EDITORIAL
Struggle and Dialogue
--Paresh Chandra

On Permanent Revolution
--Kumarila
Trotsky’s concept of permanent revolution is dialectical to the very core viewing revolution as a continuum embedding the particular in general and appearance in essence, with the latter necessarily getting represented through the former.

Discovering Nuclear Energy for Justifying Bad Deal
--Prabir Purkayastha
Not only is nuclear power more expensive, it will also have adverse effects on the entire electricity sector. Going in for huge investments for imported nuclear power plants – three times the cost of similar coal fired units -- would mean starving the Indian economy of other investments.

The Art of Naming: Meditations on Queer Activism in Delhi
--Akhil Katyal
Queer activism, here and now in Delhi, as I have lived through for the past three years, is composed of varied definitional excursions that are precisely that, definitional excursions, baggy monsters, simplifying technologies that take enormous and complicated raw material, lets say of the morass of human sexuality and try to produce, indeed with success, finished products, peculiarly sexualized individuals, gay or straight.

Q&A with Mahesh Rangarajan: On Ramanujan’s 300 Ramayanas and the Controversy
--Paresh Chandra and Bhumika Chauhan
Mahesh Rangarajan, member of faculty of the Department of History, University of Delhi, speaks about Ramanujan’s essay and the protest that followed the decision to include it in the syllabus of a BA Honors course.

Failure, Consumerism and a Counter Strategy
The IP College Protests: an Insider’s Diagnosis
--Paresh Chandra
Without the clause of class-consciousness that makes the connection between career and exploitation plain resistance becomes a perverse (the usual) form of consumerism, the commodity bought and consumed is “peace of mind” and the cost is a few days out in the sun.

Changing Class Character of the Campus: New Challenges of the Student-Youth Movement
--Abhinav Sinha
To counter the contraction of the space for students’ politics on campus we need to think about a unified student-youth movement which will have equal and free education for all and employment for all as its central demands. Only such a movement will have the strength and potency to achieve such aims.

Beyond the Veil of Identity Politics – Preliminary Explorations through Categories of Caste and Class in Indian society
--Ravi Kumar
Identity politics, based on the principle of homogenizations, segregation of social realities into unconnected, autonomous modules, has allowed the expansion of capital, thwarting any possibility of resistance against the system.

Q&A with Lal Khan: On Can Partition Be Undone
--Paramita Ghosh
The interview brings out some of the important issues dealt in the book ‘Crisis in the Indian Subcontinent - Partition... Can it be undone?’ along with Khan’s perspective on the political situation and transformation in the subcontinent.

EDITORS’ SUGGESTIONS
Marx on Value: Extract from Marx’s letter to Ludwig Kugelmann in Hanover
Ever since the publication of Das Kapital bourgeois economists have tried to question the relevance and justification of Marx’s concept of value for economic analysis simply because they have failed to understand his problematic as well as his method. Confronted with the demand to prove his labour theory of value his own answer given in one of his letters to Kugelmann remains the most devastatingly simple and cogent.

The Hyde Act and India’s Foreign Policy: Extracts from the Official Text

The Submission Guidelines
It had already been decided that I needed to rework the editorial. Now I have to mention the Delhi blasts, though the addition might seem strained. I was returning from the University when I heard. A friend sent me a message. I had boarded the metro at the University at six and came out at IP in thirty-five minutes. I spent the next half-hour calling friends who were likely to be out. It will sound clichéd but the incident did drive most other thoughts out of my head. Five blasts all over the city and many bombs diffused. Apparently an Islamic outfit took responsibility.

