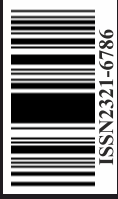




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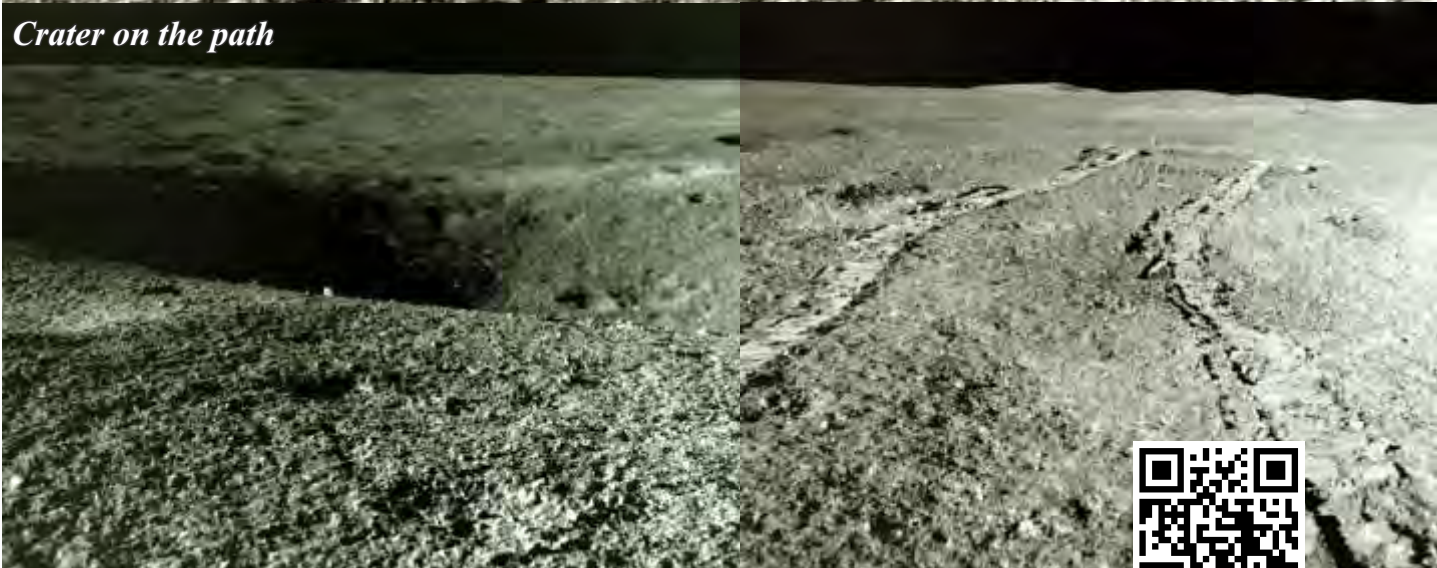


PROUT

A Journal of Proutistic Views and Neo-Humanistic Analysis



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INDIA'S MOON SUCCESS THE SOUTH POLE AS VIEWED BY LANDER VIKRAM

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Today the primary duty of the common people of India is to rectify the errors committed by the leaders and unite India through an anti-exploitation campaign. India has got to be saved.

– 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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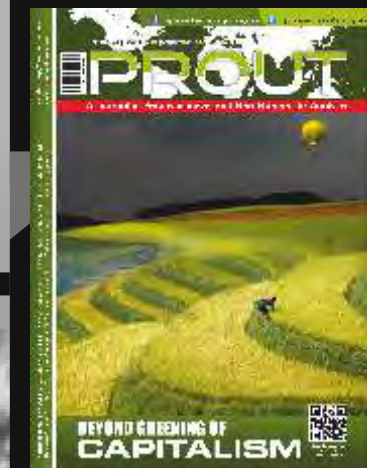


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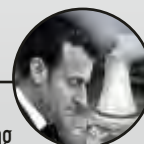
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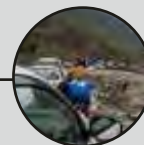
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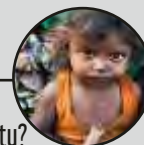
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

India's G 20 Presidential Year

Guided under India's presidency by the theme of One Earth, One Family, One Future, the recently concluded G 20 summit in New Delhi on September 9 and 10 was a great success as reported in National print and electronic media. In a fragmented shock prone world the summit was an opportunity to cement this consensus and galvanize coordinated action for international cooperation — the best safeguard against instability.

G 20 member countries in the group are: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union. Now with the African Union joining in with India spearheading support, it is now effectively G 21.

Budget 2023-24, the government had allocated Rs 990 crore for G 20 Presidency. The finance minister during her budget speech said that the presidency gave India a unique opportunity to strengthen its role in the world economic order. While the budget for direct expenses related to the presidency was presented, the government also spent money on preparation of New Delhi for the grand summit. Over Rs 4,100 crore was spent on Delhi in lead up to the G20 summit. Money was spent on roads, security, footpaths and lighting, among several other things. Several sculptures have also been installed at various places in the national capital as part of the makeover process. Other direct costs related to the event being held in Delhi have not been revealed so far. To compare countries in the past have spent significant amount of money on the G20 summit. According to available data the cost of Buenos Aires summit in 2018 was \$112 million; Japan spent \$ 320 million in Osaka in 2019, and last year Indonesia reportedly spent 674 billion Rupiah i.e. Rs 364 crore.

G 20 was marked by persistence efforts to find solutions to two big global challenges, debt relief for poorer countries and designing regulatory framework for crypto currency worldwide. Debt relief is more urgent as it impacts financial, social and political stability of many countries. As all stakeholders are represented G 20 is surely best equipped global body to find a solution to the debt crisis that facing the world. As per data presented by the IMF, as of 2021 debt percentage of GDP in low income developing countries reached dangerous levels when measured against economic capacity of individual nations. It was a staggering 88% with public debt at 49%. This was not their first time. But what is first this time is that their creditors are at the same time grappling geopolitical rivalry.

During the Covid pandemic the G 20 launched the proposal for debt moratorium, which ended in December 2021. It then created a common framework for debt alleviation for 73 countries. Among creditors China is now the world's largest bilateral lender, then the western bloc and finally private lenders from affluent countries. All three must join hands to find a solution. Till now they haven't done enough. G 20 was considered the best forum to work out a solution to the debt crisis of the world's poorest nations. It's time that they do.

In the theme of One Earth, the first action all countries must take is to step up the fight against climate change. Extreme weather like drought, floods and wildfires are causing devastation everywhere. Developing countries have to be in the frontline of climate crisis. Mitigation policies in developing economies need to be supported by stepping up financial and technology transfers from the rest of the world to achieve an equitable and just green transition — an issue India has pushed to the forefront of the G 20 debate.

And in the theme of one family India has been advocating global solidarity under its presidency and has reached its pledge to channel \$ 100 billion in special drawing rights to poorer nations through IMF trusts such as Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust. It remains however to convert all these pledges to concrete contributions. This is one task of the summit to complete as the needs of vulnerable countries are becoming urgent as debt levels are rising with multiple shocks to the world economy. Finally the world's one future, \$ 3 trillion would be required to achieve Sustainable Development Goals and address climate change.

All of this is an ambitious agenda and more work lies ahead but this is what G 20 must do. And the rich countries can take example from India's ingenuity as evidenced by the historic moon landing of Chandrayaan 3. Through its dynamism and spirit of collaboration, India is setting high targets for global leadership. ●



Elevating Backward Classes

It is true that marginalised and neglected communities all over the world need relief. They not only suffer economically but also mentally for all the humiliation they faced over centuries. Prout can certainly help alleviate this.

- Arun Saigal, New Delhi

Beyond Greening of Capitalism

The author has hit the nail on the head by exposing the evils of big time capitalists, the mighty corporations with enormous money power that rule the roost especially in the West. The future alternatives suggested require careful looking and analyses.

- Stacy Cooper, Surrey UK

Cost of Freedom

An extremely poignant piece. The Memorial Kargil is indeed telling. In Ladakh with its burst of tourism this is a well visited spot. Lovely touching poem for our young brave hearts.

- Gurdeep Singh, Manali

Manipur on the Edge

That a senior Army veteran of Lieutenant Generals rank has penned thoughts on the burning issue speaks for itself. His

recommendations must be seriously considered by the authorities.

- Maj Bhanu Pratap, Dehra Dun

Ananda Nagar Reforestation

An excellent piece full of recommendations for the future. The author ought to be congratulated to put all these thoughts and ideas of Prout's founder in a systematic way. Hope people take notice and the project gets a boost in terms of funding and action.

- Janardan Naidu, Chennai

Minimum Guaranteed Income

The Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill is no doubt a good start. It could be the first step towards the Prout alternative which is certainly more desirable as the right to job and minimum living wages would be enshrined in the Constitution as a fundamental right. There's still a long way to go.

- Ravi Nair, Tuticorin

Dying Indian Languages

It's sad the way languages are dying in India. A language dies when the last person speaking it dies. The fact that from 1680 languages in 1961 to 780 today, it is an alarming situation. Languages must be saved and India's language diversity be maintained.

- Swati Rathee, Jaipur

Animal Suffering

The suffering of animals at the hands of humans who are supposed to be higher forms, is a tragic situation and a pathetic sight to watch. It goes against the very

grain of Neo-humanism, which advocates kind and benign treatment by humans for all living beings and even inanimate objects.

- Grace D'Souza, Goa

Prout September 2023 Issue

Thank you very much for this magnificent Prout September 2023 containing so many novel items:

1. Remarkable Story of a young woman defying poverty to earn Ph.D. in Chemistry on binary liquid mixtures from Andhra University.
2. Beyond the greening of Capitalism, to deal with the detrimental effects of capitalism, by Ravi Logan
3. The Cost of Freedom by an Air Warrior
4. Insurgency in Manipur (Forgotten state of India), and how it can be stabilized
5. Reforestation Project in Ananda Nagar (Going further, extensive agriculture and farming project can provide the revenue for setting up more colleges and benefiting the people)
6. Guaranteed Employment and minimum guaranteed income
7. Twenty-two African countries are now either bankrupt or at high risk of debt distress (So what is the solution? US, China, & IMF are involved in this debt crisis; someday when the World Government becomes the constitution of United Nations, it can lead to the implementation of SDGs:
8. Domestic workers treated as slaves
9. Nepal in crisis due to poor political leadership: insufficient investment in infrastructure-roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, power stations, water supply, irrigation, sewage plants; poor quality of life of the common people. ●

- Acarya Dhanjoo Ghista, USA

Patient Turns Doctor

This is the story of courage and fortitude about a young man who was diagnosed with cerebral palsy (CP) when six months young who despite being severely challenged physically went on to become a doctor. For a long time he had to be carried or supported but now he himself drives with support wheels on his scooter and can walk independently now.

For Smit Modi it was a dream come true when he got the MBBS degree from Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Medical College, Ahmedabad sometime end August this year and earned the coveted prefix Dr. before his name. For this 23 year olds struggle, it was most challenging due to his ailment, cerebral palsy a neurological muscular disorder that hinders movement and prevents a person from standing for a very long time.

The young brave heart who started his internship on September 2, said: "I have some colleagues, seniors and juniors with conditions such as muscular dystrophy, but I have not come across anyone with CP. I have 70% disability, but it has fortunately not cramped my academic life". Even during the Covid pandemic he didn't shy away but along with his classmates performed all the ward duties.

At the age of 15 he had to undergo surgery for damaged ligaments to improve his posture while walking. A nasty fall before his X Board exams made him unable to walk. With heavy doses of pain killers he wrote his exams and scored 80% standing second in the disabilities quota in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) exam for medical aspirants in Gujarat

Says his father, "Smit was diagnosed with CP when he was six months . We tried everything that was told to us, ranging from magnet therapy to exercises. Finally we came to terms with the fact that Smit would have to live with CP". It was Smit's mother who spotted the potential in her son and pushed him to pursue science.

As the young doctor prepares to sling a stethoscope around his neck and treat patients, his family members are justly proud and rightly so. Smit is the first doctor in the family, who has spent years in and out



A child with CP – Representational Image.



Dr. Smit Modi

of hospitals dealing with doctors. As a doctor now, he intuitively knows how patients feel and what they go through, so he makes it a point to empathize with them and reach out. This he feels gives him an advantage and would help him to become a good doctor.

His future? He wishes to specialize in dermatology as it does not require much moving around. ●

Immediate Course of Action for NATION BUILDING

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

*All the fissiparous tendencies
that exist in India must be stopped*

The leaders should totally forget the question of organizing states on the basis of language and instead take up the task of reorganizing the states entirely on the basis of economics. In all spheres of life, along with English, maximum facilities are to be also afforded to each and every language of India, in their respective regions as the official language, and as the medium of public contact. There should not be any tendency to suppress anybody. If equal facilities are afforded to all in the matter of language, nobody will think of forming states on a linguistic basis.

A strong Indian nation of the future may, however, review the issue and come to a decision according to the demands of the changed circumstances; the present leaders need not bother about this issue at all. Also, they need not bother about the necessity or otherwise of having any other language as the national language in place of English. First let them form a strong nation on the basis of a strong sentiment. The Indian nation of the future will take the responsibility for arriving at a decision on national language. It is not the proper occasion to waste time and energy on this sort of issue, creating regional controversies. No nation exists now!

India, the land of many



A village Primary School in rural Bengal

nations, is just like a joint family full of internal dissension. Although it is not possible for these nations to form one nation through their joint efforts, they can live

together amicably as a joint family by forming a group of nations (a compact multinational unit) based on one ideology. It is to be remembered that the solidarity of a

joint family cannot be maintained if activities are always determined by counting votes. In that case those who are defeated will quit the joint family that is, it will be ruined.

