered from the calamity that the Zia regime wrought on the nation.

The Musharraf martial law was a classic Machiavellian medieval palace coup where the army general overthrew the legitimate government. The Nawaz government employed a devious method to remove the

Army chief and the latter's fellow generals removed the elected government to save their chief from being sacked. However, by the time army rule broke down, it had earned the ignominy of excesses committed during the lawyer's movement, the sale of its citizens to the US during the US-Afghan war and creation of a phenomenon of 'missing persons.' The general wanted to save himself from early retirement but was destined to live out his remaining days in exile in disgrace, having being sentenced to death for treason. The general wanted to evade forced retirement but ended up being replaced in the army against his will, forced to resign from the Presidency and then exiled as a fugitive of law.

There are plenty of lessons in his career for those who tread in his path.

At the end of the play, when the hunt for witches had ceased, when the victims or their families had been compensated and orders for excommunication rescinded,

Arthur Miller writes, "To all intents and purposes, the power of theocracy in Massachusetts was broken." Although even one wrongful death is one too many, yet of the 200 accused of witchcraft in Salem, only 25 people lost their lives: 19 hanged and six deaths in jail. And that was sufficient to break the power of oppressors; in this case a theocracy. That was at the turn of the 17th and 18th century, at around the time that Emperor Aurangzeb died in India and the Mughal empire commenced its slide down the long road to dissolution.

In Pakistan, alas, over last seven decades, thousands have been incarcerated and hundreds killed at the hand of military rulers and religious fanatics, yet the power of the oppressors stands intact. There is a vital difference between progressive and degenerative societies. The former have hope. ●

The author is a retired PAF Group Captain

LEST WE FORGET

*It is the Soldier, not the minister
Who has given us freedom of religion.
It is the Soldier, not the reporter
Who has given us freedom of the press.
It is the Soldier, not the poet
Who has given us freedom of speech.
It is the Soldier, not the campus organizer
Who has given us freedom to protest.
It is the Soldier, not the lawyer
Who has given us the right to a fair trial.
It is the Soldier, not the politician
Who has given us the right to vote.
It is the Soldier who salutes the flag,
Who serves beneath the flag,
And whose coffin is draped by the flag,
Who allows the protester to burn the flag.*

- Charles M Province



THE NICOYA REGION OF COSTA RICA

A HIGH LONGEVITY ISLAND FOR ELDERLY MALES

A book published by the National Geographic Society identified the region of Nicoya in Costa Rica as one of a very small number of locations in the world with exceptional longevity—regions that were referred to as blue zones. Other locations noted as having high longevity were the islands of Sardinia in Italy and Okinawa in Japan. Although the selection of Nicoya was mostly based on unpublished evidence, more than a century earlier a Swiss geographer and botanist had observed: “in no other place people are blessed with such long lives”. Recently, this high longevity has been examined in a population-based sample of elderly Costa Ricans, finding that Nicoya indeed has a significantly lower death rate ratio of 0.71 compared to the rest of the country which is an extraordinary result given the already high life expectancy of elderly Costa Ricans in general. Costa Rica, the context for this study, is known as a country with outstanding health indicators in spite of its limited level of economic development.

The 4.5 million Costa Ricans have the second-highest life expectancy in the Americas (Canada has the highest), higher than wealthier countries like the United States, Chile, or Brazil. Its public health insurance system is almost universal, and its network of primary healthcare providers is believed to have helped improve the health of disadvantaged groups and led to only small socio-economic gradients in health. Elderly Costa Ricans, particularly males, have been singled out as one of the national populations whose mortality is among the lowest in the world. This is outstanding for a middle-income country whose health expenditure per capita is one-tenth of that in the United States (World Bank 2012). The research presented here further expands on the details of Costa Rica's noteworthy longevity to focus on the Costa Rican region of Nicoya.

The Nicoya Peninsula is located in the northeast of Costa Rica bordering the Pacific Ocean. Nicoya is a tropical life-zone mostly covered by dry to moist forests and pastures. In the dry season that goes from December to April the historical rainfall is almost null: 60 mm in five months (IMN 2012). In the rainy season, from May to November, there is abundant precipitation for a total of 1,700 mm rainfall. Temperatures are warm all year: minimum 22° C in January and maximum 36° C in April. Nicoya residents show significantly lower levels in the following markers of cardiovascular risk: triglycerides, fasting glucose and HbA1c for males and cholesterol, waist circumference, BMI and (marginally) diastolic blood pressure for both sexes together.

Biomarkers also show that elderly people in Nicoya, both males and females, have lower levels of functional disabilities and cognitive deterioration; i.e. they seem to have a healthier ageing process. They may also have lower levels of stress if we take their significantly longer telomeres and significantly higher levels of DHEAS as markers of stress. Since these two biomarkers are also closely associated to ageing, the longer telomeres and higher DHEAS level in Nicoya suggest a slower ageing process in this population. Elderly Nicoyans are also significantly taller than other Costa Ricans as measured by knee height. This result suggests that Nicoyans had healthier growth and development in childhood—and possibly even in-utero—as a result of better diet and fewer infections. However, we cannot yet distinguish this hypothesis from the possibility of a more severe survival selection of the fittest in Nicoya.

