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# PROUT

A Journal of Proutistic Views and Neo-Humanistic Analysis



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Private Hospitals,  
Including Fortis,  
Making Profits up to 1737%

## Infantilization and Degeneration of the Politics

The vibrancy of the democracies is diminishing as the public sphere of informed democratic dialogue is shrinking. Blatant lies, infantile emotionalism, absolute disrespect, open display of religious and other forms of discrimination, racism, misogyny, casteism and bigotry and other such evils are replacing the concept of the egalitarianism and consensus building.



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08

WHEN PEOPLE ARE SO INERT THAT THEY TURN  
A BLIND EYE TO WHAT HAPPENS AROUND  
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INDIA RANKS BELOW ALL  
DEVELOPED COUNTRIES  
IN THE WORLD ON THE  
HAPPINESS INDEX



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# PROUT

**PROGRESSIVE UTILISATION THEORY**

Propounded by - Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

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







### **What is PROUT :**

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

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

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

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

-  **Neo-humanism :** Neo-humanism expands the humanistic love for all human beings to include love and respect for all creation - plants, animals and even inanimate objects. Neo-humanism provides a philosophical basis for creating a new era of ecological balance, planetary citizenship and cosmic kinship.
-  **Basic Necessities Guaranteed To All :** People can not strive toward their highest human aspirations if they are lacking the basic requirements of life. PROUT believes that access to food, shelter, clothing, education and medical care are fundamental human rights which must be guaranteed to all.
-  **Balanced Economy :** Prout advocates regional self-reliance, cooperatively owned and managed businesses, local control of large scale key industries, and limits on the individual accumulation of excessive wealth.
-  **Women's Right:** PROUT encourages the struggle against all forms of violence and exploitation used to suppress women. PROUT's goal is coordinated cooperation, with equal rights between men and women.
-  **Cultural Diversity:** In the spirit of universal fellowship PROUT encourages the protection and cultivation of local culture, language, history and tradition.
-  **World Government:** PROUT supports the creation of world government with a global constitution and a common penal code.



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“Internally they wish to become ministers to serve their selfish interests, outwardly they say they want to serve the society in the interest of the common people. Their one intention is to fill their pockets with money, but they publicly pronounce that they want to follow the gospels of Dharma. Oh human beings, beware of these impostors. Try to apply your power of discrimination to know who are your friends and who are your foes. You should never allow yourselves to fall victim to these political and religious traders.”

– 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.

From the

## Editor's Desk



# Moral Revolution: Crucial and Inevitable

61 years ago began a moral revolution in the state of Bihar in India. In 1957, the book *Jiivan Veda* was printed on Ananda Purnima which that year was on May 13th. This book rapidly became the 1st book read by initiates in Ananda Marga Sadhana. The principles of Yama and Niyama were said to have been given by Lord Shiva. Later the followers of Mahaviira Jain emphasized the 5 principles of Yama or Mahavratas (great vows) and Patanjali (in the Yoga Sutras) added the principles of Niyama as well.

Prior to 1957 these principles had been briefly summarized to disciples but now a succinct but complete account was there for them to follow. Thereafter Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, as Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji (the spiritual preceptor of Ananda Marga, affectionately known as Baba) began creating a moral revolution.

Many of the early disciples were from the police and other government departments that were notorious for corruption. Unlike other so-called gurus who take money from these crooks, Baba would expose the crimes of disciples in public and then give public beatings where required. However, Baba was never satisfied with disciples simply being moral in their personal lives. He demanded that they enforce moral practices in their family and their workplaces. This created tremendous clash and dangers as the various mafias and the government officers involved were enraged and did their best to ruin the careers and lives of the moralist Margis. It was based upon this foundation of revolutionary morality in society that Shrii Sarkar created the revolutionary socio-economic philosophy of PROUT and its mission for all-round or nuclear revolution.

These principles are rooted in meditation and are the foundation of Ananda Marga spirituality. Iishvara Prañidhāna [1st lesson of Ananda Marga meditation] cannot exist without the four other principles of Niyama, namely: (1) Shaocha, [external and internal purity] (2) Santośa, [remaining contented under all external circumstances] (3) Tapah, [undergoing hardship and suffering to protect and serve others] (4) Svādhyāya [study of one's true Self by studying the work of enlightened persons]. Similarly Brahmacharya [2nd lesson of Ananda Marga meditation] cannot exist without the four other principles of Yama, namely: (1) Ahimsā, [not harming anyone by thought, word or deed], Satya, [benevolent use of words] (3) Asteya, [not stealing or depriving of their rightful wealth and property] (4) Aparigraha [continually reducing one's material possessions and wealth to set an example for others].

It must be emphasized here that the establishment of Yama and Niyama in society involving the establishment of spiritual meditation in social life has nothing to do with a religious society. As Shrii Sarkar said,

**“Many people today advocate the formation of theocratic states (dharma-rashtra). But when they use the term theocratic states, they mean religious states, not states which uphold the cause of righteousness. We should strive to establish states which uphold righteousness (Dharma), and for this the physical sentiments that are the basis of religion should be ignored. People must remain aloof from dogmatic religious ideas.” (Human Progress)**

It should be noted that once in a talk attended by Acarya Sunandananda Avt. Prout's Preceptor referred to a religious nationalist party and said that it was the *shikhar shatru* (ultimate enemy) because while normal capitalists exploit they are not so ruthless. However, these religious nationalists give rise to a totalitarian capitalism that exploits ruthlessly without mercy. Shrii Sarkar repeated this in a meeting attended by Acarya Shyamananda Avt. Finally 1 month after the Ayodhya Rath Yatra, on October 20, 1990, Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar gave the final public discourse on the “Dangers of Communalism” warning that the foolish communal leader could cause further Partition of India.

Capitalism is essentially a form of Himsa and Steya (looting). And it is capitalists who are supporting religious extremists worldwide. Hence genuine, revolutionary morality demands the end of capitalism and state capitalism (communism). Today the cry of the times is for the formation of revolutionary base of morality in society as the foundation for PROUT's all-round or nuclear revolution. In the words of Shrii Sarkar's Vanii (message)

**“You, who have understood the predicament, realized the urgency, seen the naked dance of evil and heard the hypocritical and raucous laughter of the divisive forces, should throw yourself into this noble task without further delay. When the ends are just and noble, success is inevitable.” (January 1975)**





### Dharma Guru

This was an awesome story. Just imagine that we have only 1 choice – to selfishly try to save ourselves and die like an animal in a storm or to have the courage to work for, fight for and die for bringing all-round revolution on this Earth so full of suffering.

**Vivek Barman, Malkangiri**

### Physical, Psychic and Spiritual Strata

So many people in our capitalist age do yoga to end their suffering due to diseases or their psychological problems. Our Baba says do yoga so that you can take more and more tortures upon yourselves to rescue suffering souls everywhere with PROUT revolution. This is the glory of Shrii Shrii Anandamurti.

**Sudhir Mohanlal Rana, Gazipur**

### Never Let Him Go

Such a wonderful Baba story. So many of us grhis are doing nothing constructive. Can we not feel Baba calling us through this article to dedicate ourselves as His PurnaKalik Bandhus? Is it not high time? Actually we have let Baba go because of being sidetracked by ego and maya. Is it not high time to run after our Baba, and by working for His Mission for nuclear revolution, catch hold of His Hand and never let it go ever again?

**Champa Baidya, Chaibasa**

### Statehood for Vidarbha

It was wonderful to read of the work of PBI in Vidarbha. But where

is the PBI manifesto for Vidarbha? Where are the district level plans to implement PROUT? Unless the people have a concrete idea how PROUT can blossom in each district or block how can they have hope? So my humble request is for the PBI Vidarbha is to prepare pamphlet and a video for pracar for Vidarbha and the major districts at least.

**Nirmal Dandekar, Buldhana**

### Peerless Seer

The author writes that such a morally uncompromising person as Baba inevitably invites opposition. While there are many disciples who give fiery lectures, is there any disciple today who is being persecuted and fought against because of their uncompromising dedication to PROUT, NEOHUMANISM or PCAP? If you know of any such true disciple of Baba please send me their mobile number. Thanking you.

**Veda Prakasham, Nellore**

### Ananda Sambodhi

Thank you so much for that article on Ananda Sambodhi. There is just so much work to be done. I do not have much money or the health but by Baba's Grace more and more of us will surrender and do what needs to be done to blossom the dream of Ananda Sambodhi given by Beloved Baba.

**Madalasa Reiter, Salzburg**

### Draft Mineral Policy

I am sick and tired of reading these articles. All the time through so many articles, one fact keeps getting hammered in my head – that every last part of the jewelry box of Bharat Mata (including the Kohinoor) is being looted and handed over to foreign corporates by our chamcha netas. What are we going to do – you please tell me?

**Pedro Gomes, Ponda**

### Missing Women of Pakistan

I got to hand it to you people. At a time when the world is talking about the

communal rape-murder culture in India, you have an article about this in Pakistan. There is a crisis facing our nation – and women are in the line of fire as usual. The only hope is for women to unite against these male nations, male nationalisms and above all male religions. Pakistan, India and all their religions were made by men and for men. Is there any surprise that there is such chaos, such barbarism and such hatred? Only by a united revolt of women in South Asia against male religions and male nations can we find any chance of Azadi from the himsa raj of Patriarchy that is killing our planet.

**Amba Swamy, Nellore**

### Driving out our SC/ST Students

So nice that our dear leaders made the UGC collect data on our dalit and adivasi students. Then came the movement against dalit university groups leading to the death of Rohit Verma. Then came the new forest policies handing over adivasi land to whichever mafia or corporate bribes our netas. Then came the attacks on Dalits in Saharanpur by jati-rogi yogis. Then came Bhim Koregaon where people were attacked in broad daylight for organizing a protest march. Now comes the latest news of how these students are being driven out of colleges and how they are already being driven out of schools. Manu would be proud. Perhaps that is why they put up his statue in Jaipur.

**Madhusudan Yadav, Etawah**

### Baba's Warning for the Future

*Mere Baba* please forgive my heartless selfishness. Take me onto the path of Your Tapasya. Let me walk onward through all storms in the dust of Your Footsteps. You sacrifice so much for us, now bless us only with the chance to sacrifice our everything for You.

**Tumhare badmash, Puuree Duniya mein**

# Jaswant Singh

## The Man Who Saved Arunachal Pradesh

Sometime before first light fell over the mountains, they'd begun their ascent into Arunachal Pradesh once again.

This was the Chinese Army's fourth assault, in the last charge as a final insult - they'd chopped off the hand of the Buddha Statue in Tawang and carried it away, but something was different this time.

As the sun rose over the Eastern Himalayas around 5 am and the Chinese troops mounted another assault, this time through Sela top – something was different – the Delta company of the Garwal Rifles or specifically a Rifleman of the 4th Garwal - Jaswant Singh Rawat was in their way.

Just weeks before ceasefire was called, Jaswant Singh Rawat's battalion, The Garhwal Rifles, was engaged in an intense battle with the Chinese army at Nauranang. But due to lack of resources and manpower the battalion was called back. But one man decided to stay back against the invading Chinese Army – it was Jaswant Singh Rawat.

It is said that he enlisted the help of Nura and Sela, two local Monpa girls from Arunachal Pradesh, to set up a firing ground. The ensuing battle would be known as the Battle of Nauranang.

In a battle that started on 17th November 1962 and continued for the next 72 hours, Jaswant Singh alone held the post, firing from different bunkers, constantly on the lookout for the Chinese. By the time he was done, more than 300 Chinese soldiers had been killed.

Understandably, the Chinese army thought that they were facing a large defence. But they had no



way of finding out as to how many Indian troops were they actually against.

But the truth couldn't have remained hidden forever. On November 17, Rawat was surrounded from all sides by Chinese troops. When the attack began, he knew he would be captured, so he shot himself dead to avoid ending up their prisoner. Meanwhile, a grenade blast killed Sela, but the troops managed to capture Nura alive.

Even though the Chinese soldiers managed to capture a heavily wounded Jaswant Singh and hang him, by then Indian Army's reinforcements arrived, stopping the Chinese progress into Arunachal Pradesh. This was the battle of Nauranang.

Legend has it that the Chinese cut off Jaswant Singh's head to take home as a souvenir. But after the war they returned his head. The Chinese were so impressed with Rawat that they even gifted the Indian Army a bust of Rawat made of brass.

The area where Rawat last stood his ground was named Jaswantgarh. A hut was built over that area, where a dedicated staff prepares his bed, shines his shoes, irons his clothes, all as if he were still alive. He was bestowed with the Mahavir Chakra posthumously, and is still considered a serving officer.

# The Significance of The Word “Yuga”

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

In the Vedas it has been said:

*Kalishhayāno bhavati sainjihānastu dvāparah;  
Uttīśhan tretā bhavati kratamī  
sampadyate caraṇ.*

[A person who abstains from work and is unwilling to move, is living in Kali Yuga (Iron Age); one who has just awakened from slumber is in Dvāpara Yuga (Copper Age); one who has stood up is in Tretā Yuga (Silver Age); and when one has started moving, then Satya Yuga (Golden Age) has come in that person's life.]

When human beings remain steeped in ignorance, when they remain asleep in the darkness of ignorance, then that is the age of kali in their lives. Satya, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali yugas [ages] have no significance apart from [such psychological significances]. **When human beings neglect their duties, when they cannot discriminate between right and wrong, when they tolerate injustice and humiliation as a natural law, it means that they are under the sway of kali yuga.**

The Sanskrit root *yuj* and *yunj* have similar meanings. *yuj* means “to add”, as does *yunj*. For example, two plus two equals four. There is, however, a certain difference between the two. When the word “yoga” is derived from the root verb *yuj* it means “addition”, no doubt, but here the added components

When people are so inert that they turn a blind eye to what happens around them, when they ignore the future of others, of society, even of themselves

retain their original identity, just as when sand and sugar are added together the individual grains can still be identified. The root verb *yunj*, however, refers to a type of addition where the original components lose their respective identities, as in the case of a mixture of sugar and water which creates a syrup in which the sugar can no longer be separately identified. Similarly, when a unit being (*jīva*) merges into Parama Puruṣa, it loses its microcosmic identity and only one entity remains, the Supreme Entity.

The word yuga is derived from this verb *yunj*. What is a yuga? When a particular period of time ends, when a particular epoch ends, when a particular flow of life ends and another begins or emerges, it is called yuga. The past may be divided into various yugas or ages: the shudra yuga or worker age; the kṣatriya yuga or warrior age; the vipra yuga or priest/intellectual age; and the vaeshya yuga or capitalist age. In the future also these ages will come and go. People will reject the old social order and embrace a new one. The transitional phase between the two social orders is called yuga sandhi.

**When people are so inert that they turn a blind eye to what happens around them, when they ignore the future of others, of society, even of themselves, when they remain blissfully unaware that they too have a significant role to play in checking the degeneration of society, then it is called kali yuga. They are asleep.**

*Sainjihānastu dvāparah.* There are some people who also continue to lie down, but who have awakened, who have become conscious. They feel the need to act but fail to do so. This also happens in collective life. Suppose something is going on for a long time. We see it happening, even understand what is happening, yet we fail to do anything about it. “This is what should be done,” “This is what should have been done,” “This should have been done a long time ago” – people make such comments but due to the lack of dynamic leadership they fail to take action. Who is to bell the cat? This is the general





**Spartacus - leader of slave revolt against Rome**

feeling of the dvápara yuga. *Sainjihánastu dváparah.* People have awakened from sleep, become conscious but they have not yet taken any action.

*Uttiśhan tretā bhavati.* When people no longer pass idle comments from the comfort of their beds – “Oh, I think this should be done or that should be done, I am to start action” – but rather, able to discriminate between right and wrong, leap up, ready for action, it is called tretā yuga in both individual and collective life. *Uttiśhan tretā bhavati.* “Now it is time to act. We must act right now.” People meet together in groups of five or ten or twenty, and so on, to make concrete plans for immediate and effective action. Awareness exists but it is yet to be translated into action.

*Krtam sampadyate caraṇ.* Suppose one makes comprehensive plans and programs, but these plans still remain at a theoretical level. It is a paper tiger. No work is accomplished. It doesn’t make for progress in individual life. What then needs to be done? They have to be translated into action. When people undertake concrete work with sincerity, then success becomes inevitable in their lives. This is the kṛta yuga [age of practical action] or satya yuga [age of truth]. It is the way human beings have advanced in the past, how they are advancing now, and how they will advance in the future.

Earlier I mentioned that just as a yuga sandhi occurs in individual life – one particular stage ends and another stage begins, and the in-between phase is called yuga sandhi – the exact same thing happens in collective life. Suppose there is a particular community. It may consist of a few thousand or a few hundred thousand or a few million. They were asleep for a long time during which they endured countless indignities, humiliation and complete subservience to their master. No one paid them any heed or respect. But when their kali yuga gave

way to dvápara yuga and consciousness awakened among them, then others started to fear them. “Uh oh, they are waking up!” In individual life as well the same thing happens. Human beings pass their days as if they were dogs or cats or goats. They come to the earth, eat, sleep, die and move on. It is meaningless. There must be consciousness and to be established in this consciousness people have to stand up. They have to move ahead. It is the same whether it is individual or collective.

According to our philosophy, when consciousness arises in individual life then a person begins to move in accordance with certain instructions, certain guidance. In collective life as well, when this stage comes, those who are well advanced, who understand better, who are more courageous, more firmly established in morality, who are truly righteous, they have to take the lead, to assume the mantle of leadership. In such times those who worry about what others will say or think, or worry about being criticized, and due to this fear hide behind closed doors thinking that if they take action their good name will be tarnished, such people are not true human beings. They are beggars, begging for reputation. They have no manliness; they have lost the courage to move ahead.


**At that time those who come forward and say – “Let’s go. I’m with you. If trouble comes, let it come. I’ll take it on my shoulders” – such people I have given the name sadvipra.**

This is the way it has been and the way it will always be. However, in collective life at the critical juncture between one great age and another, in this transitional stage of great change, when it becomes impossible for the common man or even ordinary sadvipras to take up the leadership, then Parama Puruṣa through his special grace arranges that leadership. At this time on the earth humanity is witnessing such a yuga sandhi.

On one side there is the rubbish heap of the past and people are clinging to that rubbish heap because they have not yet been shown the way out. And on the other side, there is the call of the new. Under such conditions what will that Mahásambhúti do who gave guidance to the human race in the past? With courage He will call to human beings and declare: **“Give up the rubbish of the past. It can only harm you and lead you to your death. Move ahead. Answer the call of the new. I am with you. There is no reason to be afraid.”**

# PRIVATE HOSPITALS, INCLUDING FORTIS, MAKING PROFITS UP TO 1737%



 Anoo Bhuyan

A study of the bills of four major private hospitals, conducted by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Agency (NPPA) following several cases of overpricing of medical bills, concluded that the **hospitals have been making profits up to 1737% on drugs, consumables, medical devices and diagnostics.** One of the hospitals they studied is Fortis hospital.

