

PROUT

A Journal of Proutistic Views and Neo-Humanistic Analysis

India's Hell Holes

(Child Sexual Assaults in Juvenile Justice Homes)

48,338 child rape cases from 2001 to 2011 with 336% increase
of child rape cases from 2001 to 2011

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PROUT

Progressive Utilization Theory

Cry of the Suffering Humanity

**A
Vibrant
Magazine
which
Informs
&
Inspires**

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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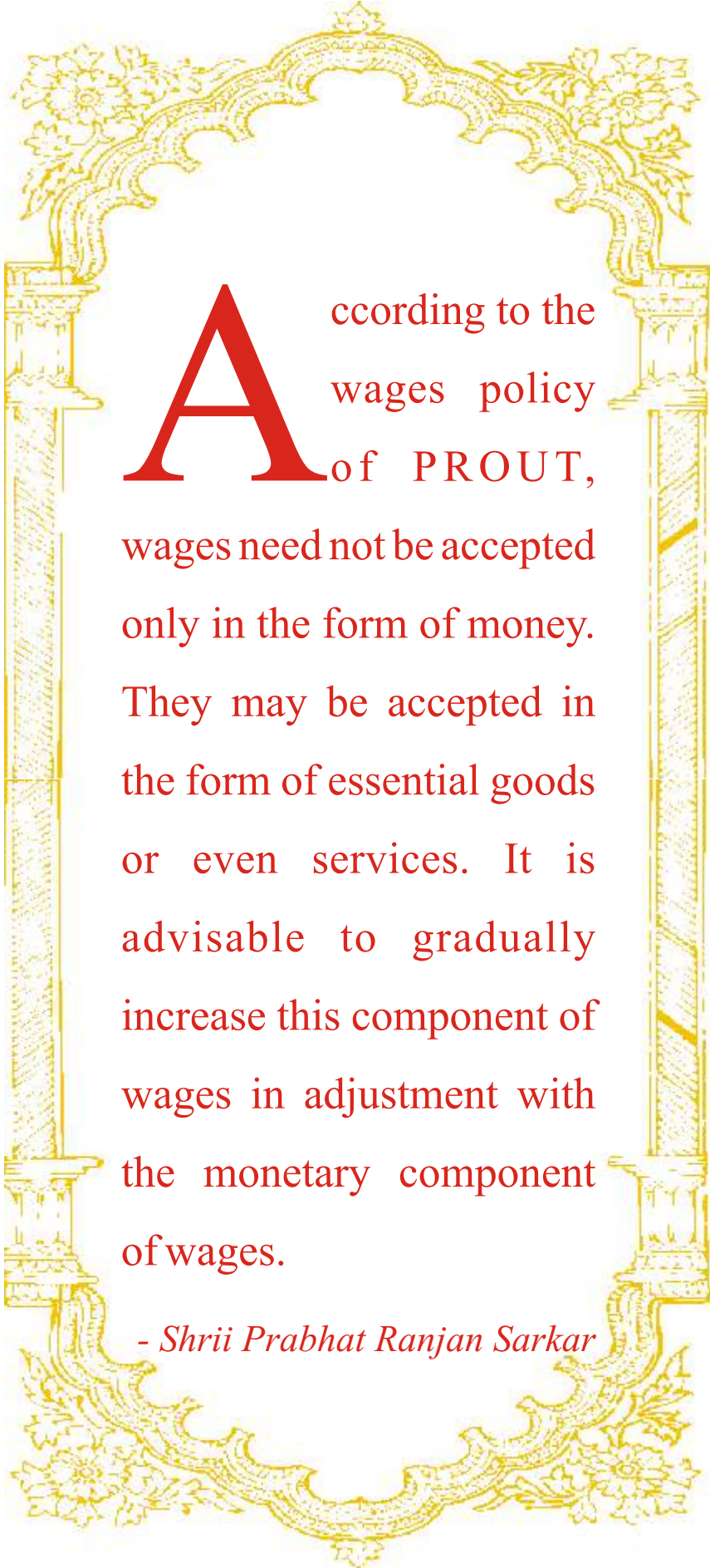
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Fundamental Principles :

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.



According to the wages policy of PROUT, wages need not be accepted only in the form of money. They may be accepted in the form of essential goods or even services. It is advisable to gradually increase this component of wages in adjustment with the monetary component of wages.

- Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

Mid Day Meal Mishap

India's midday meal scheme which provides school children a free lunch is the largest such program in the world. According to the government sources it reaches out to 120 million children in 1.2 million schools across the country and has been widely lauded as one of the most successful welfare measures in India, home to a quarter of the world's hungry. This well meaning scheme also boosts school enrolments and helps children to continue studies. This programme started way back in 1922 at Sourashtra Higher Secondary School in Madurai and in 1960s Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister K Kamaraj introduced this on a large scale all over the state. In 1982 Dr. M. G.



CM MG Ramachandran
launching the scheme in 1982

Ramachandran, then Chief Minister gave it the first major thrust and decided that all children up to class 10 would be given mid day meals and the state's programme is among the best known in the country.

On August 15, 1995 2408 blocks of the country were covered under free midday meal scheme and on November 28, 2001 the Supreme Court of India gave a landmark direction to government to provide cooked meals to all children in all government and government assisted primary schools. Despite the success of the program, child hunger as a problem persists in India. According to current statistics, 42.5% of the children

under 5 are underweight. A 2008 report says that India has more people suffering hunger – a figure above 200 million – more than any other country in the world.

What essentially began on a well meaning note decayed with numerous scams due to immoral actions of those entrusted to run it. In December 2005 Delhi Police seized 8 truckloads of rice meant for primary school children, which were being siphoned off by a UP based NGO in connivance with Govt. officials. In November 2006, the residents of Pembong village under the Mim tea estate (around 30 km from Darjeeling), accused a group of teachers of embezzling midday meals. In a written complaint, the residents claimed that students at the primary school had not got midday meal for the past 18 months. In December 2006 Times of India reported a scam involving government schools that siphon off food grains under the midday meal scheme by faking attendance — the attendance register would exaggerate the number of students enrolled in the class who did not exist. They were "enrolled" to get additional food grains which were pocketed by the school staff. This was exposed by an honest assistant teacher of a government model primary school who complained to the Lok Ayukta.


The scheme, which costs the national exchequer a huge amount of money every year (the budgetary provisions for the year 2013-14 was around Rs 13,215 crores) is marred with corrupt practices and mismanagement while risking the lives of children. The mid-day meal tragedy that struck in Gandaman Village Primary School, Bihar on July 16, when 23 children lost their lives due to pesticide poisoning shocked the nation. The police suspect that the cooking oil was stored in a container for pesticides, which killed the children so quickly, that some died in their parents' arms while being taken to hospital. The school principal absconded immediately and went underground but was arrested 8 days later. Though such a disaster has occurred for the first time, review of audit reports and research papers showed officials had ignored warnings of the lack of oversight and accountability in the program for a long time. There were no checks or monitoring by local officials to see if the food was stored carefully or cooked properly. Ajay Kumar Jha, professor at A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies, who led a team to monitor the program in Bihar in April said, "If the government checks, they will find that the children who have been eating midday meals are under great physical threat".


Close on the heels of Gandaman, on July 18, 102 girls of NLC Girls School in Neyveli, Tamil Nadu were hospitalised after eating their mid-day meals. Also in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh separate audit reports by state governments have said the food in the scheme was often laced with stones and worms. Many more such incidents of feeding poor quality food to children surfaced elsewhere in the country including the Punjab and made breaking news on national television channels and headlines in the print media.

These are matters of grave concern where immoral acts put lives of our children at risk. While political parties as usual resorted to blame game no one seriously addressed the issue of accountability. Such things would never happen in an enlightened society where both the rulers and the ruled are moralists, which is the bedrock of Prout and Neo-Humanism.





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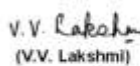
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ANANDAPURNIMA ISSUE

Please share my appreciation with your graphic design person for the nice layout of the AP article. I was very pleased with how nicely the charts came out that made the comparisons of Shiva, Krsna and Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii. And the AP issue in general was strong in both content and appearance.

Ravi Logan, Oregon, USA
by email

JULY ISSUE

What a beautifully designed publication with substantial and important articles! Thank you so much! I will forward this to many others both individuals and groups.

Aradhana, Scotland,
Pennsylvania, USA by email

INSPIRATIONAL STORY ON LOVE

Very apt and moving story. It's abso-

lutely true that only Love can bring peace and great happiness in the world.

Tracy Mc Douggal, by email

EXPLOITATION AND PSEUDO CULTURE

The piece by Shrii PR Sarkar traces the history and highlights the many facets of exploitation we know of today all over the world. It has rightly been questioned, "Can those whose necks and backs are crushed under the weight of pseudo culture be expected to hold their heads high?"

Megha Saini, Chandigarh

HOMELESSNESS AROUND THE WORLD

It is shocking to read about this curse of human civilization. The numbers of homeless people, street children and refugees are simply mind boggling.

Rahul Kar, Malda

DANGER OF GMO

The sooner we become alive to the dangers of GMO the better it is for humanity. Ganga Grace has really opened people's eyes by championing this cause.

Farid Khan, Raipur

EARTH COMMONS

SOCIALIZING LAND RENT

A well researched, and an excellent article by Alanna Hartzok. It's one way towards the distant goal of a society where land is the common heritage of mankind and not the property of any single individual.

Mahesh Sindhvani, New Delhi

DEATH PENALTY

Absolutely true, the views expressed by RD Singh. It's better we become truly compassionate human beings soon than remain blood thirsty about retribution from over the ages.

Betty Sonpar, Mangalore

HAPPY PEOPLE

The 22 points to happiness would be well worth remembering. Acarya Krsnananda Avadhuta has beautifully compiled them in simple language. It reminds me of the old saying, "If you are sick your connection with nature is broken, if you are unhappy your connection with God is broken".

Charu Manjunath, Mysore

SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON DISABLED WOMEN

Absolutely shocking – the details revealed in the study by Richa Kaul Padte, will make any self respecting person hang his head in shame.

Martha D'souza, Panaji.

CORRUPTION IN HIGH PLACES

The expose by Medha Patkar and others shows how absolute power corrupts absolutely. All those guilty should be speedily brought to book.

Sardar Singh, Rupar

A Gift of Love!



“Can I see my baby?” the happy new mother asked.

When the bundle was nestled in her arms and she moved the fold of cloth to look upon his tiny face, she gasped. The doctor turned quickly and looked out the tall hospital window. The baby had been born without ears.

Time proved that the baby’s hearing was perfect. It was only his appearance that was marred. When he rushed home from school one day and flung himself into his mother’s arms, she sighed,

knowing that his life was to be a succession of heartbreaks. He blurted out the tragedy. “A boy, a big boy ... called me a freak.”

He grew up, handsome for his misfortune. A favorite with his fellow students, he might have been class president, but for that. He developed a gift, a talent for literature and music.

“But you might mingle with other young people,” his mother reproved him, but felt a kindness in her heart. The boy’s father had a session with the family physician. Could nothing be done? “I believe I could graft on a pair of outer ears, if they could be procured,” the doctor decided.

Whereupon the search began for a person who would make such a sacrifice for a young man. Two years went by. Then, “You are going to the hospital, son. Mother and I have someone who will donate the ears you need. But it’s a secret,” said the father. The operation was a brilliant success, and a new person emerged. His talents blossomed into genius, and school and college became a series of triumphs.

Later he married and entered the diplomatic service. “But I must know!” He urged his father, “Who gave so much for me? I could never do enough for him.” “I do not believe you could,” said the father, “but the agreement was that you are not to know ... not yet.” The years kept their profound secret, but the day did come ... one of the darkest days that a son must endure. He stood with his father over his mother’s casket. Slowly, tenderly, the father stretched forth a hand and raised the thick, reddish-brown hair to reveal that the mother had no outer ears. “Mother said she was glad she never let her hair be cut,” he whispered gently, “and nobody ever thought Mother less beautiful, did they?”

Real beauty lies not in the physical appearance, but in the heart. Real treasure lies not in what that can be seen, but what that cannot be seen. Real love lies not in what is done and known, but in what that is done but not known.

~ Stephen



In the Vipra Era the dependence of women upon men increased. Conspiring to cripple women in every way the vipras fabricated “divine” commandments, scriptural injunctions, and imaginary yarns of sin and virtue.

SHRII PRABHAT RANJAN SARKAR



Women

The Wageless Slaves of the Vipras

The vipras were inclined towards intellectual exploitation. No matter what they built or destroyed, they always kept the path of exploitation open. The intelligent vipras never opened the path of logic and reasoning as they knew it was not a means of exploitation. On the contrary, they wanted to lead the ignorant mass down the alley of blind faith and so they wrote social treatises with their own selfish interests in mind. Without using logic or reason to support their statements, they continued indulging in pedantic religious injunctions. That was why the amount of genuine humanism that we come across in the ksatriya social and matrimonial systems was never improved upon in the vipra system. Rather, what we got there was merely a coating of religious bigotry and fanaticism.

The ksatriyas tried to construct their social system and base their matrimonial relations according to the conveniences of both men and women. The vipras, however, cleverly tried to permanently keep

intact the system of exploiting women and ignorant men using every diplomatic manoeuvre under the sun. To prevent the oppressed men and women from claiming equal rights, they strove hard to keep all the power vested in the hands of a particular group. The ways the ksatriyas came to power were different in different countries of the world, but those of the vipras were the same in almost all countries. The vipras achieved their ends by concocting mythological stories and fables to suit their purpose in the name of religion, not righteousness or spirituality.

In the Vipra Era the dependence of women upon men increased. The vipra intellect reduced them to the position of wageless slaves. Conspiring to cripple women in every way the vipras fabricated “divine” commandments together with numerous kinds of scriptural injunctions, paralogical tenets and imaginary yarns of sin and virtue. Listening to these it would seem that man alone, particularly the vipra man alone, was the chosen person of God for whom the rest of humanity had taken birth only to provide

enjoyment.

In the matrimonial system of the Ksatriya Era women were regarded as men's co-helpers and co-workers. In the Vipra Era, although women were declared on paper as men's better half and the co-performers of religious rites, they practically became maid-servants. Their social respect and prestige lasted as long as they maintained their feminine charm and beauty. In countries where the women alone toil and the men spend their days sitting idle and eating, the feminine status is no better. Women are still kept under severe domination. Even in the advanced countries of the world, where the women are courteously respected as the "fair sex", the masculine society wears a long face when the question of equal rights occurs. So the masculine domination which characterized the Vipra Era remained unchanged in the subsequent Vaeshya Era.

In the Ksatriya Era women were men's partners through good times and bad, commanding equal prestige in the society. But with the intellectual defeat of women in the Vipra Era, their social prestige dwindled and they became the playthings of the opposite sex. Sometimes the man doted upon a woman and sometimes he neglected her. Of course, even in the Vipra Era, particularly in the middle of the Vedic age, when the intellectuals became the leaders of the society, some of the women, as a legacy of the past, undoubtedly got equal respect as wives (jayas). They enjoyed equal social rights, not equal religious rights. The majority of women, however, became mere objects of enjoyment. Society refused to recognize anything except their ability to conceive and bring up their progeny. Such women were called bharyas [wives without religious or social rights but with a progeny enjoying patrilineal prestige]. The opportunists declared unambiguously, Puttrathe kriyate bharyā ["Women are the child-bearing

machines"].

The continuance of this sort of primitive thought is symptomatic of the Vipra Era. The ignorant women of the Vipra Era were tricked into believing that they were not only spouses and child-bearers, but respectable housewives, having equal social rights and prestige, and the right to participate in spiritual observances. In practice, however, these rights were generally ignored. One or two women who appeared to have been given these spiritual rights had actually usurped them virtually by force on the strength of their personalities. The society of the pandits at that time did not oppose this attempt to establish such rights in black and white, but all the same it certainly did not view it favourably or patronizingly. However, those women subsequently commanded great respect and still do today. Of course it has always been a fact that nobody gives anybody rights on a platter. One has to establish one's rights by dint of one's own force and power. I mention with special emphasis – the vipras deliberately and intentionally did not want to recognize the rights of women.

