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# PRROUT

A Journal of Proutistic Views and Neo-Humanistic Analysis

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Happy New Year.

– Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

# Fundamental Principles of PROUT

- 1 No individual should be allowed to accumulate any physical wealth without the clear permission or approval of the collective body
- 2 There should be maximum utilization and rational distribution of all mundane, supra mundane and spiritual potentialities of the universe
- 3 There should be maximum utilization of the physical, metaphysical and spiritual potentialities of unit and collective body of the human society.
- 4 There should be a proper adjustment amongst these physical, metaphysical, mundane, supra mundane and spiritual utilizations.
- 5 The method of utilization should vary in accordance with the changes in time, space and person and the utilization should be of progressive nature.

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Ácárya Santosánanda Avadhúta

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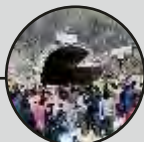
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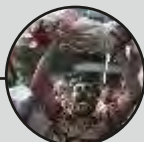
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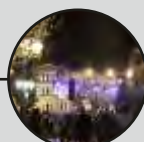
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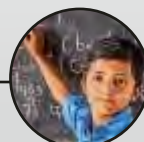
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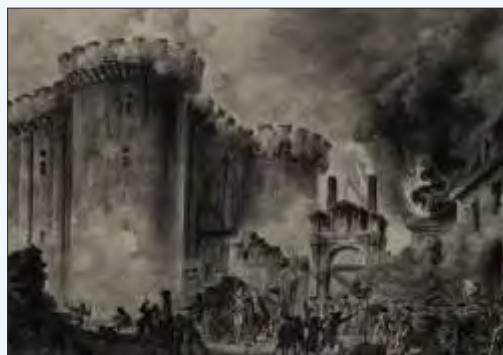


## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

# Revolutions and Regime Change

**R**eolution is a fundamental change in power or organisational structures that takes place in a relatively short period of time. Revolutions can be those that institute regime change as well as social change. The French, American and the Soviet Revolutions which were all very violent in nature are historical examples as also the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, and many before that.

Recently the world has been a witness to revolutions in the Arab world called Arab Spring that spread to Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan and Syria, which were all civil uprisings to effect oppressive or unpopular regime change. As of now Governments have been overthrown in the first three countries and simmering unrest continues in the others. The blood shed and gore in Libya is reminiscent of what happened in France in 1789.



The privileged classes invariably think of their own comforts. They infuse the poorer sections of society with inferiority complexes in order to exploit them, and then force them to become their obedient servants. But eventually the poor people revolt against such exploitation, even if it takes one, two, three or more generations. People will always revolt against those things that go against human psychology. When oppression crosses the limits of human tolerance and endurance, revolution is inevitable.

Though regimes changed in Iran and in the Arab world over a decade ago or would change elsewhere, they are unlikely to result in the change of the collective psychology and the forward movement of the social cycle of the people. For this Shrii PR Sarkar the founder of PROUT advocates another type of revolution called “nuclear revolution”. In nuclear revolution, every aspect of collective life – social, economic, political, cultural, psychic and spiritual – is completely transformed. New moral and spiritual values arise in society which provides the impetus for accelerated social progress. The old era is replaced by a new era – one collective psychology is replaced by another. This type of revolution results in all-round development and social progress.

Nuclear revolution can only be brought about by Sadvipras who reside in the nucleus of the social cycle. Through their concerted efforts, moral and spiritual power and all-round endeavour, they mobilize the exploited sections of society to overthrow the ruling class – the exploiters. This very struggle for mass upheaval liberates society from exploitation and ushers in a new era of peace and prosperity. That’s what society needs to day – not simply regime change.

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



## Moral Standard of the Age

An interesting and thought provoking insight by Prout's founder into the age of the Mahabharata, when people were moralists but not spiritualists. Today people who tread the path of spirituality and grasp its essence well become moralists as a natural consequence.

*- Arup Saxena, Ganganagar*

## Social Boards

It is true that society today is different from those early days of clans and tribes that had inbuilt support systems. Hence the author has rightly pointed out that we now need new approaches to correct the defective social order that prevails today and establish a meaningful society that can make the human race feel proud of itself.

*- Belinda Moss, Kent UK*

## Prout December Issue

Thank you very much for this magnificent issue. Among other excellent articles, what I like about this Issue are: Gaza Medical Crisis, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres Speech to the Security Council on the Middle East, October 24, 2023. For many years, I have strongly supported Palestine, as it has been run over by Israel (with strong support from US and Britain), after Britain converted overnight its Palestine

colony into Israel in 1948. Hamas should have demanded a permanent cease-fire in exchange for release of Hostages. This temporary pause on bombing of Gaza by Israel is a planned maneuver, as the Israel-US intent is to take over Gaza totally because of its gas produce. Also, a two-state solution, that some (including US President) are asking for, is nonsense because Israel now occupies 95+% of Palestine.

*- Acarya Dhanjoo Ghista, USA*

## Prout-the Need for Mental Health

Many of today's mental health problems are caused due to financial stress in the unequal society that prevails. When Prout's economic principles of providing minimum and basic essential requirements for all and ceiling on wealth comes into play, many of these problems would disappear.

*- Satyarathi Godbole, Pune*

## Tuberculosis : History and Cure

An interesting historically researched article about this dreaded disease that humanity has been suffering for ages, and one that has infected a quarter of the global population. Countries all over the world must work very diligently to see that this UN SSD of eradicating TB by 2030 is achieved.

*- Johnny D'Silva, Goa*

## Artificial Intelligence and Deepfake

It is not correct to say that Artificial Intelligence is the greatest danger to humanity. In the past all new inventions and scientific developments were attacked just because people didn't understand them and felt threatened by something new and unknown. AI is

no different. When man has invented it man controls it. Danger will only be from those who instead of putting it to good use, misuse it, as has been seen in the case of Deepfake controversies. Such misuse needs to be curbed with practical laws and their strict enforcement.

*- Arun Prakash, New Delhi*

## Outsourcing to Global Consulting Firms

Why should the Government of India depend upon private consultants from overseas to solve national problems? There's enough talent in the country and it is a well known fact that many of these internationally acclaimed consultants have Indians on their payroll.

## India's Malnutrition

It's a shame that India a country which is one of the biggest food producers of the world its children should suffer from malnutrition. Urgent steps must be taken by the concerned authorities to eradicate this malaise.

*- Swathi Sengupta, Kolkata*

## Smog Isn't about Farmers

Every year during winter Delhi and neighbouring areas suffers from smog and acute air pollution, which causes untold suffering among the people. One of the major causes of this is the burning of the crop stubble after the harvest in the states of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. This is a problem that can be easily solved politically by the governments with correct decisions that would make the farmers not burn their stubble before the next planting. The steps recommended by the author should be taken note of and followed. Only political will is required. ●

*- Jaswant Singh Arora, Mohali*

## THE GOLD WRAPPING PAPER



Once a man punished his five-year-old daughter for using up the family's only roll of expensive gold wrapping paper before Christmas.

Money was tight, so he became even more upset when on Christmas Eve, he saw that the child had used the expensive gold paper to decorate a large shoebox she had put under the Christmas tree. Nevertheless, the next morning the little girl, filled with excitement, brought the gift box to her father and said, "This is for you, Daddy!"

As he opened the box, the father was embarrassed by his earlier overreaction, now regretting how he had punished her. But when he opened the shoebox, he found it was empty and again his anger flared. "Don't you know, young lady," he said harshly, "when you give someone a present there's supposed to be something inside the package!"

The little girl looked up at him with sad tears rolling from her eyes and whispered: "Daddy, it's not empty. I blew kisses into it until it was all full." The father was crushed. He fell on his knees and put his arms around his precious little girl. He begged her to forgive him for his unnecessary anger.

An accident took the life of the child only a short time later. It is told that the father kept this little gold box by his bed for all the years of his life. Whenever he was discouraged or faced difficult problems, he would open the box, take out an imaginary kiss, and remember the love of this beautiful child who had put it there.

In a very real sense, each of us as human beings have been given an invisible golden box filled with unconditional love and kisses from our children, family, friends and God. There is no more precious possession anyone could hold. ●

*Author Unknown*



# SOCIO-ECONOMIC MOVEMENTS

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

**I**n nearly all countries of the world economically privileged or advanced groups are mercilessly exploiting other economically backward groups and sucking their vitality, gagging their voice and closing all the doors of their future progress. To overcome this tyranny and exploitation, movements will have to be launched for those suppressed people so that they can stride boldly forward, fight against all exploitation and attain economic independence. Nobody can deny the need of such an

***The basic rights of all people is to be guaranteed-the minimum essentials for their existence, including at least proper food, clothing, housing, education and medical care.***

approach, of such movements, because such an approach is truly humanistic. If such an approach is not adopted, it be something unnatural and anti-human. In fact, to oppose such movements amounts to working as an agent to protect the interests of the exploitative and reactionary forces.

PROUT always stands for the cause of exploited people, irrespective of race, nation, religion etc., and always opposes all types of exploitation. But as poverty is the main problem in the world today, PROUT gives top priority to opposing economic exploitation, as this affects the livelihood and existence of the people.

To solve this problem and other pressing socio-economic problems, popular movements based on anti-exploitation and universal sentiments should be launched throughout the world. Such movements should oppose all forms of economic, psychic, cultural and psycho-economic exploitation. In addition they should undertake appropriate practical programs to enhance the all-round welfare of the people.

In order to root out exploitation and build a just and benevolent society, the following six points should be borne in mind.

### **100% Employment for Local People**

First, there should be 100% employment for the local people. The basic right of all people is to be guaranteed the minimum essentials for their existence, including at least proper food, clothing, housing, education and medical care. This basic right should be arranged through cent per cent guaranteed employment, not through welfare or dole-outs. Unemployment is a critical economic problem in the world today and 100% employment of the local people is the only way to solve this problem.

Local people are defined as those who have merged individual socio-economic interests with the socio-economic interests of the socio-economic unit they live in. The primary consideration is whether or not people have merged their individual interests with their socio-economic unit, regardless of their colour, creed, race, mother tongue, birthplace, etc. Those who earn their livelihood in a particular socio-economic unit but spend their earnings in another socio-economic unit should be considered as outsiders or non-local people, as this practice is not in accordance with the interests of the socioeconomic unit in which they are employed. It results in the



drainage of the capital necessary for the continued growth of that unit and undermines its economic development.

Capitalists, in either their singular or collective forms, are the most pernicious economic exploiters today. All over the world they are continually exploiting local economies and draining their wealth. In nearly all cases the profits they accrue are spent outside the local area and remitted to outside stockholders and parent companies. An essential measure to control this economic exploitation is that the speculative markets in all countries of the world should be closed down immediately.

To create 100% employment among local people, PROUT supports both a short term and a long term economic plan. In the short term plan, labour intensive industries based on the collective minimum requirements of life should be started immediately or made more productive where they already exist. These industries should be based on the consumption motive. They should also provide a rational profit in order to guarantee adequate purchasing capacity to those

employed in them and to ensure their continued existence and growth. In North Bihar, for example, where there is virtually no industry, all kinds of agrico and agro-industries can be developed to alleviate the unemployment problem there.

In the long term plan, capital intensive industries should also be developed to increase the productive capacity of the socioeconomic unit. PROUT advocates a three-tiered economic structure, that is, small scale privately owned businesses, medium scale cooperatives and large scale key industries managed by the immediate government. Such an economic structure should be based on the principles of self-reliance, maximum utilization, rational distribution, decentralization, rationalization and progressive increases in the standard of living of all people. Through the never ending creation of new industries, new products and new production techniques incorporating the latest scientific discoveries, the vitality of the economy can be increased. As part of the long term economic plan, working hours may also be progressively reduced to maintain

full employment.

To solve the unemployment problem in both the short and long term there must be an accurate understanding of the surplus and deficit manual and intellectual labour trends. In India, for example, there is surplus manual labour in North Bihar, which is based upon an agricultural economy, and surplus intellectual labour in Calcutta. In both places there is high unemployment. In most of the countries of the world where there is high unemployment, there is surplus manual labour. So manual labour intensive industries are required to create employment. In some instances where deficit labour exists for an expanding industry, retraining programs may equip workers with the necessary skills for employment.

Another way to help solve unemployment, especially in rural communities, is the utilization of plants for economic self reliance. All socio-economic units have the potential to increase their plant and crop varieties by properly matching these with the soil, topography and climatic conditions etc. in their units. Reforestation can reclaim arid and semi-arid regions, and some unique plants like the Puranica or fern, which has the capacity to attract clouds, can help radically transform the rainfall and weather patterns of a region. Agro- and agrico-industries based upon the productive potential of different plants can also help solve rural unemployment by creating a range of new goods and services. There are many dimensions to this revolutionary plant rationalization program, which is also a practical expression of the ideals of Neohumanism.

