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PROUT

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Noble Victory over the NOVEL VIRUS



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AS OF NOW THERE'S NEITHER CONFIRMED
VACCINE TO PREVENT NOR ANY
GUARANTEED CURE.

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DALIT WOMEN THAT BEAR THE BRUNT
OF THE REPRISALS FROM THE
DOMINANT CASTES

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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.



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



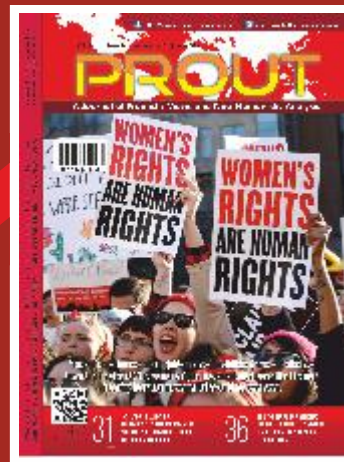
Cultural Diversity: In the spirit of universal fellowship PROUT encourages the protection and cultivation of local culture, language, history and tradition.



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

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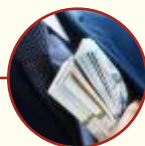
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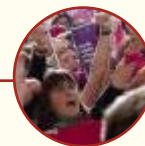
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Fundamental Principles of PROUT

Certain deviations of celestial bodies like meteors, comets and satellites take place due to the concentration of a huge number of positive and negative microvita. Movement in universal space is subject to the movement of positive and negative microvita, and this also affects life on earth.

– Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

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

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HOPE BEYOND COVID 19

According to official figures as of end April, well over 2.6 million people have been infected worldwide, the good news is over 7 lakhs have recovered. But nearly 2 lakhs have died. USA has been the hardest hit with over 46000 deaths with Italy and Spain and France following with 26000, 22000 and 21500 respectively. In India, which went into a total lockdown from March 24 midnight 25,000+ have been infected with over 700 deaths. These figures in comparison appear quite low considering the population of 1.3 billion and credit for that is attributed to the timely lockdown to prevent rapid spread of the virus among India's teeming millions. Most people have not experienced a worldwide crisis so large and alarming in their lifetime, with unimaginable economic fallouts, so much so that many in the world are asking for reparations from China from where the virus originated and spread to the rest of the world.

Two major catastrophes viz. the 1918 flu epidemic that infected a quarter of the world's population and claimed anywhere between 40 and 50 million lives; and the Great Economic Depression of 1930s which wiped out millions of people's savings in banks and in stocks causing a massive global unemployment of 25 % out of a world population of 2.07 billion then – (it is 8 billion today). The US Govt. provided no direct public relief to the hungry in the appalling belief (not surprisingly for Capitalists) that it would weaken individual character, turn them away from work and make them dependent on handouts!

As elsewhere in the world more so in India poor people have been the hardest hit by the lock down; they have lost their means of livelihood and migrant workers in metro cities estimated to be around 60 million, half a million have left to return to their villages. Thousands are stranded on roads with no money for food or shelter. Though all must follow govt. rules and regulations and cooperate with the authorities to contain the virus, such instances of desperation need sympathetic consideration and assistance. As told by the Govt. to Supreme Court on Apr 7, 28000 temporary shelters and 19500 food camps set up all over India feeding over 85 lakh people daily while over 15 lakh migrants are being given food and shelter by employers and industries. No doubt lot is being done, there remains scope for more to mitigate hardships.

And at the same time there should be no irrational fears, neither dogma nor superstition through social media or otherwise. Villagers ban all outsiders; doctors are prevented from returning to their urban homes; the policeman wields a lathi with impunity. Gated communities in urban areas also seem to be following suit. And on the other extreme there are reports from affluent countries of wealthy people renting hotel rooms and resort suites, as they flee major cities to less densely populated areas. But the even more affluent are taking it a step further and reserving entire properties for themselves. This is a perfect display of the stark class divides in nations driven by capitalistic economies when many people can't even afford to leave their homes (or stop working).

According to an analysis by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Global economy (presently 90.5 trillion US \$) could shrink by almost 3% in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic: With nearly 100 countries closing national borders during the past month, the movement of people and tourism flows has come to a screeching halt. This has particularly hit developing countries dependent on tourism. Also global supply chains and international trade has been disrupted. The severity of the economic impact will largely depend on two factors - the duration of restrictions on the movement of people and economic activities in major economies; and the actual size and efficacy of fiscal responses to the crisis. The report says : "A well-designed fiscal stimulus package, prioritising health spending to contain the spread of the virus and providing income support to households most affected by the pandemic would help to minimise the likelihood of a deep economic recession."

Despite these dark forebodings there is hope for optimism. There are three main reasons for this. One, information revolution has made possible instant transmission of useful knowledge about best health practices, results of scientific and medical breakthroughs. Two, there's more food security with adequate stocks and better distribution systems in place. Three, the world is better prepared this time compared to the two historical events above. Besides many a silver lining has been seen among dark clouds of the lock down. With practically all cars buses and trucks off the roads, there's been a drop in air pollution and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. A new study reveals that the way the Earth physically moves has changed. Researchers from the Royal Observatory of Belgium have reported a drop in seismic noise – the hum of vibrations in the Earth's crust.

All that apart no matter where we live the crisis has great lessons for considering that we humans belong to one under the benign umbrella of the Creator and all should help, comfort and take care of each other despite apparent differences or disagreements. As Prout's founder said: "No entity in this universe exists individually. Ours is a universal family. The sum total of all creations is the Cosmic Order (Brahmánda). This includes the sun as well as the small ant which crawls on the earth. Whether it is a dead star or a living star, whether it is a nebula or a milky way or a galaxy – all belong to one universal family. The Milky Way is vast from one end to the other; an ant is a very small creature, but the role of both of them in maintaining the balance of the universe is equal. Similarly, in human society, the importance of a powerful and eminent person is no less than that of a disabled and dying patient. None can be ignored. The least injustice done to anyone will cause the breakdown of the entire social framework". ●



EDITOR

Dangers of Communalism

It is the most dangerous thing to happen in society today, whatever be the colour of inter group hatred be it based on religion, caste or ethnicity. Religious wars in ages past have shed too much human blood due to and only due to the overbearing presence of dogma in them. The Crusades is a horrific example. The article by Prout's founder clearly explains how it happens and how it should be avoided.

- Tara Ghose,
Hooghly, Kolkata WB

Women's Rights

An excellent article by Dada Acyutananda. He has rightly pointed out the historical complexities of this serious problem of patriarchy that divides humanity on the basis of gender with half the human race being repressed, suppressed and oppressed. The waves of feminism the author describes should come as a lesson for the diehards who for their own selfish reasons do not wish the status quo to change.

- Tarun Kashyap,
Chandigarh, Haryana

Men must Restore

What a wonderful and thought – men must restore rights to women that they had taken away. It is also true that women cannot get it back

alone. Fact that it is based on discourses on the subject by Prout's founder makes it all the more the need of the hour today.

- Chandni Sharma,
Allahabad, UP

Free Mixing Liberty License

This is indeed a thought provoking poem. It is also very true that liberty and license have to be properly differentiated. The former stays within bounds of social conduct, the latter powered by excessive wealth in the hands of a few causes tremendous loss to women's prestige and social standing.

- Sarvotam Nanda, Panipat

Pension Schemes an Illusion

The unorganised sector in India is really hard hit. Apart from non recognition by the Govt. they also miss out on all Govt. schemes that are regularly being dished out to labour in the organised sector. Pension scheme is a must especially for poor people especially those employed by private parties who when they get old and weak are simply thrown out with a small package as a parting gift for years and years of loyal service. This is absolutely deplorable. Govt. must make amends immediately.

- Adv Sitaram Swamy, Madurai

Villain of NPR NRC

A well reached article by a senior veteran of the Indian Army. Facts pointed out by the author deserve serious consideration by the Govt. of the day. Why go through such a mammoth and expensive exercise when the money that would be spent on this could be better used for welfare measures of the poor and downtrodden such as what has been pointed out in the picture at the top of the article.

- Zarina Tarique, Bhopal, MP

By 2030 2.3 Billion Affected

It is a serious matter that has been caused due to the environmental crisis facing planet earth. And in the bargain according to the WHO Report, children of today would be the most affected, especially those in poor and developing countries. Govt. of such nations should target the children so that scarce resources are set aside for education and health care. What is being provided today is far below what is needed for the citizens of tomorrow. The steps advised in the article must be followed

- Jeanne Francoise,
Paris, France

Partyless Democracy

This is the requirement of the future. Party democracy as we see today is no democracy at all. It is a dictatorship by few people in the party popularly known as High Command.

- Ariant Bucholoz, Goa

Astrology and Vegetables

A short and sweet article on humble vegetables that we tend to miss and astrology apart, ones that have surprisingly good effects on human beings.

- Sonia Karan Vashisht,
Thane, Maharashtra

How Mining Ruined Lives

It is very sad that illegal mining that has been going on for the past 150 years has caused such a devastating effect in Birbhum district (WB). Local water resources have been contaminated, which in turn is seriously affecting the health of children and elders in the district. Something urgently needs to be done by the authorities to put a hold on mining activities and devise measures that it won't affect the health of the people. Only after proper safeguards are put should mining be started to the minimum extent necessary.

- Bhasudev Bhattacharya
Howrah

Civil War

Their cause was "My"
But also "We" –
They loved their sisters,
Their sisters free.

They had been wronged
Centuries long
Till trust was dust.

"Our power to bear
Is a trap and a treason –
No, this isn't fair,
There isn't a reason."

In their defense
Let's think upon
Their violence.

"It's wrong that men
Alone should be winners,
So let's scorch the earth,
Let's scorch our innards.

"It's not okay
If the smaller than small
Are in our way."

So the soft color pink,
Though it might seem odd,
Became the flag
Of an angry god.
On the other side,
They had nothing to win,
But it seemed unfair
For that child within,

Who can't understand
Or say good-by
Or lift a hand.

They too love their sisters,
But justice resists,
They the pro-life
Feminists.

So they took a vow
That this crime will end
And the time is now.

"If life's thrown away
We're going to catch it,
Your procedure is evil,
We're going to smash it."

But that's not all,
Here's another oath:
"Take care of both!

"First is life,
Then the world will fall
In an order where children
Are the job of all."
So the best and brightest,
Two hostile sets,
Aimed their emotional
Bayonets.

Sister versus sister,
Pain versus pain,
Over children slain.

No, it wasn't pretty,
It was ugly strife,
But their daughters and grand-daughters
Said yes to life.

Those later generations
Were nobody's fool.
They applied this rule:

"Choosing mother OR baby
Will never do,
We stand with the warriors
Who love the two."

Yet the women were brave
Who had lost the fight
That wasn't right.

They were not inhuman,
Not unkind,
Just fifty years
Behind their time.

- Dada Acyutananda

History *and* Superstition

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

There are many reasons why superstition takes root in the human mind – ignorance of history, ignorance of science and blind attachment.



Let me tell you at the very outset that the English word “history” and the Sanskrit word *itihāsa* are not synonymous. The chronological record of past events which is called “history” in English should be called *itivrta*, *itikathā*, *purāvrta* or *purākathā* in Sanskrit. *Itihāsa* refers to the aspect of *itivrta* or history which has educative value. *Itihāsa* is defined as: *Dharmārthakāma mokṣārthaṃ nītivākyasamanvitam; Purāvrta kathāyuktam itihāsa pracakṣyate.*

“The type of itivrta which has the possibility of fulfilling physical longings, psychic longings, psycho-spiritual longings and spiritual longings, and which also imparts moral education, should be called itihāsa.”

According to this definition, the *Mahābhārata* can definitely be regarded as *itihāsa*. I do not subscribe to the

views of those who treat it merely as an epic or educative story. So you can now understand that the book called *The History of India*, which is usually taught in schools and colleges, should not be called *Bhāratavarṣer Itihāsa*, but *Bhāratavarṣer Itikathā*.

Books which only impart moral education and have no historical context are called *purāṇas*. Books of this type are unable to help us to determine historical fact. In fact, their exaggerated and imaginary content creates confusion in the minds of the readers. For example, we can cite the case of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The *Rāmāyaṇa* has great educative value, yet it is not *itihāsa* or *itikathā*. It is a *purāṇa*. All the characters in the *Rāmāyaṇa* are imaginary. The *puṣpak* chariot, the imaginary flying vehicle in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, may create the misconception

in people's minds that during the Rámáyāña period the people of India knew how to manufacture planes. If they read such written records of our ancestors, people today may misunderstand history and be led into the false belief that the unreal is real, and thus fall prey to superstition. This is not the case only with the Rámáyāña and other famous mythological books; many ancient stories and works of fiction are wrongly regarded as itihása, causing the seeds of superstition to penetrate deeply into the minds of contemporary readers.

There are many reasons why superstition takes root in the human mind. These reasons can be divided into several categories: ignorance of history, ignorance of science, superstition caused by blind attachment and superstition which has become a habit. Today we will analyse the superstitions which arise due to ignorance of history.

First, let us discuss casteism. It is an undeniable truth that at the dawn of creation the earth was not inhabited by human beings. In the course of pratisaiṅcara [the process of introversion in the Cosmic Cycle of creation], first plants evolved out of the five fundamental factors, then underdeveloped creatures, and finally human beings. The study of history has taught us that about one million years ago a class of semi-humans, closely related to apes of those times, emerged on the earth. These semi-humans were the tailless apes (gorillas, chimpanzees, orang-utans, etc.) and the early ancestors of human beings. After thus studying the origin of the human race and tracing the earliest human ancestors, every educated person will have to admit that all human beings have come from this semi-human clan. No group of people can logically

claim that their ancestors are superior to those of others. Every intelligent person will have to admit that the ordering of the castes was something created by human beings and is not divinely ordained. As human beings originated from apes, all belong to one race. Were the ancestors of Brahmans monkey Brahmans, and the ancestors of Kayasthas monkey Kayasthas? Such a ludicrous concept will provide historians with amusing anecdotes. In fact, primitive people established themselves as members of the higher castes through verbal jugglery or by defeating others in battles of wits, and today their descendants claim this ancestral lineage. At the same time people with little intellect were forced to accept positions as members of the lower castes.

Many people today talk about purity of blood. Let us also discuss this point. If by purity of blood people mean pure Aryan blood, I will ask, did not non-Aryan blood enter into the collective body of the Aryans who migrated to India from Central Asia and the Arctic? Certainly it did, and this is the reason that their skin colour was gradually transformed from white into black or yellow according to the routes they took as they migrated into India. In India we can see black-skinned Brahmans and white-skinned Shúdras because of this mixing of Aryan and non-Aryan blood.

Some people support casteism by referring to books about caste history. Although many of the historical texts of the different castes were written in difficult Sanskrit, one fundamental defect is apparent. If we believe the shlokas [couplets] in these texts, we will be led to believe that one caste was born from the mouth of the Supreme Entity, another from Its arms, another from the middle of Its body, and yet another from Its feet. Only those who are under the influence of intoxicants will accept such



scriptures as authentic! Obviously, no human being can be born from the mouth, and although it is philosophically accepted that the quinquemental universe was created out of the vast formless Cosmic Body, it is foolish to imagine that that Body has a mouth, arms, [etc.,] out of which the different higher or lower characteristics of the different castes were created. In fact, this Rgvedic shloka, which is a mere interpolation, has been used to perpetuate the defective concept of casteism. Furthermore, the actual meaning of the shloka is different from this.

*Bráhmaṇo'sya mukhamásiit váhurájanyo'bhavat;
Madhya tadasya yadvaeshya padbhya shúdra ajayata.*

[Brahmans came out of the mouth (of the Supreme Entity), Kṣattriyas were born from the arms, Vaeshyas came out of the trunk of the body, and Shúdras were born from the feet.]

Actually, here “Brahmans” means “those who are sattvaguṇii [of a sentient nature] and have an intellectual disposition”. Through allegory it is being suggested that intellectuals symbolize the mouth of the Supreme Entity, warriors (rajahguṇii) represent the valiant arms, capitalists, merchants and traders (rajastamaguṇii) represent the middle portion of the Cosmic body, and workers (tamoguṇii) symbolize the feet. This is the proper interpretation of the shloka.