The supremacy of clan mothers in the Ksatriya Era was completely obliterated in the Vipra Era. At the first dawn of human knowledge, women, too, imparted knowledge to others. They also composed mantras and offered libations to the sacrificial fires sitting beside men. In the Vipra Era, however, they lost that role, and all possible means were taken to firmly establish their slavery. They were stripped of their sacrificial rights and superseded by clan fathers in the society. The rights women enjoyed to study scriptures were either withdrawn or drastically curtailed. There was no alternative left to ignorant women but to [[silently]] submit to the superiority of men.

The Vipra age was the age of opportunistic men and so extremely rigid conditions were imposed on women. Men, however, had the right to abandon their wives at will as well as the opportunity to be dissolute. If any such moral lapses were found in women, they would be punished by the loss of their womanly prestige and social respect. And yet, guilty of the same crime, men strutted about as leaders of society. After the Vipra



A clan mother of an American Indian tribe

Era the Vaeshya Era came. But in this Vaeshya Era we see, as the legacy of the post-Vipra Era, that abandoned wives command no prestige in society. Even in many of today's societies which are not threatened by a potential shúdra uprising, divorce is not openly accepted. Although some concessions have been allowed to women in black and white, in reality women are at the mercy of tyrannical men.

In the Vipra Era, due to loss of women's prestige, economic hardship, and other environmental causes, prostitution as a profession came into being for the first time. It did not develop in either the Shúdra or Ksatriya Era. Individual depravity may cause a certain amount of licentiousness, but it is certainly not the reason for the emergence of a large number of prostitutes. The iniquity or sin of this lewd profession is the creation of the selfish vipras. Later I shall discuss this subject at length.

In the Ksatriya Era women were considered as men's precious wealth. Although women did not have the same rights and privileges as men, they commanded considerable social prestige. But in the Vipra Era women were relegated to the status of animals and cattle. They became mere household necessities. In the Ksatriya Era women were regarded as the pleasurable objects of the valiant, and abduction of women by strong men was considered an act of piety and virtue. But in the Vipra Era the trend changed, and women became playthings. Without

husbands, they lost their very existence in society. In some countries, more than one woman was compelled to be subservient to one man.

As a result of men crippling women economically with the pain of unrelenting social penalization and threats of perdition in hell, women became so dependent on men that the very sense of injustice of a man possessing many wives at the same time was erased from their minds. As a result of the peculiar logic that it was a sin for women to live unmarried lives, unmarried girls were forced to marry old men on the verge of death. In some countries and in some periods, they were married to imaginary gods and called devadásiis or "servants of God". Needless to say, these sorts of marriages only heightened social injustices. The continuation of such malpractices bred a sort of inferiority complex and despair in the minds of women. Few keep count of the millions of women who wept and sobbed themselves to death in the darkness of many a sleepless night. They were levelled flat like the soft earth under the administrative steamroller of the vipras. For this reason, we find in some social customs and ceremonies, women's doggerels and tales of religious observances, that mothers with no other means of escape, taught the daughters from their childhood to pray to God that they might not be neglected as co-wives or that their rivals might not live long. Matrimonial ties became inviolable in the Vipra Era.



Globesity

and

Worldstarvation

While Food Crisis Looms Large

Global hunger and obesity levels might seem like a gigantic paradox. It is not, it is part of a single global food crisis with economic, geopolitical, and environmental dimensions.

* Arun Prakash

World starvation and global obesity seem to go hand in hand on planet Earth. Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar - PROUT's founder - during his discourse on Human Society said, "Food is the most important of the primary necessities of human life. If people are not satisfied with their food there will be a simmering discontent in their minds which will seek an opportunity for an explosive expression". In today's global food crisis this assumes great importance.

In June 2009, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that, worldwide, the number of hungry people had reached one billion. Today, more people are hungry than at any point in human history. They are concentrated in the developing world, and their hunger has been exacerbated by the global financial crisis. Yet among all this global starvation and malnutrition we find that 1.6 billion people are obese. This is apparently paradoxical but is not. Why so?



Famines and Starvation

Let us turn awhile the pages of history and see famines over the world causing widespread scarcity of food. A famine is caused by several factors including crop failure, population unbalance, or government policies. This is usually accompanied or followed by

malnutrition, starvation, epidemic, and increased mortality. Food shortages in a population are caused either by a lack of food or by difficulties in food distribution; it may be worsened by natural climate fluctuations and by extreme political conditions related to oppressive government or warfare. Famines



Bengal famine 1770 in which 10 million people perished

were often seen as signs of God's displeasure. Elaborate religious processions and rituals were made to prevent God's wrath in the form of famine. One of the proportionally largest historical famines was the Bengal Famine of 1770, which began due to severe extractive practices of the East India Company. An estimated ten million people died in the famine, roughly one in three people in the affected area. The deaths were greatly aggravated by the fact that the British raised land taxes by 10% at the height of the famine, in April 1770.

Modern African famines are characterized by widespread destitution and malnutrition, with heightened mortality confined to young children. Modern famines are sometimes aggravated by misguided economic policies, political design to impoverish or marginalize certain populations, or acts of war. The demographic impacts of famine are sharp. Mortality is concentrated among children and the elderly. Individuals and groups in food stressful situations will attempt to cope by rationing consumption, finding alternative means to supplement income, etc. before taking desperate measures, such as selling off plots of agricultural land. When all means of self-support are exhausted, the affected population begins to migrate in search of food or fall victim to absolute mass starvation.

History of Famines

Nearly every continent in the world has experienced a period of famine throughout history. Human beings devised many ways to cope

with famines. Many people took advantage of extended family networks, crop diversification, and overproduction in good years, but during bad years, as the normal crops failed, they had to rely on 'famine foods': edible but unappetizing fruits, vegetables, seeds,

leaves, pods, and shoots. When food was available but expensive, people often purchased food on credit, which provided a short-term defense against hunger but also led to debt problems after the famine had passed. Migration was the most effective way and functioned as a safety valve, reducing pressure on resources in critical areas.

During the 20th century, an estimated 70 million people died from famines across the world, of whom an estimated 30 million died during the famine of 1958-61 in China. The other most notable famines of the century included the 1942-45 disaster in Bengal, famines in China in 1928 and 1942, and a sequence of famines in the Soviet Union, including the Soviet famine of 1932-1933, Stalin's famine inflicted on USSR in 1932-33. Chinese scholars had kept count of 1,828 instances of famine since 108 B.C. to 1911 in one province or another — an average of close to one famine per year. From 1333 to 1337 a terrible famine killed 6 million and the four famines of 1810, 1811, 1846, and 1849 are said to have killed no fewer than 45 million people.

The largest famine of the 20th century, and almost certainly of all time, was the 1958-61 Great Leap Forward famine in China. The immediate causes of this famine lay in Mao Zedong's ill-fated attempt to transform China from an agricultural nation to an industrial power in one huge leap. While no accurate figure is available due to suppression of news it is estimated



Depiction of victims of the Great Potato Famine of Ireland, 1845-49

to have caused nearly 40 million deaths. In India there were 14 famines in between 11th and 17th century. During the 1022-1033 famines in India entire provinces were depopulated. Famine in Deccan killed at least 2 million people in 1702-1704.

The Great Potato Famine of Ireland 1845-49 caused 1 million



A victim of starvation in besieged Leningrad in 1941 suffering from dystrophia.

dead and another 2 million fleeing to Britain, Australia and the United States. In Russia eleven major famines occurred between 1845 and 1922, one of the worst being the one of 1891-92. During World War II civilian victims in the USSR at German hands, including Jews totaled 13.7 million dead. The last major famine in the USSR happened in 1947 due to the severe drought and the mismanagement of grain reserves by the Soviet government.

Some countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, continue to have extreme cases of famine. These famines cause widespread malnutrition and impoverishment; the famine in Ethiopia in the 1980s had an immense death toll, although Asian famines of the 20th century have also produced extensive death tolls.

A few of the great famines of the late 20th century were: the Biafran famine in the 1960s, the Khmer Rouge-caused famine in Cambodia in the 1970s, the Ethiopian famine of 1984–85 and the North Korean famine of the 1990s. Besides the Bengal famine of 1770, other notable famines include the one of 1876-78, in which 6.1 million to 10.3 million people died and the one in 1899-1900, up to 10 million people died. The famines continued until independence in 1947, with the Bengal Famine of 1943-44. Even though there were no crop failures, it killed nearly 3 million people during World War II.

History of Food Systems

The historical origins of today's global linkages between food, capital, energy, environment, and technology lie well before the mid-twentieth century. For most of history, humans hunted or grew food for their own consumption, and food travelled only short distances from source to stomach. Yet, orchestrated, long-distance exchanges of food go back millennia: the spice trade dates back to ancient times, for example. Islamic farmers brought sugar to the Mediterranean around 600 AD, and the Spanish, along with other

European powers, brought it to the new world, and established the huge plantation complexes that formed a recognizably long-distance food system. From the early modern period, European historians can identify a series of relatively distinctive 'food systems' or food regimes, which can help locate the origins of today's global food crisis. The period 1500-1750 saw a 'mercantile' food system. Most basic foodstuffs (grains, milk, and meat) were produced within Europe, but 'exotics' were drawn from the colonies, with protective tariffs ensuring that such colonies could only trade with their mother nations. During the nineteenth century, this nakedly extractive system was largely dismantled and replaced

nineteenth century saw millions of famine deaths in India, China, Korea, Brazil, Russia, Ethiopia and Sudan about which we have seen before. The global causes of these famines, which connect the economic, political and the climatic—disturbingly prefigure today's food crisis. Such geopolitical concerns were borne out by World War One, which was, in historian Avner Offer's words, a 'war of bread and potatoes' as well as one of steel and gold. The interwar period saw European nations struggle to resurrect some form of nutritional self-sufficiency. After 1945, following the compound shocks of two World Wars and the 1930s financial crisis, a new 'productivist' food regime



with a 'settler-colonial regime' (c.1850-1930). White settler colonies (America, Canada, Argentina, Australasia) increasingly supplied Europe with luxury and basic foodstuffs (particularly meat and wheat), the profits from which were used to purchase European manufactured goods.

The second half of the nineteenth century is particularly interesting: this is when a novel form of world food system came into being, which was centered on Europe and Britain in particular. This food system also displaced onto much of the rest of the world the burden of feeding the exploding populations of industrializing Europe, who generally ate better than ever before. The later

emerged. This new food system was typified by the re-emergence of European and American agricultural protectionism, and the growing power of the food industries (such as Kellogg's and Del Monte). There were important institutional dimensions to this post-World War II shift. With the foundation of the UN and the FAO (1945), the idea that the entire world could collectively suffer a 'food crisis' (of maldistribution, hunger, and famine) can be said to have been born, as can the idea that a world free from hunger was both feasible and politically expedient.

Feast and Obesity

In 1800, a diet of 2,000 calories per day was normal in many European countries. From around



20 % of children
65 % of adults
are Overweight.

this point onwards, a steady calorific rise is discernible, with most European nations breaking the 3,000 calorie threshold by the early twentieth century. Great nutritional disparities existed within the West—as social investigators demonstrated and hungry slum-dwellers protested—yet a significant calorific chasm had emerged between the west and much of the rest of the world. Hunger persisted, and indeed rose. Yet, production—buoyed by synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and developments in plant genetics—easily kept pace with world population growth.

The FAO Second World Food Survey (1952) noted that 59.5% of the world's population lived in countries where daily food supplies were below 2,200 calories, a figure falling to ten percent by the mid-1980s. West German and British gross food output, moreover, doubled from 1950 to the 1970s, as agricultural self-sufficiency returned to post-industrial Europe. The western dietary complex—sugar, wheat, beef (and increasingly chicken), dairy products, plus caffeinated and alcoholic beverages has increasingly become a diet to which developing nations aspire even as health-conscious westerners try desperately to emulate the unprocessed diets of pre-modern

peasants.

Compared to the rest of the world in the west what strikes us is not hunger, but its opposite: obesity. According to a recent World Health Organization (WHO) study, more than 1.6 billion people globally are overweight or obese and in 2001 the WHO began to speak of 'globesity'. This epidemic is not limited to America and Western Europe: it is visible in East Asia, Central and South America, and even in Africa.

In South Africa, 30.5% of black women are obese. In China, the prevalence of childhood obesity rose from 1.5% in 1989 to 12.6% in 1997. In India more than 300 million overweight people coexist with another 300 million who starve. Chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease that often stem from overeating are growing at a far faster rate in developing countries than in the more prosperous West. In the

Middle East, obesity is skyrocketing, especially among young people.

Food Morality

While globally we are propagating 'energy morality' with young people lobbying against wasting energy yet there is no 'food morality' even though food is organic energy. We sit by and watch each other overeat and discard food without a thought. Extravagant overindulgence is viewed as hospitality and many assume that being a good parent requires that we force feed those we love. We pay dearly for this overconsumption.

Recent calculations set obesity-related health spending just in the United States at \$150-\$200 billion - more than all foreign aid worldwide. The cost of extra medical care for the obese runs as high as \$1400 per person annually. Over 2 billion people do not earn that much in a year. In 2006, the World Food Program produced, but never publicly released, a map charting food consumption. Dubbed the 'Fat Map', it shows where the world's calories go. Nations grow or shrink based on how much the average person eats - mapping starvation or overeating.

That apart, escalating global hunger and obesity levels might seem like a gigantic paradox. It is not. It is part of a single global food crisis, with economic, geopolitical, and environmental dimensions. It is perhaps the starkest, most basic way in which global inequality is manifest.

World 'Fat Map'
showing per capita calorie consumption on a nation by nation basis



FOOD CRISIS



The Global Food Crisis

In 2008, Eva Clayton, the former special adviser to the Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), spoke before the U.S. House of Representatives. "The situation is dire," she stated. "Our response must be decisive and forward thinking. The failure to strengthen our global food system would ultimately lead to political and economic upheaval all over the world."

The food crisis is indeed dire. It is also systemic and global:

it unites the world, but its pathologies are geographically distinct. On the 'developed' side of the calorific rift, fat is accumulating at a startling rate. On the 'developing' side, huge populations are increasingly vulnerable to hunger and famine. The bifurcation of the world into fat and hungry zones is the most visceral way in which global inequality is lived, felt, and seen. Although this process has accelerated in recent years, the origins of such corporeal polarity

and stratification lie deep in historical time.

As Europeans colonized the world and built food systems that underpinned their industrialization and development, they embedded dietary inequality within these systems. The global food crisis is a product of these past practices.

The United Nations has warned that world grain reserves are so dangerously low that severe weather in the United States or other food-exporting countries could trigger a major hunger crisis. "We've

not been producing as much as we are consuming. That is why stocks are being run down. Supplies are now very tight across the world and reserves are at a very low level, leaving no room for unexpected events," said Abdolreza Abbassian, a senior economist with the FAO. With food consumption exceeding the amount grown for six of the past eleven years, countries have run down reserves from an average of 107 days of consumption 10 years ago to under 74 days recently. Prices of main food crops such as wheat and maize are now close to those that



Riots caused by rising food inflation – clockwise from top, Mexico, Haiti, Argentina and Egypt – such rioting may turn into a revolution



Protests against rising food prices Algeria

sparked riots in 25 countries in 2008. Food inflation is devastating many economies around the globe, particularly the developing ones. India is dealing with an annual food inflation rate of 18%. FAO figures released this recently suggest that 870 million people are malnourished and the food crisis is growing in the Middle East and Africa.

One of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century, then, is to find a way of overcoming this history and producing a more equitable global food system, one in which the obese will lose some of their weight while the starving will gain some. A centuries old truth is that if all the food in the world were shared out evenly, there would be enough to go around.

Today, world population is now passing through seven billion, on its way to nine billion by 2050. We will need a lot more food than we used to. Lester Brown, president of the Earth policy research centre in Washington, says that the climate is no longer reliable and the demands for food are growing so fast that a breakdown is inevitable, unless urgent action is taken. The geopolitics of food is fast overshadowing the geopolitics of oil and adds Brown : “Armed aggression is no longer the principal threat to our future. The overriding threats to this century are climate

change, population growth, spreading water shortages and rising food prices”.

