SATYA

MANY IDEAS OF INDIA

SATYA

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Staff Advisor's Note

The past year in the wake of the pandemic has been a very difficult and challenging year for academics, faculty and the students. In this situation of first the lockdown and then the start of online teaching, it was not an easy task to keep the society active. I congratulate the members of the council of Gandhi Ambedkar study Circle for rising up to the occasion and meeting the challenges of these abnormal times, by organizing several online seminars on themes which are relevant for understanding the contemporary social and political situation of India. Here I would like to particularly mention Ajay Skaria's online lecture on "Courage, Democracy and Equality: Questions from Gandhi" held on 2nd October 2020, Surinder Singh Jodhka's online lecture on "Revisiting the Rural, Re-visioning the Village" held on 16th October 2020, the online Panel Discussion on the topic "From Margin to Centre: Translating 'Dalit Literature" by Maya Pandit Narker, Anushiya Ramaswamy and V. Ramaswamy held on 11th November 2020, Kalpana Kannabiran's online Lecture on "Pandemic of (In) Justice: Covid-19 Metaphors in Constitutional Democracy" held on 15th November 2020 and finally an online student panel discussion on 23rd January 2021. In fact, in the month of Februaury 2021, the society has planned some interesting discussions, cultural events and film screening as a part of their festival Satya. I once again congratulate the student council of the society for organizing these activities. Here I would particularly like to mention Suchintan, Hari, Ananyo, Shivay, Shubham, Anusha, Pradeep, Shalika, Hepsiba and Pinaki.

Dr. Tasneem Suhrawardy
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Editorial

In The Discovery of India, a book that Jawaharlal Nehru composed in the Ahmednagar Fort during his years of captivity (1942-1946) and published in 1946, Nehru (1946: 38-39) wrote:

Often, as I wandered from meeting to meeting, I spoke to my audiences of this India of ours, of Hindustan and of Bharata, the old Sanskrit name derived from the mythical founders of the race.

In 1950, four years after the publication of Nehru's Discovery of India, the drafters of the Constitution of the larger of the two successor states of British India decided how the country should be known. In the opening article of the Constitution of India they wrote: 'India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States'. Two names: one, Bharat (skt. bhārata, also bhāratavarsa), perceived as native because it was found in ancient Sanskrit literature and India, associated with the foreigners whose rule was coming to an end.

The Mahabharata defined it broadly yet resonantly as the land north of the sea and south of the Himalayas. The Vishnu Purana even spelt out Bharatavarsha's ethnic boundaries thus:

The country north of the sea and south of the Himalayas
Is Bharata and her children are Bharati.
A thousand yojanas from north to south,
It has kiratas in the east and yavanas in the west (Vishnu Purana 2.3, verses 1, 8)

Within much of modern Indian thought, the idea of India as a nation implied the assumption that it would invariably be a democracy. India realising itself or constituting itself as a nation will necessarily do so as a democracy. The relationship between these two was not problematised.

Although, the exceptions give us what we have today. There were those who thought through the lens of caste, examples being E.V. Ramaswami Naicker, K.M. Panikkar and B.R. Ambedkar and also Adivasi leaders such as Jaipal Singh, who argued that the idea of nation has to be profoundly rethought in India and that such rethinking was needed to foreground democracy in an anticipatory mode. The Gandhians laid stress on Swaraj but this idea, while not being not opposed to democracy, did not directly connote self-rule of the citizen-community. The socialists and communists who were interested in the idea of democracy, and uncoupling it from the idea of nation, tended to lay stress on the economic prerequisites and redistribution of power to realise the former. There were some thinkers such as V.D. Savarkar who argued that the idea of nation took shape in India in the epochal past, but they dwelt little on democracy. Some Islamic scholars such as Maulana Maududi introduced concepts such as "theo-democracy", i.e., the mode of self-rule where believers ordain their common affairs; but apart from the hierarchisation and exclusion such a conception threw up, it was hardly linked to the idea of a nation as a bond or fellowship that marks it off from every other kindred entity.

The rise of the ruling party has placed a particular notion of the nation- the idea of India on the political agenda, and it has sought to refract constitutional democracy and elections through it. It has confined constitutional democracy to the bare letter of the law and periodic elections to merely subserve a majority in the House. In the process, it has shorn them off from even residual considerations of democracy as the self-rule of the citizen community and the nation as the outcome of this process.

Therefore, at this time when history has become an ideological site for the redrawing of the idea of India, as writers, it is important to write with conviction. In a moment when history is being used to aid and enable majoritarian nationalism, it is more incumbent than ever that historians become part of these debates and intervene in ethical and responsible ways. As writers, we must be responsible for the interpretations of facts and arguments, when writing to create discourse.

Satya, the Annual Journal of the Gandhi Ambedkar Study Circle, has "Many Ideas of India" as its theme in its 2020-21 edition. We have attempted to bring together an eclectic and topical set of ideas of our country, which in turn, shape our identity as Indians.

Rayan Chakrabarti's poem, "The Puppet", paints a picture of a dystopic land, Kashmir under shutdown. Imageries of guns blazing, gunpowder scent in the air, deafening silence looming over the lonely streets of the valley bring to us the idea of India that we are afraid of facing.

Avishi Gupta's article titled "A Gendered Home: Working Gender into the Archetypical Idea of Nationhood" flags off important ideas on the gendered nature of nationhood and nationalism. It seeks to look at how the discourse on gender informs the different epistemic ideas of our nation and how we can work our way through the problems to reach at a more inclusive and democratic reality.

Sujato Datta's "The Nation and Its Others: The Half Citizens of India" tries to complicate the issues of citizenship and nationhood, by delving into the nation-building process. The nation creates its others, and such a process of otherization relegates large sections of the Indian people to the position of half-citizens of India, argues Sujato. Citizenship is analysed in an ontological sense, posing existential questions about who are Indians and what is a nation.

We have reprinted Arvind Narayan Das's article called "Gandhi's Role: A Blasphemous Analysis" from the special Gandhi centenary edition of the Stephanian magazine of 1969. Arvind Narayan Das was an eminent historian and an alumnus of St. Stephen's College and this article was written when he was a student. The article deals with Gandhi's contribution to India's freedom struggle and critiques him along Marxist lines.

Suchintan Das's translation of Nabarun Bhattacharya's Bengali poem "Ei Mrityu Upotyoka Amar Desh Naa", titled here as "This Valley of Death is No Country of Mine" is a poignant reminder of the systemic violence inflicted by the state and the ruling classes on the people of India. Graphic descriptions of death and desolation also act as metaphors for the dystopic times we inhabit.