## Maximum Industrial Development

The second point of PROUT's approach is that maximum

industries should be developed in the local area according to the availability of raw materials or local consumption. This principle will develop the economic potential of a socioeconomic unit by placing economic power into the hands of the local people and divesting outsiders of their control over the economy. In a economy most industries will be run as agricultural, producer or consumer cooperatives creating a new kind of cooperative spirit or cooperative dynamo. Such an approach will place economic power into the hands of those who work physically or intellectually for proper production, stripping capitalists of their exploitative economic power. Thus maximum industrial development will be assured.

Several corollaries arise from this second principle. First, industries should utilize locally available local raw materials and should not import raw materials from outside the socioeconomic unit. Raw materials are the basic ingredients or resources necessary to make finished products. The tyre industry, for example, requires rubber plantations as rubber sap is the basic raw material for this industry. If the topography of the local area favours the ample growth of rubber trees, then industries may be created around

this raw material. Or, if alternative synthetic materials are available, a synthetic tyre industry may be developed.

There are several reasons why industries should utilize locally available raw materials. First, not all areas have the same socio-economic potential. Different areas will naturally be conducive to producing different kinds of raw materials, as in the case of plant-based raw materials. Industries based on locally available raw materials can produce commodities cheaply, be located near ready supplies of raw materials, and ensure their self-reliance. These advantages are not apparent where there is a dependence on outside raw materials. Secondly, raw material producers, especially producer cooperatives, will prosper as there will be ready markets for their products.

Thirdly, industries will feel secure when they know that sufficient raw materials are available to supply their needs, and they will be able to plan their future production efficiently. Fourthly, many large capitalists deliberately influence the economic and political policies of a local area by preventing the growth of local industries based on the local raw materials. They further exploit the local people by selling manufactured goods in the local markets which



are made from locally produced raw materials. Australia, for example, imports many manufactured goods from Japan which are produced from Australian raw materials. Encouraging the growth of local industries based on local raw materials will terminate the dominance individual and collective capitalists exercise over the local markets, ending the drainage of capital vital for the local area's economic growth.

A second corollary of the second point is that local raw materials should not be exported – only manufactured goods should be exported. Local raw material prices in the export market are subject to manipulation and erratic fluctuations as they are currently traded through speculative commodity markets which are controlled by vested interests. To root out dishonesty from the field of trade, free trade should be established throughout the world as far as possible.

Manufactured goods, on the other hand, are generally subject to less price manipulation and command better prices than raw materials. By manufacturing locally finished products, a socioeconomic unit can conserve its reserve bullion and improve the purchasing capacity of the local people.

A third corollary is that if no potential exists to produce the manufactured goods required by industry in the local area, only then should the importation of such goods be allowed. Importation of manufactured goods means that local capital is being transferred to another socio-economic unit which has produced the product. The drainage of capital is always detrimental to the economic growth of a socio-economic unit, therefore unnecessary importation should always be discouraged. Barter agreements should be arranged between trading units so

that no net loss occurs to either of the trading partners. Barter agreements in foreign trade are especially beneficial for those socio-economic units which have very few commodities to sell but a large number of commodities to buy, and their saleable commodities, though few in number, are large in quantity.

Thus, where there is a plentiful supply of local raw materials, industries can be developed for local demand according to local consumption, and if applicable the surplus may be exported. The availability of raw materials will ensure the long term viability of local industries.

### **Avoid Importing Outside Products**

The third point of PROUT's approach is that outside finished products which can be locally produced should not be imported.

This point implies that the local people should support their local industries by purchasing their own finished products. They should buy the finished goods of the local industries even if initially they may be of lesser quality than the finished goods manufactured outside the socioeconomic unit, as this will ensure the continued economic viability and growth of the industries in the unit. With continued local support, the local industries will develop to a stage when they will be able to produce goods of better quality. But, if due to economic, political or psycho-economic exploitation, people purchase finished goods made outside their socio-economic unit rather than those made locally, then local developing industries may be forced to close down creating unemployment and other social and economic problems. Thus, people's sentiments should



be aroused so that they buy locally produced products rather than outside finished products wherever possible. To achieve this, popular movements should be started so that the economic awareness of local people is increased.

When the British were ruling India, India imported salt even though the potential for manufacturing local salt existed in India. The Indian leaders then organized a civil disobedience movement and proceeded to make their own salt, boycotting British made salt. This movement caught the imagination of the people and won their support, thus the Indian people became conscious of British exploitation. This movement brought down the price of salt, an indispensable part of most Indian dishes, and provided employment by building up the local salt industry. It also saved the country from the drainage of wealth which previously went into the coffers of the British salt manufacturers. In addition, it heightened the consciousness of the Indian people and helped polarize the population into the pro and anti-British camps.

### **The Local Language as the Medium of Instruction**

The fourth point of PROUT's approach is that the medium of instruction from primary to tertiary level should be in the local language. The sum total of human expression is culture, and language is the best medium to express human culture. While different socio-economic groups should encourage every language, each socio-economic unit should use the local language to inspire self-confidence and self-respect amongst the local people. Encouraging a positive cultural identity is an important ingredient in the socioeconomic development of the local area, and is an essential factor in generating a sense of affinity and unity amongst the people.

The use of non-local languages as the medium of instruction only results in the suppression and subjugation of the local language and inevitably means the suppression of the local culture. This in turn leads to psychic demoralization, inferiority complexes and a defeatist mentality. Whenever the sentimental legacy of a group of people is undermined, they become easy prey to the economic, political and psycho-economic exploitation of vested interests. Such a strategy of cultural suppression was adopted by the English, French, Dutch, Spanish, American and other colonial powers. If local people develop a sublime awareness of their cultural heritage they can readily throw off all psychic inferiority complexes which prevent them from attaining socio-economic self-reliance.

The introduction of the local language as the medium of instruction from primary to tertiary level will also put the local people in control of their educational institutions, thus ridding them of those cultural prejudices, biases and teachings which perpetuate subjugation. In Bengal and Chattisgarhi, for example, many of the educational institutions are controlled by non-local people who have migrated from outside the region and who still maintain their cultural prejudices. The same situation occurs in many undeveloped and developing countries.

### **The Local Language as the Primary Means of Communication**

The fifth point of PROUT's approach is that the local language should be the medium of communication in governmental, and non-governmental institutions and offices. When the British were ruling India, they concentrated their economic activities in a few centers like Bombay, Calcutta,

Delhi and Madras. The indigenous capitalist class, who were in collusion with the Britishers, usually brought in labourers and managers from outside the local area to disrupt the local economy and make it amenable to their control. The English language was imposed on local people, and the British administration went to great lengths to train up tens of thousands of Indian clerks in the English system of education to ensure British cultural dominance of the Indian economy.

So, if the local people demand that the local language should be the medium of expression in the workplace, the nonlocal people who control the local industries can be forced out of the local area, creating more opportunities for the local people.

### **Local**

### **Socio-Economic Demands**

The final point of the approach of the socio-economic movements of PROUT is that particular demands pertaining to the local area should be implemented. The local situation should be carefully studied and programmes should be adopted as per the requirements of the particular locality. For the socio-economic groups in Germany, Ireland and Korea for example, the major focus should be on the unification of their divided nations. In other socio-economic groups, local people may demand the construction of bridges and roads to make raw materials more accessible as the first step in developing new industries. And in those places which are dependent on agriculture, small scale irrigation projects may be necessary to increase the availability of irrigation water and thus increase the number of crops grown per year. Thus, this last point includes all the local needs necessary to expedite the socio-economic development of the local area. ●

*The heroic rescue by rat miners has cast the spotlight on an occupation that's outlawed across India.*

# TUNNEL RESCUE HEROES

■ Bhupendra Singh



The recent rescue of 41 trapped labourers from a caved in the Silkyara-Barkot tunnel in the Himalayas in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand cheered the hearts of the nation. The 4,531 metre-long Silkyara tunnel is part of the Chardham Project of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and is under construction by NHIDCL through M/s Navayuga Engineering Company Ltd at a cost of Rs 853.79 crore.

The accident occurred on November 12 and the news made headlines and occupied prime television time. Soon the rescuers established contact with those trapped and the first priority was to supply food and water. Few days later the trapped persons were fed with dry packaged foods and provided bottled water through pipes. On November 20, the first

cooked food was sent down through a new pipeline especially constructed.

It took 17 days and 57 metres of digging, 12 of it manually spanning a period of over two weeks, involving repeated challenges and many plans. In the final leg of the rescue operations, at least 6 rat-hole miners arrived from Delhi and Jhansi to enter the tunnels and dig manually. In the final leg of the rescue operations, at least 6 rat-hole miners arrived from Delhi and Jhansi to enter the tunnels and dig manually. Additional Secretary, Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Mahmood Ahmed said that simultaneously, work of vertical drilling was also on at a fast pace during the final hours.

Out of the 41, fifteen were from Jharkhand, eight from Uttar Pradesh, five each from Odisha and Bihar, three from West Bengal,

two each from Uttarakhand and Assam, and one from Himachal Pradesh – the men trapped inside the Uttarkashi tunnel may have come from different states, but what united them was the need to venture out in search of a livelihood. It was first reported by Rajeev Das, a construction worker who heard a colleague shouting that a part of the tunnel where he had been working had collapsed, trapping his other colleagues inside. Soon the State Disaster Response Force was informed and the rescue operation began.

12 central and state agencies were involved viz. NDRF, SDRF, BRO, National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd, Navayuga, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, Tehri Hydro Development Corporation, Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam, Rail Vikas Nigam Limited, Trenchless Engineering

Works, as well as the state and district authorities, and the Army and Air Force. All had regular coordination between one another along with experts from different fields collaborating to solve a single puzzle — that's what it took for rescuers to get the men out from Uttarkashi tunnel.

The rescue operation had a five-point plan in place by day 10, which involved Horizontal boring from Silkyara end using American machine, digging a 1.2 m wide hole vertically, from above, horizontal micro-drilling from the left, to make escape tunnel, construction of rescue tunnel from Barkot end, and ONGC to make vertical tunnel. After the auger joint of a drilling machine broke down, the rescuers drilled through the remaining few meters using the practice of rat-hole mining.

An auger machine built in the US drilled through 46.8mm of the 57m-thick wall of debris over a week before its blades snapped in the face of stern rock on November 24. After all the superhuman ordeal and the failures, finally, the rat

miners were parachuted in on the evening of November 27 as a last-resort to clear out the last 12m of rubble. In the end, it was the most unheralded lot who stood tallest. As clouds of unease and uncertainty swarmed over the mountains of Silkyara, as glitch after glitch delayed freedom for 41 workers trapped in an under-construction tunnel for 17 days, an unsung group of miners took charge.

Where modern machinery turned into stoppable forces in the face of a seemingly immovable object, the group known as “rat-hole miners” or “rat miners” — a term equating the work they do with rodents' movements was clinical. And their heroic rescue has cast the spotlight on an occupation that's outlawed across India, but is still prevalent in some mines and construction sites. Twelve men, armed only with shovels, spades, hammers and drills, spent 24 hours holed into a narrow pipe, ploughing through a wall of debris in a desperate attempt to get to those trapped

men. At the end of the 24 hours, these 12 men got the job done without a fuss — the labourers emerged, shaken and scarred, but safe.

On site as a host of rescue techniques collapsed, when global tunnelling experts armed with excavators, auger machines and boring machines failed, it fell upon these 12 men, who clean sewers in Delhi and Ahmedabad, to extricate their compatriots. “When we saw the trapped workers inside the tunnel after the breakthrough, we hugged them like they were family,” said Nasir Hussain, one of the 12 miners.

Finally, the rat miners were parachuted in on the evening of November 27 as a last-resort to clear out the last 12m of rubble. Wakeel Hassan, Monu Kumar, Feroze Qureshi, Nasir Khan, Munna Qureshi, Irshad Ansari, Rashid Ansari, Naseem Malik, Devender Kumar, Ankur, Jatin and Saurabh worked in shifts of three to cut through the rock. One person would drill through the rock, the second collected the debris and the third pushed it out of the pipe through a wheeled trolley. They worked for nearly 24 hours without a break.

“Where machines can't go, our hands can. Our work involves laying underground sewer and water pipelines where machines can't be used — like railway lines, road crossings, and narrow lanes. We use hand-held tools like hoes to dig through and trolleys to dispose of the rubble,” said Feroze.

Feroze's brother and fellow miner Munna said they had told the officials heading the rescue operations that they would remove the debris in 24 hours. “Our team made a commitment, and we stuck by what we said.” But, Feroze said, their work is ridiculed and humiliated. “We are treated terribly because of the work we do,” said Feroze, who now lives in Kasganj district in western Uttar





Pradesh. “Society doesn't give our work much respect. Even our superiors don't treat us with respect.”

Indeed, over the years, rat mining has claimed many lives. Most recently, at least 15 rat miners were killed in a mine in Meghalaya after being trapped for

more than a month between December 2018 and January 2019. The Uttarkashi rescue will most certainly be a turning point in their lives, one way or another. Monu Kumar, for instance, said he found succour where he never had before. “My father called me and said he was proud of me. This is the

first time he has appreciated the work I do.” Munna agreed. “We are being treated like heroes,” he said. “Hopefully, it brings a change in our society and our work should not be looked down upon,” he said.

