

THE RADICAL HUMANIST



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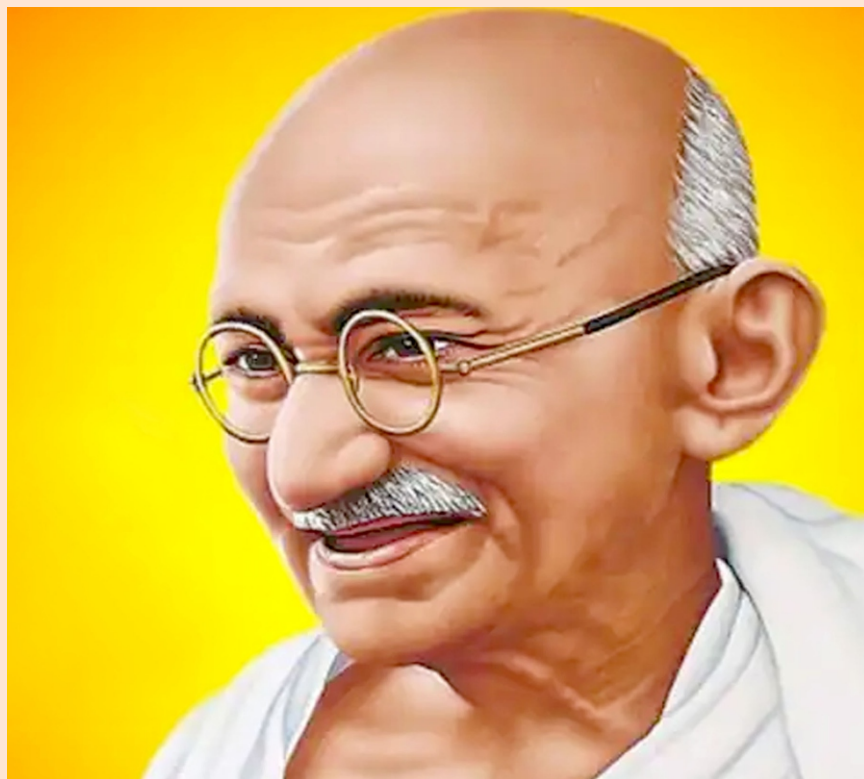
M.N. ROY

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**We pay our respectful tributes to Mahatma Gandhi,
the apostle of non-violence, on his
birth anniversary on 2 October 2024**



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The Website of the Indian Renaissance Institute Launched & YouTube Channel of the Indian Renaissance Institute to be launched soon

We are happy to announce that
our website: www.indianrenaissanceinstitute.com has been launched.

By clicking at the three horizontal lines on the top right corner of the Home page
in your mobile, you can access all the windows/sections of the website.

1. **M.N. Roy** section gives the introduction of Roy and some of his close associates.
2. **The Radical Humanist** section contains
 - (1) all the issues of The Radical Humanist since February 2015;
 - (2) the two volumes of '**Selections from The Radical Humanist**';
 - (3) list of cities from where readers have accessed these two volumes at www.academia.edu;
 - (4) Compiled Record of Articles and Writers published in The Radical Humanist since April 1970;
 - (5) Articles by prominent writers like M.G. Devasahayam, Yogendra Yadav, Prem Singh, S.Y. Quraishi, S.N. Shukla and others on Indian democracy and the challenges faced by the people;
 - (6) Books written by M.N. Roy;
 - (7) Four published volumes of '**Selected Writings of M.N. Roy**' edited by Sib Narayan Ray;
 - (8) Books by other writers on radical humanism and related issues;

M.N. Roy and Justice V.M. Tarkunde Memorial Lectures

Narisetti Inniah's writings

'The Truth about the Gita' (Text) by Late V.R. Narla &

Audio-book: The Truth About the Gita

Film on M.N. Roy in French with English subtitles (in Four Parts).

3. **Organisation** section has
 - (1) *Photos of 13 Mohini Road, Dehradun where M.N. Roy and Mrs. Ellen Roy lived;*
 - (2) *Constitution of the Indian Renaissance Institute and the list of Members of the IRI;*
 - (3) *Present Office-bearers and Members of the Board of Trustees of the IRI;*
 - (4) *Previous Office-bearers of the IRI since 2017;*
 - (5) *Minutes of the General Membership Meetings and the Board of Trustees since 2017.*
4. **Indian Radical Humanist Association (IRHA)** section has information about the IRHA and its Constitution.

You are welcome to visit the website.

Mahi Pal Singh, 27.6.2024

THE RADICAL HUMANIST

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Articles and Features :

Why PM Modi and CJI Chandrachud's public display of faith is troubling

It betrays their oaths of office and undermines constitutional assurances

Indira Jaising



The Chief Justice of India (CJI) and the judges of the Supreme Court (SC) on appointment, take an oath of office to the effect that they will bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India, and that they will duly and faithfully, perform their duties without fear or favour, affection or ill-will, and that they will uphold the Constitution and the law.

Photographs tweeted by the Prime Minister, show him at a **Ganesh puja with CJI D Y Chandrachud** and his spouse. It is clear that the PM was an invited guest. This raises several questions. Primary amongst them is whether the CJI has been true to his oath of office.

The SC has held that secularism is a basic feature of the Constitution. Quoting Upendra Baxi, the Supreme Court in *S R Bommai v Union of India* (1994), held that that “secularism” in the Constitution connotes that the “state by itself, shall not espouse or establish or practise any religion.” The Court, in the same judgment, also held that “every individual person will have, in

that order, an equal right to freedom of conscience and religion”.

Nobody can question the right of the CJI and the PM to enjoy the freedom of conscience and religion privately. The question, however, is whether the public display of their faith breaches their respective oaths of office. The answer, undoubtedly, is in the affirmative.

This is the first known case in India's judicial history, where a sitting CJI has invited a sitting PM to a public display of religiosity, with videographers and photographers to ensure that the event is made public. The CJI is in a saffron kurta while the PM is wearing a Maharashtrian topi (cap). One must also remember that the CJI has heard, and is due to hear shortly, the case relating to the disqualification of legislators from Maharashtra and the use of party symbols by the two factions of the Shiv Sena. This is not the first time that we have seen this kind of display, but we let each instance pass, creating a new normal. In January, the CJI visited the

Dwarkadhish Temple in Gujarat, and urged district court lawyers to function in a manner that the “dhwaja of justice” keeps flying. “Dhwaja” is a Hindu symbol so how does this square with secularism and his oath of office?

The puja, in public view, by two constitutional functionaries raises the question of whether religion is being infused into the judiciary. India is a multi-faith society, so how does the public display of one religion by constitutional functionaries comply with their oath of office?

In S R Bommai, the SC observed that “the Constitution does not recognise, it does not permit, mixing religion and State power. Both must be kept apart.” Assuming that this puja was constitutionally permissible, why invite the PM only? Why was the head of state, the President, not invited? Why were the CJI’s brother and sister judges and the Leader of the Opposition not invited?

As Supreme Court Bar Association President Kapil Sibal points out, there have been Maharashtrian judges before (including the CJI’s illustrious father) who have never invited a PM to their residence for a Ganesh puja. This brings us to the separation of powers between executive and judiciary.

Montesquieu wrote, “...there is no liberty if the powers of judging are not separated from

the legislative and executive.” Justice must after all, not only be done, but also be seen to be done. This continues to be the law of the land. For the sake of institutional sanctity, the CJI needs to answer the following questions.

One, at whose invitation did the PM go to the CJI’s residence? Two, why were other constitutional functionaries not present? Were they invited? Three, in the two-year tenure of the CJI, how many times has he met the PM for social and/or religious functions in private? Four, why was a private religious ritual used for a photo-op? Five, was the symbolism of the Maharashtrian topi lost on the CJI given that the Maharashtra elections are coming up? Six, given this overt display of Hindu symbols, hymns and rituals, can non-Hindu litigants expect impartial justice from the CJI?

The oath of office requires allegiance not only to the Constitution but also to one’s conscience. Can the CJI honestly say he has been faithful to his? I have nothing to offer but a quote from Shakespeare: “O judgement, thou art fled to brutish beasts and men have lost their reason!”

The writer is a Senior Advocate, Supreme Court.

Courtesy **The Indian Express**, September 13, 2024. 🌈

Humour: A prime-time visit *Raju Z Moray*



When Big Boss went
To Big Chief’s house
Big Chief welcomed him
Along with his spouse
It seems the cameramen
Were stationed in-house
Why should anybody have
Any grievance or grouse?
Gauri-Ganesha were happy
And so was their mouse!

We, the people, now know
That all is so good and well
What did bonhomie achieve?
Shortly prime-time shall tell
Executive and the judiciary
Are now bonding so well
While Big Boss folds hands
Chief’s wife shakes the bell
Is this separation of powers?
Looks like... What the hell!



September 12, 2024, **Raju Moray** writes a regular column for *The Leaflet*, titled ‘Adalat Antics’.

Bulldozer justice can't go on: SC's warning to states

Utkarsh Anand

The court frowned on the practice, emphasising that a person's property cannot be destroyed solely because they or a family member are accused.

The Supreme Court on Monday said it would issue guidelines to regulate demolitions across India — a move that comes in the background of local governments and police demolishing the properties of people accused of crimes, and, sometimes, of their families, often using earthmovers or bulldozers, without following due process.

The court frowned on the practice, emphasising that a person's property cannot be destroyed solely because they or a family member are accused or convicted of a crime.

The top court underscored the importance of due process and natural justice before any demolitions are carried out and expressed the need for nationwide guidelines to address this issue.

A bench of justices Bhushan R Gavai and KV Viswanathan questioned how a house could be demolished simply because someone is accused of a crime, noting that even a conviction does not justify such an action without following proper legal procedures.

"How can a house be demolished just because he is accused? It cannot be demolished even if he is a convict... A father may have a recalcitrant son, but if the house is demolished on this ground...this is not the way to go about it," commented the bench, expressing concern that despite previous orders of the Supreme Court on due process, there were complaints being raised.

The court highlighted the need for standardised guidelines across all states to prevent arbitrary demolitions, pointing out that even in cases of unauthorised constructions, the

process must be conducted in accordance with the law.

"We are on broad guidelines so that there is no bulldozer tomorrow and so that it is documented and checked so that neither side point any lacunae...Why cannot some guidelines be passed so that it is followed? There can be notice, time to file a reply, time to pursue other legal remedies and then the demolition...we want to resolve this on a pan-India basis," said the bench.

Governments across the country have increasingly resorted to the practice of demolishing the properties of those accused of crimes revelling in the message this sends out about their decisiveness and speediness of their justice. When challenged, most claim the properties were illegal and violated laws, though it has never been clear whether due process was followed even in these cases.

The apex court's proposed guidelines on property demolitions could serve as a crucial check against the rising trend of "bulldozer justice" — a term increasingly used to describe the practice of using heavy-handed demolition tactics against individuals accused or suspected of criminal activities.

These guidelines could establish a uniform legal framework across states, ensuring that any action against properties is grounded in due process and not driven by extrajudicial motives. By mandating adherence to municipal laws and legal protocols before demolitions are carried out, the court's guidelines would help prevent arbitrary and punitive actions that may otherwise bypass established legal channels.

The court was hearing a petition by Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, which sought a generic directive to stop demolition across the states until the court decides the Muslim body's petition alleging violation of people's rights.

Appearing for the Uttar Pradesh government, which faces a series of complaints of illegal demolition in the petition, solicitor general (SG) Tushar Mehta said that the state's stand is clear that merely because a person is alleged to be part of an offence, it cannot be a ground for demolition. Mehta read out from the state's affidavit to state that no immovable property can be demolished because owner or occupant is involved in any offence, while adding that in the instances mentioned in the petition filed against the state, notices for violations were sent to the persons, and since they did not respond, unauthorised constructions were demolished following the process in the municipal laws.

"So, if you are accepting this...then we will issue guidelines based on this. What you have said is fair," replied the bench, adding that the guidelines so issued could deal with the process to generally be followed before any structure is bulldozed.

At the same time, the bench clarified that illegal structures occupying public roads must be removed as per law and that there is no protection against such encroachments. "We will not protect any illegal structure obstructing public roads...that includes a temple also," it remarked.

The court expressed its intention to issue national guidelines basis to ensure that the law is uniformly applied and that no one takes advantage of legal loopholes. The bench requested that all parties submit their suggestions for these guidelines, and the matter was scheduled for further hearing on September 17.

"We propose to lay down some guidelines on a pan-India basis so that concern raised is

taken care of. We appreciate the stand taken by the state of Uttar Pradesh. We find that it is appropriate that counsel for the parties can give suggestions so that court can frame guidelines which are applicable on pan-India basis," the court recorded in its order. It asked the parties to submit their suggestions to senior advocate Nachiketa Joshi for collating them for the court's consideration.

Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind, which was represented in the court by senior counsel Dushyant Dave, filed two petitions in the top court in April 2023 against the alleged practice of using bulldozers to pull down residential and commercial properties of persons suspected to be involved in criminal incidents such as riots.

The first petition, filed by advocate Kabir Dixit, urged the Supreme Court to issue appropriate directions to the Union government and all states that demolition cannot be used as a punitive measure against persons purportedly involved in crimes.

