

# PROUT

A Journal of Proutistic Views and Neo-Humanistic Analysis

## Evaluating the Legacy of President Hugo Chávez Using the Progressive Utilization Theory (Prout)

For the first time in the history of Venezuela, a President used the profits from the country's petroleum sales to fund social programs, such as building schools and hiring teachers so every child would go to school, starting free universities, building hospitals and health clinics in every barrio and country village that have saved thousands of lives each year.

# PROUT

Progressive Utilization Theory

# A Vibrant Magazine which Informs & Inspires

## *Cry of the Suffering Humanity*

### What is PROUT :

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

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

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

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

Neo-humanism expands the humanistic love for all human beings to include love and respect for all creation - plants, animals and even inanimate objects. Neo-humanism provides a philosophical basis for creating a new era of ecological balance, planetary citizenship and cosmic kinship.

**Basic necessities guaranteed to all :** People can not strive toward their highest human aspirations if they are lacking the basic requirements of life. PROUT believes that access to food, shelter, clothing, education and medical care are fundamental human rights which must be guaranteed to all.

**Balanced economy :** Prout advocates regional self-reliance, cooperatively owned and managed businesses, local control of large scale key industries, and limits on the individual accumulation of excessive wealth.

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

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

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

For both civilization and science, intellectual knowledge is indispensable. Spiritual or intuitional development is possible through the happy blending between civilization and science.      - Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar



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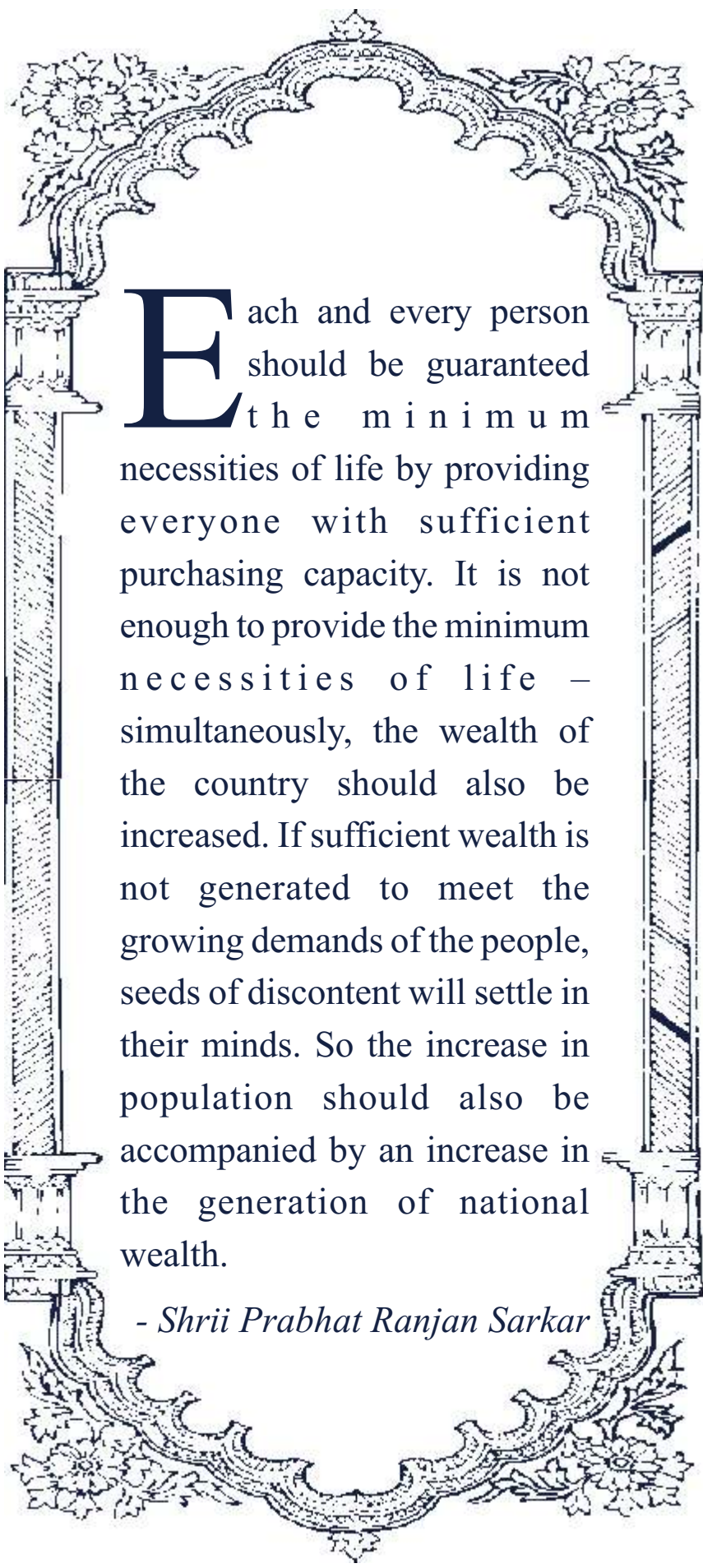
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## Fundamental Principles :

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.



Each and every person should be guaranteed the minimum necessities of life by providing everyone with sufficient purchasing capacity. It is not enough to provide the minimum necessities of life – simultaneously, the wealth of the country should also be increased. If sufficient wealth is not generated to meet the growing demands of the people, seeds of discontent will settle in their minds. So the increase in population should also be accompanied by an increase in the generation of national wealth.

- Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar



From the **Editor's Desk**

# Budget 2013

With the coalition government led by the Congress party, mired in corruption scandals and widely derided as incompetent in the face of the economic slowdown, faces a struggle for re-election in polls due by May 2014. Finance Minister P. Chidambaram stepped into Parliament on February 28 and unveiled a rise in spending despite expectations of an austerity budget to shore up the government's finances. He also imposed new taxes on the rich and large companies to fund a dash for growth. Total budget expenditure will rise by 16 percent in the 2013/14 fiscal year to 16.65 trillion rupees. Many private economists expressed scepticism at Chidambaram's rosy revenue assumptions and were dismayed by the sizeable increase in public spending in a country facing its sharpest economic downturn in a decade. This plan appeared to have been drawn up with voters in mind, several economists and industrialists said. Everyone congratulated Chidambaram on balancing the Budget quite forgetting that the real goal in these hard times should be reduced government spending. Thomas Sowell the radical US economist rightly puts it, "If you define a tax as only those things that the government chooses to call a tax, you get a radically different picture from what you get when you say, "If it looks like a tax, acts like a tax and takes away your resources like a tax, then it's a tax." One of the biggest, and one of the oldest, taxes in this latter sense is inflation. Governments have stolen their people's resources this way, not just for centuries, but for thousands of years". Though the budget seems to have achieved the immediate goal of staving off a credit rating downgrade, for now, but Global agencies Standard & Poor's (S&P) and Fitch said the budget would not affect their assessment of India's creditworthiness. Both have threatened to downgrade India's sovereign rating to 'junk' unless it gets its finances under control. On television there were heated debates on how the Budget would affect the corporate world and the middle class. Print media was not far behind. It answered questions on how much more it would cost to buy a mobile phone, eat out in an air-conditioned restaurant or buy silk garments etc. Only two days before the increase in rail fares and freight charges that would cause rise in prices of food and essential commodities that would hit the common man was conveniently ignored in the debates on national television. According to Government's own admission vide the Report (from National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector), based on data between the period 1993-94 and 2004-05, 77% of Indians live on less than Rs. 20 a day. Though on the face of it rural poor got fair amount of attention in the Budget, it was minimal and inconsequential - political grandstanding in the main. Few who tried to speak about these unfortunate masses, their voices were drowned in the overall din along party lines. Still among all these dark clouds there appears a silver lining. Poor people in around 14,000 rural habitations have been allocated Rs 1,400 crores to set up water purification plants in rural areas to help provide water free of arsenic and fluoride. How much of this would be properly spent to benefit the people remains to be seen.

While all these are based on party and cabinet decisions primarily with votes in mind, well meaning administrators who wish to serve the people well cannot do so due to political pressures. PROUT's founder Shrii PR Sarkar provided a solution way back on July 17, 1961: "To provide a fearless and independent ambience to the administration, the secretariat should be kept free from pressures from the cabinet . . . the power of ministers should remain confined to the parliament and not poke their nose in the workings of the secretariat".



## PLANT ANIMALS HUMAN BEINGS

Shrii PR Sarkar's article is full of lucid details about the philosophy that should guide human lives in their interactions with animals and plants. His explanation that even some animals are not devoid of rationality and the fact that all have Prana Dharma should set minds thinking.

**Tarulata Haldar**, New Bongaigaon

## KURDISTAN UNATTAINED

Ethnic Kurdish peoples spread all over the world cry for a homeland of their own, what they had before the colonial powers in their selfish interests to keep control of oil and other valuable natural resources divided the people while creating boundaries of modern nation states. With their rich culture and history this simple request of the united Kurdish people for a separate homeland should not be too difficult to grant. It was very sad to read about the young Kurdish men and women who suffered brutality at the hands of the state. The story of Farzad the young school teacher and Shirin the sweet woman is very touching.

**Faiz ul Alamein**, Ankara

## THE EVIL DESIGN

GM Foods and their aggressive marketing by rich and powerful corporations is the scourge of mankind today. Ganga Grace's article filled with scientific facts is a real eye opener. Few countries have officially banned such agricultural products. Many others should follow so that the health of common people are safeguarded.

**Jyoti Karmakar**, Agra

## BRAC UNIVERSITY DACCA

The piece on BRAC university of Bangladesh by Sohail Inayatullah and others is thoroughly researched and is a well informative article. Using principles and precepts of PROUT's founder Shrii PR Sarkar and interfacing them in the study throws up real possibilities of their application in practice.

**Zeenat Zafri**, Chittagong

## WORLD GOVERNMENT

Ravi Logan's Prout Perspective of World Government - the cover story is visionary and true to facts that are very much possible as an alternative

## ISOL 2013

I am the convener and Founder of ISOL Foundation which is a Trust. We conducted the **4th International Conference on Integrating Spirituality and Organizational Leadership** along with Xavier Institute of Management Bhubaneswar. The theme of the conference was Spirituality and Entrepreneurship and one session was devoted to **Progressive Utilization Theory**.

ISOL Foundation does recognize the contributions made by individuals and institutions in integrating spirit and entrepreneurship. We were very happy to acknowledge the contributions made by Pardeep Sharma and Kanhu Behuraji.

The projections in your February (2013) issue of PROUT magazine is something seriously objectionable. This was NOT an international seminar on PROUT but ISOL 2013 conducted by ISOL Foundation.

**Sunita Singh Sengupta**

*The news item was carried in the journal based on the write-up sent by the participants in the conference. We did not receive any news of the event directly from the organizers of the programme. We feel sorry and regret the inconvenience caused. - Eds*

to the dissensions among nations we see the world over. International standards of probity and moral behaviour to save people from oppression that have been set collectively must be observed and for that World Government with a militia of its own to enforce them is a must. The present UN system with peacekeeping forces are weak and have their limitations as experience has shown.

**Aranya Thakur**, Gaya

## SRI LANKA WAR CRIMES

Shocking are the revelations by Dr. Umakant. With the US sponsored vote due in the United Nations, India despite Government's compulsions of coalition politics should vote for truth and justice. The world should know about these war crimes. If war crime trials in Bosnia could be conducted, then why not the perpetrators from Sri Lanka be also brought to book by the international community?

**Elangovan T**, Madurai

## NEW FORM OF DEMOCRACY

Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed's piece reveals quite a few truths about today's world where capitalism of the state and private corporations rule. This paranoia about endless growth that comes at great cost to Mother Earth must be stopped immediately and wiser counsels prevail about rational distribution and growth for the sake of future generations.

**Rakesh**, Dharamshala



## Articles / Suggestions Invited

We invite your articles, comments, letters, wit & humour materials etc. on any aspect of human life including Spiritual, Socio-economic, Political, Cultural, Ideological, Educational and local self government. Clips, photographs and cartoons are also welcome.

Please send them at the following address :

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# The Wind and The Moon

## A Jataka Tale

Once upon a time, there were two very good friends who lived together in the shade of a rock. Strange as it may seem, one was a lion and one was a tiger. They had met when they were too young to know the difference between lions and tigers. So they did not think their friendship was at all unusual. Besides, it was a peaceful part of the mountains, possibly due to the influence of a gentle forest monk who lived nearby. He was a hermit, one who lives far away from other people. For some unknown reason, one day the two friends got into a silly argument. The tiger said, "Everyone knows the cold comes when the moon wanes from full to new!" The lion said, "Where did you hear such nonsense? Everyone knows the cold comes when the moon waxes from new to full!" The argument got stronger and stronger. Neither could convince the other. They could not reach any conclusion to resolve the growing dispute. They even started calling each other names! Fearing for their friendship, they decided to go ask the learned forest monk, who would surely know about such things.

Visiting the peaceful hermit, the lion and tiger bowed respectfully and put their question to him. The friendly monk thought for a while and then gave his answer. "It can be cold in any phase of the moon, from new to full and back to new again. It is the wind that brings the cold, whether from west or north or east. Therefore, in a way, you are both right! And neither of you is defeated by the other. The most important thing is to live without conflict, to remain united. Unity is best by all means." The lion and tiger thanked the wise hermit. They were happy to still be friends.





# Socio-Economic Groupifications

SHRII PRABHAT RANJAN SARKAR



**While forming socio-economic units, several factors should be considered. These include same economic problems; uniform economic potentialities; ethnic similarities; the sentimental legacy of the people; and similar geographical features.**

In today's world large animals are on the verge of extinction. Environmental conditions do not support the existence of big animals any longer. In the past many large creatures inhabited the earth, but as environmental conditions changed and human beings extended their domination over the planet, giant animals became extinct. Similarly, small states are struggling to survive. People are more interested in forming larger and larger socio-economic units to ensure the welfare

of all than in maintaining many small states. Narrow sentiments are gradually fading away and a universal outlook is arising in the minds of human beings. Science and technological development have exposed the blind faith and dogma that have suffocated many sections of society, and gradually humanity is advancing towards an age of rationality and common interest. The present age is not the age of large animals and small states.

In accordance with this trend, PROUT



advocates the formation of self-sufficient socio-economic units throughout the world. They will work to enhance the all-round welfare of the people in their respective areas and unite humanity on a common ideological base. The interests of all local people will be guaranteed and gain proper recognition. As each unit becomes strong and prosperous it will merge with other units. The formation of a world government will assist this process of integration. Socio-economic units will thus facilitate the comprehensive, multifarious liberation of humanity.

### **Liberty**

Since the beginning of history there has been an incessant fight for freedom from natural, social, economic and political bondages. This fight is inherent in human nature. Human beings want freedom both as individuals and as members of society, and to achieve this freedom they must fight against all types of oppression. Yet we find that when any oppressed group or class gained some measure of freedom it in turn oppressed others. Whatever liberty exists in society today is the result of prolonged struggle by many individuals and groups. At the root of this struggle is the innate human desire for happiness – the longing to establish oneself in the supreme flow of bliss. To fulfil this longing in individual life, human beings have to attain the absolute state and break all shackles of relativity. It is a natural human tendency to liberate the mind from the bondages of time, space and person, but only the attainment of the absolute can fulfil the innate desire for happiness.

Society will have to encourage the individual search for absolute freedom because the psychic and spiritual realms are unlimited, and possession in these spheres does not hinder the progress of others. But unrestricted freedom to acquire wealth in the physical sphere has every possibility of permitting a few people to roll in luxury while hampering the all-round growth of the majority, because physical resources are limited. Individual liberty in the physical sphere must not be allowed to hamper the development of the complete human personality, and at the same time it must not be so drastically curtailed that the all-round growth of society is impeded. Freedom is a right of every human being. To encourage comprehensive, unbarred human expression in the different spheres of social life a congenial socio-economic environment has to be created, because as such an environment does not exist today.

### **Criteria for Groupification**

While forming socio-economic units, several factors should be considered. These include same



economic problems; uniform economic potentialities; ethnic similarities; the sentimental legacy of the people; and similar geographical features. “Same economic problems” refers to the common economic problems confronting people in a particular unit and may include the lack of markets for locally produced goods, surplus or deficit labour problems, communication or transportation difficulties and lack of irrigation water. Ascertaining whether or not a similar set of economic problems exists in an area is the first thing which should be clearly analysed when forming a socio-economic unit. The economic problems of the socio-economic unit, and their solutions, should be well understood.

Secondly, there should be uniform economic potentialities in the unit. Despite natural variations from place to place, overall the people throughout a unit should enjoy similar opportunities for economic prosperity. Disparity between the haves and the have-nots and the rich and the poor will have to be progressively reduced so that the collective wealth will increase and society will become bountiful.

Thirdly, there should be ethnic similarities. In the past many races and sub-races have been suppressed and exploited by powerful or dominant races. Racism has been propagated by those with evil designs in order to divide society and establish their own pre-eminence. Society must guard against such narrow and dangerous sentiments. This can be done only if every ethnic group has adequate scope for its expression and development. The multi-coloured garland of humanity will be enriched to the extent diverse human groups blend together from a position of strength and independence out of a genuine love for each other, and are not forced together through fear or compulsion.

Fourthly, sentimental legacy includes factors

such as language, historical traditions, literature, common usages and cultural expressions. It is the common chord in the collective psychology of a particular group of people which gives them their unique identity and sense of affinity.

Human beings are predominantly sentimental by nature. They establish some kind of relationship with the many objects of the world through their day-to-day activities. If the sentiment for a particular favourite object is adjusted with the collective sentiment then that sentiment can be utilized for establishing unity in human society. The human sentiment for many objects may sometimes run counter to the collective sentiment and create great disunity, so those sentiments which are conducive to human unity should be encouraged, and the sentiments which divide human society should be rejected. This is the approach adopted by PROUT's socio-economic units.

Finally, similar geographical features such as topography, river systems, rainfall and irrigation water should also be considered in the formation of a socio-economic unit.

Socio-economic units will give expression to popular sentiments and fight against all forms of exploitation to meet the demands and aspirations of the local people. Movements will have to be launched throughout the world to establish self-sufficient socio-economic units based on the maxim, "Know the area, prepare the plan and serve the people." Local people are those who have merged their individual socio-economic interests with the socio-economic interests of the socio-economic unit they live in.

#### **Self-Sufficient Socio-Economic Units**

Each socio-economic unit should prepare and implement its own developmental programmes. Factors like natural resources, topography, river systems, cultural conditions, communication and industrial potential need to be considered to facilitate proper planning and development so that each unit will become economically self-sufficient and prosperous. If a significant part of the production of a unit is misutilized or capital is sent outside, the unit cannot increase its prosperity, hence there should be maximum utilization of all resources and no drainage of capital.

