

# SACH

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## Pakistan : Test for Democracy

The victory of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party (PTI) led by the cricketing icon turned politician Imran Khan in the general elections in Pakistan held on July 25, 2018 marked the country's second civilian transfer of power and its first ever decade of uninterrupted democracy, without military rule in between. Since its independence, the nation has seen only two democratically elected governments completing full terms in office. The first having taken place as recently as 2013, when the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government handed over the reins to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). Since 1947, Pakistan has been ruled three times by military dictators who served as President for many years. In 1958, Muhammad Ayub Khan became the President. In 1977, Zia-ul-Haq became the President after ousting Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. And in 1999, Pervez Musharraf held the post and remained in office till 2008.

The election results ruptured the conventional politics of status quo and demolished old myths and brought down several stalwarts. One of the important aspects of these elections has been the utter electoral failure of the religio-political parties in the country. The Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), the five-party far-right religious alliance could not succeed in securing the significant public mandate. The first point of the MMA's election manifesto was the implementation of Shariat laws, provision of protection to Islamic laws existing in the constitution. Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) was revived a decade after the political alliance was dissolved over differences. Formed in 2002, the MMA, which was a political alliance consisting of ultra-conservative, Islamist, religious, and far-right parties of Pakistan, ruled Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province from 2002 to 2007 before it became dormant after developing internal rifts on the issue of contesting general elections in 2008. Similarly, another ultra-conservative religio-political party Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) could succeed in securing only two provincial assembly seats in Sindh. TLP, Pakistan's newest hard-line religious party was formed in 2017 and blasphemy has been a central issue for the party,

The new prime minister of Pakistan, Mr. Imran Khan has to brace himself for the multiple challenges at home and abroad. The challenges stem from issues like a faltering economy, rampant corruption, extremism, overbearing military, overpopulation and dwindling water resources. In the last five years, a yawning international trade deficit has fuelled Pakistan's current account deficit, adding pressure on the rupee. A sinking rupee epitomizes a jarred economy that is crying out for a bailout package, most likely from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which is likely to be on tougher conditions. Corruption has remained a substantial obstacle for economic development in Pakistan. Before the elections in July 2018 the former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was sentenced to 10 years in prison for his involvement in corruption. The new government faces the major challenge to tackle poverty and endemic corruption through a revamped governance system in the country. The Islamic State (ISIS) claiming the Election Day bombing in Quetta and other places killing over 200 people put forth yet another grotesque reminder of the global terror group's presence in Pakistan. Imran Khan's success as a leader and as the prime minister hinges on how well he addresses these on priority if he wants to fulfil promises he made to his voters on governance.

# Invocation to Freedom

Poem by **SUBRAMANYA BHARATHI**

Mother, those that hungering seek thy grace  
And offer to thee their life and love,  
Howbeit consigned to dungeons here,  
They'd qualify for a place in Heaven.

Those unvisited by your grace, Mother,  
Must exult in being slaves;  
Albeit inhabiting palaces,  
They breathe the air of prison cells.

Winning your grace through heroic deeds  
Many Western peoples now live a new life;  
They've achieved all, being always ready  
To make the supreme sacrifice.

Alas, born in a hapless land  
Which remembers not the glories lost,  
Knowing the power of your grace,  
Mother, How best may I propitiate thee?

I call these Lights! Nectar of the brave!  
Preserver of the righteous!  
Destroyer of suffering and deceit!  
I call for the descent of your grace.

—*Translated into English By S. Prema*

# When Dalit Filmmakers Embrace Their Identity and Reclaim Their Stories

*“Our world is shown as colourless and poverty-stricken. Yes, we are economically poor but not culturally so. Where is the depiction of our vibrant culture, music and food? Why is our world shown bereft of it all?” asks Kaala director Pa Ranjith.*

By **DIPTI NAGPAUL**, INDIA

**FOR** his directorial debut, the 2012 film *Attakathi*, Tamil filmmaker Pa Ranjith shot a track, *Adi en gaana mayil*. He had grown up listening and dancing to the folk song, which was sung at funerals to the beats of the *parai melam*, a percussion instrument made of leather, and thus considered inauspicious. The song made it to the top of the charts and playlists of parties and temple festivals across Tamil Nadu. “I grew up on such songs but this tradition had never been reflected in our cinema. So, when people took to the song, it felt like an acknowledgement of the Dalit culture that is otherwise missing from the mainstream,” says the 35-year-old filmmaker.

Since then, Ranjith has honed his politics to assert his Dalit identity through the cinema he makes. His last, *Kabali* (2016), for instance, had Rajinikanth play the leader of a gang of Tamilians in Malaysia. It tells the story of Tamil Dalits who were taken to Malaysia by the Britishers as indentured labour. His next, *Kaala*, which released this Friday, is set in Dharavi, a settlement once dominated by Tamil Dalits. As *Kaala*, Rajinikanth plays a leader of slum-dwellers, who challenges the relentless displacement of

the poor in a metropolis. The promos suggest a generous use of Dalit symbolism. Take, for instance, *Kaala*’s jeep number, MH 01 BR 1956, a reference to the year BR Ambedkar led the mass conversion of Dalits to Buddhism; or the blue that dominates the slums in the form of cloth, drums, tarpaulin sheets. The film’s teaser begins with the chant of “*Poraduvom* (We will fight)” and ends with the Ambedkarite exhortation, “*Kattravai, pattavai* (educate, agitate)”.

To the filmmaker, the symbolism is secondary; it’s the assertion that forms a crucial part of his cinema. “There have been films in the past that depict Dalit characters and lives. They were made by non-Dalits, who view us through a lens of pity. Our world is shown as colourless and poverty-stricken. Yes, we are economically poor but not culturally so. Where is the depiction of our vibrant culture, music and food? Why is our world shown bereft of it all?” he says.

Most films that address caste confirm Ranjith’s analysis. They depict Dalits in minor roles of poverty and helplessness. One of the Hindi film industry’s biggest commercial successes, *Lagaan* (2001), for example, celebrates this kind of token “inclusion”.

While the rest of the village's makeshift cricket team shuns the "untouchable" Kachra, Aamir Khan's Bhuvan embraces the crippled man and deigns to include him in the team as a spinner.

"I understand that films such as Jabbar Patel's Mukta (1994, about an upper-caste woman who falls in love with a Dalit activist) are well-intentioned. But why do these films have to adopt a patronising tone?" asks Marathi filmmaker Nagraj Manjule, whose films Fandry (2013) and Sairat (2016) broke new ground in the depiction of caste relations. Sairat, a love story with Dalit actors in the lead, broke several box-office records to enter the elite Rs 100-crore club usually reserved for films by the Khans.

With films like Newton (2017) and Mukkabaaz (2017), Hindi cinema, too, appears to be have embarked on a tentative exploration of caste. Newton signals this tacitly, with a blink-and-miss glimpse of Ambedkar's portrait in Newton's house or a discussion of Adivasi food preferences (Anjali Patil's Malko telling Newton why red ants make for great chutney). Mukkabaaz is more overt, with a lower-caste protagonist who works for a Brahmin, but the film never dives too deep.

But, in the film, every character is vocal about their caste. The reason caste has been able to survive is precisely because it isn't spoken of openly. People don't talk about it the way characters in Mukkabaaz do," says Somnath Waghmare, a Dalit documentary filmmaker and research scholar at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Waghmare is working on a thesis that maps Dalit voices in Indian cinema.