It is also easy to find numerous contradictions in caste history. For example, according to caste history there were only ten categories of Brahmins: five from North India and five from South India. As other groups of Brahmins did not fall into these ten categories, they were considered to be non-Brahmins. Besides this, the histories of different castes refer to the widespread practice of niyoga prathá [fathering a child by a woman other than one's wife], which resulted in widespread promiscuity. Moreover, in the Buddhist Age the rigidity of the caste system loosened and the intermingling of castes became quite common. In regions where orthodox people tried to strictly follow caste rules, new castes and sub-castes were formed.

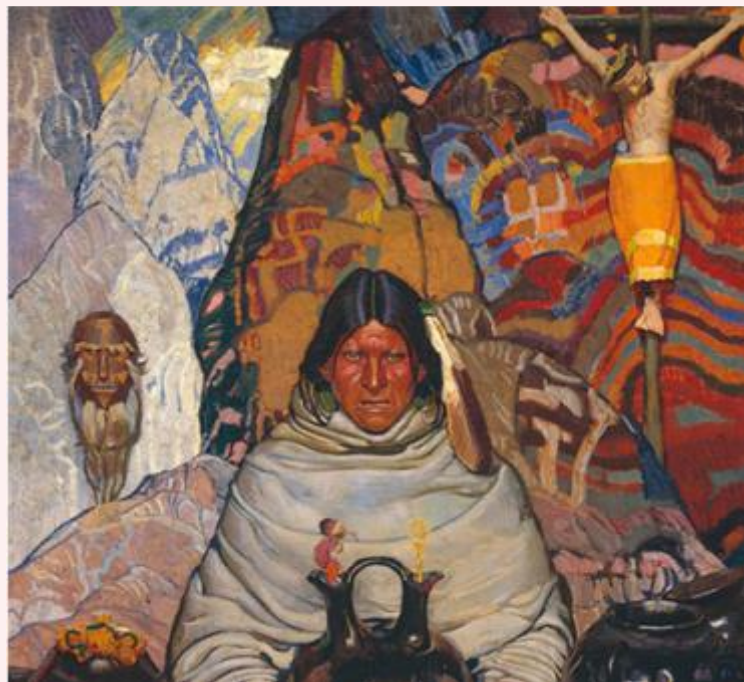
Let me tell you an interesting story which will illustrate the contradictory nature of caste history. In the caste history of the Bengal Brahmins it is mentioned that King Jayanta Shur brought five sincere Brahmins from Kanya Kubha to Bengal. These five Brahmins are described as the ancestors of the millions of Brahmins of Rárh and Barendrabhúmi. (Did each of these five men marry a large number of Bengali women? Otherwise how could they have had so many descendants?) It is also stated that five Shúdras came to Bengal along with the Brahmins as their servants and became the ancestors of the Kayasthas of Bengal. Now, in the caste history of the Kayasthas it is mentioned that King Jayanta Shur brought five warriors to Bengal from Kanya Kubha, and they are the ancestors of the Káyasthas of Rárh and Barendrabhúmi. These Kayasthas were all warriors, and came on horseback wearing leather shoes. Despite their skill as warriors, they did not know how to cook, so five cooks accompanied them. These cooks became the

ancestors of the Brahmins of Rárh and Barendra. Obviously the question arises, are such caste histories reliable?

Káko nindo káko vando dono pálrá bhárii!

[Whom should we criticize, whom should we worship? Between the two there is an even balance!]

According to the caste history of the Kayasthas, Chitrugupta was the first ancestor of the Kayasthas of Bengal. (All the Kayasthas except four or five groups accept Chitrugupta as their first ancestor.) The amusing thing is that Chitrugupta is only an imaginary character. He is the mythological son of Brahma [the Supreme Entity]. The caste history states that Chitrugupta had twelve sons: Cáru, Sucáru, Citru, Citracáru, Aruṇa, Yatiindraya, Himavána, Matimána, Bhánu, Vibhánu, Vishvabhánu and Viiryabhánu. The twelve categories of Kayasthas – Ambaśtha, Shriivastava, Bhattanágara, Máthura, Sakhasená, Ganda, Súryadhvaja, Valmiiki,



Kulashreśtha, Aśthána, Nigama and Karana – descended from these twelve sons. But the interesting thing is this: the Kayasthas belonging to these twelve categories had two hands, but their father, Chitrugupta, is depicted as having four hands, holding thunder, a club, a pen and an ink pot. Though Chitrugupta was supposed to be human, he was the record keeper of an invisible kingdom. I leave it to you to decide whether the account of Chitrugupta is reliable or not.

There is an unhealthy tendency among some sections of society to give credence to baseless stories and mythologies. They do so because they are ignorant of history. I have heard people say that since India was named “Bháratavarśa” after the Puranic character King Bharata, neither King Bharata nor the Puranas themselves should be regarded as false. However, facts contradict this. India was not named after King Bharata. In fact, the term “Bháratavarśa” is much older than the

story of King Bharata. People have been misled and confused because of the similarity in the names. Etymologically, bhara means “feeding the people” and ta means “expanding”. So “Bhāratavarśa” means “a land which can readily supply food and shelter to its population and easily facilitate the unhindered psycho-spiritual development of its people”. (Varśa means “land”.) When the nomadic Aryans, who were used to living in an inhospitable environment, arrived in the fertile, prosperous land of India, they were so overwhelmed by the abundant wealth, warm climate, lush vegetation and verdant beauty of the country that they called it “Bhāratavarśa”.

It was the practice of the Aryans to name geographical regions or individuals according to their special qualities or characteristics. For example, the Aryans noticed innumerable pebbles and stones resembling jām [Eugenia jambolana Lam.] in the

Aryans migrated to and settled in India, the country was already inhabited by Dravidians and Austrians, so naturally there was racial mixing between the Aryans and the non-Aryans. Eventually there was so much social blending that it was impossible to determine who were the torchbearers of Aryan culture and who were not. To distinguish themselves from the masses as the upholders of Aryan culture and Vedic religion, the Aryans started wearing a pigtail. Through their pigtail the Aryans proclaimed their Aryan identity, in spite of the fact that tremendous racial mixing had already occurred in India and that the skin colour of many of those who followed this custom was black. How can there possibly be any relation between these external rituals and the observance of dharma?

Regarding the custom of wearing a sacrificial thread, one need not bother trying to find a connection between an ordinary cotton thread and one's internal



northwestern region of India, so they called it “Jambudvīpa” (modern Jammu). [Jambu is the Sanskrit equivalent of the Bengali jām, and dvīpa is Sanskrit for “island”.] A region that had two large lakes they called “Dvigarbhābhūmi” (modern Dogra). [Dvi = “two”, gartta = “lake”, bhūmi = “land”.] As the northern part of India was inhabited by people of the Kash tribe, the area was called “Kashmeru”. (Meru means “land”, and “Kashmeru” became “Kashmir”.) Thus because the Aryans considered that India possessed wonderful qualities and vast resources, they called it “Bhāratavarśa”. This name has nothing to do with the mythological King Bharata.

Some people in India attach great importance to the tradition whereby men wear a pigtail on the back of the head and a sacrificial thread across the body. They believe that a man is not virtuous unless he follows these two practices. When in ancient times the nomadic

spiritual elevation. The fact is that the Aryans – the original inhabitants of the Arctic and Russia – were very partial to drinking. The Aryans of the Vedic Age who came to India maintained many of the original Russian customs (some of which can still be found in the Russia of today). In that primitive age before the development of science, the Aryans, like numerous other tribes and races, were basically animists. They regarded the various natural forces as expressions of a divine entity and attributed all their fortunes and misfortunes to those deities. In order to save themselves from natural calamities, they used to chant hymns, make offerings of their favourite food and burn sacrificial wood to propitiate their gods. This is how yajñas and homas [two kinds of sacrifice] arose and why the Aryans of that time used to offer ghee, animal flesh and other favourite food items into those sacrificial fires. As the colour of clouds and smoke appear similar, the Aryans incorrectly thought

that the smoke rising from their sacrificial fires would climb high in the sky, form clouds and bring down rain. The Aryans wrongly thought that the diseases which originated and spread from stinking, filthy places could be counteracted by the scented smoke of sacrificial fires. In an age in which science was still very primitive, the undeveloped Aryans engaged in sacrificial rituals, goaded by mundane considerations. Unfortunately, there are still groups of people today who think that unless sacrificial rituals are performed, religious practices will be incomplete.

The five categories of Brahman priests [Hota, Rtvik, Udgata, Adhvaryu and Brahmana] who performed sacrificial rituals were supposed to perform their religious duties with perfect calmness and mental serenity. This is how the Aryans expected their priests to conduct themselves. Obviously, the priests would scrupulously avoid drinking alcohol and shun the company of drunkards during a ritual or sacrifice. To keep drunkards away, they used to wear a piece of deer skin across their left shoulder as a distinguishing mark. As this symbol was used during sacrificial rituals, it was called a yajnopavita. And when the priests wore the same symbol on their right shoulder during the performance of oblations to their departed ancestors, it was called a praciravita. When they suspended the same symbol around their necks, it was called a niviita. Women were entitled to perform religious sacrifices, therefore it can be presumed that they also wore a yajnopavita.

Later on, after deer had become somewhat scarce and the Aryans in India had become acquainted with cotton, the custom of wearing a deer skin was replaced with the custom of wearing a cotton thread. Subsequently, it became a part of their religious practice to always wear a cotton thread over the left shoulder. Whatever might have been the importance of sacrificial rituals and a sacrificial thread to the ancient Aryans, today in this relatively developed age of science, when people use their intellectual power and developed technology to fight against natural calamities and no longer propitiate deities by offering ghee in sacrificial fires, the intelligentsia should decide whether or not the custom of wearing a yajnopavita is useful.

Many people become confused and believe in superstitions because they do not have a proper understanding of the correct meaning of words. I have often seen people debate over useless, trivial matters such as whether Rama or Krsna is greater, or whether Shiva or Narayana is greater. The word Rama is derived from the Sanskrit root verb ram. Etymologically, Rama means “The Entity Who Is the Embodiment of Bliss”, that is, Purusottama [Nucleus Consciousness]. Similarly, the word Krsna is derived from the Sanskrit root verb krs. Krsna means “The Entity Who Attracts the Entire Universe towards Himself”, that is, Purusottama. Rama and Krsna are therefore two names of the same Entity. Similarly, the word Shiva means Parama Purusa [“Supreme Consciousness”]. Narayana is a combination of two words: nara and ayana. Nara means Prakriti [“Supreme Operative Principle”] (nara can also at times be used to mean “devotion”) and ayana means “shelter”. So Narayana means “The Shelter of the Supreme Operative Principle”, that is, Supreme Consciousness. Thus Shiva and Narayana are merely two names for the same Entity. So where is the scope to wrangle over this issue? The Persian word Khuda and the Sanskrit word Svayambhu (according to some people the Vedic word Svayambhu has been transformed into the Persian word Khuda) are also two names for the same Entity. Is there therefore any scope to debate over whether Khuda or Svayambhu is greater? It is only due to their ignorance of etymology that people take part in unnecessary debates and arguments over the correct meaning of words and divide society. If all human beings are the offspring of the Supreme Entity, how is it possible that only Muslims are the favourite children of Allah, and only Hindus are the favourite children of Narayana?

The fact is that all the created objects in this universe are the children of Parama Brahma – all are Its finite manifestations. Nobody is inferior; nobody is insignificant. All are bound by the ties of fraternity.

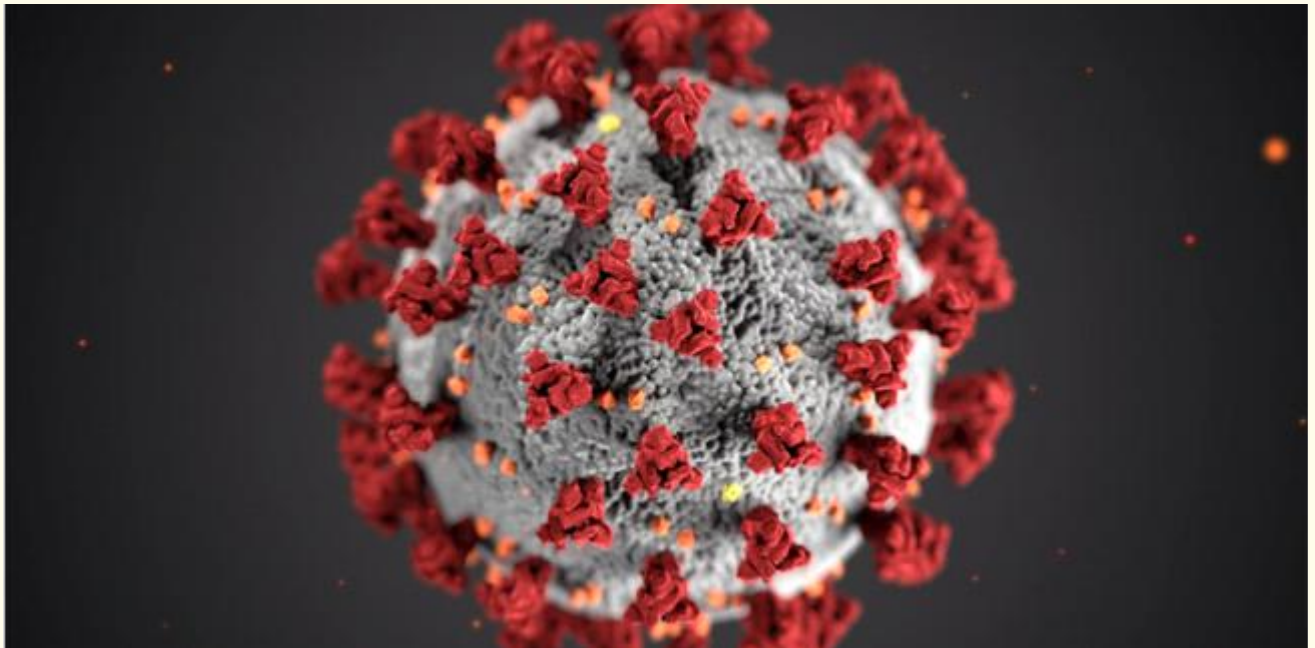
We have to move forward, shoulder to shoulder, together with all. No one will benefit if human beings remain confined within the quagmire and filth of ignorance or the foggy atmosphere of superstition. Superstition and a false sense of superiority can only pave the way for the annihilation of the human race. ●



Noble Victory over the

NOVEL VIRUS

Choice was between life and livelihood; life was chosen.



Karunakshim Vatsalam

The decision to impose a total lockdown in the country for three weeks from March 24, will go down as one of its kind in India. Never before in the history of humans has a strict 24 hour curfew been imposed on a population of 1.3 billion at one time. Even China where the novel corona virus, called COVID-19 first appeared, did not take such a drastic step of shutting down the whole country. Since Independence, India has fought four wars. Except for blackouts during

the night there was practically no other restriction; people freely moved around so did goods and services. During the Emergency of 1975-1977 declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, fundamental rights were severely curtailed as was public assembly, but transport and all other activity continued. To fight this emergency, Prime Minister Modi and his team had no past experience to fall back on either from India's past or from other countries presently handling the pandemic. In other words after the country went into such a lockdown for the first time in its history there was no formula readily

available to either anticipate all possible problems and answers to solve them.

According to official sources no one really knew under which law they could pass such a decision without declaring a nationwide Emergency. Apart from the legality of imposing such an order, it was felt it might disempower the states when their full cooperation was required to win the battle against the virus. The Epidemic Diseases Act 1897 which was promulgated to tackle the bubonic plague in Mumbai had limited power viz. state governments allowed to impose regulations in the event of an

outbreak of a dangerous epidemic. The Centre's powers under this act were restricted to regulating the entry of individuals at various ports. Finally it was decided to use the powers that the Disaster Management Act, 2005, vested in the Prime Minister as chairperson of the National Disaster Management Authority to impose a national lockdown whose measures the states would have to comply with. The decision for complete lock down came after much deliberation within the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and key ministries. Immediately thereafter the centre and state officials including police authorities displaying a rare degree of national unity got together on the same page and worked out the initial details to ensure that the lockdown was strictly enforced and only movement of essential goods and services was permitted.