Two indicators of preventive health services—household visit by a health worker and flu vaccination within the past year—suggest elderly Nicoyans are better served by the Costa Rican primary healthcare system. While 64% of Nicoyans were vaccinated, only 59% of other Costa Ricans were. Moreover, Nicoyans consume less of the three most common drugs for chronic conditions in contemporary medicine: blood pressure and blood lipid lowering pills and diabetes medication. This result in part mirrors the lower prevalence of these conditions in Nicoya, but it also shows lower consumption when individuals are sick. Lipid-lowering medicine is the clearest example: 14% of Nicoyans take it compared to 27% of other Costa Ricans. When only individuals with high levels of total cholesterol are considered, the proportion taking the medicine is 29% and 36%, respectively. Thus preventive health services analysed here provide a mixed picture of Nicoyan advantages and deficits.

The data on frequency of food consumption in CRELES showed some significantly but small

differences in the diet of elderly Nicoyans compared to other Costa Ricans. Nicoya diets include significantly more plain, quotidian foods like rice, beans, beef, fish, chicken, light cheese and sodas; and significantly less of 'fancy' foods like aged cheese, olive oil or mayonnaise, less salad ingredients (lettuce, avocado, carrot, tomato) and less processed and fast foods such as white bread, cookies and hamburgers. They also drink significantly less milk (an average 0.5 glass per day compared to 0.7 glass by other Costa Ricans). There are no differences in consumption of fresh fruits, eggs, sugar, pastries and potato chips. These dietary patterns translate into the macronutrient differences.

Nicoyans eat or drink more calories, carbohydrates, proteins (mostly of animal origin) and fibre. Although they do not differ in the consumption of total fat, their significantly higher levels of saturated and trans fats probably come from the use of cheaper brands of oils. Calcium and the glycemic index are the only two macronutrients with significantly lower consumption in Nicoya. However, the estimated differences in macronutrients are small. For example, Nicoyans consume 3 g/d more protein than the 70 g/d Costa Rican average; their glycemic index is one point lower than the 76-point national average (an index of 100 corresponds to pure sugar); or their intake of fibre is one g/d higher than the national average of 23 g/d.

A distinctive characteristic of the Nicoya diet is the low consumption of cow's milk, which according to some literature is a healthy behaviour to avoid autoimmune response diseases like diabetes. Costa Rica: observed age-specific mortality rates in 1995–2000 and 2000–2005, estimated by the Central American Population Center (CCP 2012a).

Okinawa: the age-specific mortality rates reported in the official life table for the Okinawa Prefecture in year 2000 prepared by the Japanese Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare (2003)

Sardinia: average of the age-specific mortality rates in the annual life tables for the Autonomous Region of Sardinia 1995–2005 produced by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (2013)

Japan, Sweden and United States, average mortality rates in the periods 1995–99 and 2000–04 reported in the Human Mortality Database. ●

Extracts courtesy Luis Rosero-Bixby, William H. Dow and David H. Rehkopf



Nicoya peninsula, Puerto Rico

FIELD MARSHAL

Sam Maneckshaw's War Jagir (Jangi Inaam)

Ashok Ahlawat

This true story should put to rest every contention that Field Marshal Maneckshaw was head and shoulders above all other Generals of the pantheon of the Indian Army. The Meghna Gulzar movie “Sam Bahadur” is a timely tribute to the great and fascinating General. He was all that is shown in the movie and much more as a human being and an officer.

There is this story about Field Marshal Sam Maneckshaw's driver when he was army chief. As we all know, these drivers are Army Service Corps soldiers. Well I suppose the army chief must have had more than one dedicated driver for his official duties. This man was from Haryana and his name was Havildar Shyam Singh.

One day General Maneckshaw came out laughing from a conference in the north block. The driver who was standing at rigid attention opened the door for him. It was the month of April and it was a fine mellow day with a balmy sun.

“Tumhe pata hai Shyam Singh, you know Shyam Singh the defence minister today changed my name. He called me Shyam. He said “Shyam Maan bhi jao.”

Sam Maneckshaw was referring to the plea by Babu Jag Jivan Ram to invade East Pakistan in April on Mrs Gandhi's insistence and Sam had prophesied 100% defeat if we went inside East Pakistan in April 71.

“Waise there is not much difference in Shyam and Sam. Just the letter H and Y.” chuckled the

future Field Marshall.

After the war was over and just when General Maneckshaw was about to retire, he noticed Shyam Singh had become tense and his uneasiness was smeared on his face which the General easily read.

“What's the matter Shyam Singh, your face these days looks like your family's buffalo has stopped giving milk?”

“Nahi sahab wo baat nahi hai- No sir that's not the matter and the dour man would clamp shut.”

The days passed and Sam Maneckshaw's date of retirement came closer and closer. One day the driver said, “Sahab, I have one favour to ask of you and only you can help me. “Yes, shoot Shyam Singh.”