When filmmakers from the so-called "lower" castes tell their stories, they not only aim to correct the near-erasure of their history and existence from popular culture; but they also wish to tell stories from the inside, which humanise the life of Dalits and depict it in all its complexity. Take, for instance, Neeraj Ghaywan's Masaan, where one of the six

principal characters belonged to the Dom community of Varanasi that is designated to handle and burn corpses. Played by Vicky Kaushal, Deepak's is essentially a love story. "But one is able to sense Deepak's aspiration, a thread that is common in the depiction of all low-caste characters in movies by Dalit filmmakers," says Waghmare. "One can see it in Manjule's films. Be it little Jabya of Fandry or Parshya in Sairat," he says.

If such representations have rarely made it to the big screen, it is a reflection of the casteism inherent in the Indian film industry, and the tiny number of Dalits who work in it. Manjule recounts that in 2013, during Fandry's promotion, a journalist pointed out that he was the first Dalit filmmaker to talk about caste in his movie. "That was the 100th year of Indian cinema and I told the journalist that if that is the case, it has taken a hundred years for a Dalit to make a film in India," says Manjule, who believes that few Dalits are empowered enough to identify as Dalit. Fandry went on to win international acclaim, but, more importantly, it pushed the discussion about caste into the mainstream.

Earlier this year, following the Bhima Koregaon protests in Maharashtra, Ghaywan "came out" as a Dalit on Twitter, following an unsavoury comment by filmmaker Vivek Agnihotri. Not everyone has the courage Ghaywan displayed under the circumstances, only to face a torrent of abuse on social media for using the "Dalit card". Many in the film industry choose to conceal their Dalit identity. "So many prominent names have reached out to me after watching my films. They call or meet me with a 'Jai Bhim', choosing to reveal themselves to me but not to others," says Manjule, adding that he had not been aware that so many actors and technicians in the Marathi and Hindi film industries are Dalits.

Two years ago, the son of the late lyricist, Shailendra, who wrote some of Hindi cinema's most memorable songs — from Piya

tose naina laage re in Guide to Pyar hua iqrar hua in Shree 420 — announced at a public event that his father had belonged to the Dhursia caste, a cobbler community from Bihar. “Growing up, my parents did tell us that we were from a low caste but I never understood what that meant until my late 20s, when I started to research my father’s life,” says Dinesh Shankar Shailendra. Unable to understand why his father, a successful lyricist and poet of his time, did not receive any national or state awards, Dinesh went to a village in Arrah district, where his grandfather was born and found that he had managed to break the cycle of oppression. “I learnt that he chose to educate himself despite the discrimination, sitting five rows behind others in the classroom. He found a job as a contractor in the British army and eventually got posted to Rawalpindi, where my father was born.” While Shailendra didn’t experience caste discrimination, he was acutely aware of it, perhaps because he had seen his father suffer. “Except one incident that he wrote of in his diary: Once, while playing hockey, some upper-caste boys had sniggered, ‘Now, we will have to play with these kind of people’. That strengthened my father’s resolve to move to Bombay,” says Dinesh, who is writing a script on his father’s life.

In Bombay, Shailendra was drawn to the Communist movement, and became one of Indian People’s Theatre Association’s founders. Collaborating extensively with Raj Kapoor, who gave him his first break, Shailendra wrote lyrics that often spoke of the socialistic ideals of independent India. “But he was aware of the ways in which caste operates and oppresses. Take, for example, the song sung by a cobbler, Thahar zara o jaane wale, in Boot Polish (1954), where he says: Pandit ji mantar padhate hain, woh Ganga ji nahlaate hain/Hum pet ka mantar padhate hai, jute ka muh chamkaate hai. Pandit ko panch chavannee hai, humko toh ek ikannee hai/ Phir bhed

bhav yeh kaisa hai, jab sab kaa pyara paisa hai,” says Dinesh about the song which mocks the priest’s superiority.

Many film professionals would understand why Shailendra chose to keep his identity a secret. “In today’s politically correct world, caste discrimination doesn’t exist in the conventional way. But the fear of being outed is deep-seated,” says a respected filmmaker, who did not wish to reveal his identity. “Our ‘place in the society’ has been grilled into us from a very age. There is a constant fear of being seen as lowly by one’s friends and colleagues. The fear is so real and raw that, sometimes, I wonder what my upper-caste house help will think of me if she found out that I am a Dalit,” he says, the vulnerability visible in his eyes.

Manjule seconds this. “When I came in the industry, I used to be scared of who I am, of how I look, of my last name, of my choices that would give away my caste identity. The language I speak is a raw version of Marathi that the upper caste speak. It’s considered ‘impure’. It took me a while to understand that any language is kept alive by the working class. Language’s purpose is expression and if whatever dialect I speak can help me express and communicate, it cannot be dismissed,” says the director, who used his local dialect in both his films. Fandry’s producer had initially asked him to avoid it but Manjule stood his ground. Sairat’s success, ironically, made the rural argot fashionable, triggering a trend in Marathi television shows and films.

But the filmmaker, who chooses to be anonymous, also worries about being seen only as a Dalit filmmaker, or being dismissed as a product of reservation. “Reservation has helped me but the chances are high that my capabilities will be questioned (because of it). Nor do I want my work to get any sympathy just because I am a Dalit.”

Ranjith argues that the first step in liberating oneself of these complexes is to take a stand and talk about one’s Dalit identity.

"The inferiority complex is a part of every Dalit's life. Growing up, there was a toy store near my house that would stock every toy except the spinning top, which was available at the store in the upper caste settlement. I would tell myself I shouldn't want that top because if I do, I will have to go across the store and be subject to humiliation. Over time, I realised I have no reason to feel inferior. If my poverty and my ways bother people, the problem lies with them and the society they have created," he says.

More importantly, caste is almost impossible to disown. "It's in people's nature, their choices, their expression. One can tell your caste based on what they like, what music they listen to or even how they name their film. You will never hear of a Gulabjaam made by Nagraj Manjule," says Manjule, referring to Sachin Kundalkar's recent release, which was criticised for passing off upper-caste vegetarian dishes as Marathi cuisine.

Nishant Roy Bombarde, who has worked in the media industry for a few years, recounts the everyday casteism of the film world. "A badly dressed person is called bhangi. Anything that was disgusting is dismissed as chuda-chamar. When looking for 'good-looking' lead actors, people would look for Brahmin girls and boys or casually confirm if a certain surname was upper caste," says the 35-year-old whose 2015 Marathi short film, *Daaravtha*, won the National Award. In the short, Bombarde tells the story of a young boy confused about his sexuality. A tiny thread in the film also touches upon caste, which he feels has been an integral part of his identity.

Waghmare's research reveals that characters in Marathi films who share his last name are usually peons, criminals or in other petty jobs. "This comes from conditioning and adds to it as well. It manifests in interesting ways. Last year, at a screening of my documentary film on Bhima Koregaon, a woman stood up to confirm if the 'fair-complexioned' professor in my film was

indeed a Dalit," he recounts.

Bollywood's power politics, on the other hand, rests in denial. Rumour is that *Sairat*'s remake in Hindi has done away with the caste angle. Director Abhishek Chaubey agrees that caste isn't blatant in Bollywood. "No one will ask, 'Tumhari jaat kya hai?' But I look around me and all I find are Chaubeys and Bhardwajes. That's as in-your-face as caste can get... I grew up in Ranchi, being able to afford a missionary school education that a lower caste person may not be able to. When I come to Bollywood, the chances are higher that I will be given an opportunity for the English I speak and the way I present myself," he says. Chaubey recently finished shooting for *Sonchiriya*, an action film set in Chambal of the 1970s. The director says most of his protagonists are upper caste, except one, and he tells the story of caste oppression but from the oppressor's point-of-view.

As more Dalits tell their own stories, however, they also find more challenges. "Being vocal about one's caste identity may mean that the villains in your film will be from the upper castes, which doesn't go down very well," says G Murali Vardhan, a cinematographer and FTII graduate whose filmography is limited to *Ranjith's Madras*, *Kabali* and *Kaala*. "It comes through in how people forget your work or how they miss inviting you to functions, or the sheer lack of work offers despite having proved your calibre."