Complimenting them, National Disaster Management Authority member Lt Gen (Retd) Syed Ata Husnain said the rat-miners did a phenomenal job by digging about 12 meters in less than 24 hours. “Rat-hole mining may be illegal but their talent and experience has helped us to rescue the workers,” he said. And in the end, the 41 survivors walked out into the light standing on the shoulders of giants. In a country where accidents such as these mostly end in heartbreak and tragedy, it was that rare good story.

Society may look down upon the type of work they do, but Prout Journal along with many in the nation salute these true 'Bharat Ratnas' for doing such phenomenal work of rescuing the trapped labourers by simply digging with shovels in hand when all machines sophisticated and complex failed. ●





Recent Amnesty International Report has documented has documented unlawful Israeli attacks, including indiscriminate attacks, which caused mass civilian casualties which must be investigated as war crimes. They spoke to survivors and eyewitnesses, analysed satellite imagery, and verified photos and videos to investigate air bombardments carried out by Israeli forces between 7 and 12 October, which caused horrific destruction, and in some cases wiped out entire families. In each of these cases, Israeli attacks violated international humanitarian law, including by failing to take feasible precautions to spare civilians, or by carrying out indiscriminate attacks that failed to distinguish between civilians and military objectives, or by carrying out attacks that may have been directed against civilian objects.

# War Crimes in GAZA

■ Karunakshim Vatsalam

Amnesty International's Secretary General Agnès Callamard said, "In their stated intent to use all means to destroy Hamas, Israeli forces have shown a shocking disregard for civilian lives. They have pulverized street after street of residential buildings killing civilians on a mass scale and destroying essential infrastructure. Testimonies from eyewitness and survivors highlighted, again and again, how Israeli attacks decimated Palestinian families, causing such destruction that surviving relatives have little but rubble to remember their loved ones by. For 16 years,

Israel's illegal blockade has made Gaza the world's biggest open-air prison – the international community must act now to prevent it becoming a giant graveyard".

The Hamas rocket attacks killed more than 1,400 people in Israel, most of them civilians, and around 3,300 others were injured, according to the Israeli Ministry of Health after armed groups from the Gaza Strip launched an unprecedented attack on 7 October. They fired indiscriminate rockets and sent fighters into southern Israel who committed war crimes including deliberately



killing civilians and hostage-taking. The Israeli military says that fighters also took more than 200 civilian hostages and military captives back to the Gaza Strip. Hours after that, retaliation in the form of massive airstrikes on Gaza by Israeli forces have as of December 12, killed 18,000 Palestinians and wounded 49,500 according to Gaza's Health Ministry sources. The relentless bombing of Gaza has brought unimaginable suffering to people who are already facing a dire humanitarian crisis. After 16 years under Israel's illegal blockade, Gaza's healthcare system is already close to ruin, and its economy is in tatters. Hospitals are collapsing, unable to cope with the sheer number of wounded people and desperately lacking in life-saving medication and equipment.

Hamas and other armed groups also continued to fire indiscriminate rockets into civilian areas in Israel in attacks that must also be investigated as war crimes. Meanwhile in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, at

least 79 Palestinians, including 20 children, have been killed by Israeli forces or settlers amid a spike in excessive use of force by the Israeli army and an escalation in state-backed settler violence, which Amnesty International is also investigating.

“Our research points to damning evidence of war crimes in Israel's bombing campaign that must be urgently investigated. Decades of impunity and injustice and the unprecedented level of death and destruction of the current offensive will only result in further violence and instability in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories,” said the Secretary General Amnesty International. “It is vital that the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court urgently expedites its ongoing investigation into evidence of war crimes and other crimes under international law by all parties. Without justice and the dismantlement of Israel's system of apartheid against Palestinians, there can be no end to the

horrifying civilian suffering we are witnessing”, she added.

Amnesty International investigated five Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip, which took place between October 7 and 12. From 2012 till 2022, Israeli authorities have denied, or failed to respond to, all of Amnesty International's requests to gain access to Gaza. For this reason, the organization worked with a Gaza-based fieldworker who visited attack sites and collected testimony and other evidence. Amnesty International researchers interviewed 17 survivors and other eyewitnesses, as well as six relatives of victims over the phone, for the five cases included in this report. The organization's Crisis Evidence Lab analysed satellite imagery and verified photos and videos of attack sites.

These five cases showed that Israeli forces carried out attacks that violated international humanitarian law, including by failing to take feasible precautions to spare civilians, or by carrying out indiscriminate attacks that



failed to distinguish between civilians and military objectives, or by carrying out attacks that may have been directed against civilian objects. Under international humanitarian law, all parties to the conflict must, at all times, distinguish between civilians and civilian objects and fighters and military objectives and direct their attacks only at fighters and military objectives. Direct attacks on civilians or civilian objects are prohibited and are war crimes. Indiscriminate attacks – those which fail to distinguish as required – are also prohibited. Where an indiscriminate attack kills or injures civilians, it amounts to a war crime. Disproportionate attacks, those where the expected harm to civilians and civilian objects is excessive in comparison with the “concrete and direct military advantage anticipated,” also are prohibited. Knowingly launching a disproportionate attack is a war crime.

On one of the residential buildings bombed on October 7, Amnesty International's research and eye witness accounts has found no evidence of military targets in the area at the time of the attack. If Israeli forces attacked this residential building knowing that there were only civilians present at the time of the attack, this would be a direct attack on a civilian object or on civilians, which are prohibited and constitute war crimes. Israel offered no explanation on the incident. It is incumbent on the attacker to prove the legitimacy of their military conduct. Even if Israeli forces targeted what they considered a military objective, attacking a residential building, at a time when it was full of civilians, in the heart of a densely populated civilian neighbourhood, in a manner that caused this number of civilian casualties and degree of destruction would be



indiscriminate. Indiscriminate attacks that kill and injure civilians are war crimes.

On October 8, an Israeli air strike struck the Nuseirat refugee camp in the centre of the Gaza Strip, killing Mohammed and Shuruq al-Naqla, and two of their children, Omar, three, and Yousef, five, and injuring their two-year-old daughter Mariam and their three-year-old nephew Abdel Karim. Around 20 other people were also injured in the strike.

At around 10:30am on October 9, Israeli air strikes hit a market in Jabalia refugee camp, located a few kilometres north of Gaza City, killing at least 69 people. The market street is known to be one of the busiest commercial areas in northern Gaza. That day it was even more crowded than usual, as it was filled with thousands of people from nearby areas who had fled their homes empty-handed earlier that morning after receiving text messages from the Israeli army. Amnesty's Crisis

Evidence Lab reviewed six videos showing the aftermath of the airstrike on Jabalia camp market. The images show a densely populated area with multi-storey buildings. Videos of the aftermath and satellite imagery show at least three multi-storey buildings completely destroyed and several structures in the surroundings heavily damaged. Numerous deceased bodies are also seen under the rubble in the graphic footage. According to the Israeli military, they were targeting “a mosque in which Hamas members had been present” when they struck Jabalia market, but they provided no evidence to substantiate their claim. Regardless, membership in a political group does not in itself make an individual targetable. Satellite imagery analysed by Amnesty International showed no mosque in the immediate vicinity of the market street.

On October 10, an Israeli air strike on a family home killed 12

members of the Hijazi family and four of their neighbours, in Gaza City's al-Sahaba Street. Amnesty International people spoke to the Hijazi family members. Three children were among those killed. The Israeli military stated that they struck Hamas targets in the area but gave no further information and did not provide any evidence of the presence of military targets. Amnesty International's research has found no evidence of military targets in the area at the time of the attack. The same day an Israeli air strike hit a six-storey building in Sheikh Radwan, a district of Gaza City, at 4:30pm. The strike completely destroyed the building and killed at least 40 civilians.

In the cases documented by Amnesty International, the organization repeatedly found that the Israeli military had either not warned civilians at all, or issued warnings which were inadequate. In some instances, they informed a single person about a strike which affected whole buildings or streets full of people or issued unclear "evacuation" orders which left residents confused about the timeframe. In no cases did Israeli forces ensure civilians had a safe place to evacuate to. In one attack on Jabalia market attack, people



had left their homes in response to an "evacuation" order, only to be killed in the place to which they had fled.

Under international humanitarian law giving a warning does not free armed forces from their other obligations. Particularly given the time that had elapsed since the warning was issued, those carrying out the attack should have checked whether civilians were present before proceeding with the attack. Furthermore, if, as appears, this was a direct attack on a civilian

object, this would constitute a war crime.

With this evidence in hand Amnesty International appealed to the Israeli authorities to immediately end unlawful attacks and abide by international humanitarian law; including by ensuring they take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians and damage to civilian objects and refraining from direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects, indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks. And lift its siege and allow unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza's civilians. To the international community and particularly Israel's allies, including EU member states, the US and the UK, to: Take concrete measures to protect Gaza's civilian population from unlawful attacks. Impose a comprehensive arms embargo on all parties to the conflict given that serious violations amounting to crimes under international law are being committed. Call on states supplying arms to Palestinian armed groups to refrain from doing so. And finally to refrain from any statement or action that would, even indirectly, legitimize Israel's crimes and violations in Gaza. ●



# CATASTROPHE AND TRANSITION

**T**here are four trends that will increasingly influence humanity's future: The more resources are used unsustainably the more humanity moves toward ecological overshoot and population die-off. It is now estimated that 1.8 earths would be required to sustain our current rate of resource use; humanity is on an ecological overshoot trajectory. The more we pollute the air and waters, deplete the soils, denude the forests, and dump toxins on the land the more diminished is earth's capacity to support life. The biosphere is degrading so rapidly that the earth is experiencing its sixth mass extinction event.

The more greenhouse gases get concentrated in the atmosphere the more the climate warms and

*The more that wealth is concentrated in the hands of the uber-rich, the more fragile becomes the economy.*

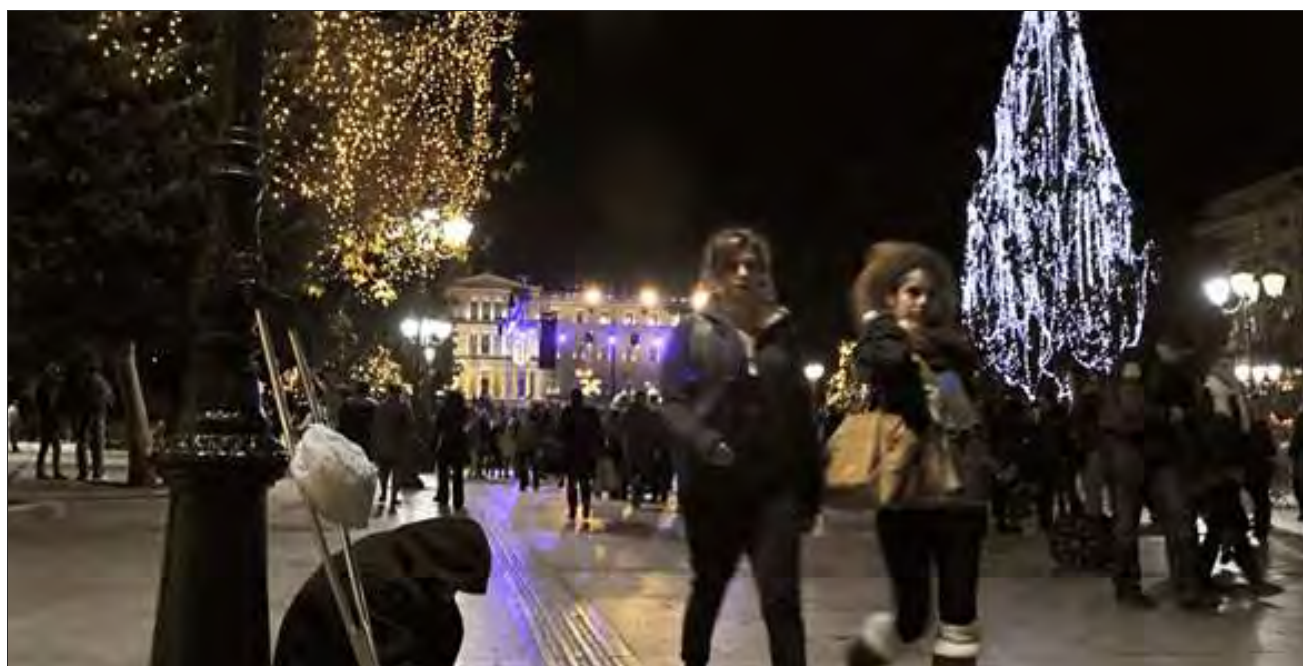
■ Ravi Logan

weather extremes occur. The earth is rapidly approaching climate tipping-points, which will bring a rapid intensification of climate catastrophes. The more that wealth is concentrated in the hands of the uber-rich the more fragile becomes the economy. Concentration of wealth is a precondition of economic depressions. The concentration of wealth in America is now at an unprecedented level. Each of these trends on their own are capable of creating catastrophic troubles for humanity. Together, they will force humanity to abandon its dysfunctional ways and adopt a new socioeconomic system.

