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# PROUT

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# PROUT

**PROGRESSIVE UTILISATION THEORY**

Propounded by - Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

## **PROUT - Cry of the Suffering Humanity**

### **What is PROUT :**

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

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

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

### **Main principles of PROUT and Neo-Humanism**



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



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



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



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



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



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



Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar



## The Fire That You Ignited

JE A'GUN JVA'LIYE GELE,  
JE A'GUN JVA'LIYE GELE,  
SABA'R MANE LIILA'CHALE;  
SE A'GUN NIVABE NA' KONO KA'LE  
JE SURE GA'N GEYECHO,  
JE GA'NE BHA'LOBESECHO  
MISHE A'CHE TA' DHARA'TALE,  
SE A'GUN NIVABE NA' KONO KA'LE

RJUTA' SAMATA' TOMA'R,  
A'A' A'A' A'A'  
RJUTA' SAMATA' TOMA'R,  
SAMA SAMA'JE BHITTI JA'R  
THEKE JA'BE MA'DHURII TA'R,  
YUGA YUGA'NTE CALA'CALE  
SE A'GUN NIVABE NA' KONO KA'LE

TUMI PRIYA GUN'A'TIITA,  
A'A' A'A' A'A'  
TUMI PRIYA GUN'A'TIITA,  
ARU'PA A'DHA'R RU'PE STHITA  
SAM'KALPE APARIMITA  
SVAYAM' SIDDHA TAPO BALE  
SE A'GUN NIVABE NA' KONO KA'LE  
JE A'GUN JVA'LIYE GELE,  
SABA'R MANE LIILA'CHALE;  
SE A'GUN NIVABE NA' KONO KA'LE

The fire that You have ignited  
In all minds by Your mysterious, divine drama;  
That fire shall not be extinguished at any time.  
The melodies in which You sung Your songs  
Those songs by which You gave Your love  
Are all mingled and merged in this Earth.  
That fire shall not be extinguished at any time.

Your rectitude and straightforwardness  
Your impartiality, equality and  
identification (with all)  
Has formed the foundation of social  
equality (sama-samaja).  
That sweetness (of sama-samaja)  
Will remain for ages upon ages  
Amongst the animate and inanimate beings.  
That fire shall not be extinguished at any time.

O Beloved  
You are beyond all qualities and  
qualification (gunas)  
Your divine Form is established  
In the foundation of Formlessness.  
Your samkalpas (decrees) are limitless  
You are self-perfected and self-established  
By the strength of Your  
Suffering and austerities (tapas)  
(For humanity and all created beings).  
That fire shall not be extinguished at any time.

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“Hence, non-struggle – the absence of struggle – is but another name for death. It has been My constant endeavour to arouse this spirit of struggle in you; I have never encouraged aversion towards struggle.”

– 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.





## 2G and Our Corporate Chaprasi Parties

The verdict is out - the accused in the 2G scam declared innocent and even the existence of the scam is denied. Since Rahul Gandhi's America visit, strong propaganda in favour of him has been appearing in the corporate media. The corrupt dynastic Congress was re-branded "Grand Old Party" copying the US Republican party. Then came the Gujarat elections where the prince was showcased as Prime Minister material. Now comes this judgement which enables the Congress to claim that the entire 2G case (which was a principal factor in their loss of the 2014 elections) was itself a fake news scam.

The alleged villain of this fake news scam whom the Congress demands be investigated is Vinod Rai, former CAG who first exposed the scam (and the Coal Scam) in 2010 and received several awards for this. The NDA rewarded him by granting him the Padma Bhushan. Normally, post-retirement CAG chiefs do not accept any sinecures. Rai broke with tradition when the PM made him head of the Banks Board Bureau much like how a senior justice in the Sohrabuddin Encounter case was unprecedently made Governor after retirement (and after the death of Justice Loya).

However, in February 2012, the Supreme Court held in a public interest suit that the issue of 122 telecom 2G licences to 9 companies in 2008 was "arbitrary and unconstitutional" for using a "first come, first serve" system that "gifted away important natural asset at throw-away prices" and thus declared them canceled. Later when the BJP held auctions for these licenses they received much larger amounts of money. Thus, if according to the new judgement, the Congress is not guilty of criminal conspiracy, then certainly it is guilty of criminal negligence. Does such a party perpetrating such practices that gave a green light to corruption deserve to be back in power? This party allowed DMK MPs to be accused for the 2G scam and lifted not a finger to defend their own minister – should such spinelessness be rewarded?

Furthermore, the December 2017 judgement holds that 2 secretaries of the PM were guilty of misleading both the PM and Raja and hence bear primary responsibility for any irregularities in the licenses. Does the Congress expect the country to believe that such massive criminal negligence was solely masterminded and conducted by two secretaries? If so, then why is not the Congress demanding these secretaries be investigated?

Then there is the CBI scam. In an unprecedented order, the Supreme Court in November 2014, ordered then CBI director Sinha to completely keep off the 2G case as it found prima facie "credible" the charges that he had attempted to help the accused in the spectrum scam. This CBI scam did not end in 2014. In the final judgement, Special CBI Judge Saini stated that the CBI had "miserably failed to prove any charge against any of the accused." Saini in one part of the judgement states how the quality of prosecution declined in the last few years under the BJP. He ends by blaming the special public prosecutor (Anand Grover) and the regular CBI prosecutor, saying "they were moving in two different directions without any coordination". So then is the BJP as incompetent/corrupt as the Congress?

The answer lies in the fact that the media hype around the 2G case ignored who were the real prime accused – the Ruia's of Essar and Anil Ambani. Anil Ambani escaped prosecution by becoming a government witness against his own company. But on the witness-stand he claimed to have a "memory loss" and did not implicate anyone in his company. Surprisingly, (perhaps not too surprisingly) no prosecutor tried to penalize him for violating his promise to testify to his company corruption in Court.

The Essar accused were also given special treatment by the BJP. Previously they had been denied permission to leave the country. However, in December 2015, the PM invited them to be part of a national delegation to Moscow and for the first time the CBI gave permission. Not only that, after Modi's trip, Ruia visited Athens, Greece for a family holiday, then flew to London and finally spent a day in Dubai for a day for a "holiday with family". Truly royal treatment while countless poor undertrials rot in jail for up to 10 years. Small wonder that even Subramaniam Swamy after the judgement said (in an uncharacteristic understatement) that his party is not serious about fighting corruption.

Politically the case has paid off also for the BJP now that the PM has visited DMK head Karunanidhi and a possible alliance may be on the cards (after a pro quid quo?) now that their MPs are declared innocent. We can only contrast the 2G case with the Fodder scam in which Lalu Yadav (inveterate foe of the BJP) was found guilty. This was a "typical" corruption case in which no corporates were charged, and many government officials were found guilty. Some have expressed surprise that former Bihar CM Jagannath Mishra was found innocent in this case. Actually, this is not all too surprising, considering that he joined the NDA in 2015.



## Living Beings and Their Mentality

This was another remarkable article I have seen in Prout on what is sentiment. Once again it is said that the key to solving the problem of narrow social sentiments is sama-samaja tattva. The question however that keeps coming to me is that why is it that no one is working for sama-samaja? Is there any follower of PROUT anywhere in the world who is working for the realization of sama-samaja? The word “sama-samaja” was once the name of a popular Trotskyist party in Sri Lanka and many people devoted their lives to this failed, fraud movement. The question then is, if Proutists are not serious about sama-samaja, then will not this innate human desire be exploited by opportunistic vocal revolutionaries?

**Sanghamitra Deva, Kandy**

## Wage Code Bill 2017

Truly great are our corporates who write our laws and get our netas to put their thumbprint and enforce it with the police. Instead of saying that they want to get rid of the minimum wage, they re-brand it as a “flexible” minimum wage and talk of states’ rights. Now, we all know how certain states like Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh are cannibalized by the Marwaris and other elites who control the corporations. What this wonderful bill does, is to make it possible to change the laws of these states to bring back the good old days of Manurajya, when all worked as slaves. When workers get such low wages, when they have no work security or labour rights, when mafias are allowed to discipline workers – this truly will come the Rashtra that so many of our social parasites have been dreaming of for the last 1200 years since the hegemony of the caste gulami-rajya was broken.

**Subodh Walgankar, Nagpur**

## Constituent Assembly Debates

This is the one speech of the Constituent Assembly every Indian needs to read. How many people know that the Constituent Assembly was created by persons chosen by the British? How

many people know that freedom fighters like Damodar Svarup, socialists like Acharya Narendra Deva and seers like Aurobindo were not in favour of it? How many know that large portions of the Constitution were copied from the British Government of India Act? How many know that in later years, Dr Ambedkar rejected the Constitution? Today many of those who complain about these facts, fail to realise that this imposition of the constitution is actually our national tradition. Did anyone vote for the Manu Smriti? No, it was enforced by the sword just as the Koran was during the days of Aurangzeb. So, the point is, that this authoritarian culture must end. We need a national conversation to create a consensus for a genuine constitution. And that must be based on the principle of Artha Azadi, without which all other Azadi is fool’s gold.

**Reba Mahato, Chaibasa**

## State Land Grabbing

You see, there are activists who work for years to mobilise people against a law that enables land-grabbing. After great struggle, imprisonment and murder of innocent victims, the law is changed and made “better”. Then what happens – the corporates pay a state neta to change the state laws to help them loot the state. And the biggest sham is that these changed laws are treated as holier books than the Koran and Vedas. Does anyone know what the English word “jurisprudence” means? It means a person who is “skilled” in juris. Juris is a Latin word meaning “a right”. So, jurisprudence is the science of skillfully upholding the rights of the rich elites. The word Juris comes from the word “i-ous” meaning a sacred formula of a religious sect of elite citizens. Is this not a perfect description of what this British law system in India is – a mumbo-jumbo malign spell (in a language most of the country barely understands) that helps foreign corporates loot the country through their chamcha Brown Britisher corporates?

**Rashid Mehta, Pune**

## 40 Million Slaves in the World

The article tells us that slavery has been booming with the rise of corporate globalization. Slavery like today is even worse – more violent, more exploitative than during the glory days of early capitalism. Slavery for the tribals and other victimized social groups is a fundamental part of capitalism just as is unemployment among the social

minorities in rich countries. And the number 1 victim in every country is women. Women need to stop being fooled by various male ideologies. We need a women’s revolution to take back control of every community on this planet. Capitalism, communism, casteism, religion are all diseases created by male psychology. Now is the time to end liberate humanity from the swamp of this patriarchal mindset. And that will not happen without a revolutionary struggle. The longer we delay, the more women will be enslaved and abused in the millions all over the world.

**Chinnomosta Debi, Ramgarh**

## Compensatory Afforestation

There is a war on forests worldwide. The way in which the logging companies scientifically destroy forests at maximum speed is like high-tech killing in war. The way in which companies bribe politicians, rewrite laws, kill protesters is also just like in a war. The reality is that human civilization is an omnivore, killing countless species. But all of us are dependent on the forests. When forests die, so do entire ecosystems and when ecosystems die we have famines in which humans die. Ultimately the truth is this war on the forest is a suicidal war that will destroy humanity. However, no one has the courage to stop the capitalists behind this war on the forest. The reality is, by doing so, we are signing our own death warrant as a species on this planet.

**Veeramma Kuruba, Chamrajnagar**

## Indian Medical Service

Such a nice idea – such an impossible dream. You see, we sell so many lies – like the idea of public healthcare, poverty alleviation. So many sincere workers are there, struggling to survive amid the sordid reality of underfunding, corruption (looting) and systemic heartlessness at the Centre. We do not need to read about beautiful ideas today. We need to understand how cowards like you and I can rouse our courage and fight for the medical rights of every citizen. It is not going to happen by pushing a button every 5 years to vote for a neta purchased by pharma corporates and private hospitals. It is going to happen when we are ready to put our life on the line to fight for the right of every citizen – to live out their natural lives to a ripe old age in sound mind and health.

**Janardan Pandey, Kaushambi**



# The Present Crisis

James Russell Lowell (1819-1891)

When a deed is done for Freedom, through the broad earth's aching breast

Runs a thrill of joy prophetic, trembling on from east to west,  
And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels the soul within him climb  
To the awful verge of manhood, as the energy sublime  
Of a century bursts full-blossomed on the thorny stem of Time.

For mankind are one in spirit, and an instinct bears along,  
Round the earth's electric circle, the swift flash of right or wrong;  
Whether conscious or unconscious, yet Humanity's vast frame  
Through its ocean-sundered fibres feels the gush of joy or shame;  
In the gain or loss of one race all the rest have equal claim.

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,  
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side;  
Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,

Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the right,  
And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light.

Hast thou chosen, O my people, on whose party thou shalt stand,  
Ere the Doom from its worn sandals shakes the dust against our land?

Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes, they were souls that stood alone,  
While the men they agonized for hurled the contumelious stone,  
Stood serene, and down the future saw the golden beam incline  
To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith divine,  
By one man's plain truth to manhood and to God's supreme design.

(Excerpts: for the full poem  
visit <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/present-crisis> )



# Women's Rights

**"When the fighting starts, My daughters will be out in front."**

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

**W**e, men and women, are the progeny of the same Supreme Consciousness. Women and men are equally divine and inherit similar and equal rights to life, liberty and expression. The significance of life does not lie only in living. Animals also live. But life to us means something more – rather something much more.

**To us life means living for a great cause. Life implies the endeavour to have the freedom to express one's potentialities in the physical, economic, psychic and spiritual realms. It means real liberty and not license to commit anything good or bad.**

In the annals of human history we do find women whose memory glorifies not only womanhood, but the entire human world. In philosophy and spirituality, social reform and educational pursuits, science and technology, they stand second to none. Women are found discussing the riddles of philosophy, solving problems of social and educational reform, and are inspiring men in times of struggle. They have their potentiality no less than men. The difference in natural and biological characteristics between men and women speaks only of coordinated cooperation, not of subordinated cooperation.

Yet the annals of history depict the sad and painful episodes of women's exploitation throughout the world. To fulfil this sinister

design, dogmas were created which led to psycho-economic exploitation. Dogmas were cunningly popularized and women were degenerated to slavery. Psychic exploitation has been infused into the minds of women and many symbols which are religiously observed are nothing but symbols of slavery. In many religions of the world today women are not allowed to become priests in the religious hierarchy.

Women's exploitation is more or less the same everywhere. Is it not a fact that in many countries even franchise rights were not given equally to men and women?

Even today women are slaves to the male-dominated social order. This is not only bad but deplorable. We should decry such domination of

women and their psycho-economic exploitation through the evil design of dogmas. To abolish dogma and liberate women from psychic exploitation, there should be:

- Free education for all women in all countries of the world.
- No discrimination in the social, educational and religious realms.
- The provision of economic and social security to all women.

We stand to create a powerful, dynamic and upsurging social consciousness, especially among women, so that they are inspired to rise, abolish dogma and annihilate all symbols of slavery, and usher in a new era of coordinated cooperation and glorious achievement. **Let women be the vanguard of a new revolution which humanity must achieve for a glorious tomorrow.**



# A Great Betrayal

■ Upendra Baxi

February 19, 2016 was an unusual day in the world history of torture when Ashwani Kumar, a senior advocate and former Union minister of law, filed a petition before the Supreme Court of India to ensure a standalone law compliant with the UN Torture Convention. The Rajya Sabha Committee's unanimous report (December 10, 2012) virtually rewrote the Torture Bill passed by the Lok Sabha on December 6, 2010. On July 8, the Union sought the advice of the Law Commission of India with specific reference to the pending constitutional litigation. It responded (October 30, 2017) with a torture bill of 2017, which mostly followed the Rajya Sabha Standing Committee and the UN Convention. The SC was expected to perform its nudge function, exercising its demosprudential adjudicatory leadership, as it has done frequently.

But in 2017 on November 26 (otherwise the day on which the

State impunity continues for acts of torture.  
Lawmakers and court have not stepped up to  
their duty

Constitution came into force), the SC dismissed the petition. Relying on judicial observations as widely reported in the media, the court mentioned three related grounds. First, Chief Justice Dipak Misra asked: "How can we compel the government to make a law? Can we ask the government to ratify a treaty by way of a mandamus [judicial command]?" Second, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud said "the government has to take a political decision on whether it should ratify the treaty". Third, when Ashwani Kumar maintained that it was the duty of the court to fill the gaps in written law, Justice A.M. Khanwilkar observed: "But it is a policy matter".

The learned chief justice was correct in the abstract but disappointing in the context; the

petitioner did not ever ask for a mandamus in the first place because it would violate the supremacy of Parliament in its own legislative domain. The prayers before the Court did not ask for enforcing a treaty by a court order. The question of compelling the legislature to make a law also never arose. The suggestive jurisprudence of the SC is as old as the court itself and the petitioner painstakingly demonstrated this. The SC has used this power on many subjects concerning, for example, participative decision-making, forest rights, right to information, ragging on campus, right to education, judicial services, inter-country adoptions, consumer jurisprudence, sustainable development law, and privacy rights. The SC remains open to nudge a slow-moving legislature into quick action.

This nudging role becomes most crucial for effectively preventing and punishing the rampant torture practices in policing and security operations. The SC is no stranger to such requests for advancing constitutional civilisation. It has already steadily converted adjudication into the site of demosprudence and issued several directions desiring an abatement of this practice. The writ assumed importance because nearly two decades after India signed the Torture Convention, the Indian state practice has been, to say the least, shameful.

Justice Chandrachud was also broadly justified in saying that treaty ratification was a matter of political

## The Convention Against Torture (CAT)

- The Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, G.A. Res. 39/46, 39 U.N. GAOR Supp. No. 51 at 197, U.N. Doc. A/Res/39/708 (1984) (CAT) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1984.
- The CAT was ratified and entered into force in June 1987.





choice. True, all governance is a matter of political choice, but political choices must remain subject to some constitutional discipline, lest a set of governance dispositions renders citizens into mere rightless subjects. And if the anti-torture norms have become part of customary international law binding on all states, does not the constitutional concern require the Indian state to follow it? The 273rd Report of the Law Commission has now clearly stated that anti-torture norms are *jus cogens*, or peremptory norms of international law, which do not depend on state consent.

Equally legitimate is Justice Khanwilkar's concern about "political matter" but the SC in its demosprudential leadership of the nation has not abstained from making new policies. In fact, it has done so in custodial deaths and encounter killings; so also, it has evolved a compensation policy for violation of fundamental rights.

Overall, the problem becomes one of understanding and explaining the reluctance of the SC in expressing its constitutional anxiety concerning the standalone torture legislation. It is unworthy to suggest that the recent Law Day spat between the executive and judiciary animated summary dismissal. Yet such a disposal after nearly one and half years, and involving the Law Commission that relegates the matter to the legislature for ill-stated reasons raises concerns about a just constitutional response.

The petition disturbingly demonstrates the penchant of state inaction, although from 2007 onwards, India has committed to taking steps to ratify the torture convention. Despite this, no steps have been taken to enact a suitable enabling law required for accessing the UN convention, which is what the Rajya Sabha Standing Committee did after hearing all concerned parties. In preparing a bill, consented to by all political parties, the committee functions as a mini-Parliament and its draft bill should have been enacted.

It was after the great revolt of 1857 that the British instituted torture as a fundamental part of policing. Policing was created in England to serve and protect the foreign exploiters and their Indian lackeys by throttling any revolt of the exploited masses in its infancy. When power over India was transferred to agents of these lackey business houses, the system remains unchanged.

During the Constituent Assembly drafting of the Constitution, Shrii H. V. Kamath tried and failed to pass an amendment banning torture. On September 15, 1959 he explained its necessity saying:

*"I think Dr. Ambedkar is not quite aware of the frequent cases of physical or mental ill-treatment to which detenus were subjected during the British regime, especially during the dark days of 1942 and immediately thereafter. In one or two prisons where I myself was detained, I personally knew of cases, where detenus in C class were beaten mercilessly and also subjected to all sorts of third-degree methods of torture. There were cases where detenus were given no clothes to wear and*

*were made to shiver in severe cold in a state of nudity. There were other cases where the cells of detenus were flooded and the detenus had to pass hours on the, damp floor which was not merely unhealthy, but definitely in some cases induced pneumonia and other diseases which proved fatal. Sir, after all, a man is detained on suspicion only. It is but fair that our Constitution should lay down specifically that no detenu will be subjected to physical and mental ill-treatment."*

Unsurprisingly custodial torture, and even custodial death in India is a norm rather than exception. It flies in the face of due process under the law now enshrined as an aspect of the basic structure of the Constitution. Very recently, the SC issued directions about extra-judicial killings in Manipur. Many other countries especially urged India (in the Universal Periodic Review, 2012) to "finalise" accession to the UN Torture Convention, endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council.