Manjule agrees but adds that one of the crucial ways to escape such hurdles is by making sure the film isn't lacking in craft. "If you overlook the caste angle in *Sairat* and *Fandry*, the films are still entertaining. They manage to move the audience. This makes it easier for me to tackle production roadblocks and reach a wider audience," he says.

There is also, however, a simmering anger against fellow Dalit-Bahujans, who not only chose to conceal their caste but also adopted Brahmanical symbols. For instance, a young filmmaker who made a successful film using a Brahmin protagonist. Or Marathi

actor Bhau Kadam, who was at the receiving end of fellow Buddhist-Dalits' ire in 2017 after he installed a Ganesha idol during a festival. Bombarde feels that the anger isn't unfounded but he also empathises with them. "It's an inner battle for acceptance," he says.

Each one fights that battle in their own, contradictory ways. "He may never have spoken about his Dalit identity but it took an Ilayaraja to transform film music, mixing folk with holy ragas and serve it to the upper castes in a way that they lapped it up," says Vardhan. "You can disagree with his politics but cannot take away from him what he did for music."

Vardhan's colleague T Ramalingam, the art director on *Kaala*, says that the fight is about claiming ownership of the story of their lives. "You may find the slum I grew up in filthy but it was home to me, I will see beauty in it." He cites the example of the

2015 National Award-winning Tamil film *Kaaka Muttai*, pointing out that it has the same setting as Ranjith's *Madras*. "But it lacks the colour and vibrancy that we grew up seeing. In our houses, there was a separate spot to keep pots where sometimes rats would sneak in. While an outsider would view them with revulsion, as pests, we used to play with them." Which story is less valid? Which narrative will win? The answer, says Manjule, is in assertion.

"Ranjith has been doing what I did it with *Sairat* — enlarging the canvas to fit into the mainstream. The idea is to take our world to a larger audience, so they can see we are as human as they are."

*Courtesy : <http://indianexpress.com/article/express-sunday-eye/when-dalit-filmmakers-embrace-their-identity-and-reclaim-their-stories-5209972/>*



# Saints in Schools?

By **SUBHASH GATADE**, INDIA

*"..I am afraid I have no faith in astrology and certainly I should not like to fix up national programmes in accordance with the dictates of astrologers..."* Jawaharlal Nehru (In a letter to Rajendra Prasad, who had objected to January 26, 1950 as the date for inaugurating the republic on astrological grounds. Page 77, Volume 2, *Jawaharlal Nehru, A Biography*, OUP, 1979)

Can schools aided by government funds be opened for religious instruction? A cursory glance at the constitutional debates makes it abundantly clear that a majority of the members – despite their own religious inclination – were clearly of the opinion that schools, whose basic purpose was supposed to open minds of children and not to make them dumping ground of useless information, should never be opened up for any type of religious instruction. It was clear that they were seeing the perils of poisoning of the minds by religious frenzy in this part of the subcontinent, and were keen that future of independent India could be secured on secular grounds only.

The insertion of article 28 (1) just goes to show the united resolve of our founding fathers which clearly states: "No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State Funds" unless "established under any endowment or trust which requires that religious instruction shall be imparted in such institution".

In fact, article 28 of the constitution makes it more explicit and does not leave any ambiguity as far its implementation is concerned.

"No person attending any educational

institution recognised by the state or receiving aid out of state funds shall be required to take part in any religious instruction that may be imparted in such institution or to attend any religious worship that may be conducted in such institution or in any premises attached thereto unless such person or, if such person is a minor, his guardian has given his consent thereto cultural and educational rights."

It needs to be underlined that the expression religious instruction here has a restricted meaning. It conveys that teaching of customs, ways of worships, practices or rituals can not be allowed in educational institutions wholly maintained out of State funds.

It is worth considering whether an educational institution could impose its will on the students vis-a-vis religious instruction under the name of moral teaching etc.? Perhaps drafting committee of the constitution was aware of this possibility, and had clearly stated that any such imposition is a breach of article 19 which says, "All citizens shall have the right -(a) to freedom of speech and expression,"; any such imposition is also a breach of article 25(1) which says, "Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all person are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion."

The recent order of the Rajasthan government, where it has instructed that the government schools in the state will hold lectures of "Saints-Mahatmas" on every third Saturday of the month as an extra-curricular activity, seems to overlook these key provisions of the constitution. What is rather disturbing is that it has also not bothered to pay heed to

another constitutional provision which includes, under fundamental duties, "To develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform". (Sec V, article 51 A on Fundamental Duties), fully knowing that any such sermon by these "Saints-Mahatmas" would be a strong deterrent in development of the scientific temper.

It is an interesting coincidence that this move by the Rajasthan government has come at a time when the apex court of the country has asked the government to clarify its stand on a similar matter. A petition has been filed in the SC by a man based in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, who has claimed that the Hindi prayers sung during the morning prayers in over 1,100 Kendriya Vidyalayas promote a particular religion and hence violate the Constitution. According to the petition, the Hindi prayers that include shlokas like '*astoma sadgamaya*' and other prayers promote particular religious beliefs, and thus, parents of students from religious minorities, agnostics etc. might find them "constitutionally impermissible". The Supreme Court has termed it a 'serious issue' and has issued a notice on the same. The response of the government is still awaited.

Anyone who has closely watched the trajectories of the governments led by the BJP at the Centre and different states would not feel surprised over these developments in Rajasthan.

Time and again they have expressed their proximity not only to a particular religion, but have promoted issues, taken up moves, courted controversial *sadhus*, which has had a serious impact on the secular fabric of the constitution. The public display of religiosity – which was unthinkable or rather muted till a few years ago – by people holding reins of power has become a new norm these days.

Last few months have been a witness to the turmoil caused by the cases involving two high profile *sadhus* – Ram Rahim and Asaram Bapu – for their involvement in sexual assault of their followers and other black deeds, who were later convicted by the courts. There is

enough documentary proof available to show how the *sadhus* did not shy away from showering their support on the two in the long-winding court battle, clearly with an eye on their mass following.

It was no mere part of human error, rather a reflection of this attitude that a chapter on saints in a Class III textbook taught in Rajasthan schools, featured the rape accused self-styled godman Asaram Bapu as a great saint, more than two years after he was jailed for his act. It was noticed that he was sharing the space in the text book with Vivekananda, Shankaracharya, Mother Teresa and Ramakrishna Paramhans in the book.

Not a long ago, *India Today* had published a report providing details about the 'changes' being undertaken in the field of education: "Since 1st July 2015, yoga, pranayam, vande mataram, surya namaskar and meditation have been made compulsory at the time of school prayers; Saraswati Puja Worship has been made compulsory on every government and non-government schools on Basant Panchami; a school development committee has been formed in every school and its meeting is compulsory on every *Amavasya* (no moon day); *Bhagwadgeeta* has been made part of curriculum; and Geeta and Jail diary of Bhagat Singh have been made mandatory in schools. Books on Integral Humanism and Samajik Samarasta have been made part of school libraries." (Badalne Lagi Hai Shiksha, 'India Today' 3rd August 2016, Page 21)

One can see that apart from adding 'religious tinge' to the education, efforts are on to popularise ideas/ideologues of the right wing in a subtle manner.

Merely a few months before this order by the Rajasthan government, the MP government led by CM Shiv Raj Singh Chauhan had granted Minister of State (MoS) rank to five religious leaders, namely Baba Narmadanand, Baba Hariharanand, Computer Baba, Bhaiyyu Maharaj, and Pandit Yogendra Mahant in the state Cabinet. It needs be mentioned that Bhaiyyu Maharaj did

not accept this proposal, who recently committed suicide because of 'stress'. It was evident that the immediate trigger to make these appointments was that the likes of Computer Baba had decided to take out 'Narmada Ghotala (scam) Rath Yatra', along with Yogendra Mahant, to expose an alleged scam, and to demand action against illegal sand mining – which they promptly dropped after this appointment.