Sounak Banerjee's "Idea of India" seeks to delineate the convolutions that characterize our nation today. The peculiar nature of Indian politics and the rhetoric around it forms a particular idea of India, which is highlighted in this article. Themes of democracy, secularism, national unity, and nationhood have also been discussed in light of the contemporary socio-political developments in India.

Satyam Jha's "Refuting the Idea of India" highlights the critiques of Indian nationalism, drawing mostly from Perry Anderson's moorings on the same. It deals with the alleged exclusionary nature of the nationalist discourse and seeks to look at alternative ways of imagining India as a nation.

Satya is a humble effort to write with more conviction and we sincerely hope that it elicits the spirit of critical inquiry in the minds of its readers.

Puppet

Rayan Chakrabarti

The Kalashnikov imagery stutters like broken kids in the valleys,
This idol of time; a relic not worshipped.
The struggles in the hills of the country go unnoticed.
The valley dreams; this pendant of charm, this shining valley, beckons.
We will go.

Through the gates, the unbuilt bridges, the burnt villages.
We will go.
From the cities.
We will spread out and form the human bridge, and we will meet them in the mountain valleys.
And then, a wisp of smoke will go up, and the smell of burning will coexist with the savagery.
The primitive existence will begin.
Our voices will be guns.
And we will all burn.
And the puppet strings will burn.
And when our ashes will be cremated, they will find our hearts still beating, our brains still working

We do not tire
We do not rest

We are the valley people

We are the circus clowns

The middle people, wedged in mockery, the civilized disharmony, the pantomime execution.
We are the idols of time.

A Gendered Home:

Working Gender into the Archetypal Concept of Nationhood

Avishi Gupta

Nation-building is often thought to be an act of putting together a jig-saw puzzle. Back in 1947, the architects set out to bind a landmass with a multitude of microcosms into a single thick hardcover - the constitution. The newfound euphoria of freedom brought with it an urge to set a precedent; the parameters for said precedent being the degree of inclusivity. This inclusivity was necessitated by stating that it was essential to maintain unity in a nation reeling from the aftermath of partition. There existed a dichotomy of values - unity and diversity, like yin and yang, where the former was seen in the positive light while the latter was palatable but had negative undertones. Although a broad spectrum of ethnic, cultural, and caste diversities were exclusive to the Indian context, the question of gender wasn't, yet it fell to the same fate in India as many of its contemporaries and inspirations i.e. being reduced to a 'question' rather than an 'understanding'.

The abstract identity of a nation manifests itself into concrete standards mainly under the purview of legal authority. Therefore, to get a clear picture of evolving ideas of a 'woman's India', one needs to analyze their tussle with the legal authority itself.

The earliest and perhaps the most well-known manifestation of this tussle presents itself in the Dadaji Bhikaji vs Rukhmabai (1885) case, where Rukhmabai, who was a child bride, resisted her husband's bid for 'restitution of conjugal rights'. The 1885 case resulted in a verdict in her favor, owing to the lack of similar precedent in British law. However, it was when the case was brought up for re-trial in 1886 that the trouble began. There was a widespread backlash from the Hindu community citing disrespect towards Hindu law and custom, with the likes of Bal Gangadhar Tilak rallying in support of Bhikaji who stated that her defiance was a danger to Hinduism and a product of English education. This time, the law, under pressure, favored Bhikaji.

The fact that Rukhmabai was willing to court arrest rather than accept a virilocal residence and her husband's autonomy presents an image of a parallel women's movement taking shape against the backdrop of a brewing national movement, that was a living, breathing

entity in itself. Rukhmabai went as far as petitioning Queen Victoria who ultimately dissolved the marriage.

If Rukhmabai's story is that of a visionary, the reality of women's involvement in the constitution-making process is that of piecemeal appeasement. Some might say that 15 was a satisfactory number for women in a Constituent Assembly of 299 by the standards of 1947, however, if one looks at the background and involvement of these 15 women, the representation dwindles. Among the fifteen, there was only one woman each from the Muslim and Dalit community and none representing tribal women. The allocation of space within the assembly to these women was such that they were granted limited agency. Women were absent from the Drafting Committee and the Advisory Committee only had three female members - Hansa Mehta, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, and Begum Aizaz Rasul.

Therefore, the flawed perception that 'some women can represent all' muted the need for intersectionality. An environment of sexism pervaded the assembly as well where women were deemed too emotional to make rational decisions.

Another major theme in this scenario was that of rejection of separate electorates for women, which was supported by the fifteen feminine voices in the assembly themselves. To understand this, it is important to examine the ideological influence they drew on. In the aftermath of partition, the system of separate electorates was seen as a divisive force, a threat to the binding unity of the nation, thus a rejection of the same was equivalent to upholding the unity of the nation. Pattabhi Sitaramayya called the rejection of separate electorates for women, by the women in the assembly, an act of 'extreme courage and imagination'. Therefore, this widespread apprehension against a system of representation and the positive feedback mechanism attached to its rejection narrowed any scope of trial for the same.

Interestingly, the question of reservation for women was also dismissed by these women who cited that any form of positive bias or favor stood in violation of the idea of equality between the sexes. In doing so, however, women who were privileged enough to take the center stage were given priority while the voices of those who had been discriminated against across various intersections of caste and ethnicity were silenced.

If the women of the assembly were driven by the nationalist fervor of the 40s, the women in the late 20th century were the trailblazers of the emerging Indian Feminist Movement. The Air India v. Nargesh Meerza (1981) case resulted in a pioneering judgment that set concrete precedents in the context of workplace discrimination. Air India required

female flight attendants exclusively to retire in case they reached the age of 35/ got married/ or upon first pregnancy while no similar requirements existed for men. The Supreme Court struck down this measure on the grounds of arbitrariness and hostile discrimination. The verdict also challenged the sexist notion of beauty attached with the job of a flight attendant which tends to limit a woman's qualification to her appearance while men are allowed to serve longer, free from any such biases.

Over time, the idea of a 'woman's nation' has become more intersectional and diverse. Women leaders now see themselves not only as representatives of gender but also as agents of change situated in their specific regional, cultural, religious, and social contexts. The 21st century has primarily seen a multitude of women rising to action and addressing not only the issues of representation but also of women's health, personal autonomy, sexuality, etc.

