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Resolution Passed by All-India Congress Committee: August 8, 1942

The All-India Congress Committee has given the most careful consideration to the reference made to it by the Working Committee in their resolution dated July 14, 1942, and to subsequent events, including the development of the war situation, the utterances of responsible spokesmen of the British Government, and the comments and criticisms made in India and abroad. The Committee approves of and endorses that resolution, and is of opinion that events subsequent to it have given it further justification, and have made it clear that the immediate ending of British rule in India is an urgent necessity, both for the sake of India and for the success of the cause of the United Nations. The continuation of that rule is degrading and enfeebling India and making her progressively less capable of defending herself and of contributing to the cause of world freedom.

The Committee has viewed with dismay the deterioration of the situation on the Russian and Chinese fronts and conveys to the Russian and Chinese peoples its high appreciation of their heroism in defence of their freedom. This increasing peril makes it incumbent on all those who strive for freedom and who sympathize with the victims of

aggression, to examine the foundations of the policy so far pursued by the Allied Nations, which have led to repeated and disastrous failure. It is not by adhering to such aims and policies and methods that failure can be converted into success, for past experience has shown that failure is inherent in them. These policies have been based not on freedom so much as on the domination of subject and colonial countries, and

the continuation of the imperialist tradition and method. The possession of Empire, instead of adding to the strength of the ruling power,

has become a burden and a curse. India, the classic land of modern Imperialism, has become the crux of the question, for by the freedom of India will Britain and the United Nations be judged, and the people of Asia and Africa be filled with hope and enthusiasm.

The ending of British rule in this country is thus a vital and immediate issue on which depend the future of the war and the success of freedom and democracy. A free India will assure this success by throwing all her great resources in the struggle for freedom and against the aggression of Nazism, Fascism and Imperialism. This will not

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only affect materially the fortunes of the war, but will bring all subject and oppressed humanity on the side of the United Nations, and give these nations, whose ally India would be, the moral and spiritual leadership of the world. India in bondage will continue to be the symbol of British Imperialism and the taint of that Imperialism will affect the fortunes of all the United Nations.

The peril of today, therefore, necessitates the independence of India and the ending of British dominations. No future promises or guarantees can affect the present situation or meet that peril. They cannot produce the needed psychological effect on the mind of the masses. Only the glow of freedom now can release that energy and enthusiasm of millions of people which will immediately transform the nature of the war.

The A. I. C. C., therefore, repeats with all emphasis the demand for the withdrawal of the British power from India. On the declaration of India's independence, a provisional government will be formed and free India will become an ally of the United Nations, sharing with them in the trials and tribulations of the joint enterprise of the struggle for freedom. The provisional government can only be formed by the co-operation of the principal parties and groups in the country. It will thus be a composite government, representative of all important sections of the people of India. Its primary functions must be to defend India and resist aggression with all the armed as well as the non-violent forces at its command, together with the Allied powers, and to promote the well-being and progress of the workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere, to whom essentially all power and authority must belong. The provisional government will evolve a scheme for a constituent assembly which will prepare a constitution for the government of India acceptable to all sections of the people. This constitution, according to the

Congress view, should be a federal one, with the largest measure of autonomy for the federating units, and with the residuary powers vesting in these units. The future relations between India and the Allied nations will be adjusted by representatives of all these free countries conferring together for their mutual advantage and for their co-operation in the common task of resisting aggression. Freedom will enable India to resist aggression effectively with the people's united will and strength behind it.

The freedom of India must be the symbol of and prelude to this freedom of all other Asiatic nations under foreign domination. Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, the Dutch Indies, Iran and Iraq must also attain their complete freedom. It must be clearly understood that such of these countries as are under Japanese control now must not subsequently be placed under the rule or control of any other colonial power.

