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PROUT

A Journal of Proutistic Views and Neo-Humanistic Analysis



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Striving ahead
together with
the entire
Universe along
the path of
divinity is truly
the greatest
task for
humanity.

– Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

Fundamental Principles of PROUT

1

No individual should be allowed to accumulate any physical wealth without the clear permission or approval of the collective body

2

There should be maximum utilization and rational distribution of all mundane, supra mundane and spiritual potentialities of the universe

3

There should be maximum utilization of the physical, metaphysical and spiritual potentialities of unit and collective body of the human society.

4

There should be a proper adjustment amongst these physical, metaphysical, mundane, supra mundane and spiritual utilizations.

5

The method of utilization should vary in accordance with the changes in time, space and person and the utilization should be of progressive nature.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Ending Global Poverty

Today the world has over 2500 billionaires with a total net worth of around 13 trillion US \$. John D Rockefeller in 1916 became the first one. Today with wealth of 230 billion US \$, Elon Musk is reportedly the world's richest man. And it has been forecasted that within the next ten years the world would have its first trillionaire!

As per an Oxfam report, it is strange yet true that wages of 800 million workers have failed to keep up with inflation while the wealth of 5 richest people grew by \$ 14 million an hour since 2020! But the way we are going, it will take centuries to end global poverty, and the UN Sustainable goal to end poverty by 2030 may not be possible for another 229 years?

Billionaires today are \$ 3.3 trillion richer than they were three years back. While at the same time global poverty remains mired at pre pandemic levels. There has been a 114% jump in the wealth of the world's five richest men. Their combined wealth has more than doubled from \$ 405 billion to \$ 869 billion today. That's \$ 14 million per hour!

7 out of every 10 of the world's largest corporations have a billionaire as CEO or main shareholder. These corporations are together worth \$ 10.2 trillion, which is more than the GDPs of all the countries in Africa and Latin America together. Runaway corporate and money power has become a fast paced inequality generating machine - through squeezing workers, dodging tax, privatizing the state, and hastening climate breakdown. With corporations funneling endless wealth to their ultra rich owners. For every \$ 100 in profits made by 96 major corporations between July 2022 and June 2023, \$ 82 was paid out to rich shareholders, and with this, what is worse, they are at the same time funneling power undermining democracies and human rights. And to crown it all, it is well known that the top 1% of wealthy people own 43% of all global financial assets. All this is cause for serious concern.

Runaway inflation across the world has destabilised governments and pushed people to desperation, but the wealth of ultra rich has grown faster than prices of bare necessities. More than half the world's population nearly four billion people — their earnings were squeezed in the last four years.

Although they account for only a fifth of the global population, rich countries of the Global North own 69% of global wealth. Concentration of wealth is helped by monopolies created by the wealthiest people and the largest corporations. Monopolies harm innovation and crush workers and smaller businesses. Meanwhile quality of work and quantum of wages have declined for workers at the lower rungs. People worldwide are working harder and longer hours. The wages of 800 million people have failed to keep pace with inflation and they have lost 1.5 trillion over the last two years..

One of the problems is defective tax structure. As per estimates in the same Oxfam study, tax rate has fallen by a third in recent decades, even as privatization is fast becoming the order of the day. A wealth tax on the world's millionaires and billionaires could generate \$ 1q.8 trillion a year. This would greatly contribute towards social spending and lifting millions out of poverty all over the world.

But there's another more revolutionary way, why not have a ceiling on individual wealth itself. All the wealth generated on planet earth which is the patrimony of all humans, animals and plants, which strictly speaking is collective wealth — should be rationally distributed. This will establish a society in which there would be no very rich nor anyone very poor, with all being guaranteed employment and earning sufficient wages to meet their basic human needs. Therein lies the glory of mankind and human civilization ●



Prout Economic Policy

Prout is indeed a God centred economic philosophy, nothing else comes anywhere close. Sooner people in power realise this better for the world. The cover is very striking and appropriate, and the graphic designer deserves all praise.

- Aaron Westermann,
Ipswich, UK

Neohumanistic Progress

This is the best way to promote universal welfare, progress of mankind that changes with time and space, and opportunities would keep on coming in the future to better lot of not only humans but also all living beings.

- Bansi Chaube, Kalyan

Provoking Thoughts

Why have so many so many civilizations come and gone, namely Greek civilization, Roman civilization, and Indus Valley civilization. Why Islam could take over so many countries in West Asia but could not take over India. It is because of lacking in spiritual ideology and spiritual practice, which was prevalent in India. Why communist countries and countries with religious constitution lack many of these factors, and hence cannot provide their citizens with progressive thinking and living. In India, Buddhism and Jainism propagated spiritual philosophy and spiritual practice. Buddhism spread into East Asia, and is the majority religion in Bhutan,

Myanmar, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Mongolia, and Laos. However, Buddhism has lacked socio-economic theory, and hence these countries are not socio-economically prosperous. At the same time, the so-called Democratic countries (including USA and many South American and African countries) are unable to provide stable economy for their citizens, why?. Because their "political party-based governance system" does not work in the best interests of the people, and is unable to cater to people's needs.

- Dhanjoo Ghista, USA

Bank Loan Write-offs

With such huge amounts being written off — bad loans waived, there seems to some sort of hidden agenda in this!

- Naina Saha, Indore

Exploitation of Women

A very eye opening article based on Shrii PR Sarkar's discourses. Women's rights can only be restored by men who took it away from them in the first place. The article on Bengal Human trafficking is Bengal is sad and shows exploitation continues. I wonder why the authorities can't crack down on such anti social elements and put them in jail to keep women safe?

- Trilok Singh, Ludhiana

Remarkable Rescue

Hats off to the brave and disciplined aircrew for saving so many lives. In any emergency when everyone is stressed, it is discipline and training that counts.

- Creda D'Cruz, Goa

Environmental Impact of War

An excellent article where far reaching consequences of war have been clearly explained. But

the author's name cannot be clearly read? Seems to be a printing error.

- Nandi Katoch, Bareilly.

We regret the inadvertent printing error. The author's name is Nand Varma. Eds

New Years New Air Strikes

This latest round of US air strikes has definitely escalated the war in West Asia and these are continuing sporadically. Meanwhile Israel Palestine war continues to rage, and as per latest reports at least 27,365+ Palestinians and 1,443 Israelis have been killed in the Israel-Hamas War with 1,900,000 Palestinians displaced within Gaza and 500,000 Israelis displaced. The problem can only be solved from its roots by peaceful methods, not by military action, which once started spins out of control and cause untold human misery.

- Arun Prakash, New Delhi.

Illegal Fishing

This global scourge of IUU fishing is against all tenets of humanity and neohumanism and needs to be stopped at once. For this a duly constituted world government is need of the times.

- Dinshaw Driver, Mumbai

Crucible That is Pakistan

Pakistan today is in a sorry state, with the economy in tatters and the country deeply in debt. The recently concluded sham election with the Army acting behind the scenes is a case in point. It threw up a hung house and the previous PM Imran Khan jailed and debarred from contesting, his party followers who stood as independents have won the most number of seats 98 out of 265. Amidst allegations of massive rigging for which a senior bureaucrat resigned, a ragtag coalition government of other parties who got lesser number of seats has been formed. In all this turmoil it is the poor who suffer the most. ●

- Laila Siddique, London

FOUR BURNING CANDLES



In a room there were four candles burning. The ambiance was so soft you could hear them talking. The first one said, "I am PEACE, however nobody can keep me lit. I believe I will go out." Its flame rapidly diminishes and goes out completely.

The second one says, "I am FAITH. Most of all I am no longer indispensable, so it does not make any sense that I stay lit any longer." When it finished talking a breeze softly blew on it putting it out.

Sadly, the third candle spoke in its turn. "I am LOVE. I have not gotten the strength to stay lit. People put me aside and don't understand my importance. They even forget to love those who are nearest to them." And waiting no longer it goes out.

Suddenly a child entered the room and saw three candles not burning. "Why are you not burning you are supposed to stay lit till the end." Saying this, the child began to cry.



The flame of Hope should never go out from our life and that each of us can maintain HOPE, FAITH, PEACE and LOVE.

Author Unknown

Hope never abandons you. You abandon hope. Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what it is still possible for you to do. ●

Nationalism

The outdated ideals of nationalism are crumbling to pieces today.

and UNIVERSALISM

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

Nationalism is fast becoming outdated. Not only has the national sentiment given humanity rude shocks in the world wars of this century, but the social and cultural blending of the present age also shows the growing domination of cosmopolitanism in world affairs. Vested interests, however, continue to cause certain divisive tendencies. Despite these obstacles, a social blending of humanity is in progress and needs a common constitutional structure to cement the solidarity of the world.

It is often heard that a particular country was never so united as during the war. This is due to love of motherland, but more due to all the individuals

having a common ideal – a goal to face the peril of war. This common ideal is, however, very temporary, and disappears with the danger of war becoming less. It will have to be explained to all that there will be clash between different nations as long as national feelings exist. Some may talk of disarmament, but military preparation will go on underground. If people dedicate themselves to the cause of the welfare of the entire human race, their respective nations will also be benefited.

The one Cosmic Ideology will have to be preached; that one Supreme Father, the Cosmic Entity, is the goal of all living beings. This spiritual sentiment

will keep humanity united for all time to come. It will form the entire planetary world and even the universe into a nation. Then there will be only one nation – a World Nation. No other theory can save the human race.

Every atom of this universe is the joint property of all living beings. This has to be adopted as a matter of policy; and after its recognition, the idea that this is national and that is foreign, that a particular person is fit for the citizenship of a particular country while others are not or have no rights at all, cannot stand. In reality, only vested interests appear intensely interested in such illusory matters.



All people are world citizens by birth. Every human being has the right to go and settle anywhere and to live like a human being. If any group of people of any country is not ready to accept this fundamental right of living beings, then it should be understood that their utterances for “peace” are only meant to cheat and bluff others.

Humanity has a right to live not only in this small world, but also on every planet and satellite, meteorite, nebula and every particle of this vast creation. If anyone wants to deprive human beings of this very birthright, then people will have to establish it by force.

The human society is continually striving to arrive at a synthesis through analysis, some sort of unity through diversity. The natural obstructions of small clans, narrow communal interests, geographical distances and intractable customs and usages barriers – none of these obstacles could hinder the steady and silent movement towards a supreme goal. That is why the policy of apartheid, the vanity of racial superiority, national chauvinism or regionalism – these relative doctrines or social philosophies could not thwart the progress of human society.

The subterranean flow of love and affection exists in all hearts alike. Every person cries out in pain, everyone feels pleasure when there are occasions of joy and happiness. Maybe in different geographical, cultural, social and other environments, the lifestyle of different human groups may vary; maybe, a few special psychic traits in those groups may assert themselves, but fundamentally, their mental existences flow along the same channels of ideas and consciousness. Containing the same cosmic momentum and under the same cosmic inspiration, they all have set out for a tryst with the same Destiny.

Humanity has only one



culture. I am not prepared to admit that there are various cultures. The dances, songs, pronunciation and ceremonial celebrations of different sections of humanity may have their local peculiarities, but these cannot be considered cultural differences. The variations in local customs cannot be removed by legal force or by dictatorial rule. If an attempt is made to destroy common practices, languages, and various local manners and customs in the name of national or human unity, violence and mutual distrust will result and collective life will be doomed.

I am in favour of social synthesis. In my opinion, as people come more intimately in contact with one another, and the corners of the world come nearer, local customs will assume newer forms as a result of frequent interchange. The flowers of different gardens will unite into a bouquet which will be more, not less, beautiful than the individual flowers themselves. If different countries or communities are anxious to establish social blending through marriages, then social synthesis can be achieved within a very short time. Its concrete reflections are already apparent to some extent in cosmopolitan cities.

A world government is essential to exercise effective control in certain spheres. For example, there should be only one

world military force. The world government should form certain autonomous units (not necessarily national) to deal with problems such as education, food supply, and flood control. The boundaries of these units may be readjusted to reflect the development of more sophisticated communication techniques. Such development brings the remote parts of the world nearer and the world therefore grows smaller.

The outdated ideals of nationalism are crumbling to pieces today. The newly awakened humanity today is anxious to herald the advent of one Universal Society under a vast blue sky. The noble and righteous people of all countries, bound by fraternal ties, are eager to assert in one voice with one mind, in the same tune, that human society is one and indivisible. In this voice of total unity and magnanimity lies the value and message of eternal humanism.

The fact that the fortune of every individual, not only of this earth, but of the entire cosmos, has been wreathed together, will have to be admitted one day by humanity. The spiritual aspirants have to fetch that auspicious moment sooner by their pauseless effort, service and propagation of the great ideology. This alone is the supreme task for the present humanity. ●

THE TIME FOR PLANNING IS NOW

The new economy will need to be built on commerce in necessities and basic amenities, and not superfluous goods

Ronald Logan

Capitalism is eating itself from the inside, but as its erosion is internal its precarious condition is not so visible. That is why capitalism will end in sudden collapse. The Soviet Union quickly crumbled under its own weight, but capitalism will explode. It will go down suddenly, like a building whose foundations have weakened from internal corrosion until it abruptly collapses.

The current economic system requires ever increasing consumption to hold it up — consumption at levels that are unsustainable. When this consumption driven system stops, the current economy will stop. The

new economy that will succeed it will need to be built on commerce in necessities and basic amenities, and not superfluous goods. Out of necessity humanity will have to adopt economies based on PROUT-like approaches, and these economies will be grounded in the values of neohumanism. That is, the well-being of human beings and of the earth's living beings will come first.

The approaches and values of a PROUT system were first conceived some time ago, and its seeds are now ready to be spread. Some seeds have already been planted in demonstration projects and placed in books, articles, and videos. Some are held in the minds of progressive individuals. But

these seeds cannot fully sprout as yet as the rich soil of human innovation, commitment, and drive is so adversely impacted by the domineering grip of capitalism. But when capitalism is gone, then the fertile earth and the creative human minds will have plenty of rich soil and energy with which to build a new society.