State's inability to take into account the idea of female self-autonomy however prevails and sexist laws can be seen taking shape at various instances, driven solely by a male-dominated perception of the nation. In the present scenario, when there exist several interpretations of what India stands for, an analysis of the same through a 'feminist lens' is essential.

However, it will be wrong to limit the horizons of a 'woman's nation' to a specific gender for the gamut of the same in the present scenario extends far beyond to cover mainstream politics. Women are no longer restricted to the advocacy for their sex, rather they actively engage in modern-day nation-building processes.

At the same time, it is essential to state that the idea of a nation, though manifesting itself best against a legal and political backdrop, is shaped and strengthened well within the folds of society. Institution of laws can only be effective in dealing with systemic inequalities if measures are taken to amend the social setting of the same.

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The Nation and Its Others:

The Half Citizens of India

Sujato Datta

The nation is a project permanently in a state of construction. It is a relentless amalgamation of changing imagery, motifs, and identities imagined and narrated by different groups and individuals. The provocation of this essay comes from a recent headline in the Times of India which read, "Primitive Tribal Girl Tops KGBV Schools in JAC Class X Exam.". I want to draw attention to a closer reading of the statement into the nation-building process, and the process of how legal terms are structurally coded identity constructions. I want to move a little away from the overemphasized concept of 'imagined community' because too many fractures have invaded it by now. I do not like to think that we have a coherent idea of a nation any more or that we ever had one. The modern state is a politico-juridical community far more than an imagined one. The argument poignantly reminds me of a scene from Newton (2017), where Nutan (Rajkumar Rao) explains how an Electronic Voting Machine works, to an utterly clueless tribal community living in a Naxal-infested region. He says, "Whoever you choose, by casting your vote, will go to Delhi." The villagers mumble and then the eldest among them stands up to say that he will be going to Delhi since he is their leader chosen by custom. Nutan has to painstakingly explain that they have to vote for people listed on the electoral rolls. This community did not imagine Delhi to be the capital of their 'nation'. Their only linkage to Delhi was the legal symbol of the EVM.

The project of building a national body politic is a process of listing 'what not to be' rather than 'what to be'. There is no coherent idea of the national 'self' and the only rubric of the national 'self' is a narrated distance from the multiple 'others'. This 'self' is reinvented time and again by the same story told differently by the different parties which come to power. The 'birth' and 'making' of the nation is not only a socio-political institutional trajectory but a story that is told differently by different people. As a case study, I look at the treatment and discourse of the people displaced in either of India namely Bengal and Punjab provinces. I attempt to analyse the deliberations on their identity as citizens of either India or Pakistan. They were not considered at least for any politico-juridical purposes, complete citizens and yet India and Pakistan made it a point to relocate Hindu women separated from their families and stuck in Pakistan to India and from India to Pakistan for Muslim women as

if they rightfully belonged to either of the nation-building processes. The refugees were thus earmarked as the essential 'other' not to be integrated completely but rightfully kept. One would think, it was predicaments like these that prompted Aristide R. Zolberg to make the statement, "The formation of new states is a refugee generating process.". A common phrase used to describe the predicament of the people was that they were made 'refugees on their land'. The state of India was simultaneously their and not their homeland. For all references to their history, it was their hoe yet for all moments of present converging into the future it was to be alien to them.

In August and September 1947, around 15 million refugees crossed the Western border with Pakistan, into India. The number of Hindus fleeing to Bengal on the East was close to 2 million (Chatterjii 2007). The erstwhile landowning class in the Eastern side of Bengal owned townhouses in Calcutta. Government officials were given a choice to work for either government (Chatterjii 2007). Thus, individuals who were officially engaged in the institutional project of the nation were given the option of agency. Lower classes of refugees were assembled in refugee camps or in local communities called 'colonies' as ironic as it may sound. The colonies were relatively better but life in the camps was miserable with often the bare minimum for survival. The state thus went beyond the biopolitics of power and took to decide who had to live and who could die. This whole process was organized through the rational bureaucratic methods of the modern state. Refugee lives were statistics and had to be measured in clear terms of burdens and constraints it put on governmental resources. The rehabilitation attempts by the government were evaluated by the Committee of Review Rehabilitation Work in West Bengal in the late 1960s, after reviewing 74 ex-camp sites with a total population of about 45000 displaced people, spread over nine districts of West Bengal it produced a document called 'Report on Rehabilitation of Displaced Persons from East Pakistan at Ex-Camp Sites in West Bengal'. In the first such report, published in December 1967, the Committee stated two issues regarding the problem of rehabilitation. Firstly, that the human suffering was huge. Secondly, and interestingly, the "wastage of government resources either in the form of forced occupation of government lands or in the form of rent on the occupied house". The creation of the refugee subjects thus happen as they are not 'citizens' neither burdensome foreigners, but 'responsibilities' of the state. It was in July 1958 that the government announced that relief camps in West Bengal were to be closed by the next year, with 10,000 families being absorbed into West Bengal and the remaining 35,000 moved to other areas including Dandakaranya. In September 1961, 10,000 families were still found to be left in the campsites of West Bengal with all camp benefits stopped.

This subjectification is one of the first steps towards constituting the identity of the

'other'. At this juncture, this process has to be read in terms of the idea of the 'nation' as 'narration' (Bhaba 1990). For the 'narration' to originate there has to be an 'event' that acts as the genesis of said narratives. In this discussion, this event is the Partition of India, that turned the erstwhile Indian into a 'refugee in their land', the origin of displaced identity. This identity required further mechanization. The aforementioned report made one notable recommendation regarding rehabilitation assistance. It read, "families at ex-camp sites who could be identified as displaced persons should be given rehabilitation benefits in the form of homestead plot...". The identification of displaced persons in all possibility was documental, thereby fitting conveniently into the process of legal codification of identity and the place one occupied in the nation-making process. The provision of access to certain resources contingent on the identity of 'displaced people' is a further extension of this process. Hence, the state cannot keep them outside the nation-making. They have to be included in the narration but as the 'other'. The linkage of the formation of the 'other' to the event was inauspiciously maintained through legal institutions and legal codes. For a long time, the basis of Indian citizenship was jus soli, that is it was based on birth. However, this problematizes the narration of the refugee as the 'other' produced by the 'event'. Hence, propelled on by the agitations to deport illegal immigrants, the multiple amendments to the Citizenship Act 1955 have gradually converted it into a jus sanguinis (descent-based) citizenship thereby retaining the historical trace of the impact of the Partition on their identity (Kumar 2019).