## Predicting Crises

Many people now recognize that humanity faces growing threats of a catastrophic nature. What is unclear to all is how soon severe dislocations will be upon us. (Of course, for some they are already here.) Each of the above four trends is intensifying in its own way, some in a more predictable progression than others.

The trajectory of *climate change* is well studied, and somewhat accurate predictions can be made as to the course of intensification, at least in the near term. (See for example the annual climate change predictions made by the climate action group, Job



One for Humanity.) The variables that are most in question concern the onset of tipping points caused by positive feedback dynamics that will rapidly accelerate climate change. (Recent research findings indicate that the Global Warming Potential coefficient for carbon dioxide could be much higher than previously assumed, which, if confirmed, would mean that climate change will occur much faster than has been expected.)

In relation to resource depletion caused dislocations, the major unknown is when oil production will go into decline. Oil is the major energy source of the global economy, and once production peaks and goes into decline, energy costs may spike. As Post Carbon Institute's Richard Heinberg said about the fate of humanity's oil-driven economic boom: "the party's over." Most past predictions of peak oil production incorrectly anticipated that peak oil production would have already occurred. The current range of predictions is that peak will occur between now and 2040. Peak production of phosphorous, copper, natural gas, and other non-renewal resources are also of concern. Timber and fish are also in diminishing supply.

The effects of *degradation of*

*the natural environment* are also difficult to predict. The influential 1987 report, *Our Common Future*, developed by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, drew attention to the profound impacts that environmental degradation is having on economic development. Since *Our Common Future* was issued, conditions in most of the world have worsened. Some ecosystems have at least partially collapsed — dead zones at the mouths of major rivers and the dying of coral reefs. But the chain reaction of collapsing ecosystems that environmental alarmists had predicted has yet to occur; earth's biosphere has proven remarkably resilient. But the fact remains that the earth is bleeding from a thousand cuts and cannot endure human abuse indefinitely. Of the nine "planetary boundaries" identified by a group of distinguished earth scientists that are critical thresholds for maintaining global environmental stability, seven of them have now been transgressed. This means that abrupt, non-linear environmental changes are now inevitable; but, while inevitable, the timing of the onset and the intensity of these planetary upheavals is unknown.

Also impossible to predict is

the onset of global economic crisis. Concentration of wealth has already reached dangerous levels, leaving the economy with little resilience with which to weather economic shocks. In economics, there is a proposition known as Dornbusch's Law which states: *Crises take longer to arrive than you can imagine, but when they do come, they happen faster than you can possibly imagine.* A reasonable corollary to Dornbusch's Law is that crisis, when it comes "will happen more intensely than we can possibly imagine." Two indicators are ominous: one, that wealth concentration in the United States has never been as concentrated, and two, the amount of financial debt (set to collapse in the event of a major economic downturn) has never been greater. A global economic depression could well be the least anticipated crisis to erupt, and it may be the crisis that hits humanity first. Add to all this unpredictability is that these four arenas of crisis are not wholly independent of each other but can interact in complex ways that further amplify the unknowns.

What can reasonably be said about the onset of global crises? The four arenas of crises described above are already affecting local and marginalized communities and peoples. For at least a billion of our fellow humans, the disasters they cause are not of the future but are here and now.

The onset of full-blown manifestation of these arenas of crises is impossible to predict. Many alarmist predictions of the past have failed to pan out. But the lesson to be had from the failure of these predictions is not that we are safe from catastrophes, or that catastrophes are yet far in the future. Failure of predicted timelines does not mean failure of the rationale for the predictions.

We dismiss the lack of predictability of catastrophe at our risk. Humanity is already





massively underprepared to meet the coming challenges. But the more aware we become of the threats we face, and the more we can set in placenew models and new values, the more resilient we will be positioned. We will not face a single crisis but multiple, interacting crises.

The complexity researcher, Joe Brewer, has marshalled a formidable body of trans disciplinary scholarship in his attempt to comprehend the forces that are rapidly unbalancing social and ecological life. His take is that humanity has about five years before survival struggles consume us. This is a reasonable prognosis.

## Characterizing the Nature of Our Precarious Situation

There are many informed people who are aware of the precariousness of humanity's situation and who have sought to describe the complex of interacting crises that afflict us. Some of the terminology they have come up with includes:

*Continuous cascading crisis.* This expression emphasizes there will be no letup in crisis events and that, increasingly, one crisis event will precipitate others.

*Poly-crisis.* This expression emphasizes that humanity is

dealing with a multifaceted complex of crises.

*Mega-crisis.* This term emphasizes the unprecedented scale of the catastrophic future humanity is facing.

*Meta-crisis.* This is meant to convey that the multi-faceted crisis has its roots beyond any immediate causes but in the very value base of the dominant economic system — that is, in the normative structure of neo-liberal capitalism.

*Crisis generating system.* This is used as a description of capitalism, making clear that it is inherent in capitalism to imbalance the environment and the society and bring about intensifying crises.

Reforms and technical fixes alone will not deliver us from crises on the magnitude. The challenges we face so profound that only a change to a new socioeconomic system can ensure a future for humanity.

## The Causes of Meta-Crisis

In order to envision a way forward, one that does not lead to dead endings, it is necessary to have clarity about the cause, or causes, of our civilizational impasse. There are four broad psychological orientations, or outlooks on life, that have informed political

theories and created societies based on these theories. Three of these four orientations bear responsibility for the meta-crisis.

*Matter-oriented psychology.* This outlook on life grounds political philosophy in materialism. Its effect is to limit the human being to an economic being. Communism comes out of a matter-oriented psychology. Where communism was established, it typically confined the expansion and expression of the human mind — though it often demonstrated a commendable capacity to equitably meet people's material needs and to nurture a feeling of social responsibility. In its drive for material productivity, communist economies rarely showed much concern for the well-being of the natural world.

*Dogma-oriented psychology.* Here, the word “dogma” is meant to convey that limitations are imposed on thought that certain ideas are sanctioned, and others are banned, are forbidden. Dogma-oriented psychology privileges creeds, canons of faith, orthodoxies, and it leads to blind faith, unquestioning belief, unchallengeable conviction. Fundamentalist states and movements come out of the dogma-oriented psychology. When fundamentalist beliefs tend toward the noble, the magnanimous, they have some capacity to uplift humanity. When they are intended to protect privilege or divide humanity into believer and infidel, follower and heretic, conformist and dissident, they then become cruel in their treatment of outsiders, of the other. Moreover, their vice-like grip on the human mind inhibits the universal outlook necessary for humanity to unite in common cause.

*Self-oriented psychology.* This mentality privileges the aspirations of the individual over that of others, or of the natural

world. It gives rise to a mentality of individual separateness. Capitalism is the economic system that has come out of the self-oriented psychology and which is the reigning model of economic activity in the world today. At the time of its inception, at the end of the medieval age, capitalism lifted Europeans out of stifling material stagnancy. It has since been a powerful force for spreading material well-being in great measure to much of the world. But capitalism's core motive is profit, is greed, and it allows for the private extraction of wealth from the labor of workers. Without severe regulation, it is rapacious in its extraction of wealth from the environment. Given the tremendous wealth of the global capitalists, and the access to political influence this gives them, there is inadequate scope to reign in the excesses of capitalism. Further, by creating a mentality that gives primacy to the individual, there is little recognition that we exist in an interdependent, interwoven social and ecological existence. This distorted thinking makes easy behaviors of domination and

exclusion, of exploitation and oppression.

Of the three world systems that grew out of the three psychological orientations — i.e., communism, fundamentalism, and capitalism — capitalism bears the greatest responsibility for the global meta-crisis. Its greed-driven commercial activities, carried out most callously by powerful transnational corporations, is singular in focus. The organization and activity of these corporations are complex, but their logic is simple: maximize profit. This simple logic makes capitalism unable to promote to the well-being of workers, communities and the environment.

Humanity must retain many of the dynamic methods of capitalism. Incentives for meritorious work, in particular, must be maintained — those who are skilled and hard-working must be appropriately rewarded, otherwise the collective will suffer, and the poorest will suffer most. But the core motive for economic activity must shift from personal and corporate profit to collective welfare. For this, another psychological orientation is

required on which to base a new socioeconomic theory.

*Spiritual-oriented psychology.* This outlook recognizes that all life existence is characterized by interdependency and all existence by interconnectedness. This is an understanding that is well-established by modern science. But the spiritual-oriented outlook goes further to acknowledge that there is a ground, a base, to this wholeness of being that is transcendent in nature. This transcendent wholeness, this ultimate reality, is given different names. It may be called the Tao, Brahma, Shunya, Great Spirit, or God. It may be called Supreme Consciousness. For some, it may go unnamed. It is the cardinal base which underlies and substantiates all existence. Spiritual-oriented psychology, in its true sense, does not give scope for patterns of domination or exclusion. It does not see the natural world as separate. It leads to a universal outlook. In the social realm it gives importance to welfare. For all. It alone can provide a suitable outlook on life upon which to base a new socio economic theory that can enable humanity to thrive. ●



# The 70 Hour Week: Is It Necessary

■ Ganesh Bhat Sirsi

*The idea of long working hours is a planned attempt by vested interests to brainwash the people to accept it under the guise of pseudo-national interest.*

The suggestion that the youth in India should work for 70 hours a week to make it an economically powerful country and earn worldwide respect was floated by Mr N.R. Narayan Murthy, founder-CEO of Infosys a few days back. This statement was applauded by many corporate giants and politicians and criticized by labour organisations and kicked up a debate.

70 hours a week means 10-14 hours a day for 5-7 days a week. Working hours for Government employees in India is around 42 hours a week and in private sector it is about 40 to 48 hours. Private as well as the State do not consider the travel time (about 2 to 6 hours every day), the work that workers take back home, or the multiple jobs that many of them have to engage in to make ends meet or the

## Arguments in Favour of the Long Working Hours:

- ✓ With a relatively young population India gets a competitive advantage in terms of workforce.
- ✓ India needs a dedicated labour force in the service of nation-building.
- ✓ India's work culture needs to be highly determined, exceptionally disciplined, and diligent.
- ✓ To accomplish the task in one generation what other nations have achieved over many years.
- ✓ Opportunity to use extra hours for personal skill enhancement after working for 40/48 hours.
- ✓ After the government takes away all the restrictions and gives free ground to entrepreneurs, they will create more jobs and wealth for themselves and investors and taxes for the government.
- ✓ Prosperity depends on hard work.



day and night struggle of farmers either to provide irrigation at odd hours depending on the availability of electricity or to protect the crops from wild animals.

## Arguments Against the Long Working Hours

- ✓ Research shows that productivity declines significantly after 50 hours of work per week.
- ✓ The absence of at least one full day off each week can negatively impact overall hourly output.
- ✓ Extended working hours can result in physical and mental fatigue, reduced job satisfaction, and an imbalance in work-life equilibrium.
- ✓ Longer work hours mean reduced family time, and less time for sports and leisure.
- ✓ Long working hours will lead to many health problems like sleep disturbances, obesity, and mental health issues, including elevated stress levels, anxiety, and depression.
- ✓ Excessive working hours are challenging to manage childcare responsibilities for working mothers.



## Analysis

The supporters of the long working hours propagate a myth that everyone can become a millionaire by giving examples of top-level corporate executives who work beyond 90 hours a week (called extreme work) and earn exorbitant sums. They say that post-World War, workers in Germany and Japan increased their working hours, which is also a myth, actually, productivity increased while reducing working hours

Certainly, hard work is the foundation of success, but it is not just about the hours put in; it is the dedication and enthusiasm that matter. For instance, countries like Norway, Finland, and Switzerland achieve higher labour productivity despite their workforce spending fewer hours on the job.

Floating the idea of long working hours is a planned attempt by vested interests to brainwash the people to accept it under the guise of pseudo-national interest. PROUT opines that capitalists, in either their singular or collective forms, are the most pernicious economic exploiters today. All over the world they are continually exploiting local economies and draining their wealth. They use natural and human resources to increase

their profit and wealth but hardly bother about the welfare of the masses. Human resources, for the greedy capitalists, are just one of the factors of production to increase their profit, and they ignore the subtler aspects of human existence.

The crony capitalists think that wealth is meant for a few, and the benefits from workers crossing the line from comfort into discomfort, is cornered by them. Because of the adoption of a self-centred socio-economic system, the gap between the rich and poor has widened. As per a 2023 Oxfam report, the wealthiest 10 percent own more than 72 percent of the total wealth, and the top 1 percent own nearly 40.6 percent of the total wealth in India.

Social media users said: "Why would you not want to work 70 hours a week and kill yourself in the process to help line the pockets of these despicable billionaires?"

## Balance between Work and Life

Well-wishers of society, who are rich, have opined that money or finance is not the master of a country's economy, but its servant and instrument. The real capital of a country consists of its resources in materials and manpower, and money is simply a means of mobilising these resources and channelising them into specific forms of activity. China's model of overworking that is inhuman is not desirable. Human existence is in three strata—physical, psychological, and spiritual; none can be neglected. PROUT suggests:

## Progressively Reduce Working Hours

Of course, the reduction in working hours will have to be determined keeping in view the demand for commodities. The question of unemployment arises only in the capitalistic framework where industry is for profit. In

PROUT's collective economic structure, where industry stands for consumption and not for profit, the question of unemployment does not arise. **Here the number of labourers will not be lessened; rather the working hours will be reduced** and the remaining hours will be used in mental and spiritual pursuits.

