

PR UT

A Journal of Proutistic Views and Neo-Humanistic Analysis

*Wishing you all a
Very Happy New Year*

Smart Cards and Lazy Money

“

Credit Card culture left the shores of America and gradually spread to other countries in Europe and infiltrated into traditional societies in Asia that were averse to buying on credit.

”



PROUT is the Illuminated Path to Follow

**E GÁN THÁMIBE NÁ,
E DÁBI DAMIBE NÁ**

**PATH BENDHE DILO ÁLOKOJJVALA
PROUTÉRA PREŚĀNÁ**

**SAHYA KARECHI YUGA YUGA DHARE,
SAHYER SIIMÁ GELO BHENGE PAĀRE,
DĀNAV ĀJIO BHRUBHAUNGI KARE
NIITIVĀDII UNMANÁ**

**PŪRVA DIGANTE ARUŅ ESECHE,
KĀLER KĀLIMÁ SARIYÁ JE GECHÉ,
VIŚĀDERA PAR ĀLOK JHARICHE
ĀR DERI SAHIBE NÁ**

This song will not stop.
This suppression will not continue.

PROUT is the illuminated path
to follow.

We have endured suffering for eras.
The limits of tolerance
have now broken down.
Up to the present day,
the demons have been browbeating.
The moralists are in unrest.

The sun rises in the east.
The era of darkness is about to end.
Light falls after pain.
We cannot bear any further delay.

(Translated from Bengali original)

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Rate (INDIA)

Newstand Price	-	₹ 25/-
Annual Subscription	-	₹ 275/-
Two Years Subscription	-	₹ 520/-
Three Years Subscription	-	₹ 730/-
Five Years Subscription	-	₹ 1100/-
Ten Years Subscription	-	₹ 1800/-

Overseas (BY AIRMAIL)

Annual - US\$ 45

Overseas (By Paypal)

US - US\$ 45

Others - US\$ 50

Payments in India may be made
by cheque favouring

Neo-Humanist Education Foundation

mailed to Acarya Santosananda Avadhuta,
JC-48, Khirk Extension, Main Road, Malviya
Nagar, New Delhi 110017

For outstation remittance from non
computerized banks/branches add
Rs 30.00 for bank clearance charges.
Or amounts may be deposited directly
to any branch of the State Bank of India
as per details below:

Neo-Humanist Education Foundation**State Bank of India****Malviya Nagar Branch,****C-30 Malviya Nagar,****New Delhi 110017****A/C No. 30379188250****IFSC SBIN0001493**

Overseas remittances may be made by Paypal
using id **prout.am@gmail.com**
or electronic bank transfer referring above
details and **Swift Code SBININBB382**

Printed, Published and Edited

by A'carya Santosananda Avadhuta

on behalf of Neo Humanist Education Foundation

JC-48, Khirk Extension, Main Road,

Malviya Nagar, New Delhi - 110017

and printed at Cyber Creations,

JE-9, Khirk Extension,

Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-17

INSIDE

January 2014

COVER STORY**38****RUPEE CRISIS****India: Plummeting Rupee****contents**

- 08 NEOETHICS**
The Neo-Ethics of Multi-Lateral Salvation
- 11 PRINCIPLES OF PROUTIST ECONOMICS - III**
- 12 EDUCATION FUTURES**
The University in Transformation :
Can Prout Lead the Way?
- 16 GREEN COSTS**
Beyond the Greening of Capitalism
- 20 SOCIAL ISSUES**
Zulus and Maoris : Origins and Culture
- 26 RESEARCH**
Who Invented Yoga
- 30 RELIGIOUS ORTHODOXY**
Religion : The Great Barrier to Growth
- 35 TRIBAL OPPRESSION**
Triple Oppression of
Dalit Women Panchyat Members
- 41 SECRET DARPA**
Mind Control Project Revealed
Leaked Documents
- 44 BOOK REVIEW**
After Capitalism
- 47 BOOK REVIEW**
Stay Healthy, Stay Fit



12



30

regulars

- 05 EDITORIAL**
- 06 LETTERS**
- 07 INSPIRATIONAL**
- 48 ACTIVITIES**

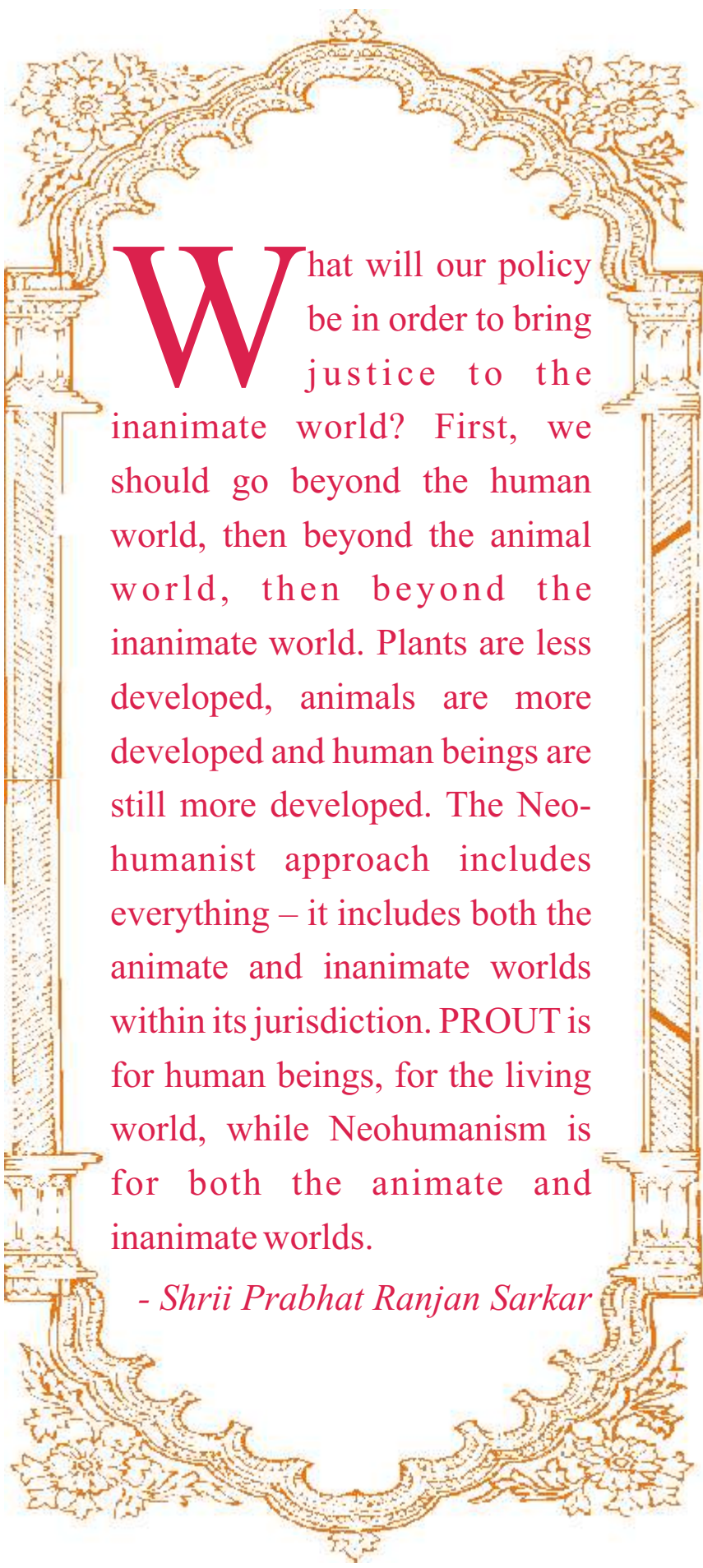
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Fundamental Principles :

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.



What will our policy be in order to bring justice to the inanimate world? First, we should go beyond the human world, then beyond the animal world, then beyond the inanimate world. Plants are less developed, animals are more developed and human beings are still more developed. The Neo-humanist approach includes everything – it includes both the animate and inanimate worlds within its jurisdiction. PROUT is for human beings, for the living world, while Neohumanism is for both the animate and inanimate worlds.

- Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

Hung Assemblies and Constitutional Reforms

The recently concluded elections in Delhi in December 2013 threw up a hung assembly with no party getting simple majority to form government on their own. This was after hectic campaigning by 875 candidates for 70 seats in the Vidhan Sabha. Similar was the result in February 2005 when Bihar assembly elections were held with 2135 aspirants for 243 assembly seats. Fresh elections were held in October- November the same year. Hung assemblies are a common feature of democratic elections based on universal suffrage. In Canada in 2004, 2006 and 2008 elections produced hung parliaments and Germany in 2005 faced a similar fate.



This state of affairs is most undesirable as in election a lot of public money is spent. In the recent Delhi elections approximately Rs 100 crores were spent and now there's very little hope of any party forming a stable government. Bhartiya Janata Party with 32 seats refused and so did the young Aam Aadmi Party (one that promises to sweep away corruption) which creating revolutionary fervor remarkably won 28 seats also refused at first but later appears to have change in heart as the Congress party that won 8 seats, has for its own political agenda declared unconditional support. Even if the latter forms the government it is unlikely to be stable and last long. Re-elections cannot be ruled out well before the full term of 5 years ends. And yet again more money would be spent, with money already spent going down the drain. In the general elections of 2009 s per estimates a staggering Rs 10,000, crores were spent. In 2014 this figure is likely to be substantially more and as forecasted neither of the two national parties, viz. the Congress or the BJP may get the numbers required to form Government on their own in the Lok Sabha having 543 seats.

All these raise serious constitutional issues. In a multi ethnic, religious and linguistic culturally diverse country like India with the rapid growth of regional parties, pluralistic parliamentary form of Government based on the British Westminster model is sure to aggravate the situation further creating one hung parliament and assembly after the other. While discoursing on an "Ideal Constitution" in Calcutta on September 22, 1986, Prout's founder Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar mentioned, "In Britain theoretically all power is vested with the crown and when there is hung parliament a lame-duck ministry is formed by the crown and the crown can head that ministry until a new parliament is elected. Whereas in India the president has no power and cannot even head a caretaker government. At the same time the Indian prime minister can remove the president but the president cannot remove the prime minister. Although the prime minister is powerful according to the constitution, he or she is not directly elected by the electorate, that is, by the people. The prime minister is elected only as a member of parliament and then is made prime minister by the party". This situation is not desirable at all, it is better to elect the Prime Minister directly like in France and the USA. In France the president elected directly by the people appoints the prime minister and all other ministers; and in the USA the president appoints Secretaries to take care of federal administration. The USA also has a presidential form of government, which is a better form of government.

This by far is the best form of government where the executive head of state is elected directly by the people. In India it would mean electing the leader of the centre and the states directly. This system should be adopted as soon as possible so that the dangers of hung parliaments and assemblies do not recur bringing with it all its inherent defects and problems leading to instability, mal governance and corruption.

Necessary amendments should be made in the constitution of India so that the Chief Minister is also elected directly by the people, and he should have the full freedom to select his council of Ministers.

**NEO ETHICS**

Shrii Sarkar's new approach to the sciences of the universe as we see it viz. that of carbonic fundamentals vis-à-vis microvitum is path breaking indeed. Research in this direction is already underway by scientists and thinkers alike primarily on the frontiers of knowledge and when some breakthrough is achieved in the future the entire world of science may never be the same. Also when those elevated humans of the future get detached from carbonic plabula and think more about non-carbonic plabula, global societal structures would alter significantly too.

Arun Prakash, New Delhi

PRABHATA SAMGIITA

None should take liberties of omitting lines while translating PS.

One may add as a commentary a few lines and own the responsibility for it.

In your December issue the translation of the first five lines are broken into two stanzas in English.

The second stanza is *sha'san shos'han* that means exploiting the institution of governing (and should it be tyrannizing? you decide.)

In the third line *abadha toshan* - it means the vicious have unopposed support for nourishing gangsters. The line of sunrise is not in the beginning and the translations of lines are a freelancing and is not a line by line translation.

Dada Bhaskarananda
by email

Thanks for the correction. We will be careful in future.

-Eds

UNIVERSITY IN TRANSFORMATION

Sohail Inayatullah's piece gives a sneak preview of the universities of the future with Prout leading the way. People of all ages would be able to learn staying at home on earth as well as other planets in the distant future? Pointers to this direction based on Proutistic principles have been

clearly explained. All it needs is to make a start albeit in a small way and develop further along changing world scenarios.

Indrani, Mumbai

BEYOND GREENING OF CAPITALISM

The article by Ravi Logan is a real eye opener. Not many people are aware of societal costs of production and still fewer even think about them, least of all the profiteering capitalists, about costs outside market transactions. The reform strategies indicated are very apt and easy to follow by conscious people, who think that the environment is a cosmic inheritance and not on materialist conception of wealth with spiritually based views of human progress.

Sophia, Toulon
by email

ZULUS AND MAORIS

The attention Prout journal is giving towards dwindling tribal population the world over is commendable. Arun Prakash's feature about Zulus and Maoris is well researched and based on a careful study about the history of these two great races placed at two

ends of planet Earth. The so called civilized world can learn a lot from these two and other ethnic tribal communities of the world.

Desmond, Natal,
South Africa by email

YOGA

Ramesh Bjonnes has brought out in simple language about how old is the science of yoga asanas practiced all over the world. Though yoga is not simply asanas as mostly believed, is clearly explained in the article.

Rex Westermann,
Norwich UK by email

RELIGIOUS ORTHODOXY

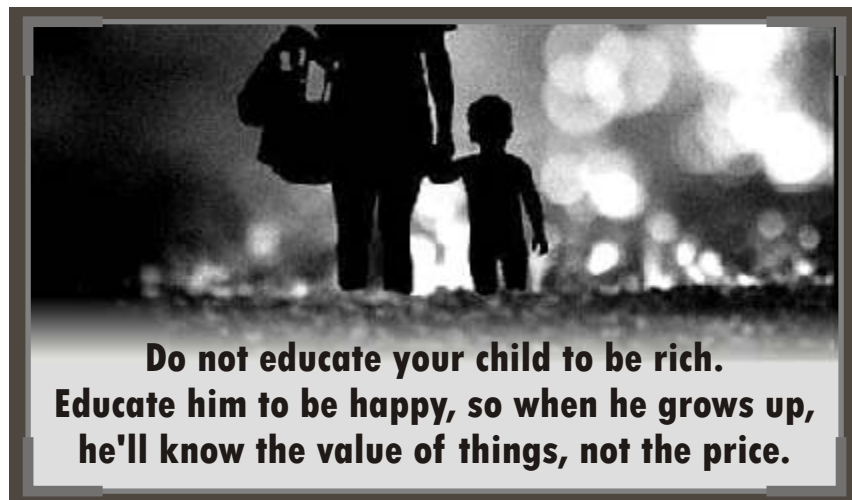
It is very true that religion is the greatest barrier to human progress and growth. RD Singh needs to be congratulated for a fine article.

Madhuban, Jhansi, MP

PLUMMETING INDIAN RUPEE

The cover story brings to the fore how the Rupee has showed steady and precipitous decline over the years due to mismanagement of the Indian economy. The cartoon on page 40 says it all.

Bhavna Shrivasta,
Bara Banki, UP.



**Do not educate your child to be rich.
Educate him to be happy, so when he grows up,
he'll know the value of things, not the price.**

Kind Attention Readers!

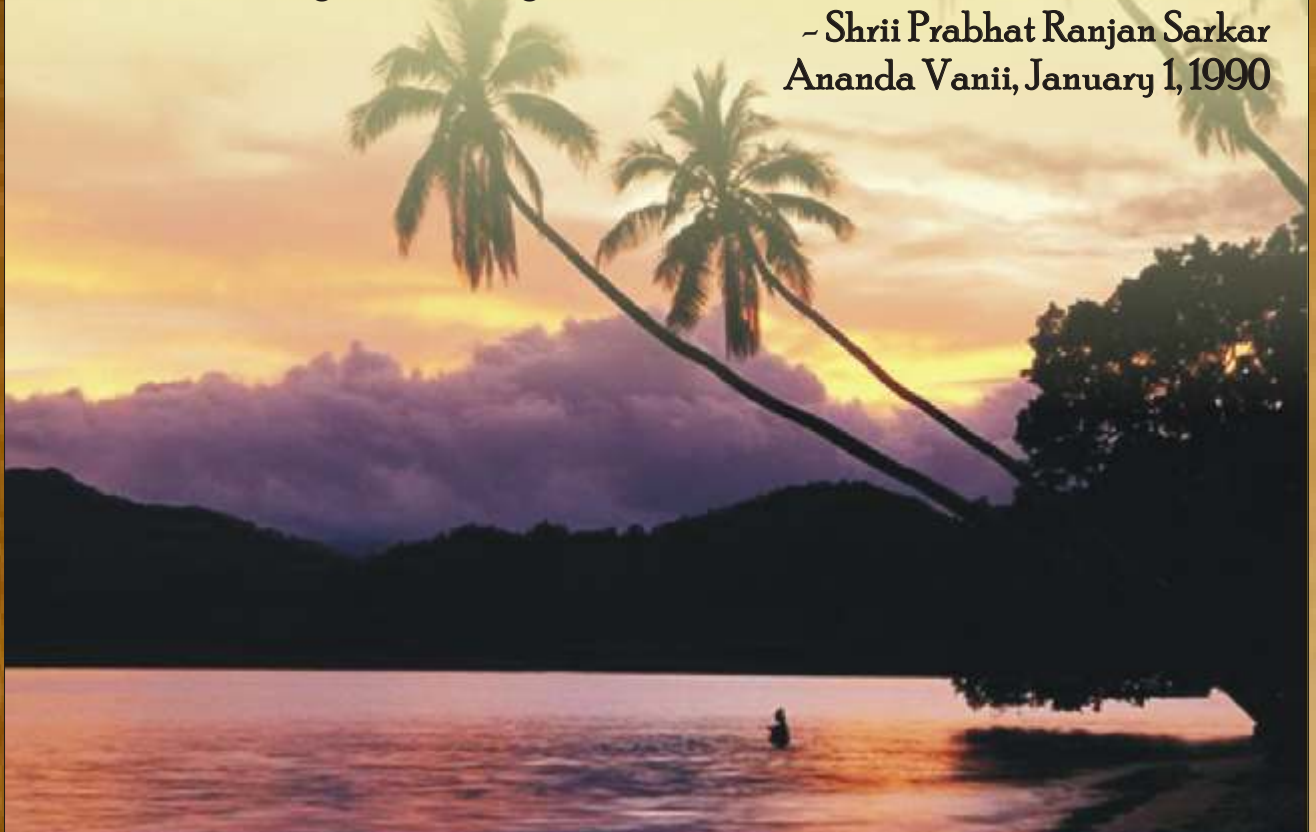
Due to increase in Paper & Printing prices, we are compelled to increase the price of this magazine from Rs. 20/- to Rs. 25/- per issue. Accordingly, subscription prices have also been revised, details of which are given on content page. We hereby request our readers to bear with us.