“In recent months Delhi/NCR witnessed some unfortunate deaths because of dengue and other ailments in four reputed private hospitals. In each case, NPPA got complaints of overpricing and inflated bills from the relatives of deceased patients,” says the study, posted on NPPA’s website.

NPPA says they asked for the

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**The regulator’s study shows that the major beneficiaries of profits from inflated prices have been hospitals and not patients or manufacturers.**

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details of bills from these hospitals, a duty they can legally carry out. They have then analysed these bills for this detailed study.

One of the hospitals they studied is Fortis Hospital that was embroiled in a controversy in December 2017 over the high prices they charged the family of a seven-year-old girl who was suffering from dengue. Fortis says they billed the family nearly Rs 16 lakh. The

child finally died.

Their analysis of bills from just these four hospitals was of a total value of Rs 69,34,764.

### **What NPPA can regulate**

Out of this amount, the bulk component of the bill was in fact “non-scheduled formulations” which comprised 25% of the cost in these bills. The next highest component was diagnostic services which took about 16% of the bill. Consultation and medical supervision, cost of procedures and room rents were all about 12% each.

Surgery costs were less than 1% of the bills. And “scheduled formulations” took up about 4% of the bills.

The fact that scheduled



# Don't have health cover? Pay up to 60% more

Pradeep Thakur | 1700

(Source — Times of India)

## CUTTING INTO COSTS

Treatment	Payment with insurance	Cash
Heart surgery	2.25	3.63
Angioplasty	1.32	1.80-1.65
Knee replacement	1.60	1.80-2.44
Caesarean delivery	0.55	0.85-1.25
Cataract	0.24	0.35-0.45



New Delhi: In a dramatic reversal of the trend that existed just three years ago, big corporate hospitals today charge health insurance card holders much less than those paying in cash for the same procedures. Those paying out of their pockets are now billed anywhere between 25% and 60% more than those with cashless health insurance schemes.

**P Knee surgery ₹2.4L, P ₹1.2**

TOI did a comprehensive study of the amounts charged from the two categories of patients at Sir Ganga Ram, Max, Fortis and Apollo hospitals in

Delhi, Medanta in Gurgaon and similar category hospitals in other metros. Sources say the trends are similar across most hospitals in India.

It appears that the Indian private healthcare system is moving closer to mirroring the situation in the UK, where insurance firms are the prime

factors in holding down healthcare costs and those without insurance can face crippling charges.

In 2010, TOI ran a campaign on how corporate hospitals were overcharging health insurance card holders. After the campaign, the claim ratio of four PSU insurers — National Insurance Company, New India Assurance, Oriental Insurance and United India Insurance Company — had come down to 90%. Before the campaign, this figure was as high as 130%.

This had forced insurers to make all corporate hospitals off their network when they refused to lower the rates. The

insurers, 18 of them including the four PSUs, took this extreme step as they annually bled to the extent of Rs 1,500 crore, the difference between what they collected as premium and what they paid to hospitals for settling claims.

However, 80-90% of the population is without any insurance cover and they are now feeling the pinch, more so in the absence of a health regulator. "While the insurance business is only Rs 17,000 crore, the country's total health spend is Rs 4.5 lakh crore a year," said Pawan Bhalra, CEO of Mahindra TPA, responsible for back-end operations of the PSU insurers.

formations comprise one of the lowest components of the bill is indicative of the benefits of price control for the patient- scheduled formulations are those that are in the National List of Essential Medicines, 2015 (found in Schedule 1 of the DPCO, 2013). Only the items on this list are under price control, regulated by the NPPA.

**Till date, NPPA has capped the prices of 871 essential drugs on this list, leaving the bulk of the market free of control.**

Besides the shortlist of items which the NPPA can monitor and regulate, the rest of the market is "non scheduled". Thousands of drugs, devices, consumables and diagnostics, remain unregulated and hospitals bill patients discretionarily and arbitrarily, leaving patients with what the NPPA calls an "information asymmetry."

On this, the study says, "It is amply clear that for claiming higher margins, doctors-hospitals preferred prescribing and dispensing non-scheduled brand medicines instead of scheduled medicines where scheduled medicines under NLEM are supposed to cover all essential medicines."

NPPA says that the Clinical Establishment Act, 2010, is one of the only policy interventions which can help, but states have been reticent so far to enact this legislation.

## Other strategies of profiteering by private hospitals

The study also says that the

beneficiaries of profits have been hospitals and not manufacturers of drugs or devices.

Hospitals have also been insisting that patients buy drugs, devices and disposables from their own in-house pharmacies, and patients were given "no choice" to buy these items from places which may be cheaper.

Another tactic used by private hospitals has been to not advertise the expenses on drugs, devices and diagnostics. These together account for about 46% of the total costs. This is why "patients have complained that the **initial estimate of expenditure is inflated by 3-4 times.**"

The price regulator has called out the hospitals for "unethical profiteering in failed market system."

## How hospitals have been charging patients

The NPPA's study is valuable for the various types of items' prices it has studied. It has tabulated the prices for scheduled formations, non-scheduled formations, consumables and medical devices.

It has also studied the price to stockist, the purchase prices by the hospitals, the prices printed on the items and the ultimate billing to the patients.

Consumables see the highest margins. These include surgical masks, hand gloves and so on, all of which are billed to patients. For

example, a three-way stopcock bi-valve sees a margin on procurement price of 1737%. Bed bath wet wipes see a margin of Rs 959%.

For scheduled items, whose prices the NPPA regulates, the study shows that in some cases there has been a margin of 357% for the private hospitals. For example, a propofol injection costs Rs 80.96 to stockists. Hospitals purchase it for half that price, at Rs 40.95. The MRP printed on the injection however, is nearly five times what the hospital bought it for. And the margin that hospitals take away for just this injection is 357%.

**For non scheduled items, where NPPA does not regulate the price, there have been upward margins up to 1192%.** Take the case of Adrenor injection of two ml. It is priced to stockists at Rs 13.64, purchased by hospitals for Rs 14.70, and 28 of these were billed to patients for a total of Rs 5318. This is a margin of 1192% on what the hospital procured it for.

**Medical devices**, where the NPPA made a big splash last year by regulating the prices of cardiac stents and knee implants, **sees margins of upto 1271%.** This margin on the price to distributors, is seen for intravenous infusion sets which are non-vented. Here, the price to distributors is Rs 5.20 and the billing to patients is at Rs 2070. Disposable syringes see a margin of 1596%.



According to PROUT, all progress in the physical world comes with concomitant dangers and side-effects

## Economic Freedom and Agricultural Democracy

T N Das

*Artha* is a word used in Indian languages for economics. Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar's moral transformation of artha is indeed radical; namely from the pursuit and enjoyment of wealth to the struggle to liberate everyone from internal and external pain which includes poverty or the lack of wealth. As He explains

**"Artha means that which brings an end to suffering. Human beings usually suffer from triple afflictions: physical, mental and spiritual. That which alleviates these triple afflictions is called artha. We know that in the physical sphere human beings suffer in various ways – not only from the shortage of food and clothing, but also from others pains and sorrows as well. Suppose someone falls down while walking; this is also suffering in the physical sphere.**

**In the psychic sphere, too, people suffer much pain, for example at the death of a beloved one. Even those people who have no problems of food, clothing, accommodation or education or medical care, also bitterly weep at the loss of their near and dear ones. This is psychic affliction.**

**Then there is spiritual affliction. "Parama Puruṣa [Supreme Being] is mine, and I am His – this I realize. Yet I cannot make Him exclusively my own at all times." This affliction of not attaining Parama Puruṣa as close as one desires, is spiritual affliction."**

The root *arth* meant to beg and to plead. When do we beg and plead the most? It is when we are in pain, sorrowful or are afflicted by something. We may say that artha is the search for and enjoyment of material prosperity or meaning. However, this search is based on a deep yearning for freedom from pain and freedom from bondage. This is why Shrii Sarkar describes *artha* or economics as the liberation of living beings from pain or sorrow (*dukha*) and from various bondages. From the experience of sorrow arises our goal or aim in life or our *artha*. This goal may be money, knowledge but ultimately it is borne from the desire to end all sorts of pain, dissatisfaction and sorrow. This pain cannot just be due to being afflicted by something harmful. It can also be due to the fact that we have not achieved our dreams.

It is important to note that the liberation that artha brings is merely temporary because in this world as per PROUT, all progress in the physical world comes with concomitant dangers and side-effects. The same is the case with progress in the mental-emotional-intuitional realm. Real progress lies in the realm of param-artha or the ultimate relief from all suffering that arises from becoming merged in the Supreme Subjectivity within the core of our

existence or "I" feeling. The aim of Proutist economics or artha is to create a socio-economic foundation (*samaja*) to enable the blending of every aspect of social life with Paramartha or ultimate freedom from all suffering.

Economic liberty is rooted in agricultural democracy. Agricultural democracy is built upon firstly land democracy or earth rights. This means to fight to free local land from exploiters. It means secondly to change the property laws to deny anyone permanent rights over land. People only have the right to use land.

Historically, whenever a society has absentee landowners such as in 19th century rural Ireland or early 20th century rural Bengal the result has been economic decline and crisis such as seen in the Irish famine and the Bengal famines. Today in India, many upper-caste landowning elites have left for the cities as agriculture is no longer profitable. As a result their lands are either untended or only utilized for crops for the family in the city. In Bihar today, this crisis is further compounded by the reckless spending and reckless loans given by banks to fueling a construction-cum-real estate bubble like the bubble that caused the Depression in America and like the current real estate bubble in China.

Hence there needs to be a movement to fight for **land democracy**. This fight involves the industrialization of the land in the form of post and pre production agricultural industries and then more sophisticated industries. This is essential because in many places around the globe there are impoverished areas (created due

## Colombia's Movement for Water Democracy and Constitutional Reform

Briefing Paper • June 2009

**W**ater activists in Colombia are pushing a popular initiative to add explicit protection for the human right to water to the nation's constitution. The initiative follows similar reform efforts that succeeded in Uruguay in 2004, Ecuador in 2008 and Bolivia in 2009. These constitutional reforms demonstrate the close parallels between the movement for access to safe and sufficient water and the movement for democracy that is sweeping the Americas. After three years of popular mobilization to build support, the Colombian reform measure is now up for debate before the nation's congress.

### Background

In 2006, environmental groups and public sector workers in Colombia simultaneously expressed a demand that the human right to water be included in the country's constitution. By 2007, progressive forces had united to launch the formal process of constitutional reform. According to the law, 1.5 million signatures must be gathered to bring a constitutional referendum before Congress. The measure is subject to two debates in the House and two in the Senate, after which it goes before a federal court judge for review pending approval by the president. Following this process, the measure comes to a popular vote. For the vote to be valid, a full quarter of the population — 7 million people — must vote. A winning vote is 50 percent plus one.

The popular initiative came in response to deteriorating access to safe water combined with a wave of failed water privatization projects that had swept the water sector over the previous decade. Like many financially constrained developing countries, the government of Colombia had long neglected its water and sanitation infrastructure and services. A 2006 survey conducted by the Defensoría del Pueblo, the government's human rights agency, found that at least 6 million Colombians lack reliable access to safe drinking water due to poor infrastructure and 20 million more are at high risk of going without due to scarcity. The private sector has also failed to provide needed services, despite its boasts of efficiency and improved service. Water and human rights advocates



Marching in the streets for the right to water.

In Colombia see democratic reform, citizen participation and increased public investment as the solution to decaying water infrastructure and inadequate water services.

In February 2007, a diverse popular coalition came together, calling itself the National Committee for the Defense of Water and Life (CNDAV in its Spanish acronym), after the movement that evicted Bechtel Corporation from Bolivia in 2000. CNDAV drafted a five-point reform proposal and mobilized to collect signatures across the

desertification. This will be achieved by helping them farm the lands on a cooperative basis. PROUT's program for land liberation can be summarized as follows,

**“PROUT advocates the reorganization of all agricultural land according to a phase-wise plan. In the first phase all uneconomic landholdings should be taken over by cooperative management for the benefit of both those who previously owned the land and agricultural labourers who work in the cooperative. In the second phase all landowners should be requested to join the cooperative system. In the third phase there should be rational distribution of land and redetermination of ownership. Finally, in the fourth phase there will be no conflict over the ownership of land. People will learn to think for the collective welfare rather than for petty self-interest. This psychic expansion will create a more congenial social environment. However, such a change in the collective psychology will not come overnight, but will occur gradually according to the sentiment of the people. When such a system has been introduced the present conflict among landowners and landless rural workers will no longer exist.”**

The second cornerstone of agricultural democracy is **water democracy**. Currently we are amidst a global water crisis that is going to explode as Global Warming impacts the world in the next ten years. Water wars will be the norm. However, if there is to be any economic freedom, if there is to be even any temporary liberation for the suffering caused by economic exploitation, the people in every samaja, in every district and in every intradistrict (block) must launch their own water wars to liberate the water of their samaja from the destructive hands of corporations and their lackeys in government.

In addition as per PROUT the right to irrigation water must

to colonialism) robbed of their raw materials by capitalist and then made to buy back the finished products (made from their own soil) at exorbitant prices. This does not mean granting everyone a tiny, unsustainable piece of land. Rather it means implementing PROUT phases for the cooperativization of land.

The preliminary step is a biodiversity survey so that any planning can be done without damaging plant and animal species. Also needed is a survey of the lands to determine which are presently economically sustainable and which may become sustainable in the near future and which land may become sustainable only in the distant future. Then a **people's land liberation movement is needed** such as was seen in Brazil but avoiding the

mistake of seeking mere political power. **It is by capturing economic power that capitalists rise like vultures in the sky and it is by liberating economic wealth from them, that their machinery of exploitation will be brought crashing to the ground.**

Finally, in places like Pakistan and India where the structure of exploitation is based on caste the most crucial preliminary to PROUT economic movements lies in giving legal, material and other forms of aid to help mula-nivasis or the original Indians (BC, OBC, SC and ST) break free from economic enslavement to upper caste farmers and landlords. They then can be given charge over the task of transforming neglected lands into orchards and agricultural land through Shrii Sarkar's plans to fight

be fought for wherever this is ecologically possible. Thus far we have seen mainly water resistance where the people resist extreme water exploitation by corporations, mafias and governments. Rarely has there been achieved complete liberation from water exploitation like in Bolivia. These water wars must work in tandem with movements for water preservation. As a revolutionary agriculturalist, Shrii Sarkar has written books on farming which describe such programs as:

- Riverside plantations to preserve the rivers and create jobs via dredging and tree cultivation.
- Digging innumerable ponds to collect every drop of rainwater and create new water ecosystems.
- Afforestation programs that is not monoculture but involves a variety of trees that attract water – many of them unknown to scientists.
- Plans for small check dams to supply local irrigation.
- Plans to try to preserve dying rivers or rivers whose waters are not being harnessed for irrigation.
- Plans to generate hydropower in ways that does not destroy the local ecology and that provides the control over the power to the local people.

All of these plans and more are part of the Ananda Nagar ecovillage programme. These programmes will create a Madhya artha in the realm of water security.

The final cornerstone of agricultural democracy is **seed democracy**. Right now as many now we are moving towards seed totalitarianism in which one company (Monsanto) dominates the seeds used in countless countries around the world. This is done by making them dependent on Genetically Modified Seeds

(producing BioTech crops) whose harmful side-effects remain unknown since Monsanto controls so many governments. The consequences in India between 2002 and 2006 were over 17,000 farmer suicides since farmers had to pay for new seeds every year as the seeds did not produce new seeds. The numbers only have increased every year since then. Furthermore the seeds do not work without buying expensive Monsanto fertilizer and insect repellents.

P. Sainath, a respected journalist, has been documenting these suicides since the 1990s. Further food totalitarianism is found in the fact that five grain merchant companies based in Great Britain control the entire food supply. Vandana Shiva has launched a mission to collect India's original seeds so as to enable them to be distributed to farmers who want to be free from enslavement to Monsanto. Her organization Navdanya is training people in other countries so as to make this an international movement.

As part of the mission for economic liberation, seed banks are mandated at every Master Unit modeled on Ananda Nagar. In addition seed stores are envisioned at rate easily affordable to the local people. In addition Master Units are charged with the mission to create local seed banks in the district and to encourage barter trading in seeds with other districts. Seed democracy can ensure a surplus of agricultural produce which aside from being used for barter trade can be use for relief to areas suffering famines as well as cheap kitchens in urban areas. Moreover the fight for seed democracy will liberate the land from the clutches of corporations and their government servants.

Shrii Sarkar revealed vast knowledge about new varieties of seeds, how and where to plant them and how to use them in cottage industries. This knowledge will be very valuable in future (with increased desertification caused by global warming) as it is designed

for arid regions. Countless people all over the world have fought against Monsanto and their local government agents. PROUT however gives the mission not of resistance but of complete liberation of every samaja (socio-cultural ecoregion) from seed capitalists.

There are many other dimensions to economic democracy, which we have already examined, industrial democracy and consumer cooperative distribution systems. However above we have seen the three primary elements that need to be rescued from degradation and brought back to a sustainable form of growth based on economic independence and ecological justice. Furthermore the development of these three sectors needs to be harmonized into a dynamic state of equilibrium and harmony that Shrii Sarkar calls prama. This also can mean symmetry. Shrii Sarkar has noted how the symmetry of the world has been lost as climactic seasons no longer coincide with mating seasons, spawning or reproductive season and seasonal festivals of local cultures. This is part of the lost symmetry or balance between various parts of the economy (industrial, agricultural, agro industries, agricultural machinery industries, general industries, trade and commerce and white collar jobs).