Opportunities should be created to set aside time for activities that help to relax and recharge, such as spiritual practices, exercise, hobbies, and spending time with loved ones.

### Enhance Productivity through Technology

Under a capitalistic framework, mechanization means more misery and unemployment for the common people. Doubling the yield by using a machine will decrease the required number of labourers by half; consequently, capitalists will lay off labourers mercilessly. The unemployed labourers are ruined, bit by bit, by poverty and hunger. In a **collective economic system**, mechanization means less labour and more comfort. With a double increase in the productivity of machines, the

working hours will be reduced by half.

Through the never-ending creation of new industries, new products, and new production techniques incorporating the latest scientific discoveries, the vitality of the economy can be increased. As part of the long-term economic plan, **working hours may also be progressively reduced** to maintain full employment.

### Create Employment Near the Place of Residence:

PROUT's concept of **Block Level Planning** aims to make each block economically sound by utilising the local resources and creating employment opportunities for a maximum number of people within the block itself.

This is possible because, the concept of resources in PROUT is far wide and unique (Physical Mental, Mundane, Supra mundane, and Spiritual potentialities of the individual and collective). Contrary to the common belief that resources are not evenly distributed on the surface of the earth, PROUT believes that Nature is kind enough to provide resources in all areas and it is possible to create

employment for everyone and they need not leave their native place for that purpose.

### Promote Growth and Promising Future by Fostering a Culture of Transparency, Trust, and Meritocracy

PROUT says, "The basic right of all people is to be guaranteed - the minimum essentials for their existence, including at least proper food, clothing, housing, education and medical care. This basic right should be **arranged through cent percent guaranteed employment**, not through welfare or dole-outs."

This is possible by implementing decentralised economy that means economic power to the people. This does not mean that the majority of the population will be dependent on agriculture for their livelihood or that the other sectors of the economy will remain undeveloped. Rather, each sector of the economy must strive for maximum development, and all sectors must strive for maximum decentralization. This will continuously increase the purchasing capacity of the people.





### The Way to Achieve

Centralized economy can never solve the economic problems of common people. All types of economic problems can be solved only when economic structures are built based on a decentralized economy. Principles of a **decentralized economy include:** all the resources in a socio-economic unit should be controlled by the local people; consumption, not profit, should be

the underlying motive in the field of production, production and distribution should be organized through **cooperatives**, the local people must be employed in local economic enterprises, locally produced commodities should be used by the local people, etc.

**Economic decentralization** is possible by formation of self-sufficient socio-economic zones, Block level planning, adopting the principles of a balanced economy,

cooperation in Agriculture, a three tiered industrial system, etc.

PROUT divides the industrial structure into three parts – **key industries managed by the immediate or local government, cooperatives and private enterprises**. This system will eliminate confusion regarding whether or not a particular industry should be managed privately or by the government, and will avoid duplication between the government and private enterprise.

The 70 hour work proposal cannot be dismissed as a whimsical statement or a stray opinion of a capitalist; it is a well-thought out plan by the crony capitalists supported by immoral politicians. It is time that the youth of India should awaken and look for an alternate socio-economic theory, instead of being swayed away by the allurements of self-centred theory –capitalism that reduces their existence to mere slaves of greedy capitalists. It is time to study and implement PROUT which proposes a socio-economic system where people will not be searching for jobs, but jobs will be searching people. ●



# PALESTINIAN LIVES MATTER AS MUCH AS ANY OTHER HUMAN LIFE



*Amal al-Robayaa's children eat their meal amid the ruins of the family home destroyed in an Israeli strike in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, on November 7, 2023*

**W**e are living in a world of glaring double standards. A dangerous message has been sent by key policymakers in the international community that Palestinian lives matter less than Israeli ones and international humanitarian law can be applied selectively. The Geneva Conventions explicitly prohibit the targeting of civilians and essential civilian infrastructure in armed conflict. And yet, there has been muted criticism of the Israeli bombardment of civilian hospitals, schools and apartment buildings in Gaza; instead, it is justified by

***The Palestinian struggle for freedom has been demonised, just as South Africa's was.***

■ ■ ■ Alvin Botes

Israel's right to self-defense.

There is also no mention of the right of the Palestinian people to defend themselves from such egregious violations of international law, or their right to basic human rights under an inhumane and illegal occupation that has continued for 75 years. Under the laws of occupation which form part of the law of armed conflict, Israel does not

have the “right to defend itself” using military means as it is the occupying power. This is a fact and not an allegation. It has been confirmed by the International Court of Justice in a 2004 ruling.

As the occupying power, Israel can use tools applicable to the rule of law, including policing powers to deal with criminal actions. An occupying state cannot exercise control over territory it

occupies and simultaneously militarily attack that territory on the claim that it is “foreign” and poses an exogenous national security threat.

The notion of Israel's right to defend itself through military means has been used erroneously by some and deliberately by others to justify its unlawful use of force on the people of Gaza and the West Bank. We categorically reject the myopic and distorted international responses that ignore the context and root causes of this war, which is Israel's systemic oppression of the Palestinians, the occupation of their land and their ongoing ethnic cleansing.

International human rights bodies, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, along with local NGOs – among them at least 17 Israeli organisations – have characterised the oppressive Israeli military occupation of Palestinian land as constituting the crime of apartheid. They condemn Israel's cruel blockade of Gaza for the past 17 years as having created the world's largest open-air prison in which 2.3 million Palestinians are unable

to freely enter or exit the confined strip of land, while the provision of water, electricity and goods remains at the discretion of their occupiers.

When Palestinians have resorted to non-violent protests, they have been mown down with live ammunition. This is what happened to Black South Africans who peacefully protested against apartheid conditions in 1960 and were gunned down by their oppressors. The futility of non-violent resistance to oppression is what gave rise to the armed struggle in South Africa, which has similarly been the case in Palestine. According to international law, those living under occupation have the right to resist. Armed struggle against a colonial occupation force is not just recognised under international law but specifically endorsed. Wars of national liberation have been expressly embraced through the adoption of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 as a protected and essential right of occupied people everywhere.

But just as South African

freedom fighters were labelled terrorists and most Western governments turned their backs on our peoples' rights to freedom, human rights and self-determination, the rights of the Palestinians to security, human rights and self-determination on their own land have been ignored or paid lip service to by governments around the world for far too long. There is no Middle East “peace process” to speak of, and no intention on the part of the current Israeli government to compromise on the issue of land or the establishment of a viable Palestinian state. There can be no sustainable peace without a negotiated political solution which ensures that Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side in peace.

Unfortunately, the current trajectory is being driven by Israeli extremists who seek to fully take over Palestinian lands by force, no matter the consequences in human lives or utter destruction. Similarly, the desperation of occupation has also led to extremism on the Palestinian side and the targeting of Israeli



civilians which is prohibited under international law. The killing and kidnapping of Israeli civilians must also be condemned and the world has done so. But the disproportionate use of force by Israel and collective punishment of a besieged and helpless people which has been both cruel and unconscionable has not only been accepted but enabled.

When Russia resorted to similar tactics in Ukraine, it was roundly condemned and punished with the harshest set of economic sanctions the world has seen. But in the case of Israel's bombardment of civilians and essential infrastructure in Gaza, there have been no sanctions and no marginalisation, only unqualified and unconditional support by most Western governments.

It is the people in the streets of Arab, Asian, Latin American, African and Western capitals who have been the voice of conscience, condemning Israel's campaign of genocide against the Palestinians, calling out the international community for their double standards and demanding justice for the Palestinian people. It is the ordinary people around the world who have defied the Israeli



government's dehumanisation of the Palestinian people and rejected their demonisation. The lessons of World War II are still heeded by freedom-loving people who recognise that the dehumanisation of a group of people is usually done in an attempt to eradicate them, and the pushback against this type of genocidal language must be strong and unforgiving.

There can be no more apathy in the face of the decimation of

Palestinian men, women and children who are bombed as they sleep in their beds. We hear the piercing screams of babies as they are pinned under the rubble of their apartment buildings in a wholly preventable war crime. We know that the vast majority of those killed in the current military onslaught on Gaza have been women and children. Palestinians are not children of a lesser God, and it is incumbent on all of us to put maximum pressure for an immediate ceasefire and an arms embargo on Israel. The hostages must be released, humanitarian aid bodies must be given full access to Gaza, and those who have directed this war must be held accountable for their war crimes. We fully reject the forced displacement of the Palestinian people from their land, and we will not stand by and watch as every red line in war is crossed and the region descends into a zero-sum game of death and destruction.

Our common humanity dictates that all human lives matter. The time to act is now. ●

*The author is Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa*



**T**he horror that we are witnessing today in the Russia Ukraine and the Israel Hamas wars such human cruelty is not new. It was there in the past and all have been documented in history — now mostly forgotten except for few historians and serious students of history. Examples are slavery, colonialism and the Holocaust and so is the pitiable case of indentured labourers from India in the nineteenth century, which dramatically increased after the abolition of slavery. Thousands of people suffered abominably at the hands of exploiters and those governments responsible for these atrocities must acknowledge and apologise. This piece attempts to give a brief overview of their sufferings.

In Mauritius there is the Aapravasi Ghat where half a million indentured labourers from India had arrived between 1834 and 1920, it is now a historical site on the World Heritage List. There is very little difference between slavery and indenture, in fact they

# INDENTURED LABOURERS

**Arun Prakash**

*Naïve and impoverished people of Indians were fooled and taken to the Kolkata harbour and moved to foreign lands on the same ships that had been used for the slaves.*

are two sides of the same coin, on one hand, the oppression of the black slave and, on the other, the oppression of the brown indentured person. Due to huge pressure from the anti-slavery lobby, slavery was finally abolished in the British part of the colonial empire before the French part. Sugar plantations were vacant and the British realised after taking over Mauritius that to keep the sugar plantations going, they needed cheap labour. Since slavery was abolished, they thought they

could take the brown natives of their colonised lands by misleading them about a better future.

After the Battle of Plassey (1757), the British completely destroyed the agrarian base of India as well as its nascent industrialisation. They also raised the tribute by 70 to 80 per cent whenever there was a drought so as to drive people out of their lands. Consequently, naïve, impoverished people of India were fooled and taken to the Kolkata



*Newly arrived Indian workers in Trinidad. The British duped people from their lands into indenture.*

harbour and moved to foreign lands on the same ships that had been used for the slaves. The indentured were given water taken directly from the cholera-infested Hooghly River. Once people were infected, many of them were thrown overboard. Around 1.5 million Indians left India to go as indentured labour. This also impacted the labour supply back home, especially in eastern India.

The contract of indenture was called 'girmit'; it was a dangerous document for the poor hapless labourers. It had all the imprints of desperate people who had left due to dire situations back home. They were told they'd get food, lodging and medical facilities. They were also told that they'd get passage back to their countries after service for two to three years. But the contract had no mention of all this. They were never told they'd have to cultivate sugar, which they weren't used to. No medical facilities or lodging was provided to the indentured, just some basic breakfast and dinner. The British claimed that 'girmit' distinguished slavery and indenture. But it was a document to deceive innocent people into slavery. It was a farce. Sometimes it was written in French, but usually in English. The people putting their thumb marks knew neither French nor English. In reality, the period of indenture would be 10 years, during which the indentured would be tied to the plantations in the Caribbean, Mauritius or Fiji. Even when they somehow got time off, they weren't allowed to leave the plantation and were escorted throughout. In Fiji, they tried to put the indentured people and the slaves against each other. The browns were kept away from the blacks, in an apartheid kind system. They weren't allowed to interact or intermarry and their children couldn't go to the same schools. It was the typical British policy of divide and rule, involving partitioning land and people.



***Wreck of the Syria, the first ship with Indian workers to travel to Fiji***  
*They were given canned food on voyages, which they were not used to.*

The British had tried to get the Chinese, too into indenture. They felt that Indians were meek and docile, good at taking orders and asking no questions. They also believed that the Chinese were undisciplined opium addicts who weren't hardworking. In Mauritius, a tiny community of Chinese was recruited in the early stages of indenture, after that the Chinese stopped going, they simply refused. Whereas on the other hand, Indians because of their dire economic circumstances and possibly to save money for their families back home continued to go. And any of them died on the plantations, too. The British initially took only men. But later they changed it by having 60 women for every 40 men. Women weren't willing to go in such numbers, and that's when the kidnapping spree began.

Most of the indentured people were from Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and eastern Uttar Pradesh. Even though the indentured people were shipped out from Kolkata, most of them were from outside. Tribal Bengalis or Bengalis who had fallen into dire economic situations made up some of the indentured labour. As the British started favouring zamindars as

compradors (a second class of exploiters), more peasants were forced out of their land. That's when the Bengalis also started joining the indentured routes.