Jamiat's second petition, filed by advocate MR Shamshad (now a senior advocate), specifically raised the issue of anti-encroachment and demolition drive at Delhi's Jahangirpuri area, four days after a communal violence broke out in the locality on the day of Hanuman Jayanti, leaving eight policemen and one civilian injured. By its interim orders, the court restrained Delhi's municipal body concerned from carrying out any demolition drive in riot-hit area until its further orders.

During a subsequent hearing in June 2023, the top court remarked that demolition of properties must take place in accordance with law and not as a retaliatory measure. It also sought replies from the state of Uttar Pradesh and municipal authorities of two of its cities where the allegedly illegal demolitions took place for participating in some protests.

Courtesy **The Hindustan Times**,
Sep 03, 2024 

Death Almost Foretold

TOI Editorial

When vigilantes get a free hand from authorities, tragedies like that in Haryana are just waiting to happen

Late August, SUV-driving cow vigilantes in Faridabad, Haryana killed a 19-year-old. The murder reminds one of 17-year-old Junaid's lynching in 2017 by vigilantes on a train as he was returning home after Eid shopping in Delhi. Junaid was reportedly accused by the attackers of consuming beef. The men were arrested and bailed. The case hangs fire.

Simply goons | Lynching cases by cow vigilantes reached an unnerving high in 2016-2017 – with UP, Haryana, Rajasthan and parts of Bihar and Jharkhand the most affected. But it is a crime that has takers in every state. July saw communal lynchings in Bengal. The other day, an old man in a Maharashtra train was heckled and assaulted, accused of eating, or was it carrying, beef. The details matter little, for these were vigilantes, goons who smell blood at the sight of vulnerable citizens.

Who's next? | It is telling that the shock over the Faridabad teen's death centred around the fact that he, a Hindu, was mistakenly targeted. It's equally telling that *vigilantism* – winked at by various govts – doesn't evoke society's outrage, let alone consistent and swift police action. But police and authorities should be very scared, not only the public.

Court's biz | In 2021, SC had sought Parliament enact a law to establish lynching

as a separate offence with punishment. NCRB put out statistics in 2017 on lynchings given the killings by cattle vigilantes. The category was discontinued, IPC didn't define lynching. In 2018, SC said, "No act of a citizen is to be adjudged by any kind of community under *the guise of protectors of law*." That is exactly the point authorities unsee, in states where such self-appointed or govt-sanctioned vigilantes flourish, from beating up truckers to lynching anyone who they thought were not kosher.

Too late? | Vigilantism is not new, neither is lynching. From the terror of Ram Sene's attacks on women in Bangalore's pubs to writs by khap panchayats, vigilantism was also fuelled by child kidnapping rumours and allegations of witchcraft. But in the last decade, cow vigilantism has become near-normalised. It is why Faridabad happened. It is why police delayed arresting Faridabad's cow vigilante-in-chief Monu Manesar last year. As Haryana gears up for elections, vigilantes reckon they will get a freer hand. Lynchings are lawlessness. No govt in its right mind would allow such extrajudicial "help". But as Haryana is finding out, the genie is out of the bottle, and the bottle is tossed aside.

Courtesy **The Times of India**, September 4, 2024 🌈

The Radical Humanist on Website

'The Radical Humanist' is now available at <http://www.lohiatoday.com/> on Periodicals page, thanks to Manohar Ravela who administers the site on Ram Manohar Lohia, the great socialist leader of India.

– Mahi Pal Singh

151 MPs/MLAs Face Charges of Crimes Against Women, BJP Highest

Among Parties, West Bengal in States

Sravasti Dasgupta

A report by Association for Democratic Reforms and New Election Watch found that 16 MPs and MLAs face rape charges, and that there has been an increase of 124% in the number of MPs facing serious criminal cases since 2009.

New Delhi: A total of 151 sitting MPs and MLAs have declared cases of crimes against women, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) having the highest number of such legislators among parties and West Bengal among states, according to a new report.

The report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and New Election Watch (NEW) released on Wednesday (August 21) analysed 4,693 out of 4809 election affidavits of sitting MPs and MLAs. This includes an analysis of 755 out of 776 affidavits of sitting MPs and 3938 of 4033 sitting MLAs from all 28 states and 8 union territories in the last five years.

The report states that of the 151 sitting MPs and MLAs with declared cases related to crimes against women, 16 are sitting MPs and 135 are sitting MLAs.

Among parties, BJP has the highest number of MPs and MLAs with declared cases of crimes against women at 54, followed by the Congress with 23, Telugu Desam Party (TDP) with 17.

Among states, West Bengal ranks the highest with 25 MPs and MLAs with declared cases of crimes against women, followed by Andhra Pradesh (21), Odisha (17).

Of the total 151 MPs and MLAs who have declared cases of crimes against women, 16 sitting lawmakers have declared cases related to rape. Of these 16, two are sitting MPs and the remaining 14 are MLAs.

Among parties, both the BJP and the Congress have the highest number of sitting MPs and MLAs with five each of declared

cases of rape. While among states, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal have the highest number of legislators with declared cases related to rape, with two each.

124% increase in MPs with declared criminal cases since 2009

A separate report, by ADR and NEW also released on Wednesday, that analyses the criminal background, financial, education, gender and other details of the winning candidates of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections found that, there has been an increase of 124% in the number of MPs with declared serious criminal cases since 2009.

The report also states that 31% (170) of the winning candidates in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections have declared serious criminal cases related to rape, murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, crimes against women, etc. In 2019, of the 539 winning candidates analysed, 29% (159) had declared serious criminal cases.

In 2014, of the 542 MPs analysed 112 or 21% MPs had serious criminal cases. In 2009 of the 543 MPs analysed, 76 i.e. 14% MPs had declared serious criminal cases against themselves.

The report also notes that while the chances of winning for a candidate with declared criminal cases is 15.3%, while that of a candidate with a clean background is 4.4%.

In the 18th Lok Sabha, among parties, the BJP has the highest number of MPs with declared criminal cases with 94 of its 240 winning candidates. This is followed by the Congress (49), and Samajwadi Party (21).

Courtesy **The Wire**, 22 Aug 2024. 

The poverty of political imagination needs remedy, not mourning

The rich and grounded debates on the pluriverse of alternatives to ‘development’ have now moved beyond the shadow of Mahatma Gandhi and could guide our thinking not just on ecology but also on the new economic and political order.

What is political theory? Who is a political thinker? How can anyone pronounce the death of political thought? These and many other interesting questions have come my way in response to the opening piece in this column (“Where are our political thinkers?”, IE, August 18). The overwhelming response — articles, social media posts and personal communications — confirms that this question was waiting to be asked. These first set of reactions also suggest that the question needs to be spelt out further.

Let me begin by clarifying what is this “political thought” whose decline I bemoan. It refers to a wide range of political reflections that go beyond day-to-day political commentary, ideological polemic or policy prescriptions. This form of thinking begins with here and now, but takes a step back to offer general answers to three large questions.

One, where do we want to go? What kind of political order do we wish to create? This is a normative question that involves political vision. Two, where do we stand today? How close or distant are we from the desired destination? This is an empirical question that requires political analysis, an understanding of the cause-effect relationship. Three, what is to be done? How do we go from where we are to where we wish to reach? This is a prescriptive question that demands political judgement that translates into political strategy and tactics. Political thinkers respond to all these questions for their desh and kaal. Call it by any name — political theory, political philosophy, political ideology or political imagination — this form of thinking about politics is necessary for any meaningful political action.

Modern India had developed a tradition of

political thought in this sense. We had a vast range of political thinkers across the ideological spectrum who offered general and interconnected answers to all these three questions in their own ways and thus helped us to

make sense of our past, present and future. Unlike Europe, most of our “thinkers” were political activists. Unlike today, most of them were deeply rooted in their languages. They were exposed to, and freely drew upon, modern western ideas, but they filtered these with their regional context and nationalist sensibilities. “Modern Indian Political Thought” is this repository of ideas-in-contest. It laid the basis of our anti-colonial struggle, our Constitution and post-colonial politics. After flourishing for about a century — say, from the 1870s to 1960s — this tradition met with a precipitous decline, if not a sudden death. The poverty of political imagination, understanding and judgement in today’s India is a result of this atrophy.

There are exceptions to this general trend. I had mentioned three “living” strands of modern Indian political thought — feminism, social justice and critiques of “development”. Feminist debates on the Indian specificity of patriarchy and struggles against it, on how gender intersects with caste and class, on the limits of law and state as progressive forces and LGBTQ rights in the Indian context, have opened our political imagination way beyond the



Yogendra Yadav

“women’s question” in nationalist thought.

Though discussions on social justice have yet to move beyond the shadow of Babasaheb Ambedkar, debates on parallels between caste and race, the political economy of caste and issues of pasmanda Muslims and Mahadalits are forcing open new doors. The rich and grounded debates on the pluriverse of alternatives to “development” have now moved beyond the shadow of Mahatma Gandhi and could guide our thinking not just on ecology but also on the new economic and political order. Yet, all these, even when put together, do not fill the vast vacuum left by the decline of modern Indian political thought.

This basic argument has been generally recognised and accepted by most responses to my article. Nitin Pai (“Why Independent India has not produced great political thinkers?” Mint, August 25) agrees with this assessment and has taken the next step in this dialogue by offering his explanation of why this may have happened. I hope to follow up on this. Professor Ashutosh Varshney (in a personal communication) offers a corrective to my sweeping judgement of political science by pointing out that the analysis of Indian politics has advanced and that the academic discipline must not be burdened with offering a vision for change. That, in a sense, is my point: The science of politics cannot replace the business of making sense of politics and cultivating our political sensibility. Professor Shruti Kapila (in a post on X) offers a sharp disagreement: “Political ideas and thought [are] very much alive and kicking just not in the usual places or by the same old players”. This is an intriguing suggestion and promises a fruitful dialogue as and when it is substantiated.

Much of the first round of responses has focused on the names of thinkers that I had picked up to illustrate my argument. On this count, I plead guilty. Some of the criticism stems from misunderstanding the scope of my examples. I began with those thinkers who were alive in 1947 (hence no Jyotiba Phule or Gopal

Krishna Gokhale). And I had deliberately excluded any reference to the many sharp social and political theorists who happen to be my contemporaries (apologies to all scholar and activist friends). The list was ideology neutral and included Hindutva and Islamic thinkers I have little sympathy for.

I had also limited myself to political thought in a more limited sense (hence no social theorist like Andre Beteille, J P S Uberoi, Imtiaz Ahmed or Veena Das, or philosophers like Daya Krishna and Ramchandra Gandhi or writers like Nirmal Verma and Raghuvir Sahay). Yet the criticism (by Professor Nandini Sundar, among others) about the omission of women thinkers like Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Aruna Asaf Ali and Sarojini Naidu is a valuable corrective to my list. On second thoughts, I should have also included E M S Namboodiripad in the post-Independence thinkers, D R Nagaraj and Claude Alvares in the next generation and Aruna Roy, Dilip Simeon, Vandana Shiva, Devanoora Mahadeva and Anand Teltumbde as living examples of what I have characterised as political thought. An indictment of political science must make a reference to an earlier generation of professors — Randhir Singh, Rasheeduddin Khan, Ram Bapat, Shanti Swaroop, Raghavendra Rao and Manoranjan Mohanty, who kept a connect between political science and political sense.

I am deeply aware that I must be ignorant of many more thinkers, especially those who write in languages that I don’t read. But I hope such omissions are my limitations, not the limitations of the basic argument that I have put forward. The purpose of initiating this debate is not just to recognise and mourn the “death” of political thought, but to invite collective deliberation on why we reached this place, and what can be done to reinvigorate this lifeline of our republic. May we turn to that now?

Courtesy **The Indian Express**, 27 August 2024. 

Where are our political thinkers?

It can be traced to the decline of political thought in post-colonial India. Reviving and reinvigorating this tradition is essential to reversing this crisis of imagination.

Yogendra Yadav

You know something is seriously amiss when the pivotal idea of the Prime Minister's Independence Day speech, his vision for India at hundred, is "Viksit Bharat" (India as a developed nation), a tired repetition of a worn out concept called "development" drawn straight from the 1950s. This is not merely the intellectual limitation of a demagogue. It reflects a deeper pathology — an atrophy of the political imagination — that afflicts an entire political class, cutting across ideological and political boundaries.

Two decades ago, the renowned Sanskrit scholar, Sheldon Pollock, wrote a much-cited article, "The Death of Sanskrit", in 18th century India. Obviously, he did not mean to pronounce the death of a language; Sanskrit continues to exist. His point was about how, on the eve of colonialism, Sanskrit ceased to be the principal carrier of intellectual and cultural ideas of our civilisation. In a later commentary, Sudipta Kaviraj modified it as "The Sudden Death of Sanskrit Knowledge", an abrupt extinguishing of a conceptual universe.

Something similar has happened to the great tradition of modern Indian political thought that nourished politics of colonial and post-colonial India through the 20th century. While everyone notes and comments on the decline of political morals, we tend to miss out on something that is no less significant — the emaciation of our political vision, the shrinkage in the vocabulary of politics, the withering away of our political understanding, the poverty of political judgement and the recession in the agenda for political action. The river of ideas that nourished politics has suddenly dried up. In a stylised way, you could call it the sudden death of modern

Indian political thought.