Neither "internal political compulsions" and "weaknesses in the implementation" may produce legitimate law. If, as the SC has recognised, "even while dealing with the 'enemy' the rule of law would apply" and "police or the armed forces who have committed the excesses which do not have a reasonable connection with the performance of their official duty would be liable", should the norm for dealing with co-citizens be any different?

Why does it happen that custodial deaths, custodial and interrogational torture are rarely prosecuted? Why do state apparatuses continue to tolerate such abuse against human dignity and rights when a code of law reform and a speedy ratification of the UN Torture Convention remain available? State impunity for acts of torture must surely find a dignified funeral at least after seven decades of India's independence.



“ Infamous US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said, "Control oil and you control nations; control food and you control the people.”

## Food Sovereignty in a Nutshell

Grassroots International

Our global food system is broken. Small farmers around the world cannot earn a fair price for what they raise. Meanwhile, nearly 800 million people around the world go hungry every day.

Driven by big corporations, the agricultural system no longer values healthy, delicious food, productive and sustainable rural communities or people's right to make decisions about their communities and their farms.

This is why food sovereignty (Anna Swaraj) – the right for all people to decide what they eat and to ensure that food in their community is ecologically, socially, economically, and culturally appropriate – is so important.

Food sovereignty was born in response to campaigners' disillusion with food security, the dominant global discourse on food provisioning and policy. The latter emphasizes access to adequate nutrition for all, which may be provided by food from one's own country or from global imports. In the name of efficiency and enhanced productivity, it has therefore served to promote what has been termed the "corporate food regime": large-scale, industrialised corporate farming based on specialised production, land concentration and trade liberalisation. Food security's inattention to the political economy of the corporate food regime blinds it to the adverse effects of that regime, notably the widespread dispossession of small producers



and global ecological degradation.

Haiti can be seen as a case study. Migration from the countryside to cities has reflected a transition from subsistence agriculture to factory labor. Farmers were forced to make this move because of heavy imports of "Miami rice" from America, who was controlling Haiti, with which their natively-grown rice could not compete in the local market. By 2008, Haiti was importing 80 percent of its rice, leaving them extremely vulnerable to price and supply fluctuations. When the price of rice did triple in 2008, many Haitians could not afford to buy it.

Writing in Food First's Backgrounder, fall 2003, Peter Rosset argues that "food sovereignty goes beyond the concept of food security... [Food security] means that... [everyone] must have the

certainty of having enough to eat each day[,]... but says nothing about where that food comes from or how it is produced." [10] Food sovereignty includes support for smallholders and for collectively owned farms, fisheries, etc., rather than industrializing these sectors in a minimally regulated global economy. In another publication, Food First describes "food sovereignty" as "a platform for rural revitalization at a global level based on equitable distribution of farmland and water, farmer control over seeds, and productive small-scale farms supplying consumers with healthy, locally grown food."

Food justice is a similar concept, but its discourses focuses more on race and class inequities and their relation to food, whereas food sovereignty refers more so to agency over food production



systems.

The international food sovereignty movement formed to address the indignities of the current food system. It is composed of small farmers, fishers, consumers, environmentalists and Indigenous Peoples – all seeking to define their own agricultural, labor, fishing, food and land policies. The food sovereignty movement calls for policies that are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate for their circumstances. Communities around the world that are embracing food sovereignty are supported by La Via Campesina, an international advocacy network of small-producer organizations representing over 150 million farmers, fishers, foresters and agricultural workers on five continents.

At the Forum for Food Sovereignty in Sélingué, Mali, 27 February 2007, about 500 delegates from more than 80 countries adopted the "Declaration of Nyéléni", which says in part:

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability.

They work towards the decentralisation of food chains,

promoting diversified markets based on solidarity and fair prices, and short supply chains and intensified relations between producers and consumers in local food webs to counter the expansion and power of supermarkets. We want to provide the building blocks for people to develop their own food distribution systems and allow farmers to produce and process food for their communities. This requires supportive food safety rules and local food infrastructure for smallholder farmers.

The six principles of food sovereignty call for:

- Food for People
- Valuing Food Providers
- Localizing Food Systems
- Making Decisions Locally
- Building Knowledge and Skills
- Working with Nature

When these simple-yet-revolutionary principles are incorporated into national and international trade and agricultural policies – and when they become a visible reality in our own communities – we will know that the fight for food sovereignty has been won.

Food sovereignty does not describe a universal silver bullet solution. It is a concept for the democratisation of food production, which can be further developed and adapted to different conditions. Important principles of food sovereignty are the right to food, democratic food production systems, the strengthening of local markets, fair trade relations and the formation of fair prices, decent living wages, the freedom of association, education, and the debt relief for states. Other basic principles are access to fertile land, pastures, fishing grounds, forests, water and seeds. This access has to be ensured where necessary through agrarian and land reforms, as well as through the agroecological management and the common conservation of natural resources. Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self-reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets, and; to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources.

In September 2008, Ecuador became the first country to enshrine food sovereignty in its constitution. As of late 2008, a law is in the draft stages that is expected to expand upon this constitutional provision by banning genetically modified organisms, protecting many areas of the country from extraction of non-renewable resources, and to discourage monoculture. The law as drafted will also protect biodiversity as collective intellectual property and recognize the Rights of Nature.

Since then another four countries have integrated food sovereignty into their national constitutions or laws. These countries are Venezuela, Mali, Bolivia, Nepal and Senegal.

Project	Description	Goals
Food and Nutrition Project for Elderly Care	Ageing and retired adults with disabilities, registered in the National Social Register and residing in the Ministry of Social and Economic Well-being centres.	Groups of social interaction to promote the inclusion of elderly adults 214,000 seniors receive the government-sponsored <i>Alimambamba</i> ® soup.
Promoting Healthy Food Consumption	Promoting the consumption of healthy foods by training promoters, teachers and food leaders – receiving from training workshops to mass media campaigns.	50,000 people have attended workshops resulting in 4000 promoters of healthy and nutritional eating 6000 volunteers implementing practices of healthy eating.
Infant Nutrition Food Project	Prevention and control of iron deficiency anemia in children under five years old treated through the delivery of a micronutrient (Unicef) and educational communication strategies.	12,676 child development care units since are indicating anemia by visiting 260,000 children between 6 and 59 months of age and also providing the <i>Chaparron</i> supplement.
Places of Good Living	Creating opportunities for cultural exchange by promoting spaces of exchange, supply and training for healthy eating.	A physical space referred to as a Place of Good Living.

# Tortures Inflicted Upon Shrii Shrii Anandamurti and the Administration of Poison to Him

The following account has been excerpted from the 1974 report of the unofficial enquiry of the Chakraborty Commission in Kolkata into the poisoning of Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji.

### Chakraborty Commission(1)

IV-1 Shrii Shrii Anandamurti is a guide, philosopher and also the supreme inspirer of the Ananda Marga. Rapid growth and development of the organisation and its popularity caused serious apprehension in the minds of the Ruling Party and they became very much afraid of losing their vicious grip over the people. So the Government started the humiliation of the leader of the organisation and his disciples before the general public. With this end in view, the Government and its machineries proceeded so that the dis-affection against the organisation might grow. It is stated that since 1967 the Government and police made several onslaughts on this organisation and thus they chose to put its leader to untold sufferings and harassments. Shrii Shrii Anandamurti was arrested by C.B.I. (Central Bureau of Investigation) on 29.12.71.

Acarya Keshavananda Avadhuta says that on 29.12.71 was his (Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji's) fasting date. The C.B.I. did not allow his morning duties and spiritual practices to be performed nor allowed to take even a single drop of water. He was produced before the S.D.O. (Sub Divisional Officer) Patna and remanded to Buxar Jail. Before he was personally presented to the court, the order was passed for Anandamurti to be sent to Buxar Jail. The letter addressed by Anandamurtiji himself to the Governor of Bihar...It is stated there that the remand order for (being sent to) Jail was kept ready in the S.D.O.'s office before He was produced in the S.D.O.'s chamber. It shows that S.D.O. decided to send Him to jail even before she saw the arrested person. She did not ask a single question nor (was) Anandamurtiji allowed to narrate the tales of tortures. He was sent to Buxar Jail (in another district) at about 10:00 PM at night and Anandamurtiji was without food and water for about 60 hours at a stretch.

IV-2 Anandamurtiji became sick due to unhygienic conditions prevailing in jail. He was sent to Patna Medical College Hospital for treatment. There he was

kept under inhuman torture by the C.B.I., state C.I.D. (Criminal Investigation Department), state police for all te 24 hours upto 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1972. He was kept there continuously without food for three days from 25<sup>th</sup> February.

**Bidhyadhar Pandey of Khadishpur (Gazipur, UP) says in his evidence, "I went to Buxar jail... I saw a man known as Guruji (Anandamurtiji) taken out of the jail by two persons. They were bringing him to take him on the police van. Guruji was groaning and he refused to go by the police van standing nearby. The jail wardens forced him to board the van...and also warned him in filthy language and they said that...[he]...would be subject to more tortures...He was practically physically lifted and was put in the aforesaid van against his will. The Marga arranged for a car but he was not allowed to board that car.**

**Indrajit Pandey (from the same area) said that "I saw two jail warders brought him to the jail gate on their laps and Anandamurtiji was groaning in pain. I tried to follow the van but in vain."**

Both these witnesses thereafter started for Patna and they went to P.M.C.H. (Patna Medical College Hospital). They went to meet Baba (affectionate name for Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji) but to no effect. They further ascertained [from hospital staff] that Anandamurtiji was brought in the hospital in an unconscious state.

Acarya Svarupananda Avadhuta says, "I went to meet Anandamurti in March 1972 at P.M.C.H. I went there to see him and to give him some food, newspapers, periodicals, etc. He was guarded by many police in [uniform] and plain dress in Room No. 17 of Patna Medical College Hospital."

Acarya Svarupananda made an attempt officially to have an interview but to no effect. On being refused he approached the Superintendent of the Hospital but the Superintendent pleaded his helplessness in the matter. Acarya Svarupananda said, "I approached the S.D.O., Patna, Miss R. Sinha, but she expressed her helplessness



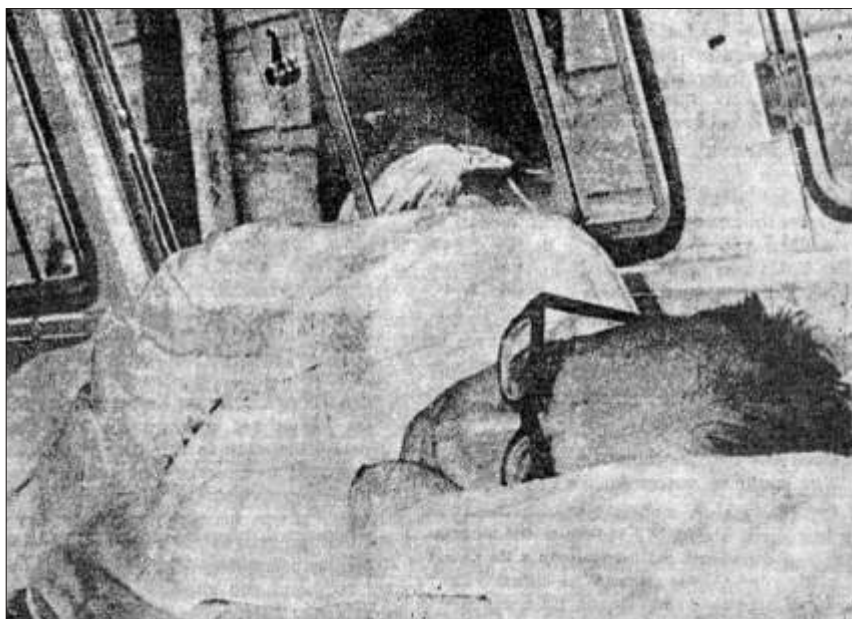
in the matter. I then approached the Superintendent of Buxar Jail and also the Superintendent of the P.M.C.H. applied in writing for an interview but to no effect.

Gangaprosad of Muzaffarpur also went to the hospital. He was there for about two hours and Anandamurtiji was still unconscious.

It was also stated in the letter written by Anandamurtiji to the Governor exhibited by Acarya Keshvananda Avadhuta wherein Anandamurtiji himself specifically stated...“motive was clear and simple. They wanted to kill me as per secret instruction of C.B.I. They did not allow me to read newspapers and also taking food coming from my house and force me to take the un-hygienic food prepared by a man of their choice. They did not allow any of my friends and relations to see me even from a long distance. They created disturbance in my spiritual practice.”

IV-3 Anandamurtiji was sent to Bankipur Central Jail in the first week of April 1972. Just a few days after the authorities had stopped interview with the relations and friends of Anandamurtiji and nobody could see [Him] without written order from the Court of Law. In the first week of June 1972, his mother died. As far as the usage of India was concerned, the first son used to do the [last rites] of his parents. But the Government did neither allow Anandamurtiji to see his mother in her deathbed nor did they allow him to perform her last rites.

Anandamurtiji was accustomed to regulated and routined life. As such he maintained good health before he was arrested. Due to the mal-treatment and tortures of the Government and their agents in the jail department in particular his health deteriorated. Four of his disciples used to look after him in the jails but they were suddenly transferred to Daltonganj and Buxar Jail without any reason with the obvious motive to seclude him and to keep him [alone] with obvious motives.



Acarya Raghunath Prasad in his evidence has said

1. Four co-accused persons living with Baba were transferred to other jails where they had no case pending against them

2. Just at the gate of Baba's cell, sepoys were posted so that none [outside] could see him

3. There was a harsh talk between the I.G. (Inspector General) of Prisons Mr. R. P. Shrivasthava and Baba who threatened Baba with dire consequences. A petition in this connection has been filed before the Committing Magistrate Mr. Shrivasthava and that also appeared in newspapers.

4. While Dr. Ghose was on leave for 10 days from 21<sup>st</sup> January 1974 Dr. Rahamatullah was requisitioned from Muzaffarpur on telephone and given charge of the Bankipur jail hospital and [during] this time the poisoning was done.

The evidence of Shrii Bhola Prasad Singh, the leader of the SSP [party] and jail visitor is that the cell of Anandamurtiji is telling [seriously affecting] his health and the atmosphere of the cell is unhealthy and sickening just like a compact matchbox. Dr. H. M. Ghose was in charge of [Jail] hospital of Patna and he was transferred. He represented [trying to have the order cancelled] and while his representation was in the process, he

was forcibly vacated from his quarters. This appeared in the Press.

It is clear from the above evidence that Dr. Rahamatullah was posted in this jail in place of Dr. Ghose who was on leave and who was forcibly vacated from the quarters also. With the obvious motive, the posting of Dr. Rahamatullah was continued even after the expiry of leave of Dr. Ghose [the official reason for posting Dr. Rahamatullah] who was subsequently transferred.

Suresh Singh from Dhangai Barun (Aurangabad, Bihar) was arrested while he went to the jail for the execution of the Vakalatnama (form legalizing an advocate as one's personal representative) on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1973 for taking signatures of Anandamurtiji regarding the court cases and he was put in a cell in Bankipur Central Jail. He met Anandamurtiji. He said in his evidence that Anandamurtiji has a fixed time for taking meals...foods were supplied before 10 AM, but the jail authorities supplied food very irregularly and the health of Anandamurtiji was deteriorated due to irregular taking of meals.

He said, “On 12.2.73 Anandamurtiji felt pain of headache at 3 PM. The matter was reported to the jail doctor, Dr. Rahamatullah. The jail doctor came and

administered some medicine. At 9 PM Anandamurtiji felt severe pain inspite of the medicine given aforesaid. The doctor again came at 11 PM on my report in this matter. Anandamurtiji told the doctor to inform the civil surgeon and his own men as he is seriously suffering now. The doctor assured about the information and to report this matter to the civil surgeon. After a short while Dr. Rahamatullah came and assured us that the civil surgeon was consulted on telephone and the Ananda Marga men were also informed. He brought a medicine at that time and administered [it] to Baba as per instructions of civil surgeon of Patna. Those medicines were tablets.

“After the administration of the medicine, Anandamurtiji became restless and went to his bed for sleeping. I also slept in the same cell. Usually Baba woke up at 4 PM. On 13<sup>th</sup> February 1973 I got up at 4 AM on expectation that Baba will arise from his bed as usual. I observed that till 6 AM Anandamurtiji did not arise from his bed. At 7 AM, I tried to wake him by touching his feet, calling... “Baba, Baba”. It appeared to me that he was under the influence of some intoxication (*hamney unko nasas se pravabit dekha*). I ascertained from Anandamurtiji that:

- a) He is feeling serious pain all over the body;
- b) Inertness of brain;
- c) Water was oozing out from his eyes
- d) He felt burning sensations in the whole body;
- e) He felt himself very weak

“Anandamurtiji directed me to give an information to the civil surgeon through the jailor. [The] civil surgeon came to see Anandamurtiji at about 9 AM. I told the civil surgeon that the medicine prescribed by you and sent through the jail doctor was administered to Baba and from that very time he was feeling uneasy and now he is in such a...condition as aforesaid...Civil surgeon became surprised. He said, 'I don't know anything about this, nor I prescribed any medicine in the night.'”

Suresh Singh further says that there was no label on the [bottle] of tablets which were administered to Anandamurtiji. He said, “I have tried to know about the name of the medicine from the doctor but to no effect. The present condition of Anandamurtiji is due to the administration of the medicine on the previous night. After one month, Anandamurtiji regained some health.”

Acarya Sujitananda Avadhuta, the Personal Assistant of Anandamurtiji says that **“On 11.3.73 when I met Anandamurtiji, I found him very weak in comparison to his past and water oozing from his eyes [and] there [were] visible black spots below the eyes. I enquired about the watering from eyes and the black spots below the eyes and came to know that those signs are due to the poisoning. He felt difficulty in recognizing me from the distance. He had also difficulty in vision. I saw the milk supplied to Anandamurtiji. It was not milk but a whitish liquid mixed with some lentils, dust of sand and blotting**

**paper, etc.** Curd was also supplied to Anandamurtiji but that was having acidic taste and pungent and obnoxious smell. Anandamurtiji wrote a letter to the Governor Bihar on the said issue. Jail authority did not allow Anandamurtiji to get papers, magazines, periodicals sent by friends. Anandamurtiji wrote a letter to the District Magistrate, Patna, stating the aforesaid matter. Anandamurtiji was often disturbed by jail authorities and jail constables at the time of his private [toilet] duties...The right leg of Anandamurtiji became paralysed on and from 14.2.73.”

From Annexure 6 and Exhibit 1 provided by Acarya Piyushananda Avadhuta, it transpires that Anandamurtiji in his letter to the Governor of Bihar specifically made a complaint that “about 11 O'clock in the night of 12.2.73 the jail doctor said that 'the civil surgeon is not [able] to come to see me but he has prescribed a medicine for you.' He administered that so-called medicine which was actually a poison. Just after taking the medicine I became restless. I came back to senses at about 7 O'clock in the morning on 13.2.73. At that time, I was undergoing the following five reactions of that poison viz., --

- a) Extreme weakness throughout the body
- b) Nervous reaction throughout the body
- c) Profuse watering from both the eyes
- d) Extreme pain in the brain
- e) Inertness of brain.

“On 14<sup>th</sup> morning I felt the sixth reaction and that is I was unable to see anything clearly even from a short distance. I became almost blind. A few days after that, an eye specialist came and said that I was suffering from conjunctivitis. On 15<sup>th</sup> night two more specialists came. At that time my blood pressure was 180/111 [very high]. On the 16<sup>th</sup> morning my urine was examined, the sugar was \*\*\* (three plus) [very high]. I have got no doubt that I was poisoned on 12<sup>th</sup> night and all these diseases are reactions to that poison. On 19<sup>th</sup> February a first-class Magistrate was deputed by District Magistrate to record my statement. In the statement I have stated that in case of medical treatment, the faith of a patient plays a very important role and as I have lost faith in these Government Doctors and as a strong suspicion has been created in my mind that they have poisoned me as per direction of the C.B.I., I not like to be treated by any doctor selected by Government. I want to be treated by my private doctor...I would request you to please favour me by appointing a judicial commission to go through all the above-mentioned complaints and other relevant matters at an early date. I have got strong suspicion that certain black hands are working against me from behind the curtain and some of them are important person. I want to disclose the names of those important persons before the Judicial Commission.”

