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PROUT

A Journal of Proutistic Views and Neo-Humanistic Analysis



AGRICULTURAL BILLS REPEAL Further Directions



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HUMANITY MUST
EVOLVE, BUT NOT
THROUGH MIRACLES

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ACCORDING TO THE UN, MORE THAN 736
MILLION PEOPLE LIVE BELOW THE
INTERNATIONAL POVERTY LINE.

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PROUT

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PROUT

PROGRESSIVE UTILISATION THEORY

Propounded by - Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

PROUT - Cry of the Suffering Humanity

What is PROUT :

PROUT is an acronym for the Progressive Utilization Theory. Conceptualized in 1959 by Indian Philosopher Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, PROUT is a viable alternative to the outmoded capitalist and communist socio-economic paradigms. Neither of these approaches has adequately met the physical, mental and spiritual needs of humanity. PROUT seeks a harmonious balance between economic growth, social development and cultural expression.

Combining the wisdom of spirituality, the struggle for self-reliance, and the spirit of economic democracy, Proutist intellectuals and activists are attempting to create a new civilizational discourse. PROUT newsmagazine aims at conveying comprehensive and visionary goals of PROUT Philosophy.

PROUT magazine invites scientists, economists, politicians, artists, intellectuals and others to join us in the creation of a new, spiritually bonded society by propagating and popularising unambiguous elevating thoughts. Through Proutistic views and Neo Humanistic analysis, it strives to serve as beacon for the benighted civilization of our times.

Main principles of PROUT and Neo-Humanism



Neo-humanism : Neo-humanism expands the humanistic love for all human beings to include love and respect for all creation - plants, animals and even inanimate objects. Neo-humanism provides a philosophical basis for creating a new era of ecological balance, planetary citizenship and cosmic kinship.



Basic Necessities Guaranteed To All : People can not strive toward their highest human aspirations if they are lacking the basic requirements of life. PROUT believes that access to food, shelter, clothing, education and medical care are fundamental human rights which must be guaranteed to all.



Balanced Economy : Prout advocates regional self-reliance, cooperatively owned and managed businesses, local control of large scale key industries, and limits on the individual accumulation of excessive wealth.



Women's Right: PROUT encourages the struggle against all forms of violence and exploitation used to suppress women. PROUT's goal is coordinated cooperation, with equal rights between men and women.



Cultural Diversity: In the spirit of universal fellowship PROUT encourages the protection and cultivation of local culture, language, history and tradition.

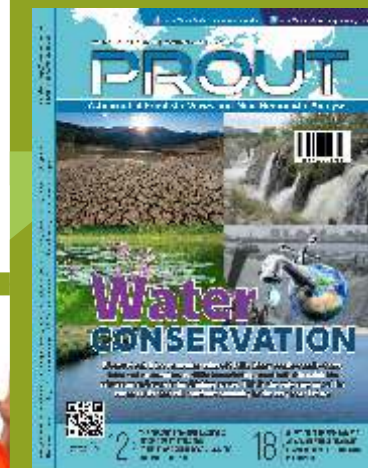


World Government: PROUT supports the creation of world government with a global constitution and a common penal code.

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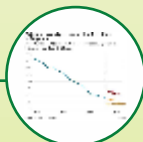
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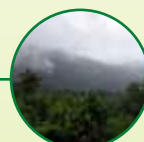
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Fundamental Principles of PROUT

The second cause of sin is non-utilization of over-accumulated physical and psychic pabula. Where there is over-accumulation of physical wealth several problems occur. The desire to accumulate money is actually a mental disease.

– Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

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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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



FARM LAWS REPEAL

In September 2020 when the three farm laws were passed PM Modi said, “It is a great moment for farmers of the country. These bills will do away with middlemen and other impediments in growth of farmers”. He also said that many political parties in the past wanted to reform the agri sector and pass such bills but they did not do so, therefore they have no cause for complaint.

However, in November last it just took four minutes for the Lok Sabha to pass a bill that sought to repeal the same three farm bills which saw farmers mobilise at the Delhi borders for over a year. It is shocking — but hardly a surprise — that the government refused to have a discussion in the House on the subject that had been debated extensively on different platforms across the nation, leading to deep distrust about the reforms itself, which the Prime Minister was at pains to point out that he failed to convince a section of the farmers. In fact, the obstinacy of the government was a major reason why it failed to convince the protestors despite 11 rounds of talks and the intervention of the Supreme Court about crucial reforms.

The decision to repeal the Acts was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Guru Purab. But a televised address to the nation is no substitute for a detailed statement and discussion in Parliament since these Acts had been passed by the House. Union ministers had taken to social media and hailed the PM's climbdown as a great gesture in the national interest — what was against the national interest was never explained. So, what were the imperatives? Was the government's failure merely a case of miscommunication? What has been the outcome of similar “reform” measures in the states? Should the Centre henceforth let the states decide their own agriculture reform paths as per the demands of local political economy rather than push centralised solutions on a sector rich in diverse cultivation practices and markets? And now even though farm laws have been repealed the protests are still going on. There is the continuing demand among farmers for making the minimum support price a legal right.

While those who opposed the farm laws agree that Indian agriculture is in a crisis and needs radical solutions. So what is the way forward? As Prout's founder Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar says, “Agriculture should be given the status of industry. In industry raw material costs, labour costs, interest on loans, depreciation, maintenance costs, profit, the rate of outturn, etc. are fixed and included in costing. In agriculture this has not been done, so produce is usually priced uneconomically. Farmers are forced to sell their produce at low prices due to the pressure of circumstances. If agriculture is treated as an industry, all the conditions of industry should apply to agriculture”. Once agriculture gets status of industry and the perks that go with it, prices can be properly fixed just like goods produced in factories. Then there will not be any difference in the style of development and costing of agriculture and industry. The second solution is cooperative farming, where small landowners come together and farm together. They can demand the price they want for their produce. Successive governments including this one have promised at least the minimum price for their produce. Several myths about it have been dealt in a detailed article on page 39. In fact, it's time to move towards Prout's maximum support policy.

Prout takes this opportunity to wish all its readers a very Happy New Year 2022. ●



Water Conservation

A very thought provoking article on planet earth's most precious life giving resource – water.

The pointers given by Prout's founder are simple but very effective and should be implemented by the concerned authorities at the earliest. The editorial on the same subject also raises important issues based on statistical studies. The scenario painted may look grim and forbidding, but the problems forecasted are not impossible to solve, provided there's political will by all nations to solve this global crisis. And the article on page 25 about women bearing the brunt of water crisis is very true especially in the rural areas where most of India lives. This problem should be solved immediately.

- Archana Sen, Kolkata

Inadvertent typo error on page 8 regretted. Eds

Humanity at Crossroads

Ravi Logan's article makes interesting reading about capitalism eating itself out from the inside and communism crumbled on its own weight starting with the Soviet Union. The latter caused widespread suffering and the former will fare no better. So as he rightly points out Prout must be ready with plans to step in when Capitalism collapses.

Haroon Rashid, UAE

Creating A New Renaissance

Post Covid 19 very few know what might happen to the world at large. This pandemic has brought in its

wake untold suffering to people who lost jobs, lost their homes and children who could not go to schools etc. What the next world offers still remains unknown with no sign of the pandemic relenting, what with newer and newer mutations of the virus surfacing. As the author tightly points out it should lead to a new renaissance.

- Rana Ketut, Bali

100% Employment

Sounds like a pipedream in today's age and environment. But with Prout's economic principles in force in a neo-humanistic society, it is entirely possible.

- Sardar Singh, Panipat

Sadhana Theory and Lessons

The second part was equally interesting as the first part. The article should arouse sufficient interest for people to find a teacher to learn sadhana. Thank you Prout for publishing such an article that will benefit many people.

- Shashi Kumar, New Delhi

Implosion of Capitalism in Guatemala

What happened in Guatemala in November 2020 at the height of the worldwide Covid pandemic is a precursor of things to come, when government corruption hand in glove with capitalists crosses all bound of propriety.

- Muchos Xavier, Goa

Wildlife genocide

An excellent article on wildlife conservation in India. As tree felling goes on unabated, wildlife is bound to suffer. For that unthinking and unfeeling humans are squarely to blame.

- Samyuka Sharma, Kanpur

Women's Empowerment

The Uttarakhand is to be lauded for talking such a bold move. Other states should follow suit.

- Geeta Saran, Gurugram

Pregnancy

Loss Due to Pollution

It is sad day for India and the world when this happens. Even those women who go through the full term of pregnancy the babies are exposed to risk and may be born with unknown defects. It is a risky situation. Something should be done urgently to solve the pollution problem on a war footing.

- Kali Banerjee, Bhopal

India's Worst Enemy – Inequality

It is true the world over, economic inequality is the scourge of humanity. The world provides everything for man's need but not man's greed. The answer to this is a ceiling on individual wealth, which Prout advocates.

- Raghuvir Singh, Chennai

Poor Women's Fight For Rights

It was wonderful to read about how a group of exploited women workers in Tamil Nadu got together to fight for their rights. Everyone must similarly organise themselves to take exploitation head on.

- Sarika Raha, Begaluru

Govt. Economic Policies

Reference article on Governments Economic Policies (pgs 26-28) Nov issue and letter by Aram Shannon on the same published in December issue. The article contained many points that highlight the anti exploitive sentiment, however in the last para of the article the statement backward communities must join forces to fight against savarna dominated corporatization of small scale industries, was pointed out by one of our readers. Prout certainly supports fighting against exploitation but not against any particular community, as it does not believe in humanity being divided on the basis of caste or creed, but considers all humans to be members of one universal family. ●

MOTHER'S COURAGE OF LOVE



Kiran Baiga and son

This is the story about a mother's courage of how she rescued her young son from the jaws of death. Kiran Baiga of a Baiga tribal family in Barijhar village under Tamsar Range Madhya Pradesh was sitting with her three children by lighting a bonfire in front of the house at 7 pm on Sunday November 29, 2021 evening to get some warmth from the fire. Unknown to them in the darkness a short distance away a leopard was observing them. While they were sitting, suddenly the leopard charged and snatched Kiran's 8-year-old son Rahul in its mouth and ran off towards the forest. Kiran was after the leopard in a shot without a moment's thought.

About a kilometer away, the leopard stopped at a place in the forest and sat down holding the child with its claws. Kiran had also reached the spot and in a spurt of unprecedented courage pounced on the leopard and freed her child, carried him in his arms and ran back towards her house.

The leopard wasn't about to give up his prey so easily and pounced on the mother and child. However she grabbed his paw and pushed it away hard. By then the people of the village also reached and seeing the crowd of people coming, the leopard ran away.

After seeing that she was no more alone, it was too much for Kiran to bear. She fainted from shock and was taken to the village dispensary immediately, where she was given first aid. As both mother and child had deep claw and fang wounds they were taken to the Community Health Center Kusmi, where after proper medical attention they were stable as told by Asim Bhuria, Ranger Sanjay Tiger Reserve Tamsar.

This was not the first time. Earlier similar incidents were reported in Barijhar village under Tamsar Range, buffer zone of Sanjay Tiger Reserve, where constant attacks by predatory animals have created fear and panic among the tribals living in the area. Kiran who showed exemplary courage and strength to fight the Leopard said, "Such incidents happen every day, often we keep hearing leopards call or meet bears. To save our lives we run away. After this incident, the fear has become more and more".

Mother's love for her child is unconditional and no one can match that. Kiran proved that right. ●

- Ashita Singh



Social Values and Human Cardinal Principles

The truth is that human beings have always and everywhere paid tribute to social values, but never, not even for a moment, has anyone respected human cardinal principles.

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

Having progressively crossed the different evolutionary stages since the distant past human beings have at last reached the present stage. The journey has not been solitary: People have advanced together in society. Even in the primitive past, humans lived in clans and tribes, for alone they could not easily procure the means of livelihood. An individual who totally shuns collective life finds existence difficult, for humans are essentially social beings. Whenever one thinks of a human being one automatically thinks of the society in which he or she lives. Human existence is thus two-sided – individual existence and

collective existence – and as such it has two sets of values: social values and human cardinal principles.

The social values of human beings are ascertained on the basis of social responsibilities. As a member of society a person has to discharge certain duties and responsibilities. Those who shoulder great responsibility are naturally accorded due recognition and respect, because the good of all depends upon the proper execution of one's duties.

An analysis of history will show that in the Kṣatriya era kings and emperors were honoured most. In their courts everyone bowed before them in spontaneous respect for they had conquered the hearts of

the people by virtue of their heroism, valour and chivalry. During the Vipra era the Kṣatriyas and other social classes were so overwhelmed by the Vipra's intellectual might – which they had used to invent various things to further human welfare – that they surrendered before them. The Vipras were regarded as wise because their intellectual research benefited the common people. Out of awe and respect everyone prostrated at the lotus feet of these great people.

The truth is that human beings have always and everywhere paid tribute to social values, but never, not even for a moment, has anyone respected human cardinal principles.



Human Cardinal Principles

Human cardinal principles are the silver lining between the psycho-spiritual and spiritual strata of human existence. The meeting point of the spiritual and psycho-spiritual strata is called the human cardinal stratum. Human existence is trifarious, a combination of three currents: physical, mental and spiritual. Most people cannot transcend the limits of their physical existence: crude worldly pleasures become the only enjoyment of their lives. They embody all that is beastly in nature, goaded and tormented as they are by carnal desires. The subtle feelings of life, the subtle expressions and practices are beyond their reach. Their world is limited to their bodies and physical requirements.

Other people are more concerned with their minds. They feel that it is the supremacy of the mind that has differentiated them from animals. Their lives are guided by their desires for mental satisfaction. By virtue of their endeavours they create poetry, art, music, sculpture, etc. They express the finer human feelings of mercy, sympathy, love, friendship and pity. They believe that the mind flows for the sole purpose of attaining the Infinite, and hence they focus their energies on the contemplation of the Transcendental Entity. They are the spiritual aspirants, they alone are worthy of being called human beings. Drawn by the magnetic attraction of the Cosmic Consciousness they speed forward and reach the stage which marks the end of mental existence and the beginning of spirituality. At that stage one is no longer a human being, one is a veritable god. It is the duty of every person to reach this confluence of the mental and spiritual strata. It is the pinnacle of human progress. The point where humanity ceases to exist as it merges in divine beatitude. The culminating point of animality is the commencement of humanity. The highest peak of human progress is the beginning of divine bliss. Where animality ends, humanity begins,



where humanity ends, divinity begins. The meeting point of the highest attainment of humanity and the blossoming of divinity is the base on which the cardinal human principles are established.

A glimpse through human history reveals that nowhere have human values been truly honoured. What is worse, nobody has looked upon humanity with sympathy. Only those were respected who, by serving their self-interests, climbed onto the higher rostrum of society. It is difficult to step down from the high position of vainglory to rub shoulders with the downtrodden. The neglect of humanity was particularly acute towards the end of each era of the social cycle. The progeny of the noble Kśatriyas, on gaining power, engaged themselves in the pursuit of pleasure and comforts, utterly neglecting their sacred duty to serve their subjects. They never cared to know people's suffering. They were not concerned by the bent old man, decimated by poverty in the Himalayas, being mercilessly beaten by a royal servant for defaulting on his tax payment. Kind-hearted and philanthropic kings did exist, but was there any king who, besides meeting the psycho-physical needs of his people, opened the gateway to realization of the Infinite? For self-aggrandisement and in a bid to conquer the world they invaded countries, one after another. How

could they afford to inquire into the tragic plight of the common people?