In this era of 'binary' politics, it is possible to take out similar examples from the records of any other secular parties and show that what BJP or the governments led by it have been doing is nothing unusual. Any such claim or understanding which reduces the really ground-breaking developments in Indian politics merely as a 'political change' would tend to miss the 'paradigm shift' which is occurring (or has occurred) before our own eyes. In fact, in a write-up commenting on Prime Minister Modi's first Nepal trip (August 2014), the author and well-known journalist Bharat Bhushan had put it rather bluntly: how a conscious attempt is on not only to legitimise 'Hindu rituals in the public sphere', but "create a predominantly Hindutva public sphere that marginalises others".

In his very first trip to Nepal, Modi had made a personal visit to Pashupatinath Temple, wearing a saffron kurta, saffron shawl and 'two strings of the holy rudraksha bead', and had symbolically presented 2,500 kg of yellow sandalwood to the temple authorities. He had performed a *Rudra Abhishek* – a ritual supposedly performed to please Lord Shiva. The author had raised an important question whether it should have been done as "a representative of a secular republic", and whether 'gifts' worth more than Rs 4 crore perhaps given from the funds from public exchequer should have "been linked with Modi's personal visit to the temple?"

This is in contrast of the stand taken by the newly independent Indian state on the proposal for renovation of the Somnath Temple. When Sardar Patel and K M Munshi

went to Mahatma Gandhi with the project, he blessed the idea but told them that people should contribute for the renovation and not the state. Jawaharlal Nehru distanced himself from the project. He reprimanded Munshi for writing to the Indian Embassy in Peking asking it to "send waters from the Hoang Ho, the Yangtse and the Pearl rivers, and also some twigs from the Tien Shan mountains" for the reconstruction of Somnath.

There are innumerable other examples which show the conscious manner in which the leaders of the nascent republic took steps so that the state does not appear favourably disposed towards a particular religion, and to maintain separation between religion and state.

We should never forget that founders of Constitution decided to move ahead on these lines in an atmosphere which had seen enough communal bloodletting and killing of innocents. Despite the challenges involved in the process, they resolved that if we do not ensure separation of religion and politics, similar bloodletting may occur again. The principled stand taken by Gandhi and Nehru on maintaining the separation, vis-a-vis Somnath Temple was merely a reflection of this greater concern.

Would it be possible for all those concerned citizens – who still believe in secular principles and values, and who are worried about the growing 'Hindutvaisation of the public sphere' – to regain initiative so that unsurmountable obstacles on the long journey towards secularisation of society could be removed? This effectively means removal/exit of the 'sacred' from the functioning of state and society and its reconstitution on secular foundations.

As of now, the battle looks difficult, but perhaps a beginning has to be made somewhere, lest the situation goes from bad to worse. Thus, while one strategises to challenge this move by the Rajasthan government – which clearly infringes on the constitutional principles and would act as an instrument to further close minds of the

young students – one should not shy away from forming broadest possible alliance to do it. It is high time also to look inward, introspect the whole idea of secularism and introspect why there is a lack of social foundation for secularism in this country. During any conflict situation involving different communities, it becomes more evident. Question arises why more than 70 years after we embarked on a secular path, it has remained so weak.

Perhaps it needs to be mentioned that there is still confusion or lack of consensus within the broader secular movement about what constitutes 'secularism'. Should we see it as '*Sarv dharm sambhav* (equality for all religions)' as popularised by Gandhi and his band of seculars, or should we look at it as 'separation of religion and politics? In fact, this confusion exists within the left also. Absence of clarity gets reflected in the strange formulation one witnessed after demolition of Babri mosque when a section of mainstream left tried to 'appropriate Rama in its own way' by dividing Ram into 'real Ram' and 'phoney Ram'.

For various reasons, serious thought could not be given to the whole process of secularisation also ('a process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols' – Peter Berger) in a country like India, and we remained focussed on maintaining or strengthening secularity of the state in a society which was not secular, but was based on exclusions of various kinds – may it be based on caste, gender, ethnicities etc. It is possible that most of us broadly concurred with the prevalent understanding then made much popular by the scholars like Peter Berger (*The Sacred Canopy*, 1967) which argued that the decline of religion was inevitable in modern industrialising society. It can be mentioned how this understanding flows out of what Meera Nanda calls

"[e]nlightenment project which believed that as men and women begin to understand the underlying order of nature without

involving God, they will learn to outgrow their faith in God" (Page 178, *The God Market*).

One knows that the Indian constitution is based on this classical view of secularisation.

Our confidence in the rationalisation of work process, removing all scope of divine intervention or magical action or the unfolding reality of 'emancipation of the state from the sway of religious rationales for economic activity, law and politics which is universal characteristics of all modernising states' (Nanda, Page 179) led us to a situation where whole world of culture and society was left the field open to various status quoist, reactionary interventions – may it be from the religious formations or from the likes of RSS or Jamaat which further helped desecularisation of the society. It was a manifestation of the situation within the society where one witnesses emphasis of the progressive/transformational movements on political-economic struggles and their neglect of intervention in social-cultural arena.

Another limitation is that secularism was envisaged broadly in terms of an extension of anti-communal struggle which left many a 'fraternal' struggles outside its purview. If secularism could be broadly construed (to quote Charles Taylor) as 'emptying of religion from autonomous social spaces', movements whose direct or indirect impact was on similar lines, were never considered as an essential part of the movement. For example, anti-caste or Dalit movement, movement against patriarchy and gender-based oppression, people's science movement, rationalist movement or movement of the exploited and oppressed for dignity and rights definitely bear the potential of limiting the role of religion in statecraft as well as society. But, there was no attempt to broaden the constituency of 'secular movement' or integrate them in a larger framework.

There could be many such points and the conversation should continue with a hope expressed in the Sanskrit couplet '*Wade Wade Jayate Tatvabodhah*' (Let us reach a sense of the world by this debate).

# Avoiding ‘Religious’ Violence in Sri Lanka

By **ASOKA BANDARAGE**, SRI LANKA

**ON** the night of February 22, four drunken Muslim youths traveling on a three-wheeler in Sri Lanka’s Kandy district beat up a Sinhala Buddhist truck driver because he had not allowed them to overtake his truck. The police arrested the assailants but released them on bail.

Although intelligence officers had warned that the incident could be used to instigate ethnic tensions in the area, the police did not take immediate action. After the truck driver died and his body was being taken from the hospital on the night of March 2, feeling betrayed by state authorities, villagers burned tires in protest.

Soon the protests spread to other areas in the region, culminating in mob violence and extensive destruction of Muslim-owned homes, shops and mosques by Buddhists. The violence killed two people and injured dozens.

The rioting was brought under control by March 9 after deployment of the Special Task Force, the declaration of a countrywide emergency, and a ban on Facebook and other social-media platforms for alleged promotion of hate speech. More than 80 people suspected of rioting were arrested.

Sinhalese Buddhist extremism has been vehemently condemned for the violence by the United Nations, Western governments, media, academia, and non-governmental organizations and their Sri Lankan counterparts. There is no question that violence by any group against another must be condemned and perpetrators must be held accountable. However, in order to avoid

descent into further “religious” violence, it is important to move beyond a simplistic depiction of a majority aggressor and a minority victim and consider the multiple historical and social structural causes of the conflict.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND :**

Communal harmony and cooperation rather than violence and conflict are the predominant features of Sri Lankan society. Muslims who started arriving in Sri Lanka around the 9th century as merchants and pilgrims were peacefully integrated into the society from about the 12th century. Sinhala kings, the Buddhist sangha and the people provided the facilities for the Muslim newcomers to practice their religion without hindrance.