A joint family is nurtured by the goodwill of each of its members (in the present case, of each of the nations of India). It is a matter of great regret that there is a dearth of this goodwill in India today. Even powerful leaders are looking after the interests of their own nations (the basis being language, states, communalism [socio-religious sentiment] or casteism as the case may be), instead of thinking of the interests of India as a whole. None of these leaders are the leaders of India; they are all the leaders of their own nations. The interests of others are not safe in their hands.

It is proper that English should continue as the medium of instruction in colleges and universities. Question papers, too, should be in English. But students should have the right to answer according to their convenience in English or in any other language or languages approved by the university. In this respect, the greater the number of languages approved by the university, the better. The students taking final school examinations should be also given the right to give answers in English or in other approved languages. The media of instruction should be English and other approved languages, and the question papers should be printed in the approved languages also. Students may feel inconvenience if the medium of instruction is English only or if the question papers are in English only. Still, English must be an approved language, otherwise it will be almost impossible for students coming from distant provinces to get an education when their mother languages are not included in the schedule of approved languages.



A village High School in rural Bengal

What More Should Be Done?

All these suggestions are efforts to help check the fissiparous tendencies that exist in India. But we require something more as a nation-building element. What more should present-day India do towards the formation of a nation or a group of nations?

Most of the people of India are poverty-stricken. They want to get rid of exploitation. Political independence has no value for them if it cannot give them economic independence. I have heard many poor villagers say, "Can we not cast our votes in the box marked for the British? We will do that. Their government was good." These remarks certainly do

not add to the glory of the present leadership. If a strong nation or group of nations is to be built, a fight against exploitation will have to be launched. Only high-sounding talks of socialism, a socialistic pattern, or a welfare state will not yield any result. No sentiment is growing in the minds of the people as a result of these slogans. Unless a strong sentiment is created, a nation or a group of nations cannot be formed. The government gets hardly any support or cooperation from the people in its welfare work for want of a sentiment among the people.

India has had many opportunities to create sentiments, and even today they exist, but in

the interests of world fraternity one may not support them. If an anti-exploitation sentiment is created among the poverty-stricken mass of India, not only will a strong nation or a strong group of nations be formed, but this nation or group of nations will continue with due solidarity for a long time. The leaders should, therefore, rectify the errors of the past and vigorously launch a fresh anti-exploitation campaign. There is no other alternative to save India.

But will the leaders be able or willing to do this? If they are, it is well and good. If they are not,

perhaps they will try to unite the people forcibly through the pressure of governmental machinery. But will this be possible? The different characteristics of the peculiar land of India cannot be pounded into dust by the steamroller of governmental machinery, and such unity is not at all desirable. The more the steamroller is used, the greater the dissatisfaction among the people will be. If anything is to be done by force, the condition of India will become like that of the Balkan states. The whole of India will be split up into innumerable

states, big and small. Innumerable nations, big and small, will fight among themselves. So it seems that the present leaders need to retire in the interests of India.

I find it necessary to say one more thing in this connection. Those who think that the Bhudán and Sarvodaya movements(7) are a fight against exploitation are mistaken. Rather, these movements very carefully avoid an anti-exploitation campaign. They will only be advantageous to the capitalists because the fighting spirit of the people is tactfully suppressed.

Politics is neither my hobby nor my profession. I am a student of history. I feel it my duty to draw the dreadful picture which I visualize about India, otherwise future historians will not forgive us. The highest responsibility in this respect, however, rests with the leaders of the country. They can save or sabotage the country.

To save India the present leaders should immediately chalk out a policy to convert the people of India into a strong nation or a strong group of nations. Any pretext or jugglery of words in this matter will be fatal to the cause of the country. If the leaders do not do this, I am afraid the political unity and geographical integrity of India will be affected at any moment; especially when there are fissiparous tendencies active in the country. We should not forget that in the past it was the want of unity which brought India under the yoke of slavery time and again. If there is lack of unity at present, it should be understood that India has become intellectually bankrupt.

I am an optimist. I hope that the leaders will realize their mistakes and will face reality with courage. If they fail to do so, India will create new leaders in the future, and those future leaders will save India from destruction. India will not die. ●



Propulsion of Happiness

INDIA'S MOON

SUCCESS

Arun Prakash



n August 23, at 6.03 pm Indian Standard Time, Chandrayaan 3 touched down softly on the South

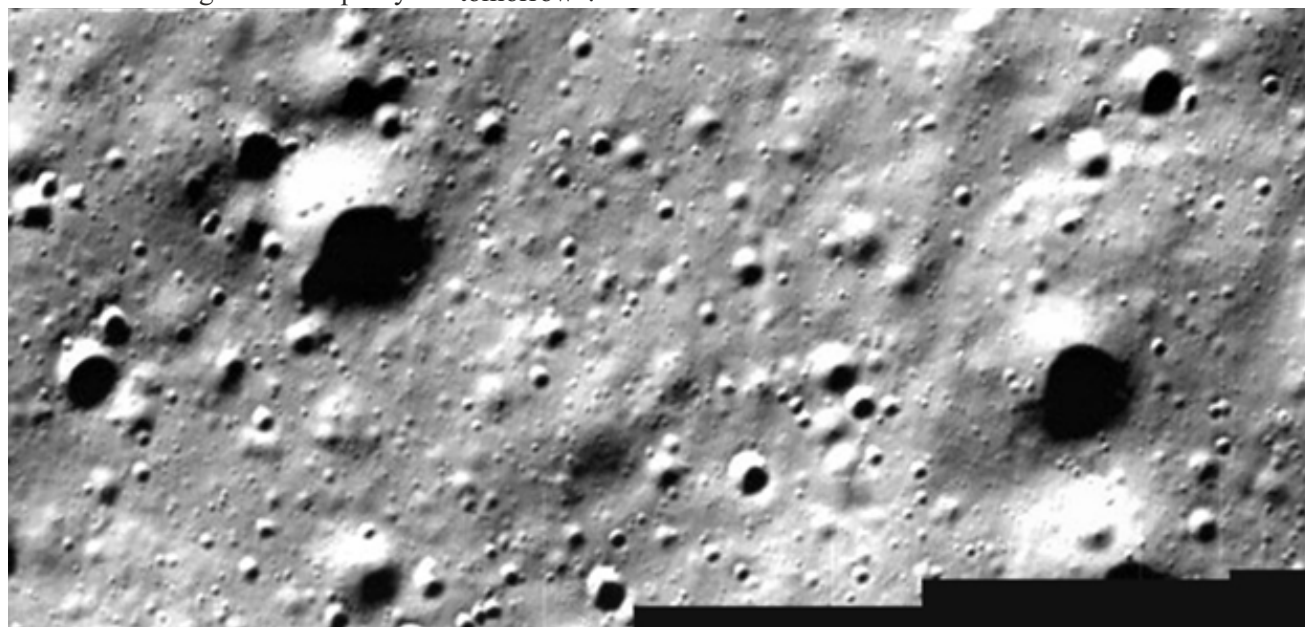
Pole of the Moon, where no other nation from the world's elite space club had ever gone before. This was the perfect culmination of how it started with a bunch of Indian space scientists on November 21, 1963 experimenting on space science in a sleepy fishing village in Trivandrum carried a US made 715 kg Nike Apache their first rocket to be fired on a bullock cart.

Renowned philosopher Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar said, "Human beings are rapidly

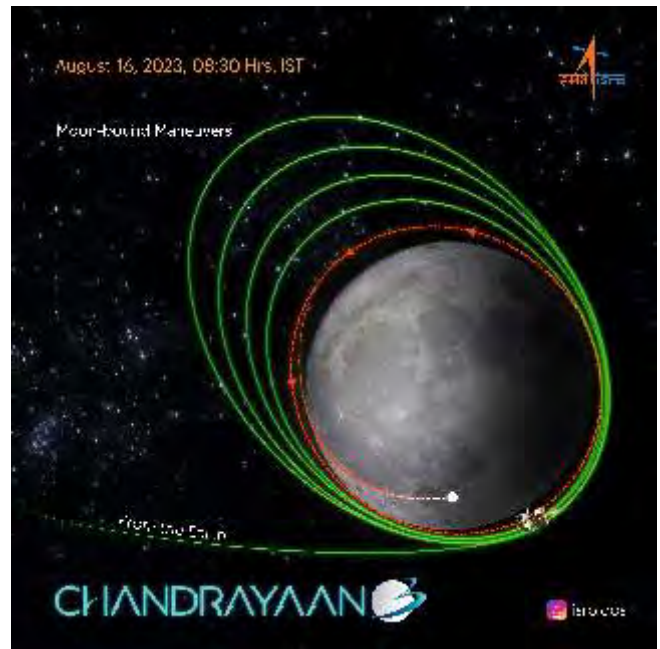
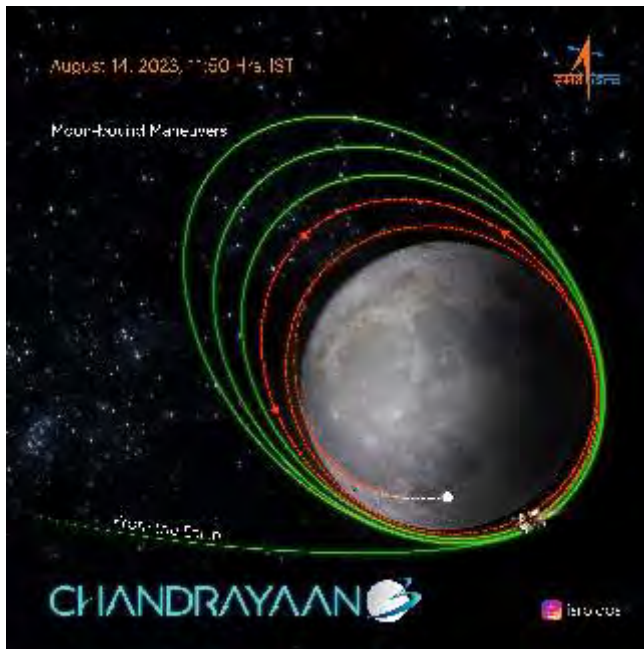
The world woke to this outstanding achievement by Indian scientists. It was an unforgettable moment.

conquering space and time. The destruction of a particular planet or solar system does not mean the end of the human race. There are numerous other stars and planets in the universe. With further development of science and by the help of inter-planetary rocket systems, human beings will move to other planets. What is a dream today will become a reality tomorrow".

Now let us briefly go over India's space endeavours. It started in 1962 with the formation of INCOSPAR, the forerunner of ISRO. Against all odds it took India to the elite club of top four space nations, viz US, Russia and China. Presaging Chandrayaan 3's success were the moon rocket Chandrayaan 1 the launch in October 2008 which had payload of an orbiter and a Moon impact probe; it was a successful mission. Then followed the launch on July 22, 2019 of Chandrayaan 2, to make an audacious attempt o soft landing on the Moon's South Pole. All went well and the nation waited with bated breath in the



A composite of four images taken by the Vikram lander as it descended to the lunar surface.



Sketches of voyage from earth to the Moon,

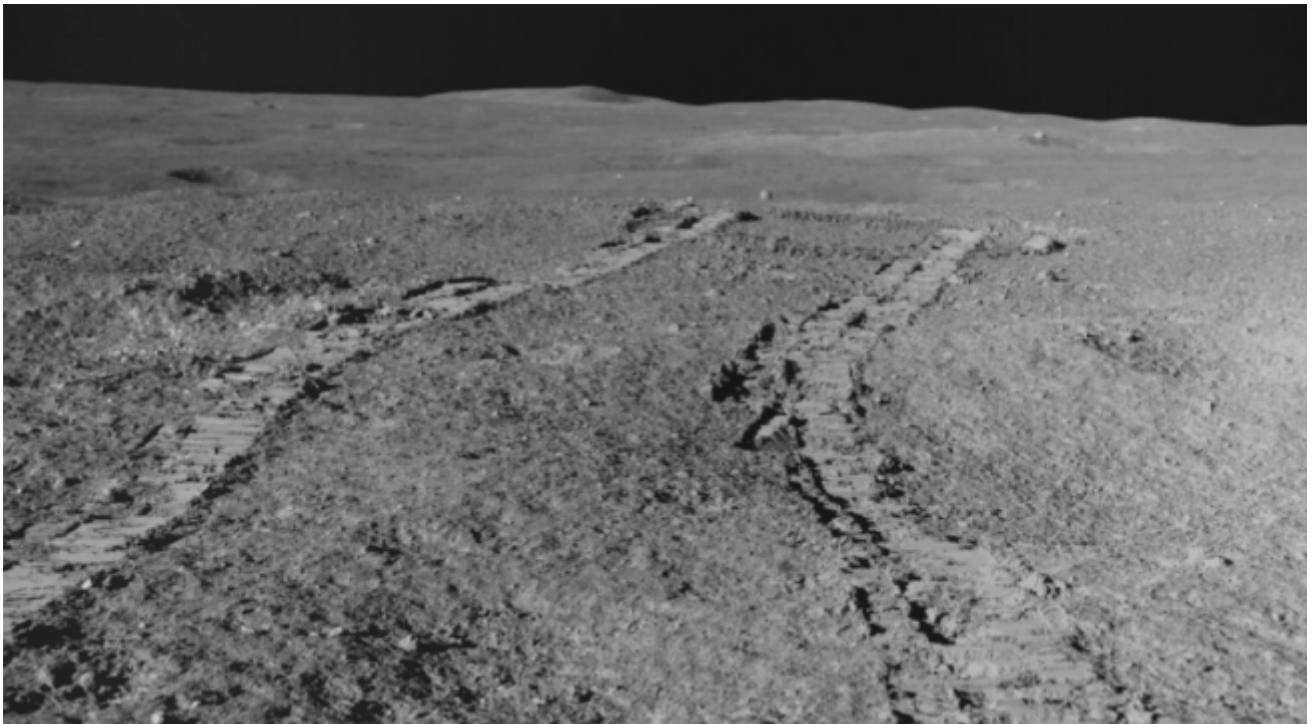


Sketches of Lander close to the Moon on August 17 & 18



Sketches of Lander close to the Moon on August 19

Photo of Lander on Moon's south pole



Tracks made by Chandrayaan 3 Rover on August 27, as viewed from its navigation camera



Chandrayaan 3 close up views on the the Moon's surface

small hours of September 6, for the scheduled landing. This wasn't successful, the moon Lander crashed minutes before touchdown.