The Vipra era illustrated the same thing: the scholarly Vipras were hardly accessible to the common people. The innocent masses were busy appeasing the Vipras with oblations, honorariums and floral offerings. Where was the time for them to take of the needy families of the poor neighbourhoods who were perhaps dying of starvation? And what would be the material benefit of such an action? Service to the poor would pay nothing, so let them go to hell, let them die en masse. So nobody had anything to do with the poor. And anyway, the Vipras were busy with worship, prayer and observance of sacraments. All their energies were spent in the appeasement of the gods and goddesses enthroned in the temples, churches or mosques. There was simply no opportunity to inculcate more humane qualities. According to Vipran scriptures, a temple made of bricks and wood was of more value than humanity itself. Suppose an old beggar, numbed with the cold chill of the night, is standing wearily in front of a temple, his begging bowl empty. The temple is reverberating with ringing bells, and the deity is being worshipped in accordance with the scriptural dictates. While the devotees stand before the deity with hands folded in reverence, the beggar shivers bitterly outside. On completing the



ritual, the people leave the temple one by one, followed by the priest. The beggar entreats him to let him sleep in one corner of the temple, but the priest replies emphatically, "I can't afford to pollute the temple for your sake." And the old man has to trudge into the world of uncertainty, and perhaps bury himself in the coffin of the cold. The sanctity of inert wood and bricks is valued more than a man's life.

Notions of vice and virtue, codes of justice and scriptural texts – which are claimed to be the word of God – have been formulated by different religions to further vested interests. Those who oppose the scriptures or the system they propound are subject to severe punishment. To socialize with a person of a different caste is a great sin and those who commit such sacrilegious acts will be excommunicated. They have to make atonement according to scriptural decree, and sometimes the magnitude of their penance may be the cause of their death. If they plea for a milder dose of punishment, the priests express their helplessness: one cannot defy the scriptures!

Those who are ensnared by the scriptures cannot be expected to know the value of human life. It takes millions of years, lives and stages to get a human body. But nobody knows how many

invaluable lives have been nipped in the bud, or how many innocent lives have been slaughtered at the altar of the scriptures.

Vice and virtue are the outcome of mental perversion under the influence of time, space and person. The mental perversion which is vice in one country or in one age passes for virtue in another country or another age. Thus it is unwise to attach absolute importance to the notion of vice and virtue nurtured by some individuals at a given time. Vice and virtue have their origins either in religious faith or social prejudices, as a of natural or other causes, and they undergo changes in time, space and person. In ancient India grief-stricken wives, mourning the death of their husbands, were dragged pitilessly onto the funeral pyre and burnt to death. Those who did this remained unaffected because according to the their scriptures it was a virtuous act. Today, however it is treated as a vice.

These fabricated religious injunctions have been a repeated cause of exploitation. Placing blind faith in the scriptures people used to derive pleasure from cruel human sacrifice. The scriptures also proclaimed that to live the life of a virgin was a vice. Hence, it was not uncommon for a nine year old girl to be forced to marry an old man waiting at the jaws of death. After

the death of her old spouse, hymns were chanted to make the young bride believe that she was destined to return to her husband after her own death and had no right to turn a new leaf in this life by marrying again. What a tragic existence for a sentimental woman to have to live a life of austerity to ensure unison with a husband in the life hereafter.

Polygamy, on the other hand, was not forbidden for men. A woman who was married to a man having a number of wives suffered a life of misery due to her co-wives. The folk lores or doggerels bear an excellent testimony to this: "Peace will come with my co-wife's death. Oh what joy! I shall kill my co-wife and adorn my arm with bangles." Even today within the same social group the cutting remarks of the mother-in-law and the husband's sisters rob the wife of her zest for life. The story goes that a wife had her rice rationed to one earthen cup full by her mother-in-law. One day, as luck would have it, that measuring cup broke into countless pieces. Oh, what joy the wife felt. But the mother-in-law cruelly remarked, "The small earthen cup has broken, but the big one is left for us. Your joy is in vain, daughter-in-law, for my hand will now be your measure." Can there be any greater cruelty than this? Even when supplying the minimum

requirements meanness was perpetrated with such cruelty.

The inhuman rules and regulations and tortures inside the house filled a woman's life with bitterness. Nobody knows how many have wept away sleepless nights having suffered tortures for which no redress was possible. The dogma of the scriptures crushed their emotional feelings, their hopes and aspirations like a steam roller flattening soft clay. Nobody has paid any heed to their sobs and tearful outbursts. The irrational social dictates based on vice and virtue have been a perennial source of injustice for human beings. Humanity has always been hated and trampled.

I repeat that no scripture should gain supremacy by slighting or neglecting humanity. Scriptures should be written to further human progress. They should provide rules, but these rules should in no way send humanity to its grave. Their utility lies in promoting freedom from bondage and leading humanity along the path of union with Cosmic Consciousness, the source of everything. Scriptures that throttle society to death or arrest its natural

movement, should never be accepted.

Vice and virtue should be defined in the interest of human values not on the whims of certain individuals. People must move towards that stage which is the zenith point of human progress and from which no further advancement is possible. That which blocks this movement is vice and that which facilitates it is virtue. To exploit an individual, a group or the entire society for one's own interest or the interest of the group is vice. To rob a person of the right to exist is also vice. There should be scope to punish such acts; but punishment is not an end in itself. If punishment kills or prevents one from progressing along life's path, it may also be treated as vice. Punishment should be for rectification. The penal code will be based on human values. Ananda Marga's social treatise states: First use sweet words and inform the offender of their mistake. Then use harsher words to convince them of the social damage caused by their actions. In the third stage, inform them about the possibility of penal measures. And in the fourth stage, if the situation warrants such

action, take penal measures against him, but remember, punishment should be inflicted humanely.

Those who commit acts of vice, for whatever reasons should be given scope for rectification. If they fail to realize what they have done, they should be convinced by logical argumentation. If they ignore such reasoning they will be liable for punishment. Only the offenders themselves will be punished – under no circumstances will their relatives be punished too. Penal measures will be withdrawn as soon as the offenders have corrected themselves. An entire life should not have to be wasted over a single act of vice. On no account should anybody be branded forever.

Those who worship a marble deity in the dark corner of a temple and neglect the poor multitudes – who are themselves an embodiment of God – gain nothing in this life nor for the life hereafter. The neglect of a person who is the embodiment of God is tantamount to neglecting God Himself. A truly righteous person realizes that God does not confine Himself to the temple, but manifests Himself in His creation.

“Why are you lying in the gloom of the temple?

Raise your eyes. Look! God is not confined to four walls.

He has gone where the farmers are tilling and toiling all year round”.

–Rabindranath Tagore

In the Vipra era, humanity was affronted by the creation of divisions between high and low. People of high-birth would lose their caste if they merely stepped on the shadow of the so-called low-castes. Even worse, if a Vedic Brahman touched a person from a low family he was declared an outcaste. In no other age has humanity suffered such hatred and insult. Rabindranath says, “By standing aloof from your fellow man daily, you have hated the God enthroned in his heart.”

Instead of hating anyone, the Sadvipras will encourage everyone to build good careers. This will be Sadvipra's principle duty. None should feel that they have been doomed for good. ●



AGRICULTURAL BILLS REPEAL

Further Directions



Professor R.P. Singh

When any law is enacted, its advocates always describe that law is very useful, but in practice it does not happen in the absence of preparation for a favourable system.



Many people feel that the repeal of agricultural bills is taking back a reasonable and necessary step. But, if the Farm Bills were the right step, why did first the government and later the Courts stay implementing them? So many measures seem right in a bookish or cursory look, but without creating a proper environment, such measures eventually prove to be disastrous, razors in a monkey's hand.

Contract farming has been

prevalent in South and Central India for decades. Lakhs of farmers have been forced to commit suicide in the last 30 years under the burden of usurious loans and companies. In contrast, there has been no Contract farming (Punjab being a recent exception since 2013), and the trend of suicide among farmers has been significantly low. The problems of the farmers are not going to be eliminated by enacting or removing the law.

When any law is enacted, its

advocates always describe that law is beneficial, but in practice, it does not happen in the absence of preparation for a favourable system. Take the example of Cooperatives. Due to capitalist and communist manoeuvres, cooperatives failed in India because they did not create a proper environment. In contrast, the same cooperative has successfully worked in the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Israel, etc. Farmer's mindset of these countries is also not much different

from that of the farmers of India. But when these farmers saw that the Corporate's dominance would suppress them, their voices were not heard - they followed the Cooperatives as their institution.

The agricultural laws enacted in India also raised fear in the farmers' minds that even if we become free somehow from the individual brokers and middlemen, what would be left for us if even the well-educated people cannot stand up before the dominance of companies? The government has failed to ensure that the farmers develop Coordinated-Cooperatives properly as their institutions instead of Cooperatives subordinated to Babu-dom of the government departments.

MSP Law and Production Cost

Now, there is a talk of bringing in an MSP Guarantee law—Minimum Support Price for agriculture produce. When we can mandate the Minimum Wages Act to Industry workers, the poverty line determined; provide Employment Guarantee (MNREGA) and Food security - MSP can also be introduced in respect of the sale of agricultural produce. It can be a variable system of progressive pricing from time to time.

Measures have to be taken to prevent exploitation by individual

intermediaries, brokers, and companies. But, in general, more important than the poverty line is the determination of the Amiri Rekha or a ceiling on the accumulation of wealth that deprives others of opportunities.

According to PROUT, agriculture should be considered on par with the organised industry. Only then can the cost per production unit be systematically determined, eliminating the farmers' poverty. As a result, farmers will get a fair price for their goods, achieving stability in the agriculture sector.

Economic planning should include the following factors—the cost of production, productivity, purchasing capacity and collective necessity.

Cost of Production

Traditionally, farmers and their family members work to grow crops in many rural economies. However, when fixing the price of their produce, they do not calculate the labour costs involved in cultivating the land or pay wages to their family members. Nor do they determine the cost of the tools or machines they use in the fields or count the other expenses incurred in producing their crops. Hence, they fail to calculate the per-unit cost of production systematically. As a result, they incur losses or perpetually get low

prices for their produce.

Agriculture must be reorganised and established on the same basis as an Industry through the Cooperative system to resolve the growing agrarian crisis and farmers' distress. According to PROUT, agriculture should be treated as an organised industry. Only then can the per-unit cost of production be systematically determined, and farmers' poverty end. As a result, farmers will get proper prices for their commodities, achieving stability in the agricultural sector.

In a Proutistic economy, the cost of production should be systematically determined and kept at the minimum level. All industries, including agrico-industries and agro-industries, must see that the cost of producing a particular commodity does not exceed its market value. Every production unit must be economically viable.

Productivity

The economy will have to be organised in such a way as to drive its innate power to produce more and more. Money should be invested – the economy should keep the money rolling rather than hoarded – so that the collective wealth of society is continually increased.

Purchasing Capacity

Planning should also result in the increasing purchasing capacity of every person. PROUT does not support the existing practice of considering the per capita income as the index of people's economic standard. Per capita income is a deceptive and defective measure of collective wealth popularised by capitalist economists to fool people and hide their exploitation. The true measure of peoples' economic advancement is increasing purchasing capacity.

Increasing peoples' purchasing capacity, the easy availability of the minimum requirements, stable prices, progressive, periodic increases in wages and salaries ensures ever-increasing collective wealth.



In a Proutistic economy, there will be no limit to purchasing capacity – that is, purchasing capacity will be ever-increasing. Further, the minimum requirements must be guaranteed and continuously increased according to time, space, and person. It can best do this by continuously increasing the people's purchasing capacity in relation to the economic development of the concerned socio-economic unit or Samaj. The greater the purchasing power of the people, the higher their standard of living.

Collective Necessity

Planners will also have to consider the current collective needs and the future requirements of a socio-economic unit and chalk out their developmental programmes accordingly. For example, many industries have been established in India, but electricity production has not been increased. Through lack of proper planning, power production has lagged behind industrial development. It is especially evident in Bengal and Bihar.

We should give top priority to the production of the minimum requirements. So Planners will have to make provision for the minimum requirements of all, but we should

not neglect the requirements of both meritorious people and those with special needs; otherwise, it will not meet the Age's requirements.

Economic Transformation

The agricultural, industrial and trade policies of a socio-economic unit will have to be formulated according to the principles of a decentralised economy. The maximum utilisation and rational distribution of local resources and potentialities to ensure full employment should be prioritised, considering that there should be constant economic development in all regions of a socio-economic unit or Samaj.

The members of the cooperatives should decide the policies concerning such things as agricultural production, price fixation and the sale of agricultural commodities. Local people should control cooperative bodies and supervise all local economic activities. The local administration will have to assist the economic development of cooperatives. The price of agricultural commodities should be fixed on a rational basis by taking into account the price of commodities; the cost of labour, raw materials, transportation and storage; depreciation; sinking funds; etc. In addition, this price should

include a reasonable profit of not more than fifteen per cent of the cost of production.

A rural economy should not depend solely on cottage industries. Otherwise, it will jeopardise the economic welfare of the rural population. If cottage industries are adequately organised, rural women will also get ample scope to earn a decent livelihood. To avoid scarcity, cooperatives and the local administration will have to supply cottage industries with raw materials.

The local administration will also have to arrange for sufficient power to facilitate industrial production. Every region in a socio-economic unit must strive to be self-sufficient in power generation. Therefore, the local administration will have to supply locally generated power, such as solar, thermal, biogas, hydroelectricity, nuclear, pneumatic, electromagnetic and tidal power, or any other Power which is easily available locally. The generation of power is a key industry that should be run on a no-profit, no-loss basis so that the cost of production is minimised and the people's purchasing capacity is increased. In this way, the villages are going to be energy generators. ●



Role of Humans in a DIGITAL WORLD

Acarya Shambhushivananda Avadhuta A Neohumanist Narrative

At one stage in our evolution, humans were just one of the many dominant creatures on this planet earth. Today, the earth is under the command of humans (homo-sapiens) while all other creatures are almost at their mercy. Even invisible viruses do not escape human wrath, and as soon as they interfere in human survival, they attract a collective global attack to cause their annihilation.

Some scholars have predicted that humans will evolve into super humans where ordinary humans will become mere slaves to a new breed of humans who will be masters of genetic engineering, control biometric data, utilize artificial intelligence, machine learning and augmented virtual reality and will relegate ordinary humans to the category of subhuman 'irrelevant' species. This science fiction scenario posited by some is still speculation. Not all projections are likely to actualize but this is definitely a scenario worth addressing.

Human interface with machines is not new on the planet, and humans have integrated nature's powers in their lives for their advantage from very early days, with the discovery of fire. Nature, both inorganic and organic, holds immense power. As humans begin to tap the potential of nature and begin to harness it by intelligent design, the question of the future of human society and the survival of its norms comes into a sharper focus.