Muslims fleeing persecution by the Portuguese and Dutch, who had ruled the island’s coastal lowlands since 1505, were welcomed and allowed to settle in the Sinhala kingdom. Muslim settlers married local Sinhala and Tamil women. The original Sinhala family names of some of these Muslim descendants are still in evidence in the Kandyan hill country disturbed by the recent riots.

Both colonial and local rulers have manipulated grievances and incited ethnic and religious groups against each other during times of crises and challenges to their authority. A case in point is the Rebellion of 1818, which sought to drive out the British from the Kandyan kingdom. It was sparked when the insecure and unpopular

colonial regime appointed a Muslim as the headman of Wellassa, undermining the traditional authority of the Sinhala governor of the region. The British put down the rebellion with utmost severity and repression, consolidating their authority over the Sinhala chiefs and the population.

Similarly, a conflict that emerged in Gampola in Kandy district in May 1915 over the right of a Buddhist procession to play music while passing a Muslim mosque, was used by the British regime in its own interest of divide and rule. Failures of the British to uphold Buddhist customary rights and to arrest a Muslim man who shot dead a Sinhala boy led to widespread violence by Buddhists against Muslims in Kandy and other areas. The British declared martial law, killed a large number of suspected rioters and charged prominent Sinhala leaders with sedition and arrested them to secure colonial domination

during the volatile World War I period.

During Sri Lanka's post-independence period too, so-called ethnic riots have rarely been spontaneous outbursts of primordial Sinhala hatred toward minorities. Rather, communally based conflicts have arisen and been exacerbated either because of state inaction or manipulation by state and outside actors.

The 1983 anti-Tamil violence was a pogrom. Its outcome was the horrific 30-year armed conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). There were no mass Sinhala uprisings during the armed conflict against Tamils following LTTE attacks against the most important Buddhist sacred sites, including the Sri Maha Bodhi in Anuradhapura and the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, or against atrocities such as the killing of young Buddhist monks in Arantalawa.



There are many unanswered questions regarding the forces behind the spread of anti-Muslim violence in the current postwar period. The disturbances in southwestern town of Aluthgama in 2014 were reportedly carried out not by local Buddhist villagers but by outside groups engaged in a “planned and well-orchestrated attack to discredit the [then] government.”

There is speculation as to the origin and sponsorship of the extremist group Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), which has been spreading xenophobia, bigotry and hate speech against the Muslims in Aluthgama and elsewhere. There are unanswered questions as to why the BBS was founded in 2012 soon after its leaders returned from a trip to Norway and why its leader, the monk Galagoda Gnanasara, was given a five-year multiple-entry visa to the United States. After the Aluthgama riots, the previous government lost the 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections, losing the crucial Muslim vote.

While Buddhist extremism has been subjected to global condemnation, there is little attention paid to the extremist Wahhabi Islam that has been spreading across Sri Lanka for the last several decades. In order to avoid further religiously based violence, it is necessary to address how this intolerant and aggressive form of Islam imported from Saudi Arabia is aggravating tensions between Muslims and Buddhists as well as other communities and between different Muslim sects. Indeed, how is the spread of Islamic extremism disturbing the island’s traditions of harmony and cooperation and contributing to communal violence?

#### **CURRENT SITUATION :**

According to local villagers affected by this month’s events in Kandy, the violence there too was perpetrated not by local residents but by groups that came from outside. The riots emerged soon after the present regime was badly defeated at local-government elections on February 10, and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe is facing a non-confidence motion in Parliament. The

defeat at the local-government elections conveyed public disapproval of proposed constitutional reforms and the ongoing sale of the country’s vital resources, assets and services to external interests including India, China, the US and transnational corporations.

The timing of the Kandy riots and the failure of the state to take timely action despite prior warnings have prompted many to ask: Was another unpopular and insecure regime seeking to promote communal conflict and destabilization to assert itself through authoritarian measures?

The disturbances in Kandy have provided new legitimacy to calls for internationally backed constitutional reforms as the basis for minority protection. However, constitutional reforms that provide the legal framework for dismemberment of the country along ethno-religious lines are likely to aggravate communal conflict. They will not address the structural violence rooted in corporate globalization and efforts of its state, media and NGO sectors and local allies to divert public attention away from widening economic inequality and massive social and environmental insecurities.

#### **MOVING FORWARD**

Sri Lankan Buddhists must not support xenophobic groups but safeguard their Buddhist heritage non-violently. Muslims must eschew extremist Islam and protect their traditional tolerant and gentle Islam. To avoid descent into religious wars, all individuals and groups must uphold the norm of unity within diversity and the qualities of generosity, compassion and wisdom over the lures of greed, hatred and ignorance promoted by both ethno-religious and economic fundamentalisms.

“Whoever judges hastily does Dhamma not uphold, a wise one should investigate truth and untruth both.” – Verse 256, The Dhammapada

*Courtesy : <http://www.atimes.com/avoiding-religious-violence-sri-lanka/>*

# Next Door Nepal : Secularism and its Discontents

*It is crucial for secularists in Nepal to define it.*

By YUBARAJ GHIMIRE, NEPAL



**IT** is crucial for the truly committed secularists in Nepal to have the courage and honesty to define the meaning of secularism in the constitution, incorporating its universal contents. (Image used for representational purpose)

Four years ago, a question put to Sushma Swaraj suggested that both India and Nepal should be “Hindu states”. “I have taken oath as a minister under the Constitution of secular India, and this issue is not open for discussion”, she said during her speech at a programme organised by a sister organisation of the RSS. No other BJP minister or leader would, perhaps, have reacted in the manner Swaraj did in defence of secularism.

But privately, senior Nepali leaders, mostly from the government, are invariably advised by BJP leaders that Nepal should be a “Hindu country”. Apparently, Nepali Congress chairman, Sher Bahadur Deuba, had assured Indian authorities before the constitution was promulgated in September 2015 he will make every effort not to have the word “secularism” inserted in the constitution. Deuba was more candid than other leaders who, either through words or gestures, tried to indicate to BJP leaders that they were not averse to the suggestion.

Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal gifted Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh an idol of Ganesha during a visit to Delhi when

the constitution was not yet written. In fact, Singh was the first BJP leader to tell then PM G P Koirala in June 2006, a month after Nepal transformed from a Hindu kingdom to a secular state, that the decision merited reconsideration.

The Nepali leaders and major parties chose a path that could be termed a fraud both on the constitution as well as secularism. The constitution says that Nepal shall be a secular country but remains silent on the state's commitment to neutrality or equal treatment toward all faiths. More ridiculously, it says protecting "sanatana dharma" shall be the duty of the state.

A subversion of key or guiding principles of the constitution, and ignored established norms and practices, had been a regular feature while drafting it, almost always with the "consensus" of key political parties. Let the end justify the means, was their approach. When they found that the public opinion was overwhelmingly opposed to "secularism", they chose not to make it part of the process. For them, giving the constitution a progressive look by any means was more important. The constituent assembly chose to solicit advice from western International NGOs on "progressive contents" instead of its members, whose role was limited to raising hands in "ayes" for each provision — none of them debated — for final approval. There was clearly little worry over possible future questions of the legality and ownership of the constitution.

Doubts and speculation over some "deals" each time a high-level political visit takes place from Kathmandu to Delhi, do not end with it. The recent visit (April 6-8) by Prime Minister K P Oli was no exception. Did Indian authorities, especially given a 90-minute one-on-one meeting on the first day between Oli and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "privately" give particular advice on secularism this time as well?