Thereafter on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1973 Anandamurtiji addressed another letter to the Governor of Bihar wherein it is stated, “if the jail authorities want to kill me like this, I will have no alternative but to resort to some



other step for which the Government will be solely responsible because of their not doing the needful in response to my timely request. It may please be added that since 13.2.73 I have been suffering from the reactions of poisoning which was done on 12.2.73 and I have not been served with a single drop of medicine until 16.2.73.”

Thereafter he addressed several letters to the Governor of Bihar on 1.4.73, 13.5.73, 15.6.73 but the Governor has not even [the] courtesy to acknowledge those letters, farless taking any actions requested by Anandamurtiji.

Anandamurtiji thereafter sent a letter to the District Magistrate, Patna on 11.8.73 with a copy to the President of India, Governor of Bihar, Secretary General (U.N.O.) with a specific request to the Governor that no reply had yet been received of the first letter dates 5.3.73. Thereafter he again sent letters of the District Magistrate, Patna, Bihar on 2.8.73 with a copy to the President of India and the Governor of Bihar and the Secretary General (U.N.O.).

Apart from these letters, Anandamurtiji sent letters to the Inspector General (Prisons) on 10.9.73, to the Governor of Bihar on 21.9.73, to the IG (Prisons), Bihar on 17.10.73 and the Governor of Bihar on 25.10.73 and also on 28.10.73. Copies of the letters addressed to the Governor were also forwarded to the President of India and Secretary General (U.N.O.).

In the last letter dates 19.10.73 he made specific allegations... “I have brought to your notice the fact that this doctor tried to kill me on 12.2.73 by administering poisonous drug in the name of medicine for which I requested you to please arrange a judicial probe.

Recently, I have been informed that the Chief Minister of Bihar, Mr Abdul Gafoor is backing and patronising Dr. Rahmanatullah and trying to suppress the truth by avoiding the judicial probe.”

Anandamurtiji has been on partial fast in Bankipur Jail since

April 1, 1973...It is strange that inspite of repeated protests by the Members of Parliament, by the leaders of political parties, by their statements and also by series of public demonstrations by the members of the Samgha, the Government has not made any statement clarifying the position and/or taking suitable steps against the allegations namely tortures, harassment and ultimately the allegation of poisoning made by Anandamurtiji himself. We fail to understand what prevented the Government from showing the minimum courtesy in replying to his letters. When Anandamurtiji has leveled a specific charge on the Government regarding poisoning on him and damaging his life, any democratic Government would have taken such steps as would satisfy the people at large.

Shrii Bhola Prasad Singh (MLA) says that the Bihar Government officials say that they are helpless in this case as they got instructions from the Home Minister (Central Government). Shrii Singh is a jail visitor. He had been to the jail. He met Anandamurtiji and he along with other political leaders agitated the questions of tortures and poisoning in the Assembly, but to no effect...

IV-5. Now let use to the issue...regarding poisoning on Anandamurtiji at Bankipur Central Jail on 12.2.73...Barbituates comes under the definition of poison and the use of barbituates has steadily increased. They have a depressant effect upon the central nervous system and affect the cardiac and respiratory centres. Barbituates are contra-indicated when there is impairment of liver or kidneys since excretion is normally slow and these drugs are cumulative.

Dr. N. K. Mallick of Bangaon (24 Parganas, West Bengal) is the Doctor examined by the Commission. He said the following symptoms will be expressed due to administration of the medicine [of barbiturates], namely

a) Extreme weakness throughout

the body

b) Nervous reaction throughout the body

c) Profuse watering from both the eyes

d) Extreme pain in brain; and

e) Inertness in brain.

If these symptoms are found in any person administered in higher dose of barbiturates group of medicine, it may be fatal to his life.

Another Doctor, an expert viz. Dr P. K. Sen (MRCP-Edin, and MRCP-London: Member of Royal College of Physicians) was examined. His evidence is that barbiturates come under hypnotic group of medicines...there are short acting groups, long acting and intermediary acting groups. Any of these drugs of hypnotics, if administered in excess of the therapeutic dose acts as poison. The doctor said, “Symptoms like extreme weakness throughout the body, nervous reaction, profuse watering from the eyes, inertness in brain and extreme pain in brain and unconsciousness for hours could be due to administration of either barbiturates or tranquiliser. I am giving this opinion as a clinician from my long experience in administering these drugs and also patients who have taken overdose of above drugs...”

IV-9 Keshavananda who was waiting outside the Jail was not permitted to meet him [by the jail authorities]. On 14.2.73 Nirmalananda met Anandamurtiji and he also asserted all the symptoms which were states above. He saw Anandamurtiji with red eyes and water oozing from his eyes. Anandamurtiji started his fasting from 1.4.73. He is living on two cups of horlicks a day. He is still on partial fast.

IV-10 Now, let us analyse the circumstances in arriving at the decision of this issue. When the Inspector General of Prisons, Bihar went to see Anandamurti in his cell on 12.11.72 there was a hot discussion between the I.G. and Anandamurtiji and the I.G. of Prisons at that time said in a most

unparliamentary tone: "Don't shout, I will show you the consequence". This matter was reported to Shrii R. P. Srivasthava, Special Munsif Magistrate, (C.B.I.), Patna with copy to Present of India and Government of Bihar for necessary action but to no effect...

IV-12 So in view of the aforesaid circumstances that

- i) The attitude of the Government was very much vindictive towards Anandamurtiji
- ii) Anandamurtiji as head of the world-wide organisation deserves protection of his civil and democratic rights
- iii) The Government always followed the procedure of protection of civil and democratic right by willful breeches
- iv) From the day of his arrest with utmost disregard for his minimum rights as enjoyed by an undertrial prisoner
- v) The attitude of the Government towards Anandamurtiji was amply expressed by [the] threatening of I.G. (Prisons), the remark made by police when he was shifted from Buxar Jail to P.M.C.H. and also remarks made by the police when they were assaulting the members of the procession before the Bankipur Jail
- vi) The statement of Indira Gandhi that he (Anandamurtiji) had been proven guilty of many heinous crimes. This [prejudicial statement before the actual trial was to begin] expresses very nakedly the vindictive attitude of the Central Government
- vii) It is in evidence that when the leaders of the opposition met the Bihar Government, the Government expressed its helplessness in dealing with the grievances of Anandamurtiji without the direction of the Central Government
- viii) The evidence of the Members of the Parliament and leaders and member of Bihar Assembly and other proves beyond doubt that the Government is very inimical towards Anandamurtiji and his organisation with obvious motive to crush the organisation
- ix) Dr Ghose when on leave was forcibly ousted from his quarters and Dr. Rahamatullah (undoubtedly a faithful agent) was posted on telephonic order to perpetuate some heinous crime.
- x) It is common knowledge that political rivalry sometimes induces the top of the ruling clique to perpetrate heinous crimes. We have analysed the evidence regarding Dr. Rahamatullah: how he was posted by removing Dr. Ghose, and his false statement regarding administering of medicine on Anandamurtiji, without prescription and examination and the statement of the civil surgeon otherwise and withholding of cogent evidence regarding administration of barbiturates on Anandamurtiji.

Instances of slow poisoning on

political prisoners during British days are still fresh in our mind. So, considering the aforesaid facts and circumstances, we cannot but conclude that some heinous attempt was made by the Government in administering the poisonous drug on Anandamurtiji with obvious motive.

The cogent circumstances and evidences and evidences lead us to make the irresistible conclusion that the Government machineries from the top to the State level, being surcharged with hatred against Anandamurtiji and his disciples, logically induces us to believe that the poisonous drug was administered to Anandamurtiji in overdose, which, undoubtedly amounts to poisoning.

28.12.1974

Footnote

(1) MLAs of Bihar approached the People's Welfare Council to launch a non-official enquiry commission into the tortures and poisoning of Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji. On 18.5.1974, the People's Welfare Council met at the office in Rajendranagar (Patna). The Council appointed Advocate Amar Prasad Chakraborty and Advocate Bhakti Bhusan Mondal of the High Court of Calcutta. The first sitting of the Chakraborty Commission was held in Patna on 15.6.74. Others who assisted were Advocate Sachinanda Chowdhury (Patna), Mr. Randhir Sinha (Patna) and Mr. Pandey Nabdesswar Sahay. The Commission began examining witnesses but received no cooperation from the Central and state government officials.

Shrii Sarkar fasted for five years, four months and two days asking for an official judicial enquiry. Seven disciples performed self-immolation in pursuance of this quest for justice. Afterwards, Shrii Sarkar continued to ask for judicial proof for His poisoning. **Sadly, no disciple bothered to pursue justice for their Preceptor. To the present day, there has been no official judicial enquiry.**



# Close the Gender Pay Gap - How far are we?

“

According to ILO's Women at Work: Trends 2016, globally, in the last twenty years labour participation has decreased for both women and men, but still there is a gap of 27 p.p. (percentage points); 49.6 per cent and 76.1 per cent has been the corresponding labour force participation in 2015.

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■ Xavier Estupinan & Sher Verick

Gender inequality occurs when social constraints based on gender roles result in unequal distribution of opportunities and outcomes. There are different ways in which gender inequality is manifested and the consequence of this inequality has a direct impact on human development. From a point of view of labour, respective labour force participation rates of both women and male populations give the first glimpse of gender inequality. If one looks closer at the endowments of women and men, we are able to identify if there is a direct link between the stock of abilities (acquired through education, skills, experience and other attributes that then determines the ability to perform a labour activity), and the capacity of either sexes to produce economic value. In other words, if someone has better qualifications and experience, the likelihood of obtaining higher returns from a job increases. From a sectoral perspective, certain advantages in productivity or location tend to influence in the returns from work. The reality is that not more than 18% of workers are in the formal economy, an additional 30% of workers are casual daily-wage workers who earn only 30% of male urban workers do for the same work.

Another issue in understanding wages is the economic slowdown. In 2016-17, growth in industry has been estimated at 5.6 per cent (compared to 8.8 per cent in 2015-16), while in the services sector, growth slowed down to 7.7 per cent, a decline of 2.0 percentage points from the previous year. Manufacturing slowed down to 7.9 per cent in 2016-17, compared to 10.8 per cent in 2015-16. The sharpest decline has been witnessed in the construction sector, which has been linked to the impact of demonetization: an absolute decline of 3.7 per cent in fourth quarter of 2016-17, versus a positive growth rate of 6 per cent in 2015-16.

An additional factor has been that the share of workers in the unorganized sector fell from 86.3 per cent in 2004-05 to 82.2 per cent in 2011-12. At the same

time, the share of informal workers in the organized sector (i.e. workers without access to social security) increased significantly because of a greater use of contract and other forms of casual labour. The share of contract labour in organized manufacturing increased from 15.6 per cent at the end of the 1990s to 34.7 per cent in 2011-12. 79 per cent of non-agricultural wage workers had no written contract and only 23.8 per cent were eligible for social security benefits.

**India has amongst the lowest women's labour force participation rates (LFPR) in the world. Not only women's participation rates are low, but has been showing a declining trend since 2004-05.** Women's LFPR dropped from 42.7 per cent in 2004-05 to 31.2 in 2011-12. As per this understanding, one can say that gender inequality in the wage form of employment is determined by the difference in endowments between women and men. While this still be a simplistic explanation there exists other determinants behind the gender wage gap.

Gender equality is addressed in the ILO Conventions. Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), have been ratified by 90 per cent of ILO's members. These Conventions provide a legal framework for countries to work towards their own legislation. The ratification of these Conventions has helped countries to address the gender wage gap. The gender wage gap can be 8% at higher level jobs and up to 50% to even 75% at low wage jobs in the informal sector. Another reason is that women in the informal sector are less educated and have less job security. And of course, we find it is Dalit and Adivasi women who face the lowest wages and harassment due to endemic discrimination.

### What Women Want

**The global gender wage gap, has decreased in a substantial way in the last two decades, and in 2015 is**





estimated to be of 23 per cent, with women earning 77 per cent of what men receive, on average. This gap can be estimated on a monthly or an hourly basis, and the latter reflects a more consistent result as women are engaged more in part time work than men. This gender wage gap is also referred to as the unadjusted wage gap. It is so because it is a raw measurement that does not take into account endowment characteristics that directly affect the level of returns from work. Recent studies explain that characteristics related to work, sectors and geography are insufficient to explain the gender wage gap. The residual in such analysis is attributed to discrimination and this is what is referred to as the adjusted gender wage gap.

The recent ILO Global Wage Report 2014/2015, breaks down the unadjusted gender wage gaps for few developed and emerging countries. It helps identify the explained part of the gap as per the measurable labour market characteristics (such as education, experience, economic activity, location, work intensity and occupation). Developed countries like Germany and the United States have explained the wage gap within these factors. Some of the explanations may reflect that women end up working greater share of their time in part time jobs, yet they draw a lower pay than those

employed in full-time jobs.

Also, most women tend to leave work because of motherhood, childcare and elderly care and the age of the women and the number of children at home are also variables that influence differences in their wages as compared to the men. Some working mothers, “tend to value family friendly workplaces policies more than men” and some of the gap is explained by the percentage of women, who work in the industry and occupation, with less returns from their work. What is not captured by these explanations, is the adjusted gender wage gap.

### Rock Bottom

Many research papers have looked at both the adjusted and unadjusted gender wage gap in India. In fact, there are many papers which estimate earning functions determined by the production. This are typically broken down into an endowment effect and the unexplained or discrimination effect against women workers. Rustagi, 2005, finds significant disparity levels between women and men workers across levels of education, types of employment, industries and locations that place women in a disadvantageous position as compared to men. Madheswaran and Khasnobis (2007) found that wage differentials have declined in India from 0.40 in 1983 to 0.26 in 1999-2000 for the regular workers, and this has to do with the narrowing

of the endowment difference.

Using NSS 2009-2010 data, Khanna's (2012) study reveals the existence of “Sticky Floor” in regular labour market that indicates there is a larger gap at the lower levels of the wage distribution. Duraisamy and Duraisamy (2014), shows that female wage growth has been faster than that of the men. 81 per cent of the wage differences could be related to discrimination and part of this is due to the choice of industry and occupation. Bhattacharjee, Hnatkovska and Lahiri (2015), see in their results that gender wage gaps have shrunk in most percentile groups, the gaps have narrowed for the youngest cohorts, that suggests that this gap will continue to narrow in the future.

These investigations reveal the reasons behind the gender wage gap in the Indian labour market. **Larger gaps are found at the lower end of the wage distribution. And in this lower end, as identified by Khana (2012), if one takes the National Floor Level Minimum Wage as a threshold, there is evidence that for women almost 42 per cent of the regular working population fall below this line.**

Extending the coverage of minimum wage to all workers, and working towards achieving compliance based on full consultation with employer's and worker's organizations are noted in ILO's Convention No. 131, and ILO's policy guidelines on minimum wages. These measures can have a direct impact on the most vulnerable and reduce the gender wage gap at the lower end of the distribution. Other measures to close this pay gap will need to include strengthening of the education system and skill enhancement (that then results in obtaining high added value jobs), raising awareness to overcome discriminatory practices, and advocacy to create an environment for narrowing the gender labour participation gap.

What is even more important is to address the work overload that women face as compared to men.

Most women tend to be primary care-givers, looking after their households and children, this phenomenon isn't captured in the gender wage gap studies which is something to consider so as to construct better policy measures.

### **Low female Labour Force Participation**

Female labour force participation in India has been historically low, particularly in the North, where social norms have placed a constraint on how and where women can work. **In this context, one of the most puzzling labour market trends in India has been the further decline in the female labour force participation rate (LFPR), particularly during the last 15 years, which was a period of strong economic growth.** Looking at the all-India level, LFPR for women aged 15 and above stood at 42.7% in 2004-05, according to Usual Principal Subsidiary Status (UPSS) definition<sup>1</sup>. By 2009-10, the rate had fallen dramatically to 32.6%, and it continued to decline to 31.2% in 2011-12. More recent data from the Labour Bureau indicates that women's LFPR stood at just 31.1% in 2013-14, before falling to 27.4% in 2015-16.

In recent years, there has been considerable debate on the various explanations for this puzzling trend. Most studies, including Dasgupta and Verick (2016), focus on four key drivers of the decline: firstly, increased enrolment in secondary schooling; secondly, rising household incomes, which pulled women out of the drudgery of agricultural labour; thirdly, mismeasurement of women's participation in the labour force; and finally, the lack of employment opportunities for women in the non-farm sector. Based on small-sample primary surveys, there is also some evidence that the mechanisation of agriculture has contributed to the decline in demand for female agricultural labour.

As noted above, increased enrolment in secondary school is a factor behind the decline in LFPR,

though it hasn't been the main driver since the fall is also evident among prime-age women. At the same time, educational attainment is a key determinant of labour market outcomes – this is reflected in both the differences in female LFPR across education categories and the types of jobs women can access. Firstly, there is a U-shaped relationship in India between female labour force participation and education, with the lowest participation rates experienced by women with secondary schooling (Kapsos et al. 2016). Only for those who complete tertiary education do participation rates increase. Secondly, as the level of education goes up, so does the likelihood a woman can find better quality employment (a global phenomenon!). As shown by Chaudhary and Verick (2014), Indian women with a graduate education have a 30% higher chance of being in regular salaried work in rural areas, and 20% higher probability in the case of urban areas (compared to illiterate women).

Overall, while Indian women have withdrawn from traditional roles in agriculture, there have been insufficient job opportunities for women in fast-growing sectors, which has been the case in other Asian countries, including Bangladesh. That said, women are entering the labour force in larger numbers in some states, such as Tamil Nadu, where the garment industry has become a large employer of women workers.

In some ways, it has been hard for many commentators to accept that India's female LFPR has been falling – some have suggested that it is largely an issue of measurement. The argument goes that women's work is mismeasured indeed, since many women are unpaid family workers, their status is misclassified and recorded as domestic duties. However, as outlined in Dasgupta and Verick (2016), mismeasurement is less likely in the context of an external workplace such as factory or office. There should be little doubt that the number of women in India working outside the home is low in comparison to other countries, say in East and South-East Asia.

India is, in fact, not unique in its experience of low and declining LFPR of women. The female LFPR in Turkey fell from 36.1% in 1989 to 23.3% in 2005. This has been explained by the process of urbanisation and structural transformation: as households moved to urban areas and husbands shifted out of agriculture, women withdrew from the labour force (reflecting an increased engagement in domestic duties) (World Bank, 2009). Female LFPR in Turkey only started to increase in 2009 – as of 2013, it had reached 30.8% (ILOSTAT database).

### **Asia vs Other Developing Regions**

Overall, female LFPR is lower in South Asia than other parts of Asia (Figure 1). On average, female LFPR in South Asia stood at just 28.3% in 2015, while it reached 61.8% in East Asia and 58.8% in South-East Asia. That said, it should also be noted that the rate has not only fallen in South Asia, from 34.8% in 1995, but also in East Asia (from 69.1% in 1995). However, in South-East Asia, women's participation remained stable at around 58%. While these aggregate trends mask differences across countries, they are significant in that they set the region apart from the rest of the world. In all other developing regions, women's LFPR has increased since the 1990s. Even the Arab states, with the lowest level of female LFPR, witnessed an increase from 17.2% in 1995 to 21.1% in 2015 (Dasgupta and Verick 2016).