Those entities in whom psychic and intellectual powers are looked upon as more gorgeous than the physical ones are called humans – predominantly mental beings. Hence, to bring about the real well-being of humanity, greater attention has to be paid to the psychic and intellectual expressions of human beings, for that will lead to perfect spiritual composure and all-round fulfillment in human life.

Competition in the realm of physical pabula may bring satisfaction in material enjoyment, but it leads human beings far, far away from inner tranquility. It is true that to give emphasis to existential security of human beings food, clothes, accommodation, education and medical care are absolutely necessary. Accepting these requirements as indispensable needs for living beings, you will have to move forward. But remember that while giving utmost importance to these requirements, human characteristics should not be even slightly neglected under any circumstances. You must also remember that the physical expressions of life and the increasing spiritual unfoldment of human beings are not antithetical rather they are complementary to one another in the task of establishing a great ideology.

So keep moving, enlighten humanity with crimson rays, and make your existence meaningful and effulgent. Move on, move on.

~ Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar
Ananda Vanii, January 1, 1990





Almost everywhere in the world the vaeshyas support democracy rather than monarchy, because in a monarchy the administration cannot be as easily influenced.

SHRII PRABHAT RANJAN SARKAR

Rise of the Vaeshyas

Because the vipras (intellectuals) have so much confidence in their presence of mind they fail to think about the future; consequently they rarely bother to accumulate wealth. They think that they will always be able to make some arrangement in any situation. But this overconfidence leads to their downfall. When real danger arrives and their presence of mind fails them, they have to sell themselves to anyone with any kind of wealth.

The vaeshyas (capitalists/acquisitors), though endowed with less intelligence, begin to control the vipras with their capital. The subservient vipras then occupy themselves in increasing the wealth of the vaeshyas. Although they lack the capacity to accumulate wealth themselves, the vipras explain to the vaeshyas how to increase their wealth. The vipras show the vaeshyas all the straightforward and dirty ways of killing and cheating others that had escaped the vaeshyas' attention. The vaeshyas evade taxes and indulge in black marketeering, smuggling and adulterating food and medicine, and increase their profits by paying

bribes, but it is the vipras, groveling at the feet of the vaeshyas, who supply the brains and the techniques behind these activities.

But in the course of time the vipras lose even their intellectual originality. They become servants of the vaeshyas, agents of capitalism. In the vaeshya-dominated society the vipras become like the shūdras and ksatriyas: mere beasts of burden that carry bags of sugar without ever tasting its sweetness. The capitalist



CAPITALISM

Capitalism is the extraordinary belief that the nastiest of men, for the nastiest of reasons, will somehow work for the benefit of us all.

vaeshyas gradually wrest the right to lead society out of the hands of the vipras, and establish their dominance using the vipras' intellectual force.

Almost everywhere in the world the vaeshyas support democracy rather than monarchy, because in a monarchy the administration cannot be as easily influenced. People regard the bravery, tradition, noble birth and ksatriya nature of a monarch with respect, or with a mixture of devotion and fear. For this reason they do not like to oppose a monarch unless he or she does something which severely undermines the interests of the people. If the monarch demonstrates even a little concern for the public interest, the lives and properties of the vaeshyas in that kingdom may at any time be endangered.

In a party dictatorship or any other type of dictatorship, the dictator has to take into account the interests of the people. Even oppressive dictators cannot afford to ignore the welfare of the state, otherwise they will lose power. But in a democracy there is no danger of this.

The unintelligent ksatriyas and ignorant shudras are easily duped by the mind-stupefying, life-enchaining propaganda of the vaeshyas, assisted by their vipra servants. Even the vipras, despite their intelligence and despite whatever they may say or think, support the vaeshyas out of fear or due to lack of a proper alternative. Thus in a democratic structure, particularly in a structure where downfallen vipras and ksatriyas are few in number and ignorant shudras form the majority, the vaeshyas can easily win votes.

During vaeshya rule the vipras' intellect remains intact; it neither sleeps nor becomes rusty. However, though the vipras have intellect, they do not have the courage to apply it, because crude worldly bondages hold them tightly, like the grip of an octopus. It can therefore be said that the day that the vipras submit to the vaeshyas, the Vipra Age dies, even if the vipras themselves do not.

The blood-sucking vaeshyas order the vipras whom they hire to write voluminous books which artfully distort the truth. They try to portray as mean and sub-human those who oppose the vaeshyas and demand the right to live. In order to keep their machinery of exploitation running, the vaeshyas produce deadly weapons with the help of mercenary vipras. On the orders of their vaeshya overlords, vipra



scientists willingly or unwillingly take up the task of making weapons in their laboratories that have the potential to destroy human civilization.

Although the vipras understand what is going on, they cannot do anything about it. They look up towards heaven, hoping to see the arrival of better days. They think, "When will the downfallen vipras, ksatriyas and shudras unitedly save human civilization from the all-devouring greed of the vaeshyas. When will people realize that it is not the desire of providence for some to exploit others?" Due to the utter despair they feel, the subservient vipras gradually become consumed with remorse recalling how they themselves once exploited others.

The economic exploitation of the vaeshyas relegates the vipras to the level of intellectual satans, and the money of the vaeshyas controls the brains of those satans. In the Vaeshya Age intellectual progress occurs on many levels: new inventions are brought forth, new types of deadly weapon are invented, and people learn how to produce many types of commodity to increase comfort. Many people believe that these things are creations of the Vipra Age, but actually they are expressions of the Vaeshya Age. The vipras who sell themselves to the vaeshyas for money produce such items at their behest.

A deep analysis reveals that many of those, whose creative and inventive ability once commanded the respect of innumerable people, become dependent upon the mercy of the vaeshyas for their food and clothing. Poets and [[authors]] write according to the dictates of their vaeshya publishers or in the hope of winning prizes from the vaeshya-controlled governments. Artists wield their brushes according to the demands of the market, or are

compelled to produce commercial art, neglecting more subtle art forms in the process. Instead of writing the truth, journalists turn day into night and night into day according to the wishes of profiteering newspaper publishers because they are afraid of losing their jobs. They go against their own consciences and pervert the truth in order to help unworthy people become leaders. They create spectacular lies with their pens.

Of course there is another side to all this. If vipras engage themselves in intellectual development and research, it is difficult for them to meet their material needs. Because the vaeshyas finance them, this problem is solved, and they are able to work free of worry. But naturally the vaeshyas do not extend their economic support in a disinterested way. Their ulterior motive is to establish themselves in society, and because of this the Vipra Age comes to an end.

Economic Liberation

The subservient vipras employ all their intellectual power to increase the wealth of the vaeshyas in exchange for the basic necessities they need to fill their bellies. Millionaire vaeshyas employ vipras at low wages in order to increase their wealth; with the help of these vipras they build up networks of adulteration, black marketeering and smuggling.

After the vaeshyas secure the allegiance of the vipras, they enlist them to help them consolidate the capitalistic social structure and philosophy. The contemporary Bhúdán movement is an example of this type of philosophy; it is supported by the vaeshyas and propagated by the vipras under their control. As a result of this kind of movement, efforts to fight the exploitation of the vaeshyas decline because people think, "Why fight against rich people

when they voluntarily distribute their land and wealth to the poor?" This aversion to fighting will somewhat lengthen the Vaeshya Age; because as the vaeshyas know full well, most of their donations are not genuine, but exist on paper only – and whenever they make genuine donations, they realize double the amount as profits in some other way.

In the Vaeshya Age this type of rotten philosophy gets widely trumpeted in the newspapers. Attempts are also made to mislead students by including such harmful philosophies in textbooks. The agents of the vaeshyas attempt to awaken respect and devotion for vaeshyas in children's minds by depicting them in textbooks as symbols of peace, love and humanity.

To accomplish this objective a new type of nationalism based on economics is created which is totally different from both the nationalism of the Ksatriya Age, based on personal force and family glory, and that of the Vipra Age, based on learning. The nationalism of the Vaeshya Age leads to a form of imperialism which is extremely dangerous for the unity of the human race.

Although the vipras groveling at the feet of the vaeshyas wield great authority at various levels of society as the servants of capitalistic imperialism, the vaeshyas never entrust them with the responsibility of leading society or structuring the economy. Only in this way can one easily understand whether a country or state is in the Vaeshya Age. It is not always the case that a state controlled by the vaeshyas is democratic. One indication that is clear is that the vaeshyas always keep the collection and distribution of finance and the corresponding ministerial posts in the hands of orthodox vaeshyas. They never delegate these

responsibilities to a learned and experienced vipra economist, because it is their own systems of collection and distribution of finance that provide them the opportunity to establish themselves. Thus in the vaeshya social system, vipra scholars are nothing but paid planners and intellectual servants appointed to materialize those plans.

Whenever, after popular acceptance of the vaeshya-created social system, it became apparent that vipras were trying to free themselves from the rule and exploitation of the vaeshyas, the vaeshyas would buy the support of the masses, rub the noses of the rebellious vipras in



the dirt, and then replace them with a group of sycophantic vipras.

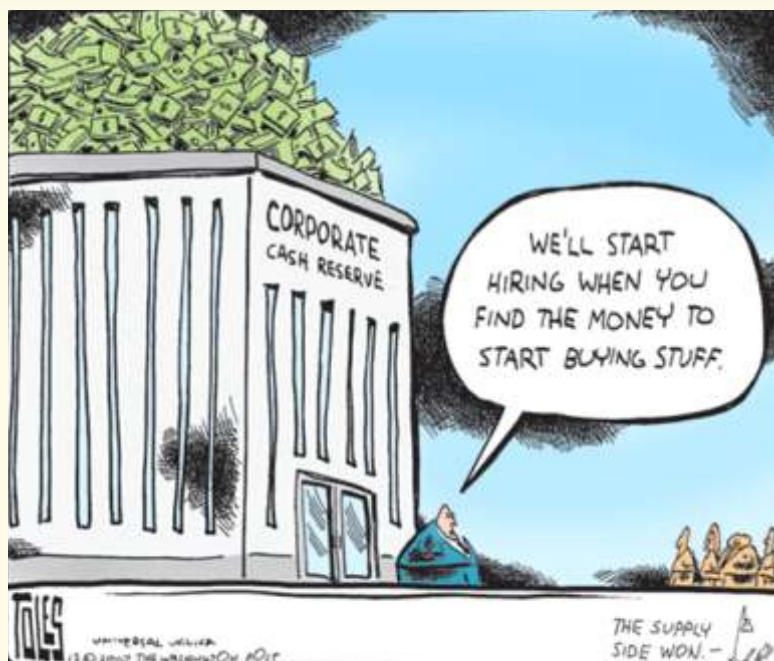
The vaeshyas have repressed unrest and discontent among agricultural and industrial labourers, as well as political revolution, with the help not only of their vipra hirelings, but of ksatriyas and shudras as well. In fact, of all the classes, the vaeshyas have made the most extensive use of the policy of divide and rule. For example, when a group of vipras vociferously demanded an investigation into the mysterious death of Shyamaprasad Mukherjee, another group of vipras immediately diverted their steam by increasing the tram fares in Calcutta and at the same time starting a movement to oppose the increase. Because of this, those typical vaeshyas who were directly or indirectly responsible for Shyamaprasad's death escaped punishment. The discriminatory measures adopted by employers or states ruled by vaeshyas to suppress labour agitations are generally known to every educated person. To disrupt the plans and intellectual movements of one group of vipras, a second group of vipras are appointed as spies or informers. Such spies or informers do not work out of ideological inspiration but in order to fill their stomachs. They are merely paid servants of the vaeshyas.

The efforts of intelligent vipras or brave ksatriyas to escape from the influence of the vaeshyas can be called the vikrānti [counter-evolution] or the prativiplava [counter-revolution] of the vipras or ksatriyas.

Some people consider what happened recently in Hungary as counter-revolution, but actually it was not. It was a vipra revolution against ksatriya rule. It failed because factors relating to time, place and person could not be prepared properly. Those in power called it counter-revolution in order to belittle it.

In India at present the Vaeshya Age is in full swing. But because there is not sufficient consciousness among the exploited vipras, ksatriyas and shudras – and because the clever vaeshyas of India, having learned from the experiences of other countries and having become cautious, often employ some psychology and exploit people indirectly rather than directly – the revolution to end the Vaeshya Age has not yet taken place.

What to speak of revolution, even the need for revolution has not yet been felt properly among intellectuals. At present they are in a hesitant frame of



mind. They are waiting for the auspicious day when the Vaeshya Age will end naturally through krānti [evolution], without any struggle.

This mentality is reflected in the support which a group of intellectuals extend to the Sarvodaya movement and Gandhism. They deliberately ignore the fact that the Sarvodaya movement and Gandhism will only increase the period of their suffering.

There is also a group of leaders who have genuine sympathy for the masses and who do not in their hearts support the Sarvodaya movement or Gandhism; they nevertheless believe that the vaeshyas will be removed from power without a struggle through their plans for a welfare state. I am not suggesting that their ideas are totally irrational, because they do have an example before them. Great Britain is moving towards socialism by accepting the ideals of a welfare state. If it is possible there, why shouldn't it be possible here? It is natural to ask this question, because in the rotation of the social cycle it is not imperative for revolution to occur. A change from one age to another can also occur through evolution. However, although it is theoretically possible to establish a welfare state or genuine economic freedom through evolution, in practice it will not work. It is true that in Great Britain some of the minimum requirements of life are being provided to the people, but how great the difference is between rich and poor! Clearly their social system is capitalistic. The exploited and disgruntled people are given a small amount of sympathy to appease them. They are given a small taste of the dainties and delicacies, but their stomachs are never full.



The masses in India face greater privations than the masses in Britain. Due to a lack of political and economic consciousness and the confusion created by the misleading propaganda of the Sarvodaya movement and Gandhism, the people of India may continue to be complacent for some time more, misguided by the false promises of the agents of capitalism. However, this situation will not continue for long.

Because rich people have the opportunity to purchase votes, it is not easy for leaders who are genuinely concerned about the people to become members of parliament. It is therefore not possible to eradicate the sufferings of the people of India by enacting laws befitting a genuine welfare state. It is not possible to bring about the economic liberation of India through the present democratic structure.

Divisive Isms

The predominance of dishonest people over honest is far greater in the Vaeshya Age even than it was in the Vipra Age. The vaeshyas use most of their capital and privileged status to deprive others of the wealth they earn through their hard labour. (Here "labour" certainly includes intellectual labour.) Just as the vipras use their intellects to stupefy and manipulate the ksatriyas' vitality, the vaeshyas still more ruthlessly turn the vipras, as well as everybody else, into beasts of burden. When the Vaeshya Age begins after the Vipra Age, and the vipras and

ksatriyas helplessly sell themselves to the vaeshyas, the vipras and ksatriyas clearly understand that they are sold. They are like chickens that have just been sold to the hungry chicken-fancier.

Only the shudras fail to realize that they are sold. Although the vipras and ksatriyas know what is happening, they nevertheless accept the dominance of the vaeshyas due to selfishness, infighting and a lack of economic knowledge. The vaeshyas are fully aware of the disunity and other weaknesses of the vipras and ksatriyas, and they use this knowledge to perpetuate their hold on power; they use their financial power to incite one group against another. The ksatriyas, out of obligation to the vaeshyas, lose their lives in needless battles and fracasos of different kinds; while the vipras, similarly fed and sheltered by the vaeshyas, keep such factional conflicts permanently alive by creating various types of sentiment such as casteism, communalism, provincialism and nationalism, and by composing the necessary scriptures to accomplish this.

It should be clearly understood that the vaeshyas encourage all isms that divide people. Casteism, communalism, provincialism and nationalism are supported mainly by the money of the vaeshyas. They finance such isms to keep people divided so that they cannot unite and protest against their exploitation.

The funny thing is that the vaeshyas purchase the vital energy of the ksatriyas and the intellectual skills of the vipras with money and use that energy and those skills to perpetuate their hold on power and turn the ksatriyas and vipras into long-term slaves. The vaeshyas' financial power carries more weight than the power of speech and intellectual power of the vipras, not to mention the physical power of the ksatriyas; therefore the vaeshyas have no trouble buying the vipras' brains and the ksatriyas' brawn with their money.

Among those who possess knowledge, intellect, great courage or physical strength, there is hardly anyone who has the courage, or sometimes even the intelligence, needed to take the financial risks necessary to earn money. The vaeshyas understand this weakness of the vipras and the ksatriyas. They lull their discrimination to sleep by praising the ksatriyas' valour and the vipras' intellect. Then afterwards they can easily buy them off. In a vaeshya state, poets, scientists, [[authors]] and great heroes are awarded prizes, medals and titles for this very reason. By participating in all this, the vipras and the ksatriyas surrender all their endowments at the feet of the vaeshyas for a little money or some name and fame; and at the same time feel they are fortunate. They fail to realize that they are digging their own graves.

Principles of Proutist Economics

This sutra of Ananda Sutram states:

Sarvanimnama'navardhanam' sama'jajiivalaks'an'am.

**The increase and nourishment of the minimum standard of living
is the indication or sign of the vitality of a society.**

Many communists and other philosophers have proposed a subsistence economy such as that of hunter-gatherer societies in which people's standard of living does not increase rapidly. The reality is however is that most people will not be willing to live such lifestyles. This is because one has no security and during hard times such as winter or during a drought one's standard of living can decline rapidly. This is why communists were forced to abandon these utopian beliefs. Furthermore we find that subsistence-based groups are very vulnerable to rapid changes in the environment such as due to climate change. This is why many such communities have died out. A group of people are certainly free to live this lifestyle but it should not be forced upon people.

On the other hand, even in elite capitalist countries we find that the real wages have declined since the 1950s or the 1970s. The present Global Economic Depression created by financial elites is drastically reducing the minimum standard of living of countless people all over the world. The general decline in the standard of living of the majority of people goes hand in hand with rocketing increase in the standard of living of corporate executives. In reality these executives are cutting off their own legs because with the increase in poverty no one will be there to buy their products. Capitalism is based on creating a culture of endless buying so as to compensate for overproduction of goods in the pursuit of profits. This consumer culture of buying and throwing away is injected in the mind of society through the media. It corrodes all values of a society and fosters the self-centred pursuit of pleasure. In such a culture even the pursuit of intellectual knowledge and spiritual bliss is rooted in the greed for selfish enjoyment. This is why Shrii Sarkar has said that this tendency to acquire even knowledge out of greed leads to the acceptance of dogmas and various forms of intolerant and often violent prejudice which further poisons social life.