“Sahab I want to go on



Maneckshaw statue in Maneckshaw centre New Delhi; right statue in Pune cantonment

retirement. Please help me obtain release from army service." "But what's the matter, do you have some, Zameen kaa muqqadma or some family problems. You should try to serve your full length of service. I will make you Naib Subedar but you continue serving." said the chief. "Nahi sahab. That's not the matter. It's something else that I cannot disclose before I get my release from service." Maneckshaw appreciated the man's candour and izzat and did what he had to do. So the drivers release date and papers came. And then he asked his driver again, "Ab to khush ho. Are you happy now? Tell me why have you left service early." The driver stood at attention and said, "Sahab aap ki gaadi chalane ke baad me kissi aur ki gaadi nahi chala sakta. Sir after being your driver I cannot drive anyone else's in my life time. This has been the high point of my life and I want to go home, issi izzat se with this pride." The field Marshall laughed and said, "Tum bahut bada bewakoof hai, you Haryanvi chaps, you are a big fool." But now that his driver's papers had come through nothing could be done. The driver was an obstinate Haryanvi. A breed of men who never retracted once they made up their mind. The issue kept roaming in the mind of the chief. One day he asked his driver, "What will you do after retirement?" "Sir I will do something or the other. I will find a job." replied the driver. "How much agricultural land do you have." "None sir, I am from a poor family." The future field Marshall was quite taken aback. This penniless poor man had just kicked his job because he couldn't drive another man after he had been driver to him. The day his driver was leaving Sam gave him an envelope. "Shyam Singh, open it only once you reach your home." "Ji sahib Yes sir." The driver saluted and left.

When he reached his home he



Field Marshal Maneckshaw

forgot all about the envelope and got busy with life and finding some job. He got a job of driving some freight truck. Then one day his wife said to him, "I was putting away your army uniform in the sandook (steel trunk) and this envelope was in your shirt pocket." "Oh this, I had forgotten all about it. I did not open it because I can't read or write much. Sahib must have written a letter of appreciation for me as is the practice with senior officers." "Fir bhi, please open it and have it read by the school masterji and tell me what it says." said the wife.

So the soldier and his wife went to the village school and requested the headmaster to translate the contents of the letter. The headmaster put on his glasses and tore open the envelope and his eyes stayed transfixed on the sheet of paper. "Why are you staring at the page like this masterji?" asked

Shyam Singh. "You have any idea what this letter is?" "No sir I haven't." "This is a transfer deed. The Haryana Government had given a war jagir of 25 acres of land to General Sam Maneckshaw in Haryana after the 1971 war victory. He has gifted his war jagir to you. You are the owner of 25 acres of agricultural land now." Then the wife whacked her husband angrily. "Tu to nira bewakuf manas hai-You are such a stupid fool, I was about to burn this envelope to light the choolha (oven). Thank God I asked you what was in it first. You are the biggest idiot I have seen." Anyhow, that's the story about the great General Sam Maneckshaw, Military Cross. He gifted his war jagir near Sonapat to his driver and his Field Marshal's pay arrears to the Army Widows Welfare Fund. Now can anyone even come close to such a great man? ●

DISTRESS OF MUSTARD

Farmers' Points to the Coming Wider Crisis for Farmers of all Traditional Oilseeds in India

While all GM crops and particularly GM food crops are dangerous, this is particularly true in the context of oilseed crops including mustard.

■ Bharat Dogra

Recent reports indicate a sharp downward trend in the price of mustard, an important oilseed crop of India. The price in recent days at INR 5200 a quintal compared to the price of INR 7500 a quintal about two years back. This has been attributed largely to an increase in imports of edible oils, an increase of nearly 2.4 million tonnes in a single year. While farmers growing mustard in states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and elsewhere are understandably disappointed by this, in trade lines there is less enthusiasm now for what has been the preferred oilseed crop for many people in India, which in addition also provides much relished leafy vegetable and has highly valued medicinal uses as well.

If edible oil imports continue to increase, the problems of mustard oil farmers are likely to persist. Instead the government should invest much more resources in ensuring higher procurement of mustard crop at a better price. What is more, the current distress of mustard farmers is also a pointer to a wider crisis for farmers of all traditional oilseeds in India including groundnuts, sesame, coconut and several minor oilseeds (apart from mustard), related to the imports of cheaper edible oils. In addition a new



source of threats is likely to appear in the form of increased domestic availability of palm oil. Despite its high ecological costs, the government appears determined to persist with plans to rapidly spread palm oil fruit tree plantations in India. If these plans succeed then cheaper availability of less healthy edible oil, imported as well as locally produced, will flood the Indian edible oil market, thereby further diminishing the prospects of the large number of farmers growing traditional oilseed crops (all of which have important diverse nutrition and health uses in

addition to providing edible oils), who may start shifting to other crops, despite the fact that they have valuable skills in growing these traditional oilseed crops and their crop-patterns and rotations are well adapted to these crops.

As a result if within a decade or two India's traditional oilseeds decline a lot, it will be difficult to recover from this setback. This will also adversely affect the availability of oilcakes for dairy and farm animals. This will be a very big loss for agriculture, animal husbandry, nutrition and health. In addition the government

has been trying its best to promote the spread of genetically modified (GM) mustard crop varieties. This too can be very harmful for health as well as for agriculture and environment keeping in view the several serious and well-known adverse aspects and impacts of GM crops.

Hence this is a time to seriously consider and monitor the changes taking place in the oilseeds and edible oils sector so that the interests of farmers can be protected along with health, nutrition and environment. It is important to take corrective actions before it is too late. The present big push for palm oil may cause disruption at two levels—in places where highly water-intensive palm oil fruit plantations are imposed at the cost of local biodiversity and secondly at the level of farmers growing traditional oilseed crops elsewhere.

The Supreme Court acted with so much wisdom and firmness when it withstood the pressures exerted by the

government for allowing cultivation of GM Mustard. A bench comprising Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan said—“Environmental harm cannot be reversed.” (hence a lot of caution is needed). Sad that the government has apparently revealed itself to be for the GM lobby.

When Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh ordered moratorium on Bt brinjal it won widespread appreciation all over the world wherever the onslaught of the biggest multinational food and agro-chemical companies to gain control over world food and farming systems by promoting GM crops is being resisted. Even today the brave steps of the Mexico government to resist GM corn are being appreciated all over the world. Damages worth millions and millions of dollars have been awarded by courts to those who suffered from these health hazards. While specific issues relating to any specific GM crop variety can be discussed as much as desired, this discussion should not ignore

the wider context that the many-sided serious hazards, risks and harms of GM crops are well-established in the reports of several senior scientists and groups of scientists, including a former advisor of the Supreme Court of India.

Till recently the Indian government, supported by a wide range of farmer, health and environmental organizations and activists, had taken a clear decision not to permit any GM or GE (genetically modified or genetically engineered) food crop in the country, keeping in view their widely documented risks and hazards. What prompted the government to change its stand, and start pleading for the cultivation of GM food crops?

The only GM crop released in India so far is GM cotton in the form of Bt cotton, and although its cottonseed oil is widely used for preparing namkeen or salty foods sold in the market and its oilcake is widely consumed by dairy animals, cotton is generally regarded as a commercial crop and



not a food crop.

However the GM lobbyists got busy again to push for introducing another GM food crop, this time gunning for mustard in the frontline, with plans to introduce other GM food crops once the gates were opened with GM mustard as the first GM food crop to be introduced in India. These initial efforts were checked after widespread mobilization by activists and a court battle as well, with the Supreme Court's technical committee advising very clearly against the introduction of GM mustard.

Amazingly very soon after this, and after many adverse aspects of GM mustard had been widely established, recently again the efforts to introduce GM mustard started on a very shrill note, preceded by the US government's efforts at the WTO to break the barriers to exporting USA's GM food to several developing countries including India. After this it started appearing that the government has decided to surrender to the powerful GM lobby.

In India the government regulatory agency agreed for environmental release of GM mustard but this was challenged in the Supreme Court. In Mexico where the President supported by many activists and farmers is firmly opposed to GM crops, the government came under increasing pressure from its powerful neighbor the USA to agree to import GM yellow corn.

The scientific literature on this issue has been reviewed by a very senior scientist the late Dr. Pushpa M. Bhargava, the founder of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology who had also been appointed by the Supreme Court of India as an expert on food safety issues to guide the court. He has stated, "There are over 500 research publications by scientists of indisputable integrity, who have

no conflict of interest, that establish harmful effects of GM crops on human, animal and plant health, and on the environment and biodiversity... On the other hand, virtually every paper supporting GM crops is by scientists who have a declared conflict of interest or whose credibility and integrity can be doubted."

A group of eminent scientists organized under the Independent Science Panel have stated in very clear terms, "GM crops have failed to deliver the promised benefits and are posing escalating problems on the farm. Transgenic contamination is now widely acknowledged to be unavoidable, and hence there can be no co-existence of GM and non-GM agriculture. Most important of all, GM crops have not been proven safe. On the contrary, sufficient evidence has emerged to raise serious safety concerns, that if ignored could result in irreversible damage to health and the environment. GM crops should be firmly rejected now... By far the most insidious dangers of genetic engineering are inherent to the process itself, which greatly enhances the scope and probability of horizontal gene transfer and recombination, the main route to creating viruses and bacteria that cause disease epidemics." At least in present times we should heed such a warning given by eminent scientists.

In addition there have been several official reports in India on the hazards and non-desirability of GM crops, there have been the Sopory Committee Report (August 2012), the Parliamentary Standing Committee Report on GM Crops of August 2012 and again of 2017 which was more specific regarding the dangers of GM Mustard, and the Technical Expert Committee (TEC) Report.

While all GM crops and particularly GM food crops are dangerous, this is particularly true

in the context of oilseed crops including mustard. This is because oilseeds provide edible oils which are used in preparing almost all our cooked meals to a lesser or greater extent. In addition mustard also has important medicinal uses in India. Its leaves are consumed directly as food and its oilcake is widely fed to dairy animals. Claims of higher yield for GM have been widely refuted to be false and based on wrong comparison as several higher yielding non-GM mustard varieties are available and a satisfactory rise in mustard production has been achieved on their basis.

While the concern of providing safe and healthy food to the people of India is the top concern of the country, in addition India can also become a leading exporter of safe and healthy, organic and non-GM food but certain foreign interests want to destroy the possibilities of India emerging in this role and it is these forces which are pushing GM crops in India. Any honest review of Bt cotton in India would also reveal the harm it has caused, and several well-documented papers on this subject are already available. But the harm caused by GM mustard and introduction of GM food crops would be simply too high, much, much higher than this.

At a time when India should be taking the path of true natural farming and when thousands of natural farmers are actually showing by their example that they are ready to contribute so much to this, government policy is messing up everything and spreading confusion by promoting GM crops. Protect food and farming system, protect oilseeds, wake up people of India. ●

The author is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books include Planet in Peril, Man over Machine—A Path to Peace, Protecting Earth for Children, Earth without Borders and India's Quest for Healthy Food and Sustainable Farming.

It has been more than five years since Tumpa's mother Arati last saw her. Tumpa, a resident of Dakshinpara on Bali Island in Sundarban, left for school one morning never to return. Her room still holds remnants of her life—kurtas, an old science book, and expired cosmetics.

"I carried her in my womb for nine months. How can I lose hope now?" Arati asks. "I still don't know if she was taken by wild animals or human predators. Only god knows"..