The long voyage from India to foreign lands was a horrible experience for the indentured labourers. Many died on the way, often by contracting cholera. If you fell ill, there was a chance you'd be thrown overboard. The food that was given was inadequate. It was canned food, the kind Indians weren't used to. Plus, the spaces were small and tight and the conditions were unsanitary. However, as a result of their struggle, the indentured people also formed bonds on board the ships they were on. Caste, food and other barriers were cast aside as the survivors became *jahaji bhaais* and *jahaji behens* to one another.

There was another category — free labour. They were the enterprising one who worked hard and prospered. They saved enough money to buy a plot of land to cultivate and build houses and at times they even hired the indentured labour for their service. Over a period of time, these hard-working Indians built their own little communities. That's how these rainbow nations developed

as they were able to surmount their challenges and turn things around. Gradually, they became a part of the great Indian diaspora, but one that's fundamentally different from what you'd find today.

In many ways the treatment to women indentured labour was even more atrocious than it was for men?

The indifference to their requirements was shocking. They were given no maternity leave or extra food during pregnancy. They were expected to come back to work the day after their delivery and given no time to breastfeed their babies, who had to be brought along. Indentured women were unfairly labelled as sex workers by the British as well as the male chauvinists in our own country, denigrating them as sexual objects. But that's far from the truth. Yes, some women may have been sex workers, but many went to overcome their economic circumstances or simply to prevent themselves from starving. Many more were kidnapped. But they finally revolted against such vile treatment. Continuous mistreatment of the indentured women led them to break loose. They organised themselves as female labour and stepped up their resistance. They started beating up the men who were abusive to them.

Often enough, it was one man against 20 women, and these were strong women. They also participated in the labour strikes that happened in Fiji and Mauritius at the time. There's a lot of history yet to be written about these women centric labour movements, which made the authorities sit up and take notice.

The plight of indentured labourers came to the attention of national leaders of those times, e.g. MM Malviya and MK Gandhi. In the early years Gopal Krishna Gokhale also chipped in. On the other hand, many among the so-called *bhadralok* of Bengal thought indenture was a good thing. It took them a while to understand what indenture meant for Indian dignity and sovereignty. The Arya Samaj also played an important role in raising awareness against indenture. Lord Hardinge, as one of the viceroys at the time, knew indenture was evil and needed to be removed. Instead, he was himself removed for his troubles.

It was Malviya who had first told Gandhi about indenture and asked him to stop over in Mauritius while returning from South Africa to India. Mauritius was then in the grip of bubonic plague, meaning Gandhi couldn't travel much around the country. But he had

seen enough. On coming back to India, he sent two trusted barristers to educate the indentured Indians of their rights. Back home, agitations began against indenture after horrific stories about the treatment of Indians started spreading through the regional press and causing outrage. Ultimately, it was the First World War that brought an end to indenture. The British weren't doing well on the high seas and knew they couldn't win the war without Indian involvement. They stopped recruiting indentured labour because they wanted Indians to fight their war. The German submarines, known as the U-boats, had also stopped the movement of indentured persons by intercepting them as they were being transported by the British.

Now what can be done to ensure that the sad history of indenture is not forgotten in the country? The indentured routes have already been inscribed. As the next step, we need to have indenture museums in places from where these people were taken as well as in places where nobody knows about them. It must not be forgotten that the indentured Indians never gave up their struggle for identity, it's what gave them hope and the courage to continue. If one visits the places where the indentured labour used to stay, one may still find an old Bhagavad Gita or the Quran. One will also see people wearing dhotis or saris. To counter the narrative that Indians are a docile people who will simply swallow humiliation needs to be effectively countered. This isn't true at all, it is a fabricated history of our people written by others. Indian civilization couldn't have been built by docile or subservient people! Finally it is strongly felt that that indenture and its history should be included in the school syllabi across the country, just like slavery is taught in Africa. ●



*Continuous mistreatment of the indentured women finally led them to break loose.*



# MOTHER TONGUE

## should be the first medium of instruction in schools

**I**magine you joined a course without knowing that the instructions were in Russian. You would understand nothing. In a poignant scene from the Hindi movie, Taare Zameen Par, the parents of Ishaan, who is dyslexic, are asked to read Chinese and learn. They struggle and fail. This is what happens to thousands of Indian children who are enrolled in English-medium schools, though they do not hear English at home. Many lose interest, and a significant number drop out.

Educators stress the importance of using the mother

*Educators stress the importance of using the mother tongue in the early years of education, asserting that teaching in an unfamiliar language hinders learning*

■ ■ Gurumurthy Kasinathan

tongue in the early years of education, asserting that teaching in an unfamiliar language hinders learning. A recent study by the Gyan Vigyan Samiti in Jharkhand found that students speaking tribal languages struggle in Hindi-medium government schools. Conversely, when Odisha changed the medium of instruction in government schools, in districts with large tribal populations, from

Odiya (the state language) to Saora and other tribal languages, it significantly improved student learning. The National Education Policy 2020 recommends the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. Yet Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah courted controversy when he recently batted for Kannada-medium schools. Of course, 'Kannada medium' should connote mother

tongue education for all Kannadigas. This implies schools offering instruction in Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Urdu, Konkani, and Tulu, languages spoken in numerous Kannadiga homes. And languages like Hindi, Nepali, Bengali, and Marwari that are spoken by migrant communities.

Educators opine that English (or any 'second language') can be more easily learned once the child is comfortably learning through the home language, as the home language can serve as a bridge to support 'second language' learning. This is why a second language is usually recommended to be introduced after a few years of formal schooling.

### **Pedagogical-political conflict**

However, parents, viewing English as crucial for socio-economic mobility, prefer English-medium schools. Government schools, mostly offering Kannada-medium education, see declining

enrollments, while private schools promote English as the medium of their instruction. Mandating Kannada in government schools might not solve the problem, as parents may opt for 'English medium' schools wherever possible. English-medium private schools will continue to proliferate, and children in such schools who have little or no support for English at home will suffer. They are unlikely to learn English, and what's worse, they are unlikely to learn other subjects as well.

Yet what Siddaramaiah wants, as recommended by educators, is not impossible. A child can learn English as a language while studying other subjects in her mother tongue. English proficiency does not necessitate English-medium instruction. Schools in Germany, China, or Russia teach only in their home language in the primary grades. While Kannada should be the medium of instruction, it is

essential to strengthen teaching English as a second language in all government schools. Kerala introduced the E-Language Lab (ELL) English language programme during the 2022–23 academic year. The ELL provides ample digital resources—picture story books, audio stories, and videos—for an 'immersive' environment in English. 'Listening' is the first step in language learning, but the learner usually has only 'textbooks' for learning a language. A textbook can only be read; 'reading' is a skill that needs emphasis after acquiring basic language competencies through listening. Students found the ELL stories engaging and often listened to them on their own. This facilitated interest-driven self-learning of English, reducing inhibition. ELL has been effective in strengthening the English competencies of children in government and aided schools, potentially reversing the move of children from



government to private schools. The programme shows that digital technologies can be used for creating, sharing, storing, and using audio-visual resources to create an effective 'listening rich' environment in schools. (The study of the Kerala ELL programme was conducted by IT for Change along with the Regional Institute of English, South India.)

Yet this would not be adequate. Karnataka must invest significantly in government schools, meeting the basic requirements outlined in the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009. An Annexure in the RTE specifies physical infrastructure, including adequate classrooms, toilets, drinking water, a compound wall, and a playground, as well as sufficient teachers (one teacher for 30 students). While the RTE made education a fundamental right for children, Karnataka's compliance is at a dismal 23.6% (the Ministry of Education's response to the question in Lok Sabha in 2021), with a severe shortage of teachers. Kerala's relatively better education system is due to state legislation that made the 'teacher to student ratio' 30:1 a school-level mandate; other states compute this ratio at a state level, which leads to teacher shortages in larger schools. Also, ad hoc or guest teacher recruitment cannot ensure quality education. School maintenance and development budgets are pathetically inadequate. A primary school with even 100 students would need more than Rs 1 lakh every year; current allocations average less than Rs 10,000. The government's thinking that poor people can do with poorly resourced (government) schools is inherently iniquitous.

Secondly, the government must close down private schools that do not comply with RTE and are unlikely to. Most schools that depend wholly on parent fees



cannot meet RTE norms. The small percentage of elite schools, where parents cover all expenses, should comply with the 25% admission of children from marginalised sections to provide diverse learning contexts to students.

Thirdly, a society-wide programme for building a more informed discussion on the aims and principles of education is absolutely necessary. For most people, education is merely a means to employment and economic mobility. However, education is the primary vehicle for building a better society, which makes curriculum a complex political question. Hence, the government needs to continuously organise open public discussions (in and outside panchayats and on

social media) on topics such as home language education, language learning, the role of digital technologies, secular education, constitutional morality, the role of community in education, etc. to evolve a shared and rational understanding and build political will for progressive education. Such reconciliation of pedagogical and political perspectives would be essential for a healthy education system. Promoting the medium of instruction in the mother tongue would also protect and promote the linguistic diversity and cultural wealth of our country. ●

*Published kind courtesy of the author who is a teacher and director of 'IT for Change'*

# 'PLASTIC RICE'

## WHY THE GOVT'S EXPERIMENT WITH AN ARTIFICIAL GRAIN IS HARD TO SWALLOW FOR RURAL ADIVASIS

India is among the world's top food producers; yet, it faces a chronic undernourishment crisis with 16% of its population malnourished compared to the global average of 8%. This series traces the structural causes of hunger and food insecurity in inequalities in power. It examines the solutions the state is offering to ask what their true meaning is for people and the climate.

Even though states lacked capacity to test fortified rice but had to give it to the poor, in Jharkhand, 56,000 quintals of fortified rice rations were distributed while the state lacked a fully equipped laboratory to confirm the quality and the levels of vitamins and iron. *State governments were given no choice but to switch to distributing chemically-fortified rice, even where infrastructure for quality was absent, or far from assured.* In villages, even those who question the policy are told to eat the new rice, artificially fortified with factory-made micronutrients. Adivasi farmers who have the knowledge and practice of growing a variety of rice, pulses, millets, and gathering tubers, small game, mushrooms, berries from the forest are further pushed to cereal-heavy diets, that have over time depleted soils and worsened nutrition.

To reduce anaemia and

***Rice growing farmer communities refuse to accept new fortified rice kernels, while public health experts express concern at the food scheme's lack of safety mechanisms for vulnerable groups.***

■ Anumeha Yadav

malnutrition, the Union government began experimenting with supplying rice grains artificially enhanced with micronutrients such as iron, vitamin B, folic acid, in the public distribution system in 2021. Medical experts have debated the benefits of chemically-fortified rice versus its potential harm. Public officials in Jharkhand's capital Ranchi said that they were asked to either distribute fortified

rice, or forgo getting food aid from the Union government.

Right to food and health activists have documented concerns that by forcing mandatory consumption of grains fortified with industry-made micronutrients in haste, the government has ignored the safety of the some of most vulnerable individuals who would consume this rice. A number of studies show the Union government released





fortified rice to the public even in the face of serious gaps in infrastructure to assure quality. An evaluation of the scheme by NITI Aayog, India's planning body, after visits to seven states showed the government proceeded even when laboratory facilities for ensuring basic quality in the supplied grains were lacking. As explained below, studies by the World Food Programme of the UN, and J-PAL, a global research centre, too showed similar gaps.

To fortify rice with factory-made nutrients, a powder “pre-mix” of vitamins and minerals – iron, vitamin B12, folic acid – is added to powdered rice and broken grains. The paste is machine-carved to manufacture new rice grains, which are mixed into grains being given as food rations. In 2022, in phase two of the programme when the government decided to scale up the pilots for fortified rice from 15 districts to 291 districts – up from providing 35 lakh metric tonnes to 175 lakh metric tonnes in social schemes – its coverage expanded quite rapidly in Jharkhand. Almost all of Jharkhand's 24 districts are in the category “aspirational”, which means they are extremely poor and are lacking in basic infrastructure, or they fall under the state's “high burden” category of malnutrition

and anemia. On the ground, it became evident that the haste in expanding the schemes led to lapses in accounting for quality.

India's statutory food regulator, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has placed fortified rice in the category of “high risk”, that require mandatory safety checks. Making chemically fortified rice requires regular monitoring. Measures include checking the quality of the powder pre-mix of vitamins and minerals which is added into powdered rice, whether the micro-nutrients are as per the required Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) decided in scheme norms, if fortified rice was blended in the required proportions as stipulated (one enhanced or fortified grain to every 100 ordinary rice grains), and finally, whether the rice gets eaten within its shelf-life period of one year.

India lacks the required laboratories with facilities to check the quality of the pre-mix of micronutrients such as iron, folic acid and vitamins. A confidential scheme evaluation in May 2022 by the government's planning body, the NITI Aayog, first accessed by *The Reporters' Collective*, flagged this problem. Only the laboratories that are accredited by the

commerce ministry's National Accreditation Board Testing and Calibration Laboratory (NABL) are equipped to accurately test micronutrient levels in the fortified rice kernels.