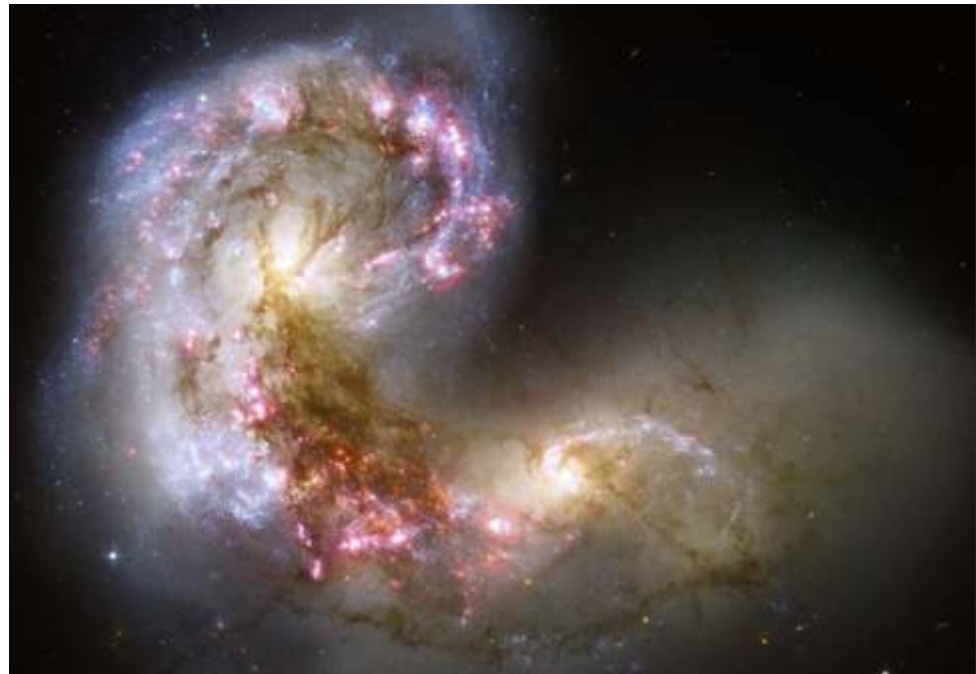


Will the institution of family still exist? Will humans still exercise compassion in all their dealings? Will robotic society cause the disappearance of human emotions? Will human-designed algorithms replace natural evolution of different species completely? What will happen to the consciousness of

humans and other beings? Will the theory of reincarnation still hold? Will religious, political, and economic institutions still play a dominant role in human affairs? Will the distinction between mind and consciousness become clearer? Will humans become sort of immortal, with an indefinite shelf life? Would

laboratory babies be as intelligent as the naturally born babies of today? Would designer babies have any independent thinking or would they display only programmed 'smart thinking'? How will our sense of the meaning and purpose of life evolve over time? Will the society of the future have any moral dilemmas? Would there be any role for 'revolutions' in the future society of AI-dominated scenarios? Could coordinated cooperation and competition create a benevolent future for all species?

Before we can address such questions, we must understand the role of humans in the cosmological order. Humans did not just emerge out of matter, whether organic or inorganic, nor out of nowhere. Matter and humans both have originated from primordial Transcendental Consciousness and carry the potential of that highest consciousness. The Supreme Consciousness is far subtler than Cosmic Mind and all manifestations of Cosmic Mind are merely the cruder manifestations of the greater powers embodied within Cosmic Mind. Thus, what the Cosmic Mind has been doing until the present continues to be taken over by human minds in slow and gradual steps. All human powers are the manifestations of a higher



Force—Cosmic Mind— and ultimately the Supreme Consciousness. So, there is no reason to panic over technological scenarios proposed by some scholars. Ultimately, the all-benevolent Consciousness, the macro-psychic volition holds the strings of evolution. The Supreme Consciousness (and its macro-psychic volition) is not a dualistic god as religions understand it, but the embodiment of Cognition (Cosmic Intelligence) and the

cosmic energy, which made it possible for creation to occur in the first place. So the Cosmic Operative Principle can never outperform the Cosmic Cognitive Faculty to which it is subservient. Equipped with understanding of the missing link between organic and inorganic, through a science of the building blocks of subatomic structures, developed minds shall be able to motivate human beings to create a harmonious society where all can live in the balance, harmony and inspired love of cosmic divinity. This alternative scenario provides a hopeful and assuring benevolent future for human society.

Furthermore, each human being possesses something that has the potential to be connected with that highest consciousness. That unit consciousness is the real 'owner' of all that we can truly claim as ours. Thus, while machines may begin to control the bodies or crude minds of humans, they can never overpower the unit consciousness since machines do not possess the subtlest consciousness of humans. If they ever can, the same laws of consciousness, which Cosmic Consciousness represents, will guide them, too. Cosmic Consciousness is not merely a repository of all power, but also of





infinite love. This love will continue to preserve and nurture an alternative scenario for the human society of the future.

It is with this premise that the philosophy of neohumanism propounded by Shri P.R. Sarkar asserts that every entity in the universe will always have two basic values—existential value and utility value. Furthermore, the reins of creation do not lie ultimately in the hands of frail or super humans but with a higher power, the macro-psychic volition of divine Supreme Consciousness. Humans can unite with the highest consciousness, but that is only possible through a process of increasing expansion of magnanimity of mind until the interests of all become the interests of each entity. Machines will never be able to become one with Highest Consciousness without going through the process of emotional enlargement and psycho-spiritual development. So even in the age of artificial intelligence and augmented reality, humans, as the owners of AI, will need to undertake such meditative practices that will enable the unification of the unit consciousness with the Supreme Consciousness. That alone could satiate their eternal craving for greater happiness, enlarged

magnanimity, everlasting bliss and realization of Love Divine.

The primary task for the leaders of the human race today is, therefore, to build systems, which will nurture a neohumanist spirit in all domains of human endeavor. No other ideology is comprehensive and compassionate enough to care for the welfare of all beings—sentient or non-sentient. All have a place in this creation and we must learn to understand and preserve the existential and utility values of all manifestations of Supreme Consciousness. This work needs to be conducted by the wisdom teachers, neohumanist educators, and by the institutions that prepare the young for the challenges of tomorrow.

As for the questions raised earlier about the nature of a future human society, all we can say at this point is that evolutionary forces will continue to transform us in myriad ways. While there may be greater control over our bodies and crude minds and the world around us, the inherent reactive momenta embodied in our genetic codes will continue to manifest diversity of unparalleled proportions. The source of diversity in creation comes from the subtler domains of existence and we must respect that

diversity and preserve it in order to maintain the aesthetic quality of creation. So in the world of AI and machine learning, humans will still be in command and will still serve as the trustees of the real owner, the Supreme Consciousness. Hopefully they will act in the interests of all—animate and inanimate, living and non-living, humans and machines. If, overall, they do not, at least some humans will have the wisdom to replace controllers of artificially intelligent machines with greater benevolent consciousness through an intellectual revolution empowered by the force of the collective spirit. Our gurukulas will help assure that there will be enough progressive individuals with such wisdom at all times.

Thus, human beings should use the spare time generated by increased use of AI to serve fellow living beings through imagination and creativity, make greater use of intuitional intelligence and experience the coveted joys of spiritual stillness and divine bliss-consciousness, the inherent longing of human existence. The culture of devotion is a blissful legacy of the human race. It would be a shame to lose it to a culture of robotics and a mechanistic futuristic scenario. ●

Humanity has entered a time of even greater conflict. But in the transition to a better world, this conflict it is not without purpose. And that purpose is to provide clarity as to the nature of the fissiparous tendencies of those who are engaged in politics for love of power, money and the ability to influence or force the movement of society according to their misguided whims. For the most part, these motives of those who would oppress had been hidden, but no more.

It is important to note that the ability of the self-interested rulers to hide their motives has been achieved with the will or acquiescence of the population. For example, the willful ignorance of the genocide of Jews and others at the hands of Hitler and his henchmen was enabled and emboldened by the world population's willingness to ignore the pain and deaths of the Nazi's victims. Hitler could not have done this on his own. He had his willing executioners to take the actions, but he had as well the willing population of those he governed, and those who turned a blind eye to the distant news accounts of the holocaust.

So, humanity must evolve, but not through miracles. They must go through the pain of having the veils of illusion torn from their eyes, even though it has been their desire to cling tenaciously to those veils.

Cities in the United States are now exposed to the precarious vulnerabilities of the energy systems in the United States as regions run out of energy either through climate change wrought disasters or through malicious cyber-attacks by governments or by complicit criminal gangs from abroad. These gangs of cyber thieves are the new mercenaries. Like mercenaries they are recruited and financed by the government that employs them, and they do the dirty work on behalf of

The Unfolding PLANETARY TRANSFORMATION

Humanity must evolve, but not through miracles

Ronald Logan



those governments. Unconstrained, they have the ability to bring mighty countries like the United States to its knees by interrupting and exploiting its dependency on vast amounts of centralized energy.

So, they are educating the American public to the threats that lie ahead and are reminding the public that solutions to their problems will not come through armed conflict when in actuality it will only come from making available the energy, food, water, and the other resources that are needed throughout the world. After

the reactions of fear-based response there will come the realization that we are a one-world family, and that the needs of one are the responsibility of all.

This is the nature of the period humanity is entering. It is the period of education, and if the application of the feather is not sufficient then there will be the application of the stick. And that stick is the seeming chaos that is applied not by the humans but by the divine guiding entity moving humanity toward a dharmic future. This education forced by conflict is not just

happening in America; it is also thereon the world stage.

Those that understand the unitary nature of the universe are not currently elevated or venerated by the society. But the time is rapidly approaching when out of desperation and great suffering many will turn to the sources of truth and divine eternal love, and they will turn to those who can provide moral leadership, for they will have exhausted all other channels for resolution. At that moment the poles may shift, and help will come from afar. But that time has not yet come, though it is rapidly approaching.

First the people must be willing to see. In the United States, in the last century, it took the disastrous and dramatic attack on Pearl Harbor for

atrocities and the end of the atrocities carried out by the Japanese.

It can take great drama in the life of one person to get them to change a disastrous course of action. And it can take great planetary drama to get governments of countries to change their disastrous courses. It will take a drama of planetary enormity to change the present course of the planet. So great must be the change that we cannot conceive of what must happen, of what is about to happen, to force minds to shift and open the pathway to a bright future.

Through all of the coming conflict and drama, what will not be shattered is the hearts and minds of the moralists that will live and even

connection to divinity and allow themselves to be willing vessels for the flow of divine love. They are not the leaders nor the followers. They are nothing less than the divine presence wearing the clothing of human forms, and in those many forms they become the harbingers of the crimson dawn. They must only endeavor to surrender to the guiding divinity that lies quiescent within and permit themselves to be the willing instruments of divine will.

Even many who are dedicated to morality, dharma and spiritual life may be unaware and unwilling to accept just how powerful a force is about to burst on the planetary stage. The force that guides the universe is limitless in power and influence. Those who throw in their lot 100



the United States to stand against fascism on the world stage. The tenacity of the country to cling to delusion while the rest of the world suffered was, in retrospect, beyond comprehension. When President Roosevelt declared that the day of the Pearl Harbor attack will live on in infamy, it was the United States that caused the infamy by ignoring the suffering occurring all over the planet. That willful ignorance caused the need for that crisis, not Japan. Japan's one provocation was the rending of the veil and, as a result, the eventual end of Hitler's

die for the cause of dharma. That light has not been extinguished, and soon it will have its opportunity to burn bright.

Those who are dedicated to bringing morality, social equality, and spirituality to humanity are not necessarily destined to be the leaders of world revolution. Their main role is to allow themselves to be the willing instruments of the divine entity whose mission is to bring about the higher evolution of human beings into full realization of who they truly are.

So, they must cultivate their

percent with this Entity become part of the most powerful force in the universe, and nothing can stop their eventual shepherding of a new dawn for humanity.

It is their willingness to dissolve the smallness of their ego limitations that allows them to be a part of something much greater. They are but instruments in the mind of the creator, but in that role, they are also part and parcel of the creator. They do not have to direct or even know the overall creation they are working on, but they willingly become part of the effort that will transform the planet. ●

Can We Create A New Planetary Narrative? A New Renaissance?

■ Sohail Inayatullah

Six paradigms or discourses are used to understand possible responses to Covid-19. These are: the medical, next disease, beyond meat, leadership and climate change, the end of capitalism. The final discourse suggests that we may be able to create a new renaissance. The key question is what are the narratives we use to make sense of the changing world, particularly, COVID1-19 and its consequences?

During the global financial crisis over a decade ago, the Financial Times reported that at its heart this was a narrative crisis. How you dealt with it depended on the story you used. Was it a mortgage crisis, a banking crisis, a geopolitical crisis of the shift to the Pacific (higher savings rates), a financial crisis, or even a crisis of capitalism? Ultimately, the deeper crisis was waived off, and Wall Street was saved at the expense of Main Street. China also helped to save the day and all returned to normalcy. The window of a possibility of deep change did not materialize.

We are in a similar situation today. As during the French Revolution, time is plastic, we have entered uncharted waters. Once the crisis nears its end, many will be tempted to go back to the world we knew. However, this is also the opportunity to create a different world - a portal as Arundhati Roy, argues. As biosecurity expert Peter Black argues, "Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different.



Disease and Cure

If this is merely a disease crisis, then the answer is easy: find the cure and the vaccine. Ensure open science, the free -flow information, and find the medical solutions. The main insights will be that global science - the free flow of information - working together can create the difference. As a Spanish biological researcher commented: "You give the footballer one million Euros a month and biological researcher 1800 Euros. You are looking for a treatment now. Go to Cristiano Ronaldo or Messi now and they will find you a cure. Science and technology with predictive artificial intelligence and innovative companies such as Alibaba lead the way.

It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next."

What we do will be decided by the narrative we use. How deep do we wish to go, how much do we wish to change? Here I present six paradigms, or discourses, to understand the possible responses to Covid-19 that may play out.

The Next Disease

While this resolves the short and

medium range future, what happens when a similar zoonotic disease erupts? To meet an increasing demand, wildlife are being sourced from more and more remote patches of the planet that humans have disturbed (i.e. land use change)—to satisfy resource consumption needs at the broadest level. More erratic excretion patterns of viruses follow, coupled with mixing of species that increase the risk of so called 'spill

over events' that manifest more as a food consumption crisis. Required here is the banning of wet markets, of eating of exotic animals. It also means challenging masculinities in East Asia and the search for exotic alternative health potions. But mere legislation will not solve the day. We need to ensure that those trading in these lucrative areas - the bounty hunters - find new work, otherwise, the trade will just go underground. This again is not just a Chinese national issue but one requiring a global coordinated effort. It will require Interpol to begin to shift toward becoming Earthpol.

Beyond Meat

Perhaps this is more than just a zoonotic crisis. It is not just wildlife that is the problem, but our consumption patterns. Many blame factory farming and warn that the next pandemic will emerge from how we produce food. Hence, we need to redesign cities and what we eat so we do not encroach into wildlife areas. We also urgently need to change our relationship with meat. While challenging meat may be too much for many, the current production models certainly need to shift.

Leadership and Climate Change

We now know that global focus is possible. Global coordination is possible. Solutions unimaginable months ago are now the new normal. This crisis can be seen as a pre-run, a mock trial, preparing us for the real event - climate change. Some of the drivers for the zoonotic disease challenge, such as land use change, are also directly related to climate change. What we learn today, or the changes we need to make today can be crucial for the world we create. Thus, this crisis is essentially about leadership. Can we ensure the shift to a greener planet? This means moving toward solar energies and ending the fossil fuel era.

The End of Capitalism

As we enter a severe recession, or a seven year malaise, possibly a global depression, the real issue is economic. Creating a world where

"money keeps on rolling" and not getting stuck in the hands of a few become urgent and imperative. This is a world where glo-cal solutions are focused on equity and prosperity. One where universal basic income, free education, health, and housing for all are not the sole concern of the left, but required for global security. We thus need to challenge the world capitalist system with its mantra of "more, more, more for the few." In this scenario, uneven development distorted by deep global inequity cannot continue. Capitalism dies:

we help it disappear. Most likely this will mean three economic spheres as argued by Sarkar, the founder of Proutist Economics. Global cooperatives, globalized industries and markets. It will require global governance if not global government. For many, this means surveillance and the loss of individual liberties. For others, this means the end of identity based on whom one hates and other imagined realities. It means accepting that we are human beings first. Innovative technologies create stunning wealth for all.