Two years ago, when a father lodged a complaint at Jibantala Police Station in South 24 Parganas about his daughter's disappearance, the police investigation led to the arrest of a placement agency owner and his wife. The state police busted the alleged kingpin who worked who worked with the placement agency to traffic over 2,000 girls in the Sundarban and the surrounding areas in South 24 Parganas. The children were purchased from the local contacts for Rs 5,000 each.

HOW THE NATURE *of* HUMAN TRAFFICKING HAS CHANGED IN BENGAL

While the numbers have increased, nowadays many families are reluctant to lodge police complaints.

■ Joydeep Sarkar and Aparna Bhattacharya

Most of the cases went unreported to the police.

About four years ago, on a winter morning, Dasharath Mondal's daughter disappeared. In the next few months, he frantically searched for her in the homes of relatives and friends but did not report the incident to the police fearing social ostracisation. But one cannot say that his daughter is 'missing'. The father of two explains, "My daughter has been

working outside for four years. Last year, she returned home for seven days, contributed money to house repairs, and took her younger sister with her. She looks different now – and is well-dressed. We have no idea where she works or lives. Even if we ask, she doesn't specify, only says she is happy with her work."

A police officer from the special cell handling trafficking in the district recounted an incident



West Bengal Sunderban

involving a teenager named Fatima. She was trafficked to Kashmir, made to work as a sex worker and managed to flee to Delhi but was then 'sold' for Rs 40,000 to another man from Rajasthan. Her name was changed to Nandini, as per the wishes of her new 'owner', said police. When police rescued her, she chose to go back to the man who 'purchased' her in Rajasthan. She cited financial stability.

Between 2019 to 2021, the number of missing children in West Bengal increased by 22% rising from 8,205 to 9,996, whereas the national increase was 6% (from 73,138 to 77,535). During the pandemic, around 100,000 adult women in Bengal, aged 18 and above, went missing in 2020 and 2021. Only 44,000 have been located so far, leaving over 50,000 still unaccounted for. While the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data ranks West Bengal 10th in human trafficking, with a slight increase from 27 cases in 2020 to 29 in 2021, the ground reality gives a grim picture. Many activists we spoke to highlight underreporting. Even when cases are reported to the police, a significant number omit the crucial aspect of trafficking.

Dearah Association for Social and Humanitarian Action, popularly known as 'Asha NGO' has been on the child protection in the bordering blocks along the Indo-Bangladesh border and the Sundarbans. Sanjeev Singh, the secretary of the organisation, narrates a case where a dance group, registered under the Societies Registration Act, acts as a front for trafficking. Young women are often offered respectable jobs at the outset but then go missing.

"Families find it challenging to decide on filing the complaint as their daughters, regardless of the nature of their work, send them substantial amounts of money



every month. The dynamics of trafficking has changed in the last 10 years," says Sanjeev.

In the narrow lanes of Netaji Palli in Jagaddal, North 24 Parganas, Sanjoy Das is still grappling with the pain of losing his daughter. Fourteen-year-old Nandita was a fierce volleyball player and a student at the nearby Aatpur Girls School. She wanted a good smartphone that her daily wage-earning father, Sanjay, could not afford. To earn pocket money for her goal, Nandita used to work part-time. One morning, she mysteriously disappeared.

Sanjoy reported the case to the police. During the investigation, he was informed that his daughter's body was found in Siwan. It was revealed that she had joined an orchestra and catering firm in Bihar, where she was shot dead. Sanjoy says he has not received her death certificate or autopsy report.

"We were against her involvement in catering work. I heard that my daughter was shot and killed during a wedding function where she went to work. The local police station says that the mention of death due to the shooting will be in the autopsy report. Only then will the matter of arresting the criminals be considered. The Bihar government

is expected to send us Rs 5 lakh as compensation and a death certificate. I still haven't received anything," says Sanjay.

In the North 24 Parganas, many speak of the tradition of hiring dancers for parties. Many of those hired are underage. Police officials working in this field also point out the tacit approval of many families who want the additional income.

"Women engaged in catering or dance groups for weddings are all becoming part of this cycle of crime. Sometimes, even when recharging your mobile phone at a shop, your number can be leaked to crime rackets. Initially, there are missed calls, then regular contact, and finally, they are lured with lucrative offers to disappear," says a police official from North 24 Parganas.

Former senior police officer Sukhendu Hira also speaks of such methods. Hira says there are some age-old ways young women are trafficked: they are given work or married off or lured with promises of love. Local acquaintances in the area are also noted to facilitate trafficking. These criminal activities often go unreported due to families' struggles with poverty. "Even the victims often become a part of the recruitment racket," another police officer says. ●

YOUR IDEAL IN LIFE

- Shrii Shrii Ānandamūrti

[As Bábá took His seat in the room in the Jamalpur Ashram, He said:] In the Mahābhārata period we find two persons coming quite close to Shrii Krśṇa – Arjuna and Sudāmā. Both were greatly devoted to him. Now tell me, which of the two is the greater devotee of Shrii Krśṇa, and whom would you choose as the ideal of your life?