As with all movements in the world of ideas, it is hard to put a date to this "death". But we can place it somewhere in the first quarter of post-colonial India. Just recall the number and range of political thinkers active in 1947. It's not just Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar that we all remember. There was a whole galaxy of thinkers, across the ideological spectrum. We had intellectual giants like M N Roy and Sri Aurobindo who had retired from active politics. Within those in active politics, we had Maulana Abul Kalam Azad within the Congress, Acharya Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan and Rammanohar Lohia from among the socialists, S A Dange and PC Joshi among the communists, Ramasamy Naicker Periyar for radical social justice, C Rajagopalachari from the economic right, and V D Savarkar and Maulana Maududi representing the pro-Hindu and pro-Muslim end of the spectrum.

You may agree or disagree with their ideas, but you cannot deny that they were all political thinkers. They were, or had been, political activists, but their political practice was anchored in a vision of future India. While engaged in everyday politics, they were also engaged in thinking, speaking, writing about issues beyond quotidian partisanship. They were fully immersed in India, but deeply informed of the developments across the world. They read and wrote in English but were deeply anchored in the world of Indian languages. They had strikingly different takes on modernity and tradition, but collectively they shaped a very Indian — and very desi — modernity. They all created a pool of political imagination that shaped our Constitution, divergent political

ideologies and competing political practices.

Within the first 25 years after Independence, this tradition suddenly evaporated. By the early 1970s, almost all the thinkers mentioned above had died, leaving feeble ideological legacies, if at all. Political thinking was still dominated by political leaders, though they were not a patch on the body of thought available in 1947. Jayaprakash Narayan's concept of "total revolution" remained as the last flicker of socialist imagination; Charu Majumdar's was among the final creative interpretations of Marxism. Vinoba Bhave was among the few notable, if one-sided, inheritors of Gandhi, M S Golwalkar collected the remaining bunch of "Hindutva" thoughts, while Charan Singh articulated the vision of rural-agrarian India. This list may be incomplete, but is surely not off the mark.

Cut to the end of the century and the remainder of the political activist-thinkers also disappeared, with the exception of Kishen Pattanayak, Sachchidananda Sinha, Ramdayal Munda, Dharam Pal and B D Sharma who remained outside mainstream politics. Since then, we don't have, in any meaningful sense, a body of political thought that reflects on and, in turn, shapes the world of political action.

To speak of the atrophy of political imagination or, more boldly, of the 'death' of modern Indian political thought is not to say that we don't have brilliant minds, thinkers and writers any more. We do, perhaps more than before. But politics, at least in the narrow sense, is not at the centre of their thinking.

The various strands of political thinking that still float around do not constitute a coherent conversation, a vibrant contestation, a meaningful dialogue that can connect to the world of politics. There are honourable exceptions. Critiques of the dominant model of development, explorations in the pluriverse of alternatives and occasional debates in feminist and Ambedkarite circles keep the tradition of political thinking alive.

By and large, political thinking was gradually relegated to the world of academia. This produced some brilliant political theorists like Rajni Kothari, D L Sheth, Ashis Nandy, Partha Chatterjee, Sudipta Kaviraj and Rajeev Bhargava (and some sharp commentators who write on these pages), but it is safe to say that much of their ideas have not left a deep impression on the world of political practice. Barring such exceptions, the take-over of political thinking by the formal discipline of political science was an intellectual as well as a political disaster. Disconnected from involvement in the world of politics and any language other than English, the academic mode of thinking about politics is geared towards the demands and fads of global academia, indifferent to political consequences.

The sorry state of our politics today is in some measure the result of this atrophy. Reviving and reinvigorating this tradition of modern Indian political thought is a precondition to reclaiming our republic.

Courtesy **The Indian Express**, 20 August 2024. 

"The people of this country have a right to know every public act, everything, that is done in a public way, by their public functionaries. They are entitled to know the particulars of every public transaction in all its bearing." Justice K. K. Mathew, former Judge, Supreme Court of India, (1975)

Post 2024 Parliament Elections: RSS's Electoral Strategies

At a deeper level the understanding of the RSS is that the major reason for the BJP's decline in this election has been due to the shifting of Dalit vote towards INDIA coalition.

The Parliamentary Elections of 2024 gave disappointing results for BJP. Its strength in Lok Sabha came down from 303 to 240. Thereby the formal NDA Government had to become NDA Government. The alliance partners who had no say during the last ten years, now there is some possibility of their voice being heard. This may reduce the dominance of BJP's Hindu Nationalist agenda. To cap it all, the increased strength of the INDIA coalition and increasing popular support for Rahul Gandhi led to the opposition becoming more assertive and forceful.

In these elections it seems probable that RSS had not come forward to aid its political progeny; the BJP. That does not mean RSS wanted BJP to be defeated, it was just aimed to subtly reprimand the rising 'Non biological' syndrome, to deflate his rising dominance. Still RSS is in the driving seat or is the back seat driver in the real sense. Already RSS leaders are having long meetings with BJP leaders to analyze results of elections and to chart out future strategy.

In UP the RSS delegation was led by *Sah Sarkaryavah* (joint general secretary) Arun Kumar, who has been pioneering the coordination between the two organizations, *Live Hindustan* reported. RSS's Ram Madhav has taken charge of Jammu and Kashmir elections.

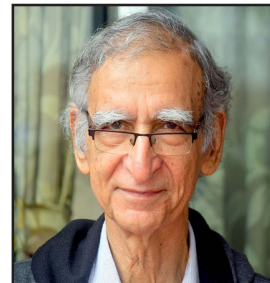
At a deeper level the understanding of RSS is that the major reason for BJP's decline in this election has been due to the shifting of dalit vote towards INDIA coalition. To tackle this VHP is being activated; which will be having a series of meetings in dalit bastis, to

co-dine with them and to organize religious programs to lure them. The VHP saints and Sadhus will be undertaking this. The Hindu reports, "These religious leaders will undertake *padyatra*

[foot march] in the designated areas, organize satsangs, Dharm Sansads [spiritual gatherings], visit homes of people hailing from the communities, and eat at their houses. This program will be undertaken in the 9000 sub division of VHP."

In a way it also reminds us of the Ram Temple movement, where VHP played the foundational role and then BJP took over. RSS not only trains the drivers (Pracharaks, Swayamsevak) but is doing the back seat driving also. The 2024 parliament election results have shaken it and it is planning to go full steam to win back the shifting vote bank. The response of RSS to these election results yet again shows that its claim of being a cultural organization is a mere façade. It is another matter that now their political strength may have to go in the reverse direction for multiple reasons. Ram Temple movement was made strong to counter Mandal. With ten years of Modi rule and major unfolding of Hindutva agenda, the realization is reaching far and wide that this organization which stands for 'Manu Smriti' and 'Hate Muslim' politics, cannot stand for social justice in any way.

It has taken so long for the opposition



Ram Puniyani

parties to see the reality of politics of Hindu Rashtra. It practically took ten years of dictatorial rule and partisan agenda of Modi-BJP that now the opposition parties are taking the baby steps to counter the politics of RSS. RSS as such had a long journey from its blunt formulations praising Nazis, and fascists as articulated in its second Sarsangh Chalak M.S. Golwalkar's "We or our Nationhood defined", to opposing the tricolor, to opposing the Constitution to more subtle language at present. Also its prestige in people's eyes had nosedived after the murder of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathuram Godse.

By a quirk of fate, Jaya Prakash Narayan's 'Total revolution' came to give credibility to RSS. J P was a giant of a freedom fighter, still he could not see the true nature of RSS, when he said 'if RSS is Fascist I am a fascist'. Just prior to this Nehru had grasped the true nature of RSS. In his letter to the heads of provincial governments in December 1947, Nehru wrote that "we have a great deal of evidence to show that RSS is an organization which is in the nature of a private army and which is definitely proceeding on the strictest Nazi lines, even following the techniques of the organization". This understanding of his was not taken seriously by the later governments, and in addition the RSS trained pracharaks had started infiltrating in different crucial aspects of social and political life of the country.

The period of two terms of BJP rule has totally disillusioned a large section of people and many parties. They have realized that what Nehru was saying has more than a grain of truth in it. To cap it all, most of the civil society

groups who had been aloof from the electoral processes so far have woken up. These groups do see the fact that the rule of BJP-RSS has already done so much damage to our society that irrespective of the weaknesses of the INDIA coalition, a situation has to be created where the goals of INDIA coalition of democracy and pluralism have to be strengthened. Starting from the Karnataka initiative of Eddulu Karnataka and then Bharat Jodo Abhiyan; many civil society initiatives are aligning together, irrespective of their difference on other issues, to ensure that democracy survives and pluralism thrives.

This realization is not just at the political level. The observation as to how scientific temper is being undermined and blind faith being promoted is there for all to see. The blind glorification of the past, the first plastic surgeon-ancient India, Gold in Cow urine or promoting beating of thalis to drive away corona have shattered the core of rational thinking. IIT's; the peak of our academic attainment; are taking up projects to prove the usefulness of Panchgavya (mixture of cow dung, urine, milk, ghee and curd).

The RSS trained pracharaks are there in media, social media and have infiltrated the very body of our national life with an understanding which glorifies retrograde values. The rot is very deep and electoral defeat of BJP is a mere first step which has to be followed by building a social common sense rooted in the values of our freedom movement. Be it the history or science or legal system, a rot brought in by communal ideology has to be combated against.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 25 August 2024. 

"Where a society has chosen to accept democracy as its credal faith, it is elementary that the citizens ought to know what their government is doing." Justice P N Bhagwati, former Chief Justice, Supreme Court of India, (1981)

Combating Islamophobia: A task overdue

Ram Puniyani

In July 2024 England witnessed riots and unrest in several cities. They were precipitated mainly due to misinformation and anti immigration sentiments among the people. In these riots Muslims were the main target. There was attack on mosques and also places where immigrants were living. In the aftermath of this, 'All Party Parliamentary Group' of the UK came up with a report for preventing such violence in future. This group mandated that using the phrase 'Muslims spread Islam by the sword' is banned. 'Islam Spread by Sword' is one of the roots of Islamophobia.

This is a great example to emulate in our country where this and many other misconceptions and biases rule the roost. How did Islam spread? By citing the examples of some Hindu kings being killed by Muslim Kings for political reasons, it has been popularized and instilled the myth that Islam spread by sword. The reality of the spread of Islam in India is very different.

The Arab traders had been frequently coming to Malabar Coast of Kerala and Islam was adopted by the locals through social interaction with these traders. The manifestation of this phenomenon is perceivable through Cheraman Jumma Mosque in Malabar region of Kerala which was built in the seventh century itself.

Swami Vivekananda points out "The Mohammedan conquest of India came as a salvation of the downtrodden, to the poor. That is why one fifth of our people have become Mohammedans. It was not the sword that did it all. It would be the height of madness to think that it was all the work of sword and fire. It was to gain their liberty from the... zaminders (landlords) and from the - Priest, and as a consequence you find

in Bengal there are more Mohammedans than Hindus amongst cultivators, because there were so many zaminders there." As such none of the kings spread their religion, barring Emperor Ashok, who sent his emissaries to spread the message of Lord Gautama Buddha.

Today in India the misconceptions against Muslims and Christians abound and form the base of violence. The misconceptions are becoming stronger over the period of time and have become a part of 'social common sense'. The process of spreading misconception began with formulation that Muslim Kings destroyed Hindu temples. The intensification of the propaganda led to demolition of Babri mosque on 6th December 1992, the guilty of which have not been punished till date. The Babri Mosque issue has been added, Kashi and Mathura. Even Tajmahal is being propagated as Shiva Temple converted into the tomb of Noorjahan, queen of Jahangir.

Lately misconception about 'Cow being a holy animal and Muslims are killing the cows' is at the forefront. This is one of the main grounds for propagating vegetarianism on one hand and lynching on the other. As per the IndiaSpend "IndiaSpend has reported that Muslims were the target of 51% of violence centered on bovine issues from 2010 to 2017 and comprised 86% of the 28 Indian citizens killed in 63 incidents. Only 3% of these attacks had been reported before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government came to power in May 2014. IndiaSpend also recorded that about half the cow-related violence—32 of 63 cases—occurred in BJP-ruled States."

Human rights activist Harsh Mander, the founder of Karwan-e-Mohabbat, visits the families of lynching victims to soothe the wounds of the families and residents. The

impact of lynching is very powerful and frightening. All this came to mind when Cow Vigilantes' killed a Hindu student Aryan Mishra on the suspicion of cow smuggling. His mother stated "In her statement, Aryan's mother questioned the reasons behind the killing, saying, "The accused mistook him as a Muslim and killed him. Why? Aren't Muslims human? Why you need to kill Muslims". We do recall Akhlaq, Junaid, Rakbar Khan and many others who have been done to death on suspicion of killing the cows. Recently while travelling from Amritsar to Palampur by road, my young colleague was repeatedly shocked to see the plight of stray cows, their menace on the road and frequency of road accidents related to cows and plight of farmers due to stray cows.

On parallel lines the non vegetarian food in the Tiffin is becoming another cause for tormenting Muslim students. In an incident a third standard Muslim boy in a prominent school in Amroha had brought Biryani in his lunch box. The principal of Hilton school, Amrish Kumar Sharma locked him up in the store room, commenting that "I won't teach children who will demolish temples after growing up..."