The New Renaissance

This then is a much deeper crisis and challenge:

- ✦ Our view of ourselves as material beings is being challenged. We can either panic or go deep within and mindfully find peace. Our view of ourselves as defined by the nation-state is being challenged. Viruses do not care about boundaries nor does nuclearisation bring safety.
- ✦ Our view of ourselves as outside of nature, as separate from Gaia is being challenged.
- ✦ Our view of ourselves as defined by economics only is being challenged. More and more will recognise and identify 'the Growth Delusion'.

The deep challenge lies in fixing the great imbalance. In our four spheres of life: economy, society, spirit, and nature, we have overly favored one at the expense of others. We need a great Gaian rebalance, moving to a world with a quadruple bottom line: Prosperity, Purpose, People, and Planet.

COVID-19 can help us create a new Renaissance - a transformation of self and society, home and plant. There have been two historical renaissances. The Asian classical Renaissance was personal: the quest for inner peace, enlightenment. The European Renaissance challenged dogma, allowing science and art to flourish, creating the possibility of revolution after revolution against authority that does not serve.

We are in a similar process now. However, after the vaccine is found there will be a push to go back to what we know, the used future. If we are not careful and purposeful, it will be a pause followed by the pursuit of light-speed economic growth—back to where we were. Gaian leadership at this time is about charting a new direction, exploring scenarios, and creating global systems that help us arrive at a new future. ●

Global Poverty Soars

AS DO BILLIONAIRES

Thalif Deen

According to the UN, more than 736 million people live below the international poverty line.

The phenomenal rise in extreme poverty — for the first time in 20 years — has been accompanied by an upsurge in the incomes of the world's billionaires and the super-rich. The paradox of poverty amidst plenty is being blamed largely on the coronavirus pandemic which has driven millions, mostly in the developing world, into a state of perpetual poverty.

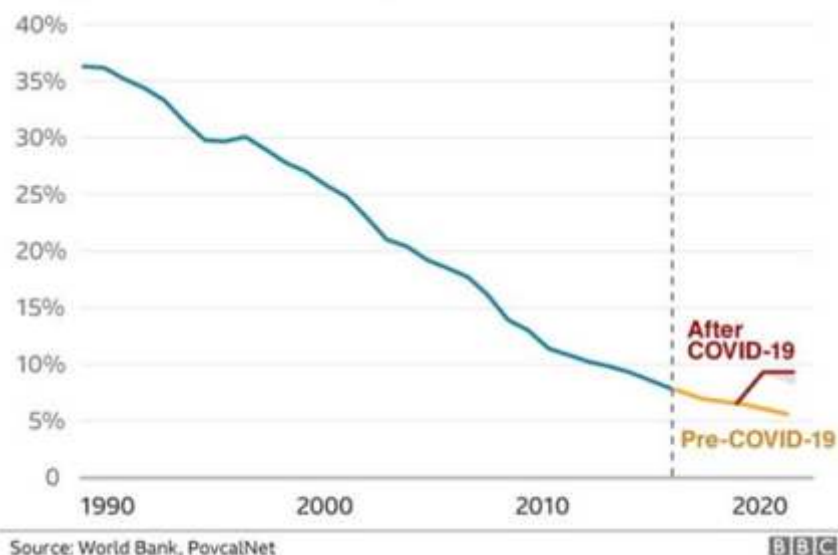
As the United Nations commemorates International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer— which may also reflect the realities of widespread economic inequalities worldwide. The world's total population is around 7.8 billion, and according to the UN, more than 736 million people live below the international poverty line.

A World Bank report last week said extreme poverty is set to rise this year, for the first time in more than two decades, while the impact of the spreading virus is expected to push up to 115 million more people into poverty. The pandemic, which is also compounding the forces of conflict and climate change, has already been slowing poverty reduction, the World Bank said.

By 2021, as many as 150 million more people could be living in extreme poverty. In contrast, the wealth of the world's billionaires reached a new record high in the

Extreme poverty rising for the first time in 20 years

Poverty rates (%) and number of poor people (millions) living on less than \$1.90/day



middle of the pandemic, primarily as “a rebound in tech stocks boosting the fortunes of the global elite”, according to a report released last week by UBS Global Wealth Management and PwC Switzerland.

Providing a sheaf of statistics, the report said total wealth held by billionaires reached \$10.2 trillion last July, described as “a new high”, compared with \$8.9 trillion in 2017. The number of billionaires worldwide has been estimated at 2,189, up from 2,158 in 2017.

The rising earnings were mostly from three sectors, including tech, health care and industry—a trend accelerated by the pandemic. But the study also says the rise in billionaires has led to greater philanthropy, with some 209 billionaires pledging \$7.2 billion in donations. At the other end of the scale, billionaires have seen their fortunes hit record highs during the pandemic, with top executives from technology and industry earning the most.

The world's richest saw their wealth climb 27.5% to \$10.2tn (£7.9tn) from April to July this year, according to a report from Swiss bank UBS. Pooja Rangaprasad, Director, Policy and Advocacy, Financing for Development (FfD) at the Rome-based Society for International Development (SID), told IPS “philanthropy or charity is not a substitute for systemic solutions”.

Many developing countries are already on the brink of debt crises which is further exacerbated by a broken international tax system that allows wealthy corporations and individuals to pay little to no taxes, she pointed out. “Unless global economic solutions are prioritised to ensure developing countries have the fiscal space to respond to the crisis, the consequences will be devastating with millions being pushed back into extreme poverty,” she warned. Governments need to urgently agree on systemic solutions such as debt cancellations, a binding and multilateral UN framework for debt crisis resolution that addresses unsustainable and illegitimate debt and a UN tax convention to fix loopholes in the international tax system, argued Rangaprasad.

Professor Kunal Sen, Director of UN University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), told IPS the pandemic is going to push millions of households into poverty, all around the developing world. “The challenge for the international community is to channelise additional resources through Official Development Assistance (ODA) to low income countries, where global poverty is concentrated”.

“The UN can play an important role in mobilizing resources for financing the efforts of the member states to counter the effects of the pandemic on the poor and vulnerable in their own countries”, said Dr Sen, who is also a professor of development economics at the Global Development Institute, University of Manchester, UK. The projected rise in poverty has also undermined one of the UN's 17



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which had targeted the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger by 2030.

According to the World Bank, “extreme poverty” is defined as living on less than \$1.90 a day. The projected increase in poverty would be the first since 1998, when the Asian financial crisis shook the global economy. Before the pandemic struck, the extreme poverty rate was expected to drop to 7.9% in 2020. But now it is likely to affect between 9.1% and 9.4% of the world's population this year, according to the bank's biennial 'Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report'.

“The pandemic and global recession may cause over 1.4% of the world's population to fall into extreme poverty,” said World Bank Group president David Malpass. He said that to reverse this “serious setback”, countries would need to prepare for a different economy post-Covid, by allowing capital, labour, skills and innovation to move into new businesses and sectors.

Malpass said World Bank support would be available to developing countries “as they work toward a sustainable and inclusive recovery”, with grants and low-interest loans worth \$160 billion to help more than 100 poorer countries tackle the crisis.

Ben Phillips, author of 'How to

Fight Inequality', told IPS the concentration of wealth amongst a handful of oligarchs, and the spread of impoverishment to hundreds of millions more people, are not the disconnected coincidences that the super-rich claim, but are two sides of the same bad penny. He said COVID-19 has not created obscene inequality, but it has supercharged it. In this systemic crisis, the healing impact of philanthropy will be no greater than a novelty sticking plaster on a gaping wound.

As the Pope, the UN Secretary-General, the President of Ireland and the Prime Minister of New Zealand have all pointed out, there is only one non-disastrous way out of this, and that is a rebalancing of economies to serve ordinary people, he noted. “That is absolutely doable – indeed, we've done it before – but markets cannot self-correct, and elites never bestow a fair economy from on high. Only pressure from ordinary people can win an economy that is humane and safe,” declared Phillips.

Dereje Alemayehu, Executive Coordinator, Global Alliance for Tax Justice, told IPS inequality is rising in every country; so also, is the income of billionaires. These are causally linked. “Multinationals and the wealthy do not pay their share of taxes, thus depriving countries the public revenue needed to address inequality.” Furthermore, he said, the prevailing international financial architecture denies developing countries their right to tax their share in global profit of multinationals. To adequately address inequality, national governments should introduce progress and redistributive tax systems.

But his would not be enough. “Developing countries should also reclaim their taxing rights on global profit. For this, a UN led intergovernmental process, in which member states participate on an equal footing, should be established to pave the way for the reform international tax rules and standards,” said Alemayehu, who is also Senior Advisor – Economic Policy at Tax Justice Network Africa. ●

SMOG

The real culprit for air pollution and other environmental hazards is the Defective socio-economic system

CAUSES AND CURE

■ Ganesh Bhat Sirsi

North India is once again engulfed by a thick layer of smog. Repeated smog combined with poor air quality in Delhi is not only making news and noise, but has become the cause of concern for the public. Delhi is not the only Indian city choked by smog. Last year, nine of the world's 10 most polluted cities were in India. The Supreme Court of India took note of debates on electronic media engaged in blame game without offering a viable solution to tackle the issue, and commented "TV news channels are causing more pollution than anybody".

Smog or smoke fog is a type of intense air pollution. The word "smog" was coined in the early 20th century, and is a contraction of the words smoke and fog to refer to smoky fog due to its opacity, and odour.

Effects of Poor Air Quality

Children are more vulnerable to the negative effects of air pollution which can lower children's immune system and increase the risks of cancer, epilepsy, diabetes and is a cause of reduced lung capacity, headaches, sore throats, coughs, fatigue, lung cancer, multiple sclerosis, and early death among adults. Smog reduces visibility and becomes the cause of traffic jams, road accidents, difficulty in train movements, flying etc. Air pollution is a silent killer but people don't



realize the seriousness of it and consider it to be an "elitist" issue. Air pollution in India is estimated to kill about 2 million people every year; it is the fifth largest killer in India.

Smog in Delhi

The air quality in Delhi, the capital territory of India, according to a WHO survey of 1,650 world cities, **is the worst of any major city in the world.** ... To contend with the poor air quality, embassies and international businesses in Delhi are considering reducing staff tenures, advising staff to reconsider bringing

their children to Delhi, providing high-end purifiers in their offices. Delhi accounts for 2 per cent of the national population but contributes 5 per cent of the total national emissions. Of this figure, transportation accounts for two-thirds of the city's total emissions.

Sources of Pollution

Although pollution is at its worst from November to February, Delhi's air misses clean-air standards by a wide margin for much of the year. The majority of analysis sources are hinting towards stagnant winds

trapping the various sources of smoke during colder weather. The primary sources of smoke are emissions from vehicles, power plants, factories, exhaust from diesel generators, dust from construction sites, burning of garbage, and burning of crop stubble in the neighbouring states.

Colder air slows down dispersal of pollutants and brings down the mixing height, trapping pollutants close to the ground. Delhi also sees fog spells at this time, as the moisture also traps pollutants in the air. In summers, dust is the most prominent pollutant. Instances of trans-boundary dust pollution, coming all the way from the West Asia have also been reported across NCR in the past, leading to 'very poor' to 'severe' air in the summer. A 2016 report from the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests highlighted individual-level causes as being the main contributors of air pollutants in India, from personal automobiles (72%), along with other factors such as household pollution, industrial emissions, construction of infrastructure, garbage burning, ...

Farmers burn paddy stubble in order to clear their fields to sow the next crop; burning is also seen as a solution to the challenge posed by pests and fungi. The Union

government told the apex court that stubble burning **contributed to only 10% of the** pollution and thus is not a major cause of pollution in Delhi. The Supreme Court said the “cat is out of the bag” to prove that urban factors such as construction activities, industry, vehicular exhaust and road dust were actually the major causes of pollution in the Capital and not farmers' stubble burning. In recent years, due to economic development, the number of cars has increased from 24 lakh in 2000 to 1 crore and 12 lakh in 2018, which are releasing large amount of Carbon dioxide (CO₂), Carbon monoxide (CO), Sulphur dioxide, Ozone and other gases daily which pollute Delhi's environment. According to a study conducted by the Meteorological Department of India and the Centre for Science and Environment **70 percent of air pollution in Delhi** is caused by vehicles only. Study revealed that 98 percent of Nitrogen oxide, 60 percent of Sulphur Dioxide, 14 percent of P.M. 10 and 10 percent of P.M. 2.5 are released only by industrial units. Dirty fuel and coal are still used by the industries that are spread in the municipal areas.

The processes involved with construction of modern houses are not environmental friendly. Fine

dust from construction activities is considered a major contributor to the toxic mixture of smoke. Apart from these pollutants, Delhi has numerous high mounds of garbage which burn all year round, emitting large amount of dangerous gases, smoke and dust particles which pollute the air. According to recent research study of P.A.U, Ludhiana, smoke from burning paddy straw remains trapped in Punjab because smoke only disperses into farther directions when speed of winds is high but when air is still, smoke leads to build up of smog in its proximity. The above study also shows that in 2017, 2108 and 2019, the speed of wind was below 5km per hour which couldn't have drifted this localized smog from Punjab all the way to Delhi and the National Capital Region.

Control Measures

Short term control measures initiated by the government include – closure of schools, encouragement to working from home, commuting by public transport, carpooling, the implementation of the odd-even rule, banning of construction and demolition work, restriction on use of diesel generator sets, ban on entry of trucks barring few exceptions, and closure of six thermal power



plants in the 300 km radius of the national capital etc. Government is also planning to encourage electric vehicles, upgradation of combustion engine vehicles, banning of vehicle older than 15 years or below BS6 emissions, installation of smog towers to purify and clean the air, use of solar energy for Delhi Metro, banning of sale of fire crackers etc., as longer term measures.

People have suggested encouragement of pedestrians and bicycle riders; safe and eco-friendly renewable energy alternates; use of safe scientific techniques to dispose of garbage etc. 1,600 km long and 5 km wide green ecological corridor along Aravalli range from Gujarat to Delhi which will also connect to Shivalik hill range with planting of 135 crores new native trees over 10 years to combat the pollution is under consideration. All the above measures will have little effect in the long run on the control of pollution, because the experts and leaders deliberately avoid recognising the real cause of environmental pollution.

The Real Culprit

The real culprit for air pollution and other environmental hazards is the socio-economic system which forces people to migrate to urban

centres on a massive scale in search of employment opportunities, which is aggravated by capitalistic greed. Rapid urbanization, in conjunction with the intensified challenges of environmental degradation, has placed pressure on infrastructure, housing availability and the spread of slums. Delhi is the capital and commercial city of India. As the population grows (more than 3 crore at present) so does the demand for modern luxury items. Huge industrial plants have been set up to meet this huge demand. As a result, the level of air pollution in Delhi is slowly increasing; and this applies to other cities also. Another major impact of rapid urbanization is a change in the way that land is used. Fertile grounds and water bodies, along with agricultural lands, have been covered over by built-up urban sprawl. In 1951, the total area of agricultural land in the Delhi region was 97,067 hectares; now it is less than 25,000 hectares.

Capitalism survives on centralization. Capitalists want to produce commodities at the lowest costs and sell them at the highest prices : the purpose of production is maximization of profits. To produce commodities cheaply, there must be efficient transportation, cheap raw materials, cheap labour, cheap

energy, adequate water supply, etc. No matter what form capitalism takes – individual capitalism, group capitalism or state capitalism – capitalists will always prefer centralized production. They always try to lessen the cost of production, environmental degradation is conveniently overlooked; hence they never support the principle of decentralization. This trend leads to industries getting concentrated in urban centres which in turn cause pollution.