The Indian state of Orissa is very rich in mineral resources such as coal, bauxite and manganese, but the present leaders export these mineral resources to other countries. If the raw materials had been utilized for indigenous industrial production, then four big steel plants could easily have been established. This would have substantially raised per capita income. But the leaders, instead of paying attention to those things, whimsically frame five year plans. These

plans neither remove economic disparity nor increase collective wealth.

To achieve these objectives, the Indian economy has to be thoroughly overhauled. At the very outset, to facilitate socio-economic development, the country should be divided into socio-economic units. If state boundaries are demarcated on the basis of political and linguistic considerations, then socio-economic plans can never be properly prepared and implemented, and various economic problems will not be given due attention. Self-sufficient units are indispensable for expediting the country's economic progress.

#### **Merging Socio-Economic Units**

Where there is economic parity, cultural mixing, communication facilities and administrative efficiency, it will be easy and natural for two or more adjoining units to cooperate, because they will have attained a high degree of socio-economic uniformity. In such cases they should merge to form a single larger unit. This will further the welfare of their respective citizens and enhance their socio-economic interests.

In some places regions with different economic problems are located within the same political unit. For example, in the Chotanagpur Hills in Bihar there is an acute problem of irrigation, whereas in the plains of north Bihar there is the problem of water drainage. These two regions should be formed into distinct socio-economic units. Royalseema, Shrii Kakulam and Telengana have all been annexed to the one political state of Andhra, although their economic problems are different. In the interests of the people living in these three regions, each should be formed into a distinct socio-economic unit. If these three regions are converted into a single economic unit right now simply for administrative purposes, it may lead to complications.

Thus, in some cases one political unit may be divided into two or more socio-economic units. That is, there can be more than one socio-economic unit in a political unit. This approach will enable different socio-economic units to develop to a level which fulfils their potentiality.

If a particular state in a federal system cannot get economic justice, it may agitate for the separate allocation of funds within the federal budget. If, after launching such an agitation, it still fails to secure proper justice, it will have no alternative but to demand the formation of a separate state. However, PROUT does not favour the formation of many small states, each with its separate budget and administration. Numerous state divisions will only compound socio-economic problems, causing unnecessary duplication, and are costly and wasteful.



Rather, small states should be expanded into larger socio-economic units.

When two units reach a similar level of development, they should merge together to form a larger unit. This process of unification will gradually result in the formation of one socio-economic unit for all India. In the next phase, through continued growth and development, the whole of South and Southeast Asia will become one socio-economic unit. Eventually, the whole world will function as one integrated socio-economic unit. After reaching this stage of development, socio-economic groupifications will have attained a state of equipoise and equilibrium, and universal fraternity will become a reality.

### Universal in Spirit, Regional in Approach

Socio-economic units are bound to gain great popularity all over the world within a short time.

While there may be diverse cultural expressions and socio-economic potentialities in different units, the points of difference should not be allowed to divide humanity. If the common sentiments of human beings are given prominence and the points of unity are made the basis of collective development, diversity will enrich humanity rather than tear it

asunder. If each socio-economic unit is inspired by a comprehensive ideology and a universal outlook, human society will move ahead with accelerating speed towards a sublime ideal.

A sound ideological base is a prerequisite for socio-economic groupifications. Such a foundation is provided by universal humanism, which has the potential to unite all humanity. Universal humanism will not be established on the hard crust of the earth overnight, but will come to fruition gradually, stage by stage. It will include each and every person in the world, as well as animals, plants and inanimate objects. If a single person remains outside the influence of universalism and becomes a victim of exploitation, then the foundation of universal humanism will be undermined. Hence, PROUT has adopted a rational method to solve socio-economic problems which may be characterized as universal in

spirit but regional in approach.

### Protection from Exploitation

Once socio-economic units are established throughout the world, how will exploitation be avoided in the future? Society will enjoy lasting protection from all types of exploitation only if an integrated ideology, an empirical spiritual base, spiritually oriented cadres and proper institutions are well established in social life. An integrated ideology should have several aspects. It must be the basis for the rational analysis of socio-economic problems and the formulation of comprehensive, appropriate and logical solutions. Secondly, it must not ignore the human need for psychic expansion and spiritual emancipation. And thirdly, it should be imbued with inherent dynamism and vitality so that it can guide humanity forward in its quest for all-round progress.

An empirical spiritual base will protect society

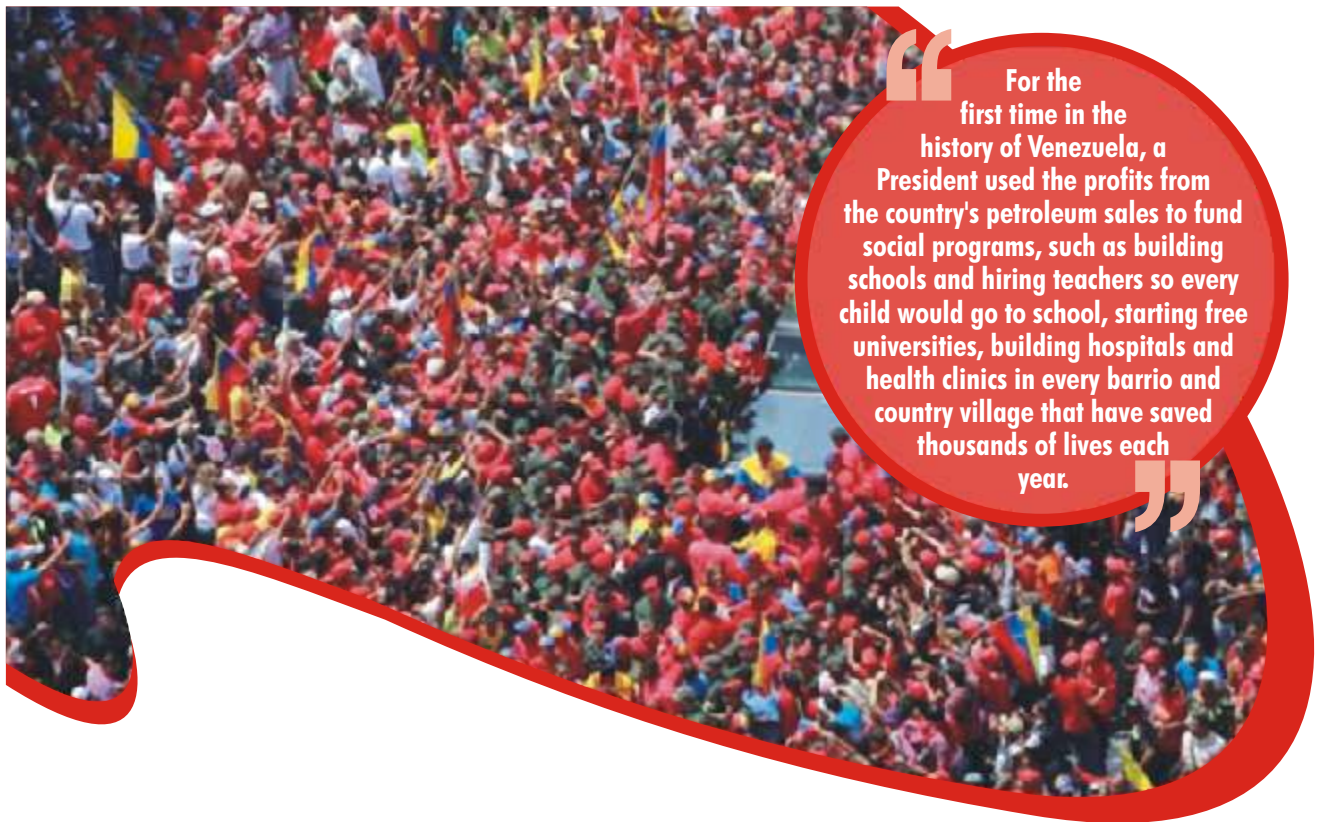
from all fissiparous tendencies and group or clan sentiments which create shackles of narrow-mindedness. Spirituality does not recognize any unnatural distinctions between human beings. It stands for evolution and elevation and not for superstition or pessimism. Spiritually oriented cadres will provide a moral check against all forms of exploitation, and propagate moral and



spiritual values throughout society according to the maxim, "Self-realization and service to humanity."

Finally, proper institutions are necessary to reflect the needs and aspirations of the people and work for the cause of human welfare. The need for a world government is already apparent to many people, and in the future, once it is established, its powers should be progressively strengthened. Each socio-economic unit will have to get ample scope for its integrated development within the framework of the world government.

PROUT's system of socio-economic groupifications is a comprehensive approach to the socio-economic problems confronting society. If people adopt such an approach, society will move along the path of progress with increasing speed, overcoming all bondages and hindrances. Human society will enjoy a bright and glorious future.



“ For the first time in the history of Venezuela, a President used the profits from the country's petroleum sales to fund social programs, such as building schools and hiring teachers so every child would go to school, starting free universities, building hospitals and health clinics in every barrio and country village that have saved thousands of lives each year. ”

# Evaluating the Legacy of President Hugo Chávez

## Using the Progressive Utilization Theory (Prout)

✱ Dada Maheshvarananda

President Hugo Chávez dedicated his life to the poor people of Venezuela. He transformed their lives and transformed their country. On March 6, the day after his death, I spent 11 hours waiting with friends to pay my respects as his body was slowly transported through the city. It took much longer than expected, as hundreds of thousands of people filled the streets and the giant stadium where the procession ended to get a glimpse of the passing casket. The crowds sang and

clapped along with popular songs about “El Comandante”, shouting: “Chávez lives, the struggle continues!” “The people united will never be defeated!” “I am Chávez!” When the body finally arrived at night in the National Military Academy for viewing, the line of people waiting was almost two kilometers (one mile) long!

Why did so many people go? Why were they willing to wait so long? And instead of being a somber occasion with everyone dressed in black, why did so many wear bright red T-shirts, or headbands with the national colors, and why were they

singing and shouting slogans?

Venezuela is an example of a country that seems to have undergone a class change through a nonviolent electoral process. Lieutenant-Colonel Hugo Chávez, a career military officer, organized 130 officers and nearly 900 soldiers, approximately ten percent of the Venezuelan military, to attempt a military rebellion in 1992 to overthrow dictator President Carlos Andrés Pérez and end his reign of corruption, censorship and abuse of human rights. Though they failed, Chávez became a popular hero. After two years in prison he received



amnesty, starting an electoral campaign among the poor that won him the presidency at the end of 1998. As of December 2012, his coalition has won 16 out of 17 national elections due to his successful consciousness-raising and politicization among the masses.

The capitalist-led opposition attempted a military overthrow of Chávez in 2002 with U.S. government knowledge and support; yet two days later the masses and the military united and brought him back from the island naval base where he was held prisoner. After that, Chávez became much more strident in his rhetoric about class warfare against the oligarchy, calling them “squalids”. Socialist and military values have influenced the masses to a great extent in terms of participatory democracy, grassroots communal councils, the new national police force and other initiatives.

The heads of the Venezuelan Central Bank and economic ministry are not bankers, but revolutionaries, orchestrating government buyouts of key industries at an accelerating rate, with more than 200 expropriations of private enterprises in 2010 alone. Chávez has announced that he is committed to “the elimination of capitalism”. Government-owned and community media influence the masses with values of solidarity, people’s power and socialism for the twenty-first century. Many capitalists have fled to Miami and elsewhere, and while others remain, they are frustrated and nervous because they are no longer in power.

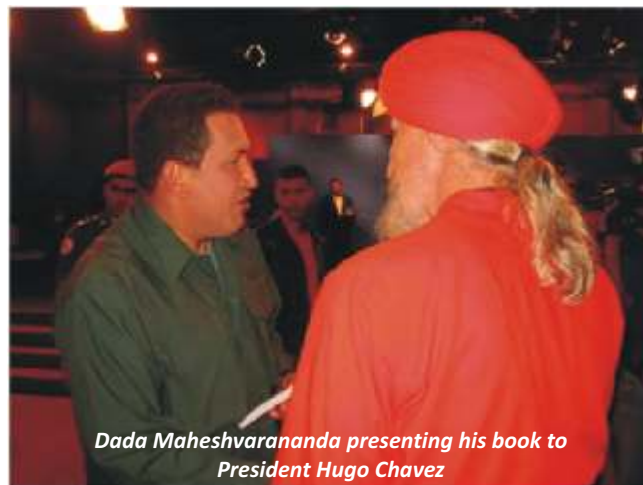
For the first time in the history of Venezuela, a president used the profits from the country’s petroleum sales to fund social programs, such as building schools and hiring teachers so every child would go to school, starting free universities, building hospitals and health clinics in every barrio and country village that have saved thousands of lives each year. In the hills of Vargas, a

group of rural women told me how in the past when someone in their village got sick and died, it would take them two days to carry the body down to the cemetery for burial, and when they returned, sometimes there was another dead body waiting for them, because there was no clinic they could go to. Now there are clinics everywhere. With the help of the Women’s Bank, they have formed successful agricultural cooperatives that give them all a steady income. They swore they would never go back to the terrible poverty they suffered before Hugo Chávez changed their lives.

Chávez pioneered barter trade, signing bilateral barter agreements with developing countries, s w a p p i n g Venezuelan oil for other products or services the country needed, i n c l u d i n g 50,000 Cuban doctors and dentists who provide free medical care in city slums and remote rural villages.

Chávez put the condition of the poor people on the national agenda. Voter registration has dramatically increased, and polling places have increased. More than 80 percent of eligible voters went to the polls in the 2012 presidential election (compared to less than 59 percent of voters in the United States who cast their ballot that year). Today even the anti-Chávez candidates say that if elected they, too, will continue the social projects in order to try to win the majority of voters. In 1998, when Chávez was first elected, all the houses in the villages of Barlovento in Miranda, were made of mud and in very bad condition due to regular flooding. The state governor, Henrique Capriles, who ran against

Chávez in 2012, made significant loans to the poor people so that now nearly all the houses in the villages are built with cement blocks. Ten years ago, on June 1, 2003, I was invited to meet Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez on his weekly television show to present the Spanish edition of my first Prout book, which was published in Caracas. I told him that I was inspired by the words of Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, the founder of Prout, at the end of his 1979 visit to Caracas, in which he said, “Venezuela needs good spiritual political leaders. If Venezuela can produce spiritual political leaders, it will not only be the leader of Latin America, it will also be the leader of



*Dada Maheshvarananda presenting his book to President Hugo Chavez*

the planet. Venezuela is a blessed country.”

President Chávez said, “Dada Maheshvarananda has given us a book that we appreciate very much. Your visit has come at such an opportune moment.... Thank you very much, brother, and let’s continue with spirituality, spirit, good faith, morality, and the mystical force that moves the world. Dada Maheshvarananda and other citizens of the world are welcome to visit, especially those who come in good faith and offer their ideas, their spirit and their moral flame to the Bolivarian Revolution. This has attracted the attention of the whole world, especially those that struggle and dream of a better world, just as it

says in *After Capitalism: Prout's Vision for a New World*.”

In December 2003 and again in 2005 the national petroleum company of Venezuela (PDVSA) contracted for me and other Proutists to give a series of training courses and lectures about the Prout model. Then in 2007 we founded the Prout Research Institute of Venezuela in Caracas as an independent, not-for-profit foundation. A major reason we did this was because of how closely the goals of Prout's socio-economic model were shared by the Bolivarian Revolution initiated by President Chávez. Prout asserts that the first priority of any economy should be to guarantee the minimum requirements of life (food, clothing, housing, education and medical care), the right to live, to all people. Subsidized food staples are sold very cheaply in government supermarkets throughout the country, and public schools now provide free lunches to all students, both of which significantly reduce the money spent by poor people to feed their families. Free education and health care for all has been achieved, too, with college enrollment doubling. During 2012 the government built more than 200,000 houses and gave them to needy families, and it plans to build a total of two million homes by 2018. His government reduced poverty by half and extreme poverty by 70 percent. Eligibility for public pensions tripled. As someone who has spent his life working with the poor, I am deeply grateful for these very impressive accomplishments – so are the masses who poured out to the streets yesterday.

Community empowerment is another key component of Prout's economic democracy; Chávez initiated the system of communal councils with cooperative banks that decide for themselves which local projects they will fund – 33,000 are now running throughout the country.

Though many complaints have been made in the world media about

how Chávez has “destroyed” the Venezuelan economy, economic growth actually increased to 5.6 percent in 2012. The conservative International Monetary Fund calculates the country's gross public debt last year at 51.3 percent of GDP, but Europe has more than 90 percent! The foreign part of this debt was only 4.1 percent of Venezuela's export earnings. Inflation is high, but lower than before he came to office.

Food sovereignty, to produce enough food to feed the entire population, has not yet been achieved, but it is another goal common to both the Bolivarian government and Prout.

Chávez wanted to transform the profit-oriented capitalist economy into one oriented towards endogenous and sustainable social development by involving those who had been marginalized or excluded. From 2002 he inspired the phenomenal creation of 262,904 registered cooperatives by the end of 2008, but many of these never became active or collapsed. The national cooperative supervision institute, SUNACOP, recognizes about 70,000 as functioning, which is still the highest total for any country after China. The majority of Venezuelan cooperatives have few members who are unskilled. Because of the high rate of failure among the registered cooperatives, in 2005 the president shifted the government's support from cooperatives to socialist enterprises and worker takeovers of factories. In this way, the government pays the salaries, but keeps the ownership.