The major problem being faced by the country is Hate speech. We have mechanisms to control and punish those indulging in Hate speech but on ground; those indulging in hate speech are generally enjoying impunity, rather they are promoted in the party hierarchy. The Assam Chief Minister on a regular basis

spreads such hate, like I will not let Miya Muslims to take over Assam. And uses words like flood jihad, electricity jihad and naukari (jobs) Jihad. On a regular basis he and other BJP leaders state things like this to polarize the community along religious lines.

UP Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath began demolishing the houses and property of Muslims by bulldozers. Other BJP Chief Ministers have been following this example. On Bulldozer menace Justice B.R. Gavai stated "How can homes of people be demolished only because he is an accused? Even if he is a convict, it can't be done without following the procedure as prescribed by law,". He was hearing a petition against the Jahangirpuri demolition drive in Delhi after the 2022 riots. " But the question is will the Chief Ministers listen?

Is it not time for the state to set up a committee like the one in the UK to ensure the implementation of norms which combat misconceptions? In India many misconceptions are prevailing and no impactful effort has been undertaken to counter these. These misconceptions have spread very dangerously in society. The civil society groups and political parties committed to inclusive, peaceful society need to come forward need to undertake promotion of harmony by countering misconceptions, it is overdue to prevent communal violence in society!

Courtesy **The Wire.in**,

11 September 2024. 

Swami Vivekananda on sectarianism, bigotry and fanaticism

"Sectarianism, bigotry and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful Earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization, and sent whole nations to despair."

Swami Vivekananda, Chicago, Sept 11, 1893.

If 240 feels like 182

R. Jagannathan

All coalition govts compromise on policies and roll some back. Lesson from Vajpayee era is that NDA 3.0 needs to extensively consult allies before its policy announcements.

It is not unusual for coalition govts to retract, modify or enter into messy compromises on policies to retain office. Even with this rider, NDA 3.0 appears less sure-footed than the Vajpayee and UPA era coalitions. BJP's 240 seats today do not seem to be putting govt on a more solid foundation than Vajpayee's 182 seats in 1999.

Within just over two-and-a-half months of its third term, Modi govt has had to reverse or modify several decisions. It started with the rollback of a budget proposal to not offer indexation benefits for sales of properties bought before July 23, 2024, budget day this year. One can justify this as normal, for finance ministers do respond to market feedback.

But we then got the Wakf Act amendment. This bill seemed to be supported by BJP's two key allies but quickly got dispatched to a joint parliamentary panel, from which it is unlikely to emerge unscathed. Again, one can argue that it is parliamentary practice to have multi-party panels vet critical legislation. But this wasn't the attitude adopted in the previous two terms.

More recently, small caste-based parties like LJP, with just five MPs, forced a rollback of a UPSC advertisement calling for lateral entries into govt. And most recently, govt announced a new unified pension scheme (UPS) for govt employees. This has many of the features of the old pension scheme (OPS), which offered defined benefits as opposed to the defined contributions approach of the national pension system (NPS).

One can argue that the decision to "improve" NPS was already underway in Modi govt's previous term, given the pressures of non-BJP

govts opting for OPS. But will one say the same if other established policies are subject to reviews by growing political pressures? For example, will one say that it is perfectly fine for govt to offer legal guarantees for MSP, if that appears politically unavoidable?

One is not trying to be over-judgmental about a govt that needs the support of coalition partners and cannot always stand firm on critical policy decisions. But it does seem as if this govt is yet to come to terms with "coalition dharma". One can accept compromises and rollbacks as necessary in a multi-party coalition, but it seems govt is not consulting its partners sufficiently *before* announcing changes or introducing new legislation.

The core feature of "coalition dharma" is not that there will be messy compromises, but how these compromises are reached. Prior consultations would have saved govt some of the embarrassing U-turns it has been forced to make since taking office.

The difference between the Vajpayee, Manmohan Singh and Modi coalitions of 1999, 2004 and 2024 is this: both the former PMs entered into coalitions knowing they would have to compromise. But Modi, who has governed one state for nearly 13 years and the Centre for 10, has never been in the position of having to bargain with allies. This means the current coalition govt started off without a sound understanding of how allies have to be included in decision-making.

When he announced his cabinet in June, Modi sought to project continuity rather than change, with almost all top cabinet ministers – barring Shivraj Singh Chouhan in agriculture – being the same old faces. The allies got some

key ministries like aviation, panchayati raj, heavy industries and food processing, but any group photo taken of the Union cabinet before the elections would not look very different from ones taken afterwards.

BJP also pretended that nothing had changed after June 4. With Modi back and heading a new govt, there was no official acknowledgement of the subterranean shift that had taken place in Indian politics.

It would be unfair to be hypercritical of a new govt that may just be learning the ropes on coalition management, after two stints of not having to bother about allies. Coalitions are not born swearing by “coalition dharma”. This dharma is learnt on the job, and there is no alternative to making adjustments in your political approach as you learn from your recent mistakes.

Vajpayee was not a born coalition leader, nor was Sonia Gandhi, though she had Manmohan Singh as a buffer to take the blame for any missteps. During Vajpayee’s PM stint, FM Yashwant Sinha earned the sobriquet “Rollback Sinha” for good reason. Key decisions like oil price deregulation and privatisation had to be

kept in abeyance before the 2004 elections. During the Manmohan years, P. Chidambaram could not list Bharat Sanchar Nigam due to pressure from communists. And the opening up of multi-brand retail had to be shelved when Mamata Banerjee threw a fit.

For Modi, the transition to being a coalition captain after being the unquestioned boss of a majority party should actually be easier than it was for Vajpayee and Manmohan or Sonia. Reason: he has a stronger political base than Vajpayee and Sonia did.

If govt prepares its partners in advance, and explains its policies in greater detail to cadres and allies, they are more likely to accept the logic of reforms. In short, if govt embraces the need for more direct discussions made, Modi is more likely to succeed as PM than his two predecessors. He can’t leave this job to light weight ministers.

A stable coalition needs Modi to make this transition from unquestioned leader to someone whom the allies trust, and are willing to stand by when govt faces any threats to its survival.

Courtesy **The Times of India**,

August 29, 2024. 🌈

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‘We’re Not Anti-Nationals’

Prasanna D. Zore

‘We are not secessionists, we want to coexist with our countrymen but not on the terms that will strip us off our dignity and a right to peaceful existence.’



IMAGE:
Unau
Tribal
Forum
members
stage a
protest
demanding
justice for
the Kuki-
Zo tribals
of Manipur
at
Freedom
Park in
Bengaluru,
August 1,
2023.
Photograph:
ANI Photo

Senior Kuki National Organisation leader **Seilen Haokip** shares with **Prasanna D Zore/ [Rediff.com](https://www.rediff.com)** details about the tripartite dialogue between the KNO, Manipur government and Centre and why the KNO is now demanding that the hill districts of the state be structured as a Union Territory.

“Article 3 (of the Constitution) allows (Parliament) for creation of new states, changing the boundaries of existing states, but all for the strengthening of the country, the Union of India,” says Haokip.

You’ve been in a dialogue with the Government of India and government of Manipur seeking devolution of powers for the Kukis in the hill areas.

When did this dialogue start? Who are you speaking with and what’s the main purpose of this dialogue?

I’ll have to give you a little bit of background information. The Kuki National Organisation and other umbrella organisations called the United People’s Front have been engaged in a dialogue with the government (of India) since 2008.

Although we’re an armed organisation, our demands are not anti-national; we signed a tripartite agreement with the Government of India and the state government of Manipur which is legally binding on all three constituents.

We have the suspension of operations

(*SoOs*) which pertains to ground rule issues, for example, the behaviour of the security forces towards our cadres and vice versa.

The idea is there should be no incidents of firing or violence so that talks can take place in a peaceful environment conducive for negotiations.

From 2008 our political demand was that we should have our own self-administration by way of autonomous territorial council within the state.

In the north east, as you would be aware, the Government of India implemented the Sixth Schedule for the tribals in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

But in Manipur, the majoritarian population, the Meiteis objected to it. The assembly has 40 elected members (*from the valley, predominantly Meiteis*) and 20 hill people, and they (*the Meiteis*) suppressed it.

Despite numerous efforts from the Centre, the Sixth Schedule was not implemented in Manipur.

Alternatively, the government of India, when Manipur gained statehood in 1972, when V V Giri was President, Article 371C was created for Manipur, where a hill area committee was established so that the hill people, the tribal people, could have a voice in the state assembly where they are a minority.

As you must be aware that in the state assembly of 60 seats, the Meitei population, the dominant group, which constitutes about 53 of the population, hold 40 seats and the remaining 47 per cent are the hill people, primarily the Kukis and Nagas, have been given 20 seats.

This imbalance and inequality has been the bane of our existence in terms of socio-political issues, development issues, the whole works.

Article 371C, guaranteed as a Constitutional provision endorsed by the President of India,

simply did not work out on the ground.

Letter couldn't translate to spirit because the majoritarian dominated government successfully suppressed it and partly because they were able to manipulate, take advantage of the ignorance of the tribal people from the hills, who, of course, in terms of civilisational aspects, have been way backward than the valley people, who are the Meiteis, who have over 2,000 years of culture, as they claim.

Be that as it may, the Kuki National Organisation and the United Front engaged with the Government of India to find a solution within the state where there is the evolution of power so that we can also, as part of the state and part of the country, be developed if not at par with the rest of the country, at least to a point where government has, for example, earmarked whatever in the budget for the hills should come to us as planned by the government so that we also contribute to the growth and prosperity of the state and the country.

This simply did not work out and Article 371C became totally toothless. In this reality, our demand for the autonomous district councils under Article 371C was completely pointless.

So we were asking for an upgrade from autonomous district councils to an autonomous territorial council for our areas where we would have better prospects as planned by the government.

However, on May 3 last year over the demand for the status of a tribe by the Meitei population, who are also OBCs, which get 29 per cent reservation, Scheduled Castes get 17 per cent, while the STs (*the Kukis belong to the ST category*) actually get only 7 per cent (*reservation*) but they (*the Meiteis*) now wanted ST status also, to which the Kukis and Nagas objected (*and took out a rally on May 3, 2023 following which violence began in the state and has since been continuing although sporadically now*)

because that (*the Meiteis getting the ST status*) would have only allowed the Meiteis to come into our lands in the hills although they are, in terms of productivity, not comparable to the 7 per cent of the valley which has all the government institutions, all the funds that come for the state and are managed by the majoritarian government dominated by the Meiteis.

All the turmoil began when the hill people, on May 3, all over the hill districts, in the districts where Nagas and Kukis carried out a peaceful rally demonstrating against the Meiteis' demand for ST status.

Unfortunately, in Churuchandpur, all hell broke out and led to ethnic cleansing and genocide of the Kuki-Zo people by the state sponsored Meitei radicals.

Following this genocide and ethnic cleansing our demand shifted from autonomous territorial council, which would have been within the state of Manipur; we now want our own political autonomy within the Constitution of India, comprising the areas we inhabit in the hills.

We cannot be a part of Manipur where the majority dominated population and the government have treated us this way.

We are in an existential crisis. Our lives matter. For our security, we want Constitutional safeguards. And they (*10 hill MLAs*) submitted a representation asking for a separate administration for Manipur.

We — the suspension of operations groups, the KNO and UPF, who are in dialogue with the government — also reinforced the demand of our elected members for a SA (*separate administration*).

Over the next three months that followed in June, July, August, SA was defined or crystallised within the Constitutional provisions as a Union Territory, because we are of the view that we will be ruled directly from the Centre and then we will have Constitutional safeguards.

In India, there are eight UTs and they are small, the population is also small, and we (*the hill areas*) are also small, our population is also small.

And if we have direct rule from the Centre with, of course, (*an elected*) legislature, then we won't be in the same situation as the Leh-Ladakh people, who have no legislature, so their land is under threat and it's like back to square one for them. We don't want to make that mistake.

UT, with a legislature, is our political demand now, comprising our inhabited areas.

Of course, we have Nagas in the districts where we are (*in a majority*). We (*the Kuki-Zo people*) are also in Naga-dominated districts. But these are fine because districts were not created on ethnic lines. The boundaries of the districts were drawn for administrative purposes.

In the UT model that exists in Puducherry, which has four districts, two districts are surrounded by Tamil Nadu, one by Andhra Pradesh and one by Kerala.

All these four districts which are not contiguous in terms of geographical landmass have their administrative headquarters in Puducherry. And since this is an administrative arrangement within the Constitution of India, it works.

Something similar could be applied for our UT where, for example, in Churachandpur where the Kuki-Zo people are predominant. Likewise, in the other ten hill districts of Manipur.

Article 3 (*of the Constitution*) allows (*Parliament*) for creation of new states, changing the boundaries of existing states, but all for the strengthening of the country, the Union of India.

The Meiteis although they kicked us out, now they want to have their cake and eat it too. Now that when we want to leave, they don't want us to have our political autonomy.



IMAGE:
Union Home Minister Amit A Shah 'taking stock of the security situation with senior officials in Moreh (Manipur),' as he announced on X, May 31, 2023;
Photograph: Amit Shah/X

Who are the members participating in this tripartite dialogue?

The Centre chairs this (*dialogue*) and the talks are chaired by the advisor, North East, A K Mishra. He is a retired IPS officer, former special director, Intelligence Bureau.

The SoO representatives include members from KNO and UPF. The state sometimes sends the DIG, Intelligence.