The Cure

According to PROUT all types of economic problems can be solved only when economic structures are built on the basis of decentralized economy. Centralized economy can never solve the economic problems of remote villages. Economic planning must start from the lowest level, where the experience, expertise and knowledge of the local people can be harnessed for the benefit of all the members of a socio-economic unit. Decentralized economy does not mean that everybody should depend on agriculture and that industries should be neglected; but it means maximum industrial development in an eco-friendly way by using latest technological inventions for the benefit of local people. ●



India's Family Laws Are Discriminatory

Can a woman-centric legal doctrine be termed 'biased' and lacking a 'neutral' perspective?

That's Why Judges Shouldn't Be 'Neutral' on Gender.

Flavia Agnes

Several feminist theorists have argued that the instrumental characterisation of law as a tool for the potential transformation of society is far too simplistic. They hold that law is a crude and limited device and is circumscribed by the dominant ideologies of the society in which it is produced.

Existing beliefs and assumptions shape the context of a legal provision. Even when changes are successfully made on a doctrinal level, they can and will fail if judges or others charged with the application of new laws revert to interpretations that merely replicate old results.

The impact of dominant ideologies on the shape and content of law and the legal process makes the idea of 'progress' through legal reforms problematic. Since legal, moral and social codes are determined by hegemonic claims of patriarchy, an exploration into the notion of justice and fairness to women can be embarked upon only after piercing the veil of 'neutrality', 'impartiality' and 'formal equality'.

When we examine women's rights, it becomes imperative to address the doctrinal concern – whether a woman-centric legal doctrine can be termed 'biased' and lacking a 'neutral' perspective? Can the lens of feminism or concern for women's rights be labelled as 'biased'?



When we examine the development of law we realise that due to the demands raised by the women's movement, women were added into the 'Law' project, particularly after women started claiming their rights as citizens, within an overarching patriarchal system. The demand by the women's movement was for equality. Right to vote, right to education, practice various professions etc. were hard won battles for Western women. Influenced by these struggles, the Indian Constitution guarantees equality under Article 14 and non-discrimination under Article 15. Equality, along with liberty and

freedom, form the pillars of our constitution to protect women. The right to vote, equality of opportunities for education and employment, equal pay for equal work etc. fall within this notion of formal equality.

But when we examine the domestic sphere under the matrimonial laws, this notion of equality becomes detrimental to women. Since men and women within the marriage are not equal, the same yardstick of equality cannot be applied. Equality can only be between equals. If the norm of equality is applied between unequals it will lead to greater

disparity. But this distinction has not been clearly made within matrimonial laws. This is most glaring when we examine the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, enacted soon after the Constitution came into effect.

An Unequal Marriage

Women's status and role within marriage differ a great deal from that of men. The man is the breadwinner and his contribution can be measured in economic terms. The woman is the homemaker and assumes a subordinate status within marriage. She is the repository of cultural norms of the family and community. However, there is no recognition of this unequal status between the spouses within matrimonial laws. While seeking divorce, both men and women have to frame their petitions on the same stipulated grounds – adultery, desertion and cruelty.

But the incidents of cruelty which men plead while seeking divorce vary a great deal to the incidents of cruelty on which women base their plea for divorce. It is like comparing oranges and apples.

Let us examine some of the issues that come up before our courts in divorce litigation.

Not preparing meals on time, not making tea when the husband returns from work (even though the wife too may be an earning member), refusal to have sex, terminating pregnancy, not covering her head in the presence of in-laws or in public, refusal to wear *sindoor* or a *mangal sutra*, the symbols of marriage, demand for setting up a separate residence away from the joint family, filing a case under Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code (related to dowry) etc. are pleaded as instances of cruelty by husbands while seeking divorce.

The grounds on which women base their petitions for divorce are vastly different. They are based on the issue of basic survival – throwing her out of the matrimonial residence, constant demands for dowry or insults to her parents for



their incapacity to pay more dowry, refusal to provide maintenance, snatching away and refusing to give access to her ornaments and valuables which constitute her *stridhan*, preventing her from seeking gainful employment or taking away her salary, aspersions on her moral character, acute physical, sexual or emotional abuse, denying custody or access to the children, etc. are grounds on which the woman bases her petition for divorce.

Within the patriarchal social structure and patrilineal residence, in most cases, the woman leaves her natal family and comes to reside in her husband's home, where until recently her right to residence was not even recognised. When the wife is sent to her natal family for her child delivery, the husband could easily prevent her re-entry and then plead desertion. It took courts a long time to develop the theory of constructive desertion when the husband actively prevents his wife's re-entry. Hence we can see that even the ground of desertion plays out differently for men and women.

It was the husband's prerogative to decide the place of matrimonial residence and if the wife took employment at a far off place, the husband could file for restitution of conjugal rights, which

courts would grant on the premise that the husband is the lord and master (*pati parameshwar*), and it is the wife's sacred duty to obey him and reside at the place chosen by him as the matrimonial residence. This despite the fact that the Hindu Marriage Act had transformed Hindu marriages to contractual, civil unions in 1955.

The Maintenance Problem

The most disturbing feature of the Hindu Marriage Act is the right given to the husband to claim maintenance from the wife, based on the notion of equality. This was in 1955, when Hindu daughters were not given the right as coparceners in their natal family, there was great disparity between men and women in literacy, higher education and gainful employment.

Monogamy for men was just being introduced and had not yet become the norm. Yet it was deemed necessary to bring in equality between the spouses based on a liberal notion of formal equality and make women liable for paying maintenance to their husbands. The matrimonial laws governing other communities and even the Special Marriage Act did not have such a provision.

Yet maintenance, which is her basic right to survival, is framed in

the context of the husband's economic power which is pitted against the woman's sexuality. It is like a sword of Damocles which hangs over her head even after her divorce while the man can contract a new marriage with absolute impunity. The recent trend in the courts is to impose on access to husbands even while they refuse to pay maintenance to their wife and children. Women view this attitude of the courts as a great injustice to them.

It has taken a long time for the courts to realise that the terms cruelty, desertion and adultery have different implications for the husband and the wife. It has taken more than 60 years for us to realise this anomaly and move away from the notion of equality and demand gender specific legal provisions to protect women from domestic violence. Finally, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 grants this recognition by providing a detailed list of all acts that constitute cruelty to women. There is no reciprocal list which men can rely on, nor a reciprocal remedy.

The Adultery Law, or Women's Bodies as Property

This anomaly is even more stark when we examine the law on adultery under Section 497 of the

IPC, which was finally stuck down by a Constitution bench in *Joseph Shine vs Union of India* on September 27, 2018. Under Section 497 of the 158-year-old IPC, it was a crime against the husband if a man had sexual intercourse with his wife without his consent. A similar recourse was not given to women. Women could not be punished under this law. When this provision was challenged on the ground that it violated Article 14, the courts relied upon a paternalistic doctrine to save it from the premise of equality. It was viewed as a protectionist measure and a beneficial provision in favour of women. The harm caused to women was seldom recognised in legal discourses.

But examining it from a gender lens, it was obvious that it was premised on the notion that women are passive beings, incapable of making choices about their bodies or sexual desires. It presumed that after marriage, the woman's body belonged to her husband. Framed within the notion of sexual morality of the Victorian era, it viewed the problem to be between two men over sexual access to the body of the woman. Though the law criminalised only men, in essence it was anti-women as it treated women as chattels, and gave legal validity to the proprietorial rights of the

husband over the wife. Any man who had sexual intercourse with another man's wife, without his consent, was perceived to be violating the right of the husband to exclusive sexual access to his wife.

While examining the constitutionality of this provision in *Joseph Shine*, the Centre had defended this provision using a deeply flawed argument that the section was essential to save the institution of marriage. "Diluting the adultery law will impact the sanctity of marriage. Making adultery legal will hurt marriage bonds," the Centre had pleaded in an affidavit filed before the court. It failed to see that the provision does not ensure marital fidelity. It merely protected male privileges. When adultery with the consent or connivance of the husband is not an offence, the patriarchal notion of the dominion of the husband over the woman's sexuality and bodily integrity gets reinforced.

In an extremely short-sighted manner, in 2003, the Justice V.S. Malimath Committee had recommended making the provision gender neutral premised on a flawed logic of equality. When marriage is constructed as a patriarchal institution, the woman does not have the corresponding control over her husband's sexuality. Granting the husband additional powers to prosecute his wife for adultery would amount to adding salt to a festering wound. Justice Prabha Sridevan, former judge of the Madras high court, comments that that a law which is superficially equal kicks in injustice when it is put in action is something we have recognised too late.

On earlier occasions when this provision was challenged, the courts declined to strike down the section based on a paternalistic notion of protecting women (*Yousuf Abdul Aziz vs State of Bombay* 1954, *Smt. Sowmithri Vishnu vs Union of India* 1985 and *V. Revathi vs Union of India* 1988). These challenges were based on a two-way discrimination – the woman's right to prosecute her husband and his



lover for adultery and the husband's right to prosecute his own adulterous wife.

Finally on September 27, 2018, the five-judge Constitutional bench validated the feminist analysis of the section and struck it down. The bench observed that the parameters of fundamental rights should include the rights of women, and that individual dignity was important in a sanctified society. The court felt that the law was against women who had no opportunity to defend themselves in a situation where they were falsely linked to a man on mere suspicion, since a woman could not be made party to the case under Section 497 and had no *locus standi*. The then Chief Justice of India, Justice Dipak Misra, while reading out the judgment, said: "A husband is not the master of his wife. Legal subordination of one sex by another cannot be permitted." Justice D. Y. Chandrachud held that a woman loses her voice and autonomy after entering marriage and autonomy is intrinsic to a dignified human existence. Section 497 denudes women from making choices and held that this provision is a relic of past. Justice Indu Malhotra held that Section 497 IPC is a clear violation of the fundamental rights granted in the Constitution, and there was no justification for the country continuing with this archaic provision.

While analysing why it took 158 years for this provision to be stuck down, we stumble across the concept of a 'reasonable man' – a fictional notion which is often used to arrive at a conclusion about how common people would respond in a given situation. Here again there is a presumption that both men and women would respond in a similar manner and that there is no distinction in their perception between the genders. Questioning this premise of 'reasonable man', in an article titled, "In search of the ordinary woman" Justice Sridevan discusses a case of sexual harassment which came up before the Madras high court:

"The Enquiry Officer found the delinquent officer guilty. But the High Court exonerating him and while doing so, made certain observations which indicate how the Ordinary Man gets constructed differently from the Ordinary Woman. "...The delinquent is leading a happy married life and there was no necessity for him to solicit sexual favours from anyone, much less the complainant ... The complainant lodged the said criminal complaint [...] only to create documentary evidence in her favour so as to be used in the departmental proceedings which shows her motivated intention of achieving her illegal goal of throwing the delinquent officer from his official position."



She comments, "Going by the judgment, the Ordinary Man is ordinarily faithful. The Ordinary Woman is ordinarily vengeful."

A Biased Neutrality

To conclude I bring back the original question with which I started, can the lens of feminism or concern for women's rights be labelled as 'biased'? The answer is provided by none other than Justice Chandrachud. At a roundtable organised by the O.P. Jindal Law School, titled, 'Feminism in Practice: Feminist Lawyering and Feminist Judging' in October, 2018, he commented: "As a judge you are giving effect to the essential values of the constitution and the basis of those values like equality, liberty, and fraternity which is the essence of the constitution. So in that sense when you apply feminist principles, one is doing nothing more than giving effect to the substance of equality in the constitution." Responding to a question, whether the constitution is feminist, Justice Chandrachud said, "Feminism is a lot about a disruption of social hierarchies, and that is what the Constitution intends to do. Transformation involves a disruption of the existing social structures."

As the number of women judges increases in all our courts, it is essential that they do not shy away from bringing in a women-centric jurisprudence with the fear that they will be implicated as 'biased' judges. While it is necessary to bring in a critical mass of women judges to protect women's rights, it will become a failed project if they become apologists to patriarchal notions of 'neutrality', but are able to contribute substantially towards the evolution of feminist jurisprudence, deeply enshrined in the Constitutional values as per the roadmap that Justice Chandrachud has charted out. ●

The author is a women's rights lawyer and is the co-founder of Majlis, an NGO which offers litigation support and legal advocacy to women.

ANAEMIA, OBESITY

on the Rise in India as NFHS-5 Reveals Falling Nutritional Indicators

■ ■ Mohana Basu

The fifth and latest round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) has revealed that the percentage of anaemic individuals as well as obese children and adults rose in India in the last five years.

Several of India's nutritional indicators have worsened since the fourth round of the NFHS, which was held in 2015-16. But the country has hit a major demographic milestone of replacement-level fertility, according to the latest survey conducted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare between 2019 and 2021. The survey fact sheet was published Wednesday.

Data showed that India's fertility rate fell to 2.0. A population is said to stabilise once it achieves what is known as replacement-level fertility (2.1). This is the total fertility rate at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next. The NFHS provides information on population, health, and nutrition for India and each state/union territory, including district-level estimates for many important indicators.

More Children and Women are Anaemic

The survey revealed that the number of anaemic children under five years of age rose to 67.1 per cent from 58.6 per cent in the last survey. This means that two out of every three children-under-five in India are anaemic. The percentage of anaemic



women rose to 57 per cent from 53.1 per cent, anaemic teenage girls (15-19 years of age) to 59.1 per cent from 54.1 per cent. The number of anaemic men also rose to 25 per cent from 22.7 per cent.

The number of non-breastfeeding children between 6 and 23 months old receiving an adequate diet fell to 12.7 per cent from 14.3 per cent, the NFHS-5 data showed. Moreover, children-under-five who are severely wasted increased to 7.7 per cent from 7.5. A child is said to be severely wasted if their weight-to-height ratio is minus-3, which indicates that the child is too thin for their height. This is also referred to as acute malnutrition.

The percentage of malnourished children also jumped to 3.4 per cent from 2.1 per cent in the last survey. Nutrition-related

indicators didn't worsen in children alone. The percentage of obese women increased to 24 per cent from 20.6 per cent, while the percentage for men rose to 22.9 from 18.9.

The NFHS

The NFHS-5 fieldwork was conducted in two phases — phase one from 17 June 2019 to 30 January 2020 in 22 states/UTs, and phase two from 2 January 2020 to 30 April in 14 states/UTs — by 17 field agencies. It gathered information from 6,36,699 households, 7,24,115 women, and 1,01,839 men. The International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, was the nodal agency for the survey. The data from NFHS-5 will help in identifying the need for new programmes with an area-specific focus, and groups that are most in need of essential services. ●

Not just Global Hunger Index, India's own Govt. Data Shows **HOW WORRIED WE SHOULD BE**

■ Siraj Hussain and Jugal Mohapatra

India has set a target to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030.

The Government has questioned the methodology of the Global Hunger Index. But undernutrition is one of the leading factors of child mortality in India. In India, malnutrition is not uncommon even in economically well-off sections of the population. It must be understood that malnutrition is not just hunger. It also includes:

- ❖ Undernutrition –which includes wasting (low weight for height), stunting (low height for age) and being underweight (low weight for age)
- ❖ Micronutrient-related malnutrition –which includes deficiency of important vitamins and minerals or micronutrient excess; and
- ❖ Overweight, obesity and diet-related lifestyle diseases

The Global Hunger Index 2021 is basically about undernutrition. It provides us an opportunity to introspect on why India's performance is not as good as what our economic growth should have ensured. Rather than doing that, the Narendra Modi government has chosen to question the methodology of one particular indicator used in the report to assess the level of undernourishment. It is true that at its core, the Hunger Index is primarily an indicator of child undernutrition and mortality. While it does estimate the prevalence of undernourishment (PoU), its



weightage in the index is only one third. The other three components of the index relate to the percentage of children under five years who show wasting, stunting, and child mortality (percentage of children who die before reaching five years of age).