The drive to increase and nourish the minimum standard of living is the primary engine of a Proutist economy. However PROUT believes in balanced growth for local consumption and not for endlessly increasing corporate profits. It is important to note here that Prout's economy is driven by localization or the endeavour to make each community as self-sufficient economically as possible. This is done via participatory microregional or intradistrict (block) level planning. Hence PROUT not only rejects the rule of corporations but also the rule of national bureaucrats such as in state capitalism or communism. Augmenting the minimum standard of living needs to be done often while keeping the maximum allowed level of income constant so as to make sure to keep economic disparity within moral limits. This increased economic dynamism will lead to more mechanization of the economy. Unemployment caused by the increasing use of machines to replace human labour is solved in PROUT by reducing working hours so as to provide more free time for people to pursue artistic, intellectual and spiritual interests.

For PROUT, increasing the minimum standard of living also includes providing people the means to partake of higher aspects of life such as the arts, intellectual subjects and also spiritual knowledge. This is because PROUT has created a new dimension of economics called Psycho-economics is driven firstly by the mission to document and expose and educate people regarding all forms of exploitation (that are becoming increasingly done via psychological methods) and economic disparities. PROUT is not a utopian philosophy that dreams of a future paradise without conflict but rather a pragmatic paradigm that seeks to combat economic inequality. Hence psycho-economics will safeguard the needs of the people for increasing standards of living. Furthermore psycho-economics seeks to increase the minimum intellectual, emotional, moral, cultural, intuitional and spiritual growth of the common people. This drive towards these subtler and more sublime forms of growth will help divert people from the path of material greed which can create economic and ecological imbalance and destruction. Lack of intellectual, emotional and intuitional growth and dynamism is, according to PROUT, one of the causes of social vices. Similarly there is the need to increase the amenities provided to hard-working people so as to increase productivity. Both these dynamic forces move in tandem maintaining equilibrium and equipoise (prama) with each other and with the survival and flourishing of animals, plants, rivers and mountains. Some may feel that such balance and harmony is impossible to create let alone maintain, but the truth is that no one has done the intellectual labour of love to plan for this in a constructive way. Shrii Sarkar has defined life as the constant effort to restore an unstable equilibrium in every minute sphere of physical, psychic and spiritual life – both on the individual and collective levels. This science of dynamic equilibrium and harmony (samarasa) is known as prama. Prama applies the understanding of the dynamics of Tantric cosmology and yoga to all forms of social life. In reality balance, harmony and progress are found only in the spiritual realm and thus Prama becomes the mission of manifest the peace and harmony of the spiritual realm in the intellectual, sentimental, cultural, economic, moral, political, social and ecological realms. Thus the increase in the minimum standard of living emerges from and is goaded towards spiritual values such as those found in many indigenous societies and in the great mystics of history.



Smart Cards And Lazy Money

Credit Card culture left the shores of America and gradually spread to other countries in Europe and infiltrated into traditional societies in Asia that were averse to buying on credit.

✱ Arun Prakash

One of the fundamentals of PROUT economic policy is a constitutional guarantee of providing jobs with real purchasing power for all human beings so that they can live with dignity and honour in society where food shelter and clothing are within their reach. The founder of PROUT Shrii PR Sarkar said, "PROUT is a socioeconomic philosophy ... the path of socio-economic emancipation for humanity ... side by side with the psychic approach of Neohumanism. Neohumanistic ideas will give impetus and energy to PROUT to remove all disparities and artificial barriers. PROUT will get spirit and stamina from Neohumanism from Neohumanistic inspiration, Neohumanistic ideology and Neohumanistic thoughtfulness. PROUT is for human beings, for the living world, while Neohumanism

is for both the animate and inanimate worlds. Spirituality is the central avenue which maintains the balance between PROUT and Neohumanism. Spirituality is like the Tantric bird whose one wing is PROUT and the other wing is Neohumanism." Paths towards achieving this goal in the future may be varied but one thing is clear without ascending levels of

spirituality in society, the lofty principles of PROUT is difficult to implement.

It is in this context one may view the purchasing power aspect that has permeated modern society today. With the institution of Credit Cards - a revolving credit of sorts which has become such an everyday part of life and its mass acceptance by society, three things have



Smart cards are made of plastic, generally polyvinyl chloride. Of late credit card design has become a big selling point.

happened. Firstly it has provided an artificial purchasing power in a consumer oriented society strengthened by ad blitzkrieg in the electronic and print media - not real purchasing power. Secondly it has generated millions of debt ridden people worldwide mired in billions of dollars of debt and finally it has made the capitalists the producers of consumer goods and banks that cover credit card loans richer. According to President Lyndon Johnson's assistant Betty Furness, Credit Cards were basically "giving sugar to diabetics".

History of Credit Cards

The history of the credit card begins in 1887, with the idea of using a card to make purchases described in the novel 'Looking Backward', written by Edward Bellamy. Bellamy is also the first to use the term credit card. Many early twentieth century science fiction books mentioned about plastic money too. Credit cards were first used in the 1920's in the U.S. as a successor to many other forms of merchant credit. Initially they were meant to sell gasoline to the growing number of drivers on the road. It wasn't until 1938 that many companies began accepting these credit cards from other businesses. By 1921, Western Union also started to issue charge cards to regular customers. In 1928, Farrington Manufacturing Co. trademarked the Charga-Plate, which was developed as an early predecessor to the modern credit card of today. Charga-Plate technology was used from the 1930's through the 50's and the cards were made from sheet metal, similar to dog tags in the military. Each card was embossed with the name, city and state of the customer with a paper card included for the customer's signature. To record a purchase, this metal plate was placed in a recess in the imprinter machine and a paper charge slip was placed on top. Each transaction record would include an impression of the embossed data on the card when the imprinter pressed ink against the charge slip. Charga-

Plates were issued mostly by large merchants to their frequent customers, in the same way department stores issue store credit cards today. Charga-Plates dramatically improved bookkeeping in stores by speeding up the manual process long before computers were available.

American Airlines, along with the Air Transport Association, further revolutionized the system in 1934, when they introduced the Air Travel Card by creating a unique numbering system that identified the customer account and the card issuer. Air Travel cards allowed customers to purchase tickets and pay later by buying against their credit while also receiving a 15% discount at any airline that accepted the card. Within 10 years, all major airlines in the United States offered the cards to use on 17 airlines. Amazingly, half of all airline revenue came through card agreements within 7 years of their release. Airlines also began offering customers installment plans in an effort to encourage air travel and the card became the first internally accepted charge card in 1948. By the 1950's, this idea of paying different businesses with the same card became even more popular as the founders of Diner Club decided to consolidate numerous cards. The Diners Club created the first general use charge card that required the full balance to be paid with each monthly statement. Following this was Carte Blanche and American Express in 1958, which created a massive worldwide network and originally offered only charge cards. Until this time, no company had yet been able to set up a revolving credit card issued by a third party bank that could be accepted by numerous merchants, rather cards issued by a merchant were accepted at only a few establishments. Many banks in the United States attempted to set up a system without success, although Bank of America finally succeeded with the launch of their BankAmericard in 1958. This became the first modern credit card

and it developed many international affiliates until it eventually became the Visa system. By 1966, MasterCard's predecessor was created when banks established the Master Charge card to compete with Bank of America's card. The Master Charge card became even more popular when Citibank merged their Everything Card into the MasterCard three years later.

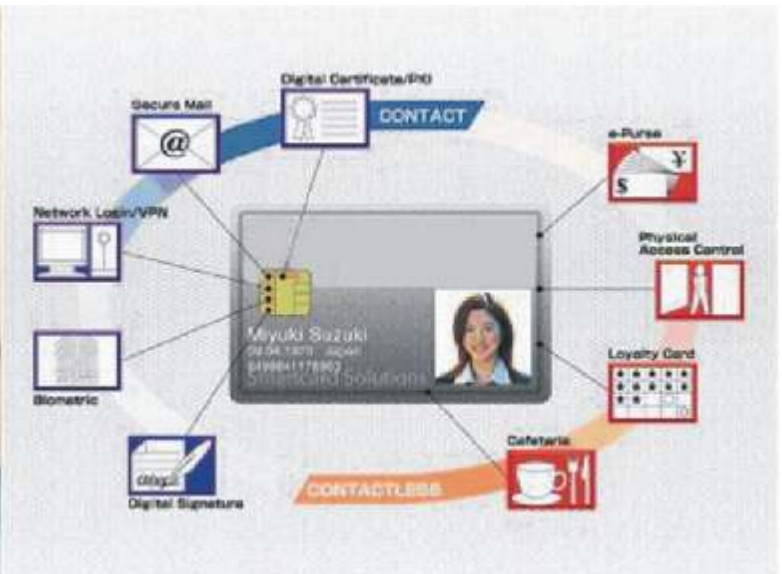
Credit Card culture left the shores of America and gradually spread to other countries in Europe and infiltrated into traditional societies in Asia that were averse to buying on credit. In China it gradually built up after the Reforms of 1979 and similarly in India from 1991 to the credit and debt explosion we observe today. Over time, credit cards became an effective way for consumers to use their credit on the go at times they couldn't directly use their bank and by 1966, Barclaycard in the United Kingdom created the first credit card outside of America. Today, there are an untold number of variations from branded credit cards and business cards to store credit cards. Despite the great success and popularity of credit cards in the UK, Canada and the United States through the 20th century, many cultures still revolved around a cash system or set up their own payment systems, like the Eurocard. In these countries, adopting credit cards was a much slower process and it wasn't until the 90's that they reached the level of market saturation as the US and Canada achieved in the 50's and 60's. Some countries also still have low credit card acceptance, depending on how reliable the banking system is deemed. Japan, for example, still remains cash-oriented and credit cards are typically only used by the biggest merchants. Other countries like France have adopted chip-based cards to combat fraud due to strict banking regulations. In many countries, debit and online banking cards are used much more often than credit cards.

The Master Card

Roland Moreno born in Cairo



Roland Moreno and today's Smart Card



in 1945 is the universally accepted inventor of the Smart Card, that he created in 1974 to touch the lives of almost everyone on the planet. It is a chip card or integrated circuit card made of plastic that can provide identification, authentication, data storage and application processing and provide strong security authentication for single sign-on (SSO) within large organizations. The international payment brands MasterCard, Visa, and Europay agreed in 1993 to work together to develop the specifications for smart cards as either a debit or a credit card. The first version was released in 1994. In 1998 a stable release of the specifications became available and in 2000, 2004 the specification was upgraded. With the exception of a few countries such as the United States the use of these cards and equipment are widespread. Contactless smart cards that do not require physical contact between card and reader are becoming increasingly popular for payment and ticketing applications such as mass transit and motorway tolls. Smart cards are also being introduced in personal identification and entitlement schemes at regional, national, and international levels. Citizen cards, drivers' licenses, and patient card schemes are appearing. Contactless smart cards are part of International Civil Aviation

Organisation biometric passports to enhance security for international travel. In India this system is being used in the National Population Register and the generation of Unique Identity Aadhaar Cards. Smart cards serve as credit or ATM cards, fuel cards, mobile phone SIMs, authorization cards for pay television, household utility prepayment cards, high-security identification and access-control cards, and public transport (like Metros) and public phone payment cards. Smart cards may also be used as electronic wallets with the chip "loaded" with funds to pay parking meters and vending machines or at various merchants.

Credit Misery

Credit cards, while omnipresent now, were not always widely used by consumers to make purchases. At one time the credit card was seen as a novel and trendy idea, with a limited number of cardholders who were in effect members of a special club. Now, credit cards are viewed as essential purchasing tools that everyone must have, for status, transactional ease, and even necessity in some instances. Many purchases, particularly those related to travel and lodging, absolutely require credit cards. The overwhelming majority of internet vendors require a credit card for the purchases. In

essence, it is nearly impossible not to have a credit card in the 21st century. The credit card has come a long way in its short history. Many people today may think that the credit card rapidly and dramatically transformed society. In fact, it did not. The explosion of credit offers in the US to adults and minors alike from the mid-1970s until the bursting of the credit bubble in 2008 have caused untold misery to debt ridden people. Credit cards found their way more carefully and slowly onto the world stage and, nearly 60 years after their creation, contributed to one of the largest debt bubbles in history. This massive debt bubble, inextricably linked to the housing market bubble, began to unravel in 2007 and is now sending America into one of the worst economic downturns since the Great Depression.

Clever Marketing Campaigns

This downturn threatens the prosperity of generations to come and will likely result in a permanent reversal of fortune for the United States unless it takes substantial steps to ensure the survival and relative prosperity of the middle class America's largest socioeconomic group, and the engine that drives America's economy through consumer spending. Since consumer spending accounts for about 70% of the U.S.

economy, and the middle class is responsible for the bulk of consumer spending, the U.S. will undoubtedly experience painful contractions for the foreseeable future. This did not worry banks. There was a lot of money to be made by collecting fees for debt creation and debt service, and the largest banks wanted in on the action. Clever marketing campaigns led the public to believe that it could access luxury items and vacations that were once thought to be out of reach, and fueled a growing desire among many Americans to live life like the wealthy. People could purchase the 10-day Caribbean cruise or expensive diamond ring that was once restricted to those with higher income levels. People were starting to feel as if they could live like royalty as credit card marketing created the illusion that debt was equal to wealth. People appeared to care more about how high their credit line was than how much debt they had. As a result, credit cards were soon at the heart of a new materialist culture that had people of widely varying income levels and ages going into debt to fuel their desire for acquiring more and more goods. Debt drove a lucrative credit card industry which became even more lucrative for credit card issuers after it received favorable court rulings in the US in 1978 and 1996.

Americans' Debt Trajectory

Americans rose rather gradually from the 1940s through the 1970s, but began to escalate much more quickly in the 1980s as the “yuppie” came to prominence in American popular culture. Yuppies (young, upwardly mobile professionals) became iconic in the 1980s as credit cards made more luxury products and services available to more people through the creation of debt. Yuppies were professionals in their 20s and 30s who found new wealth in a rising stock market which was seeing a large influx of cash due in part to the growing prominence mutual funds and tax incentives for investments

thereof. These opened the financial markets to the public at large for the first time in history and the rising use of credit. Additionally, those working in the upper echelon of corporate management saw an increase in corporate profits and high-level employee bonuses, which were made possible by increasing worker productivity and the corresponding flattening of wages for mid-level, blue collar and non-professional workers. The rich were taking it all for themselves and letting the good times roll and everyone who wasn't rich wanted to be or act as if they were rich. The 1980s was the age of a paradigm shift in American politics. The U.S. transformed itself into a country where the profit motive supplanted the public good. Profit driven business had always been a trait of America's political and economic culture, but when the profit motive of the 1980s was unveiled, it appeared to be more individualistic, more personal, more pervasive, and more accepted than at any time before. America moved away from its traditional embrace of serving the public interest and even farther from the emergent communal ideals.

Rise of Consumer Culture

The rise of the consumer culture had a direct correlation to the decline in Americans' saving rate, which would eventually put further strain on households some 30 years later. Saving money used to be a prudent exercise that was valued by society as a whole. In the 1970s and 1980s, America did not have a chorus of financial pundits on television encouraging citizens to be consumers and speculative investors. When they had to pay for something, they paid with cash. In cases where cash was not sufficient, they took out loans that were installment based credit, not revolving credit. The notion of paying for something with cash seemed to have become a foreign concept by the 1990s as the value of credit card debt reached new heights, and in dramatic fashion. In

2005, America's 164 million credit card holders charged \$2 trillion to their credit cards amounting to \$12,500 per credit card holder. This contributed to massive consumer debt, which rose over seven times in 28 years from \$355 billion in 1980 to \$2.6 trillion in 2008. By 2008, consumer debt increased seven times, while the savings rate was seven times lower than in 1980. Clearly, banks and other financial institutions that issued credit cards benefitted from the public spending frenzy and made and continue to make billions of dollars on the fees and interest paid on credit card debt.

Falling on Hard Times

With the rise of the consumer culture came depressing stories of people falling on hard times and becoming debt slaves to the credit card companies. Some consumers got so far into debt that they lost the ability to pay even the minimum required monthly payment. They lost their jobs, experienced a medical emergency, had to support other family members, or lost their homes, and soon fell into a debt spiral of despair. Credit card companies saw these people as great risks to their revenue streams and began to increase late fees and penalties for those carrying a balance over their credit line. They also raised interest rates two, three, and four times. This had the effect of worsening their ability to make payments and contributed to an increase in personal bankruptcy filings. In order to keep bank share values as high as possible for large and wealthy investors, the banks had to find another source of revenue. They turned their sights on customers in good standing, who regularly paid their balances in full or made timely monthly payments. The best customers saw their interest rates rise, credit limits fall, and saw their creditors issue harsh terms for submitting payment even an hour late.

Credit Card Debts Worldwide

As per CardHub.com, in the United States in the second quarter



representing \$ 751 billion in credit have been closed since September 2008. Here are a dozen alarming consumer debt statistics: The total amount of consumer debt in the US is nearly \$ 2.4 trillion in 2010. That's \$7,800 debt per person. Thirty-three percent of that debt is revolving debt (such as credit card debt), the other 67 percent comes from loans (such as car loans, student loans, mortgages and the like). \$ 51 billion worth of fast food was charged to credit cards in 2006, compared to \$ 33.2 billion the previous year. The average credit card debt per cardholder is \$ 5,100, and expected to increase to \$6,500 by the end of the year. 1 in 10 consumers has more than 10 credit cards. The average consumer carries 4 credit cards.

of 2012 Credit Card debt stood at a massive US\$ 799.5 billion (Rs 4,39,7250 crores) and in the United Kingdom (March 2009) £ 64.7 billion (Rs 5,30,540 crores) and Australia (2010) Au \$ 50 billion or Rs 2,83,750 crores. In India the latest statistics from the credit card companies indicate that consumers spend nearly Rs 50,000 crore annually through credit cards, which is expected to grow at 50 percent over the next 4-5 years. Reserve Bank of India data shows that between November 2011 and November 2012 credit card outstanding of Indian borrowers was Rs.24,700 crore. Despite China's reputation as a nation of savers, the central bank has said that Chinese consumers are increasingly falling behind on their credit-card payments, suggesting a move toward Western-style spending. The People's Bank of China in a state-run media report stated that China's credit-card debt at least six months overdue was 4.97 billion Yuan (Rs 4348.75 crores).