PROUT’s Cooperative Model

One possible answer is the cooperative movement as advocated by PROUT’s founder Shrii PR Sarkar. He suggests, “Individual farmer’s landholdings would be formed into cooperatives, with farmers receiving shares depending upon productivity, and receive produce and profits according to the number of their shares in the cooperative and their labour. Disadvantaged or minor landowners will also benefit in the cooperative system.

The proper supply of irrigation water is a cardinal right, because without water, food, which is the most important of the minimum requirements, cannot be produced. As the yield of land increases due to the continuous development of improved scientific techniques, farmers can expect increased productivity and greater prosperity.

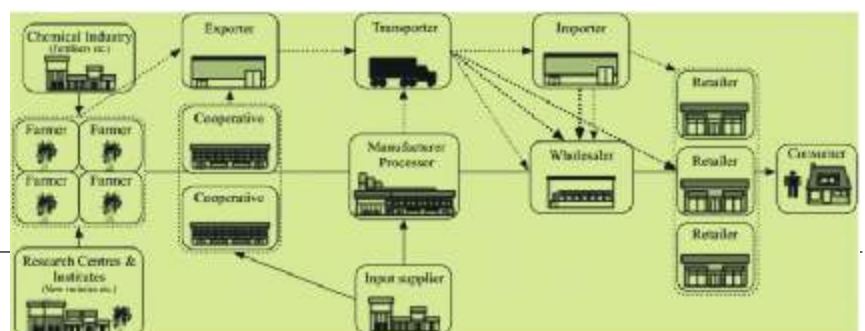
Cooperative Food Production And Supply Chain

Farmer’s cooperatives would sell their produce directly to the

Producer’s cooperative which in turn can manufacture a variety of consumer goods. Farmer’s cooperatives which also function as producer’s cooperatives can increase their profitability in various ways. For example, such cooperatives could produce oil from rice husks. The money earned may be reallocated and reinvested in the farmers-cum-producers cooperative or used for research and development.

Taxes, levies, excise duties, etc., should be collectively paid by the cooperative, thus freeing individual farmers from financial pressure and economic exploitation. Farmers in agricultural cooperatives will be able to exert collective pressure on the local, state or federal governments for different benefits and facilities”.

It is the cardinal right of the people to be guaranteed the minimum requirements of food, clothing, housing, education and medical treatment. In the food crisis that looms before the world such guarantees can only be provided by a system advocated by PROUT.





Rescuing US Political System from the 1% Power Elite and placing it with 99% All Americans, thereby transforming Corporate Capitalism to Mass Capitalism for the realization of the American Dream



Corporatocracy

to

Cooperatocracy

* Apek Mulay

Corporatocracy control of the American Political System and Economic System and Policies

Corporatocracy is a term used as an economic and political system controlled by corporations or corporate interests. It is a generally pejorative term often used by critics of the current economic situation in United States. The term has been used by liberal and left-leaning critics, but also some economic libertarian critics and other political observers across the political spectrum. Economist Jeffrey Sachs has described the United States as a Corporatocracy in his book *The Price of Civilization*. He suggested that it arose from four trends: weak

national parties and strong political representation of individual districts, the large U.S. military establishment after World War II, big corporate money financing election campaigns, globalization and offshoring of manufacturing (once upon a time the bastion of American economy) tilting the balance away from workers.

The term has also been used by author John Perkins in his 2004 book *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, where he described

Corporatocracy as a collective composed of corporations, banks, and governments. This collective is known as what author C Wright Mills terms would call the Power Elite who wealthy individuals are holding prominent positions in Corporatocracies. These individuals pull the strings behind the curtain and control the process of determining society's economic and political policies. The concept has been used in explanations of bank bailouts, exorbitant bonuses for CEOs, as well as complaints such as the exploitation of national treasuries, people, and natural resources. It has been used by critics of globalization, sometimes in conjunction with criticism of the World Bank or unfair lending practices, as well as criticism of free trade agreements.

How to now rescue US democracy and economy from these Power Elite?

Corporatocracy has resulted in (i) the 1% Power Elite driving the US public policies and turning it into corporate-democracy (instead of civilian democracy) and crony

Late nineteenth century Wall Street



capitalism, with the associated (ii) downfall of US economy in terms of huge (almost irrecoverable) trade deficits and budget deficits. How to now rescue US democracy and economy from this Power Elite?

So in this article, we are proposing an altered co-operative structure for companies, with the employees involved in owning company shares (instead of Wall Street), in company management decisions and sharing company profits. This would enable companies to concentrate on company benefits and not be driven by Wall Street stock holders. With the 99% company employees now owning companies (not just the CEOs), the economy would also be owned by the 99% Americans, thereby making it possible for the realization of the All American Dream.

Corporate Structural Framework and Managerial Reform: *A neo Co-operative Operational model, resulting in wresting from the Economy from the 1% Power Elite and bringing it to the 99% Working Class:* The investors on Wall Street have been controlling the internal framework, workings and operational policies of companies and corporations. They have made companies and corporations controlled by the 1% CEOs who make the 99% employees do all the work and themselves take home 99% of the company profits. The Wall Street investors have also been demanding very high returns on their investments, thereby pressurizing US businesses (in all sectors—from electronics and semiconductor to pharmaceuticals and to medical devices) to outsource high paying manufacturing jobs offshore, in order to increase corporate profits and higher stock value to feed on the financial appetite of greedy investors.

To end this blood-sucking of businesses and corporations by Wall Street investors and stock holders, we are proposing a radical change in

the company's internal organization and management framework, by stipulating that only the company employees should be permitted to become the majority shareholders (with only banks involved in sponsoring companies) and not the wealthy Wall Street outsider-stock holders. The company employees would also then automatically become involved in sharing managerial decisions and company profits. In other words, the company would then be organized as a cooperative, wherein all the staff are partners and have say and stake in the company operation and policy. This neo company organizational structure will enable the companies to become independent and freed from outside colonized ownership and policy making. The CEOs and CFOs of companies would then no longer be the 1% receiving 99% of the company assets and profits. Rather, they would be forced to make collective managerial decisions jointly with and in the best interests of their employees and in fact of the companies also. This neo company structural framework of employee empowerment would enable employee partnership in company ownership and participatory decision making. In other words, with the 99%

employees owning the companies, the overall economy would also be owned by the 99% employees of corporations. Further, these 99% corporation owners would then turn around the Corporate Outlook and eliminate corporate dictatorship of American policies and financial control.

Concept of Co-operative Ownership of Companies based on 'Mass Capitalism'

This system of Cooperative ownership of companies, resulting in "collective and cooperative management" by employees, constitutes an economic system that is based on Mass Capitalism. This system would eliminate "outside (Wall Street) shareholders" and make the companies insulated from their pressures to increase profits at the cost of the employees' interests and the national interests. These employees owned and guided firms will then naturally also be able to provide health insurance and pension benefits to workers. Elimination of outside interference by institution of this Cooperative Business Managerial System (CBMS) will help to preserve incentive to growth and not only avoid undue pressure from investors on Wall Street to ship jobs overseas

Figure 1: Annual U.S. income share of the Top 1% 1910-2010.
As shown in the figure above huge disparity in income caused great depression during 1930s and the same disparity is also the cause of great recession that has started since 2007.



but would also eventually put an end to even the presence of Wall Street and restore the country back to its 99% population, who have started the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement to protest against crony Capitalism and Wall Street's greed.

This policy of cooperative ownership of companies' policy would also ensure that wages of hard working Americans to catch up with their productivity, increase the percentage of taxpaying Americans and thereby help to eliminate budget deficits. This CBMS is most innovative way to (i) transform US Corporate-Democracy to Civilian-Democracy, which is what Democracy is all about—by the people for the people, and (ii) thereby restore the American Economy to its 99% Population—the All Americans!

The American Dream at Work: The Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP)

Currently, we have a version of CBMS in the form of Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP). Most private U.S. companies operating as an ESOP are structured as S Corporation ESOPs (S ESOPs). The United States Congress established S ESOPs in 1998, to encourage and expand retirement

savings by giving millions more American workers the opportunity to have equity in the companies where they work.

These S ESOPs provide retirement security, job stability and worker retention, due to the productivity gains associated with employee-ownership. Study shows that S ESOP companies performed better in 2008 compared to non-S ESOP firms and also paid their workers higher wages on average than other firms in the same industries. These ESOPs also contributed more to their workers' retirement security and also hired workers when their non S-ESOP employers were cutting jobs during 2008 recession. Scholars estimate that annual contributions to employees of S ESOPs total around \$14 billion. The net U.S. economic benefit from S ESOP savings, job stability and productivity has been estimated to total \$33 billion per year.

A study conducted by the National Center for Employee Ownership found that S ESOP account balances were three to five times higher on average than 401(k) plans. While median employee account balances for S ESOP accounts were around 75,000 to

\$100,000, median account balances for employees in 401(k) plans ranged from \$20,000 to \$22,000.

A study released in July 2012 found that S Corporations with private employee stock ownership plans added jobs over the last decade more quickly than the overall private sector. Alex Brill, author of the study and a former advisor to the Simpson-Bowles bipartisan deficit reduction commission, concluded that "The unique strengths of employee ownership drove company gains and jobs in the past decade, while helping insulate S-ESOP businesses from the adverse effects of the recent recession." Brill found that members of Employee-Owned S Corporations of America increased employment by 60 percent over the past decade, versus flat employment in the economy as a whole.

Now we want to go one step further with our CBMS, in which the employees will own the Corporation's stocks totaling its operating cost. Thereby they will be joint owners of the Corporation's assets and thereby of the Corporation itself.

How Would This CBMS Be Structured

For an established company, the company stops allowing outsiders to buy company stocks, buys off the outside owned stocks at share value, and offers them to its employees.

The total amount of salaries plus operational costs constitutes the company's expenses. The sales constitute the company's revenue. Employees can be given stocks to purchase, to make up the 1-year operational costs of the company; that acts as a safe-guard investment.

Also, for company expansion, the company takes out bank loans and offers stocks to employees to purchase. The employee stocks amounts need to be proportional to their salary. So in this way, the company's assets are owned by the employees through stocks.

The company's sales revenues



go partly to support salaries and partly to make up the operational costs. The excess constitutes profits that are employed to give stock dividends to the employees.

If the sales fall down, the employees do not get stock dividends, but the company can still operate by making use of the stocks purchase money kept in the bank. Then when next year the company performs better, the employees can again get stock dividends. If the sales fall down for another year, the employees decide to take salary cuts instead of layoffs. In this way, the company employees together make managerial decisions.

For a new to-be-formed company, the founding people come together and form an operational plan. Then they can take out a 10-year bank loan and offer jobs to appropriate people who have the requisite background for the company operations. From the bank loan, they defray the operational cost (including paying salaries). The company also offers stocks to be bought by the employees; this amount is kept in a bank. The company sales are used to pay the interest of bank loans and defray operational costs.

After 2-3 years, when the operational costs plus bank loan interest are met with from sales revenues, the profits can be used to pay stock dividends to employees. Then from there on, the company

has to be collectively managed, such that the operational costs and bank loan interest are met by sales revenues and the profits are used to pay dividends.

When the company's operation becomes stable, the bank amount of employee share purchases can be employed to start giving additional stock dividends to employees and also for the expansion of the company.

After the bank loan is paid off, the company can take additional loans to expand the company operations.

Towards Cooperative Capitalism and Realization of the All American Dream

This policy of Cooperatively Managed Corporations (CMCs) would ensure prosperity to all Americans with a sustainable economic demand and minimize malpractices which lead to economic bubbles with a minimal government interference. This policy would also ensure that wages of hard working Americans catch up with their productivity in Figure 1, thereby regenerating consumer demand, eliminating budget deficits and paving way for balanced economy.

Moving further, if the employees were to become the share-holders and joint owners of companies, the working Americans would in turn become the share-holders of the US Economy. In

other words, if the majority staff of company owns the majority of their company assets, then the majority of Americans would own the majority of American Economy, thereby providing the solution to the "99:1 Issue" of the Wall Street movement.

Finally, let us announce one overarching benefit of CBMS. Thus far, CEOs and owners of Corporations have dominated the 99% American working class, by controlling businesses, banks and even governance policies. Now when, due to this CMBS, the 99% workers of companies and businesses have joint stake in the company and business operation and policy making, the economy will automatically come within the control of the 99% Americans.

This will in fact replace Corporate Capitalism by Mass Capitalism, and bring relief to the 99% Americans. With this transformation, many policies will become 99% people-centered. For instance, we could even make the universal healthcare dream of the 99% people become a reality. Not just that, but we can foresee the realization of the All American Dream of Education for all, Healthcare for all, Housing for all, Public Transport for all, Employment for all, and Fulfilling Lives for all!

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Can the Future be Abundant

“Very serious is the condition of the basic resources upon which the productive capacity of the earth and of human economies depend”

* Ravi Logan

There has been growing awareness of global oil depletion, of “peak oil”. Oil depletion is best understood as an epiphenomenon of the very nature of the global economy. Mae-Wan Ho, of King’s College at Cambridge University, characterised the nature of the global economy as an “environmental bubble economy”. This image borrows from the concept of an “investment bubble” — an investment situation in which the collapse of an unsustainable speculative investment mania is inevitable. The environmental bubble economy is “built on the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources” and — like an investment bubble — it is headed for collapse. Many are now aware that oil production is at or near peak.

But fewer people realize that other important non-renewable resources are also at, or will soon be, in the same situation:

- Declining production of natural gas is only a few years behind oil.
- Production of a number of strategic metals, such as copper and uranium, is in decline. More significantly, production of some important renewable resources —

resources that are constantly replenished by nature — are now steadily dropping.

- Most fish stocks are in serious decline.
- The production of most timber stands has peaked and is in decline.
- World grain yield appears to have been in decline since about 2001. Even more serious is the condition of the basic resources upon which the productive capacity of the earth — and of human economies — depend:
 - Top soils are being heavily depleted.
 - Desertification is unrelenting in its advance.
 - Water levels of most aquifers of economic importance are dropping.
 - Water quality is in serious decline in most of the world.
 - Air quality is in similar decline (with pollution from China now reaching North America).
 - The resilient fabric of many ecosystems is coming unraveled.
 - Biodiversity is being lost at a rate estimated by biologist E.O. Wilson at about 27,000 species per year — 10,000 times the background extinction rate.
 - And the climate stability that is essential for the development of civilization is now undergoing accelerated destabilization. Lester Brown, whose annual State of the World reports have monitored global conditions since the early 1980s, succinctly summarized the impacts of the environmental bubble economy: “collapsing fisheries, shrinking forests, expanding



deserts, rising CO2 levels, eroding soils, rising temperatures, falling water tables, melting glaciers, deteriorating grasslands, rising seas, drying rivers, and disappearing species.” This increasing toll on the health of the earth will soon burst the environmental bubble economy. Indeed, this bursting has begun: By 1995, the global carrying capacity of the earth was surpassed by about 20 percent — a trend that has since increased with accelerating speed. Humanity has overshot earth’s resource base.

Beyond Resource Depletion

If we wish to look holistically at the phenomenon of depletion, we must go beyond the depletion of natural resources. Compelling evidence has been given that:

- There is depletion of our collective intelligence.
- There is depletion of the quality and relevance of information we are being provided to function effectively as citizens.
- There is depletion in economic equity and access to economic opportunity.
- There is depletion in the social safety net.
- There is depletion of the quality of democratic institutions and governance.

- There is depletion of our immune systems and of our psychic vitality.

- There is depletion of our capacity for meaningful expression of civil liberties.

- There is depletion of vitalizing culture.

And so forth. This is to say, at a time when human society is certain to face unprecedented challenges from the collapse of an unsustainable global bubble economy, the very factors that sustain social and personal vitality are also being depleted, leaving us less potent to adequately respond.

Given these alarming trends, it is understandable that talk of collapse is increasingly in the air. A few prominent examples:

- There’s renewed interest in Joseph Tainter’s book *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, an authoritative study of the fall of past civilizations.

- Richard Heinberg books, *The Party’s Over* and *Peak Everything*, have gained a popular following.

- Michael Ruppert, whose book *Crossing the Rubicon* became one of Amazon.com’s most popular titles.