Steps to fight the virus had started soon after China on January 7 finally admitted that it had identified the corona virus as the cause of the flu that had swept its Wuhan and Hubei provinces, infecting, 81,589 people in China and resulting in 3,318 deaths. Soon Indian civil aviation and health departments began screening all international passengers, particularly those flying in from China, at key airports. The measures were stepped up after the PMO held a review meeting with key departments over preparedness on January 25. Orders were then issued to expand the screening progressively to all airports, all state health ministries were alerted and the National Institute of Virology labs across the country equipped to test the virus. On February 3, Modi constituted an empowered group of ministers chaired by the Union minister for health Dr Harsh Vardhan, with ministers from the external affairs, home, civil aviation and shipping ministries as its members, to enhance the country's preparedness. At this point, India had reported only three cases of COVID-19.

It was in the first half of March that things took a dramatic turn. On



March 11, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic, after the worldwide number of cases crossed 118,000 in 114 countries and the number of deaths rose to 4,291. The number of cases in India then was 57, and deaths just one, fairly low compared to its viral spread in Europe, East Asia, particularly South Korea, and, subsequently, the US. But even as India was relatively safe, specialists warned Modi that there was no room for complacency. The country had proceeded to the second stage where local infection had begun to take root after the first travellers returning to the country were found to be infected. However, it was the Stage 3 of the disease that was the real worry when the virus would spread through community transmission, leading to an exponential rise in the number of cases within days. It could, thereafter, enter the dreaded fourth stage where large clusters of population would be afflicted, turning it into an epidemic.

Indian health facilities were ill-equipped to meet the onslaught of community transmission, especially

if the numbers grew from a few thousands to a hundred thousand in a matter of days. Studies of the way the pandemic struck other countries indicated that while 80 per cent of those infected would experience a milder form of flu that could be treated at home, the remaining 20 per cent would need hospital care. Of these, 8 per cent would require Intensive Care Units (ICUs) for treatment. Currently, India has just about enough ICU facilities to treat around 29,000 patients, but these are spread across the country. For instance, Maharashtra, which has recorded the highest number of cases so far, is equipped with only 2,500 ICU beds. Should the epidemic be confined to a single state, as in China, then the health system in that state would collapse and the death toll escalate. With no vaccine on the horizon for at least the next six months, the only way to stop the COVID's spread is through social distancing and ensuring that infected persons are quarantined so that they don't infect others.

The cluster approach was then considered, locking down only those places that were infected as

China had with its two provinces. By March 19, when the Prime Minister in a nationwide broadcast announced a Janata Curfew', 75 districts had reported cases and had to be locked down. The plan initially was to observe frequent Janata Curfews rather than impose a total lockdown. But the number of districts under lockdown soon shot up to 548, or three-fourths of the 720 districts in the country. Most states had brought their districts under some sort of curfew. The piecemeal approach, therefore, then had to be ruled out. It was at this point that it was decided to waste no more time and take the tough but necessary decision to impose a 21-day countrywide lockdown, and the PM again in a nationwide broadcast at 8 pm on March 24 announced the lockdown of the whole country that would start four hours later. It was a difficult decision no doubt, but the time was right, deferring it would have been devastating for the entire nation. The choice was between life and livelihood, life was chosen.

While officials claim they anticipated 95 per cent of the lockdown effects, they admit to being unprepared for the large-scale reverse migration to rural areas of those working in the unorganised sector. They blame it on rumours that the lockdown would run on for

three months and that workers would not be paid wages by their employers. With over half a million such workers leaving cities for their homes in the hinterland, there is a real danger that the infection could spread to rural India. Given the weak rural health infrastructure, India could end up facing a massive tragedy. Moreover these migrant workers propped up much of the rural economy with their earnings in the city and if the situation didn't improve, the impact could be devastating.

A day after the lockdown, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced measures to provide relief amounting to Rs 1.7 lakh crore to the poor, especially migrant workers, who were most severely impacted by the lockdown and to the farmers. This included providing an additional 5 kg of wheat or rice and 1 kg of pulses every month for the next three months, doubling the current entitlement for grains. Some 204 million women with Jan Dhan accounts were promised Rs 500 per month over the next three months. And farmers, it was announced, would be given Rs 2,000 as upfront payment in April as part of the Rs 6,000 that had been promised to them annually under the PM-Kisan Yojana. Experts were divided on the

impact of these measures, with some saying that rather than disburse them through various schemes, a universal basic income to tide over this period might have been better.

Meanwhile, another major crisis started brewing in the economy. Despite orders that essential goods could be transported, state police forces under pressure to enforce the lockdown went about dealing with the situation ham-handedly. Over 1.3 million trucks carrying fruits, vegetables and other essential supplies were left stranded across various highway checkpoints. With all passenger flights cancelled and only 10 cargo flights operating daily, moving goods became difficult. In one instance, the government reportedly had to charter an entire flight just to lift a sample of an imported Hazmat suit that needed to be urgently replicated for mass manufacture by a factory in Tamil Nadu. In another case, a charter was hired to transport over 40,000 handheld thermal thermometers from Hong Kong to West Bengal.

Realising that the situation called for extraordinary crisis management strategies, the Prime Minister set up 11 empowered groups consisting of top Union secretaries and experts to plan and swiftly implement actions needed to





ensure that the lockdown remained effective, disruption was minimised and adequate steps were taken in advance to face any eventuality. Four of these groups have been tasked specifically to deal with the vital health sector requirements, including rapidly expanding medical emergency facilities and ensuring enough equipment for testing, protection and treatment of patients. One group focuses on facilitating the supply chain and logistics management to move essential goods. A third group is tasked with examining how technology can help monitor the spread of the virus and its victims. And, importantly, one group is working on an exit strategy for lifting the lockdown, whether to do it in phases or in one go, so that the economy could be brought back to life.

Constituted on March 29, these groups have begun transforming the way the crisis is being handled, instilling a new sense of purpose and confidence in tackling the key challenges the lockdown poses. An official of one of the groups says, we have been working day and night, including holding conferences through Zoom. We act like backroom boys, giving out recommendations for the ministries to execute. Among the first things the logistics group did, for instance,

was to remove the rule according to which only essential goods could be transported, which had caused the pile-up of trucks at check-posts. Group members also act as troubleshooters to remove choke points. For instance, when the mandi in Nashik, the onion centre of the country, remained closed, truckers were told to go directly to farmers and pick up the crop while state officials enabled the produce to be sold to wholesalers. The new system of empowered groups will have its work cut out when the harvest of the rabi crop reaches its peak in mid-April. Arrangements need to be made to transport grain to mandis and have it purchased; otherwise it would be disastrous for farmers and the economy.

Yet, even as the Central government appears to be getting a grip on the situation, it has a long way to go. So far, the number of active COVID-19 cases and deaths are still relatively low, 21,355, and 683, respectively, as on April 23 compared to over 2.6 million cases and over 182,000 deaths worldwide. The low numbers in India could also be because it has tested mainly those who showed symptoms of the disease. The government has now rightly decided to increase the number of tests across a wider spectrum to get a better understanding of the spread. The key

is boosting healthcare facilities to meet any challenge. As a senior official says, we are preparing for the worst, even planning to tackle over 2 lakh cases if it happens, including quarantine and ICU facilities. Meanwhile, efforts are being made to mobilise doctors, including those practising Indian medicine, and training them to handle corona cases. The Army too has been called in to be in readiness with field hospitals. All the stops are being pulled out and no expense spared to purchase personal protection equipment (PPE), especially for medical personnel, apart from ventilators from abroad. For instance, orders have been placed for 45,790 ventilators, three times the current availability of 15,000 in the country, even as both the public and the private sector have been asked to manufacture some in India. Defence ordnance factories are to manufacture 300,000 PPE pieces while another 8 million are being imported. In all, orders have been placed for a total of 11 million to increase the current inventory of just 350,000 in various states. These are good signs.

While the government correctly put personal safety ahead of all other considerations, it now has to get down to working out an economic revival package to rebuild the economy that has all but ground to a halt. Indian industry is now looking at the government to work on a major economic package that would help businesses get back on their feet and provide a financial ventilator to an economy that seems to be heading towards the ICU. On April 2, the PM held a second round of consultations with state CMs, in which he even asked them to work out how the lockdown could be removed in phases to prevent a second wave of infection. So far, no official in the government is willing to commit as to when the lock down might end. But one of them offered this reassurance: "While we are preparing for the worst, we do not expect a doomsday scenario. There will be no collapse". Till then let all remain safe staying at home. ●



As of now there's neither confirmed vaccine to prevent nor any guaranteed cure.

Worldwide Scare of Corona Virus

Preventive Methods

Acarya Tanmayananda Avadhuta

As you all are aware that, the Corona virus (Covid-19) which was limited to only China two months back, has spread all over the world now and there is hardly any country left unaffected. As yet, there is no confirmed vaccine to prevent nor there is any guaranteed cure. Work is going on and it will take time to create such vaccine.

Although India's situation at the moment is not as bad as China or Italy, Spain, France or the USA, we all over the world have to be very careful about this pandemic virus which is Negative Microvita. Here

are some preventive methods to combat this virus. These methods are in conformity with WHO guidelines as well as guidelines given by both the Central and State Governments.

Physical Measures

1. Sarva t m a k a S h a o c a : (Cleanliness of the physical body, the environment and the surroundings).
2. 16 Points (Personal hygiene including psycho spiritual aspect)
3. Vyapaka Shaoca – Washing hands with soap, up to elbows,

feet up to knees, lower body, splashing eyes with water over 12 times, keeping eyes open and with mouth full of water.

4. Drinking warm water in the morning with lemon and pinch of salt
5. Immunity boosting drinks like Tomato juice with little salt for taste (remove tomato skin by boiling tomatoes)
6. Drink fresh Orange juice (not sour)
7. Use less oil, spices and salt and prepare food to keep the digestive system in order.

8. Drink butter-milk (Ghol) after lunch.
9. Consuming curd increases immunity.
10. Light meals at night, not full belly.
11. Avoid cucumber and curd at night.
12. Don't expose yourself to very hot or very cold weather
13. Avoid food from restaurants (including fast food) or food prepared by mean minded person.
14. Take Tulsi leaves on empty stomach.

Physico-Psychic measures

Asanas : Sarvangasan (shoulder stand), Matsya Mudra (fish pose), Bhujangasan (Cobra) and Vayavi Pranayam in addition to your prescribed asanas, (they increase immune system)

Dhouti : (Cleaning the throat) is very useful and can be repeated as needed

Vayusevan : Taking clean air in lungs to the full capacity and better be done in morning or evening walks. The clean air can remove several diseases.

Nasapan : Twice a day helps the cleaning process. Slowly taking water in through nostrils and taking it out through mouth. Internal cleaning

Blood Purification measures: Several methods like raw turmeric, Margosa leaves or bitter gourd juice in **measured** quantity can be taken for blood purification.

Music Therapy: Prabhat Samgiita

Psycho-spiritual approach: Guru Sakash, **Akhanda Kiirtan**, Sadhana, Paicajanya (Spiritual

Practices) at 5 am regularly with all family members make the whole atmosphere spiritually vibrated. Dhyan on Shrii Shrii Anandamurti's (Baba's) Varabhaya Mudra is very helpful.

Please be careful not to have BIG gatherings at Akhanda Kiirtan. So it is better to hold 3 hour A. Kiirtans at every unit on Dharmacakra day. This will avoid big gathering and number of Kiirtans at many more places will vibrate the whole India and abroad wherever such Kiirtans are held.

Persons susceptible to attack

1. Persons with weak immune power
2. Persons with weak lungs and weak digestive system
3. Persons above 60 (old persons) and less than 12 years (immunity not fully developed)
4. People living in unhealthy atmosphere
5. **Coming in contact with persons already affected**

What causes the attack?

1. Change in season
2. Filthy environment
3. Unnatural, unscientific or immoral lifestyle
4. Static (Tamasik) food habits

SYMPTOMS include : Inflation / Irritation of throat, rise in body temperature (fever), dry coughing, sneezing, breathing trouble, disease aggravation at night, irregular bowels/diarrhea

The background of Negative Microvita at Whole Timer training center in 1989

Then (1989) Ac. Viitamohananda Avadhuta was Central Training

Secretary at Ahmedabad WT training centre. A strong virus attacked him along with 55 trainees. One of the trainees succumbed to the attack. No medical practitioner could find the remedy for their disease.

When Baba came to know of the severe calamity, He intervened. He said it was Negative MV from other planet. He sent flowers with mantraghata (spiritually charged with mantra) to the training centre and explained how to use these flowers. Baba instructed to shift the training centre immediately. He also instructed that all the belongings of the trainees ((including the clothes they were wearing) and CTS dada affected by the negative MV to be burnt and nothing should be taken from that training centre. New clothes have to be given to each and every affected person.

The strict instructions given by Baba were followed by all the trainees and CTS dada.

By His grace all the trainees and CTS dada who were treated with positive MV through the flowers given by Baba survived this serious attack. Baba detailed several measures to limit the infection to Ahmedabad Training Centre. Training center was immediately shifted to Gandhidham under Baba's instructions. No medicine was required for these affected persons. The cure was completely under Baba's instructions only.

Appeal

We appeal to all the Margis and workers of Ananda Marga and to all the sympathizers and friends of Ananda Marga to follow these guidelines to face this severe calamity affecting the whole world. ●

Whatever might be the physical miseries – be they natural or man-made – if people collectively chant kiirtana, the calamities are dispelled then and there. Although different types of calamities may confront humanity, doomsday will never happen. The very idea of doomsday is based on dogma.

-Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

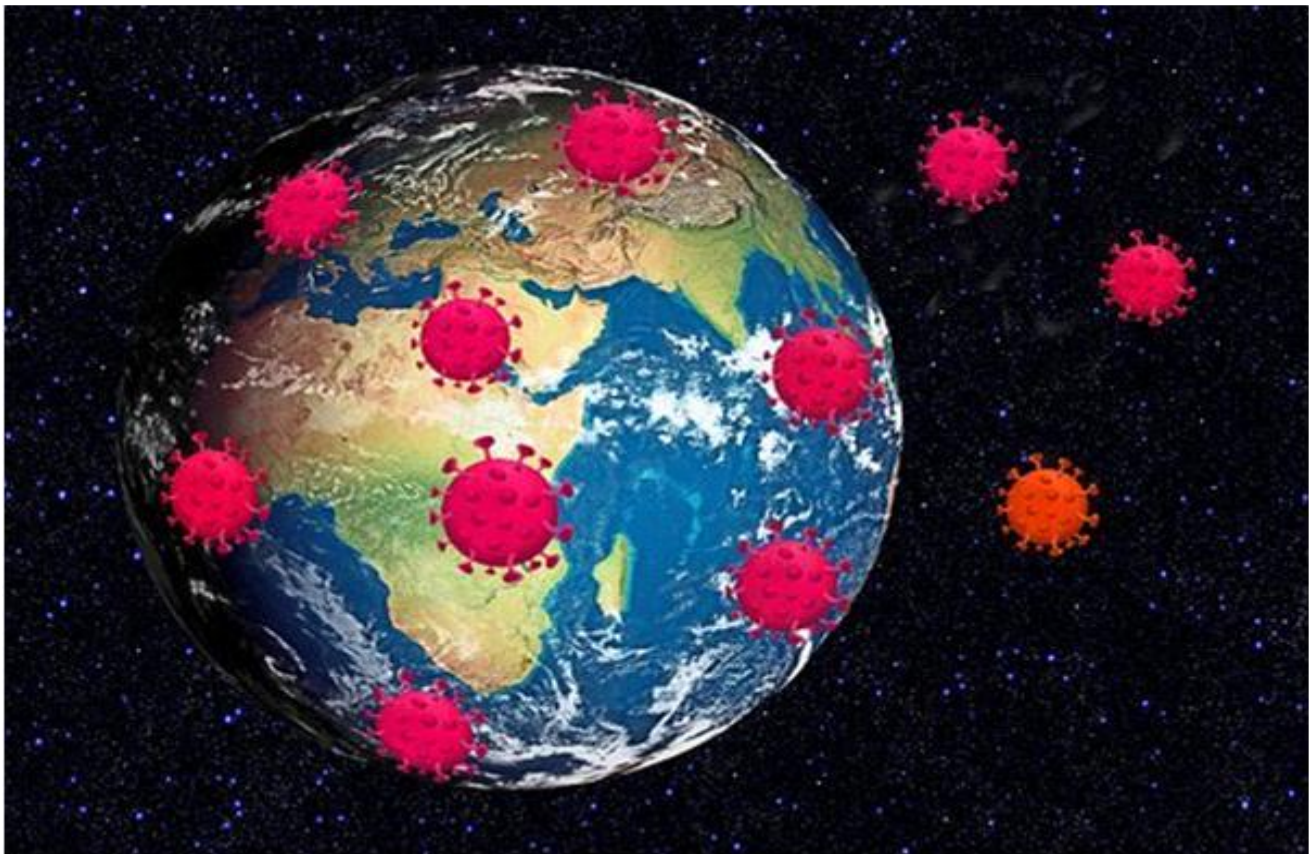


The importance of
'Being A True Human'
will begin to get
recognized

Beyond Corona Pandemic

A Proutist Perspective

Acarya Shambhushivananda Avadhuta



A spectre is haunting the entire planet at the moment—a COVID 19 global pandemic, which has claimed lives of hundreds of thousands and has already infected millions of people in 195 countries of planet earth. The whole world has almost come to a standstill and COVID19 has posed a challenge, which is no less than the

previous world wars, economic depressions, nuclear threats, tsunamis and plagues of the past. What is so special about this pandemic is that it has enveloped all people on the earth at almost the same time and spread quite rapidly, affecting rich and poor, young and old, men and women, and created a lot of uncertainty about the future for

everyone.