The paranoia that an incident like this creates is huge. Blame is thrown on the police, on the Home Ministry, on Shivraj Patil’s softness on ‘terrorism’. Solution plans fly from all over the place. I distinctly remember how I annoyed I was with the manner in which a RJ kept repeating how such incidents can be averted if we like responsible citizens inform ‘concerned authorities the moment we see unattended objects’. The most interesting solution was proposed by possibly the biggest terrorist in the country—re-invoke POTA. For a moment I bracket out the interests of Hindutva in the re-invocation of the act and concentrate on other aspects. Everybody is bent on treating it as a ‘law and order’ problem. A few decades ago my criticism could have been different (discussions of socio-economic causes of acts of violence have becomes so common that they are not considered serious anymore) but I now feel that mere common sense and experience should be enough to teach us that the problem lies somewhere else. I do not suggest that law and order are not in question, nor am I taking the ‘terrorists-are-also-humans’ stand. I merely wish to point out the fact that stricter laws and greater protection have never ever helped in curbing acts of violence. However I do not wish to go into diatribes against this blindness nor is my agenda to offer an alternative solution (I have none to offer)—I seek to make a different point, or rather I wish to target a different bunch of people.

The situation of the Left in the country is very interesting. If I try to put my finger on the stand of the Left at large on issues like terrorism and communalism I am struck by a sorry realization—there is no stand to pinpoint. The Left is so stuck in the creation of counter-discourses or participation in discourses that are already ideologically compromised that its own discourses cease to exist. Try to locate a few genuine attempts in the country to understand fundamentalism and fundamentalist militancy (to name one issue) from a Left perspective and you will understand what I’m talking about. The ‘mainstream’ left is the busy guardian of bourgeois secularism and the not so mainstream left is busy attacking the mainstream left. When an incident like this one takes place the only thing the Left leaders can do is offer condolence. And because they themselves do not have anything to offer all they can do is try and counter what the Right offers—in this case it will probably be POTA.

Struggle provides us with what is perhaps our only real chance of continued freedom from reification. It entails the forging of alliances that can help transcend the experiences of fragmented modern existence. The process of changing society is also the most effective manner of transforming our own existence and the only way of bringing about fundamental change is struggle. This magazine is a medium to take forward the idea of struggle. The revivification of struggle (in all its possibilities) needs us to first understand what threatens this idea and then strategise to counter these threats. This magazine is an attempt at doing just that—it will try to bring together counter-hegemonic perspectives on important questions and help provide the sense of community essential for the participants in counter-hegemony. Without this community an idea will hold no bearing on reality—it will become a force only when shared by persons. In this editorial I will lay out some of my thoughts on the situation making some observations regarding problems that I think important.
I was in conversation with a person whom I know to be more than a mere sympathizer of the Left and I am using some of his words when I say that these are depressing times for those people in India who want to believe in the validity of a Left politics, with the organised Left in danger of succumbing completely to the social democratic “Third Way” and the fringe Left more often than not caught in the mires of sectarianisms and adventurisms. It is easy in such circumstances to give in to the lure of consumerism and it becomes compulsive to “enjoy one’s condition”; the easiest thing indeed is to give up the idea of struggle and go out to shop. This consumerism too is not limited to the mall but seeps into and becomes the defining signifier of all actions and social phenomena, even resistance. Trapped in the tri-partite struggle between i) the inertia of a long history of anti-establishment struggle ii) the apparent uselessness of this struggle and iii) the desire to join the system (that one cannot fight) by choosing a career, some call a truce and resistance is chosen as a career option—a symptom of this is the manner in which instead of the Party being a means for struggle, struggle becomes solely a way of “building” the Party (it is important to emphasize the word ‘solely’ because it alone signifies where the problem lies).

We discuss at length the importance of looking at things dialectically. In theory dialectics is something we have a copyright over, but it is hard to maintain it in practise. I do not deny that in concrete political engagements it is not that easy to constantly double check with what’s on paper but to completely lose sight of it is not altogether advisable.

I feel that one needs to be wary of this ontological blindness that advertises itself on the name ‘practicality’ and allows not only actions that one would otherwise completely condemn but also disables faculties that the original idea had provided us with. But then we also need to question if the problem is that we understand and do not practise our ideas or whether there is a problem in our understanding of ideas that we call ours. I don’t think the former is possible.