- James Howard Kuntsler’s book *The Long Emergency* gained similar attention.

- Jared Diamond’s book, *Collapse* long held its place on the *New York Times*’ best-seller list.

- And organizations like the Post Carbon Institute are finding increasing public interest in their work.

The Need for a New Paradigm of Development

In as short of a way as possible I’m suggesting that what’s needed is not simply the implementation of a global oil depletion allowance protocol, or the following of a soft energy path, or other technical or policy fixes. What is required is a new paradigm of development. Anything less cannot ensure sustainability; anything less can only — at best — attenuate the time until planetary civilization collapses.

To provide humanity with a truly viable and sustainable future, such a new developmental paradigm must be modeled on the way nature works. It must recognize that human society is imbedded within a larger fabric of life, and that those principles which pattern the harmonious and fruitful development of the natural world are no less relevant to human social and economic development. This brings me to permaculture. Permaculture is a design system which has been applied to natural resource management and which models the functioning of natural systems. It can be shown that, by use of permaculture design principles, yields of useful resources can not only be greatly increased in amount, but do so with less imported oil and energy inputs and while sustaining — and strengthening — the productivity of associated natural systems.

Comparison of Three Agricultural Systems

At a keynote address at an Earth Day program, I made a hypothetical comparison of the agricultural productivity of three different systems of agriculture as a way of illustrating the power of the permaculture paradigm. By



“productivity” I mean not only production of food per land used, but productivity in relation to the amount of imported energy going into food production. The three systems I compared were industrial agriculture, organic farming, and permaculture. I do not have time here to review in detail this comparison. But here is one quantified indication that I can quickly offer in support of my assertion that permaculture approaches (which are also found in the farming system given by P.R. Sarkar) promise superior food productivity:

Permaculturist Joshua Smith, at a recent PROUT Institute training, reported on a study that show that productivity drops by as much as 90 percent when farmers in developing countries who are skilled in traditional farming adopt green revolution agricultural practices. He also reported that farmers at Ananda Nagar in West Bengal who went from green revolution industrial agriculture back to traditional farming saw their production yields increase by several times. Many of these traditional agricultural practices are permacultural in nature.

Beyond Permaculture

The increased yield figures reported by Joshua Smith are certainly dramatic. But there are far greater gains in agricultural productivity that can occur by adopting planning and system approaches that come from PROUT — from the Progressive Utilization theory. Like permaculture, PROUT’s design principles are compatible with the way nature

works. So under well-managed PROUT planning, sustainability is inherently maintained. Unlike permaculture, but complimentary to it, PROUT’s focus of application is at the socioeconomic level. It provides a well thought out vision for creating a vital, decentralized economy — one that is well-adapted to local culture and local community needs. What would PROUT add to the food production gains that are possible through permaculture design? Here are some examples:

- Farming would be operated mainly by agricultural cooperatives, allowing for a pooling of resources, greater efficiency of land use, coordination of marketing, and efficiency in labor distribution.

- Decentralized economic planning bodies would help mobilize capital and develop infrastructure on the basis of meeting collective needs, enhancing productivity, and improving standards of living of local people.

- Planning at a bioregional level would create a high degree of regional self-reliance, thereby minimizing the need for costly imported goods and reducing dependency on the outside economy.

- The local economy would be controlled by local people and local enterprises. Outside economic interests would have no place. Among other benefits, this would protect the local economy from drainage of capital — keeping money circulating where it can best develop the wealth of the local people.

- Rural areas would be valued

for the materials they produce that are used by the local economy, so the economic development of rural farm communities would be given great importance. Many agro-industries would be sited in rural areas, immediately adjacent to the farm products these industries make use of. And there would be social and cultural enhancement of life in rural areas, which would greatly reduce the population flight of talented youth.

And so forth. What is important to appreciate is the importance PROUT gives to using solution-oriented design principles to re-envision and reinvent our approach to development. The future will bring some measure of collapse — of this there is no longer doubt; indeed, it is already occurring. But the future also holds the possibility of a social renaissance. Insecurity threatens, while the promise of sustainable abundance gives hope. Much will depend on the choices we make. What is needed is for humanity to let go of worn out and dysfunctional ways and to embrace a hopeful, solution-oriented new vision.

For those who have studied closely the Progressive Utilization Theory, there is every reason to believe that the future economy can be both abundant and sustainable. We must only leave behind the environmental bubble economy that threatens collapse and move toward the life sustaining economy envisioned by PROUT.

[This is a transcript of a lecture delivered at the University of Oregon, USA]

**Geography has made us neighbors. History has made us friends.
Economics has made us partners, and necessity has made us allies.
Those whom God has so joined together, let no man put asunder.**

- John F Kennedy

Democratic Governance *in Asia 2030*

* Sohail Inayatullah

Organized by Oxfam, Chulalongkorn University (Thailand) and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (Singapore), with support of the Rockefeller Foundation, these and other perspectives were suggested at a two-day forum in Bangkok on Visions of Democratic Governance in Asia 2030. While there were certainly key influence makers from around Asia – a minister from Pakistan – leading civil society leaders from Thailand Cambodia – intellectuals from India and Singapore, the meeting in itself was not a typical conference highlighted by long speeches and irrelevant questions. Rather it was an interactive workshop that used the methods and tools from the emerging field of Futures studies to explore visions of democracy in 2030 and pathways to realize that vision. While methods and tools such as the futures triangle, scenario planning, causal layered analysis and backcasting were thrown around the room by the facilitator, Professor Sohail Inayatullah, the process was in itself democratic – participants worked and voted on

the futures they wished to see.

And what did they wish?

Five Visions of the Future

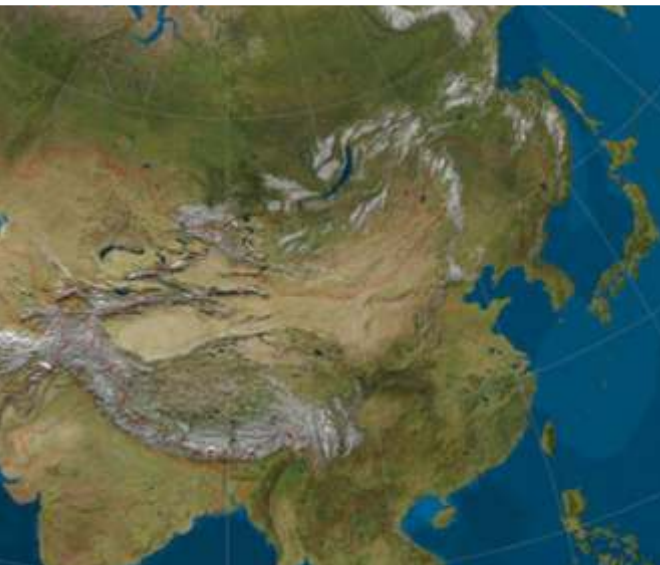
Five powerful visions of the future emerged. The first was titled, Contribution, Inclusion and Empowerment. By this they meant that citizens needed to contribute to governance, everyone needed to be included, and in doing so empowerment would emerge. But this was not empowerment, i.e. power over others, rather, it was empowerment that contributed to the lot of everyone. The core metaphor for this group was: the Ant. A small but powerful creature that understands the empowerment born from working together. Ants work as a cohesive unit and are able to achieve so much more than they would as individuals. Understanding that any true democracy requires participation, this group rallied around the ideas of bringing more people to the forefront of democratic governance and giving those citizens a meaningful way to participate. This was a vision of less government and more participatory governance. Government as facilitator and guide rather than government as teacher or parent.

The second group took

inclusion even more seriously. They argued that for better democratic governance by 2030, a set of indicators would need to focus on social inclusion. Indices that would measure how nations and/or cities include their voices and perspectives of their citizens need to be created. These indices would also offer awards to those who demonstrated institutional practices that enhanced inclusion. In the dystopic scenario that this group explored as a counter valence to their preferred future, the current lack of inclusion in politics could lead in the future to a charismatic leader with extremist viewpoints rallying the masses who have far too long felt excluded and marginalized.

The third group agreed with inclusion, but wished to add the reality of the environment. There could be no democratic governance if nature was not part of, and ultimately built into society. This meant nature at every level – green design for cities, green design for buildings, indeed, nature could not be an externality, but had to be internalized and accounted for. Green democracy was their vision of the future. They imagined Green political parties rising up throughout Asia. This was logical as Asian





Democratic governance will thrive in Asia, once Asian narratives – myths and metaphors – are used to provide support and give meaning to it. Democratic governance in 2030 will be radically different from how we see it today. We need new lenses to see the future. Democratic governance will keep on changing as new technologies, demographic shifts and geopolitical transitions challenge reality – prepare for flux!

development had, while creating a middle class, been “cement” heavy, nature had been pushed away. As more and more research has demonstrated that productivity is enhanced in green buildings, and the immune system of individuals is strengthened when the forest enters the city, democratic governance in 2030 rests on the platform of green politics – gender equity, nature inclusion, smart design, and deep diversity. Their metaphor for the future was a healthy body – the body politic was smart and green, using the best from science to create a healthy environment so Asians could enjoy the gains from sound economic development.

The fourth group agreed with the others but added the power of the digital citizen. By 2030 dramatic new interactive evaluative Big Data technologies would be embedded in everything citizens did. While certainly this challenges our current notions of privacy, by 2030 with digital natives as the dominant demographic category, everyone is a “friend”. Politics is daily, immediate and interactive. There are new public spaces where engagement occurs. Ratemayor.com and many other applications would be the norm,

many of them predictive, solving problems of sanitation, safety and security before they become big issues. Citizens play a direct role in the polity, indeed, they are the polity. Politicians are seen far less as daily legislators but instead as last resort custodians of decisions, most of the time they work with citizens to facilitate desired futures. The metaphor for this future was the co-scripted text. Democracy is not a book authored by others, rather, is it written daily in the actions and choices – the “likes” of citizens.

To create any of these visions, a narrative platform is required. The fifth group offered the Asian marketplace, the fresh market, as the guiding story. In this market, buyers and sellers interact daily, their choices creating the political-economy. No one group dominates, this is not an oligarchy or a corporatist monopoly. Rather, citizens own the future. Democracy is owned by all. And thus loved by all. Democracy thus is engaged, participative, inclusive and creates results that benefit the market as whole and the citizens who live in the market.

Drivers and Strategies

To get to these visions, changes clearly have to occur. Already,

however, the drivers are there: 1. Generational shift from the independence generation to the digital natives, who expect far more embedded technologies and inclusion. 2. Digital, 3d printing, holograms, Big Data technologies that can make democracy as a daily practice far more real. 3. The move from vertical sociality organized by seniority to more peer-to-peer organizations where the capacity to share information, to be hubs in the node, to cooperate and work together – and this can be slow – is creating a new narrative that leads to more productivity. This does not mean the end of hierarchy but situational hierarchy, where in times of emergency, tough decisions do need to be made by leadership to ensure the long term over the short term and all groups instead of the few or the individual. 4. Climate change leading to crisis throughout Asia – 32 trillion dollars of assets are at risk, most of that in large Asian cities – forcing innovation to meet these challenges. While there is a scenario where crisis enforce the “big man” metaphor, there is also the possibility that innovation is social, leading to a future where the actions of each individual enhances the ability to meet this mega

challenge. 5. As Asia becomes wealthier and basic needs are met, the needs of freedom, the desire to enhance agency, to influence the future, will become more pronounced. This means more economic democracy – cooperatives – but also political democracy. While phase one means regular fair and transparent elections in nations, citizens and organizations, phase two means direct democracy using new digital technologies. Direct democracy by 2030 may not be relevant to every issue, but there may be many issues where citizens can either offer consultative advice, legislative advice, or indeed, executive advice.

Given the power of these drivers, it would not be a surprise if the visions outlined by the fifty or so participants become reality by 2030. Participants, even, as they remained idealistic, did articulate the outlier scenarios - one where autocratic or charismatic religious leaders used new technologies to influence people toward their religion or nation-state? Or where climate change led to Eco-fascism? Or where there was dramatically enhanced fragmentation as China fell apart. But there were also positive outliers. In one scenario participants imagined a confederation of Asian states, an Asian Union, with extensive trade, a security regime, and institutional networks and high order organizations to promote democracy.

While the alternative scenarios explore possible futures, the strength and power of the workshop was the articulation of desired visions of the future. Visions pull us forward toward the future, even as there are weights – mindsets, institutional blockages, resource constraints – that challenge the realization of the preferred. What participants were certain about was that democratic governance in Asia would be transformed by 2030.

Prout Policy

The Proutist approach on the futures of democratic governance in Asia by 2030 is focused in three areas:

First, economic democracy. Instead of Asian multinational corporations spreading wealth, it is far more important to create legislation throughout Asia to support cooperatives. Asian need to own the future they wish to see. Ownership comes from having a say not just in the polity but the economy. The use of digital networks that can create peer-to-peer cooperatives networks should be strengthened Asia-wide. The economic benefits will be enormous ensuring that wages for labour keep up with productivity, that equity is enhanced.

Second, while as much as possible, democratic forms of government are required – equality before the law, regular elections, an independent judiciary and press, enhanced electoral education for voters – it is developing leadership

that is not beholden to financial interests nor to any particular religious interests that is paramount. The leader needs to see the alternative future, protect the weak, serve the poor, innovate through ideas and ensure that productivity is enhanced.

Third, the context of current democracy is the nation-state. Prout envisages the shift to a confederation of Asia. This can be accomplished by an increased flow of goods, services and the ideas of neohumanism/universalism. Challenges of climate change, organized crime, inequity within and between economies all create conditions where more Asian glocalization (global and local simultaneously) is required not less. Harmonization of laws are necessary to protect minorities, the poor and refugees from war and climate change. Asia-wide financial, cultural, environmental and regulatory institutions are a must.

Asia needs to continue to move forward, where identity is far less based on ethnicity, religion and the nation-state and far more on our common humanity. Governance - at local, national and regional levels - that can create conditions for the movement of people, ideas, good and services can help create a transformed Asia.

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Village scene in South Asia

Boys With Boobs

Hidden Chemicals Fed to Kids

* **Beth Greer**



Chemicals in the everyday products we use in our homes may be negatively affecting our hormones, says a newly-released study by WHO, the World Health Organization. The study, titled "State of the Science of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals," says pesticides, plasticizers and product additives contain endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs). They act like synthetic hormones, throwing off the body's natural hormonal system. A hormone is a chemical messenger produced in the glands in our endocrine system and released in our blood and affects everything from mood to metabolism.

One of the chemicals investigated in the study is BPA, or bisphenol A, which mimics estrogen if it's introduced into your body. It can get there by leaching out of hard

plastic bottles, especially if they are heated (in microwave ovens or dishwashers) or exposed to acidic solutions (tomato sauce). BPA is also found in plastic reusable food containers, canned soup, soda cans, and cash register and ATM receipts.

Frederick vom Saal, a biology professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia and one of the leading BPA researchers in the country, says that in studies of laboratory animals BPA changes play behavior, weakens gender differences, decreases sperm count, stimulates prostate cancer and causes ADHD symptoms.

BPA is Also Making Us Fat

A study of nearly 3,000 children and teens in the September 2012 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association found a significant association between levels of BPA in kids' urine and obesity. The report said that kids with the highest levels of BPA in their urine were over 2.5 times more likely to be obese compared to those

with low levels of the chemical.

BPA might also be responsible for another disturbing effect. "I saw lots of 10- and 11-year-old boys with breasts," said Michelle Perro, M.D., during an interview, referring to what she observed while on a recent beach vacation. "I also am seeing a number of them in my office, and I'm convinced it's partially due to BPA in plastic that's acting as an endocrine disruptor," said Dr. Perro, a Marin County, Calif. pediatrician who's been practicing medicine for 30 years.

Kids are at Risk

Children are exposed especially from eating canned foods. In a new report by the Breast Cancer Fund, dangerous levels were found in a wide variety of canned foods specifically marketed towards kids. Some of the highest levels were found in Campbell's Disney Princess and Toy Story soups as well as from "healthy" companies like Annie's Homegrown and Earth's Best Organic.