We cannot easily imagine how change will occur and what it will be like on the other side of this great shift, for at present the tendrils of capitalism limit our thinking and choke off progressive change. Consider how it has pervaded the utilization of the Internet.

Capitalism will fall and we must be ready — not for disaster



but for opportunity. Progressive forces are already hard at work creating opportunities for the dispersal of new ideas and new approaches. They are building the foundations of the new society, though as yet little can be seen of their work. They are going forward, knowing — those who see deeply enough — that soon the conditions of the world will change and the demand for their knowledge and vision will keep them busy.

The problem that the advocates of a new society are now facing is that the tentacles of capitalism are sucking the lifeblood and energies of people everywhere, and so their message is not heard above the noise. But after an earthquake, when all is reduced to rubble, the sound of one helicopter bringing relief aid is a very loud and welcome noise. This is how it will be: those with a progressive vision will be like the relief workers after the earthquake, bringing what is necessary to rebuild the society upon the rubble of what was.

The infrastructure of the corporate economy which people have come to rely on will be gone,

so new cooperative enterprises will have to be launched quickly. Work opportunities and purchasing power will have to be created to address suffering and get goods and services flowing. When capitalism has gone to ashes, out of the ashes the phoenix of a people's economy can rise.

When the Soviet Union fell there was widespread suffering. But, as we saw, people are resilient. The farms still produced food, though the distribution of the food was disorganized. Electricity and fuel were still produced, though there were no innovative systems established for rational distribution. The bureaucrats and police still showed up for work, though their pay checks were disrupted. The buses ran and the airplanes flew, though the service was basic. Consumer goods were scarce, yet there were enough necessities and amenities available for people to survive.

What was not there when Soviet communism collapsed was innovative thinking on a new direction. No one had a better system to put in its place; there was no progressive vision. So,

capitalists from the global economy and local opportunists rushed in and purchased the resources for pennies on the ruble. Opportunists flourished and fed on the misery of the people. A class of multimillionaire quickly formed and became a cabal of quasi-capitalist oligarchs, accumulating wealth among a few while the post-Soviet society as a whole languished.

But now, with capitalism's collapse there will be PROUT, built on the value base of neohumanism, and there will be the many progressive ideas and models that are compatible with PROUT's synthetic economic framework. So, the potential for a progressive vision now exists to replace capitalism. Only the progressive minded society builders must be ready to spring into action — like the disaster action teams of the relief organizations following a great catastrophe — and they must also have the political strength to see that greed driven opportunists can't consolidate a grip on society's resources to form a Russian-like oligarchy.



The Time for Planning is Now

PROUTists and their many allies must make their post-collapse action plans now and have all in readiness for when the opportunity strikes. As with Soviet communism, capitalism's fall will happen very fast, and in the devastation of its fall people will be listening for the sound of the relief helicopter, bringing knowledge of how to reorganize their local economies so they will have food to eat and cooperative businesses to work in and purchasing power to obtain their necessities and the other requisites to rebuild a life for themselves and their families.

People's homes or their neighbourhoods will need gardens, solar or wind powered energy generating systems, and supplies of potable water. Clean sources of heat and fuel will be needed. Ride sharing and public transport will become the norm, for the cost of individual auto ownership will become unaffordable to most. Repair and renovation of existing mechanical systems will flourish, for the engines of mass production will be paused for lack of demand and loss of investment. Newly structured local governing boards will need to be formed to supersede the old non-functional governing systems.

Most of all, people will need a workable vision and the practical blueprints to build the new economic and political systems. All of this is contained in PROUT, built on the value base of neohumanism.

It is likely that the capitalist economy will fall faster than did the Soviet Union's communist economy. But if PROUT-like vision and practical solutions can be brought forward swiftly, capitalism's replacement will be fast, and the new system will arise quickly.

So, the progressive visionaries need to prepare



themselves by learning the practical aspects of how to operate the economic and governing systems based on neohumanism-guided approaches. Teams of society rejuvenating responders should be trained on every level. And they should begin now building demonstration projects, for these will become very important in the near future. These PROUT-inspired models must be easy and quick to build and be readily replicable.

In many places in the aftermath of capitalism's fall there may be a need to rapidly construct temporary shelters for the unhoused while they begin their new jobs and build their new lives. In some places, with the complicating impacts of climate change disasters, flooded, burned or demolished cities and towns will have to be abandoned wholesale and new self-sustaining towns and liveable cities will have to be quickly built to replace them. These new settlements, if built on the inspiration of PROUT's integrated development schemes, will flourish.

Non-polluting sources of energy will have to be quickly created to provide for the energy needs of the world's peoples. Following capitalism's collapse, during the transition, energy

sources will not be plentiful. However, with rational and innovative utilization of resources, there can be enough for all — just not enough for wasteful use by a few.

So, the new economic and governing vision must be brought forward at the proper time, and that time is quickly approaching. The time is now to actively prepare. It is time to lay down the backbone of the distribution of knowledge of the application of PROUT-like social system so that a new vision and new approaches can flow freely at the time of the quickly approaching apocalypse.

Capitalism has been digging away at its own foundations, and it has no contingency plans for its own collapse. Capitalism will fall. And the few remnants of communism will also fall, as will the fundamentalism-based governing systems. Outdated governments and economic systems will not be able to function. However, as happened in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, people will still show up for work, for work is vital to their equilibrium. But they will need new ideas and new hope to guide and inspire their work.

The moment of great change is coming. We must prepare to seize the day. ●



Informal workers are most impacted by air pollution



AIR POLLUTION

Hits Informal Workers Worst

 Arun Prakash

In so called prosperity terms by Gross Domestic Product GDP India dubiously ranks fifth among the top ten nations, but as per Purchasing Power Parity PPP, India's ranks a high third after China and the USA

Yet among 1.25 billion Indians there are over 27 million Living below the poverty line. With most of the population not having a long and healthy life, with little education and access to knowledge and having poor living standards as per Human Development Index HDI, India is 130 out of 188 nations; and by GNI Gross National Income it's 151. This is low much too low for this

ancient land once fabled as a bird of gold with milk and honey flowing.

In the above backdrop and recent acute air pollution for the whole of January over north India Delhi NCR and surrounding states especially Delhi city; being the hardest hit with 80 lakh vehicles having very poor to severe air quality; and satellite towns of Faridabad, Ghaziabad and Gurgaon faring no better affected; let us look at a recent study on the impact of air pollution on informal settlements in Delhi had a detrimental impact on human health and 91% fell sick or uncomfortable when air quality deteriorated.

The study revealed that informal workers, especially those residing near landfill sites in Delhi are most impacted by the pollution because of working outdoors for long hours during the day. Hardest hit were construction workers with added pollution caused by construction materials like cement, sand and gravel which they have to handle at their work sites which include home based workers construction site, landfill, street vendors, waste picker, small industries factory workers, daily wage workers, shop owners and petty traders who face severe health challenges due to air pollution.

Here are a few statistics on the impact from the study. 94% felt air pollution has detrimental impact on health. 91% reported feeling sick or uneasy when air quality deteriorates. 48.5 % say air pollution has significant impact on their lives. 31% are afraid of complaining about air pollution at work site among them 95% feared losing their jobs. Among issues at the workplace 75% feel the working hours are excessively long and an equal percentage face constant exposure to pollution. 70% toil under extreme weather conditions and again an equal percentage work in physically demanding jobs.

There are additional concerns too. 37% gave inadequate access to potable water; 27% are exposed to toxic substances and 21% are harassed by employers. Major environmental issues are 80% contaminated water, 69% air pollution, 59% water scarcity, 51% heat stress and 50% issues related to cleanliness and hygiene.

Though they know pollution causes them to get sick, they dare not complain for fear of losing their jobs.

Yet in times of high air pollution in Delhi, government shuts down construction sites, which leads to loss of jobs and impacts their already precarious livelihoods and financial security

of such informal sector workers. The waste pickers at Bhalswa experience additional health problems beyond air pollution from contaminated water, toxic fumes from garbage burning and handling of toxic waste without adequate protective gear. Therefore it is necessary that various stake holders take precise steps to offer skill development and training programmes to them. This will help them look for other jobs away from waste picking.

Awareness campaigns on air pollution should be developed, and workers be helped to promote different kinds of livelihoods for these informal workers. Protection from landfill pollution is needed along with setting up community facilities. The study recommended collaborative efforts, policy changes, getting different stakeholders together for their involvement to alleviate the plight of such workers in the informal sector.

Today nearly 8.7 % of India's population of 140 crores, viz. over 12 crores have no jobs. With 6 million young in their prime In the organised sector mostly Government employed number 30 million. Two-thirds among them get job security and assured pay rise, while 140 women and 320 million men toil away in the unorganised sector barely earning

subsistence wages without any job security at all.

The striking fact is that this informal economy accounts almost 50% of the national product of 3.18 lakh crores US \$ or 264 lakh crore Indian Rupees, and India is third largest economy of the world and is poised to become the third largest within the next few years. Still for these millions of daily wagers, farmers, stone breakers the coolies and maids, no heart bleeds for them, while privileged government employees: peons chowkidars drivers clerks and their inflation indexed pay rise makes unorganized workers poorer and an uncertain morrow becomes more unsure.

So where lies the answer it is in a holistic approach of Shrii PR Sarkar's Neo Humanistic Education that teaches besides modern needs of the day, the cardinal human principles of spirituality, service, morality, and universal love for all creation. This would be supported by a Proutist economy where profit is not the overriding motive, where men won't need to chase jobs, jobs would chase men. It's the only way to calm the turbulence of the present towards the bright future that awaits.

And as far as employment is concerned, what else — more jobs in the government or in private owned companies, or let the unorganized sector thrive under watchful eyes of a new government of moralists having genuine love for the people; who will optimise wealth and rationally distribute the same. Working hours could be halved to double the numbers employed. And in the private sector decrease profits and reduce unemployment, providing jobs closer to hearth and home and guaranteeing minimum wages to all so that they may live with human dignity with head held high. ●



INTERIM BUDGET 2024-25

*Selling the Dream of
Prosperous India
without a Blueprint*

■ Ganesh Bhat

The popular comment on the Indian budget that “*In every budget poor gets a subsidy and rich gets rebate and the Middle class sees TV and debate*” needs to be revised a bit, because the interim budget has camouflaged the subsidies and the rebates by sowing a dream of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

In an election year, the incumbent Government cannot present a full Budget as there may be a change in the executive after the polls. As per the code of conduct of the Election Commission of India, the outgoing government will not be allowed to propose any major tax and economy-related policies to avoid

its influence on electors. Hence, there is a need for an interim budget that can be understood as a provisional arrangement to meet the expenditure of the government for a short period till the new government comes in and makes the new full budget.

A simple vote on account includes presenting the Centre's fund requirements for salaries, ongoing projects, and other expenditures for the transitional period and is then passed via the Lok Sabha sans debate. It cannot make any changes to tax rates. It is also valid only for two months and can be extended up to four months.

The full-year Union Budget is a comprehensive financial plan to

cover all the aspects of government spending, revenue generation, policy reforms, and more for an entire fiscal year.

However, it has been the trend for outgoing governments to present an interim budget instead of a simple vote on account. In an interim budget, the Finance Minister will present the current state of the Indian economy, and its fiscal status including India's revised estimated growth in the next year (here FY 25 from April 2024-March 2025).

The Budget Speech

The Finance Minister's speech is more of praise for the PM and exaggeration of the achievements



of NDA during the last decade. There are no direct announcements of subsidies or rebates, but indirectly the voters are lured through different schemes and dreams to be realised after a long time. Some of the examples are:

Vision for Viksit Bharat

The Budget speech says, "Our vision for 'Viksit Bharat' is that of "Prosperous Bharat in harmony with nature, with modern infrastructure, and providing opportunities for all citizens and all regions to reach their potential. . . In the full budget in July, the Government will present a detailed roadmap for our pursuit of 'Viksit Bharat'."

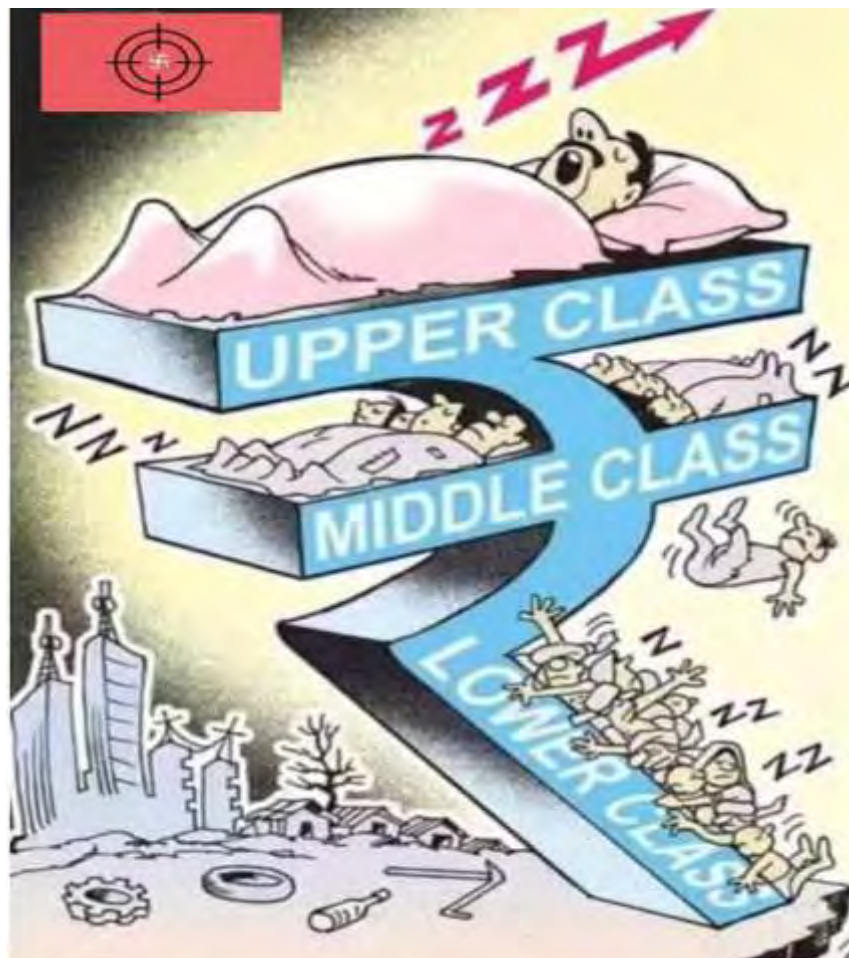
"The next five years will be years of unprecedented development, and golden moments to realize the dream of developed India @ 2047."