India collects its own data on health and nutrition that is widely considered to be credible and extremely useful. The fifth round of the National Family Health Survey was conducted in 2019-20 and its findings were released in December

2020. However, data for Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh was not included in the first phase so the all-India performance is not yet known. The survey found that the progress is worse than expected, and stunting, reflective of chronic malnutrition, has increased in 11 out of the 17 states surveyed. Wasting, indicative of acute malnutrition, has also increased in 13 of these 17 states. Such malnourished children are more vulnerable to illness and disease. The percentage of

underweight children has gone up in 11 of the 17 states. In Bihar and Gujarat, 40 per cent of children under the age of five, were underweight.

Undernutrition is one of the leading risk factors for child mortality in India, accounting for 68.2 per cent of total under-five deaths (10.4 lakh) in 2017. Children with severe undernutrition are at high risk of dying from diarrhoea, pneumonia, and malaria.

Data Gaps in Nutrition

Hunger is defined as an uncomfortable or painful physical sensation caused by insufficient consumption of dietary energy. This term is sometimes also used to denote food insecurity. Someone is severely food insecure when they have run out of food and gone a day or more without eating. A person is moderately food insecure if their access to food is uncertain. In this situation, they might have to sacrifice other basic needs just to be able to eat. Such a situation is not uncommon.

It must be noted that the Global Hunger Index 2021 does not present data of impact on hunger and food insecurity as a fall out of the economic impact of the Covid pandemic-induced lockdown from March to June 2020. Several reports have documented the loss of livelihood and income, especially on

the 91 per cent of the working population employed in the informal sector. Similarly, the impact of a large number of deaths, largely unaccounted in government records, in the second wave of pandemic in April-May 2021 is not captured by this report. We might get to know the real impact of these events when the household consumption expenditure survey is released.

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) researchers have published papers on the affordability of Indian diets and a comparison of the Indian diet with the EAT – Lancet reference diet. The latter study found that in the lowest decile of per capita monthly expenditure, only 4 per cent caloric intake is from protein sources against the recommended 29 per cent. These studies are based on consumer expenditure surveys of 2011-12 and the situation may be entirely different now.

When the Modi government decided not to release the consumption expenditure survey conducted by National Statistical Office (NSO) in 2017-18, it was hoped that a fresh survey will be conducted in 2020-21 and 2021-22. But we don't know yet. In the absence of recent data, it is difficult to assess whether the poorest Indians are eating nutritious diets.

What the Government is Doing

It is not that the Modi government

has been totally oblivious to the challenge of undernutrition of children. In 2017, the Niti Aayog published the National Nutrition Strategy with the vision of Kuposhan Mukta Bharat by 2022. The following sources of funding were identified for this:

- ❖ National Health Mission
- ❖ National Nutrition Mission (Poshan Abhiyan)
- ❖ Integrated Child Development Scheme
- ❖ Swachh Bharat Mission
- ❖ Provision of 25 per cent flexible funds for states in centrally sponsored schemes

In 2018, Poshan Abhiyan was launched by the government through which it aimed to reduce child stunting, underweight and low birth weight by 2 percentage points per annum and anaemia among children (and young females) by 3 percentage points per annum. Niti Aayog has been evaluating the progress and three reports have been submitted to the government. Anyone concerned about India's poor standing in the Global Hunger Index should read the latest of these reports to understand the challenges faced by the Union and the state governments in tackling child undernutrition on the ground.

The two most important government interventions to address the challenge of undernutrition are the Integrated Child Development



Scheme (ICDS) and National Health Mission (NHM). ICDS has been focused on providing take-home ration to children between 6 to 36 months. It also provides supplementary nutrition to children aged 3-6 years in anganwadi centres with provision for enhanced support to undernourished children. Health-related facilities like immunisation, check-ups and referral services for malnourished children are supposed to be delivered through the state government's primary and community health centres and hospitals. However, the fragile health infrastructure and severe deficiency of trained health professionals in many states, especially in rural, hilly and tribal areas, is a serious stumbling block in ensuring these. We hope that the PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will augment the health infrastructure at the primary and secondary level to address these concerns. Implementation of ICDS also warrants more rigorous coordination and monitoring because, in 2018-19, only 44 per cent of the funds released by the

Modi government under the Annual Programme Implementation Plan (APIP) were reported to have been utilised.

India has set a target to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030. To this end, in the Union Budget 2021-22, Mission Poshan 2.0 was announced to improve nutritional outcomes in 112 aspirational districts. Poshan 2.0 is just a new name for existing schemes like ICDS, Anganwadi services, Poshan Abhiyan, Scheme for Adolescent Girls and National Creche Scheme.

Distributing Excess Grains

Many say that the Union government should distribute excess stock of food grains to those who are not currently covered under the Public Distribution Scheme, in view of rampant undernutrition. In fact, the government has done well to allot an additional 5 kg of wheat or rice per person per month under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY). In 2021-22, this allocation is up to November 2021. But only 79.51 crore people with ration cards are eligible for this. There would be many others who would have fallen into poverty as a

result of the pandemic and also deserve cheaper food grains.

On 1 October 2021, the central pool stock of rice and wheat was 816.03 lakh tonne against the buffer norm of 307.70 lakh tonnes. Rather than making ethanol from issuable food grains procured at the minimum support price, the government can allow anyone to take 5 kg of wheat or rice per person per month at 50 percent of MSP. This can address the needs of those who do not have ration cards.

Jharkhand has recently decided to provide eggs at least six days a week to children aged 3-6 years at Anganwadi centres. The Modi government should encourage other state governments to also distribute eggs to children from families where eggs, meat and fish are not taboo. Even if the Union government is reluctant to bear losses incurred in inclusion of nutriceals in PDS, the states should consider introducing them at least in aspirational districts that have high incidence of under-nutrition. ●

*Hussain, retired as
Union Agriculture Secretary.
Mohapatra was Chief Secretary, Odisha and
Union Secretary, Rural Development.*



Another 29 Crore People won't have Enough to Eat this Year due to

GLOBAL COVID

Mike Dorning

Global hunger will surge by about a third this year, driven by lingering income losses from the pandemic, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Income Losses

Overall, 1.2 billion people in 76 countries will be food-insecure this year. Most of the additional people the USDA expects to fall into food insecurity this year are in Asia. Global hunger will surge by about a third this year, driven by lingering income losses from the pandemic, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The department classifies someone food-insecure if they are unable to maintain a diet of at least 2,100 calories a day, considered a minimal level to stay active and healthy.

The department's annual assessment of food security in 76 middle- and low-income nations that are past or current recipients of U.S. food aid estimates an additional 291 million people in those countries won't have enough to eat in 2021. That comes on top of a huge spike in hunger last year as the pandemic unleashed economic distress.

The United Nations earlier this month estimated global food insecurity in 2020 had already hit the highest level in 15 years as income loss made healthy diets out of reach for about a 10th of the global population. Things are projected to get worse in 2021 as commodity inflation and disrupted supply chains sent world food prices to the highest in almost a decade, particularly bad news for poorer countries dependent on food imports.



The large-scale human suffering that's driven by hunger is reaching new depths of bleakness. A study published in Nature Food journal this month projected the exacerbated undernutrition among mothers and children in low-and middle-income countries will cost the world \$ 30 billion in future productivity losses. Rising hunger for hundreds of millions of people, primarily in Asia and Africa, also raises the risk of political instability.

Overall, 1.2 billion people in the 76 countries covered in the USDA report—representing 31% of their population—will be food-insecure this year. Prior to the pandemic, the USDA estimated 761 million people, or less than 20% of that population, fell into the category in those countries.

Most of the additional people the USDA expects to fall into food

insecurity this year are in Asia, which accounts for 72% of the increase. Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia will see particularly large jumps in the number of people without enough food, according to the report. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 21% of the global increase in undernourished people.

Yemen, Zimbabwe and Congo are projected to have the highest prevalence of hunger, with more than 80% of the population in each of the countries unable to get enough to eat. The primary driver of rising food insecurity is the persistent drop in income in the countries compared with pre-pandemic levels, according to the report. The authors cautioned that the projections didn't consider the potential impact of climate change, armed conflict or political or economic instability. ●



WHY IMRAN KHAN'S CIVILIAN GOVT SEEMS REMARKABLY SIMILAR TO MUSHARRAF'S ■ ■ Xari Jalil

MILITARY DICTATORSHIP

The administration's attempts to clamp down on free speech at Asma Jahangir Conference in Lahore showed it as anti-democratic and repressive.

Certain anti-democratic and repressive traits of Prime Minister Imran Khan's government in Pakistan surfaced last weekend when several attempts to muzzle free speech were made during and after the third Asma Jahangir Conference, held on November 20 and 21 in Lahore. The conference has been held annually since 2018 in memory of Asma Jahangir, the late Pakistani human rights activist and lawyer, although the spread of the pandemic last year had caused the 2020 session to be called off.

Members of the top judiciary attended the first day of the conference, including Saquib Nisar, the former chief justice of Pakistan, and Gulzar Ahmed, the current chief justice. Foreign dignitaries such as the ambassadors of the European Union, the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands opened the conference with their speeches. Everything ran smoothly – almost dully – until Ali Ahmed Kurd, former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), made his way to the rostrum. Then everything changed.

Speech of Dissent

Kurd has been known for his blazing, passionate speeches since 2008, when the lawyers' movement, also known as the movement for the restoration of the judiciary, took place against military dictator General Musharraf who had been in power at the time. When he spoke at the conference, it was with his usual theatrics – voice rising higher and higher, body language agitated. While the audience enjoyed the drama, it soon became clear that Kurd's speech was too direct and outspoken: one could almost see

tension rising from certain people. The chief justice of Pakistan, at whom Kurd's criticism was directed, appeared indifferent. But there was no doubt that each line that Kurd uttered was more critical than the last.

Kurd's panel topic centred on 'The role of the judiciary in protecting human rights and strengthening democracy'. In his speech, he brazenly asked the organisers of the conference, "What judiciary are you talking about?" and then went on to say that the judiciary of Pakistan had one of the lowest rankings in the world.

"Out of 130, we are on number 126! A journalist asked me my comment about this deplorable ranking. I said, are you as a Pakistani not happy about the fact that we are still four places higher than the bottom?" Kurd said as the audience exploded with laughter.

He also said that there was a clear division within the judiciary and that this inefficiency is why Pakistan's ranking is so deplorable. "*Aik general* (one general)!" Kurd shouted four times before the audience, delighted by what he had been saying so far and anticipating more jibes at the establishment, permitted him to complete the sentence. Only after Ahsan Bhoon, the current president of the SCBA,

managed to hush a group of students chanting slogans like "*Hum cheen kay lenge azadi* (We will snatch our freedom)!" could Kurd continue, whereupon he said, "In this country, one [army] general was superior to the 220 million citizens", which caused serious unease among several people in the crowd.

One day later, Kurd was charged with Article 6 (high treason). This is not new for him. He had faced the same charge in 2008 when the police claimed that after the funeral prayers of the assassinated Baloch leader Nawab Akbar Bugti on August 29, Kurd had made objectionable speeches against the state and had incited people against the government. While the 2008 charge was later dropped, it is difficult not to compare Imran Khan's civilian government of today to the military dictatorship of 2008.

'A thing Done by Rats'

Kurd's speech obviously went viral, leading to trolls accusing the lawyer of sedition and a backlash against the organisers of the conference. But it was on the second day of the conference, Sunday, November 21, that Pakistan faced one of its worst incidents of censorship in recent times when popular political leader Mian Nawaz Sharif, the head of the

Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), was abruptly cut off during the live video call via which he was participating in the conference.

The Pakistan Muslim League chief had been invited to the closing panel of the conference along with leaders of other political parties, including the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI).

While Senator Farhatullah Babar, senior leader of the PPP arrived readily, the PTI's Fawad Chaudhry – ironically Pakistan's minister of information and broadcasting – refused to come. He announced this not to the organisers, but via a tweet. "I was invited to the Asma Jahangir Conference today. I was told that the conference would end with a speech by a fugitive accused. Obviously, this is tantamount to mocking the country and the constitution. I have apologised for not attending the conference," Chaudhry said in the tweet.

But when the organisers did not back down from including the PML-N chief on the panel, the government used baser methods to try and stop them. At first, cellular services went down two hours before the concluding session. Then when the video call connected, within seconds of Sharif's address which began with a condemnation of the clampdown on freedom of speech, the call disconnected.

According to the organisers, they had been tipped off that the government-run Pakistan Telecommunications Authority would send people to the internet service providers and tell them to cut the connection. So they had made other arrangements.

"They have tried to block us off, but we are not far behind. We have always found our way round their tactics of muzzling us. Cutting off cables is a thing that is done by rats," said Asma's daughter Munizae Jahangir, journalist, anchor and one of the main organisers of the event. And so a telephonic address ensued. Not much could be heard because the sound quality was bad, but the move symbolised resistance.



'Your Regime Resides in Glass Houses'

The Nawaz Sharif fiasco was to be expected, although the organisers had violated no laws. While a notification issued by Pakistan's electronic media watchdog PEMRA had banned any live videos of Sharif to be telecast, the ban extends to television only, not an address to a gathering, not even to digital media.

That the government was uncomfortable about the conference's open conversations was also felt when they did not allow visas to be given to foreign guests invited as speakers, including those from India. Journalists Barkha Dutt and Jyoti Malhotra and lawyer Vrinda Grover all had to participate online because they were not given visas. Steven Butler, the Asia Pacific head of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) was also not allowed to come for the second consecutive time. For the 2019 conference, when Butler, armed with a valid visa arrived at the airport, he was actually barred from stepping outside and deported.

The bullying by the government has not stopped. Fawad Chaudhry and others from the PTI cabinet urged an investigation into the funds of the chief organiser of the event, the Asma Jahangir Legal Aid Cell, known locally as AGHS. This was after the entire event was

said to have been funded by the European Union, the German Embassy, the Embassy of Netherlands and the Canadian High Commission. The PTI government constantly issues statements against the conference, calling it a "foreign funded" event. This accusation was often made about Asma Jahangir too – but hardly anything has ever been proved.

Posting a still of Fawad Chaudhry accusing the event organisers of using foreign funding, journalist and author Nadeem Farooq Paracha quipped on social media: "*Bhai, pura mulk ghair mulki funding pe chal raha hai. Kya IMF mulki idara hai, jiska head office Jhelum mein hai* (Man, the whole country is being run on foreign funding. Is the IMF a local institution, whose head office is in Jhelum)? Your regime resides in glass houses, Fawad Sahib. Shouldn't throw stones."

On November 23, a letter was drafted by Aliya Hamza Malik, a member of the National Assembly, who demanded that the following matters be taken up in the assembly: apart from the source of funding, the work done by the AGHS and why the forum gave an 'absconder' a place on the panel.

AGHS was formed in 1984 by four women lawyers including Asma Jahangir and her sister Hina

Jilani, both leading human rights lawyers of the country and recipients of international awards. The organisation provides access to free legal aid for all marginalised communities, especially women and children, and minorities. During her life, Asma won a plethora of cases where basic human rights were being pitilessly violated, including cases of blasphemy, bonded labour, the right to due inheritance, violence against women, rape and forced marriage. One of these cases shook the nation when a young woman who wanted to marry of her own free will was shot dead by her own father inside the AGHS's shelter home, Dastak.