One of the first tasks that the Oli government undertook upon his return from Delhi was to begin work on a legislation seeking to annul the permit given to any INGOs found

working in favour of "religious conversion". Nepal has 249 INGOs, with some of them accused of working on "conversion". India is not the only country that has a view on Nepal's secularism. A British ambassador, through an open letter to all the members of the constituent assembly, had asked the "right to conversion" be incorporated as a fundamental right in the constitution as "secularism will have no meaning without the right to conversion". The European Union's view more or less conforms to the British ambassador's.

The controversy triggered by "secularism" is an outcome of an over-enthusiastic subversion of established democratic and constitutional processes. Nepal was declared a "secular country" in May 2006 by a "decree" of the presiding officer of the House, mainly on the calculation that "Hindu Nepal" was the strength of monarchy and without taking away that identity, the monarchy could not be abolished. External stakeholders were party to prescribing that short-cut to secularism, something that has now become the major bone of contention in Nepal. As Swaraj had pointed out, the Government of India, with a secular Constitution, can not officially advise its neighbour to shed secularism.

It is not just the common people who wanted a direct, participatory role in settling the issue. Even a large section of the votaries of the present constitution now want a review of the particular provision, in response to the open role that some EU countries and western INGOs have been playing on the issue.

It is crucial for the truly committed secularists in Nepal to have the courage and honesty to define the meaning of secularism in the constitution, incorporating its universal contents. But if the Oli government's proposed legislation on conversion is an outcome of the PM's deepening ties with the BJP leadership in Delhi, it could be at the cost of his earlier commitment to "secularism".

*Courtesy : <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/secularism-and-its-discontents-nepal-5156442/>*

# Pakistan: Revival of the Left

By RASHED RAHMAN, PAKISTAN

**THE** task of reviving the Left to once again become an effective player in the polity has been exercising minds in the surviving Left parties and groups for long but the achievement of this goal has proved difficult. It is therefore heartening to note the follow-up of the meeting of 10 Left parties and groups in Lahore on December 29, 2017 by the formation of a 17-parties/groups' platform dubbed Lahore Left Front (LLF).

Even a cursory perusal of the minimum programmatic pronouncements of these two meetings plus the composition of these brotherly platforms will be enough to prove that the LLF is inspired at least partially by the December 2017 moot. That 10-parties/groups platform agreed on what it considered the main or crucial tasks before it. These included the recovery of missing persons and their being charged through due process if there is any evidence of wrongdoing against them; deportation to their countries of origin of illegal immigrants; halting forced conversions and marriages of minority girls (particularly Hindu); regulation of the sugar mafia; restoration of tenancy rights in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's protected forest lands; withdrawal of unjust and false criminal cases against the Hashtnagar and Okara Military Farms' peasants, and the restoration of banned students unions. The 10-party/groups' meeting characterised the current narrative dominating politics of corruption as the main if not only problem afflicting society as a phenomenon integral to the bourgeois (capitalist) system, the

only solution/alternative to which is provided by socialism. The meeting also dilated on the persistence of feudalism and the need for land reforms. The participants vowed to wage a concerted struggle against fundamentalism, extremism, intolerance and fanaticism. In their struggle against feudalism they committed themselves to support the workers, farmers and tenants; work for the supremacy of parliament over the national security state; establish Pakistan as a multi-cultural country where every nationality would have full control over its resources; struggle for gender equality, the separation of the state and religion and the creation of a socialist economy in which there would be no class distinction in education and opportunity; implementation of the constitutional guarantees of shelter, employment, education, healthcare, and adherence to a non-aligned foreign policy while promoting friendly relations with all Pakistan's neighbours on the principle of non-interference.

The follow-up meeting of 17 parties/groups in Lahore on March 24, 2018 adopted a declaration focusing on four main issues to be tackled by the newly formed LLF: fight the growing tide of fundamentalism and terrorism; help develop class-based organisations of the working class; preserve democratic norms, and tackle the missing persons conundrum. While the 10-parties/groups session on December 29, 2017 set up an eight-member committee to take the process of a dialogue and coming together of the Left

forward, the LLF has set up a 17-member organising committee to implement its programme. These two streams, national and local, will hopefully merge as the process plays itself out. The LLF has kept its doors open to non-Left forces desirous of being part of the endeavour to counter religious radicalism. It also critiqued the current dominant national narrative about corruption as certainly an issue but which fails to challenge the existing system based on exploitation, inequality and injustice.

While the undeniable dearth in numbers on the Left means it has its work cut out for it, the apathy of the intelligentsia, including the progressive intelligentsia, underlines the deep psychological effects of the collapse of the Pakistani Left around 1980-81 and the decade later collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since the latter event and the consequent end of the Cold War, the world (and in its wake Pakistan) has changed almost beyond recognition. In this brave new world of the internalisation of the inevitability of unfettered capitalism and so-called liberal (bourgeois) democracy, the Left worldwide struggles to re-establish a coherent and credible narrative based on a penetrating in depth analysis and critique of the workings of the system, how this has changed in the last three decades, and what are the effects on state and society of these developments.

In the case of Pakistan, such a narrative cannot escape our early or recent history, which by now has mired us in international isolation (read 'conflict' with the west), at odds with all our neighbours, and internally veering towards a new form of fascism allegedly backed by the ubiquitous establishment and representing a new chapter in the control and manipulation of the polity.

Perhaps the only reason (explicitly stated or implicitly internalised) for the Left to support the struggle for a genuine

(bourgeois) democracy over the last 70 years, a struggle still in progress, is because they believed this provided the space for articulation of and struggle for their aims and objectives, central amongst them, and to which all other issues were linked but subordinate, being the establishment of a socialist state. How far in practice that hope has transpired is there for students of our history to peruse. Currently, such is the crisis of state and society and the consequent insecurity of the establishment despite no serious challenge to its hegemony that it now seeks (and to a considerable extent has silenced) the smothering through all possible means of the voices of dissent and criticism, whether in the mainstream or social media or in society at large.

The hoped for 'advantage' therefore of democratic liberties, including freedom of expression, remains an elusive will o' the wisp. That merely serves to underline the formidable challenges for the Left, ranging from evolving and being allowed to disseminate its message/narrative to confronting the risks to life and limb emanating from such activism. And of course this does not even compare to the greater risks to safety that is the inevitable outcome of practical organisation and struggle of the masses.

Is history on the side of socialism in the 21st century, as its advocates still are convinced of, or is the dream of a just world passé, as capitalist and pre-capitalist advocates would have us believe? Only time will tell, but it would not be out of place to insert a word of caution about premature triumphalism regarding capitalism's 'victory' and the lack of any alternative. History has a habit of surprising us when least expected.

*Courtesy : <http://www.sacw.net/article/13703.html>*

# The Psyche and Phantasy

By **CHRISTOPHER CAUDWELL**



*...Continued from previous issue*

**POETRY** is written by a poet. The contradiction which generates it is a special case of the contradiction that drives on society and is fought out in the real life and real consciousness of men – the contradiction between man’s desires and Nature’s necessity. Poetry springs from the contradiction between the instincts and experience of the poet. This tension drives him to build the world of illusory phantasy which yet has a definite and functional relation to the real world of which it is the blossom

The twentieth century has learned a good deal about the general nature of phantasy. Among its important discoveries are those of psycho-therapy, using the pioneer methods of Charcot, Janet, Morton Prince and, above all, Freud. Freud’s founded many rival schools, of which the best known are those of Jung (analytical psychology) and Adler (individual psychology).

Probably in no other field has the essential weakness of modern science been more clearly shown than in the subsequent development of the important data gained by Freud in his early researches. This weakness is the lack of any synthetic world-view in which to fit the empirical discoveries made. The researches of a brilliant investigator such as Freud increase instead of clarifying the hopeless confusion of modern ideology.