The government relies on experience and believes that the trinity of demography, democracy, and diversity backed by 'Sabka Prayas' has the potential to fulfill the aspirations of every Indian.

Where is the Blueprint

To make all regions reach their potential, the direction of planning has to be reversed from the top-down system followed at present. The basic unit of developmental planning should be the block, demarcated based on geographical, economic potentialities, problems, etc. The purpose of planning should be to make available the basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care) of every individual living in the area by providing gainful employment opportunities (not by government doles) through sustainable use of local resources.

It is essential to recognise and give the right over the natural resources to the local people. The regime which is actively involved in handing over the right over the natural resources (Ores, Rivers, Ports, Forests, Railways, Banks,



etc.,) to a few crony capitalists cannot be expected to change overnight.

This concept of a decentralized economic system has never been mentioned or projected by the present regime; rather it has encouraged a centralized system. There have been continuous efforts to reduce and encroach over the powers of the states by the present Government, and there are no reasons or indications to believe that it will change. Whenever the states ask for their rightful share or put forth a demand for decentralisation of economic power, the Union Government brands it as a divisive tendency. By taking shelter from pseudo-nationalism the ruling party is interested in becoming a Central Government rather than a Union Government.

There is no need to wait for 23 more years to make India and its people prosperous, provided a

decentralized system of economy is adopted, that can show the result in less than 5 years. This requires identifying self-sufficient socio-economic zones and planning to attain economic self-sufficiency. Since the present regime could not materialise the promises during the last 10 years, (like the creation of 2 crore jobs a year, bringing back the black money, doubling of farmers' income, etc.,) it has made the people dream for two more decades.

Making a provision of INR 75,000 Cr as a fifty-year interest-free loan to support those milestone-linked reforms by the State Governments will remain an eye wash till structural changes are made in the economic system.

Camouflaging the Doles

Promising to take up **two crore more houses** in the next five years under the continuity of PM

AwasYojana (Grameen) is simple bait to voters. Similar is the 'Rooftop Solarisation and Muft Bijli' scheme that promises to enable one crore households to obtain up to 300 units of free electricity every month. While the benefits of the scheme are highlighted in the budget, it lacks a way to achieve this. Added to these is the promise to launch a scheme to help deserving sections of the middle class "living in rented houses, or slums, or chawls and unauthorized colonies" to buy or build their own houses. It is announced in the interim budget that the Government will subsidize the **construction of 30 million affordable houses in rural areas.**

The statement of the FM that the success of SHGs has assisted nearly one crore women to become LakhpatiDidi already lacks support of authentic data. The FM announced that the Government has decided to enhance the target for Lakhpati Didi from 2 Cr to 3 Cr as if it is they who do it.

Why doesn't the Election Commission consider these promises as the ones to influence the voters?

Political Statements

The Interim Budget is less professional but more of a political speech with a lot of praise for the PM at regular intervals, here are some examples:-

"People are living better and

earning better, with even greater aspirations for the future. The average real income of the people has increased by fifty percent. Inflation is moderate. People are getting empowered, equipped, and enabled to pursue their aspirations".

The FM has boasted that average monthly Gross GST collections doubled to 1.66 lakh crore in FY24, but the fact that two-thirds of GST is paid by the poorest 50% and the richest population pays only 3 to 4% is not revealed.

When to Repay the Loans

The Budget reveals that 28% of the resources come from borrowings and other liabilities, and 20% of the total expenditure goes towards payment of interest, whereas there is no provision for repayment of earlier loans. It means the total loans of the country which has increased threefold since 2014 will still increase.

The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003 requires the central government to progressively reduce its outstanding debt, revenue deficit, and fiscal deficit, and to give three-year rolling targets for these. Yet, the FM solaces the countrymen with the figures that borrowing for 2024-25 is lower than 2023-24.

Providing a Loan itself will not bring Self Sufficiency

In the open market competition

system where MNCs and big companies are allowed to take part in all the fields of manufacturing, trade, and commerce including retailing, it is very hard for individuals and small players to face competition and sustain the business. A clear-cut policy for trade and commerce is essential, where there shall be no overlapping of economic activities and no unhealthy competition. PROUT therefore proposes a clear-cut three-tier industrial policy – where the key industries will be managed by immediate Government, small and petty businesses by individuals, and the rest of the industries and trade to be managed by cooperatives. The present Union Government lacks **this scientific and logical industrial policy.**

Quoting the figures that the Government has helped to secure loans to artisans, street vendors, women, and MSMEs to attain self-sufficiency is mere boasting.

Promoting Foreign Investments

The BJP which opposed FDI decades ago is now announcing with pride that FDI has increased during its tenure, and justifies that it is done with the spirit of '**first develop India**'. It is a fact that the priority of any investor is to maximise profit and reap back the investment, they have hardly any interest in developing the place unless it yields extra profit.

The voters neither have the minimum level of socio-economic consciousness nor the patience to demand a blueprint of development; because they are easily swayed away by emotional slogans and issues. While presenting the election year Interim Budget, the team BJP has scored well over its rivals by intelligently showing a dream of a prosperous India in 2047, to the youth of the country who form their vote base. It is like dangling a carrot in front of a horse. ●



Women Emerging FROM OPPRESSION

Using few words, Shrii P.R Sarkar has given us a vivid picture of the thousands of years of oppression of women in patriarchal society:

“Because such injustices continued for a long time, women developed an inferiority complex and a sense of despair. Who can count the millions of women who have spent sleepless nights weeping their grief out in the dark, and died with no hope for redressal of such tyranny. They were pulverized like soft lumps of earth under the steamroller of *vipra* rule.” (“The Vipra Age”)

In every sphere of life men have either substantially limited the rights of women

■ Ácárya Acyutánanda Avadhúta

“In every sphere of life men have either substantially limited the rights of women, or made the ability of women to exercise their rights subject to the whims and caprices of men. Such an attitude never existed among the primitive human beings who lived at the dawn of human history. Nor had primitive men conceived of the deceitful practice of establishing their supremacy by keeping women in bondage in the name of

social purity.” (“Social Justice”)

“The moment opportunists discover a weakness in somebody, they exploit that weakness and devour all the vitality of the person. They even consider it a weakness on their part if they reflect on the sufferings and heartaches of those who are weak.” (“Social Justice”)

“Those who shudder at the sight of various social vices . . . should realize that among all the



causes behind this so-called all-round degeneration, social injustice is the principal one. Because of injustices against women with respect to their social rights and because women are economically crippled, a section of women is compelled to take to prostitution.” (*Problems of the Day*)

The Revolutionary Triumph

The women's-rights movement may overall be the most inspiring liberation movement the world has ever seen. For them to throw off the dogmas that chained their minds was a great achievement. A few men helped out along the way, but men seem to deserve little credit.

(Changing circumstances do seem to deserve credit, however. Though I can't speak with much scholarship about this, industrialization and world wars brought women out of the home and into the workplace; increasing mechanization lessened the advantage men had had in terms of greater physical strength; in Russia, Lenin and the Bolsheviks supported women's equality; developments in media – first radio, then television – helped remove women's ignorance.)

I'm not well-informed about when the raised consciousnesses of different individual women first resulted in organization and thus could be called truly revolutionary, but in terms of tangible advances,

probably the greatest ones occurred in Western democracies once women themselves began to organize independently of men. In the USA, what is known as the “first wave of feminism” secured voting rights in 1920 after seventy years of struggle. That first wave of feminism also made progress in access to higher education and to professions.

The second wave of feminism in the USA, starting in the 1960s, saw women securing further rights in the workplace, and also rights in relation to their husbands and in relation to health care, and also securing sexual freedom and a right to abortion. (Securing a right to abortion certainly helps indicate the increasing strength of the movement, regardless of the wisdom of that victory.)

The Pitfalls

In his article “Women's Rights” Shrii Sarkar wrote, “life... means real liberty and not license to commit anything good or bad.” Elsewhere he wrote: “Lack of consciousness about rights and responsibilities drives social beings towards a tragic end.” The women's-rights movement must overall be the most inspiring liberation movement the world has ever seen. But in this second wave of feminism we see for the first time, along with all the inspiring progress, some tragic failures of responsibility (I will specify below).

Shrii Sarkar also said, as quoted above, “Because such injustices continued for a long time, women developed an inferiority complex and a sense of despair.” But once they started to understand the injustices, some of them also developed a lot of anger. The more they learned, the more educated they became, the more for some of them the inferiority complex turned into anger. (For the spiritual among them, a calmer determination to fight injustice must have developed also; I'm not well enough informed to provide examples.)

The injustices against women went back for millennia, so there was always fuel waiting to be lit into anger, but the expression of anger, and possibly even the conscious sense of it, seem to have developed slowly. I have the impression that the 70-year struggle for voting rights in the USA was carried out fairly decorously, and (though this is speculation), it seems possible that the women involved in it felt “We ought at least to have voting rights, but overall it is right that the men should continue to be the main architects of public policy.”

But a critical mass of women decided by the 1960s that there was no reason women should be subordinate at all. It could be expected that when the dam burst, excess on the part of some women would result in one or more seriously wrong policies. The stream of pro-choice or pro-abortion feminism became the women's rights mainstream in Western countries. Did anger cloud their judgment and lead them to take that disastrous wrong turn? (1) We only know for sure the outcomes in terms of their public positions, and because of those positions, pro-life (anti-abortion) feminists, who are a small minority of feminists, even question whether those pro-choice or pro-abortion feminists are really feminists:



Pro-choice feminists want respect for some aspects of womanhood, but not for the potential that nature has most uniquely equipped women for – motherhood.

Once pro-choice feminists came to dominate the women's-rights movements (in 1967, in the USA), they failed to try seriously to change society in such a way that society would honour and support female biology, which means biological processes that sometimes include unexpected pregnancies. Instead of a strategy of making society support unexpected pregnancies, they adopted a strategy of seeking a right to never go through pregnancy, that is, a right to imitate male biology. In other words, pro-choice feminism denigrates the female body by suggesting that its natural functioning is often undesirable and not as good as that of men – and thus by suggesting that women are not at all inherently equal. On a subtle psychological level, this seems anything but feminist.

An organization run by pro-life feminists, Secular Pro-Life, uses the slogan “Abortion – a means by which women conform to a society designed for men.”

How to Finish the Work

Pro-choice feminists want respect for some aspects of womanhood, but not for the functions that nature has most uniquely equipped women for – motherhood, and above all, giving birth. The main work that still lies ahead may be a society that honours the natural functioning of the female body.

Erika Bachiochi, today's leading theoretician of pro-life feminism, has written eloquently



here about the seemingly unfeminist attitudes that we have discussed: (2)

“Because men's duties as potential, and then actual, fathers are not as deeply inscribed in their bodies, the law, if it is to uphold a genuine equality of the sexes, must act to educate and, if necessary, compel men to embrace paternal responsibilities, the fulfillment of which our society so evidently craves.”

“From the creation of thousands of crisis pregnancy centers and maternity homes across the nation to, more recently, making college campuses and workplaces more hospitable to childrearing, prolife activists have sought to assist women who bear children with the task of raising those children. There is much more to be done in this area, particularly in streamlining and normalizing adoption, in increasing workplace flexibility, in incentivizing marriage, in decreasing the tax burden on those who support children, and in finding ways to ensure greater social and legal enforcement of paternal responsibility.”

Here is a still more radical

pro-life feminist view: (3)

“. . . promoting female equality on this front will require people who are not mothers to give up some time, energy, and money from the career areas of their lives to share the load. And if children are unplanned and are not to be aborted, this will mean that those who are not pregnant (which includes all men) will have to give up time, energy, and money to share the load of children whom they did not want and even their mothers did not want. Obviously, this won't be popular among those who have traditionally enjoyed the privilege of focusing entirely on careers . . .”

Pro-life feminists say that pro-choice feminists “took the bait” that was offered to them by left-leaning men who had the attitude: “We don't want to restructure society so as to support women and children against our interests, but we will let you abort your children.”

As New Wave Feminists say, “Instead of *removing* the remaining oppression, pro-choice feminists try to *redistribute* the oppression.”

Within Shrii Sarkar's mission, perhaps the first priority now in the interest of “a society that honours the natural functioning of the female body” is to finally materialize a programme he gave long ago. In an old procedure order, along with other programmes for Ananda Marga's Women's Welfare Department, he gave a programme of maternity homes. These have also sometimes been called “homes for unwed mothers”. Such homes can help greatly to ensure that giving birth will seem to a pregnant woman like the best option for her. ●

Please see links below for further reading:

- (1) Shrii Sarkar's views on abortion: <http://proutglobe.org/2021/01/when-p-r-sarkar-was-asked-about-abortion/>)
- (2) https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1873485
- (3) <https://secularprolife.org/2016/02/next-steps-for-pro-life-feminist/>

Courtesy Viirāṅganā

Net Zero Carbon Emission



Lovraj Kumar Memorial Trust organized Lovraj Kumar Memorial

lecture on 'Accelerating Net Zero Transition with Project Management', which was delivered by Dr V K Saraswat, Member Niti Ayog recently in New Delhi. Welcoming the delegates, Secretary of the Trust Shyam Bang said that, several countries have made commitments to achieve Net Zero defining time lines. Government of India has also made commitment in this regard. In my opinion, for India the challenge is bigger than many other countries. Growing aspirations of people, growing energy needs and implementing a change in a democratic social structure, all these factors make the situation difficult and challenging. We have technical capabilities, but managing transition is not an easy task.