US Household Debts

Even after the catastrophic financial crisis in 2008, it seems in 2010 lessons from past mistakes have not been learned and taken on board. Eighty-eight million accounts and credit lines



While the average household carries \$ 6,500 of debt. 1 in 50 households carry more than \$ 20,000 in credit card debt. That amounts to more than 2 million households. 4.5 percent of cardholders are 60 or more days late in their payments. Roughly 2.5 million Americans seek the help of a credit counselor each year to avoid bankruptcy. On average, clients seeking financial counseling were \$43,000 in debt. Of which \$20,000 was consumer debt and \$8,500 was revolving debt (such as credit card debt). By the end of 2010, there were 115,000 bankruptcy filings in California alone. Across the US, 1 in every 160 people filed for bankruptcy.

Why is there so much debt? Late payments on credit card bills are closely linked to unemployment levels. Which in the US, have yet to recover to conducive levels since the financial crisis in 2008. Thirty percent of middle income households in debt also reported medical expenses as the main reason for unpaid balances. However, the Federal Reserve Bank comments, "40 percent of households simply spend more than they earn". The fact that they were enticed into this debt trap by a system that promoted it in the first place to further the interests of the capitalists and the banks is conveniently overlooked?

Credit Card Debts UK

Today in the UK 318 people are declared insolvent or bankrupt every day, this is equivalent to 1 person every 62 seconds during each working day. 1473 County Court Judgments are issued every day. 82 new people a day became unemployed for over 12 months during the year ending December 2011. 93 properties were repossessed every day. 25.9 million plastic card purchase transactions were made every day in December 2011 with a total value of £1.222 billion. Total UK personal debt stood at £1,456 trillion (end of January 2012). Average household debt in the UK (excluding mortgages) is £7,975. Average

household debt in the UK (including mortgages) is £55,988. The average amount owed per UK adult (including mortgages) was £29,634 in January. This was around 122% of average earnings. Average consumer borrowing (including credit cards, motor and retail finance deals, overdrafts and unsecured loans) per UK adult was £4,221 in January. The estimated average outstanding mortgage for the 11.2m households that carry mortgage debt stood at £111,260 in January. Based on January 2012 trends, the UK's total interest repayments on personal debt over a 12 month period would have been £63.2 billion; this is equivalent to £173 million per day. This means that UK households would have paid an average of £2,432 in annual interest repayments.

Spiraling Personal Debts China

Credit card usage in China has increased dramatically over the last few years. In 2003 there were only 3 million credit cards in circulation against China's population of approximately 1.34 billion. By March 2008 that figure had risen to 104 million and when the last figures were compiled in November of 2008

the number of credit cards held by Chinese citizens had risen to 160 million. China will become the world's top credit card market. The number of credit cards issued by Chinese banks could quadruple to 800 million or more by 2020, up from over 200 million today. China is expected to overtake the U.S. as the world's top credit card market in the next decade, according to a new report by MasterCard, as growing wealth and urbanization lead to greater disposable income. From 2004 through 2009, credit card adoption in China has been growing an average of 40% annually, says Euromonitor International. This rapid increase could soon make China, Asia's "most important card market," says a 2009 report by McKinsey consulting firm. Credit cards have grown especially quickly in China's coastal areas during the past five years, "a clear illustration of the upside potential" of the market, says Emmanuel Pitsilis, a senior partner who heads McKinsey's financial institutions practice in the greater China region. The penetration of credit cards is directly related to consumers' affluence, says Ivy Cheung, a Hong



Shoppers in a Mall in Guangzhou China

Kong-based executive director for Synovate, a market-research firm. She predicts that as Chinese consumers' spending power grows so will the size of the card market. Statistics from China's central bank show China had around 207 million credit cards in issue at the end of June 2012, up 10% from the end of last year and more than quadruple the level at the end of 2006. "With China's continued urbanization, the domestic spending on credit cards and the number of cards are expected to grow by 11% and 14% a year from 2010 to 2025," Mastercard said in a statement. Mr. Chen said he expects the number of credit cards in China to rise to 1.1 billion in 2025, and spending on those cards to amount to \$ 2.5 trillion. He forecast the pretax profit on a China credit card will reach \$ 30 in 2025, six times the expected \$ 5 per card this year. Although 'delinquency' rates on credit cards are relatively low across Asia, China's central bank warned last November that bad credit card debt was on the rise. There seems to be one silver lining in these dark clouds. The default rate on credit cards in China is believed to run at around 2%, one of the lowest rates in the world. The reason for this could be that under Chinese law a person who defaults on a credit card and owes as little as \$ 3,000 can be imprisoned for up to five years for their 'reckless financial behavior'.

Struggling Middle Class Debt India

India's recent binge on credit cards and personal loans has ended badly for some. A person (name withheld) remembers his lowest point in late 2008. The father of two in Mumbai was guarding a dark secret from neighbours, friends and even his wife. After several years of signing up to all the credit cards and personal loans he could find, he had notched up Rs 30 lakhs (\$ 66,000) in debt. He bottled up his growing sense of shame. "I thought better you run away from Mumbai, or you commit suicide," he remembers.

Until recently, the Indian middle class were deeply conservative borrowers. With a strong cultural aversion to loans and with very little finance on the market, most people lived frugally all their lives. But in the years before the global economic crunch, credit cards and loans flooded onto the markets of most Asian countries. The amount of outstanding credit card debt in India tripled between 2004 and 2007, according to industry reports. Private and foreign banks marketed credit cards and loans to consumers who had little experience of borrowing. "Getting credit cards in India two or three years back was very easy," he recounts. "They would fill out the forms for you." He got six cards and nine unsecured loans, with few questions asked. His business was failing, so he started using the credit cards to withdraw cash, which he spent on everything from paying his staff to feeding his children. He didn't realise that with most credit cards, high interest charges kick in immediately when you withdraw from ATMs. His feelings of shame prevented him from seeking help. He is not the only one. In India too, however, there's a

silver lining that lays bare the Indian mindset against credit spending. The number of credit cards in India declined by 27.46 % over a three year period, even as the number of debit cards grew by 73.37%. As of March 2011, the number of credit cards stood at 18.04 million, whereas the debit cards were 227.84 million. Bankers say that it is only a matter of time before debit cards completely dominate the payment space thankfully so.

Lazy Money

Credit Cards entail fees viz. fees that come directly from Visa and Mastercard; fees from the bank that issues the credit card, also known as Interchange fees and Merchant Account fees, which are added by the processor. While the biggest chunk of the credit card processing fees you pay go to the bank issuing the card, which receives about 75% of the fees. Surprisingly, Mastercard and Visa get the smallest percentage. Now where do all these billions of dollars of debts incurred by millions of unsuspecting consumers and spenders, some foolishly so and at times for genuine reasons like taking emergency loans for paying medical



bills or taking loans for higher education of their children end up? Most of these come for charges on defaulting accounts and high interest rates that are levied for servicing the credit card sometimes as high as an unbelievable 79.9% or as penalty! These charges compounded reach astronomical figures and break the common man's back. Most of the money goes to banks whose officials are literally smiling in them when their computer screens add up profits as explained before. Fact that these debts may never be recovered, seldom if ever crosses their minds.

Stock Exchanges Casinos

The flip side of the Debt Industry coin is perhaps the Stock Exchange the casino where the more you trade the richer your broker gets. Former US Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Arthur Levitt warned in an article in Fortune magazine a decade ago, "Investors have been ripped off as massively as a bank being held up by a guy with a gun and a mask." Apart from street investors Banks over indulge themselves in the Stock Exchanges hoping to increase profits further often end up losing common depositor's money. Lazy Portfolios where few selected stock were kept with eye on long run returns were born as a defensive move against this relentless war by the broker guys with "masks and guns". Extending the same principle towards mounting credit card debts is the simple question. Not saving 10% for your future? Then you're spending too much. In 'The Millionaire Next Door', Tom Stanley and Bill Danko reveal the one habit all millionaires share: "Frugality: They live well below their means. The opposite of frugal is wasteful. We define wasteful as a lifestyle marked by lavish spending and hyper-consumption".

Cornerstone of Wealth Building Frugality

Being frugal is the cornerstone of wealth-building. The arithmetic is

simple -nothing saved equals nothing for the future. One should save at least 10% if one wants an unknown future reasonably secured. Therefore to buy or not to buy is the question. Spend when you need to without being swayed by hype and television screaming at you to spend. Spend if you must with a Debit Card it's Plastic Cash your own money. Avoid Credit Cards as they give feeling of enhanced purchasing power absolutely unreal and this makes one overspend. If at all Credit Card needs to be used e.g. for on-line bookings of train and air tickets, use it for such essentials but pay up immediately so that Card Debit Balance remains zero. This frugality pays dividends in the long run and is one way to beat this credit card debt trap. In fact one should get back to the old days when buying things by borrowing from the money lender was considered dishonourable and frowned upon by society. Let this hard earned money saved remain lazy yet secure for the future. It's advisable to stay away from speculative investments like Stock Markets and Mutual Funds which carry inherent risks. Stock Exchanges are like a rigged casino where the house always wins. Investment consultants (brokers or their representatives) may advise lazy money loses value due to inflation. They do so because they get commissions and can't make money unless you buy and sell. It may be true to an extent but it's far better to invest in services for the family, on children's education, building a house, for a pension fund and strengthen family bonds. If money falls short, loans for buying a house could be taken from family members and not from Banks. If former is not available bank loans should be kept to the barest minimum and cleared at the fastest



possible time. So in the world of Smart Cards and enticing Credit save. Let your hard earned money laze and be judiciously used as insurance for the future.

As PROUT's founder Shrii PR Sarkar said, "It is better not to take a loan, then alone you will not have to pay the interest. To purchase, by incurring debt is against the principle of *aparigraha*" [meaning not indulging in activities unessential for the preservation of life]. He goes on to add, "For our existence we require food, clothes, and also a house to live in. Provision for old age and money ... for one's dependents are also essential. *Aparigraha* is an endless fight to reduce one's own comforts out of sympathy for the common people, after ensuring that individuals are able to maintain solidarity in their physical, mental and spiritual lives for themselves and their families". That's Neo-humanism the sister of Progressive Utilization Theory two wings of the Tantric bird of Spirituality.



Agra turns out 250,000 pairs of shoes every day. Most of them are made by invisible home-workers at the bottom of the global supply chain, who earn as little as Rs. 30/- a pair.



INVISIBLE, EXPLOITED

Home-workers of Agra's Footwear Industry

✱ Aakash Mehrotra

Sarojini is a home-worker at one of the 4,500 home-based units in Agra, the footwear capital of north India. For her, each new day marks a search for work to keep food on the table, a roof over her family, and her children in school. To her sub-contractor, she is known by a number. She is, quite simply, one piece in the supply chain of a footwear brand -- one of the million invisible workers in this industry.

Sarojini wakes up at 6 every morning and gets to work assembling the upper parts of shoes, stitching them together. But her work and therefore her income are irregular. When it comes, her small thatched house turns into a warehouse for the domestic footwear brand (she cannot pronounce the name properly). When she delivers, she gets paid. Since she is not recognised as part of the company's workforce, she is not entitled to sick pay, maternity benefits, medical insurance, or pension. Like Sarojini, Rehana works for one of the 200-odd sole-making units clustered around the inner city. They supply material either to other units or to traders dealing in shoes in the main

wholesale market of Hing ki Mandi. Although the home-workers usually get work throughout the year, the months between August and March are peak periods, when production and thus business is good.

According to ILO Convention 177, home-workers are sub-contracted or dependent workers working for an employer, intermediary or sub-contractor for a piece rate. This means they are not entitled to a minimum wage. Often, they are paid one-third or one-fourth of what a typical factory worker earns on a per piece basis, apart from what they have to pay for supplies

and transport.

Low pay is only one of the problems home-workers face. Most home-workers are usually involved in the most insecure areas of employment; they enjoy no visibility in the supply chain; there are no occupational safety checks despite complaints about health hazards arising out of poor working conditions, use of toxic chemicals, especially glue, infected fingers and stress from long working hours. And this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Agra is one of India's most diverse and tightly knit footwear manufacturing regions, still bearing





the characteristics of an artisan-rooted low-tech cluster. The locally available skilled artisan labour belongs mainly to the Muslim and Jatava communities -- traditional shoe-makers from the Mughal era -- residing in the inner city areas. Some artisans are home-workers; others are wage workers who opt to work on a per piece basis during the slack season. Home-workers are usually involved in five major shoe production activities -- cutting, upper stitching, upper closing, pasting and finishing. Activities like upper stitching are better priced, at around Rs 10-15 per piece, while cutting will get a worker something like Rs 4-6 on a per piece basis. Assembly of an entire shoe could fetch something in the region of Rs 30-40. In the traditional home-working system, per worker productivity of a complete shoe varies between three and five days.

India is the second largest global producer of footwear, accounting for over 13% of footwear production, and coming up with over 2,065 million pairs of footwear every year. The country's \$35 billion footwear industry provides over 20 lakh jobs, of which 70% are in the unorganised sector. In Agra alone, the daily footwear output ranges between 250,000 and

300,000 pairs of footwear for both the export and domestic markets. Its share in the domestic market is over half, and in the export market one-fifth. It hosts around 60 exporting units, 200 large domestic units, more than 200 small domestic units and over 4,500 home-based units.

Then there are a number of footwear accessories manufacturers, all accounting for a huge workforce and an even larger number of home-workers sub-contracted for the task. For every factory labourer, there are over 10 home-workers working on a per piece rate. Having an army of home-workers is a win-win situation for the industry. Indeed, many major footwear companies are linked to home-working. Brands like Nike and GAP have all been guilty of violating the requirements for reasonable working conditions at their production facilities. They have been criticised for being complicit in breaching the ethical lines set out by their company. An internal report by Nike, for instance, found that nearly two-thirds of the 168 factories making Converse (one of the company's brands) products failed to meet the company's own ethical manufacturing standards. The trend as regards domestic brands is worse; domestic

companies operate on a smaller scale and most do not have an ethical code of conduct.

Home-working brings about a complex relationship between employee and employer. Although retailers do not directly employ home-workers, supply chain decisions do directly impact them. And although suppliers do not directly source materials from home-workers, they work on their products and are deemed to be 'working on contract'. They are therefore invisible to the actors at the top. Likewise, home-workers are unaware of the range of actors in this long sub-contracted chain and their responsibilities or ethical obligations.

Because of their 'invisibility', traditional trade unions have never been able to address home-workers' issues, although small steps are being taken. In Tamil Nadu, for instance, a home-workers federation has set up a savings and life insurance scheme, offering members greater security and access to loans. Companies themselves are moving to improve the precarious working conditions of home-workers in their employ. Efforts are on by the Ethical Trading Initiative to develop a multi stakeholder platform directed at improving the

condition of home-workers by offering them training in health and safety issues, ensuring that they receive fair payment, and that companies introduce artisan cards for them to increase their visibility in the supply chain.

Apart from this, various international declarations like the ILO Convention and the Kathmandu Convention have recognised and appreciated the rights of home-workers. Business sustainability reporting frameworks like the Global Reporting Initiative, Business Sustainability Initiatives, UN guiding principles on business and human rights focus on the value of human rights in the business supply chain; CSR forums recognise that businesses have a social responsibility and that the sphere of influence for any business begins by taking an ethical stand towards the workforce.

Dialogue between businesses, NGOs, trade unions and human rights organisations would help

create the required impetus on this issue. Improving the work conditions of home-workers will bring greater transparency and sustainability to global supply chains and also help organise the informal economy. One of the principles defined in the National Voluntary Guidelines (NVGs) developed by SEBI for 100 top listed companies in the NSE (this could be applied to the top 500 companies) recognises human rights and ethical sourcing as integral parts of business sustainability.

In April, the Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) and Stop Child Labour organised two stakeholder meetings, in Agra and Chennai, to discuss the issue of home-working and child labour in the footwear industry. Each stakeholder meeting drew a diverse audience of local footwear suppliers, business associations, government officials, international brands and retailers, international and local NGOs, trade unions, and

social compliance experts to analyse and chart out a sustainable path that could be taken to eradicate child labour in the industry. The consultations yielded the idea of initiating bottom-up research to better understand the socio-economic realities of home-workers and to develop tools and guidelines to bring in greater transparency and accountability in the supply chain. An encouraging trend is that buyers are themselves voicing interest in such tools and are slowly graduating to the concept of ethical supply chains. The bottom-up research should help businesses devise specific initiatives to improve the condition of home-workers.

Ethics is the new competitive watchword for any labour-intensive industry. Businesses must come forward and realise that good business means much more than good profits.

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* Kannan Kasturi

The steep and prolonged increase in the price of vegetables across India has imposed severe hardship on the average citizen. Official statistics places wholesale vegetable price inflation in October at 78 per cent compared to a year ago. The price rise was exemplified in particular by onions, a staple for most Indians, costing over Rs 80/kg in many parts of the country recently. The price of other vegetables of common consumption such as tomatoes and potatoes has also shot up. A catchall explanation that one often hears from the Government and its economists is that "demand is exceeding supply".

The accompanying chart shows data put out by the National Horticulture Board on the production of onions and tomatoes over the last decade. Besides tomato



Why Your Bag of Vegetables Costs More Every Week!

It is certainly not because of mere demand-supply mismatch. Supply chain dynamics and credit linkages in the vegetable markets to show how these, coupled with government impotence, have led to uncontrolled, spiraling inflation.

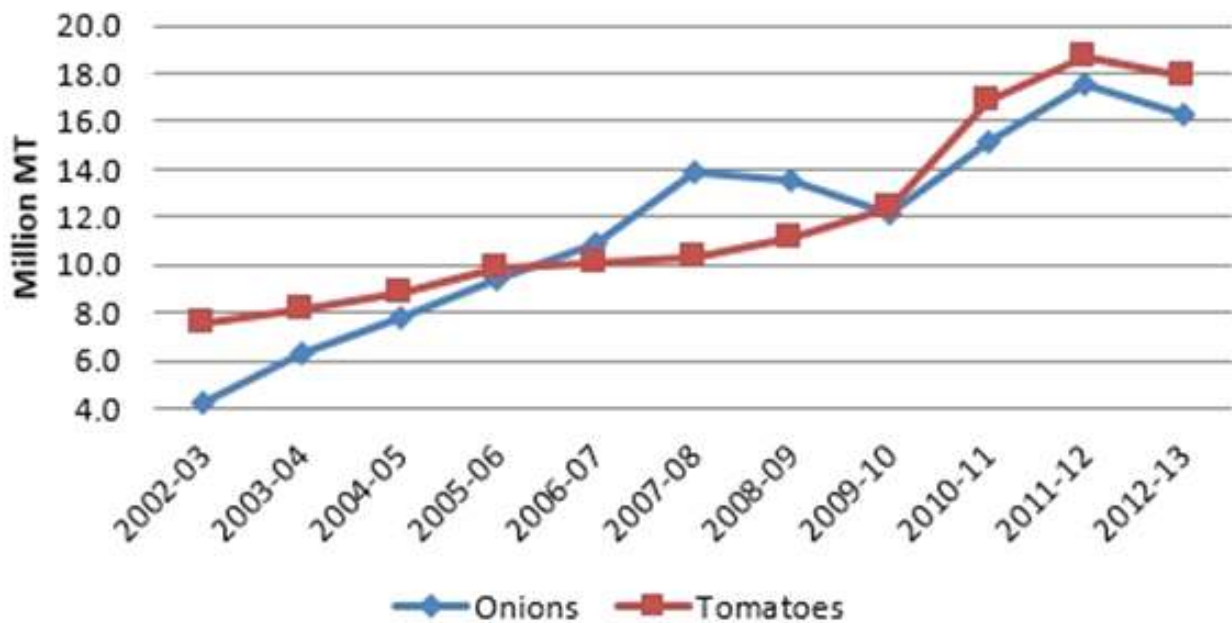
and onion, potato is among the top three vegetables produced in India. These three account for nearly half of the total vegetable production. Potato production increased from about 23 million MT in 2002-03 to 45 million MT in 2012-13. The corresponding figures for overall vegetable production are 85 million MT and 160 million MT.