[One by one, persons present there expressed their views. Some said that Arjuna was more devoted to Shrii Krśṇa than was Sudāmā, for he did all that the Lord asked him to do. Arjuna was the ideal of their life for he was a great karma ogi (yogi of selfless action) and the much-troubled world of today needed a karma ogi. A similar number were for Sudāmā. Even being such a poor man and knowing that his childhood playmate Krśṇa could shower riches on him, he never ever asked for even a little material help. Sudāmā was a greater devotee than was Arjuna. Sudāmā was the ideal of their life. When all had expressed themselves, Bábá said:] Devotion means unconditional self-surrender. The measure of devotion is the amount of this self-surrender. One who has more of it, is a greater devotee than one who has less of it.

[Bábá paused and then said:] Arjuna and Sudāmā were great devotees. But while comparing their devotion by this yardstick, we have got to say that Sudāmā was a greater devotee than was Arjuna. You know the story in the Mahābhārata – Arjuna refused to fight when Shrii Krśṇa asked him to do so. This shows that Arjuna did not have full faith in and complete surrender to Shrii Krśṇa. Had there been complete surrender, Arjuna would have done as directed by Shrii Krśṇa. On the other hand, we notice a complete surrender by Sudāmā. He never desired anything from Krśṇa, his sakhā [friend], who could have given him anything and everything. Howsoever he was, he remained content. Even when his wife forced him to go to Shrii Krśṇa to request Him to remove his poverty, he went to him but didn't ask for a thing. Sudāmā was a greater devotee than was Arjuna.

[Bábá again paused and then continued (in reference to the second of the original questions):] Now whom should you take to be your ideal? Neither of the two – neither Sudāmā nor Arjuna. You do know that neither of the two is perfect – so how to take anything imperfect as the ideal of life? Your ideal has to be perfect – so your ideal is to be the Lord and the Lord alone. No one else should be your ideal.

And you should not pray to the Lord, “Make me this, make me that; make me Arjuna or make me Sudāmā.” No, such should never be your prayer, for suppose the Lord wants you to become even greater than what you are praying to become? In such a case, you are creating a hindrance to your own welfare.

What you must do is simply surrender to the Lord and leave everything else to Him and Him alone. Your ideal should be the Lord, and your effort should be towards a complete self-surrender. You should ask the Lord to make you what He wants. You should ask the Lord to take that work from You which He desires.

And if he finds that you have the potentialities to do His work, but you are lacking in self-surrender and you have not forgone your ego, then in such a case He will first create circumstances in which your ego will be forced to yield and surrender. After this only will the Lord choose you to be the medium for His work. You do know, similar was the case with Arjuna. Arjuna had the potentiality, but he also had some ego left in him. Shrii Krśṇa first made him surrender by showing His virāṭa rūpa [Cosmic form], and then alone was Arjuna chosen to be the medium. ●

Ananda Vacanamratam 31, Appendix 'From the Notebooks of Devotees'

AMURT Distributes Blankets



Under the banner of Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team (AMURT), Samastipur, blankets were given to 50 people for protection from bitter cold on 16 January 2024.

AMURT's mission is to serve the helpless, underprivileged and disaster-affected people and improve their quality of life in every corner of the world. AMURT helps people and communities secure their basic necessities of life while respecting their customs, language and religious beliefs.





We Need to Protect Bhojpuri Language from Vulgarities : Prof. RP Singh



A seminar on 'Bhojpuri language, the pride of Bhojpuri' was held on 24th December at the Buddhist Museum in Kushinagar. The event was organized by Bhojpuri Punarjagran Manch, Deoria, and featured various speakers who discussed the importance and challenges of Bhojpuri language and culture. They urged the Bhojpuri community to preserve the richness and purity of their literature and movies, freeing them from all vulgarity. They also demanded constitutional recognition for their language.

The chief guest of the seminar was Professor RP Singh, from the Commerce Department of Deen Dayal Upadhyay University, Gorakhpur. He said that Bhojpuri language was a part of India's identity and heritage, and that it should be promoted and celebrated. He also mentioned the contributions of various saints and poets, such as Gorakshanath, Kabir, Dnyaneshwar, Bhikhari Thakur, and Gorakh Pandey, who enriched Bhojpuri with their spiritual and literary works.

The seminar also saw the participation of several prominent members of the Pragatishil Bhojpuri Samaj from different districts, who shared their views and opinions on the topic. The seminar concluded with a cultural program in Bhojpuri, performed by Mangala Arya, Kammi Kumari, Priya Giri, Saurabh Kumar, Sunil Mishra, Supriya Tiwari, Atul Bharti, Ravi Shankar Pathak and others.



PBI (Vidarbha) Launches Movement for Unemployed Youths

Under the dynamic leadership of Proutist Madhukar Nistane, the Proutist Bloc in Vidarbha, India, has initiated a groundbreaking movement aimed at addressing the concerns of the state's unemployed youth.

In an exclusive interview with the PROUT journal's correspondent, Madhukar Nistane expressed, "Through this movement, our party is uniting unemployed youth in the region to articulate their genuine demands with clarity and vigour. Additionally, we are guiding them to channel their energy into socially constructive activities."

The movement has the following demands:

1. Everybody, who is willing to work, should be given an employment opportunity that ensures them adequate purchasing power for their basic necessities.
2. Competitive exams for government jobs should be conducted fairly and their results, declared timely.
3. Within every constituency, employment opportunities should be created.
4. Cooperative Agro-based and Agrico-indusries should be opened in every district.
5. Farmers should be ensured fair MRP for their produce.
6. Agricultural labourers should be guaranteed minimum 6 months of employment with adequate compensation.

PBI's movement aims to address systemic issues and champion the rights of the unemployed youth, fostering a more equitable and prosperous future for Vidarbha.