Current estimated emissions from India is about 3.5 billion tonnes

Shyam Bang

At present only 2% population in India has air conditioned houses, as compared to 98% in Japan. Probably only 10% families have cars. What happens when these numbers become comparable to the developed countries. The forecast is that, our GDP will increase by a multiple of ten, from current level of 3.7 trillion USD in next 25 years. To achieve Net Zero carbon emission while managing the economic growth is a big challenge. At the same time, we cannot ignore it also. Some countries are talking about Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which can affect exports from India; which means that our economic growth will be affected if steps are not taken in the

direction of Net Zero.

Recently all senior persons from Government of India had participated in COP28 in Dubai and were part of global level discussions. Currently estimated emissions from India is about 3.5 billion tonnes. This is at current GDP level. This number will increase with increase in GDP. So we can imagine how difficult is the task of achieving Net Zero with growing economy.

Dr Saraswat explained that with industrialization, consumption of oil, gas and coal has increased, which has increased concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere; which in turn is causing global warming. As a result of global warming, we have erratic climate conditions like





more floods, storms, draughts etc. All countries have agreed to limit the temperature rise to 1.5 degrees centigrade till the year 2100. This is possible only if, emission of carbon dioxide is stopped completely, the concept known as Net Zero. Developed countries have taken target to achieve Net Zero by the year 2050. India has also taken target to achieve Net Zero by the year 2070.

Major carbon emission is from the use of fossil fuels like oil, gas and coal. While it is not possible to eliminate the use of fossil fuels, we have to work on alternative technologies to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels.

At present, India's total installed capacity for power generation is 425 GW, which includes 206 GW from coal, 25 GW from gas, 7.4 GW from nuclear, 47 GW from hydro, 6.6 GW from lignite, and 132 GW from renewable sources like wind and solar. Total thermal power capacity is 239 GW, which is considered carbon emitting.

India has taken a target to increase installed capacity of non-fossil fuel based capacity to 50% of

total installed power capacity by the year 2030. There has been a good progress in last decade in this direction and already crossed 40 %. Increasing renewable energy from solar and wind also demands energy storage system.

To reduce dependence on imported Li-ion batteries, lot of research work is going on to develop alternative technologies like based on sodium, aluminum etc. Besides technology, it calls for heavy investment also. Hydrogen and pumping water for hydro power, are also considered as alternative storage systems.

At present cost of producing hydrogen by water electrolysis is 5 dollars per kg, as compared to 1.5 dollars for hydrogen produced by steam reforming of natural gas. Large investment is required for producing electrolyzers in large capacity to reduce the cost of hydrogen.

Nuclear energy is considered as a clean energy option. Currently, the trend is set up for large capacity nuclear power plants, which call for heavy investment. It is proposed to invest in small modular reactors (SMR). Such

SMR will need less land and can be installed at multiple locations, may be for specific needs of large industries like steel, aluminum, cement etc. This should reduce the capital cost and running cost as well.

We may need multiple initiatives like , improving technologies in coal based power plants to reduce emissions , improving energy efficiency in all consuming industries , increasing renewable energy , increasing nuclear energy , use of hydrogen , energy from biomass and carbon capture and utilization . One possible technology option is to capture carbon dioxide and together with hydrogen produce syngas / methanol from that. Fuels like methanol and ethanol are being promoted for automobiles.

Technology development work is in progress on these options. Some pilot plants are being set up. Clarity on technologies will emerge in coming years. However, we need strong policy framework in place to achieve the target of Net Zero by 2070. ●

How Animals Suffer Due to HUMAN WARS

■ ■ Nand Varma

The world of animals has suffered immensely due to human wars through the ages. British forces in East Africa used carts drawn by cattle — many taken from India in the 1890s. Moving them overseas proved disastrous for these cattle passed on rinderpest to other animals, with a huge number of zebras, antelopes and wildebeest in the African savanna succumbing. A massive

Most animals would see the furies of battle as humans became more and more modern

usual routine to go from Mughal India to Kabul and Kandahar in spring and return with horses for war which had been bred there or Arab, Turkish and Persian steeds brought from Central Asia.

Until 1840s these routes for horses remained crucial. The horses were greatly valued and paid for in large amounts of silver. They were then made to travel across north, central and southern India, the latter supplied by sea routes, with horses disembarked in ports like Goa and then made to walk great distances inwards into the country.



depopulation of wild ruminants took place alongside the perishing of cattle used by the military.

Some animals had different fates, many enriching traders. It is well known how Afghanistan mostly became a wasteland, its ecology having suffered centuries of relentless battle which destroyed fields, streams and meadows. However Afghanistan was also a centre of commerce of war, mostly in horses. Once it was

Most animals would see the furies of battle as humans became more and more modern. In the 19th century as British power over South Asia was on the rise, the Indian elephant became very vital for military transport. In Bengal elephants were trapped and trained for this work. They were also trapped in Mysuru for this very purpose. These animals were prized as military resource and as early as 1873, the Madras Presidency enacted a law for the preservation of elephants. This was long before the first mammal the Grey Seal received protection through law in the United Kingdom. The elephant got protection in the British Indian empire only because of its military value to the colonial power.

Later in World War II from 1939-45, over 2.2 million Indian soldiers served and so did over 3000 elephants. These are a poignant reminder of the cruelty of humans towards nature and its non human species in war

eras. It would be worthwhile to think about them even today.

And another animal that was used extensively for war transportation of supplies through difficult terrain were countless numbers of mules. In the words of a veteran of the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater, “they served without a word of complaint or lack of courage. They transported artillery, ammunition, food, and medicine, and under enemy fire transported the wounded. Many of the CBI veterans are here today because a mule stopped a bullet or a piece of shrapnel meant for the GI. Mules fell in battle, mortally wounded, and we shed tears for them.”

Pack mules indeed performed yeoman service in Asia and other theaters during World War II, hauling weapons and equipment as well as saving lives by carrying wounded off the front lines. They took the same risks as their human masters and too often they paid the ultimate price. A report on April 4, 1944, from one of the units of Merrill’s Marauders described their sacrifice in detail: Japanese artillery fire had killed or wounded most of the unit’s mules. The stench of the dead animals was so intense that the troops would not put the wounded ones out of their misery for fear of increasing it. The remaining animals also blocked enemy fire with their very bodies, one mule having 26 holes from a Japanese machine gun”.

Mules are often mentioned as having been used by Allied forces for transport in difficult terrain, but rarely are the full details of their employment have been recorded. The hardy pack animals were vital to the troops fighting in the jungles of Asia and the mountains of Italy, and the soldiers loved them, particularly the mule skinnners; those soldiers were trained to use and care for the animals for the Americans. The British in India called them muleteers. The



German army also made widespread use of horses and mules for transport. The Allies, however, had access to the vast automotive production capability of the United States, so their use of pack animals was on a relatively smaller scale. This vast supply of trucks was a major advantage. The war, however, was not limited to terrain accessible by motorized transport. When it came down to it, the mule was akin to a piece of equipment, like a 21/2-ton truck, needed to take supplies into places no truck or even jeep could go.

Mules entered military service at the remount depots and received training, initially for a period of about four months, although this was shortened during the war. Prospective muleteers also received training at these depots. Once training was complete, the mules were ready for active duty at the front lines. For shipment overseas, they were accompanied by groups of muleteers - the animals were sent by train to a port and were loaded aboard ships dedicated to transporting animals. These ships, called “floating barns,” carried the mules, handlers, and a three-month supply of fodder and water for the voyage to the combat zone.

At sea, the mules faced the same problems as humans. They needed to get their “sea legs” just as a person learned to deal with the motion of a ship upon the open sea. Seasickness was also a common problem although the animals usually recovered with no trouble. The muleteers would regularly move the animals to give them some exercise and relief from the ship’s motion. In rough seas the hapless beasts would be tossed around in their stalls, suffering concussions, broken bones, and bruises. Veterinarians aboard ship treated the mules as best they could; those that died from sickness or injury were buried at sea.

After delivery to the combat zones, the mules were loaded onto trains and sent to units at the front. Once there, they were organized into pack troops that used the mules to carry all manner of supplies to support frontline forces. The nature of fighting in places such as Burma often lacked definitive lines, meaning support units were often under fire themselves. The second was the pack artillery battalion, which saw service on virtually all fronts during the war, but they are best known for their service in Italy, the

Pacific, and the CBI. Last, mules were issued to individual formations that were serving in terrain where the mule was vital for transporting supplies.

The mules really proved their value in the CBI with both British and American units fighting there. These operations involved deep forays into enemy-held territory through terrain devoid of road networks. The mules proved ideal for carrying supplies in this environment. Often, these mules had their vocal cords cut to prevent them from braying and exposing British positions. During the second Chindit expedition in the spring of 1944, about 1,400 mules were delivered by gliders in order to carry supplies brought in by air.

The most famous American unit of the CBI was the 5307th Composite Unit, also known as "Merrill's Marauders." Undertaking operations similar to those of the Chindits, it used large numbers of mules. Six Quartermaster pack troops were part of the unit, and mules were liberally issued to the rest of the unit as well to transport their own equipment and supplies. Each troop had about 300 mules and 75 men. Since conditions required that a soldier lead each mule, the pack troops kept about 70 mules

and spread the rest to the rifle battalions. Each rifle company got 42 mules, 10 for the headquarters and weapons platoons, the rest to the rifle platoons. The battalion headquarters company used its mules to transport the heavy weapons, radios, and other gear it needed. Ten mules were set aside for the evacuation of casualties.

It took four mules to carry a heavy machine gun or mortar, one for the weapon itself, and the other three for ammunition. Efforts were made to take only necessary equipment to lighten the mules' loads as much as possible, and each mule generally carried spare horseshoes and a day's supply of grain. The animals also ate bamboo or banana leaves.

During campaigns the mules proved their worth time and again. Don L. Thrapp served with the Marauders and later wrote of his experiences with the pack mules during the fighting at Tonkwa against the Japanese. "They were zeroed in on our bivouac area at a river crossing, and their fire caused us some casualties in men and animals. One tree burst accounted for seven animals. Another shell cut between two mules ... and burst about eight feet behind them, but injured neither."

When the fighting in Burma

ended, the mules and horses that had served there were ordered disposed of. Some were sick after their service in the fetid jungles of Southeast Asia and had to be destroyed. A farewell volley was fired for them. Others were sent to remount stations and shipped to Eastern Europe and the Balkans as part of the Lend-Lease Program. Others were sent to farms in the Philippines or China. More still went to the Chinese Army. Several years later, during the Korean War, a Chinese mule captured by American troops north of Seoul in May 1951 had its old U.S. Army brand still apparent.

The mountainous terrain of Italy also required the mule's services. For example, an infantry regiment needed 250 animals per day to keep it supplied. Many of the mules were obtained locally and were usually smaller than American-bred animals. Occasionally the need was so great that a mule might be bought even though it was only good for a single trip to the front with supplies.

The Allies also made use of nine pack mule companies of the Italian Army after the Italian surrender. Goumiers, French colonial troops from Morocco that served in Italy, used mules extensively. It was in Italy that the mules received perhaps their greatest compliment. With the end of the war in Italy, the mules on hand were distributed to those Italians who had fought with or otherwise helped the Allies and to local farmers in general.

Mules filled an important niche in the Allied logistics network, particularly in areas where poor road systems limited wheeled transport. Many soldiers came to have great affection for them. Certainly they were relied upon heavily. After the war, mechanization eclipsed the mules and their accomplishments. ●



Sant Kabir had once said,;
Manná rangáye, rangáye
jogi kaprá

[Instead of colouring his mind with love, the ascetic has only coloured his cloth!]. One has to become a sādhu from within as opposed to an external show of virtuousness. Elsewhere, Kabir also says,

Jati na puchho sadhu ki,
pooch lijiye gyan;
Mol karo talvar ka,
padarahan do myan

[Ask not a saint of his caste; rather, of his knowledge; Value the sword, not its sheath!]

Kabir and Mahāprabhu Chaitanya launched open revolts against the caste system which had kept Indian society crippled through creation of complexes of superiority and inferiority among the sections of the society. Although Mahāprabhu was born as Vishvambhar Mishra into a well-known Brahman family, he suffered many insults because of his opposition to casteism. Despite this he remained steadfast in his ideology.