While the A. I. C. C. must primarily be concerned with the independence and defence of India in this hour of danger, the Committee is of opinion that the future peace, security and ordered progress of the world demand a world federation of free nations, and on no other basis can the problems of the modern world be solved. Such a world federation would ensure the freedom of its constituent nations, the prevention of aggression and exploitation by one nation over another, the protection of national minorities, the advancement of all backward areas and peoples, and the pooling of the world's resources for the common good of all. On the establishment of such a world federation, disarmament would be practicable in all countries, national armies, navies and air forces would no longer be necessary, and a world federal defence force would keep the world peace and prevent aggression.

An independent India would gladly join such

a world federation and co-operate on an equal basis with other countries in the solution of international problems.

Such a federation should be open to all nations who agree with its fundamental principles. In view of the war, however, the federation must inevitably, to begin with, be confined to the United Nations. Such a step taken will have a most powerful effect on the war, on the peoples of the Axis countries, and on the peace to come.

The Committee regretfully realizes, however, that despite the tragic and overwhelming lessons of the war and the perils that overhang the world, the governments of few countries are yet prepared to take this inevitable step towards world federation. The reactions of the British Government and the misguided criticism of the foreign Press also make it clear that even the obvious demand for India's independence is resisted, though this has been made essentially to meet the present peril and to enable India to defend herself and help China and Russia in their hour of need. The Committee is anxious not to embarrass in any way the defence of China or Russia, whose freedom is precious and must be preserved, or to jeopardize the defensive capacity of the United Nations. But the peril grows both to India and these nations, and inaction and submission to a foreign administration at this stage is not only degrading India and reducing her capacity to defend herself and resist aggression, but is no answer to that growing peril and is no service to the peoples of the United Nations. The earnest appeal of the Working Committee to Great Britain and the United Nations has so far met with no response, and the criticisms made in many foreign quarters have shown an ignorance of India's and the world's need, and sometimes even hostility to India's freedom, which is significant of a mentality of domination and racial superiority which cannot be

tolerated by a proud people conscious of their strength and of the justice of their cause.

The A. I. C. C. would yet again, at this last moment, in the interest of world freedom, renew this appeal to Britain and the United Nations. But the Committee feels that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an imperialist and authoritarian government, which dominates over and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interest of humanity. The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction, for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale, so that the country might utilize all the nonviolent strength it has gathered during the last twenty-two years of peaceful struggle. Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken.

The Committee appeals to the people of India to face the dangers and hardships that will fall to their lot with courage and endurance, and to hold together under the leadership of Gandhiji and carry out his instructions as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom. They must remember that nonviolence is the basis of this movement. A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people, and when no Congress committees can function. When this happens, every man and woman who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions issued. Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place and which leads ultimately to the independence and deliverance of India.

Lastly, whilst the A. I. C. C. has stated its

Protect and Preserve the Gandhian Heritage

July 22, 2023 is a red letter day in the history of Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh, an institution which carries the heritage of Mahatma Gandhi formed soon after his assassination by a Hindu fanatic. It was on this day the country witnessed the most shameful act of State power which Gandhi looked upon with fear and suspicion that represents violence in a concentrated and organised form. The police force forcibly entered the premises of Sarva Seva Sangh in Varanasi, evicted the belongings of the people who were staying there for decades and thousands of books and materials of Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan were dumped outside. The picture of the statue of Mahatma Gandhi filled with dumped books and materials shows the utter disrespect of the State machinery to Mahatma Gandhi who is not only the Father of the Nation but also a universal personality respected all over the world. It was with great shock the people of this country saw the videos and pictures of eviction and news of arrest/detainment of activists viz. Ram Dheeraj, Arvind Anjum, Nandlal Master, Chandan Pal,

Ishwarchand, Anokhe Lal, Rajendra Mishra, and Jitendra who were desperately trying to save the premises of Sarva Seva Sangh, Varanasi.

Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh has a glorious history and rich heritage. Mahatma Gandhi wanted to call a meeting of constructive workers engaged in different fields in the country at Sevagram on 2 February 1948 to realise the goal of real Swaraj which he dreamt. But he was assassinated on 30 January 1948. However, the proposed conference did take place, after a slight deferment from 11-15 March 1948. This finally led to the founding Sarvodaya Samaj and Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh. The meeting was attended by 47 persons including stalwarts of the Gandhian movement and freedom struggle. Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Dr. Zakir Hussain, J.C. Kumarappa, Kakasaheb Kalelkar, Gulzarilal Nanda, Jayaprakash Narayan and others were present in the meeting. Thus finally Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh came into existence in April, 1948 after merging five constructive organizations e.g., Akhil Bharat Charkha Sangh, Akhil Bharat Gram Udyod Sangh, Akhil Bharat Go Seva Sangh, Hindustani Talimi Sangh & Mahrogi Seva Mandal.

Sarva Seva Sangh was established in Varanasi through the efforts and guidance of stalwarts like Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Lal Bahadur Shastri, and others. In fact Vinoba Bhave felt the dire need for the dissemination of Sarvodaya Literature to spread Gandhi's message while he was travelling in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Thus Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, the publishing wing of Sarva Seva Sangh, was established in 1955

Down view of the future governance under free India the A. I. C. C. wishes to make it quite clear to all concerned that by embarking on mass struggle it has no intention of gaining power for the Congress. The power, when it comes, will belong to the whole people of India.

(*The Indian Annual Register*, 1942, Vol. II, pp. 209-11; also *Harijan*, 9-8-1942 and *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. II, pp. 621-47)

(Courtesy: The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Page 458-461)

during Vinoba Bhavé's Bhoodan movement. It was in this premises Jayaprakash Narayan, another popular Gandhian activist, thinker and socialist leader, who established the Gandhi Vidya Sansthan (Gandhian Institute of Studies) in 1960 to bring together Gandhian thought and modern social sciences. JP invited none other than E. F. Schumacher to become the director of the Institute. It shows the grand vision of JP and pre eminent status of the Institute. The Indian Council of Social Sciences and Research (ICSSR), was providing financial aid to the institute from 1977 onwards. The dispute started around 2003 due to political interference and finally the registration of the Institute was cancelled.

On May 15, 2023, the Institute was taken over by the Government and given to the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture, which works as a centre for research in the field of the arts. The forceful takeover by the government made the premises of Sarva Seva Sangh a battle ground for Satyagraha protesting the decision . Soon the Sarva Seva Sangh approached the High Court and on May 16, 2023 the Allahabad High Court directed the Varanasi District Magistrate to examine the land records of the Sarva Seva Sangh and ascertain the ownership of the said property, which is approximately 12.90 acres. The court gave the District Magistrate two-month deadline to ascertain the ownership of the land. On May 29, 2023 Varanasi District Magistrate started the hearing and June 26, 2023 he passed an order, saying that the land belongs to the Northern Railways. On June 27, 2023 a notice pasted on the premises of the organisation by the Northern Railways says, "This is to inform all the encroachers that in continuation of a notice by District Magistrate, Varanasi, on June 26, 2023 that on June 30 at 9 am, Railways officials will

take demolition action against the illegal structures built by Sarva Seva Sangh... All of you are informed to vacate the premises."

On June 28, 2023 the Sarva Seva Sangh approached the Allahabad High Court against the demolition order, praying that it be quashed as the society has three land deeds from 1960, 1961 and 1970 to prove its ownership of the said land. On July 4, 2023, the Allahabad High Court refused any relief against the order for the demolition of 'Sarva Seva Sangh ' in Varanasi. The Division Bench while hearing the petition of 'Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh and another' said that the petitioner should go to the lower court. The Sarva Seva Sangh knocked the doors of the Supreme Court of India. On July 7, 2023 the Supreme Court agreed to hear the plea challenging the decision of the Varanasi district magistrate however no relief was in sight.

The sale Deed between the Railways and Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh was registered in the year 1960 . The agreement took place on 15 May 1960, between the Divisional Engineer of Northern Railway (Lucknow) as a representative of the President of India and the trustee Radhakrishna Bajaj of the Sangh . The document clearly mentioned that the plot no. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 of the railways was sold at total price of Rs 23,490 that is at the rate of 2700 per acre to the Sangh. It also mentioned that Rs 26,730 was deposited in the State Bank of India as per treasury Challan no.17 by the Sangh towards the value of property and other items.