Per capita figures provide better insight as they account for population growth. In per capita terms, annual production of onion nearly quadrupled over the decade from 4.1 kg to 13.5 kg that of tomato doubled from 7.4 kg to 14.8 kg while

potato production increased from 22.5 kg to 37 kg. In the case of onion, there appears to be enough to allow exports. On average, over 10 per cent of onion production - 1.7 million MT - has been exported annually over the last five years. From these figures, it appears safe to conclude that at least for these vegetables of mass consumption, production is keeping pace with demand in the long term.

A more pointed explanation for onion prices came from the Agriculture Minister, Sharad Pawar. Heavy rains had affected the onion crop in Maharashtra and Karnataka

Vegetable Production



and this had temporarily affected supply. However, as crop area was higher, there would be no overall drop in production and prices would come down in a few weeks. Pawar also remarked that "when farmers were getting more money for their produce, we should not complain" implying that farmers were the beneficiaries (*Economic Times*, 19 September, 2013). Undoubtedly, weather events such as the one alluded to by the Minister can lead to some loss of production. However the question is, are these reasons for the price rise or just an excuse for it?

Anatomy of the Supply Chain

Horticultural produce typically traverses through at least two mandis (wholesale agricultural markets) in its journey from the farm to the urban consumer, an assembling mandi in the farming region and a terminal mandi near the urban consumption center. Farmers may take their produce directly to an assembling mandi such as Lasalgaon in the onion growing region of Nasik but often need to go through village agents who consolidate produce from several

farmers, transport it to the mandi and arrange for its sale to a wholesale trader. This trader will in turn sell the produce to another wholesale trader at a terminal mandi such as Azadpur sabji mandi in Delhi. The trader at the terminal mandi may directly sell the produce to large retailers; however sale to small retailers is typically mediated by sub-wholesalers (called mashakhors in Delhi). All transactions between farmer and trader or between two traders at the mandis are necessarily mediated by commission agents who match buyer and seller and charge a percentage of the transaction as commission.

This supply chain architecture is actually mandated by Law. The prototype of the law was a colonial legislation establishing state control over wholesale agricultural markets, allowing the state to levy a transaction tax and giving it the ability to commandeer produce when needed.

Agriculture is the responsibility of the state governments and most states have slightly differing versions of this

law. The law dictates that farmers can sell their produce only in the state - established mandis to licensed middlemen (commission agents and wholesale traders). It also forces produce from outside state boundaries to be routed through local mandis ensuring yet another layer of middlemen between the farmer and the local retailer. Every player in the supply chain adds to the cost to the consumer. So besides the legitimate grading, packaging, labour and transport costs, there are the marketing fees (a transaction tax accruing to the government) paid at each mandi the produce traverses, as well as the commissions of the agents and the margins of the wholesalers. All this makes for the customer paying a price several times the price obtained by the farmer.

A vegetable like onion that can be stored throws up another aspect of this supply chain. The winter rabi crop harvested in April-May, accounts for 60 per cent of onion production. Part of the crop must be stored to last the lean months, typically September to January, till

kharif harvests arrive. Onion growers, mostly small farmers do not have the capacity to store; storage capacity lies mostly with the large traders in the supply chain. Traders build up their stocks from the rabi crop and then release them at higher prices in the retail market in the lean months when demand is inelastic because of major festivals and the marriage season. This appears to be the normal seasonal cycle in the onion market.

Profiting by Creating Scarcity

What happens then when mandi middlemen anticipate a shortfall in production? The natural response is hoarding and tightening of supplies all along the chain. The consequent price spike is typically followed by a price collapse coinciding with the next harvest. By then, the traders have already made a killing while the farmers stare at ruin. An episode from a few years back illustrates this pattern. Onion prices climbed steeply in the months of December 2010 and January 2011 before collapsing as suddenly, as seen in the graphic below. The sharply higher retail margins during the spike point to hoarding in the terminal markets.

The trigger for this episode was untimely rain which was expected to affect the late kharif crop in Karnataka, Gujarat and Maharashtra. As it turned out, onion production that year reached 15.1 million MT, the highest annual crop seen till then! Exports too at 1.3 million MT were lower that year compared to preceding and subsequent years. It appears that this is the pattern Sharad Pawar had in mind when he spoke about the current onion crisis and predicted that price would come back to normal in a few weeks. From May 2011 to April 2012, average wholesale prices at Lasalgaon, the largest onion procuring mandi in India remained in the range of Rs 3.90/kg - Rs 11/kg. There were reports of onion farmers in the Nasik area attempting suicide as they could not get even Rs 2/kg. This gives a lie to claims that farmers benefit from price spikes.

The Competition Commission of India commissioned a study of onion markets by The Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, after this episode. The study focused on the onion supply chain from the main assembling

markets of Karnataka and Maharashtra (which together account for over 50% of onion production in the country) to the consumption markets in the main metros.

Analyzing price and market arrival data of onions across assembling and large metro mandis, the study found patterns that clearly pointed to hoarding and price fixing in onion markets. Other findings of the study throw light on why these practices thrive.

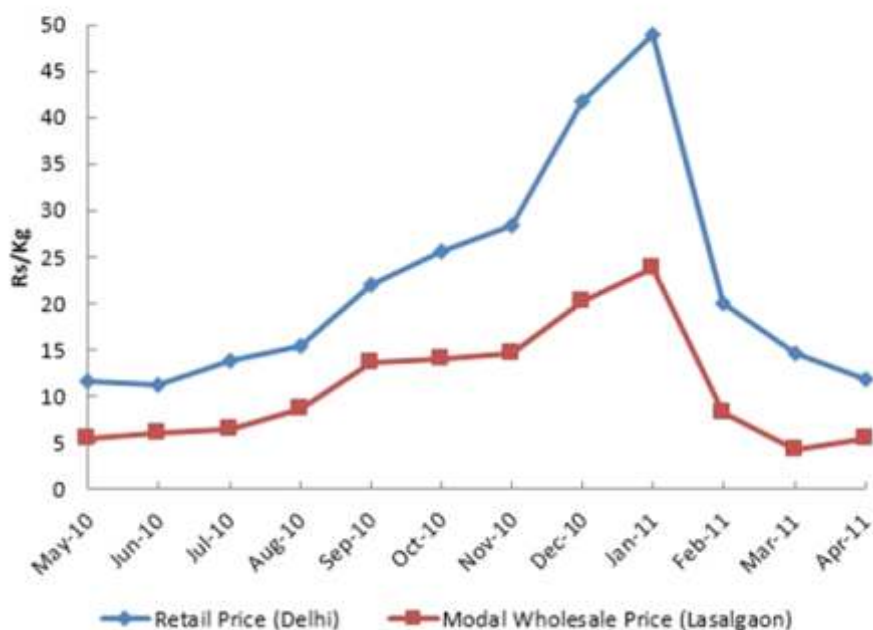
The APMCs governing the mandis were largely dominated by traders. Commission agents and traders at the assembling mandis were well entrenched and formed an oligopoly, having been in the business on average for 20 years. The APMC officials, public servants - did not enforce market rules. Even transaction records, the key to understanding pricing, were not transparent.

Many farmers were indebted to commission agents to whom they went for their credit requirements. Commission agents also extended short term credit to traders purchasing from them. The big traders in the assembling mandis were well connected with the intermediaries in other markets. Given all of the above, it is hardly surprising that the licensed intermediaries of the mandis can dictate prices to both the farmer and consumer.

Who will Bell the Cat?

The government, of course, is well aware of what ails this supply chain. The Minister of State for Agriculture, Tariq Anwar was all candor recently: "If farmers get paid Rs 10 per kg, while the consumers pay anywhere between Rs 80-100 per kg of onion, there is obviously something seriously wrong in the way the onion market operates... we know that there are governance issues related to licensing of wholesalers, issues related to holding capacity of farmers, issues related to market prices information and a number of issues related to the

Onion price spike - 2010/11



whole supply chain which creates the kind of pricing contradiction." (PTI, Nov 8, 2013). A committee of bureaucrats looking into food inflation too did not mince words: "APMCs were established to protect the interest of farmers. However, in reality, the APMC system has abetted monopolistic behavior and reduced the choices available to small farmers ... Unwittingly; it is our well intentioned APMC law that has contributed to cartelization and collusion amongst incumbent traders." But then, what is the Government doing about it?

Direct intervention in the market is no longer fashionable. The strategy revolves around encouraging large corporations to enter agricultural retail under the premise that these would build alternative supply chains in competition with existing ones. The moves to attract foreign direct investment into retail are part of this

strategy. In line with this, the Union Government came up with a model APMC Act in 2003, providing for establishment of private markets and permitting direct sale of produce from contract farms to sponsors. Leaving aside the fact that many states have not even adopted the model APMC Act after 10 years, even where it has been adopted, entrenched interests have prevented new markets from coming up and new trading licenses being granted in existing markets. Reports suggest that the grip of the established traders and agents is so strong that even corporate retailers who have been in business for a number of years have difficulty buying from farmers directly and have to pick up a majority of the produce they sell from the wholesale mandis (*The Hindu Business Line*, 25 Nov 2011).

At least part of the problem stems from the ground reality of the credit linkages that bind the different

elements in the existing supply chain - not only the farmer to the commission agent and the wholesale trader to the commission agent, but also the small retailer to the mashakhor and so on. The experience of Indian retailers punctures a big hole in the argument that allowing FDI in retail will automatically bring improvements in the supply chain. Radically transforming the supply chain for fruits and vegetables can bring huge benefits in price and price stability for the farmer and consumer, allow reliable price signals to the farmer and ensure better availability for the consumer. But the major political parties in government have no inclination to confront the powerful middlemen who control the agricultural markets, a confrontation necessary for any such transformation.

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The famed textile industry of Surat is one of the pillars of Gujarat's industrial success story. What is less known about it is the unfortunate reality of rampant child employment and exploitation that prevails there.

SMALL HANDS

Hard Labour in Surat's Textile Industry

✱ Shirish Khare

It is truth, but only a half-truth, that Surat is the backbone of the Indian textile industry. The complete truth is that this 'industry' in the city employs several thousand children, who contribute towards making Surat such a reputed hub of textiles in the country. More than one-fourth are from Gujarat itself. According to government figures, there are 5000 child labourers in Surat. But statistics from civil society estimates are closer to the 50,000

mark. Of these 68 per cent are between the ages of 15 and 18, meaning that nearly a third of them are younger than 15.

The National Child Labour Project also accepts that child labour is significant in the areas of Surat, Bhavnagar and Banasaktha. In these districts 28.51 per cent of the total labour force is comprised of children. The state government had earlier committed to a goal of making the state free of child labour by 2010, but these revelations show how far that goal is.

Power Looms Thrive, So Does Exploitation

The *khat-khat* sound of machines that emanates from Surat's South-East Zone is not out of nowhere. The Census reveals that there are over 4.5 lakh power looms in this area. In 1951 there were only 2282. Even in 1970, there were only 19,025. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of looms increased to 2 lakh, and over the past decade that number has more than doubled.

Interestingly, between 1978 and the 1990s, five large textile mills



Bans notwithstanding, the use of child labour is rampant.

in this area were shut down and their space was taken up by several power looms. In the large mills, the labour unions were strong, and there was no difficulty in mobilising the labour force to pressurise mill owners for workers' rights. But the shutting of the mills broke the back of these unions.

There are 160 unions in Surat even today, but they exist only in name. The power loom factories scattered over the area have undermined workers' rights and have also encouraged the exploitation of the labour force. Taking advantage of the absence of mobilised workers, they continue to employ children in large numbers. Each day in Surat, 35,000 to 1 lakh saris are made, guaranteeing a daily turnover to the tune of 5 crore. Several thousand frail, thin, small hands are behind these saris.

Child labour in the textile industry exists predominantly in three sectors. First among these is the power loom factory where the raw cloth is prepared. This is prevalent largely in the areas of Katargam, Limbayat, Pandeysaray, Udna, Falsabadi, Mufatnagar. The children here put oil in the machines as required and also act as helpers of the machine operators.

In the power looms at Katargam, it is often noticed that even basic amenities such as toilets, drinking water, ventilation and fans are missing. As soon as one enters the power loom there is a dull darkness that envelops him, and layers of grease underfoot. Some of the workers outside the factory say that there is an accepted silence around the practice of extracting maximum work for minimum pay and benefits here.

The second sector is the dyeing factory, where the cloth is coloured. This is considered a hazardous industry because of the harmful chemicals used in the dying process and because the steaming involved can cause burns to the children. Interestingly the dyeing industry is also the predominant reason for the

heavy pollution of the Tapti River that runs through Surat. Along the Tapti in Pandeysaray, over 500 small dyeing units function. The children here lug heavy bundles of dyed cloth in the unit. No new people are allowed in this sector of the industry.

The third hub of employment of child labour is the textile market. In Surat there are over 60,000 shops in the textile market. Cloth is sold from here to all parts of the world. The children pack saris, bundle the thread, and carry bundles in the market. The most number of children are found in these markets, because they get paid anywhere between Rs 50 to Rs 80 a day. At the power loom factories, they get measly Rs 20-25. In this sector, skilled workers are a requirement, so the children are reduced to mere helpers.

The textile market runs along the Ring Road and children who work here live in the areas over the 2-5 kilometre stretch from this road - in Limbayat, Meethee Khadi, Sangam Tekri, Mafat Nagar and Ambedkar Nagar. Workers walk part of the way and travel by shared rickshaws for the remaining. They work from 9 in the morning to 10 at night. The Rajasthani Marwadis are the predominant loom owners in this area, and they also employ children on contract from poor Rajasthani families in rural areas. These children don't live in bastis but accommodate themselves in the area around the power loom, sleeping and eating on footpaths.

Many girls are employed in the textile market sector. They get paid 50 paise for sewing in shiny stones and cutting the threads on a sari. When four or five girls get together and work all day, they manage to scrape together something between Rs 10 and Rs 12 each day. Most of the girls involved in this work are from the Harpati caste.

In Limbayat and Meethi Khadi, several Muslim children from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh do *zari* work on saris. These children have come here via Mumbai's Govandi suburb.

When the labour commissioner in Mumbai gets active, the children are brought to Surat and put to work here. For the *zari* embroidery, 5-6 children, often predominantly girls are seated around a *khatiya*. In a hall, there will be around 5 *khatiyas*, and thus you will find 25 children labouring for 8 to 10 hours a day in the dim light, doing fine *zari* work on saris. Since they work and sleep in the same place, there is no difference for them between day and night, work and home.

Owners with Impunity

Many factory owners don't register their business. This means that they not only save on tax, but also get away without giving workers any benefits or guaranteeing satisfactory conditions of work. As a result it is difficult to get an accurate estimate of the number of factories and the number of workers involved in this industry. The situation is so bad that even if a worker is injured at work, there is little or no chance that any compensation will be given to him. The machinery is often old and workers frequently operate four to six machines simultaneously.

The workers are now demanding a payment of Rs 1.25 per metre of cloth, the current rate being Re 1 a metre. Even adult workers don't have a guaranteed wage, but instead get paid not on a monthly basis, but on piece rate as well. The situation of children is substantially worse.

The Surat textile industry is glowingly referred to as the backbone of Gujarat or the *lambi minar*. Those who gaze up at this *lambi minar* with awe in their eyes, fail to observe the unshakeable foundation, under whose pressure countless childhoods have been ruthlessly buried. School, aspiration, dream, hope..... all smothered under the weight of the clothing that the industry churns out.

The writer is a Bhopal based journalist and also a senior correspondent for Tehelka Magazine.

Considering the Humanity of Nonhumans



Elephants, chimpanzees and some cetaceans have shown that they can recognize themselves in a mirror.

✱ James Gorman

What is a person? “Beings who recognize themselves as ‘I’s.’ Those are persons.” That was the view of Immanuel Kant, said Lori Gruen, a philosophy professor at Wesleyan University who thinks and writes often about nonhuman animals and the moral and philosophical issues involved in how we treat them.

She was responding to questions in an interview last week after advocates used a new legal strategy to have chimpanzees

recognized as legal persons, with a right to liberty, albeit a liberty with considerable limits. The Nonhuman Rights Project, an advocacy group led by Steven M. Wise, filed writs of habeas corpus in New York last week on behalf of four captive chimpanzees: Tommy, owned by a Gloversville couple; two at Stony Brook University; and one at the Primate Sanctuary in Niagara Falls. The lawsuits were dismissed, but Mr. Wise said he planned to appeal.

He believes that the historical use of habeas corpus lawsuits as a tool against human slavery offers a model for how to fight for legal

rights for nonhumans. His case relies heavily on science. Nine affidavits from scientists that were part of the court filings offer opinions of what research says about the lives, thinking ability and self-awareness of chimpanzees.

Mr. Wise argues that chimps are enough like humans that they should have some legal rights; not the right to vote or freedom of religion—he is not aiming for a full-blown planet of the apes—but a limited right to bodily liberty. The suits asked that the chimps be freed to go to sanctuaries where they would have more freedom.



Richard L. Cupp, a law professor at Pepperdine University in California who opposes granting rights to nonhuman animals, described the legal strategy as “far outside the mainstream.” He said in an email, “The courts would have to dramatically expand existing common law for the cases to succeed.” Lori Marino of Emory University, who studies dolphins and other [cetaceans](#) and is the science director of the Nonhuman Rights Project, said it “is about more than these four chimpanzees.” Mr. Wise, she said, “sees this as the knob that can turn a lot of things. It’s potentially transformative.” She said she was under no illusion that rights for animals would be easy to gain. “It may not happen in anyone’s lifetime,” she said.