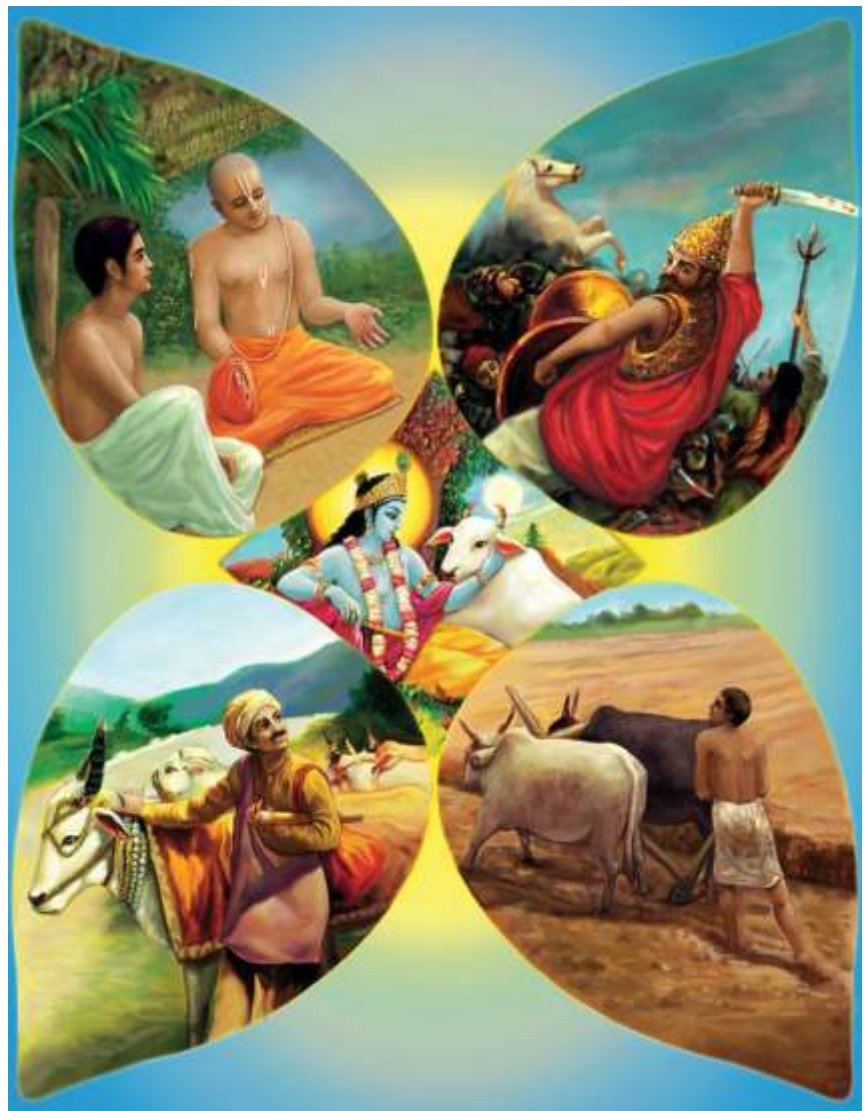
Recent Developments on Varna and Caste in India

At an event to mark the birth anniversary of Sant Ravidas in Feb 5, 2023, a hardcore Indian religious leader marked that in the eyes of God everyone is equal and there is no caste or creed, there is no sect for him. Caste, creed and sect were created by pandits which is wrong. "We also have a responsibility towards the society. When everything is for the society, how can someone be high, someone low or someone different? God has always said that for me everyone is one, there is no caste, creed among them, but pandits created the category, that was wrong. Conscience, consciousness are all one in the

The Varna System Good, Bad and the Ugly

In the Vedic Age the economic system of India evolved on the basis of four social classes

■ Kislaya Kunjan and RP Singh



country. There is no difference in that. Just the opinions are different."

In this address the word 'Pandit' was used to which Brahmin organizations objected that they did not compose

Ramayana, Mahabharata or Manusmriti, then how can they be blamed for the caste system? It was clarified that the word 'Pandit' has been used here in the sense of scholar.

Earlier on October 8, 2022,

the same religious leader had said that 'varna' and 'caste' should be completely abolished. Speaking at a book release event in Nagpur, he had said the caste system has no relevance anymore and said that social equality was a part of Indian tradition, but it was forgotten leading to harmful consequences. The leader said anything that causes discrimination should be thrown out of the system. Previous generations made mistakes everywhere, including in India. "There is no problem in accepting the mistakes that our ancestors have made."

This is a great improvement in the earlier stand of hardcore Indian religious position which used to assume that caste is a vital element of Hindutva existence and identity, even though it was noted to be complimentary in nature. Talking about the evolution of the Varna system an earlier hardcore thinker had said,

"Classes do exist in a society. Here too, there were castes, but we had never accepted conflict between one caste and another as a fundamental concept underlying it. The four castes, according to our conception, are thought of as analogous to the different limbs of

the Virat-Purusha. There cannot be any conflict in the different parts of the same body. On the contrary, 'One Man' prevails. The limbs are not only complementary to one another, but even further, there is individuality, unity."

These statements of the present day hardcore religious thinking have raised a fundamental question as to when caste came to India. It is necessary to understand this for proper guidance and solutions as expounded by Shrii PR Sarkar in his various discourses, notably: "Rarh – The Cradle of Civilization, Discourses on Tantra and on Mahabharata."

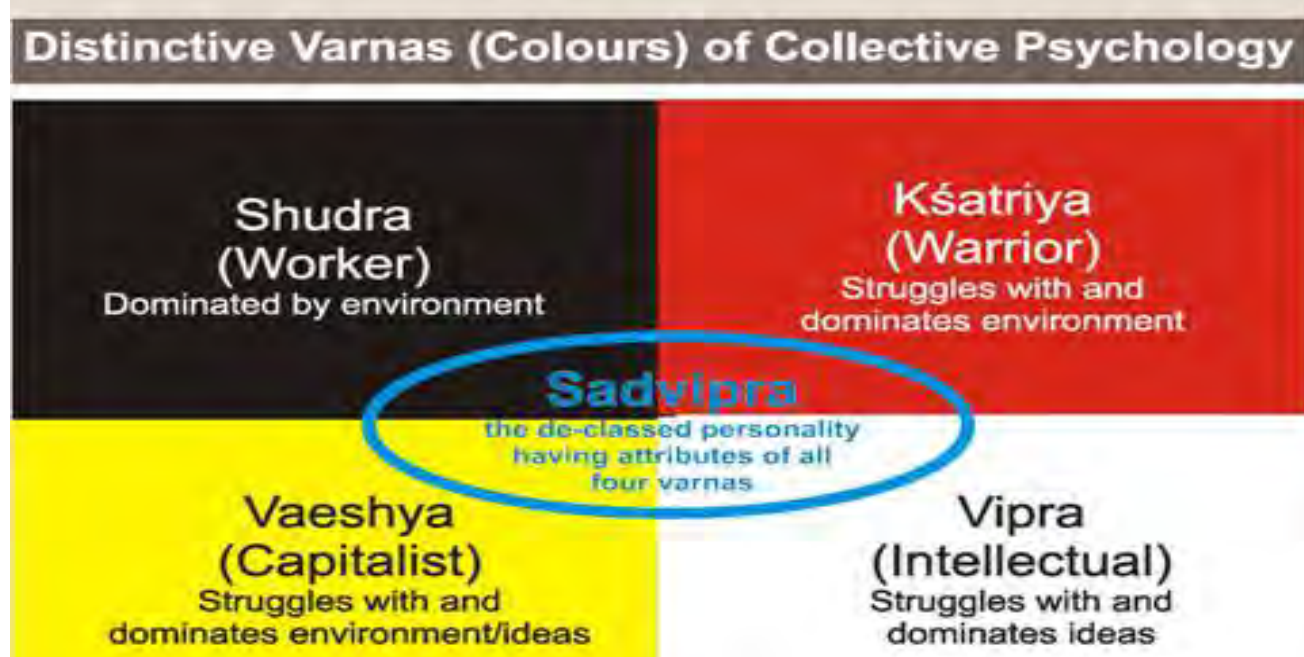
We present a selection of quotes from those discourses to explain the evolution of the caste system in the Indian sub-continent. Here, it may be pointed out that the words, caste (meaning hereditary classes) is used synonymously with the Indic words, varna (literally means mental colours, but is equivalent to occupational classes) and jatis (birth-based classes), even though we recognize their subtle differences.

The Origins

Explaining the origins of the caste division, Shrii Sarkar writes "The Aryans entered India between

seven and ten thousand years ago. This was well before the advent of Shiva. The conflict between the pre-Aryan civilization and that of the invading Aryans went on for centuries. Then in the course of time synthesis began to come. This state of synthesis went on for thousands of years and extended up to the Buddhist and Jain ages. The process of give-and-take between the pre-Aryan civilization and the invading Aryan civilization did take place, but not without much bargaining and many a tug-of-war. Of all the defective gifts of the Aryans that the indigenous Indians accepted, one was the system of caste division, which spread hatred between the high and the low."

Shrii Sarkar continues, "It was not difficult for the healthy, martial, almost invincible Aryans to conquer northern India. The victorious Aryans treated the vanquished non-Aryans as slaves, trampling them underfoot to the bottom of their trivarna [three-caste] society – their society of Brahmanas, Ksatriyas and Vaeshyas. There the non-Aryans became the fourth class, or ShudraVarna, while society became a caturvarna [four-caste]



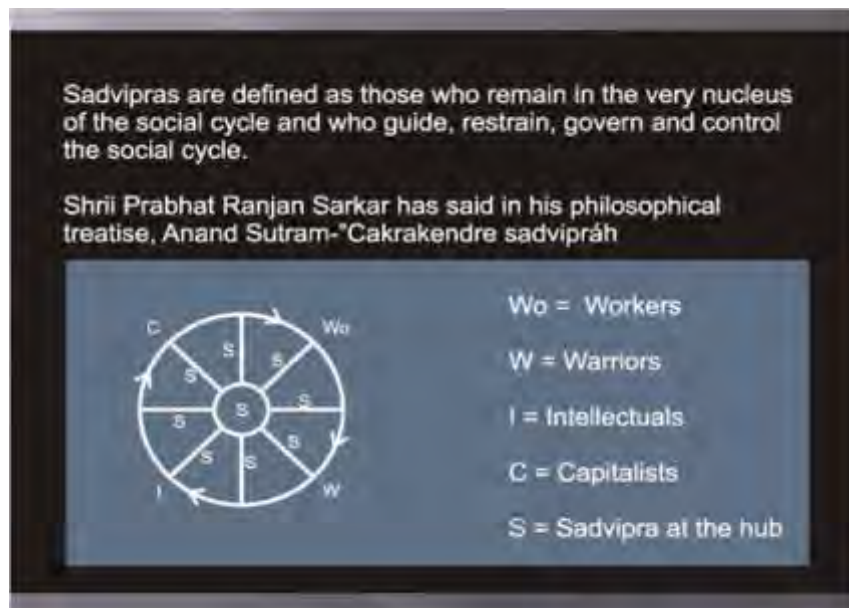
society. In the beginning the Aryans tried their utmost to avoid blood relationships with the Shúdras – overwhelming proof of this is found in the Vedas and later books – but eventually it became impossible for them to avoid intermixture.”

In describing the economy of ancient India, Shrii Sarkar writes, “In ancient India a form of elastic economy was prevalent which supported the collective economic endeavour of the people. In the Vedic Age the economic system of India evolved on the basis of social classes (varṇa). The shúdras, kṣatriyas, vipras and vaeshyas – these four social classes evolved and remained content with specific economic activities of their choice. One particular class engaged itself in farming, while other classes undertook different occupations. People did not rush towards agricultural work as is happening today. As this class system (varṇashrama) was hereditary, there was little scope for socio-economic imbalance. In that age agriculture reached a high degree of expertise and efficiency.”

Caste During Mahabharata

The period of Mahabharata is particularly interesting in how caste division was noted for its flexibility. We find for example a quote in the Bhagawad Gita: “*Cāturvarṇyam mayāsrstam, guṇakarmavibhāgasah*”, i.e., the four varṇas are created in accordance with human qualities and nature of work. And these human attributes are in turn a product of the three guṇas (Sattva, Rajah and Tamah) of Prakṛti (cosmic operating principle).

Shrii Sarkar notes, “The system of four varṇas was simply nominal at the time of the Mahābhārata, as it was in the Vaidika age. The system of varṇas was only due to war purposes in the Vaidika period. In the Mahābhārata age this system got



somewhat strengthened. The worldly father of Lord Kṛṣṇa was Vasudeva, a popular kṣatriya leader, being an army commander. But Lord Kṛṣṇa's guardians, Nanda and Upananda, the cousins of Vasudeva, were known as gopayadava (milkmen). His guardian, Nanda, was a gopa (vaeshya); and his uncle, Maharsi Garga, was a vipra, because he adopted a life of scriptural study, contemplation and meditation. There was no rigidity in the caste system. Sometime later the rigidity came into being.”

Caste Discrimination after Adi Shankara

Using Rārḥ as an example, Shrii PR Sarkar explained that prior to Adi Shankaracharya, there were caste divisions, but no caste discrimination, i.e., the practical implication that one caste was superior to another, was unknown in that region. In other words, even though caste divisions came through the Aryans from the north-western part of undivided India, the ugly caste discrimination came to fore only about 1300 years ago, after Shankaracharya preached his Paoranik Dharma. Prior to that, the caste discrimination was also more or less limited to specific areas of

engagements, such as wars or in the practice of certain social norms.

Discussing about how the caste division spread to eastern India, Shrii Sarkar writes, “The Aryan civilization came to a standstill at the threshold of the kingdom of Kāshii Rājya (Varanasi).

Then a lot of strenuous efforts were made in order for Mithila to be accepted in Āryavartta [Land of the Aryans], or Uttarāpath [northern India]. But in the end Magadh did not win this acceptance.

The word magadh means “a population which is opposed to the Vedic system”. Maga means “opposed to the Vedas” and dha means “one who abides by”.

Rārḥ, which was located on the further [eastern] border of Magadh, had no opportunity to become “sanctified” by the touch of the Aryans feet. But just as the system of caste division entered Magadh under the influence of Āryavartta, so also did it enter Rārḥ to some extent. Rārḥ too became segmented into so many castes, but thanks to the firmly-rooted Shaeva Dharma, caste-based hatred could not crystallize in Rārḥ.”

Applying this to the context of Buddhism and Jainism, Shrii Sarkar further writes, “That there was casteism in India even before the emergence of Buddhism and Jainism is best proven by the fact that Buddha came from a Kśatriya varṇa [here, a sub-caste] belonging to the Malla branch of the Shakya pravara [dynasty]. And Vardhaman Mahavir was born in a Vaeshya family of Videha. His father, Siddhartha, was a businessman. So, the caste system did exist in India. This caste system also reached a peak in Magadh in a later period. After the demise of Buddha, the kings – both Buddhists and non-Buddhists – said clearly that since Buddha was a Kśatriya, they were entitled to the ashes from his cremation. But it was not like this in Rārh.”

Describing the religious conversions in Bengal, Shrii Sarkar writes, “It is true that caste discrimination came to Rārh much later. The Paorāṇik Dharma of Shankaracharya weighed Rārh down and immobilized its social consciousness. It converted the spontaneous flow of life in Rārh into a stagnant pool and paved the way for countless weeds to burgeon. The defective mentality and way of life of Paorāṇika Dharma became intolerable for people, hence a great number of

people in Rārh-Samatat-Barendra-Dabāk who came in contact with the more humanitarian Islam took shelter in it.”