Manoranjan Byapari, in his autobiography, notes the impact of caste on the organization of rehabilitation settlements. People hailing from the Namasudra caste lived in semi-legal camps in Calcutta, while the upper-caste refugees not only got legal colonies but also governmental aid. (Byapari 2018). Byapari notes that the 'elements of erasure' figured structurally into it (Byapari 2018). Erasures by democratic states are largely necropolitical issues. The semi-legal camps were inhospitable areas. Hence, the nation produced second-class citizenship by spatially organizing their proximity to death. For these individuals, citizenship was not an inalienable right but an aspirational entitlement to be earned. The report, previously mentioned, "The Committee would, therefore, urge that this human material full of potentialities should be given the minimum of facilities...so that they can prove to be worthy citizens and real assets to the country.". The refugees were not citizens they had to 'become' citizens. This was how they were to be integrated into the project of nation-making. This has to be read in tandem, with the development of nationalist discourse and historiography. Bhaba argues that nationalist discourses have usually read the nation in terms of a continuing narrative of national progress (Bhaba 1990). In post-independence India, the 'other', the refugee's becoming into citizen was how this process of otherization was read into that of a national progress. The appearance of this subject position problematized citizenship itself.

To understand this process, one has to go back to how the nation was projected in nationalist historiography. Nationalist historiography had tried to recover an indigenous past before the colonial masters, using the idea of a unified Indian consciousness to reflect projections of future conceptions of sovereignty. The problem with contemporary Western discourse about India continued to haunt nationalist historiography. Sumit Chakrabarti argues that nationalist historiography merely "transformed India as an object of knowledge- from passive to active." (Chakrabarti 2007). The perception of the 'new' nation was still a unified one. The generation of refugees interrupted this narration. It wove the presence of legally foreign beings who had to be incorporated into the making of the nation. This confusion induced in the body politic, severely affected the narration of the nation. This ambivalence grew more intense because of the difficulty of locating a culture to accommodate a narration of the lived experiences of refugees (Redclift and Rajina 2017). The refugees were thus organized into manageable communities where they had 'uncertain citizenship' (Kumar 2019). In a state of 'uncertain citizenship', the whole category of citizenship becomes uncertain. In 1964 by the means of an official policy, India stopped the provision of direct rehabilitation to new migrants from East Pakistan. However, as is seemingly evident from the history of citizenship laws, change came calling. In 1972, the Indira-Mujib pact agreed on 1971 to be the date after which the migrations were 'illegal'.

One thus has to note, that 'illegal Bangladeshi"' is an extremely unstable and continuously changing category. Its definition is accorded by which party is in power. The instability of this category by extension means that Indian citizenship itself is unstable and the category of 'Indian' is unstable. It is important to further clarify the experience of these refugees in the immediate post-Partition, post colony. The people displaced by the 'event' of the Partition were always in the process of becoming citizens and never fully there. They were both within and without. They were 'performing citizenship' (Kaur 2009). This creates a distinctive characteristic of the 'other' half-citizen in the narration of the nation. It is not only that they do not have equal access to political spaces and claims as full citizens but also the fact that one's position as a postcolonial citizen was shaped by the relationship one had with the state. Hence the refugees had to transition into citizens by self-rehabilitation. This process became essential as the state on both sides of the border, consolidated markers of legal recognition of national belonging. The refugee identity was formalized by the issuing of refugee cards. In 1948, a rudimentary permit system was in place. From 1948 to 1950, India also had a Custodian of Evacuee Property to supervise property that was left vacated. By 1951, a passport and visa were required to cross India's western border into Pakistan and vice versa (Khan 2007). Both of these steps indicate the formalization of citizenship identity and a distinct marker of who belonged where. However, there develops an observable dichotomy

within the state's perception of the presence of refugees. On one hand, the state encouraged the self-rehabilitation of refugees and put an aspirational trajectory for them to turn into citizens. On the other hand, both the Indian and Pakistani governments were discussing the incompatibility of the refugees with regards to the states' financial prerogatives, particularly within the rhetoric of Planning. It is also known that both the Indian and Pakistani governments made efforts to bring back 'their people' stuck on the wrong side of the border during the chaotic aftermath of the Partition. The middle, ambivalent space between an unqualified, nascent citizenship and a qualified, entitled citizenship is the space that refugees occupied. They were, hence, half-citizens, a category whose genealogy still continues in current political discourse with many fundamentalist organizations trying to retrace the traumatic lineage of Partition displacement.

So, what exactly is the impact of this on how the nation is narrated? The 'production' of refugees in the aftermath of the Partition made the sustenance of the early nationalist historiographies rather unstable. This new category of people, which moulded not only the nature of the state but also citizens and public spaces, ruptured the argument about civilizational exceptionalism and laid bare the many fractured ideas and identities of India. From this juncture, the narration of the nation had to progress from the postcolonial conditions of both India and Pakistan, for it was this series of events that produced the categories of 'Indian' and 'Pakistani'. However, it is not merely the generation and presence of refugees but the violent conditions and extreme strife that produced these refugees that has so deeply embedded the rhetoric of rightful belonging so deeply in the narration of the nation. It is here that we must arrive at the present through the past.

During the enactment of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in 2019, protests broke out in different parts of the country. The argument of the unsecular and undemocratic nature of the Act was naturally met with narratives of the influx of illegal immigrants by various communal, fundamentalist, and ethno-fascist groups. In December 2019, the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) collaged clips from the Partition trilogy of Ritwik Ghatak into a six-minute clip in an attempt to show the devastating effects of cross-border immigration. In doing so, they traced out the firm historical lineage that the nation draws from Partition and their desire to underline it once more. Displaced people, who for all of their history inhabited the stretch of land called India, were being produced as the 'other' who caused the struggle and strife for the citizens of India. The refugees were thus bifurcated into two groups within such narration. On one hand, were refugees who had successfully institutionalised their existence within the postcolonial state by being able to procure necessary documentation to affirm the same, and on the other, were refugees who have failed to do so because of several class and

community constraints. These two groups occupy two vastly different positions within the narration of the nation. The first group of people are posited in an overlapping framework of bravery and struggle, where their trajectory of having made citizens out of themselves is narrated. The image of the valiant Sikh refugee is such an example. On the other hand, the dominant image of the other group is the illegal immigrant who causes security issues and economic problems disrupting the polity of the nation. The CAA along with the National Register of Citizens (NRC) fulfills a two-fold function. Firstly, by excluding Muslims from its provisions the CAA makes a deliberate linkage to the postcolonial moment of rightful belonging. Secondly, the NRC makes a large-scale attempt to affirm at this point the process of production of citizens for these seventy-three years and reproduce that demarcation based on citizens and half-citizens on religious grounds. These thus become the latest attempts to re-narrate into the nation, a community of half-citizens based not only on religion but where they and their families stood in the context of postcolonial, post-Partition politics of India. They thus become the 'other' of the nation- different but not expelled. They are the half-citizens of India.