The political leaders, scientists and researchers around the globe are busy trying to fully grasp the etiology of this pandemic and find short-term and long-term solutions to deal with its spreading and protect lives of those who are infected or waiting to be the victim. It may take many months before we fully

NAMASKAR

A AVOID CROWD	B BEWARE OF FAKE NEWS	C CLEAN YOUR HANDS	D DON'T GO OUT	E EMPTY THE STREETS
G GATHERING IS BAD	H HAND SANITIZING	I INSIDE THE HOME	J JOIN FIGHT AGAINST CORONA	K KIND TO THE NEEDY
L LOVE YOUR FAMILY	M MEDITATE DAILY	N NO TO HANDSHAKES	O OFFER HELP TO EACH OTHER	P PRACTICE YOUR PASSION
Q QUARANTINE YOURSELF	R REGULAR EXERCISING	S SOCIAL DISTANCING	T TRAVELING IS DANGEROUS	U USE MASKS
V VISIT YOUR DOCTOR ONLINE	W WEAPONIZED IMMUNE SYSTEM	X XTRA PRECAUTIONS FOR ELDERLY	Y YOUR AWARENESS IS A PREVENTION	Z ZERO FACE TOUCHING

understand the ways to insulate ourselves from such invisible creatures.

It appears that this unexpected visitor is bringing us some important messages:

Message #1 – We need a global response to global challenges. We need a greater global coordination and preparedness to face such challenges, today and tomorrow. Perhaps the time for a world government led by benevolent leaders is drawing nearer in order to face this and other such challenges that does not respect national or genetic boundaries. At the least, we need greater transparency and stronger global governance mechanism to ensure timely response by all concerned.

Message # 2 – This pandemic is forcing us to think of the basics: food security for all and health infrastructure for entire global population. The global economic system, which ignores the rationality of creating economic self-sufficiency for every region is bound to remain vulnerable in such times of crises. The sooner we learn to establish resilience at the community level, the lesser the pain to common people and greater the

chances of human survival. Ensuring increased purchasing power to one and all is the only way forward.

Message # 3 – The vast potential of digitization, use of robotics, AI and ICT is just beginning to be recognized now. These technologies and their future improvements are not our enemies, but a gift of the divine to equip us to come together quickly and respond to any calamity with the greatest human ingenuity. Education is not about information any more. Online learning is becoming a norm now. Home-based work is likely to become more common. The use of technology to replace all tasks that is repetitive will become the order of the day. The importance of 'BEING A TRUE HUMAN' will begin to get recognized too. The developed sense of ethics is as important as the intellectual faculties that make technology possible. Thus an intellectual renaissance led by a cosmic vision is likely to emerge from the ruins of this pandemic.

Message # 4 – Never underestimate the power of the tiny or the little. A small hole can leak our all energy. Hence, the tiny is never tiny. Those who are poor or at the

bottom of the social ladder doing so-called menial tasks carry the entire weight of the social body. Their welfare is as important as the glamorous lives of the celebrities and few super-stars or the super-rich. Let humans be recognized by their spirit of service and sacrifice and not by the social status or quantity of wealth that they accumulate by hook or crook. Human happiness does not depend on material accumulation but on spiritual transcendence.

Message # 5 – Listen to the seers who have taught humanity to treat all as the embodiments of Divine Consciousness. Behind these viruses lies power of the microvitality – the mysterious emanation of the Cosmic Spirit. We must attune our will to the Divine Will through intuitional practices, spirit of service and adherence to ethical codes that cause least hurt to all creatures. A compassionate life style can save us from such epidemics in future also. Let humanity follow the universal instructions of the sages of the past free from dogma of any kind.●

*The author is Kulapati
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Ecuador

Guayaquil Faces Drama Due to Non-Buried COVID-19 Dead

The Guayas province had reported "more COVID-19 victims than entire Latin American nations. The COVID-19 spread in the province of Guayas, Ecuador, has made Guayaquil one of the world's most affected cities by the pandemic so far.

The presence of corpses inside the houses "is related to the poor capacity of funeral homes to provide their mortuary services in connection with the Guayaquil graveyards," the Joint Task Force (FTC) chief Jorge Wated said. Existing funeral homes in this city

are either overworked or refusing to follow procedures for fear of contagion since the causes of death remain unknown in most cases.

Besides, the population faces difficulties in carrying out the death-related paperwork since the curfew begins from 2.00 hours every day. The FTC has promised that it will facilitate these procedures by delivering the documents to the affected families' homes if necessary.

Between Monday and Tuesday, "we have buried approximately 50 people," Wated told the news agency

EFE. The current problems in burying people have caused many corpses to remain inside homes for several days.

"What is happening in the country's public health system? They do not remove the dead from their homes, they leave them on the sidewalks, they fall in front of hospitals. No one wants to pick them up," Guayaquil Mayor Cynthia Viteri said. The "major delay" in the removal of the corpses has made people use social media to beg for help, as EFE explained. In some cases reported through social media, the corpses have remained uncollected for up to "four or five days," Wated acknowledged and referred to an elderly man who died by "natural death", although his corpse was placed on the street. "When we immediately went to see the case, the family asked us to give them the death certificate," the Task Force chief said recalling a case in which people burned tires near a coffin placed on the street to demand that authorities take the body to bury it.

As of April 1, the Guayas province, which has 3.6 million inhabitants, accumulates 1,937 of the 2,748 COVID-19 cases in Ecuador, more than entire Latin American nations. At least 1,116 cases had been registered in Guayaquil, which makes it one of the world's most affected cities, using as a measure the number of cases per one million inhabitants.●



A corpse remains lying on Pedro Carbo street in downtown Guayaquil, Ecuador, March 31, 2020.

SOCIAL DISPARITY — SOLUTIONS?

Efforts to remove social disparity
Have been going on ever since
Man became aware of his surroundings
And lived together in groups
Even in ancient times and
In the medieval ages there were
Many Robin Hoods who
Robbed the rich to help the poor
They felt this was a pious way
And the right thing to do.

This however did not and cannot
Solve the problem of poverty
For charity cannot permanently
Sustain anyone and ends up
Creating only a society of beggars
Such a sordid greedy and inert society
Portends far worse poverty in the future
The poverty that we see today caused
By capitalism and hoarding of wealth
Cannot be destroyed by raids on that.

These heroes may warm people's blood
But cannot inspire them today
By applying physical and mental force
Robbery and plunder may deflate
The bloated capital but cannot kill
The potential of the seed of capitalism
For the rich can be robbed and destroyed
But not their opportunities
To become rich yet again
In this unequal material world.

Just as love begets love
Violence only invites violence
So such capitalists take recourse
To yet bigger conspiracies in the future
And the half witted robbers
Ultimately meet their destruction
At the hands of such capitalists
A fate far worse they could face
Than what they did to the
These bloodsuckers of the society.

Violence does not and cannot
Solve any real social problems
It may destroy the poisonous tree
Of the individual or the collective mind
But the seed in human minds
Still remains and does not die
It will grow again no sooner than
The force of circumstance is released
Up sprouts the seed of violence
Again and becomes more menacing.

It is true that change of heart is necessary
But that's not possible
Through violent means
Some fee only human appeal works
While this may be a noble idea
The soil of the world
Is too rigid and challenging
For such pious thought
To sprout and flourish to bring
People on to the path of goodness.

So where lies the solution
By applying a different kind of force
Intellectual and moral force perhaps
That creates circumstantial pressure
So that the individual and collective mind

Feels liberated and joyful and
Sways to vibes of benevolent waves
But this can apply only
To one who is warm and receptive
And not too a frigid minded person.

To change the latter there are two options
Either wait indefinitely in the fond hope
For them to reform or hit them
Extremely hard as delay would not help
The multitudes of helpless tormented souls
Appeal alone can never work like Gandhism
Which is a model of excellence
In the paradise of imagination but
But in the real world its nothing but
A bizarre self righteousness.

Human mind must be made amenable
And for this one must not always count
On moral force or human appeal
So circumstantial pressure must be created
For which all that's necessary must be done
To make the people accept change
In a democratic state it can be by legislation
An autocratic state may deem it expedient
To coerce the few exploiters on to the right path
For the common good of the deprived masses.

Whatever may be the means used
Stirring minds is not the only objective
What is needed is moral education
To keep such benevolent waves active
And for that a never ending fight
In both individual and collective life
Must go on and on
And one must be vigilant lest time blunts
The edge of that vital force
And lest inertia sneak into the mind.

Communism is almost like armed robbery
It's more fatal than plunder as peoples'
Natural expression is gagged by crude force
To remain subdued in this way
Goes against the grain of human nature
Since people do not want to live like animals
Their self potential and all that they stand for
In the subdued mind shall evolve
Out of natural self expression
Through the medium of revolution.

Communism has to curb individual freedoms
By crude force to keep people under the thumb
For this the party centralizes power
And they believe it is dangerous to accept
The special value of people as humans
As that would allow people to express opinions
With the right to prove that it is benevolent
Such acceptance in a matter centred ideology
Willy-nilly would lead to the conclusion
That suppression of people is wrong.

And if it weren't so that centralized power
Would be gone soon with the impact of
The combined mental and spiritual force
Of the newly freed common people
Hence neither communism nor Gandhism
Can do any good to humanity which must
Choose a path where there's no dearth
Of a sense of humanism or human appeal
And over and above there should also be scope
To apply force as needed to the extent necessary.

- Arun Prakash



We are currently living
in the age of fraud,
it has become
mainstream



The Age of Fraud :

The Link Between Capitalism and Profiteering by Deception

■ Jörg Wiegatz:

Fraud is an issue that haunts many contemporary societies around the globe, including in East Africa. I have been researching the topic of economic trickery for over a decade in Uganda, and published a number of articles, books and opinion pieces about the matter. As many of you might know, Uganda experiences intensive fraud levels in numerous economic sectors, from agricultural seeds and produce trade to land and the fuel business. Basically, all vital sectors

of the economy are affected by fraud in one way or another.

As an analyst, I have for a while now regarded Uganda to be at the high end of the fraud problem in the region, at least in certain trades such as seeds. However, a few days ago I spent some time in Kenya and was taken somewhat by surprise by how dominant the theme of fraud – i.e. profiteering by deception – was in the Kenyan press. On the day I gave a talk at the Aga Khan University, the front and inside pages of one of

the dailies was full of news about the latest scandals and the evening news started with and was dominated by the same theme: fraud and corruption.

It quickly became evident to me that this fraud-heavy news day was probably not a one-off, or an outlier. In a way I was prepared for this scenario and realisation: I have read over the past few years about some of the major fraud cases in Kenya (Goldenberg et al.), and was aware that the current government



has declared to fight corruption vigorously. But more broadly, I have watched fraud news become more or less a staple, not only in the country of my research focus, namely, Uganda, but also in my country of residence, the UK, and my home country, Germany. In fact, economic fraud has become, I think, a key component of global news and reporting, just like elections, security, natural disasters, and so on. Remember the waves of news and commentaries about the “Panama papers”, the VW ‘Dieselgate’ case, or the irregularities in the finance sector that contributed to the global financial crisis in 2008?

That said, my research has led me to argue for years now that we are currently living in the age of fraud. Fraud has become mainstream; it is at high levels, institutionalised, at the core of “the system” and part and parcel of the (re)production of contemporary society. That applies to many societies, not just in the often discussed Global South but also in the Global North. Moreover, fraud at significant levels is evident across numerous sectors of the global economy: from tax advisory

services, banking, manufacturing and “fair trade” to construction and pharmaceuticals. What makes the news is usually the proverbial “tip of the iceberg”. No one can reasonably say how long the age of fraud will last and what it will bring. Are we just in the early days of it and fraud will spread, accelerate and increase for many years to come, or are we somewhere near the top, or close to the end of the current intensive-fraud period? Your guess is as good as mine.

In any case, seven key characteristics of contemporary fraud in the global economy include: (i) fraud is at an industrial scale; (ii) it has become significantly routine; (iii) it is ever more blatant; (iv) it is spreading across the economy and society i.e. it is affecting new areas, such as education; (v) it produces staggering levels of social harm; (vi) it is co-produced by economic and state actors; and (vii) it implicates the most powerful members of society (the ruling class, transnational companies, top managers, top state officials, the rich and famous, celebrated role models, etc.). There are other major

characteristics of our age of profit-by-fraud, but I leave that for another day.

I need to move on to another related issue: an overall highly impoverished debate and analysis about the mega phenomenon of fraud. Despite all the news reporting about economic fraud, corporate crime, malfeasance, trickery and so on, the overall public debate is small in scale and analytically flat. Economic fraud remains one of the most under-researched topics I am aware of; the primary data set gathered by scientists – via qualitative field research etc. – on some of the major dimensions of fraud seems minimal, compared to, again, the size of the phenomenon we face. For example, the moral compasses of fraudsters in different economic professions are hardly investigated, nor is the moral climate in the most fraud-infested sectors. This observation certainly applies to the countries and regions I know best – Germany, UK, US (aka ‘the West’), Uganda – and as far as I know from following research publications on the topic, it applies as well to Kenya, the East African

region and the wider African continent. It definitely applies overall to the global conversation on fraud.

In the countries mentioned above, very few professional analysts and commentators or public debates (in print news or TV) explicitly try to connect the dots between two core issues: fraud and capitalism. They do not explore what the current fraud phenomenon tells us about the capitalist social order, that is about capitalist society, economy, polity, state, culture, social change, power structures, subjectivities, companies, and so on. Nor do they address the issue of the dominant moral order and moral climate in capitalist society: for example, our relationship with money and wealth, and about the ways in which we treat each other – including deceive and harm each other – when it comes to earning a living (i.e., making money, income or profit). Large-scale empirical research projects on the theme of the current moral economy of fraud are de-facto absent or negligible in many countries that actually have a substantial fraud problem. This observation applies to Uganda, Germany and the UK. Does it apply in the Kenyan context too? If it does, Kenya is, unsurprisingly, part of a



global phenomenon. This state of play is in itself intriguing. I patiently checked whether Germany would get on the discussion more decidedly after the VW and Deutsche Bank fraud cases, or whether there would be a more substantial debate in the UK after the financial fraud and crisis years. But it didn't really happen, not at significant scale and depth anyway.

We are therefore left with a fundamental analytical and political

poverty concerning our deliberations about and understanding of fraud in the so-called private sector. The theme thus remains massively under-discussed, misrepresented and misunderstood, at least in the public sphere. Uganda is a typical example. Post-1986 Uganda is one of the most studied countries on the continent, if not across the Global South (check the ODI publication data base for example). In the last three decades, foreign donors have commissioned thousands of reports, studies and briefings on all sorts of matters related to politics, the economics, society and culture. But to the best of my knowledge, they have avoided to face one topic head on: the moral climate in the new neoliberal-capitalist Uganda. That is, more specifically, the moral-economic order of this 'New Uganda', and related features and transformations. Notably, donors themselves have co-produced the making of this new moral order, together with various other foreign and domestic actors. They have orchestrated, financed, advocated and pushed for a societal transformation process at the level of norms, values, orientations and practices that I have termed "neoliberal moral restructuring. This the new society has been





established, embedded, consolidated and locked-in for the last three decades via thousands (or is it millions?) of interventions in the political, economic, social, and cultural structure of this country. As it turned out, this neoliberal moral change has produced a new moral order – and more largely societal structure – that is for various reasons fraud-enabling rather than fraud-inhibiting; this process, it seems, is not unique to Uganda only.