Subhash Chandra Suman Becomes VP of PBI (Bihar)



In a recent development, Proutist Bloc, India (PBI) has announced Subhash Chandra Suman as its new Vice-president for the Bihar state committee.

Suman, 48, is a farmer, and a social and political activist, who hails from Khagariya in Bihar.

The party hopes that his appointment will be instrumental in spreading its ideology and vision among the masses, strengthening its presence and influence in the state of Bihar.

PBI (MP) Inaugurates its Head Office in Balaghat

In a significant development, the Madhya Pradesh state committee of the Proutist Bloc, India (PBI) marked a momentous occasion with the inauguration of its head office on January 15, 2024.

The newly established headquarters, located at C.H. Road, Prem Nagar, Balaghat, MP, will serve not only as the state committee's central hub but also as the official office for the Balaghat-Siwan parliamentary constituency. This move is expected to enhance the organizational presence and efficiency of PBI in the region.



The Chronicle of a Political Alternative

– Ravindra Singh (Public Relations Secretary, PBI)

Proutist Bloc India (PBI) has recently released a 52-page book in Hindi titled "PBI: Rajnaitik Vikalp Jiski Aaj Bharatvarsh ko Jarurat Hai" (PBI: The Political Alternative that India Needs Today), authored by Acharya Santosananda Avadhuta.

The book gives a detailed account of the history of Proutist Bloc India (PBI), a political party founded by Shri Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar in 1968. The narrative covers the birth, challenges, and revival of PBI, spanning over five decades.

Acharya Santosananda Avadhuta traces the origins of PBI, providing insights into Shri Sarkar's vision for a global political movement based on moral principles and progressive ideals. The book highlights PBI's distinctive approach, focusing on its dedication to Prout (Progressive Utilisation Theory) and the establishment of Proutist government in India.

The author discusses the challenges faced by PBI under Shri Sarkar's guidance, and the obstacles encountered during the declaration of internal emergency in 1975. The narrative extends to the post-emergency period, shedding light on the party's cancellation of its registration in 1992 and the subsequent Struggle for restoration.

The book explores the complexities of the political landscape, detailing PBI's interactions with the Election Commission and the legal battles for re-registration. The author critically analyzes the obstacles faced by PBI, attributing its limited success to factors such as the party workers' tendency for indifference until elections and the changing political dynamics in India.

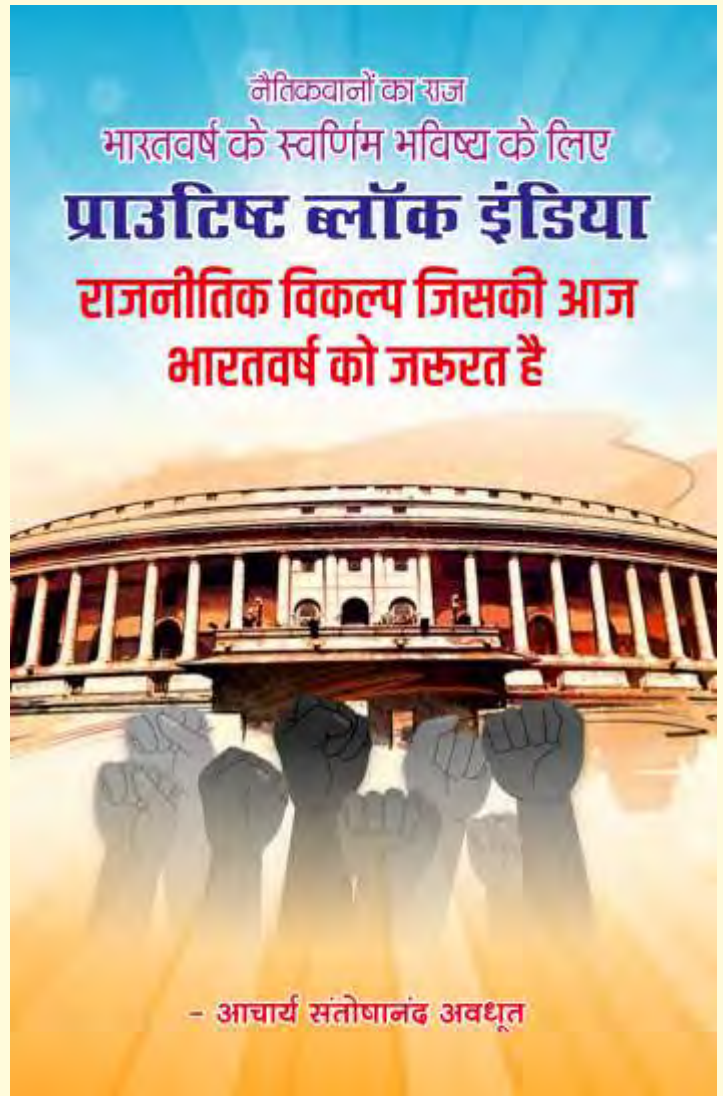
A notable aspect of the book is its exploration of Prout, an ideology advocating for economic justice and the empowerment of local communities. The author emphasizes PBI's commitment to Prout's principles, indifference to the demand for "Amiri Rekha" (wealth limit) to ensure economic democracy and social justice.

The book also addresses the issue of political democracy, emphasizing the party's stance on the right to vote and the need for genuine representation. It argues for a redefinition of political engagement, advocating for ethical and moral individuals to enter politics, while excluding those deemed unethical.