For the last meeting they didn't send anybody and I don't know if they will send anybody for the next meeting.

Our objective is peace and coexistence. We are not anti-nationals, we are not secessionists, we want to coexist with our countrymen but not on the terms that will strip us off our dignity and a right to peaceful existence.

What's the current status of your tripartite dialogue between the KNO, the Union government and state government of Manipur?

After May 3, dialogue has not resumed because there were state elections followed by the parliamentary elections (*in April-May 2024*). Now that a new government is in place they have five years ahead of them and if they want they can resume the dialogue.

Last week, the SoO people were called for the extension of the suspension of operations — because this is extended periodically, sometimes for one year and sometimes for six months. Now the last extension was due in February this year.

But again, the autocratic state government unilaterally abrogated suspension of operations when they took their decision in the state assembly, where the Kuki-Zo MLAs were not participants.

On January 24 this year, the Arambai Tenggol, the militant group, summoned state assembly members to Kangla Fort and issued a *diktat* that they should abrogate the SoO. So all the Meitei MLAs came together in the assembly and abrogated the SoO and refused to participate in the February 29 meeting called by the Union government to decide upon extension of the SoO.

This impacted the government's plan to renew the SoO in sync with the home minister (*Amit A Shah*)'s wish that there must be peace in Manipur before we can decide on political issues.

When the central government called for an extension meeting on February 29, we went, but the state didn't come.

While abrogating the SoO, these Meitei MLAs said that the SoO groups violated ground rules.

If there are violations of ground rules, normally it's addressed in the joint monitoring group meeting that takes place in Imphal, but there has been no joint monitoring group meetings for the last two or three years.

So how can there be any allegation of ground rules violation by SoO? It's a technical matter, but the point was raised on the 29th (of February) by the chairperson, the additional secretary of MHA (*ministry of home affairs*).

As we started the meeting (*in Delhi on February 29*), there was a chair empty next to him, which was supposed to be the representative of the state.

They didn't come, but the meeting started with the additional secretary saying that there are certain ground rules violations by cadres of the various SoO groups, which are usually petty matters.

Nothing that can compare with the CM, a Constitutional head, allowing state forces to lead Meitei mobs to burn Kuki-Zo settlements and attack our villages. It is a Constitutional violation of that enormity.

When is the tripartite dialogue likely to resume?

Violation of ground rules by SoO groups is dealt by the (*Union*) joint secretary, North east. There's a separate meeting for extension issues. Now talks are chaired by the advisor, North east (*A K Mishra*), and SoOs are signed so that talks can take place.

Since May 3, 2023, there was almost no government in place (*at the Centre*) because the model code of conduct had set in for assembly elections first and then Parliamentary election, and so were waiting for a government to take shape.

Now that the government is in place and when it wanted to go ahead with the SoO extension and resumption of dialogue, the state

government became obstructive.

Apart from withholding funds that are due for us and exploiting us with the majoritarian Meitei-dominated government, they alleged violation of ground rules to abrogate the SoO.

When the additional secretary raised this at the meeting at the outset, our response was, what about the violations of the state forces? And he raised his hands acknowledging, understanding the situation. It was not elaborated upon.

The advisor North East requested us to give him a few days as they would talk to the state government and then bring them on board because it's essential for them to be a part of this dialogue, because the (*Union*) home minister (*Amit A Shah*) wants peace and the SoO is for peace.

The state is part of the tripartite agreement and they should participate, but they have not been compliant.

When is the next meeting likely to happen?

There is one group among us which is still trying to sort out their proposal and the government is waiting for it; that may happen sometime next week. They might be able to come up with their proposal and once that is communicated to the Centre they will decide when to hold the next meeting.

In an interview to the Press Trust of India Chief Minister N Biren Singh has revealed for the first time that he has appointed an emissary to hold talks with Kuki-Zo and Meitei leaders.

Who is this emissary and what is your position on this?

We are not aware of any emissary from the state government or from the CM. I don't think there is one.

He says a lot of things in the media and we take everything now with a pinch of salt.

Courtesy **Rediff.com**,
September 03, 2024 

Legal Article :

Each Day's Delay Matters In Cases Of Personal Liberty: SC

Sanjeev Sirohi

While quashing the detention of Kerala resident Appisseril Kochu Mohammed Shaji who was detained under the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act, 1974 on account of delay of 9 months by the jail authorities in communicating the representation of the detenu and also the non-supply of relevant materials, the Supreme Court in a most learned, laudable, landmark, logical and latest judgment titled *Jaseela Shaji vs The Union of India & Ors* in Criminal Appeal No.: 3083 of 2024 and cited in Neutral Citation No.: 2024 INSC 683 in the exercise of its criminal appellate jurisdiction that was pronounced as recently as on September 12, 2024 has minced just no words absolutely to hold in no uncertain terms that, "We may only reiterate what has been laid down in the earlier judgments of this Court that the Prison Authorities should ensure that the representations are sent to the Competent Authorities immediately after the receipt thereof. In the present era of technological development, the said representation can be sent through email within a day. It is further needless to reiterate that the Competent Authority should decide such representation with utmost expedition so that the valuable right guaranteed to the detenu under Article 22(5) of the Constitution is not denied. In the matters pertaining to personal liberty of the citizens, the Authorities are enjoined with a constitutional obligation to decide the representation with utmost expedition. Each day's delay matters in such a case." It is the bounden duty of all the High Courts and so also all the District Courts and so also the police and the competent authorities to abide most unflinchingly

by what the Apex Court has ruled so explicitly, elegantly and eloquently and effectively in this leading case! No denying it.

It must be mentioned that the detenu named Appisseril Kochu Mohammed Shaji who was detained on August 31, 2023 under the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act, 1974 by the Detaining Authority to prevent him from acting in a prejudicial manner by allegedly indulging in hawala dealings, illegal purchase, sale and carriage of foreign currencies. It must be noted that the wife of detenu then had to file a habeas corpus petition appealing against the detention orders. On March 4, 2024, the Kerala High Court dismissed the petition.

As an ostensible fallout, the wife then filed a criminal appeal before the Supreme Court which issued notices and sought jail records. There was a delay of 9 months and 27/27 days for subsequent representations. We thus see that the Bench of Apex Court comprising of Hon'ble Mr Justice BR Gavai, Hon'ble Mr Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra and Hon'ble Mr Justice KV Viswanathan quashed all detention orders and set aside the judgment of the Kerala High Court. Very rightly so!

At the very outset, this brief, brilliant, bold and balanced judgment authored by Hon'ble Mr Justice BR Gavai for a Bench of the Apex Court comprising of himself, Hon'ble Mr Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra and Hon'ble Mr Justice KV Viswanathan sets the ball in motion by first and foremost putting forth in para 1 that, "The appellant, who is the wife of one Appisseril Kochu Mohammed Shaji (Shaji A.K.) (Hereinafter

referred to as “detenu”) , has approached this Court being aggrieved by the judgment and order dated 4th March 2024 passed by the Division Bench of the High Court of Kerala at Ernakulam in Writ Petition (Criminal) No. 1271 of 2023 (“habeas corpus petition”), vide which it has dismissed the said habeas corpus petition filed by the appellant for production of the detenu, who was detained pursuant to the order of detention dated 31st August 2023 (Hereinafter referred to as “detention order”) passed under the provisions of the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act, 1974 (Hereinafter referred to as “COFEPOSA”).”

As we see, the Bench discloses in para 2 stating that, “By order dated 31st of July 2024, this Court allowed the present appeal; quashed and set aside the impugned judgment and order of the High Court dated 4th March 2024 in Writ Petition (Criminal) No.1271 of 2023 so also the order dated 31st August 2023 passed by the Joint Secretary (COFEPOSA), COFEPOSA Unit, Central Economic Intelligence Bureau, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Revenue, Government of India (Hereinafter referred to as “Detaining Authority”) to the Government of India directing the detention of the detenu and the order dated 28th November 2023 passed by the Under Secretary, COFEPOSA Wing, Central Economic Intelligence Bureau, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India (Hereinafter referred to as “Central Government”) confirming the detention order of the detenu. We have directed that the detenu be released forthwith, if not required in any other case.”

To put things in perspective, the Bench envisages in para 3 observing that, “Shorn of details, the facts giving rise to the present appeal are as under:

3.1 The detention order dated 31st August 2023 was passed by the Detaining Authority under Section 3(1) of the COFEPOSA, thereby directing detention

of the detenu with a view to prevent him from acting in any manner prejudicial to the augmentation of foreign exchange in future.

3.2 The detenu was taken into custody on 2nd September 2023 and put in detention in Central Prisons, Poojapura, Trivandrum, Kerala.

3.3 The grounds of detention and the relied upon documents were served on the detenu on 6th September 2023.

3.4 A perusal of the grounds of detention served on the detenu would reveal that there are 12 grounds on the basis of which the detention order dated 31st August 2023 came to be passed. The Detaining Authority has relied on the following material for arriving at its subjective satisfaction:

(a) Statements of the detenu recorded on 20th June 2023, 11th July 2023 and 17th July 2023 under Section 37 of FEMA;

(b) Statement of Shri Suresh Babu recorded on 7th July 2023;

(c) WhatsApp chats, voice calls, images recovered from the mobile phone as also ‘paper slips’ allegedly recovered from the detenu;

(d) Statements of Ms. Preetha Pradeep recorded on 5th July 2023 and 6th July 2023.

3.5 In the grounds of detention, the detenu was further informed about his right to make representation to the Detaining Authority as well as the Chairman, COFEPOSA, Advisory Board, High Court of Kerala (Hereinafter referred to as “Advisory Board”) and the Central Government through Jail Authorities.

3.6 Accordingly, the detenu had made representations to the concerned Authorities i.e. the Detaining Authority, the Central Government and the Advisory Board. It appears that the Jail Authorities

sent the said representations to the concerned Authorities through the ordinary post. However, neither the Detaining Authority nor the Central Government received the said representations. Insofar as the representation made by the detenu to the Advisory Board is concerned, the Advisory Board opined that there was sufficient cause for detention of the detenu. Hence the Central Government vide order dated 28th November 2023 confirmed the detention order and further directed that the detenu be detained for a period of one year from the date of his detention i.e. from 2nd September 2023.

- 3.7 Being aggrieved by the detention of the detenu, the appellant herein approached the Kerala High Court by way of habeas corpus petition being Writ Petition (Criminal) No. 1271 of 2023. By the impugned judgment and order dated 4th March 2024, the said writ petition came to be rejected.
- 3.8 Being aggrieved thereby, the appellant has approached this Court by way of present Appeal by special leave.”

Quite significantly, the Bench propounds in para 19 holding that, “It can thus be seen that this Court, in unequivocal terms, has held that the constitutional requirements under Article 22(5) of the Constitution of India are twofold, viz., (1) the Detaining Authority must, as soon as practicable, after the detention communicate to the detenu the grounds on which the order of detention has been made, and (2) the Detaining Authority must afford the detenu the earliest opportunity of making the representation against the order of detention. It has further been held that the right is to make an effective representation and when some documents are referred to or relied on in the grounds of detention, without copies of such documents, the grounds of detention would not be complete. In unequivocal terms, it has been held that the detenu

has the right to be furnished with the grounds of detention along with the documents so referred to or relied on. It has been held that failure or even delay in furnishing those documents would amount to denial of the right to make an effective representation.”

Be it noted, the Bench notes in para 20 that, “This Court further went on to hold that it is immaterial whether the detenu already knew about their contents or not. This Court reiterated the position that it being a constitutional imperative for the detaining authority to give the documents relied on and referred to in the order of detention *pari passu* the grounds of detention. It has been held that there is no question of demanding the documents.”

It is worth noting that the Bench notes in para 25 that, “There can be no doubt that it is not necessary to furnish copies of each and every document to which a casual or passing reference may be made in the narration of facts and which are not relied upon by the Detaining Authority in making the order of detention. However, failure to furnish copies of such document/documents as is/are relied on by the Detaining Authority which would deprive the detenu to make an effective representation would certainly amount to violation of the fundamental right guaranteed under Article 22(5) of the Constitution of India.”

Do note, the Bench notes in para 60 that, “In the present case, it is an admitted position that though the detenu had made a representation on 27th September 2023 to the Jail Authorities for onward transmission of the same to the Detaining Authority and the Central Government, it is merely stated in the counter affidavit that the Jail Authorities informed that the representations dated 27th September 2023 were submitted by the detenu. The Jail Authorities had sent the said representations to the concerned authorities through ordinary post. It is stated that however, neither the Detaining Authority nor the Central Government received the said representations. It is further stated that the said representations

were sent by the ordinary post and since the said representations were sent by ordinary post, they could not be tracked to know where the said ordinary posts have stuck. It is further averred that only after a notice was issued in the present matter, the said representations were sought from the Jail Authorities and the same came to be rejected on 11th June 2024 and 12th June 2024 respectively.”

Further, the Bench discloses in para 61 that, “Memoranda dated 12th June 2024 further show that the Director General, CEIB being the Central Government received the representation of the detenu through Superintendent, Central Prison & Correctional Home, TVPM-12 vide his letter dated 11th May 2024 and the representation was received by the Detaining Authority through email on 22nd May 2024. However, there is no mention in the counter affidavit as to when the said representations were in fact received by the Central Government and the Detaining Authority. Presumably, if it is held that the representation would have been received by the Central Government within 2 or 3 days from the date of dispatch thereof that will bring the date of receipt on 14/15th May 2024.”