Interesting Contradictions

Describing the double standards of casteism and its interesting manifestations in the society, Shrii Sarkar writes, “Rich, selfish people sometimes suppress the poorer sections of society by binding them with illogical ideas. The caste system in India has been used to exploit people with interesting contradictions. In the past, for example, high caste people propagated the idea that it was a sin for so-called low caste milk vendors to give them water. This was done to ensure that the high caste people were supplied with pure, undiluted milk. However, it was not considered a sin for high caste people to take water from so-called low caste sweet vendors. Otherwise, high caste people would not have been permitted to consume the numerous delicious sweets prepared from milk and water.

Numerous contradictions are also easily discernible in caste history. Moreover, in the Buddhist Age the rigidity of casteism decreased, and the intermingling of castes became quite popular. In those regions where orthodox people tried to keep themselves

aloof from caste mixing, various castes and sub-castes were formed.”

Conclusion

On the basis of Shri PR Sarkar's discourses and historical understanding, we can surmise that caste as a system (i.e., varṇa system) is ancient and took a divisive form upon the arrival of the Aryans from the North West to the Indian subcontinent.

In ancient India, the class system helped maintain socio-economic balance. The idea of four varṇas, i.e., Vipra(scholars and yajna priests), Kshatriyas (rulers and warriors), Vaishyas (farmers, merchants and artisans) and Shudras (workmen/service providers) has relevance in understanding human psychology and its manifestations in human activities and pursuits. But this idea of varṇas is to be understood as a dynamic and flexible construct in human beings and as traits that can (and should) be developed by one and all, and yet be transcended through spirituality.

Caste discrimination is nothing but an ugly manifestation of opportunistic elements of society. This discrimination was nominal in the past from the Vedic period through the time of Buddhism and Jainism. It was much later, that the discriminatory aspect became apparent after Shankaracharya's intellectual victory over Buddhist ideology 1300 years ago, and the establishment of dogmatic Paurāṇik religion.

Through the contribution of such luminaries as Mahāprabhu Caetanya and Mahatma Kabir, not all dynamism was lost, and the lamp of universalism and cosmic brotherhood was kept lit through the years. ●

Kislāya Kunjan is a US based Indologist and RP Singh is Professor in Gorakhpur University

MORALISTS OF THE WORLD UNITE

More the honest people are firm on morality,
more the evil forces will be active against them.
So all the moralists of the universe
should remain organized and confront
the evil forces unitedly.

*Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar
January 1, 1983*



NEURALINK BRAIN COMPUTER INTERFACE

*When brains do
more who owns us*

■ Karunakshim Vatsalam

At times one can't help but feel that latest news from the world of science feels like fiction. In the TV series Star Trek that began in the US in 1960 and came to India in 1980s, mobile phones were first seen on TV. Then it was fiction today it is more than reality, one apparently can't do without them! Similarly Drones were also seen or read in science fiction novels or their movie adaptations. Today Drones (unmanned aircraft) have become a potent weapon of war or as military people say a

force multiplier.

Brain computer interface is what scientists have been working on for decades, and most of its promises remain in the realm of science fiction. But putting the first wireless device in a human brain by Elon Musk's company does mark an exciting and significant tech advance. This of course has been built on the labours of predecessors. In 2021 Australian ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) patient Philip O'Keefe used a neural interface to create a social media update.

This will benefit those who have lost use of their limbs would be the initial users. For such patients taking control of their phone or computer or almost any device just by thinking would indeed be transformative. Going into future possibilities if one category of patients will depend on their brain to steer clear of malfunctioning bodies, a second would be those whose brains are themselves malfunctioning. The underlying idea is that processes like deep brain simulation could help fight Alzheimer's and

Parkinson's and even depression and addiction. Finally there is a third category that could use neural interface to amplify cognitive functions like memory and concentration.

But then comes the question, when brains do more who owns us? Neuralink's first human brain chip implant can herald a revolution. Thought can become actions. Neuro diseases can be controlled. But with a chip inside humans, who will have access to data that defines what we think and who we are?

With our imagination having been captivated by a complex web of neurons playing complex symphonies in the brain and now for the first time a human patient receiving an implant in the brain chip startup Neuralink there are seemingly exciting possibilities of promises coming true. Paralyzed patients regaining control of their limbs, artists painting landscapes and writing without arms. This is the tantalising promise of a tiny coin sized chip implanted in the brain that would translate neural activity into digital signal and vice versa. Bypassing the limitations of

our bodies it opens a door to a future where thought becomes action and information flows seamlessly between mind and machine. This chip houses 1024 tiny threads, each thinner than human hair, and are flexible electrodes that interface with the brain recording and simulating neural activity.

Brain Computer Interface BCI which started in 1970 in the University of California Los Angeles is a neurotechnology. Neuralink has further advanced BCI where implant is done surgically motor cortex, a part of the brain involved in movement of parts of the body. This implant is wirelessly connected to a small external device that processes and interprets brain signals. These signals by neurons firing, are then translated into commands for external devices, or even used to control software applications directly.

There are immense potential application possibilities. Starting from those suffering from paralysis, Neuralink could become a bridge between their thoughts and the world. That one could

control a robotic arm with the power of the mind or typing emails just by thinking. There are claims of possible uses in Parkinson's disease, dementia and other like diseases. Even those with healthy brains a Neuralink implant could be used to control devices like mobile phones and enhance learning abilities on through shared neural network. These seem like fiction now but as the saying goes today's science fiction is tomorrow's fact.

Clinical trials have so far not gone beyond a few dozen living beings. Notwithstanding what its proponents claim, this technology is nowhere near as pacemakers or artificial knees. However it is important to discuss this issue and how it would be regulated for use by those who feel the need for it. Presently this experimental science is in the limelight because of controlling computers and phones with the mind. But in the future? A radical expansion of human brain capacity could take care of fears of Artificial Intelligence ruling us?

Such unprecedented access to the human mind raises many





ethical questions. One major concern is privacy. Would individual movement be monitored? Would it capture other signals from the brain such as memory. Who owns the data? Can it be used without our consent.

Another concern is that there is potential for discrimination. Would it be used to investigate criminal charges? Would access to this technology become a privilege deepening existing social inequalities? Would every person now addicted to a phone be tempted to use Neuralink too? Also blurring of lines between man and machine raises questions about our very identity. And one that sounds most scary, if during human trials one loses abilities or even life, how would that be justified?

Presently the highly invasive surgical procedures, which, involves cutting layers of the brain by drilling a hole through the skull are under active scrutiny. The risks are like any other surgery viz., possibilities of infections, implant

rejection etc. Regulations governing such innovative scientific advancements struggle to keep pace with deep tech's rapid advancements. Reactive policies have their limitations and are unable to proactively manage mitigation of risks. It is hoped that these gaps could be addressed through clearer and ethical safety frameworks, steps that could guide responsible development? In today's world where immorality rules could anyone feel comfortable about giving his brain data to someone else?

These are no easy questions but need discussion by scientists, ethicists, policy makers and public and answers found as the uncharted seas of Neuralink are to be navigated. Neuralink, it must be ensured unites and not divides humanity. Those considering BCI should have full rights to demand transparency and ethical considerations about their safety, security and privacy. As brain health significantly impacts

human well being, raising awareness alongside fitness initiatives is very crucial to keep potential harm at arms length. At the same time neglecting brain health can lead to far reaching consequences, impacting cognitive functions, mental well being and overall quality of life.

For all this, researchers, healthcare professionals and the public must collaborate with one another to create accessible resources and educational campaigns. The seas are uncharted, the voyage ahead has holds many promises and many perils some known, some unknown. But just as internet transformed the world, Neuralink has the potential to rewrite the very definition of what it means to be human as our brains gives us individuality. It is a technology that demands not just innovation but also wisdom, empathy and a commitment to building a future where the power of the mind benefits all of humanity.

This is just the first baby step. ●



Lethal chamber Gurney in Alabama, USA

Kenneth Eugene Smith was convicted of the murder-for-hire of a preacher's wife in 1988. As a death row inmate he was originally scheduled to be put to death with lethal drugs in November 2022.

Prison staff inserted one intravenous line, but two lines were required to administer the lethal injection.

After they struggled for an hour to insert the second IV, the execution was called off. He was eventually executed on January 25, 2024 in Holman Correctional Facility, Alabama, USA, using nitrogen gas instead. He was 58.

This was a controversial method used for the first time and represents the latest step in the search for a new way to execute convicted criminals - even as the death penalty has become less popular over time. Around half of US states still have death penalty laws. Execution methods vary, but

NITROGEN

Execution in USA

Killing convicted murderers to lighten the burden caused by their lives is certainly not indicative of a developed civilization.

■ Bhupendra Singh

some states still allow execution by hanging, firing squad or the electric chair.

"Tonight Alabama causes humanity to take a step backwards," Smith, said in a final statement. "I'm leaving with love, peace and light." The execution took about 22 minutes from the time between the opening and closing of the curtains to the viewing room. Smith appeared to remain conscious for several minutes. For at least two minutes,

he appeared to shake and writhe on the gurney, sometimes pulling against the restraints. That was followed by several minutes of heavy breathing, until breathing was no longer perceptible. Smith's spiritual adviser, the Rev. Jeff Hood, said the execution did not match the state attorney general's prediction in court filings that Smith would lose consciousness in seconds followed by death within minutes.

The European Union and the

UN Human Rights Office expressed regret over the execution. The 27-nation EU and the Geneva-based UN rights office say the death penalty violates the right to life and does not deter crime. Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who along with two other liberal justices dissented, wrote, "Having failed to kill Smith on its first attempt, Alabama has selected him as its 'guinea pig' to test a method of execution never attempted before. The world is watching."

According to the Death Penalty Information Center (DPIC), an organisation that is critical of how executions are administered, no method has been found to violate the US Constitution's ban on "cruel and unusual punishments", although some state courts have outlawed some methods. In recent decades, however, most states have converged on lethal injection - the administration of intravenous drugs that sedate and kill the convict - as the main execution method. Texas was the first state to execute a convicted criminal with

lethal injection, in 1982. Last year, 24 people were executed in the US - most of those in Florida and Texas, and all by lethal injection.

The process, however, is not always straightforward. Several months prior to Smith's previous botched execution, Alabama authorities failed to put to death another death row inmate, Alan Miller, also because of difficulties inserting an IV needle. Several other lethal injection executions have also not gone according to plan. And states have recently had difficulty in obtaining lethal injection drugs. In some cases, drug manufacturers won't sell them, or no longer produce them.

The UK and the European Union banned exports of the chemicals in 2011, and five years later American drugs giant Pfizer, the last open-market source of lethal injection drugs, announced it would no longer sell them to be used in executions. This caused states to find other means to execute prisoners. Texas got its deadly chemicals from private sources — a secret list of private

"compounding pharmacies", which mix their own drugs.

Prison officials strapped a mask to Smith's face and administered the pure nitrogen gas. The gas itself is not poisonous - nitrogen makes up more than three-quarters of the earth's atmosphere. But in pure concentrated form, breathing in the gas chokes off oxygen to the brain, a process called nitrogen hypoxia.

The use of nitrogen gas in executions has been approved by three states, including Alabama in 2018, and has withstood various legal challenges since.

The procedure had critics even before Smith's execution. "It's an experimental procedure," says Dr Jeff Keller, President of the American College of Correctional Physicians. "Many things can go wrong."

Deborah Denno, a criminologist at Fordham Law School who specialises in research into death penalty methods, said the procedure "is supposed to be painless, but I have to emphasise - that's in theory."

"These masks don't usually don't fit people," she says. "They're not airtight, air can get in." Smith could have started vomiting or survived the attempted execution with brain damage, she says.

Proponents of the method reject criticism and point to examples of nitrogen hypoxia occurring in industrial accidents, with victims apparently becoming unaware of what is happening to them.

One study prepared for Oklahoma lawmakers considering whether to allow nitrogen gas executions cited research that concluded "without oxygen present, inhalation of only 1-2 breaths of pure nitrogen will cause a sudden loss of consciousness". Alabama State Attorney General Steve Marshall has called nitrogen gas "perhaps the most humane method of execution ever devised". Some witnesses to



Smith's execution, though, said he did not lose consciousness within seconds and that he inhaled the gas for many minutes, thrashing all the while, before finally succumbing.

The flurry of attention over Smith's execution comes as enthusiasm for the death penalty has ebbed across much of the US. The number of executions is down substantially from a peak of 98 in 1999, according to the DPIC. Not only are fewer death sentences being carried out, in fewer states - just 10 have executed a prisoner in the last decade - but fewer death penalties are being handed out by courts. Gallup, which has been tracking public attitudes towards the death penalty for nearly a century, says that 53% of Americans favour the death penalty for convicted murders. That figure is down from a high of 80% which the survey registered 30 years ago.

Ms Maher says a variety of factors resulted in the death penalty becoming less common - not only botched executions, but

nearly 200 exonerations of death row inmates, legal changes which prohibit mentally impaired people and juveniles from being put to death, and the increasing reluctance of juries to hand down death sentences. This trend is likely to continue.

The case raises numerous questions: What is nitrogen hypoxia? What is required to administer it? Why is a new form of execution necessary? Nitrogen hypoxia is a method of suffocating a person by forcing them to breathe pure nitrogen, starving them of oxygen until they die. Despite its scientific-sounding name, "nitrogen hypoxia" is not a real medical term, says Joel Zivot, an associate professor of anesthesiology at Emory University, who co-authored the human rights complaint.

Nitrogen is an inert gas that makes up 78 percent of the air we breathe, passing in and out of the body harmlessly with every breath. A person can breathe pure nitrogen and not immediately realize there is a problem, but their cells and

organs are slowly being deprived of the oxygen needed to function and will rapidly start to break down. Someone deprived of oxygen will pass out in minutes and die soon after when the heart stops beating, according to Zivot.

Strangely the state is not required to demonstrate that a method of execution is not "cruel and unusual punishment, the burden is on the condemned inmate to show that it is torturous rather than the burden being on the state to show that it's not. So the state can make up anything it wants.