In the latter part of the book, the author outlines PBI's action plan, emphasizing its focus on morality in politics and the establishment of economic democracy. The vision includes guarantees for basic necessities, increasing purchasing power, local economic decision-making, and resistance against external interference.

The narrative concludes with an inspirational message from Shri Sarkar, urging PBI members to endure hardships and work towards the realisation of Sadvipra Raj, a society characterised by moral values.

This book provides readers with a profound understanding of the challenges faced by a unique political entity striving to bring about social and economic transformation. It serves as a valuable resource for those interested in the intersection of spirituality, politics, and social change in the Indian context.





PBI's Journey in Electoral Politics

December 1968 – Shashi Ranjan, sitting Member of Lok Sabha, resigns from Congress Party

5th December 1968 – Application to the Election Commission of India for the registration of this (PBI) political party. The application mentions its 14 units, including Amra Bengali, Angika Samaj, Pragatishil Magahi Samaj, Nagpuriya Samaj, Bhojpuri Samaj, Avadhi Samaj, Braj Samaj, Bundeli Samaj, Garhwali Samaj, Kumaoni Samaj, Haryanavi Samaj, Asi Punjabi, and Proutist League.

The following names are mentioned as the functionaries of the party "Proutist Bloc, India" :

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Chairman | : | Shashi Ranjan MP |
| 2. Chief Secretary | : | Tapas Kumar Banerjee (Amra Bengali) |
| 3. Organising Secretary | : | Naval Kishor Sahay (Angika Samaj) |
| 4. Finance Secretary | : | Ladali Prasad |
| 5. Publicity Secretary and Treasurer | : | Professor Raghunath Prasad |
| 6. Relief (Social Care) Secretary | : | Professor Shashi Bhushan (Bhojpuri Samaj) |

6th December 1968: Shashi Ranjanji writes to ECI stating that there is no need to separately register its units as mentioned above.

6th December 1968 : Election Commission replies to the chairman, PBI, that they have registered latter as a political party and the symbol "Swastik within Circle" has been included in the list of free symbols that may be utilized by PBI according to the Commission's rules and regulations.

18th December 1968 : ECI releases the list of registered political parties, with PBI listed at serial no. 33.

4th January 1969 : ECI issues a consolidated up-to-date list of registered political parties wherein PBI's name figures at serial no. 39.

13th December 1969 : PBI writes to ECI inquiring about the former's registration number.

20th December 1969 : ECI replies, stating that it does not grant any registration number to registered political parties.

30th November 1992 : Jaiprakash Sharma (Bhaiji) applies to ECI for re-registration since PBI's name was deleted by ECI from its list of registered political parties. The application includes the names of various functionaries of the Party as given below :

- | | | |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| 1. Chairman | - | Jaiprakash Sharma |
| 2. Secretary | - | Acharya Raghunath Prasad |
| 3. Joint Secretary and Public Relations Secretary
cum Organizing Secretary North Area | - | Acharya Sujit Kumar |
| 4. Organizing Secretary Area South | - | R. Bhaktavatsalam |
| 5. Organizing Secretary Area West | - | Dr. SD Dhotre |
| 6. Organizing Secretary Area East | - | Chandra Narayan Yadav |
| 7. Organizing Secretary, Women's Wing | - | Professor (Dr.) CP Solanki |
| 8. Office Secretary | - | HR Bhagi |

17th December 1992 : ECI acknowledges PBI's application for re-registration dated 30th November 1992, pointing out the lack of information regarding the date of PBI's formation and requests to furnish the same in order to consider the party's application for re-registration.

26th December 1992 : PBI replies, stating the date of its formation.

21st January 1993 : ECI writes to PBI, stating the rejection of the party's application for re-registration by the Commission's order dated 4th February 1992.

11th February 1993 : PBI submits a fresh application for re-registration.

9th March 1993 : ECI writes to PBI, pointing out anomalies in its application and refuses to grant registration.

1st October 2009 : PBI submits a fresh application for registration before ECI by some inspired Proutists.

7th September 2010 : ECI restores the registration of PBI as a political party after prolonged official formalities.

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

CLOUDS ARE DISPELLED

KEŢE GECHE MEGH, GECHE UDVEG
ÁLOR JÁTRÁ PATHE
DÚR NIILIMÁY KÁRÁ ÉKE JÁY
SONÁLI SAORA RATHE

KEŢE GECHE MEGH, GECHE UDVEG
ÁLOR JÁTRÁ PATHE

ESO BHÁI SABE E MAHOTSAVE,
ÁJIKÁR E ÚŚÁY
DHARAŅIIRA DHVANI ALAKÁR VÁNII
EK HOYE MISHE JÁY

Clouds are dispelled,
Upon the exciting journey of light.
In distant blue skies
Who calls from beyond

The golden solar chariot.
Come brothers all

In this great festival
Of today's dawn.
Melody of the earth
Message from heavens
All blend into one.



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*Conditions apply

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Supreme Hospital is a 225 bedded, 5 OT multi super specialty Tertiary care hospital, focusing on medical and surgical super specialties of neuro sciences, cardiac sciences, gastro sciences, renal sciences, critical care, ortho-trauma, mother and child, ophthalmic, ENT and many more. We are a patient centric organization, providing international quality healthcare by compassionate professionals at affordable price, in full compliance with international quality standards / guidelines. So the Supreme Hospital Is The Top Hospital In Faridabad.