When the Union government pushed to expand the scheme rapidly, a state such as Jharkhand, in the interior eastern part of India, faced particular disadvantages. Though it has high numbers of those who depend on subsidised food rations – 86% of the state's residents qualify for the food-grains – and a high number of ration outlets, it lacks even a single laboratory fully equipped to provide the quality checks. The east and the northeast region, where Jharkhand lies, has only 10% of the laboratories but holds more than 30% of the food ration outlets and thus generates a higher number of samples for testing. But the laboratories are located primarily in India's northern region around the capital, or the south.

As per the FSSAI, of the laboratories in India that can perform these tests, none are in Jharkhand. The closest such laboratory is in Kolkata in the adjoining state of Bengal. Yet, the evidence in Jharkhand shows the Union government proceeded with the compulsory scheme without ensuring the mechanism to timely verify the quality of and level of safe micronutrients fortified grains was available.

Over more than a year between 2021 and early 2023, the Jharkhand state government supplied 56,000 quintals of fortified rice to the state's poorest. The micronutrient levels and quality of rice kernels was tested at Sun-Tech, the only NABL-laboratory located in Tupudana, Ranchi, in the state capital. However, this stopped earlier this year as the FSSAI stated that this laboratory cannot test micronutrients and it lacks the “Proficiency Test” certification.

“We have one such laboratory in our state. But even this is no longer functional to test micronutrient levels in Fortified Rice Kernels (FRK),” Yatinder Prasad, the managing director of the Jharkhand State Food Corporation said.

As per the scheme's guidelines, the FSSAI has to ensure NABL laboratories in all states, and periodically evaluate the scheme with the health ministry. On “quality assurance mechanisms”, the guidelines state “an officer will verify Certificate of Analysis (proof of micronutrients analysis) of every fortified rice kernel (FRK) batch”, and that “a sample is to be lifted from each blending point monthly to go to a NABL laboratory.” It recommends that a sample of the fortified rice being distributed be collected monthly from the ration shop, or places it was served.

Officials in Jharkhand said they were not able to collect and test samples from ration shops, schools and creches, and they believed that leaving it to manufacturers to prove the quality and quantity through such certificates of analyses may be inadequate to monitor in a foolproof way. “First, we lack such a laboratory in our state. And second, there is no way for us to get the micronutrients' tested in time for distributing the grains to poor households every month,” said a senior official. “As the local

authority overseeing this scheme, ideally, we prefer we should have had a second layer of testing, allowing us to verify that no manipulation in quality was done by the rice kernel manufacturers.”

The state provides food subsidies to more than six million poor households, or over 26 million residents. They are in two categories: priority households get 5 kg rice per person per month and “Antyodaya”, the poorest of the poor, are entitled to 35 kg per month. “The laboratory takes 10-15 days to give us the results and if we wait that long, we cannot do the ration distribution by a fixed time,” explained the official. “The time to lift grains from the public system is fixed, or else the state would lose its quota of grains, and distribution is also time-bound. If you do not do it within a certain time, the Point of Sale devices at the retail stores will automatically block the disbursement of grains.” The official added, “The infrastructure that should have been there for a scheme like this that affects people's health and vital nutrition is absent. It is just not sufficient.”

The confidential NITI Aayog report drafted after visits to seven pilot districts documented serious lapses in quality control, and abdication of quality mechanisms by the government. Unlike the substantial role envisioned in food ministry guidelines on the scheme, “FSSAI is found to have almost no role in quality assurance/quality

control of fortified rice within the visited districts”, it noted, and that “there are no reported processes to monitor the quality and cost of the nutrient premix”.

It found that in some districts, regular monitoring was by “development partners”, such as Tata Trusts, or the American NGO, PATH. Though the guidelines state sample checking will be done at rice mills, FRK [fortified rice kernel] plants and at ration shops, it found “no samples were being taken from rice mills, ration shops and children's schools and creches where this was being served”. The officials from the food safety body and food and civil supplies department are supposed to independently test the quality of the FRK. In Jamshedpur, East Singhbhum district, supply officer Rajeev Ranjan SAID that the quality checks at mills were done by PATH in Jharkhand. PATH checked if the rice mills had obtained quality certificates when buying FRK from manufacturers, and if the tested and certified batch matched what was being provided further. For FRK, the manufacturers have to test every batch of 10 lakh metric tonne, and then PATH was trying to make sure that the sample and final delivery batch of rice matched, he said.

While proper laboratory infrastructure was missing, 56,000 quintals of fortified rice were supplied to Jharkhand's rural residents till June 2023. The supply of fortified rice went on even while the facilities to the test of the quality and quantity of micronutrients being added were inadequate, or absent. In villages, the picture is more complex. Smallholder farmers shared that with a slow but gradual process of ecological and cultural erosion in this biodiversity rich region, the soils in all areas now no longer support growing certain older folk varieties of cereals. ●



# THE SUPERCONSCIOUS MIND

- Shrii Shrii Ānandamūrti

**T**hose who have attained this superconscious level of awareness develop the true discrimination, the ability to transcend the illusion of life and discern the eternal which underlies all the changing forms. The result of true discrimination is vaerāgya [non-attachment]. Those who are established in non-attachment realize that everything of this universe is the manifestation of the Supreme. They cannot hate or neglect anything of this universe. The universe is changeable, while Supreme Consciousness is unchangeable, true and absolute. But non-attachment does not mean to leave all pleasures and remain in a state of indifference to the world. It does not mean to leave everything and go to the seclusion of a mountain cave. Those who are truly non-attached do not deny the world (worldly life), they embrace it, for they feel the touch of the eternal hidden within all the changing forms of their lives. They are with everything. They are paramahamṣa.

The subtle causal mind is the last (fifth) gateway of perfection. It is the third stage of the superconscious mind. One who experiences this stage of mind reaches very near the Infinite Self within, and such a person's desire for supreme union becomes unbearable. Such a person has an intense desire for God. In this stage of mind there is a complete reflection of Supreme Consciousness. When the spiritual aspirant reaches this stage of mind, his or her mind becomes one with that subtle causal mind, and as a result his or her mind becomes one with the Supreme [or Cosmic] Mind and becomes an all-knowing mind. Then the person becomes an all-knowing personality and attains complete spiritual awareness. The person experiences a divine current of the supreme happiness. He or she attains the fullest expression of humanity: divinity. This is the aim of life. One can reach this stage of mind through dhyāna [meditation in which the psyche is directed towards Consciousness]. Beyond this fifth layer of mind, there is Supreme Consciousness, the Supreme Spirit, the absolute reality, where all logics and reasonings and conflicts of the lower mind are dissolved and everything becomes one. Be spiritually aware; be great by your sādhanā, by your service and by your sacrifice. Be as great as He (the Supreme Entity). ●



# THE FORGOTTEN SOLDIER

Who care who died, who lived to tell,  
Of falling comrades, of bursting shells.  
Amidst the snow or sand they lie,  
Each man must fight to kill or die.  
As bright young blood so freely flows  
Of leader, friend or ever foes.  
Who can deny that doubt and fear  
His senses often see and hear.  
Amidst this sound of death and dirge  
Ascends a cry, a scream, a surge  
As daily bulletins spill their views  
And mounting funds are in the news.  
How oft we think our debt is paid  
Some moneys given, some flowers laid.  
Few martyrs sung and most forgot  
Their mothers shattered, their wives ....distraught.  
His youthful dreams to us unknown  
The dreamer and his dreams have flown  
Few days of clamour soon are done  
Then all falls silent with the guns.  
None knows the vacuum of the kin  
None hears their wail above the din  
The sighs – the hush – the hopelessness  
The lifelong void – the friendlessness.  
Come walk with me my countrymen  
Our family and friends to share  
With those whom they have left behind  
To make them ours and make us theirs.

Mrs. Yasmeen Sawhney



Dearest Papa Mama Birdie and Gung,

1. By the time you get this letter I'll be observing you all from the sky enjoying the hospitality of Apsaras.
2. I have no regrets. In fact even if I become a human again I'll join the army and fight for my nation.
3. If you can, please come and see where the Indian army fought for your tomorrow.
4. As far as the unit is concerned the new chapos should be told about this sacrifice. I hope my photo will be kept in the A' log mandir with Mami Mata.
5. Whatever organ can be taken, should be done.
6. Contribute some money to orphanage and keep on giving 50/- Rs to Rukhmani per month and I must take care.
7. Best of luck to Birdie, never forget this sacrifice of these men. Papa you should feel proud. Mama so should you, meet (I loved her), Mami forgive me for everything wrong I did.

Be there its time for me to join my class of the Party Boyz. my next party has 12 days.

Best of luck to you all.  
Love life King size - yours  
Vijayant

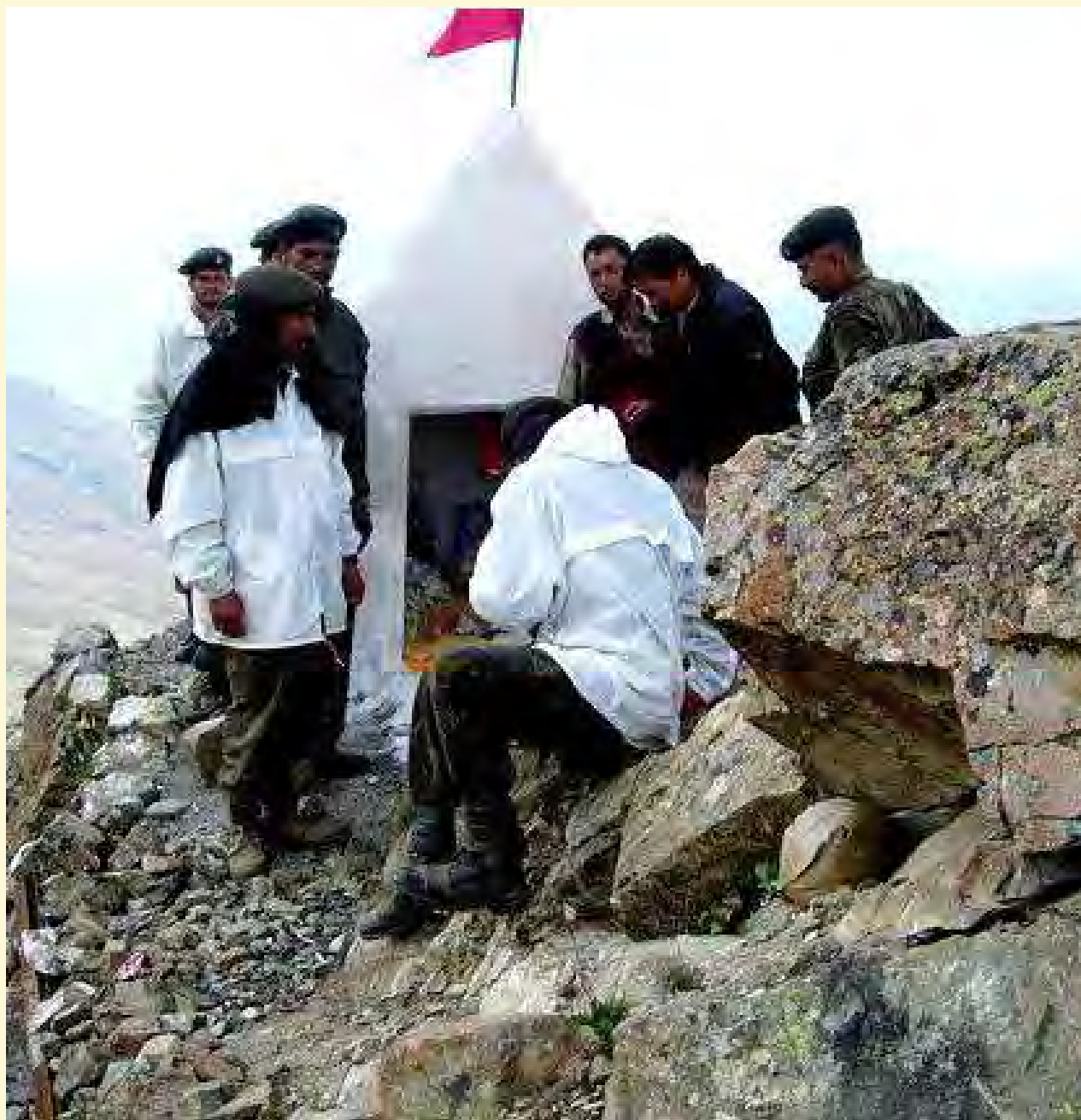
Letter written by Captain Vijayant Thapar of 2 Rajputana Rifles a day before he was killed in action in Kargil.

## HIS FATHER'S REPLY

Son!

The brave way you left this world, at the age of 22 is a measure of how you lived your short life and what you valued. In meeting the stark challenges of capturing Knoll against all odds, during the battle of Three Pimples with heroic coolness and single minded devotion to duty, you have achieved immortal honour. In death you have epitomised the spirit of national pride - an honour which makes every sacrifice worthwhile. Your actions will forever inspire generations of Indians to come. You have left us with pride for being the parents of a worthy son and a lifetime of pain for having lost a child we loved.