Not to be discouraged, the scientists of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) did a lot of scientific soul searching about what could have caused the failure and regrouped to attempt yet again. Four years later at 2.35 pm on July 14, 2023 Chandrayaan 3 was launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Shri Hari

Kota, Andhra Pradesh. The culmination of the mission was to be the soft landing executed by the Vikram Lander approximately 600 kilometres from the Moon's South Pole. The spacecraft entered lunar orbit on August 5, and made the perfect landing on the 23rd at 6.03 pm which was watched live on television all over India and the world. The world woke to this outstanding achievement by Indian scientists. It was an unforgettable moment.

These images courtesy ISRO

represent this epic journey in the history of India.

But why the South Pole what's so special about that? In the past the big leaguers the US, Russia and China have landed several missions on the Moon's equatorial regions. The South Pole had only been photographed by orbiters, which established that the region is suitable for a human outpost. It is of special interest to scientists because of water ice in the permanently shadowed craters. The region is also rich in minerals.

Both would aid explorers. Besides, the craters contain a fossil record of hydrogen, water ice and other volatiles dating back times when the Solar system was born. This would help scientists learn more about our Solar System.

Near constant sunshine on mountain peaks near the lunar South Pole could provide adequate solar energy to an outpost. This also a place where scientists could perform many unique astronomical observations, and it would be an ideal place to receive astronomical radio signals from Earth. Elements known to be present on the lunar surface include hydrogen, oxygen, silicon, iron, magnesium, calcium, aluminum, and titanium. The oxygen content is estimated to be 45% by weight. Nasa's Artemis programme plan to send several robotic landers and rovers in preparation for the Artemis III human landing in 2025 at the south pole.. They are studying data from Chandrayaan 3 to fine tune its mission's parameters. Russia, which launched a spacecraft to try and land on the South Pole before India failed as that Lander crashed on the moon's surface.; and China, are also likely to send more missions to the lunar South Pole in the near future.

Moreover scientists believe that the Moon harbours secrets of Earth's early history and understanding the Moon the closest cosmic body to earth would help understand the evolution of the solar system, and can also be a good

testbed for technologies required for deep space missions. Such lunar missions aim to enhance our understanding of the Moon, simulate advancement of technology, promote global alliances and inspire future generations of explorers and scientists said ISRO Chairman S Somnath

ISRO's next critical phase will be its maiden human spaceflight, Gaganyaan. The aim is to send astronauts to space and in such a mission the levels of sophistication required are enormous. This is a remarkable testimony of ISRO's dogged persistence and achievements of India's scientific community who despite shoestring budgets have enhanced India's capabilities in communication and remote sensing satellites. This is all the more astounding because only 2% of ISRO scientists are from IITs and NIITs. This reveals the depth of India's scientific potential.

While all this is no doubt a great achievement for the nation which should be justifiably proud, one question that needs to be asked, is Shouldn't Space explorations be a united cooperative effort by earth. With different nations separately spending huge amounts and directly or indirectly competing with one another isn't it an avoidable frittering away the Earth's resources which could be saved by cooperative effort. A few statistics on space expenditures for the years 2020 and 2022 reveal how much more effective cooperative effort would be.

As per Statista, government expenditure by major countries money on space programmes in 2020 and 2022 in billions of dollars — the leader US spent 61.57 and 54.59 — next China spent 11.94 and 10.29. Others viz. it was: Japan 4.9 and 4.21; France 4.2 and 3.95; Russia 3.42 and 3.57; Germany 2.53 and 2.38; India 1.98 and 1.96; Italy 1.74 and 1.48; UK 1.15 and 1.46 and South Korea 0.72 and 0.68. If one totals all these and also total the scientific talent pool and think of cooperative efforts the answer is obvious. The savings would be enormous all round and would produce a united effort on behalf of planet Earth. After all, mankind going into space represents Earth and humanity not any particular nation. With increasing technology and increasing awareness of Earth as a global village, isn't it time to have international cooperative space efforts?

In this context it is important to recall that, way back in 1959, while speaking about the formation of World Government he mentioned, "The boundary of the world government will go on increasing, and one day it may extend throughout the entire planetary world. With advances in technology, the mastery of human beings over space and time will continue slowly to increase, so the necessity of a world government, also, will be profoundly felt". Therein lies the answer. A world government and world space explorations. ●

A blade of grass is a commonplace on Earth; it would be a miracle on Mars. Our descendants on Mars will know the value of a patch of green. And if a blade of grass is priceless, what is the value of a human being?

- Carl Sagan

We shall continue our fight against all sorts of divisive and fissiparous tendencies, dogma, blind faith, suppression of women and casteism



A PROUTIST PRIME MINISTER'S INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH Sometime in the Future

■ Ganesh Bhat

To all dear brothers and sisters of this great nation of Bhāratavarṣa, my deepest namskar. Today from the ramparts of the Red Fort, with the tricolor fluttering proudly, in its first year, the world's biggest Proutist elected democracy celebrates the solemn and sacred occasion of its independence from colonial rule it gives me the greatest of pleasure as your Pradhan Sevak, my best of wishes to each and every citizen who loves, respects and takes pride in our nation of Bhāratavarṣa.

Wherever you may be living whether in the country or overseas, my greetings to you all. And let us all pause and extend heartfelt gratitude to our soldiers sailors and airmen and all uniformed personnel who guard our nation on land, sea and air against aggression both external and internal.

Today, let us also respectfully pay homage to all those who contributed and sacrificed their lives during our freedom movement and humbly bow down before their struggles and sacrifices to get us political freedom. But unfortunately this

political freedom failed to give economic freedom to all of its people. After tremendous struggle and sacrifice, similar to that encountered before 1947, we have today taken the first step by electing a Proutist government are on the threshold of attaining economic freedom based on the Proutistic system of economics postulated by the renowned philosopher Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar way back in 1959. We are well on the way to free ourselves from the shackles of a socio-economic system that benefited a few persons, while the majority of

common people had to face all sorts of exploitation, harassment, and tyranny. The collective upsurge against suppression, oppression, and repression has brought this revolutionary change. We salute all those unheard, unsung revolutionaries, whose dedication and sacrifice have ushered a new era of liberation not only in the socio-economic sphere but also in the psycho, and spiritual fields.

Let us not dig into the past to develop hatred and animosity but learn to rectify our mistakes. We are not going to paint a rainbow image of the future and make people rush toward that mirage of the rainbow, forgetting the present. We abide by Lord Shiva's saying, "You are living in the present. Utilize your past in building your present. Plan for the future in such a way that all human wealth is consolidated and radiates tremendous energy."

The entire world has noticed that our Union Cabinet consists of efficient, dedicated members of parliament from different parties, signifying the spirit of collective

leadership —all to begin with are staunch moralists of the highest order. As the head and representative of this team, I am proud to put forth the road map planned for the socio-economic development of our Nation.

By their very nature, the past economic forces divided society and competed with one another with the sole aim of maximizing profits. This led to the centralization of economic power, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, where 1% of the population owned more than 50% of the nation's wealth. In that GDP based system which had per capita income as a holy benchmark; 90% of GDP was shared by 14 crore people (10% of the population) and 10% of GDP by 126 crore people. The catchy political slogan by the capitalist's aided democracy of Reform, Perform, Transform, for centuries helped the rich to become richer; poor have become poorer.

Our mission of Sarvajana Hitayacha, Sarvajana Sukhayacha, cannot be established following past economic theories. Our

Arthashastra for this is 'Progressive Utilization Theory' (PROUT) propounded by Shri Prabhát Ranjan Sarkár. Instead of using tax reforms/progressive taxation to create a more equal economy, we shall focus on structural changes with the concept of economic democracy. It is a power shift in economic decision-making from corporate and the wealthy elites, and people in power to the people at large. This will be materialized by establishing Natural Resource Management Committees at various levels starting from villages. Economic Democracy is essential not only for the economic liberation of human beings but also for the well-being of animals and plants. As per the aspirations and desires of brothers and sisters of our country, we have decided to replace the centralized economic system based on 'Trickledown Theory' with the decentralized economic system. PROUT, and move towards establishing 'Economic Democracy.' The inevitable consequence of this would be more power to the states.

It is our firm faith that Nature has graciously provided bountiful resources all over the planet. Human beings have to recognize the local resources and plan development activities accordingly. Our concept of resources is not limited to the physical sphere only but extends to the psycho-spiritual sphere which will be suitably employed in developmental planning. The Neohumanistic philosophy being the base of the decentralized economic system, reminds us that the earth is not only for human beings but also for other living beings too. Based on this concept of universalism, all people have the right to enjoy the Earth's resources to the extent require, but not to plunder or waste them.

The first step we embark upon is to guarantee constitutionally as a



fundamental right the minimum essentials of life namely Food, Clothing, Shelter, Education, and Medicare to every individual. This will be materialized in the decentralized economic system by vesting economic power with the people, which will create 100% employment opportunities with adequate purchasing power for every individual so as to fulfill the basic needs of self and the dependents. The quantum of the minimum requirements will progressively increase with the passage of time so that the standard of living of the common people keeps increasing. For that it is essential to increase the purchasing capacity of the

common people, to begin with by maximising production for consumption i.e. of essential goods not luxury goods. We believe this will create a balance between production and consumption and ensure that the minimum requirements are supplied to all.

Another important step would be to put a ceiling on wealth so that difference between the rich and the poor gets narrowed down. This difference in income between the lowest and highest paid/earning person in society would be an inherent part of the economic structure itself. This ceiling would be derived after scientific study depending upon the demands of the time,

considering practical application and agreement by general consent and would be revised with the passage of time.

We also need to balance the economy by defining by the percentage of people employed in certain industries. It is a sustainable combination of agriculture, manufacturing, and services. The following percentages we shall work towards attaining: about 30 to 40 percent of the population should be employed in agriculture (this also includes extraction of natural resources); 10 to 20 percent in agri-co-industry (i.e., pre-harvest industries serving agriculture such as the manufacture of farming tools and fertilizers); 10 to 20 percent in agro-industries (i.e., post-harvest industries such as food processing, flour, and cloth mills, paper mills, etc.); 20 to 30 percent on non-agricultural industries; 10 percent in general trade and commerce; and 10 percent in intellectual and white collar jobs.

If a country has to develop and become self-sufficient, there should be development in its every nook and corner. For this purpose, the country has to be divided into different zones with the potential of becoming an economically self-sufficient unit. Based on factors like natural resources, topography, river systems, cultural conditions, communication, industrial opportunities, etc., 44 socio-economic zones (samajas) have been identified that have the potential to become economically self-sufficient units. Each socio-economic unit shall prepare and implement its own developmental programmes. These socio-economic units do not have to conform to the state boundaries. There are more than one such unit in some states and few units are spread in more than one state. Since the



aim of states is the welfare of the people, they will have to join hands in preparing and implementing developmental plans. This will usher in a new era of cooperation among states, ending border disputes of the past. Once these samajas are established by law, old state boundaries would cease to exist.

Based on block level planning one coordinated plan for the whole socio-economic unit would be formulated based on local resources, productivity, collective necessity, etc., making sure that basic needs are met and that it is environmentally regenerative. Economic development should have a bottom up approach not top down. Blocks are areas with similar geographical features, economic needs, and potentialities, and with a population of approximately one lakh, as the basic unit of planning. Block-level planning is essential for economic decentralization, and would be adopted all over the country. Each block would be responsible for its local economic administration harnessing the experience, expertise, and knowledge of the local people. The aim would be to make each block economically sound so that the entire socio-economic unit will be self-sufficient. These plans would be integrated into district, socio-economic unit, state, national, and global level plans by the relevant level planning bodies. Attempts would be made to set up and maximise local industries based on the availability of natural and human resources. Such type of planning would remove economic disparities and create collective wealth.

We also propose that agriculture shall be given the status of industry; it means, the parameters employed to fix the price of industrial products shall be applied while fixing the price of



agricultural products. When this occurs farmers will not be neglected, distress sales by farmers will end and there will not be any differentiation in the style of development and costing of agriculture and industry. Cooperation in farming and marketing of agricultural produce will be encouraged, which shall be a boon to small and marginal farmers.

Industrial structure shall be divided in three parts. Key industries shall be managed by the local government; small-scale industries shall run on a cooperative basis, and the small industries and businesses that cannot be managed by cooperatives would be run as 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.

We also believe that people should move ahead together on a cooperative basis, this will be better for the welfare of society.

Only those things which need not be done collectively should be done individually. Hence, a major share of the economic activities shall be in the cooperative sector. The distribution of essential commodities shall be done entirely through consumer cooperatives, not through the government, businessmen, or different levels of middlemen. Barter trade between different socio-economic units, states, and countries on mutually beneficial basis would not be discouraged. All speculative markets shall be immediately closed down. There shall be no opportunity for trading of shares. Granting of loans against imaginary financial assets will be stopped. As this would affect local economy export and trade of local raw materials from one area to another will not be allowed, only finished goods would be. Processing units for the local resources shall be set up locally, with the participation of local people.