The scientist is left with two alternatives. On the one hand, he regards his discoveries as limited to his own particular

sphere and adopts towards reality as a whole a complete eclecticism, which leads inevitably to a view of reality as unknowable and to a conception of science as a mere collection of convenient summaries of empirical discoveries not necessarily capable of coherence or synthesis. Or, on the other hand, the scientist who has made some important discoveries may, in default of a world-view common to science as a whole, erect a complete ideology on the limited basis of the particular discoveries he has made. Naturally such an ideology will be a travesty of reality and will fail to account for most of the important features of reality and of the human mind. The things unaccounted for by its explanation are forcibly reduced to the level of the other few facts by the crude “nothing but” method.

If, however, this happens to be repugnant to the scientist, as will be the case if he is a scientist of some breadth of culture then mystical explanations will be given for the other phenomena inexplicable by his limited world-view. A large portion of reality will be conveniently removed to the sphere of religion, as among the vitalists, holists, entelechists and spiritualists generally.

Freud is representative of empiricism with its reductive method, while Jung tends towards a more eclectic and mystical point of view.

Freud finds sexuality – using a somewhat broad definition of sexuality – present in all human ideology, but most clearly seen in the products of neurotic conflicts. This sublimated sexuality takes a number of forms: artistic, religious and

philosophical. It is in fact the generating force of all human activity. "But then," the objector urges, "sexuality is something else besides sexuality, which by definition is a certain instinct directed to the accomplishment of the sexual act?" "No," Freud answers, "sexuality is unable to take this simple form, because it comes into conflict with the stern prohibitions of the super-ego and the ego in the psyche. The wealth of ideology is produced in its attempt to sublimate the conflict. This ideology includes religion, morals, art, philosophy, neuroses and dreams."

Freud takes the arbitrary, ego-instinct duel further by his concept of the Pleasure and Reality Principles. The pleasure principle represents the instinctive desires of the sexual part of the psyche. The ego is associated with the reality principle. Here we have nothing but a special version of the familiar biological opposition – the instinctive organism and its adaptation to the environment.

Freud's pleasure principle (which as he himself admits, must include hunger and other instincts beside the sexual) is the appetitive striving of life, and the reality principle is that conditioning or adaptation of its appetites produced by the environment. This adaptative instinct, seen in action, appears to the cat stalking the mouse, the otter fishing, the deer on watch and fleeing. But no hard-and-fast line can be drawn between the two. In seeking a mate, in seeking food or in evading danger, a pleasure principle is being followed, but the animal cannot ignore external reality; indeed it is only by the help of its adaptations to reality that it gratifies its appetitive instincts. Why then do the two not come into conflict in animals and so create a neuroses and an ideology? Why is the conscious ego in man associated with the reality principle and not with the more "egoistic" appetitive instincts of sex, hunger or self-preservation?

Freud is, in fact, only rediscovering in

his new but limited sphere, categories as old as any known to human thought, and then applying them, with the nomenclature and special twist they receive in his domain, back to the whole sphere of human thought. It is the old contradiction between subject and object, between man and Nature, between instinct and environment, between free will and necessity, between life and matter, which appears in Freud's psychology in three different dresses: (a) as the pleasure principle and the reality principle, (b) as the life instinct and the death instinct, (c) as the ego (together with its emanations the id and the super-ego) and the libido.

Now we have already remarked about this subject-object dualism (which has been the constant ground of our study so far) that men have tended to separate them as mutually exclusive opposites and to give only one the status of reality. Thus all reality is reduced to those phenomena which do not contain any part of the other: since these two opposites are not exclusive but mutually interpenetrate, such a reduction eventually reduces the world to precisely nothing but a meaningless name.

Since he is a psychologist and not a philosopher, Freud does not treat of all reality but only of mentation, conscious and unconscious, considered objectively. Yet here, exactly as in the field of knowledge as a whole, the same interpenetration of environment and instinct takes place, and it is never possible to separate any mentation as specifically instinctive and in no way conditioned by the environment. The attempt to do so, to discard as "additional" or "sublimated" all mentation which bears the stamp of the environment, involves excluding layer after layer of consciousness as secondary and unreal until one reaches as the only true psychic reality something vague and formless, a mere name – libido.

Yet this discovery was in fact given from the start in Freud's bourgeois approach to psychology. The bourgeois philosopher is

unable to rise above the standpoint of the individual in civil society. All social activity is the product of the free will and dynamic urge of the individual as it emerges immediately in its own consciousness grappling direct with Nature. Since its instinctive centre is the source of its freedom, any restrictions placed on it by social relations cripple and distort its range of action.

This conception is, of course, appropriate to a class the conditions of whose existence are that he is free to produce exactly what seems best to him in view of the market, the market itself being but a kind of extension of Nature or the environment. To such a class, the initial condition of whose development was that it abolished all feudal relations, freedom necessarily seems to inhere in the individual by divine right, and freedom appears as the ignorance of the necessity of those social relations which influence the individual's desires.

Such a conception leads to a wholly false view of society and freedom, and in psychology, therefore, to a misinterpretation of the social contents of the psyche and of the way in which the instincts become free. It reflects the view of a class whose own developing freedom rests on its alienation from active struggle with the environment, and in whose ideology therefore there is already a cleavage between subject and object. Instead of seeing that subject and object are separated actively by their mutual struggle, such a view supposes that they are already separated contemplatively by their mutually exclusive nature. Such a misunderstanding can only lead to an interpretation of the world in terms of either subjectivism or mechanism, and Freud, although he regards himself as a materialist, chooses the subject. Libido, the source of free action, creates the psychic environment which cripples it. Freud's idealistic presumption is the simple presumption of Rousseau's "natural man," who is born free and is everywhere in chains.

But we have already seen that the instincts, unadapted by society, are blind and therefore unfree. The brute is not free; the ant is the slave of its innate responses. Man's freedom is obtained by association, which makes it possible for him to acquire mastery over Nature through becoming actively conscious of its necessity and his own. This association of itself necessarily imposes certain restrictions, conventions and obligations, such as those of good behaviour, language and mutual aid. But all these things are not fetters on the free instincts (libido); they are the instruments by which instinctive man realises his freedom. The view of reality which is science, the canons of feeling which are art and ethics, are imposed on the instincts from without; none the less they are not fetters, distortions, inhibitions or sublimations. They are the means by which instinct realises its freedom because they give it understanding of Nature's necessity and its own and therefore are – since Nature will not yield to a mere wish – the only means by which the will can actively realise itself. And man's consciousness, with its ego, its sublimations, its distortions, and its vivid rich complexity, is nothing but the adaptation produced in man's psychic genotype by the conditions of working in association with other men towards the realisation of freedom. Consciousness, in the broadest sense (including therefore the subconscious, which is also the product of modified instinct), is a social product. It is not merely that consciousness has a social component. The construction of consciousness is the socialising of the psyche.

Of course individuals vary, and this individuality is reflected in their consciousnesses, just as the difference in a man's anatomy is reflected in his clothes. Yet clothes are clothes and not flesh and blood, and these social adaptations of the human psyche are the very means by which individual differences are realised and

accentuated. Also human experiences differ, and since consciousnesses are determined by experience, individual consciousnesses will differ, but this is only to say that society itself by division of labour has so differentiated itself as to give rise to the possibility of widely different individual adventures in the world of geography or of feeling; this difference contrasts with the simple sameness of lives among the members of a herd and once again shows that the development of society is the means by which differences are realised and personality attains its full worth.

Since consciousnesses are determined by the social complex made necessary by a given historical development of the productive forces, and it is not, as Freud assumes, that society is determined instantly by the make-up of the psyche, the historical production of ideology, phantasy, dream and the like must depend on an historical change in the structure of men's social complex. It must be plain that this is so, for if the innate qualities of the psyche determined the social complex and also the consciousness and ideological productions of its members, how could these vary so much from age to age and culture to culture, when man's genetic make-up barely varies at all in historical times?