BPA is Everywhere and Inside Almost Everyone

We are repeatedly being exposed to BPA on a daily basis and it's showing up in our bodies. Nearly 93 percent of people aged 6 or older had detectable levels of BPA in their urine, according to a 2003-2004 National Health and Nutrition Examination survey. The Environmental Working Group (EWG) also found BPA in umbilical cord blood, indicating that this chemical starts polluting babies in the womb. Infants then are exposed to BPA from their formula cans, baby bottles, sippy cups and mother's milk (if the nursing mom eats canned foods).

Toxic Shell Game

Last year the FDA finally banned BPA from baby bottles and sippy cups, but in some instances BPA is being replaced with BPS, which lacks scientific research. "When they replace BPA with chemicals that are less well known and less well studied it's simply a toxic shell game," said Michael Green, executive director of the Center for Environmental Health (CEH) in Oakland, Calif., during a recent interview. "They don't know the health impacts of these new

chemicals and in my opinion, they don't want to know the health impacts, because if they know, they may have some liability or responsibility," he added. According to Green, the solution is to create and enforce new regulations on toxic chemicals. "We need to change the rules that govern what chemical companies can and cannot use in products, especially those designed for small children to put in their mouths."

Things You Can Do to Drastically Cut Down on BPA Exposure

- Limit canned foods.* If you do eat from cans, seek out companies that claim not to use BPA. These include Trader Joe's, Eden Foods, Westbrook Farms and Bionaturae.
- Choose foods in glass jars whenever possible.
- Opt for fresh or frozen food. Every can you pass up means less BPA in your body.
- If you use infant formula, choose the powdered variety in non-steel cans.
- Give your baby breast milk (Check out Honeysuckle breast milk storage bags, which are BPA-free.

- Replace plastic baby bottles with glass bottles.
- Stop using plastic food containers in the microwave -- heat it in glass instead.
- Deny receipts whenever possible.

*Note: BPA levels in different canned foods varies wildly, but a study recently published in the Journal of the American Medical Association detected shocking levels. The levels of BPA in participants skyrocketed 1,000 percent after eating a can of Progresso soup. Dangerously high levels have also been detected in popular brands of kids' canned foods.

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To Break Free of the

Vicious Cycle of Poverty

Exposed is the absolute failure of the self-designated 'largest democracy of the world' in saving its poor citizenry from falling into penury through the cracks that define a thousand welfare schemes it runs.

* Avinash Pandey

Rs. 17, or approximately 30 US cents, is what an average poor spends a day in rural India. Their urban friends are no better off either; they have to content with spending Rs. 27 for seeing a day off. Adjust that amount for the cost of living in urban centres and they are just as worse off as the poor in villages. All one can buy for 17 Rupees, to make sense of the amount, is not even a kilogram of wheat flour, forget everything else one would need to turn it into a meal. That is the extent of the crisis looming large over Indian poor. Unfortunately for the government, this data cannot be rubbished as it comes from National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), a governmental body itself.

Not that it was not known before. In fact both the civil society and media were trying to wake the government out of its slumber and attend to the crisis. The government

knew it as well, as was pointed out by the repeated admissions of the Prime Minister who has found the extent of child malnutrition a 'National Shame' and the President who has conceded that there was 'no humiliation more abusive than hunger' in nothing less than his acceptance speech. Both of them have promised to take concrete steps to arrest the poverty from deteriorating into a national crisis. Then, it seems, they forgot the promise.

NSSO's findings for 2011-12 (July-June) show that Rs. 521.44 is all that the bottom 5% of the population has to survive a month in rural areas and Rs. 700.50 in urban ones. The findings, shockingly, bursts another bubble, the myth of Indian middle classes' march into an era of prosperity. Pinching the balloon, it pegs average monthly expenditure of top 5 % of Indian

population at a lowly Rs. 4481 in the countryside and only a marginally better Rs. 10,282 in the cities. Adjust it for the expenditures of the rich significantly lifting the average and we get a horrible scenario of widening gulf in incomes of the top 5 % of Indian population on one hand and rest of all Indians on the other. To understand the enormity of the message, the average monthly expenditure on a national level is a meagre Rs. 1430 for rural areas and just Rs. 2630, or about the cost of a family of five watching a single movie in a multiplex, in urban centers. That is all about the stories of growth and development being sold to the country.

The data also exposes the absolute failure of the self-designated 'largest democracy of the world' in saving its poor citizenry from falling into penury through the cracks that define a



thousand welfare schemes it runs. Let's look at the situation of hunger, for example. The poor are forced to shell out almost a half of their abysmally low daily expenditures on food. That is 42.6 % of the total expenditure in cities while a much higher 52.9 % in villages. How much the poor would be left with after spending this much just to ensure physical survival is anybody's guess. Think of the amount they are left with for everything from education to leisure and the banality of this cruel joke tears one apart.

The situation merely worsens if one looks at where the worst affected come from. Worst hit are the villagers of Odisha and Jharkhand, closely followed by Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. These are the same states which are worst performers in urban sector as well. That is almost half of total Indian Population.

The data could shame any government into action, more so if they claim to be already aware of the situation. Indian government, it seems, would have none of this. It is sitting upon for four years now, incomprehensively, even on a lame duck Food Security Bill severely criticised by the Right to Food Campaign of India for its serious limitations in fighting hunger. That is when the Bill does not specify any time frame for the rolling out of the entitlements promised, continues with skewed idea of a Targeted PDS that inherently excludes 33 % of the population from accessing the PDS as a right and provides for a mere 5 kilograms of food grains per person as against ICMR norms of 14 kilograms for adults and 7 for children. That the bill does not take care of specific issues plaguing the food and nutritional security of the women, allows for private profiteers and thereby corruption and leakages and does not offer any agriculture and production related entitlements is being the point.

Similar was the fate of the

Prime Minister's Council on India's Nutrition Challenges that was formed in the wake of his admission of 42 % of Indian children being severally malnourished. The commission, set up with much fanfare in 2008, was last heard for holding a single meeting way back in 2010. The Council has made a few path-breaking decisions to overhaul the system and save the children from falling prey to stunting by suffering severe malnutrition in the early years of their lives. The decisions included making efforts for universalisation of the Integrated Child Development Services by providing for an Anganwadi centre for 500 to 1,000 people taking a little burden off it by lowering existing upper limit of 1500.

It had also proposed a second Anganwadi for a population of 1,000 to 2,000, and another for every additional 1,000 people. Similar were its recommendations for an Anganwadi for every 150 to 500 people in tribal areas and a mini-Anganwadi centre for places with a population of less than 150. Other proposals included ensuring a compulsory monthly weighing of children under the age of three at Anganwadi centres for keeping a tab on their nutritional situation, universal registration of births, issuing mother and child protection card and upgradation of Anganwadi centres into Anganwadis-cum-crèches.

Needless is to say that the Council had not met ever since as against its mandate of meeting once in three months. In absence of any clear-cut guidelines, several ministries have been found to be taking controversial decisions like on the involvement of private sector in child survival and nutrition. The move that will pave the way for private profiteers to enter the sector with packaged food for the marginalised is being staunchly opposed by the civil society.

All this when private companies in nexus with vested

interests deeply entrenched in administrative and political hierarchies have been found to have stolen more than Rs. 1000 Crore, or USD 185 million in the state of Maharashtra alone as per the findings of a report of Biraj Patnaik, Principal Adviser, Commissioners to the Supreme Court and were submitted to the court with reference to SLP (Civil) No. 10654 of 2012 in the matter of Vyankateshwar Mahila Auyodhigik Sahakari Sanstha v. Purnima Upadhyay and Others listed along with Civil Writ Petition 196 of 2001 (PUCL v. UOI).

Independent studies into the status of other welfare schemes ranging from Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to Mid-day meal scheme tell the same tales of unbridled corruption, leakages and stealing from the funds earmarked for these schemes for the poor who have nothing else to bank upon. As it is, no one in his senses would really expect a person to survive a day on a mere 17 Rupees in rural and 27 in urban areas, will one. Even if one does, can one really expect these citizens of India to be able to break free of the vicious cycle of poverty with no money left for anything for education or health, two basic requirements for even thinking of making such an attempt?

Do the Indian poor, faced with such governmental apathy and inaction coupled with the economic distress haunting them stand a chance of survival with dignity? Does the situation shame the government of India into action if for nothing else? That is the question the government of a country that claims to be the largest democracy of the world must answer immediately.

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A Kabir Kala Manch performance



The Project

* Aritra Bhattacharya

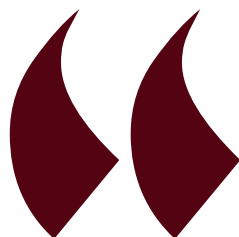


Does Einstein's theory of relativity lend itself to music? To cultural activism, to be more precise?

Perhaps not, you might think, but for a group of youngsters in 2005, it did. "It was unusual," says Arun Ferreira. "After all, not often do you come across a group that works among the grassroots putting up an act around the theory of relativity." Ferreira was referring to Chandrapur-based Deshbhakti Yuva Manch, which had, on the occasion of 100 years of Einstein's relativity theory, made it the focus of one of

of

Cultural Resistance



The Kabir Kala Manch and Deshbhakti Yuva Manch trace their ideological lineage to the radical movements in Maharashtra. What are the issues these cultural activists engage with, and why do they make the state so uncomfortable?

their campaigns.

The group emerged out of a big Marathi daily's attempts to expand its base by supporting college bands around 2002. Once various members of the group stayed together for a while, they figured they wanted to do more than just sing and dance for the sake of it. They gradually charted out a radical course, initiating and sustaining various campaigns, mainly street theatre.

By 2005, Deshbhakti Yuva Manch had grown in stature, and had run campaigns on the birth centenary of Bhagat Singh, among other things. Their plays were political, stringing together Ambedkarite and leftist strands. "They became quite popular. In fact, in 2007, they organised a 5,000-strong rally in Chandrapur," says Arun. Viplov Teltumbde, who was studying law in Chandrapur when Deshbhakti Yuva Manch was functional, remembers it as a 'big students' group', which organised campaigns around the birth anniversaries of Ambedkar, Phule and Marx. "By 2007, they were a force to reckon with in Chandrapur district...they had over 15,000 members," says Viplov.

This was when the state swung into action. In January 2008, nine members of Deshbhakti Yuva Manch were arrested for their alleged involvement in offences punishable under Sections 10, 13, 18 and 39(1) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967, which deal with membership of an unlawful association, membership of a terrorist organisation/gang and sympathies for a terrorist organisation/gang. They were also charged with sedition (Section 124A), criminal conspiracy (Section 120B), cheating (Section 420), forgery (Section 465), and possessing unlicensed arms.

In February 2010, another person named Bandu Meshram was picked up by the Nagpur police—he was presented as 'Bhanu', an absconding accused in the

Deshbhakti Yuva Manch. Following his arrest Bandu was tortured for over two weeks—he was stripped and beaten up and given electric shocks in his genitals. This apart, such was the mental torture he was put through that it took him six months to recover. "Throughout, while torturing, cops wanted to know what I was up to as Bhanu—they said that Deshbhakti Yuva Manch, which I, ie Bhanu, was supposedly associated with, was a front organisation of the Maoists. They kept torturing me in order to make me accept that I was Bhanu and that the Deshbhakti Yuva Manch was a Maoist front," says Bandu. In fact, Bandu was associated with another radical Mumbai-based group called Republican Panther Jati Antachi Chalwal (RP) founded by Sudhir Dhawale, who is in jail now on charges of being a Maoist.

Bandu, then an accused in the Deshbhakti Yuva Manch case, was handed over to the police in Chandrapur. In order to firm up the group's Maoist credentials further, Arun Ferreira was made a co-accused in the case. Arun, a political activist who was jailed in 2007 for his alleged Maoist links, was in prison then. The state had lodged multiple cases against him to ensure he stayed behind bars; he was infamously arrested immediately after being released from Nagpur jail, from outside the jail, in 2011. Though cops said that he was arrested in connection with another case, Arun was acquitted of all charges and released from prison in January 2012. He says he came to know about Deshbhakti Yuva Manch only after he was made an accused in the case. He adds that the state action against the group forced some members to go underground.

The broad trajectory of the Deshbhakti Yuva Manch appears strikingly similar to that of Kabir Kala Manch (KKM). KKM was founded by Amarnath Chandaliya in 2002, when some members of the group came together against the communal carnage in Gujarat.

During the ensuing years, the group took up various causes including slum-dwellers' and workers' rights and the annihilation of caste, through various modes of performance. They joined ranks with and performed for movements led by Medha Patkar and Bhai Vaidya.

Noted playwright Ramu Ramanathan recalls KKM appearing on Pune's theatre scene in 2002. In an article, he wrote, "The group had young dalit boys and girls – who sang songs and staged angry plays...A typical KKM show in the bastis ensured the first scene had to have more noise onstage than the noise in the audience." Along the way, Amarnath, who founded the group, distanced himself from it, as did some others. In came young singers and poets like Sheetal Sathe, Sagar Gorkhe and Deepak Denge. The group grew in stature and popularity, much like Deshbhakti Yuva Manch. Its songs and acts were imbued with strands of feminism, equality, and the perils of rampant casteism and unbridled capitalism.

Gradually, as their sphere of influence extended beyond their base in Pune and their songs became popular among sections of the population, the state swung into action again. The Maharashtra ATS arrested four members of KKM in April-May 2011, along with three others from Pune and Thane, and booked them under various sections of UAPA; other members of KKM, who were declared absconding, were also booked for similar charges. They were accused of 'spreading Naxal ideology of armed struggle against the government'. News reports reproducing the police narrative painted the members of KKM as undercover Maoists; it was alleged that KKM was, in fact, a front-organisation of CPI (Maoist). Its members were accused of attending 'Naxal' training camps in Pune's Khed taluka and lecturing in support of 'dreaded Maoist' Angela Sontakke and others.

Why would anybody want to

sing and perform resistance, rather than engaging in direct political action? Theatre critic, theoretician and political activist Antonio Gramsci provides a possible answer, when he says that political power rests upon cultural hegemony; thus part of any revolutionary project is creating a counter hegemonic culture. Though Gramsci had observed this with regards to the workings of the Catholic church and the fascist state, his conception holds as true today, when all inequity and injustice is sought to be wished away by promoting more consumerism and more access to 'free' markets. Part of the mandate of the project of cultural resistance that Deshbhakti Yuva Manch or KKM was engaged in was to point out the partisan nature of the discourse of the free market, and its cosy, compatible, often interchangeable, relationship with earlier oppressive structures like caste and gender.

For instance, the song Zhopad Patti Re Zhopad Patti by KKM talks about the urban slum that builds the factory and the nation, and powers the economy; the same urban slum is also the place where most of the people from the oppressed castes reside. The song says:

*Angrez Aaya, machine laya, mil banaya, zhopad patti
Chamar, bunker lohar mehnat, sab samaya zhopad patti And goes on to end with the lines:*

Gora jake aaya kala, toota woh sapno ka manzar

*Sath saalon mein chuna laga hai
Sath saalon mein chuna lagake bikti reh gayi zhopad patti*

(The English came, mills and machines in tow

The slums that came up accommodated the tanner, the weaver, the blacksmith

The white made way for the brown, the kingdom of dreams came crashing down

For sixty long years, cheats are running the show, the slums up for sale—where do we go?)

As with the above song, the project of cultural resistance, in a

sense, seeks to puncture the hot air balloon of progress, and raise questions about how it cultivates varied deprivations to rise higher and higher.

Kabir Kala Manch is perhaps the most well-known of the cultural resistance groups in Maharashtra today. This is thanks to Anand Patwardhan's documentary *Jai Bhim Comrade*; members of KKM feature prominently in the film, which was released after 14 years in the making, shortly after KKM members were arrested and charged by the Maharashtra ATS.