Henceforth banks shall not be managed by business people; they would be managed by

cooperatives. The central or federal bank will be controlled by the local government. And essential commodities will be entirely tax-free; instead, taxes shall be levied at the starting point of production. Income tax shall be abolished. Excise duty on excisable commodities shall be increased to cover loss of government revenue. As there's no income tax, black money would cease to exist and as a result, there will be economic solidarity, an increase in trade and commerce, more investment, and more employment.

Keeping environment conservation in mind production of energy shall mostly be from renewable resources. It shall be the responsibility of the local governments to ensure the supply of power to agriculture and industry at affordable prices.

We accept that the aim of education is: *Sá vidyá ya vimuktaye* Education is that which liberates." The education field shall be under the preview of educationists and will be freed from the clutches of politicians. A

Neohumanistic system of education will be introduced to inculcate the feeling of universal brotherhood and develop all four faculties, viz. labour, warrior, intellectual, and business mentalities of students in a balanced proportion for the development of holistic personality. We shall not allow the minds of youth to be polluted with pseudo-nationalism, religious fanaticism, dogma, and anti-human sentiments. Proper scientific - practical training methods will be introduced in the education system to inculcate higher ideals among the children and the youth.

We propose certain reforms in the electoral system, which includes a presidential system where the executive heads from the Panchayat level to the national level are elected directly by the voters, instead of the existing indirect method. This idea will be put forth for thorough discussion and consideration by the citizens.

We shall continue our fight against all sorts of divisive and fissiparous tendencies, dogma, blind faith, suppression of women

casteism, etc. Let us not forget even for a moment that the future of all human beings, rather every living being is interdependent and interlinked. A new world order, a new global order, a new geopolitical equation is rapidly progressing towards one human nation, and the days are not far for the establishment of a world government; let us support it. Accepting the diversity of our country, let us get united and move forward. Let us make use of the youth power of our country for the welfare of all. Let us move with the right principles, forging a new way, setting the right pace, and tread a new path.

Let us firmly resolve to create a new dynamic *Bháratavarśa*, and a new world with the spirit of 'Samghchadwam', i.e. moving in unison to greater heights of existence where everyone is cared for, no one is left behind, and no one is neglected; let us face all sorts of challenges and try to solve them in an united way.

Jai *Bháratavarśa* Jai Humanity! May all of you have glorious future in the days ahead. ●



G-20 Summit and INDIA'S PRESIDENCY

Nand Varma

There were around 220 meetings spanning 60 cities, with nearly 30,000 delegates, over 100,000 participants in events on site, as well as involvement of citizens from all over the nation



India's G 20 presidency since December 1, 2022 has been unique in many different ways, focusing on key concern of developing nations, amplifying the voice of the global south and raised the bar in areas like climate action and finance and energy transitions, sustainable development goals implementation and technological transformation.

This presidency has been commendable because of people's participation from across the nation in various G 20 related events and activities. Through active participation from different states and union territories, it has

truly been a people's G 20. There have been approximately 220 meetings spanning 60 cities, with nearly 30,000 delegates in G 20 meetings, over 100,000 participants in their events on site, as well as involvement of citizens from all over the nation, G 20 engaged with people in myriad ways. So said the External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

There was enthusiastic and active participation by students, teachers and parents in events organised at various levels from state and district to block, panchayat and school. These events cultivated awareness about the G 20, and collectively drew

over 23.3 crore participants, which included 15.7 crore students, 25.5 lakh teachers and 51.5 lakh community members

Beyond the participation numbers many activities were conducted ranging from G 20 University Connect lecture series to interactive model G 20 meetings, Special G 20 sessions in educational institutions, G 20 Pavilions at prominent festivals, quiz contests, and the enchanting G 20 stories, they all played a stellar role in fostering widespread and enthusiastic engagement. All this could happen as the various working groups showed innovative means to increase

public participation.

States and UTs competed among themselves to showcase their respective traditions and achievements to welcome the G 20 delegates. In many cases the spin off was a spurt to development activities e.g. the restoration of Loktak Lake in Manipur, urban sanitation campaigns in Mumbai and infrastructure enhancements in Lucknow. This synergy showcased different cultural heritage, local artisanal skills on a global platform and also increased employment opportunities for different communities. Many delegates saw for themselves One District One Product programs and more importantly they were able to visit centres where local artisans work. This also had an advantageous fallout, India's captivating natural landscape and architectural splendour. Post the Covid pandemic this caused tourism to get a much needed spurt. Overall economic benefits of all this is yet to be determined, but it has been substantial.

Celebrating the G 20 event across the nation has created a pan national experience which has been to the benefit of India and the world. This has made India ready for the world and the world ready for India and looking at it with new

respect. Tremendous amount of interest has been generated in the India society and their direct or indirect commitment towards global problems and issues. On matters of science it has contributed to collaborative thinking about key challenges facing planet earth.

Youth 20 — participation by the youth was full of impact. More than 125,000 delegates in 1563 meetings infused remarkable energy into the proceedings. Civil 20 touched 45 lakh people worldwide. Social media as usual created a storm and became an effective tool to reach out to all stakeholders, resulting in 14 trillion posts. Two world records were created during this course of public participation. One was the insolvent of 1,25 lakh students from 800 schools in the Quiz contest at Varanasi. Another was the showcasing of craftsmanship skills by 450 Lambani artisans, who created an amazing collection of around 1800 unique patches.

There were broad based debates and discussions around themes crucial to India's collective future, e.g. encouraging eco friendly changes in daily habits. Similarly the highlighting of digital delivery encouraged all to be comfortable in the emerging

trends in the digital domain. The focus on women led development endeavours, highlighted the key role they play in societal progress. Emphasis on Sustainable development goals help accelerate attaining them with greater awareness of global prosperity. The Prime Minister Modi's statement terming India's presidency as people's presidency summed it up nicely. This was both its description and a motivation on how ideas and energies could be harnessed across the country.

All this helped created a truly memorable G 20 with the smooth and successful summit of heads of these countries in New Delhi on September 9 and 10, reaching the final climax, with the unanimous passing of the 83 para — the New Delhi Declaration covering a lot of subjects, getting a global consensus which catapults India's stature as the leader of the Global South, especially after it successfully pushed the inclusion of the 55 member African Union as a permanent member of the group. This marks the biggest ever inclusion of developing countries to a powerful world body in a single stroke, and can pay dividends when India steps up its bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. ●



ONE NATION ONE POLL

■ Bhupendra Singh

*Barring few, most
opposition parties have
cried foul on the proposed
one nation one poll*

It is an unfortunate fact of political life in India is that anything proposed by the political party in power will be opposed by those not in power. In fact anything any political party proposes it is opposed by the rest in spite of its merits or demerits. So it is hardly any surprise that the entire bloc of opposition parties which hopes to remove Modi from power in 2024 has not agreed to the government's proposal to examine the viability of holding simultaneous polls in three tiers of government, Centre, States and Local Bodies. A political reform of such a huge magnitude must naturally require a lot of forethought and planning.

Since 2014, the proposal for simultaneous elections to Lok Sabha and all state assemblies has been mooted by the Prime Minister and the President and has been

examined by various stake holders, the Law Commission included, the latter in its draft report submitted in 2018; Niti Ayog; Election Commission; and Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice in a report submitted in 2015. All of them have agreed that frequent elections forces the model code of conduct to apply almost all the time, which affects good governance and causes policy paralysis, while also draining finances of the exchequer, Simultaneous elections were the norm until 1967 — polls to the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies were held together, barring a few exceptions. In 1968 and 1969 as some state Assemblies were dissolved before their time and

early general elections held in 1971 broke this cycle.

The Election Commission of India first mooted simultaneous elections in 1982. It suggested among many others, that the date for the start of new Lok Sabha should be fixed; any no trust motion against government must include a trust motion in favour of an individual who would head an alternate government; if a government falls there should be President's rule for a specified short period before the end of the Lok Sabha term. If this period is long, fresh elections should be conducted for the remainder of the Lok Sabha term. The same procedures was to be followed for state assemblies.

In 2018 the Law Commission under the Chairmanship of Justice B S Chauhan endorsed simultaneous polls and submitted a draft report in this regard but said that certain articles of the Constitution would need to be amended. These were 83, 85, 87, 172, 174 and 356. In 2015 a Parliamentary Standing Committee recommended that elections should be held twice every five years, the general elections to Lok Sabha along with some Assemblies and the remaining assemblies together.

Barring few, most opposition

policies promised. But the opposition raise the question what if a government falls soon after being elected? Would the Centre, state or municipal body be run by unelected people e.g. the President, Governor aided by expert advisors. And what would happen to legislatures already elected? Would they be go beyond their full term or their term be shortened? These are justifiable questions no doubt but what is more important to consider before accepting or rejecting the proposal is: does the benefit of improved governance outweigh the cost of

naturally causes huge fiscal damage which can only worsen over a period of time to trending world events, like Covid, the Ukraine War — disruptions that might come with greater frequency. Resources needed to deal with crises would be found wanting — when spending becomes the norm in order to repeatedly woo the same voters three times every five years. Using taxpayer money to get oneself elected is legally sanctioned corruption with a democratic sheen.

The idea of one nation one poll per se, is fair and just, as its main advantage is, it will reduce huge election expenses incurred both by the government and political parties and the present practice of having some election or the other almost every year coming in the way of good governance with leaders time being spent more on winning elections and less on good governance. A committee has been appointed under the chairmanship of Shri Ram Nath Kovind the ex President of India to look into all aspects connected with this. This has naturally generated protests from the opposition, with the Congress member recusing himself from the committee.

And there is another issue yet. India's democracy cannot forsake good governance easily, especially because of the troubling reality that the system can give a party a majority government with as little as 30% of the popular vote. Uttar Pradesh in 2007 and 2012 are stark examples. Governing on behalf of a small section of the population is no tribute to democracy as practiced in India today. One nation one poll though a complex issue may deliver better political outcomes in the long run, just as the Goods and Services Tax which was opposed vehemently which is now paying off paying off on taxation all over India.



parties have cried foul saying the proposed one nation one poll which is an election promise of the BJP manifesto, is a threat to the country's federal structure. They mostly fear that the popularity of the present Prime Minister would damage their electoral prospects with simultaneous elections.

The merits of One Nation One Poll are that: it will lower the costs of elections since all elections will be held simultaneously; it will also improve governance, since elected governments will run its full term of five years during which it can implement its promises and

not having as legitimately elected government for long periods of time? Or can other ways be found so that unelected people do not keep running the government for too long.

The governance benefits for giving political parties breathing time to perform are obvious. Presently given the frequency of the common man the voter goes to the polling booth (at least thrice during any five year term, perhaps more if a government falls midway), political parties tend to offer massive freebies and handouts to stay in power. This

The type of political democracy prevalent in India has proved to be a unique system of exploitation. Just to hoodwink the masses, the people were granted the right of universal suffrage. Millions of Indians are poor, superstitious and illiterate, yet the exploiters, through such practices as making false promises, intimidation, gross abuse of administrative power and vote rigging, repeatedly win over the electorate. This is the farce of democracy. Once they form the government, they get ample opportunity to indulge in rampant corruption and political tyranny for five years. In the subsequent elections – whether on the provincial or state level it is repeated. This has been going on in India since independence. For the last thirty-five years, the political parties have maintained that in order to attain economic parity with the industrially developed countries of Europe, India must follow the democratic system. To support this argument, they cite the examples of America and Great Britain or China and the Soviet Union. The political leaders urge the electorate to vote in their favour at election time so that the

country's starving masses can reap the benefits of a developed economy. But once the elections are over, the exploitation of the common people continues unabated in the garb of political democracy, and other areas of social life are completely neglected. Today millions of Indian citizens are being deprived of the minimum requirements of life and are struggling to procure adequate food, clothing, housing, education and medical treatment, while a handful of people are rolling in enormous wealth and luxury.

The biggest defect of democracy is that voting is based upon universal suffrage. That is, the right to cast a vote depends on age, which pre-supposes that they have the ability to weigh the pros and cons of the issues in an election and select the best candidate. But there are many people above the voting age who have little or no interest in elections and are not conversant with social or economic issues. In many cases, they vote for the party rather than the candidate, and are swayed by election propaganda or the false promises of politicians. Those who have not reached the voting age are

often more capable of selecting the best candidate than those who are entitled to vote. So age should not be the yardstick for voting rights.

In most countries of the world, the masses lack political consciousness. Cunning, erudite politicians take advantage of this, confuse people and attain power. They resort to immoral practices such as bribery, vote rigging, booth capturing and buying of votes, and stand unopposed for elections. Consequently, the standard of morality in society declines; honest, competent people and moral leaders stand no chance, because election results are rigged through financial inducements, intimidation and brute force. In the present democratic system, all sorts of immoral and corrupt practices get the opportunity to pervert society. The very nature of the present political democratic system favours the capitalists who fill the coffers of political parties to help them win elections, as a result they directly or indirectly control the administration.

Simultaneous elections cannot stop this. But then “democracy is the worst form of government, except for other forms” so said British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and left it at that. But the reality is, as said by Prout's founder Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar “In all countries where democracy is in vogue today, people have been deceived into believing that there is no better system than political democracy. Political democracy has no doubt granted voting rights, but it has snatched away the right of economic equality. Consequently, there is gross economic disparity between the rich and the poor, immense inequality in people's purchasing capacity, unemployment, chronic food shortages, poverty and insecurity in society”. This is the crux of the matter. ●



Century of LADY LAWYERS

Karunakshim Vatsalam

Earlier, women practising law in remote or conservative regions faced considerable challenges and were often excluded from mainstream legal practice

in India

In 1923 the British passed Legal Practitioners (Women's Act), which lifted the restrictions on women practising law. This overruled the judgment of 1916 by a five judge Bench of the Calcutta High Court in Regina Guha (1916) and a three judge Bench of the Patna High Court in the Sudhansu Bala Hazra case of 1921, its rejection of women practising law was considered to be discriminatory purely on the grounds of sex.