Furthermore, the Bench lays bare in para 62 that, “Even if it is presumed that the said representations were received on 15th May 2024 and 22nd May 2024 respectively, even then there is a delay of about 27 days in deciding the said representation by the Central Government and 20 days by the Detaining Authority.”

What’s more, the Bench points out in para 63 that, “No explanation as to what caused such a delay in deciding the said representations of the detenu is offered in the counter affidavit.”

While taking potshots at the jail officials, the Bench minces just no words to lament in para 64 stating that, “Firstly, we find that the Superintendent of the Central Prison & Correctional Home has acted in a thoroughly callous and casual manner. In spite of there being catena of judgments by this Court that it is the

duty of the transmitting authorities to transmit the representation of the detenu promptly and it is the corresponding duty of the concerned authorities to consider the said representation and to decide it swiftly, the same has been followed only in breach in the present matter.”

Adding more to it, the Bench further laments in para 65 pointing out that, “In the present case, it has been casually stated that though the Jail Authorities had informed that the representations of the detenu were sent through ordinary post, the same were neither received by the Detaining Authority nor the Central Government. We deprecate the practice of the Prison Authorities in dealing with the valuable right of the detenu in such a casual manner.”

Still more, the Bench further observes in para 66 lamenting that, “In spite of this Court clearly observing in the case of Vijay Kumar (supra) that the State Government must gear up its own machinery to ensure that the representation is transmitted quickly; it reaches the Central Government as quickly as possible and is decided expeditiously. In the present case, the law laid down by this Court has been given a go-bye.”

Frankly speaking, the Bench rightly points out in para 67 that, “The Jail Authorities ought to have ensured that the representation of the detenu reaches the concerned Authorities at the earliest. In the present era of technological advancement, the Jail Authorities could have very well sent the copies of the representation to the Detaining/ Appropriate Authority either by email or at least a physical copy could have been sent by Speed Post (acknowledgment due) so that there could have been some evidence of the said being sent to the competent authority and could have been tracked.”

Most forthrightly, the Bench mandates in para 68 postulating that, “We are of the considered view that merely because there has been a casual or callous and, in fact, negligent approach on the part of the Jail Authorities in ensuring that the representation of the detenu is communicated at

the earliest, the valuable right available to the detenu to have his representation decided expeditiously cannot be denied.”

It would be worthwhile to note that the Bench notes in para 69 that, “As already discussed herein above, there has been a delay of almost about 9 months in deciding the representations made by the detenu. Even otherwise, from the Memoranda dated 12th June 2024, as already discussed herein above, there would be at least 27/20 days’ delay on the part of the Central Government and the Detaining Authority in deciding the representation of the detenu after it reached them subsequent to the filing of the present appeal.”

Most significantly and most commendably, the Bench encapsulates in para 70 mandating that, “We may only reiterate what has been laid down in the earlier judgments of this Court that the Prison Authorities should ensure that the representations are sent to the Competent Authorities immediately after the receipt thereof. In the present era of technological development, the said representation can be sent through email within a day. It is further needless to reiterate that the Competent Authority should decide such representation with utmost expedition so that the valuable right guaranteed to the detenu under Article 22(5) of the Constitution is not denied. In the matters pertaining to personal liberty of the citizens, the Authorities are enjoined with a constitutional obligation to decide the representation with utmost expedition. Each day’s delay matters in such a case.”

It cannot be glossed over that the Bench concedes in para 71 that, “In the present matter, we find that on account of casual, callous and negligent approach of the Prison Authorities, the representation of the detenu could not reach to the Detaining Authority and the Central Government within a reasonable period. There has been about 9 months’ delay in deciding the representation. Even otherwise, accepting the stand of the respondents as made in the counter

affidavit, there has been a delay of 27/20 days on the part of the Central Government and the Detaining Authority in deciding the representation when it was called from the Prison Authorities after notice was issued in the present matter. We further find that the detention order is liable to be quashed and set aside on this ground also.”

Finally, the Bench then concludes by directing and holding in para 72 that, “In the result, we pass the following order:

- (i) The appeal is allowed;
- (ii) The judgment and order of the High Court dated 4th March 2024 in Writ Petition (Criminal) No. 1271 of 2023 is quashed and set aside.
- (iii) The order dated 31st August 2023 passed by the Joint Secretary (COFEPOSA) to the Government of India directing the detention of the detenu is quashed and set aside.
- (iv) The order dated 28th November 2023 passed by the Under Secretary, Government of India confirming the detention order of the detenu – Appisseril Kochu Mohammed Shaji (Shaji A.K.) is quashed and set aside.
- (v) The detenu is directed to be released forthwith, if not required in any other case.”

In a nutshell, we thus see that the Apex Court very rightly took potshots at the jail authorities for calling out the jail authorities for most casually dealing with the fundamental right that are protected under Article 22(5) of the Constitution. It was also made clear by the top court that representation against preventive detention must be decided soon. The Supreme Court was most categorical in asserting that each day’s delay matters in case of personal liberty. No denying!

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The Humanist Frame

Sir Julian Huxley

(Summarized by Vinod Jain)

Man is embarked on the psychosocial stage of evolution. Major advance in that stage of the evolutionary process involves radical change in the dominant idea-system. The new pattern of thinking and attitude is necessitated by the increase of knowledge, demanding to be organized in new and more comprehensive ways, and by the failure of older ideas which attempted to organize beliefs round a core of ignorance.

Modern industrial man finds it hard to understand tribal people, whose idea-systems are organized round the concept of magic power; and equally difficult to understand medieval Western man, whose idea-system was centred round the concept of a central earth, created and ruled by an omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent supernatural Being.

The present age of disillusion, witnessed a widespread breakdown of traditional beliefs. It has also witnessed a fantastic growth of knowledge — about the material universe, about life and mind, about human nature and human societies, about art and history and religion; but large chunks of this knowledge are lying around unused, not worked up or integrated into fruitful concepts and principles, not brought into relevance to human life and its problems.

Meanwhile an increasing number of people are coming to feel that man must rely only on himself in coping with the business of living and the problem of destiny, but feel increasingly sceptical about the possibility of his achieving this at all adequately.

If the situation is not to lead to chaos, despair or escapism, man must reunify his life within the framework of a satisfactory idea-system. To achieve this, he needs to survey the resources available to him, both in the outer world and

within himself, to define his aims and chart his position, and to plan the outline of his future course. He needs to use his best efforts of knowledge and imagination to build a system of thought and belief which will provide both a supporting framework for his present existence, an ultimate or ideal goal for his future development as a species, and a guide and directive for practical action and planning.

This new idea-system, I shall simply call Humanism, because it can only be based on our understanding of man and his relations with the rest of his environment. It must be focused on man as an organism. It must be organized round the facts and ideas of evolution, taking account of the discovery that man is part of a comprehensive evolutionary process, and cannot avoid playing a decisive role in it.

Such a Humanism is necessarily unitary instead of dualistic, affirming the unity of mind and body; universal instead of particularist, affirming the continuity of man with the rest of life, and of life with the rest of the universe; naturalistic instead of supernaturalist, affirming the unity of the spiritual and the material; and global instead of divisive affirming the unity of all mankind. Humanism thinks in terms of directional process instead of in those of static mechanism, in terms of quality and diversity as well as quantity, and unity. It will have nothing to do with Absolutes, including absolute truth, absolute morality, absolute perfection and absolute authority, but insists that we can find standards to which our actions and our aims can properly be related. It affirms that knowledge and understanding can be increased, that conduct and organisation can be improved, and that more desirable directions for individual and social development can be found.

It is only through possessing a mind that he has become the dominant portion of this planet and the agent responsible for its future evolution. He could all too readily be a failure in the job; he will only succeed if he faces it consciously and if he uses all his mental resources — knowledge and reason, imagination and sensitivity, capacities for wonder and love, for comprehension and compassion, for spiritual aspiration and moral effort.

In the evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer either need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created: it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion. Religions are organs of psychosocial man concerned with human destiny and with experiences of sacredness and transcendence. In their evolution some (but by no means all) have given birth to the concepts of gods as supernatural beings endowed with mental and spiritual properties and capable of intervening in the affairs of nature, including man. These theistic religions are organizations of human thought in its interaction with the puzzling, complex world with which it had to contend — the outer world of nature and the inner world of man's own nature. In this, they resemble other early organizations of human thought confronted with nature, like the doctrine of the Four Elements, earth air, fire and water, or the Eastern concept of rebirth and reincarnation. Like these, they are destined to disappear in competition with other, truer, and more embracing thought organizations which are handling the same range of raw or processed experience.

Evolutionary man can no longer take refuge under the umbrella of Divine Authority. Not only is he made of the same matter and operated by the same energy as all the rest of cosmos, but for all his distinctiveness, he is linked by genetic continuity with all the other

living inhabitants of his planet. Animals, plants, and micro-organisms, they are all his cousins or remoter kin, all parts of one single branching and evolving flow of metabolizing protoplasm.

As a biologist, I would compare the present stage of evolving man to the geological moment, some three hundred million years ago, when our amphibian ancestors were just establishing themselves out of the world of water, they had to learn to support their own weight; debarred from swimming with their muscular tail, they had to learn to crawl with clumsy limbs. The newly discovered realm of air gave them direct access to the oxygen they needed to breathe.

On the other hand, they had emerged into completely new freedom. As fish they had been confined below a bounding surface. Now the air above them expanded into the infinity of space.

So, we have only recently emerged from the biological to the psychosocial area of evolution, from the early biosphere into the freedom of the noosphere. Do not let us forget how recently: we have been truly men for perhaps a tenth of a million years — one tick of evolution's clock: even as proto-men, we have existed for under one million years — less than a two-thousandth fraction of evolutionary time.

Our new pattern of thinking will be evolution-centred. It will remind us of our long evolutionary rise, which also was the rise of mind which culminated in the eruption of the mind as the dominant factor in evolution.

Our new organization of thought — belief-system, framework of values, ideology — must grow and be developed in the light of our new evolutionary vision. Our evolutionary outlook must be scientific, in believing in the value of the scientific method for eliciting knowledge from ignorance and truth from error, and in basing itself on the firm ground of scientifically established knowledge. It accepts the

inevitability and desirability of change, and advances by welcoming new discovery even when it conflicts with old ways of thinking.

Next, the evolutionary outlook must be global. Science gives us a foretaste of what could be. It is already global, with scientists of every nation contributing to its advance: and because it is global, it is advancing fast.

Quality must be the dominant concept of our belief system—quality and richness as against quantity and uniformity.

One sphere where individual variety could and should be encouraged is education.

Population-increase is already destroying or eroding many of the world's resources, both those for material subsistence and those for human enjoyment and fulfilment. Early in man's history the injunction to increase and multiply was right. Today it is wrong, and to obey it will be disastrous.

The western economic system is based on expanding production for profit; and production for profit is based on expanding consumption.

But, like the population-explosion, this consumption -explosion cannot continue much longer: it is an inherently self-defeating process....More than a certain number of

calories or cocktails or TV sets or washing machines per person, is not merely unnecessary but bad. Quantity of material production can only be a means to a further end, not an end in itself.

Although it is to his mind that man owes both his present dominant position in evolution, he is strangely ignorant and even superstitious about it. Just as was the exploration of the world's surface a few centuries ago, psychological exploration will doubtless reveal as many surprises as did geographical exploration.

Thus the evolutionary vision, first opened up for us by Charles Darwin a century back, illuminates our existence in a simple but almost overwhelming way. It shows that truth is great and will prevail, and the greater truth that truth will set us free. Evolutionary truth frees us from subservient fear of the unknown and of the supernatural. It shows us our destiny and our duty. It shows us mind enthroned above matter, quantity subordinate to quality. It gives us a potent

incentive for fulfilling our evolutionary role in the long future of our planet.

(To be continued)

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Analysing Budget 2024–25 from People’s Perspective:

Part 1: The GDP Claims

Neeraj Jain

Ever since the Modi Government came to power in 2014, it has been claiming that its economic policies have made India one of the fastest growing large economies in the world. It made this claim in *Economic Survey 2018–19*, and again in *Economic Survey 2019–20*. Then, the corona pandemic struck, and the Modi Government’s gross mismanagement of the pandemic pushed the economy into an unprecedented collapse, one of the worst in the world.

But the very next year, the *Economic Survey 2020–21* again claimed that “India is expected to be the fastest growing economy in the next two years.” This year, the *Economic Survey* declares India to be the fastest growing G-20 country. It estimates the Indian economy to have grown at 8.2% in real terms in 2023–24. This high rate of growth “came on the heels of growth rates of 9.7% and 7.0%, respectively, in the previous two financial years.”[1]

India’s GDP is estimated to have reached \$3.6 trillion in 2024. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman expects India to become a \$5 trillion economy by 2027–28 or thereabout[2], and the Finance Ministry’s review of the Indian economy released in January 2024 says that India should become a \$7 trillion economy by 2030.[3]

The Prime Minister’s Yes-men-and-women have been competing with each other in making even grander claims, of India becoming a \$10 trillion and a \$20 trillion economy in the years and decades to come. NITI Aayog has made a triple jump, and come out with a draft vision document ‘Viksit Bharat @ 2047’ to make India a \$30 trillion economy by 2047.[4] The *Economic Survey 2023–24* posits: “India ... has now set for itself the goal of becoming a

developed nation within a generation by 2047, the hundredth year of independence.”[5]

Modi’s friends are excitedly chirping in unison. Business tycoon Gautam Adani has come up with this gem, “Following independence, it took us 58 years to get to our first trillion dollars of GDP, 12 years to get to the next trillion and just 5 years for the third trillion. I anticipate that within the next decade, India will start adding a trillion dollars to its GDP every 18 months. This puts us on track to be a \$25–\$30 trillion economy by 2050 ...” Mukesh Ambani has gone one step further, and said that he expects India to become a \$35 trillion economy by 2047.[6]

All these buffoons are also gung-ho about India being the fifth largest economy in the world, and becoming the third largest economy in a few years.