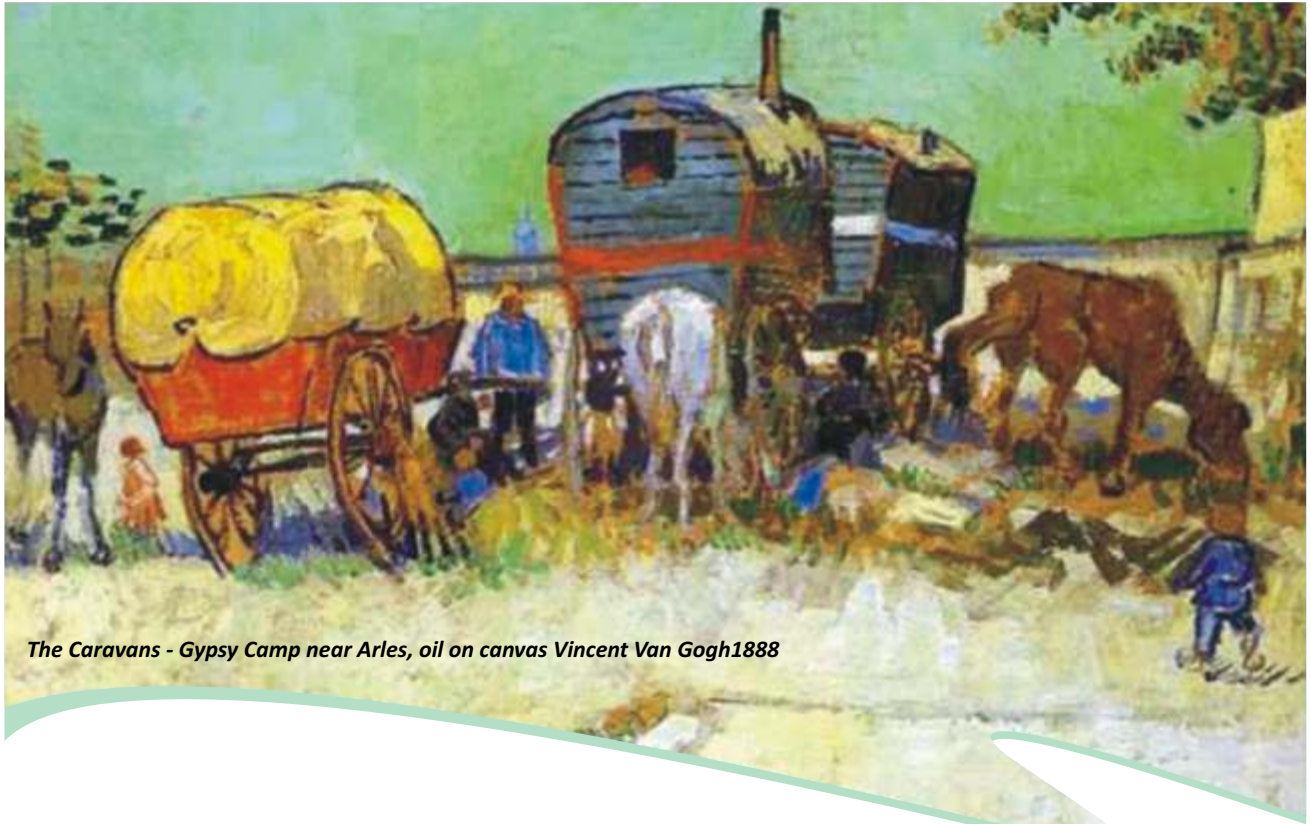
Prout, on the other hand, supports cooperatives that are worker-owned as well as worker-managed.

Of course there are problems in Venezuela; a couple of them are very serious. Corruption and crime hurt everyone. Their causes are many; to solve these problems requires the help of all the people – for this a major consciousness-raising campaign is required in every level of education, through the mass media and in every government office. Consciousness-raising and popular education are also key to reducing pollution and protecting the environment, another serious problem. If the impact of these problems was reduced, many more people of the middle class could be inspired to support this revolution. Unfortunately the revolutionary rhetoric of Chávez was often insulting towards his opponents – listening sincerely to valid complaints is necessary to open dialog and build bridges so that an ever greater majority of Venezuelans participate constructively in the Bolivarian project.

Hugo Chávez was a very strong man who led his people through a tremendous social transformation. He has died, but his vision of a more just and more democratic society continues to inspire the masses of Venezuela and remains very much alive.







*The Caravans - Gypsy Camp near Arles, oil on canvas Vincent Van Gogh 1888*

# Romani – Gypsies

## Millennia of Oppression

✱ Arun Prakash

In his discourse No. 3 on September 29, 1989 at Calcutta (Shabda Cayanika Part I) Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar the founder of PROUT had mentioned in passing about a clan living during pre-historic times on the basin of River Koyel in Rarh the Asuras. “They originated here and developed their own separate culture. Later they left and headed northwest in the direction of Europe. A few words from their language can still be found among the Gypsies of central Asia and in the Romansch language of Europe”. This laid the seeds of this piece about the nomadic people called Gypsies (also called

“ Few ethnic groups in the world that have for generations suffered under oppression from others. Romanis are one of them with an estimated 10 million worldwide, most of whom live in Europe; yet as a minority community they continue to be persecuted and discriminated against even till this day. ”

“Romanies” in Europe), on the occasion of International Romani day that falls on April 8. There are a few ethnic groups in the world that have for generations suffered under oppression from others. While suffering can’t really be equated or compared, those handful of groups have undoubtedly been at the receiving end of largely irrational anger and in some cases genocidal hatred. The Kurds in the Middle East, The Tutsi in Rwanda, the Armenians in Turkey, and the Jews throughout the world are just a few examples of ethnicities which have been targeted for oppression simply

*Banjara children in colourful attire*



because of their ethnicity. Likewise, the Romani people, better known as Gypsies, have suffered oppression virtually everywhere they have gone. Because they are culturally a wandering people, the Romani have become synonymous with such actions throughout Europe.

Worldwide, there are an estimated 8 to 10 million of them, most of whom live in Europe. This name often conjures up images of wandering bands of peddlers and fortune tellers traveling from place to place in colorful caravans.

The largest group of Gypsies in India are the Lambadi (or Gormati) Gypsies. Other groups living there include the Tamil Nomads, the Indian Gypsies, the Kanjari, and the Baiga. Although these Gypsy groups are spread throughout India, most of them are concentrated in such areas as Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madras, Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh. The Arhagar Gypsies also live in neighboring Pakistan.

### **Traditional Values**

The traditional Roma place a high value on the extended family. The relationship between children and their parents is extremely strong in gypsy communities. Virginity is essential in unmarried women. Both

men and women often marry young; Roma law establishes that the man's family must pay a dowry to the bride's parents. Even though Gypsies are unreserved in speech, many have high moral standards. For example, chastity is very

purity laws ("marime" or "marhime"), still respected by most Roma and among Sinti groups by the older generations. This regulation affects many aspects of life, and is applied to actions, people and things. Facing discrimination made gypsies united and they focused more on family life. In their nomadic life, gypsies turned to skilled blacksmiths and traders, but also talented artists, while many women pretend having supernatural powers to make a living. While some Gypsies travel throughout the year, others travel only part of the year, returning to their home camps periodically. Some live in houses similar to those of the region, but many use their wagons or bull carts as dwelling places, and some live in mobile homes. Few travel by foot or on horseback, since they cannot afford such "luxuries."

Gypsy (Roma) music is very



**Fig. 370.-Gypsies Fortune-telling.--Fac-simile of a Woodcut in the "Cosmographic Universelle" of Munster : in folio, basle, 1552**

important. In the past, some girls who were involved in prostitution were buried alive. Unmarried girls are still discouraged from going into the cities, and they usually wear veils over their hands and feet while sitting with strangers. Roma social behaviour is strictly regulated by

important in Eastern European cultures such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Hungary, Russia and Romania, and the style and performance practices of Roma musicians have influenced European classical composers such





as Franz Liszt and Johannes Brahms. Later, Roma people who came to the Americas contributed to almost every musical style. Salsa, rumba, mambo and guajira from Cuba, the tondero, zamacueca and marinera from Peru, mariachi music from Mexico, "llanero" from the borders of Venezuela and Colombia, and even American country music have all been influenced by their mournful violins and soulful guitar.

These Gypsies despite their rich history and culture have for millennia been living on the fringes of society in impoverished conditions – a depressed and an oppressed lot - they do not have a national territory or their own government. Yet there are among them with Gypsy blood that attained fame and fortune: Charlie Chaplin the famous comedian, Pablo Picasso the famous painter, Nobel Laureate scientist August Krogh and actors Yul Brynner and Rita Hayworth and the king of Jazz Django Reinhardt to name a few.

### Origin of Gypsies

The English term Gypsy, originates from the Greek word 'Aigyptoi' in the erroneous belief that the Roma originated in Egypt. Linguistic and genetic evidence indicates the Romanies originated from the Indian subcontinent, emigrating from India towards the northwest no earlier than the 11th century. Genetic evidence also supports the mediaeval migration from India. The Romani are generally believed to have originated in central India, migrating to the northwest (the Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan) around 250 BC. In the centuries spent here, there may have been

close interaction with such established groups as the Rajputs and the Jats. Their subsequent westward migration, possibly in waves, is believed to have begun sometime between AD 500 and AD 1000. Contemporary populations sometimes suggested as sharing a close relationship to the Romani are the Dom people of Western Asia and North Africa and the Banjara of India. This inference is possible by tracing Gypsy languages and comparing them to historical languages and looking at their words borrowed from other languages and when and where those words originally existed. Three separate emigrations occurred over the course of about four hundred years, traceable today in three identifiable linguistic populations: the Eastern Gypsy (Domari) in Egypt and the Middle East, the Central Gypsy (Lomavren) in Armenia and eastern Turkey, and the Western Gypsy (Romani) in Europe. This last group is the population most widely dealt with in reference works and literature. This suggests that the first exodus was spurred by Mahmud of Ghazni, of Afghanistan, who invaded North West India between circa 1001-1027 AD. The second exodus arose out of attacks by Mahmud of Ghor 1191-1192, and then the empire expansion of Genghis Khan 1215-1227. The third took place during the reign of the Tamerlane in the late 1300's and early 1400's, when he attempted to repeat Genghis Khan's exploits. There is another interesting connection, they who are very fond of music and dance play musical instruments such as the bouzouki, a stringed instrument that sounds a bit like the Indian 'Veena', played in Hindustani music.

Migration

The Gypsies led a

semi-nomadic life in India, and has been tentatively identified as the Dom, which has been recorded as far back as the sixth century. The Dom performed various specialized jobs such as basket-making, scavenging, metal-working and entertainment, traveling a circuit through several small villages each year. Indian caste beliefs of the time may have been the original model for the strict purity and pollution ideology of the present Gypsies, modified over time through contact with other cultures. This semi-nomadic life allowed the Dom the opportunity to easily flee when battles threatened the area in which they lived, and apparently did so three times during the Middle Ages. The European Gypsies are perhaps the original refugees from Mahmud of Ghazni's wars, for all sixty Romani dialects contain Armenian words, suggesting that they passed through Armenia in the early 11th century on the way into the Byzantine Empire. The impetus to continue on and enter Byzantine Anatolia was most likely provided by the Seljuk Turks attacked Armenia during the 11th century and spurred the Gypsies onward.

The earliest currently known reference to Gypsies is in a Life of St. George composed in the monastery of Iveron on Mt. Athos in Greece in 1068. It relates events in Constantinople in 1050, when wild animals plagued an imperial park.



The Emperor Constantine Monomachus commissioned the help of "a Samaritan people, descendants of Simon the Magician, who were called Adsincani, and notorious for soothsaying and sorcery," who killed the beasts with charmed pieces of meat. "Atzinganoi," the Byzantine term for Gypsies, is reflected in several other languages: the German "Zigeuner," the French "Tsiganes," the Spanish "Gitanos," the Portuguese "Ciganos," the Italian "Zingari," and the Hungarian "Cziganyok." Today Gypsies of Europe are generally termed as "Romanies" and most of them still speak one of the many dialects of the Romani language. When the Romanies first came to Europe they still preserved a vague memory of an Indian homeland. One of the outriders who came to Spain in advance of the main companies of migrants called himself Count

Thomas of Sabba in India while in Italy the fact that they came from India was recorded as explained before. It was not until around 1780 that a number of scholars discovered that the Romani language was closely related to North Indian languages such as Punjabi and Hindi. Following this discovery they naturally assumed that the Gypsies had migrated from India, and the ground for speculation was narrowed.

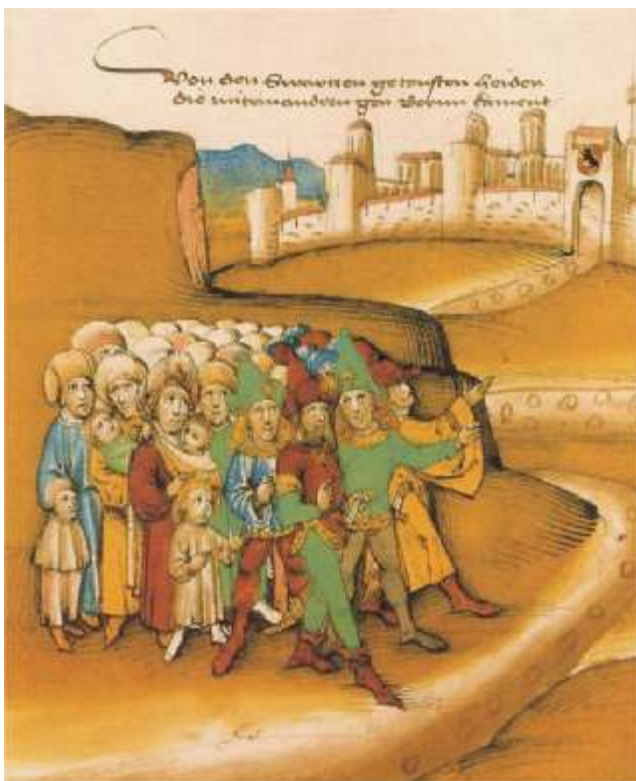
During the next 200 years, the Gypsies slowly advanced southwest into Arabia, Egypt and North Africa, northwest into the Byzantine Empire and established themselves in the southern Balkan countries (Serbia, Moldavia, Bulgaria, Hungary and the surrounding area) before 1300. This movement was slow due to the westward pressure of the Mongolian Empire; all of Eastern Europe's population was in turmoil and Russian refugees were

fleeing west at the time. Once Kublai Khan died in 1294, the Mongolian Empire began its decline and the borders crept back east, easing pressure on Europe and allowing the Gypsies to expand more rapidly than the previous two centuries. They entered Dubrovnik (modern-day Yugoslavia) before 1362, and had blanketed the Balkans by 1400. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries came as close to a Gypsy Golden Age as there had ever been. Gypsies

covered Thrace, Macedonia, Greece, Yugoslavia and Rumania long before the Ottoman Turks conquered those lands. There was a large population at the seaport of Modon in the 1300's, on the most popular route to the Holy Land, settled in the Gypsy Quarter, a tent-city just outside the city walls sometimes called Little Egypt. Gypsies certainly had economic importance, valued as artisans practicing such trades as blacksmithing, locksmithing and tinsmithing, and also filled the niche between peasant and master.

During colonial times, some European countries dealt with the Roma by shipping them overseas, mainly to various Caribbean islands and the present-day United States and Gypsies first appeared in the Americas in the 16th century when the colonies were being used, mainly, as dumping grounds for the undesirables of European society. By the end of the last century, however, the groups of gypsies were entering the US and Canada along with other European émigrés, with perhaps up to a million now being in North America. Initially they settled in country areas, but with the hardships of the Great Depression, they were forced into towns.

Their image has always been controversial in the eyes of the Europeans: in some novels and movies they are depicted as extremely hospitable, careless, nomadic beings, animating sadness or happiness through singing and dancing. The other image is that of un-adapted, dirty, untrustworthy people. During the Middle Ages, the universe of most Europeans was limited to their village or town. When gypsies arrived, they were strangers for them, with their dark skin, black eyes and hair, clothing, habits and language. Moreover, gypsies remained isolated, a habit probably inherited from the caste system of India. But curiosity would be replaced by lack of trust within a few decades. Gypsies were marginalized, forced to make their



**First arrival of the Romanies outside Bern in the 15th century, described by the chronicler as *getaufte heiden*("baptized heathens") and drawn with dark skin and wearing Saracen-style clothing and weapons**



camps outside the villages and they were not allowed to enter the villages not even for buying stores or taking water. They were known as child eaters and forced by law to cook in the open, so that anybody could see what they were cooking. That's why in many cases their food for a day was overturned. No wonder that in many cases gypsies started stealing in order to survive.

### Why Nomadic Lifestyle

This transient, fully nomadic lifestyle developed in response to the constant fighting pushing them west. Originally refugees from India, they may have thought they would return to their homeland as soon as Mahmud of Ghazni's fighting stopped. Refugees quite

semi-nomadic lifestyle in the midst of sedentary cultures, keeping their language and strict pollution ideology in order to maintain their unity as a people as well as clinging to something familiar in the midst of strange new cultures. They were mostly successful until the nations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries grew powerful enough to force the majority to settle. Their identity as a separate people is still strong enough for them to withstand the brunt of prejudice and hatred, a fact hammered home by the killing of half a million Gypsies by the Nazis during World War II.

### Historical persecution - Antiziganism

Antiziganism or Anti-Gypsyism or Anti-Romanyism is hostility, prejudice or racism directed at the Gypsies (Romanies). The skills they were known for — music, craftsmanship, military, and even fortune-telling — often earned them gracious welcomes and respect. At the same time, the Roma kept their distance from natives because they frequently believed non-Roma to be "unclean." Yet

throughout their history, the Roma have faced accusations of crime and delinquency. Their dark complexions, constant mobility, alien hierarchies, and sacred rituals made them easy targets. Such accusations have often led to expulsions from the outskirts of the towns that initially welcomed them. One of the most enduring persecutions against the Gypsies was their enslaving. In the Byzantine Empire, they were slaves of the state. The situation was the same in Bulgaria and Serbia until their social organization was destroyed by the Ottoman conquest. Slavery existed on the territory of present-day Romania from before the founding of the principalities of

Moldavia and Wallachia in 13th–14th century, until it was abolished in stages during the 1840s and 1850s. Legislation decreed that all the Gypsies living in these states, as well as any others who would immigrate there, were slaves. Anyone who married a Gypsy would also become a slave. The arrival of some branches of the Gypsy (Romany) people in Western Europe in the 15th century was precipitated by the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans. Although they themselves were refugees from the conflicts in southeastern Europe, they were mistaken by the local population in the West, because of their foreign appearance, as part of the Ottoman invasion the German Reichstags at Landau and Freiburg declared the Romanies as spies of the Turks in 1496–1498. In Western Europe, this resulted in a violent history of persecution and attempts of ethnic cleansing until the modern era. As time passed, other accusations were added against local Romanies (accusations specific to this area, against non-assimilated minorities), like that of bringing the plague, usually sharing their burden together with the local Jews. One example of official persecution of the Romani is exemplified by the great Roundup of Spanish Gitanos in 1749. The Spanish monarchy ordered a nationwide raid that led to separation of families and placement of all able-bodied men into forced labor camps. Later in the 19th century, Romani immigration was forbidden on a racial basis in areas outside Europe, mostly in the English speaking world (in 1885 the United States outlawed the entry of the Roma) and also in some South American countries (in 1880 Argentina adopted a similar policy).

### Forced assimilation

In the mid-18th century, Hapsburg monarch Maria Theresa, Archduchess of Austria, attempted to assimilate the Roma by giving them less politically charged names—"new citizens" and "new peasants" among them—prohibiting

*A Romani family travelling 1837*



often stay ready to return to their point of origin for many years once pushed out of their native lands. (A modern example: some Cuban refugees still keep bags packed in anticipation of returning at any time.) When the Dom people left the Sind, they probably planned to live on the road for a few years and then return to their home territory. Normally, the second generation would have settled down in this "temporary" new area, but they were semi-nomadic to begin with, and then the Seljuk Turks invaded and pushed them farther west. After that the Mongolian expansion kept pushing them, and eventually the idea that there was a "back home" was lost. They retained their original



**An 1852 Wallachian poster advertising an auction of Romani slaves in Bucharest.**

nomadic movements and employment in their traditional professions, and not allowing Roma to speak their language or marry other Roma. The attempt failed, as Roma moved away in search of places where they would not be forced to give up their way of life. In the 1860s, Roma from Britain arrived in the US, but the largest wave of Roma arrived in the early 1900s. In Wallachia, a region that partly encompasses modern Romania, Roma were slaves for over 500 years, from the 14th century until 1863, when their enslavement was abolished. They were used as agricultural labor, and treated as property or cattle.