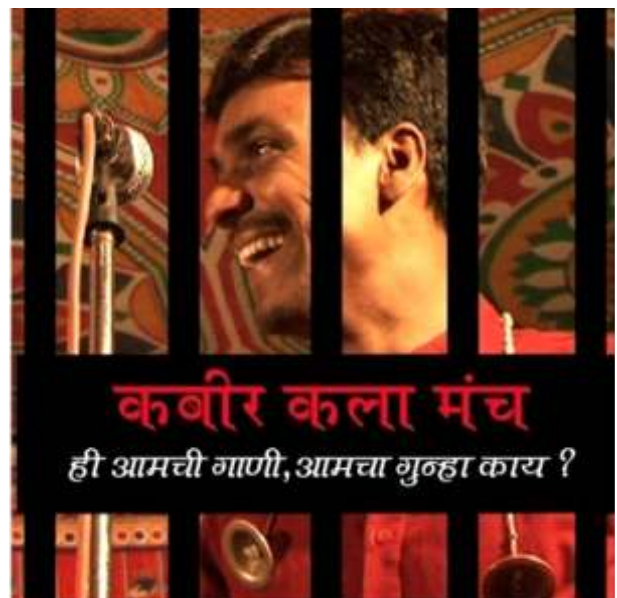
The film gave visibility to KKM as a group; sections of the media were quick to pick up the gross violation of 'freedom of expression' in the arrest of KKM members. At the same time, a strident and aggressive state used sections of the mainstream press as its handmaiden to publicise KKM's Maoist connections; stories appeared in papers suggesting that KKM members had, in fact, attended Maoist camps, and were in charge of spreading their network in Pune and other urban areas.

Did KKM really have Maoist connections? Were they, as the cops allege, serving as a front organisation for the Maoists? Whatever be the answer to that question, there isn't any incontrovertible evidence to suggest that they were involved in armed conflict against the state. In fact, four of the arrested members have already been granted bail by the High Court of Bombay; the judge, while granting the bail application stated that mere belief in an ideology does not make one a member of the banned Maoist party.

What then did the state seek to achieve by charging the KKM members and putting them behind bars? The answer may be gleaned from the fate of Deshbhakti Yuva Manch after its members were arrested on similar charges. Even though all those arrested in the Deshbhakti Yuva Manch case were eventually acquitted and granted bail, the incarceration smashed the group completely. "Some members went underground fearing police action," says Ferreira, adding that post the acquittal, the group never reconvened. Some activists who closely watch the cultural resistance landscape think that the state's attempt in the case of KKM is also something similar—to smash the group.

Yet, neither was Deshbhakti Yuva Manch the first group of its kind, nor will KKM be the last. There were/ are several groups engaged in cultural resistance that trace their ideological lineages from the radical left in conjunction with the radical Ambedkarite flanks. Activists, though, say that whenever any such group becomes too 'active' and begins wearing its radicalness on its sleeve, the state clamps down on them. Like it did in case of Deshbhakti Yuva Manch and KKM.

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Police Silencing Songs of Dissent



KKM activists courting arrest

★ PROUT News Report

Two activists from the Pune-based Kabir Kala Manch handed themselves over to the police to face the law after they were charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act or UAPA two years ago. Sheetal Sathe and Sachin Mali were taken away by the police as soon as they arrived at the gates of the Maharashtra assembly.

The duo read out a statement clarifying their actions before they were taken away. "This is not a surrender and they have faith in the courts and the democratic process and they hope for justice," they told reporters. Filmmaker and activist Anand Patwardhan, who was present when they surrendered, told NDTV, "They are not surrendering. They are doing Satyagraha. They are not apologising. They are saying we have done no wrong. We have spoken out for the poorest of the poor." This was the first public

appearance of Sheetal Sathe and Sachin Mali after living underground for two years. Both were members of the Kabir Kala Manch, a Pune-based group of cultural activists, when they were charged under the UAPA over allegations of being Naxalites. "This is our Satyagraha. Freedom of expression is our struggle," Sheetal told NDTV. "Incidents like Khairlanji and the lack of justice in the Ramabai firing case, their songs became more militant and the state interpreted them as some kind of extremism. To my knowledge, they have never been charged with any kind of violence," Mr Patwardhan said. NDTV had reported their story earlier from the slum in central Pune's Swargate area where Sheetal was born and brought up by her mother Sandhya, who encouraged the former to sing and supported her fight for Dalit Rights. When NDTV spoke to her after her daughter went underground, she had said, "The

State is accusing them of being "desh drohi". We don't understand what this means. After all, they are not manufacturing bombs or killing people...they are only providing entertainment through their songs." Sandhya has always believed in her daughter's innocence. After Sheetal's news appeared on TV channels, she told NDTV, "If they were involved in any anti-national activity, I would have shot them dead before the Anti-Terrorism Squad or police." Now, activists are hoping that the duo will get a speedy trial and that, their case will not drag on like that of activist Binayak Sen. A recent Bombay High Court ruling has given them reason to hope. The ruling states that unless the police make out a case that an actual crime has been committed by the accused, they cannot interpret the UAPA to arrest people merely on the basis of any alleged ideology.

Meanwhile, the fight for Dalit rights, the duo saying, will continue.

India's

Hell Holes

(Child Sexual Assaults in Juvenile Justice Homes)

48,338 child rape cases from 2001 to 2011 with 336% increase of child rape cases from 2001 to 2011

* Suhas Chakma



Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) submits report

on child sexual assault in India's juvenile justice homes to the visiting UN Special on Violence against Women - in its report, "India's Hell Holes: Child Sexual Assault in Juvenile Justice Homes" stated that sexual offences against children in India have reached an epidemic proportion and a large number of them are being committed in the juvenile justice homes run and aided by the Government of India. The report was submitted in advance to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Ms Rashida Manjoo who was on an official visit to India from April 22 to May 1, 2013 and the ACHR met the Rapporteur on April 23, 2013.

The 56-page report, citing National Crimes Record Bureau statistics, stated that a total of 48,338 child rape cases was recorded from 2001 to 2011 and India saw an increase of 336% of child rape cases from 2001 (2,113 cases) to 2011 (7,112 cases). These are only the tip of the iceberg as the large majority of child rape cases are not reported to the police while



children regularly become victims of other forms of sexual assault too.

Among the states, Madhya Pradesh recorded the highest number of child rape cases with 9,465 cases from 2001 to 2011; followed by Maharashtra with 6,868 cases; Uttar Pradesh with 5,949 cases; Andhra Pradesh with 3,977 cases; Chhattisgarh with 3,688 cases; Delhi with 2,909 cases; Rajasthan with 2,776 cases; Kerala with 2,101 cases; Tamil Nadu with 1,486 cases; Haryana with 1,081 cases; Punjab with 1,068 cases; Gujarat with 999 cases; West Bengal with 744 cases; Odisha with 736 cases; Karnataka with 719 cases; Himachal Pradesh with 571 cases; Bihar with 519 cases; Tripura with

457 cases; Meghalaya with 452 cases; Assam with 316 cases; Jharkhand with 218 cases; Mizoram with 217 cases; Goa with 194 cases; Uttarakhand with 152 cases; Chandigarh with 135 cases; Sikkim with 113 cases; Manipur with 98 cases; Arunachal Pradesh with 93 cases; Jammu and Kashmir with 69 cases; Andaman and Nicobar Island with 65 cases; Puducherry with 41 cases; Nagaland with 38 cases; Dadra and Nagar Haveli with 15 cases; and Daman and Diu with 9 cases.

Many of the child rape cases take place in juvenile justice homes established under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 and by the end

of financial year 2011-2012, about 733 juvenile justice homes were fully supported by the Government of India under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) of the Ministry of Women and Child Development. "It will not be an understatement to state that juvenile justice homes, established to provide care and protection as well as re-integration, rehabilitation and restoration of the juveniles in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection, have become India's hell holes where inmates are subjected to sexual assault and exploitation, torture and ill treatment apart from being forced to live in inhuman conditions. The girls remain the most vulnerable. It matters little whether the juvenile justice homes are situated in the capital Delhi or in the mofussil towns," says Suhas Chakma.

The 56-page report also highlights 39 emblematic cases of systematic and often repeated sexual assault on children in juvenile justice homes. Out of the 39 cases, 11 cases were reported from government-run juvenile justice homes such as observation homes, children homes, shelter homes and orphanages, while in one case a CWC member was accused of sexual harassment during counseling sessions. The remaining 27 cases were reported from privately/NGO run juvenile justice homes such as shelter homes, orphanages, children homes, destitute homes, etc. Majority of privately/NGO run homes are not registered under Section 34(3) of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (as amended in 2006).

In the case of government-run juvenile justice homes, the perpetrators were staffs including the caretakers, security guards, cooks and other Class IV employees, and the senior inmates.



collusion with the staff.

With respect to the privately/NGO-run juvenile justice homes, the perpetrators include managers/ directors / owners/founders and their relatives and friends, staff members such as caretakers, wardens, cooks, drivers, security guards, gatekeepers, senior inmates and outsiders including security forces. Out of the 27 cases in privately/NGO-run homes, inmates were responsible for the offences in five cases and out of these, in one case offence was committed in collusion with the staff. In most cases, sexual assault in the juvenile justice homes continues for a long period as the victims are not able to protest and suffer silently in the absence of any inspection by

the authorities under the JJ(C&PC) Act. While authorities of the juvenile justice homes are the main predators, the absence of separate facilities, in many cases for boys and girls, and in most cases as per age i.e. for boys and girls up to 12 years, 13-15 years and 16 years and above as provided under Rule 40 of the Juvenile Justice Care and Protection of Children Rules 2007 facilitates sexual assaults on the minor inmates by the senior inmates.

ACHR blamed the Government of India i.e. the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the State Governments for the continuing sexual assault on children in the juvenile justice homes. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights and the Child Welfare Committees intervene only after crimes are reported but there are no preventive mechanisms or regular inspections.

The report highlighted four major failures for the continuing sexual assaults in the government run and aided or unregistered juvenile homes.

First, most State governments have not formed Inspection Committees which are mandated to inspect the juvenile justice homes and report at least once in every three months. Though the Ministry of Women and Child Development while approving projects for all the





States and Union Territories under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme since 2010, it never raised the issue of Inspection Committees with the Governments of Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Puducherry, Bihar, Jharkhand, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Meghalaya and Nagaland despite having yearly meetings for the last three years. In fact, no separate budgetary allocation has been made under ICPS for the functioning of the Inspection Committees. There is a conscious effort on the part of the Ministry to avoid the issue of the Inspection Committees.

Second, there are hundreds of unregistered child care homes across the country despite the requirement to register the same within six months under JJ(C & PC) Act, 2006. Inspection is seldom carried out in these unregistered homes and children remain extremely vulnerable to sexual abuse in these homes. The Ministry of Women and Child Development had raised the issue of non-registration of children's home with Jharkhand on 21 January 2013, Odisha on 9 November 2012, Arunachal Pradesh on 29 August 2012, Haryana on 29 August 2012, Rajasthan on 29 August 2012, Andhra Pradesh on 11 July 2012, Assam on 11 July 2012, Mizoram on 15 March 2012, Karnataka on 28 June 2012 and Kerala 17 January

2012, among others, but unregistered children's homes exist across the country. In many cases funds are given by the State Governments even if institutions are not registered under the JJ(C&PC) Act.

There is no punitive provision per se for non-registration of the institutions but Section 23 of the JJ(C&PC) Act allows the authorities to take action against willful neglect, mental or physical suffering of children but little action is taken.

Third, though there are 462 District Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) in 23 States mandated to verify fit institutions, majority of them exist only on paper. The State Government of Karnataka in October 2010 put the conditions that "members of the CWCs cannot visit child care institutions, when they are not holding a sitting, without prior permission of the heads of these institutions," thereby prohibiting random and surprise inspections.

Fourth, though Rule 40 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Rules 2007 provides for separate facilities for boys and girls as well as according to age i.e. for boys and girls up to 12 years, 13-15 years and 16 years and above, this provision has not been complied with. The lack of segregation on the basis of gender, nature of offences and age facilitates

senior inmates to commit the offences against minor inmates including girls.

Asian Centre for Human Rights stated that the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO) will not address the menace of child sexual abuse unless the Government of India creates a Special Fund under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme to provide financial assistance for prosecution of the offenders under the POCSO.

ACHR also, among others, recommended immediate establishment of the Inspection Committees in all the districts and mandatory inspection of the juvenile justice homes by the Inspection Committees in every three months; stopping funds to any home unless inspection reports are submitted; separate budgetary allocations for the functioning of the Inspection Committees, ban on posting of male staff in girls' homes, separation of residential facilities based on the nature of offences, gender and age, completion of inspection of all unregistered homes within six months and registration of cases against the authorities of the unregistered juvenile justice homes.

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Governors in the Dock

They turn a blind eye to laws overriding tribal rights, complains national commission



Tribals in Jharkhand protest for land rights. Conflicts are growing in tribal areas

* Jitendra

GOVERNORS of states with sizeable tribal population have come in for indictment over not performing their special administrative roles. To ensure partial autonomy in tribal areas, the Constitution entrusts governors with immense powers to supervise the administration and governance in such areas. They can allow or disallow any law or development programme in tribal areas to protect self governance and development needs. They can also make regulations for harmony and effective governance. But

governors are hardly doing so, finds the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.

In a confidential report sent to the President, the Commission has recommended that governors be made more accountable in dispensing their special duties in tribal areas notified under Schedule Five of the Constitution, which protects tribal interests. This comes at a time when the government is allocating large development funds for these areas, many of which are reeling from Maoist insurgency. "There is a need to evolve a mechanism for the governor ... in scheduled areas to monitor and ensure implementation (of

constitutional provisions) in letter and spirit. So that governors may play an oversight role in the matter," states the report sent in June last year and seen by Down To Earth.

The Commission, a constitutional body, sends an annual report to the President on the state of affairs in tribal areas notified under Schedule Five. According to sources, the President, who also enjoys special powers in Schedule Five areas, has sent the report to the tribal affairs ministry. It should have been placed in Parliament after a review by the ministry. But the ministry, due to reasons known to it best, did not do so. "We did not table it in Parliament due to complex

procedures and non-availability of a Hindi version of the report,” A K Dubey, joint secretary of the ministry, says. He does not elaborate “complex procedures”. Since its inception in 2004, the Commission has sent five annual reports to the President. Except for the first one, no report has yet been tabled in Parliament.

Review All Laws

The latest report indicates constant failure of governors in overseeing developments in Schedule Five areas. The most important responsibility of the governor is to ensure that the special panchayati raj law for tribal areas, known as PESA—Panchayat Extension to the Scheduled Areas— Act is implemented effectively and

any law that contradicts it is put aside. Through a notification, a governor can annul, restrict or modify state and Centre’s regulations without seeking the opinion of the Council of Ministers headed by the chief minister.

Governors’ reports rarely mention poor governance, insurgency or displacement

However, according to B D Sharma, the last commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, “All the laws are automatically applicable until the governor does not want to implement or amend as per the need of the Fifth Schedule areas.” As governors fail to perform this duty, general laws have automatically

been applicable to tribal areas, often leading to conflicts.

The confidential report has recommended a review of all laws for their adaptation in Scheduled Areas. Every year the governor is supposed to send a ‘TACs’ conducted meetings to the President on the state of affairs and his/her interventions. The commission has suggested that the ministry of tribal affairs should issue a uniform format for preparation and submission of governor’s report. The format should have a provision for review of Union and state laws and their compatibility with the constitutional provisions safeguarding tribal interests. It should also have a specification for listing steps taken to protect the constitutional rights of tribals.

In reviewing laws, governors can consult the Tribes Advisory Councils (TACs) constituted by the states with tribal areas. In the current financial year, four states out of the 11 that have TACs conducted meetings till December 2012. Senior journalist B G Verghese, who has written extensively on the issue, says sarcastically that it is mutely accepted by the Government of India that the governor in the Fifth Schedule, meant to be a “governor-in-council”, is acting on the aid and advice of his council.

The confidential report has recommended making TACs more accountable. The advisory councils should be reconstituted regularly and meet at least twice a year, says the report.

Out of Focus

Governors’ role in Schedule Five areas has been under scrutiny ever since the enactment of PESA. It gained urgency in the recent past with large-scale industrialisation triggering conflicts in several tribal areas. Governors are not only irregular in sending annual reports to the President (see map), but also evasive on the subjects these reports are meant to address. R R Prasad,

Missing Governors' Reports

Available records show that governors in the nine states with Schedule Five areas have till date sent 66 reports (break-up in the map) to the President. In the Past 22 years the states should have sent 189 reports.