- Col. V.N. Thapar



*Capt. Vijayant Thapar- Memorial Mandir at Knoll 16000 ft, where the young brave heart made the supreme sacrifice in defence of the nation.*



## PBI (Gorakhpur) Strategizes for General Elections - 2024

The Gorakhpur District committee of Proutist Bloc, India met at the residence of Publicity Secretary Acharya Dr. Ram Nayan on December 17, in the presence of National Convener Acharya Santosananda Avadhuta. The meeting aimed at fortifying the party's influence in the district. The meeting was presided by Vice-president Krishnananda Dixit in the absence of District President Ranjana Bagchi, who couldn't attend the event due to some unavoidable circumstances.

The meeting saw the participation of about 25 prominent Proutists. Notable attendees included General Secretary Advocate Ram Achal, Vice president Prof RP Singh, and women proutists Archana, Pushpa and Madhu. Krishnananda Dixit emphasized the pivotal role of Prout in combating the societal decline. Women's wing president Madhu Shrivastav expressed her resolution to do everything possible to garner mass support for PBI. RP Singh too underscored Prout's ability to confront the multifaceted aspects of capitalism such as consumerism, marketism, and pseudo-culture.



### Key resolutions taken :

1. Active participation in the upcoming General Elections in 2024.
2. Regular monthly meetings of the committee on the 1st Thursday of every month.
3. Each member shall enroll five new members before the subsequent meeting.
4. Committee's to focus on the '4 Ks' - Karyakarta (cadre), Karyalaya (office), Karyakram (programme), and Kosh (Fund).

## PBI Contests MP Assembly Polls: Party Sees Room for Future Growth

In the recent Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections, Proutist Bloc, India (PBI) marked its participation through the candidature of Basant Kumar Bopche for Lanji Kirnapur assembly seat (No-109). The electoral race witnessed the entry of Basant Bopche, a leader known for his amiable persona and positive social influence within the region.

Campaigning under the symbol 'Bat,' Basant Kumar Bopche, a Proutist leader, showed a firm commitment to the principles of Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT). Having entered the race late, Bopche encountered various challenges.

The election results, declared on December 3, revealed that Bopche secured 1250 votes in the electoral contest. Later, a review meeting was held on December 13 in Mohjhari, Balaghat, to assess the campaign strategy and its outcomes.



It was highlighted in the meeting that the electoral campaign began late and lacked sufficient groundwork from an electioneering perspective. The introspection led to a determination to engage in more regular and proactive fieldwork in future. Proutist Bloc, India, with an intent to revolutionize the electoral scene of India, sees this election as a learning curve, recognizing the importance of consistent groundwork.

## Pradeep Tripathi to Contest from Kanpur Lok Sabha Constituency



In an announcement that has stirred the political landscape of Kanpur, Pradeep Tripathi, a PBI cadre, has declared his candidacy for the Kanpur Lok Sabha constituency in the upcoming General Elections of 2024. Hailing from Kanpur himself, Tripathi brings a blend of professional expertise as a pharmacist and a dedicated educator to his political pursuit.

Known for his unwavering integrity and commitment to community service, Pradeep Tripathi has carved a reputation as a champion for the marginalized. His pledge to advocate for the rights of the underprivileged and those who have faced injustices resonates strongly with his long-standing dedication to social causes.

## PBI's Call for Vidarbha's Statehood Resonates in Nagpur

On 15 December, Proutist Bloc, India (Vidarbha) took out a rally to Vidhan Sabha Bhavan in Nagpur to voice its demand for statehood to Vidarbha, and to highlight the plight of farmers and the landless in the region. A large number of people, including the party office-bearers and cadres, and prominent proutists of the region, participated in the event. National Convener of PBI, Acharya Santosananda Avadhuta and party's Vidarbha convener Madhukar Nistane addressed the activists. Other Proutist luminaries who lent their voices to the resounding call for Vidarbha's statehood included the President of the Vidarbha Youth Federation Mohan Pawar, Pandurang Kiranapure, Arun Kapile and Sarchitnis Yashwantrao Bonde.



Addressing the agitators, Acharya Santosananda Avadhuta said that Vidarbha has been meted out unfair treatment by Maharashtra government, which is grounds enough for this region to be declared a full-fledged state. He recalled that years ago the founder of PBI, Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, made a strong case for statehood to

Vidarbha, and therefore, PBI will take this fight to its logical end. "But statehood alone won't bring smiles to the faces of Vidarbha's children. The leaders of the movement must ensure that the power goes to the hands of moralists" he added.

Talking about the plight of debt-ridden farmers and the landless, party's Vidarbha convener Madhukar Nistane said that all the schemes and plans made in the capital are not even remotely connected to the ground realities in the villages and small towns, and the implementation is marred by corruption and red tapism.

State President Vivek Dehankar said, "For decades Vidarbha has waited for justice. Different leaders have betrayed the people of Vidarbha by derailing all the past movements for statehood, but PBI shall ensure that the movement achieves its stated objective. The Leaders of Jai Vidarbha Party Arun Kedar and Mukesh Masurkar also participated in the rally.

After the rally and sit-in, a memorandum of the party's demands was given to the Forest Minister, government of Maharashtra.



## PBI Gains Support from a Prominent Civil Society Organization in Vidarbha



Acharya Santosananda Avadhuta, the national convener of Proutist Bloc, India (PBI), on 14th December, addressed the members of the "Annyaygrast v Sajjan Suraksha Sangathan," an organization dedicated to safeguarding exploited citizens. The gathering took place at a rest house in Yavatmal, Vidarbha.

The spokesperson for the organization expressed satisfaction at the shared objectives between their organization and PBI. Speaking to a PROUT correspondent, the



spokesperson stated, "We are delighted to note that PBI aligns with several of our objectives. Having listened to Acharyaji and observed PBI's track record in Vidarbha, despite our non-political stance, we intend to extend our support to PBI in all their endeavors."

The support of such civil society organizations could potentially bolster PBI's standing in the region in the political scene of Vidarbha.

## PBI, Odisha Outlines Plans for Upcoming General Elections

In a decisive meeting held on December 9, 2023, at the party office in Bhubaneswar, the Odisha State Committee of Proutist Bloc, India (PBI) solidified plans for the upcoming 2024 General Elections. Chaired by State President Kedar Nath Sahoo and led by State General Secretary Pitambar Bhuiya, the committee, comprised of prominent members including Chandragupta Lenka, Aditya Pradhan, Rajshree Biswal, Bandita Dash, Gitanjali Swain, Khageswar Bala, Arun Kumar Swain, Pradip Kumar Singh, and Kanhu Charan Behura, the National General Secretary, charted an extensive agenda aiming for political outreach and mobilization.

### The following key decisions emerged from the meeting:

1. **Visible Representation :** PBI Cadres mandated to display signboards bearing the PBI name at personal residences and all office levels.



# ACTIVITY



2. **Regular Meetings** : State committee monthly meetings scheduled for the second Saturday of each month to ensure consistent communication and strategy alignment.
3. **Operational Essentials** : Provision of leaflets, receipt books for memberships and donations, along with a register for visitors seeking social justice assistance at every PBI Party office.
4. **Digital Outreach** : Emphasis on social media propagation and a robust digital campaign to enhance political awareness on the Progressive Utilization Theory (Prout).
5. **Women Welfare Program** : Highlighting the necessity of maximum female participation for successful implementation. Responsibilities assigned to Rajashri Biswal, Bandita Dash, and Gitanjali Swain.
6. **Youth and Farmer Engagement** : Active involvement of cadres from student, youth, and farmer forums. A cohort of 70 youths organized from Proutist families.
7. **Election Preparedness** : Intent to contest 6 MP seats and 42 MLA seats in Odisha for the 2024 General Elections. Specific responsibilities allocated to the following cadres across the following regions:
  - ✓ Kantamal :- Aditya Pradhan/Kedarnath Sahoo
  - ✓ Sambalpur :- Bijay Kumar Nayak / Shankarlal Dev
  - ✓ Bhubaneswar :- Arun Kumar Swain/ Kanhu Ch. Behura
  - ✓ Baleswar :- Pitambar Bhuyan/ Kanhu Charan Behura
  - ✓ Bhadrak :- Chandragupta Lenka/Sanatan Behera
  - ✓ Jajpur :- Kanhu Charan Behura

Additionally, the committee estimated a minimum expense of Rs 30 lakhs for the electoral campaign and urged all Proutists to contribute towards this amount to participate effectively in the upcoming elections.

## PBI (Delhi) Unveils Plans for General Elections- 2024

Proutist Bloc, India's Delhi State Committee convened a meeting at Prout Bhavan, Malviya Nagar, Delhi, on December 10, 2023, to strategize and outline key agenda for the upcoming year, with a primary focus on the 2024 Parliamentary elections.

Chaired by National Convener Acharya Santosananda Avadhuta, the meeting, saw the participation of prominent members including President Amitabh Verma, General Secretary Baidhnath Sah, Organising Secretary Ramkesh Chaudhary, Publication Secretary Madhusmita Das, Treasurer Niranjan Dhar, and several other esteemed members such as Secretary Pratibha, and Members Anil Kumar Anthony and Sushil Kumar.



The agenda encompassed crucial topics such as the

(1) formation of District Committees across all 11 districts of Delhi, (2) preparing for the General Elections in 2024 by establishing an election management committee, conducting an extensive membership drive, and (3) securing monthly financial contributions from members. Additionally, plans were outlined for (4) the setup of necessary office infrastructure, printing materials like booklets, pamphlets, as well as launching digital platforms including a website, WhatsApp groups, email, mobile app, and issuing press releases.

Following the deliberations, the Committee passed significant resolutions : (1) confirming the formation of District Committees, (2) the party's intent to contest all 7 Lok Sabha Constituencies in the upcoming elections, and (3) an accelerated drive for membership and public engagement through widespread meetings.

## Proutists in Nagpur Demand Justice for Vidarbha Baliraja Project Victims

The Vidarbha Baliraja Prakalpgrast Sangharsh Sangathan (VBSS) spearheaded a monumental march in Nagpur during the Winter Session of the state assembly, advocating for justice and rights for those affected by the Vidarbha Baliraja Project.

Starting on December 7th, 2023, from Nehru Maidan in Rajkamal Chowk, Amravati, a passionate gathering of project-affected individuals, led by VBSS President Proutist Manoj Chauhan, supported by Proutist Bloc, India's Vidarbha state convener Madhukar Nistane, embarked on a prolonged protest march to Nagpur.

VBSS assembly conveyed their grievances regarding the 2006 government circular that sought to deprive farmers of their lands.

Despite the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 and subsequent provisions, the government's actions have directly impacted thousands of farmers in Vidarbha. These actions violated the constitutional rights of the affected individuals, leading to immense hardships including unemployment, suicides, and land loss.

### The demands put forward by the protestors are as follows:

1. Additional compensation for lands purchased by the government through direct purchase methods from 2006 to December 2013.
2. Cash compensation of Rs. 30 lakh if a member of a project-affected family cannot secure a government job as per the Rehabilitation Act.
3. Increase in job reservations from 5% to 15% for project victims.
4. Immediate development of civil facilities and resolution of public issues at the local level for project victims.
5. Establishment of an Economic Development Corporation for comprehensive development of the victims.

The marchers sought justice and fair treatment for those impacted by the project, emphasizing the need for government accountability and action during the ongoing Winter Session.

Among the activists who participated in the March included Sunilbhau Ghatale, Secretary Bhushan Chaudhary, Sanjay Gid, Ajay Bhoir, Abhay Jain, Prashant Murade, Rajubhau Lonkar, Nitin Malamkar, Pramod Khade, Dr. Bhagwan Pandit, Mohan Gahle, Anil Munde, Sharad Khalokar, Gautamji Khandare (Sarpanch), Satish Metange, Omprakash Komawar, Sheikh Habib, Pvt. Nilesh Thackeray, Gaurav Bijwe, Manojbhau Tambakhe, Rahulbhau Watane (Sarpanch), Prof. Prashant Thackeray, Rajabhau Kale, Sanjaybhau Dhonde, Shubham Dawande, Chandrakant Gaikwad, Rajesh Shirghare, Gajanan Chaubitkar etc. ●



Shri Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

# TODAY IN A DREAM DEEP

ÁJI, SAJALA PAVANE SAGHANA SVAPANE  
AJÁNÁ PATHIK ESECHE

SE JE, VIÍNÁR TÁRETE SIIMÁR PÁRETE  
CETANÁR GÁN GEYECHÉ

SE HÁSÍTI MAMATÁRA SE CÁHANI CINI KÁRA  
SE JE AJÁNÁRO BÁDHÁ BHENGE  
JÁNÁ ÁJI HOYECHÉ

In heavily moistened air  
The unknown traveller comes.

Strumming strands of the harp  
Going beyond boundaries  
He sings songs of awakening.

That smile full of love,  
That glance whose, I know,  
Breaking barriers to the unknown  
He becomes known today.





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