In Spain, attempts to assimilate the Gitanos were under way as early as 1619, when Gitanos were forcibly settled, the use of the Romani language was prohibited, Gitano men and women were sent to separate workhouses and their children sent to orphanages. Similar prohibitions took place in 1783 under King Charles III, who prohibited the nomadic lifestyle, the use of the Calo language, Romani clothing, their trade in horses and other itinerant trades. The use of the word Gitano was also forbidden to

further assimilation. Ultimately these measures failed, as the rest of the population rejected the integration of the Gitanos. Other examples of forced assimilation include Norway, where a law was passed in 1896 permitting the state to remove children from their parents and place them in state institutions. This resulted in some 1,500 Romani children being taken from their parents in the 20th century.

### **Holocaust**

The persecution of the Gypsies reached a peak during World War II in the Porajmos, the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis during the Holocaust. In 1935, the Nuremberg laws stripped the Gypsy people living in Nazi Germany of their citizenship, after which they were subjected to violence, imprisonment in concentration camps and later genocide in extermination camps. The policy was extended in areas occupied by the Nazis during the war, and it was also applied by their allies, notably the Independent State of Croatia, Romania and Hungary.

Ian Hancock, director of the Program of Romani Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, proposes a figure of up to a million and a half. Under Stalin's rule in Russia, Roma were also repressed and murdered.

### **Contemporary issues**

Amnesty International reports continued instances of discrimination against the Gypsies during the 20th Century, particularly in Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and Kosovo. Czechoslovakia carried out a policy of sterilization of

Romani women, starting in 1973. The dissidents denounced it in 1977-78 as a "genocide", but the practice continued through the Velvet revolution of 1989. A 2005 report by the Czech government's independent ombudsman, Otakar Motejl, identified dozens of cases of coercive sterilization between 1979 and 2001, and called for criminal investigations and possible prosecution against several health care workers and administrators. In 2008, following the brutal murder of a woman in Rome at the hands of a young man from a local Romani encampment, the Italian government declared that Italy's Romani population represented a national security risk and that swift action was required to address the



emergenza nomadi (nomad emergency). The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Thomas Hammarberg has been an outspoken critic of Antiziganism, both in reports and periodic viewpoints. In August 2008, he said that "today's rhetoric against the Roma is very similar to the one used by Nazis and fascists before the mass killings started in the thirties and forties. This is shameful and dangerous".

The 2008 deaths of Cristina and Violetta Djeordevic, two Roma children who drowned while Italian beach-goers remained unperturbed, brought international attention to the relationship between Italians and the Roma people. Europe's 12 million Roma who live in deplorable



conditions for them poverty is not the only worry for the community. Ethnic tensions are on the rise. In 2008, Roma camps came under attack in Italy, intimidation by racist parliamentarians is the norm in Hungary, and in September of last year thousands of Bulgarians took to the streets to chant such slogans as "Turn the gypsies into soap". During the communist era, the Romanian and Hungarian governments tried to force the Roma to settle in major cities and adopt a "decent" communist way of life. Yet, life under communism was relatively tolerable for the Roma because they had access to housing, health care, and jobs.

### French Deportations

In scenes reminiscent of the Nazi German occupation, French police rounded up almost 1000 Romani people in August 2010 and deported them to Romania and Bulgaria. The mass deportations were foreshadowed by President Nicolas Sarkozy in July in a series of inflammatory speeches. Romani camps across France were bulldozed and Roma with Romanian or Bulgarian citizenship were given a choice of "voluntary repatriation" (with a payment of 300 euros to each

adult and 100 euros for each child) or being deported for "threatening public order". On August 31, an administrative court in Lille blocked the deportation of seven Roma, casting doubt on the legality of the "threatening public order" pretext. Romania and Bulgaria have been European Union members since 2007, giving their citizens the right of free movement between EU countries. Romani people were the worst affected by the explosion in unemployment in eastern Europe that followed the reintroduction of capitalism. They also became scapegoats for worsening economic conditions across society. The rise of ethnic nationalist ideologies in post-Stalinist eastern Europe has worsened the situation for Roma. Unemployment, homelessness, marginalisation, criminalisation, police violence and violence from right-wing extremists are experienced by Roma across the region. This, and the entry of eastern European countries to the EU, with its diminished internal borders, has led to tens of thousands of eastern European Roma moving west. Beginning in France, the newest liquidation of the Romani has now started to spread throughout the

continent with Germany once again looking to clean house.

### Environmental Discrimination

The various legal blocks to their traditional nomadic lifestyle have forced many travelling Roma into unsafe areas such as former industrial areas or former landfill or other waste areas where pollutants may have impacted runoff into rivers or streams or even groundwater. The lack of provisioned stopping places deny Roma access to clean water or sanitation facilities, rendering Roma more vulnerable to disease and/or complications of illnesses. Denied environmental benefits such as water, sewage treatment facilities, sanitation and access to natural resources, and suffer from exposure to environmental hazards due to their proximity to hazardous waste sites, incinerators, factories, and other sources of pollution. This has also driven governments in their attempts to "settle" the Roma within habitable areas, both in the legal and/or social obligation itself to have a fixed address and in the motivation of integrating Roma into the broader population. Where Roma are settled in many areas of central and eastern Europe, the distance of such housing from the commercial centers of cities and the lack of amenities nearby pose significant barriers to working or education, particularly when public transit is lacking. Here, again, even running water may be an issue, complicated further by the Roma's cultural practices of hygiene. "While most of Sofia, the capital city of Bulgaria, is connected to the public water and sewerage system, there is only one tap for every 200 families in Glavova "mahala", an area in Sofia where Roma live."

### Problems Facing Gypsies Since 1989

Despite some positive changes — recognition of minority status, establishment of political parties and cultural organizations, publication of books and newspapers in their language — the

Memorial for murdered Sinti Gypsies in Düsseldorf-Lierenfeld



Roma's problems in Eastern Europe have been particularly acute since the fall of communism in 1989. They lack access to government services and health care, good-quality housing and schools, and suffer from high rates of unemployment and discrimination on the labor market. For the Eastern European Roma, like Roma in other parts of Europe, these problems are partly rooted in the "otherness" of their lifestyle and values. The Roma have suffered also because they have learned that cooperating or registering with authorities can do more harm than good to their communities. For example, Catherine the Great obliged all Roma to register in the mid-18th century, which allowed the monarchy to control the population more easily. This distrust of government and outside help continues to the present day, and must be overcome if their situation is to improve. However, governmental lack of interest and inability to tackle Roma problems are mainly to blame. The communist era of relative welfare, access to health care, and assured (though low-paying) jobs in heavy industry has given way to a capitalistic society where nothing is guaranteed.

With few resources and little education, the Roma have seldom been able to compete for jobs or start their own businesses. Indeed, 70 percent of Roma in Slovakia and 85 percent in the Czech Republic are unemployed. On the open job market, they face discrimination—even if hired, they could be fired as soon as the employer identifies them as Roma. Those with jobs are often victims of harassment. Of the 320,000 Roma officially living in Slovakia today, half (160,000) reside in exclusively Roma neighborhoods, according to the Roma Press Agency. Of these, some 50,000 Roma are still living in 281 segregated settlements, many of which lack water or electricity. Outside the new European Member States, the situation is frequently

even worse. In Romania, one million, or 50 percent of Romania's Roma population, were illiterate in 2001. In Bulgaria, 90 percent (or 450,000) of the country's Roma population of 500,000 do not have an elementary school education. The practice of placing Romani students in segregated schools or classes remains widespread in countries across Central and Eastern Europe. In Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia, many Romani children have been channeled into all-Romani schools that offer inferior quality education and are sometimes in poor physical condition, or into segregated all-Romani or predominantly Romani classes within mixed schools. In Hungary, Bulgaria, and Slovakia, many Romani children are sent to classes for pupils with learning disabilities, regardless of whether such classes are appropriate for the children in question or not. In Bulgaria, they are also sent to so-called "delinquent schools", where a variety of human rights abuses take place. A 2009 UN's anti-racism panel charged that "Gypsies suffer widespread racism in European Union that 'Racially motivated crime is an everyday experience' for Roma people, says EU's Fundamental Rights Agency".

### **What Are Their Needs?**

Yet in most of the world today, many Gypsies live in poverty. Usually the only clothes a Gypsy

owns are the ones on his back. An unsanitary lifestyle has created many physical needs among them. The quality of health care, nutrition, and education is poor. Most children do not attend schools because their families are always on the move. Adequate educational opportunities must be provided to raise their standard of living. The European community, individual countries, and numerous organizations are committed to addressing the roots of the Roma's economic and social problems within and outside the EU. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that their basic needs are met, such as a reliable source of clean water, adequate housing, and food.

Valeriu Nicolae a computer programmer Gypsy writes about his hometown in Romania, "Craiova has several main intersections. At any of them, you will find Romani kids waiting to wash or scrape the frost off your windows for anything you may want to give them, even a piece of gum or a sandwich. These kids are mostly between 4 and 9 years old. Sometimes they have to work in pairs to reach the car window, a smaller child sitting on the shoulders of a larger child. And you will find them at work in all weather conditions, from minus 20 to 40 degrees Celsius. They live on what they earn at the intersections, and if they don't make anything,



*Gypsies scavenging through garbage dump in Craiova, Romania*



they will not eat that day. Entire families live nearby and spend their time at the garbage dump. Most of the adults collect paper and metal scraps to sell. I didn't see anyone playing music or dancing close to the garbage dump or the canteen garbage bins. There were no tarot card readers or beautiful dramatic girls after the market closed. In the orphanages, I found no free and open fields or passionate lifestyles. But there are Gypsies: There are thousands of them just trying to find a way to survive through the day. Some of the kids have enormous, dramatic brown eyes, but it is just despair or fever flickering there”.

Still respective governments have done nothing to give them opportunities to improve their standard of living and have openly discriminated against them, which is why it is not surprising to hear about acts of delinquency being committed by them. They are now held in low esteem and tend to be involved in economically unimportant activities, which allow them to work on their own behalf. Something needs to urgently done by the countries having Gypsy populations; otherwise they being the largest minority group in Europe will continue to suffer in poverty and poor health conditions as compared to the majority and the present economical gap would widen. But their proud insistence of clinging on to and preserving their culture perhaps comes in the way of their rehabilitation with mainstream Europeans. Nevertheless, it will take decades for attitudes to change and for living standards to improve.



This problem can easily be solved by education and teaching them spiritual practices and not by force.

These people persecuted over the ages have their own culture and have given the world a distinct style of music and dance, their folk songs especially popular are those from the Balkans viz. in the former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Greece. They have for hundreds of years, enthralled people by their dance and music. Kings, Queens, Tzars and Emperors have all enlisted Romani musicians to play for them in their castles and palaces. The fiery Flamenco dance and music from Spain is Romani in origin. In fact readers may be interested to know that the melody of one of Shrii PR Sarkar's compositions Prabhata Samgiit No. 63, "Lord, I've decorated a row of lamps to perform

oblations to thee". The tune that has elements of Gypsy music in it is popular and sung in folk songs in the Balkans and Middle East. Gypsy songs as explained before are characterised by soulful melodies and sorrowful verses that reflect their suffering at the hands of others and hardship faced over the ages; people always on the move who cry for a homeland having lost the home of their ancestors over a thousand years ago. Yet in Europe they as a minority community continue to be persecuted and discriminated against even till this day. They don't really need to be 'integrated', but to have the same access to opportunities available to all other citizens and to be free from the discrimination that leads to isolation and poverty. One wonders how much longer it will take for attitudes to change and their living standards to improve.

**"One of the saddest lessons of history is this ... once you give a charlatan power over you, you almost never get it back".**

**- Carl Sagan**



# FDI Retail Blessing or a Curse

✶ Mahesh Prasad

While Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh was rolling out red carpet to WalMart on 14th September 2012, there was a news item in Atlantic City that on June 30, over 10000 people were shouting slogans in Los Angeles: “WalMart = Poverty”. And on June 01, hundreds had protested in Washington DC with slogans: “Say-No-To-WalMart”. In fact, WalMart has become almost untouchable in US. The protesters voice was unambiguous and clear that WalMart will devastate local businesses as it has neither heart nor morals!

Is it not an irony that while there is a genuine and strong

opposition in the land of its origin we (many in the ruling party and others) are obsessed with the idea that FDI in retail (called “Multibrand”) is going to harbingers an era of prosperity and is a panacea of our economic ills? To quote further: In Austin, a neighborhood of Chicago, WalMart entered in 2006 - - by 2008, 82 closed out of 306 small shops – overall closure rate 35 to 60%! Studies show 3 jobs were killed for every two created. Another study by UNI Global Union confirms that one worker employed by WalMart replaces 1.4. Thus, instead of increasing employment, the entry, in fact, negatively impacted it.

Another argument in favor of FDI put by its protagonists is that it will be beneficial to farmers and

“Any attempt to tamper with the centuries old rural –urban balance will thoroughly shake up our economy as a whole since it is mainly based on agriculture.”



they will receive better price which will improve their economic condition and that it will provide better products at cheaper rates and thus will be fair to the consumer also. But, facts are stranger than fiction. WalMart does not pay the price to the farmers across the counter. It buys next harvests in futures market and fixes farm prices. Thus, the farmers are forced to sell at fixed price, no matter what is the prevailing market price. As seen in Chicago, Mexico and other places the small businesses in the neighborhood are devastated by first lowering the selling price, and then raising them, when there remains no competition. Moreover, purchases are mostly made from China at much, lower price, thus the local production (mostly in small cottage industries) is also destroyed.

Study shows that FDI Retail will kill 12 million family retailers in India. Even Planning Commission Working Group on Agriculture for XI Plan (2007 –2012) and 19th

report of the Standing committee of Parliament on Food (2006 – 2007) nail the lie that association with WalMart will make Indian farmers rich. 59 million families, about 32 crore, live on less than 5 acres and only 40% of their produce moves out for sale, the rest is used for their own consumption. For the reasons aforesaid, if this balance is disturbed through the temporary allurements, as they will be, it will destroy food security in India.

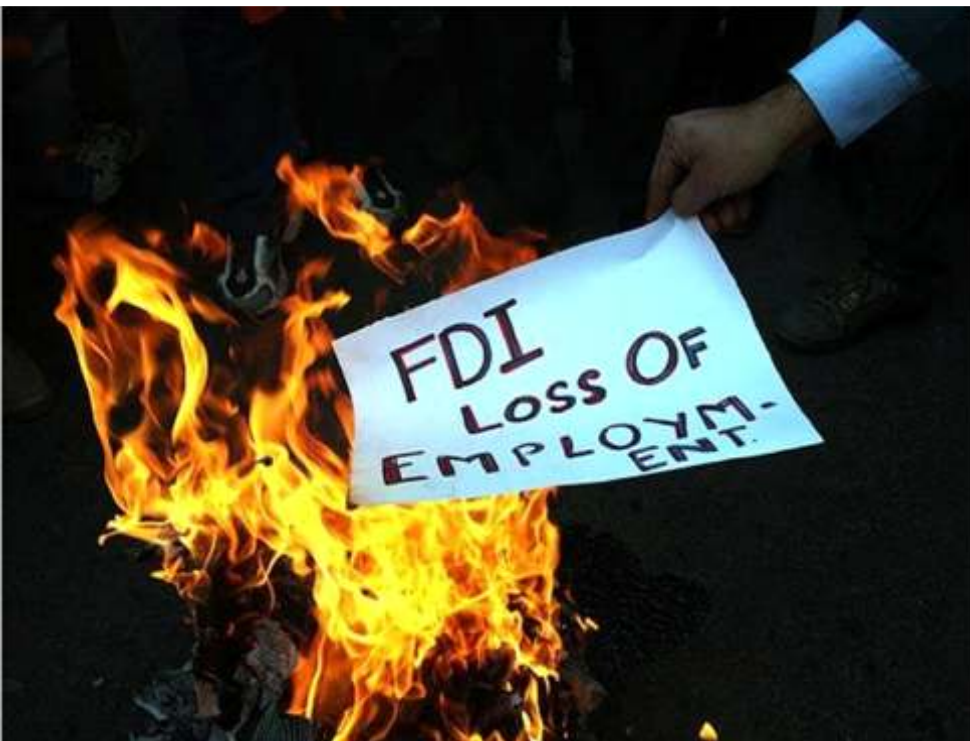
Moreover, small farmers are more efficient. They use only one third of land to produce 41% of our needs. Thus, any attempt to tamper with the centuries old rural –urban balance will thoroughly shake up our economy as a whole since it is mainly based on agriculture.

An exhaustive study has been made by UNI Global Union which is associated with 900 Trade unions and 20 million workers in the entire globe over. It has also focused mainly on WalMart because it is the largest corporation in the world in

multi-brand sale. Its revenue was US\$ 421 billion in 2011 -- 3.5 times of the next largest competitor. Through its mere size, it has a tendency to merge the existing smaller trades wherever it goes and then monopolizes.

In its long and arduous study it has found that its activities are not fair even to its employees. It strongly opposes union formation and thus shuts out any possibility of 'Collective Bargaining'. If due to local laws or other pressure, some section does form union that section is silently closed down. By and large, a worker in WalMart earns 12.4% less than in a small retail while 14.5% less in large retail as a whole. Hundreds of court cases have been filed against this injustice. There have been cases when the insurance benefits were said to have been usurped by WalMart on the death of their employees, as they were deliberately kept in dark about the insurance policies taken at their back.





It has been further observed by UNI that in a number of countries presence of Wal Mart had devastating effect on small businesses and that there were mass closure. Even US Censure Bureau found substantial negative impact on employment growth and survival of single or small chain-stores. Of course, it will be dooms day for wholesalers and middlemen. As said earlier, WalMart reaches directly to producers and manufacturers. In the beginning they will be offered remunerative price, but in the long run, the prices to them will be pushed down. Thus, the dawn of prosperity will end in the dusk of poverty!!

Not that our big economists are unaware of these possibilities, and in ignorance, they are propagating FDI Retail, especially WalMart, but they appear to have been victim of aggressive lobbying on the part of the FDI giants. Recently, WalMart in its report to a financial institution of US government has admitted having spent 150crores in lobbying in India. What is the classification and who has been the beneficiary is not known, neither the GOI appears to be interested to know details for obvious reasons.