This sale deed also has a clear mention that the full transfer of land ownership is being done to All India Sarva. Seva Sangh by Vendor i.e. Railways. And in future there will be no claim on the property by the vendor (Railways) nor will he take any action for the eviction of Sarva Seva Sangh from the same land. Every page of this ⇨

A Society of Morbid Voyeurs

Tushar Gandhi

With the advent and reach of social media, video streaming and apps with live streaming features, we see a flood of videos of all kinds. This seems to have turned a vast majority of Indians into morbid voyeurs.

Heinous videos are posted on streaming platforms like YouTube, Facebook Live and Instagram Stories. The tragedy is that this horrifying genre garners a huge number of eyeballs.

Videos of heinous crimes, in which human beings are brutally tortured and murdered on camera, are as casually circulated as videos of parties and social functions. There used to be a genre of porn, 'snuff videos', that featured women getting murdered. They had a viewership but even many porn addicts drew a line at this.

In 2012, the Nirbhaya rape, brutalisation and

murder rocked the nation. There was outrage but also a clamour for explicit videos. Even when documentaries and serials were made about the tragedy, many were disappointed that the crime wasn't explicitly depicted.

When an eight-year-old nomad girl in Kathua, Jammu, was abducted, held captive in a temple by a priest and accomplices that included policemen, gangraped and eventually murdered in January 2018, people were frantically searching for videos of the crime. What a demonic obsession!

The rape and murder of a 19-year-old Dalit girl in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh, by four upper caste men once shamed the nation but once again there was a clamour for videos of the crime.

Atrocities against Dalits have been normalised

⇒ document has the signature of Divisional Engineer and Divisional Superintendent of North Railway (Lucknow). Also signed by Darbarilal Asthana and Prabhash Chandra Banerjee as witnesses. Similarly in the years 1961 and 1970, the Sarva Seva Sangh purchased some more parts of the railway land.

Here it is pertinent to note that this land of Kohna village fort located in Rajghat was also received by the railway from the army in 1941. Then East Indian Railways got this land from the defence department by an agreement through its representative military estate officer Allahabad circle. Part of which sold by the Railways to the Sarva Seva Sangh. It is beyond the comprehension of people how the land which were purchased by the Sarva Seva Sangh and registered and possessed for decades all of a sudden become illegal on technicalities and the so-called procedural lapses. It should be noted that ICSSR and the State

Government financially supported the Gandhian Institute of Studies for quite a long time.

It is largely seen as a deliberate attempt on the part of the government whether it is the State or the Central Government to trample every institution which carries the heritage of Mahatma. It is not just an attack on the thoughts of Gandhi, Vinoba and JP but an attack on the freedom and the dream of a free India for which many persons sacrificed their lives in the freedom movement which ultimately liberated our country from the shackles of British imperialism.

It is the right time to protest against this unjustful act in a peaceful manner and call upon the heads of State and central Governments to intervene in this case and preserve the heritage of Mahatma Gandhi.

- Sarva Seva Sangh, Sevagram,
Wardha, Maharashtra

and hardly anyone bats an eyelid when they occur. A nine-year-old Dalit, Inder Meghwal, was brutally beaten by his upper caste teacher, Chail Singh, in a village in Rajasthan just because Inder drank from a water pot reserved for the teacher. It did not create sufficient outrage but, if there was a video of Inder being brutalised, it would have garnered millions of eyeballs.

There have been many lynchings of Muslims, a trend that has gained momentum since 2014 when the National Democratic Alliance came to power. A government led and dominated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has given official patronage to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's agenda of unleashing hate to fracture society along religious and caste lines. Scores of Muslims have been lynched on the suspicion of transporting cows for slaughter, possessing and consuming beef and even for having the temerity to try to earn a livelihood in predominantly Hindu localities. Almost all these lynchings were filmed and the videos posted on social media. All of them trended and garnered a phenomenal number of views. The number of people who watched these videos is large and a majority of them watched with glee. A small minority was horrified and even fewer expressed revulsion.