A century later women constitute on 15% of enrolled

lawyers in India and the data of exactly how many are continuing to practice is not clear and it is evident that many women quit the legal profession being unable to balance work and home life. It is ironical that even today we still need to discuss the need for empowering women legal practitioners. In spite of opting to pursue higher professional education in law, women are still struggling to make a success of a legal career. As a result many drop out resulting in a big gender gap in the profession.

Women generally feel that they are not supported in their legal practice. The lack of work life balance perceived or otherwise is mainly due lack of institutional support for women. Most of them drop out of law practice in the middle of their careers. A 2022 Reuter's survey found that 60% of women lawyers in the age group of 35-55 leave practice when at the prime of their careers. Around 82% of women lawyers surveyed stated that the main reason for quitting the profession was lack of work – life balance.



But there appears to be a silver lining — the advent of virtual courts. It is transforming the global legal landscape. Virtual courts could help women lawyers achieve the work–life balance.

Administration of Justice has been revolutionized by digital platforms. It is convenient, efficient and accessible. The impact of virtual courts extends much beyond merely streamlining legal proceedings. These platforms have the potential to significantly empower women, including those in the legal profession. Virtual courts can become a catalyst for gender equality, promoting inclusivity, diversity and advancement opportunities for women practising law.

One of the most significant advantages of virtual courts is their capacity to transcend geographical limitations. Before, women practising law in remote or conservative regions faced considerable challenges, often being excluded from mainstream legal practice. Such courts enable these women to participate in hearings and trials from the comfort of their homes, without having to travel long distance or compromising their safety. By breaking these barriers, virtual courts create a level playing field for women practising law, enabling them to contribute their expertise from wherever they choose to be.

The traditional legal system with its demanding and rigid schedules makes it difficult for women to balance professional aspirations with their home and other responsibilities. Virtual courts offer flexibility, allowing women lawyers to manage their time more efficiently. This improved work–life balance would be especially advantageous for those juggling between family obligations and professional commitments, and would stop talented women from abandoning

their legal careers due to perceived conflicts between work and family life.

Virtual courts would help alleviate gender biases that women might face in traditional courtrooms. While interacting on audio video platforms in a virtual setting, preconceived notions on account of gender would get nullified or minimised. This reduced emphasis on physical presence may lead to fairer judgments, as women lawyers would be judged solely by their legal prowess, and nothing else.

The legal profession regrettably, has not been immune to cases of harassment and discrimination against women. Virtual courts act as a safeguard against such incidents, as they provide anonymity and security to the women who are not physically present. Women lawyers would feel more secure and protected this way encouraging them to assert their rights and perspectives without fear.

For many women, especially those from marginalised backgrounds, access to justice has been a daunting task. Physical barriers such as transportation costs, child care, or societal norms have hindered their ability to engage with the legal system. Virtual courts offer an affordable and efficient alternative, ensuring that women from all walks of life can seek justice and legal recourse without significant obstacles.

Virtual courts are more than just a technological advancement. They represent a pathway to empowerment and gender equality within the legal profession. With geographical barriers broken, with enhanced work–life balance, reduced gender bias, women can combat harassment and have easy access to justice. Virtual courts lay the foundation for a more inclusive and diverse legal landscape.

Policy makers, legal institutions and legal professionals

must all agree to fully harness the potential of virtual courts in empowering women-practising law and ensure that equal opportunities and support mechanisms are in place. Embracing this transformation will not only benefit women but will enrich the legal profession with diverse perspectives and talent, ultimately leading to a more just and equitable society.

While virtual courts can never totally replace real courts it should be encouraged to streamline the legal system. Though there may be initial teething troubles, give time and patience this would go a long way to help these women lawyers in the centenary year of them being admitted to the Bar. In society legal profession is a necessity.

As Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, Prout's founder said, “The popular allegation that lawyers earn their living by deceiving others and by encouraging litigation is, according to my understanding, not totally correct. But is this frequently-made allegation totally false? Although it cannot be proved conclusively, we can say that in general most lawyers would like disputes in society to continue. In spite of all this, I do believe that lawyers are necessary and have an extremely important role to play in society. Common people often cannot express themselves coherently. During a trial a frightened, nervous person sometimes behaves in such a way that his or her facial expressions arouse suspicion in the mind of the judge, which in turn influences the judgement. It is indisputable that lawyers are needed to protect common people from such dangerous situations. Apart from saving the innocent, lawyers can and do help to save criminals from unjustifiably harsh sentences which stem from prejudice or strong bias”. Here women lawyers can play a pivotal role. ●

Horror, Survival, and Hope on **AUGUST 8, 2023**

Krsnaprema

An eye witness account the largest fire in USA since 100 years, possibly caused by fallen power lines igniting dry grass, augmented by heavy storm in the coastal town of Lahaina, on Maui Island of Hawaii. The death toll is over 100 with about 850 still missing.

On Tuesday morning, August 8, 23 the electric power went out in Lahaina. The wind was fierce, breaking branches from the trees behind my house. My mother left her nearby apartment and came over to my home. We huddled together watching the storm, as we have always done during rough times.

The wind's fury peaked after lunch, and out of concern, I went outside to see how my neighbors

were faring. However, the gusts were still so strong that I nearly lost my footing. Soon after the scent of smoke wafted in. I joked, "Who's having a barbecue in this weather?" But then the realization hit me—another wildfire must have ignited. We had heard about one earlier which had been brought under control, but this must be new.

Lahaina has witnessed its fair share of fires in recent years, so the

scent of burning wood was not entirely unfamiliar. Surprisingly, there were no warning sirens or emergency notifications. Conversations with neighbors led us all to decide to remain indoors. Within minutes, though, the sky turned darker. Going outside I was horrified to see that the smoke in the wind was now full of burning embers. Panic surged when I noticed the trees near my home catching fire. Without a second





thought, I ran back inside, grabbed my mom, my dog, and our purses, and dashed to my car. I picked up a neighbor as we pulled out. Flames were already engulfing the building next door.

As we merged onto Front Street, a narrow two-lane road, traffic was at a standstill, with the dense smoke restricting visibility. Chaos reigned as people scrambled for safety. Amid the tumult, I noticed water tankers approaching the property where my mom's apartment was. A police car was moving up the left shoulder, actually driving over people's front lawns. Instinctively I swerved over and followed right behind him, and many other cars copied us. We made significant headway. Predicting further congestion ahead, I steered into a large grocery store parking lot.

For a tense 15 minutes, we watched the smoke rise ominously. As we resumed our journey towards the highway, fallen power

lines impeded our path. Winding our way northward, we eventually reached an area devoid of downed electric lines and stopped. We actually considered heading back to Lahaina, not truly grasping the gravity of the situation.

Fortunately, our friend who we had picked up earlier, is an employee at the Marriott Hotel. He was able to secure cots for us in the Hospitality Room and some granola bars. The shock of what a close call we had had sank into us.

Through sporadic cell service, the crushing truth gradually started emerging the next day. Many people did not survive, and hundreds more are still missing. More than 2,000 structures were burned, including five homes belonging to our family. Yet, we drew solace from the fact that we were all unharmed.

Lahaina holds a special place in my heart, with our family roots extending over five decades. The devastation is heart-wrenching.

When we lost our homes without a moment's preparation, we literally lost every possession we owned: our clothes, computers, furniture, books, family pictures, and family heirlooms including my grandmother's jewelry. My mother also lost her car.

The magnitude of the loss is almost immeasurable. However, following the horrendous fire, I sought refuge in the teachings of my spiritual teacher, Shrii Shrii Anandamurti. Holding onto the understanding that a Cosmic Consciousness orchestrates the universe, I started to believe that even such profound tragedies carry an underlying meaning. Through consistent meditation and dedication to my spiritual routine, I've managed to rekindle a connection with my inner essence and the boundless cosmic rhythm. Bolstered by a supportive and loving global community, I stand resilient, deeply rooted in spirituality, and rejuvenated with a newfound hope and purpose. ●

France Never Stopped Looting Africa, Now the Tables are Turning

Brad Pearce

As developments in West Africa demonstrate, the francophone countries are no longer willing to accept French neo-colonialism. With the fear factor finally removed, Africa's quest for genuine independence is steadily coming to fruition.

The 26 July, 2023 coup in the West African nation of Niger, which threatens to undermine French and US military presence in the region, has shed light on the historical exploitation and continued practices of *Francafrique* - the term used to describe the persistent exploitation by the former French Empire in Africa.

France heavily relies on nuclear energy, with 68% of its

power coming from nuclear plants. It obtains 19% of the uranium required to run these plants from Niger. Despite this significant contribution toward France's energy needs, only 14.3% Nigerians have access to a power grid, and even that is often unreliable. This stark contrast highlights the disparities and ongoing exploitation by rapine foreign powers throughout the African continent.

The Legacy of Francafrique

Francafrique has been known for its exploitative systems designed

With fear factor removed, Africa's quest for genuine independence is steadily coming to fruition

to profit from African resources, using pressure, capital, and frequently outright force to maintain control over its former empire. As a result, many African states, including Niger, continue to face poverty and underdevelopment.

Burkina Faso's young, charismatic leader Ibrahim Traore recently spoke at the Russia Africa summit in St. Petersburg and decried the fact that Africa is resource-rich, but its people are poor, and criticized African leaders seeking hand-outs from the west, as they perpetuate



dependency and poverty. He also described what is being imposed on Africa as a form of slavery, stating:

“As far as what concerns Burkina Faso today, for more than eight years we've been confronted with the most barbaric, the most violent form of imperialist neo-colonialism. Slavery continues to impose itself on us. Our predecessors taught us one thing: a slave who cannot assume his own revolt does not deserve to be pitied. We do not feel sorry for ourselves, we do not ask anyone to feel sorry for us.”

France's inability to justify its presence in Africa with a coherent narrative further complicates the situation. Paris cannot openly confess its greed, feign a "civilizing mission," or admit to any responsibility due to its past crimes. This lack of purpose weakens French power on the continent, leading to violence and poverty in its wake.

West Africa's drive for further independence has left Atlanticists concerned about the opening this leaves for Eurasian powers like Russia and China to increase their influence in Africa. The west's reaction reflects a lack of respect for the sovereignty of African countries, viewing the continent merely as a theater to maintain global dominance.

Since the Ukraine war's onset in early 2022, Atlanticists have expressed alarm over the unwillingness of Global South states to support the west's anti-Russia policies, a trend further amplified by the shift to multipolarism everywhere. This weakening of western hegemony has opened a path for many nations to avidly explore their geopolitical options and diversify their economies. A report from the Munich Security Conference held in February highlighted this very real schism with the west:

“Many countries in Africa,



Asia, and Latin America have steadily lost faith in the legitimacy and fairness of an international system which has neither granted them an appropriate voice in global affairs, nor sufficiently addressed their core concerns. To many states, these failures are deeply tied to the west. They find that the western-led order has been characterized by post-colonial domination, double standards, and neglect for developing countries' concerns.”

Fleeced by the CFA Franc

The aftermath of the Second World War marked a significant shift in global power dynamics, and the victorious powers sought to establish a new world order that would maintain peace and promote economic balance. In the context of African colonies, where colonial troops played a major role in the allied victory, the victorious powers, including France, aimed to retain economic control and benefit from their former colonies even as the world moved towards decolonization. This included the establishment of new currency systems, with French leader Charles De Gaulle creating two currencies collectively known as CFA Franc in 1945 for former

colonies in the Western and Central zone.

As the push for political independence grew stronger in the late 1950s, France organized referendums in its African colonies to vote on accepting a constitution drafted by the French.

Guinea, led by former trade unionist Sekou Toure, opposed accepting the French constitution and voted overwhelmingly against it. In a furious response, De Gaulle's government withdrew all French administrators from Guinea and took action to sabotage the country's infrastructure and resources. The harsh measures by Paris aimed to serve as an example of what would happen to any former French colony that resisted France's agenda.

During the Cold War, the Communist states exploited such actions by presenting themselves as liberators and allies of African countries that sought independence from European influence. This stance has led to some Africans viewing countries like Russia as more equitable partners compared to France.

Over the years, France has demonstrated a pattern of intervening militarily – over 50 times since 1960 - in African



countries to secure governments that remain compliant with French economic interests, particularly related to the continued use of the CFA Franc.

The system by which the CFA Franc operates has historically been one of a fixed exchange rate where the currency has unlimited convertibility but is permanently pegged to the French currency, previously the Franc and then the Euro.

African currency under French control

This means that African countries cannot influence the value of their own currency, and the difference in value makes it so that France can buy African products artificially cheap while Africans are able to buy fewer goods with money they exchange. Worse yet, France had requirements to store, and thus profit from, the foreign reserves owned by its former colonies, though the requirement of holding 50 percent of their foreign exchange reserves in a French-run bank was dropped for the western zone in 2019.

Under this scheme, African

states received a nominal amount of interest, but the bank benefited from lending that capital out at higher rates and attaining massive profits off African resources and labour. This is despite the fact that many countries in Francophone Africa are major gold exporters and thus have a multitude of options for storing wealth to back a currency in alternative central banks.

While the CFA Franc system

has provided some benefits in terms of stability and preventing Zimbabwean-style hyperinflation, it has also come under scrutiny for imposing requirements on African countries that are not placed on more powerful nations. The lack of control over their own currency has hindered economic growth and made these countries vulnerable to global economic shocks.