David Barston, a keen investigator, had written an article in NY Times in April 2012, in which he had disclosed how WalMart used bribery (Pay-offs) to expand in

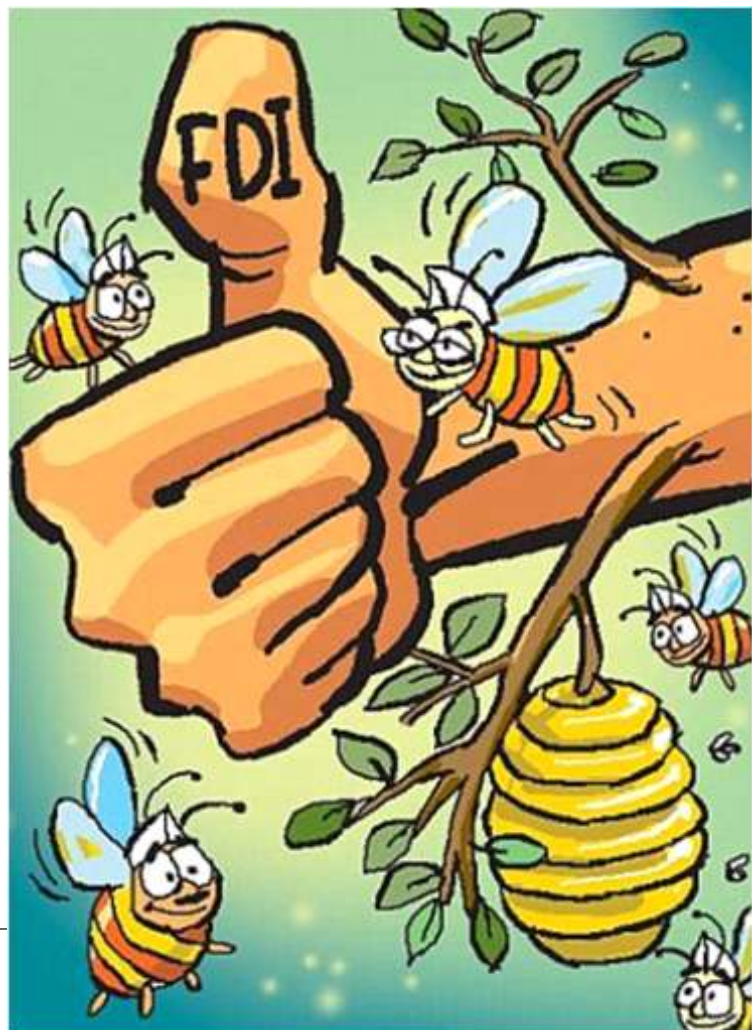
Mexico and then used the same method in hushing up the exposures it violated the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of Mexico.

It is, thus, no wonder that after Mexico, now, India is falling in trap.

For ideological and similar reasons PROUT does not support accumulation of wealth and formation of big corporations --- their expansion, no question. Policy of free market and freedom to unbounded profits have created huge disparities amongst nations as well as individuals and this has given vent to unbridled greed under whose shadow West and US are reeling under economic melt-down and facing large unemployment. Mahatma Gandhi once rightly said, "There is enough for every need but not enough for every greed". In fact, the world is at cross-roads and

is in dire search of a plausible paradigm, alternative to both Communism and Capitalism. Under such uncertainty FDI retail, which, by its nature, is going to devour millions of jobs and render a large percentage of small vendors and businesses out of commission cannot be supported.

India has unique position as regards its teeming millions. From 30 crores in 1947, it has grown to 1.2 billion and there appears to be no sign of either slow down or stabilization as a large section of its population, either under misguided ambition of 'empowerment' or under religious dictates is not going to adopt family planning. As such, as time passes India will need accelerated growth in jobs which is going to hardly come by, as already job market is almost stagnated. Under such dismal circumstances it will be rank foolishness to permit FDI Retail since huge unemployment possibilities loom large as experienced by others.







# Comedian Grillo's Populist Plan for Italy

**Default on the  
public debt,  
nationalization  
of the banks,  
and a citizen  
dividend could  
actually  
save the Italian  
economy.**

✱ **Ellen Brown**

Comedian Beppe Grillo was surprised himself when his Five Star Movement got 8.7 million votes in the Italian general election of February 24-25th. His movement is now the biggest single party in the chamber of deputies, says *The Guardian*, which makes him “a kingmaker in a hung parliament”.

Grillo's is the party of “no.” In a candidacy based on satire, he organized an annual “V Day Celebration”. He rejects the status quo—all the existing parties and their monopoly control of politics, jobs, and financing—and seeks a referendum on all international treaties, including NATO membership, free trade agreements and the Euro. “If we get into parliament,” says Grillo, “we would

bring the old system down, not because we would enjoy doing so but because the system is rotten.” Critics fear, and supporters hope, that if his party succeeds, it could break the Euro system.

But being against everything, says Mike Whitney is not a platform: To govern, one needs ideas and a strategy for implementing those ideas. Grillo's team has neither. They are defined more in terms of the things they are against than things they are for. It's fine to want to “throw the bums out”, but that won't put people back to work or boost growth or end the slump. Without a coherent plan to govern, M5S could end up in the political trash heap, along with their right-wing predecessors, the Tea Party. Steve Colatrella who lives in Italy, has a different take on the surprise win. He says Grillo does

have a platform of positive proposals. Besides rejecting all the existing parties and treaties, Grillo's program includes the following: (1) Unilateral default on the public debt; (2) Nationalization of the banks; and (3) A guaranteed "citizenship" income of 1000 euros a month.

It is a platform that could actually work. Austerity has been tested for a decade in the Eurozone and has failed, while the proposals in Grillo's plan have been tested in other countries and have succeeded. Default on the public debt has been pulled off quite successfully in Iceland, Argentina, Ecuador, and Russia, among other countries. Whitney cites a clip from Grillo's

maximize earnings in the market at the expense of the nation. . . . If financial powerbrokers use speculation to increase their earnings and force governments to pay the highest possible interest rates, the result is recession for the State that's in debt as well as their loss of sovereignty. There are alternatives. These are being put into effect by some countries in South America and by Iceland. The risk is that we are going to reach default in any case with the devaluation of the debt, and the Nation impoverished and on its knees".

### **Bank Nationalization: China Shows What Can Be Done**

Grillo's second proposal,

economic output within just another few years". According to Eamonn Fingleton in 'In The Jaws of the Dragon' (2009), the fountain that feeds this tide is a strong public banking sector: "Capitalism's triumph in China has been proclaimed in countless books in recent years. . . . But . . . the higher reaches of its economy remain comprehensively controlled in a way that is the antithesis of everything we associate with Western capitalism. The key to this control is the Chinese banking system . . . [which is] not only state-owned but, as in other East Asian miracle economies, functions overtly as a major tool of the central government's industrial policy".

### **Guaranteed Basic Income—Not Just Welfare**

Grillo's third proposal, a guaranteed basic income, is not just an off-the-wall, utopian idea either. A national dividend has been urged by the "Social Credit" school of monetary reform for nearly a century, and the Incole Gurantee Network US Basic Income Guarantee Network has held a dozen annual conferences. They feel that a guaranteed basic income is the key to keeping modern, highly productive economies humming. In Europe, the proposal is being pursued not just by Grillo's southern European party but by the sober Swiss of the north. An initiative to establish a new federal law for an unconditional basic income was formally introduced in Switzerland in April 2012. The idea consists of giving to all citizens a monthly income that is neither means-tested nor work-related. Under the Swiss referendum system of direct democracy, if the initiative gathers more than 100,000 signatures before October 2013, the Federal Assembly is required to look into it.

Colatrella does not say where Grillo plans to get the money for Italy's guaranteed basic income, but in Social Credit theory, it would simply be issued outright by the government; and Grillo, who has an



China Central Bank

blog suggesting that this is also the way out for Italy: "The public debt has not been growing in recent years because of too much expenditure . Between 1980 and 2011, spending was lower than the tax revenue by 484 billion (thus we have been really virtuous) but the interest payments (on the debt of 2,141 billion) that we had to pay in that period have made us poor. In the last 20 years, GDP has been growing slowly, while the debt has exploded. . . . [S]peculators . . . are contributing to price falls so as to bring about higher interest rates. It's the usurer's technique. Thus the debt becomes an opportunity to

nationalizing the banks, has also been tested and proven elsewhere, most notably in China. In an April 2012 article in The American Conservative titled "China's Rise, America's Fall," Ron Unz observes: "During the three decades to 2010, China achieved perhaps the most rapid sustained rate of economic development in the history of the human species, with its real economy growing almost 40-fold between 1978 and 2010. In 1978, America's economy was 15 times larger, but according to most international estimates, China is now set to surpass America's total



accounting background, evidently agrees with that approach to funding. He said in a presentation, “The Bank of Italy a private joint-stock company, ownership comprises 10 insurance companies, 10 foundations, and 10 banks, that are all joint-stock companies . . . They issue the money out of thin air and lend it to us. It’s the State who is supposed to issue it. We need money to work. The State should say: “There’s scarcity of money? I’ll issue some and put it into circulation. Money is plentiful? I’ll withdraw and burn some of it.” . . . Money is needed to keep prices stable and to let us work”.

### **The Key to a Thriving Economy**

Major C.H. Douglas, the thought leader of the Social Credit movement, argued that the economy routinely produces more goods and services than consumers have the money to purchase, because workers collectively do not get paid enough to cover the cost of the things they make. This is true because of external costs such as interest paid to banks, and because some portion of the national income is stashed in savings accounts, investment accounts, and under mattresses rather than spent on the GDP. To fill what Social Creditors call “the gap,” so that “demand” rises to meet “supply,” additional money needs to be gotten into the circulating money supply. Douglas recommended doing it with a national dividend for everyone, an entitlement by “grace” rather than “works,” something that was necessary just to raise

purchasing power enough to cover the products on the market. In the 1930s and 1940s, critics of Social Credit called it “funny money” and said it would merely inflate the money supply. The critics prevailed, and the Social Credit solution has not had much chance to be tested. But the possibilities were demonstrated in New Zealand during the Great Depression, when a state housing project was funded with credit issued by the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, the nationalized central bank. According to New Zealand commentator Kerry Bolton, this one measure was sufficient to resolve 75% of unemployment in the midst of the Great Depression. Bolton notes that this was achieved without causing inflation. When new money is used to create new goods and services, supply rises along with demand and prices remain stable; but the “demand” has to come first. No business owner will invest in more capacity or production without first seeing a demand. No demand, no new jobs and no economic expansion.

### **The Need to Restore Economic Sovereignty**

The money for a guaranteed basic income could be created by a nationalized central bank in the same way that the Reserve Bank of New Zealand did it, and that central bank “quantitative easing” (QE) is created out of nothing on a computer screen today. The problem with today’s QE is that it has not gotten money into the pockets of

consumers. The money has gotten—and can get—no further than the reserve accounts of banks. A dividend paid directly to consumers would be “quantitative easing” for the people. A basic income guarantee paid for with central bank credit would not be “welfare” but would eliminate the need for welfare. It would be social security for all, replacing social security payments, unemployment insurance, and welfare taxes. It could also replace much of the consumer debt that is choking the private economy, growing exponentially at usurious compound interest rates. As Grillo points out, it is not the cost of government but the cost of money itself that has bankrupted Italy. If the country wishes to free itself from the shackles of debt and restore the prosperity it once had, it will need to take back its monetary sovereignty and issue its own money, either directly or through its own nationalized central bank. If Grillo’s party comes to power and follows through with his platform, those shackles on the Italian economy might actually be released.

*The writer is an attorney and the author of eleven books, including Web of Debt: The Shocking Truth About Our Money System and How We Can Break Free.*

*Her websites are [webofdebt.com](http://webofdebt.com) and [ellenbrown.com](http://ellenbrown.com).*

*She is also chairman of the Public Banking Institute.*

**W**hile they prate of economic laws, men and women are starving. We must lay hold of the fact that economic laws are not made by nature. They are made by human beings. . . . Competition has been shown to be useful up to a certain point and no further, but cooperation is the thing we must strive for today.

Franklin D. Roosevelt 1912

# Deconstructing

## The Shahbagh Square Protests

✶ Zeeshan Khan

**B**angladeshi students and pro-government supporters gather during a rally demanding death to Islamic political party leaders who are on trial for alleged war crimes during the country's 1971 independence war, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Sunday, Feb. 24, 2013. Eight top leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami, the country's largest Islamic party, are being tried on charges of mass killings, rapes and arson allegedly committed during Bangladesh's nine-month war of separation from Pakistan. The question of capital punishment stirs strong feelings and so it should. Every death brings bereavement. People unrelated to the crime – wives, children, siblings, husbands, parents – suffer as deep a loss as the people who lost loved ones because of it. It can never be a wonderful thing to end a life, and as someone recently pointed out to me, to assume to possess the moral authority to do so is assuming quite a lot. At the very least, no death should ever be celebrated. The impassioned and festive calls by little children for Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) leader 'Koshai' Kader Mollah to be sent to the gallows for his crimes against humanity during the 1971 war of

independence are certainly revolting, but perhaps that presents a limited view of what's really going on all of a sudden in Bangladesh.

And what's really happening is

**What's really happening is astounding. Thousands of people have gathered peacefully for days and nights in a country known for violent demonstrations; demanding that their judiciary deliver justice.**

astounding. Thousands of people have gathered peacefully for days and nights in a country known for violent demonstrations; demanding that their judiciary deliver justice even when a combined assault by Jamaat and its student wing Shibir looms large and in some ways, has already begun. The protests are decidedly non-partisan and have resisted every attempt by leading parties to use their movement, including the ruling Awami League which initiated the war crimes tribunal and whose tacit patronage they receive in the form of police protection, public toilets and parliamentary speeches. They have however, allowed members of civil society, intellectuals, freedom fighters and activists to give speeches and have been endorsed by



numerous non-political entities, including the Bangladesh cricket team. In a country where partisan divisions go deep, this is truly an unprecedented development.

It began when a group of bloggers calling themselves the Bloggers and Online Activists Network or BOAN assembled at Shahbagh Square, now the centre stage for the sit-in and register their disgust for the life sentence that was handed down to Kader Mollah, in spite of the fact that he had been found guilty of being complicit in murder and several cases of torture and rape, including that of an 11-year-old girl.

The news about the sit-in spread virally, and by late afternoon, a few thousand people had added their voices. By the first week, it was somewhere between 300,000 and 500,000 people, with chapters springing up across the country. Meals are provided, Wi-Fi is free and open, performances are catered for, an enormous petition has been rolled out, people come with their families and everything about the place is communal and considerate – except towards Razakars (those who were members and supporters of pro-Pakistan militia), of course, who are being given no quarter at all. Asif Moinuddin, one of the BOAN bloggers and a member of the core group at Shahbagh, who was stabbed a few months ago by Shibbir cadres for blogging about atheism and religious fanaticism, says their agenda goes beyond the hangings. It's about rooting out a culture of low and high level terrorism, the sort that he was a victim of, perpetrated in the name of religion. He said they are fighting for the right to live in a functional, secular country where their freedom of expression and thought is not constantly challenged and where political intimidation and impunity is a thing of the past.

He was careful to make it clear that this was not a movement against religion, but against the misuse of religion in politics and simply an affirmation of the principles that

Bangladesh was founded on – nationalism, secularism, democracy and justice. Even though on the surface, Bangladesh doesn't look like Afghanistan or even Saudi Arabia, the influence of a particularly intolerant brand of Islam remains perilously close. JI's leanings are consistent with many elements of these doctrines, and their website plainly demonstrates their desire to be involved in politics only because it's a necessary evil by which the imposition of Shariah can be realised. Throughout the 1980's and 90's the term 'Shibir' was synonymous with 'horror' as student wing activists routinely slit political opponents' tendons and throats. During their tenure as part of the previous coalition government, a creeping religious censorship entered the public sphere and manifested itself as acts of vandalism or outright murder.

A sharp spike in activity against secular, academic, cultural, non-Muslim groups and even the prime minister, was witnessed during this period and while most were perpetrated by groups like Jamaatul Mujahadeen Bangladesh (JMB) and Harkatul Jihad Islami (HuJI) and not by the JI, the fact that it happened on their watch is noteworthy. Some of these activities were carried out with Jamaat's direct consent. The minority Ahmmediya community was targeted, their literature banned and their mosques dismantled, and Shibbir activists viciously attacked the writer Humayun Azad with machetes for a book in which he exposed Jamaat's militancy, both past and present. The nation-wide fear of being held hostage to a radical interpretation of Islam is a very real one, and one that the Jamaat-Shibbir nexus perpetuates with their tactics of terror. Immediately after the first



Peaceful demonstration Shahbagh Square Dacca

verdict, AbulKalam Azad aka BacchuRazakar's death sentence, they declared a nationwide strike, which was marked by violence including the clubbing to near-death of a police officer.

They followed this up with a second equally violent strike, and went as far as threatening the government with civil war if more death penalties were issued. Over the last few days they have taken to the streets, shooting at the police indiscriminately, injuring many of them along with civilians. They have attacked Jahangirnagar University's Vice Chancellor for going to Shahbagh and have entered into a sustained campaign of vilification, calling the movement an affront to God and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and encouraging 'God-fearing' people everywhere to resist it. Things have begun to get ugly with one of the BOAN bloggers, Rajib Haider being murdered in a way that bears all the signs of a JI hit. Violent clashes with the police have left people dead on both sides and after a recent Jumma prayers thousands of people across the country driven by JI's smear campaign against the movement attacked journalists and symbols of Bengali nationalism by burning flags and vandalising a monument to the language martyrs of 1952. They have threatened to swoop on Shahbagh or bomb it and security is on high alert.

The Awami League government has begun developing legislation to ban JI from politics while simultaneously shutting down their sources of funding and communications and a full-scale political showdown is in the making. There have been skirmishes in mosques between pro and anti JI supporters and an uncomfortable polarisation is beginning to develop between a religious right that feels under attack and a secular left that is growing more and more emboldened. Jamaat considers the War Crimes Tribunal a kangaroo court and have strongly questioned its integrity, along with the government's motives, which they believe include vendetta and political manoeuvring. In a sort of upside down reality, their sentiments are shared by some western governments as well as rights groups and independent observers that claim the trial falls short of established standards of due process.

Muslim countries have also voiced their concerns, with the Turkish president going as far as sending a letter to the Bangladeshi prime minister asking for clemency for the accused. There have also been protests at the recent Organisation of Islamic

Cooperation (OIC) summit against the government of Bangladesh. Given all this, the government's commitment to follow through (questionable verdicts notwithstanding), and the demonstrations at Shahbagh along with the nationwide solidarity they have encouraged, shows that this is an issue that still inflames. Questions about the legality of challenging judicial rulings in as flagrant a manner as is being done in Shahbagh can also be added to an already enormous list of anomalies. It veers close to contempt of court, since a ruling can be challenged within the framework of appeals, but not on the streets. In a contradictory move, the Awami League, which has been able to stem their plummeting popularity by supporting the movement, has distanced itself from the courts, coming close to contempt of court themselves.