All countries in South Asia, apart from Nepal, have low female LFPR. But, in recent years, there are different trends and divergence in some cases (Figure 2). In contrast to the predictions of the U-shaped hypothesis<sup>2</sup>, which relates female LFPR to the level of economic development, there has been an increase in the LFPR in Bangladesh. A low-income country, Bangladesh has witnessed a substantial increase in female employment in labour-intensive export-oriented industries in urban areas. At the same time, the rapid expansion of microfinance in rural areas has supported women's employment in poultry and livestock. Another puzzle emerging from South Asia is that, despite significant progress in human development over many decades and the

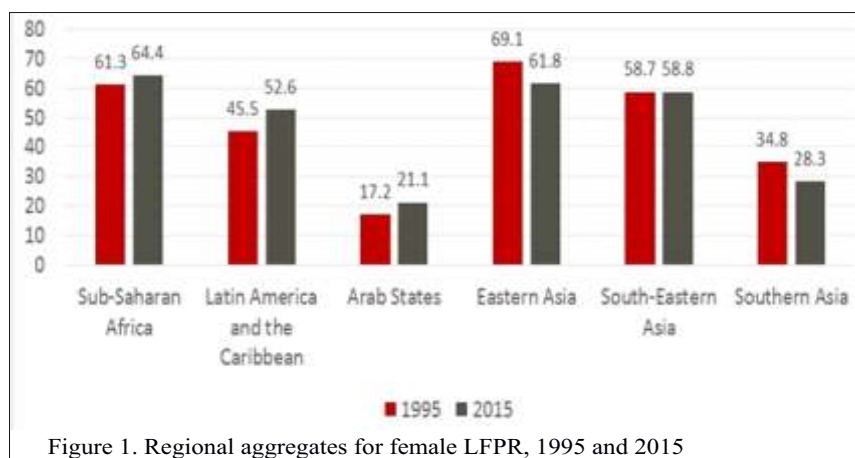


Figure 1. Regional aggregates for female LFPR, 1995 and 2015

more recent positive economic trends, female LFPR in Sri Lanka has remained stagnant, which is linked to educational attainment, access to jobs, and the child and elderly care burden. In contrast to the other countries in South Asia, Nepal has a very high female LFPR, even by global standards, which reflects both differences in the opportunities women have to work (along with the pressure imposed by the migration of spouses) and measurement.

Looking to other parts of Asia, far higher rates of female LFPR are evident. In Cambodia, the female LFPR increased to 84.8% in 2011 from 77.5% in 2004, which is one of the highest rates witnessed anywhere in the world. In Indonesia, LFPR is lower but still far higher than in South Asia (48.9% in 2015). In the last three decades, China has experienced an unprecedented period of economic growth; however, this was also accompanied by increasing gender gaps in some labour market indicators. Although women's LFPR in China is relatively high (above 60%), both women's LFPR and employment-to-population ratio have declined at a faster rate than men's. Women are also more likely to be engaged in low-productivity sectors.

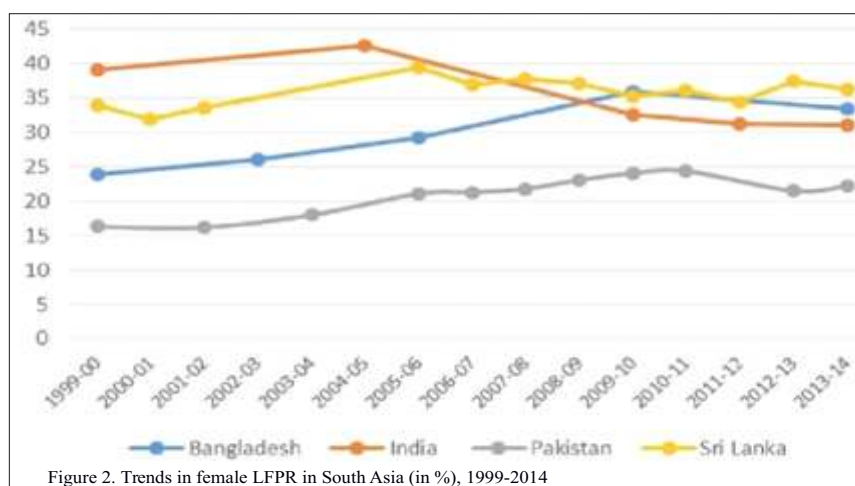


Figure 2. Trends in female LFPR in South Asia (in %), 1999-2014

### What Needs to be Done?

The goal should not be to increase female LFPR at any cost, but to increase good work opportunities for women, and their freedom to choose to work outside the home and access decent and productive employment. Due to the complexity of the factors driving female labour force participation, no single policy measure can be proposed to improve labour market outcomes for women in India and across Asia.

Overall, six policy pillars can be considered, particularly in the Indian context: 1) inclusive growth and job creation; 2) education and skills

development; 3) support for reducing the time burden; 4) transport and infrastructure; 5) legal rights and protection; and 6) measurement.

1. More emphasis is needed on promoting investment in smaller towns and locations, which would lead to the creation of jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities that women are able to access.

2. Educational attainment beyond secondary schooling needs to be promoted, along with vocational education and training, which, in turn, increases occupational choices for women.

**3. Efforts are required to reduce the time burden associated with unpaid household work through the provision of child care and elderly care, as well as sharing of care responsibilities at the household level. Maternity benefits and flexible work arrangements should be offered. The improvement of basic infrastructure, such as energy, water and sanitation, would contribute greatly to making available more time for women's paid work.**

4. Further efforts are needed to expand public transport to facilitate the movement of women, especially the poor, in addition to the provision of infrastructure, such as public toilets and street lighting, to improve the safety of women when travelling to work.

5. A range of legal rights need to be strengthened, including protection from violence and sexual harassment, equal pay, safe working conditions, non-discrimination, and representation. Access to social protection is critical to not only support household incomes, but also to encourage mobility.

Policymakers need to improve collection of data on different dimensions of women's participation in the labour market (example, through time-use surveys and better trained enumerators). The Resolution of the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (2013) provides a broader foundation for a far more comprehensive approach to measuring women's work.



# Contrasting the Legacy of Political Democracy with the Prospects of Economic Democracy

Trond Øverland

The world over, economic conditions are worsening for most. Everywhere we see the same scene: disappearance of well paid jobs resulting in decreasing purchasing capacity. When most of the fit population no longer have a decent income, they will neither be able to fend for themselves nor aid the economy. Due to the ensuing weak consumption and economic slowdown, even the super-wealthy develop cold feet and refrain from investing, dreading the prospects of poor returns on their investments. Hence, “financial crises” are on the cards everywhere.

The propounder of the Progressive Utilization Theory (Prout), (1) Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, noted:

“The most important economic issue before the leaders of all the countries in the world today is how to increase the standard of living of their citizens through the economic prosperity of the state. This is a burning question, especially in those countries which are economically backward. The matter is not very simple because in many countries people are still directly dependent on nature for their subsistence. Only in a few countries have people been able to utilize their knowledge and wisdom to solve their economic problems.” (2)

## The Demise of Political Democracy

On closer inspection, we realize that economic booms and busts develop irrespective of political systems. Capitalism's volatile ups and downs are felt as acutely in Beijing as in Moscow, Washington Istanbul, and Riyadh.

This is an essential observation: No political system, (including Europe's social democracies), has been able to guarantee welfare for all or even for most of their populations over time. In fact, democracies cannot even guarantee their own stability. Greece today? Then yesterday Germany, a cultured and most socio-economically educated nation, transformed rapidly into brutal totalitarianism where even its advanced system of education was thoroughly abused and perverted:

“Education played a very important part in Nazi Germany in trying to cultivate a loyal following for Hitler and the Nazis. The Nazis were aware that education would create loyal Nazis by the time they reached adulthood.”(3)

The systemic reason for Hitler's easy takeover was weak political leadership who could not handle the realities of the country's financial and military losses. Much like the current US president Donald Trump,

The next step of democracy lies in evolving practical economic democracy supported by universal moral and spiritual leadership from grassroots upwards.

Hitler came to power by manipulating political elections in primitive ways and didn't care a fig for democracy thereafter. This is a basic problem of democracy; its political processes from grassroots up require a highly educated and morally conscious electorate to function adequately, while capitalism (the system that always come to work behind) the scenes only encourages immorality, corruption and cultural decadence.

Is capitalism always working behind democracy? Eventually yes, and there are fundamental historical causes to this phenomenon. With the maturation and inevitable decadence of monarchic rule, democracy develops due to growing number of advisors and interest groups that continue to take hold. When the new era of enlightenment weakens due to internal strife and decadence, as was the case of both the Church and all modern party-based democracies, capitalism eventually gain supreme power. The *working behind* is due to the



dynamics of the upcoming system taking advantage of whatever is useful to it in the preceding system. According to the theory of the social cycle this is part of how history unfolds. (4)

Hence, capitalism places democracy in front and cashes in at the back, while the political system and the whole of society continue to disintegrate and decay. How come, then, you may wonder, hasn't the penny dropped by now? Why do we remain caught up in the same old fragmented world of party-based political democracy? The simple reply is that the interests of both capitalists and politicians are very well served by the system of political democracy covering for capitalism's psycho-economic exploitation:

"When economic exploitation is perpetrated by the application of brute force, it is politico-economic exploitation; but when it is done not through brute force but through the application of cunning intellectual strategy, it is primarily psycho-economic exploitation." (5)

According to this view, political democracies in industrially and socially developed countries work as part of capitalism's psycho-economic exploitative strategy: "You have the freedom to choose between a range of commercial products, a handful of political views, so many opinions and issues of commercial media, numerous tv-channels - freedom!" But you and all others will never ever have economic freedom as it is reserved only for the super-rich and most greedy.

Here's an acute angle: If you and your family were to choose between a life of healthy food, nice clothing, housing of your choice, excellent medical services and a solid education system or none of that to vote professional politicians into office, which one would it be? You may say this is an extreme construction. Still, it is the reality of very many today: So-called political freedom coupled with economic poverty.

Here's another realistic perspective: The current system of political democracy is motivated largely by prospects of political power. Due to relentless infighting and political maneuvering between and within political parties, ambition for power, post and position has come to consume the political mind. Had there instead been a universal, unified movement for development and economic prosperity of all, our society may have been united and not divided along numerous party lines.

Modern media-driven democracies have come to mean the worst of human nature, or rather of *sub-animality in human form*. **Politics today is a steady sewage of broken promises and angry accusations - a mockery of cardinal human values to the beat of groupism, religious dogmas, and all sorts of pseudo-sentiments meant to fragment human society.** No wonder people turn away from that stinking bed of lies and treachery, resulting in poor turnout at elections around the world. Instead of upholding human ideals, political democracy has become a venue for setting fresh records of two-facedness and all sorts of hypocrisy. Who wants to go near it?

Capitalism has now reached a stage where it effectively kills off democracy as this system is no more useful to it. Enough legislation has already been passed to establish dictatorship:

On September 28, 2001 after the 9-11 Terror attacks, UN Security Council Resolution 1373 was passed unanimously. For the first time, this law was imposed upon all members of the UN without waiting for them to sign a treaty. Even more unusual was the fact that the meeting to discuss this bill began at 10:50 PM and adjourned at 10:53 PM and even more strange is that there is no official record of this meeting. This law calls upon all nations to change their laws to create anti-terrorism legislation. What has happened since then has been the creation of laws which violated democratic civil liberties and often persecuted minorities in many nations. This has been termed by Law Professor Kim Lane Scheppele as the "International State of Emergency." The result has been a movement towards what has been termed "The Global Police State".

In fact, some opine capitalism is even not capitalism anymore as it is not about production and services but about wild speculation and manipulation. In this era of pseudo-capitalism, the speed of democracy's death is great in the third world, the US, and the UK, and slower in Europe (although right at the time of writing, France is under permanent state of emergency in violation of all its revolutionary political ideals).

The Scandinavian/European socio-democratic ideal of mixed economy, with protection of workers, consumers, and liberal social services, is clearly under attack and will perish sooner than later. The welfare systems of those political democracies were financed by classical productive capitalism via taxes. This socio-economic reality is vanishing rapidly as purchasing power, morality, and political stability are all fast eroding. At the same time, the system of capitalism itself, as already discussed, has entered its final phase of all-out exploitation beyond any reason or human concern.

### **Declining Purchasing Capacity**

As already mentioned, a significant indicator of worsening economic times is a continuing decrease in people's actual purchasing power. When salaries start to fall behind the cost of living, the value of money will fail to hold up against any economic crisis. Until recently, salary takers in opulent countries did not face the problem of weakening purchasing power but nowadays they, too, do, even in countries where the economy is on the increase at least according to government statistics. (6)

Gross domestic product (GDP) and gross national product (GNP) are the main conventional statistical tools for measuring growth and decline of economies. These tools distribute aggregate national economic figures per capita the sum of national produce divided by the number of citizens (irrespective of who is employed, unemployed, retired, minors, ill, disable,

etc.). Such figures (that includes operations of companies working abroad, etc.) yield statistical average abstracts and provide no authentic information on people's actual economic situation. Evidently, figures of GDP and GNP say next to nothing about the situations of various individuals and families here and there in a country. Macroeconomic data, such as GDP and GNP, may not even be remotely related to the economic realities of actual living beings and their society.

According to PROUT, the only real yardstick of people's economic circumstances is their purchasing power. If people's purchasing power amounts to less than the costs of securing the minimum necessities of life food, clothing, shelter, medical services, and education then those people are poor. When their purchasing power meets those targets then they are ok. Whereas if someone's purchasing power surpasses the cost of the minimum necessities, such people may be said to be above the poverty line and even well off as they case may be. Shrii Sarkar opined:

“The minimum requirements can be assured through guaranteed purchasing capacity which should be enshrined in the constitution as a fundamental or cardinal human right. This will give the citizens of the country legal power if their minimum requirements are not met, hence the necessity of purchasing capacity will be reinforced by constitutional law. As people's economy will deal with minimum requirements and people's subsistence problems, it must take precedence over other parts of the economy.” (7)

**Two fundamental causes of decreasing purchasing power are feeding into each other:**

**1. Firstly, as wealth concentration is increasing by leaps and bounds, the number of have-nots is increasing sharply while the number of the well-to-do and rich is decreasing. This means much less for the growing majority and much, much more for very few.**

**2. Consequently, most families and individuals have less of a disposable income than they used to. This negative macroeconomic scenario generates a second cause of declining purchasing power: Because of the economic weakening of the masses, the rich minority grows all the time more averse to investing in what is perceived as an increasingly high-risk environment. As a result, economic life grinds into further standstill.**

The two main indications today of such a vicious economic circle are:

- Astronomically inflated financial markets, and
- Epidemic personal, company, and national credit debts fast spiraling out of control. Prout's

way of furthering the economy of society's grassroots is, as already indicated, economic democracy through economic decentralization. Shrii Sarkar termed such a socio-economic setup *progressive socialism*.

### **Genuine Socialism, Anyone?**

The term socialism implies collective movement. Its socio-economic spirit is social regulation of wealth.

However, to make that spirited movement rich and meaningful, its proper goal should be established. However, materialist socialists inspired by Karl Marx transformed the concept of social regulation into party control either via participating in elections controlled by capitalists or in communist controlled states. Both these ideologies gave socialism a bad name its bad name associated with compromise with capitalism and imperialism on the one hand and on the other totalitarianism and state capitalism.

The practical result of Marxist materialist socialism communism was state dictatorship and the ruin of everything that is human. This is not surprising as Lenin's role model for his “state capitalism” was the Kaiser's Germany who paid for him to go to Russia and overthrow the revolutionary government to stop Russia from fighting in the first world war. Such authoritarianism is also unsurprising given that Marxism developed first in Russia, a vast country of largely uneducated citizens at the time, and as an antithesis to capitalism and dogmatic religion both, with little or no synthesis of ideology. Nevertheless, and as already mentioned, cultured advanced civilizations may suddenly turn into brutal fascism, too.

Both Communism and Nazism were dogmatic systems based on rigid sets of restricted thinking. Under banners of aggression and pure fantasy, those primitive “isms” ultimately barred the progress and freedom of their citizens and the country. We may agree that the intentions of leadership and its ideological orientation will decide whether a country's political system will generate human welfare or not.

As already noted, the general level of education and cultural legacy of a country offer no such guarantee. Yes, a highly conscious population may not accept any level of violence even in times of radical political transition. Still, the outcome of change will not depend on the level of public education but on the ideological impact of the essential thrust of transition.

If a change is morally motivated, such as in an uprising against injustice or exploitation, the outcome is likely to be the establishment of some righteous force or ideal. On the other hand, where changes are motivated by revenge or hatred of some kind, the outcome is sure to spell death and destruction.

PROUT is a non-dogmatic, spiritually-ecologically oriented socio-economic theory. According to it, spiritual development (transcending all concepts and emotions) is real progress, while physical and psychic dynamics are affected if not negated by their respective natural side effects. Physical and mental developments may be termed as “progressive” whenever they support and are in harmony with genuine spiritual development.

Capitalism's epidemic of individualism and selfish pleasure, under the burqa of freedom, permits unchecked accumulation of physical wealth. Gradually its implications are dawning on people - that the unbridled acquisition of even a single person comes at the cost of



the deliberate deprivation of the basic welfare of so many others. Still, capitalism triumphantly is ever insouciant; such are the costs of freedom! This is how political democracy directly supports profit-oriented, self-seeking economics: Political freedom = economic liberalization. Do what you like, and everything is fine!

A very clever persuasion, indeed. The universal declaration of human rights itself is but an amplification of this shrewd manipulation of the medieval concept of *habeus corpus*, the antithesis of feudalism and repository of individual political rights. (8) Modern capitalist democracy (who said social democracy?) is clearly very old school and not suited to the dynamics of forward-looking, decentralized economies.

As a matter of fact, the only reference to economy in the United Nations declaration of human rights appears in its Article 17-1: "Everyone has the right to property alone as well as in association with others." That is, classical capitalist prospecting. Elsewhere, Article 23 addresses rights of laborers, including their right to form trade unions, an offer effectively reduced to tall talk only under the rampages in the current phase of late capitalism. The 1948 UN declaration has nothing to do with economic democracy but all to do with capitalism's need for a universally recognizable human face in its pursuit of global economic exploitation under the beguiling banner of individualism and selfish pleasure. The later Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN does not even pretend to take secretly.

Political democracy is no guarantee for an economy of, for and by the people. Rather, democracy has become the enemy of people's economy. Far from favoring consumers and producers, political democracy does everything to back capitalist exploiters. Instead of uniting all, political democracy divides us. Political democracy is hand in glove with global capitalism, and not with economic democracy.

### Ideology and Practical Politics

Is there such a thing as an ideal economic system, or even a divine one? Try this on for size: The ideological platform of Prout centers on the principle of cosmic inheritance. Supreme Consciousness is the real owner of all wealth of the universe as It is the creator of everything. Shrii Sarkar established:

"This universe is the psychic and internal projection of Cosmic Consciousness, and ours is a reflected projection. We cannot create anything original. Whatever we do, we do with the physical waves radiated from the matter. We can only make physical mixtures and chemical compounds. The ownership lies with the Cosmic Entity and not with individuals." (9)

This spiritual view transforms into Prout's principle of social equality. We are an expression of It All. The essential spirit of society is that we are all family to move in unison towards our common goal, the supreme desideratum. Prout's spirit of sharing all wealth rationally, and not dogmatically in vertical (capitalist) or horizontal (communist) fashion, sets its progressive socialism radically apart:

a) The *existential value* of all is the same, while

b) The *social value* of individuals may vary.

In economic terms, Prout furthers these dynamics by:

a) Ensuring a *minimum of purchasing capacity* of all through work, while

b) Differentiating between average and superlative contributions by way of *according special amenities* to the deserving.

In addition to maximizing the efficacy of incentive while minimizing social inequality, other points of differentiation from materialist socialism include:

- All-round human development and progress.
- Full psychic and spiritual freedom.
- Ecological integrity.
- Strengthening local cultural roots towards universal synthesis.

- Decentralized planning.
- Worker participation in decision-making and cooperative ownership of assets.
- Consumption oriented (not profit-motivated) economy, and more. (10)

Prout ensures that collective development will accelerate and not stagnate into "to all according to need, from all according to ability." Instead, Prout installs a sense of "guaranteeing the minimum requirements of all as well as the maximum development of their potentialities." Under Prout, all will work and there will be no shortage of suitable jobs for all. Shrii Sarkar opined:

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

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

Capitalists, in either their

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

To create 100% employment among local people, Prout supports both a short term and a long term economic plan. In the short-term plan, labor intensive industries based on the collective minimum requirements of life should be started immediately or made more productive where they already exist. These industries should be based on the consumption motive. They should also provide a rational profit to guarantee adequate purchasing capacity to those employed in them and to ensure their continued existence and growth. In North Bihar, for example, where there is virtually no industry, all kinds of agrico- and agro-industries can be developed to alleviate the unemployment problem there.

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

of the long term economic plan, working hours may also be progressively reduced to maintain full employment.