But in an economy with such extreme inequality — India is now among the most unequal countries in the world, with the top 1% controlling more wealth more than during the British colonial period, while the majority of the population lives on incomes among the lowest in the world [7] — such overall figures have no meaning. The same IMF, which expects India to become a \$5 trillion economy by 2026–27, also admits that India had the lowest per capita income amongst all large economies. In per capita terms, the Indian economy is at the 138th position in the world.[8] Being the fifth or the third largest world economy is of no consolation to the marginalised.

This means that there is a problem with the very assumption that GDP is a measure of societal well-being, and that a high GDP growth rate would increase employment, increase wages and lead to reduction of poverty. This

problem has got particularly accentuated in the neoliberal era, when giant corporations have come to dominate the economy, and growth only means growth in their profits, growth in wasteful consumption of the rich, and boom in the stock market, all of which are accompanied by destruction of livelihoods of common people and spoilation of the environment. This has also been pointed out by the Stiglitz Commission, set up by the President of France some time ago to identify the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress, including the problems with its measurement. The report of the Commission, authored by two of the world's most renowned economists, Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen, notes that over the course of recent decades, GDP was rising in most of the world, even as the median disposable income was falling in many countries, meaning that economic growth was benefiting the wealthy at the expense of the rest. The Stiglitz Commission report calls on policy makers to focus on the material well-being of typical people by measuring income and consumption, along with the availability of health care and education, instead of being obsessed with GDP growth rates.[9]

But let us keep this issue aside. In this article, we subject the official GDP and GDP growth rate figures released by the official statisticians of the Modi government to close scrutiny. The investigation reveals several problems with the data and methodology, which raise questions about the reliability of these figures.

Problem 1: Manipulation of Data

Even a cursory look at the GDP data released by the Modi Government reveals that it has no qualms about manipulating data to suit its political propaganda!

India had one of the best and most reliable statistical systems in the developing world. The Modi Government has ruined it. It has curbed the independence of the National Statistical Commission — which was originally envisaged

as an independent body of experts which would verify and supervise the collection, collation and dissemination of official data — and made it subservient to its wishes. It has pressurised the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), the body that collects and disseminates data, which is run and staffed by professional economists and statisticians, to blatantly manipulate data to glorify the economic record of the Modi Government. This coercion began immediately after the Modi Government came to power in 2014.[10] We present below a brief summary of how the country's official statisticians have doctored GDP data in accordance with the desires of their masters.

Soon after Modi Government assumed power, in early 2015 the CSO announced that it was changing the base year for all calculations to 2011–12 (from the earlier base year of 2004–05), as well as changing the methodology for calculating the GDP. Based on this, it came out with new figures that magically upped the GDP growth rate to 7.5% year-on-year during the third quarter (October–December 2014), overtaking China's 7.3% growth in the same quarter, making India the fastest growing major economy in the world. The CSO also forecast the full year GDP growth for 2014–15 to accelerate by nearly 2 percentage points to 7.4%, from the 5.5% estimated earlier by the old method. The following year (2016), the CSO projected the country's growth rate to further accelerate to 7.6% for the year 2015–16 (see Table 1 for the two sets of figures).[11]

Table 1: Modi Govt's Manipulation of GDP Growth Rate Figures

	<i>2014-15</i>	<i>2015-16</i>
GDP Growth Rate ¹	7.4	
GDP Growth Rate ²	7.2	7.6

¹ Advanced Estimate, February 2015;

² Advanced Estimate, February 2016.

Now, there is fundamentally nothing wrong with re-basing the GDP; this is periodically done. But this time, there were several reasons for doubting the new data series. To begin with, whenever the GDP is rebased, the “back series” is also released immediately, going back to at least a decade or more. This time, what was bewildering was that for three years the CSO did not publish GDP growth figures for the years prior to 2011–12. Finally, in July 2018, a committee set up by the National Statistical Commission (NSC) presented its estimates of GDP back series based on the new methodology. But to the Modi Government’s dismay, the new back series showed that economic growth during the UPA years exceeded the growth during the BJP years. The new series calculated the average growth rate during the UPA years to be 8.0%, while the average growth rate during the 3 BJP years as per the new series was 7.6%. Despite the NSC being an autonomous body, the Modi Government forced the NSC to trash the report, and the government’s sycophantic statisticians burnt the midnight oil to come up with a new back series that showed a lower rate of growth during the UPA years as compared to the BJP years. The new data now lowered the growth rate during the UPA years to 6.7%. And then, wonder of wonders, in 2019, just a day before the Modi Government released its last budget of its first term, the CSO further bumped up the growth rate data for the year 2016–17 to show that growth for the four BJP years was even higher than earlier projected, at 7.7% (Chart 1 and Table 2).[12]

Chart 1: GDP Growth Rates, New Series: July 2018, Nov 2018 and 2019
(constant prices, 2011–12 base, %)

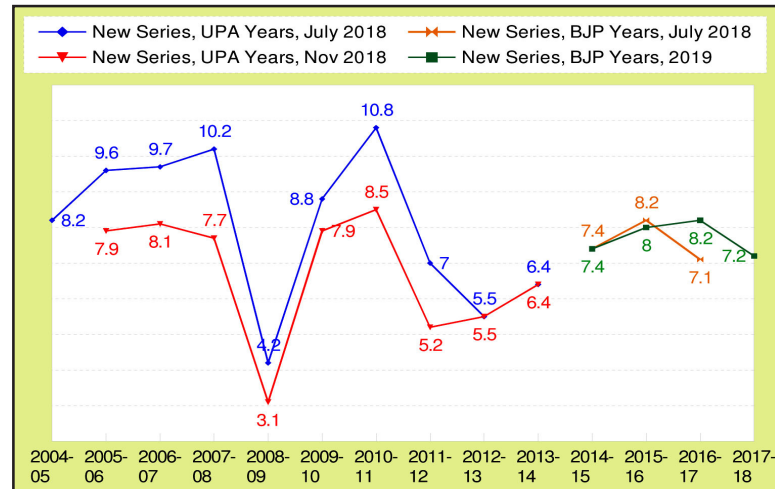


Table 2: Modi Govt’s Manipulation of GDP Figures (constant prices, 2011–12 base) (%)

	Average: 2005–06 to 2013–14
GDP Growth rate, July 2018: UPA Years	8
GDP Growth rate, Nov 2018: UPA Years	6.7
	Average: 2014–15 to 2016–17
GDP Growth rate, July 2018: BJP Years	7.6
	Average: 2014–15 to 2017–18
GDP Growth rate, 2019: BJP Years	7.7

There were rumblings of disbelief about the new figures. All reports from the ground indicated that the hastily announced demonetisation in November 2016 and then the badly designed GST in mid-2017 had devastated the economy, especially the informal sector. But the new official estimates claimed that India had grown at a whopping 8.2% in 2016–17, and 7.2% in 2017–18 (see Chart 1). These figures

were simply unbelievable!

Arvind Subramanian, who was the Modi Government's Chief Economic Advisor from 2014 to 2018, let the cat out of the bag after resigning. In a working paper published in June 2019, he admitted that India's GDP was overestimated by 2.5 percentage points per year for the post-2011 period, that is, for the five year period 2012–13 to 2016–17. Instead of the reported average growth of 6.9% for these five years, the GDP growth was more likely to be around 4.4%. [13]

There is a limit as to how much you can manipulate data. As the economic situation worsened, the CSO was forced to admit that the economy was slowing down: the GDP growth rate slowed down for 9 consecutive quarters to touch 3.1% for January–March 2020, and for 2019–20 as a whole, the growth rate fell to just 4%, an 11-year low (Table 3).

Table 3: GDP Growth Rate Before the Pandemic, 2016–17 to 2019–20
(constant prices, %) [14]

	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20
GDP Growth Rate	8.3	6.8	6.5	4

This means that the economy had begun sinking into recession even before the corona pandemic hit the economy.

After that, the pandemic struck. The Modi Government's inept handling of the pandemic led to an unprecedented economic collapse. Official data admitted that the economy contracted by –23.9% in the first quarter of 2020–21. [15] For the full year, the CSO estimated that the economy had contracted by –8% (this has since been revised to –5.8%). [16] India witnessed perhaps the sharpest absolute drop in GDP among the major economies of the world in 2020–21. [17]

With the lifting of the lockdown, the economy began to recover. Once again the Modi Government's trumpeters have begun to

proclaim that India's post-pandemic growth rates are the highest among the major economies (see Table 4).

Table 4: GDP Growth Rate, Post-Pandemic, 2020–21 to 2023–24 (%) [18]

		2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
1	GDP Rate Growth			7.2	7.3 ^Ω
2	GDP Rate Growth	–5.8	9.7	7.0	7.6 [†]
3	GDP Rate Growth			7.0	8.2*

^ΩFirst Advanced Estimates
(5 January 2024);

[†]Second Advanced Estimates
(29 February 2024);

*Provisional Estimates
(31 May 2024).

Several mainstream economists have questioned the reliability of the latest figures dished out by the CSO. For instance, in September 2023, Ashoka Mody, a professor of economics at Princeton University, wrote an article in a reputed international publication, accusing the

Indian government of conducting a “branding and beautification” exercise on its GDP numbers to make them look better in the run-up to the G20 summit. The CSO had estimated an annual growth of 7.8% in the first quarter (April–June) of 2023–24. Mody argued that the CSO had calculated India's GDP growth on the basis of output or production data. But there was a huge discrepancy between this figure and GDP measured on the basis of expenditure: expenditure had risen by only 1.4%. When the discrepancy is negligible, it can be ignored, but when the discrepancy is large, then the international best practice is to take both figures into consideration. For instance, the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) of the USA uses an average of the two. If we use this methodology,

then the Q1 2023–24 growth rate falls from the headline 7.8% to 4.5%.[19]

If we extend this argument to the latest provisional growth rate for 2023–24 (see Table 5), which is estimated by the CSO to be 8.2%, then since GDP growth rate based on expenditure is 3.8%, the average of the two figures or GDP growth rate works out to 6% — this is more than 2 percentage points less than GDP growth rate based on production data.

Table 5: GDP Based on Production data and Expenditure data, 2023–24 and 2022–23 (Rs cr)

	2022–23	2023–24	Growth rate, %
GDP (based on production)	1,60,71,429	1,73,81,722	8.2
Discrepancies (in expenditure component)	–5,53,897	1,29,012	
GDP (based on expenditure)	1,66,25,326	1,72,52,710	3.8

More recently, the well known economist and former Chief Statistician of India Pronab Sen has pointed out another important discrepancy in the GDP data released by the CSO on 29 February 2024 (see Row 2 in Table 4 above), which indicated that the GDP growth rate is overestimated. According to Sen, private consumption growth numbers correlate very closely with the GDP growth figure. If GDP growth is X percent, then consumption growth can at most be 0.5 to 1 percentage points less than X. This means if GDP growth is estimated to be 7.6% for 2023–24, then consumption growth should be at least 6.6%. But official data shows consumption growth to be only about 3%, or less than half of GDP growth. Sen argues that the only possible conclusion that can be drawn from this is that GDP growth is overestimated.[20]

The latest GDP growth rate data for 2023–24 (provisional estimates, 31 May 2024) given in Table 6 also shows the consumption growth

to be a huge 4.2 percentage points less than GDP growth rate. Following Pronab Sen’s argument, this means that GDP growth rate for 2023–24 is overestimated, by around 3 percentage points. The arguments of both Pronab Sen and Asoka Mody point to the same conclusion.

Table 6: GDP and PFCE, 2022–23 and 2023–24 (Rs crore) [21]

	2022–23 FRE (1)	2023–24 PE (2)	Growth rate (2 over 1), %
GDP at Constant Prices	1,60,71,429	1,73,81,722	8.2
Private Final Consumption Expenditure	93,23,825	96,99,214	4

*FRE: First Revised Estimate;
PE: Provisional Estimate*

Several other economists too have questioned India’s GDP growth rates. To give just one more example: Rajeswari Sengupta, Associate Professor of Economics, IGIDR, says that under the new methodology adopted by the CSO in 2015, GDP is measured in nominal terms, which is then deflated by price indices to derive the real numbers. The deflator has therefore become crucial. She takes the example of Q3 2023–24 data released by the CSO, that estimates nominal GDP growth of 10.1% and real growth of 8.4%, implying that the deflator is 1.7%. But how can India’s inflation be so low? Clearly, there is a problem with the deflator.[22] This argument too can be extended to the latest GDP growth rate for 2023–24, wherein the CSO has estimated nominal GDP growth rate to be 9.6% and real GDP growth rate to be 8.2%, implying a GDP deflator of just 1.4% — which again is absurdly low.