**The goal of Prout is to establish prama in every aspect of economic, social, political, moral and cultural life. This dynamic symmetry in an entire samaja or planet is known as prama samvrddhi. Vrddhi means "to increase, grow, elevate, strengthen, exalt, exhilarate, inspire, cause to prosper or thrive." The prefix sam means complete, total, proper.**

Now, how can such complete growth, prosperity, might and bliss be achieved? As per PROUT it can only be achieved by aligning the nucleus of all sectors and all forms of life in a eco-cultural region (samaja) with the nucleus of the collective psyche and with the



nucleus of the Macrocosm or the Supreme Subjectivity or Supreme “I” within the core of our own “I”. This is why Shrii Sarkar explains revolution as follows,

**“The nucleus of creation is Cosmic Consciousness. It is also the goal of revolutionaries, and whatever they do by way of revolution with this goal in mind leads them to the culminating point of their life’s march. Revolution must have an ideological goal. In essence, revolution means controlling all the three nuclei of the universe – physical, psychic and spiritual.”** (Talks on PROUT)

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**“In nuclear revolution, every aspect of collective life – social, economic, political, cultural, psychic and spiritual – is completely transformed. New moral and spiritual values arise in society, which provide the impetus for accelerated social progress. The old era is replaced by a new era – one collective psychology is replaced by another. This type of revolution results in all-round development and social progress.”** (Nuclear Revolution)

In this way Madhya artha or the plans and samaja movements of PROUT can create prama on the entire planet and later the universe. In this way the portion of the human psyche (intellect, sentimentality and intuition) normally wasted in selfish, short-sighted longing for money is transformed into a mission to liberate one’s eco-cultural region, liberate the planet and liberate the universe. This liberation takes place by developing the latent benevolence in the human intellect and using it to liberate and construct a new society by creating countless plans and programmes as well as countless liberation struggles to manifest those movements.

These movements must be localized as for PROUT planning must be primarily at no higher than the sub-district (block) level so as to ensure democratic planning

that utilizes local expertise and knowledge. Shrii Sarkar urgently requested that such plans be created for impoverished regions such as Western Rarh (districts along both sides of the West Bengal and Jharkhand borders). This intellectual mission to create such comprehensive plans for create the economic infrastructure required to provide the minimum necessities of life to every citizen in the form of purchasing power is a new branch of economics (partially anticipated in Yugoslavia and Venezuela) called People’s Economy. As Shrii Sarkar reminds us,

**“Human beings will have to draw up all sorts of plans and programmes for the collective welfare of universal humanity. This will accelerate the speed of their movement and enable them to easily remove the thorns from the path. Obstacles are inevitable on the path of movement. In fact, in all actions, auspicious and inauspicious, obstacles arise, but the innate force lying in each thought and every action, from the cosmic perspective, provides the necessary stamina for forward movement. Let us not forget this fact.”**

There are a number of progressive thinkers who have developed the mission of sustainability and

economic justice. However, the ultimate goal of their endeavours remains unclear. Either they simply project the culture of today into a more equitable future, or they evoke romantic notions of a utopian future based on the noble savage ideal that is rooted in the Christian millennialism.

PROUT clearly states that an even more revolutionary struggle is required in the intellectual, sentimental and intuitional realms to liberate the human intellect from dogmas. Without this liberation of intellect all economic solutions and revolutions will ultimate prove useless as the old psychology will persistently corrupt the new society that emerges.

The art of liberating the intellect is known as Neohumanism. The very essence of Neohumanism is that we exist for all, for everyone. Hence, as part of this collective sentiment, there has to be an equilibrium, equipoise (prama) between ourselves and every entity in the universe. Tantra meditation is a way to achieve this in personal life. PROUT policies are a structure created so as to enable this to be implemented in society. The heart of the PROUT movement is to establish agricultural democracy through the creation of cooperative networks and the revolutionary struggle against economic exploiters.



*A LETTER TO THE CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE FOR PREPARATION OF DRAFT NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY, MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA*

## Removing Deprivation of Education to Marginalised Social Groups

■ P S Krishnan

Dear Dr Kasturirangan,

While there are many aspects to the National Education Policy, it is vitally important the new National Education Policy and your Recommendations on it specifically deal with the educational development of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the educational development of the Scheduled Tribes (STs), centrally and prominently (and not marginally and casually as has been usual), for the following reasons:-

(i) These two classes of people are at the lowest level at every stage of education (as also in all parameters of development in other areas, viz., economic, occupational, residential, health-and-nutrition-related etc.). The gap between the SCs and STs at the lowest end and the Socially and Educationally Advanced Classes [SACs], i.e., the non-SC, non-ST, non-Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEDBC) [NSCTBCs] at the top end, is the widest. Two examples of the large mass of data available on this are given below:-

Even in the educationally most advanced State of Kerala, one of the States where social reform and social change have progressed more than in most regions of India, even at the lowest rung of education, viz., literacy, the following figures for the different social classes show that illiteracy among SCs is nearly 5 times and among STs nearly 4 times the illiteracy among the SACs/NSCTBCs.



*Percentage of Illiterates among Social Classes in Kerala*

SC	13.6
ST	11.5
SEDBC	6.2
SAC/NSCTBC	2.8

*Source: NSSO 66th round (July 2009-June 2010) data*

(b) At the higher end of education, viz., Graduation and Above, in the population of age 15+, even in the metropolitan city of Delhi, right under the double-nose of the Government of NCT of Delhi and of the Central Government, the following Table shows the percentage of Graduates and Above among SC males is as low as 1/5 to 1/6th of that among the SACs/NSCTBCs and among SC females a meagre 1/25th of that among SACs/NSCTBCs.

PERCENTAGE OF GRADUATES AND ABOVE IN DELHI (As per NSSO 55th (1999-2000) and 61st (2004-05) Round Survey data)				
Social Group	Delhi Male		Delhi Female	
	55th Round	61st Round	55th Round	61st Round
SC	5.5	5.2	1.3	1.3
SEDBC	12.5	11.3	3.9	3.4
SAC/ NSCTBC	32.9	31.4	26.9	26.2

*Annexure-1 of the Report dated 21. 09. 2012 of the Task Force on Educational Development of Scheduled Castes set up by the Ministry of HRD gives some more data of the gross disparity between the SCs and STs at the lowest end and the SACs/NSCTBCs at the top end.*

(ii) This lowest educational level of the SCs and STs is not only unjust to them, is not only the continuation, through the seven decades of our Independence, of their educational deprivation through the centuries of our history, but also deleterious (along with similar lag in every other development area) to the optimal advancement of India as a whole.

(iii) Conversely, their educational progress, enabling them to reach the level of the SACs/NSCTBCs at each stage of education (along with similar equalisation in other areas such as economic, occupational, residential, health-and-nutrition-related, etc) is a sine-qua-non for securing the rapid advancement of India, which is the goal of the Government. If this is not done the demographic dividend which we are all talking about and setting much store on, will turn out to be a demographic nightmare.

(iv) The SCs and STs constitute more than a quarter of the population of India. They contribute the majority of the manual labour force of India. Without their progress to the level of Equality, India's optimal progress is impossible.

Some of the points below are elaborations of the recommendations contained in the Task Force Report on Educational Development of SCs. These may also be incorporated in the Recommendations of your Committee.

### **High Quality Residential Schools in Every Block**

Para 2.5.1 of the Report of the Task Force on Educational Development of SCs refers to this. This is very important for the educational advancement of the SCs and STs.

In the Budget speech of the Finance Minister introducing the Budget for FY 2018-19 he has said that "Ekalavya Schools", of the standard of Navodaya Schools, will be set up by 2022 in every Block where tribals constitute the majority population and which have not less than 20,000 tribal residents. This is welcome in respect of STs. Presumably what he meant was that there will be one such school for boys and one for girls in each such Block. There is no outlay provided in the Budget for this. It is hoped that this lacuna of Budget provision will be removed so that this important scheme can have a flying start in this year and so that the target date of completion, viz. 2022, is successfully fulfilled.

But, the need for such high quality residential schools in every Block of the country for the SCs has been lost sight of, though this was one of

the important Recommendations of the Report (2008) of the Group of Ministers on Dalit Affairs under the Chairmanship of the then Finance Minister Shri Pranab Mukherjee.

The issue of such residential schools of high quality for SCs and STs, which is contained in the Task Force Reports, needs to be emphasised strongly in the Report of the Kasturirangan Committee.

Para 2.5.7 of the Task Force Report contains a reference to the then Minister for HRD Shri Kapil Sibal's observation in the Round Table Conference on Educational Development of Women, SCs, STs and Persons-with-Disabilities (PwDs) held on 16. 04. 2012 that **there is need to set up Residential Schools and Colleges for disadvantaged sections like the SCs, STs, Women and PwDs.** But, as usual with our political and intellectual leadership, this observation has not been followed up with concrete and practical steps, budgetary outlays and implementation.

I have pointed out the importance of such high-quality residential schools (along with other issues) in the three meetings of the National Monitoring Committee (NMC) for the Education of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), set up by the Ministry of HRD in 2012, of which I was a Member, chaired by three successive HRD Ministers, namely, Shri Kapil Sibal, Dr Pallam Raju and Smt. Smriti Irani. This remains to get the holistic attention of the Government. The Kasturirangan Committee must point out this as an example of the hiatus between what is professed and practice, between noble statements and specific action.

### **Scholarships**

There is a new alarming development of recent years. **Huge amounts of arrears of Post-Matric Scholarship (PMS) and Maintenance Allowance have piled up in the last three years. As a result, a number of**





**SC and ST students have been forced to drop out** at advanced stages of their higher education. Many others, who have managed to hang on, have to prosecute their studies under conditions of severe stress and distress on account of non-payment of fees to their educational institutions and non-availability of maintenance allowance.

Post-Matric Scholarships, introduced through Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's initiative as a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in 1943 and extended to STs after Independence, is an OPEN-ENDED SCHEME. The concept of "Open-endedness" is that the Government is committed to provide whatever funds are required, even though in excess of the outlay in the BE, and the additional outlay should then be formalised in the RE.

The present Government is rightly paying tributes to Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and paying homage to him. It will be in keeping with this that his concept of "open-endedness" continues to be honoured as it was till recently.

Delay in timely disbursement of PMS to SC and ST Post-Matric students hampers the full achievement of the purpose of

inclusive development and fuller development of India's human resources, for which this scheme is intended.

I have pointed out these to the Finance Minister through my letters. The Kasturi Rangan Committee's Recommendations in this regard will help. It is to be emphasised that, as mentioned in para 3.3.9 of the Task Force Report on Educational Development of SCs, Scholarships and Maintenance Allowance are released at the beginning of each month or quarter.

### **Legislation for Reservation in Private Educational Institutions to Secure the long-evaded Implementation of the Constitution (93rd) Amendment 2005 inserting new Clause (5) in Article 15**

This is dealt with in para 3.1 of the Task Force Report on Educational Development of SCs. The following are the further developments in this regard:-

At the 3rd meeting of the National Monitoring Committee (NMC) for the Education of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) held on 21.12.2014 under the

Chairpersonship of HRD Minister Smt Smriti Irani, the official note circulated showed that all official action for enacting this legislation had been completed in the office of the Ministry and all that was required was a political decision from the Government. I pointed out this specifically to the Minister in my remarks at that meeting. This legislation is yet to be enacted. The Kasturirangan Committee may emphasise this.

In para 3.1.4 of the Task Force Report, there is reference to the issue of Constitutionality of the Constitution (93rd) Amendment of 2005 in the High Court. The subsequent development is that the Supreme Court has upheld the Constitutionality of this Amendment in the *Pramati Educational and Cultural Trust vs Union of India* case on May 6, 2014. Thus, there is nothing standing in the way of enacting the legislation for which the Ninety-third Amendment was passed by the Parliament. The evasion that has already taken place during the pre-2014 Government and the post-2014 Government and any further delay is a breach of the Constitution.

### Human Rights Education

This has been dealt with in para 2.4.3 of the Task Force Report on Educational Development of SCs. This needs greater elaboration.

**Our syllabus should contain a frontal attack on the Indian Caste System (ICS), i.e., Caste System-with-“Untouchability”.** It has to be pointed out his system is anti-national, as described by Dr Ambedkar in his historical Address of 25 November 1949. It fractures the consciousness of Indians, while a large nation like ours needs a common national consciousness.

**Consequently, Indians approach each issue as fractured groups, instead of adopting a common national approach to each issue.** The injustice perpetrated by the caste system against the SCs and STs and, though not to the same extent, against the SEDBCs, must be brought out.

Its continuing consequences in the shape of wide gaps in every parameter of development, welfare and life – economic, occupational, educational at every stage, housing-and-residential-related, health-and-nutrition-related etc. — between the SCs and STs at the bottom end and the SACs/NSCTBCs at the top end, and the SEDBCs coming in between, closer to the SCs and STs than to the SACs/NSCTBCs, must be underlined. The fact that this hampers the goal of optimal development and advancement of the nation as a whole must be emphasised.

This is necessary as an inoculation against the poison of caste system, caste attitudes and caste insularities, which are bred in the family, in the village and urban mohalla and by the peer group.

At the same time, Social Justice measures, including but not only Reservation, for the SCs, STs and SEDBCs need to be continued, in order to eliminate the wide gaps which have been created by the centuries-old caste system and continued in the decades of Independence and,

therefore, it must be pointed out that all, including those who are not provided reservation because they do not need it and, therefore, the Constitution has not provided for it, should extend their wholehearted cooperation with the Social Justice policies for SCs, STs and SEDBCs.

The following is a telling example of the great harm done by the caste system-with-“Untouchability”:-

In 1980, China’s GDP, both in absolute and per capita terms in PPP dollars, was smaller than India’s. Until 1991, India’s GDP per capita was higher than China’s. Since then the gap between the two economies has continuously widened, and now the Chinese economy has become 4 to 5 times as large as India’s economy.

**An important reason for this is that China has managed to bring some level of Social Equality though full-scale land-reforms, and ensuring equal access to equal education for all sections of society, while these precisely are the two major areas which suffered neglect in India on**

**account of the caste system-with-“Untouchability” and the caste-limited outlook of the Indian elite dominating politics, political parties, Governments and all institutions including educational institutions** (Source: *Times of India*, 18.09.2014 under the head “Statoist”).

**A few years back, a Chinese Think Tank gloated over the fact that India is caught up in the mouse-trap of caste. Those who do not wish India well are gloating over India’s inability to escape from this mouse-trap. It is the patriotic duty of all Indians to rectify this.**

This subject should be an important part of the syllabus in every level of education, in doses calibrated as suitable for different levels of education and different ages of the students. It is to be administered in its most elaborate form at the higher secondary level and higher education and in institutions for the training of teachers, and officers of the IAS, IPS, IFoS (Indian Forest Service) and other services. The

## Objective of Human Rights Education in India

- Human rights education aims to do the following
  - Enhance the knowledge and understanding of human rights.
  - Foster attitudes of tolerance, respect, solidarity, and responsibility.
  - Develop awareness of how human rights can be translated into social and political reality.
  - Develop skills for protecting human rights
- The design of the curriculum needs to be built on the philosophical, psychological, and sociological bases of curriculum planning and development
- The school curriculum should work toward the holistic development of the individual.

Kasturirangan Committee may lay emphasis on this and make full and detailed recommendations on this.

### **Social and Educationally Backward Classes**

The emphasis that the Ministry gave to SCs and STs is justified by the fact that they are the most deprived. But, it is also necessary to also take into account the educational needs of the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEdBCs), also referred to as Backward Classes (BCs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), with particular attention to the More, Most and Extremely Backward castes of the SEdBCs, who too are the victims of the Caste System, though not to the same extent as SCs. As may be seen in the two illustrative Tables given in para 3 (i) (a) and (b), the educational level of the SEdBCs is much below that of the SACs/NSCTBCs though not as low as that of the SCs and STs. Their level is between the SCs and STs, on one hand, and the SACs/NSCTBCs, on the others, and closer to the SCs and STs than to the SACs/NSCTBCs. This is the position of SEdBCs in all other educational parameters and also all parameters in other areas.

**The SCs, STs and SEdBCs together constitute 2/3rd to 3/4th of the population of India and contribute almost the entire physical labour force of the country.** Therefore, India's optimal advancement requires, in addition to the measures for enabling the SCs and STs to reach the level of Equality in every educational parameter with the SACs/NSCTBCs, also measures for enabling the SEdBCs to reach similar Equality.

I enclose herewith are some points regarding what is needed for the educational development of SEdBCs, so as to enable them to reach the level of Equality with SACs/NSCTBCs at every stage of education. These measures also should be included in the Recommendations of your Committee.

### **High Quality Residential Schools for BC Children**

As recommended in respect of SCs and STs, Residential Schools of high quality from Class-VI to XII, including ITI-type institutions, should be established in every district for SEdBC girls and SEdBC boys, with 75% of the seats for BC children and the remaining 25% for children of other deprived categories and poor children of non-deprived social categories, and subsequently such residential schools should be established at different sub-district levels until all SEdBC children in the country are covered with high-quality school education. In the admission of SEdBC children in these schools, priority should be given to the children of the Extremely Backward, Most Backward and More Backward castes of the SEBCs.

This programme will widen the educational base of SEdBCs, especially the More, Most and Extremely Backward Classes of SEdBCs, from school level upwards.

### **(2) Educational Equalization at all Levels, especially Higher and Professional Education with focus on women**

(i) Reservation/Reservation-equivalent share should be made available for SEdBCs in all good educational institutions of all types, including professional institutions, at all levels, Indian and foreign, at government cost. For this purpose, a Bill to be known as 'The Private Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admissions) Bill', providing reservation for SC, ST and BC in private educational institutions, in continuation of the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admissions) Act, 2006, Act No. 5, 2007 which provided reservation for SCs, STs and BCs in Government institutions, should be introduced without delay in the Parliament, thus fulfilling the purpose for

which the 93rd Constitution Amendment Act inserting new clause (5) in Article 15 of the Constitution was enacted in 2005.

(ii) The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) Act 2009 should be amended to provide, within the 25% for children of the disadvantaged groups and weaker sections, for specific reservation for SEdBCs, especially the More, Most and Extremely Backward castes of the SEdBCs, along with SCs and STs, in the ratio of 8% for SCs, 4% for STs and 10% for SEdBCs, as recommended by the Sub-Group on Empowerment of SCs in the XII the Five Year Plan, of which I was the Chairman, in its Report (August 2011). Though the RTE Act is welcome, in the absence of specific reservation for SCs, STs and SEdBCs, there is a tendency for private educational institutions to avoid admission of children of these deprived classes, taking advantage of the wording of the existing Section 12 read with Section 2(ii)(d) of the RTE Act and, therefore, the goal of removing the educational gap between them and the SACs/NSCTBCs will not be achieved.

### **Conclusion**

It is my experience during these decades that Committees and Commissions on important issues ignore issues of SCs, STs and SEdBCs and suggestions made for them. I hope your Committee will be an exception to this unfortunate experience.

I shall be happy to provide any further information required by you and your esteemed Committee. I am also prepared to meet the Committee, if you so wish, for any discussions and clarifications.