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

Another way to help solve unemployment, especially in rural communities, is the utilization of plants for economic self-reliance. All socioeconomic units have the potential to increase their plant and crop varieties by properly matching these with the soil, topography and climatic conditions etc. in their units. Reforestation can reclaim arid and semi-arid regions, and some unique plants like the *Purana* or fern, which has the capacity to attract clouds, can help radically transform the rainfall and weather patterns of a region. Agro- and agrico-industries based upon the productive potential of different plants can also help solve rural unemployment by creating a range of new goods and services. There are many dimensions to this revolutionary plant rationalization program, which is also a practical expression of the ideals of Neohumanism.” (11)

### Leadership

Conventional democracy is representative administration of, by and for the people. Not, it is not so much about *leadership* as about *representation*. Such democratic representation was only very recently introduced. Long before democracy, leaders took the masses forward on their path. And before that? It is difficult to say how long our ancestors lived without leadership. We may as well concur with Peter Gronn, Professor of Education at the University of Cambridge, who puts the figure at one hundred thousand years. (12) According to Gronn, hunter-gatherers began the transition to early chiefdoms and embryonic states between 3,000 and 6,000 years ago, while it is only in the previous 100-500 years that we have seen state-level polities.

For simplification's sake, we may equate Gronn's state-level polities with modern party-based democracy. As an alternative to chiefdom, absolute monarchy, dictatorship and other forms of authoritarian decision-making, political democracy has been around for some 2500 years, although not in the liberalist form promoted under global capitalism. Early forms of democracy, such as those evolved by the North-Indian Licchavii royal society and Greek republics, meant the rule of an elite minority; a select group of aristocrats who had somehow managed to wrestle state powers from former despotic rulers.

Two millennia on, post-French Revolution democracies continue to demand universal voting rights and freedom of expression for all. As already indicated, there are significant hitches to these so-called democratic principles: For one, as comparatively uneducated people remain in majority all over the world, voters are basically kept in the dark under the influence of a commercial media that keep bombarding them with utter nonsense meant to feed the crude desires and flimsy sentiments of the largely ignorant majority. This form of essentially commercially motivated media-based democracy is no more than a hundred years old and has yet, as previously discussed, to prove its lasting human benevolence.

### The Trump turmoil

Today, most of Earth's human population, including that of China and most Islamic states, remain subjected to totalitarian and dogmatic forms of rule. Such regimes are routinely heckled by democratic leaders and western

agencies on the virtues of human rights. There is, overall, very little freedom on offer, particularly when we add economic liberation and not begging to the list of required conditions for freedom.

While a system of combining political and economic freedom remains a theoretical proposition only, the current US presidency of property tycoon and reality TV star Donald Trump begs the question: Is today's commercial democracy really the high point democracy? Couldn't we do better? With his bizarre ways and monocratic demeanor, the obviously undemocratic Mr. Trump has shaken the democratic West at its core, while the "undemocratic world" is laughing.

Perhaps part of The Donald's historical role is to put into sharp focus everything that is questionable about political democracy under capitalism, including:

- Under political democracy, society is subjected to heavy commercial media manipulation;
- Democracy under capitalism doesn't seem to educate the masses politically but confuse them; the majority of such befuddled and manipulated voters may not be in the right but in the wrong, and may therefore, by "mob rule", repress better-informed minorities;
- Meanwhile, economic, political and social disparities continue to increase enormously;
- Overall, morality seems to be on the decline with corruption and cynicism on the increase, a situation that is apparently not helped by the entrenched party-system.

### Improving democracy

Some of the conspicuous weaknesses of present forms of commercially motivated, saleable democracy were listed above. Let us now try to offer remedies and solutions to it.

### EDUCATION

First, active participants in democracy must be properly educated. Voters and candidates must prove their knowledge of current problems, potentialities and resources, as well as their ability to address these. Following on this, avenues for addressing pressing problems and their solutions must be evolved and expanded. In the same way as ecology has gone some way to address current physical problems and challenges, still more advanced and sophisticated knowledge and methodologies must be advanced to address still greater and deeper challenges of political, economic, social and cultural life.

Such knowledge and practices should not only concern the physical world but also the far greater psychic and spirituality spheres of human existence. By placing greater spheres of existence before all, by addressing the need and value of more subtle life and values, avenues towards solving even life's crude challenges will be greatly facilitated and significantly broadened.

As to the notion of being educated, age, literacy

and university degrees cannot be the deciding criteria for obtaining voting rights. Rather, all-round human maturation should be the key factor. It is the duty of society to secure integrated development for all its citizens. Education cannot simply mean theoretical knowledge. Rather it should generate all-round growth physically, mentally and spiritually in individual and collective life both.

**Today there is no lack of university-educated people who remain insensitive to actual problems and challenges of humanity. Instead they remain concerned about themselves and their own little group only. Such selfish individuals and groups resist to take larger collective issues into account, whatever their level of education. This sorry situation is caused mainly by a faulty system of education that never took practical life seriously. In its place, any system of education and training must involve deep, comprehensive ecological, moral and spiritual learning presented in straightforward and practical ways.**

Education and training should be uplifting for the individual as well as for the collective. New relevant methodologies for solving burning issues should be implemented without reservations and unnecessary delay.

### LEADERSHIP

Secondly, as present commercially motivated institutions may not be able to formulate and deliver such progressive education, the need for generating fresh leadership require our undivided attention. As a matter of fact, we must find ways and means to seed, sprout and nurture the new both inside and outside the present establishment. Since democracy is defined as leadership of, by and for the people we should first ask ourselves about the nature of good leadership and how it should benefit a well-functioning democracy. Considering the above, we should welcome that:

1. Proper leadership must be morally enlightened.
2. It must also be spiritually enlightened
3. These two prerequisites feed into each other.

As power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, capable leadership of a properly functioning democracy should not occupy political offices directly. Instead, it should function as an indirect power that monitors political, economic and social developments while being in mutual communication with entire society.

For such a leadership to be relevant to the welfare of all, it cannot be borne out of a certain class or interest group. Quite on the contrary, it must be declassed and universal in spirit. As morality and spirituality are unbarred by class, creed, and color, these two dynamic morality and living spirituality will serve the purpose of proper individual and collective education and training well.

Obviously, such an educative and inspiring leadership will be able to generate both an increasingly



qualified electorate as well as still better equipped candidates for offices. In fact, the emergence of a properly equipped moral and spiritual leadership will benefit all irrespective of class and other potential group interests. A well-directed system of education, dynamic morality and living spirituality are the prerequisites as well as the medicine for democracy.

### **ECONOMIC DECENTRALIZATION:**

Today the litany of the professional political class is political freedom. Current political systems are victim to vested interests and commercial forces that keep forming opportunistic alliances working against actual genuine human interests. It is therefore relevant to question the values of current political democracies.

Moreover, for the survival and further progress of humanity, basic values of economic democracy should be demanded and developed. The prime needs of human beings are food, medicines, clothing, housing and education, not political documents of theoretical human rights. Let people take their economic destiny in their own hands and decide its outcome for themselves. The development of political values on the other hand may then be left to a declassed, detached enlightened leadership such as discussed above.

PROUT recognizes a number of essential requirements for economic democracy to take root. We have already addressed the need of sufficient purchasing capacity to secure the minimum necessities of life for all. The only way to establish such purchasing capacity is by work for all, and Prout guarantees such a thriving work market.

Further requirements for economic democracy include local economic rule, non-interference of outsiders in the local economy, and the consistent effort

for the welfare of all living beings including that of all animals and plants. (13)

PROUT's model of economic democracy can only function within a *decentralized economic system*. Requirements for decentralized economic systems include in brief. (14)

1. All the resources in a socio-economic unit should be controlled by the local people. In particular, the resources which are required to produce the minimum requirements must be in local hands, and all the industries based on these resources will have to be controlled entirely by the local people.

2. Production should be based on consumption, not profit.

3. Production and distribution should be organized through cooperatives.

4. Local people must be employed in local economic enterprises.

5. Commodities which are not locally produced should be removed from the local markets.

### **Conclusion**

In response to a historical need for enlightened rule and economic liberation of all, humanity need to evolve collective leadership based on spirito-moral enlightenment. It would require us all to start practicing morality and spirituality in earnest. Such a moral and spiritual collective movement may not take the same form everywhere but differ in response to varying circumstances and ongoing changes. The common point would be the common human heart and universal consciousness.

The next step of democracy lies in evolving practical economic democracy supported by universal moral and spiritual leadership from grassroots upwards.

### **Notes**

(1) See <http://proutglobe.org/prout>

(2) "Decentralized Economy 1," *Prout in a Nutshell Part 21*. P.R. Sarkar, Ananda Marga Publications.

(3) The History Learning Site, <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/nazi-germany/nazi-education/>

(4) More on Prout's theory of the social cycle: <http://proutglobe.org/prout/socio-economics/social/#socl>

(5) Exploitation and Pseudo-Culture". P. R. Sarkar. *The Liberation of Intellect: Neohumanism*, Ananda Marga Publications.

(6) <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/28/death-middle-class-undermine-democracy>, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/03/whats-the-solution-to-middle-class-stagnation/472194/>, etc.

(7) From "Quadri-Dimensional Economy", P.R. Sarkar. *A Few Problems Solved Part 7*, Ananda Marga Publications.

(8) <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

(9) From *Discourses on Prout 1*, P.R. Sarkar. Ananda Marga Publications.

(10) Further comparisons of Prout with materialist socialism and other systems are found at <http://proutglobe.org/prout/ideology/comparative/>

(11) "Socio-Economic Movements", P.R. Sarkar. *A Few Problems Solved Part 9*, Ananda Marga Publications.

(12) <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/peter-gronn-early-human-society-hunted-gathered-and-worked-without-leaders-1706868.html>

(13) More on Prout's concept and system of economic democracy is found at <http://proutglobe.org/prout/socio-economics/economics/economic-democracy/>

(14) More on Prout's concept and system of decentralized economy is found at <http://proutglobe.org/2011/06/decentralized-economy-1/>

The write-off in the last six months comes at a time when banks are struggling to resolve many cases of repayment of loans and recover money stuck with corporate defaulters through insolvency proceedings.

## PSU Banks Write off Rs 55,356 Crore in Six Months

George Matthew

INDIA'S STATE-OWNED banks have written off loans worth Rs 55,356 crore in the first six months of fiscal 2017-18, according to data compiled by credit rating agency ICRA, as banks attempt to clean up their balance sheets after a string of defaults by firms and promoters in the wake of the economic slowdown.

The write-off in the last six months — 54 per cent higher than the Rs 35,985 crore written off in the same period last year — comes at a time when banks are struggling to resolve many cases of repayment of loans and recover money stuck with corporate defaulters through insolvency proceedings.

Figures obtained by The Indian Express from the RBI through the Right to Information (RTI) Act for the last decade show that banks had written off Rs 2,28,253 crore in nine years — from fiscal 2007-08 to 2015-16. The central bank did not provide data for the subsequent period.

Separately, responding to a questionnaire from The Indian Express, ICRA said that write-offs amounted to **Rs 1,32,659 crore in 2016-17 and the first six months of 2017-18.**

This means the total write-off in the last ten years is now over Rs 3,60,000 crore. State-owned banks have reported to the RBI that frauds in advances during the last three financial years and the current fiscal (up to June 2017) cumulatively amounted to a whopping Rs 51,086 crore on account of around 5,750 “Red flag” accounts.

To put that number in perspective, the advance-related frauds during the last three years adds up to nearly 8 per cent of the gross non-performing assets (GNPAs) of the public-sector banks, which stood at Rs 6,41,057 crore as on March 31, 2017.

Given the current trend, the total write-off in fiscal 2018 is estimated to top Rs 1 lakh crore, bankers said. PSU banks wrote off Rs 25,573 crore in the June quarter and Rs 29,783 crore in the quarter to September, the

highest in any quarter, ICRA said.

Incidentally, as against just advance-related frauds in the last three years, the total frauds, including those on account of advances, deposits cyber-frauds and trade-related, reported in the four years to March 2013, was significantly lower at Rs 29,910.12 crore (the number of cases were higher though at 1,69,190).

Bank-Group wise Advance Related Frauds involving amounts of Rs 1 crore and above in value during this period was Rs 16,690.26 crore on account of 2,760 cases.

The RBI had earlier explained that writing off of non-performing assets or bad loans is a regular exercise carried out by banks to clean up their balance sheets.

### LOAN WRITE-OFF IN 10 YEARS

(₹/crore)

Year	Amount
2007-08	8,019
2008-09	7,461
2009-10	11,185
2010-11	17,794
2011-12	15,551
2012-13	27,231
2013-14	34,409
2014-15	49,018
2015-16	57,585
2016-17*	77,123
2017-18*	55,356**
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>360,912</b>

\*\* Half-year. Source: RBI \*Source: ICRA

“A substantial portion of this write-off is, however, technical in nature. It is primarily intended at cleansing the balance sheet and achieving taxation efficiency. In ‘Technically Written Off’ accounts, loans are written off from the books at the Head Office, without foregoing the right to recovery. Further, write-offs are generally carried out against accumulated provisions made for such loans. Once recovered, the provisions made for those loans flow back into the profit and loss account of banks,” the RBI had said in an explanatory note.

The write-offs, even if “technical”, is significant in the context of ongoing efforts by the government to enable a clean-up of balance sheets of banks. Repairing that and enabling banks to lend again by infusing fresh capital is at the heart of some of the recent measures unveiled by the government.

M Narendra, former chairman and MD of Indian Overseas Bank, said, “The write-off is just a technical book entry. Banks are not losing anything. It doesn’t mean banks are giving up those assets. They will continue with various recovery methods.”

Banks will initially make provisions on such assets and then a write-off is done when the loan becomes irrecoverable. The loan is

then excluded from the balance sheet and taxable income of banks gets reduced.

Banks were engaged in a massive write-off of loans over the years and the figure hit a high of Rs 77,123 crore during the year ended March 2017, against Rs 57,585 crore in fiscal 2015-16. Ten years ago, in 2007-08, loans written off by banks were just Rs 8,019 crore, the RBI said in its reply to an RTI query.

However, experts say there is a perception that write-offs are not transparent and public funds are being misused. “You can’t clean up every quarter or every year. Once in five or ten years, we are cleaning up the balance sheet for the last 20 years. You can’t clean up every year. Generally, write-off should be small, and should be used sparingly when there’s some crisis. Technical write-off creates non-transparency, destroys the credit risk management system and brings all types of wrongdoings into the system,” said a former RBI official.

“I have nothing against a write-off but it has to be done scarcely and within a policy, with all efforts taken to recover the money. Any asset which is backed up by tangible asset is never written off. **Secondly, you must be subject to scrutiny for these write-offs. There must be a policy. You ask any bankers. They have written off Vijay Mallya’s**

**loan.** Then how are they going to recover that money? Use it very sparingly and do it where it’s essential. If there’s asset, why are you writing it off?” the official said.

Karthik Srinivasan, group head – financial sector ratings, ICRA, said, “With limited resolution in stressed assets and consequent ageing of these stressed loans, the loan write-offs by public sector banks during Q2 of fiscal 2018 were at the highest-ever levels. With record loan write-offs, the addition to gross NPAs of public sector banks was limited to Rs 837 crore only during the Q2 of fiscal 2018, the lowest level during last four years.”

Accordingly, the provision cover ratio, including technical write-offs, improved to 60.5 per cent as on September 30, 2017, the highest since the launch of the asset quality review by the RBI during Q3 of FY2016, Srinivasan said.

According to ICRA, provisions made by banks on advances surged by 30 per cent to Rs 64,500 crore during the second quarter ended September 2017, with more corporates coming under the insolvency process. For the first half of the fiscal, the total credit provisions were up by 17 per cent on a year-on-year basis at Rs 1,10,000 crore.

**With the total exposure of Rs 3,00,000 crore of accounts likely to be resolved under the new bankruptcy code, the overall credit provisions are likely to be at Rs 2,40,000-Rs 2,60,000 crore,** including impact of ageing on existing NPAs and provisioning on IBC accounts, for FY2018 as against Rs 2,00,000 crore during FY2017.

The asset quality pain is likely to continue in the near term with Rs 1,70,000 crore of standard restructured advances. Gross non-performing assets (GNPA) are likely to peak at Rs 8,80,000-Rs 9,00,000 crore (10.0-10.2 per cent) by the end of FY2018 as against NPAs of 9.5 per cent (Rs 765,000 crore) as on March 31, 2017, Srinivasan said.





# Riverine Fisherfolk : How Four Projects Treat Them Today

Fisherfolk should unite against corporate and government sponsored “resource grabbing.”

Parineeta Dandekar



Fisherfolk Protest at Bhadbhut Photo: Dr. Sheikh, Brackishwater Reserach Institute, Surat

When I was documenting a tiny, free-flowing river in Maharashtra Western Ghats named Shastri, the common thread from headwaters to estuary was Fishing! It was everywhere, in all forms, including dozens of fish species and fishing practices, including everyone: men, women, children, otters, crocodiles, storks. Across the country, buzzing, diversified fisheries with old, complex narratives indicate a rich river. And the palette just gets more vivid, nuanced and colorful with the size of the river.

More than 10 million Indians from some of the most vulnerable groups depend on rivers for their livelihood and nutritional needs. This staggering number can be an underestimate as several riverine fisherfolk do not bring their produce to the market and our livelihood census hardly captures the intricacies of riverine fisheries sector. Despite the huge dependence and critical importance of riverine fisheries, the sector continues being ignored and abused. **The reasons behind the exploitation are at the**

**heart of a deeper, more troubling discourse: capitalist ownership and appropriation of the river as a natural resource.**

To illustrate, most dams which fundamentally affect riverine fisheries, never recognized fisherfolk as legitimate stakeholders, with a say in the decisions making processes. In the conundrum of infrastructure for irrigation, drinking water, hydropower, flood control, sewage disposal and now increasingly, navigation, riverine fisheries find no place: its protagonists perched on small wooden boats are too poor and unorganized to hold a clout. And the rivers cannot go to the court.

The latest statement of the Water Resource Minister sums up the narrative succinctly “Leave Rivers to me” he says. “Me” is Large Dams, Navigation, Embankments, etc. No wonder that the World Forum for Fish Workers gathering in New Delhi asserted that fisherfolk should unite against corporate and government sponsored “resource grabbing.”

Let us try to look at the status of river fisheries in India through the lens of four large infrastructure projects: How they impact rivers and fisheries, how these impacts are addressed and what space remains for the fisherfolk in the discourse which holds sway over their lives.



*Fishing just upstream proposed Athirappilly Hydropower Project, Chalakudy River, Kerala*

### Inland Navigation Project

In 2016, Indian Government enacted National Waterways Act and declared 111 rivers or river stretches, creeks, estuaries as 'National Waterways'. Prior to this act, there were only five, including National Waterway 1 on the Ganga from Haldia to Allahabad, and National Waterway 2 on the Brahmaputra. Indian Waterways Authority of India, in existence since decades, is in charge of these activities.

Purportedly for eco-friendly transport of cargo, hazardous chemicals, coal, industrial raw materials, and tourism, each project will include massive interventions on rivers like capital and maintenance dredging of rivers, docks, channels, wharves, jetties, landing stages, locks, buoys, inland ports, cargo handling equipment, road and rail access and cargo storage spaces. This will automatically include several rounds of land acquisition.

The Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system (Allahabad-Haldia-1620 km National Waterway I or NW I) and the Brahmaputra River (Dhubri-Sadiya-891 km) have already been declared as national waterways. The World Bank has approved Rs. 375 Million USD for

NW 1.

Although it is obvious that a project which entails dredging the river beds, straightening meanders, establishing ports and jetties at river mouths, mangroves and riparian floodplains, changes in river hydrology, traffic inside a river, transport of hazardous material like coal, fly ash and iron ore inside protected areas would require Environmental & Social Impact Assessment, public consultation and Environmental Clearance, the Ministry of Shipping has been opposing this and Union Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has been inconsistent and ambiguous on its stand.

#### **a. National Waterway 1: Ganga Waterway:**

NW I proposes to build multi-modal terminals at Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), Sahibganj (Bihar) and Haldia (West Bengal). Apart from being a riverine stretch with a heavy fisheries dependence, most of the stretch is also habitat for the Gangetic Dolphin. The work on this waterway is already underway, including dredging at the Vikramshila Dolphin Sanctuary without an environmental clearance!