Gandhi's Role - A Blasphemous Analysis

Gleaning from the Past

Aravind Narayan Das

We are indeed a peculiar people. Our ways of celebrating the centenary year of the 'Father of our Nation' are, for instance, peculiar. Starting with a few human sacrifices, we have worked our way through organising a bon-fire with Harijan women and children in Tamilnadu, through performing man-snatching power-politics in Bihar and Haryana, through brutally murdering peasants in Andhra, Punjab, Orissa, Kerala, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Kashmir, through a full-fledged operation to de-populate whole regions in Assam and Nagaland through high-level political intrigue deception in Delhi, to spending twenty-two lakhs of our meagre wealth to arrange for a comfortable twenty-two hour in our country for the person whose mercenaries have dropped more bombs on a small Asiatic neighbour than the total used in the Second World War. We have interpreted Gandhi's ideals of upliftment of Harijan's, emancipation of women, rural socialism, non-violence, Ramrajya and peace in peculiar ways indeed. And yet, all the times we have been chanting Gandhi's name deifying him, extolling his virtues and swearing by his principles. The root of this contradiction perhaps lies in the fact that we have not cared to historically analyse Gandhi as a human being but have adopted him as a religious symbol, an escape mechanism. An excuse for our won diseased minds.

We should, first of all, remember that Gandhi was a real historical person and not only that but primarily a politician who used his qualities to first stimulate and then, perhaps unconsciously, to arrest a great historical upsurge. As a politician, and as a full-time patriot unlike those 'leaders' who preceded him, Gandhi realised the importance of an organisation, a Party, a vanguard in the national movement in which he was placed. He built up this, filling up a gap left by the idealist petition-mongers who called themselves politicians before 1919. Even Tilak had not been able to provide this historical requirement which Gandhi did. (Coincidentally, another 'Father of a Nation' who realised the importance of vanguard organisation in a mass movement is also having his centenary celebrated this year). Along with the building up of a regular full-time Party, Gandhi also launched upon the task of

bringing the masses into the national movement. He transformed the practice of patriotism as a pastime of upper-middle-class gentlemen to a system of practical politics involving the people who, and only who, he realised, is the motive force of history. Having made the common man a participant in the political movement and having built as an organisation to lead him, he gave both something to occupy themselves with during the lulls that occurred in the political struggle. A campaign against untouchability, against the subordination of women, against religious dissension and against other social evils were included in his programme for which he set out a definite course of action. And yet, all the time, by keeping personal control of the non-political side of the national movement and personal direction over social welfare sections of his organisation (the All-India Spinner's Association. The Khadi Bhandars, the Harijan Sewak Samaj etc.) he retained control over the cadres of his party and hence of its politics too. He never surrendered the real sources of power, hardly ever consulted his colleagues and never the people- the 'inner voice' sufficed. As a result, under this banyan tree too, only a few saplings grew up and the seeds of his own ideas perished because of his sheltering.

Some people, including some Marxists, have tried to explain the contradictions in Gandhi in terms of class analysis. While their intentions might be unimpeachable, the conclusion they reach is definitely incorrect. They hold that the basis of these contradictions lies in the fact that Gandhi, a spokesman of the big bourgeoisie, working in the interest of that class, was leading a mass movement, the interest of the majority of whose constituents were diametrically opposite. This is a misunderstanding of Gandhi's role. Gandhi was by no means the spokesman of the bourgeoisie- he was definitely one of the 'small men'. To put him in the former category seems to be to force him into a position without historically considering his writings and his actions. And yet there definitely are contradictions in Gandhi which intrigue us. How could a popular leader who opposed exploitation by foreigners connive at the exploitation by shop-keepers? How could a person who sincerely desired that every man should have a better standard of living oppose the heavy industry? How could a political realist be so naive as to suppose that the ich, 'the trustees of the poor', voluntarily surrender their wealth? How could a person who realised that the national question is ultimately a peasant question not lead the peasants in a fight for an agrarian revolution? How could a person who wanted to end religious fanaticism adopt religious orthodoxy to do so? Why did Gandhi not lead the Indian revolution to its logical end? Whose interest was he serving? These questions can be answered only when an attempt is made to historically analyse Gandhi's words and deeds and after such an analysis the conclusion reached is that far from being a bourgeois ideologue (as Moscow at one time held), Gandhi was a spokesman of that class for which he felt most- that rural petit bourgeoisie, the small and

middle-class peasants, that class which lives on a low income and high ideals, that class, which, though potentially revolutionary, is scared of revolution because it values its meagre 'security', that class which is historically, unfortunately, Gandhi's ideas, a camp-follower: in revolutionary times of the workers, in times of stability of the bourgeoisie. And, if this class or its representatives leads a movement, it is bound to be arrested revolution. Gandhi's revolution could not bring about a People's Democratic Republic because he never let the people take the initiative after he had given the lead. Gandhi's peasant movement did not result in an agrarian revolution because he did not recognise the rural landless labourers- the agricultural proletariat- and the very small farmer as constituting the real peasantry in India; his peasant had some land. Gandhi's urban petit bourgeois following too did not join hands with the most revolutionary section- the working class but to operate on the basis of its own high, even somewhat quixotic, ideals. Consequently, since Gandhi tried to stop a total upheaval, he objectively, though perhaps unconsciously, served the interest of those who tried to perpetuate the status quo of social injustice. And, to further chant his 'mantra' in an age which is crying for the overdue socio-economic and political upheaval, is to try to mislead the people to try to stop their growing political consciousness, to try to addict them to another opium of the masses.