Source: Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and Samata NGO

Report highlights

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes recommends:

- Governors should have more oversight in tribal areas
- Create a new mechanism to make governors accountable
- Create a format for their annual report to the President
- Annual report should deal with the compatibility of general laws with special rights of tribals under the Constitution

Defunct council

National Council for Tribal Welfare, headed by the prime minister, was constituted in September, 2010, for the welfare of tribals. It has 18 members drawn from ministries, Planning Commission, chief ministers of states with Schedule Five areas and tribal experts. It has not met since its inception. The government accepted this while replying to a query by H K Dua in the Rajya Sabha in December 2012. "The government does not seem serious about Scheduled Areas," Dua says.

director of the National Institute of Rural Development, has analysed such reports. According to him, none of these reports talks about burning issues like displacement, poor governance and insurgency. "The reports are hardly objective assessments as required by the law. Largely, they read like a laundry list of physical targets and financial allocations under various schemes as reported by the state government's department," says Prasad. "It is time a more stringent system is put in place so that the annual report truly reflects the condition

of tribes in these areas."

There is no proper record of the annual reports submitted to the President. Non-profit Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative sought records on governors' reports between 1990 and 2008 through the right-to-information route. But the tribal affairs ministry furnished reports dating from only 2001, citing the reason that the ministry was created in October 1999. This is not the first time government's own wing underscored governors' negligence in tribal areas. In 2008 and 2011, during governors' meetings in Delhi, the then president requested

them to look into their roles in tribal areas more seriously. In April 2012, the Central government for the first time issued a directive to a governor in respect to his constitutional duty in Scheduled Areas. V Kishore Chandra Deo, Union Minister for Tribal Affairs and Panchayati Raj, asked the governor of Andhra Pradesh to cancel the memorandum of understanding signed for bauxite mining in the state's Scheduled areas. The governor, however, ignored the directive.

The Commission's report has officially raised an issue that has been simmering for some time now.

When resources are degraded, we start competing for them, whether it is at the local level in Kenya, where we had tribal clashes over land and water, or at the global level, where we are fighting over water, oil, and minerals. So one way to promote peace is to promote sustainable management and equitable distribution of resources.

- Wangari Maathai

There is no evidence to back up the claim that we can create jobs for everyone who wants one. To rely on jobs and economic growth does not work. We have to get rid of the myth that "welfare-to-work" will solve the problems of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness.



Long line of the jobless

Jobs are not the Answer

* Allan Sheahan

The current unemployment rate of 7.5 percent means close to 20 million Americans remain unemployed or underemployed. Nobody states the obvious truth: that the marketplace has changed and there will never again be enough

jobs for everyone who wants one -- no matter who is in the White House or in Congress. Fifty years ago, economists predicted that automation and technology would displace thousands of workers a year. Now we even have robots doing human work. Job losses will only get worse as the 21st century progresses. Global capital will

continue to move jobs to places on the planet that have the lowest labor costs. Technology will continue to improve, eliminating countless jobs.

There is no evidence to back up the claim that we can create jobs for everyone who wants one. To rely on jobs and economic growth does not work. We have to get rid of the myth that "welfare-to-work" will

solve the problems of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness. "Work" and jobs are not the answer to ending poverty. This has been the hardest concept for us to understand. It's the hardest concept to sell to citizens and policy makers. To end poverty and to achieve true economic freedom, we need to break the link between work and income. Job creation is a completely wrong approach because the world doesn't need everyone to have a job in order to produce what is needed for us to live a decent, comfortable life. We need to re-think the whole concept of having a job. When we say we need more jobs, what we really mean is we need more money to live on.

Basic Income Guarantee

One answer is to establish a basic income guarantee (BIG), enough at least to get by on -- just above the poverty level -- for everyone. Each of us could then try to find work to earn more. A basic income would provide economic freedom and income security to everyone. We'd have the freedom to work less if we wanted to, or work the same amount and save or spend that money. It would provide a direct stimulus to the economy, which would help create more jobs.

In 1972, Democratic Presidential candidate and Senator George McGovern knew the economy was changing. He proposed a \$1000 annual "demogrant" for every American. The grant would act as a kind of cushion against the loss of a job or other misfortune. We could pay for a Basic Income Guarantee by eliminating most of the 20th-century programs like unemployment insurance, welfare, Social Security, Section 8 housing, etc., and by having the wealthy pay their fair share in taxes. Billionaire Warren Buffett admits he pays a lower tax rate than his secretary. Mitt Romney said he paid only 13.9 percent in federal income tax in 2010, despite earning \$22 million. Average-income Americans pay about 20

percent. A BIG would be cheaper than a jobs program. President Obama's 2009 stimulus plan promised to create 3 to 4 million jobs at a cost of \$862 billion. That's over \$200,000 per job. Such a basic income would recognize that with productivity as high as it is today, too many workers get in each other's way. Those who don't have to work shouldn't be required to do so. Instead, they can create, do volunteer service, or work at low-paying jobs which are still socially needed, such as teaching or the arts. Think of it as the opposite of trickle-down economics, where we give huge tax breaks to the rich in the false hope that something will trickle down to the rest of us.

Not a New Idea

Basic income is not a new idea. It's been debated among policymakers in several nations since the 1970s. Economist Milton Friedman said: "We should replace the ragbag of specific welfare programs with a single comprehensive program of income supplements in cash -- a negative income tax." The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., said: "I am convinced that the simplest solution to poverty is to abolish it directly by a guaranteed income."

BIG's most recent American advocate is welfare critic Charles Murray. In his book: *In Our Hands*, Murray agrees with Friedman and King, and proposes a \$10,000 yearly grant paid to every adult. Murray and others argue it would save money. There would be no bureaucracy to support and no red tape to manage.

Opponents claim we shouldn't pay people not to work. But the duty to pursue work is based on the mistaken assumption that there is work to be had. In the post-industrial age, the USA will provide ever fewer opportunities for low-skilled workers. Policies in pursuit of full employment make no sense.

Basic Income Can Work

In 1982, the state of Alaska began distributing money from state

oil revenues to every resident. The Alaska Permanent Fund gives about \$1000 to \$2000 each year to every man, woman, and child in the state. In 2012, the amount fell to \$878. There are no work requirements. The grant has reduced poverty and the inequality of income in Alaska. A 10-year, 7800-family, U.S. government test of a basic income in the 1970s found that most people would continue to work, even when their incomes were guaranteed. A test in Manitoba, Canada produced similar results.

In 2005, Brazil created a basic income for the most needy. When fully implemented, the plan will ensure that all Brazilians, regardless of their origin, race, sex, age, social or economic status, will have a monetary income enough to meet their basic needs. A two-year, basic income pilot program just concluded in Otjivero, Namibia. Each of 930 villagers received 1000 Namibian dollars (US\$12.40) each month. Malnutrition rates of children under five fell from 42% to zero. Dropout rates at the school fell from 40% to almost zero. It led to an increase in small businesses.

Most Americans are six months from poverty. Middle-class people who worked all their lives, then lost their jobs and saw their unemployment benefits expire, are now sleeping in parks and under bridges. America hasn't seen full employment in decades. Even a full-time job at the minimum wage can't lift a family of three from poverty. Millions of Americans -- children, the aged, the disabled -- are unable to work.

A basic income guarantee would be like an insurance policy. It would give each of us the assurance that, no matter what happened, we and our families wouldn't starve.

The writer is the author of the book,

"Basic Income Guarantee: Your Right to Economic Security"

and is a board member of the U.S.

Basic Income Guarantee (USBIG) Network.



Complementary currencies can help eradicate poverty and are endorsed by many governments worldwide. The oldest and largest is the WIR system in Switzerland, an exchange system among 60,000 businesses – a full 20% of all Swiss businesses.

The Crime of Alleviating Poverty

A Local Community Currency Battles the Central Bank of Kenya

* Ellen Brown

Former Peace Corps volunteer Will Ruddick and several residents of Bangladesh, Kenya face a potential seven years in prison after developing a cost-effective way to alleviate poverty in Africa's poorest slums. Their solution: a complementary currency issued and backed by the local community. The Central Bank of Kenya has now initiated charges of forgery.

Complementary currencies can help eradicate poverty.

Proving that may be difficult in complex economies, due to the high number of factors influencing outcomes. But in an African slum with little of the national currency available, supplying residents with an alternative currency has a positive effect that is obvious, immediate and incontrovertible.

This was demonstrated when Will Ruddick, an American

physicist, economist and former Peace Corps volunteer, introduced a complementary currency into a Kenyan slum called Bangladesh, near the coastal city of Mombasa. Will's local development organization, Koru-Kenya, worked with over one hundred small business owners in Bangladesh, who agreed to give each other the equivalent of 400 shillings (about €3.5 or \$4.60) in mutual credit in the form of business vouchers called Bangla-Pesa. Half of the vouchers would be available for spending on each others' products and services, and half would be spent into the community on public projects such as waste collection and health services. Allocation decisions were democratic and transparent, and the new currency was backed entirely by the community's own resources and insured by a system of group guarantors, not by the



Kenyan government or a development agency.

The project was launched on May 11, 2013. The immediate effect was an increase in sales of 22%. That meant increasing incomes and purchasing power by 22%. These exchanges were of goods and services that without the additional currency would have been thrown away or gone to waste, not because they were unmarketable but because potential customers did not have the money to buy them. Introducing Bangla-Pesa worked to move the economy forward at full capacity, connecting the community to its own resources when the only things lacking were those slips of paper called “money.”

The successful Kenyan experiment quickly earned endorsements from the United Nations, The Hague and the International Reciprocal Trade Association. Indeed, no other poverty alleviation or local governance program can compete with the cost-effectiveness of this approach, which is easily replicable in poor communities across Africa. The plan was to expand it to other villages in a democratic grassroots fashion so that it could provide a local medium of exchange for people throughout the continent. This would be done via mobile phones with a system provided by Community Forge, an organization based in Geneva that supports the development of community currencies worldwide.

But that plan was unexpectedly interrupted on May 29th, when Will and five other project participants were arrested by Kenyan police and thrown in jail. Besides Will, who is married to a Kenyan aid worker and is a new father, the others include local community business owners who are parents and grandparents, a youth activist, a volunteer mother, and the caretaker of seven orphan children.

The police at first accused the group of plotting a terrorist overthrow of the government,

claiming that Bangla-Pesa was linked to the MRC, a terrorist secessionist group. When that link was easily disproven, the Central Bank of Kenya was called in and charges of forgery were formally placed. Will and his fellow suspects have been released for now on a bail of EUR 5,000 and await trial on July 17th. If convicted, they face seven years in a Kenyan prison.

Despite these perilous circumstances, Will remains optimistic. “The exciting thing,” he says, “is that these systems really do show a means of poverty reduction – and my hope is that after this case we’ll be allowed to spread them to slums across Kenya. There have been years of precedent for Complementary Currencies as a solution to poverty, and today there is no doubting it.”

Successful Precedents from Switzerland to Brazil

Complementary currencies are endorsed by many governments worldwide. The oldest and largest is the WIR system in Switzerland, an exchange system among 60,000 businesses – a full 20% of all Swiss businesses. This currency has been demonstrated to have a counter-cyclical effect, helping to stabilize the Swiss economy by providing additional liquidity and lending capacity when conventional credit for small businesses is scarce.

Brazil is a global leader in using the complementary currency approach for poverty alleviation. Interestingly, its experience began in much the same way as Kenya’s: Brazil’s most successful community currency, called “Palmas”, was nearly strangled at birth by the Brazilian Central Bank. How it went from criminal suspect to official state policy is told by Margrit Kennedy and co-authors in *People Money*.

After issuing the first Palmas currency in 2003, local organiser Joaquim Melo was arrested on suspicion of running a money laundering operation in an

unregistered bank. The Central Bank started proceedings against him, saying that the bank was issuing false money. The defendants called on expert witnesses, including the Dutch development organisation Stro, to support their case. Finally, the judge agreed that it was a constitutional right of people to have access to finance and that the Central Bank was doing nothing for the poor areas benefiting from the local currencies. He ruled in favour of Banco Palmas.

What happens next shows the power of dialogue. The Central Bank created a reflection group and invited Joaquim to join in a conversation about how to help poor people. Banco Palmas started the Palmas Institute to share its methodology with other communities and, in 2005, the government’s secretary for “solidarity economy” created a partnership with the Institute to finance dissemination. Support for community development banks issuing new currency is now state policy.

The Legal Debate: Mutual Credit or Counterfeiting?

If the Kenyan court follows the example of Brazil, this could be the beginning of a promising new approach to poverty reduction in Africa. The Bangla-Pesa is backed by local resources, and the villagers were very happy to have it in order to move their products and buy the surplus of others within their community.

Viewed as a case of counterfeiting, however, there is historical precedent for harsh punishment. In the mid-eighteenth century, when the Bank of England was privately owned and had the exclusive right to issue the national currency, counterfeiting Bank of England Notes was made a crime punishable by death. That was the era of Charles Dickens’ *Tale of Two Cities* and *Bleak House*, when supplementing the national

currency might have helped relieve mass poverty; but it was in the interest of the Bank to control the market for currency and keep it scarce, in order to ensure a steady demand for loans. When there is insufficient money in the system to cover the needs of exchange, people must borrow from banks at interest, ensuring the banks a handsome profit.

The converse is also true: when sufficient money is supplied to cover the needs of exchange, debt levels and poverty are dramatically reduced.

In this case, the physical Bangla-Pesa voucher looks nothing like the national currency, as it would need to in order to sustain a charge of forgery. The intent of complementary currencies, as their name implies, is not to imitate or compete with the national currency but to complement it, allowing for increased sales within the local

community of existing goods and services that would otherwise go unsold. Today, the Bank of England itself acknowledges this role of complementary currencies.

The Bangla-PESA experience demonstrates what policymakers often overlook: gross domestic product is measured in goods and services sold, not goods and services produced; and for goods to be sold, purchasers must have the money to buy them. Provide consumers with excess money to spend, and GDP will go up. (In Kenya, where nearly half the population lives in poverty and mass unemployment, increase in GDP reflect extractive practices rather than local conditions.)

The common perception is that increasing the medium of exchange will merely devalue the currency and increase prices, but the data show that this does not happen so long as merchandise and services remain unsold or workers remain

unemployed. Adding liquidity in those circumstances drives up sales, productivity and employment rather than prices.

This was demonstrated in a larger experiment in Argentina, when the country suffered a major banking crisis in 1995. Lack of confidence in the peso and capital flight ended in a full-scale run on the banks, which closed their doors. When the national currency became unavailable, people responded by creating their own. Community currencies at the local level evolved into the Global Exchange Network (Red Global de Trueque or RGT), which went on to become the largest national community currency network in the world. The model spread throughout Central and South America, growing to seven million members and a circulation valued at millions of U.S. dollars per year. At the local government level, provinces short of the national currency also resorted to issuing their own money, paying their employees with paper receipts called “Debt-Cancelling Bonds” that were in currency units equivalent to the Argentine Peso.

Although these various measures increased the currency in circulation, prices did not inflate. To the contrary, studies found that in provinces in which the national money supply was supplemented with local currencies, prices actually declined compared to other Argentine provinces. Local exchange systems allowed goods and services to be traded that would not otherwise have found a market.

This salutary effect was also observed in Bangladesh. “With Bangla-PESA,” says Ruddick, “we’ve seen that a circulating community-backed interest-free credit is a low-cost, effective way to increase local liquidity and decrease poverty.”

The defendants just need to prove that in court. A crowd-funding campaign is being used to raise the money urgently needed for their defense.



Amurt Relief in Uttrakhand

Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team (AMURT) consisting of 15 monks, nuns and volunteers rushed to worst flood ravaged area of Rudra Prayag district of Uttrakhand and started relief work there. Two AMURT Teams led by Acharya Dhyanatmananda Avadhuta (Central AMURT Secretary) and Acharya Naranarayananda Avadhuta are distributing beaten rice, sugar, milk powder, biscuits, lemon, banana, water and other essential commodities amongst thousands of flood



victims at Kandara village, Chandrapur village in Agastamuni block and other remote areas of Rudra Prayag District. AMURT is also planning to set up several medical camps to combat epidemic and endemic diseases in flood affected areas.