Preliminary studies have documented the distress of dolphins at the loud noise and their disappearance from dredging sites, which will slowly include most of their habitat. Incidentally, Gangetic River Dolphins are our National Aquatic Animal. The case of Chinese Baiji Dolphins driven to extinction and the role played by inland navigation is documented. The project will cut through the Kashi Turtle Sanctuary, but the National Board for Wildlife has given its recommendation. Manthan Adhyayan Kendra has done an assessment of impact of inland navigation.

In 2016, a study of the impact of coal transportation by National Thermal Power Corporation on the Ganga Waterway (Haldia port to Farakka through the Hooghly River), by ICAR-Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI), corroborated severe impacts, sharp fall in fish diversity due to barge movement and the fall in income of the 25,000 fisherfolk dependent on it. Not surprisingly, the affected people were not compensated. The author has met several fisherfolk around Farakka Barrage who are still facing severe impacts of the Barrage.

Built on the Ganga-Padma river in 1975, Farakka Barrage single-handedly killed Hilsa migration up the river. The barrage does not have a functioning fish lock to facilitate migration of Hilsa fish which is ecologically, economically and even culturally unique in its identity for Bengali culture. This is despite the fact that India's premier Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI) is located not too far from Farakka and has a separate program on Hilsa!

However, the lucrative Inland Navigation Project has made authorities scamper and contract for a new navigational locks tender has already been awarded to Larson and Toubro for Rs. 359.19 Crores in November 2016.

The Fish Lock, on the other hand has not been operational,





Fishing Boats at Bhagirathi River, upstream Farakka Barrage

repaired (or even traceable!) for last several decades.

**It is clear that despite huge impacts, Riverine Fish or Fisheries have no role to play in decisions related to the NW-I development.**

#### **b. Inland Navigation and Impact of Fisheries in Goa**

In Goa, riverine and estuarine fishing is not just a profession, it has permeated into the culture of that unique land. Researchers and activists in Goa say that about 50,000 fisherfolk are dependent on artisanal estuarine fisheries in six major rivers of Goa. Goans have several fishing techniques, indigenous management systems like Khajans, specialized nets and boats for their riverine *susegaat* maneuvers. Rivers and river mouths are shared with fish, snails, oyster reefs, crocs, otters, mangroves and fishing boats, in the same easy-going manner.

Of all states in India, possibly Goa has most at stake when it comes to impact of Navigation on Fisheries on its six major rivers: Zuari, Mandovi, Cumbarjua, Chapora, Sal and Mapusa/Moide. Goa has witnessed the fallout of exponentially increasing iron ore & imported coal shipping on rich estuaries of Zuari and Mandovi Rivers.

Goan fisherfolk are staunchly against corporate politicians' "Nationalisation" of rivers and Inland Navigation. Main objections include:

- the intricate dependence of communities on rivers and river banks which will be taken over by the navigation project,
- the placing of fishing nets across and parallel to river mouths and mangroves which will be useless once more ships start plying these waters,
- the pollution already caused by ship yards and ore transport.
- the biggest concern is conversion of a verdant, vulnerable and staunchly "fighter" state into a coal hub in no time.

Abhijit Prabhdesai from Madgaon, an activist and researcher with immense knowledge of Goa's river system tells me, "*Goa has one of the richest estuarine and riverine fisheries. We have our own systems like Khajan. We do not want to sell our rivers and fisheries for Coal transport of Adani and Jindal.*" Here is a small, wonderful film on the same: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6Re50uxwyI>

A Citizen Group known as 'Our Rivers, Our Rights' has come together specifically to counter river nationalization and against any transport of Coal in Goas rivers. The group has petitioned to the PM: "*People all over Goa are furious and up in arms against the totally, illegal, unconstitutional and anti-*

*national attempts to nationalise our rivers and are willing to go to any extent to prevent our rivers and appurtenant lands from being grabbed for private profits of a few corporations, for coal transportation or any other reason.*"

*"The conservation of our river commons is essential for promotion of our rich culture and traditions, sustainable economic growth through renewed agriculture, fisheries and related activities and for protection of our environment the economy of our children to come".*

It also states poignantly: "*Our rivers are the inalienable properties of our village communities and continue to sustain lakhs of Goans even today. Fishing tools like Fut'tani, pagels, ogors, manxio, kobule, lambaris, etc are used extensively by thousands of river side fisher folk people to sustain Goan economy and culture... These rivers are not only the lifeline of Goan communities, but are also completely owned, managed and protected by local communities*".

The All Goa Fishermen's Union has said that 45 inland fishing villages will be destroyed on account of the nature of waterways proposed. Several bodies like Chapora Fishermen Association have opposed the move strongly.

For nearly one year, the ruling government has been stating that it will sign a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Goa Government, Marmagao Port Trust and Inland Waterways Authority after taking people in confidence, but it has still not shared the MoU with the people.

Fisherfolk protests are rising, but fisherfolk: the true custodians of Goa's rivers and vibrant cultural identity find no place in the discourse surrounding their rivers.

## **2. River Interlinking and Fisheries**

River Interlinking (ILR or Inter Linking of Rivers) being pushed by the Centre is poised to change the hydrology of several rivers in eco-





Estuarine Fisheries in Goa Photo: Aaron Savio Lobo/Scroll

sensitive zones across the country. Several studies have documented the possible impact of river interlinking project on fisheries. Some studies claim that the “*implementation of such construction-intensive project will lead to biodiversity loss [so massive] that would be beyond comprehension.*”

For some of the ILR projects, even an EIA is not needed because it is wrongly claimed that they are drinking water supply schemes and erroneously excluded from EIA Notification 2006 like the Damanganga Pinjal Link in Western Ghats.

For other Projects like Ken Betwa Link Project, the EIA makes sadly laughable claims. The Project will significantly change the habitat of Ken river, which is also famed for migrating fish like *Anguilla bengalensis bengalensis* and *Bagarius bagarius* and Mahseer. As is observed throughout the country, dams have led to sharp population collapses of these species. In addition, dams change the entire hydrological, chemical and physical properties of river water, entirely affecting fisheries. In his eloquent report, young researcher Tarun Nair sharply illustrates how all the diversity of River Chambal, Ken and Son is hanging by a thin thread due to all the existing diversions on the rivers which take away water, silt,

nutrients and sand from the rivers.

The EIA of Ken Betwa Link, however, says that the canals would provide a shortcut for the fish to migrate upstream!

A recently published paper on the Ken Betwa project, authored by a Senior Fisheries Scientist of CIFRI (who was also the member of the EAC which cleared Ken Betwa Project, but did not oppose the fraudulent EIA of the project!) highlights the ecological richness of Ken river and the possible impact of the link on fish species and diversity. According to the paper, Ken River has 89 fish with two species recorded in 70s already missing due to “*Large scale modifications in the riverine habitats due to construction of dams and barrages at two sites on the main channel and three sites on tributaries...* As a result, the river has been fragmented, causing serious obstruction to the migratory fish species, *Tor tor*, *Bagarius bagarius* and *Anguilla bengalensis*.

Dams have altered the hydrological regime, sedimentation pattern, and feeding and breeding grounds of the native fish. Dams have considerable influence on downstream river ecosystems, extending for hundreds of kilometers below the barricade. Diminishing populations of Indian major Carps, Catfish, Murrels, and Featherback and increasing invasion of hardy exotic fishes could be

attributed to the massive river modification activities. Construction of Daudhan dam on the river Ken and related developmental activities would lead to extermination of this valuable fish species like *Anguilla bengalensis bengalensis* from the river. Dam will affect diversity negatively.”

Betwa has about 81 species. “Ken and Betwa traverse through some of the most diverse habitats including rapids, falls, and deep pools; the river substratum comprises bedrocks, boulders, gravels, sand, silt, and clay in different stretches. This leads to a rich fish diversity including Indian Major Carps(IMC), large Catfish, Murrels, Featherbacks, Mahseer and miscellaneous fish form the major fishery. About 60% fish species found in the Ken are edible.”

Ken has 8 threatened species and a fish *Anguilla bengalensis bengalensis*, a long distance catadromous migrant which is very rare in Yamuna is still found here and is held very important by local communities.

And despite this, we did not see any representation from CIFRI either about the impact of the project on fish and livelihoods or on the fraudulent EIA at a time when the project was seeking environmental clearance.

### What is the Role of Fisherfolk in Decision Making?

None. The Public hearing of Ken Betwa was extremely problematic, with no place of fisher people or researchers or academics who are also stakeholders. Even the Executive Summary of the EIA was just not available for the local residents to study and comment before public hearing. SANDRP has highlighted the issues.

### 3.Narmada Obstacle Race and Fisheries:

Since the inception, Narmada Valley Development Plan of Madhya Pradesh which include 30 major dams (of which the Tawa, Bargi, Omkareshwar, Mann and

Indira Sagar dams have been completed in Madhya Pradesh) in addition to the Sardar Sarovar dam in Gujarat declared complete by the Prime Minister Shri Modi on his birthday, Sept 17, 2017, ecological integrity of Narmada has been compromised exponentially.

There are documented reports of how fish landings of valuable fish species like Mahseer collapsed following dam building. Recently research paper by CIFRI, Bhaumik et al., *A case study of the Narmada River system in India with particular reference to the impact of dams on its ecology and fisheries*, 2017 compared pre- and post-impoundment eco-environment and fisheries. Not surprisingly, it revealed staggering changes in productivity, water quality, and aquatic flora and fauna of the river system.

Among the fish, species like Mahseer (*Tor tor*), *Labeo fimbriatus* and *Labeo dyocheilus* suffered most. Percentage contributions to catches of Freshwater Prawn, (*Macrobrachium rosenbergii*) and Hilsa (*Tenualosa ilisha*) have declined by **46% and about 75%** in the estuarine stretch of the river system! The percentage contributions to total yield of Carp, Catfish also fell by **17% and 36%**.

Just imagine the impact this must have had on the riverine fishing communities, which is not documented as usual, nor is there any question of counting them among the impacts, compensating the losses or rehabilitating the affected people.

“Unni (1996) mentioned the river as the only natural source of Mahseer eggs because of high and sustained abundance. However, studies conducted by the Government of Madhya Pradesh between 1987/1988 and 1995/1996 showed **decline in fry production potential of the species by nearly 78% within three decades of commissioning of the river valley projects.**”

The great Narmada River, once an important natural seeding ground of fish like Mahseer now has to buy Mahseer fingerlings from Tata Hatcheries in Pune. **This is an ecological tragedy of massive proportions if we are ready to listen.**

There is strong opposition to further dams by fisherfolk in places like Maheshwar. I have visited fish bazars in Maheshwar region, still with some native species. The fisherfolk there ask, **“If our river won't flow, we will not get fish. Can the dam builders compensate us with another river?”**

Apart from Fisherfolk, Government organisations like CIFRI have noted that: “Giant freshwater Prawn (*M. rosenbergii*) fisheries have shown a declining trend during the installation of the Sardar Sarovar dam. Loss of habitats due to the controlled flooding of riverbeds and change in depth profiles created major constraints for Prawn fisheries.”

Fisheries of Bharuach and downstream is dominated by a single enigmatic species: **The silvery Hilsa or Palwa fish**, which migrates from the sea up into the river for breeding during monsoons. It lays eggs in relatively calmer and nutrient rich waters of



Hilsa catch of Bhadbhut Photo: Amruta Pradhan, SANDRP

the estuary and upriver and then swims back into the sea. Hilsa, renowned for its flavor is nothing short of a cultural phenomenon.

Across India, dams and especially barrages at river mouths have killed Hilsa fisheries. Same is the case in Narmada. Again, documented by CIFRI: “*The Sardar Sarovar dam was built stage-wise in Gujarat, gradually blocking the normal river flow, restricting the Hilsa migration range, and also causing a shift in their breeding grounds. In the recent past, the fishing grounds have moved further downwards to the Gulf of Cambay, where about 90% of the catch is now harvested.*”

*During the filling of the Sardar Sarovar Dam Hilsa production has shown a declining trend. Annual catch of 16,000 t of the species during 1990/1991 reduced to 4000 t in 2007/2008 and indicated a 75% decline in production over a period of one-and-a-half decades.*

*The control of the river discharge has detrimentally affected the migration of Hilsa and their abundance in the river. Change in salinity patterns and gradual shrinkage in freshwater habitats have cumulatively affected the Hilsa fishery.”*

Just downstream of the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) Dam in Gujarat, there is now a new dam, **Garudeshwar Dam** is under construction, without any social or environmental impact assessment (as usual). The project is designed to arrest any water released by River Bed Power House of SSP from going down to the sea, to be pumped back to the dam! A petition challenging the project in National Green Tribunal, unfortunately and shockingly, was dismissed on the grounds that it was filed too late!

**Yet another Dam, this time to improve water quality?!**

And it is with this background that the Government of Gujarat **proposes to build yet another dam on Narmada: the Bhadbhut Barrage, right near the Narmada river mouth, which can be the last straw for Hilsa in Narmada estuary. No wonder, on Oct 8, 2017, when the Prime Minister visited Bharuch to lay foundation stone, hundreds of fishing boats defiantly waved black flags at the ceremony.**

**Stated objectives of the Bhadbhut Barrage are:**

- To protect the fertile land from salinity ingress
- To protect the river banks from erosion and



- To provide the road connectivity between Hazira and Dahej industrial estates.

Central reason behind rising salinity in Narmada is **declining freshwater releases from the Sardar Sarovar Dam, managed by the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd (SSNNL)**. Recently the Narmada Control Authority has allowed the closing of all 30 gates of the Sardar Sarovar dam at Kevadia Colony, which will help raise level of water in the reservoir to 138.68 meter from the present 121.92 metre.

According to Dr. MSH Sheikh of the Brackish Water Research Institute Surat, *"The Dam authorities believe that water release in the downstream is wastage of the freshwater. They have no value for the 150 km of Narmada River downstream the dam. There was a delta of Narmada when the Sardar Sarovar dam was not constructed called Aliyabet with lush green "AAL" grass. Cattle from villagers of the northern and southern parts of the river grazed here. After the construction of dam and non-release of adequate freshwater, delta of Narmada has all but disappeared. Southern portion of the delta has merged with land and created a desert. Sardar Sarovar dam has played a major role in changing the geographic condition of the entire area and reduced the freshwater fish, reducing the fish catch in the delta hugely."*

*"Bhadbhut Barrage will lead to high siltation at the mouth of estuary which will create problems of uneven surface in breeding-fishing zone and navigational problems for fishing boats. The major economic threat is due to the creation of reservoir of fresh water as freshwater has limited number of fish species and its market rates are very low Rs 80 to 100 /kg in comparison to estuarine species which fetch between Rs 300 1200 /kg with varied range of fish. Fisherfolk are opposing the Bhadbhut project as their very*

*livelihood is at stake. They had no option but to oppose the laying of the foundation stone of the Bhadbhut Dam on Oct 8, 2017 by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at Bharuch. Thousands of fisherpeople took out boat rallies with black flags and the fisherwomen took out silent march. We want the Barrage cancelled, we want the government to ensure ecological flow in Narmada not only for the factories and SEZs, but for fisheries and finally, we demand for compensation: Compensation for the livelihoods lost due to reduced flow of our river."*

### **Farcical EIA of proposed Bhadbhut Barrage by NEERI**

In 2014, SANDRP had visited Bharuch to understand the impact of Bhadbhut Barrage on fisherfolk and Narmada. During the meeting, Hilsa dominated all discussions. Local Fisherfolk and traders drew our attention to the EIA of Bhadbhut done by National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI).

Kamlesh Madhiwala, President Samast Bharuch Machimar Samiti, pointed out several lacunae in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report. *"The entire study has been an absolute farce. First of all, none of the local people were aware of any such study going on. It grossly underestimates the total population of fisherfolk that will be affected by the Bhadbhut dam."* The report

considers the total number of fisherfolk residing in 21 villages to be 12,638 based on more than a decade old data from Census 2001. According to Kamlesh Bhai the actual population residing in the estuary region whose livelihood will be affected by barrage is close to **35 to 40 thousand!**

*"The NEERI EIA is a complete copy-paste job [from past projects]. It has several incidences of plagiarism. It mentions names of places that are found nowhere in this region. On 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014 local fisherfolk organized a protest rally at the District Magistrate office and more than 4000 fisher people were a part of this. This is our fourth rally opposing the project."*

*Rallies and protests go on, as mentioned above, foundation stone laying of Bhadbhut dam was opposed on Oct 8, 2017.*

And in this situation, the response of Kalpasar Project Authority of Gujarat government is, **"If migratory fish are caught during their upward travel for the purpose of spawning (producing eggs), question of next generation does not arise at all and after some years with the same practice, fishes would become extinct."**

The response is not only callous and irresponsible, but utterly shameless when viewed with the background of all that has happened to the fisherfolk in Narmada during damming.

### **Where are Fisherfolk in**



Protests against Bhadbhut Barrage Photo: Kamlesh Madhiwala



## Decisions around Bhadbhut Barrage?

No assessment of downstream impacts of either Sardar Sarovar or Bhadbhut dam has been done. No compensation is being offered to the fisherfolk affected. According to the fisherfolk, compensation has never entered the discussions at all. 1500 farmers and fisherfolk attended the public hearing in 2014 and walked out soon after sharply registering their protest against the proposed project. However, the fact remains that they have no space in decision making that can be the last straw for commercial Hilsa Fishery in Narmada and livelihoods of thousands of fisherfolk families.

## 4. Tadadi Port: Destroying Estuary of a Free-flowing River

Aghanashini River cutting through the Western Ghats and meeting the Arabian Ocean in Dakshin Kannada District of Karnataka is a rare river in many senses. First and foremost, **it is one of the very few rivers in India and even the world to retain its integral connection to the sea from its source: it is undammed and free flowing.** Less than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of large global rivers remain like that today. Because of the relatively protected catchment, immensely biodiverse habitat and comparative remoteness of the river basin, the water quality and riparian health still are in a good condition.

But the gem is the estuary of the Aghanashini, its mouth where it meets the sea. The estuary, its associated mud flats and mangroves form a spectacularly productive ecosystem which harbours astounding biodiversity, at the same time supports livelihoods of thousands of fisherfolk, riparian farmers, bivalve collectors (clams, mussels, oysters, etc). More than 20 villages depend on Aghanashini estuary for fishing, directly employing more than 6000 fisherfolk, impacting about 25-30000 people! The Centre for Ecological Sciences of Bangalore's Indian Institute of Science (IISc), proposed to the Karnataka State Biodiversity Board that the biologically active mudflats near Aghanashini village and the mangroves near Kaggal and Masur villages be declared as 'Biodiversity Heritage Sites', under the Biological Diversity Act of 2002. The Bivalve Collectors' Union proposed to the Karnataka State Coastal Zone Management Authority that the entire estuary be declared as a 'critical vulnerable coastal area'.

In such an ecological wonderland, Karnataka State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (KSIIIC) has proposed a multipurpose port bang at the mouth of the river, which is going to affect and destroy mangroves, mudflats, and estuarine area spread over



*Mussel Collection from Aghanashini Estuary Photo: IISC*

more than 1000 acres. In late 2016, an expert appraisal committee (EAC) of the Ministry of Environment and Forests recommended environmental and coastal regulation zone clearances for the project.

As usual, the EIA (done by NEERI) and public hearing has been severely critiqued as being inadequate, biased and refusing to acknowledge the ecosystemic and cultural value of the region.