However, despite sustained public outcry about (i) fraud and (ii) aspects of moral change (including powerful state and non-state actors deploring levels of 'greed' and 'dishonesty' in society), the Government of Uganda has, as far as I am aware, not launched any substantial, large-scale empirical study into the matter of what the high level of fraud has to do with the neoliberal transformation of the country, including the severely altered moral (and highly relevant and interconnected political-economic) structure. Neither has the private sector and its associations or the academic community. Neither have the powers that be, as far as I know, funded seasoned corporate crime experts to have a good look at fraud in the private sector. This is in some ways surprising, in other ways it is not.

So, this is where we are regarding the science of the “capital-

state-academia” nexus. If you know any empirical data set that has something to say about the dominant moral climate in your country's economy and respective changes and trends, or about the link between neoliberal reforms and the current moral-economic order, please let me know (the Aga Khan University data set concerning youths' views on money making is a rare gem in a large data desert). That said, if you have answers to the question why this state of academic enquiry and public debate is where it is in Uganda, Kenya or elsewhere, then you are already deep into the terrain of understanding of what capitalist society is and how it operates in a particular way, and why.

I want to make a final point about those who favour the “greed” explanation for fraud. The popular and often used 'it's greed' explanation is in my view only the Mickey Mouse version of thinking about causalities when it comes to fraud in capitalism. If you think you can explain and understand fraud in its many versions with sole or main reference to greed, then you are adopting the position that many of those with political and social power put in front of us in their public utterances and debates. You are adopting the position of our rulers and overlords, and what one might call the “science of the establishment”. How analytically

useful can that be?

To see where this sort of analysis leads to, you may want to check Jeffrey Sachs' analysis. He basically suggests that we can yoga (i.e. relax and feel) our way out of the fraud problem (I have analysed and critiqued his take here). Finally then, here are the eight things he and others don't tell you about fraud:

Contemporary fraud is not merely due to the so often mentioned greed but a much bigger system, namely, capitalist society and all that comes with it, especially in the current variant of capitalism, neoliberalism. The history of capitalist development across the world is rife with evidence that capitalism and endemic fraud are twins, from the colonial period to the present period. In other words, the warnings concerning the fraud and corruption (and the related social harms) that comes with capitalist development (and the capitalist corporation) has been on the wall for some time and yet those foreign and domestic actors in/with power on matters of neoliberal social engineering in Africa for years have all too often 'ignored' them, probably for good reasons.

Fraud is not about the economy only but also about our political system, our political economy, our culture, Frals. It is socio-cultural and political as much as it is an economic phenomenon. Most debates neglect the point that fraud is a political phenomenon, and a child of our political-economic order. Sometimes though there is a more or less explicit and substantial nod to the politics (broadly understood) that underpins a particular fraud case.

Fraud is a phenomenon of social, economic, cultural, moral and political power (see e.g. here).

Fraud is socially constituted, i.e. produced collectively by a range of actors. The lone wolf, errant individual type explanation does not make much analytical sense.

Contemporary fraud (in terms of scale, forms, facets, meaning etc.) has been shaped by the impact of

neoliberalism, i.e. neoliberal policies, programmes, ideologies, discourses, practices etc. We can speak of a neoliberalisation of fraud(see also e.g. here)

Fraud does not indicate the absence of morals, or loss of moral compass by the actors concerned (e.g. the tricking banker, trader, farmer, doctor or sales staff), but indicates the presence of a particular moral order and moral climate, as well a particular moral view, reasoning, and priority setting, i.e. a particularly (re-)calibrated moral compass(see here).

Fraud is not a function of poverty or severe economic and social pressures alone i.e. a mere function of, for example, underdevelopment, the peripheral status of countries such as Uganda, or widespread and substantial destitution. We have escalating and routine fraud in the richest countries on earth, in the richest and mightiest companies run by the most highly paid managers, in prosperous sectors, regions and towns, i.e. at the core of the system. The German state, again often regarded and referred to by external audiences as

the exemplar of good governance and good statesmanship (whatever that means), has for years enabled the making of the pro-fraud culture in a range of the country's industries, such as car making or banking. It has been a direct and indirect promoter of fraud at an industrial scale, which has social harm repercussions of a tremendous scale (ask customers of VW cars and their fumes). And, the German state has for long time not changed course significantly; it is overall still largely protecting the fraudulent car making companies. The state as an enabler, directly and indirectly, of a fraud-conducive economy in general and specific fraud incidences in particular is a major feature of neoliberalism.

Fraud in East African societies such as Uganda or Kenya cannot be explained with sole reference to internal actors and factors i.e. 'This is Uganda', or 'This is Africa' type explanations. Lots of external actors, factors, trends, pressures and incentives that originate from outside Africa shape the moral and political economy of fraud in Uganda and Kenya (in many ways, these relevant external actors are

principally the same in both countries). In short, one has to de-Africanise the analysis and debate about fraud in the region. At the minimum, more analytical attention needs to be paid to the role that capitalism plays in driving fraud in the region; more specifically, the promotion, embedding and locking in of a particular variant of capitalist society – aka neoliberal market society – in, for example, Uganda and Kenya and the political-economic and cultural turbulences this process has brought about.

We are living our lives in the age of fraud and might have to do so for some time to come. Analysing and discussing how we got here and why is vital. It helps to understand why fraud is now so common and widespread, and, and the use of deception to get on economically in life seen by many as acceptable, normal, necessary, and appropriate, i.e. justified. But it also helps more broadly to better understand crucial aspects of economy, society, the state and human beings, i.e. who we are and have become (and why), individually and collectively, under the condition of capitalism in the 2010s.●

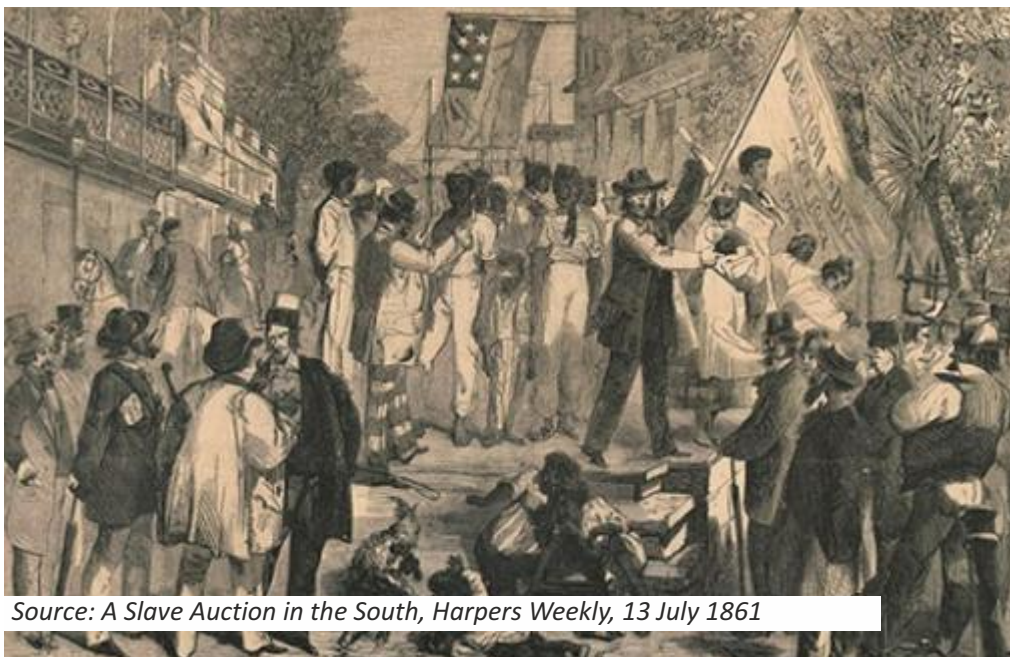
If a liar, a fraud, a bribe-taker, or a corrupt politician happen to reap the consequences of their bad actions in this life, whether they admit it or not, they will realize in their minds that they are being punished for their falsehood, fraudulence and political hypocrisy. These reactions are *dr̥ṣṭa vedaniiya karma*. Likewise, people can also enjoy the fruits of their actions in this life. Generally we reap the fruits of actions we performed in the past life. To reap the consequences of actions of the present life is not quite natural, though it is also not unnatural.

-Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

HUMAN PREDATORS, HUMAN PREY

Society As Ecosystem in a Time of Collapse

Richard Heinberg



Source: *A Slave Auction in the South*, Harpers Weekly, 13 July 1861

Racism centered on the brutal and blatant kidnapping and intergenerational enslavement of Africans by Europeans and European-Americans.

The world turned upside down: “predators” and “prey” in times of growth, and in times of ecological release

Whenever that occurs, it must somehow be justified—at least in the minds of “predators,” if not in those of “prey” as well. Religion served this function in many ancient complex societies (the followers of the “true faith” having been given divine license to subjugate non-believers), while economic and political ideology do so today more frequently. Priests served the kings of ancient civilizations, channeling myths and rituals that valorized the divine right of the monarch. The king claimed ultimate ownership of

everything and everybody within the borders of the state, as ordained by the dictates of the sky god—of which he was regarded as an earthly embodiment. Later, as the state became more culturally diverse and more secularized, philosophers and economists served a function similar to that of the ancient priesthood, explaining why the rich deserved their riches and the poor their poverty, and why everyone owed loyalty to the state, the economic system, or both.

One ideological system for the justification of “predation” stands out as particularly influential in the last few hundred years—namely, racism. The circumstances that gave

rise to racism centered on the brutal and blatant form of “predation” involving the kidnapping and intergenerational enslavement of Africans by Europeans and European-Americans. The practice occurred within wealthy, sophisticated societies that fancied themselves rational, moral, and religious. Thus it required a new and compelling ideological basis.

Before the 15th century, the European slave trade centered on East European Slavs (hence the term “slave”). By the 1400s, the Slavs had improved their self-defenses and slave traders turned to Africa for victims. As Portuguese Prince Henry the Navigator explored the

West African coast in the early 15th century searching for sources of wealth, his chronicler Gomes Eanes de Zurara described the burgeoning Portuguese slave trade, categorizing Africans as a separate and inferior “black” race and Europeans as a “white” and superior race (previously, “white” had not existed as a racial category). The idea caught on among other Europeans, who drew on textual sources from classical antiquity to sort humans into groups based on physical appearance, attributing deeply

persuasion by abolitionists, and a bloody Civil War that entailed up to 750,000 deaths out of a total population of 34,000,000. But racism continued—and does to this day, not just in the American South but throughout the nation and internationally as well. For the “white” upper classes, it ensures the solidarity of much of the “white” working class with elites, rather than with people of color of similar economic status. Meanwhile, the poor of all ethnicities (including poor European-Americans) remain

smarter, we work harder, and we are the result of good breeding.” The “prey,” in contrast, are often conceived of by elites as unintelligent, lazy, and lacking in breeding. They are to be managed like cattle or sheep, for their own good, via low-wage jobs, drugs, debt, and prisons. Often elites turn reality on its head, painting the poor as “parasites,” and themselves as the producers of all that is worthwhile in society. The ideology of the elites is inculcated in each new generation in exclusive schools, and reinforced

Storming of the Tuileries on 10. Aug. 1792 during the French Revolution. Jean Duplessis-Bertaux [Public domain], via [Wikimedia Commons](#).



ingrained behaviours and capacities to those groups. Quickly the notion arose that people of the allegedly superior “white” race were not only right in enslaving what amounted cumulatively to several million “inferior” people of colour, but were doing God’s work by bringing civilization to the “savages” (an idea later encapsulated in the title of Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The White Man’s Burden”). In the southern United States, where slavery became the basis of the agricultural economy, race came to serve as an organizing social principle.

Slavery ended in the U.S. in 1865 due to resistance on the part of slaves and ex-slaves, campaigns of

subject to a “predatory” economic system.

From the “prey’s” point of view, “predation” looks and feels like persistent poverty, lack of opportunity, cultural oppression, and much higher rates of incarceration and police violence. The lower-class person is encouraged to think, “If I’m not getting ahead, it’s my fault”—or it’s the fault of other groups who are competing unfairly for scarce resources.

From the elites’ point of view, “predation” looks quite different. The upper classes are encouraged to think, “We deserve all that we have because we are superior: we’re

through “high-class” amusements (including memberships in country clubs) and symbols of achievement. The upper and lower classes alike tend to share the view that “it is better to be a ‘predator.’”

However, such “predator-prey” relationships are not stable over long periods of time. As we have seen, human society is subject to environmental carrying capacity limits, population cycles, and debt cycles analogous to the adaptive cycle in ecosystems. During the growth phase of such cycles, society as a whole tends to become more complex. “Predators” and “prey” may all benefit, though to differing degrees. But during the release

phase, revolution, civil war, invasion, and collapse may ensue. The system of domestication partially breaks down, to the detriment of both “predators” and “prey.”

For “prey” classes, which are already living with little or no surplus or cushion against hard times, collapse brings immediate and severe hardship. Nevertheless “prey” may have opportunity to escape from dreary routines as the mechanisms for the maintenance of the means of “predation” (including the financial system) fail. There is the opportunity to form cooperative efforts to meet basic needs directly, rather than via elite-managed systems of production and distribution.

“Predator” classes are initially at least somewhat insulated from hard times as the release phase of the cycle approaches; after all, they have plenty of surplus, including money and means of mobility (hence the current elite craze for building bunkers in New Zealand). But wealth held in stocks, bonds, and derivatives can disappear virtually overnight during times of

financial crisis. Under such circumstances, elites can find themselves in mortal competition not just with angry mobs of former “prey,” but with other elites as well.

In effect, the human ecosystem in times of ecological release finds itself plagued with an overabundance of “predators.” During times of growth and conservation, elites maintain gate-keeping mechanisms and forms of intra-elite competition to ensure that the “predatory” class does not become overpopulated in relation to available “prey.” As the release phase approaches, an “overproduction of elites” leads to much fiercer intra-elite competition, which can take the forms of coups and revolutionary movements. This leads us to the consideration of still more biological metaphors.

“Disease organisms” (revolutionaries), “parasites” (criminals), and “immune systems” (law and punishment) in times of growth and release

In his brilliant 1976 book *Plagues and Peoples*, historian William H. McNeill explored how infectious disease has shaped human

societies through the ages. A remarkable paragraph on page 84 of the Anchor paperback edition has stayed with me for several decades and partly inspired this essay: Very early in civilized history, successful raiders became conquerors, i.e., learned how to rob agriculturalists in such a way as to take from them some but not all of the harvest. By trial and error a balance could and did arise, whereby cultivators could survive such predation by producing more grain and other crops than were needed for their own maintenance. Such surpluses may be viewed as the antibodies appropriate to human macroparasitism. A successful government immunizes those who pay rent and taxes against catastrophic raids and foreign invasion in the same way that a low-grade infection can immunize its host against lethally disastrous disease invasion. Disease immunity arises by stimulating the formation of antibodies and raising other physiological defenses to a heightened level of activity; governments improve immunity to foreign macroparasitism by



stimulating surplus production of food and raw materials sufficient to support specialists in violence in suitably large numbers and with appropriate weaponry. Both defense reactions constitute burdens on the host populations, but a burden less onerous than periodic exposure to sudden lethal disaster.

McNeill uses the term “macroparasitism” in much the same way I have been using “predation.” I have no desire to quibble: his metaphorical framing serves his purposes well and is revelatory for readers. However, it seems to me that a somewhat different framing can be just as helpful— “parasitism” referring metaphorically to crime; “disease microbes” to rebels, revolutionaries, terrorists, and invading barbarians; and “immune system” to laws, enforcement, and punishment. From the perspective of lower classes, elites often appear “parasitic” (as Marx’s followers insisted; as Michael Hudson suggests in his book cited previously, referring to today’s financial elite; and as McNeill does above). I would argue that this usage is not incorrect, but that it can be helpfully supplemented with another perspective. Elite classes are integral to complex societies. However, actual parasites are alien organisms relative to their hosts. The criminal, like a parasite, exists apart from the corpus of the state; his or her behavior is regarded as “antisocial” (a partial exception occurs in the case of political corruption, which I’ll discuss below).