The science of behavior is only part of the legal argument, though it is crucial to the central idea that chimps are in some sense autonomous. Autonomy can mean different things, depending on whether you are talking about chimpanzees, drones or robot vacuum cleaners, and whether you are using the language of law, philosophy or artificial intelligence. Dr. Gruen sees it as a term that is fraught with problems in philosophy, but Dr. Marino said that for the purposes of the legal effort, autonomy means “a very basic capacity to be aware of yourself, your circumstances and your future.”

Science can’t be decisive in such an argument, as Dr. Gruen points out, but what it can do is support or undermine this idea of autonomy. “If you form the right kinds of questions,” she said, “there are important answers that science can give about animal cognition and

animal behavior.” Dr. Marino said that science could “contribute evidence for the kinds of characteristics that a judge may find to be part of autonomy.” Dr. Gruen, Dr. Marino and Mr. Wise made presentations at a conference, *Personhood Beyond the Human*, at Yale over the weekend. They spoke in interviews related to the court case during the week before the conference. The kind of science that supports the idea of chimpanzees as autonomous could also support the idea that many other animals fit the bill. There are affidavits related to cognitive ability, tool use, social life and many other capabilities of chimpanzees, but there are questions about how pertinent each line of evidence is.

“Is that important for being a philosophical person tool use itself?” Dr. Gruen asked. The issues of self-awareness and of awareness of past and future strike to the heart of a common-sense view of what personhood might be. Chimps, elephants and some cetaceans have shown that they can recognize themselves in a mirror. But the rights project is claiming more, saying that for chimps, as Dr. Marino put it, “you know it was you yesterday, you today, you tomorrow,” and “you have desires and goals for the future.” There is plenty of evidence that chimpanzees and other animals act for the future. Some birds hide seeds to recover in leaner times, for example.

One affidavit is from Matthias Osvath, of Lund University in Sweden, who studies the thinking ability of animals, particularly great apes and some birds. He cites a number of studies of chimps that support the idea they have a sense of the future, including resisting an

immediate reward to gain a tool that will get them a larger reward. In one well known piece of research by Dr. Osvath, he reported on Santino, a chimp at a zoo in Sweden who stockpiled and hid rocks he would later throw at human visitors. Dr. Osvath argued that Santino had the capacity to think of himself making future use of the rocks he saved. Science cannot prove what went on in Santino’s mind. But Dr. Marino said the cumulative evidence could be used to ask a judge, “If you look at all the evidence in total, then what kind of being could produce all that evidence?”

Not all proponents of animal welfare are convinced that calling for rights for animals is the best way to go.

Dr. Gruen said that she had misgivings about the rights approach, philosophically and politically. “My own view is that it makes more sense to think about what we owe animals.” Progress on that front in 2013, particularly for chimpanzees, has surprised and delighted many activists. The National Institutes of Health is retiring most of its chimpanzees. And the United States Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed changes that would classify all chimps, even those in laboratories, as endangered, a move that would raise obstacles to experiments on privately owned chimps.

One point to remember is that personhood does not mean being human. Robert Sapolsky, a primatologist and neuroscientist at Stanford University who was not associated with the lawsuit, said, “I think the evidence certainly suggests that chimps are self-aware and autonomous.” That still leaves a vast gap between chimps and humans, he said. Chimps may look ahead in hiding food for later, or planning “how to ambush monkeys they are hunting.” Humans, he noted, could think about “the consequences of global warming for their grandchildren’s grandchildren, or of the sun eventually dying, or of them eventually dying.”



Towards an Economy of *Mutualism*

Modern economy must come to assume a mutualistic, and not a predatory role toward the natural resource-based, labour-intensive sector of the economy.

✱ Madhav Gadgil

J.C. Kumarappa, the Gandhian economist who worked with the Planning Commission in the early years of Indian Independence, favoured industrialisation but insisted that its pursuit should not lead to the creation of an economy of violence. Recent disturbances linked to control over, and fate of, the rich water, mineral, forest and biodiversity resources of the Western Ghats of Kerala suggest that Kumarappa's worst fears of a lopsided development have come true. As Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz emphasises in his recent book, *The Price of Inequality*, any nation must aim at a harmonious development of its four capital stocks: not just man-made capital that GDP highlights, but natural capital, human capital and social capital as well. A GDP-centric viewpoint focuses exclusively on economic activity in the organised industries-services sector.

Chembanmudy Quarries

Thus, in the case of the controversial Chembanmudy hill stone quarries of Pathanamthitta district in Kerala, what will count as positive development gains are not only quarrying, crushing and truck transport, but also the boosting of sales of anti-cancer and anti-asthmatic drugs as a result of the ill-



health caused by quarrying activities. In the absence of proper records, other relevant elements of economic activities such as the decline in agricultural productivity and loss of employment for agricultural labour that ought to be counted on the debit side will be overlooked. In addition, the GDP-centric view totally ignores the ongoing grave depletion of natural capital, human capital and social capital. Thus, in the case of Chembanmudy, landslips and

blockage of streams are adversely impacting land, water, forest and biodiversity resources. Health, education and employment are three important components of human capital. In the Chembanmudy case, health has suffered, with even young children developing lung cancer. Mothers have petitioned that the unceasing truck traffic does not permit their children to focus on studies.

As for employment, there is little for local community members.



Most of the small number of labour employed is from tribal tracts of Orissa or Jharkhand, people whose livelihood has been destroyed by rampant mining in their own native districts. There are horror stories making rounds of how this disorganised labour force is ill-treated, with no compensation for accidental injuries or even death. Indeed, the claim that India's rapid economic growth is helping create much-needed employment is dubious; the annual rate of growth in employment in the organised sector that was 2 per cent when the GDP was growing at 3 per cent, actually declined to one per cent as the GDP growth rate soared to 7 per cent. So what we are witnessing is jobless growth, with accompanying erosion of human and social capital.

Social capital resides in social harmony, cooperation and trust. These too are suffering under the prevalent economy of violence. This economy is promoting grabbing and spoiling of land, water, mineral and forest resources to benefit a few, at the cost of the larger society. This is being facilitated by lawlessness and social injustice: witness the very large number of illegal quarries currently operational in Kerala,

estimated at 1,700 out of a total 2,700 functional quarries. The disinformation campaign focusing first on our Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) report, and now on the Kasturirangan report, and the violence that has been triggered suggest that social disharmony has become the order of the day.

WGEEP points out that we are currently practising "Development by Exclusion, accompanied by Conservation by Exclusion." This is because the many powerful interests that control decision-making today are not motivated to pursue development that would create mutually beneficial relationships among the beneficiaries of the organised industries-services sector and the bulk of our people dependent for their livelihoods and well-being on a healthy base of the natural resources. Nor are the powers-that-be properly informed of the realities at the ground level. This prevails all over the country, despite our well-entrenched democracy and the many constitutional and legal provisions to protect the environment and engage people in decision-making processes that are a result of a sensitivity towards what

the people want.

Of all the States, it is Kerala that has led the country in democratic devolution and has made considerable progress in ensuring that people can influence the course of development and protect their environment and livelihoods. A notable example of this is the Plachimada panchayat in Palakkad district, where a Coca Cola plant had polluted as well as depleted groundwater, with consequent drying up of wells, loss of agricultural productivity and concomitant negative impacts on livelihoods. The people of Plachimada ensured that there was a proper scientific inquiry into the losses suffered by them. This provided sound scientific evidence that these losses amount to a whopping Rs. 260 crore. On the basis of this evidence, the panchayat rescinded the company's license. Notably enough, initially none of the political parties backed the people's demands, but came round when confronted with a groundswell of sentiment. While cancelling the license, the panchayat evoked its constitutional rights, arguing that as a local elected government it had the duty to protect the well-being of its

subjects. So it had the right to cancel or refuse permission to anything that affected its subjects adversely. The company's counter-argument was that the panchayat was a subordinate of the State government and thus could not operate out of its domain, since the State government had granted the license for Coca Cola to operate. The High Court rejected this argument, affirming that people at the grassroots indeed have the authority to decide on the course of development in their localities.

The powers-that-be today would like to set aside these significant constitutional provisions empowering the people and helping them protect their environment. Instead, they are promoting a GDP-centric approach with little concern for natural, human, social capital. This is reflected in the rhetorical and unconstitutional question posed by the Kasturirangan panel: "How can local communities have any role in economic decision-making?" Evidently, the Kasturirangan panel wishes to facilitate the continuance of the present system of a predatory

economy, but was obliged to prescribe some minimal level of protection for natural resources. Quite typically, this protection is proposed to be imposed from above and is not decided upon through a democratic process. But even this minimal protection is unacceptable to the beneficiaries of the current system who triggered the recent violence.

Duty to inform

Such lopsided development is clearly against broader national interests and since it is people at the grassroots that are best aware of what is happening to the natural, human and social capital, their inputs are critical to arriving at a development strategy that will promote a harmonious, balanced development. The sole duty of those wielding power should, therefore, be to inform the populace of all relevant facts and of the various development-conservation alternatives. Hence, WGEEP has explicitly stated that "we should attempt to develop a model of conservation and development compatible with each other ... to replace the prevailing 'Develop

recklessly conserve thoughtlessly' pattern with one of 'Develop sustainably conserve thoughtfully'. The fine-tuning of development-conservation practices to [the] local context that this calls for would require the full involvement of local communities. It is therefore quite inappropriate to depend exclusively on government agencies for the constitution and management of Ecologically Sensitive Zones. Instead the final demarcation of the Zones and fine tuning of the regulatory as well as promotional regimes must be based on extensive inputs from local communities and local bodies."

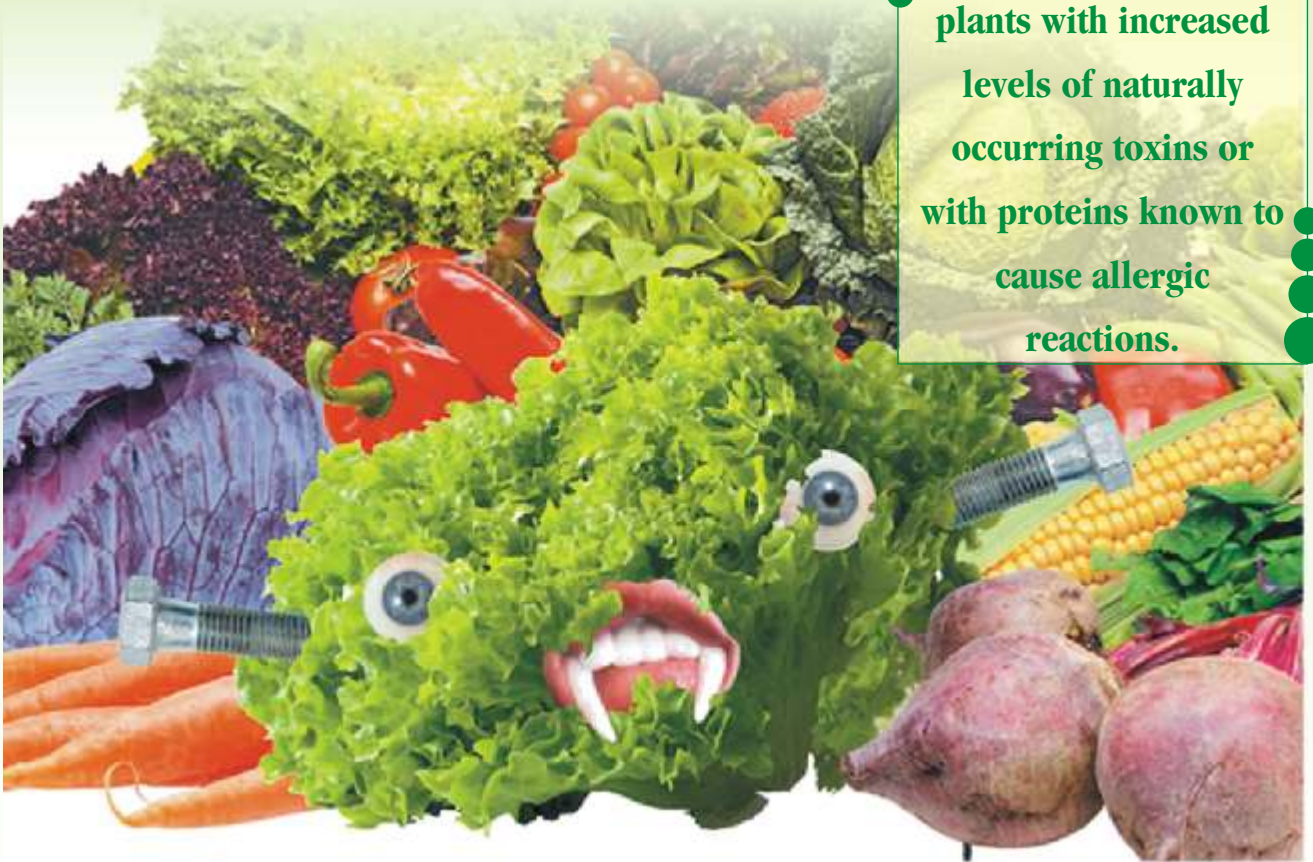
An important focus of the development of the Western Ghats tracts of Kerala should therefore be on properly informing and organising people down to the grassroots level to exercise their democratic rights. A well-informed and empowered citizenry will ensure that the environment is properly cared for even as we continue to industrialise, as has happened in Germany and the Scandinavian countries. What we need to concentrate on is implementing that which by all rights must be implemented, namely, the constitutional provisions for protecting the environment and empowering the people.

Of course, India must continue to develop a vibrant technology-based economy as well. Inevitably, this will end up employing only a small proportion of our people. But this modern economy must come to assume a mutualistic, and not predatory, role towards the natural resource-based, labour intensive sector of the economy. That is the only route to balanced and harmonious economic and social development.

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All breeding techniques can create plants with increased levels of naturally occurring toxins or with proteins known to cause allergic reactions.



The Scariest Veggies of Them All

Last July, when Monsanto withdrew its applications to sell genetically modified biotech seeds in the European Union, the move opened the way for competitors to challenge Monsanto's market share. As opposition to genetically modified crops has spread across Europe and the world, leading chemical companies including BASF and DuPont have turned to mutagenesis technique that mimics the sun's irradiation of plants to create herbicide-resistant crops. The process, which faces almost no

regulation, creates opportunities for companies to grab a bigger share of the \$34 billion global commercial seed market. But some scientists say mutant crops are more likely to pose health risks than genetically modified ones.

Mutagenesis isn't new: Breeders have relied on it for decades to produce thousands of varieties of lettuce, oats, rice, and other crops. BASF today licenses its technologies to 40 of the world's biggest seed companies, including DuPont and Switzerland's Syngenta, which in turn sell high volumes of

mutant breeds, ranging from wheat to sunflowers, in markets that reject genetically engineered seeds.

Brazil says Yes Mexico says No to GM Foods

Earnings at BASF's agriculture unit rose 27 percent in 2012 from the previous year, partly because of higher demand for mutant seeds in Eastern Europe, according to the company's latest annual report. "The flexibility is there to use this technology quite broadly," says Jonathan Bryant, vice president of the global strategic marketing group

for herbicides at BASF. “Because it's a conventional breeding technique...it's very amenable to a wide range of seed companies.”

How much of a challenge does this pose to Monsanto? The world's largest creator of genetically altered crops it develops and sells seed produced by farmers it contracts with accounts for a sizable chunk of the global seed market. It had \$14.9 billion in sales in fiscal 2013; \$10.3 billion of that was from the sale of seeds and genetic licenses. The St. Louis-based company doesn't break down sales figures, but it says most of its seed revenue comes from genetically modified organisms. While earnings have grown at a rate of more than 20 percent the previous three years, Monsanto faces increased regulation and bans of its GMOs in some countries as well as political hurdles that can delay product launches for years, or indefinitely.

Monsanto's Rogue Wheat Seed at Centre of Mystery

The EU has approved planting only one of Monsanto's genetically modified crop varieties in two decades, prompting its decision to withdraw eight pending GMO requests last summer. It's not the

only company confronting roadblocks with GMOs in Europe. BASF last year decided to move its plant science division, dedicated to engineered crops, to the U.S. from Germany. Even in the U.S., bills pending in 26 state legislatures and before Congress would, if passed, require labels on genetically modified foods. No such disclosures are required on ingredients derived from mutant crops.

All breeding techniques can create plants with increased levels of naturally occurring toxins or with proteins known to cause allergic reactions. Reports from the National Academy of Sciences, representing the consensus of experts in the field, say the risk of creating unintended health effects is greater from mutagenesis than any other technique, including genetic modification. Mutagenesis deletes and rearranges hundreds or thousands of genes randomly, spawning mutations that are less precise than GMOs. The academy has warned that regulating genetically modified crops while giving a pass to mutant products isn't scientifically justified.

The risks associated with mutagenesis, the academy also says, are small relative to the incidence of

food-borne illnesses such as salmonella. BASF maintains the crops are safe for consumers and the environment. “This has been a technique used for many decades without issue, without concern,” Bryant says. In addition to the regulatory-free environment they operate in, mutant crops are also gaining in popularity because they're cheaper to produce. Monsanto spends anywhere from \$150 million to \$200 million to launch a single genetically engineered product. Japan, by comparison, invested \$69 million from 1959 to 2001 on mutant breeds that yielded \$62 billion worth of products over that period, according to data from the United Nations' Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture program.

“These difficulties in getting a GMO to the market, we don't have it in mutation breeding,” says Pierre Lagoda, who heads up the UN program. That's spurred even more interest in the mutant varieties, he says. In 2013 alone, Lagoda's program has received requests to help irradiate a record 31 plant species ranging from sugar beets from Poland to potatoes from Kenya. “The current regulations are a huge incentive to go back and do things the old way,” including mutagenesis, says Wayne Parrott, a professor of crop science at the University of Georgia in Athens. Monsanto has also used mutation breeding, says the company's chief technology officer, Robb Fraley.

Industry experts say breeding and biotechnology are starting to converge. Over the past five years, breeders have increasingly used molecular markers and sequenced genomes of corn and other crops to improve crossbreeding, making conventional breeding more like genetic engineering. “There is not a black line between biotechnology and non-biotechnology,” says Paul Schickler, president of DuPont's Pioneer seed unit. “It's a continuum.”

The writer is a reporter for Bloomberg News in Houston.



Smoking Plastic, Pesticide, Bleach and Fiberglass

The four killers that Big Tobacco Never Mentions

Cigarette paper comes from trees that are naturally brown, so every puff of smoke contains a little bleach.

Consuming bleach on a regular basis, whether by food or by inhaling fumes, causes cancer.