*The writer is a retired Member of the IAS of the 1956 batch who retired in 1990 from the post of Secretary, Ministry of Welfare*



# A Review of Sohail Inayatullah's “Prout in Power: Policy Solutions that Reframe Our Futures”

*A review published in Journal of Futures Studies, September 2017*  
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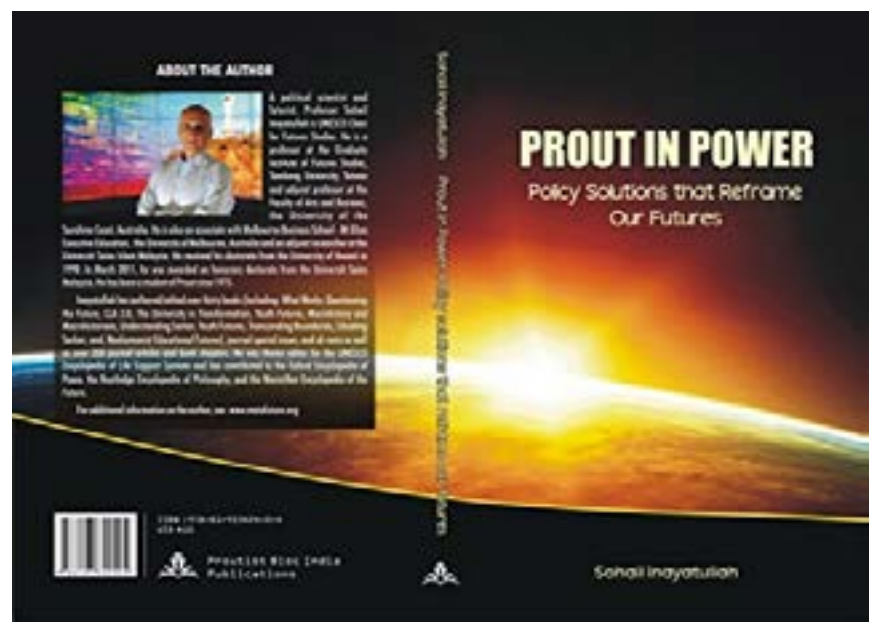
The purpose of futures studies is to make the world a better place and improve the welfare of all living beings. Alternative futures, ethics, and increasing democratic participation are parts of exploring sustainable futures (Bell, 2003). In Sohail Inayatullah's new book, he uses PROUT (progressive utilization theory) as theory and strategy to discover not only alternative futures, but also practical approaches to create better futures.

## The Book's Framework

There are six sections of the book, starting with the concepts of PROUT to issues of politics, education, society, economy and transformation. In first one, the author deconstructs PROUT to provide a new scope of futures-focused policy-making from triple bottom line to a quadruple bottom line. **Neo-humanism is weaved into theory and action to make policy processes future-oriented and deeper.** The four classes in Sarkar's theory of social change are workers, warriors, intellectuals and accumulators of capital. These are applied to understanding history and policy-making. Organizations and individuals can glean insights across the landscape of institutions

to selves through playing the Sarkar game, with case studies detailing and demonstrating it. Political issues in Asia and new emerging Asian visions are presented in part two. Historical and emerging conflicts and the rise of Asia make Asian visions and futures unique. Inayatullah analyzes the present conflicts and the possible future using Sarkar's four classes to understand the power shifts in play, with case studies of visions and influencers.

He suggests that deeper transformations beyond geopolitics need to be explored, rather than re-creating copy-cat or used futures. For example, while today's Olympic games are dominated by rich nations and fueled by commercial excess, a PROUT approach would emphasize triumph through achieving one's best and focus on creating a green Olympics. School systems today mostly prepare students for global competitive capitalism or national economic development, instead of what it means for someone to live a





life of meaning and wellbeing. Globalization, virtualization, and “Asia-leading” are key forces that further deepen this – a form of social control.

**Inayatullah argues neo-humanist education is a way out of this dominant history, with a PROUT strategy needed focused on practice.** Three case studies of higher education with academic leaders are elaborated through scenarios, causal layered analysis (CLA), backcasting, narrative and Prout analysis.

In part four, Inayatullah explores the futures of crime and prisons, debates between rehabilitation and punishment and a case study of e-health. Traditional rehabilitation and punishment is challenged, with various new types of crimes emerging as a result of revolutions in science and technology. Social and economic systems need to be changed to reduce crimes, with multi-pronged strategies for diverse offenders. The future of prisons needs to be reformed through soft technologies, helping offenders reintegrate with society. In health, three e-health in 2025 scenarios are provided, where the PROUT policy perspective integrates spirituality and technology to create powerful visions for the future in this area.

In the realm of political economy, the author investigates and deconstructs six futures of the global financial crisis. He argues PROUT policy give us new pathways out of our emerging crises. The rationale for PROUTist economics and other economic approaches are introduced and compared. Here a unique viewpoint is put forward - that learning from yoga's ethical context and psychological transformation may help us implement a more balanced and flexible world economy. In addition to triple bottom line, another indicator for a fourth bottom line is added and discussed.

In the final section, since PROUT is a theory as well as a vision of the future, Inayatullah lists guiding questions to help us examine organizations and social movements and evaluate whether they are on the path to creating better futures or not. From the PROUT perspective,

climate change is identified to be a leadership issue. This section also puts forward seven positive trends encourage us to create more positive futures. He ends by exploring alternative futures of PROUT and the strategies needed for PROUT to be a success.

## Conclusion

PROUT is an idealized socio-economic system while Neo-humanism is a holistic social philosophy. It is noteworthy that Inayatullah allies this to alternative futures to create new narratives. The triple bottom line is applied to measure the conditions of organizations, adding a quadruple bottom line. Readers can learn about PROUT and Neo-humanist theories, strategies, visions, but also how they interact with problems and crises we encounter today and in our futures. The most significant contribution of this book is solutions: from the most visible short term focused policy answers to the unconscious level of narrative with a long term focus, many solutions are presented on many different issues. Using the PROUT perspective, Inayatullah creates powerful insights that lead to new policy pathways which should be considered as essential elements in our collective social and global conversations for action.



# Infantilization and Degeneration of the Politics



■ Dr. Shalu Nigam

Across the world, many democracies are in crisis and the civilization is crumbling. The crisis erupts because there is an impoverishment of political life where intolerance, greed, ignorance and rage are growing recklessly. The vibrancy of the democracies is diminishing as the public sphere of informed democratic dialogue is shrinking. **Blatant lies, infantile emotionalism, absolute disrespect, open display of religious and other forms of discrimination, racism, misogyny, casteism and bigotry**

**and other such evils are replacing the concept of the egalitarianism and consensus building.** The substantive engagement with the ideas in the public life is being emptied of contents and as happening in the mainstream media, **celebrity culture is being promoted in political and social life, which relies more on emotions rather than reasons or the rationalism.** The spectacle of right wing fantasies is growing as the public sphere is increasingly occupied by the majoritarian Hindu, upper caste elite male club in India as compared to a majoritarian

Muslim, Turkish elite male club in Turkey and a white male Christian club in the US or other parts of the West. The concept of respecting the diverse views is being collapsed in the cacophony of uninformed arguments, unintelligible jargon, esoteric theories and unsubstantiated opinions. Lawlessness is increasing and fanatics are getting louder and louder. Ignorance clubbed with the power, narcissism and megalomaniac attitude among ruling elite is giving rise to the dangerous state of affairs.

The democratic secular ethos is being replaced by the culture



of blood thirsty crony capitalism, cruelty and politics of uncivility. **Anti-intellectualism and oligarchy is expanding while pushing for catastrophic human miseries because the totalitarian tyrannical and authoritarian state had failed.** Militarization is expanding causing harm to the unarmed citizens while war mongers are consolidating their power. **The language, the culture, the ethos, the civility, all are being infantilized and crippled leading to the decay of socio-political environment.** The world is being pushed into the dark times by **the newly emerged populous self-centered leaders.**

Democracies across the world are facing new kind of challenges but the critical question that is being raised here is that will these democracies be emerge out of this situation to imagine a different world while reclaiming democracies? When the politics is infantilized and its standards and norms are degraded, are there ways to revive and re-sustain mature democracies? Are these democracies in crisis, ready to contest the murky forces to bring desired transformations that would end the barbarism in politics? When human rights are curtailed by demagogues through strategies ranging from heavy militarization to the trolls of army on the internet, is there any way out to this global assault to imagine ways to cherish democracy, establish social justice and reaffirm human rights?

### **The Rise of Tyrannical Empires**

History reveals that since ancient times, demagogues have appeared and controlled democracies. Aristotle warned that these populist leaders signify the manner in which democracy feed' on itself. Cleon of Athens has been considered as the first demagogue who through his brutal role has led to destruction while using his common man appeal. He persuaded the fellow Athenians to murder every man in the city as a punishment for revolting. It is for this Greek tyrant that Aristotle wrote, "He

was the first who shouted on the public platform, who used abusive language, and who spoke with his cloak girt around him, while all the others used to speak in proper dress and manner."

Modern demagogues include Adolf Hitler in Germany, Benito Mussolini, Father Coughlin and Joseph McCarthy, a US Senator in Wisconsin from 1947 to 1957 among others. The list has got several new additions in recent years with those being compared to 'Goblin Word', Voldemort and other fictional rogue characters because

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most of these political figures who fashioned themselves as the leaders of people could go to any extreme to hold and expand their powers by exploiting the sentiments of masses. In 1838, James Fenimore Cooper defined the populous leader as 'a leader of the rabble'.

These demagogues, today, in the cloak of being a messiah' are exploiting the people's passion and are distorting, infantilizing and misusing those reactions to grab power while threatening the established rules of political conduct. Signer has argued that these demagogues are the symptoms rather than the cause of decay and could lead to the self-destruction of democracy. They emerge because people wrongly choose to select

leaders who enslave them rather than choosing those who would ensure liberty. It is these demagogues who are consciously and deliberately choosing to infantilize politics for their vested interests.

Samuel Huntington, an American political scientist, in 1993, in his famous proposition 'The Clash of Civilizations?' wrote that the world is divided along cultural lines and according to him each cultural block has its own distinct sets of religious and cultural values which are primary source of conflict. His thesis led to furious debate. Many could not agree with him. However, as partly propounded by him, today, the authoritarian, totalitarian regimes are increasingly expanding across several countries. **The great recession of 2008 resulting in the economic disaffection and dissatisfaction has created conditions that has directed the intensification of authoritarian regimes at the surprisingly faster rate.**

With the triumph of right-wing populism in many countries, recently, the world seemingly is moving in a dangerous phase where the repressive pseudo conservative forces are expanding, consolidating and strengthening and where fascism and religious fundamentalism are becoming a norm. The volatile and chaotic situation that is emerging in some way is legitimizing dangerous paths against that which favours establishing the paradigm of human rights and social justice.

Currently, across the globe from America to India, from Turkey to the Philippines, the newly emerging right-wing populist leaders, in the name of nationalist agenda are re-creating a sense of false nationhood while cultivating the rhetoric of violence and misappropriating the growing feelings of resentment and outrage. Mishra in his piece elucidates that these populist leaders cultivate rage and promise prosperity that "collides with the massive disparities of wealth, power, education and status". The

**“Take for example, a communal riot where a little innocent boy is killed, and when the person who encourages the riot becomes the people’s leader. Where the intellectual standard of the people is low, people commit blunders – prompted by such leaders they become beasts. Those backward countries which have less socio-politico-economic consciousness in the people tend to have more immorality. In such countries the leaders misguide the people in order to collect votes. I call such leaders “political satans” or “political pigs” Such pigs become leaders only when the intellectual standard of the common people is low. In a country with shortages of physical and intellectual pabula, people ultimately become beasts and commit sins and crimes. To murder a person during a riot is both a crime and a sin.”**

**- Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar**

demagogues are breaching the code of political conduct, respect, equality and dignity in the multi-cultural diverse societies by encouraging fascism and fundamentalism and are openly promoting unfettered majoritarianism. **The culture of violence and impunity is being manufactured, designed and cultivated by these leaders to endorse their vested political agenda.** Anti-Islamic, anti-Kurd, anti-minority and anti-immigrant views are being propagated to contest against the common enemy while demonizing the minorities, stereotyping the refugees, banning the travelers from specific countries and vilifying the migrants.

While explaining the rise of populist leaders across Russia, Philippines, France, Germany, USA, Turkey, Indonesia, Thailand and India, McCoy explained that, **“In their compulsion to “protect” the nation from what are seen as pernicious alien influences, such populist movements are defined by their need for enemies. That need, in turn, infuses them with an almost uncontrollable compulsion for conflict that transcends actual threats or rational political programs”.** Instilling fear and terror amongst the masses while

fueling hate are some of the tools that are being deployed strategically to grab and maintain power position. Religion is being used as the weapon to create binaries and divides and those who do not confirm to autocratic diktats are labeled as ‘others or anti-nationals’. Obedience and compliance is becoming the norm and any voices of dissent are crushed. Hence, demagogues today are weakening the stable democracies by turning government by ‘the people’ against ‘the people’ who elected them.

These demagogues are mocking those who speak against them, keeping judiciary under control through malicious means, rolling back gains in development and rights arena and are jeopardizing the basic human rights. The autocratic rulers, in the recent times, are indulging in self-aggrandization while throttling the voices of the civil society and are ruthlessly attacking the non-confirming and dissenting citizens. Mass surveillance and invasion of privacy are a few of the tools that are being used as tools to maintain control while ignoring the international human rights laws, conventions or treaties. War, persecution, terror, brutalities and torture are handy weapons that

are being used to maintain the power status. Demagogues do not accept accountability for their actions and are keeping discontent under the wrap. They are trying to build popular support by spinning the false explanations and cheap solution to genuine ills.

The Human Rights Watch Report 2017 rightly observed that the new generation of populists is emerging which while “claiming to speak for the “the people” **they treat rights as an impediment to their conception of majority will, a needless obstacle to defending nation from threats and evils.** Instead of accepting rights as protecting everyone, they privilege the declared interests of the majority, encouraging people to adopt the dangerous belief that they will never themselves need to assert rights against an overreaching government claiming to act in their name”.

### **Demagogues are Endangering and Weakening the Democracies**

History shows that the demagoguery has ultimately leads to the death of democracy. Polybius, a Greek philosopher around 200 BC, elucidates that the demagogues undo the democracies and that **every**



democracy eventually decays leading to “tumultuous assemblies, massacres, banishment” Hitler sponsored the holocaust by creating the concentration camps and vilifying the popular sentiments against Jews, however, today, the populist leaders are evoking distinct elements of totalitarianism by generating lawlessness while denying constitutional rights and undermining civil liberties. These populist leaders are not creating special concentrations camps rather **they are turning the entire nation into their laboratories of fascism and brutalities.**

Hannah Ardent in her work **The Origin of Totalitarianism** has described the manner in which the totalitarian regimes seek to gain absolute power by propaganda and only state approved voices are tolerated while all other dissenting voices are muffled and throttled. Similarly, the demagogues, today, are imperiling the human rights and endangering the democratic constitutional structures. Populism is inherently hostile to the constitutional values. In their zeal to accumulate power, demagogues are violating the constitutional rights and are manipulating the human rights paradigm. **Intolerance, moral policing, religious fanaticism, all are becoming the norms** and diktats are being issued

as to what people should eat and how they should survive.

Today, in many countries, the rule of law is being bend and broken to favour those who are in power while overlooking the concerns on common citizens. Anarchy and subversion is rampant and martial law is justified. Spate of laws and policies are being formulated by these populist leaders which are anti-people and anti-constitutional. Rights of citizens are being diluted by making amendments in the existing framework of laws and policies. **Policies are being made to restrict human rights of marginalized groups. The police, the army, the para-military forces, all are deployed to fulfil the whims and fancies of the anarchical autocratic leaders.** Arbitrary implementation of laws and policies is emphasized and those who raise voice against inhuman decisions are being put behind the bars or are being murdered.

**In many places, prisons are full of citizens from the minority communities and the civil right activists while those who openly commit crimes roam around freely with impunity because they know they are being supported by the dictators.** The populist leaders, in many nations, are turning blind eye towards violence inflicted on

the citizens or the defenders of human rights and in the process, they end up murdering and killing the human right and democratic paradigm. Even in nations like Brazil without a populist leader but under the control of American capitalists this militarization of social life is ongoing. And, at times, while not condemning violence on the civil society they support and promote the violence through their silence.

### Rising Culture of Cruelty

Demagogues, in the recent times, pursue callous forms of neoliberalism while ignoring ethics and overlooking the social and economic cost. **Crony corporate capitalism is favored and promoted at the expense of the rights of citizens.** Corruption is increasingly becoming the norm in such societies. Exploitative market apparatus that lack human compassion is being pushed continuously while negligently ignoring the appalling human misery and ruining the democratic institutions.

And all this is being done while using the framework of development. Such pitiless attitudes and actions on the part of ruling elite is giving rise to the culture of cruelty which results in producing “inhuman policies that treats the most vulnerable with contempt, relegating them to the zone of abandonment and forcing them to inhabit a society increasingly indifferent to human suffering”.

Human societies are made to bow before the dictates of the market where the worth of an individual is determined by material standards set by the capitalism. The hegemonic market approach favours a monolithic set of norms that push accumulation of personal wealth, career advancement, material status and brands while ignoring the diverse needs and desires.

**Human agency, creativity, independent thinking capacity for self-reflection and moral**



**autonomy is lost behind the cluttering desire to confirm to the repressive standards of totalitarian, inhuman and authoritarian market.** Neoliberal capitalist systems are based on irrational belief that market is sufficient enough to cater the range of needs of diverse population. The worth of an individual is reduced to a factor of production and s/he is compelled to comply with the exploitive market norms. The system is never blamed rather it is the individual who is censured, in case he or she fails to fit in. The reality is banished giving rise to delusions and what is espoused is irrationality, absurdity and infantilism.

This culture has ancient roots in the history of every country. In India the Arthashastra (the 2nd shastra for the current ruling party after the Manu Smriti – the shastra of casteism) it states that the Artha is the basis of Dharma. Artha in this text primarily is concerned with economic wealth and political power. This is fundamentally a capitalist idea – that the basis of righteous conduct and sublime righteousness (often wrongly equated with religions) is founded upon political power and wealth. **Hence acquiring totalitarian power (through divide and rule and imperialism) and hoarding wealth (through economic centralization and imperialism) is the basis of Dharma according to the ruling party hyper-capitalist culture of today.** However in India economic wealth and economic power is being transferred overseas as even Chinese companies are encouraged to make their raj in India. At the same time political coercion is being outsourced to foreign corporations that operate the Aadhaar system and are linked with foreign intelligence programmes. The only Indians who are benefitting from this treason are a handful of crony capitalists linked to the government. This was the same during the Congress government but the acceleration of economic looting has reached

new heights. Rather than following the austere lives of Upanishadic rishis, the new religious leaders are crorepatis and their culture is rooted in this Arthashastra vision of Artha as the basis of Dharma.