Northern African states such





as Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco chose to leave the CFA Franc upon gaining independence and have experienced relatively higher prosperity. Similarly, Botswana's success with its own national currency demonstrates that proper management can lead to stable democracy and economic growth, even for less developed nations.

Exclusive rights and privileges

The CFA Franc system has been the geopolitical equivalent of one's father insisting he manages their savings while leaving them out of his will. There are benefits to having a trade and currency zone, such as the current ECOWAS union that covers the Western part of the continent, but by design under the CFA Franc system, independence has been an illusion by which France has fleeced these countries.

France has been dependent on Africa for its status as a world power for more than a century.

Among other privileges it has carved out for itself in post colonial treaties, France has had the exclusive right to sell military equipment to former colonies, and enjoys the first right to any natural resources discovered. Paris makes great use of these privileges: as just one example, 36.4% of France's gas is sourced from the African continent.

Moreover, a vast network of French business interests, which include major multinational companies, dominate industries such as energy, communications, and transportation in many African countries. France's government also supports French businesses in Africa in several ways, including through an enormous public company called COFACE which guarantees French exports into these underdeveloped markets.

Towards independence and self-reliance

This economic dependence has contributed to the perpetuation of a

system where African states remain weak, pliant, and reliant on resource exports, primarily benefiting French companies and interests. Additionally, African states are obligated to ally with France in any major conflict, further eroding their national sovereignty.

The African continent suffers from many ailments, but perhaps the most persistent and nefarious are a lack of sovereignty and access to capital. Meanwhile, much of Europe's prosperity has been derived from looting the Global South for centuries.

The case of Brussels, built on the wealth derived from the brutal exploitation of the Congo under Belgian King Leopold II, is a stark reminder of the deep-rooted impact of colonialism. When the monarch's crimes against humanity were discovered, he was ultimately forced to bequeath the majority of his fortune to the Belgian state upon his death.

Not wanting to do so, he embarked on an enormous series of public works to spend his ill gotten gains, creating modern Brussels. Now the EU and NATO meet there and audaciously give disingenuous lectures about universal human rights while surrounded by the profits of some of the most brutal cases of oppression in human history.

While military governments often face challenges in achieving their stated goals, it is evident that western-backed "civil democracies" have also struggled to significantly improve the security and well-being of the African public.

The path to solving Africa's problems lies in transformative leaders who can shrug off the legacy and remaining shackles of colonialism and enable the continent to carve out a genuine, home grown path to independence and self-reliance. ●

MIGRATION

Shay Cullen

The Consequence of Colonial Exploitation

Population growth is a huge problem in the developing world. The poor have more children in the hope they will provide security as they face an early death or old age without any income and they cannot feed them all. Besides, millions are in refugee camps because of climate change and war. Instinct drives them to survive by having large families and besides they have little access to birth control methods. The decrease in infant mortality rates in Africa has added to the population growth. Nigeria, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger and Sudan are among the countries with the highest birth rates.

There are now eight billion

Refugees and migrants are those that all nations are supposed to welcome and shelter.

people on the planet at present and that is increasing every day. According to a UN report, about 140 million babies are born every year. That is about 385,000 babies born each day worldwide. The highest populations however are in Asia: India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh. The Philippines' population is very high, too. It stands at 114 million as of July 2023 based on the UN Worldometer data. In Africa, Liberia has the highest population growth of all.

In Asia, the rich countries have declining populations. There are more deaths than births.

Singapore and Japan are in rapid decline and have serious labor shortages and are hiring more overseas workers especially Filipinos. China has an annual decline in population with 850,000 less children born every year.

The poor in underdeveloped countries receive little or no meaningful social or health benefits or services and most poor people have no pensions and income. They are so poor they can hardly feed their children. That lack of nutrition means low energy levels and leaves millions of children prone to sickness and slow mental development. Many





children have short attention spans and cannot learn so well in ill-equipped shabby school rooms with poorly paid, under-trained teachers. There are presently recurrent teacher strikes across West Africa because of poor wages and conditions. Education is the hope of any nation to overcome poverty but corrupt politicians steal part of the available funds.

In rural villages and towns, their teaching aids are a black board and a stick of chalk without teaching or visual aids. The students are mostly taught by rote without discussion and participation in the learning process. This disables intelligent, independent thinking and decision-making. It seems authoritarian regimes prefer unquestioning students. Many drop out for lack of inspiration and encouragement. Others go to school hungry and cannot concentrate. In some developing countries, foreign aid for education, infrastructure and job creation are passed through the hands of corrupt politicians and serve their interests as they serve

the interests of the rich nations and allow them to exploit natural resources. These countries in Africa and Asia have a cluster of millionaire politicians that rule with cronies and their dynastic family members are in every part of government.

The Philippines suffers, too. It ranks lowest among all of the ASEAN nations. The respected Philippine economist Winnie Monsod says it simply in her excellent analysis (see marengwinniemonsood.ph) She points out that the Philippines has the lowest GDP per capita, the most unequal distribution of income, the highest poverty headcount ratio and the highest learning poverty rate of 90.9 percent. This means among 10-year olds, nine out of 10 cannot understand what they are reading.

Many Filipinos cannot find fair paid jobs and seek work abroad to escape poverty. An estimated 10 million Filipinos live and work abroad and every year another one million travel to join them. About 16 million Filipinos live in dire poverty, according to the

Philippine Statistics Authority. The mass migration causes emotional stress, loneliness, family breakups, abandoned children and child abuse.

The impoverished deprived youth in Asia and Africa see no hope in their corrupt countries and flee poverty, violence and hunger. Thousands travel overland from Central America and others from Asia and Africa and across the Mediterranean Sea in small boats. They are mostly youth seeking to reach a better life in Europe or the United States. Many are refugees fleeing persecution, war and hopelessness. These are the unwanted and unwelcome migrants of failed or semi-failed states, many with colonial histories of exploitation and corruption.

The refugees and migrants are the strangers that all nations are supposed to welcome and shelter. They are the victims of historical colonial injustices and abuse. The youth of previous migrants to European countries are born citizens but are still unaccepted by many natives as true Italians,

French, Germans, Swiss and so on. Some, despite efforts to change the situation in Europe and the United States, are still subject to marginalisation, racial profiling and police brutality. They are still unwelcome in many European countries although they were born there. France has been the scene of terrible violence and unrest by these marginalized youth. The consequences of past colonial sins are catching up on the present generation. They cannot accept the growing reality that diversity in population is inevitable.

These marginalized youth and their families are being joined by the fresh waves of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers arriving daily. Some are victims of the neo-colonial regimes where corruption, inequality and poverty continues. Colonial exploitation still thrives among them as oil and mining companies of the rich developed nations exploit the natural resources of the “dependent” poor nations. At the same time, the rich nations continue to support lifestyles of vast consumption that are run on the burning of oil, coal and gas that are damaging the climate and causing more hunger and poverty.



Climate justice demands recompense and an end to a fossil fuel-run world. The alternatives are there. They just need to build more renewable sources of energy.

As a consequence, there is continuing mass migration to the rich nations. The number of arrivals of refugees and migrants in Europe in 2021 was 123,318 people. Tragically 3,231 died in an attempt to cross the Mediterranean sea in small boats. In 2022, there were 159,410 arrivals in Mainland Europe and 2,439 drowned trying to cross the sea.

This year 2023, as many as 91,008 have crossed and sadly 1,872 drowned when left

unrescued. It is forecast that about 56,000 migrants will cross the English channel from mainland Europe this 2023, having trekked across Europe from impoverished nations, whereas in 2022 there were 45,000 arrivals on the UK shores in small boats.

Most European countries have sealed their borders to migrants and asylum seekers and refugees of African and Middle Eastern origin. They have erected huge barbed fences and have armed patrols to stop crossings. However racial basis has been alleged when refugees and migrants from Ukraine flooded in their many thousands to Europe when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. They were welcomed with jobs and housing. As some Europeans said, “they are like us,” so some refugees are more welcome than others. Racial inequality persists.

However Germany, to the dismay of its neighbors and the delight of refugees and migrants and their supporters, has passed a new migrant-friendly law to invite and welcome migrants to apply for jobs in Germany with less stringent language and other requirements. Kindness and compassion meet self-interest as Germany has a huge decline in its birth rate. ●

The author is a missionary in the Philippines since 1969





India's Himalayan Forests under Threat with New Bill

As the Indian parliament moves to amend the Forest Conservation Act, activists, researchers and academics express concern over the fate of the Himalayan watershed's forests

■ ■ Sushmita

On 26 July, 2023 the lower house of the Indian parliament, amidst protests, passed a bill to amend the country's 1980 Forest Conservation Act (FCA). The FCA was originally enacted to regulate industrial uses for forested land, such as mining or hydropower, and to put a price on such exploitation. The bill will now have to be passed in the Rajya Sabha, or upper house of Parliament, to become an act. If it

does, it will alter how this land is defined and used, via a joint committee almost entirely comprising governing party members.

Unsurprisingly, concern is growing among environmentalists and indigenous communities. The amendment's changes the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023, as introduced, concerns land that was defined as forest under either the colonial-era Indian

Forest Act of 1927, which contained procedures to define forests as 'protected' or 'reserved', or in government records created after the 1980 FCA came into effect.

There is no legislatively defined definition of forests in India. The country's supreme court uses the dictionary definition of the term, stating that all forests – whether designated or not – come under the scope of the FCA. This

was most clearly stated in the Godavarman Judgment of 1996, which read: “The provisions enacted in the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 for the conservation of forests and the matters connected therewith must apply clearly to all forests so understood irrespective of the ownership or classification thereof.”

The new bill travels in the exact opposite direction of the Godavarman Judgment. This means private forest land and any parcels of land that are forested – but not recorded as such in government records – will lose FCA protection.

Most prominently, “linear projects” – such as railway tracks, transmission lines and highways – that are of “national importance and concerning national security”, will be exempt from forest conservation scrutiny if they fall within 100km of India's border. Such exemptions will also apply to defence projects, paramilitary camps and public utility projects, the last of which remain undefined.

Losing FCA protection means such lands will no longer be subject to pre-clearance checks, for example seeking consent from indigenous inhabitants, or making

provisions for destroyed ecosystems. The bill also opens up forests for activities such as ecotourism zones and zoos. While India does have a policy on sustainable ecotourism, in reality, research suggests that “forest loss rates were higher in ecotourism hubs than in matched non-ecotourism areas.”

Opposition to the amendment

Those contesting the amendments include government opposition party members, ex-Indian Administrative Service and Indian Forest Service officials, and environmentalist and activists, for a variety of reasons. Asad Rahmani, the former director of the Bombay Natural History Society. Rahmani says skipping government or court approval for development projects in forests that lie within 100km of India's national border is “very dangerous”; Rahmani points out that “a large portion of our country will come within 100km of the border.” India's borders stretch to 15,106.7km across land and its coastline covers 7,516.6km, including island territories.

Kanchi Kohli, who researches legal issues and policies

and wrote Development of Environmental Laws in India, said that the amendments fail to see the bigger picture. He said: “While the political security concerns of border areas cannot be undermined, a progressive way to understand both internal and external security is by also including ecological and social challenges within the framework. This is particularly important in the context of climate change and the biodiversity crisis that has induced transboundary disasters.” Bilateral and multilateral agreements are necessary to address these challenges. Meanwhile, Debadityo Sinha – the climate and ecosystems lead at the Vidhi Centre for legal policy – is concerned about the amendment's planning concessions for “public utilities”. Sinha says the term is too expansive: “The broader understanding of public utilities can cover a range of projects, right from banks, hospitals and parking lots, to airports.”

Concerns over private forests

In its submission to the joint parliamentary committee, the Himachal Pradesh-based advocacy group Himdhara highlighted how the process of recording land remains fraught with irregularities in many Himalayan states. This includes Himachal where, due to colonial-era land transference, more than 50% of the land belongs to private individuals. There needs to be a detailed understanding of the probable conflicts that will be heightened if those who are so-called 'owners' of these forests are given a free hand to erect structures. Himdhara's submission calls for an environmental study, stating: “Before changing application of the FCA on private and deemed forests areas that look forested but



are not classified as such, there needs to be a detailed understanding of the socio-economic and ecological services these private and deemed forests play in different contexts and the probable conflicts that will be heightened if those who are so-called 'owners' of these forests are given a free hand to erect structures.”

Development versus climate compliance

In a press release issued on 18 July, several activist and campaign groups outlined their opposition. These included the indigenous research and advocacy group, Dibandh Arunachal Pradesh. Its co-founder Bhanu Tatak says the bill will lead to widespread road-building through critical forests: “Our border areas encompass some of the most biodiversity-rich forests and protected areas in northeast India.” The biodiversity of India's border lands incorporates endemic species of flora and fauna, as well as endangered species including great Indian bustards, red pandas, snow leopards, Kashmir stags, Tibetan antelopes, markhors and hoolock gibbons.

Indigenous people and village councils excluded

The FCA's forest clearance processes currently include fulfilling mandates limiting pollution and degradation, as well as ensuring there is no conflict over the usage of the land in question. To facilitate this process, it is divided into two stages, one of which requires the consent of

residents on forest lands. By exempting large tracts of lands from this process, the new bill removes this consent, even though indigenous communities on forest land are legally entitled to it in the 2006 Forest Rights Act. The amendment does not mention gram sabhas (elected village councils) or indigenous people, nor does it provide measures to include them in forest clearance processes. India's northeastern indigenous communities, including those in Arunachal Pradesh, have protected these forests for eons. “We will not let India's elected representatives destroy our ecological heritage,” says Tatak.

Why are Himalayan states at greater risk?

As in previous years, massive flooding and landslides have gripped India's mountainous states in 2023, such as Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. As climatic changes intensify, bringing greater heat waves and more extreme rainfall to the Himalayan regions, the FCA amendments have important implications for the environmental resilience of these areas.