It can be shown that the material productive forces of society, and the relations between men made necessary by these, vary and develop historically according to deterministic laws of a quality peculiar to the sphere of society, and since this development is fought out in the consciousnesses of the men who engage in these relations, it is possible to explain scientifically the ceaseless change of ideology and individual consciousness in spite of an invariant psychic genotype. To cut away all these material causes, as Freud does, is to cut away the only means of understanding scientifically the cause of historical changes in ideology.

It also robs his therapy of any but a local and particular value. Since the distortions and variations of consciousness, including all neurotic conflicts, are generated, not by material conditions of living but by the psyche torturing itself, by the ego separating itself and issuing stern demands to the libido, man can only be cured by becoming conscious of the cause of his conflict which, since it is all in the psyche, can by the same effort of will be removed. Hence Freud's therapeutic theory is solipsist and religious.

Empiricist as he is, he does not of course carry this out consistently. He admits material causes for neurotic conflicts, such as family upbringing, psychic traumata derived from experience, unhappy surroundings and puritan education. But he does not fully see that if this kind of explanation is to be carried out in any scientific spirit of thorough-going determinism, it at once shifts the responsibility for the organisation of consciousness on to the material basis of society. He does not fully see that if the super-ego is a reflection of the parent, then – since the parent's behaviour to the child, and his status in regard to it, are reflections of the economic development of the era – the formation of the super-ego, which is the key to most neurotic conflicts, is determined by sociological laws. To admit this fully would make psycho-therapy – once the connections between the psyche and the environment were understood – a matter of understanding how to modify the social environment itself. Of course with a rich neurotic the environment can be modified more easily, and since Freud's patients are mainly of this type, it suffices to state the problem of the environmental causation of neuroses in the partial vague way he does. But applied to society as a whole, any such therapy is – literally – revolutionary.

For although society is the instrument of man's freedom, it no means follows that it is a perfect instrument. On the contrary

its imperfections are what produce the constant development of society. The very nature of class society necessarily involves that the productive forces – on whose power men’s freedom is based – tend in varying degrees to become stifled and crippled by the social relations which made possible their initial development. Class society itself is only a result of the division of labour which raised social productivity to new levels. At such periods it certainly seems as if man’s social relations are crippling his possibilities of freedom. At such times he groans and travails and cries out because the forms and restraints – the morals, religions and all the conscious formulations of society – are crippling his “free” instincts. The very neuroses which Freud investigates, and which are so characteristically modern, are products of this travail – the labour pangs of a new society.

Freud is always faced by the dilemma of deducing the changing phenomena of consciousness and mentation from unchanging instincts and an unchanging biological environment. This can only be done, as we have shown, by the introduction of a variable, the relations made necessary by economic production: but Freud ignores this. Hence he is driven to deduce historical change from the make-up of the individual psyche, and he therefore imagines to be a permanent part of the psyche what are merely reflections of a special social environment.

Jung is well aware of the contradictions in psychology. He regards them, however, as mechanical and mutually exclusive opposites – such opposites as “introversion” and “extraversion,” or “energetic quantitative finality” and “materialistic qualitative causality.” He is never able to resolve the contradictions he raises, because he never passes from the contradictions of psychology to the sphere immediately beneath psychology, that of society itself. Instead he passes in the opposite direction, from psychology to the

epistemology evolved by psyches, and gets lost in the old familiar metaphysical difficulties of subject and object. Thus by a more philosophical and less empirical path, Jung arrives at the same dilemma as Freud. Since the neurotic conflict is due to the conflict between life and reality, which religion in its various forms has been evolved to sublimate, how is the patient to be cured? Freud recommended telling the patient that the medicine was only water from the tap, in the belief that the shock would cure him. (Cure by abreaction.) Jung recommends that the patient should be allowed to believe in the water, should in fact be encouraged to spin his own fancies about it. (Cure by synthesis.) Jung justifies himself in this betrayal of science by the belief that back of all mythology are primeval structures inherent in the mind (the archetypes) which interact with the patient’s ideology and so generate myths. These, although they are not truly true, are yet psychologically true. (Birth of the Hero.) Thus Jung also chooses the subject and a fundamentally idealistic approach. Their therapy is a therapy of will-power and mystic wind-control. In neither do the material, i.e. the environmental causes of mental disease figure candidly and openly, but only in the limited form of erotic transference to the analyst. The analyst tries to fill the role of society and necessarily fills it meanly and in a limited way. Neither see that the problem is of its nature one which cannot be solved only in the sphere of consciousness divorced from action.

Nor do Freud or Jung see that, in so far as religion is brought in by man to plaster up a decaying culture, man will have no difficulty in giving birth to new mythologies without the need of archetypes or the psycho-analyst’s midwifery. Dying bourgeois culture has in fact evolved the vigorous religion of fascism, complete with mythology and choregus as seen in Germany and Italy. The neurotic conflict is a real thing and Jung and Freud are right when

they see the germs of it in all civilised beings. But they are wrong in supposing to be a pathological product of civilisation which would be removed if only we could do away with civilisation. The conflict between man's instincts and environmental reality is precisely what life is, and all the products of society – hats, art, science, houses, sport, ethics and political organisation – are adaptations evolved to moderate and cure that conflict. Since the successful issue of this conflict is freedom, it is nonsense to talk of these adaptations as crippling freedom qua adaptations. They only cripple freedom to the degree in which they grow obsolete and begin to stifle the developing freedom they have already generated. This crippling is not a sign that adaptations must be done away with but that fresh adaptations are needed. It is therefore pointless to ask oneself, as Freud does, whether civilisation is worth the price one pays for it in the frustration and crippling of the instincts, for it was precisely to moderate and lessen the frustration and crippling of the instincts by the environment that civilisation was evolved.

Hence psycho-analysts play a petty part during the breakdown of modern civilisation in war, unemployment, universal degradation, hatred and despair. Plainly there is a world-wide conflict between the instincts and the environment and all the tremendous and elaborate superstructure of society – religion, art, laws, science, states, patriotism, ethics, political aims and aspirations, liberty, comfort, peace, life itself – all these things tremble and collapse in ruins; yet it was just this splendid edifice

that man constructed to sublimate, in Freudian nomenclature, to resolve, in ours, the contradiction between his environment and his instincts. This immense decaying superstructure fills with awe the mind even of the revolutionary who sees the cause of its collapse and the still more complex structure which will supersede it; but as a substitute for it the psycho-analysts solemnly offer the meagre constructs of Freudian philosophy or Jungian mythology, tattered scraps expected to heal the conflict which a whole Europe of human achievement cannot resolve.

On the surface Adler's approach seems more realistic. In his theory of the struggle for existence and the consequent development of an inferiority complex and a compensatory ability, he realised the way in which bourgeois competition strangles in its final stages all the best in man's individuality and ability. He recognised the environment.

Let us take a quotation from Adler:

In a civilisation where one man is the enemy of the other – for this is what our whole industrial system means – demoralisation is ineradicable, for demoralisation and crime are the by-products of the struggle for existence as known to our industrialised civilisation.

So far, so good. Here we have an analysis of the general effect of capitalism on the individual. What is his remedy?

To limit and do away with this demoralisation, a chair of curative pedagogy should be established.

*to be continued...*

*Courtesy—Illusion and Reality*

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INSTITUTE *for* SOCIAL DEMOCRACY, New Delhi, India  
E-MAIL : [notowar.isd@gmail.com](mailto:notowar.isd@gmail.com) / WEBSITE : [www.isd.net.in](http://www.isd.net.in)