**This heinous idea strikes at the very root of what Mahrishi Vyasa with both hands pleaded for the Indian people to listen and accept – that Dharma (righteous struggle against injustice that is rooted in spiritual enlightenment) is the foundation of both Artha and Kama (fulfillment of physical desires).** As modern propagandists for capitalism have shown even Vyasa's Mahabharata was corrupted to become a mouthpiece of capitalist propaganda. For example at the end of the 87th chapter of the Shanti Parva it says,

“The king, O son of Pritha, should always conciliate and protect the Vaeshyas (merchants, capitalists), adopt measures for inspiring them with a sense of security and for ensuring them in the enjoyment of what they possess, and always do what is agreeable to them. The king, O Bharata, should always act in such a way towards the Vaeshyas so that their productive powers may be enhanced. Vaeshyas increase the strength of a kingdom, improve its agriculture, and develop its trade. A wise king, therefore, should always gratify them. Acting with heedfulness and leniency, he should levy mild imposts upon them. It is always easy to behave with goodness towards the Vaeshyas. There is nothing productive of greater good to a kingdom, O Yudhishtira, than the adoption of such behaviour towards the Vaeshyas of the realm.”

**The zeal to conquer the wealth and resources and to grab power is guided by the dark ethic of the senseless capitalism and it propagates imperialist expansion. Citizens in such economic and political environment are being victimized by those whom they elect to govern. This irrational greed is leading to extreme inequalities,**

**rise in poverty, hunger and malnutrition, climate change, droughts, carbon emission, rising global temperatures, changing agricultural patterns, decline in crop yield, rampant corruption, shrinking free spaces, curtailment of civil liberties, financial crisis, endless wars, poisoned ecosystem, increased stress in daily lives and similar endless concerns.** Today, specifically in the countries such as India, the educational institutions, civil society, NGOs all are under attack and restrictions are being made on the right to freedom of speech.

**The decay of the democratic polity is evident when the culture of myths, magic, unreasonableness and illogicality is being propagated in many contemporary societies.** This is mixed with the greed, gluttony and with the plundering, loot and exploitation which is harming the very essence of a democratic society. Absence of intelligence and lack of imagination to break free from the glorious past of blood and orgy is leading to anarchy. Fundamentalist, fascist and unethical perception is prioritized. Reasoning and rationality hold no meaning in such senseless and baseless pursuit. Evidences and facts are being detached from the arguments and truth is set aside while being branded as the 'fake news'. **Anti-intellectual forces are becoming strong and politics today embody the essence of this decayed intellectually bankrupt and immoral world.**

Neo-fascists are acting to erode political and social values, exploit resources and harm social relations. In the absence of social security provisions and because of chaotic situation being created by the demagoguery, citizens across the countries are denied of basic essentials even to survive. In fact, in many developing countries, including India, the policy of 'liberalization, privatization and globalisation' has resulted in situation where the spending on

health and education is continuously being reduced and no emphasis is laid on creating opportunities of employment. **Conservative, neo-liberal ideology is being deployed to destroy all public institutions including education.** Taking advantage of the situation, the populist leaders are making all efforts to exploit the raw youth energy to serve their hideous purpose.

Violence is being normalized or rather glorified in the current times.

Violence has so much permeated into the daily normal life that cruelty is being accepted as a part of the regular culture. **Bullying, intimidation and harassment in all forms, whether children victimizing each other or cyber bullying, all forms of violence is legitimized.** Also, it is considered as a normal to be indifferent and insensitive to the sufferings of others. In fact, today, violence is being promoted as a means of entertainment and 'pleasure' in the form of the violent video games, action and drama films and violent stories depicted in the daily news in audio, visual and print media. The news channels are fiercely and selectively promoting wars and violence while sensationalizing the news, in and out, to gain mileage in terms of their rating points. Some of the television channels in India have been accused of running motivated doctored videos and the fabricated news items. Often, false stories are being promoted in the rat race to gain mileage. In fact, currently most of the media ownership is politically aligned or they are owned by the corporate houses.

### **Growing Militarization**

Harming the unarmed citizens is the trend that is growing over for the past few decades. Demagogues are obsessed with the national security and thrust on militarism, both external and internal. **The toxic mix of religious chauvinism, social biases and the evolving gun culture is used to create volatile situations where those vulnerable**

**are easily targeted. Increasing militarization is degrading societies it is intended to protect. Brutalities and barbarism is being legitimized for the sake of false sense of national security and integrity. Emphasis is laid on procuring arms and arsenals while exhibiting the toxic macho style of governance. It is excluding the marginals, normalizing the brutalities and insensitivity to human sufferings and is devaluing open debates, negotiations or exchange of ideas or dialogues.**

In fact, it has been said that the welfare states are moving towards warfare states and are impacting all aspects of the given social order. **By evoking the culture of militarization of minds' (advocated by Trotsky and Mussolini), the populist leaders, world over, are reaping the benefits through cultivating fear among masses.** The general dissatisfaction and outrage is easily used to create us' versus 'them'. Innocent people are being killed world over and civilizations are being destroyed because of the sickening and gruesome psyche these demagogues are displaying. Any protest or any act of dissent is being crushed with the arms and the arsenals consisting of grenades, sprays, pellets, bullets and platoons of armed forces. The rage and anger among people is crumpled with equal amount of force. The cops are being trained to approach their jobs with wrong mindset. The polarization is being engrained to the extent that common people are made to believe lies without questioning or ascertaining the facts.

War is being waged against common citizens where women, children, students, minorities, poor and middle classes are assaulted. People are being forced to live in the shadow of fear. Women and children are suffering greatly out of this madness deployed by these politicians for their vested interests. In many places, children are growing up seeing military men

or the militants as a part and parcel of their lives. Bombing, shooting, rapes, abduction, killings are the part of daily routine and are severely impacting the children who grow amidst such environment. **Rape, abduction, killings, by army personnel as well as militants - all are being normalized in the name of nation's security.** Civic institutions are being undermined. Also, when the people are killed the media report the number of deaths but not the cost in terms of arms and arsenals, destruction of life and property, emotional and social cost of the life of victims and survivors and so on. The rhetoric of "War" and "Terrorism" is misused over the years even to militarize the common day-to-day language too.

Defense spending is continually being increased considerably over the years while reducing budgetary allocation in health, agriculture or education sector in countries all over the world. Armed forces are being modernized and nuclearization is being prioritized by the populist leaders across the globe. This war mongering attitude is harming rather than protecting the nation states.

Recent report say that India has overtaken United Kingdom in defense spending and now occupies the fifth position in spending on defense budget. India spend 52.5 billion dollars on defense in 2017 as compared to UK which spend 50.7 billion dollars in the same year as compared to US which spend 602.8 billion dollars. In the Union Budget of 2018 defense spending get the increased allocation by 7.81 percent. Similarly, in US, the budget plan for 2018 proposed that 30 million dollars for the military parade that the President wants in Washington DC. Despite criticism, the Trump administration defended the proposed plan saying that military parade would help show appreciation and support for those serving in the military. Arrogant vulgar display of masculinity through the pompous military parades holds no value when the

budget for other essentials such as health or education are being cut and common citizens are denied the basic necessities. However, the demagoguery could not understand this simple reason.

### **The Growing Politics of Lies, Narcissism and Megalomaniac Arrogance**

Demagogues are abrasive politicians who are creating a cult of personality to attract supported and to be surrounded by the cult of blind loyal followers. This army of supporters generally follow the populous leaders thoughtlessly and unquestioningly and is ready to commit violence of all kinds when required without reason. Fascism and fanaticism are the strategies that are being deployed by the demagogues to create the cult of blind followers. Haque noted that immature, insecure and stunted minds that could not find a way to grow gets trapped between fear of the father figure and fear of freedom. **The fascist mind, according to him is afraid of freedom and afraid of living and therefore for such mind obedience replaces inner morality. It is for this reason that fascist mind is stuck and regress into infantile stage and cannot understand reason, logic facts or evidence.**

These demagogues are also using fear and hatred to stir up frenzy which help them to further establish their authority. They are playing on while exploiting prejudices, ignorance and misinformation among common people and are shutting down reasoned debates. They are advocating for relentless forceful and violent means usually without any deliberations. These populist leaders are taking all possible steps to appeal directly to the emotions of poor and uninformed while telling lies and exploiting the crisis situations. **The shallow image of strong macho man is being maintained by the autocrat leaders to subjugate masses while projecting opposition as weak or disloyal. Most of the populist elites**

**ruling the nations today, across the globe are woefully deficient in knowledge or intellectual pursuit. They lack the capacity of critical thought. There is the dearth of intelligence and scarcity of the judgement. What they possess is unbridled narcissism. Childish temperament coupled with the volatile blood thirsty masculine impulsiveness as being depicted by these populist leaders is putting not only the nation but the planet at risk.**

The populous leaders are using techniques such as scapegoating which implies blaming others for troubles, fear mongering by evoking fear among people as rape or death threats, telling unfettered blatant lies and more lies, being unfair and corrupt, **using emotional oratory and personal charisma, using crude propaganda, accusing opponents of weakness and disloyalty, making empty promises and often promising the impossible, violence and physical intimidation, personally insulting, ridiculing and mocking the opponents and portraying them as corrupt and immoral, displaying vulgar and outrageous behavior, grossly over-simplifying and using polarization and exclusion while demonizing the 'others'.** They are anti-pluralists, and are controlling media to their own advantage.

Self-promotion is one of the main characteristic of these populist leaders. Politics is mixed with theatre and dramatic use of emotions is a strategy that is being used to fool people. **These demagogues in modern democracies are the dream sellers who are perfect at arousing the aspirations and play on the hidden fears of masses.** Overall, it may be said that these demagogues are degrading the standards of politics, taking all possible steps to escape accountability, are overlooking ethics and are belittling others as well as themselves.

### **Infantilization of Standards and**

### **the Language of Politics**

“Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind” explicates George Orwell. However, in today’s global context, telling lies is normalized and violence has become the catalyst to promote the irrational, senseless, vulgar and fundamentalist arrogance. Wild promises are being made with no intent to fulfill them. Truth which keep check on the corrupt power is being posed as fake and the language of fascism is utilized to normalize falsehood and create sensationalism. People are being easily seduced and the shrewd leaders and opportunist manipulators are not being held accountable for their actions. Words no longer hold meaning or bind the leader and dialogues lack social or ethical imagination. **Shameless, senseless, eccentric, crude and vulgar use of language, daunting sociopathic behavior, using divisive anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant rhetoric rooted in hate and violence-bigotry, toxic masculinity, sexism and misogynist conduct is being used to ridicule the opponents.** Empathy no longer remains a concern and vague ideas are proposed to attract the attention of masses.

Narcissism is shamelessly being promoted and rationalism is under attack. **Unapologetic, arrogant attitudes are portrayed with the agenda of self-glorification. These leaders are creating powerful rhetoric and imagery and use their magical appeal to befool masses by their uninformed utterances.** Myths and bizarre irrational statements are being made to attract uneducated masses. **The growing nexus between the superstitions, celebrity culture, irrationality and political patronage is giving rise of cult of godmen and god women while the rationalist, secular and pluralistic character of the societies is being ripped into pieces.** These leaders surround themselves with the like-



minded conservative people who are against intellectual culture and most of these demagogues avoid press conferences which may put them in embarrassing positions and generally prefer one side dialogue using media.

Today, with the growth of technology, these populous leaders are using mainstream media as well as social media to address political issues. However, these social media platforms are used to humiliate and ridicule the opponents and critics and at times, mocking the physical characteristics using demeaning sexually charged insults and vulgar language. False, defamatory and deceptive statements are being made while latching on the vulnerabilities.

Aggression is clearly visible and cyber bullying is becoming a common practice. Mercilessly, battering the opponents on social media is increasingly becoming a norm. In fact, an army of trolls is purposely being deployed “to construct, contrive and calibrate a social media culture where dissent towards a leader or an ideology or even a party is reciprocated in a worst possible manner”. **Disparaging and vituperative remarks, disgusting sexual innuendos, rape and death threats, hateful memes, abusive language, threat and intimidation all are used by these trolls which shut down the opportunity for democratic dialogue and fuel as well as incite hate online.** Right-wing militancy on social media is responding to dissent by abusive language, bigotry and fanaticism. These troll army lack the logic or basic decency and could go up to any extent to demean, insult and humiliate the person who dare to say anything against the party or its leaders. Attack is coordinated and fully well organized.

In such situations, politics instead of building societies and developing civilizations is becoming a tool to destroy nations. Social cohesion is disappearing and the political disintegration is becoming the norm. The infantilization and decay of politics

is leading to the anarchy. Samuel Huntington explains political decay as “the lag in the development of political institutions behind social and economic change”. Today, political institutions are decaying and democracy is being crumpled. Fukuyama explains that the “Institutions are created to meet certain needs of society, such as making war, dealing with economic conflicts, and regulating social behavior”. “But as recurring patterns of behavior, they can also grow rigid and fail to adapt when the circumstances that brought them into being in the first place themselves change,” he added.

**Worse still, such rigidity can be exacerbated by the elite classes’ misappropriation of state power for their own primary benefit. Those two dreaded forces—rigidity and elite self-dealing—are the sources of political “decay,”** Fukuyama’s emphasized. Currently, democracies across the world are facing decay and disintegration. Manor in his work emphasized that in the hierarchical democracies such as India, political decay and awakening run parallelly, but the citizens eventually have been able to develop a corrective and though regeneration did not fully reverse the process of decay but it has been able to avert the collapse.

### **Reclaiming Democracies and Strengthening Politics**

In fact, currently democracies over the world are crumbling by the obnoxious alliance between the conservative forces and the neo-liberal economy. Today, demagogues are flourishing taking advantage of the fact that the democracies are ailing and that the neoliberal forces are further weakening the democratic structure. However, strong and mature democracies have shown capacities to survive such assaults in past. Aristotle in his work, ‘Politics’ wrote that “Revolutions in democracies are generally caused by the intemperance of demagogues”. Robust movements

have been initiated and thrived earlier, which have ultimately led to revitalizing of democratic spirit.

Social movements as the form of an expression to fulfill the legitimate democratic ambitions and aspirations have helped to instill political awakening in the past. Similarly, even today, the crisis can be resolved by reclaiming democracies where ultimately people hold the answer, if they dedicate themselves to the rule of law. A broad-based movement where people with different political and ideological vision may come together in defense of economic equality and social justice to reject the non-democratic governance may help to revive the political spirit in a positive manner and may help to preserve the radical democracy which must be founded upon economic democracy. Solidarity above class, caste, religion, race or gender differences, not just against the neo-fascism but to create a new humanity based on a revolution in the human spirit is crucial in order to survive.

*Also, Martin Niemoller, a Lutheran pastor in Germany in 1892 in his famous poem ‘First they came for the Jews’ and this was later adapted and re-adapted with its numerous versions. He wrote*

**“First They Came for the Jews  
And I did Not Speak Out  
Because I was not a Jew  
Then they came for the Communists  
And I did Not Speak Out  
Because I was not a Communist  
Then they came for the Trade Unionists  
And I did Not Speak Out  
Because I was not a Trade Unionist  
Then They Came for Me  
And There was NO One Left  
To Speak Out for Me”**

Democracies suffer from “an intrinsic paradox – if left to their own devices they can disintegrate and can lead to tyranny”. Therefore, citizens

have to play a meaningful role in strengthening political situations and institutions. In a democracy, it is the onus on the citizens to make the politicians answerable and to fix the accountability of every institutional mechanism through collective actions. Ordinary, informed citizens may play a vital role in reclaiming democracy and political regeneration. When the populous leaders are infantilizing the politics, it is an obligation of the common citizens in the mature democracies to check and balance such actions. Meaningless politics, therefore, must be controlled. Making democracies across the world strong and robust is the need of the hour.

Various scholars and thinkers have pointed out towards **strengthening the political role for ordinary people as a solution besides increasing civic education and cultivating a strong sense of responsibility and obligation among common citizens.** Kant in his essay on Perpetual Peace in 1795 based on contemporary liberal thoughts has proposed his peace program. Similarly, today, the universal unalienable right to life and liberty needs to be protected. Opposing the forces of domination and oppression is crucial.

In today's democracies, whoever controls people also regulate the power. Power can be evoked by wide range of actions ranging from protest for justice to massacres and the mob lynching. Essential is to understand the relationship between individual mass leaders and the citizens. Collective resistance build on solidarity of diverse group of people could challenge the power of fascist forces. Also, the lies and falsehood propagated by the populist leaders need to be contested with the truths. The uninformed utterances could be challenged with informed reasoning and facts. The language of fascism needs to be countered with the critical sustained dialogue and narratives of freedom and empathy.

In contemporary times, the need

is to think beyond the role of citizens to vote and elect the candidates to monitor and survey the work being done. Civil literacy is the modus operandi in the given situation to create political awareness. Critically informed and socially responsible engagement may help to create new public spheres that may help to revitalize the democratic struggle. Civil society has to play an affective role in providing vigilance and creating more instruments such as Right to Information Act and similar such instruments which could held those on power accountable for their actions as well as inactions. The struggle for democracy in this appalling time requires taking responsibility for the state of our society and resistance. The concept of dollar vote needs to be re-examined. **The involvement of corporations and money in politics must be brought to an end by having the Electoral Commission finance elections.**

Decentralization of power has been suggested by many leaders in the past. But without the decentralization of economic power and the end of economic dictatorship – globally, nationally and locally – decentralization will lead to anarchy. The need is to think beyond the party politics to be understood as a vibrant ecology of practices to include wide range of perspectives, aspirations and innovations.

The market system is destroying the political system by relentlessly undermining the social institutions and depoliticizing the citizens while make democracy impossible. This need to be re-examined. Resistance at local as well at the global level is essential to prevent destruction by such powerful forces. Therefore, there is a need to connect local politics with the national as well as global political developments.

H.L. Mencken in 1939 wrote, *"The most dangerous man to any government is the man who is able to think things out ... without regard to the prevailing superstitions and taboos. Almost*

*inevitably he comes to the conclusion that the government he lives under is dishonest, insane, intolerable."* Thus, reclaiming ideals and promise of democracy require sustained critique of comprehensive politics along with the channelizing forces of fierce and courageous collective systemic, ongoing, educative and creative resistance at various level in and different forms in which radical and ethical imagination is being realized through mass demonstrations and protests.

*It is the process of engagement of informed citizens who confront the dark times with energized optimism to create a social movement that could bring change. This is a non-violent resistance that is transformative and emancipatory. It is a dissent of hope, conviction and courage that allows to think critically, dialogue effectively, questions the autocracy, deliberate thoughtfully, reveal and challenge the oppression and transgress the established norms.*

*Fredrick Douglass in his speech in 1857 said, "If there is no struggle, there is no progress. ... This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."*

So, there is a need to cultivate hope and to imagine a sense of possibility. With the bankruptcy of the political language in the contemporary era, there is a need to develop a new language of hope and justice which could provide new meaning to the question of genuine democracy based on economic liberty for every community. Bauman stated that "as inevitably as the meeting of oxygen and hydrogen results in water, hope is conceived whenever imagination and moral sense meet". And hope today is founded on a moral economy and a revolution in the human spirit. As Ursula Le Guin said "You cannot buy the Revolution. You can only BE the Revolution. It is in your spirit, or it is nowhere."