They have also hastily put together a bill, which will give powers to the prosecutor to appeal for a raised sentence; a power previously unavailable and also quite improper after a verdict has already been given. If the prosecution appeals and there's every chance they will, then Kader Mollah's case will be reviewed again. He'll probably be found

guilty and hanged. But if, as the observers say, the trials are politically motivated then we will have to ask ourselves if the right people are being punished for these horrific crimes. And if not, it begs the question: who and where are the real razakars? What happens in the political realm in Bangladesh is always messy and murky, and if the people at Shahbagh are being used as a political tool then it's most unfortunate. The energy that they have brought to the table is remarkable and their ability to control large numbers of people makes them a force to be reckoned with.

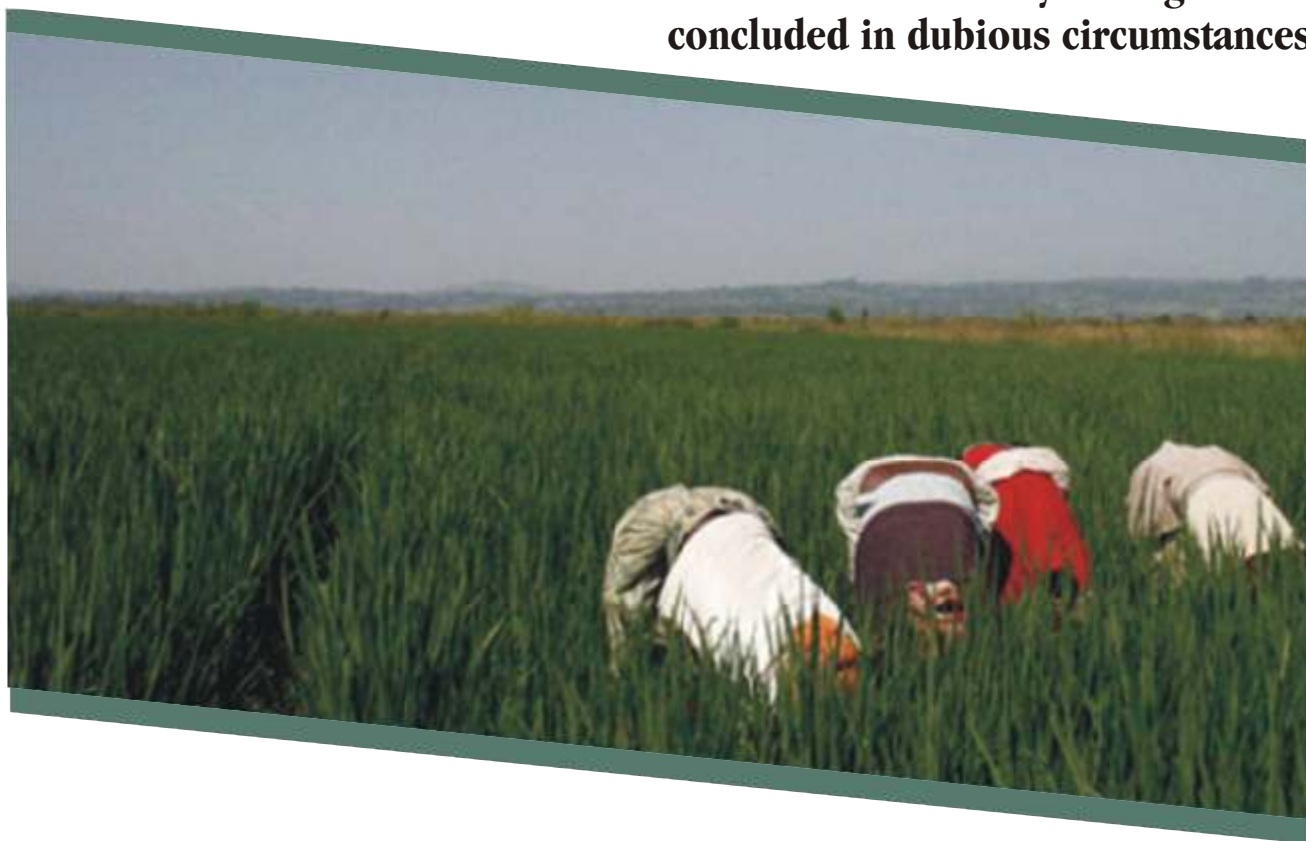
The macabre calls for death are certainly disturbing and the imprint it will leave on the country's national psyche is cause for concern, but I'm heartened when I also hear slogans like *golakatarajniti, rogkatarajniti ain kor e nishiddhokoro* (ban the politics of terror) '*moulobadirajniti ain korenishiddhokoro* (ban fundamentalism), *Ai Banglarmati, hobena Afghanistan, hobena Mali* (Bengal will never be Afghanistan or Mali). If the movement expands to become a cry for conscientious governance, as still other slogans suggest it might do, then it's very encouraging indeed.



*The battle must be won*



**Indian companies are among the biggest land holders in the African country through deals concluded in dubious circumstances**



# How Ethiopians are being Pushed Off their Land by Indian Capitalists

✱ **Ashish Kothari and Kalpavriksh**

“It is not a land-grab, it is a life-grab. It is daylight robbery. But if we protest, if we speak the truth, we could end up in jail or worse.” Obang Metho was referring to the leasing of land to foreign companies in Ethiopia, spreading over nearly four million hectares. Nyikaw Ochalla joined in: “This is happening in the lands I grew up in, and it is my relatives and childhood

friends who are being jailed, beaten up, and driven out; my childhood memories are being violated.”

Metho of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia, and Ochalla of the Anuak Survival Organisation were speaking at the “Indian-Ethiopian Seminar on Land Investments” organised on February 5-6, 2013 in New Delhi. The seminar was put together by Indian civil society groups Indian Social Action Forum (Insaf), Popular

Education and Action Centre (Peace), and Kalpavriksh, the research institution Council for Social Development, and the U.S.-based research group Oakland Institute.

## **Indian Stakes**

The stories narrated by Obang and Ochalla were harrowing. The lands being leased by the Ethiopian government to companies from India, China, Malaysia, and other



countries, were claimed by it to be “empty.” In actual fact these are areas occupied or used by pastoral and small farming communities, as also grasslands and forests with significant wildlife. Decisions are being taken in the country’s capital to give up these lands ostensibly to help the country produce food and generate revenues; the underlying message is that either there is no one there to do the job, or that local communities are simply not up to the mark.

Indian companies are among the biggest players in the land deals, with investments of over \$5 billion, and leases over 6,00,000 hectares. Karuturi Global, a Bangalore-based agroproduce company has alone received 3,00,000 hectares. Claims by these companies and by the Ethiopian government that the deals are legal and entail no human rights violations, have been shown as false in a series of on-ground investigations. The Oakland Institute has meticulously documented the nexus of corporations, politicians, investors, and officials that has made the land-grab possible. It notes that there is no public consultation with local communities (much less their

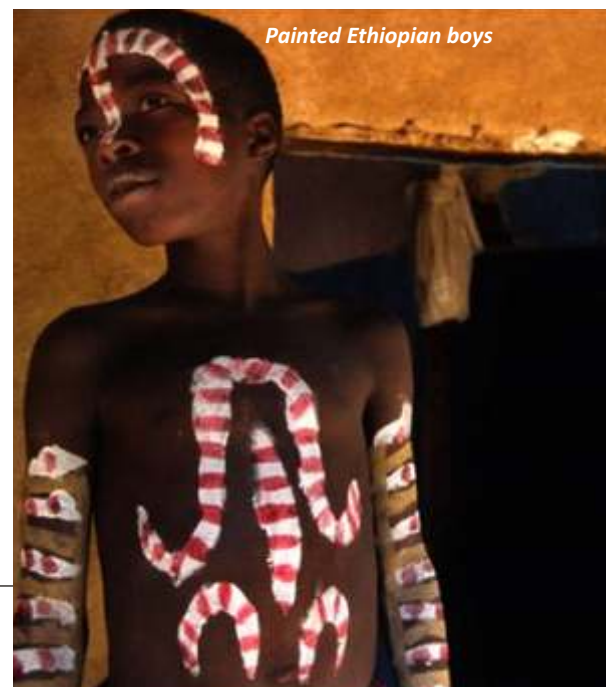
consent), many of whom find out that their pastures or fields have been sold off only when bulldozers arrive. Any form of resistance or even questioning is met with imprisonment, beating up, and even killing. Both private security companies and the Ethiopian government’s own forces are used to protect the investors. And there is a total lack of environmental and social impact assessments in these deals.

It is also stated sometimes that what Indian companies are doing abroad, is not the responsibility of the government. But this ignores the various ways in which the Indian government facilitates and supports such deals, not only through diplomatic channels but also financially (even if indirectly). For instance the Indian Export-Import Bank has pledged \$640 million of credit over five years for Ethiopia’s sugar industry, and the fact that Indian companies are getting the biggest deals for sugarcane plantations cannot be unconnected.

### **Mass Displacement**

Obang and Ochalla were

careful to clarify that they were not against India’s people, who they realised could not be supporting such land-grab; however, for the affected communities, “it is Indians who are doing this to us.” It is therefore important for groups here to question the intentions and actions of Indian companies and the Indian government agencies supporting them. Does their behaviour in Ethiopia meet the laws or guidelines under which Indian companies act within their own country? Does it meet international standards of human rights and



*Painted Ethiopian boys*



environmental sustainability that India is a signatory to?

Over the next couple of years, the Ethiopian government plans to forcibly move 1.5 million people off their homelands and concentrate them into a few settlements in a process called “villagisation.” It claims that this will enable it to provide efficient and good quality services like drinking water, sanitation, schools, and clinics, which is not possible in the case of today’s scattered, small settlements. But Obang and Ochalla point out that all the relocation is taking place from lands targeted by investor companies, and that even where communities are saying they would much rather stay where they are with whatever amenities they have, they are being forcibly moved out.

The claim that such investments are a “win-win” deal for the Ethiopian people and Indian companies is also questionable. Much of the production (sugarcane, cotton, jatropha, etc) is meant for export, and local foodgrains which are the staple diet are not being grown. Very little local employment is created; there is no requirement by the Ethiopian government that companies have to hire locally. Nor is there any contractual clause by which the money generated is to remain within the Ethiopian economy. A handful of businessmen

and politicians are the prime beneficiaries.

Obang and Ochalla were at pains to state that part of the blame for this sell-out is located within the country’s own history, in which sometimes adverse relations between different tribes have become entrenched in the political system. The country’s ruling elite are from a tiny minority belonging to one ethnic group, who can ignore the sufferings of other groups affected by land-grab. In this sense, it is the Ethiopian people themselves who have to resolve the problem. But there is also an important role for India’s people, especially in highlighting the role of their own companies and government, and facilitating greater awareness of what is taking place in the name of Ethiopia’s development.

#### **Odisha Parallel**

What is happening in Ethiopia (and other African countries) is an outcome of India’s own aggressive push towards globalised economic growth. The growth fetish has led to situations of both internal and external colonisation, in which farms, waterbodies, forests, grasslands and other natural resources are all up for grabs.

It was an ironical coincidence that on the very days the consultations on Indian land-grab in Ethiopia were taking place in New

Delhi, police action was under way to forcibly evict villagers in Odisha to make way for the Korean multinational Posco. Representatives of movements from Jharkhand, Karnataka and elsewhere told Obang and Ochalla that they were facing similar repression while resisting forcible takeover by the government or by corporations. The currently dominant model of “development” is pushing such violence across the globe, wherever dominant nation-states and giant corporations are eyeing land and resources.

In such a situation, people in India who care for human rights, ecological sustainability, and basic justice, have to raise fundamental critiques of “development” and centralised governance, and work towards radical alternatives that secure the rights of all people to food, water, shelter, energy, learning, health and livelihoods. Such alternatives are already demonstrated to be feasible at thousands of sites across the world, but it requires a mindset change for both the Ethiopian and Indian governments to facilitate the empowerment of local communities to adopt them, rather than paving the way for corporate takeover. Neither the founders of India nor of Ethiopia would have dreamt of a future in which development takes place at gunpoint.

*Huts at Yabelo bordering Kenya*





We  
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hospital?

✱ Dr. Punyabrata Gun

**A**fter the murder of Shankar Guha Niyogi in 1991, newspapers were flooded with reports of Shaheed Hospital and workers health movement. Doctors and health workers in many parts of India, particularly in West Bengal,

## Peoples' Health Movement in India **Looking Back at Dalli Rajahara Achievements and Problems**





followed the lead given by the Shaheed Hospital after that.

Now, once again people are expressing interest about Shaheed Hospital. The reason is that the person convicted for life under black laws by the Raipur district court on 24th December 2010, is an honourable founder-member who had been associated with the hospital from 1981 to 1987 – doctor and human rights activist, Dr. Binayak Sen.

Dalli Rajahara is a small town of iron-ore mines in Durg district of Chhattisgarh. The town owes its name to the two iron ore mines Dalli and Rajahara. The iron ore taken out from the mines is sent to the Bhilai Steel Plant. Mine workers were generally drawn from the ranks of agricultural labourers and poor peasants, who came to this town escaping a famine which struck in the decade of 60s. They were all contract workers. Some of them used to break rocks using hammers and the others used to load these rocks into waiting trucks. Before the day break, the trucks of the contractor used to ferry the men-women workers from their shanties to the mines, who returned back

only after darkness of the night engulfed their homes. Kids never got to see their parents. In return, they got a pittance as wages, only to be further eaten by the two unions as contributions: INTUC and AITUC.

After the massive drubbing of Indira Congress in the parliamentary elections of 1977, iron ore mine workers freed themselves from the clutches of these two central unions and formed a new trade union – CMMS – Chhattisgarh Mines Shramik Sangh. Illiterate workers were looking for an honest leader. They met Shankar Guha Niyogi, just released from jail, who had been arrested under MISA during the Emergency. They had heard of him as a leader of the nearby Danitola quartzite mines workers. They called him and he responded to their call. A strong movement to protect the economic rights of the workers was born. To break the movement, the police arrested Shankar Guha Niyogi on 2nd of June, 1977. Workers responded by organizing a protest demonstration to get their leader released. The police fired on the agitating workers. 11 people, including a woman worker and a child, were martyred. But under the growing pressure of the workers' movement, the management surrendered, and Niyogi was released; workers were also given their withheld bonus payments.

In 1977, Kusum Bai, a vice-president of CMSS, tragically lost her life during child birth due to the negligence of doctors and nurses of the local BSP hospital. Ten thousand workers stood firm in their protest in front of the hospital. But not one of them indulged in arson, not one

assaulted any doctor or nurse; they took, instead, a novel oath. They vowed to construct a maternity home for themselves, for no mother should die for want of healthcare during child birth.

This dream turned into a reality in 1979. Shramik Sangh had adopted a policy, in contrast to the narrow economism of traditional trade unionism, to think and work for the holistic development of workers. The kind of trade unions we usually encounter, are concerned only about one third of workers' lives, the 8 hours that they spend at the workplace. The programmes of such unions do not have space for issues other than pay hike, bonus, preparing replies to the chargesheets. CMSS started thinking about all these issue in a novel way. In 1979, Shramik Sangh had taken up the policy to work in 17 different departments. Apart from building the worker-peasant joint front, working towards liberation from casteism, fighting for women's liberation, and defending a democratic culture, it also took up the issue of public health.

We usually think of trade unions as the weapon of a movement; so what led Chhattisgarh Mines Shramik Sangh (CMSS) to take up the creative work of constructing a hospital? To answer this question, one has to understand CMSS policy of "Sangharsh and Nirman (struggle and creation)". On the one hand, struggle for social change, and on the other, small creative constructive work, the two mutually reinforcing each other. Among these constructive work were building and supporting schools, hospital,

engineering workshops, to name only a few. Going through these constructive works, there was a small attempt to translate the workers' imagination into reality, of creating fragments of the future society, free from the exploitation of human by human. These were the sources of inspiration for people in their bitter struggles.

### **Achievements and Weaknesses**

The movement centered around Shaheed Hospital can be said to be an experiment. There are many novelties, achievements, and some weaknesses of this experiment. Let us look at them one by one.

1. The public health movement of Rajahara was essentially a movement by revolutionary intellectuals under the leadership of a workers' union. Initially the movement started without the presence of any doctors or intellectuals. It began by taking up the campaigns for liquor prohibition, cleanliness, etc. Doctors arrived only in 1981 – Dr. Binayak Sen, Dr. Ashish Kundu, Dr. Pabitra Guha were the first to come. Dr. Saibal Jana joined in 1982. These doctors conducted educational meetings in the workers' colonies, at the workplace, i.e., at the mines. To run the health movement, a health committee was formed with more than hundred elected representatives of workers in 1981. On 26th January 1982, a small dispensary, Shaheed Dispensary, was started in the garage of the union office. The work for hospital construction was started besides this dispensary. This was named Shaheed (Martyrs') Hospital in the memory of the martyrs of 1977. This was inaugurated on the Martyrs' Day in 1983. The leading workers of the organisation were associated in all works of the hospital – running the propaganda work on health issues, running the dispensary, construction of hospital, or running the hospital.

2. The construction of Shaheed Hospital was carried out entirely with local support. As workers won

economic struggles, they started collecting contributions, and kept on pooling funds to construct, initially, a 15-bed hospital. That was expanded into a 40-bed double storeyed hospital; later, it was even equipped with a modern operation theatre. After that many more equipment, and ambulances, etc., were also purchased. The main form of outside support has been doctors and trained nurses, which this health movement could not generate locally. All the doctors and nurses were the product of the revolutionary student movement in West Bengal. But despite this fact, this movement does not have any caste or nationality-based discrimination.

CMSS did not have easy alternatives to draw on. Like other currently popular health models, many proposals and offers of governmental and non-governmental support, or even foreign assistance, came their way. But CMSS consciously resisted these proposals, as outside economic assistance means direct or indirect outside control. Shaheed Hospital, indeed, was a programme "by the toilers for the toilers."

3. In the initial days of this health movement, there was a dilemma among doctors and health workers about whether to go for curative healthcare or to promote preventative healthcare. Some were opposed to the construction of hospital because they were apprehensive that construction of the hospital would hinder the broader health campaign. It was only experience that proved the point that running a dispensary or a hospital does not hinder efforts at disseminating consciousness about health, but instead complements this work.