The (over) sensitivity of the PTI government regarding free speech and expression as well as a free press has been increasing of late, it seems. On November 22, just one day after the conference, the prime minister himself ordered an inquiry against a senior joint secretary of the cabinet division for posting "objectionable comments" against the ruling party on a social media platform.

The post had allegedly said in Urdu: "A similarity between the PTI and the Taliban is that both are figuring out how to run the government only after assuming power. And the centre of hope for both of them is Aabpara." (Aabpara is where the Lal Masjid is located).

Pakistan's governments – not just this one, but earlier ones as well – refuse to understand that it is useless to clamp down on the press. They can try and crush it, but the public still squeezes out and forms its own narrative in other ways.

If the government wants to be perceived as a democratically elected set-up, if it wants people to believe that it is honest and uncorrupt – an agenda that Imran Khan always seems to push – then it must stop muzzling the press and silencing dissent. After all, freedom of speech is a basic human right. ●

The author is a journalist and co-founder of Voicepk.net, a non-corporate/non-profit digital platform for human rights.



A spectre is haunting India's ruling class – the spectre of MSP. Over the last few days, various sections of this ruling class – political allies of the Bharatiya Janata Party, economic ideologues of free-market and some ecological warriors – have entered into an unholy alliance to exorcise this spectre and stymie the possibility of India's farmers getting a fair price for their produce.

MSP

Yogendra Yadav

Won't Bankrupt India

It's Complex, but so is Disinvestment

Debunking Six Myths about the MSP



Ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dramatic, though over-delayed, capitulation on the farm laws, the fear of the ascent of the rural has left the Indian bourgeoisie petrified. Minimum Support Price (MSP) is now the new battleground. End of “reform” – arguably the most abused word – is the latest war cry. Ever since the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) has reminded the PM of its pending demand of a legal guarantee of MSP, we have witnessed a flurry of articles, editorials and debates out

to block the possibility that the PM may concede this one as well. MSP is the “bane of agriculture” and the demand for its legal status “totally unreasonable” says the 50-word editotal of The Print, which I often agree with.

As in much ideological propaganda, this tirade against MSP is full of ignorance, prejudice, and fabrications. I cannot imagine such ill-informed canard getting space on national media if it concerned share market, Provident Fund, debt restructuring

or anything that touched upon the interest of the “middle class”. As this historic farmers' struggle enters end-game, it is vital to debunk some of the misinformation and disinformation that surrounds the current debate on MSP.

Farmers Shifting Goalpost?

The first lie is an accusation: Farmers are shifting the goalpost by inventing the demand for legal guarantee of MSP once the demand for repeal of three agricultural laws was conceded.

This is nonsense, contrary to the well-known and widely publicised position of the SKM. Demand for MSP realisation has been prominent on the charter of demands, next only to the repeal of three laws, at every stage of this struggle, from the very first memorandum to the 11 rounds of negotiations and the Kisan Sansad. The government's power-point response to the SKM's demands acknowledged this issue. This has been one of the main demands in the public domain, reiterated in almost every public speech. There is nothing new or surprising about it. Assured remunerative price has been a flagship demand of the farmers' movement for decades.

Environmentally Unsustainable?

The third lie is presented under an ecological garb: Legalisation of MSP would lead to over-production of water-guzzling paddy and delay the much-needed diversification of crops. This reasoning is fallacious: The over-dependence on paddy (and sugarcane for that matter) is not because of generous MSP, but because of skewed procurement. While the government declares MSP for 23 crops, it makes good this promise only for wheat and paddy, and that too in select states. No wonder all farmers in these states are hooked to these crops that are not environmentally sustainable. The solution does not lie in withdrawing MSP, but in making sure that the farmers realise MSP in other crops like chana, makka, bajra and various dals. The government should offer attractive MSP for pulses (as recommended by the Arvind Subramanian committee) and oilseeds and ensure their purchase.

Will it distort the market?

The fourth lie is dressed up as elementary economics: Any tinkering with prices by way of MSP would distort the market.



MSP already exists

The second lie is plain and simple: MSP is already available. So, why bother about legal status? Sadly, the PM's rhetoric of "MSP *tha, hai aur rehegi*" has given fresh lease of life to this myth. The truth is that MSP has existed mostly on paper. The government's own data shows that only 6 per cent farmers actually benefit from it. (I think a realistic number is around 15 per cent). That is why, over the years, farmers, movements have made three demands.

We can call these three components of the demand for MSP. One, the promise of Minimum Support Price should have a *sound statutory status*, instead of remaining just an executive order. (A working group of Chief Ministers headed by Narendra Modi recommended this component to PM Manmohan Singh in 2011. The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices also reiterated this demand in its 2017-18 report.) Two, the government should make good this promise by creating a well-funded and *effective administrative mechanism* that ensures that every farmer actually received at least this minimum price for her entire produce. (Successive governments, including this one, have repeatedly promised this without putting such a mechanism in place). Three, there should be a fair and *comprehensive method of computation* of MSP that takes full cost into account and is extended to all agricultural produce. (This was recommended by the Swaminathan Commission). All these three asks remain unfulfilled to this day.

Yes, it would, just as TRAI regulations distort telecommunication market, just as ban on surge prices distort road and air transport market. Ever heard

these free-market *wallas* complain against these distortions? Do we not fix minimum wages lest they distort labour market? Should we allow aspirin to be sold for Rs

1,000 per tablet? As for the fear of food prices going up, the way to control it is to offer subsidised food to the poor, not to deny fair price to the producer. The fact is that “free market” is and must be regulated all over the world to meet overall societal objectives. Farmers are offered subsidies and price support all over the world. If price assurance is a bad idea, why declare MSP in the first place?

Impossible for Govt?

The fifth lie takes bureaucratic form: MSP may be a good idea, but it is practically impossible. How can the government purchase all the produce of all the 23 crops? Where would it be stored? What would the government do with it? Or so goes the argument. The simple response is: No government needs to do something as silly as that in order to ensure that all farmers receive MSP. My colleagues and I have repeatedly argued that there are multiple methods for ensuring MSP to all farmers. The government can procure more than it does today, especially in pulses, coarse grains, and oilseeds. For the rest, the governments need not purchase. The farmer can be given deficit payment for the gap between the MSP and market price, as was done by the Haryana government this



year for bajra. Government can do selective intervention in the market, or use protectionist policies in international market, to prevent prices from falling. And, in the last instance, it can use punitive measure to disallow trading below MSP. All this is complex, yes. But developing a mechanism for MSP delivery is no more complex than designing disinvestment or drawing up mining contracts.

Will India go Bankrupt?

Finally, the fiscal lie: India would go bankrupt! My colleague Kiran Vissa and I had debunked this fear-mongering by presenting a rough

estimate, with complete breakdown, of how much would it cost the government to make up for the gap between the existing MSP and the prevailing market price. Our calculation for 2017-18 showed the overall cost to be Rs 47,764 crore (just 1.6 per cent of the Union Budget that year and less than 0.3 per cent of the GDP). If the MSP were to be raised to the level recommended by Swaminathan Commission, it would still cost Rs 2.28 lakh crore (about 7.8 per cent of Budget and 1.2 per cent of GDP). Can India afford it for the welfare of nearly two-thirds of its population? That is the real question that the country must face.

Thanks to this historic farmers' movement, the country has woken up to a political reality: Farmers do not belong to the dustbin of history, they are very much a part of India's present and future. A legally binding system of fair calculation and effective delivery of MSP to each farmer is a logical corollary of this realisation. As AR Vasavi says, it's time to move towards “Maximum Support Policy”. It is all about political will now. ●

The author is among the founders of Jai Kisan Andolan.



Goa Will Be Dr. Gurinder Kaur

DESTROYED

All in the Name of Economic Development

On the night of November 1, 2020, about 5000 Goans gathered near the railway crossing in the historic village of Chandor (which was the capital of Goa in the Medieval Period), one kilometer away from the ecologically-sensitive area of Mollem National Park and Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary.

Playing drums and chanting slogans like 'Save Mollem' and 'Goa doesn't want coal', they protested against the state government for allowing three infrastructure projects which include double tracking of railway line, four laning of 4-A National Highway and laying a 400 KV transmission line. The protest was also supported by the Goa Congress leaders and some foreign environmental activists.

The Union Environment minister Prakash Javadekar has approved and discussed 30 infrastructure projects during the lockdown which fall in environmentally-sensitive areas in different parts of the country. As per the rules, before approving such development projects, the outline of the project has to be discussed with the regional environmental committee of the respective area, after which the Environmental Impact Assessment of the area is conducted.

Detailed information about the project is supposed to be disseminated through print and electronic media. A proposed project



can only be started if people living in the area agree to the project after knowing the pros and cons of the same. Public hearings are usually organised to allow people living in the area to present their concerns. In case the public has suggestions, these are to be deliberated upon and incorporated into the project outline before allowing an infrastructure project to begin.

However, the government took advantage of the COVID-19 lockdown and hastily passed multiple projects via video conference, with approximately 10 minutes allotted to discuss each project, without conducting site inspections or seeking public opinion

in most cases, in complete defiance of environmental regulations. These include the three projects which are being vehemently opposed by the people of Goa.

Both the Central and state governments are trying to convince the people of Goa that these projects are for the betterment and development of the state. Then why are the people opposing them?

Goan residents say that these three projects have been planned in an ecologically-sensitive area, and will pass through Mollem National Park and Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary, both of which are renowned for their rich flora and fauna.

The proposed projects will be located in the Western Ghats, one of the world's few biodiversity hotspots, known for its ecological fragility. The natural beauty of this area is very captivating—Goa's famous Dudhsagar and Tambdi Falls, Tambdi Surla Temple and Devil's Canyon are also in this region and these places are important tourist destinations.

The region is densely forested which contributes immensely to the balance of Goa's environment and groundwater level. The three projects will upset the environmental balance of the region. For these projects, at least 50,000 trees will be felled, which will drastically increase the amount of carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, increase the local temperature and have a negative impact on the ground water level of the area. The people of this region will be forced to face water scarcity like the people of Cotigao area.

In the Cotigao area of Goa, it is not an uncommon sight to see women of the five villages lining up in front of government water tankers for drinking water, every year during the summer months. What is the use of such 'development' when people are left craving for even basic needs like water?

Goan residents further say that none of these projects are for the development of the state. All of these projects are designed for the benefit of the corporate world. The main reason for double-tracking the railway line and expanding the National Highway 4-A is to supply more coal and iron from Mormugao port to industries in Karnataka. So far, 12 million tonnes of coal is being transported annually but with this railway line and 4-A National Highway, the target is to increase the volume to 51 million tonnes per annum by 2036.

The Central government had planned to double the railway track in 2016. Former Chief Minister of Goa, Pratap Singh Rane had said that Goa already has two railway lines which are enough to cater to the needs of the people of the state. It is important to mention here that the

400 KV transmission line is also meant to meet the growing power demands of the industries.

The three proposed projects will not promote the economic development of Goa. Rather, they will pollute natural resources such as forest, air and water and destroy the environmentally-sensitive zone.

During the transportation of high amounts of coal, large particles of coal and coal ash will scatter in the coastal areas of Arabian Sea and on both sides of the railway line. It will disperse through the air and water, polluting the environment, endangering the lives of the people, sea creatures and wildlife.

With these projects, the dense biodiverse forests of Mollem National Park and Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary will be fragmented into small pieces, destroying the natural habitat of the animals and putting them at greater risks as their numbers will start declining at a faster rate. Human population will face dire consequences with the extractive entry into forests, as animal diseases will also start spreading among them.

Goa is known for its natural beauty across the world. If a double track railway line is constructed, it will not only destroy the forests but also pollute the beaches of Goa that attract both domestic and foreign tourists around the year.

The increase in transportation of coal and destruction of eco-tourism spots will reduce the influx of tourists which will adversely affect the livelihood of the people of Goa. As a result, the tourism industry, which is the mainstay of the Goan economy, will also be severely impacted by these projects.

Along with the beaches, the sea water will be polluted with coal particles which will cause the sea plants to die, as they will be unable to make their food due to lack of sunlight. Due to absence of food, sea creatures (fish, crabs, etcetera) will either die out or migrate to other places. With the scarcity of fish and other aquatic organisms, thousands of fishermen whose livelihood depends on the sea will become

helpless to meet their basic needs.

These so-called development projects pose great damage to the natural beauty, biodiversity, and economic and social development of Goa. The bottom line is that these projects have no prospects for the development of the state, that is why the residents of Goa are opposing them. Their fight to save Goa's environment, wildlife sanctuaries, economy, people's employment and health from the government and industrialists continues.

Goa's state government seems to be supporting these projects under pressure from the Centre. It should have approved only those projects which are in favour of the state's natural environment and economic development.

It is difficult to understand why the Central Government, at various international platforms and as part of the Paris Climate Agreement, has promised to increase forest cover and generate energy from renewable sources to reduce carbon emissions, while at the national and state levels it is encouraging coal-fired industries by removing dense forest cover, endangering the natural environment and livelihood of the people as well as their health.

Not only this, the Centre has brought forth the draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification during the lockdown period. With the new notification, the country's natural resources will also be sacrificed for the corporate world.

It is incumbent upon the Central government to abandon narrow political interests and the corporate-friendly model for economic development of the country and adopt a people and nature-friendly model. If the Central Government does not change its planning strategy for economic development, then the people of our country will be facing a greater number of natural calamities of high severity due to rising temperatures in the coming days. ●

Dr. Gurinder Kaur is a professor at the Department of Geography, Punjabi University, Patiala.

30% Muslims, 20% Dalits and Adivasis Report Discrimination in Accessing Healthcare: Oxfam



Forty-three percent of the respondents stated that they could not get vaccinated because the vaccination centres had run out of vaccines when they visited them and 12% did not get inoculated because they could not afford “the high prices” of the vaccine. A third of Muslims, over 20% Dalits and Adivasis, and 30% of the overall respondents reported being discriminated against on grounds of religion, caste or because of illness or health conditions in hospitals or by healthcare professionals, claims a report.

Sharing the results of its rapid survey on the challenges with the COVID-19 vaccination drive in India, Oxfam India in its report noted that 43% of the respondents stated that they could not get vaccinated because the vaccination centres had run out of vaccines when they visited them and 12% did not get inoculated because they could not afford “the high prices” of the vaccine.

Nine percent of the respondents said they had to lose a day’s wages to get themselves vaccinated, according to report ‘Securing Rights of Patients in India’. The NGO said the survey was conducted in two parts to cover the rights of patients against “some of the provisions” of the Union ministry for health and family welfare and India’s vaccination drive.

The survey on the patients’ rights charter of the health ministry was carried out between February and April and received 3890 responses, while the survey on India’s vaccine drive was conducted between August and September covering 10,955 respondents in 28 states and five union territories, it added.

“One in four Indians faced discrimination while accessing health services due to their caste and religion,” Oxfam India said, citing findings of the survey. “A third of Muslim respondents, over 20 per cent Dalit and Adivasi respondents, and 30 per cent of overall respondents reported being discriminated against on the grounds of religion, caste or because of illness or health conditions in a hospital or by a healthcare professional,” the report claimed.

Fifty percent respondents said they were not provided with an estimated cost of treatment/procedure before the start of the treatment/procedure when they or their close relatives were hospitalised in the past 10 years, it claimed.

While 31% respondents reported being denied case papers, patient records, investigation reports for treatment/procedure by the hospital even after requesting for the same, 35% of women said they underwent physical examination by male attendant without a female present in the room, the report said.