Some media reports claim that **the port will be built on a PPP basis, with Adani being the private party.** While more than 300 submissions were received against recommending Environment Clearance to the project, the MoEF&CC's Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) still recommended the project for EC. It seems that in their scheme of things, voice of fisherfolk (or even experts and scientists) holds no sway. But this does not mean that the port will continue unchallenged

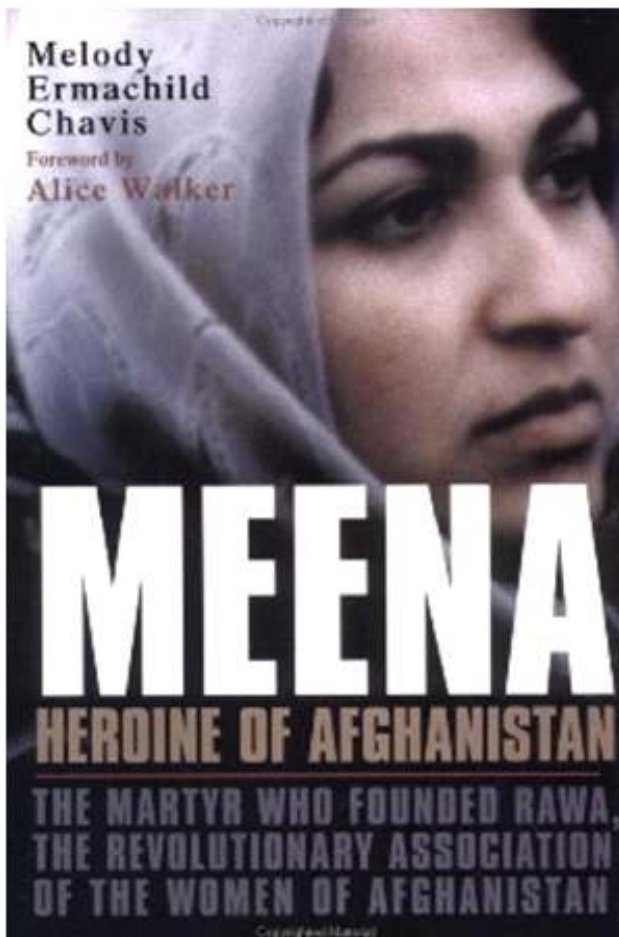
**In conclusion** Riverine Fisherfolk can be the guardians of our healthy, flowing rivers. When we brush them under the carpet, we brush the rivers under the carpet too. Ecosystem-dependent communities are the best indicators of how we treat our natural resources and vulnerable societies. They are a yardstick to assess environmental governance of a nation. It is clear that we are failing riverine fisherfolk of India by not ensuring assessment of impacts of project on them, by not including them in decision-making processes affecting their livelihoods, by not compensating them for the stark losses because they were too poor, weak and vulnerable to stake their claims and by mistreating our rivers.

The crisis also provides an opportunity. Riverine Fisherfolk can be the guardians of our rivers. Ensuring their welfare is a win-win game for all. It is time to acknowledge them as ambassadors of healthy, flowing rivers.

# A Radical Passion for Justice

“Afghan women are sleeping lions. When we are aroused we react with the same courage and charisma as lions. There are only two paths to choose from: side with the criminal regime, or oppose them and be ready to fight like a lioness. We have to risk our lives and even lose them. — Meena

 Susan Griffin



On the surface, “Meena, Heroine of Afghanistan” is a very simple book. Since this account of the life of the founder of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, or RAWA, is told for girls as well as women, the style is conventional and direct. Yet the narrative will provide a profoundly moving experience for readers of any age. In fact, the story of the young woman who at the age of 20 started the first movement for women's rights in Afghanistan, only to be

assassinated 10 years later, is a page turner.

Meena's story cannot have been easy to piece together. Readers will benefit from the experience of the author, Melody Ermachild Chavis, who in her career as a private detective has investigated numerous murder cases. In the course of her research for this book, she traveled to Afghanistan to interview many of the principals men and women who, even after the Taliban was overthrown, were still in danger of attack by fundamentalist terrorists because of their support of women's rights.

Those readers unfamiliar with the lot of women under the Taliban will be shocked by the conditions revealed in this book. Yet the logic of the oppression will not, unfortunately, be entirely unfamiliar to Westerners, who see various forms of repression imposed on women in Christian fundamentalism and ultra-Orthodox Judaism. Claiming that women are spiritually and intellectually inferior as well as sexually dangerous, the Taliban promoted male domination both in the family and in public life through various forms of repression, including the imprisonment of women in the home, the imposition of the veil and the burqa, the denial of the vote and of education, the exclusion of women from the clergy and places of worship, and opposition to abortion, affirmative action and the employment of women outside the home.

In 1957 the year Meena was born into a middle-class family in Kabul Afghanistan was ruled by King Zahir Shah, a monarch who supported some measure of equality for women. Afghanistan's modern history can almost be read as an exercise in violent ambivalence concerning democracy and women's rights. Amanullah Khan, who ruled Afghanistan from 1919 (the year the country won full independence from Britain) until he was deposed in 1929, began a program of modernization that included education for women. Nadir Shah, king from 1929 to 1933, abolished Amanullah's reforms, but Nadir's son Zahir, who succeeded him after Nadir was assassinated, advanced Amanullah's liberalizing policies



even further, establishing a constitution in 1964 that gave women the right to vote. When she was born the family was visited by a saint who said, "She will be a queen but she will not live to an old age."

It was thanks to all this, that Meena received an education unlike her mother, who was illiterate. Lycee Malalai, the all-girls school she attended, was named for an Afghan heroine who in 1880, when the country was invaded by Britain, had retrieved under gunfire a fallen Afghan flag and held it high until she was shot down by British soldiers. Inspired by this story and by two of her teachers who believed in the equality of women, Meena eventually became a heroine herself to countless Afghans, legendary even before her martyrdom at age 30.

After graduation, Meena intended to study law so that she could fight for women's rights in the courts. But by then the liberal atmosphere that had fostered her determination had dissipated. Three years earlier, Zahir was overthrown by his prime minister and cousin, Mohammed Daoud, who was aligned with a pro-Soviet party. Gradually Afghanistan lost its independence, and the government became unstable. Fundamentalist groups began interpreting every democratic reform as a sign of corrupting foreign influence, and emancipated women were their first targets. By 1976, when Meena entered the University of Kabul, its female students had to contend with a reign of terror as random attacks were carried out on them. The followers of the Islamic radical Burhanuddin Rabbani threw acid on the exposed legs and even the faces of women walking across the campus the beginning of hostilities that continue to this day.

Meena did not let these attacks stop her from attending the university or from speaking out for women. The resolve and bravado for which she was soon to become famous showed itself in a family drama culminating that year with her marriage. Meena was 19 years old. Because according to Afghan tradition a girl is considered marriageable at 13, the pressure from members of her extended family for her to wed had reached a fever pitch.

Meena's standards seemed impossible to fill. She did not believe in, nor would she consent to, a bride price, let alone an arranged marriage. She would not wear the veil; though polygamy was still the custom in many households, she insisted that her husband should take no other wives; she demanded that she be allowed to continue her studies; and she made it clear that she planned not only to practice law but to hold her own political views as well. Eventually an enterprising aunt found Meena an acceptable husband in Faiz Ahmed, a distant cousin who was a doctor with radical views, including a belief in women's rights. Because he agreed to all her conditions and she liked him, Meena agreed to the union, though in the beginning she was not in love with him.

If over time she would come to love Faiz, she never agreed with his Maoist politics. She seems to have

rejected ideology altogether, favoring instead the practical complexities that inform the lives of real women. Still, she watched and learned from her husband's political activism. Increasingly, it seemed to her that the courts were not the only way to better women's lives. She decided to start a political organization for women. Influenced by her husband's organization, which under a pro-Soviet regime had to be clandestine, she found a way to build RAWA while keeping its membership secret. Interestingly, her method was similar to one used by American feminists of the late '60s and '70s: a constellation of small groups. Though Meena met with all the groups, they did not meet with one another, making it easier for women to keep their membership secret and thus evade the disapproval and draconian retaliation of their families. This approach also afforded great intimacy, which helped give its members an uncommon strength and courage.



In the beginning, some of Meena's tactics, such as wearing a burqa when visiting members' houses, seemed unnecessary, but soon the wisdom of this approach became all too clear. When Daoud was assassinated in 1978, thousands of Afghan intellectuals were imprisoned or executed. The following year, after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, all other political points of view were brutally repressed. That officially the Soviet regime supported women's rights made RAWA's task no easier. Indeed, educating women about their rights became more difficult under a hated communist government that



was forcing its ideological program on an occupied people.

Soon Meena's life became more difficult in still other ways when, because he was a Maoist, Faiz and Meena were forced to separate. Meena continued to organize women, even during the last month of her pregnancy. On the day her labor began, Faiz was arrested. Fearing that she too would be imprisoned, Meena went to the hospital at the last minute before giving birth, leaving in disguise only hours afterward. Although a donor gave her money for a proper hospital in a larger city she used the money for helping other women. In one of the more wrenching episodes of her story, she decided to leave her newborn child with a friend before going into hiding herself. Faiz was finally released from jail, but he was able to visit his wife and daughter only briefly before he fled to Pakistan.

Though matters would soon become significantly worse under the warlords and fundamentalist mujahedin who finally overthrew Soviet rule, under Meena's leadership RAWA continued to publish and distribute leaflets, hold literacy classes and build its organization through the continual spawning of small groups of women. Eventually Meena herself was forced to go to Pakistan. But she continued to work for RAWA there, establishing literacy classes and a home for refugee Afghan women and children. She was close to finishing work on a hospital intended to serve refugees and those injured by land mines when she was murdered by an Afghani who had been acting as a RAWA supporter.

The author's description of Meena's considerable physical beauty, burnished by a passion for justice that gave her a luminous quality, is verified by the photographs accompanying the book. As one learns about how she would go out dressed as a man, or show up at the home of a member who was ill or suffering a loss, bringing food or offering to cook,

even while she was pregnant and exhausted, one comes to love this woman.

Another great service rendered by her for the Afghan women is the launching of a bilingual magazine, *Payam-e-Zan* (Women's Message) in 1981. Through this magazine RAWA has been projecting the cause of Afghan women boldly and effectively. *Payam-e-Zan* has constantly exposed the criminal nature of fundamentalist groups as well as the communist occupiers. Avoiding any rigid ideology, the paper propagated basic humanism and tolerance in simple language even young girls could understand. Meena also established Watan Schools for refugee children, a hospital and handicraft centers for refugee women in Pakistan to support Afghan women financially. Her final work was a hospital for Afghan refugees.

She suffered great heartache not only for the risks of death and hard life she faced but also from the murder of her husband and her being kept apart from her young daughter to prevent her from being killed as well. She poured her longing for her daughter into caring for the refugee girls as if they were her own. She loved to visit the young girls in the refugee camps and inspire them to study, respect themselves and plan boldly for their future. She knew all their names and they would come running when she came near their tents.

At the end of 1981, by invitation of the French Government, Meena represented the Afghan resistance movement at the French Socialist Party Congress. The Soviet delegation at the Congress, headed by Boris Ponomarev, shamefacedly left the hall as participants cheered when Meena started waving a victory sign. Besides France, she also visited several other European countries and met their prominent personalities.

Her active social work and effective advocacy against the views of the fundamentalists and the



puppet regime provoked the wrath of the Russians and the fundamentalist forces alike and she was assassinated by agents of KHAD (Afghanistan branch of KGB) and their fundamentalist accomplices in Quetta, Pakistan, on February 4, 1987.

RAWA continued its activism. Members risked their lives to secretly film a woman being executed by the Taliban in Kabul's sports stadium. RAWA members were forced to work undercover and many were arrested and killed by different Afghan regimes.

There is no comfort in the supposition that since Meena was a political activist, her suffering must have been exceptional. A piece about Afghan women written by Jane Kramer for the *New Yorker* makes it clear that over the last two and a half decades most of the women of Afghanistan have suffered terribly, often in almost unspeakable ways. Kramer quotes Zahir Tannin, once editor of a prominent daily paper in Kabul and now head of the Afghan desk at the BBC: "No one wants to talk about it

but the one thing [Afghans] do agree on is that the biggest victims of our twenty years' war are women." If Meena was exceptional it was because she fought back and took joy in the fight — a joy shared by the women of RAWA, who, as they continued Meena's work under the Taliban.

In her moving foreword to the book, Alice Walker writes, "One day one hopes the whole of Afghanistan, healed after so many centuries of war, will look upon the smiling radiant face of Meena and recognize itself." If, as Walker writes, the male leaders of Afghanistan live "under the illusion that she is separate from them," so too does the current world leadership. The 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees still defines "refugee" as someone running in fear from persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, even membership in a particular social group or because of holding a political opinion, but not persecution due to gender.

The world would do well to take this widespread persecution seriously. Its victims are also often startlingly prescient. What would have happened had world leaders listened to Meena in 1981, when, after attending an international conference of socialists in Paris to protest the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, she warned in a televised interview of the dangers of violent Islamic fundamentalist movements? When Afghanistan's public educational system collapsed, Meena and others in RAWA saw the danger, but the American government took no heed. Despite pleas for help, no money or support was given to RAWA for its schools and hospitals. Yet the Islamic fundamentalist schools, established during the Soviet occupation by, among others, Osama bin Laden and that trained many future terrorists were well funded by several nations, including our own (America).

RAWA has condemned the crimes of the US invasion of

Afghanistan and the compromises the US installed government has made with powerful conservative politicians to restrict the rights of women and to prevent proper justice being given to women. Unlike other organizations working in Afghanistan, RAWA is not dependent for money and security upon the various foreign (NATO, Pakistani) invaders, bombers and drug-dealers of Afghanistan.

This is a book not only to read but to urge others to read. It provides, in its devastating way, a measure of hope. Another way of preventing violence exists: not through repression but through the expansion of civil liberties. Below is the translation of an inspiring poem by [Meena](#) published in "Payam-e-Zan" No.1, 1981.

## I'll never return

I'm the woman who has awoken  
 I've arisen and become a tempest  
 through the ashes of my burnt children  
 I've arisen from the rivulets  
 of my brother's blood  
 My nation's wrath has empowered me  
 My ruined and burnt villages fill me  
 with hatred against the enemy,  
 I'm the woman who has awoken,  
 I've found my path and will never return.  
 I've opened closed doors of ignorance  
 I've said farewell to all golden bracelets  
 Oh compatriot, I'm not what I was  
 I'm the woman who has awoken  
 I've found my path and will never return.  
 I've seen barefoot, wandering and homeless children  
 I've seen henna-handed brides with mourning clothes  
 I've seen giant walls of the prisons  
 swallow freedom in their ravenous stomach  
 I've been reborn amidst epics of resistance and courage  
 I've learned the song of freedom in the last breaths,  
 in the waves of blood and in victory  
 Oh compatriot, Oh brother, no longer regard me  
 as weak and incapable  
 With all my strength I'm with you  
 on the path of my land's liberation  
 My voice has mingled with thousands of arisen women  
 My fists are clenched with the fists of  
 thousands of compatriots  
 Along with you I've stepped up  
 to the path of my nation,  
 To break all these sufferings, all these fetters of slavery,  
 Oh compatriot, Oh brother, I'm not what I was  
 I'm the woman who has awoken  
 I've found my path and will never return.

# Losing Hope: Who will give Kashmiri Pandits Justice Now that the Supreme Court has Turned them Away?

Varad Sharma

On October 25, 2017, the Supreme Court rejected the second plea for a fresh investigation into the killings of hundreds of Pandits in Jammu and Kashmir in the 1990s and early 2000s. It was a review petition filed by a Kashmiri Pandit group against the court's July 24 order, which stated:

"We decline to entertain this petition under Article 32 of the Constitution of India, for the simple reason that the instances referred to in the present petition pertain to the year 1989-90, and more than 27 years have passed by since then. No fruitful purpose would emerge, as evidence is unlikely to be available at this late juncture." The apex court's decision is nothing short of rubbing salt into the wounds of Kashmir's ethnic minority community. Particularly at a time when the Narendra Modi government has appointed former Intelligence Bureau chief Dineshwar Sharma to hold talks with various stakeholders in Jammu and Kashmir. The stakeholders include the separatist Hurriyat Conference as Sharma confirmed in an interview with the journalist Barkha Dutt recently.

Is the Modi government softening up on Kashmiri separatists by giving the new interlocutor a free hand? The separatists who orchestrated the exodus of the Pandits and continue to foment trouble as and when there is talk of the Pandits returning to their homeland.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, which is in power at the Centre as well as in Jammu and Kashmir, has done little for the Pandits despite claiming to be committed to

redressing their plight. Other parties such as the Congress, National Conference and Peoples Democratic Party too have offered little more than lip service.

Time and again, we hear the hollow promises of governments about enabling the Pandits to return to Kashmir. But there is rarely talk of bringing the perpetrators to book and providing justice to this terror-affected community that has been homeless for nearly a quarter of a century. Before becoming prime minister, Modi spoke about the Pandits on several occasions. But he has gone largely silent since assuming power in 2014. The Pandit community had great expectations from Modi, but he has disappointed.

When the legislature and the executive failed to redress the grievances of the displaced community, some Kashmiri Pandits went to the judiciary. Little did they know that the judiciary too would shut its doors for the seekers of justice. It is shocking that the Supreme Court dismissed the plea for investigation on the ground that the crimes took place long ago and it was not worthwhile to pursue the matter now. Merely because 27 years have passed does not mean investigation cannot be done, especially when those such as Yasin Malik and Farooq Ahmad Dar, alias Bitta Karate, have admitted to the crimes. Recently, Republic TV broadcast an exposé showing terrorists who have since given up arms purportedly confessing to having killed Pandits in the 1990s.

## Different standards?

Further, how can the Supreme Court envisage that nothing fruitful will come to light by reopening the cases? Is it appropriate for the

judiciary to prophesise rather than scrutinise the matter at hand on its merits?

Curiously, this logic was not followed when on March 24, 2017, the Supreme Court decided to re-examine 199 cases pertaining to the 1984 anti-Sikh carnage that had been closed by the Special Investigation Team constituted by Modi government in 2015. Also, on April 19, 2017, the Supreme Court restored conspiracy charges against LK Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and 13 other accused in the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition case.

Isn't the apex court contradicting itself by reopening cases from 1984 and 1992 while dismissing a similar matter from the early 1990s?

One goes to the highest court in the land when all other avenues for justice have failed to deliver. Whom should the Pandits turn to for justice now that the apex court has ruled that seeking justice won't lead to anything? Should they just stop demanding justice and redress of their grievances?

About two months ago, the Pandits commemorated the 28th death anniversary of Pandit Tika Lal Taploo, noted lawyer and senior BJP leader, who was gunned down outside his house in Srinagar on September 14, 1989. He was the first Pandit victim of terrorism in Kashmir. Taploo's killing was the beginning of a reign of terror that forced the minority Pandit community to flee their homeland in 1990. Who can forget the massacres of Sangrampora, Wandhama, and Nadimarg? Who can forget Pandit women such as Sarla Bhat and Girija

*Continued on page No. 44*



# As Formal Farm Credit Grows, So Does Hold of Moneylenders. Here's Why

Sanjukta Nair

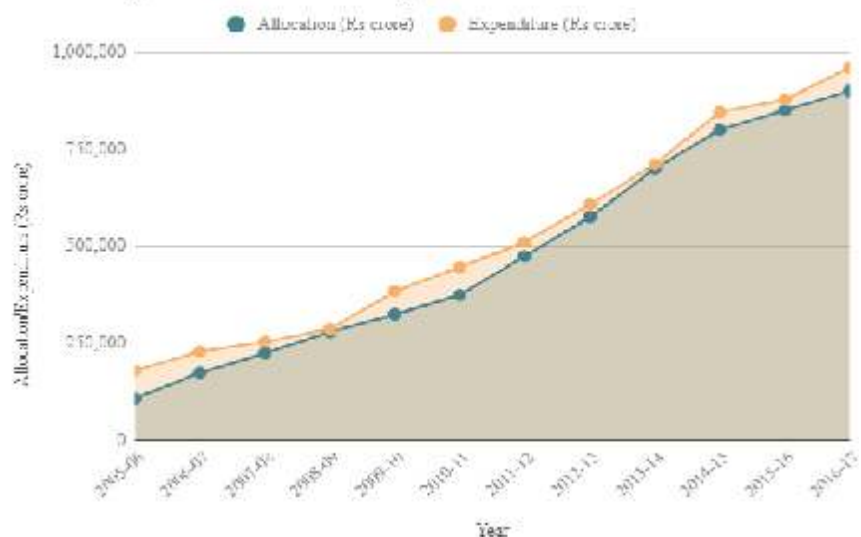
Despite a 11% rise in loans to agriculture over a year to a record Rs 10 lakh crore in 2017-18, the share of professional moneylenders in agricultural credit grew nine percentage points over 11 years to 2013, and two important government programmes meant to ease credit are denying farmers the benefits they seek, according to an IndiaSpend analysis. While the 19-year-old Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme, hopes to allow farmers to double their incomes by providing them with crop loans at interest rates as low as 4% to purchase better farm equipment, seeds and an ATM card to meet household expenses, some farmers are made to pay insurance premia they don't want; others are forced to take informal loans to pay the KCC interest on time.