A decade ago, a video was posted on social media of Dalit men being forced to pour human excreta and urine on their heads. People looked on and filmed the act, and millions watched the video repeatedly online. It was passed off as tradition and hence supposedly acceptable!

There were also videos of Dalits made to roll over and clean up plates with their bodies after upper caste members had enjoyed a community feast. These videos were from Karnataka, then ruled by the BJP.

Attacks on Christians congregating for prayers, of churches being vandalised and

desecrated, clergymen beaten up and all of it filmed and exhibited have become normal. More people have been watching the arson, riots and killings in Manipur as entertainment rather than horrifying news. These trends should worry our collective conscience.

A few days ago, a horrible video emerged from Madhya Pradesh and immediately became viral. It showed a BJP functionary urinating on a tribal. The video soon trended. Millions watched it and millions more spent hours searching for more explicit videos. I was shocked. I tweeted: "One man thought it was alright to pee on another, another man thought it was okay to film the act and post it on social media, and an entire nation thought it was essential to watch the heinous video." Not many among those who watched the video thought it was outrageous. Many thought it was essential to see the video before expressing their outrage. This, to me, is a symptom of a terminally ill society.

Why do we need to watch atrocities being committed to be moved before we are outraged? Why isn't just hearing or reading about these horrible acts enough to horrify us? Why have a huge majority of us become such morbid voyeurs? Why has our collective compassion died? We need to question ourselves, find answers and detox to humanise ourselves. And we need to do it quickly.

Humanity does not die by the actions of a few brutes or a few demonic acts. Humanity dies because of the collective demise of compassion and absence of revulsion of the vast majority and by the normalisation of savagery. This is the worrying malice I see in India today – a malice that will turn us all into murderous demons, not because each one of us will kill or act brutally but because most of us will remain unmoved by such acts. We will watch the videos, a few of us will outrage on social media and we will move on, waiting for a new video. And our inaction will

Secretary's Diary

South Zone Gandhians' Conference

The Conference of the southern zone state units of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi was held at Gandhi Bhawan, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala on 24-25 June 2023. The Conference was inaugurated by Shri Ramchandra Rahi, Chairperson of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi (Central). In his inaugural address, Shri N. Radhakrishnan, President of the Kerala unit of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi expressed happiness for convening the conference in Kerala Gandhi Bhawan after a pretty long time. He welcomed the delegates from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Kerala. An exhibition was mounted to show the contribution of the Gandhians of Kerala in promoting an *Ahimsa*-based and self-reliant life-style. He said that local Gandhians and young people were participating in the Conference with great enthusiasm. He also emphasized on facing the

⇒ embolden the brutes to commit more atrocities.

It's a different matter that our prime minister, who loudly talks about the 'compassion' and 'unity' of India's democracy when abroad, has not made a single statement about the savagery in India. He remained silent after Kathua, Hathras, the lynchings of Muslims, and the killings of and brutal atrocities committed against other minorities and Dalits, including children and women. By his silence, he supports the campaign of hate. It benefits his party and him, but we as a people have watched these videos unmoved, many amongst us with glee, many others unconcerned. Alas!

(Tushar Gandhi, great grandson of the Mahatma, is an activist, author and president of the Mahatma Gandhi Foundation. Reach him here: gandhitushar.a@gmail.com.)

prevailing trends of violence with non-violence. The path of peace is the true Gandhian path.

In his address, Shri Rahi fondly remembered working under the guidance of late Shri P. Gopinathan Nair and said that the presence of Gandhians at the Conference vindicates the work done by Gandhian institutions in Southern India. Devoted work of Gandhian of nearly a century has enriched the rural landscape of this region. In fact, the liberal thinking of South Indian people their commitment to democratic values and their will to serve the people have enriched their society. Gandhiji came to the southern region many times.