The health movement, through the work of public healthcare, increased the confidence of the people. In opposition to the locally prevalent health-related superstitions and unscientific methods of the profit hungry quacks,

the faith of the people in scientific healthcare practices were instilled only through these healthcare programmes. In the beginning of the decade of the 1980s, the World Health Organisation published the first list of administrable drugs. Neighbouring Bangladesh banned all irrational and harmful drugs. In many places in India, movements sprang up favouring yuktipurna healthcare – for instance, Drug Action Forum, WB in West Bengal, and then All India Drug Action Network on a national level. Shaheed Hospital became the first laboratory of real experiments on the substance of this campaign.

4. The health movement of Rajahara eventually became a part of the lives and consciousness of the working people. The significant achievement of this movement is that it established all kinds of health-related problems are fundamentally socio-economic and cultural in nature, and that prevention most of the diseases is not possible without changing the socio-economic structure. It also demonstrated that even a partial success on health issues is not possible without being a part of the larger social movement. To understand this very important point, we can look at an example.

Among the many health-related problems of poor countries, diarrhoeal diseases are extremely prevalent and can often be fatal. In our country, for instance, diarrhoea is the second most fatal disease. It has been observed that children who are victims of malnutrition generally suffer from diarrhoea. Micro-organisms causing the disease basically spread through contaminated drinking water, and to some extent, through stale food, or food kept in the open. The people crammed into small houses are the ones mostly suffering from this disease. Diarrhoeal diseases essentially become fatal because of dehydration of the body. The knowledge about the use of an oral rehydrating mixture of salt and sugar in water can enable anyone to



prevent and cure the dehydration. The developed countries controlled the occurrence of diarrhoeal diseases only by making clean drinking water available, as also better sewerage system, better housing for the people, clean and fresh food, education, i.e., through wider social change. Many health institutions, usually governmental ones, emphasise curing diarrhoeal diseases only through drugs. Some reformist health institutions, mainly voluntary organisations, suggest drinking boiled water and ORS to take care of diarrhoeal diseases. But what they do not realise is that obtaining wood and coal as fuel to boil water can itself be a gigantic task when one is struggling to get enough money to fill one's stomach. Usually issues regarding availability of fresh food, clean surrounding, etc. do not figure in their campaigns.

Let us see how the Rajahara health movement addressed these problems: from the very beginning a campaign about socio-economic reasons and usefulness of drugs was taken up; CMSS had forced the administration to install hand-pumps to ensure availability of drinking water. The simple truth is that the extent to which these diarrhoeal diseases were controlled was directly correlated with the increasing economic, educational and environmental progress made through incessant struggles by the workers in Rajahara.

**5. The activists of Rajahara health movement look at their programme in the following manner:**

(a) Shaheed Hospital is a programme of propagation of scientific healthcare system: Shaheed Hospital, through all stages of its development, has been struggling to take scientific healthcare system to all levels of society. In the beginning, it had to face opposition from a large section of the workers' union when it was not administering non-necessary vitamin, calcium, etc., and injections. In this region people had a fetish for injections. By propagating home-made remedies in place of irrational drugs, for example, drugs for diarrhoeal



*At the Shaheed hospital providing much-needed healthcare.*

diseases versus home-made salt-sugar solution (ORS), cough syrup versus steam inhalation, analgin for fever versus wiping the body with cold water, and by practising these in the hospital, people were assured of efficacy of these methods.

Under no circumstances, drugs other than those on the WHO's list of essential drugs are used in this hospital. Only the rational fixed dose combinations are used. Instead of using brand names of medicines, generic names are used.

(b) Shaheed Hospital is a medium of peoples' education: This health programme also carried out

work of peoples' education. In the beginning, during the campaigns in colonies and villages, during interactions of indoor or outdoor patients with doctors or health workers, posters, poster exhibitions, slides, magic shows, wall magazines, and health related booklets of 'Lok Swasthya Shiksha Mala (public health education series)' were used.

**Peoples' education basically used to be centered around the following subjects:**

(i) exposing health-related superstitions and forms of harmful customs, (ii) unmasking the unscientific healthcare systems of the profit-hungry quacks, (iii) taking medical knowledge to the people by making medical science a part of peoples' consciousness, so that instead of being dependent on others, they solve their small problems on their own, and (iv) making people aware of the loot and exploitation of the national-multinational

drug companies.

An important part of the work of education is the training of health workers. The first group of trained personnel were the mine workers, whose main task was generating awareness campaigns. Even then they were capable of solving simple health problems in their colonies. Later on, work to create a wing like 'barefoot doctors' was started by training the children of the workers. Besides, there was a seven month training programme for hospital workers, in which basically children of the worker or peasant families were educated.

(c) **Weapon of their struggle:** The health programme repeatedly stood in solidarity with the labouring people by taking responsibility for the complete healthcare of the families of persons involved in the red-green flagged movements of the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha, or of those on strike.

The campaign regarding the right to drinking water and the movement to ensure this right, has already been narrated. It was because of this movement that the management of the Bhilai Steel Plant and the government were forced to install 179 hand-pumps in Rajahara and its adjoining regions.

There was no government hospital in Dalli Rajahara earlier. The services of the hospital of Bhilai Steel Plant was also inadequate. The unexpected popularity of the workers' hospital forced the government to establish one more hospital in Rajahara and seven primary health centers in Dondi Lohara assembly constituency. This compelled the steel plant to construct a hospital with over 100 beds. Apart from this, when the movement launched its struggle against superstitions and harmful customs, the struggle against feudal values also aligned with it. In the struggle against the exploitation of multinationals in the pharmaceutical industry, the anti-imperialist struggle also merged with it.

### **Some problems of Dalli Rajahara health movement**

(a) In the primary stage, people faced problem of language and system for articulating their health problems were inadequate. By undertaking different experiments, examining them, learning from the mistakes, some of these problems were overcome.

Generally the people who prepared health campaign materials and doctors, although well-wishers of the masses, were detached from them, preparing these campaign materials while staying in big towns and cities, or worse, following foreign health institutions. They did

not have any parameter to judge their efforts to make this material comprehensible to the masses. Rajahara health movement could surmount this obstacle only by knowing the 'pulse of the people'.

(b) Shaheed Hospital is a workers' hospital. It is run mainly by the workers. When workers turn managers then some problems also surface. Sometimes the behaviour of these managing workers with the salaried staff of the hospital is exactly similar to what they face at their respective workplaces from the managers. Only an incessant political and ideological struggle can fight this tendency.

(c) All salaried staff of the hospital are from worker-peasant families. While selecting them, their faith in the ideals of Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha is gauged. Despite this, some of them reflect the mentality of merely a paid staff of any hospital. Resolution of this problem is possible through regular discussion around politics of health, issues of general political nature and contemporary developments. This can also be tackled through participation in organisational work, apart from healthcare work.

(d) In the running of the hospital, a contradiction between democracy and centralisation went on. The decision making committee consists of doctors and other health workers, where are all equally capable. Here tendencies like following individual whims, not caring about operationalising directives, have been observed. In contrast to this tendency, sometimes frustrating levels of over-centralisation is also seen. Despite all this, this health movement has withstood all the tests of an experimental system of democratic centralism.

(e) Another gigantic problem was a lack of doctors-intellectuals. Chhattisgarh has not been able to give this movement idealist doctors. This health movement could not address this lacuna. It is only with the development of a revolutionary

student-youth movement can this problem be fully solved.

On 28th September 1991, Shankar Guha Niyogi was martyred during Bhilai workers movement. The organisation has been conducting ideological struggle on questions like class struggle versus class collaboration, democracy versus centralism, after that. While a leader of the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha and some doctors of Shaheed Hospital were expelled, some have left the hospital frustrated. The health programme was also affected by the breaking up of organisation. The hospital grew in size but its ideals were defeated. New doctors came, not fired by any idealist thinking, but just to spend some time before joining a government job or availing postgraduate admission. There is no sense of responsibility towards reasoned medical care among them. Some even got involved in corrupt practices. Old doctors and health workers also failed in carrying out ideological battles alongside treating their patients.

It can be said, in lieu of a conclusion, that the Chhattisgarh workers' health movement has not lost, neither has it been decimated. Following the initiative of the Shaheed Hospital, Belur Shramjibi Hospital, Chengail Shramik-Krishak Maitri Swasthya Kendra and Shramjibi Swasthya Udyog, Kamarhati Janseva Clinic and Dr. Bhaskar Rao Janaswasthya Committee, Sarberia Suderban Shramjibi Hospital are working in West Bengal. But they have not had the opportunity, like the Shaheed Hospital, to work as part of a broader social movement. Despite all the limitations, they are attempting new experiments involving the ideals and experiences of Shaheed Hospital. They are trying to convey the message of Shaheed Hospital in the adjoining states of Tripura, Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh by preparing activists of the mass organisation as health workers.



# Trudge Toward Freedom

✶ **Bill Ayers**



In just a few pages I felt the brotherly embrace of a comrade-in-arms, a soul-mate, and a companion; further along his fierce intelligence and original insights challenged me to make new connections; by the end I was inspired to re-imagine next steps in my own efforts at movement-making.

Dada Maheshvarananda is a monk and a social activist, an engaged intellectual and a writer whose powerful new book, “After Capitalism: Economic Democracy in Action”, provides a comprehensive critique of the economic system that grips the planet and suffocates our lives, names the contemporary political moment we’re facing with astonishing clarity, and illustrates with concrete cases and specific examples the practical steps needed



to build a radical movement toward joy and justice, peace and love, sanity and balance. It's a broad and ambitious book to be sure. In just a few pages I felt the brotherly embrace of a comrade-in-arms, a soul-mate, and a companion; further along his fierce intelligence and original insights challenged me to make new connections; by the end I was inspired to re-imagine next steps in my own efforts at movement-making. This is an essential book created by a gentle warrior.

The questions that animate Dada Maheshvarananda's work are the same ones I saw recently scrawled across a sprawling panorama created by the tormented painter Paul Gauguin — in 1897, after months of illness and suicidal despair, Gauguin produced on a huge piece of jute sacking an image of unfathomable figures amid scenery that might have been the twisted groves of a tropical island or a marvelously wild Garden of Eden; worshippers and gods; cats, birds, a quiet goat; a great idol with a peaceful expression and uplifted hands; a central figure plucking fruit; a depiction of Eve not as a voluptuous innocent like some other women in Gauguin's work but as a shrunken hag with an intense eye.

Gauguin wrote the title of the work in bold on top of the image; translated into English it reads:

Where do we come from?  
What are we? Where are we going?

Oil on canvas by Paul Gauguin 1897, image courtesy Wikipedia These are questions—horrifying for Gauguin, inspiring for Dada Maheshvarananda—that rumble in the background on every page of "After Capitalism." How can we see ourselves and our problems/challenges/potentials holistically? How can we connect our personal and spiritual seeking with the practical search for a better world for all? How can we live with one foot in the mud and muck of the world as it is while the other foot

stretches toward a world that could be but is not yet? How can we transform ourselves to be worthy of the profound social transformations we desire and need? And how can we build within ourselves the thoughtfulness, compassion, and courage to dive into the wreckage on a mission of repair?

We begin by opening our eyes:

Look! says the pilgrim.

I can't look...

Look at it! Open your eyes for once, for God's sake, have the courage to at least look, will you?

I can't look...I'm going to be sick...

You mean you won't look, don't you? You can look, but you won't. It might upset you, it might mess your outfit—or it might ruin your whole day. You refuse to look. Admit that at the very least.

I won't...I can't...What's the difference?

The difference is this: willful blindness is a form of cowardice and indifference, and the opposite of moral is not immoral; the opposite of moral is indifference.

Wide awake it's clear that planet earth has enough resources to meet everyone's basic needs if we share; on the other hand if we hoard we are in for famine, pestilence, war, and mayhem. It's equally clear that both tendencies live deep within every human being: selfishness and selflessness, me and we, individualism and collectivity. The question at the heart of this book is this: Where do we go from here, socialism or barbarism, chaos or community?

The practical and theoretical work of Dada Maheshvarananda and his comrades is the fight for economic justice, and on the side of sharing. One of the great deceptions of our time is the sham that meaningful political democracy is possible in the absence of economic democracy. "Freedom without socialism is privilege and injustice," wrote Mikhail Bakunin (adding that "socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality") and it is self-

evidently so: there can be no real freedom where huge differences in wealth and access make any voluntary exchange or contract little more than legal larceny and authorized plunder. The traffic in human beings, modern-day slavery, the market for body parts, international adoption—all bear the mark of privilege, exploitation, global injustice, and structural violence. And so do the sanitized schemes of the bankers, the financial wizards, and the ruling class generally.

Economic democracy requires popular control, wide participation, and decentralized decision-making, and it insists that the minimum requirements of life must be guaranteed—food, housing, clothing, education, and health-care. Life is the birthright that transcends borders, and the most straightforward gauge of the degree of justice available in any society is how power responds to that basic right.

Our struggle is for more participation, more equality, more recognition of human agency, and more transparency as we lean toward revolution. We must rouse ourselves, shake ourselves awake and perhaps shock ourselves into new awarenesses.

But it's often hard to look, and obstacles spring up everywhere: when we feel ourselves shackled, bound, and gagged or when we are badly beaten down, struggling just to survive, living with dust in our mouths, the horizons of our hope can become lowered, sometimes fatally, and our eyes, then, dim. What kind of world do we want to inhabit? When no alternatives are apparent or available, action becomes pointless. When privilege obstructs our vision it acts as an anesthetic, putting us to sleep; we must then call upon the aesthetic—the world of the imagination—to combat the numbing power of the sedative.

We all live in our time and place, immersed in what is, and imagining a social scene different



from what's immediately before us requires a combination of some things: seeds, surely; desire, yes; necessity and desperation at times; and, at other times a willingness to dance out on a limb without a safety net—no guarantees.

Imagination is essential, more process than product, more “stance” than “thing,” imagination involves the dynamic work of mapping the world as such, and then leaning toward a world that might be but is not yet. Most of us most of the time accept our lot-in-life as inevitable—for decades, generations, even centuries; when a revolution is in reach, when a lovelier life heaves into view, or when a possible world becomes somehow visible, the status quo becomes suddenly unendurable. We then reject the fixed and the stable, and begin to look at the world as if it could be otherwise, and we begin the important work of reweaving our shared world.

Choice and confidence is a necessary politics. I don't want to minimize the horror, but neither do I want to get stuck in its thrall. Hope is an antidote to cynicism and despair; it is the capacity to notice or invent alternatives; it is nourishing the

sense that standing directly against the world as such is a world that could be, or should be. Without that vital sense of possible worlds, doors close, curtains drop, and we become stranded: we cannot adequately oppose injustice; we cannot act freely; we cannot inhabit the most vigorous moral spaces. We are never freer, all of us and each of us, than when we refuse the situation before us as settled and certain and determined and break the chains that entangle us.

The tools are everywhere—humor and art, protest and spectacle, the quiet, patient intervention and the angry and urgent thrust—and the rhythm of and recipe for activism is always the same: we open our eyes and look unblinkingly at the world as we find it; we are astonished by the beauty and horrified at the suffering all around us; we act on what the known demands and we also doubt that our efforts made enough difference, and so we rethink, recalibrate, look again, and dive in once more. If we never doubt we get lost in self-righteousness and political narcissism—been there—but if we only doubt we vanish into cynicism and despair. Awake/Act/Doubt!

Repeat! Repeat! Repeat for a lifetime.

Revolution is still possible, democracy and socialism, possible, but barbarism is possible as well. Our expansive and expanding dreams are not realized, of course, not yet, but neither are they dimmed or diminished. Every revolution is, after all, impossible before it happens; afterwards it feels inevitable.

The work, of course, is never

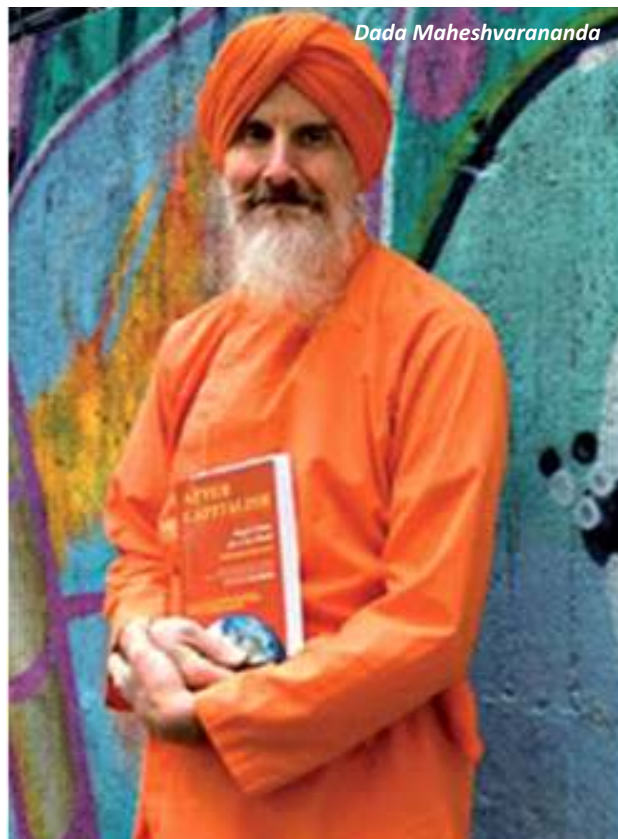
done. Democracy and freedom are dynamic, a community always in the making. We continue the difficult task of constructing and reinvigorating a public. We must love our own lives enough to take care of friends, children, loved ones and elders, to marvel at the sunset and enjoy a good meal, to run on the beach and dive into the surf, to make love for breakfast and again at noon and wake up in wonder; we must love the world enough to never look away, to never give up and never give in, and to add our weight to history's wheel.

Dada Maheshvarananda is an extraordinary and sweet revolutionary not because he has a fully worked-out and internally consistent argument as well as a set of concrete action steps that will take us from here to there—there being some vibrant and viable future characterized by peace and love and joy and justice—but because he lives with the necessary sense of perpetual uncertainty that accompanies social learning while at the same time trying to make a purposeful life battling to upend the system of oppression and exploitation, opening spaces for more participatory democracy, more peace, and more fair-dealing in large and small matters. These are revolutionary times, and Dada can explain why and how to join the revolution.

“Excess of joy weeps,” writes William Blake in a possible epigraph for this book...and for us. “Excess of sorrow”—and Lord do we have that excess right now—“laughs.”

W.H. Auden provides another: “We must love one another or die”.

*Bill Ayers is a distinguished Professor of Education and Senior University Scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago, USA and has written several books on education, as well as a memoir, “Fugitive Days: Memoirs of an Anti-War Activist”, and the forthcoming “Public Enemy: Memoirs of Dissident Days”.*





# Accountable Leadership



Our  
elec-  
ted  
leaders should  
be made  
accountable. All MPs,  
MLAs, MLCs be made to take  
a vow at the start of each  
session of their particular House:  
"I hereby declare that I am  
responsible to ... and failure  
will make me liable to forfeit  
my continuance".