AMURT appeals to all generous people to contribute cash through AMURT Mumbai. A/c No.: 0845276005, Account Name: Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team, Bank Name: Citi Bank N. A., Branch: Fort, Mumbai. Contact No. 09324279179, 9958268578.

Samaj Bhavan at Siliguri

Samaj movement (socio-economic liberation of the deprived people) work is getting its momentum along with the regular Prout propagation. Samaj movement plays pivotal role in the implementation of Prout.

The ongoing anti - gorkhaland movement in Shiliguri, the Rarh anti-exploitation movement in Tatanagar, teaching mother language in Jharkhand are a few in the list.

In West Bengal panchayat election due in the second week of July. Proutist candidates have filed their nomination papers in many districts.

Barendra Bhavan, the Samaj office in Shiliguri (West Bengal),

has been purchased now. This project has become a reality due to the cooperation of all the Proutists. Soon the Bhavan will be hub of Proutist activities.



Formation of National Platform Against Water Privatization (NPAWP)

In a historic move, struggle groups against water privatization from different states came together in Nagpur and formed a national platform to fight against water privatization in India. In a daylong meeting organised by Citizen's Front for Water Democracy (Delhi) and Focus on the Global South (Delhi) in collaboration with Nagpur Municipal Corporation Employees Union, more than 70 water activists from Delhi, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar



Acarya Santosananda Avadhuta, Editor, Prout addressing the assembly of water activists

Pradesh, Haryana and Karnataka launched formation of a National Platform. After a marathon session the meeting passed a resolution declaring formation of NATIONAL PLATFORM AGAINST WATER PRIVATIZATION (NPAWP). The meeting also came out with a Nagpur Declaration, a policy statement of the NPAWP giving details about its visions and objectives in the context of people's right to water.

In this meeting, a national coordination committee was also constituted which elected SA Naqvi of Citizens Front for Water Democracy (CFWD, Delhi) as the National Coordinator of NPAWP. Besides Naqvi, the others who constituted the National Coordination Committee include Jammu Anand of NMC Municipal Union, Nagpur as Regional Coordinator for Western Zone; Nirmla Sharma of Jagriti Mahila Samiti (Delhi) as Regional Coordinator for Northern Zone; Rajinder Prabhakar of Peoples Campaign on Right to Water (Karnataka) for Southern Zone; Subrato Chakrabarti of Guwahati Sanmilita Nagarik Adhikar Suraksha Manacha for North Eastern Zone; Saurabh Sinha of Inner Voice Foundation of Ballia for Eastern zone and Rahmat Rawat of Manthan (Badwani) as Regional Coordinator for Central Zone. Besides regional coordinators, the others who are part of the national coordination committee include Raman Kanan of Public Services International, Afsar Jafri of Focus on the Global South, Dr. A.K. Arun of Yuva Bharat, Akhil Gogoi of Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, Kiran Shaheen of Pani Hakk Abhiyan, Gaurav Diwedi of Manthan, Sanjay Sharma of Water Workers Allaince, Pranjali Dixshit of Mumbai and Vinay Baidur of Bangalore.

On 1st July, the National Platform against Water Privatization and the NMC Municipal Union staged a demonstration against water privatization in Nagpur and met with the Municipal Commissioner of Nagpur in his office and gave a memorandum demanding for the immediate termination of the contract with the Orange City Water. It also demanded for the remunicipalisation of the water supply and distribution in Nagpur. The national platform is a unique initiative to build solidarity among different movements and campaigns from India who are engaged in any activities related to water to ensure water as a common good and determine human rights to water. This national body of water activists also decided to extend all support to movements opposing dams, river diversions or river linking.



The fight against any form of water privatization will be the key agenda of the NATIONAL PLATFORM. It will help each other and seek strength from each other in this difficult time when democratic governments in the states have been sold out to corporations. The national platform will contact with different groups who are campaigning against water privatization in their cities to come together. They will share their experiences, documents and strategies to gain strength and knowledge from



each other.

The NPAWP will soon initiate mass movement against government's undemocratic moves to privatize and commodify water. The NPAWP decided to raise all issues relating to water like its environmental aspects, ecological concerns, dams, rivers etc and oppose all forms of water commercialization.

The NPAWP through a resolution rejected the National Water Policy of 2012 as well as the draft report issued recently by the Y.K. Alagh Committee, the National Water Framework Laws, which promotes privatization of water.

The NPAWP also declared the Uttarakhand disaster as man-made disaster and a result of callous and anti-environment policies of the Central and the State Governments. It passed a resolution opposing such infrastructure development anywhere in India which compromises environmental concerns for the sake of growth and development.

Prout Study Group Goes to Hear Gar

✱ By Mirra Price



For three months a Women Prout Study Group has been meeting regularly in Asheville, North Carolina, USA. Groups in Portland, Oregon and Eugene have started, as well.

On April 4th at 7 p.m. five members of the Asheville Prout Women Study Group ventured out to a lecture and book signing by Gar Alperovitz at Malaprops Bookstore. He was on a tour to launch his new book, *What Then Must We Do?* Alperovitz is currently a professor of political economy at the University of Maryland, and has been writing books about wealth, democracy and national security for 48 years. *What Then Must We Do?* is a conversational read filled with dismal forecasts and hopeful alternative economic strategies. Alperovitz founded the Democracy Collaborative, which is the think tank from which the Cleveland Evergreen cooperatives sprang. He also was a keynote speaker at the October, 2012 Economic Democracy Conference in Madison, Wisconsin.

Women Prout study group settled in near the front in anticipation of a stirring presentation. Alperovitz spoke about a dead end that he sees in grassroots movements to create societal change. Since the Occupy Movement faded, he said that it is important to figure out how to build on that momentum to construct a populist movement for social change.

He asked, "Who is allowed to own the wealth?" Historically, the lords and landlords in feudal times, hoarded the wealth, leaving the peasants landless and poor. Currently, in this country big business controls the wealth, leaving the 99 percent increasingly more impoverished, unable to provide well for their families.

Sweden has a strongly regulated form of capitalism which seems to work pretty well. However, in the United States, megacorporations are largely above government control, manipulating the economy to fill their own coffers, are only minimally regulated and are often even untaxed by the government. Alperovitz opined that neither monopoly capitalism nor state socialism are viable economic alternatives to create a sustainable,

equitable economy. He suggested going to a cooperative, locally controlled economy, based on the models of the Mondragon and the Evergreen cooperatives in Cleveland with which he has worked. He said that the women's movement in the 60s and 70s could serve as a model in consciousness-raising and movement building.

In the Q&A session after the talk, one of the Women Prout Study Group members, Ityopyia Ewart, asked Alperovitz what programs he was aware of and promoting that helped African-Americans to become economically self-sufficient.

At first, he answered that such programs were not within his purview. However, after Ityopyia persisted, he praised her and admitted that he needed to use his privileged position in society and academia to help promote economic justice of disenfranchised groups like African Americans and women.

I spoke with Gar briefly after the talk about how we could work together in the future. He mentioned his organization, the Democracy Collaborative.

Contact him at www.democracycollaborative.org and www.garalperoviz.com

PBI's Dharna (sit-in) for Action Against Anti-social Vested Interest Elements

Yavatmal(Maharashtra,India) : Proutist Bloc India (PBI), Vidarbha region headed by Madhukar Nistane, staged a one-day dharana (sit-in) in front of the office of the District Magistrate on July 12, 2013 demanding action against some anti-social vested interest elements misguiding and cheating simple ignorant tribals of the local Reserve Forest.

The forest has been declared Reserve for the tigers, and therefore tribals living in it



are being evacuated after having been paid compensation for rehabilitation. They have also been provided with land in nearby villages for rehabilitation. The civic amenities like water, electricity are available there.

But some anti-social elements became active in order to usurp the lakhs of rupees tribals received by way of compensation. They have convinced these innocent simple ignorant tribals to rehabilitate them at some different land. This land does not have basic civic amenities like road, water, electricity. Besides this land is an encroachment on some other's property.

These elements have been successful in even getting certain Deed regarding this transaction signed on Stamp papers in order to usurp their money.

PBI had brought these evil doings in the knowledge of the local authorities. When they did not pay attention to the matter, they staged demonstration before the D.M.'s office and submitted memorandum to him. They will intensify their agitation if the authorities do not jump into action and free tribals from the grip of these unscrupulous people.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens could change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has!

– Margaret Mead

The New Dawn Shall Come

KE JENO ÁSIÁ KAYE GECHE KÁNE 2
NÚTAN PRABHÁT ÁSIBE--- 2
KE JENO ÁSIÁ---
KÁLO KUHÁSÁR YAVANIKÁ PÁRE
SONÁLI JIVAN HÁSIBE---
KE JENO ÁSIÁ KAHE GECHE KÁNE 2
NÚTAN PRABHÁT ÁSIBE--- 2,
KE JENO ÁSIÁ---

THÁKIBE NÁÁR VYATHÁ HÁHÁKÁR 2
BAHIBE NÁÁR SHUDHU ÁNKHIDHÁR 2
SAB VEDANÁR URDHWA LOKETE 2,
PRÁÑER PARÁG BHÁSIBE 2
KE JENO ÁSIÁ KAHE GECHE KÁNE
NÚTAN PRABHÁT ÁSIBE---,
KE JENO ÁSIÁ---

SNEHA MAMATÁR EI JE BHUVAN 2
ÁSHÁ BHÁLOBÁSA MADHUR SWAPAN 2
SAKAL MANER MARME PASHIÁ 2, S
SAB KÁLO CHÁYÁ NÁSHIBE--- 2
KE JENO ÁSIÁ KAHE GECHE KÁNE
NÚTAN PRABHÁT ÁSIBE---,
KE JENO ÁSIÁ---

Ah, someone came and whispered
“The new dawn shall come.
Beyond the curtain of darkest fog
The golden life shall laugh.

No more agony and long lamentations
No more tears and flowing eyes
From a realm high above all agony
Will float the pollen of vitality

The realm of affection and attachment
Of hope, love and sweet dreams
Will enter the inner core of all minds
Destroying all dark shadows.”

(Translated from Bengali original)

Purport: All black shadows of pains and troubles will be dispelled by human love and human touch. Some one whispered in my ear that a new dawn will come. The golden light will laugh, crushing the Cimmerian darkness. There will be no more pain and sorrow, and no more tears. Affection, compassion, love and hope will enter the inner core of the earth. All black shadows of pains and troubles will be dispelled by human love and human touch.

ETERNAL SONG OF
The Proutists

- Shrii P.R. Sarkar

*Morality is the demand of the day,
'Prout' - the cry of the suffering humanity,
Wise you be, may not or may,
If sincere, success a certainty.
Fee fy fa fum
Expel the demons from physical stratum.
Fee fy fa fum
Expel the exploiters from economic stratum.
Fee fy fa fum
Expel the brutes from psychic stratum.
Fee fy fa fum
Expel the parasites from spiritual stratum.
Human body is to serve one and all,
Human mind to attend Cosmic Call,
Human spirit at the altar Supreme,
Surrender and be Supreme.*



Join PBI for a Poverty-Free and Crime-Free India



Subhas Chand Tyagi
Chairman, Proutist Bloc India

Our dear country India--rich in its cultural and spiritual heritage--is passing through all round crises today. There is horrible poverty everywhere, purchasing power of common man is on continual decline, corruption always raises its ugly head. No political party, nor a political leader, has proved equal to the challenging task before the nation. Consequently crisis is deepening, and the soul of humanity here is profusely bleeding.

In this deep crisis of national disaster on all fronts, Proutist Bloc India has appeared on the political scene to rid country of the dragon of immorality, poverty and exploitation.

I appeal everybody to enrol themselves as a member of this party and strengthen the power of moralist forces. Your inspired cooperation is a must for the success of this moralist political movement.

Come One

Come All

Economic Democracy and Social Justice

**Presentation by Nada Khader, Economic Democracy Conference,
Madison, Wisconsin, USA.**

Nada Khader has been executive director of WESPAC Foundation, a peace and justice action network, since 2001. She has represented the US Palestinian Community Network at the US Social Forum national planning meetings, is a member of the steering committee of the United National Anti-War Coalition, and is a board member of United for a Fair Economy.

We are here today to promote the movement for a more just economic system; to nurture existing relationships and foster new ones. The current moment that we find ourselves in is one of a “crumbling façade of corporate capitalism run wild”. It has also been referred to as casino capitalism where economic forces are willing to gamble with our lives, our livelihoods, our health and well-being, our natural world. These forces may strike it rich, very rich but at an enormous social and environmental cost that we can no longer bear. It is not a rational model; it does not make sense.

Economic democracy implies that values are set within our community context creating an exchange of goods and services outside the clutches of corporations. Economic democracy implies a rights based framework that protects women, indigenous people and vulnerable populations from exploitation.

Economic democracy implies reversing the wave of commodification and monetarization, reducing the role of big banks and speculation and strengthening local control over our commons and shared resources.

Economic democracy implies that we all accept and respect the differences of our various communities — some of us are people of intellect, with academic, technical and scientific skills and a certain sense of aesthetics. Some of us are people of the heart, spirit and senses with a deep connection with the natural world and with highly developed intuitive skills. Together through cooperation we can transform this planet into a beautiful place for all to live. Buckminster Fuller has a fabulous quote: “Everyone has the perfect gift to give the world — and if each of us is freed up to give the gift that is uniquely ours to give, the world will be in total harmony.”

We need economic democracy so that we can free ourselves and free the world so that we can develop our talents and gifts and offer them up for the collective welfare of all. We start to free ourselves by creating a society that guarantees the minimum necessities of life — food, clothing, healthcare, education, and housing. We need to guarantee a minimum purchasing capacity and full employment to every person who seeks a job.

Food is such a basic necessity and yet for the richest country in the world there are a whole lot of hungry people or malnourished people. The city of Detroit is a food desert. With over 700,000 people living within the city limits, there is not a single major supermarket in the entire city. Folks buy their food at liquor stores and pharmacies and mom and pop stores and bodegas. But there is a whole grassroots movement now to grow food in the city, in abandoned lots, in community gardens, on roof tops. Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, the founder of the Progressive Utilization Theory (Prout), said that we must elevate the status of agriculture, that agriculture and agricultural work should have the same status as industry. Think about the car industry and how over time auto workers accrued decent compensation packages, worker protections and benefits. Imagine how our food system would be transformed if we applied the same standards to agricultural work. We need federal and state policies to promote the welfare of family farms and agricultural cooperatives which will enhance food security for all.

Worker-owned cooperatives are a crucial component of our march towards economic democracy.

We may feel uncomfortable talking about racial dynamics in our work. It is okay to feel uncomfortable. What is not okay is to ignore the reality of racial power and dynamics in our society and movements. Indigenous folk, people of African descent, Latin and Asian immigrants have not had the same opportunities collectively to accumulate wealth and pass on wealth over generations as white folk have had and continue to have. The institutions in our nation were not originally created to benefit people of color and the repercussions of that original intent are still very much existing today. We cannot have a meaningful discussion on economic democracy without addressing the role that racial constructs play in deciding who the system works for and who it does not work for.

It is well documented that law enforcement and the criminal justice system treats black and brown communities very differently from white communities. How does this impact a community’s ability to achieve economic liberation? Finally, many of you may know that several of the organizers of this conference are students of the Progressive Utilization Theory or PROUT as propounded by Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar. We are a lively and eclectic bunch, at once idealistic and practical and very much wanting to see our planet transition to a post-capitalist, people-oriented benevolent economic system.

So here we find ourselves today, traveling on both our individual and collective journeys as we move along the path of progressive social change, of coming together, of uniting our intentions, of becoming the powerful force that we already are in our effort to implement a system that works for all. The more we come together, share with each other, learn together, the more gentle will be our transition to this new era that we yearn for in our various ways. There is enough pain and suffering on this earth — let not our economic system be a source of suffering for any person or creature or being.

I will end with a quote from a Native American Innu elder, Elizabeth Penashue:

“If you are here because you feel sorry for me, you are wasting your time, but if you are here because your life and destiny are linked with mine, then we will make a difference.”