The power of cultural conditioning/domestication  
is far greater than the power of the scriptures themselves

# The Mythology of RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

■ Jeriah Bowser

There are fewer words in the English language as cloaked in ambiguity and steeped in power as *fundamentalism*. It is a word which completely dominates social discourse, public opinion, and political rhetoric, yet remains undefinable and enigmatic. When pressed to explain what one means by this word, most pundits will allude to “literal interpretations of religious texts,” “religious extremism,” or “a strict adherence to a set of beliefs,” but fail to give any further context or description of what exactly makes one a fundamentalist, why fundamentalism exists, or why fundamentalists of all creeds seem to share so much in common. These are all questions that have fascinated me ever since the moment I realized, many years ago, that I was raised in a fundamentalist family and began to understand the many ways that this upbringing deeply affected me. An essential part of my healing from this traumatic upbringing has been studying the phenomenon of fundamentalism on all levels - sociological, historical, political, and psychological - in an effort to understand how ideas like this are created and perpetuated. As it turns

out, my fascination with this cultural phenomenon is shared with many others.

Since the dawn of the twenty-first century, and especially during the aftermath of the September 11th attacks in the US, perhaps no single word has held public attention so much, as governments around the world have taken advantage of the power that this word holds to create atmospheres of fear and paranoia which in turn allows them to enact draconian laws, create totalitarian surveillance systems, and incite nationalist fervor to an extent that they would never be able to get away with otherwise.

Despite the massive amounts of media attention given to this topic and the endless procession of talking heads who attempt to provide answers to these questions, I have found myself continually frustrated and dissatisfied with their answers. In addition to my search for a basic explanation of what exactly fundamentalism is, my most pressing question has been trying to understand why fundamentalists from different religions share so much



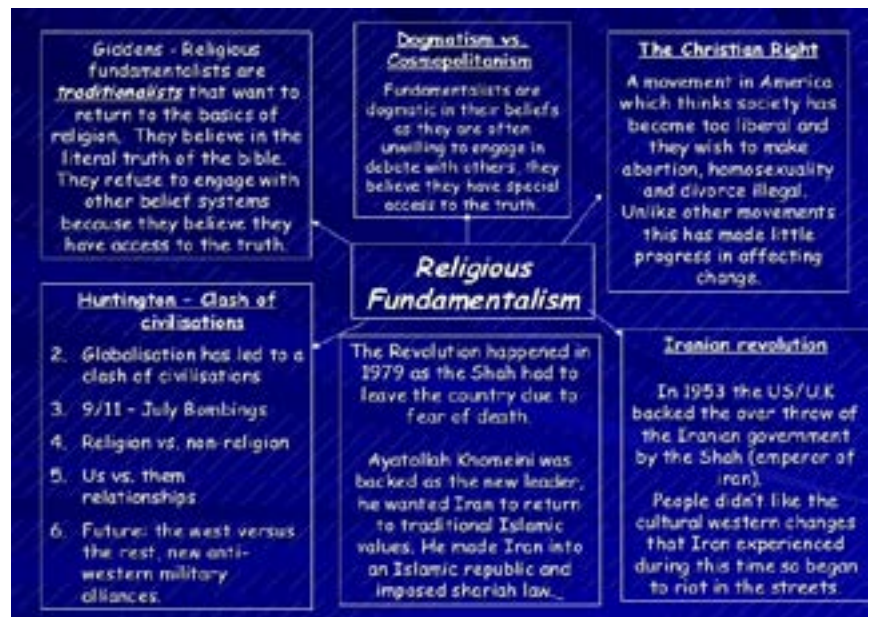


in common. This strange and terrifying cultural phenomenon seems to not be restricted to any particular tradition but is rather a non-localized personality disorder or sickness which affects people from all across the religious (and secular) spectrum. In the course of my studies in comparative religion, comparative mythology, philosophy, depth psychology, and theology, I have finally started to answer some of these questions for myself, and I think some of my discoveries may be helpful others.

But before we explore what fundamentalism is, let's establish what it isn't.

Fundamentalism isn't a literal interpretation of religious texts. As one fairly well-educated in comparative religion and theology, I am of the belief that there is no such thing as a "literal interpretation" of any religious text. **Every Abrahamic and Vedic religious text that I have studied (which encompasses Christianity, Judaism, Islamism, Bahá'í, Rastafarianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, and Sikhism) contains a vast collection of decontextualized stories, ideas, teachings, metaphors, beliefs, poems, and mandates which can be translated any number of ways.**

**Each of these religious texts contain so many possible interpretations and narratives that they effectively serve as a tabula rasa (blank slate), allowing people to project onto them whatever they wish to see and finding validation for their beliefs therein. Going solely off of these texts, you can find plausible arguments for genocide as well as pacifism, promiscuity and celibacy, materialism and simplicity, egalitarianism and totalitarianism, animism and anthropocentrism... every contradiction you could ever hope for, essentially. Obviously, having knowledge of hermeneutics, language analysis, varying methods of interpretation, historical/cultural**



context, and an awareness of how these texts were written and assembled can provide some insight into where these contradictions arise from, but very few people have the time and energy to do all of this work. There are many factors which serve to mystify these texts and make this level of insight inaccessible to most people, which is a conversation of its own. **This mystification creates an environment in which most religious adherents rely on experts (clergy) to decipher all of this information for them (Rabbis, Imams, Pastors, Sanghas, Priests, Scholars, etc.). As these clergy receive their education from other clergy who have been taught very specific narratives of these texts, this inevitably leads to a situation in which we have billions of religious adherents who have virtually no context for their religious tradition/scriptures and very little understanding of the many ways that power and history has shaped their religious practice.** One might be tempted to think that the opportunities of the internet and globalization in general would help clear up some of this ignorance, but unfortunately the opposite is true. As information on the internet is completely decontextualized and one-dimensional, it allows for a proliferation of idiots to dominate the cybersphere with their hatred and ignorance. I would say that discerning reality from confusion on these issues is more difficult now than ever before.

Paradoxically, by the time someone has gone through all the work of sifting through all of these layers of confusion and mystification, they are confronted with the unsettling realization that these texts are inseparable from the context that birthed them. **The very act of digging to the heart of a religious text in order to find the fundamental elements of that text is the very process which destroys any possibility of finding these fundamentals; the more one searches, the more they realize how impossibly quixotic the quest is in the first place.**

As one who has lived on both sides of fundamentalist culture, it is incredible to me how powerful this tabula rasa phenomenon is. As a child, I had plenty of access to Bibles in my house, I was even forced to memorize entire sections of it, but somehow I never saw that the words and teachings of Yeshua (Jesus) directly contradicted everything I was taught about Christianity. I developed a simple set of "bible-coping skills" to help me deal with parts of the Bible that my family didn't like: "Times were different back then, that doesn't really apply to us now," "Jesus didn't mean that literally, it's just a metaphor," "That only applies to other Christians," "Well, that's the old covenant, this is

the new covenant,” etc. These coping-skills allowed me to ignore or discredit ideas which didn’t line up with my cultural programming (domestication), allowing me to read, study, and memorize the Bible without ever having to actually confront the ideas that lay within it.

What is fascinating about this is that the scriptures were largely insignificant when compared to the rest of my domestication. My father’s fundamentalist rhetoric took precedence over any of the messages actually contained in the Bible, and it took me many years to begin questioning it. Any scriptural contradictions or seeming discrepancies between the words of Yeshua and our beliefs were easily explained away and dismissed; it really didn’t matter what was actually written in that book.

This is a crucial aspect of understanding fundamentalism: **the power of cultural conditioning/ domestication is far greater than the power of the scriptures themselves.** Essentially, this means that all attempts to prove that one particular religion is inherently violent/ignorant/intolerant are completely missing the point. **There are no fundamental elements of any religious text, and any attempt to reduce them to a set of basic beliefs says much more about the person undertaking such an effort than it does about the texts themselves.**

Once, as an educator, I assigned my students with the task of finding specific philosophical narratives within certain religious texts, in order to demonstrate this tabula rasa effect. Without fail, they were able to find (very convincing) narratives of feminism in the Bhagavad Gita, pacifism in the Quran, anarchism in the Book of Mormon, Marxism in the Tripitaka, and, just for fun, a zombie apocalypse narrative in the New Testament. The exercise was, obviously, an attempt to illustrate how **we can find validation for virtually anything we want within these vast tomes of completely decontextualized stories, metaphors, and myths.** This is also confirmed when one realizes that **within each of these religions there exists individuals from nearly every political and philosophical tradition. There are pacifist Christians and racist vigilante Buddhist death squads, luddite Catholics and transhumanist Mormons, anarchist Jews and fascist Hindus.... you name the ideology, and I guarantee that someone, somewhere has found a justification for that ideology within their specific religious tradition.**

Of course there are overall trends within each one of these religions and general narratives within their scriptures, but these trends have much more to do with social/political/historical context than inherent doctrine and the scriptural narratives can be easily ignored or evaded (as they often are). A few of these religions (most notably Judaism, Christianity, Islamism, Hinduism, and Buddhism) have been “adopted” by various States and Empires at some point in their history, which has drastically affected the way that these traditions are practiced and the way that the texts are interpreted. For

example, one could compare global Bahá’í culture with global Christian culture and point out that Bahá’í culture is, on the whole, much more peaceful, egalitarian, and tolerant than its counterpart.

Does this mean that Christianity and its sacred text - the Bible - is inherently more violent and intolerant? Only if one ignores the fact that Christianity has been enmeshed with Empire for at least the past 1700 years, while Bahá’í has yet to receive the same treatment. **If a State or Empire were to extend its graces to the Bahá’í faith, I have no doubt that its adherents would quickly join the ranks of the other religions in practicing violence and hatred on unbelievers and apostates.** The only reason Western Christian fundamentalists aren’t currently strapping bombs to themselves and blowing up crowds of strangers is that they have no need to do so, they are currently on the “winning team.”

Even a cursory review of the history of Christendom will reveal that these monotheists have no problem engaging in mass slaughter of infidels and committing indiscriminate acts of terrorism when their God (and State) calls upon them to do so. If my father would have thrust a rifle in my hands and pointed at the infidels when I was a child, I have no doubt that I would have killed and died in the name of my God, as that was what I was taught to do, that was my reality, there was no questioning who the enemy was or what they deserved. Blatant commandments such as “Thou shalt not kill” are of little consequence to the fundamentalist, they are driven by much deeper urges (which are easily justified when **the same Bible that says “thou shalt not kill” then goes on to tell stories of conquests, genocides, and the carnage of Empire.**)

For anyone interested in understanding the role of religious identity and culture in our world, this is very important to understand, as it provides context for why certain religious traditions have developed along the lines that they have. The West’s current depiction of Islamism as being “inherently violent” is a great example of this, as very few scholars or analysts (on either side of the issue) have taken care to point out the political and social dynamics which underlie this tension. The historical realities of Christian (and specifically American) intervention and exploitation of predominantly Islamic countries are rarely brought into these conversations, which leads to incredibly ignorant and inaccurate depictions of Islamism as being more violent than its monotheistic siblings - Christianity and Judaism. Islamism is inherently violent, absolutely, but not because of any unique doctrine or specific mandates contained in the Quran; it is only violent to the extent that it is a religion of Empire, and is therefore subject to the whims of Empire. Islamism is also inherently pacifist, to the extent that it contains numerous mandates, stories, and teachings which encourage nonviolence, peace, and equality.

Yet at the same time there remains a sense that these religious texts are somehow important to understanding

fundamentalism, that there is a certain sort of fanatical dedication to these ancient scriptures within fundamentalist cultures. I agree, there is an emphasis on literal interpretation, but one cannot take the entirety of *any* religious text literally, there are simply too many possible interpretations to allow for such a simplistic explanation. If I were to take Jesus's famous "sermon on the mount" literally, I would be acting in direct opposition to fundamentalist Christianity. [1] **The answer lies in which parts of these books are taken literally, which interpretations become doctrine, and which narratives are focused on.** Essentially: which beliefs/myths the fundamentalists are bringing to the tabula rasa. Before we explore what these myths are, let's continue establishing what fundamentalism isn't.

Fundamentalism isn't just religious extremism. That is, it isn't engaging in violent action or rhetoric in order to further a religious cause. This assertion directly ties into the previous question we just explored, as it assumes that there is a core set of beliefs within each of these religious traditions/scriptures and the fundamentalists are those who use violence to enforce these beliefs. As there is no basic set of beliefs which comprise these scriptures or traditions, and as the utilization of ideological violence is endemic to the vast majority of our species, it is a major feat of conflation to say that only fundamentalists engage in religious violence. **The connections between military culture and religion are well established,** but I doubt many would consider the actions of the Israeli Defense Forces, the Iraqi Armed Force, or the US Marine Corps examples of religious fundamentalism.

**At many points in the history of Judaism, Christianity, Islamism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, religious leaders have called upon their members to engage in violence against other religions, and have been met with little resistance. History shows**

**that it doesn't take much to militarize an entire religious population. Actually, the vast majority of religious violence in the world is committed by moderates; that is, regular people who have been incited to hatred by their leaders, not by fundamentalist sects.**[2] [3]

Unfortunately, this belief will continue being perpetuated, as a commonly employed tactic (of all fundamentalists) is **to accuse another religion of being inherently violent, ignorant, intolerant, etc.** Those who spout such provocative rhetoric will make sweeping generalizations in order to objectify other cultures and effectively make them Other. There are many reasons for engaging in such demagoguery, all of which serve to create an atmosphere of fear and hatred towards the Other and a feeling of unique greatness towards the few select members of the fundamentalist group. This serves as a happiness surrogate; as members of fundamentalist communities and cultures give up so much personal happiness, freedom, and autonomy over to their leaders and deities, they believe that they are compensated with a sort of spiritual entitlement which manifests itself in eternal rewards and privileges. By sacrificing so much in this life, they hope to receive vast rewards in the next.

The belief that fundamentalism is simply religious extremism/violence also ignores the fact that violence takes many forms, some visible and some not. Structural, or systemic violence is constantly working to ensure that the gears of progress continue churning on. **When one considers that religious morality almost always serves those in power and reinforces dominant narratives, that religious groups are often tax-exempt and receive preferential treatment from the State, that religious clergy regularly engage in child-abuse and other forms of exploitation, that women are (often violently) subjected to men and masculinity, and that religions never fail to provide spiritual justifications for war and imperialist conquests, it becomes harder to distinguish who exactly is engaging in religious violence and who isn't.**

Having established that fundamentalism cannot be understood as a literal interpretation of religious texts or religious extremism, can it be understood as a strict adherence to a set of beliefs? This answer seems the most plausible to me, but I have yet to hear anyone explain exactly what this "set of beliefs" is and why it is universal to all religious (and secular) fundamentalists.

At this point, we need to shift our focus to comparative mythology, as my background in this field has guided me in exploring this question. For those unfamiliar with comparative mythology, it is the survey of mythological archetypes, beliefs, stories, themes, and narratives from across many different human cultures in order to discover possible continuities and shared experiences between them. In other words, the comparative mythologists are trying to find common myths and beliefs which are shared by many human cultures. This is fascinating and important work because it reveals the basic mythological framework that underlays all our beliefs about the world, which holds implications for every single field of science and academic inquiry. Every ideology in the world - philosophical, religious, or scientific - can also be understood as a set of basic beliefs, or myths. When a comparative mythologist looks past the surface of an ideology and examines these basic myths, comparing and contrasting them to other ideologies, some very interesting discoveries happen; many opposing ideologies are revealed to be almost identical in their mythology, while other seemingly similar ideologies are revealed as having vastly different mythic structures.

For example, the ideologies of **capitalism and communism** have been widely presented as polarities - two opposing political and economic worldviews. The Cold War(s) were financed and fought under the guise of these two ideologies duking it out on the global battlefields of history, and many people still believe this narrative. **As a comparative mythologist, I see these two ideologies as almost identical in all their basic myths.**



**Both ideologies accept the basic logic, structure, and processes of industrial civilization, they both employ rigid hierarchies to maintain their order, they both rely on Modernist assumptions of Science, and they both use oppressive State power to accomplish their ends. Neither of them question the institutions of Patriarchy or anthropocentrism, the role of technology, the realities of industrial agriculture, or the feasibility of building a system of production predicated on infinite growth while living on a finite planet. They both accept the constructs of linear time, a market economy, and private property, and the only areas where they actually diverge are in their interpretations of how this market should be regulated and how this property should be distributed. When these two ideologies are broken down into their basic myths and compared to other human myths, the differences are hardly discernible.**

This is essentially a process of shifting perspective, of changing how we see these ideas. These two ideas may indeed look very different if your nose is pressed right up against them and you can't see the larger context, but if you sit back and shift your gaze to encompass all the many ways that humans have found to live on this planet, the differences become hardly distinguishable. To return to the question at hand, what might comparative mythology reveal about fundamentalism? What do fundamentalists from Christianity, Islamism, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism have in common?

In comparing the basic myths of fundamentalist communities and cultures across the religious spectrum, there are striking similarities between all of these different religious groups. Fundamentalist Christian mythology is indistinguishable from fundamentalist Muslim mythology, fundamentalist Hindu mythology, fundamentalist Buddhist mythology,

etc. In fact, **if one were to examine religious fundamentalist groups based purely on their basic assumptions about the world, you would be hard pressed to find any differences at all.**

All fundamentalists share a dedication to ten basic myths; these ten myths represent my attempts at summarizing and demystifying the basic philosophical assumptions of civilization: Anthropocentrism, Androcentrism, Objectification, Hierarchy, Power, Progress, Morality, Atomization, Dualism, and Property. As a full exploration of these myths would require much more time and space than this essay allows for and as I have already outlined the basic structure of these myths elsewhere, I will leave it up to the reader to explore the implications of these myths on their own. [4]

Although this list of ten myths may seem daunting to some, they are actually quite obvious when you see them playing out in your daily life, as they represent the most basic assumptions of civilization. As nearly every human alive today has been raised and inculcated in the logic and processes of civilization since your conception (a process known as domestication), these myths are not foreign to you at all. They are encoded into the language that I am using as I write this, they are reinforced with every economic transaction you participate in, they are hidden in every relationship you have ever had, they influence how you understand and create meaning out of the world around you, and they are the motives behind your every action.