It is a matter of concern that the present atmosphere in India is lacking in mutual goodwill. We are also worried over the violence. The Government's onslaught on the Gandhian institutions working for non-violence and peace has raised the danger of the reversal of Gandhian ethos and the Constitution of India. Shri A. Annamalai emphasized on more synergy in the functioning of Southern states of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi. He elaborated on the impact of Gandhian thought on Southern states. Shri Sanjoy Sinha said that in spite of the limited resources, the hard work of our workers in these states shows their commitment for the Gandhian cause. He suggested that a programme should be chalked out in this Conference to strengthen our centres working in rural areas. Shri Jacob Pulikan submitted a brief report in this Session.

Shri Udai P. Krishna, President of the Karnataka unit of the Nidhi, presented his detailed report on the activities in the state. The report was very inspiring. Shri Ranga Rao, Secretary of the Telangana unit also presented his report. Delegates of around 30 institutions shared ideas on forthcoming programmes and challenges.

Next day, the delegates visited the residence of Late Shri P. Gopinathan Nair, former

A New 'Black Market of Power' in Naya Bharat

Harish Khare

It may be just a coincidence that the prime minister's "Modi ki guarantee" spiel that India would be "the third largest economy in my third term" had already been pre-empted a week earlier by Gautam Adani. According to a report in the *Business Standard*, the controversial oligarch had told the Adani Enterprises' AGM in Mumbai on July 18: "While economic cycles are getting increasingly hard to forecast, there is little doubt that India – already the world's 5th largest economy – will become the world's third largest economy well before 2030." That is exactly the timetable the prime minister unveiled to his Pragati Maidan audience. Just to round up the argument, the Hindenburg-bitten tycoon had added: "It is well understood that for any economy to implement policy and lay the foundation of growth, a stable government is critical." And, for good measure, he declared that "my belief in the growth story of our *matrabhumi* has never been stronger."

It is difficult to say whether any kind of *jugalbandi* was at work, yet the convergence between the July 18 argument and the July 26 assertion leaves very little to the imagination.

This kind of convergence was anticipated about 80 years ago by Walter Benjamin, the celebrated Jewish dissident in Nazi Germany, when he talked of a "black market of power." As Benjamin conceptualised it, this black market was characterised by a "correlation of money and power", so evident in the Germany of the 1930s when all of the country's industrialists had lined up behind the brutal practitioners of National Socialism.

In this century, the phenomenon has already manifested itself in many countries where the economy is controlled by "a strong man" and a handful of politically connected oligarchs.

In India, we have our own, slightly refined, version because we have this little irritant called

⇒ Chairperson of the Trust. They paid tributes at his *Samadhi* also. Smt. Saraswatiamma, wife of Late Shri Gopinathan Nair, welcomed the delegates. A symposium was organised, well-attended by local Gandhians.

This was followed by a programme at Dr. G. Ramchandran school at Naiyatinkara, the native village of Shri G. Ramachandran, eminent Gandhian and former Secretary of Gandhi Memorial Trust. The programme was well-attended by local Gandhians, teachers and students.

Some eminent Gandhians were felicitated on this occasion. Shri Sooryanayak, Shri G.V. Shivraju, Prof. Prasanna and Shri Vishukumar also expressed their views on this occasion.

At the end of the Conference following resolutions were passed:

1. Wide-scale violence and disorder in Manipur need to be controlled immediately.
2. Government's encroachment and policy of suppression at Sarva Seva Sangh, Varanasi is highly deplorable.

Devoted contribution of Dr. Jacob Vadacanchery and Shri Gopalkrishnan, Secretary, Kerala unit of Gandhi Memorial Trust was lauded by all. Secretaries of Kerala unit of Gandhi Memorial Trust and Secretary at the headquarters of the Trust thanked all participants for their efforts.