When asked what the most humane way to execute someone would be, Corinna Barrett Lain, a law professor at the University of Richmond, who's writing a book on lethal injection her answer — the firing squad. "Death by firing squad is nearly instantaneous. That's certainly better than being electrocuted for five or six minutes or being gassed to death for six to 10 minutes or being slowly suffocated under a veneer of peacefulness for 10 to 20 minutes."

As Prout's founder Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar says: "If a life for a life is considered an unassailable principle of justice, then there is nothing more to say. But remember that born criminals commit their crimes due to their physical or psychic abnormalities; are not the so-called civilized people who make no effort to cure such born criminals, guilty of the same crime? Does not capital punishment amount to cutting off the head to get rid of a headache? In my opinion to take the life of a born criminal of this type is as much a crime as it would be to pass a death sentence on a patient just because we could not cure the person's illness. It is the duty of a civilized society to arrange for born criminals to be cured of their ailments. Killing them to lighten the burden caused by their lives is certainly not indicative of a developed civilization." ●



NEO-HUMANISM



A Llama being helped to board a bus in Cusco, Peru, South America.

ELEVATION OF HUMAN MIND

300 years ago there was no desert in South America; 150 years ago there was no desert in India. We must solve this problem through PROUT, Neohumanism, Microvita, art, literature, songs, music and spiritual sádhaná. So what is required now is the elevation of human existence, the elevation of human mind and human spirit.

This charm of life is not only associated with flora or fauna but with all entities, even with inanimate objects – gold, iron, water, everything – because everything is living in this universe, everything is dancing in the rhythm of Parama Puruśa.

- Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

SOUTH ASIA'S FOOD CRISIS



About 1.5 billion people are in the midst of a crisis struggling to access food with no clear end in sight

 Sachi Satapathy

South Asia's food crisis is alarming. Several unrests across the region since 2020 indicate that most of the people in these countries are unable to access basic food items due to high food prices. Misguided priorities combined with short-term political thinking have made South Asia the epicentre of the world's food insecure-hunger zone, as roughly 1.4 billion (72.2 per cent) people in this region are unable to afford even the cheapest, locally.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'s

latest report, 'Asia and the Pacific - Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023, many struggle to manage two square meals for their family. Clearly, government policies on food accessibility and distribution are not working well on the ground. More inequality, more social unrest. The underlying problem runs deep as 74.1 per cent Indians, 82.8 per cent Pakistanis, 76.4 per cent Nepalis, 66.1 per cent Bangladeshis, face challenges in managing a healthy meal for their family in 2021-2022. Is this an acceptable development standard for any country? Less than 20 per

cent of Pakistan could afford a healthy meal!

South Asia is witnessing staggering inequality. To top it, the region has the highest prevalence of anaemia (48.2 per cent) among women aged 15-40 years and the highest prevalence of low birth weight (24.4 per cent). It also reported the highest prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity for women (42.7 per cent) compared to men (37.3 per cent).

With almost three-fourths of the population in the region staring at a food crisis, national governments here must not lose time and reflect upon "what

existing policies, strategies, and institutional mandates support or hinder coherent actions towards food system goals and how to resolve policy incoherence across sectors". Inaction will lead to more hunger, more poverty, greater inequality, and severe social unrest.

Root of the Problem

Several unrests across the region since 2020 indicate that a majority of the people in these countries are unable to access basic food items due to high food prices. The 2022 demonstrations in Sri Lanka are a pointer on how food inflation can bring massive social unrest; and if not addressed, it can even topple the government. The annual food price inflation in Sri Lanka was at 85.8 per cent and the prices of non-food items was at 62.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2022.

Bangladesh raised fuel prices by more than 50 per cent, which triggered protests over the rising cost of living. Here, food inflation increased and soared to 12.54 percent in August, which is a 12-year-high according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. According to a research report, high inflation and rising food

prices have led to a reduction in the consumption of meat and fish by 96 per cent and 89 per cent respectively in the last six months.

Nepal's 29 million people are facing a surge in food and energy prices, raising the risk of social unrest. Data released by the Nepal Rastra Bank shows that annual retail inflation accelerated to a six-year high of 7.52 per cent in mid-August. -on-year price index of the spices sub-category increased by 45.56 per cent, cereal grains and their products by 13.2 per cent, milk products and eggs by 12.19 per cent, vegetables by 10.8 per cent, ghee and oil by 15.13 per cent — thus, making life for most Nepalese extremely difficult.

In India, food inflation, which accounts for nearly half of the overall consumer price basket, was 8.7 per cent in November. The prices of cereals in India rose by 10.27 per cent and vegetables by 17.7 per cent in November on a year-on-year basis, pulses were up by 20.23 per cent, spices by 21.55 per cent, and fruit prices were up 10.95 per cent as per the November data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

Food prices in Pakistan increased 27.95 per cent in November 2023 over the same month in 2022. Food Inflation in Pakistan averaged 10.84 per cent from 2011 until 2023, reaching an all-time high of 48.65 per cent in May 2023.

The above data points to the fact that about 1.5 billion people are in the midst of a crisis struggling to access food with no clear end in sight. Unchecked high food prices are only making the situation worse.

As of today, there is neither a country-level concrete strategy or action plan, nor a joint regional level co-operation mechanism to check food prices. The food security situation will not improve unless governments take a hard position to regulate soaring essential food items. Additionally, the strong US Dollar has further put pressure on the State exchequer in these countries.

Rising food prices continue to squeeze living standards of millions—and taming it should be the priority for national governments in the region. ●

The author is Director, AF Development.



Children in Bangladesh

COBALT RED :

HOW THE BLOOD OF CONGO POWERS OUR LIVES

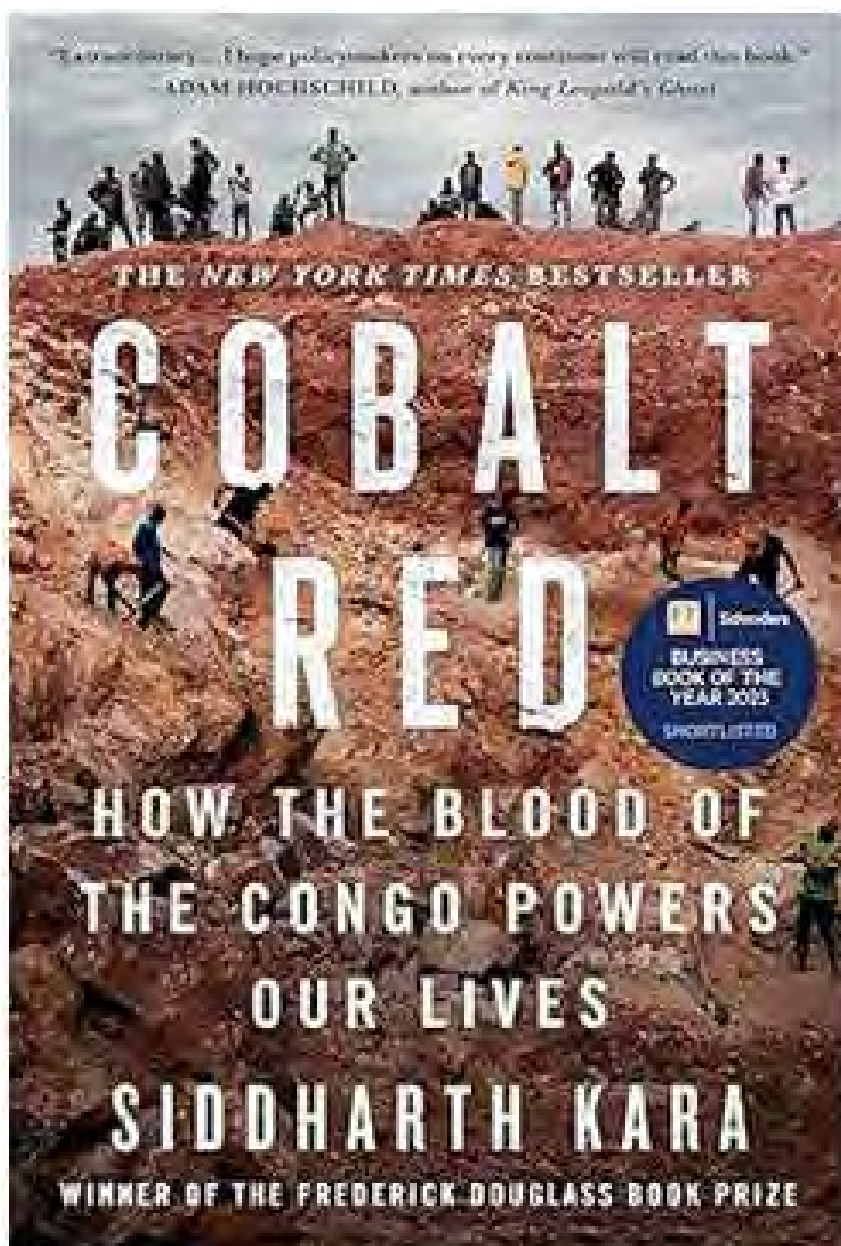
“Unspeakable riches have brought the people of the Congo little other than unspeakable pain.” So writes Siddharth Kara in *Cobalt Red How the Blood of Congo Powers Our lives*. It’s one of the many poetic phrases that make this book easy on the ear but hard on the heart and mind. There’s pleasure in turning the pages of such finely crafted prose, pain in knowing that, if you have half a heart, you’ll never be able to see your smartphone, laptop, tablet, solar power system, or electric car quite the same way again, that you’ll see blood all over the supply chain that put them in your hand, on your roof, or in your driveway. Despite such privilege, you might even ask yourself how you can stand to live in such an evil, brutally predatory world for one more day. I did, but I read on and highly recommend this book despite that shaky moment.

It’s better to know that, as Kara writes, “The ongoing exploitation of the poorest people of the Congo by the rich and powerful invades the purported moral foundation of contemporary civilization and drags humanity back to a time when the people of Africa were valued only by their replacement cost.”

Kara not only crafts a fine sentence, but also surrounds his subject—artisanal cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo—with broad historical and economic context. He recounts the discovery of the Congo and the waves of exploitation and predation to claim its vast resource

Siddharth Kara’s book exposes the exploitation behind the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Ann Garrison





wealth, driven by successive technological revolutions, none of which have left anything for the Congolese people aside from comprador and kleptocratic elites.

He explains battery technology and the global dominance of battery manufacture by South Korean, Japanese, and, most of all, Chinese industrial titans. Huge Chinese corporations so dominate Congolese cobalt mining, processing and battery manufacture that one has to ask why a communist government, however capitalist in fact, doesn't at least somehow require more responsible sourcing of minerals processed and then advanced along the supply chain within its borders. I hope that Kara's book has or will be translated into Chinese.

That's not to say that Kara even remotely exonerates the West. Equally predatory Western

industrial titans sold cobalt mines to their Chinese counterparts, in one significant instance brokered by none other than Hunter Biden.

As Kara makes painfully clear, there's blood all over the supply chain all over the globe, from the artisanal and industrial mines to the ore processors, battery manufacturers, and electronics manufacturers, including Apple, Google, Microsoft, Dell, Tesla, Ford, Huawei, Samsung, Motorola, and all the world's other electronics giants and their retail outlets.

The one industry in that supply chain that he doesn't mention is military manufacture, where Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon and all the rest rely on cobalt as much as the consumer electronics industries. That would complicate his argument with various national security concerns. His intended audience is, instead,

the consumer electronics industries and electronics consumers themselves, whom he feels should demand that their products be ethically sourced.

Artisanal Mining

"Artisanal" mining should not convey a pleasant image, as Kara writes: "Today, these laborers are assigned the quaint term artisanal miners, and they toil in a shadowy substrate of the global mining industry called artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). Do not be fooled by the word artisanal into thinking that ASM involves pleasant mining activities conducted by skilled artisans. Artisanal miners use rudimentary tools and work in hazardous conditions to extract dozens of minerals and precious stones in more than eighty countries across the global south. Because ASM is almost entirely informal, artisanal



miners rarely have formal agreements for wages and working conditions. There are usually no avenues to seek assistance for injuries or redress for abuse. Artisanal miners are almost always paid paltry wages on a piece-rate basis and must assume all risks of injury, illness, or death.”

Thirty percent or more of Congolese cobalt mining is “artisanal”; the rest is industrial, conducted with heavy machinery.

Congolese, whose environments have been destroyed to build vast industrial cobalt mines, have been left with no way to survive except by digging with picks and shovels or even their bare hands to gather bags of rocks that they might be paid as little as a dollar a day for.

They sell these bags of rocks to middlemen, “negociants,” who transport them on motorbikes or trucks to another type of middlemen in makeshift depots, or “comptoirs,” unless the miners

work near enough to a depot to sell to it directly. Moving up the chain, the comptoirs sell to the industrial mines, and at that point, artisanally mined rock becomes indistinguishable from industrially mined rock. There’s no way to know which, or what admixture of the two, winds up in refineries, electronics manufacturing plants, retail stores, and consumers’ hands. “Accountability vanishes like morning mist in the Katangan hills as it travels through the opaque supply chains that connect stone to phone and car,” Kara writes.

Cobalt and Climate Ambitions

“In 2010,” Kara recounts, “there were only 17,000 electric vehicles on the road in the entire world. By 2021, that number had skyrocketed to 16 million. Meeting the ambitions of the Paris Agreement would require at least 100 million total electric vehicles in use by 2030. An even more ambitious EV30@30 Campaign was launched in 2017 with the goal of accelerating the deployment of electric vehicles, targeting a 30 percent market share for electric vehicles sales by 2030. The EV30@30 target would require a



An electric car on the road



A cobalt stone held by an artisanal miner. Lot of illegal mining goes on in Congo.

global stock of 230 million EVs by 2030, a fourteen-fold increase over 2021 numbers. EV sales could end up being even greater, as twenty-four nations pledged at COP26 to eliminate the sale of gas-powered vehicles entirely by 2040. Millions of tons of cobalt will be needed, which will continue to push hundreds of thousands of Congolese women, men, and children into hazardous pits and tunnels to help meet demand.”