The Forest Survey of India's India State of Forest Report 2021 looked at 'climate hotspots' in forests for the first time. These were defined as areas exhibiting high variations in both temperature and precipitation. Unsurprisingly, the Himalayan provinces of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh were all found to have very high incidences of

climate hotspots. These are also the states that abut disputed borders with China and Pakistan, which run a total of approximately 4,000km and 750km along the Himalayan region. In exempting 'linear projects' within 100km of these disputed borders from forest laws, this new bill seeks to exempt critical forested areas – which the state itself has identified as climate hotspots – from conservation oversight.

The Indian Himalayas are part of two global biodiversity hotspots, Himalaya and Indo-Myanmar, which inspired India's National Mission for Himalayan biodiversity and makes them integral to the National Action Plan for Climate Change. Critics of the FCA's amendment say it is incompatible with the stated aims of these missions.

India's National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem

India is a signatory to the Global Biodiversity Framework and is home to 8% of global biodiversity, four cross-border global biodiversity hotspots, and is considered to have a high degree of species endemism. Sinha insists that the FCA's regulatory oversight is essential in India's wildlife-rich border areas: “If a species is endemic to a region, then the divisional forest officer – a senior official responsible for looking after and managing forests in a particular district – prepares a report and sends it to the [environment] ministry. If areas are excluded carte blanche, anything can be constructed.” ●

**The greatest threat to our planet
is the belief that someone else will save it.**

- Robert Swan



How Real is the Decline in India's Multidimensional Poverty?

Arun Kumar

The multi dimensional poverty index suffers from gaps and opens the door for suspicion

In the National Multidimensional Poverty Index – A Progress Review 2023, released on July 18, the NITI Aayog has reported that multidimensional poverty in India has declined sharply between 2015–16 (when it was 24.85 percent) and 2019–21 (when it was 14.96 percent). Even more heartening is the fact that multidimensional poverty has declined the most in the poorer states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. In total, 135 million people have escaped multidimensional poverty in the last five years, according to the report.

With this, India is well on the road to achieving the Sustainable

Development Goals 1.2: “By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.” Surprisingly, rural poverty has fallen rapidly during the period, even though 2020–21 was the year of the pandemic when the poor suffered grievously and migrated back to the rural hinterland from where they had come to urban India in search of better lives and livelihood.

The exercise is based on three broad dimensions— health, education and living standard. Each of them is given equal

weightage. These three are subdivided into 12 indicators— three from health, two from education and seven from standard of living. NHFS5 is based on two surveys over two years. This is odd because 2020–21 was an abnormal year due to the pandemic. The NITI Aayog report mentions that 70 percent of the data was collected in the earlier year, 2019–20, just before the pandemic.

First, for each of the indicators, deprived individuals in a sample are identified. Using the weights for each of the indicators, an aggregate deprivation score is derived for each individual. By

using another cut off (33.3 percent) the multidimensional poverty is identified. Change in multidimensional poverty is then obtained by comparing the data from the fifth National Family Health Survey (NHFS5) (2019–21) with data from NHFS4 (2015–16). This is based on two surveys over two years. This is odd because 2020–21 was an abnormal year due to the pandemic. The NITI Aayog report mentions that 70 percent of the data was collected in the earlier year, 2019–20, just before the pandemic. If that was the case, the data from 2019–20 could have been compared with that from 2015–16. Why mix it up with an abnormal year in which much of the data collection suffered?

An average over two vastly different years makes little sense. The data from 2019–20 is not enough to represent the pandemic and lockdown year of 2020–21. It cannot even represent the ensuing years, especially 2021–22, since the shock to the economy due to the pandemic still persisted. Officially, the GDP recovered to the pre-pandemic level of 2019–20 (4.8 percent) only in 2022–23. Thus, three years of growth were

lost and the economy was about 10 percent below where it could have been in 2022–23 if the pandemic had not struck. Finally, it is the organised sector that recovered while the unorganised sector, where the poor mostly work, hardly recovered but the data fails to capture this reality.

Data for 2020–21 was collected during January 2020 to April 2021. It coincides with the first and the second very severe wave of coronavirus in India. This period corresponds to the mass migration of the poor from urban to rural areas since they lost work and had no income. They could not afford to pay rent or buy food. Many fell sick and had to incur heavy expenditures for treatment, for which they took loans at onerous interest rates. Many died, as the images of people dying outside hospitals, in ambulances and of bodies floating in rivers signified. Many of these deaths went unrecorded. Globally, counting the number of deaths due to Covid was a challenge. In India, the problem was acute given the weak system of registering births and deaths, a consequence of the very weak rural and semi-rural health infrastructure.

A large number of small- and micro-businesses closed down during the lockdown, many of them permanently. Those that managed to revive themselves later on became heavily indebted due to the loans they were forced to take from the informal money markets at usurious interest rates. Closure of such units has meant permanent loss of work and incomes, not only for the workers but also for the proprietors. Education of children— rich or poor— was disrupted. Schools were closed. Where possible, online classes were conducted. That required access to smartphones and laptops, which meant poorer children could no longer afford education.

The children of those who migrated to rural areas during the pandemic suffered more due to loss of access to their schools. Also, it is hard for children to constantly sit for long hours in front of small screens to receive instructions. There are enough reports of permanent setbacks to the cognitive skills of children, not just in India, but even in developed nations such as the US. In brief, during the pandemic year of 2020–21, incomes, employment, education and health parameters for the poor suffered a huge setback.

Under these circumstances, suspicions about the credibility of the data showing such a sharp decline in multidimensional poverty as compared to 2015–2016 are bound to arise. The situation is almost similar to the incredulous official data showing the highest GDP growth rate of the decade during 2016–17, in which year demonetisation was forced upon us.

Even members of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister have raised doubts regarding the credibility of data. According to them, the sample used in most of the surveys is



incorrect since it is drawn from the dated 2011 census. The members argue that recent big changes are not being captured by the samples drawn from the 2011 census. However, even if the 2021 census was held in time, that would have been too late for the NHFS survey in 2020–21. NHFS would still have had to depend on the 2011 census. The critical point is that the data collected for 2020–21 cannot be representative, even if the pandemic had not struck.

Yes, 2021 was difficult to conduct a census due to the continuing pandemic, even though preparations for the census had been initiated earlier. But if elections could be held, the census could also have been conducted in 2022 or 2023, when the pandemic had abated and mobility was restored. Census is a crucial exercise for better policy making which requires correct data. Could it be that the government is worried that the adverse impact of the pandemic on the socio-economic parameters of the country would have been revealed by data collection in 2022 or 2023?

Macro data is already under suspicion as the largely unorganised non-agriculture sector (30 percent of GDP and employing 48 percent of the

workforce) is not independently measured. The growing organised sector is used as a proxy as it gives an upward bias to the production and income data. This results in an upward bias to the other macro variables—consumption, savings, investment, etc. Such data would show declining poverty but that is not the reality. It only gives the government an excuse to not do what it should do.

Finally, data on individual variables in NHFS5 is not only suspect due to the impact of the pandemic, as argued above, but also on grounds that the official data often does not represent the correct picture. For instance, electricity and cooking gas may come to a household but electricity supply may be erratic and gas cylinders may not be filled due to their higher cost. Child and adolescent mortality rates may be high not only due to deprivation but also due to several diseases. A child may formally attend school but not effectively if the teacher is missing or hardly teaches. The Annual Status of Education Report points to a huge learning gap but this also goes uncaptured.

Due to the absence of a consumption survey after 2012, the government is not measuring poverty properly. As per the World

Bank, the current international poverty line is US \$2.15 per person per day in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms. This translates to approximately ₹26,500 per family per month. Since it is in PPP terms, it would amount to about ₹9,000 per family per month. PPP is a measure of the price of specific goods in different countries and is used to compare the absolute purchasing power of the countries' currencies. Of the 28 crore workers registered on the e-shram portal, 94 percent have declared a monthly income below ₹10,000. This tells us that most of the unorganised sector workers are close to the poverty line.

Unfortunately, measuring things in PPP terms is a double whammy for the poor. Because their services are cheap, the rupee has greater purchasing power. But since they do not consume most of the services they provide; they do not benefit from the higher purchasing power.

Thus, for the poor, not only are PPP terms not relevant, they mask their true poverty. For them the metric of the 'nominal dollar' is more appropriate. Thus, most of the unorganised sector is way below the poverty line. Nominal dollars (also referred to as actual dollars) represents the actual amount of money spent or earned in a given year.

In brief, the conclusions of the NITI Aayog's *Multidimensional Poverty Report, 2023* need reinterpretation. Apart from the above mentioned lacunae, it is the health and education indicators which have the highest contribution to Multidimensional Poverty Index which were most adversely impacted in the pandemic year 2020–21. Inaccuracies in NHFS5's data must have led to substantial errors in the deprivation index based on the survey, opening the conclusions of the NITI Aayog report to suspicion. ●



For Parama Puruṣa No One is Big or Small

- Shrii Shrii Ānandamūrti



People must always bear in mind that “Whatever I have acquired is all by the grace of Parama Puruṣa. If He decides that I should not possess wealth, He will take it away at any moment He wishes.” So no one should feel pride about anything under any circumstances.

Yet if one must feel proud, then perhaps one kind of pride may be cherished, and that is that “I am the child of Parama Puruṣa.” Who is the source of all the wealth and prosperity of the world? What is the final cause of all these things? It is Parama Puruṣa. “I am the son or daughter of Parama Puruṣa, who owns everything.” This is the best kind of pride. Other than this, there is nothing to be proud of.

Everyone on this earth is a child of Parama Puruṣa; no one is big or small. All are related as brothers and sisters. As far as castes are concerned, no one is high or low. How can the children of the same Father be of different castes? All people are of the same caste. Everyone is by birth of the same caste as their father.(1) So keep away from those who discriminate in terms of caste; keep far from the reach of their noose. Why? Because those who believe in caste, do not believe in Parama Puruṣa. If five people are of five different castes, then what is the caste of Parama Puruṣa? Can He be of five castes? No, that is not possible.

So bear in mind that those who believe in caste, do not have genuine belief in the Supreme Father. How can people of five hundred castes have one and the same father? So I say those who believe in caste, do not believe in the Supreme Father, and those who believe in the Supreme Father do not believe in caste. The scriptures have this to say:

Caṇḍālo'pi dvijah shreṣṭhah haribhaktiparāyaṇah;

Haribhaktivihiinashca vipro'pi svapacādhamaḥ.

“Even those who are popularly known as caṇḍālas [the lowest caste], can be superior to Brahmans if devotion to Hari [the Lord] is present in them, if they have deep love for Parama Puruṣa. If, on the other hand, a Brahman has no devotion to Hari, that person is indeed lower than the lowest, in spite of having been born into a high family.” This mental balance is very important.

One thing all of you should remember. Moral judgement regarding virtue and vice takes place only in the material world. People hate a sinner; and perhaps they should. Similarly, if someone performs a virtuous deed, people regard the person highly. That also they should. But to the Supreme Father is there any distinction between a sinner and a virtuous person? All these are concerns of the mundane world. So far as the Supreme Father is concerned, they are meaningless. Take the case of a child walking on the road. It has a gold necklace round its neck, and costly ornaments decorating other parts of its body. It is such an attractive sight. The father of the child, holding it on his lap, is caressing it. The position of a virtuous person is like this. The “ornaments” we are speaking of are the person's virtuous deeds. They are not inseparable parts of the body. They have been earned or acquired from outside.

And what is the nature of sin? Suppose again that a child is walking on the road. Suddenly it falls into the gutter. Naturally its arms and legs will be covered with mud. Will the father despise his child in this condition? Other people on the road may be repelled. But what will the father do? He will immediately pull his child out of the drain, wash its arms, legs, and body, take it on his lap, and try to console it: “What makes you cry, my child! Everything is okay now. You are all clean now. I'll dry you off with a towel.” The position of those branded by society as sinners is like this.

For Parama Puruṣa no difference exists between virtuous people and sinners. It is true, however, that to the world at large and to society such distinctions do exist. The whole world holds a virtuous person in high regard, and shuns a sinner. This is but natural, so far as society is concerned. But for God it is different. So the thought “I am a sinner. How can I show my face to Parama Puruṣa” should never be allowed to enter your mind. One may feel shame and shyness before outsiders, but before God the question should never arise. ●



PBI Demands Justice for Farmers

In a compelling demonstration of solidarity, local farmers led by Madhukar Nistane, the prominent leader of Proutist Bloc, India (PBI), staged a fervent dharna in front of the Wani tehsil office on 7 September, demanding justice for the farmers. The protest saw the participation of several prominent figures, including Yashwantrao Bonde, Shalikarao Pimpalkar, Atul Atram, Krishna Tekam, Mohan Pawar, Sandeep Meshram, and Gajanan Kotarange, all of whom stood united in their quest for fairness and support for the affected agricultural community.

The primary aim of the dharna was to draw attention to the critical issues facing encroaching farmers. Madhukar Nistane, addressing the gathering, called upon Tehsildar and appealed to the Honorable Chief Minister, Eknathji Shinde, by submitting a memorandum outlining their demands:

1. Allocation of Land: The protesters demanded the allocation of land to encroaching farmers from all castes and religions, emphasizing the need for an equitable distribution of resources.



2. Crop Registration: Encroaching cultivators urged for the official registration of their crops, providing them with legal recognition and protection.

3. Compensation for Damages: The farmers also sought compensation for losses incurred due to natural calamities and damage caused by wild animals, recognizing the unpredictable challenges they face in agriculture.

4. Halt to Unfair Removal of Encroachments: An immediate cessation of the unjust eviction process was demanded, as it disproportionately affected the livelihoods of these struggling farmers.