- Sanjoy Singha

(Translated from Hindi by Rajendra Bhatt)

constitutional democracy, which obliges the black marketeers of power to go through the motion of securing public support for their 'growth model'. As far as the ruling clique is concerned, elections are a necessary nuisance. Not that the prime minister and his cohorts are daunted by the prospect of having to contest elections. Like Lionel Messi proclaimed, after winning the World Cup for Argentina, "We know what to do in every moment. We know how to win a game," the team from Gujarat too knows a thing or two about winning mandates.

And, as the economy becomes more and more inequitable on their watch, the new rulers of Naya Bharat know how to seduce the *plebes*. The professional phrase-makers have already coined the lilting rhyme: "*Pai, pai, gharib ki bhali* (Every paisa in the poor's interests)." The new oligarchs of Naya Bharat will, of course, permit themselves a sardonic smile. Indeed, a cocksure prime minister has already declared himself the winner of the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

Inherent in this extravagant claim is a warning threat to all those who have a constitutional duty to ensure fairness in the system – especially the higher judiciary and the Election Commission – not to take their mandate of protecting norms seriously. Instead, they must be prepared to overlook the regime's brazenness because the outcome of the contest is pre-ordained, if not pre-arranged. A bully's perfect boast. ...

In the 21st century, 'strongmen' need to remain 'strong' by procuring 'cutting-edge' weapons systems, just as the arms industry in the US and Europe needs to sell their ever-expensive war toys. John Bolton, one of Donald Trump's national security advisers, alluded to the phenomenon a few days ago in the *Wall Street Journal*:

"Sales of weapons systems are an important

way the U.S. strengthens its Asian allies, as [French President Emmanuel] Macron understands. Furious at losing a submarine deal with Australia to the U.S. and Britain, he celebrated Bastille Day with Indian Prime Minister Modi, announcing beforehand some \$9 billion in weapons sales."

It is perhaps now easy to understand why Modi has not found the time or the inclination to visit a burning Manipur. All this time, he was soaking in the pomp and spectacle of 'state visits' to the US and France. The fabled event manager has allowed himself to be mesmerised by the 'events' staged by other managers. Mentally he had travelled as far away as he could from the ugliness that is eating away Manipur society and political order.

It is inconceivable that the vast surveillance state was unaware of the moral shame so painfully captured in a video. If he had been told about the video or the incident, he did not want to be distracted; if he did not know of it, the pretorian guard would not have wanted to spoil his mood as he was being serenaded on the global stage. And, now it is too late because he simply cannot acknowledge that his trusted home minister had made a mess of a delicate corner of India. A few weeks of moral outrage by bleeding-heart liberals pale in comparison to the aura of a colossus sure-footedly striding the world stage.

As a politician who relishes confrontation, Modi can be expected to talk his way out of the Manipur shame – and the 'national' media can be relied upon to reaffirm his credentials as the master of narratives. But in his delusional mode, Modi need not forget that the final narrative is written by the voter.

(Harish Khare is a former editor-in-chief of The Tribune.)

(Courtesy: The Wire)

Our Morality After Manipur

Pratap Bhanu Mehta

It took a horrific video to get the Supreme Court to intervene, the Prime Minister to break his silence through a grudging and mendacious reaction full of whataboutery, and the nation to express its shame at the events in Manipur. But these reactions do not wash off the taint of vile moral callousness, the indifference to moral motivation, the incitement to brutality, and the inversion of values, that now marks our political culture. The reactions to the video across the board underscored that callousness.

This was most vividly on display in the Prime Minister's statement. As a wit once said about this Prime Minister, whenever there is an atrocity the only thing worse than the PM not speaking is him speaking. The tone was petulant, angry at the fact that a lid could not be kept on an ongoing story of ethnic targeting in Manipur. The train of political equivalences was just shockingly callous. Yes, Rajasthan recently had a horrific incident, but no one in the state government was covering it up or legitimising it, and the institutional machinery was at least put to work. The election violence in West Bengal was horrific. But again, in those cases the courts intervened, ~~central forces were~~ deployed, no one outside Bengal was legitimising the violence, and the central government and media were making it an object of attention.