✶ Kranti Kumara

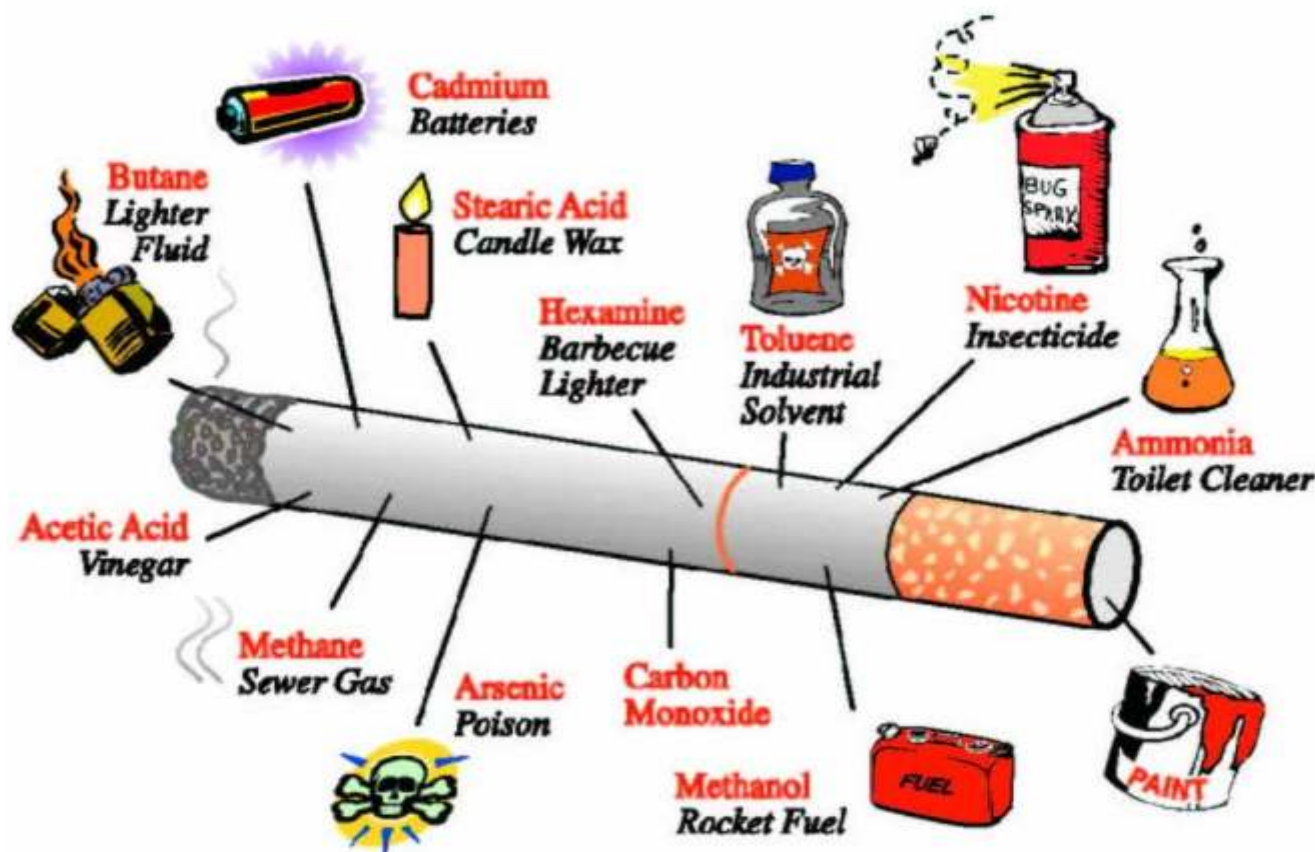
Have you ever wondered why cigarettes don't go out in heavy wind and why they burn so evenly, all the way from one end to the other? Could it be that plastic particles are woven into the rolling paper to make your nicotine delivery device more efficient? Cellulose acetate is a form of plastic that's commonly used for photo film and is highly flammable. It's time to investigate what smoking plastic does to your heart, brain and central nervous system, and it's time to

understand a vicious cycle that can be broken with the right behavior modification and nutrition.

Have you ever thought that maybe nicotine is just relief for the uneasy nervous feelings you get from smoking bug and weed killer - pesticide? Since most tobacco is treated with herbicides and pesticides, including genetically modified tobacco that contains herbicide in its genetic makeup, cigarette addicts are addicted to poison, and it gives them a "cigarette hangover" from which they look to juiced-up nicotine for immediate

relief - hence, the chain smokers of the world. Big Tobacco knows this.

Many people eat white foods that are not naturally white but rather bleached white, like white sugar, white pasta, white flour and white bread, even most white rice. Yet, how many smokers realize that they are smoking bleach? It's true. Cigarette paper comes from trees that are naturally brown, so every puff of smoke contains a little bleach. Consuming bleach on a regular basis, whether by food or by inhaling fumes, causes cancer of the lungs, the bladder, the pancreas, the



liver and other cleansing organs that are vital to life. Filter bleach from your daily intake starting right now.

Fiberglass insulation is what insulates most attics and keeps them warm in the winter and cool in the summer. It's made by grouping millions of tiny glass fibers, which are tiny rods of glass nearly too small to see individually, like glass wool. There is a reason why cigarette filters (butts) take up to fifteen years to disintegrate. They are made of glass wool, and that is why a smoker's fingers and/or thumb stay cool, even when they smoke the cigarette right down to the nub/filter. When these tiny "shards of glass" escape into the mouth, throat, esophagus and lungs, they rip apart the epithelial tissue, the soft tissue lining the inside of those parts of the body. This creates damage not only on the surface but on the cellular level. Then the chemicals creep into the wounds, and that leads to cancer. When viewing X-rays of people exposed to asbestos or fiberglass, and even smokers lungs, ground glass opacity (glass fibers sitting in lungs) looks as if someone breathed in glass fibers and a pile of

them are just sitting at the bottom of the lungs, like ground glass in a busted light bulb. Can this be filtered out of the lungs, ever? Can a person detoxify themselves from ground glass "syndrome"?

More cancer-causing chemicals in tobacco smoke:

- Tar - a mixture of dangerous chemicals
- Arsenic - used in wood preservatives
- Acrolein - formerly used as a chemical weapon
- Benzene - an industrial solvent, refined from crude oil
- Cadmium - used in batteries
- Chromium - used to manufacture dye, paints and alloys
- Formaldehyde - used in mortuaries and paint manufacturing
- Nitrosamines - a group of DNA-damaging chemicals
- Polonium-210 - a highly radioactive element
- Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons - dangerous DNA-damaging chemicals

- 1,3-Butadiene - used in rubber manufacturing

Knowledge is Power

One thing about knowledge is that, once you have it, it's yours for life. You can't lend it out and forget to get it back. You can't 'misplace' it. Nobody can steal it from you either. Plus, once you have knowledge, you can act on it with confidence, especially when that knowledge fosters your livelihood and your good health. Shove all the negativity to one side and move forward from here. Never put known carcinogens (toxins) in your body. There is a way out, and it doesn't involve one single chemical. There is an "organic" way out of your chemical "entanglement."

All natural method to quit smoking in 14 days incorporates this chemical knowledge with behavior modification and nutrition. Your body is ready for a change, a permanent change, over to organic living. You can detoxify yourself of the four big killers that have been hiding in cigarettes, keeping you from reaching your potential in life. Now is the time. Make the resolution for good health and prosperity.



“We are the permanent government. We make temporary governments, they come and go” Dabirul, a poor peasant of Phulbari

Bangladesh Crisis

Quest For People's Power

✱ Anu Muhammad

Where does Bangladesh stand at the age of 42? In the month of victory, this year, everyday is marked by strike, blockade, hartal, killing, burning cars, buses and people. There are overflow of patients in the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), the largest public hospital that has the only burn unit. The whole year witnessed unprecedented violence; nearly 400 people have been killed since February. The country appears dysfunctional. People are scared, people are angry.

Geeta Sen along with her daughter were among the victims of the latest violent incident. She was travelling with her daughter, and suddenly a bomb hit the bus, fire broke out, both of them were badly burnt. What Geeta told Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, when she visited the burnt people in DMCH on December 1, 2013, was in fact, the echo of the people's sentiment these days. Geeta said, ‘neither Hasina nor Khaleda feed us...you have not made us, rather we have made you. We don't want sick politics.’ I remember Dabirul, the poor peasant of Phulbari who was agitated to see the role of the government and said in 2006, ‘we are the permanent government. We make temporary governments, they



come and go. How can they work under foreign company's dictation?’

What made this ‘sick politics’? What made the government work in the interest of local or foreign companies at the cost of people in general? We know that parties those are aspiring for power has their own strategy of mobilizing support in other countries too. We also know that the power of money and muscle play determining role in electoral politics in many countries. What more is happening in Bangladesh that the whole election process becomes a hostage?

We need to note that, no other

country carries unfinished tasks like trial of war criminals even after 42 years of liberation war. No other country has experience of upside down equations of major parties with the party of leading war criminals in different phases. In Bangladesh, patronization by military regimes, and alliance making by both the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), strengthened the social and political base of the war criminals and their party Jamaat-e-Islami. Now a close ally of BNP, Jamaat is taking advantage of the misrule of the

government, and using their muscles to save war criminals. This has become one major factor behind many violent conflicts in 2013.

Another major factor is polarization of super rich people in two major parties, who look at the state power as essential factor for further accumulation of wealth. The third major factor is aggressive expansion of global capital and the terrorising projects of global regime in the name of 'war on terror'. The United States, India and China and many corporate groups, are taking advantage of the status of the ruling class. These global and regional powers have conflicts on their interest but unity in expanding their pie on Bangladesh.

The present crisis cannot be termed merely as 'the battle of the Begums', as the Economist (August 10, 2013) personified the conflict of two parties/alliances. Many at home also look at the problem as the conflict between two women. Actually, this is still the men's world, including the sons of the women leaders, who are seen as next leaders of the two dynasties. The present horrible situation is in fact cumulative outcome of (i) hangover of unfinished tasks, (ii) betrayal of ruling elites with the spirit of liberation war, (iii) rise of super rich through mainly rent seeking and

plunder, (iv) neo liberal reforms, (v) projects of imperial expansion, and (vi) the failure or erosion of the left.

Within three years of independence, Bangladesh fell again under military rule that they fought against in Pakistan. After long struggles against martial law, the country came back into civil electoral process in 1991. Since then we have elected government in every 5 years, with a grace period of two years in 2007-8 for army backed caretaker government. In all the four terms since 1991, never has this happened that one party could keep its support after getting elected and, therefore, re-elected for the next term.

In every term, the party/alliance quickly and conveniently forgets their promises to the people after coming to power, becomes active in accumulating and grabbing resources using government power. Along with that come political violent repression, killing, abuse of state institutions, and anti-people deals. What people do, in election time, is they try to exercise their voting power. After their rejection of the party in power, another party/alliance takes the office for repeating the same.

This is not a vicious cycle per se; this is upward movement of the cycle, showing increasing

corruption plunder and drainage of public resources and undemocratic exercises.

This was exposed in recent estimates. One leading Bangla financial daily (Bank Barta, 4 December, 2013) of the country estimated the level of corruption during successive regimes. Their findings are consistent with people's perception about the growing intensity of corruption in these regimes. According to the estimate, the corruption accounted for Tk 9,634 crore in 1991-96 when the BNP was in power, and Tk 16,353 crore in 1996-2001 during the tenure of the Awami League government. During the second term of the BNP, then leading a four-party alliance that featured Jamaat, in 2001-06, corruption accounted for Tk 42,731 crore, and a whopping Tk 152,789 crore in the second term of the Awami League, heading a 14-party alliance, in 2009-13. Converted into US dollars at an average exchange rate of the corresponding period, the amounts are, USD\$2.4 billion, USD\$3.4 billion, USD\$6.6 billion and USD\$18 billion respectively.

World Ultra Wealth Report of 2013 found a similar trend for Bangladesh. According to this report, in 2013, only 90 persons accumulated wealth of US\$15 billion worth. The rate of increase in accumulated wealth in a few hands was more than double of the rate of GDP growth in the last four years. Therefore, a class of super rich was consolidated in the country through the process of development that allowed grabbing of common property, corruption and signing bad deals.

This uninterrupted process reveals the unity between the opposite parties, continuity of their policies and corruption. That goes from plundering share market and banks to grabbing forests, wetland, Sundarbans and other public property. That also gives wider space to the global corporates; therefore, the signing of disastrous deals on natural resources, Bay of





Bengal, Sundarbans became possible. Policy makers convert into commission agents. Corruption becomes the lifeline of the ruling parties.

The parties that are keeping the country hostage represent this class. This class grew taking advantage of the state power and the neoliberal global power. State power is crucial for accumulating wealth, out of power does not only squeeze the opportunity of grabbing resources but also throw them into total uncertainty and possible repression, jail, remand and harassment etc. Differences are similar to heaven if in power, hell if out of it! That makes each party inflexible and desperate for power.

During the 1980s, neo-liberal reforms were initiated in Bangladesh under military regime. That was introduced in the name of curbing corruption, improving efficiency and transparency, increasing decent employment and reducing poverty. But as we found, these reforms instead increased the scope and legality of corruption, criminality, resource-grabbing, commissions from bad deals, and gangsterism.

This process of capital accumulation is in many ways similar to the process of primitive capital accumulation in Europe, wherein old and new elites appropriated common resources and turned them into private property, which according to David Harvey, continues till today in global scale as 'accumulation by dispossession'. There are, of course, major differences between the then European rising business class and most of the present Bangladeshi ones. While the first did its major accumulation in colonies outside Europe and brought that wealth mostly into Europe, the Bangladeshi ones do it inside the country and send most of the accumulated resources abroad. In fact, huge corruption and drainage of resources by the ruling elite from the countries like Bangladesh has been a consistent flow that enriches the global financial empire.

This ideological wave of neo-liberalism has demonised the state's responsibility and, therefore, opened the space for different forms of privatisation and financialisation. The gradual withdrawal of the state responsibilities towards its citizens

left the majority of the population unprotected from hunger, destitution, job insecurity, and illness. On the other hand the state becomes more repressive to protect the plunderers and rent seekers. Therefore we find strong unity between primitive capital accumulation and the neoliberal reforms; both go together, and help, rationalise and strengthen each other.

People of this country fought for independence, freedom, democracy, a sovereign state with self dignity and justice. But what marked its 42 years is the rise of super rich class at the cost of people's lives, environment and sovereignty and a repressive state. In this development process, lack of developed institutions and reign of few families have been crucial. We have elected parliament but the constitution does not allow the members of the parliament (MP) to speak anything against the party, in reality the party leader. So, the MPs do not have anything to do except raising hands for the party leader. Moreover, no major policy or international deals wait for discussion in parliament. These are formulated by the unelected local and global bodies. So, parliament and the electoral process become ineffective from within and outside. The country, therefore is reduced to autocracy or *jamindari*; and also free playground for local and global grabbers.

That the people are still alive is reflected in many glorious people's struggles in the past decades. The spirit of liberty is also reflected in Geeta or Dabirul's claim of ownership over their lives and the country. The coming election, whether it is one sided or all party, have all elements to begin another phase of the vicious cycle. Our future, therefore, badly needs peoples capacity to fight for their authority, needs to grow people's sovereign power to reclaim ownership of their own country.

Transforming America's Schools into Authoritarian Instruments of Compliance

✱ John Whitehead

These days, it is far too easy to rattle off the outrageous examples of zero tolerance policy run amok in our nation's schools. A 14-year-old student arrested for texting in class. Three middle aged school boys in Florida thrown to the ground by police officers wielding rifles, who then arrested them for goofing off on the roof of the school. A 9-year-old boy suspended for allegedly pointing a toy at a classmate and saying "bang bang". Two 6-year-old students in Maryland suspended for using their fingers as imaginary guns in a schoolyard game of cops and robbers. A 12-year-old New York student hauled out of school in handcuffs for doodling on her desk with an erasable marker. An 8-year-old boy suspended for making his hand into the shape of a gun, in violation of the school district's policy prohibiting "playing with invisible guns". A 17-year-old charged with a felony for keeping his tackle box in his car parked on school property, potentially derailing his chances of entering the Air Force. Two seventh graders in Virginia suspended for the rest of the school year for playing with air-soft guns in their own yard before school.

Thus, it's tempting, when



hearing about the 7-year-old suspended for chewing his Pop-Tart into shape of a gun to chalk it up to an isolated example of school officials lacking in common sense. However, as I point out in my book *A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State*, these incidents are far from isolated, occurring as they have for the better part of the past 30 years under the guise of maintaining safety and security in the schools. They are part of a concerted, top-down approach

to creating a generation of obedient worker-bees content to be directed, distracted and kept in line.

Despite a general consensus that zero tolerance policies have failed to have any appreciable impact on student safety, schools have doubled down on these policies to the detriment of children all across the nation. Indeed, the zero tolerance mindset is so entrenched among school administrators all over America that we are now seeing school officials reaching into the

"To the degree that we take away play, we deprive children of the ability to practise adulthood, and we create people who will go through life with a sense of dependence and victimisation, a sense that there is some authority out there who is supposed to tell them what to do and solve their problems. That is not a healthy way to live." - Peter Gray, psychologist



personal lives of students to police their behavior at all times. For example, 13,000 students in the Glendale Unified School District in California are now being subjected to constant social media monitoring by school officials. Superintendent Richard Sheehan has hired private firm Geo Listening to analyze the public social media posts of students both off and on campus. Whether on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, or any other social media platform, students will have their posts and comments analyzed for evidence of "bullying, cyber-bullying, hate and shaming activities, depression, harm and self harm, self hate and suicide, crime, vandalism, substance abuse and truancy."

Unfortunately, the Glendale program is simply one component of a larger framework in which all student activity is treated as an open book by school administrators. What we are witnessing is a paradigm shift in American society, in which no personal activity is safe from the prying eyes of government agents and their corporate allies. Every decision and action, no matter how innocent, is scrutinized, analyzed, filed, stored, and eventually held against you when those in power feel like it. When one pulls back the veil of zero tolerance, one can see the real culprit is the corporate-state, which has been

meticulously applying the zero tolerance mindset to not just public schools in America, but our workplaces, our political forums, our social interactions and even our own homes. The end result is a society which is completely pacified and willing to march in lockstep with the corporate-state.

Government officials have worked hard to indoctrinate Americans into the belief that everything you do is suspect, and anything you do can be held against you at a later date. This mindset is clear in all aspects of society, from zero tolerance policies in our nation's schools, to SWAT team raids in our neighborhoods, from the NSA's surveillance of all Americans' communications, to the corporate-state's insistence that people aren't capable of managing their own affairs. More and more people are becoming suspicious of others, quick to judge, and more than willing to follow the government's dictates, however irrational and immoral they may be.