5. Legal Action Against Crop Destruction: In a bid to protect the rights of encroaching farmers, the protesters called for the registration of criminal cases against individuals responsible for destroying their crops.

The dharna attracted a substantial turnout, with several women and men converging to support the cause. Among those present were Sanjay Bhagat, Sahebrao Pawar, Kavadu Teltumbde, Maroti Karke, Gangaram Meshram, Kavadu Vichu, Shankar Bhagat, Kanhoba Gedam, and Janardhan Gedam, each adding their voices to the impassioned plea for justice.



PBI Engages Students in a Discussion on Building an Exploitation-Free Society

On 19-20 August, Proutist Bloc, India (PBI) hosted a dynamic two-day brainstorming session at Bari Gopabandhu Choudhury Degree College, Bhubaneswar, sparking an engaging dialogue on the quest for an exploitation-free, self-reliant, progressive, and ideal society. The event saw active participation from numerous PBI leaders, including National Convener Acharya Santosananda Avadhuta, National General Secretary Kanhu Charan Behura, Kedarnath Sahoo, Aditya Pradhan, and several other passionate Proutists, who engaged with students, educators, and members of the local community.



PBI, a prominent socio-political organization in India, organized the event to foster discussions that could help pave the way toward a more equitable and ideal society. The interactive sessions featured thought-provoking dialogues and brainstorming sessions aimed at exploring potential alternatives to address societal exploitation and foster self-reliance.

National Convener Acharya Santosananda Avadhuta expressed the organization's commitment to exploring innovative solutions for societal challenges. He emphasized the need for an open and inclusive dialogue, stating, "Our goal is to empower individuals and communities to create a more just and self-reliant society. This interaction is a crucial step towards finding practical alternatives that can lead us in that direction."

The event was attended not only by students but also by teachers and various members of the civil community, underlining the broad appeal and relevance of the topics discussed. Attendees engaged in vibrant discussions, sharing their perspectives and ideas for building a more progressive and equitable society. The participants were clearly impressed by PBI's vision for an exploitation-free, self-reliant, progressive, and ideal society.

Pragatisheel Bhojpuri Samaj Demands Constitutional Recognition for Bhojpuri Language

In a fervent call for accountability and a safer educational environment, a number of members and office-bearers of Proutist Bloc, India (PBI) joined the activists from 'Milita Odisha Nisha Nibaran Abhijan' (MONNA), who took to the streets of Bhubaneswar on August 23, 2023. Their demand: decisive action against teachers, lecturers, and professors found inebriated on campuses across Odisha, echoing concerns voiced by students statewide.



The activists, representing MONNA, gathered in a peaceful yet determined protest outside key educational institutions in the state capital, Bhubaneswar. Their demonstration highlighted a growing concern among the student community about the alleged presence of educators under the influence of alcohol during working hours.

Speaking to reporters, MONNA spokesperson stated, "It is imperative that educational institutions provide a safe and conducive environment for students to learn and grow. We have received numerous complaints from students across Odisha regarding teachers and professors arriving on campus in a drunken condition. This not only jeopardizes the learning experience but also sets a detrimental example for impressionable minds."

The activists' demands include the implementation of stricter regulations and policies within educational institutions to curb such incidents. They are also calling for transparent investigations into allegations of intoxicated educators and swift disciplinary action if found guilty.



PBI Calls for an All-out Fight against Exploitation



On 16 September 2023, a dharna (sit-in) was organized by Proutist Bloc India (PBI) at Jantar Mantar in Delhi to draw the attention of the government towards its demands. Hundreds of party workers from Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, UP, Bihar, Odisha, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka participated in the event to voice their concerns.

Speaking on this occasion, the party's National Convener Acharya Santosananda Avadhuta said that today the exploitative capitalist system is responsible for poverty, unemployment, recession, inflation, corruption, terrorism, crimes against women and environmental imbalance in the country and the world. Even the minimum requirements of the people are not met. Therefore, PBI demands that 'the right to employment' should be made a fundamental right.

Delhi State President Amitabh Verma said that today the whole world is going through an ideological crisis. It has become a fashion to raise issues, but when it comes to providing solutions, most leaders and their parties have nothing to offer. But PBI has come with viable and practical solutions to all the problems.

National General Secretary Kanhu Charan Behura said that PBI is a party based on ideals and principles, hence its objective is not just to grab power by any means. It wants to usher in a new era that will liberate people from all kinds of exploitations.

Bihar State President Tarani Prasad Singh said that PBI wants to work 'for the welfare of all' through a systemic change. He said that during these 75 years of independence, various political parties have come into power, but they had neither any intention, nor courage or vision to change the exploitative nature of the socio-economic and political system.

Speaking on the party's demand for Amirii Rekha (ceiling on wealth), PBI (Vidarbha) convener Madhukar Nistane said that farmers

and laborers are the foundation of any economy, but today their condition is the worst. Amirii Rekha is the only way to fix this.

On this occasion, Public Relations Secretary Ravindra Singh explained with figures and facts how Amirii Rekha is the only solution to poverty, unemployment, recession, inflation, corruption etc. He said that today 10 percent people own more than 80 percent of the country's wealth, which is the root of all ills in our society.

Among those who participated were National Publication Secretary Pranav Koul, PBI (Delhi) General Secretary Baidhnath Sah, Anita Khanudi, Piyush Khanudi, Tarun Samantrey, Priyadarshi Koul, Vasant Biswas, Neelu Singh, Rashtriya Sharabbandi Movement's National Coordinator Sultan Singh, Niranjana Dhar, Nihal Singh etc. Throughout the day, Proutist Ram Prasad Nirala kept everyone in high spirits by singing a number of inspiring Prout songs. Proutist Nidhi Sati hosted the entire event.

After the dharna, a memorandum of the following demands was submitted to the Prime Minister:

1. Politics Only for Moralists : Leaders are directly or indirectly responsible for all the problems facing the country and society today. Therefore, the first and foremost demand of PBI is that politics should be the domain of moral people only and the entry of unethical people in it should be legally restricted. The government should soon make a strict law to this end and implement it at the earliest.

2. Amirii Rekha: Material wealth is limited. Today only 10% of the people of the country have become the owners of 80% wealth of India, whereas 50% of the Indians have got mere 3%. PBI demands that Amirii Rekha (ceiling on wealth) should be implemented for the welfare of all. Amirii Rekha means that no person should be allowed to accumulate any physical wealth beyond a certain limit, and the difference between the minimum and maximum wealth limit should not be more than 10 times.

3. Employment as a Fundamental Right: PBI demands that the right to secure employment should be made a fundamental right, so that every person gets adequate purchasing power, and can have guaranteed fulfillment of their basic needs.

4. Industry status to agriculture: PBI demands that agriculture should be reorganized and developed on the lines of industry. Farmers should get all the modern facilities, and like industries, they should also have the right to determine the price of their products, so that farming does not remain a loss-making deal.

5. Workers should be made shareholders: Workers should be made shareholders and given a share in the ownership of the industries where they work. This will not only ensure more equitable distribution of wealth but will also promote greater dedication and productivity among workers.

6. Increasing women's safety : PBI has urged the government to implement comprehensive measures to improve women's safety, including increased police patrolling, strict law enforcement and widespread awareness campaigns.

7. Complete ban on alcohol : Consumption of alcohol destroys the physical, mental and spiritual abilities of a person. Therefore, PBI demands that there should be a complete ban on making, buying, selling and consumption of liquor in the entire country.





Mumbai University Hosts National Seminar on Prabhat Samgiita and Indian Devotional Music



In celebration of the 41st Prabhat Samgiita Divas, the University of Mumbai's Music and Sanskrit Departments, in collaboration with the Renaissance Artists and Writers Association (RAWA), Mumbai Chapter, organized a 'National Seminar on Literary & Musical Aspects in Prabhat Samgiita and Indian Devotional Music.' The event took place on September 11, 2023, at the University's Sanskrutik Bhavan.

Pt. Bhavdeep Jaipurwale inaugurated the program as the Chief Guest, emphasizing Prabhāta

Samgiita's deep emotional significance, referring to it as the heartfelt expression. Prabhāta Samgiita is a collection of 5,018 spiritually-driven songs composed by Shrii Prabhāt Ranjan Sarkar over eight years, showcasing a diverse range of musical styles.

Dr. Vishwambhar Jadhav, a Senate member of Mumbai University, attended as the Guest of Honour. Prof. Kunal Ingle, Head of the University of Mumbai's Music Department, welcomed and introduced all guests, highlighting RAWA's global efforts to usher in a cultural renaissance.

Acharya Divyachetnananda Avadhuta, Central RU & RAWA Secretary, delivered the Keynote address, tracing the origins of Samgiita in general and Prabhat Samgiita in particular. He emphasized Lord Shiva's significance in the world of Samgiita, representing song, dance, and instrumental music. He also explained that Prabhat Samgiita includes songs composed in various languages, such as Bengali, English, Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu, Magahi, Maithili, and Angika.

Dr. Bhagyashree Varma, an Associate Professor in the University of Mumbai's English Department, discussed the literary aspects of Prabhat Samgiita, while Dr. Shakuntala Gawde, Head of the Sanskrit Department, focused on its devotional aspects. Shri Subhendu Prabhu also shared insights during the event. The program was hosted by Shrii Vijay Agarwal, Chairman of RAWA, Mumbai, and Prof. Kunal Ingle, Convenor & Head of the University of Mumbai's Music Department. ●



Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

THE LORD OF LIGHT

ÁMI SHUDHU HESECHI, NECECHI, GEYECHI

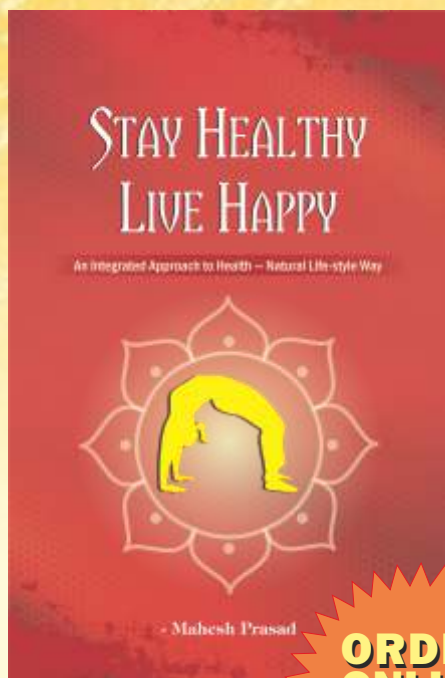
I have only laughed, danced and sung

CÁNDER ÁLOR SÁTHE BHÁVA KARECHI
JÁHÁ KICHU DEKHECHI, SHUNECHI, PEYECHI
MANER MANÍ KOTHÁY ENKE REKHECHIHave made friends With the moonlight.
All that I have seen Heard and received
I've etched them In the jeweled casket of the mind.AKARUNÁ JHAINJHÁR BAY
YADI TÁRÁ HÁRÁIÁ JÁY
SAB HÁRÁNOR SHEŚ JÁHÁR KÁCHE
SE KHÁNEI GEYE REKHECHIIn a cruel tempest If stars disappear,
All that's lost The one in whom everything ends
There I've kept those in song.ÁLO NÁI JEKHÁNE, PRÁN NÁI SEKHÁNE
ÁLOR DEVATÁ ÁJ KHUNJE PEYECHIWhere there is no light There is no life,
Today I have discovered The lord of light.

ÁMI SHUDHU HESECHI, NECECHI, GEYECHI

I have only laughed, danced and sung





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also, millets are being

Under the gloom
bang and people have
and newer strides coming

then, 02 my college friend Dr.

Bal Kishan's son Hari who is professor in NUS Singapore got interested in the book and expressed desire to get it published in USA just for the benefit of the sick who have become disappointed from the handful of tablets of many kinds to be swallowed each day and are in search of a genuine system to bring back health and happiness. This also necessitated revision as many researches have thrown away the century old theories, as stated earlier, in the dust bin.

Recently, I came across a wonderful best seller of USA "Dying to be me" by Anita Moorjani of Hong Kong, though of Indian Origin, which has described in detail her experiences after she went into coma at the terminal illness of dreadful cancer. Her experiences stimulated me deeply to describe the philosophy behind them, as I learned at the feet of my Master, Shrii Shrii Ananda Murti Ji. For this a new chapter had to be incorporated. For this I am greatly indebted to Anita Moorjani's experiences. Considering this all, I thought it the right time to revise it for the service of humanity. In the first edition the name of the book was "Stay Healthy: Stay Fit", but on second thinking I felt that Healthy and fit are almost synonymous and some new word should be given to "Fit". In place of this, it was suggested by Sri Baldev Mahajan, a keen educationist of Delhi and retired from UNESCO that it should be: Live Happy. So, the title of the book has been revised to: Stay Healthy: Live Happy.

I sincerely hope that this second edition would get the approval of the readers more than the previous one.

With best wishes.

Mahesh Prasad

About the Author



Born in a village in district Bijnore of Uttar Pradesh on 29th of Dec., 1931, Mahesh Prasad graduated in science in 1951 and did post graduation in Maths in 1953 from Agra University. Passed Provincial Civil Services Examination and was appointed as Sales Tax Officer in 1958. Retired in 1990 as Member, Sales Tax Tribunal.

He had a natural inclination in natural healing system from his very childhood as he found himself victim of sluggish liver function and thus of poor health. This stimulated him to study Yoga and Naturopathy, as other systems banked upon ingestion of foreign elements. He employed these systems upon himself and, in the process, made himself almost a guinea pig, but, gained rich experience in the end. This small venture is the result of his extensive study of the subjects and his own experience.



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