Surely the lofty goal of saving the planet should be compatible with equitable sharing of the profits generated to create it, especially with the Congolese people, whose resources and labor are at its epicenter. Surely the environment of the Congolese should be included in concern for the environment as a whole, but that is not the world we live in. Kara’s book is not an explicit critique of capitalism, but it is an implicit one. It makes it clear that,

without some form of socialism, a world powered by renewable energy will be no less predatory and no more people or community centered than that powered by fossil fuels.

Given the world’s finite supply of cobalt, battery engineers are already working on alternative designs that can minimize or eliminate reliance on it, and no matter how climate friendly, there’s no reason to believe that there’ll be any less blood on the supply chains required to manufacture them. Kara writes, “Even after battery designers find a way to eliminate cobalt from rechargeable batteries without sacrificing performance or safety, the misery of the Congolese people will not end. There will surely be another prize slumbering in the dirt that will be made valuable by the global economy. Such has been the curse of the Congo for generations.”

Critique of Cobalt Red

“Open Democracy” published a scathing critique of Cobalt Red which called it a sensationalistic, self-aggrandizing “White Saviour” exposé, even though Siddarth Kara is a South Asian Indian American.

I spoke to Maurice Carney of Friends of the Congo (FOTC), and we agreed that whatever its failings, Cobalt Red has greatly expanded awareness of the human cost of electronics and clean energy manufacturing, most of all to the Congolese. He said that FOTC works with Congolese who like the book and are glad to see its wide reception. Kara has been interviewed on countless podcasts, on Democracy Now, and at the DC-based Foreign Policy Association. The book is a New York Times and Publishers Weekly bestseller, and it’s been shortlisted for the Financial Times Best Business Book of Year Award. ●

THE MOST GLITTERING ENTITY

- Shrii Shrii Ānandamūrti

The word Rama has three meanings. One meaning is “the only entity from which yogis attain bliss”.

Spiritual aspirants do not get happiness from finite, worldly objects. They want something infinite. Bliss cannot be obtained from finite objects. The infinite object which supplies them with infinite happiness is nothing but Rama. The Ananda Sutram says infinite happiness is anandam – not sukham.

Another meaning of Rama is: Rama is the most glittering entity of the entire universe. It is the first syllable of rati, that is ‘ra’ or glittering.

The first letter of the word Mahadhara, is ma, meaning, the world. Hence Rama. All glittering entities get their glitter from Him, no entity possesses glitter of its own. The moon gets its glitter from the earth, the earth in turn derives its glitter from the sun. The sun gets energy from the cosmological nucleus. There are countless solar systems in the cosmos and the hub of all is Parama Purusha. He is the nucleus of all energy. Scriptures say: ‘Before that effulgent Supreme Entity, neither the sun shines, nor the moon nor stars nor the lightning flash, what to speak of fire. In Parama Purusha’s light all other entities shine. His effulgence illuminates all entities.’

The third meaning of Rama is ‘Ravanasya maranam.’ The first syllable of Ravanasya and the first syllable of maranam make up ‘Rama.’ Ravana means a mind that moves away from the nucleus – drifting away by the centrifugal force, dissipating mental energies in all 10 directions. He is depicted as a 10-faced demon. Ravana can be defeated or destroyed, only when one takes shelter in Rama. So one under whom Ravana automatically dies is ‘Rama.’

The meaning of Rama and Narayana is the same. Hanuman was asked why he insisted on taking the name of Rama and not of Narayana. He replied: “I know that philosophically there is no difference between Narayana and Rama, yet I will channelize my mind towards One Entity with all my sincerity and devotion and not many. For me there is no Narayana, there is only Rama”. In spiritual parlance such a word is called Ishta mantra and the spiritual aspirants treasure their Ishta mantra.

Narayana and Rama are the same Entity, only their names differ. The word Narayan comes from nara, that has three meanings: Parama, Prakrti and devotion or bhakti. Nara + da = Narada, the distributor of bhakti. Nara means devotion. And ‘ayana’ means ashraya. Narayana means Parama Purusha – the Cosmic Consciousness the shelter of Parama Prakrti.

Is the name more powerful or the name (named). Who is more powerful, Parama Purusha or His name? The bhava, or ideation, for an object goes together with its name. One cannot name oneself. You need somebody else to name you. Before leaping across the ocean, Hanuman consulted Rama. Rama replied, “Go ahead, Hanuman. You can jump across the ocean. But I cannot.” And Rama asked him, “How will you cross it?” Hanuman replied, “With your power.” Rama asked, “How will you get My power?” And Hanuman replied, “I will take your Name and jump.” Hence the name is more powerful than the name. The named, before being named, remains nameless. When there were no devotees, God had no name – He was nameless. ●

Proutist Universal in Action

Prout Convention

Proutist Universal announces that the annual Prout Convention 2024 is scheduled at Ananda Gaorii Holbækvej 56, 4560 Vig, Denmark from the 20th to the 24th of July. The theme for this year's convention is set to explore Prout's Federations, and delve into how we can optimally harness their potential within our movement. It's more than just dates on a calendar; it's an invitation to join a collective journey of exploration, learning, and envisioning - a future shaped by the principles of Prout. Get ready to immerse yourself in meaningful discussions, connect with like-minded individuals, and contribute to the evolution of our movement.

Prout Conference

It is proposed to organise a Prout Conference in spring on mental manipulation. This conference is dedicated to shedding light on the subtle yet profound issue of mental exploitation. In a world where emotional manipulation lurks everywhere, this event seeks to unravel its complexities, foster awareness, and explore strategies for prevention and healing. Those



wishing to be part of the team organizing this event are requested to let us know!

Prout Video Casts

Our team is working on a new project! We are going to start releasing monthly video reports of Prout projects around the world. Through these, we aim to provide a first hand glimpse into the diverse projects that embody the spirit of Prout to our Prout global movement and community. We will be able catch up with each other, learn more and get inspired.

More information will be released soon!

Prout Knowledge Database

With the goal of building up our internal capacity, fostering closer relationships and being more connected, we have created this Prout Knowledge Database. This is a database of Proutists who wish to share their knowledge and skills on Prout and Prout projects with those who need some assistance. We will have writers, video creators, cooperative experts, public speakers, etc.

Ready to amplify our collective brilliance? Share your skills, and let's co-create impactful initiatives.

Facing a hurdle with your Prout project? Reach out, and let the Prout Knowledge Database infuse enthusiasm and expertise into your vision. It's not just collaboration; it's a thrilling journey toward a more vibrant and empowered Prout community. Join us as we embrace the excitement of growth and collective achievement! ●

Input by PU, Copenhagen



Conference organized at PRIP and Systems Change Alliance in 2020



PBI Outlines Election Strategy in Araria Meeting



Araria, Bihar - In a significant development on February 4, Proutist Bloc, India (PBI) convened a crucial meeting in Araria, Bihar, to deliberate on the strategy for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The gathering saw the participation of around 30 socially enlightened local residents and party cadres.

The meeting, attended by PBI's national convenor Acharya Santosananda Avadhuta and the party's Bihar unit President Dr. Tarani Prasad, served as a platform to discuss key electoral tactics and chart a course for the party's campaign.

A major announcement during the meeting was the decision to field Acharya Krishna Kumar as PBI's candidate from Araria and Subhash Chandra Suman, candidate from Bhagalpur parliamentary constituencies, Bihar.

Acharya Krishna Kumar is a renowned Advocate as well as a vibrant social activist. He is famous for organising blood relief camps as well as various other charitable programmes.

Subhash Chandra Suman is recognized as a dedicated social worker, operating an NGO committed to the upliftment of the poor and downtrodden. His candidature brings forth a focus on social welfare and community development as integral elements of PBI's political agenda.

Addressing the attendees, Acharya Santosananda Avadhuta emphasized the uniqueness of PBI as the only political party offering a viable solution to the nation's prevailing challenges. Avadhuta highlighted PBI's commitment to implementing PROUT (Progressive Utilization Theory), the party's socio-economic framework. According to Avadhuta, PROUT envisions a new era of economic democracy, a prerequisite for achieving widespread prosperity. He urged the public to rally behind PBI in the upcoming elections, emphasizing the party's dedication to ushering in positive change.



PBI Takes up the Cause of Vidarbha with Chief Minister

Mumbai : February 13, 2024 - In a significant development, Proutist Bloc, India's Vidarbha convener, Madhukar Nistane led a delegation of PBI cadres to meet Chief Minister of Maharashtra Eknath Shinde in person at his office in Mumbai.

The primary agenda of the meeting was to press for the declaration of a separate Vidarbha state and address issues related to encroached agriculture.

During the meeting, the delegation, comprising of Madhukar Nistane, Vivek Dehankar, Arun Kapile, Yashwantrao Bonde, Vishwa Bandhuji, Mohan Pawar, Krishna Tekam, and Satish Kinake, emphasized the urgent need to recognize Vidarbha as a separate state. Besides, the delegation articulated the concerns of the farmers cultivating the encroached land, and their demand to be allotted land lease.

Madhukar Nistane, as the Vidarbha convener, conveyed the sentiments and aspirations of the people of the region, underscoring the socio-economic significance of establishing Vidarbha as an independent state.

The Chief Minister listened attentively to the delegation's concerns and assured that their demands would be duly considered. The meeting marked a crucial step in the ongoing efforts by Proutist Bloc, India to address regional concerns and advocate for the welfare of Vidarbha and its people.



BOOK REVIEW



PBI Holds a Grand Cycle Rally to Promote Patriotism



Proutist Bloc, India (PBI), under the leadership of Madhukar Nistane, organized a Grand Cycle Rally on January 26 at Jayastamba Chowk, Ghatanji.

Aimed at fostering patriotism and humanity among the youths, the event witnessed a vibrant display of enthusiasm from participating youths and children.

The participants, echoing chants of "Ganatantra Din, Chirayu Ho, Bharat Mata Ki Jai; No War, World Peace," marched through the city's main thoroughfare. A 4 km cycle rally from Parva Naka to Kanhoba Hill caught the attention of people.

Darshan Singhewar clinched the first position, followed by Siddhant Misal in second and Saurabh Mahajan in third. Karthik Urkude, Ganesha Gadhai, Aaradhya Vandhare, and Shreya Gadhare received promotional and honorable ranks.

The rally, meticulously planned by Mohanrao Pawar and Padurang Kiranapure, received valuable contributions from Tehsildar Vijay Salve, Chief Magistrate Amol Malkar, and other dignitaries like Thanedar Nilesh Suradkar, Anant Chaudhary, Omdev Kinake, and many more.

The responsibility of examining the competition fell on Pradip Waghpainjan and Praful Raut Chandekar, with the Nagpur Post Ghatanji City Correspondent overseeing the proceedings.

Prominent figures such as Padurang Nikode, Manikdas Tonge Maharaj, Madhukar Gedam, Guddu Shukla, and others, including Vice-President of Ekta Journalist Sangh, Journalist Kajjum Bhai Qureshi, Sagar Sammanwar, Nikam Kaka, and Correspondent Kishore Thackeray, added to the event's significance.

Umesh Pawankar showcased Rangoli decoration, while Suresh Puttajwar graced the event with his dignified presence, making the Grand Cycle Rally and Competition a memorable celebration of patriotism and community involvement.



International Seminar on 'The Vedic Tradition and Shrii Shrii Anandamurti' Concluded Successfully



The School of Vedic Studies, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, in collaboration with Renaissance Universal (RU) and Renaissance Artists and Writers Association (RAWA), successfully held a two-day International Seminar on 'The Vedic Tradition and Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji: In Modern Perspectives' on January 30th and 31st, 2024.

The seminar, held at the Rabindra Bharati University campus, featured five academic sessions with a total of 22 paper presentations. The event began with a grand inaugural ceremony, graced by esteemed dignitaries, including Subhra Kamal Mukhopadhyay, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, Rabindra Bharati University, who inaugurated the seminar.

The first day saw two academic sessions covering themes such as 'The Vedas & Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji' and 'Grammatical Tradition and Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji'. Eminent scholars and researchers delivered insightful presentations, highlighting the significance of Ananda Sutram, linguistic aspects of Shri P. R. Sarkar, and the role of grammar in his philosophy.

The second day featured three academic sessions, including discussions on 'Indian Philosophy and Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji', 'Neo-Humanism and Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji', and 'Indian Aesthetics and Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji'. Scholars delved into topics ranging from spirituality in Neohumanism to Shri P. R. Sarkar's economic theory and a comparative analysis of Prabhat Sangeet and Rabindra Sangeet.

The valedictory session marked the conclusion of the seminar, with Prof. Gopal Chandra Misra, Former Vice-Chancellor, Gour Banga University, delivering the valedictory speech. Acharya Sarveswarananda Avadhuta, Guest of Honor, emphasized Anandamurti's extensive contributions to various aspects of human existence and intelligence. ●



Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

A NEW DAWN SHALL COME

KE JENO ÁSIÁ KAYE GECHE KÁNE
NÚTAN PRABHÁT ÁSIBE
KÁLO KUHÁSÁR YAVANIKÁ PÁRE
SONÁLI JIIVAN HÁSIBE
NÚTAN PRABHÁT ÁSIBE

THÁKIBE NÁ ÁR VYATHÁ HÁHÁKÁR
BAHIBE NÁ ÁR SHUDHU ÁNKHIDHÁR
SAB VEDANÁR URDHVA LOKETE
PRÁÑER PARÁG BHÁSIBE

SNEHA MAMATÁR EI JE BHUVAN
ÁSHÁ BHÁLOBÁSÁ MADHUR SVAPAN
SAKAL MANER MARME PASHIÁ
SAB KÁLO CHÁYÁ NÁSHIBE

O someone apparently came
And whispered in the ear that
A new dawn shall come
Beyond the gloom of dark mists
A golden life shall smile.

No more shall there be pain
Nor cries of distress,
No more shall tears rain from eyes.
Beyond the peak of all pain
Adrift is the pollen of life.

O this world of love and tenderness,
Sweet dreams of hope and love,
Ensconced in everyone's soul
He shall destroy all dark shadows.



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