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Nabarun Bhattacharya's 'This Valley of Death is No Country of Mine' - A Translation

Suchintan Das

The father who fears identifying the corpse of his dead child,
I despise him.
The brother who is still unperturbed—without shame,
I despise him.
The teacher, intellectual, poet, or professional
Who does not ask for avenging these deaths in public,
I despise him.
Eight lifeless bodies
Lie across my consciousness,
I am losing my sanity.
Eight pairs of probing eyes stare at me in my sleep,
I wake up screaming
They are calling me, during odd hours, in odd places, all the time,
I will become a madman
I will kill myself
I will do whatever I want to.
This is the time to write poetry
On pamphlets, walls, and stencils
Using blood, tear, and bones in a collage,
This is the time when poetry can be written
With the fiercest pain of tattered face,
Facing terror yet gazing still
At the scorching headlight of a police-van.
This is the time when poetry can be thrown
At the .38 and in spite of everything that the assassin carries,
This is the time when poetry can be read.

In the stone-cold lock-up room
Shaking the putrefied light during post-mortem
In the court controlled by the murderer
In the school of lies and un-education
Within the state machinery of oppression and terror
On the chest of civilian-military authorities,
Let the protest of poetry reverberate
Let the poets of the country remain prepared like Lorca
Let them be prepared to get killed, strangled, disappear—like corpses
To be perforated by a string of sten gun bullets
Yet, they need to surround the city of poetry with the villages of poems.
This valley of death is no country of mine
This rostrum of executioners is no country of mine
This extended crematorium is no country of mine
This blood-bathed slaughterhouse is no country of mine.

I will return to get my country back
In my heart, I will carry the kash, wet with dew,
The flutter of fireflies throughout my body,
The crop of my heart from jhums on hills,
Fairytales with flowers, women, and rivers.
I will name the stars after the martyrs as I wish
I will beckon that gust of wind, with the shadow of sunlight on the lake that looks like the eye of a fish,
Love—even him, who, from his birth, has remained a lightyear away—
I will call him too, on this festival of revolution.
I refuse to be interrogated day and night under the light of a 1000-watt bulb
I refuse to sleep on a slab of ice with needles piercing my nails
I refuse to be hung from the ceiling, upside-down, with my nose bleeding profusely
I refuse to be crushed by boots, to bear scars from hot iron pincers
I refuse to be whipped into submission, to have sudden alcohol poured over my wounds
I refuse to be naked, electrocuted, perversely tortured
I refuse to be beaten to death, to be shot point blank at head.
Poetry refuses to acknowledge any obstacle
Poetry is armed, free, fearless
Look, Mayakovsky, Hikmet, Neruda, Aragon, Eluard!
We haven't let your poetry down

A new epic is being composed across the country
Ornamented by the rhythms of guerrilla warfare.

Let the drums beat
In the hamlet that looks like a coral island
On the blood-soaked indigo fields,
For the poisoned river drenched with death
For the sun blinded by a sharp, fiercely violent arrowhead—
Bhalla! We would reclaim our shore with your lancets and spears
With guns and kukris and blood-eyed tribal totems
And with a lot of courage,
So much courage that even fear would lose its own fear.
I am no longer afraid of cranes, bulldozers, and convoys
I do not fear the dynamo, turbine, lathe, or engine,
The desolate metal hammer shining like a diamond in the methane-black darkness of a collapsed coal mine
No longer strikes fear in me, it doesn't,
For the thousand hands raised against the bleak skies of docks-mills-furnaces
The pale face of fear seems unrecognizable.
When I have come to know that death is nothing but love
If I am killed,
I will spread like a thousand flames,
I am indestructible
Every year I will return with the spring,
I am indestructible—
I will live in joy and grief, through the lives of my children,
As long as this country lasts,
I will remain.
The death which makes even winter nights boil with rage
Call forth that day, that war, that death
When the Seventh Fleet will be stalled by seven boats.
Let the blowing of the horn declare war
When the wind is drunk with the smell of blood,
Let poetry be lighted and the ground explode
When villages, boats, towns, and temples
From the Terai to the Sundarbans
Are dry and inflammable after a night's cry,

When the land of my country and the sludge of slaughter have become the same,
Then why is there dilemma anymore?
What is there to doubt?
What is terror?
Start writing...
I can feel those eight bodies,
Whispering in the darkness of eclipse—where to stand guard
I can hear tens of thousands of stars across galactic oceans, in their voices,
The legacy of travelling from one world to another.
Let the burning torch of poetry,
Let the molotov cocktail of poetry,
Let the toluene flame of poetry,
Get immersed in this hope of fire.

First Published as 'Ei Desh, Ei Shomoy' ('This Country, These Times') in 1972. Translated from the original bangla poem, 'Ei Mrityu Upotyoka Aamar Desh Na'.

Idea of India

Sounak Banerjee

What is 'India'?

There was once a joke that went viral that 'INDIA' is an acronym given by the British that stands for 'Independent Nation Declared In August'. As much amusement as it may cause, there are reasons to evaluate the anomaly that is 'India'. An Indian can sit down to list the number of commonalities that one shares with any other Indian apart from the national symbols (national flag, anthem, etc.). The nation as a whole, does not share a common language, common culture, common cuisine or any other factors that have served as flexible instruments for stirring up patriotic sentiment in other nations. Unsurprisingly, all these differences contribute to the inequality widely prevalent in the country. Here, country and nation is being used interchangeably because while India is a recognized country with its own constitution and political government, the lack of a concrete nationhood has major implications in the definition of the country.

Ironically, one of the important notions that could strongly materialise the idea of India was that of anti-colonial sentiment and the desire for freedom from the British. Now, it is not that there is a lack of perspectives on the definition of India. Rather, there are so many of them that it becomes a matter of which one prevails in the field of 'common-sense' at a particular time.

There are the colonialist perspectives which were generated during the British rule (obviously). First, a group of scholars who were stirred by the notion of life in Eastern societies classified India as an 'aggregate of independent village republics' more or less. To them, each village was a self-sufficient autonomous unit capable of functioning in isolation. However, they did not elaborate on the interrelations which linked such isolated communities together. Second, the governing officials carried out their own study of the country for administrative purposes. They too concentrated their study on villages but they were no longer romanticized as independent republics rather, they were considered degraded and backward. It is interesting how India has always given rise to an image of villages despite not being a country with exclusive claim to such units of organization.

Not just the colonialists but even prominent national leaders shaped their definitions around villages. Mahatma Gandhi felt the need to revive and restructure the villages of India to counter the perspectives of the British as well as boost the confidence of the natives. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar underlined the village as a pit of discrimination and narrow-mindedness - a primary unit of Hindu social organization. Jawaharlal Nehru went along the lines of the western idea of modernisation and emphasised on the need for 'modernising' and industrialising the nation. Whatever history may portray, the lack of the 'voices' of the masses is too conspicuous to be overlooked. Why is it that the masses can only be represented by a chosen 'voice'? Is it because it is a more convenient and time-saving affair to consider the opinions of one 'on behalf' of everyone else? The subaltern approach is one such perspective which attempts to bring out the voices that history has trampled over.