“Nineteen per cent of the respondents whose close relatives were hospitalised said they were denied release of dead body by the hospital, it added. “The surveys show that the basic rights of patients’ in India are being routinely denied in healthcare facilities, for the poor and middle class alike. Skewed power dynamics with respect to class, caste, religion, and gender between the healthcare providers and patients deepen existing structural inequalities in the healthcare system,” Oxfam India CEO Amitabh Behar said in a statement. Underlining denial of patient’s rights in the country, the report claimed that 74% respondents said the doctor simply wrote the prescription or treatment or asked them to get tests/investigations done without explaining their disease, nature and/or cause of illness.

More than half of the respondents (57%) who were themselves or their relatives had been hospitalised did not receive any information about investigations and tests being done, the report said. Listing key findings from the survey on COVID-19 vaccination drive in India, the report noted that 29% of the respondents said that they either had to make multiple visits to the vaccination centre or stand in long queues, while 22% faced issues in booking the slot online or had to try for multiple days ahead to get a slot. ●

The Inner Significance of the Mahābhārata

Shrii Shrii Ānandamūrti



In Sanskrit there are six main directions – north, south, east, west, up and down – which are called disha or pradisha. There are also four corners – northwest, southwest, southeast and northeast, termed iishāna, agni, vāyu and naerta respectively – which are collectively called anudisha. So four plus six makes ten.

Now, the mind is blind. With the help of the viveka [conscience] it is able to see and visualize. So the mind is Dhritarastra [the blind king of the Mahābhārata], and its forces – that is, the ten agents, the bahihkaraṇa – can work in ten directions simultaneously. So the mind has ten by ten or one hundred external expressions. Or in other words, Dhritarastra has one hundred sons.

What about the Pandavas [five brothers of the Mahābhārata]? They are the five fundamental factors in the human structure. Sahadeva is the solid factor represented by the mūlādhāra cakra (capable of answering everything). Next is Nakula at the svādhiśthāna cakra. Nakūla means “water which flows having no boundaries”. Na means “no” and kūla means “boundaries” – the liquid factor. Next is Arjuna, the representation of energy or force, luminous at the maṇipura cakra – always fighting to maintain balance. Then Bhima, the son of Pandu, is vāyu, the aerial factor, at the anāhata cakra. Finally, the position of Yudhisthira is at the vishuddha cakra where matter ends and the other world starts.

So in the fight between materialists and spiritualists, in the struggle between matter and the sublime, Yudhisthira remains undisturbed, unperturbed. Yudhi sthirah Yudhiśthirah [“One who remains steady in battle is called ‘Yudhiśthira’”].

Krṣṇa is at the sahasrāra cakra. Now when the kuṇḍalinī [sleeping divinity] is awakened, rises and reaches the shelter of Krṣṇa with the help of the Pandavas, the jīva [unit being] merges in Cosmic Consciousness. The Pandavas are rescuing the jīva and bringing it to the shelter of Krṣṇa.

Sanjaya is the minister of Dhritarastra. Sanjaya is viveka. Dhritarastra is asking Sanjaya, because he cannot see by himself, “Oh, Sanjaya, tell me, in the battle of Kurukṣetra and Dharmakṣetra, what did my party [and that of the Pandavas] do? How did they fare?”

The hundred sons of Dhritarastra, the blind mind, are trying to control the jīva, which is being rescued by the Pandavas through a constant fight. Finally, being triumphant, they bring the jīva to the shelter of Krṣṇa. This is the inner significance of the Mahābhārata.

Kurukṣetra is the world of action, the external world, which is asking you to work and work. Work is the order. Kuru means “work”. [And kṣetra means “field”.] Dharmakṣetra is the internal psychic world. Here the Pandavas dominate. ●



Jan 2022: NEWS: National Webinar on Shri Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar's Contribution to Various Fields

A national webinar on Shri Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar's contribution to Ethics, Economics, Prabhat Sangeet and Spiritual Philosophy was organized on 4th December under the joint aegis of Renaissance Universal (RU) and Philosophy Department, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati.

The program started with a Prabhat Sangeet song rendition by Avadhutika Anand Abhisha Acharya. Pro. P. Chitraiya, HOD, Philosophy, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati presided over the programme. In his

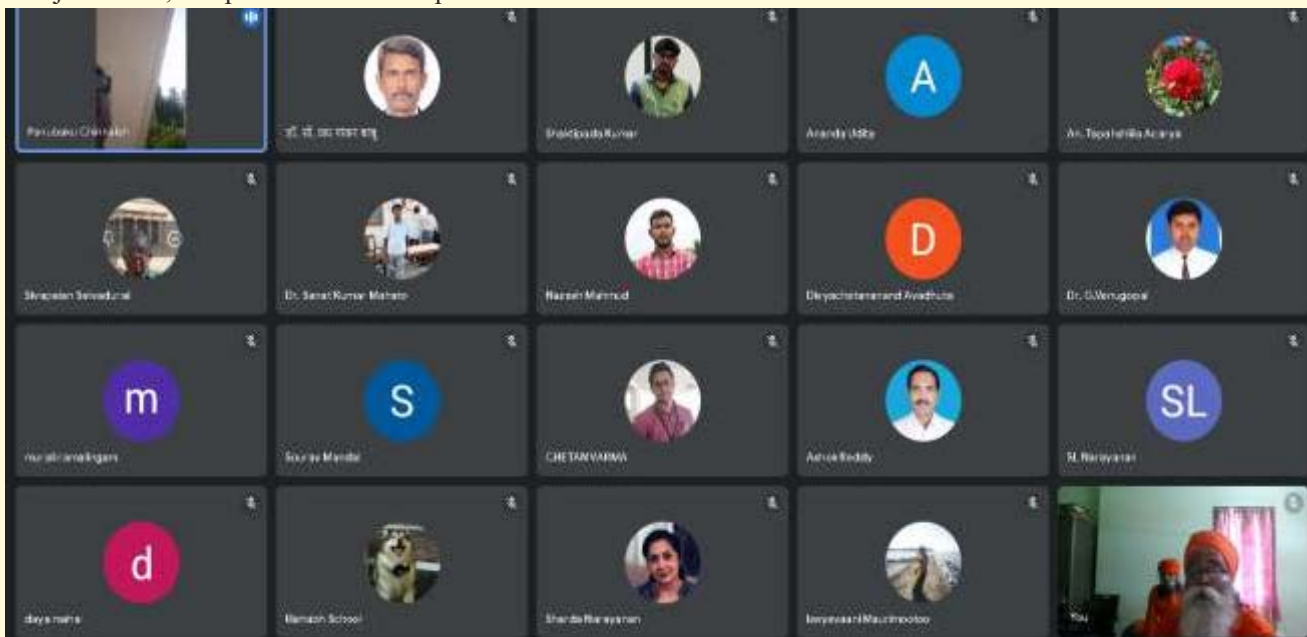


speech, he highlighted the various contributions of Shri Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar.

Dr. Joy Shankar Babu, HOD, Hindi Department, Pondicherry University, Antar Bharati, Chief Editor of Yug Manas, Dr. Aditya Gupta, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Delhi, Dr. Shaktipad Kumar, Department of English, Assistant Professor, Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University, Dr. Sharada Narayan, Assistant Professor, Department of Drama, Dr. MGR Janaki College of Arts and Science for Women, Madras and Chetan Verma, Assistant Professor, Viva College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Virar, Mumbai were the speakers.

All the speakers gave their views on Ethics, Economics, Prabhat Sangeet and Spiritual Philosophy. Dr. Joy Shankar Babu said that Prabhat Sangeet touches the innermost core of our heart. Its lyrical excellence and melody is unparalleled. Speaking on ethics, Dr. Aditya Gupta said that morality is the foundation of spiritual practice. However, it should be remembered that morality or good conduct is not the culmination of spirituality. As a moralist one can set a role model for other moralists, but it is not the goal of a spiritual seeker to do so. Mental balance is required at the very beginning of sadhna and this type of mental harmony can be called morality.

Dr. Shaktipad Kumar spoke on Rarh Civilization and Prabhat Sangeet. He further added that Jhumur and Baul music are the most popular in the region. Dr. Sharada Narayanan spoke on the concept of Taraka Brahma. Taraka Brahma appears in the form of Mahasambhuti. Chetan Verma, while talking on the economics theory of Shri Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, compared Prout with capitalism and communism.



UPLF (Muzaffarpur) Demands Guaranteed Employment for All

On 10 Dec, Universal Proutist Labour Federation (UPLF) held a meeting with the labourers and general public at Bhatgama, Balaur Nidhi Panchayat, Gaighat, Muzaffarpur.

The meeting was organized by Proutist Dr. Taranee Prasad Singh. Proutist Bloc, India's (PBI) national convener Acharya Santosanand Avadhuta was also present on this occasion. Besides him, other proutists who participated included Ramchandra Rai, Ramchandra Mandal, Kapileshwar Chaupal, Mohammad Mostak, Rishi Dev, Nilu Singh and Geeta Dev.

Addressing the labourers, Acharya Santosanand Avadhuta said that the condition of labourers in India is pathetic. They don't get adequate employment, salary, allowances and decent working conditions. The labour laws are either tilted in favour of capitalists or not followed at all. All this has deprived the labourers of their right to a dignified human life. He called upon the labourers to get under the banner of UPLF and fight to secure their rights.

Dr. Taranee Prasad Singh said labour laws are not being followed anywhere in the country because the government is not interested in implementing them. Instead, it intends to worsen the condition of labourers by changing labour laws in the name of EODB (ease of doing business). He said that the cause of most problems in the current democratic system is party politics.

Ramchandra Rai said that farmers and labourers are the foundation of any economy, but it is disheartening to see that they are suffering the most. Desperate farmers are committing suicides. Labourers are facing unabated exploitation. He supported UPLF's demand for the right to guaranteed employment with living wages.

Nilu Singh condemned the government's labour policy saying that all kinds of labour is being brought under contractual framework. Whether it is a teacher, an engineer or a doctor - all are being forced to work on contract. Looks like soon IAS officers will also be hired on contract. She said that the contract system is there to keep the workers in a constant state of panic and uncertainty so that they can be easily exploited.

The following demands were put forward by UPLF (Muzaffarpur):

1. More and more industries or companies should be made workers-owned cooperatives.
2. Working hours should be reduced.
3. 365 days employment should be guaranteed to MGNREGA workers.
4. Wages should be high enough to ensure adequate purchasing power to all.
5. Laborers in Bihar should be guaranteed employment at the block level.





PBI (Vidarbha) Demands Statehood to Vidarbha at the Earliest



On 15 Dec 2021, Proutist Bloc, India, PBI (Vidarbha) held a daylong sit-in and a rally from Yashwant stadium to Samvidhan Chowk near Vidhan Sabha in Nagpur to voice its demand for the statehood to Vidarbha and also to highlight the plight of farmers, labourers, youths and the landless in the region. More than 500 people participated in the event.

Speaking on this occasion, PBI's national convener Acharya Santosanand Avadhuta said, "For the last several decades, there has been a demand for statehood to Vidarbha and there have been



various movements to this end, but all in vain; the people of Vidarbha have always been betrayed as the leaders of the movement were bought off by money or power. Even Devendra Fadnavis, who hails from Nagpur and served as the CM of Maharashtra for several years, hardly ever did anything to fulfill this long-pending demand of Vidarbhan.

There is a strong ground for statehood to this region. Since the beginning, Vidarbha has been continuously neglected. A very little portion of Maharashtra's budget is allocated to Vidarbha, which hardly suffices to fulfill the needs of this region. Despite holding 2/3 of the minerals and 3/4 of the forest cover of Maharashtra, Vidarbha has had inadequate industrial development. Most of its coal and other mineral resources are sent to other parts of the state and the country, which has led to the shortage of power and under-development of other industries in the region. In the last 15 years alone, more than 45,000 farmers have committed suicide in 11 districts of Vidarbha. The condition of agriculture is pathetic and there is a complete lack of industries in the region. All the state governments till now have been insensitive to the needs and aspirations of the people of Vidarbha, therefore, PBI demands full statehood to Vidarbha.

The demand for Vidarbha state is very old. Even the first PM Jawahar Lal Nehru and Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar supported the demand for separate Vidarbha state. While several recent movements have resulted in the formation of smaller states like Telangana, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh, why is Vidarbha not getting its due?"

PBI (Vidarbha) convener Madhukar Nistane said, "Once Vidarbha gains statehood and Nagpur becomes its capital, the seat of decision making will be easily accessible for the common people. In a short period of one to three hours people can contact the administration personally. Ministers and people's representatives will also be able to intensify their supervision and monitoring of development projects quickly. They won't be able to shirk their responsibilities by pointing out that Mumbai Sarkar is not listening to them. Right of self determination will make all the difference in fully utilizing resources and Vidarbha's resources will not be exploited by others as is happening now."

Besides the above speakers, Vivek Dehenkar, State President, PBI, Dilipbhau Umre, Vidarbha Organizer, PBI,

Arunji Kapile, District President, PBI, Ghanshyam Purohit, District President, Nagpur, Arunji Kedar (National President Jai Vidarbha Party), Vishnuji Ashtikar (National Secretary, Jai Vidarbha Party), Mukesh ji Masurkar (National Vice President Jai Vidarbha Party) addressed the agitators.

After the demonstration, PBI submitted a memorandum of the following demands to the concerned officials to be handed over to the chief minister Uddhav Thakre:

1. A proposal for the creation of a separate Vidarbha state should be tabled in the assembly/parliament at the earliest.
2. Ownership rights should be given to encroacher-farmers.
3. Industries based on local resources be established, and local youths be employed in them. Besides, unemployment allowance should be given to the unemployed until they get appropriate employment
4. Examinations in the higher educational institutions of Vidarbha and other competitive examinations should be held timely.
5. Farmers and labourers affected by the pandemic be given financial help at the earliest.



PBI (UP) Forms a Committee in Amethi

Proutist Bloc, India (UP) held a meeting with party workers and other proutists in Amethi on 12 December. The meeting was attended by PBI(UP)'s president R. P. Singh Chouhan, General Secretary Pandey, PBI (Delhi)'s General Secretary Baidyanath Sah, proutist Ram Khelawan, proutist Arup Shrivastava from Basti and other party officials, and cadres.

On this occasion, Kalidin Suman was unanimously appointed as the president of Amethi Vidhan Sabha constituency, and a committee was also formed under him.



Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

We all Love this Earth

MÁNUŚA SABÁI ÁPAN
EKAI MARME GÁNTHÁ SABÁR HIYÁ
SABÁKÁR EKAI ÁYOJANA

DUHKHE KÁNDI MORÁ SUKHE HÁSI
PRIYA JANA PRIYA MUKHA BHÁLOBÁSI
KŚUDHÁR ANNA JAL MILE MISHE KHÁI
MORÁ, KŚUDHÁR ANNA JAL MILE MISHE
KHÁI
SABÁKÁR TÁHÁ PRAYOJANA
BUJHI, SABÁKÁR TÁHÁ PRAYOJANA

SABÁI BHÁLOBÁSI EI DHARAÑII
ÁKÁŠHER CÁNDA TÁRÁ ARAÑYÁNII
EKAI TÁLE NÁCI MORÁ EKAI TÁLE GÁI
DÁKI PARAM PURUŚERE HOYE EK MAN

All humans are our very own,
All hearts are strung in the same heart,
All have the same goal.

In sorrow we cry, in joy we laugh,
We love dear ones and sweet words.
In hunger we share food and water
Everyone needs them
We realise everyone needs them.

We all love this Earth,
The moon and stars in the sky, the forests.
We dance to the same rhythm,
We sing as one single soul,
With a single mind we call Parampurusa.





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