Parasitism and infectious disease are closely related: disease-causing microbes are by definition parasitic; however, large parasites like intestinal worms and mosquitoes are seldom described as disease organisms. Host organisms typically co-evolve with their parasites; as a result, the latter tend to weaken but seldom kill their hosts. Infectious diseases, however—especially in cases where no host defenses have co-evolved—can be fatal. Similarly, crime is present in all complex



societies and is seldom fatal to them. Revolution or invasion, though, can indeed be fatal to the body politic in some instances.

Crime is always present in complex societies, just as all higher-order organisms are subject to parasites. But once a society is weakened, as it is when it approaches the release phase of an adaptive cycle, it can be overwhelmed especially by “microparasites” analogous to disease microbes—rebels, revolutionaries, terrorists, or invaders. This is why societies tend to prescribe particularly harsh punishments for anti-state crimes. We could liken law and its enforcement to an immune system: it works to ward off “parasites” of all kinds. Legal systems have resulted in a dramatic decline of interpersonal violence during the past few thousand years of civilized history. And particularly within democracies, some laws serve to shield citizens against the abuse of state power, through the assignment and protection of rights. The legal system works to the benefit of the society as a whole, even if some members benefit disproportionately

while others are crushed.

However, legal and political systems can themselves become corrupted—that is, taken over by criminals. Political and police corruption could be seen metaphorically as an “auto-immune disorder” in which the defenses of the body politic turn against healthy “cells.” Such corruption may again be symptomatic of the approach of the release phase of a societal adaptive cycle. At such times, citizens may invent or revive ways of resolving conflict without state intervention (efforts running the gamut from vigilantism to restorative justice). In a release phase, the legal and political systems come to be perceived as rigged. Disputes arise about the purpose and efficacy of law, enforcement, and punishment. In the extreme instance, criminals become political leaders and leaders become criminals.

Politics: democracy and authoritarianism in the release phase

It is probably wrong to think of democracy as a recent invention, since many pre-agricultural societies tended to be highly egalitarian. In contrast, most early

states appear to have been ruled by kings and pharaohs. Several millennia after the agricultural revolution (which began roughly 10,000 years ago), notably in Greece, a limited form of democracy emerged as a means of regaining some of the personal freedoms and participation in leadership that had been mostly lost with the advent of cities, states, and kings. During the past two centuries, democracies have become much more common than ever before, especially in European nations and their former colonies. This trend is often attributed to “enlightenment” and a popular yearning for liberty. However, it is also possible that the vast production of wealth from colonialism and fossil fuels provoked rising expectations for wider distribution of both economic and political power—initially, in America, among the minority population of European-American males with property. From the mid-19th century onward, the threat of Marxist revolution may also have helped persuade the “predator” classes that it was in their interest to give the general populace at least a semblance of participation in governance.

If these speculations are at least partly correct, then we might also hypothesize that democracy tends to be favored most in the growth and conservation phases of a civilization's adaptive cycle (as was the case of ancient Rome, whose Republic endured for roughly four centuries, but gradually withered following the creation of the Empire in 27 BCE). When there's plenty to go around, the real rulers—who may benefit from a degree of anonymity—can afford to be relatively generous with the public, while sometimes cultivating figurehead and puppet leaders who faithfully serve elite interests even though they appear to arise from, and represent, the people. Just as prey participate (mostly passively) in their own domestication, suitably sated and propagandized middle and working classes may help ease the occasional tensions of elite



domination.

But as a release phase in the cycle approaches, there is less of a surplus available for redistribution, and the “predator” classes are likely to be in less of a mood to share. As long as there is surplus, the “prey” classes can be mollified with regard to the disproportionate amounts of wealth being arrogated by the “predator” class, because the “prey's” well-being is also improving (though less) and because of opportunity for class mobility (real or perceived) offers the hope that they, too, could become part of the “predator” class. But when surplus evaporates, the effectiveness of these mechanisms of appeasement fades. As inequality grows, so do social strains. Management of mass perception (increasingly focused on assigning blame) becomes an increasing preoccupation of politicians, political commentators, and strategists. At the same time, elites are likely to come into greater conflict with one another. As public relations specialists working for elite interests employ clashing narratives to spin events, “prey”

classes are more likely to be drawn toward political extremes.

Such a moment provides an opening for powerful personalities who promise to vanquish villains and return the nation to a condition of lost stability, moral uprightness, and magnificence. Popular enthusiasm for checks and balances between governmental departments, fair elections, and respectful discourse withers in favor of scapegoating, dirty tricks, and winning-by-any-means. The niceties of democracy can be dispensed with, if only the Great Leader can deliver!

The strong man may be a member of the “predator” class—a metaphoric “alpha wolf” whose main goal is to more effectively fleece the “sheep.” On the other hand, depending on social circumstances, a release moment may provide the opening for a true populist—a member of the “prey” classes who is persuasively intent on leveling power and wealth within the nation. But, given chaotic conditions, even in that case the formal operations of democracy may still be held in abeyance.

Unfortunately for tyrants, the release phase of a societal adaptive cycle is an awful time to be in charge. The former golden age cannot be restored. Someone must eventually be held to account, and the authoritarian leader is the most visible culprit. But overthrowing him (or her?) does little to right the ship of state. The inexorable process of creative destruction must work its way through until there is the ecological basis for a new phase of reorganization.

Summary: The usefulness (and limits) of the “predator-prey” metaphor

Both conflict and integrationist explanations for the evolution of societal complexity could be said to be applicable, though each seems a better fit for certain times, places, and practices. In describing raiding, conquest, colonialism, and slavery, conflict (“predator-prey”) theory fits the facts well and offers insights. In the case of a modern industrial state with welfare programs and universal healthcare, it is easy to argue that everyone benefits by cooperating to enable the creation and maintenance of such a wealthy and formidable society, even if some benefit more than others. However, that benefit is contingent on the society's ability to sustain itself in the long term. If it is operating in a way that undermines its own ecological foundations, all

will eventually suffer. The contradiction between conflict and integration theories is somewhat resolved in the “domestication” metaphor. Most members of society benefit to some degree from the cooperation between “predator” and “prey” implied in the process of human-on-human “domestication” (though this could hardly be argued to be the case for slavery and its aftermath—which may continue for generations). But whatever mutual benefit accrues is subject to negotiation, and also to the phases of the adaptive cycle.

Perhaps seeing the class and power dynamics of society through the lens of “predation” can highlight the machinery of inequality and exploitation, helping us avoid being “preyed upon” and “preying upon” others, and inspiring us to help loosen the bonds of “domestication” that harness our fellow citizens. Yet we may also become inspired to think about ways of building forms of social complexity that do not depend upon warfare and “predation.” Perhaps this course of cultural evolution would constitute the metaphoric equivalent of becoming a species of primary consumers—i.e., vegetarians. Though I personally have maintained a vegetarian diet for several decades, I harbor no illusion that the rest of humanity is likely to

adopt a similar lifestyle anytime soon (although doing so would dramatically reduce our impact upon climate and land use). Nevertheless, both metaphoric and literal vegetarianism can be pursued in degrees. As I've stressed in this essay, even in complex and stratified societies levels of inequality in power and wealth are highly variable. The pursuit of more cooperative and less exploitative social structures can take many forms—experiments with innovative democratic institutions (ways of increasing voter participation, direct representation, ranked choice voting, etc.), recommoning, bioregionalism, and more.

Another potential benefit from the framing employed in this essay is the possibility of increasing awareness of the nature of our collective current global predicament. As we have seen, human-on-human and human-on-nature “predation” are ultimately self-limiting, and there is evidence to suggest that we are reaching certain limits. We appear to be on the cusp of seismic shifts in the global ecosystem, and in human financial, social, and political systems. This means we are also at a time when new thinking and ways of doing things are required, and may have a chance of overturning well-established norms.

As Peter Turchin documents in *Ultrasociety*, “we humans were already on a track toward higher levels of social complexity and less interpersonal violence prior to the fossil-fueled industrial age”. As the carbon-fueled growth bubble pops there is the prospect for a great unraveling, accompanied by a significant rise in violence, at least in the short term; but there is also the possibility that the longer-term trend Turchin points to will eventually reassert itself. Perhaps discovering how cooperation and complexity are possible without social “predation” will constitute our next evolutionary project. ●





THE AMERICAN DARK MONEY Behind Europe's Far Right

■ Mary Fitzgerald Claire Provost

From Britain to Hungary to Italy, the far right is on the rise. Investigations over the past year have revealed the vital role of US Christian conservatives.

Five years ago, Matteo Salvini stripped and posed half-naked for a series of “sexy” photos that were auctioned on eBay. At the time, he was a senior official of Italy's separatist Lega Nord party. His bizarre photoshoot took place on the sidelines of a National Front conference in France. Beneficiaries of the auction included part of an Italian anti-abortion network that claims to be “inspired” by the “heritage of Christian culture” and responds to a “conspiracy against life.” Today, Salvini's party has transformed itself into one of the most prominent nationalist movements in Europe (now known only as Lega).

Salvini himself has become Italy's interior minister and the country's most recognizable politician, emboldened by stunning results in the recent European Parliament elections, in which his party won a third of Italian votes (about five times more than the 6 percent it received in 2014). Along with Marine le Pen in France, leader of the National Front (now rebranded as the National Rally party), Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, and others, Salvini is leading a startling resurgence of Europe's far right. Across the continent, the messaging of these right-wing populists is increasingly slick,



their party machines are disciplined, and their policies have been carefully crafted to appeal to a wider range of voters.

Back in 2013, a senior Tory dismissed the anti-EU activists in his own Conservative Party as “swivel-eyed loons.” Three years later came the political earthquake of the Brexit referendum result—in which the fringe became the majority. Today, Europe's nationalist movements have undergone a makeover of a comparable speed and magnitude. Last month, they collectively won a record number of seats in the European Parliament. “It is a sign of a Europe that has changed,” proclaimed Salvini at a triumphant press conference in Milan, shortly after the polls closed. Holding up a rosary, kissing a crucifix, and thanking the “Immaculate Heart of Mary,” he proclaimed it time to “save” Europe's “Judeo-Christian roots.” In Hungary, his ally Orbán—self-styled champion of illiberal democracy—hailed “a new era in European politics.” No

Advertising - No Government Grants - This Is Independent Media These movements did not emerge overnight, nor will they fade anytime soon. Since mid-2016, together with colleagues at openDemocracy, we have tracked the growth of Europe's nativist movements, from the Brexit campaign, to Orbán's increasing stranglehold on the levers of power in Hungary, to cross-border networks seeking to block or roll back women's and LGBTQI rights. Their strategy begins by influencing elections, courts, education, and healthcare systems, as well as policymakers and public opinion, and ends by taking power.

“Their strategy begins by influencing elections, courts, education, and healthcare systems, as well as policymakers and public opinion, and ends by taking power”

We started this investigative work when we noticed irregularities in the financing of the Leave campaign to take Britain out of the EU. Since then, the picture that has

emerged is of a powerful, well-funded global alliance of ultra-conservatives and far-right political actors, many of whom unite around an economically libertarian but socially conservative worldview.

This political vision is explicit about seeking to shift power away from women and LGBTQI people. It aims to promote the “life” of the unborn (while disregarding the risks of unsafe abortions and pregnancies to women's lives); the “family,” by which it means a return to traditional gender roles, without any space for LGBTQI people, and putting women back in the home, seen as their “natural” place; and the “freedom” of markets and religious institutions, specifically Christian ones, above all other claims of rights or liberties.

This triad of “life, family, and freedom” was enshrined in the Manhattan Declaration, a manifesto written nearly a decade ago by American activists of the religious right. Signatories including Orthodox, Evangelical, and

Catholic leaders pledged to act in unison and determined that “no power on Earth, be it cultural or political, will intimidate us into silence or acquiescence.”

Today, that coalition has taken on a decidedly transatlantic hue. Many of Europe's far-right leaders talk openly about defending “Christian Europe.” Orbán added this message to his party's recent European election manifesto, and Salvini frequently attacks “gender ideology.” Vox, the first far-right party to win seats in Spain's parliament since the Franco dictatorship, has vowed to roll back laws against gender-based violence. Poland's Law and Justice party is pushing to outlaw abortion and place restrictive limits on women's access to contraception.

For those Europeans who like to see their continent as the world's most secular and socially liberal, these are disturbing developments. It is no surprise, perhaps, that European countries are capable of producing hard-right nationalist movements, but it is startling how quickly these new parties have grown and forced their way into the electoral mainstream—and it's striking to see how many are adopting overtly religious and socially conservative rhetoric.

Part of the explanation for this surge, however, became clearer for us when we started tracking the international financial flows linked to many of America's most powerful Christian conservative groups. Several of the American activists who signed the Manhattan Declaration have since made numerous trips across the Atlantic, along with a great deal of cash to support their efforts.

\$50 million of dark money

A recent openDemocracy investigation found that America's Christian right spent at least \$50 million of “dark money” to fund campaigns and advocacy in Europe over the past decade. (By the measures of US political financing, this may not seem like a vast sum, but by European standards it's formidable. The total spend on the



2014 European elections, for example, by all of Ireland's political parties combined was just \$3 million.) These numbers are also likely the tip of the iceberg: our analysis looked at only twelve US Christian right groups, and there were many obstacles to disclosure that limited the information we could extract. Institutions registered as churches, for example, are not required to publish their overseas funding. The largest spender appeared to be the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, which spent more than \$20 million in Europe from 2008 to 2014, but filings are not available beyond that period, so the true figure could be far larger.

As well as reviewing thousands of pages of IRS filings from these groups over the last decade, we worked with reporters across Europe to follow the money to its local beneficiaries. One of the groups we looked at, for instance, was Heartbeat International, founded in the early 1970s. Based in Columbus, Ohio, it's seen as a pioneer of the controversial model of “crisis pregnancy centers,” which discourage women from accessing legal abortion and contraception. The organization now has a network of “affiliated pregnancy help centers” worldwide and appears to have spent more money in Italy than anywhere else in Europe.

As might be expected, we also

found links between these groups and senior members or advisers of the current US administration. None disclose their donors, and there is no legal requirement to do so, but at least two have known ties to famous billionaire funders of conservative causes, including the Koch brothers and the family of Trump's education secretary, Betsy DeVos. One of the religious groups we researched, which pumped \$12.4 million into Europe from 2008 to 2017, lists as its chief counsel Jay Sekulow, one of President Trump's personal attorneys.

Another of the US groups we found spending money in Europe is the Acton Institute. Based in Grand Rapids, Michigan, it marries economic liberalism with a conservative Christian social agenda. Its IRS filings disclose that the group has spent at least \$1.7 million since 2008 in Europe, where it keeps an office in Rome and has been linked to powerful critics of Pope Francis, including through another controversial think tank, the Dignitatis Humanae Institute, of which former Trump strategist Steve Bannon is a patron.

Dignitatis has recently made international news because of Bannon's plans to use a thirteenth-century monastery outside Rome to train a new generation of Salvinis, Orbáns, and Le Pens. “Let's have an academy that brings the best thinkers together and it can actually

train... what we call modern gladiators,” Bannon said in an April interview with NBC’s Richard Engel. His plans were later thwarted when the Institute’s lease on the monastery was revoked by the government, citing various contractual violations. This followed protests from local residents who questioned the legality of the lease. Some of the documents submitted in this process showed how the Dignitatis Humanae Institute relied on Acton to support its application, detailing joint activities between the two organizations over a five-year period.

Acton’s founder, Robert Sirico, said the Rome office had participated in this process without his knowledge, and that he instructed it to distance itself from Dignitatis and Bannon. But the controversy surrounding Bannon’s involvement misses the more significant point about Acton’s work. The think tank has an explicit mission to conjoin and support values of free-market capitalism and social conservatism. Unlike the US, in Europe, this blend of often contradictory fundamentalisms is a relatively new phenomenon, but it’s an alliance that succeeds in uniting climate-change deniers, anti-abortion activists, and anti-LGBTQI campaigners in attacks against the “liberal” pope, for example. It also explains the rise in anti-welfare state

rhetoric we heard at the annual World Congress of Families, an increasingly influential, ultra-conservative summit, held this year in Verona, where one speaker claimed that “the only welfare state that has worked in Italy is the family.” This type of rhetoric is gaining traction in places like Italy and Spain, where such systems of benefits and entitlements have long been popular and strong.