**As a member of civilization, you are manifesting and perpetuating these myths all the time, whether you are aware of it or not and whether you intellectually agree with them or not.** Of course, this is not to imply that everyone who participates in civilization is a fundamentalist, it is merely to point out the universal nature of these myths. The fundamentalists distinguish themselves from the rest of us through their unabashed devotion, acceptance, and dedication to these ten fundamentals of civilization.

**Every fundamentalist culture is heavily Patriarchal and masculine (Androcentrism), every one of them relies on strict Hierarchy within their ranks, they each ignore and disrespect the sentience and value of other forms of life (Anthropocentrism), they all believe that certain places, people, animals, things, and ideas can be owned (Property), they always long for paradise and are terrified of their origins (Progress), they all rely on coercive and violent Power to control the actions and beliefs of their members, they are all committed to Objectification by establishing clear boundaries for membership into their community, they are fixated on dividing the world into two essentially distinct planes of reality (Dualism), there is always faith in an external Morality to guide their actions, and they all reject holistic thinking or ecological frameworks (Atomization).** [5]

To put it simply, **religious fundamentalists are simply those humans who are most firmly committed to the project of civilization, they represent the extreme boundaries of human domestication.** Within this globalized all-encompassing culture of civilization, the fundamentalists have simply taken our myths to their logical conclusions. **No matter what tradition someone belongs to, when someone is deeply traumatized and domesticated they end up bringing these experiences to the tabula rasa of a certain holy scripture and religious tradition and... sure enough, they are guaranteed to find validation for their beliefs therein.** Religious traditions and texts allow these wounded humans to externalize their actions, give them a framework for projecting their trauma/domestication onto the world, and allow them to displace any accountability for their actions onto "God's will." Many people do not even need a religious framework in order to enact these myths, as the recent rise of secular fundamentalism demonstrates. [6]

I realize that this mythological explanation may come across as vague to many, and I attribute that to the enormity and difficulty of describing these myths to those unfamiliar with this way of thinking, as well as a generally myopic perspective on religious issues that is rarely challenged. Whether or not you agree with my summary of the ten basic myths of civilization, I believe that the basic framework I laid out is fairly intuitive to most people, as the similarities between Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and Hindu fundamentalism is often used as a point of humor in pop culture. [7]

If you strip away all the trappings, costumes, rituals, languages, and surfaces of these groups, what they have in common is a striking dedication to all of the same basic ideas, and I think this is very important to understand. **These various religions are merely different manifestations of the same basic belief system; they are different outfits on the same beast.** Once we recognize this, we will realize that not only is fundamentalism a universal and systemic problem, but it is one that we all carry the potentiality for under the right circumstances. As domesticated humans, we are all potential fundamentalists, and I would posit that this is why the actions of these groups fascinate and horrify us.

When the Westboro Baptist Church performs their homophobic antics, maybe they are simply holding up a mirror to our deeply Patriarchal, masculine, and sex-phobic culture. When Daesh publishes their grisly execution videos, perhaps they do so knowing full well that **our culture cannot resist such spectacles of violence, as we are secretly fascinated by those who take our myths to their logical conclusions.** When the Neo-Zionists carry out their violent rhetoric by laughingly shooting unarmed protestors in Gaza, maybe they are only carrying out the wishes of an entire nation who, no matter what leftist rhetoric they coat it with, still believes that there is something inherently different between them and other races/forms of life. When the 969 Movement Buddhists massacre entire villages of Rohingya Muslims, is it possible that they are merely playing out the mythology of not only an entire religion, but an entire civilization?

Due both to my personal experiences with fundamentalism and my academic pursuits in this field, I believe that this cultural mirroring is not only a possibility, but a sobering reality that holds vital information for anyone interested in understanding their own mythological processes and beliefs. **When we look at situations that horrify us with the realization that we are looking at our own mythology being played out in the world and taken to its logical extent, we are granted a glimpse into our own beliefs, patterns, and narratives that we are participating in.** This is not an easy or comfortable experience, but for those interested

in what lies beyond the incessant lies and mystifying illusions propagated by corporate media outlets and religious demagogues, this can be a very valuable and meaningful process.

This global crisis of religious fundamentalism is a planetary churning that is ongoing. The point is to remove the poisons and toxins from the collective psychology and to create the nectar of universal love to birth a new human society on this planet.

## Notes

[1] The sermon on the mount can be found in the New Testament of the Christian Bible, the narrative of Matthew, chapters 5-7

[2] Mark Juergensmeyer's work is illuminating here, especially his *"Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State"* (2008), and *"Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence"* (2003)

[3] There has also been significant resistance to militarization and empire within religious groups, many times by fundamentalist communities (quick example: Men in many US Mennonite communities were conscientious objectors during WW1 and 2 and were jailed, fined, and treated horrendously for refusing to enlist in the military)

[4] My two essays, "Into the Wild, Part 1: Towards a Post-Civilized Critique of Civilization" and "Into the Wild Part 2: Rewilding Self" are a good introduction to how these myths play themselves out in our world and on our bodies. For a more thorough exploration of these myths, I recommend Max Oelschlaeger's "The Idea of Wilderness," Clarence Glacken's "Traces on Rhodian Shores," Roderick Nash's "Wilderness and the American Mind," and Richard Tarnas's "The Passion of the Western Mind."

[5] Of course, this is not a strict code for deciphering fundamentalism, and some communities may fixate more on some myths than others, but these myths are more-or-less present in every fundamentalist community or culture.

[6] the New Atheist movement is a great example of this, as well as the free-market fundamentalist disciples of Milton Friedman. This is also seen when many young people who are attracted to religious fundamentalist groups like Daesh come from heavily secular cultures and families (France, for example).

[7] Here are two examples of this in pop culture that I have seen in only the past week:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEnWw\\_IH4tQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEnWw_IH4tQ)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYV7KWQ-fY4>

## Why Women Construction Workers Will Continue to Deliver Babies by the Roadside

*Interests of women workers in the construction sector have not been safeguarded and with the State failing to do its duty, we will continue to see images of children of construction workers tied to poles and not inside schools or crèches.*

**Smita Khanijow**

Several months ago, the photo of a child tied at a construction site, while her mother worked nearby, resonated with the Indian middle class, elite bureaucracy and politicians. Suddenly, everyone around seemed to wake up and notice the migrant men and women toiling away at construction sites in metros. There were several articles in print, on web and public debates on television channels looking to fix things in favour of women workers and their children at worksites. It seemed that finally, the fate of women workers in construction sites would change for the better.

That wave generated interest in looking at possible facilities for women workers in the sector at large and pushed the agenda for demand of child care facilities in and around construction sites. However, what the enthusiasm did not probe was whether the interests of these women workers are safeguarded by any legislation or not. And if they are, to what extent they have been implemented.

### Legislations and aftermath

Sheela Devi is one of the many construction workers who migrated to Delhi in the late '80s and witnessed the huge civil society uproar for legislative protection of construction workers. She remembers herself as a 20-year-old participating in many such rallies and demanding facilities such as pension and education for her



**Delhi houses more than one million construction workers, out of which nearly one-fourth are women.**

children. She shares how joyous they were when they learned of the government declaration, that by law, construction workers (including women like her) would be getting social security benefits. In the mid-90s, after a decade of civil society and union struggles, two very progressive pieces of legislations came forth – The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996 and the Building and Other Construction Workers Cess Act, 1996. They first protected the interest of workers by ensuring formation of a tripartite Welfare Board and they later provided for levy and collection of cess on the cost of construction incurred by an employer and the funds collected were mandated to be used for the benefit of workers. Interestingly, although the Act came into being in the year 1996, it took several

years for states to formulate rules and initiate its implementation on the ground.

In fact, it took seven years for the Construction Workers Welfare Board to become functional (it came into being in late 2002). Of the many workers who perhaps had to face repercussions because the delay, Sheela was certainly one of them. By the time the Board began functioning, her firstborn had already dropped out of school and was a helping hand at worksite. The role of this Board was to protect interests of the workers and to monitor that various social security provisions for the workers including entitlements such as maternity benefit, pension, education loan, marriage allowance, death benefit etc were being provided. A worker needs to be a registered member of a construction workers union to avail the benefits collected under



the Building and Other Construction Welfare Trust. In addition to the delay, it was also the cumbersome processes of registering in unions and documenting to claim benefits discouraged many women from going to the Board, explains Sheela.

In the last two decades, massive construction activities in cities have led to an increase in the number of construction workers in India and some estimates say that more than 41 million people are employed in this sector, with Delhi alone housing more than one million workers, out of which nearly one fourth are women. However, the women workers are confined to menial roles of cleaning building sites, carrying gravel, mortar and water and accordingly, lowly compensated. Thus, ironically, the promulgation of legislations and welfare schemes which was seen to be more in interest of women construction workers failed to reach out to them.

### Silver lining and harsh reality

Over the years the cess collected under the Building and Other Construction Workers Cess Act, 1996 in Delhi has soared to more than Rs 2,600 crore which is sufficient to meet welfare needs of all workers including women workers. But in reality the status is dismal.

Successive droughts in Bundelkhand led Meena and her husband to migrate to Delhi in 2011 and soon, they were pushed into construction work. For years, they weren't aware of the existence of any legislation providing social security. Later on, even though they registered with a union, they were unable to claim any benefit as they failed to pay the registration fee for the union over successive years. A recent data released by the Board (as on December 31, 2017) states that only Rs 1,414 crore has so far been spent on welfare of workers. And out of 5,18,184 registered workers, only 2,16,210 workers (41%) have received some kind of benefit.

A closer look at the beneficiaries and one realises that women in construction work are most deprived when it came to accessing entitlements. Shanti Devi, a construction worker, came to Delhi during the Commonwealth Games construction boom in 2010. Soon, she delivered at a local private hospital. She and her husband are still repaying the loan that was taken for medical expenses during her pregnancy and delivery. Similarly, there are several other women construction workers who have not even heard about maternity benefit scheme.

It doesn't come as a surprise then, that in the last ten years, only 1,552 women construction workers have availed maternity benefits under the Act in Delhi. Given that most women in the construction sector are in the reproductive age group, these numbers reflect the rather poor implementation of welfare schemes meant for women in the sector.

The status of other vulnerable categories such as disabled and senior workers is equally poor with only two persons of disability getting pension and only 194 workers getting old age pension in last ten years.

Another shocking status is of the outreach of scholarship support scheme of education to children of construction workers in Delhi which has reached only 1,927 beneficiaries. When one asks the group of construction workers



about this scheme, the response is mockingly harsh – “If our children get into schools, who will construct ‘houses of *‘babus’*. We have resigned to our fate”.

Clearly, these figures explain that while the State didn't fail its citizens in providing legislative protection, it is those manning the posts of implementation who have failed to do their due. And that is why we will continue to see images of children of construction workers tied to poles and not inside schools or crèches and women in construction work will continue to have unsafe deliveries by the roadside.

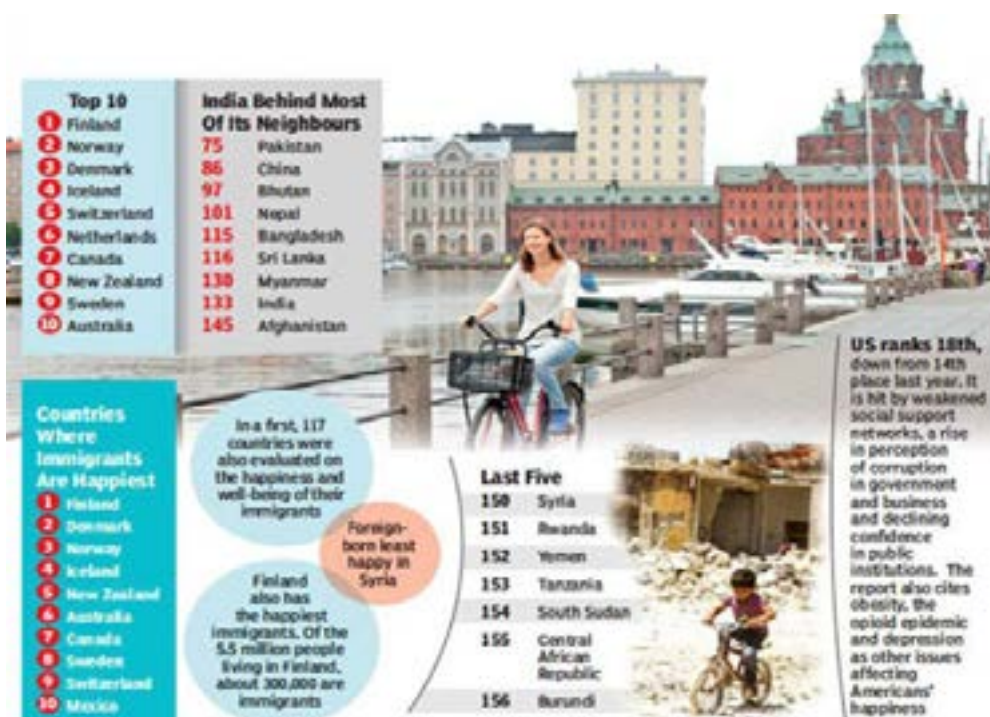
(The figures quoted are from government files.)

(With inputs from Thaneshwar Dyal, activist working for construction workers.)

Smita Khanijow is a gender rights activist and works with ActionAid India in Delhi

# INDIA SLIPS 11 SPOTS ON WORLD HAPPINESS INDEX, LAGS BEHIND PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH

*India ranks below all developed countries in the world on the happiness index*



India has been ranked 133rd in a global list of the happiest countries, according to a UN-based report.

The World Happiness Index 2018, which measures 156 countries in terms of happiness, has placed India in the 133rd position, a drop of 11 places from last year's 122nd rank. The country was ranked 118th in 2016.

India's ranking was far behind from other neighbouring countries such as Pakistan, Nepal, China and even war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo to name a few.

Among the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries, Pakistan was ranked 75th, while Nepal was ranked at 101st, Bhutan has been placed at 97th rank and Sri Lanka at 116th position. Bangladesh is ranked at 115th in the happiness index.

Myanmar, which is embroiled in the ethnic violence between the majority Buddhists and the minority Rohingya Muslims has been placed at 130th position. Pakistan was also ahead of India in the 2017 rankings. This year Pakistan has gone up 5 places in the list. Another Asian neighbour Nepal too did better at number 101.

Only war-ravaged Afghanistan fared worse than India, as the former was ranked 145th.

Finland, which was ranked 5th last year, displaced Norway to be the world's happiest country. Norway dropped to 2nd position in the index. The United States, which was ranked 14th last year, dropped four places to be at 18th position, while the United Kingdom was ranked 20th respectively.

The African countries: Tanzania (153rd), South Sudan (154th), Central African Republic (155th) and Burundi (156th) occupied the bottom positions in the happiness index.

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network's (SDSN) 2018 World Happiness Report ranks 156 countries in GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, social freedom, generosity and absence of corruption.

# 88% OF COUNTRIES RESTRICT

## Women's Economic Rights

*The World Bank has found that the majority of the world's countries restrict women economically in some way, with 104 countries preventing women from doing the same work as men.*

### Megan Clement

Around the world, 167 countries have at least one law on the books that restricts women's economic opportunity, a new study from the World Bank has found.

The Women, Business and the Law report measures how legislation in 189 countries affects women's access to jobs, property, justice and credit, as well as provisions to protect them from violence and discrimination.

While the proportion of countries with discriminatory laws remained more or less the same since the last survey – 88 percent of countries surveyed this time had at least one restrictive law compared to 89 percent in 2016 – the report found there had been 87 legal reforms made in 65 countries to increase women's economic opportunities over the past two years.

Since 2016, 28 countries have made it easier for women to get jobs, and 24 lifted restrictions on women building credit.

One of the most striking findings this year is that women in 104 countries are prevented from working in the same way as men – a figure that surprised even the project's program manager, Sarah Iqbal.

"It was shocking to me that so many economies all around the world restrict women's work," she said.

### Most Improved Countries

The report cites the Democratic

Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Iraq as having made the most progress on legal rights for women in the past two years.

The DRC reformed its family code in July 2016, giving married women the right to take on work, open bank accounts and register a business without needing their husband's permission. The DRC was also one of the countries to remove restrictions on women working at night, as well as introducing a range of anti-discrimination laws.

Kenya brought in legal aid provisions that improve women's access to justice, and made it easier to build credit – often a barrier for women who want to start their own businesses.

Iraq, the only country in the top five outside sub-Saharan Africa, abolished the need for a woman to bring a male guardian with her to apply for a passport; it also criminalized sexual harassment and outlawed gender discrimination at work.

### Work to Do

There is only one nation left – Equatorial Guinea – that requires a woman to have her husband's permission to sign a contract. But women still need their husband's permission to get a job in 18 countries.

Seventeen of them prevent women from traveling outside the home in the same way as men, and six restrict women's ability to travel outside the country – both figures unchanged since 2016.

A major barrier raised in the report is women's right to work at night. Women



*The global distribution of countries in which there are restrictions on women's employment. (Women, Business and the Law Database, World Bank)*



are prevented from working the same night hours as men in 29 countries, including India, which prohibits them from working in factories between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m. India's female labor participation rate is one of the lowest in the world at 24 percent. In Sri Lanka, women are not allowed to work after 10 p.m. in the retail sector – a restriction, Iqbal said, that employers aren't happy with.

"It should be a matter of choice – women should be allowed to get the jobs that they are qualified for," she said.

### Colonial Holdovers

The report notes that many of the most restrictive laws – including those that require a woman to have her husband's permission to work or restrict the kinds of work a woman can do – come from old European legal codes that were introduced to sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Asia under colonization.

"The laws are just on the books but policymakers, who are mostly men, don't realize that they're holdovers. Because it's not at the top of anyone's agenda, it remains," Iqbal said.

This was the case in the DRC, whose original family code was

introduced by the Belgians. "It was based on the Napoleonic Code," Iqbal said. "Married women had the same legal status as children."

She refers to these laws as "low-hanging fruit" that can often be reformed by making lawmakers aware that they are a hangover from colonization, and that the colonizing nations themselves – such as the United Kingdom, France and Spain – have already abolished them.

### Slow Progress on Property

Of the 87 legal reforms enacted across the world since the last survey, property rights improved in only one country. Ecuador repealed a law that favored husbands' decisions in cases of disagreement between spouses on marital assets. "A trend that we've noticed is that property laws are much slower to change than labor laws and gender-based violence laws," Iqbal said. "These issues are very slow to change because they affect asset allocation."

But, she said, that might not be such a bad thing in the long run. "If you reform property law too quickly you can engender a backlash that can work against women's rights."

### Will #MeToo Make a Difference?

Iqbal is hopeful that in the wake of the #Me Too movement, we'll see more progress on laws that protect women from harassment at work in time for the next report in 2020. Today, 59 countries lack laws prohibiting sexual harassment, with Japan the only OECD high-income country not to offer women protection.