The second programme is the decade-old Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme (ADWDRS), which allows farmers to have direct agricultural loans waived by issuing full waiver certificates that qualify farmers for fresh loans, or by partial waivers that are credited to their accounts. But 44% of rural houses that borrow from informal credit sources are ineligible because ADWDRS loans are formal loans from banks or other financial institutions, and one in three eligible farmers over ten years to 2007 did not receive the certificates they needed to apply for new loans.

For perspective, Rs 10 lakh crore is 5.3 times the size of India's agriculture and rural budget and 20.4 times the health budget for 2017-18.

Growing farm debt is associated with increased farmer suicides in an era of climate change and crop failures, increasing dependence on professional

India's Agricultural Credit Budget: 2005-06 to 2017-18



moneylenders charging interest that can be four times higher than the banking system.

In this second part, we explain how the government budget spends more than ever on agricultural credit and although official programmes have helped farmers earn more money, loopholes and inefficiencies withhold benefits, and eventually force them towards moneylenders and other informal sources of credit.

The continuing—and growing—lure of moneylenders and other informal credit

Professional moneylenders—who can charge up to four times more interest than the government's banking system—hold more rural debt than ever: From 19.6% in 2002 to 28.2% in 2013.

The government has constantly tried to improve agricultural credit: By nationalising commercial banks in 1969—so they could be forced to lend money to the agricultural sector—to setting up regional rural banks in 1975 and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in 1982.

In 2017-18, as we said, the government budget of Rs. 10 lakh crore towards agricultural credit, was the highest ever, up from Rs. 9 lakh crore the previous year and a 9.3 time increase from Rs. 1,08,500 crore in 2005-06.

From 2005-06 to 2017-18, the budget allocation towards agricultural credit has increased 9.3 times—to Rs. 10,00,000 crore. Though the government has always spent more than its budget towards agricultural credit—105.6% in 2012-13, for instance—rural households continue to borrow money from informal sources (moneylenders, family and friends) because conditions are flexible and often no collateral is required.

The two well-meaning government programmes—the KCC and the ADWDRS—to explore why the government fails to displace informal sources of rural credit.

Kisan Credit Card may lead to higher incomes, but also involuntary insurance premia

The KCC was introduced in 1998, so farmers could purchase



seeds, fertilisers and pesticides on credit and withdraw cash through ATMs, subject to credit limits. In 2004, the KCC was expanded to include term loans for agriculture and allied activities. For marginal farmers (those who own up to 2.5 acres of land) KCCs are more flexible, covering warehouse-storage credit, consumption expenses and small-term-loan investments to purchase farm equipment or start mini dairies.

Farmers with a KCC could earn nearly Rs 1.49 lakh every year, according to this 2016 NABARD estimate, double the Rs. 69,850 they might earn without one.

But a KCC automatically registers farmers with a crop-insurance programme, regardless of consent, and money is deducted from their bank accounts as premia towards crop insurance that they may not want. Some farmers have not received insurance payouts, despite paying these premia.

Eligible farmers denied necessary certificates, some benefits routed to ineligible beneficiaries

In 2008, the government of India announced the ADWDRS, which allowed the waiver of debts related to direct agricultural loans given upto March 31, 2007 and overdue as on 31st December, 2007, if these loans remained unpaid up to February 29, 2008. Small and marginal farmers would receive 100% waivers, while other farmers would receive a rebate of 25%, provided they paid the balance 75%.

Nearly 13.5% of eligible farmers did not receive benefits amounting to Rs.3.58 crore, according to a 2013 CAG report on the 2008 debt-waiver scheme. Instead, 8.5% of farmers who received benefits were ineligible—these loans were for non-agricultural purposes; the CAG report does not say how they got these loans—and their waivers amounted to Rs. 20.5 crore.

Debt-waiver certificates were not issued to 34% of eligible farmers. Farmers need these certificates to apply for fresh loans. Loans amounting to Rs. 164.60 crore were waived in violation of the scheme's guidelines.

Farmers return to informal sources despite loan waivers

Only farmers who borrow from formal sources, such as banks, are eligible for loan waivers. Nearly 44% of rural debt is held by non-institutional agencies.

However, those who borrow from institutional sources only get a partial waiver, as a large portion of their expenses is non-farm related. Some farmers hold multiple loans, which means they need multiple loan waivers. Agricultural labourers who do not hold crop loans are not considered.

Some households who received full waivers went on to increase their borrowings from informal sources, and such waivers can encourage future defaults, according to a 2011 World Bank study.

Despite crop failures, farmers were eager to repay their KCC loans, which are interest-free if paid within a year, according to a 2017 study by Stanford University's Center on Global Poverty and Development. So, they take loans from informal sources at high rates of interest. Once the new KCC loan was given, they used it to repay informal lenders, leaving them with lower incomes.

States with a high proportion of indebted farmers reported a higher share of informal loans, making these farmers ineligible for debt waivers, according to a 2017 RBI paper.

To provide credit at an affordable rate to boost agricultural productivity, in June 2017, the Union Cabinet approved an Interest Subvention Scheme, which allows farmers to access short term loans upto Rs. 3 lakh at 4% per annum.

In the end, the solution is two-fold providing a minimum support price that provides a good living to farmers and implementing other recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission. After this moneylending must be made a criminal act and those who engage in it (not their victims) must face mandatory minimum jail sentences.

### Continued from Page No. 42

Tickoo who were raped before being murdered by terrorists?

Kashmir's struggle for Azadi, overtly and covertly supported by most of the majority Muslim community, has meant barbadi, or ruin, for the minority Pandit community. The Pandits were seen as living symbols of the Indian nation in Kashmir and, hence, bore the brunt when the insurgency against the Indian state erupted in 1989.

In spite of their trials and tribulations, Kashmiri Pandits have always stood for the Indian nation and believed in her democracy. Yet, they have been let down by all pillars of Indian democracy. Will they ever get justice?

*Varad Sharma is a Kashmiri writer.*

*He co-edited A Long Dream of Home: The Persecution, Exodus and Exile of Kashmiri Pandits.*

# History Bears Testimony

Shrii Shrii Anandamúrti

History bears testimony that whenever a person states the absolute truth in any sphere of life, whether it be spiritual, social, economic or otherwise; sought clarification of doubts or protested against injustice and wrongs, the evil forces forthwith plotted against the person, administered poison, slandered and assaulted that person with rage, misused authority and mercilessly dealt blow after blow; but the blows boomeranged and ultimately the evil forces were annihilated by those very blows. Remember, by an unalterable decree of history, the evil forces are destined to meet their final doom.

**(Ananda Vanii, 1 January 1974)**



## Maharlika Municipalities Embrace Prout

Something very significant is happening in Maharlika (Philippines). A constellation of grassroots actions, that demonstrate the practical application of Prout-based policies, is glowing ever brighter.

Earlier on efforts were made to introduce and implement local development planning in Oroquieta City in Northern Mindanao. That good work continues, and now in two other municipalities similar initiatives are underway - in Salcedo, Eastern Samar and Bayawan, Central Visayas. These developments are the result of positive and deepening relations with local government authorities, their planning bodies, and a developing network of engaged supporters.

Often when we speak of Prout people ask if there is anywhere it has been established. Prout is complex and profound, therefore the task to implement it is not an easy one. What we do have and can share is a clear vision, and well-defined guiding principles that can translate into practical policies for a specific place or situation. When these are applied more comprehensively in an integrated way, we begin to implement core aspects of Prout's economic system. And here lies the tremendous value of ongoing work in Maharlika.

Current efforts in these three areas begin to serve as a model for how to stimulate an underdeveloped economy. Each of the municipalities share similar characteristics such as; 35 – 60% of the population lives in poverty, 70 - 100% of the food consumed locally is imported from outside the area despite favorable conditions for agriculture, unemployment and underemployment are high, and there are few if any local industries.

Though the exact approach for each municipality varies as per local requirements, the basic strategy is based on Prout's concept of Block Level Planning and other guiding principles. These include: to work with and involve local experts and authorities; to accurately survey the resources and needs; to emphasize local food production (and when possible also the production of other minimum necessities) and then value added processing industries; to find ways to keep money circulating within the local economy; to encourage cooperatives and where possible eliminate middlemen; to arrange training, equipment and facilities as required; and to promote character building, service-mindedness and ethical conduct.

We now share news of a recent tour to all three areas by Kalyanii Chew from Malaysia and Dada Dharmavedananda. Kalyanii is heading up the Model Projects group formed last summer following the Prout Convention. Their tour served a larger purpose; to help define the steps and process by which any project or activity can develop toward the implementation of more aspects of Prout. We consider this work to have very great importance - both the process and the specific targets taken. As the details are many and lengthy, what follows below is selected highlight from one of the visited areas. Another area visited was Oroquieta in North Mindanao

### Salcedo, Eastern Samar

Since November 2013, following the devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan relief and rebuilding efforts have been actively pursued by AMURT through Dada Nirmalakrsnananda and the local team he formed and guides. In addition to repairing and building nearly thirty schools and two hundred homes as well as community, day care and health centres, invaluable assistance was provided to the local coconut plantation workers and their families. The storm destroyed ninety percent of the trees which provided a livelihood to many of the local population of twenty-two thousand people.

Impressive and comprehensive Prout-based initiatives carried out in the agricultural sector are many and include: the setting up and registration of thirty-five farmer associations and two farmer federations, introduction of cooperative farming in thirty-two villages, a four hectare fruit orchard involving the participation of the farmer associations and federations, and a ninety-eight hectare afforestation program in collaboration with the national Department of Environment and Natural Resources and several local high schools. Basic farm tools and vegetable seeds have been distributed. Dada Nirmalakrsnananda has become a close and trusted ally of the Mayor.



with village leaders:

- Poverty rates
- Perspectives for young people
- Development of local tourism
- Cottage industry



## Delhi State Committee of PBI Re-organised



Delhi state committee of PBI was formed in Malviya Nagar, Delhi on 24 December 2017 in the presence PBI and UPLF cadres from almost all the districts of the state. The meeting was presided over by the party's national convener Ac. Santoshananda Avadhuta. Addressing the party cadres, he said politics today is dominated by immoral forces while good people are suffering all kinds of hardships. He said that the biggest crisis in the world today is the absence of a moralist leadership, which has endangered the existence of not only the living beings but also the non-living world.

Public relations secretary Ravindra Singh gave a powerpoint presentation on 'PBI: a new stream of Politics'. He elaborated on how and why PBI is different from other political parties. He said that PBI is an unprecedented phenomenon, and will surely and unexpectedly rise to prominence. He said the established parties divide and rule, but PBI is here to unite the people on the basis of universalism and anti-exploitation sentiment, and to put the moralists in the power to rule. He said so-called charismatic leaders and their successors have done nothing good for the country; only infallible leadership and ideal can save the country.

The meeting concluded with the formation of New Delhi state committee with the following office-bearers:

Jitendra Tiwari, Advocate -- President

Ramkhelawan -- Vice President

Chatur Singh -- Vice President

Baidyanath Sah -- General Secretary Arvind Singh, Advocate -- Secretary

Ram Ratan Sharma -- Secretary

Renu Poddar -- Secretary

B. N. Bhati -- Organising Secretary A. K. Varma, Advocate --

Training Secretary

Khusboo -- Media Secretary Vinod Singh -- Movement

Secretary Mahant Ram Tiwari -- Office Secretary

Ramkesh Chaudhary -- Finance Secretary Members -- Lalan

Gupta, Ramashankar, Ranjit Singh, S N Pandey, Nawin Kumar, Ramsabuj, B N Maurya, S P Dubey, Nawin Singh, Prabhakar Kumar, Suresh Babu, Sujay Kumar, Ravindar Singh, H. N. Gupta, Bipin Bihari Singh, Ram Vilas Yadav

Patron-----Gopalji and Ramesh Kumar

**Moralists to Rule**



**Proutist Bloc India (PBI)**  
**National Convention**

**24-25 March, 2018**

**Venue : Rajasthani Mahila Mandal,  
Tekdi Road, Sitabuldi, Madha Colony,  
Sitabuldi, Nagpur, Maharashtra 440012  
(Near Railway Station — Towards platform No. 1)**

**Welcome All**

**For details, please contact :  
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9334218810, 9204024678**



## Formation of PBI Committee of Sitamarhi

On 7 January 2018, a meeting of PBI cadres and members of Sitamadhi District committee was held at LK High School, Sitamadhi under the chairmanship of National Organising Secretary Raj Kishore Prasad to reorganise the district committee.

After due deliberations, the following people were included in the Sitamadhi district committee:

Chairman -- Ramvilas Baitha

General Secretary -- Rohit Kumar Thakur

Finance Secretary -- Amresh Kumar

Organising Secretary -- Nand Kishore Gupta

Youth Secretary -- Dinesh Kumar

Members -- Keshar Dev Lal, Raghunandan Kumar, Manoj Kumar, Rajiv Chauhan

Informing the new members about the party's aims and objectives, and its recent activities in the district, Rajkishore Prasad said that on 30 November 2017, the party held a dharna demanding the repair and renovation of the road from Goshala Chowk to Khairba Chowk and the Ring Dam road. He said that the party is actively pursuing the issue of regular teaching at the school and colleges of the district.



## De-addiction Rally of PBI in Ghatanji

The people of Ghatanji, a very old city and municipal council in Yavatmal district of Maharashtra, celebrated new year very differently this time. On 31st December, 2017, when most people were busy organizing new year parties and arranging adequate supply of liquor for this celebrations, the cadres of Proutist Bloc, India under the leadership of Madhukar Nistane, organized a de-addiction rally in the city. Besides the party cadres, a number of other social organizations participated in the rally.

The participants, including a large number of school and college students, shouted slogans against the sale of liquor and other narcotic drugs. They were carrying placards with slogans written in local language. A large number of women took part in the rally because after all, women are the worst victims of any type of addiction among the male members of their family.

Speaking on this occasion, Madhukar Nistane said, "If a family, society or country wants to progress, it should keep its members away from liquor or drug addiction, otherwise nobody can save it from annihilation." Citing an example, he said, "It is a historical fact that there was a time when the consumption of opium had completely degraded the life of Chinese due to British imperialism; but when the government dealt with it iron handedly, the country rose to





be a superpower.” He told the audience that if India wants to be a prosperous and powerful country, the government and public will have to work together in making people de-addicted. He added that after arranging alternative employment for the people engaged in the production and sale of liquor, the government should completely ban its sale in the country.

Nayab Talisdar also joined the rally. Admiring the efforts of PBI, he said, “Today when most political parties are engaged in mudslinging, this step of PBI is praiseworthy. What a great and novel way to start a new year!” Other organizations that participated in the rally were: Priyadarshini, Sanghmitra Ladies Hostel, AMP Sidharth, Samarth Boys' Hostel etc.

Social activists including Ganjendra Dhavale, Moreshwar Vatile, Pradip Vaghpaian, Prafful Raut, Arun Kamble, Miratai Vaghpaian, Amol Giri, Suresh Ambepawar and Ganesh Khaparde More also participated in the rally.

## Rally of Bhumihina Sangha of Saintala Unit with Koshal Samaj, Bolangir

Bhumihina Sangha and Koshal Samaj, Bolangir held a rally at Saintala Tahsil (District Bolangir) on 09.01.2018. More than 500 families participated in the programme demanding homestead land for constructions of their house. All these people were landless and have no house of their own.



They took out a procession which started at the Saintala Bunglow at 11.00 AM and the procession terminated at the Tahsil Office covering the main streets of Saintala Town. It was led by Sri Rajesh Bagarty, Sri Purna Chandra Biswal and Sri Kedarnath Sahu, raising slogans against the Odisha State government for its failure to provide the required land.

The rally was addressed by Sri Jagannath Mahana, Smt. Ranju Raimon, Sri Rajesh Bagarty, Sri Kapil Kumbhar, Sri Ramesh Mohapatra, Sri Sandeep Bag, Sri Vasistha Guru and Proutist Sri Kedarnath Sahoo.

Sri Jagannath Mahana, Secretary Bhumihina Sangha, Bolangir said that they were compelled to hold this rally as the Central and Odisha government had failed to provide them Homestead land despite 70 years of independence. Smt. Ranju Raimon, Social Activist of Titilagarh working for empowerment of women asked women to assert their rights for a dignified living. Sri Rajesh Bagarty, a social worker of Titilagarh said that people in this part of Odisha (the Koshal area) are generally backward due to exploitation and lack political awareness required to raise their voice against injustice.

Sri Kapil Kumbhar, a poet of Koshal sang a song in Koshli language expressing the pains and suffering of the landless people.

Sri Ramesh Mohapatra, a Kissan Neta of Bargarh District supported this movement expressing his desire to launch it in Bargarh District.

Sri Sandeep Bag, a youth leader of Bolangir expressed his anguish over the miserable living conditions of the poor and landless ones, in a democratic country like India.

Sri Vasistha Guru, Bargarh told that only through well organized movements the careless Govt. could be compelled to do the needful to the poor and neglected citizens of the country.

Sri Kedarnath Sahu, a Proutist leader of Odisha, explained why the rallies were being held by the landless and homesteadless citizens in organized manner. He said that relevant Acts and Rules had been framed by the Odisha Govt. in 1962 and declared to the people in 2015 ensuring that no one shall remain landless and homesteadless in Odisha by 31st October 2015. Nevertheless no effective steps have been taken till now. This failure of the Odisha Govt. had created a situation compelling the aggrieved people to agitate and launch movements to pressurize the administration to receive applications with proper receipt so they can be tracked.

At the end of the rally more than 500 applications as per the government norms, were submitted to the Tahsildar of Saintala. The events were documented by Purna Chandra Biswal, Secretary, Koshal Samaj, Bolangir.

## PBI Farmers' Federation formed in Muzaffarpur

On 17 Jan 2018, PBI held a public meeting with about 75 farmers of Kamaalpura Mariya Tola in Muzaffarpur, Bihar to discuss the plight of the farmers and to find ways and means to improve their economic condition.

PBI (Bihar) chairman Shiv Narayan shed light upon the topic and explained the proutistic solutions to the problems. He asked for the wholehearted support of the people for PBI in its struggle for getting industrial status to agriculture and in its efforts for making a farmers' organisation. The farmers expressed their support with applause and responding to his appeal, resolved to organise themselves.

Party's finance secretary Ramesh Chandra discussed how cooperatives can make agriculture profitable and lead to prosperity for farmers.

Satyendra Kumar Singh and Manoj Kumar organised the event, while Mohammad Sanolahak, Mohammad Vakil, Kavindra Sahani, Mahendra Paswan, Vigu Paswan, Nand Kishore Singh, Jaiprakash Singh, Nagendra Mehta, Kailash Ram and Nandu Thakur helped them. Manoj Kumar and Mohammad Saholahak were unanimously made the conveners of the Kisan Sabha.

## PBI Holds a Day-long Sit-in in Muzaffarpur

On 20 Jan 2018, PBI held a day-long sit-in at the collectorate office in Muzaffarpur, Bihar to draw the attention of the government and the administration towards of the problems and demands of the farmers, workers and common people. Addressing the activists and other people, PBI (Bihar) general secretary Dr. Tarani Prasad Singh said that Muzaffarpur is renowned for its cotton industry and juicy fruits; freedom fighters Khudiram Bose and Jubba Sahani have lived and worked on this land; it is the hub world famous intellectuals and stalwart politicians, but despite that this fertile land and its inhabitants have been the victims of government's apathy. More than 40 years ago, the preceptor of PROUT, Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, in a discourse in Muzaffarpur identified the three causes of social vice – lack of wealth of the exploited, excess of wealth of the exploiters and a stagnant collective mindset caused by dogmas and superstition.

Dr. Singh said that most of the problems like poverty, unemployment, corruption, prise-rise, crime, terrorism, pseudo-culture, ecological imbalance etc. are the results of capitalistic exploitation and demanded Amiri Rekha (ceiling on wealth) along the lines of land-ceiling for farmers.

Neelu Singh, secretary of PBI (Bihar) women's wing, said that government and the administration are completely disconnected from the ground realities. The so-called representatives of people come out of their amnesia only a few months before the elections, and the government officials are just performing the formalities in the name of their duty. Together they have made the life of common man a living hell. She appealed to all the good people to join PBI and fight for a better future.