The American religious right’s support for campaigns against legal abortion, LGBTQI rights, sex education, and other causes in Africa and Latin America has been well documented over the years. Notorious examples such as the “kill the gays” bill in Uganda and draconian anti-abortion laws in Latin America have left a trail of violence, trauma, and repression across both continents. But the scale of the American religious conservatives’ push into Europe has not been widely reported or well understood. “It took the Christian right thirty years to get to where they are now in the White House,” said Neil Datta, the secretary of the Brussels-based European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development, reacting to our research. “We knew a similar effort was happening in Europe, but this should be a wake-up call that this is happening even faster and on a grander scale than many experts could have ever imagined.”

What’s clear in the pattern of connections and support between American ultra-conservatives and European far-right groups is the willingness on both sides to exploit loopholes in regulations and to embrace unscrupulous, even illegal, methods. Last month, openDemocracy worked with a non profit watchdog named Unhack Democracy Europe to publish a report pointing to widespread fraud ‘by Viktor Orbán’s Fidesz party in the 2018 Hungarian elections, including vote-buying, voter intimidation, tampering with postal votes, missing ballots, and election software malfunctions. (The result of that election was to give Orbán a parliamentary super-majority, enabling him to further tighten his grip on the judiciary, media, and other organs of power.) The report went on to identify ways in which the European parliamentary elections in Hungary were even more vulnerable to such abuse than national ones. Unhack Democracy is now compiling a follow-up report on what actually happened there in the European elections.

In another development in the run-up to the European-wide vote, openDemocracy received a leaked report authored the European Parliament’s vice-president, a senior Irish MEP, that sought to facilitate greater influence for religious lobbyists in Brussels. This controversial plan was shelved after lawmakers protested, but with a larger bloc of right-wing populist members now in Parliament, the proposal is expected to resurface.

Although Europe’s far-right parties fell well short of predictions that they would redraw the map of European political power, underperforming in Germany, Holland, and Denmark, they did make significant gains—especially in Italy, Hungary, and France. “Rather than a victory for democracy,” concluded the Dutch scholar Cas Mudde, the European elections showed how populism, and particularly “the populist radical right” has become “mainstreamed and normalized.”●



EXCLUSION AND MARGINALISATION OF Dalits

Dalit women that bear the brunt of the reprisals from the dominant castes

International Dalit Solidarity Network

Dalit women in South Asia live in deeply patriarchal societies. The severe intersectional discrimination they face from being a Dalit and a woman, makes them a key target of violence and systematically denies them choices and freedoms in all spheres of life.

“The reality of Dalit women and girls is one of exclusion and marginalisation ... They are often victims of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights violations, including sexual abuse and violence. They are often displaced; pushed into forced and/or bonded labour, prostitution and trafficking.”

United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women

Dalit women in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh are standing up against patriarchy and caste discrimination, but they need support in holding the state accountable to implementing the legislation made to protect them at the local and national level, and for states to meet their international human rights obligations. In some caste-affected states, such as Pakistan and Bangladesh, new anti-discrimination legislation also needs to be adopted to properly address the caste-gender nexus.

Ending caste-gender violence

For centuries Dalit women have been targets of violence and rape. If Dalit women, or other members of their community, dare to challenge caste hierarchies and traditional caste roles it is often Dalit women that bear the brunt of the reprisals from the dominant castes. These reprisals can be in the form of violence, naked parading, beatings, rape, or destruction of property. Minority Rights Group International

Dalit Leaders' fight for rights

Dalit women human rights defenders are leading the fight for caste and gender justice



“Today, we are not here only to speak of our plight. We are also agents of change”

– Ruth Manorama (Dalit leader from India - speaking at the UN Human Rights Council)

“Let them not rape us every day and murder us. Make the police give us our rights. I will fight for those who are abused and dead and I hope if my turn comes, someone will be there to fight for me.”

– Manisha (Dalit leader from India)



“If you are not considered human, human rights do not apply to you. It is my duty to fight for our rights”

– Moni Rani Das (Dalit leader from Bangladesh)

“We are doing everything we can, but we need impact from the international level to move forward in our struggle.”

– Durga Sob (Dalit leader from Nepal)



reported a study finding that 70% of cases of atrocities against Dalit women were committed as Dalit women tried to assert their rights and challenge caste and gender norms.

Attempts at political influence are often met with violent reprisals or economic sanctions and even when given a political seat, Dalit women are often forcefully silenced or ridiculed. Despite the fact that in India, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act specifically bars violence against Dalits and in Nepal the Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability Crime Elimination and Punishment Act, prohibits 'untouchability' and violence against Dalits in the public and private sphere, both Acts lack implementation. Violent abuse of Dalit women therefore remains widespread in caste-affected countries and is even on the increase in many areas.

Dalit women are banding together to protest against violence and violations of their rights and to support each other in demanding respect, dignity and justice. They need solidarity to amplify their voices and put pressure on their states and society to do more to ensure that there is zero tolerance for the violence and abuse they are facing.

Tackling trafficking, abductions and forced marriage

In Pakistan Dalit girls also face abduction, forced conversions and forced marriage. As a religious minority, Dalit women also experience violations such as rape and torture as a form of punitive measure and prosecution. These crimes are almost always committed with impunity. In Nepal and India, Dalit women and girls are especially vulnerable to trafficking into domestic work, factories and the sex industry.

As long as Dalit women and girls are marginalised and excluded from key services and education, they will continue to be key targets for traffickers. Tackling trafficking



means tackling caste and gender discrimination head on and ensuring that Dalit girls and women have access to exercising their rights. Dalit women are demanding justice and protection for their women and girls and they need support in pushing for change.

Political participation

Political space for women subjected to intersectional caste and gender discrimination is very limited. Even when seats have been reserved for Dalits, as is the case in India and Nepal, they are either left unfilled or often do not transform into meaningful participation for the women elected due to stigma and discrimination. In Nepal for example, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has voiced specific concern over the need to insure proportional representation of Dalit women in political bodies in Nepal.

In Pakistan and Bangladesh, activists are pushing for reservations for Dalit women in order to gain any political influence, which is currently extremely marginal. "On higher level posts, only 16 Dalit women have seats among 753 women or only 2%" of the total amount of women ... those women in higher posts continue to undergo discrimination and humiliation from so-called upper caste, therefore finding it difficult to address the need of their fellow Dalits in general and Dalit women in particular"

Dalit women leadership and activism

Across caste-affected countries in South Asia, Dalit women's movements are challenging the systems that have been oppressing them for centuries using protest marches, sit-ins, online grassroots activism, awareness raising events and numerous other new and traditional ways of getting their concerns heard. Many Dalit women activists and movements have embraced new technology and social media in the fight for justice. This has brought with it both challenges and opportunities. successful initiatives such as the #DalitWomenFight and #DalitHistoryMonth campaigns have given exposure to the issues faced by Dalit women and served as a tool to unite women in a shared struggle.

At the same time, the discrimination and abuse faced offline replicates itself online with Dalit women activists often being abused and threatened by trolls. Much more needs to be done by both the technology platforms and their user base to help protect Dalit women from online abuse and harassment. Dalit women's movements across the world are growing stronger and are connecting to each other and reaching out to decision-makers and the global public.

Though the capital punishment is unacceptable from the moral viewpoint, people do sometimes resort to this under specific circumstances.

DARKNESS OF A HANGMAN'S NOOSE

NEED FOR UNIVERSAL PENAL CODE

 Arun Prakash

On March 20, 2020, in the darkness of dawn loud cheers reverberated in the air from crowds outside Tihar Jail, Delhi, when it was announced that four convicts in respect of the Nirbhaya case were hanged at 5.30 am. There were two others; one

committed suicide in jail three months after the crime allegedly due to remorse and another, a minor who was then 15 was set free after serving a term of three years in Delhi's Juvenile Home. For the remaining four the hangman's noose finally brought to an end the trial,

conviction, death sentence and long period of appeals and their negation in various tiers of India's monolithic judicial system and finally rejection of mercy pleas by the President of India.

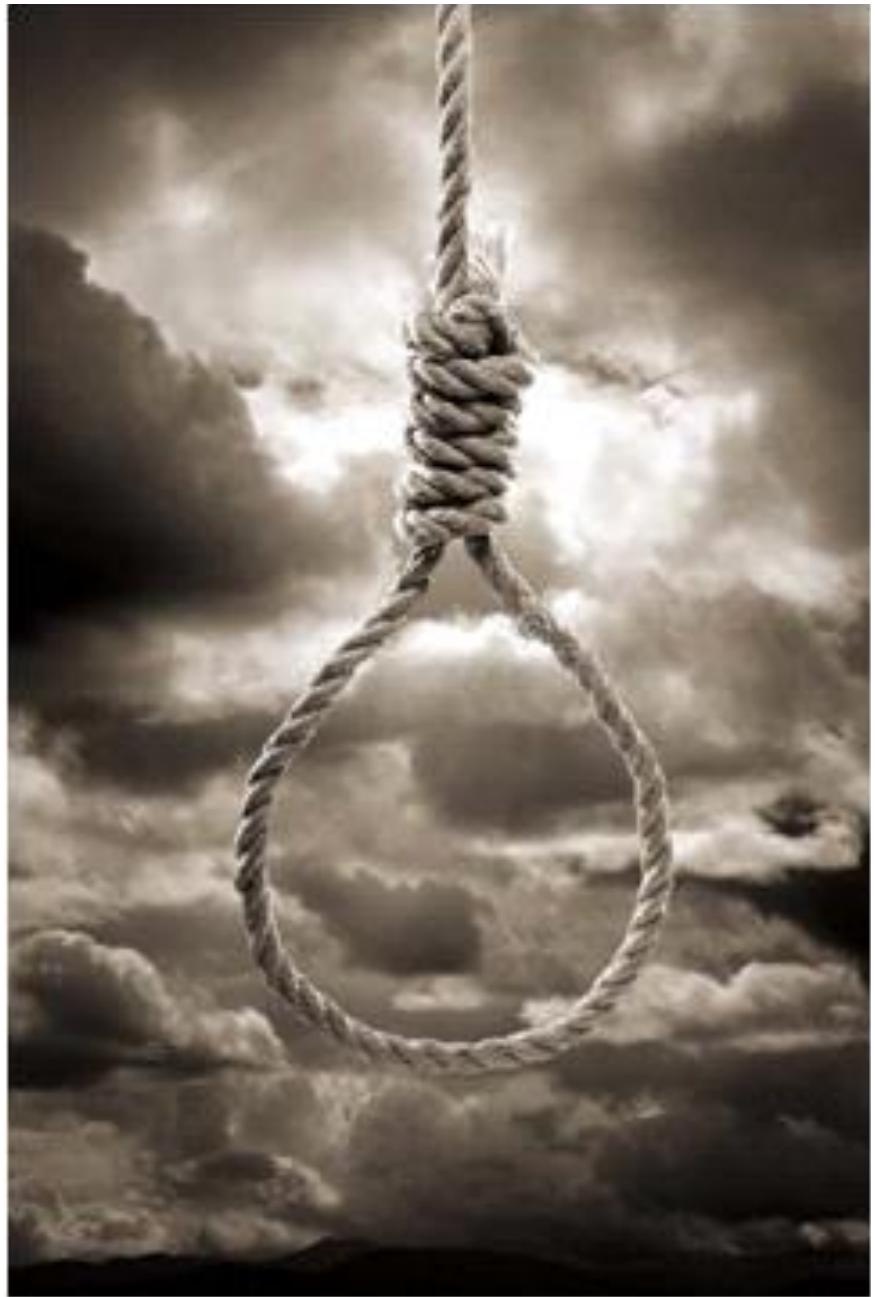
One side there was elation from the victim's family and their



sympathizers who distributed sweets outside the jail and in many places in the country; whereas on the other side there was darkness and desolation among families of those executed by the hangman's noose. These scenes were widely publicized on television. All this was as a result of a vicious crime of rape and murder committed on December 16, 2012 on a young girl of 23 years who succumbed to her injuries after struggling for life for 13 days. This story featured in Prout's February 2013 issue in an article by the author "Light of a Tigress – One that Awakened a Nation's Conscience". This piece, seven years later attempts to look at the larger social issue of crime and punishment in a truly civilized society.

During this period there was public outcry over speeding up the hanging process of this high media profile case even though in there still are 374 death row convicts in the country waiting to exhaust all their legal remedies to delay or be saved from the hangman's noose. And many of them were for crimes committed before 2012? Though the convicts were only following their natural human instinct of self preservation they were being blamed with trying to be clever and taking the judicial system for a ride. The lawyers defending them were also vilified with many uncharitable comments. The print media gave fair coverage to the hangman for whom this was the first time; his background of being the son of a hangman, whose father was also a hangman. The details about the rope, the noose and how it was made smooth with butter and bananas, added fuel to the fire of interest of a seemingly blood thirsty public.

All this may be understandable as Prout's founder Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar says: "If somebody commits a violent crime, generally he or she will not receive any sympathy from the public. Although the system of capital punishment is unacceptable from the moral viewpoint, people do sometimes resort to this custom under specific circumstances. It does not contain



any corrective measures and has no purpose other than to instill fear into people's minds. Therefore the practice of taking a life for a life out of anger cannot be accepted in a civilized social system".

There's another side to this, a benevolent and a humane one: "Even if somebody is a genuine criminal who has no public support (no matter how notorious a criminal he or she may be, he or she is still a human being), should not he or she have an opportunity to become an asset to society? It is possible that although the person fails to evoke

our sympathy because of the seriousness of his or her crimes, he or she may sincerely repent and be prepared to dedicate the rest of his or her life to the genuine service of society."

Almost all heinous crimes involving cruelty are caused by weak minded persons due to one of these reasons: (a) lack of judgement under intoxication or in a fit of extreme excitement; (b) severe blow to one's prestige; (c) lust and love affairs; (d) serious differences of opinion and (e) clash over properties. If those who commit

crimes are weak minded persons it is surely society's duty to cure them of their disease instead of sentencing them to death? People may say that if criminals who commit serious offences are not given capital punishment, they should be kept behind bars for life to keep society safe from them. Perhaps they feel few countries have the facilities to cure such mental diseases. But wont this in all likelihood cause overcrowding in prisons? And is it possible or desirable for the state to provide so many people with food and clothing? Rather as Prout's founder questions, "Why should such criminals live off the state at all? The state will have to see to it that it receives suitable work from them. And after the completion of their sentence, the state should sincerely make arrangements to find them employment so that they will be able to earn an honest living".

Shrii PR Sarkar feels a prison should be just like a reform school, and the superintendent should be like a teacher trained in psychology with a genuine love for society. Such a jailor should possess no less ability than a judge. Appointing someone to this sensitive social reforming post with no qualification other than a university degree is simply not in sync with requirements of present times. And if those imprisoned experience daily injustices, feel a lack of open-heartedness from others, or receive less food and poorer-quality food than that sanctioned by the government, their criminal tendencies and maliciousness would surely increase. In this context the path breaking efforts of Dr. Kiran Bedi as Inspector General of Prisons who headed Tihar Jail (1993-95) must be remembered.

She converted the high security predominantly male prison into a Reformatory, a transformation of a magnitude unparalleled in the history of Prison Administration anywhere in the world. One of the most significant things she did was to take a godly approach towards the inmates. She regularly took rounds, talked to inmates, listened to their



problems and inspected food being cooked and served.

There is yet another dimension to this issue which practically no one thinks of. Shrii PR Sarkar says: "If a criminal is imprisoned for a serious crime, what will happen to his or her dependents? They will still have to somehow go on living. The boys of the family may join a gang of pickpockets and the girls may take to prostitution. In other words, by trying to punish a single criminal, ten more criminals may be created". All over India and the rest of the world aren't there millions and millions of such prisoners' families? Thus in a truly civilized society, while sentencing the financial condition of the convicts' family should be borne in mind the state must step in and provide them with the means to earn an honest living.

Prevention is no doubt better than cure and applies to all aspects of life. When we observe the variety

and seriousness of crimes increasing with the so-called advancement of civilization, it is better to take steps to prevent crime rather than act after the crime has been committed. Civilized people today should be more interested in preventing base criminal propensities from arising in human beings in the first place, than in taking corrective measures to cure criminals' mental diseases. It is also true that the majority of people are not born dishonest, despite superficial differences between people and differences in their goal and efforts to reach the goal, so differences caused by defects in their bodies' various glands and in their minds can be easily corrected through collective effort.