✱ HIRAK NAG

**T**he Bhagavad Gita teaches us Kama (Lust), Krodha (Anger) and Lobha (Greed) lead to degradation of the soul. Ahankara (Ego), Mada (Pride), Asooya (Jealousy) and Asakti (attachment) lead to wrong judgments. These sacred gospels

should never be imparted to a man who lacks penance, nor to him who is wanting in devotion, nor even to him who lends not a willing ear. However, it is important in today's India to somehow get our people to lend a willing ear. It will be difficult, but to my mind a dedicated effort needs to be initiated. I had once suggested to Pujya Swami Dyanandsaraswati of Coimbatore

that the Hindu Sabha should start getting the Pujaris of temples to teach good points of living to his devotees who come to the temple morning and evening; not to tell lies, not to cheat others, to live in a clean and hygienic manner, not to litter wherever and whenever, to stop spitting wherever and whenever, urinating, defecating wherever and whenever, to always





**Vidhana Soudha Bengaluru**

care for others convenience, such as while parking. Such teachings will go a long way to educate the 80% of the population which are Hindus. I had volunteered to start this education in NOIDA. The Swamiji however did not respond. The Hindu temple Pujaris are today not trained to carry out this task, but if the suggestion is accepted then central training of Pujaris can be started in a gradual manner to cover the whole country. Similar teaching is carried out in Churches and Gurdwaras and one can notice the difference in these folk.

My other suggestion is to get our elected leaders to be made ACCOUNTABLE. Towards this aim I suggest that all MPs, MLAs, MLCs be made to take a vow at the

start of each session of their particular House that, “ I hereby declare that I am responsible to:

1. Feed all people in my constituency with two square meals with the laid down nutrition. Any starvation deaths will be my direct responsibility

2. Ensure adequate medical cover to all, especially to children and expectant mothers with pre-natal and post-natal care.

3. Adequate hygiene, clean drinking water for all children below 5 years so that they do not suffer from diarrhea, dysentery and other such stomach ailments which effect ingestion of the nutrition in their food.
4. That all children are educated adequately up to the laid-down secondary school level

Failure to carry out any of the above responsibilities will make me liable to forfeit my continuance as an MP/MLA/MLC and the Speaker may so direct.” There were

two interesting and important articles I read recently. One was regarding the very high percentage of our tiny children who are malnourished, and the other about the government’s effort to introduce ‘Sociology of Sanitation’ as a sub-subject in schools and colleges. Arvind Virmani ,Non-resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, states that in India the abysmal state of ‘public health’ in terms of sanitation, pure drinking water and public knowledge of the importance of cleanliness (germs in dirty water, dirt and grime)and nutrition (basic food groups, etc.) causes a child or adult unable to effectively absorb the nutrition from the food due to sickness with diarrhea or dysentery. Towards solving the problem of abysmal condition of our sanitation, the government is proposing to include a subject ‘Sociology of Sanitation’ to bring awareness and importance of environmental sanitation, public health and social deprivation as a part of school and college syllabus. The importance of sanitation and clean living is one of the points mentioned for the teaching by temple pujari.

*The writer is a retired naval officer and is a social activist at NOIDA, UP.*



**Women protest against legislators**

# TULSI

## The Nature's Boon

✱ Mrs. Tanvir Fatima



If winter comes, can spring be far behind!

These lines distinctively reveal the eternal truth in the world of nature. Nature is dull and lifeless in winter but when spring comes after winter nature is revived with fresh plants and flowers. We cannot deny this fact that nature is part and parcel of our life. Human life is inextricably intertwined with nature's mystery.

It is well known fact that greenery in any form is cooling. When the heat upsets the psychological as well as physiological rhythm of the body sending temperature soaring like the mercury, then we need something green around. Those who are fortunate enough to have space around the house get the natural cooling advantage of the plants in the garden. But those (which most of us are) who do not have garden at least should have some greenery inside the house.

Nature gives us the gift of wonderful plants, and some which are very useful. Tulsi or holy basil is paramount. Tulsi or *Occimum Sanctum* is a sanctified plant and considered as old as creation and has been an object of worship since time immemorial. The holy basil is a type of indoor plant which does not require much attention and is available in nurseries. We can keep it in a vase for the same purpose. It not only improves the décor, it also improves the air around us. The holy basil has medicinal properties also. Every part of this adorable plant is useful. The finely ground powder of basil seeds with honey is very beneficial in urinary problem. The tea made from ginger black pepper and basil leaves is useful in common cold or coryza. It also acts as mosquito and snake repellent. The fragrance of Tulsi keeps snakes and mosquito away. Every morning put some Tulsi leaves in a mug of water, mix this with the bath-water and see the difference. You have bracing, lingering fragrance on body. This is also a very useful cooling agent.

At last gear up for summer with Tulsi.



## PBI Stages Dharna Against Municipal Council's Callousness



**G**hatanji (Vidarbha, Maharashtra) : Proutist Bloc India (PBI), Yawatmal District (Maharashtra) unit, staged one day dharna (sit-in) at June Bus Stand, Ghatanji to voice people's demand against Municipal Council's anti-people policies. This protest was organized under the leadership of Madhukar Nistane, Chairman of Maharashtra state PBI. The programme has generated tremendous enthusiasm amongst the people and they are very happy that PBI is taking up such people's grievances which no other political party even cares to think about.

The fair started by Saint Moroti long ago is held once in a year at Ghatanji, and continues for a month from Mahashivratri. Merchants would come to sell oxen from the entire Vidarbha region. The fair is famous for its oxen market. Lately the Municipal Council has been imposing heavy taxes which have resulted in dwindling gathering at the fare and is almost on the verge of disappearing. Despite heavy taxes, there is a glaring lack of basic facilities here. Irony of the situation is that the Social Justice Minister of the state hails from this region, still he is totally indifferent to people's grievances. The administration is also not taking any interest in giving this place the status of a tourist resort which it deserves due to its religious and social significance from olden times.

PBI voiced following demands, and submitted a memorandum to the District Magistrate: 1) Give it the status of pilgrimage as well as a place of tourism, 2) Reduce the taxes, 3) Provide adequate facilities in the fare to keep people's interest alive in it, and 4) Renovate the temple of Saint Moroti and thus honour people's sentiments visiting the temple to pay respects to the saint.

## A Thought Provoking National Seminar at JNU

**R**enaissance Universal (RU) and Special Center for Sanskrit Studies of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi organised a National Seminar jointly on Shrii Shrii Ananadamurtiji's (Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar) Contribution to Philosophy, Language, Literature, Science and Economics on 17th March 2013 at the Conference Hall of Special Center for Sanskrit Studies of JNU. Prof. Shashiprabha Kumar, Chairperson, Special Center for Sanskrit Studies of JNU inaugurated the seminar. She was also the chairperson of the 1st session. Dr. Santosh Shukla, Special Center for Sanskrit Studies, welcomed the guests. Shyam Bang, Chairman of RAWA's Delhi



Chapter delivered the introductory Speech. He elaborated how Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii has enriched human knowledge on different subjects like Spiritual philosophy and Sadhana, Socio-economic theory, education, history, literature, philology, a new philosophical concept called neo-humanism (which covers environmental issues), science etc. In addition to bringing clarity to these subjects through His thought provoking Pravacans on these issues, He connected them all in a harmonious way.

Prof. Upendra Rao, Special Center for Sanskrit studies, JNU spoke on Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji's contribution to Spiritual Philosophy (Ananda Sutram). Dr. Rajnish Mishra, Special Center for Sanskrit Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, spoke on "Aspects of language study and Shrii Anandamurtijii's linguistic expositions". He illustrated with examples and contexts from Indian languages how Anandamurtiji has dealt with all the aspects of modern linguistics. He also evaluated Anandamurtijii's contribution to the comparative linguistics, citing history of development of regional languages from Sanskrit. Dr. Hari Ram Mishra, Special Center for Sanskrit Studies spoke on Shrii P.R. Sarkar's contribution to Linguistics. He drew the audience's attention to Shrii Anandamurtiji's deep knowledge of Sanskrit. Dr. Amit Kumar Sharma from Social Studies of System touched upon on Shrii P.R.Sarkar's contribution to Socio-economic thought and on his social philosophy "Prout". He showed how Shrii P.R.Sarkar through his intuitive knowledge, has developed traditional social values relevant to modern times. Prof. Shashiprabha Kumar, Chairperson, Special Center for Sanskrit Studies, JNU, concluded the first session with her insightful observations.

The second session dwelt on the contributions of Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar to Language, Literature and Science and was very thought provoking. Prof V.N Jha, Former Director, Center for Advanced Studies in Sanskrit, University of Pune, was the Chaired the session. The first speaker Prof Ujjawala Jha, Center for Advanced Studies in Sanskrit, University of Pune, spoke at length how Shrii Sarkar was 'The Philosopher of 20th Century'. Giving a brief sketch, she said he was a multi-faceted personality who had left deep imprint on almost every aspect of human life, on such diverse subjects as literature, language, science, phonetics, etymology, ontology, epistemology, medicine, sociology, history, philosophy, economics, cosmology and music with hundreds of books and thousands of discourses. In the field of music alone he composed and set to tune 5018 songs known as 'Prabhat Sangiita'. The world view of Shrii Sarkar was universal and all-encompassing in nature, who maintained that although the human race could be divided racially into white, black, yellow and brown according to external features, the internal biological propensities of all human beings were the same with common attraction for the supreme entity, so there was no room for caste-ism, racism and such divisive sentiments. Quoting from the book 'Ananda Sutram' of Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji, she revealed that He wanted to establish that bhakti is the 'goal' of human life, not the means. Karma (selfless service) and Jinana (Inner Knowledge) is necessary to establish oneself in bhakti. Dr K.P. Tripathi, UGC Project fellow, Department of Sanskrit, Allahabad University, spoke on the contributions of Anandamurtiji on cosmology (the science of large scale structures of the universe). He said that all the branches of human sciences and arts put together helped establish the purpose of cosmology, that the ultimate and absolute reality is pure consciousness alone. He said that Anandamurtiji emphasized that the entire universe is revolving around its center which is essentially spiritual in nature; this goes on until the entire creation finally merges with it's nucleus. Last and the best talk was that of Prof Uttam Pati on Micovitum. The conference participants felt spell-bound by the presentation of this Professor of Bio-technology, JNU. His subject was 'Futurology: The Microvita Age', an advanced and subtle revolutionary scientific theory of Shrii Sarkar. Speaking on the mysterious entity Microvitum, he said that it is not only the subtlest particle of the universe, but is its basic building block as well. Essentially a thought particle, Microvita is a happy blending of idea and matter. Further elaborating it, he said that microvita theory states that every living and non-living entity be it the carbon atom, or the protoplasmic cell, are all composed of microvita. He said microvita which conceptually combines spirituality, science and psychology, will revolutionize science in a way no theory has ever done before. Prof. V.N.Jha, spoke on Shrii P.R.Sarkar's Contribution to Science of linguistics. Dr. Ram Nath Jha gave vote of thanks. Rajesh Singh, of Renaissance Universal, Delhi chapter compered the entire program.

As a result of this inspiring seminar, two local students have registered themselves as research scholars in Social Studies Department of JNU under Professor Amit Sharma; their subject is regarding Social Vision of Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii. This is a new development and would add a new chapter in JNU, an Educational Center of International repute.

## Woman Proutist in Action

**F**ebruary 22-24 at the Sisters' Retreat in Asheville, North Carolina, Miira Price conducted a Prout workshop and a Women Proutist Study group to around 20 sisters. There was an enthusiastic response among those in attendance, and much interest generated for Prout.

Proutist Women now has on-going study circles in two locations--Eugene, Oregon, co-ordinated by





Jiivadhara, and in Asheville, North Carolina by Miira Price. Both are working on a Study Guide to encourage women to start study circles in their localities. Such an approach has been found to be really inspiring to study together in a supportive, friendly environment. This is aimed to create a solid base for Prout and foster solidarity among the women who love Prout.

visit [www.proutwomen.org](http://www.proutwomen.org)

## Symposia on Prout

After pushing ahead Prout through dozens of symposia during 2012 as Prout Year, the Proutists are continuing with symposia on Prout to spread it in every nook and corner of India. Recently they conducted six symposia on Prout. A brief account follows:

1. Kandi (Murshidabad District) - It was organised on 25th January at Kandi Paorasabha Auditorium. More than 200 people attended. Prof. Bidit Kumar DAs of Kandaraj College besides Prout activists Raviishanandajii and Sugatanandajii spoke on Prout.

2. Badkulla (Nadia): The symposium was organized in the hall of a Girls' High School (Bhuban Mohini Ucca Madhyamik Girls' School) on 27th January. This is a very small town and yet 150 persons were present. Prof. Gobinda Sarkar of Narendrapur Ramakrisna Residential College, Headmistress of the hosting school, Mrs. Kuntala Bhaduri and Raviishanandajii spoke on the occasion.

3. Tiljala, Kolkata: A symposium was held on 2nd February. Dr. Gobinda Sarkar, Dr. Bhaskar Purakayastha (now well known as a Proutist - Professor of Economics at Herambanath College, Kolkata), Proutist thinkers Mantreshvaranandajii and Sugatanandajii spoke on the occasion. More than 300 persons were present. A Proutist drama "Bhorer Surya" (The Dawn Sun) was staged.



4. Silli College (Ranchi District): 9th February: A local dedicated social worker Prahlad Mahato gave introductory lecture on the need of Prout in the present deepening crisis all around. Dr. Narayan Chand of Balarampur College besides Raviishanandajii, Jyotirishanandajii and Mohananandajii gave inspiring and educative talks on various aspects of Prout before an inquisitive gathering of more than 250 intellectuals.

5. Raiganj: In this prominent town of north Bengal, symposium was held on 16th February

at Bidhan Mancha of Municipal Hall. More than 400 persons attended. Dr. Sunil Sarkar, Reader at Raiganj College ( West Bengal ), Dr. Shubha Manas Ghosa, a well known column writer, Mantreshvaranandajii and Raviishanandajii addressed the gathering. The Proutist drama "Bhorer Surya" authored by Mantreshvaranandajii was also staged on the occasion.

6. Sainthia (Birbhum, West Bengal): In this prominent town of Rarh (the most ancient civilization), symposium was organised on 17th February. Dr. Shubha Manas Ghosa, Dr. Bidit Kumar Das, Prof. Kaushik Mukharjee of Asansol College and Prof. Lalmohan Mandal of Shambhunath College addressed the gathering of more than 200 people.

7. Bankura (West Bengal): A symposium on PROUT was held at Municipality Hall, Bankura, West Bengal, on 3rd March 2013. The symposium was presided over by Madan Mahan Mahapatra (Editor, Dhupdiip Sahitya Patrika).

Prominent speakers included Acarya Satyashivananda Avadhuta, Acarya Haratmananda Avadhuta and Acarya Prasunananda Avadhuta. The chief speaker was Prof. Subikash Choudhurii (Professor of Economics, Christian College, Bankura ). Inaugural speech was delivered by Ahok Mandal , a famous social worker of the area. Prof Subikash Choudhurii's and Acarya Haratmananda Avadhuta's exhilarating speech centred on salient points of PROUT philosophy. It overwhelmed the audience. There in the program was large. Participants came from diverse fields such as economics, education, engineering and legal profession, enjoying high reputation in the society.

## Demonstration and Dharana at IGNOU Study Center, Rourkela



**R**ourkela : Students of Master and Bachelor degree studying in IGNOU through distance education in A.R. Government College, Rourkela (Odisha, India) are victims of step motherly attitude by the University. Study materials have not been sent to many students till date. Students had joined the course in July 2012 session and had deposited all necessary fees to the University (IGNOU). Recently students have received letter for admission in the 2nd year. They have to submit the registration fees before 31st March

2013 . They have also to submit term end exam form and fees before 31st March with all assignments .

In the absence of study materials it is well nigh impossible for any student to write assignments since thousands of students of IGNOU do not attend regular classes . Now, without submission of assignments before 31st March, 2013 they cannot enter exam hall. It is therefore a great mental torture and complete dereliction of duty on the part of IGNOU .

These students are working in different firms or in agriculture sector for their livelihood and for supporting their families. Many amongst them are house wives. Maximum number of students come from poor families, several belong to backward classes and are inhabitants of remote areas in Sundargarh district.

A peaceful Dharna ( sit-in ) was held on 24th March, 2013 against this callous attitude in front of IGNOU Study centre at Rourkela Government College by **UNIVERSAL PROUTIST STUDENTS FEDERATION**, demanding [1] supply of study materials and [2] extension of date for submission of assignments, exam forms, registration fees and registration forms. A memorandum mentioning the aforesaid demands was given to study centre coordinator Arjun Meher. He has promised to send it to regional centre, Bhubaneswar and assured to co-operate to his best.

The dharna was held under the leadership of DILIP KUMAR PANDA, GEN. SECRETARY, UPSF. Other important participants included Municipality Secretary Sudam Dev besides Sohan Singh, Rahool, Vijit Sahoo, Jagdish Behera , Sujit Dev, Sasmita Swain and Rinku Bankra.





## Making Us Cross Over Barriers

Á-LO-KE--R JHARNÁ DHÁRÁY--  
SNÁNA KARÁYECHO TUMI SABÁKÁR MA--N  
DYU-LO-KE--- DO-LÁ  
DIYE--- UJJIVITA- KARECHO- TRIBHUVA--N  
SNÁNA KARÁYECHO TUMI SABÁKÁR MA--N

KÁCHE O DÚRE--R ÁTMA PARE--R  
VIBHED BHULÁYE SABE KARECHO ÁPA--N  
SÁDÁ O KÁLO--- MANDA BHÁLO---  
EK DORE BÁNDHIYÁCHO SAKAL JIIVA--N  
SNÁNA KARÁYECHO TUMI SABÁKÁR MA--N

USÁSI ÁBHÁ--Y SANDHYÁ RÁGE---  
TANMAYA KARIYÁCHO CINMAYA ANURÁGE  
DESH KÁL PÁTRER BEÁ DINGIYE---  
MARMER TÁNE JÁGÁYECHO SPANDA--N  
SNÁNA KARÁYECHO TUMI SABÁKÁR MA--N

In flows of the fountain of light  
You have bathed everyone's mind.  
Rocking the celestial realms  
You have enlivened the three realms.

Near and far, self and others  
Forgetting all distinctions  
You have made everyone Your own.  
White and black, bad and good  
With a single thread You've bound all beings.

With dawn's light and sunset colours  
You have engrossed and absorbed all  
In the pervasive consciousness  
Of divine attraction  
Of absolute attachment.  
Making us cross over barriers of  
Nation, time, and personality  
You awakened vibrations  
In the keynote of my heart's core.

(Translated from Bengali original)

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cute baby,  
there's a secret.

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