It seems that ideology is the only way of ordering the chaotic existence of India. One feels stupid to think of the problem in such a way since the same can be said of all nations as well. Other nations may have been established upon certain commonalities but all shared values, at the end of the day, are products of ideology. So now, we need to evaluate the nature of ideology that concretises the idea of India. India, that is, Bharat has been a notion that dates way back before the colonial rulers came over. But, the mystery accredited to the land of India may as well be claimed for one's inability to mark out a specific community of 'Indians'. The Indian subcontinent is named so because India was more or less considered as a geographical expression by many – scholars and laymen alike. So we do share geographical unity but when we attempt to establish commonality through religion, the problem gets more complex. The prevalence of Hinduism and all its religious connotations extended throughout the modern-day geographical map of India. This is often mistaken for a sense of 'Indianness' among the masses. Religions, like empires, rule over particular territories over a certain period of time. And it is undeniable that Hinduism became the central religious force in India during the Aryan era.

When the native youths began to go abroad for academic purposes, they were aroused by western ideas of democracy, secularism and other such notions now regarded as democratic values. The country of India post-independence was established upon such western ideas. However, once again, the idea of a few was imposed upon the masses. But there was no major uprising against such a rule. One could have easily presumed that India really demonstrates 'unity in diversity'. But it could also have been the case that it was all too confusing and complex to be pondered over by laymen and even most literates as well. Never before, in any kind of rule had there been such an elaborately organized bureaucracy as in a

democratic government. As for the notion of secularism, India is often popularly proclaimed to have been a universally tolerant nation. Is that the real reason behind the acceptance of all religions? Or, are all religions not really at par but hierarchically graded? Maybe, there seems to be an atmosphere of tolerance due to the coexistence of different and even contradictory spiritual ideas within the umbrella term of 'Hinduism'. It is too naïve to state that a nation which does not have a concrete definition in terms of community, can rigidly adhere to a moral value that has never been explicitly imposed.

Contemporary politics provides evidence of the fragile nature of the nation. Communal divisions have come out more prominently than ever. Linguistic groups and caste struggles have always been major sources of organization and discrimination. Democracy is not necessarily majoritarianism but it does imply the danger of arousing this idea. Maybe, that is the reason why communal politics can still sweep over the masses. So, do we assume the actions of the masses are a result of rational decisions or even collective opinions? Or, is it the power of the words over the mind, that is, general acceptance of an ideology? One stands at the same position in conclusion as the beginning of the article as to whether there is such a definition that can incorporate the whole of India? Ancient India and contemporary India cannot be synchronised nor can 'Bharat-varsh' be denoted to mean 'India'. Maybe, after all, India really is a collection of fragments unified by a single political rule and it can perhaps be studied properly, not in the search for common interests but in its common differences such that a general structure of the nation may be laid down through the interaction of its differences.

Refuting the Idea of India

Satyam Jha.

Despite the fact that British imperialism was resisted by a diverse cross-section of the population, the freedom struggle was led by the national bourgeoisie, and hence, the cultural character of the movement had a distinct Hindu upper-class tinge. As BT Ranadive has pointed out, during the formation of a collective national imagination in a sea of precapitalist relations, the national bourgeoisie led by the Indian National Congress, colluded with the feudal landlords to ensure that its hegemony was protected. This meant that while the national bourgeoisie could preach tokenistic ideas of social reform (attacking untouchability, etc.), it never pursued policies that improved the material conditions and attacked the root of the problem- liquidation of the feudal land relations and an attack on Hinduism. In the run-up to independence, the national bourgeoisie effectively managed to forge a messy social contract, uniting the broader society into one homogenising idea of India. However, wide sections of the population never got a chance to negotiate their part in the social contract. The idea of India was an exclusively upper-caste creation and denying this truth has been one of the legacies of what Perry Anderson has called the 'Indian Ideology.' This notion of the social contract was manifested in the constitution. As Randive says, "The Constitution has declared equality of all before the law, irrespective of caste; Parliament has declared untouchability a penal offence. But the basic structure of land relation, overhauling of which would have given a blow to untouchability and caste system, has not been changed."

Another enduring idea that has enjoyed widespread consensus across the political spectrum is the idea that the Indian constitution is a sacrosanct document, embellished with secular credentials. However, as Pritam Singh has pointed out, the constitution is fundamentally a Hindu-tainted document and "its Hindu bias must be read as symptomatic of the depth of institutionalised Hindu communalism in India and the shallowness of the secular foundations of the Indian republic. The existence of institutionalised Hindu communalism means that the power of Hindu communal sectarianism is greater than that which is merely represented by Hindu nationalist organisations." The fact that the constitution has a decisive Hindu bias can be seen in its imagination of the nation itself, wherein the constitution invokes the idea of ancient (and pre-Muslim India) and equates it with the modern nation (Article 1). Many scholars like Kancha Shepherd and Sharjeel Imam have also pointed out that the cow

protection provisions in the constitution are an abandonment of secular values. Anwar Alam in his paper 'Secularism in India: A Critique of the Current Discourse" has examined how the definition of who is a Hindu was formulated, especially in the context of the Hindu Code Bill of 1955. According to him, the Bill was an attempt towards Hindu homogenisation and assimilation but what was especially striking was that it took place in the Nehru era, a phase "most often advertised as the golden period of secular Indian nationalism." The Bill classified Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs as Hindus, despite their protests and included as Hindu anyone who was not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew. The negative description of a Hindu, as one who was not a member of the four excluded religions, 'produced a Hindu so tightly manacled to his/her birth that even non-belief could not provide an exit... This was clearly a legal move by the Indian state to construct a consolidated, homogenous and assimilationist Hindu identity.' Anwar Alam goes on to remark that the "the Brahmanical features of Hinduism were deliberately selected, promoted and projected at the national level in a manner that, for all practical purposes, blurs the distinction between Hindu nationalism and Nehruvian secular composite nationalism."