This manner of thinking has been slowly adopted by many Americans, but more worrisome is the manner in which it's being foisted upon our nation's youth. We are now living in an era in which childhood as it was once understood, a time to learn, to make mistakes, to try and fail, to try again and succeed,

has been replaced by the worst elements of corporate and government culture. Children are treated as workers and prisoners, collected, corralled and controlled by teachers who increasingly act as bureaucrats, forced to fit every child into the exact same mold, regardless of their personal abilities and talents. This mindset is apparent among the proponents of the Common Core Testing Standards which threaten to unleash a new system of standardized testing on a new generation of kids.

As communications consultant Luba Vangelova has noted, the key attributes of a productive member of society are "a zest for life, creativity, perseverance, empathy, effective communication and the ability to cooperate with others. These are things that can't be measured well -- if at all -- by tests." Our obsession with testing leaves children without basic reasoning and analysis skills. They are taught to parrot information, rather than produce arguments. Their value is tied to letter grades and numbers. Psychologist Peter Gray takes this criticism further, noting that children today are rarely allowed the opportunity to engage in undirected creative activity, also known as playing. Gray notes that since the 1960s, time for play has taken a backseat in the lives of children in

favor of rigid curriculums revolving around high-stakes testing. Even sports, which were once simply games played on the fly by a mixed group of neighborhood kids, have taken on the rigidity of life in a factory or cubicle. The obsession with quantifying childhood progress has gone so far that charter schools in DC are beginning to conduct high stakes testing for three and four year old children.

Over the same time period, incidences of childhood mental illness have steadily increased. The number of children and young adults suffering from major depression and generalized anxiety disorder has increased between five and eightfold since the 1950s. The suicide rate for 15 -- 24 year olds has doubled, while the suicide rate for those under the age of 15 has quadrupled. The rise in these mental illnesses is coupled with a decrease in empathy and an increase in narcissism in young people, indicating that their ability to work with others -- as is necessary in a society -- has been muted. We're raising a generation of anxious individuals who expect their life's

direction to come to them from orders from above. In short, we're creating a generation ingrained with an authoritarian mindset.

This authoritarian mindset is an unavoidable consequence of the American education system. Indeed, while so-called education reformers insist on more tests, pushing schools to emulate the Chinese, Japanese, and South Korean educational systems, they miss a big piece of the puzzle: educators in those countries consider their systems a failure. Despite performing better than American children on certain international standardized tests, Chinese educators have noted that Chinese students have also demonstrated a "lack of social and practical skills, absence of self-discipline and imagination, loss of curiosity and passion for learning."

Despite this fact, states are pushing ahead with programs like Common Core, which not only threatens our children's quality of education, but their privacy as well. A great deal of data will be collected under new guidelines proposed by the program. While the purposes of the data collection appear legitimate

on their face, mainly focused on keeping track of student progress, we must keep in mind that we are living in the era of Big Data, in which information becomes currency between the government and their corporate benefactors. The data collected on students goes beyond test scores and includes "social security numbers, attendance records, records of interaction with school counselors, identification of learning disabilities, and even disciplinary records." Of course, having all of this information about every misstep or mistake one has made through his whole life does not bode well in a society in which government and corporate authorities are happy to punish any minor mishap.

We are living in an era where every personal decision, such as where to work, where to shop, where to play, who to love, who to befriend, who to worship, what to believe, and what to say, is open to scrutiny by government officials and corporate managers. It's a poisonous mentality for those hoping to preserve democracy, and it's being foisted upon our children, whether in the form of bureaucrats fashioning one-size-fits-all educational standards, or police officers investigating innocent activities such as children playing in the street as possible crimes.

This situation will only get worse as our children are taught to accept the police state as normal. Between the regimes of zero tolerance, the surveillance of students both in school and in their homes, and the value placed in standardized testing over teaching analytical thinking skills, we are raising a generation which is being encouraged to adopt the authoritarian mindset which pollutes the minds of our government and corporate leaders. By allowing our children to be subject to the forces of the market and the dictates of the state, we are ensuring tyranny within a generation or two, if not sooner.



PBI Has A Base in Delhi

New Delhi : In recently concluded elections to Delhi Assembly, Proutist Bloc India's nine candidates did not make any significant political gain votewise. The highest figure of the votes polled to a candidate was 484 (Amarjeet Verma from Sangam Vihar constituency) which on the face of it appears a very meagre count. The gain was however in other respects. There was no functional PBI unit in Delhi , and it was therefore always an irritant for the organisers of PBI . Therefore PBI contested without any organisational infrastructure. But after the elections, PBI has now units at least in Chhattarpur, Badarpur, Matiala, Najafgarh, Janakpuri, Ghonda and Karawal Nagar constituencies.

The other gain from the elections is that the PBI candidates who had no previous experience of contesting elections have now first hand experience of the ground realities and therefore they are now preparing for future with practical approach and realistic vision. They do feel future is bright.

The other parties who have got good number of seats, viz Bhartiya Janta Party, Aam Admi Party and Congress Party, attain success on the weaknesses of the other (which is a form of negative vote). They always criticise and condemn others and try to show that they are the better ones to rule the state. None have any clear and concrete programme to effectively solve the burning problems of the common man.

Indian political scene has witnessed the rise and fall of various parties and leaders in the electoral politics, but it is yet to witness the success of a party or leader at the hustings with the corresponding success in bringing genuine happiness and peace to people in general.

Proutists feel confident that the present scenario in the rise of Aam Admi party will strengthen the anti thesis against the existing system and policies which will help in promoting the mission of bringing Prout in lime light. But they have realised it clearly that they have to work hard to snatch success from others whose role at best has been only in changing the scene inside the palace, not in the exploitative system which always maintains its stronghold without exception.

The tally of votes polled by PBI candidates is : Amarjeet Verma--484; Ram Simran Bhagat--370, Renu Poddar--326; Baijnath Shah--312; Birendra Jha--304; Rekha-- 232; Aflatoon Saifi --225; Bijender Singh Lohia--105 and Baljit Aditya Khatana--98. Also Uday Sahu, PBI Candiadate from Jabalpur West, Madhya Pradesh got 357 Votes.



Ar. Amar Jeet Verma
Constituency
SANGAM VIHAR
Votes : 484



Ram Simran Bhagat
Constituency
CHHATTARPUR
Votes : 370



Renu Poddar
Constituency
MATIALA
Votes : 326



Baijnath Sah
Constituency
NAJAFGARH
Votes : 312



Birendra Jha
Constituency
JANAKPURI
Votes : 304



Rekha
Constituency
KONDLI
Votes : 232



Aflatoon Saifi
Constituency
GHONDA
Votes : 225



Bijendra Singh Lohia
Constituency
BADARPUR
Votes : 105



Baljit Aditya Khatana
Constituency
KARAWAL NAGAR
Votes : 98



Uday Sahu
Constituency
JABALPUR WEST (MP)
Votes : 357

(INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE)

An Extensive Relief Work in Philippines

Report by AMURT

(Ananada Marga Universal Relief Team)



AMURTs (Ananada Marga Universal Relief Team) relief work was still going on for the survivors of last month's earthquake, when only 3 weeks after the quake, came super typhoon Yolanda, or as known elsewhere hurricane Haiyan.

This one was said to be the strongest hurricane in world history.

In the beginning hours the news was scattered and mostly in the form of rumors, with electricity cut all over this part of the country. In the worst hit areas even cell phone coverage was wiped out.

At least in our Ananda Marga Wellness Center and in the Yoga Center in Cebu the only losses were numerous trees ripped out by their roots, and the trauma of seeing countless objects roaring past our doorways and windows. In the midst of it, a heartfelt strong kiirtan enabled our own fears to subside. But when the winds diminished we found some of the neighbors roofs blown off, including the homes of some of our own staff.

And then it was quiet, and yet still news only came in drops and dribbles. Apparently at that point the outside world still knew more than we did.

We sent a team to survey the damage in northern Cebu Province, where the Eye directly passed. Another team was sent by specially chartered ship to survey Tacloban. One more team surveyed northern Cebu Province -- this time with food for the suffering.

The Tacloban team had a tough time even reaching there. To get there we partnered with the Federation of Volunteers through Radio Communication (FVRC), of which the Chief Officer is our close friend. The FVRC is one of the first to go to any catastrophe area, as other communication systems are usually down. The ship arrived in Hilongos, due to the danger of sailing directly into Tacloban, where at least 10,000 were already dead. From Hilongos the 140 kilometer trip was by 4-wheel drive jeeps, and it took many hours not only because of trees across the road, but especially because of numerous people lying on the road -- people who wanted to stop and then ambush the jeeps and steal whatever food and water was on board. But our staff and partners had wisely hidden their foodstuffs, and so gradually they passed through that test.

They reported that from the half way mark until finally arriving in Tacloban -- 99% of the houses and structures were demolished.

In the city they temporarily established a base in the damaged but still standing city hall, and from that time we began intensive communication with our team leader, Avaniish.

Approximately in his words:

"The faces of the people look completely blank -- like zombies. The damage is 10 times beyond the earthquake (where he had also worked for many days). Debris is piled everywhere, and the smell of death is unavoidable. All the government offices are wiped out, no where to turn for protection. The military only to be found at the airport. Here they are in the worst need for food."

Then he reported that even though shops had been ransacked for food, at least while stealing gas from the gas stations everyone was patiently standing in line.

And so we have made a plan to borrow \$5000 to purchase food for Tacloban, and are arranging military escort and a ship -- hopefully by tomorrow itself. We will most likely send it with cooking equipment and served it cooked, as people simply have no stoves to prepare uncooked materials we might give them.

It will be far from sufficient, but at least it is a start.

As to the team that went to northern Cebu Province: Our van had less than a 3 hour drive before encountering a scene hardly better than Tacloban. Again most of the houses were leveled to the ground. Children and adults were standing in the road begging for food and water. The only difference from Tacloban was that not so many had died because there had been no storm surge, so no drowning. But the hurricane winds had done their work with equal power, demolishing almost everything in sight. Tens of thousands of houses were destroyed.

Our contacts were in Bogu City, precisely where the Eye had passed. No government workers, no non-governmental workers had been there to help them. We were the first on the site, and the people were overwhelmed with happiness to see our volunteers. We brought cooking equipment, and a small amount of food, enough to serve 600 people. Upon receiving the food, many cried and embraced those serving. In fact it was painful not to be able to help others.

We will borrow another \$2000 to purchase food for the north, and likewise serve it to them cooked.

More days of great need will follow.

Our global and sectorial AMURT staff are doing what they can to drum up support. We shall likewise do all we can to serve as many as we can according to the funds sent.

Later when the threats of starvation and disease are less pressing, we shall think about house rebuilding and other long-term works

For more details, please log on to : <http://www.amurt.net/typhoon-relief-response-in-philippines/>

Dharna at Jantar Mantar

PBI Demands Direct Election of the Chief Minister

New Delhi : PBI (Proutist Bloc India) staged one day dharna (sit-in) at Jantar Mantar on 23rd December to highlight the plight of the people due to stalemate created by refusal of the parties to come forward to form government in Delhi after the results have been announced. Lt Governor had invited Bhartiya Janta Party as well as Aam Admi Party one by one for accepting his proposal to form the government. Both of them had refused giving their own reasons.

The dharna was named Janadesh Samman Rally (Respecting the mandate given by the people).

PBI activists assembled at Jantar Mantar at 10 am and remained there till 5 pm. Around 4 pm , the spokesperson of Delhi state Jitendra Kumar Tiwari and the MLA candidate from Matiala constituency Smt Renu Poddar went to Rastrapati Bhawan and Prime Minister residence to give them memorandum in this regard. The memorandum highlighted the plight of the people , and demanded direct election of Chief Minister by the people of the state. At present MLAs of the biggest party elect their leader who is appointed as the Chief Minister by the Governor. Once the Constitution is amended and CM is directly elected , the impasse of the existing nature will not occur. The CM can form his cabinet taking people from amongst legislators as well as from outside on the pattern of American system of Presidential form of government. The curse of horse trading can also become non existent by introducing this system. Before the representatives went to submit the memorandum to the President and the PM, the activists were addressed by Subhas Chand Tyagi, Jitendra Tiwari, Amarjeet Varma, Rajesh Singh, Smt. Renu Poddar, Ram Simaran Bhagat, Ram Prakash Baisla and Acarya Santosananda Avadhuta.



Intellectuals Recognise the Genius in Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar



Mumbai : Mumbai University and Renaissance Universal Chapter of Mumbai University created history by organising a one day National Seminar on the 10th December 2013 at Prof. D.N. Marshall Auditorium in Jawahar Lal Nehru Library of the University. The Seminar was focussed on the contributions of Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, also known as Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii, founder of the global mission --Ananda Marga.

The programme was inaugurated by Pro-Vice chancellor Dr. Naresh Chandra. The key note address was delivered by the internationally recognised Prof. Surya Prakash Dikshit, a noted critic and former head of department of Hindi language in Lucknow University. The renowned speakers dwelt at length on the extraordinary contributions of Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar in the field of Language, Linguistics and Grammar, Economics, Education, Philosophy, Prabhat Samgiita -- a new school of music evolved by him. Dr. Surya Prasad Dikshit set the tone of the seminar by describing in detail Shrii Sarkar's contributions and the methodology used by him which is mind boggling. He said it is logically unthinkable to understand how a single person can make such an epoch making contribution in such diverse fields of human endeavour. The mystery deepens when one learns that the person happens to have no formal education beyond intermediate. He then went on to explain that such works may possibly be accomplished only by a seer i.e. a self realized Satya Drast'a' Rsi. The thoughts of Shrii Sarkar besides being unfathomable, are clear, concise and conclusive. His ideas are not a fancy journey into the unknown or the mayik world, but are very relevant to the contemporary humanity. His ideas offer a plausible solution to whichever human problems they are applied. As a linguist, his work is of phenomenal nature. Shrii Sarkar sees inter-connections amongst all the languages of humanity. Through his work Shrii Sarkar inspires humanity to move from humanism to Neo-humanism to a state of all inclusiveness, holistic advancement towards self realization. To Shrii Sarkar the greatest human treasure is devotion, which must be protected from the onslaught of sentiments, dogma and discrimination. Here is a person who is never tired, and who inspires efforts for never ending struggle to establish social justice and peace everywhere. His ideas on rebuilding a decentralized model of economic democracy demonstrate his love and compassion for all the suffering humanity. The optimism reflected in his thoughts and music is incorrigible. His clarity and confidence is unimaginable.

Dr. Naresh Chandra, the Pro Vice Chancellor of Mumbai University, who was the Chief Guest, expressed his heart felt satisfaction and applauded the Hindi Department of Mumbai University for joining hands with Renaissance Universal for conducting the national seminar inviting scholars from JNU, Lucknow University, Andhra University Vizag, Hindi Bharati, Ananda Nagar, and other learned men and women from India. He said he was convinced that more research is required on his works, and that Mumbai University should take lead in this mammoth task.

Dr. Upendra Rao of Sanskrit Department of Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi), spoke on Ananda Sutram. He went in depth explaining the first two Sutras. He also spoke on theory of creation given by Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii, and explained the relevant sutras. He said that it would need long deliberation to appreciate the import of each sutra of Ananda Sutram.

Acarya Vishveshvarjii, a senior and well read Acarya of Ananda Marga, too chose to speak on Ananda Sutram. As an expert commentator on the subject, he delivered his discourse with exquisite scholarship which highly impressed the audience. He said the philosophy propounded in Ananda Sutram is scientific, realistic and rational, and free from any dogma.

Professor Ramji Tiwari (Former HOD, Hindi department in Mumbai University) said that he has been a student of Shrii P.R. Sarkar for last 15 years. The more he read the more he felt convinced about extraordinary wisdom of Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar. Shrii Sarkar has beautifully connected the Indian heritage with the present and explained how relevant and useful this heritage is. He was of progressive nature, but at the same time he upholds the cardinal Indian spiritual values.



Professor Karuna Shankar Upadhyay, the HOD Hindi Department, Mumbai university said he is charmed by this multifaceted personality-- Shrii P. R. Sarkar, the luminary unparalleled-- and acknowledged him as the greatest philosopher of 20th century. He was both scientific and practical in offering solution to a problem besides being a loving spiritual master for millions of disciples the world over. Dr. Prabha Verma of Hindi Bharatii, an institute of Ananda Marga Gurukul, charmed the audience by her devotional speech with strong support from her knowledge of linguistics. She said that as a linguist, there is hardly any parallel to this personality -the way he made a complex subject lucid, informative and enchanting is unique in itself. She gave several examples of how a word gets transformed. She explained taking clue from Shrii Sarkar, the sciencd of the expression of language She said before being expressed through vocal chord the event passes passes through six stages and it differs in different individuals only at the fifth stage called Vaekhari, finally it gets expressed in the next stage called shrutigochara.

The most beautiful talk was given by Dr. Mandapaka Sarda. She expressed deep reverence for Shrii P. R. Sarkar and his musical compositions.

She is HOD of Music from Andhra University and traveled all the way from east coast to west coast to present her views on this great personality.

She sang two songs from Prabhat Samgiita -Vajra Kathor, Kusum Koraka -in Sanskrit ;and one in Bengali - Cheye Naba ghana niila gagane. She explained in detail the second song, especially its musical side. She was overwhelmed by experience how the composer used his talent in arousing devotion in the singer employing appropriate Raga to express the theme and Bhava. The discourse of Acarya Kishan Sood on Neo humanist Education (NHE) was inspiring and informative. As an expert on the subject he explained Shrii P.R. Sarkar's noble approach to building a holistic character of young minds with a view to creating one universal human society. He explained the unique approach of Shrii Sarkar. NHE lays stress on Asta'unga Yoga and humanities, arts and music as the core of this new system of education. Shrii Sarkar also guides one to have a meaningful life by remembering the four Hindi letters : Bha Vi Sa Ca - Bha -stands for Bhagawan-- one must have faith in Bhagawan(God); Vi - Vinay - humility; Sa stands for Samyam - self restraint and tolerance ; and Ca -Charitra - strong character.

Shrimati Vibha Surana of Mumbai University (German Deptt) spoke vividly on Shrii P.R. Sarkar's genius as a linguist. She mentioned the unique style of Shrii Sarkar's narrative. She amused the audience by giving direct references from Shrii Sarkar's writings and from other sources.

The seminar was attended by more than 150 students and professors from Mumbai University. Many amongst the Professors, teachers and scholars expressed keen interest in learning Ananda Marga system of meditation.

Acarya Divyacetananda Avadhuta worked very hard to make the programme a grand success.



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