All the arguments given above only go to show that the Indian economy is not doing as well as the Modi Government is claiming; India’s real GDP growth rate is much below the CSO estimates.

Problem 2: Methodology Problems

The second problem with GDP data relates to the methodology used by the CSO to calculate GDP — it suffers from a serious infirmity.

The Indian economy consists of two broad sectors: the organised and the unorganised. The organised sector produces about 55% of the output, but employs only 6% of the workforce; the unorganised sector contributes to 94% of the employment and 45% of the output of the economy. Of this, agriculture contributes to around 45% of the workforce and 14% of the GDP.[23] The data for the organised sector are produced regularly every year, and so its contribution to the GDP can be accurately estimated. Of the unorganised sector, data is available only for agriculture. For the remaining unorganised sector, which has 99% of all production units and contributes to 31% of the GDP, data is collected only once in five years. In between these years, the unorganised sector's contribution to the GDP is calculated using growth of the organised sector. The last such survey was carried out in 2015–16; after that, the Modi Government has not carried any such surveys, and also scrapped all other surveys that could have given us factual data about the state of the unorganised sector.[24]

Under normal conditions, the data for the organised sector can be used to estimate the contribution of the unorganised sector to the GDP. However, with the economy suffering two shocks in quick succession — first demonetisation, and then the structurally faulty GST — this assumption was no longer valid. The unorganised sector declined sharply, while the organised sector did not. A 2018 survey by the All India Manufacturers' Organisation, which represents over three hundred thousand units — including a large number of micro, small and medium enterprises — showed that the number of jobs in micro and small enterprises had declined by roughly a third since 2014. In medium-scale enterprises, about a quarter of

jobs had been lost, and among traders the decline was over 40%.[25] A study by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) too noted that the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have been adversely hit by the Goods and Services Tax (GST) roll-out and Demonetisation.[26] This suggests that during the second half of 2016–17, after the implementation of demonetisation in November 2016, the growth rate of the non-agricultural unorganised sector had fallen to zero, and in 2017–18, after the implementation of GST, it had contracted by at least –10%, even by a conservative estimate.[27] Combining these figures with the official GDP growth rate of 8.2% for 2016–17 and 6.8% for 2017–18 — both of which represent the growth rate of the organised sector only — the actual growth rate works out to about 3.5% for 2016–17 and an even lower 1.6% for 2017–18.[28] CSO data admit that the economy had slowed down to 6.5% in 2018–19 and 3.9% in 2019–20. With the Modi Government taking no steps to revive the crisis-ridden unorganised sector, the actual slowdown must have been more than the official figures.[29]

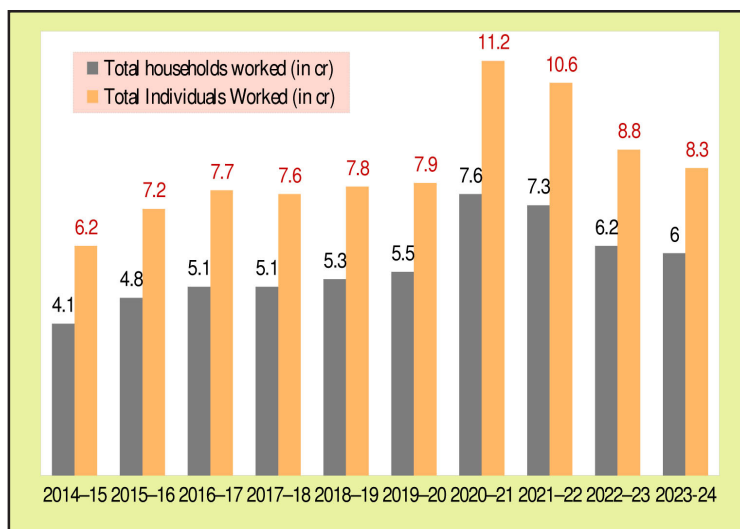
Then, in 2020, the corona epidemic hit the economy, and the economy suffered an unprecedented economic collapse. The CSO estimates an economic contraction of –23.9% during the first quarter of FY21. But again, this reflects only the decline of the organised sector. The unorganised sector suffered an even worse collapse, as it was hit hardest by the brutal lockdown. Professor Arun Kumar estimates that the unorganised sector probably declined by around 70–80% during the first quarter of FY21. Incorporating this figure into GDP data, he calculates that the economy probably declined by –47% during April–June 2020, and not –23.9%. For the full financial year 2020–21, while the CSO estimates the contraction to be –7%, factoring in the decline suffered by the unorganised sector, Professor Arun Kumar

estimates the contraction to be a whopping – 29%.[30]

Post-pandemic, the Modi Government has been euphoric about the economy’s rate of growth being the highest among the major economies. But several data sets indicate that these figures again represent the growth rate of the organised sector only, while the unorganised sector continues to flounder:

- Work demand under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) continues to be more than the pre-pandemic level. This can be seen from Chart 2. Even after 3 years of high (official) growth rates, the total number of individuals who worked under MGNREGA in 2023–24 (8.3 crore) is more than that in the pre-pandemic period (7.9 crore in 2019–20). This high demand for low wage MGNREGA work only means that the economic recovery has occurred primarily in sectors and activities which are not employment-intensive; while the employment intensive petty and small-scale sectors have been left out of the ambit of the recovery.[31]

Chart 2: Employment Provided Under MGNREGA, 2014 to 2023



- Labour Bureau data from 2014–15 to 2021–22 shows that during these eight years, the growth rate of real wages was below 1% per year across the board for all three groups of workers — agricultural and non-agricultural workers, and construction workers. More recent wage data presented in *Economic Survey* 2022–23 shows that this pattern of stagnation has continued till the end of 2022.[32]
- PLFS data also show that real wages of casual workers and self-employed workers, who constitute more than 75% of the workforce, have stagnated over the period 2017–18 to 2021–22.[33]

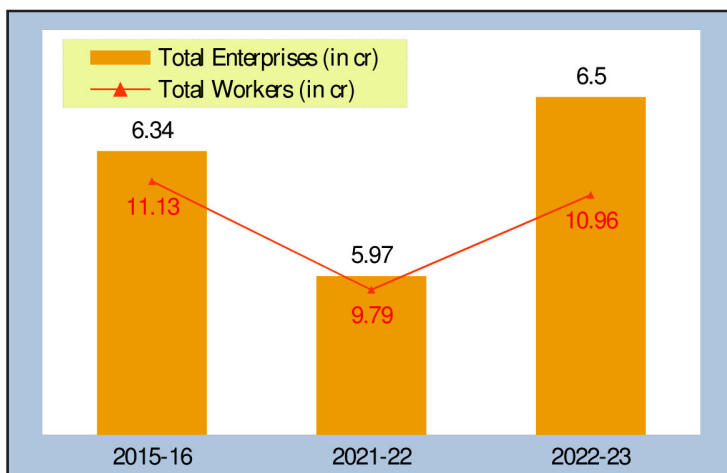
More recently, in June 2024, the government finally released reports of the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) for 2021–22 and 2022–23. The unincorporated sector enterprises (USE) represent much of what we call the non-agricultural informal sector; these enterprises provide employment to about 20% of the total workforce in the country (10.96 crore out of 56.7 crore). The data provided by these reports, when compared with the previous ASUSE report of 2015–16, provide striking evidence of the deep crisis that

had engulfed this sector following the 3 shocks of demonetisation, flawed GST and unplanned and badly managed lockdown (Chart 3). As per the data, during the 6-year period 2015–16 to 2021–22, the total number of units declined from 6.34 crore in 2015–16 to 5.97 crore in 2021–22 — implying that 37 lakh units had closed down over this period. And the total number of workers declined from 11.13 crore to 9.79 crore a massive

1.34 crore workers had lost their jobs. Over the next year (2021–22 to 2022–23), while there was some recovery in this sector with the number of units increasing to more than the 2015–16 level (6.5 crore), the number of workers was still below the 2015–16 level (10.96 crore).

Chart 3: Unincorporated Sector Enterprises:

Number of Units and Workers Employed, 2015-16 to 2022-23 (in crore)[34]



The reason for this continuing crisis of the unorganised sector is that instead of providing some relief to the unorganised sector to help it recover, the Modi Government has used the crisis plaguing this sector to corporatise the economy.

Professor Arun Kumar estimates that the decline in the unorganised sector in 2022–23 could be between 5.6% and 9.3%; factoring in this decline into the official growth rate, the actual growth rate of the economy in 2022–23 works lie between 2.5% and 3.5%.[35]

This corroborates the argument given above, that the growth rate for the post-pandemic years is overestimated.

Problem 3: Data Deficiencies

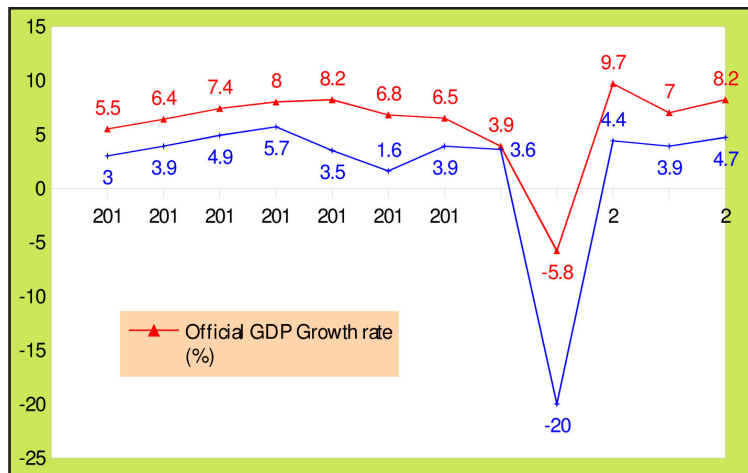
This methodological problem in calculating the GDP is compounded by data deficiencies. Even for the organised sector, only limited data is available. For instance, the corporate sector data representing industry is available only for a few hundred firms. In the case of agriculture, it is assumed that targets set by the ministry are achieved. But that has not been the case in the last few years due to heat or late rains or inability of perishable crops to come to the market during the lockdown and demonetisation, so that it rotted in the fields and agricultural output declined while the government has assumed that it has increased.[36]

Estimating Actual GDP of the Indian Economy

We can now make a rough estimate of what is the actual GDP in 2023–24, based on the above discussion.

We first plot the actual GDP growth rate at constant prices in Chart 3.[37]

Chart 4: Official GDP Growth Rate and Our Estimates, 2012–13 to 2023–24 (at 2011–12 constant prices) (%)

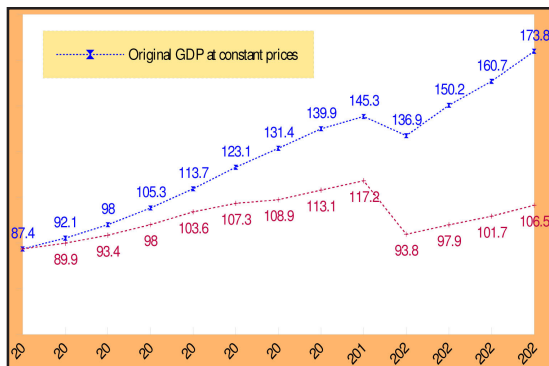


Based on these GDP growth rates, we then estimate the actual GDP for the years 2012–13

to 2023–24. As can be seen from Chart 5, the actual GDP for 2023–24 at constant prices then works out to Rs 106.5 lakh crore, as compared to the official GDP figure of Rs 173.8 lakh crore estimated by official statisticians.[38]

Chart 5: Official GDP and Our Estimates, 2011–12 to 2023–24

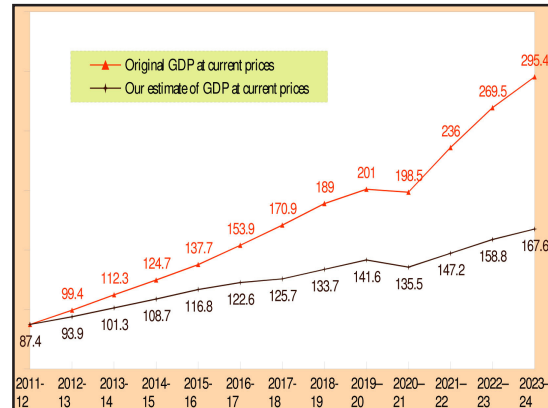
(at 2011–12 constant prices) (Rs lakh crore)



Assuming that the ratio of GDP at current prices to constant prices remains the same, we also calculate the actual GDP at current prices. We estimate the actual GDP at current prices to be Rs 167.6 lakh crore, which is 57% of the official GDP of Rs 295.4 lakh crore (Chart 6)! We are just about a \$2 trillion economy.

Chart 6: Official GDP and Our Estimates, 2011–12 to 2023–24

(at 2011–12 current prices) (Rs lakh crore)



(Neeraj Jain is a social-political activist with an activist group called Lokayat in Pune, and is also the Associate Editor of 'Janata Weekly', a weekly print magazine and blog published from Mumbai. He is the author of several books, including 'Globalisation or Recolonisation?', 'Nuclear Energy: Technology from Hell', and 'Education Under Globalisation: Burial of the Constitutional Dream'.)

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