But it is not entirely clear that in a situation as horrific as Manipur we have the moral language to counter the Prime Minister's moral evasion. The outrage at what is going on in Manipur is genuine. The video is finally shaking people to the core. But it is hard to shake off the suspicion that our reactions are as much about managing our psychodrama in the face of horrible facts, as they

are about addressing the atrocity.

The three languages in which the horror is expressed underscores this. The first is the fervent plea "this is not my India", "these are not our civilisational values". Whatever motivational value or descriptive truth these claims might have, they are morally problematic when used in the context of violence or individual atrocity. The atrocity is not an occasion to litigate the question of civilisational identity or worth; to do so is to lose sight of the specific harm, injustice and the fact that the victims have individuality. It also begs the question, of who we are trying to reassure.

The second language is the language of shame. We feel "ashamed". Shame is a powerful moral and cognitive emotion: It provides reassurance that we are not immune to moral considerations. It is inevitable. But, increasingly, the language of shame has also become tainted. It directs our attention not to the specific moral harm, but the fact that the moral harm has become public knowledge. There are two kinds of shame. One that comes from trying to look the victims in the eye, or imagining their gaze upon us, and wilting at the thought. The other is the more abstract shame: What will the world think of us? This is so shameful. How do we show our face to the world? What is striking is how few moral and political leaders have the courage to think of the individual victims and address them, in the way a Gandhi would. Our concept of shame is altogether more abstract, one that can be displayed as an object at will, one that effaces the individuality and specificity

of the crime. It is just hard to know which shame we are conveying. The “perpetrator” who could not be found for 70 days was miraculously arrested a day after the video surfaced. Our shame can abate.

The third is the excessive use of kinship language, and the absence of a language of citizenship. Even in expressions of solidarity what becomes more important to us is a form of contrived kinship: They belong to our community, some generic community of our “sisters,” as if our duties to them come from some filial obligations and sentiments. It again serves to obscure the fact that the violations in question are violations of the dignity of the individual, agents whose moral worth does not emanate from the fact that we can attribute some relation to them, and whose rights need to be secured by the state. Condemning violence against women becomes the reaffirmation of abstract masculinity, noblesse oblige chivalry rather than addressing the atrocity, trauma or even the political specificity of this violence.

The Prime Minister may yet give more statements. But don’t let his whataboutery disguise the plain facts. Whatever the historical social contradictions in Manipur between the Kukis and Meiteis, the horror unfolding at present has been exacerbated by the present governments at the state and the Centre. They have legitimised majoritarianism in Manipur and unleashed ethnic fear. The idea that the state is helpless to stop violence and ethnic displacement and targeting after nearly 80 days, is one of the most atrocious lies you will hear. Every institution, from police to NHRC,

has become part of the problem, not the solution. It is astonishing that a government that prides itself on “national security” actively creates a national security threat in its own country. The crackdown against civil society will intensify in the name of order. Already, the discourse in the media ecosystem has shifted to two questions: How can the media be muzzled and held accountable for airing this story? How can Twitter be held accountable? And a whole trail of conspiracy theories will be hatched to question the timing of the release of these videos just before the session of Parliament. The latter question will be another deflection.

Memories are short. But remember Ribbentrop-like statements from the foreign minister, who had assured the world that internet shutdowns in Kashmir were necessary to save lives. Perhaps in some circumstances, they are. But it is palpably clear in this case that this shutdown did not save lives; its purpose was to control the information order, and blanket Manipur in a veil of darkness, behind which projects of ethnic engineering could be carried out.

If the Supreme Court is serious it needs to intervene, not just as an act of pained chivalry in the face of a horrific video, but on the restoration of all basic rights, across India. And for us, unless we throw out from power this morally callous regime that peddles absurdities and revels in atrocity, our expressions of shame will just be empty hand-waving.

(Courtesy: Indian Express, 22nd July, 2023)