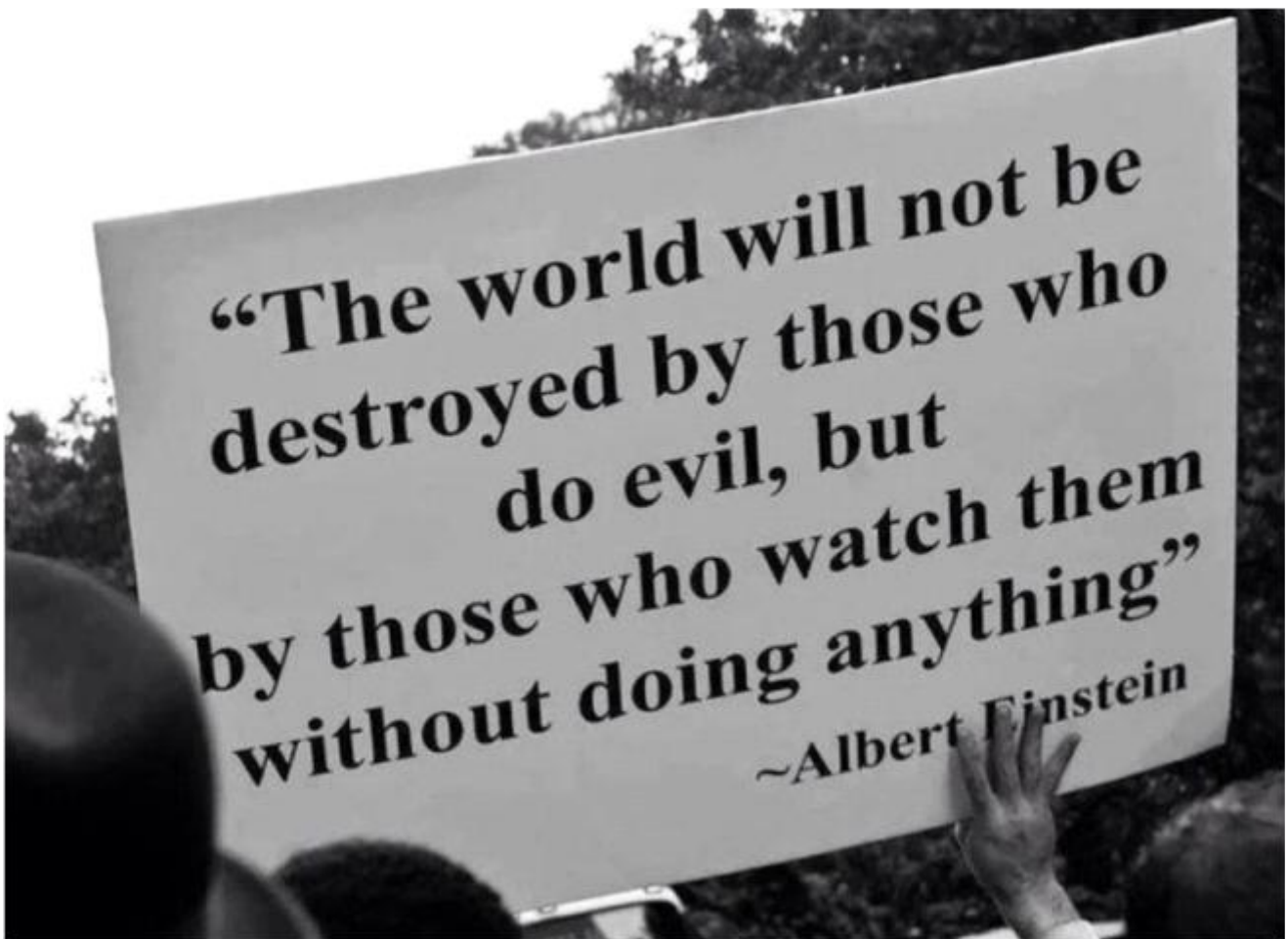
Let us also remember this sage advice of Prout's founder: "If one's goal is a pure and pervasive one, then the defects in the process of attaining the goal can never transform a person into a sub-human

creature. And if these efforts are in harmony with people's psychology, this will be extremely beneficial. As a result many people will harmonize the rhythm of their diverse ideas and ideologies and progress together, thereby gradually transforming the inherent individualism and disparity of social life into one symphonic chord, one unified rhythm, which will become the genuine prototype of a healthy human society. This idea of oneness is fundamentally a spiritual idea. Individually and collectively human beings will have to accept the Supreme and the path to realize the Supreme as the highest truth, and this will have to be recognized as the highest goal of human life. As long as human beings do not do so, the human race will find it impossible to implement a sound, well-thought-out plan of action for social progress. No penal or social code, no matter how well-planned, can liberate society.

Without a spiritual ideal, no social, economic, moral, cultural or political policy or programme can bring humanity to the path of peace. The sooner humanity understands this fundamental truth, the better”.

Therefore ideally there should be a 'Universal Penal Code'. This is best reproduced in Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar's own words. “It is my sincere belief that, except for those social problems which are caused by geographical factors, the solution to all complex social problems may be found by implementing a universal penal code, one which is applicable to all humanity. It is not desirable for different laws to bind different peoples, countries or communities. All human beings laugh when they are happy, cry when they are sad and mourn when they feel despair, and all need food, clothing and housing; so why should people be separated from each other by artificial distinctions?

The constitution of the world should be drafted by a global organization recognized by the people; otherwise the possibility exists that at any moment a minority in a country might be persecuted. Everyone knows that when a revolutionary is victorious in the political struggle of a country, he or she will be considered a patriot, and when a revolutionary is defeated, he or she will face death and be branded as a traitor despite his or her innocence. In nearly every country the law is based on the opinions of powerful people, and their autocratic style cannot be questioned. But is such a situation desirable? Does this not undermine civilization? That is why I contend that laws must be drafted by a global organization, and, further, that the supreme authority to judge or to try a person should be vested in that organization”.



Fighting Against Superstition

Shrii Shrii Ānandamúrti

The svabhāva [natural tendency] of mind is to become like its object.

Superstition of any kind – social, psychic or spiritual – influences the mind to such an extent that the mind, due to its worries, leads a person into trouble. The mental equilibrium of one believing in superstition is disturbed, and the result is that one not only loses peace, but one is also led to do some action which is detrimental to oneself. This only further strengthens belief in superstition. Any ordinary incident is magnified and attributed to some durlakṣaṇa,

or bad omen, by the believers of superstition. It is only because of the mind's nature to become like its object that people see ghosts, which are purely the mental creation of those who believe in this superstition. If only these persons had the courage and mental strength to catch the ghost, they would very soon realize that their mistake was believing nothing to be something.

Such superstitions have not left any field uncontaminated. In the social sphere there is no dearth of superstitions. Witchcraft, discrimination against widows, etc., are curses in society only due to such superstitions. In the psychic sphere there are deep-rooted superstitions such as the belief in ghosts (bhút), etc. Not only this, but superstitions related to shrāddha [funeral ceremonies], etc., have also bound down even the progeny of a person. In the spiritual field, also, ignorant people have been forced to do many things only because of the deep-rooted superstition of heaven and hell. All these only disturb psychic equilibrium and bring about discord and worry in society. For the preservation of peace, the fight against superstition is of prime importance.

In Ananda Marga none of these superstitions have been given any place. In the social field witchcraft has been discredited as only a psychic creation of some kusaṁskārī [evil] person. Widows have been given the same status as unmarried women, there being no restrictions on their dress, behaviour, living, etc. Exercising any influence on widows [to compel them] to adopt a particular pattern of life based on the social superstition of disallowing their presence in social functions, is strictly prohibited.

The psychic superstitions of ghosts, shrāddha, etc., also do not find any place in the Marga. Ghosts are only imaginary, and performing shrāddha by giving dana [gifts] to Brahmins to take a departed soul across the Vaetárnī River [the mythological river which must be crossed to enter heaven], is only a psychic misrepresentation inculcated from the very beginning. These ideas are not rational, and therefore believing in them is not correct. This is the view taken in the Marga.

The spiritual superstitions of heaven and hell and fear of God make individuals suppressed, and they lose their peace. Not infrequently fear in terms of such superstitions creates a very undesirable reaction in people, and thereby causes a loss of peace. In the Marga spiritual practices are based on rationality. Fear and superstition do not have any part in them. A systematic and scientific method of spiritual practices in the Marga leaves no place for these superstitions.

It can thus be seen that an ideal society will come into being only when there is unity, social security and peace. To provide for such a society, Ananda Marga is founded on Brahma as a common ideal. Unity in Ananda Marga is secured by evolving a casteless society where capital punishment is prohibited, and all take part unitedly in social functions irrespective of caste, creed or race. In such a society social injustice due to trade-wise distinctions, sex or race is not possible. Ananda Marga further strengthens society by refuting and discouraging all superstitions, whether social, psychic or spiritual, and by providing a systematic and scientific method of spiritual practices and codes for physical, mental and spiritual progress and advancement towards permanent peace in an ideal society.



Amurt & Amurtel Tackle Covid 19 Fall Out Head On

Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team (AMURT/ AMURTEL) has been rendering service to people affected by COVID 19 lockdown since the beginning of April in West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Punjab, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Kerala, Assam and Tripura states. Cooked food, food grains like rice, pulses, potatoes, salt, and other essential commodities have been distributed. AMURT also organised Corona Homeo medical camp in Vishakhapatnam. Nearly 45000 people have been benefited till now by such relief work by AMURT/AMURTEL. Also a sanitization drive among the affected people has proved to be very useful. To maintain physical and mental wellbeing awareness programmes have begun by way of leaflets for spiritual awakening & popularizing sentient food.

In recognition of the good work being done, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India have written to AMURT to undertake maximum relief work among people affected by the lock down. Karnataka District Authority has also requested to AMURT to render relief services in Bengaluru. Also, the Additional District Magistrate Purulia called a meeting of all NGOs on April 1, during which AMURT Relief work was discussed. Acharya Vishvamitraananda Avadhuta, AMURT representative assured the ADM that maximum relief work would be done. Print media at the national and state levels in both English and regional languages have given wide coverage to these activities.



ACTIVITY



Punjab



ACTIVITY

NHE Gurukul Creates Electronic Edition of Text Books



The Gurukul has done marvelous work by converting all text books from classes 1 to 12 in PDF and flip book form. With this major effort now classes can truly go online without disruption during the lockdown period and students can study when schools are closed during the extended lockdown period. Visit https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=1fTRvhiriVwY-dP4m2uxQDi0AE_XD8vXK to access and share with friends and relatives for their children and friends of children.

With inputs from Acarya Shambhushivananda Avadhuta



NHE Gurukula Sweden

Across the globe, our Neohumanist Education projects have quickly responded to the Covid19 virus pandemic. Firstly, where needed, important hygiene practices are being taught to adults and children alike, and classes are being offered online for health and wellness practices in general. Preschool and elementary classrooms for the most part have had to go online, as well as our adult education programs. Institutions that have resorted to online teaching in the days of lockdown include: The Neohumanist College of Asheville (USA), Neohumanist Centre in Taichung (Taiwan), Neohumanist Academy in



Hand sanitization being taught to students



NHE student with locally made mask



Bolzano (Italia), Progressive School of Long Island (USA), Rasarit Kindergarten in Bucharest, The Fountain of Hope after school program in Panatau (Romania), The ECE teacher training project (Indonesia), and many other educational institutions and programs affiliated to Gurukula. Directors and teachers have quickly learned to be creative in offering their programs in an online format, even for the very young. Directors are training their teachers how to make videos and how to share stories, activities, and communication via various platforms including zoom and even what's app in places where internet services are not readily available [kind courtesy Arti Brim, Sweden, www.gurukul.edu.]

Master Unit, Italy

Acarya Vimalashananda Avadhuta after a long stint in New York is now posted in Italy in a Master Unit which like others in the world are spiritual eco-villages serving as models of self-sufficiency, sustainable development, cooperative management, environmental consciousness and service-minded spirituality.

Italy with a population of only 6.04 crores has been badly hit by Covid 19 with nearly 1.9 lakhs infected and over 25500 deaths. Here is the report filed by him: “Namaskar, here in Italy everything is slowly getting under control. All Margiis are safe doing service in their capacity, sometimes with phones calls or delivering food and medicines to elderly people or neighbors. I am in the Master Unit alone and one lady drops food for me at the gate once a week. Relationships got warmer among close people and everybody is doing something or the other not only to protect themselves but also to help others”.

PBI (Delhi) Reaches Out to the Needy

During the lockdown, Proutist Bloc, India (PBI) (Delhi), under the leadership of its newly-elected president Nishant Sharma, did relief work in Delhi, with Shahdara constituency of the state taking the lead. The relief work started with fruit distribution to the migrant workers who were leaving Delhi to reach their villages or home towns. Since all public transportation had been stopped, they were walking to their destinations with women and children, carrying luggage in their hands or heads. PBI cadres reached GT road along Delhi-UP border and handed fruit and other food items to them.

Later, food items like rice, pulse, edible oil etc. were distributed to the poor and the needy in the slums. More than 1000 people had been served at the time of writing this news report.

The relief work was done mainly by the party cadres like Kavita Gupta, Vikram Bhatia, Mohammad Ansarul Haq, Mohammed Raahis, Arti, Ravindra Singh, Jyoti Sharma and Nishant Sharma.



PBI (Bihar) Steps Forward to Serve the Suffering Masses

Proutist Bloc, India (Bihar) did a lot of relief work in different parts of the state during the lockdown imposed in the wake of Corona epidemic. Food packets were distributed to hundreds of people who had been suddenly rendered jobless and had no savings to subsist on.

Taking the lead in Patna Metropolitan, Vishvraj ji, who heads the party unit of the said area, started food distribution work in the area soon after the declaration of the lockdown. Mithilesh, the general secretary, and other party cadres sincerely worked with him to give relief to the affected.

At the time of writing this news report, the relief work was going on in other parts of the state too. PBI (Bihar) president Acharya Shiv Narayan Prasad told our correspondent that the relief work would continue until the last day of the lockdown period. He told that AMURT was also funding the relief work being carried out by the party.



PBI's National Committee Met Online Amid Lockdown

On 9th April, during the lockdown period, the national committee of Proutist Bloc, India (PBI) met online in a video conference using Zoom application. The office-bearers who attended the meeting included national convener Acharya Santosananda Avadhuta, national general secretary Kanhu Charan Behura, national publication secretary Pranav Koul, national public relations secretary Ravindra Singh, vice-president Trilok Singh, national movement secretary Kedarnath Sahu, national youth secretary Piyush Khanduri, finance secretary Rakesh Ranjan, Bihar state president Acharya Shiv Narayan Prasad, Karnataka committee member Krishan Prasad and Tejas Puttuswami, Karnataka state organising secretary Vinod Godke, UP state president Ram Pratap Singh, Punjab state general secretary Nandkishore Jolly and Haryana state president Baljeet Khatana, Delhi state president Nishant Sharma.

The committee discussed how the period of lockdown could be utilized for the progress of the party. It was suggested that online training program could be held for the office-bearers and cadres. The suggestion was readily accepted. Besides, the committee also discussed the various ways to fund the party and thus make it financially sound. The state presidents also shared the information about the relief work party units were conducting in their respective states.

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

At the end of winter

SHITER SHEŚETE NAVA PÁTÁ ÁSE
PURÁNORÁ JÁY JHARE
VASANTA ELO DVÁRE

NRITYER TÁLE TÁLE
NRITYER TÁLE, VENII UPACIÁ
KABARI KHASIÁ PÁRE
VASANTA ELO DVÁRE

SHIITER SHEŚE APUŚPA TARU
KALITE BHARIÁ PÁRE
VASANTA ELO DVÁRE
TUŚÁR GALIBE, EI BHAROSÁY

ANKUR SAB HÁSI MUKHE CÁY
PÁKHIRÁ KULÁE TAVA GÁN GÁY
NAVA SÁJ SAB PARE
VASANTA ELO DVÁRE

SHITER SHEŚETE NAVA PÁTÁ ÁSE
PURÁNORÁ JÁY JHARE
VASANTA ELO DVÁRE

At the end of winter,
new leaves unfold,
and old leaves fall.

Spring has come to the door
in the rhythm of dance,
with loosened braids and dishevelled hair.

At the end of winter,
the bare trees burst into bloom.
"The snow will melt!"
with this hope
sprouts peep out with a smile.

Dressed in their new garments,
the birds in their nests sing Your songs.
Spring has come to the door.