"A lot of laws that affect women don't get enough attention," she said. "The #Me Too movement has gotten everyone's attention, and the law can make a difference in this area."

Iqbal said a big message to take from the report was that every country in the world can do better on women's equality, pointing to the United States – the only industrialized economy that does not have paid maternity leave – as a prime example.

"Nobody's perfect, and I think that's important for us to know. Often people assume that it's a developed versus developing country issue, but every country could improve on something. Ultimately it is not a problem of countries it is a problem of women not having real economic liberty and liberty does not come from laws. It comes out of struggles and revolts"



## DESPITE IMPROVEMENT, INDIA STILL HAS MOST PEOPLE WITHOUT CLOSE ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER

■ Shreehari Paliah

Mumbai: While India ranks top among nations that have improved access to water, it also has the most people without clean water availability close to home, according to this 2018 WaterAid report released today.

Nearly 163.1 million people lack access to clean water close to their homes in India, more than two-and-a-half times those similarly affected in Ethiopia, which is second in the list. The other countries in this top five list are Nigeria, China, and Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At the same time, since 2000, India is second after China in the list of most-improved nations in providing water access, reaching nearly 300.7 million people compared to China's 334.2 million, according to the report.

The report comes a day ahead of World Water Day, observed on March 22 every year.

Globally, an estimated 89% of the world population has clean water in or near home—an increase from 81% in 2000, added the report—leaving 844 million people struggling to access water. Today, nearly 60% of the world lives in water-stressed areas.

The latest data come at a time when a review of United Nations Global Goal 6, to deliver safe water and sanitation to all by 2030, is scheduled for summer 2018.

The challenges India faces include falling groundwater levels, drought, pressure of demand from agriculture and industry, pollution and poor water resource management, according to the report.

India's estimated per capita availability of water in 2025 will be 1,341 cubic metre. This may further fall to 1,140 cubic metre in 2050, bringing it closer to becoming water-scarce, according to this 2017 assessment by the ministry of water resources. In the decade ending 2011, the availability reduced by 15% in India.

An area with an annual per capita availability of less than 1,700 cubic metre per person is considered to be water-stressed, and less than 1,000 cubic metre per person, water-scarce.

India's restructured rural water programme aims to reach 90% of the rural households by 2022. It remains to be seen whether it will fail like previous programmes. Presently, only 56.3% of the rural population has piped water supply, according to a January, 2018 government response in Rajya Sabha (upper house of the parliament).

### Women across the world spend nearly two-and-a-half months a year fetching water

The widespread global lack of access to water has been attributed to multiple inequalities including wealth, ethnicity, religion and cultural attitudes. But gender intensifies the inequality, the report stated. The onus of fetching water falls disproportionately on women and girls.

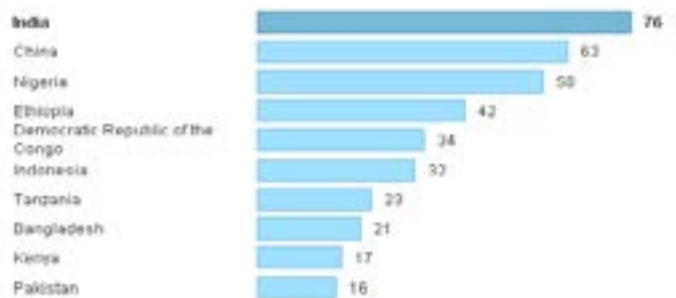
A woman collecting 50 litres daily, the UN-recommended amount per person, for her family of four from a water source 30 minutes away would spend two-and-a-half months a year on this task, it added. Women and girls spent nearly 200 million hours every day or 22,800 years collecting water, according to this 2016 press statement from United Nations Children's Fund.

One in four rural households spends more than half an hour walking to a water source, according to the Indian Human Development Survey (IHDS II), which surveyed 42,153 Indian households, IndiaSpend reported in June 26, 2016.

Wealth inequalities also contributed to the access to water. In Pakistan, 79.2% of the poorest and 98% of the richest people have clean water. In Bangladesh, the gap is narrower—98.9% of the richest and 93.2% of the poorest have access to clean water.

### Vital Resource

India has the highest number of people without access to safe water. Figures are in millions.



# Spiritual Truth Surpasses Everything

**Shrii Shrii Ānandamūrti**

The tiny organization which first saw the light of day in a small town in 1955 – you may call it the “Jamalpur Organization” because in those early days it was confined to Jamalpur town - has today, due to your efforts, been transformed into a mighty global organization.

Each and every entity grows step by step due to its own inherent strength, not by acquiring strength from any external source. If internal strength is lacking, it serves no purpose to inject additional strength from outside.

The day we started our journey we only had a fixed goal ahead of us, nothing else. In those days we had neither structure nor financial capacity, nor even a small office room. Yet our organization continued to grow and has become so large today that there is hardly any country left where its branches and ramifications have not spread. The Ananda Marga of today is no longer the small Jamalpur Organization of those early days: the people of Jamalpur have had to surrender it to the population of the world. During the twelve years since 1966, I have not been to Jamalpur. In those early days, people used to talk about the “head of Ananda Marga of Jamalpur”, but these days they no longer use such words.

Every entity develops by virtue of its own internal strength. But where does that internal strength come from? The strength acquired from the external world is fundamentally crude. Food, air and water are created from the five fundamental factors which, being crude, can only directly help the growth of physical energy and not the more subtle psychic energy and spiritual energy. One should not be over-dependent upon that physical source of energy as it is transient by nature.

From the very beginning it was my opinion that it would not be wise to depend on external objects alone. This is the advice I have given to members of Ananda Marga, saying that they should rather depend upon psychic energy. Psychic energy is of two types. One is a product of physical energy, the other a product of spiritual power. Suppose some people stop eating food for a number of days: their physical and psychic stamina will be affected. They will be unable to continue their studies and other activities due to a lack of physical stamina. Their minds, infatuated with food, will repeat “bread, bread” instead of “Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa”. Thus, crude psychic power which is a product of physical energy is also undependable.

The second type is internal psychic power. Those who are moralists, those who are armed with spiritual power, naturally develop a kind of psychic power. Whether they eat or not, their strength remains unaffected. Staunch moralists would never agree to drink alcohol even if they were about to die. Their moral strength is so strong that they would rather put their heads in fire than violate their ideology. The energy that originates from crude food is not adequate for the development of this sort of indomitable psychic power. It requires spiritual strength, spiritual moral force which originate, from unit consciousness or ātman. In the absence of spiritual power, this unflinching psychic power and moral force quickly fade. That is why from the very beginning I have been stressing that human beings should depend more on spiritual power. Ananda Marga firmly believes that human life should be based on this inherent moral spiritual force. Those who possess such crude physical force tried





their utmost to eliminate us. Their days are gone.

The crude mental force which is a product of physical energy is expressed as vanity or ego. There is nothing more foolish. You must have observed that when one strikes at vanity it shatters into pieces.

Thus, I advise you to depend upon the inherent psychic force under all circumstances. I do not say that you should depend only on the inherent psychic force because that psychic force itself depends on spiritual force. This is what intelligent people should do. That is why we have followed this path from the very beginning. The small nucleus of an organization which we first started at Jamalpur has extended its circumference far beyond the small frontiers of that small town, and has now spread all over the world. It has spread to each and every neighbourhood and is still spreading.

Today, you should remember that Ananda Marga is not limited to a handful of honest and intellectual people. Rather, **it is trying to rally thousands of people under the banner of one sublime ideology. I dedicate Ananda Marga** in this DMC [Dharma Mahácakra: a spiritual gathering during which the Guru delivers several discourses] **to all sections of society.**

Prior to this DMC, I would only discuss intellectual topics, but from this DMC onwards **I have become a man of the people because I believe that Dharma is the property of the masses, not the exclusive monopoly of a handful of so-called educated middle class elite.** Dharma belongs to one and all. From this DMC, I recognize it as the property of the common people.



## ACTIVITIES

### One-day Long Training Programme By PBI (Delhi)

On 20 May, more than 60 office-bearers of Delhi state committee of PBI participated in one day-long training camp at Prout Bhavan, Malviya Nagar, Delhi. National convener Acharya Santoshanand Avadhuta, national publication secretary Pranav Kaul, former national president Subhash Chand Tyagi and national public relations secretary Ravindra Singh were present as the trainers.

Emphasizing the importance of such training programmes, Subhash Chand Tyagi asked the participants to attend every training session to understand PROUT in detail so that they can take it to the people and generate popular support. He also said that without discipline no person or organisation can achieve their goal. He talked in detailed about the various codes of conduct and discipline that the members of the party are required to follow.

The second class was by Ravindra Singh, who gave a powerpoint presentation on 'Amiirii Rekha' (Wealth Ceiling Line). He said if poverty line was rationally determined, about 70% population would fall below it. He added that only 1% people hold 60% wealth of the country while 10% hold more than 80%. Citing various facts and figures, he established how 'Amiirii Rekha' can solve the problems of poverty, unemployment, corruption, economic depression, price-rise etc.

In his class on 'The Need of Proutist Government' by Acharya Santoshanand Avadhuta, he elaborated various social, political, economic and cultural conditions that have necessitated the application of PROUT. He told PROUT can never be implemented by a government hostile to it. Only a prout-friendly government under a moralist leadership can materialize this sublime theory in letter and spirit, and therefore, PBI needs to organize and unite all the moralist forces to wipe out the demonic rule of immoralists. He told the cadres that their duty is not just to make declarations and shout spirited slogans, but to ensure that they are moving forward with adequate speed to reach their goal.

In the second half, Ravindra Singh gave another powerpoint presentation on 'PBI: a new stream of politics'.



## ACTIVITIES



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 the people, 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 genuine moral leadership and ideal can save the country.

In his class, PBI (Delhi) chairman Jitendra Tiwari talked about 'The Expansion of PBI'. He told the cadres that they must be aware of the local issues and come forward to render their services accordingly. He said that they must acquaint themselves with government's various social welfare schemes, by using which they can serve the needy and thus gain popular support for the organization. Besides, he talked about the structure of the party, and the rights and duties of the office-bearers on various levels.

Emphasizing the need of Amiiri Rekha, UPLF chairman Y.B. Singh said that farmers and labourers are the foundation of any economy, but it is disheartening to see that they are suffering the most. Desperate farmers are committing suicides. Labourers are facing unabated exploitation. He supported PBI's demand for Amiiri Rekha and the right to a guaranteed employment with living wages.

The camp ended with a brief question-answer session to explain in-depth.

## PBI Karnataka in Action

Recently in the Karnataka Assembly election PBI candidates ran in the constituencies of Shimoga and Hubli-Dharwad West. In Shimoga the PBI candidate received 73 votes and in Hubli-Dharwad West Vinod Ghodke received 114 votes.

This historical and notorious election saw corrupt Congress candidates that the CM had tried and was unable to reject as well the resurgence of the Reddy brothers mining mafia in the BJP. Afterwards, the recordings exposing senior BJP leader trying to bribe MLAs of other parties has removed its veneer of respectability.

No other party has the courage to face the various mafias who rule different parts of the state. No other party has the courage to challenge the forces of social division. Only PBI has the answers to the problems. Now the Proutists of Karnataka have steeled themselves to fight against all odds to establish the ideology of PROUT in the soil of this great civilisation.







## PBI Odisha Forges Ahead

### PBI Land Rights Protests in Bhubaneswar



On the 2nd of April, 2018, mass demonstration and agitation was held at Bhubaneswar, the capital of Odisha at PMG Road in front of Odisha Assembly by PROUTIST BLOC, India state unit and Boudh District Unit with the following demands :

1- More than 4500 landless and homeless people who had applied for land in three Tehsils of Boudh District from 2014 to 2018 under the leadership of Proutist Bloc, India Boudh Unit be allotted land at the earliest according to the prevailing laws.

2-In spite of rallies and memorandum given to the District administration (District Collector Shri Madhusudan Mishra) and specially Kantamal Tahasildar In charge – Sri Nilakantha

Behera promoted from clerk, both officers are mute and deaf when it comes to fulfilling genuine demand of the poor of the poorest landless people. So, our second demand is the transfer of District Collector Shri Madhusudan Mishra and Kantamal Tahasildar Incharge – Sri Nilakantha Behera from Boudh District.

The agitation started at 11 AM and our Proutist leaders Shridhar Ghibila, Dharanidhar Lauria, Pradip Ku Sahu, Jogindra Kanhar, Shriram Chandra Kanhar, Senior Proutist Narendra Kumar Dev, Aditya Pradhan and Kedarnath Sahoo narrated the pathetic condition of the landless people facing poverty and a struggle to survive. Kanhu Charan Behura PBI National General Secretary, Birakishor Behera, Sarbeswar Barik, Ashok Ku Maharana, Girls Proutist Bandita and Kanchalabala Jati and others joined the demonstration.

At 1 PM, the State Revenue and Disaster Relief management Department Special Secretary Sri Ashok Ku Nayak invited our delegates to submit our demands before him.

Our four delegates (Proutist leaders Shridhar Ghibila, President PBI Boudh, Dharanidhar Lauria Organising Secretary, Boudh, Jogindra Kanhar - Ward Member of Baghiapada GP, and Kedarnath Sahoo PBI National Movement Secretary went to the Secretariat and discussed for half an hour in detail with Sri Ashok Ku Nayak and he assured action regarding two points ie 4 decimal land will be allotted to homeless families immediate transfer of Sri Nilakantha Behera ORS, which is a genuine demand, Transfer of Collector is under the jurisdiction of GA Dept. so he advised us to accordingly.

If the demands are not met according to the discussion, PBI will intensify its movement till the goal is achieved.



## ACTIVITIES

### Koshal Samaj Holds Rally of the Bhumihina Sangha in Balangir

Koshal Samaj Balangir organised a Rally of Bhumihina Sangha [Association for the Landless] of Gudvela & Tusura of Balangir district at Tusura on 7th March 2018 demanding 4 decimal Homestead land for the homeless once and 2 acres of Agriculture land for food security. As per law, this is their right but the land mafia in association with local government authorities has prevented this.

A procession of these people comprising mostly of women was taken out from Samaleswari Temple to the Tahasil Office, covering the important streets of the Tusura town, raising slogans Khani Khadan, Pahad Ban, Sabu Amar Buar Dhan” Anna Chahun Ghar Chahun tenu Kari Amme Jamin Chahu” & Koshal Samaj Zindabad, Zindabad.

The procession started at 10.30 am and ended at the Tehsil Office at 12.30 pm. It was led by the leaders of Bhumihina Sangha – Rajesh Bagarti, Kapil Kumbhar, Manohar Bhoi, President Gudvela, Susanta Sahu (President NAC Tusra), Harischandra Sahu and Rohit Sahu.

The Rally of more than 50 persons was addressed by Sri Purna Chandra Biswal, Secretary, Koshal Samaj, Balangir Sri Jagannath Prasad Mahana, Secretary, Bhumihina Sangha, Balangir, Smt. Ranju raiman, women Activist, Proutist Kedarnath Sahoo, Smt. Ranju Raimna read out the demands made by the Bhumihina persons to the Tahasildar Sri Chandramani Nag before submitting application made by the landless ones.

The Tahasildar assured publicly that after due scrutiny the needful shall be done to the deserving ones as per law of the State. Prout advocates that land should be cooperativised so that there can be efficient use of technology. However since the land mafia is increasingly active and in alliance with the government officials, Proutists have taken up the task of securing land for the poor so that then they can unite for cooperative economic development.





## ACTIVITIES

### PBI Bolangir Demonstrates for Pensioner Rights



A rally organised by PBI, BOLANGIR demanding enhancement of pension from Rs.300.00 (Rupees three hundred) to Rs.1500.00 (Rupees Fifteen Hundred) per month for the old age, widows and disabled persons at Jhankarpali GP of Bolangir district in Odisha. Memorandum was given to Chief Minister through the PEO, Jhankarpali.

### PBI Starts its Campaign for 2019 General Elections



PBI Odisha has started its campaign for 2019 General Election from Boudh and Kantamal MLA Constituency under the able leadership of Kedar Nath Sahoo. PBI activists are moving from door to door to propagate PBI Ideology among the masses. Corner meetings are being held amongst the villagers to acquaint them with the philosophy of Prout. PBI is the only alternative to today's corrupt political system. A well equipped jeep with PBI flag and banners is moving around the constituency and distributing the publicity material of PBI amongst the villagers and the response is very encouraging.

More intensive campaigning is being planned in the coming days for spreading the ideals of PBI in every nook and corner.



# YOU CAME FOR THEM

DHÚLIR DHARAÑIITE MÁDHURIÍ DHÁLITE 2  
TUMI ESECHO ÁJIKE  
KRANDAN ÁVARTE SÁNTVANÁ SUDHÁ DITE 2  
MUKHAR KARITE MÚKE  
TUMI ESECHO ÁJIKE

PICHE PAÑE CHILO JÁRÁ ANÁDRITA SABA HÁRÁ  
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PICHE PAÑE CHILO JÁRÁ ANÁDRITA SABA HÁRÁ  
TÁDER JIIVANER BHÁUNGILE ANDHAKÁRÁ  
SABÁRE TÁNIÁ NILE VIBHED BHULÁYE DILE  
EK KARE NILE ANEKE,  
TUMI ESECHO ÁJIKE, ÁÁÁÁ,  
TUMI ESECHO ÁJIKE,

HATÁSHÁY JÁRÁ CHILO ÁNDHÁRE DUBIÁ CHILO  
ÁÁ  
HATÁSHÁY JÁRÁ CHILO ÁNDHÁRE DUBIÁ CHILO  
HARŚA LÁJE TÁRÁ TOMÁRE BARIÁ NILO  
PRAJANMA ÁLO PELO SABÁI EGIE GELO  
PRATI PALKER PULAKE,  
TUMI ESECHO ÁJIKE, ÁÁÁÁ,  
TUMI ESECHO ÁJIKE,  
DHÚLIR DHARAÑIITE MÁDHURIÍ DHÁLITE  
TUMI ESECHO ÁJIKE, ÁÁÁÁ,  
TUMI ESECHO ÁJIKE

To pour sweetness into this dusty earth,  
You came today.  
For those were crying endlessly, writhing in pain  
You came to bestow the nectar of solace  
To give speech to those who were silenced.

For those who were left behind  
Those were uncared for and disrespected  
Those who had lost everything  
In their lives  
You destroyed their blinding dungeons  
You pulled everyone towards You -  
Forgetting their discrimination and differences  
Taking so many with You and making them one.

Those who were so dejected and in depression  
Who had sunk deep into the darkness  
They with such thrills of delight became so attached to You  
And adoringly welcomed You as their very own.  
An entire generation attained Your radiance.  
And they all moved forwards  
Thrilling with shivers of delight  
Each and every moment.