In 'The Indian Ideology', Perry Anderson mentions how the romanticisation of the independence movement is one of the key components in the creation of the Indian ideology. However, what this glorification ignores is the intense repression and bloodbath that went into the whole nation-building process. The duplicity by which the Indian government colonised the people of Kashmir and established one of the most brutal and most militarised zones in the world is well known and does not merit mention here. Similarly, it is well known how the nascent Indian state brutally suppressed self-determination movements in the North East and forcefully integrated them into the confines of the new nation. The sanitised and hegemonic narrative around national integration paints it as a glorious endeavour to unite seemingly feeble states and kingdoms under unitary rule. What remains occluded is the violent imposition that this project entailed and how it was built on subverting popular mandate- not infrequently leading to entire massacres and pogroms as in the case of integration of Hyderabad. It is important for our discussion to understand the role that sovereignty plays in the conception of the nation. In Imagined Communities, Benedict Anderson mentions how sovereignty is integral to the imagination of a nation because it was "born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living pluralism of such religions, and the allomorphism between each faith's ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state." Because of how the Indian nation was

essentially a British creation, this obsession with sovereignty was integral to the idea of India as well. Sovereignty, however, has always acted as a death knell for any popular mobilisation because though they have challenged specific exploitative policies, the embedded notion of sovreignity in the popular culture has prevented movements from explicitly questioning the legitimacy of the Indian state to rule. Moreover, it has ensured the existence of the settler-colonial relationship between Indian citizens and the victims of Indian imperialism. The contradiction this has for popular movements was aptly highlighted when during the recent farmers' protests, the news about the 'martydom' of a protesting farmers' son in Kashmir was packaged and sold as a tale of valour and sacrifice, conveniently ignoring the genocidal role of the Indian army in Kashmir. At the same time, it should be highlighted that the misplaced focus on constitutionalism and the principle of sovereignty of the state also places an ideological barrier by which imperialism becomes a multiparty venture, irrespective of the government in power. Nobody can possibly hope to unconditionally reject Indian imperialism within the limits of parliamentarism and constitutionalism without effectively being marginalised from the political discourse. The criminalisation of speech that the state considers threatening and 'seditious' means that no mainstream political leader or party can hope to win elections without giving in to the terms of the state, The message is clear- all political activity should effectively be constricted within the parameters that uphold the legitmacy of the state.

Beneath the rhetoric of unity, the post-independence Indian nation was marred by deeply entrenched faultlines of inequality. The edifice of state power was shaken, however, with the spark at Naxalbari. Situating the movement within a broader culture of resistance, Radha D'Souza notes that tribal rebellions and peasant uprisings have posed an unwavering challenge to the nation-building process right from the colonial period. "When the rebellions and uprisings subsided they continued to bubble away beneath the surface, forming the volcanic fault-line upon which Indian society is founded." The pitiless brutality with which the state crushed the Naxalbari rebellion came as a rude shock for middle-class Indians, who were still clinging to highfalutin notions of constitutionalism and the misplaced idea of an equitable India. This led to another pusillanimous formulation- the idea of what D'Souza calls the 'sandwich theory'- a recurrent motif which would now be grafted onto all popular struggles in India. Explaining the 'sandwich theory', D'Souza says, "Most people in middle India today agree that the Adivasis and rural poor have real and legitimate grievances against the economic policies of successive governments. According to the 'sandwich theorists' the Maoists exploit their grievances to further their own ends. This precludes the possibility that at least a section of the Adivasis and rural poor may have chosen to go with the Maoists. The argument denies the Adivasis and the rural poor their agency, their capacities to determine what is and is not good for them, and basic intelligence to decide whom they wish to support

and why. The attitude implicit in the 'sandwich theory' masks the latent authoritarianism that lurks beneath the facade of compassion for the poor... By portraying them as hapless victims of Maoists and the State alike, middle India can avoid engaging with the Adivasis and rural poor as political equals." However, D'Souza establishes that the adivasis have always stood up to the exploitative state which in turn has lost no opportunity of brutalising them- ravishing their lands and imposing draconian laws. Given the consistency of these two combatants, it is not the adivasis but 'middle India' which is 'sandwiched' feeling beleaguered by the blatant authoritarianism of the state and yet too tied to its idealistic gibberish of constitutionalism and 'non-violence'. As D'Souza states, "The nation-state structure and constitutionalism makes it difficult for middle India to rationalise colonisation of her own people. What should middle India do? Launch a new freedom struggle? Forge a new social contract? These are difficult questions by any measure. How much easier to flog the Maoists using imperialist labels like 'war on terror' to mask their own inability to re-envision the nation? How much easier to ride the 'globalisation' wave on the moral high tides of non-violence? Middle India is wistful. If only the volcanic fault-line on which modern India is founded will go away; if only the Adivasis will put on hold their insistence on jal, jangal, jameen."

Having outlined the the fundamental underpinnings of the the idea of India, ie., belief in the unity and integrity of the nation, shortsighted constitutionalism and deligimisation of struggles to challenge national hegemony, it is important to focus on the material ramifications that it has for the people of the nation. Audre Lorde had famously proclaimed, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." It is imperative to meditate on how the internalisation of the idea of India, which is in essence, a phantasm created by the Brahmanical-capitalist class, is the most sinister roadblock confronting the possibility of collective liberation in today's world. Not wholeheartedly challenging this idea and buying into the paradigm set by the oppressors is what Perry Anderson considers to be one of the major failings of the Indian left. Anderson argues that India is a 'caste iron democracy' and that despite the flowery promise of political equality in the constitution, India remains a deeply casteist enterprise because the state never challenged the hegemony of Hindu practices in the social realm. Not only has the idea that the Indian state is the manifestation of the Brahamnical order been voiced by Dalit-Bahujan scholars like Anand Teltumbde, objective evidence about the integration of oppressed castes into the state machinery corroborate their theses. Furthermore, it is well known how the oppressed castes are also used as footsoldiers for Indian imperialism and how most of the soldiders killed in army operations are people from disadvantaged socio-economic background. In this context, the idea of India imposes a criminal shackle on these marginalised groups wherein they have to appeal to these exploitative institutions and use their imagery (notice the preeminence of

the tricolour at protest venues) for amelioration, thus operating within the paradigm set by the oppressors, The enduring faith in parliamentarism and constitutionalism are the hideous offspring of this conception of India. For decades, we have allowed the state to carry out its carnage and destruction while it blithely evades moral responsibility by rigidly controlling the terms of the opposition. It is imperative for us to resoundingly reject the idea of the Indian nation and all its malignant manifestations as farcical and oppressive. It is only by actively undermining this perniciously tenacious idea can we effectively open up new possibilities for resistance and victory.

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