A great sign of decay is the manner in which people are scared of ideas. Doubt is losing its self-reflexivity and is changing into callous lack of trust; conviction is being transformed into prejudice. Both acceptance and rejection lose their Hegelian essence and begin to precede understanding. The process is a vicious circle—because conviction comes before understanding it is shaky, because conviction is set on weak grounds one is afraid of the other’s convictions lest they be stronger and since one cuts communication from the other, one’s own convictions seem unquestioned, and since our own convictions go unquestioned there seems no need to engage with the other’s convictions. A fundamental lesson of dialectical materialism that no idea is completely false and all ideas are only partially true—seems lost.

There is need for a struggle to make struggle more dialogic—dialogue here refers to the capacity to be able to incorporate the other’s voice into one’s own without dominating it; it refers to the removal from language of the violence that destroys the heteroglossic nature of correspondence. Reviving dialogue is one of the most important tasks that we need to maintain a net profit keeps it together, united against us. On the other hand by keeping a large percentage of the working population unemployed capital makes sure that at all times every worker steps in the market against every other worker. Resistance to the establishment starts off with a huge disadvantage. If we have to counter this disadvantage we cannot allow dialogue to disappear from our interactions with each other, just as we cannot afford a non-dialectical approach unless a skewed and limited picture of reality is what we wish to achieve. Without dialogue neither solidarity nor true criticism can exist. Fear of ideas is a characteristic of hegemonic authority—Hegemony has this funny property of being in a constant state of decay. Hegemony is also by definition based on violence and is opposed to dialogue. Resistance on the other hand is a process that survives and disseminates through collective action, solidarity and dialogue.

The preservation of dialogue and a dialectical understanding of things require us to stay in touch with our reality. It is vital that we grasp all that is typical and get rid of all that is superfluous. The commodification of resistance and the concomitant monologising of the space of protest is a sign of the failure of forms of resistance to comprehend the nature of capital. This will indeed be the eventual fate of all forms of resistance that lose what is actually the fundamental link that will allow them to truly engage with capitalist reality, the link with class struggle and the struggle for the interests of the working class. Capital is a result of exploitation—it exists on the production of surplus value and production of surplus value requires labour power. Any struggle as a result, to be a struggle against the system of capital needs to create and preserve its link with the “actual” producers (workers). Capital makes use of various methods to hide this essential logic of its running, to hide this essential fact, the key that has to be grasped to get rid of the chains that bind us. Perceiving the true nature of determination in capitalism would allow us to look through the various illusions that we have to confront each day and this in turn allow the re-establishment of productive ties between fellow beings.

To facilitate the re-establishment of such ties and to allow exchange of perceptions of reality, dialogue is needed. The role of this magazine is to participate in the building of this dialogue—to encourage discussion by actively participating in various discourses and by allowing discussion within its folds is the idea that will underlie its working. It will try to start a dialogue of ideas between individuals, between different organisational streams and also between the reified parts of the same whole that take the form of various disciplines in formal education today. The basic idea is to achieve the true likeness of the elephant and overcome our subjective blindness.
A basic task for a Marxist is to expose programmatic issues concerning revolutionary praxis today and to critically judge political conceptualizations and practice from this perspective. With this concern we reorient ourselves here towards Trotsky's theorization of 'Permanent Revolution' and judge its usefulness in informing our debates and practice. However, reading Trotsky's classic works today would require a point of reference in the context and debates that produced them. Below we try to present a brief overview of this context so as to make available this reference point.

Like any social theory, a Marxist theory of social revolution must be analyzed in the context of objective conditions at the time of its theorization, but its correctness must be judged in terms of its potentiality to trace the tendencies and possibilities inherent in the historical evolution of existing social conditions. Its meaningfulness at the present stage too is determined by this potentiality, as only then would it enrich the conceptualization of present reality and guide our practice. This requires us to visualize societal transformation as a culmination of the contradictions inherent in the historico-logical process producing and reproducing a particular social structure.

Marx's whole life work and his theoretical endeavors were towards the sole aim of unfolding the processes constituting capitalism and the catastrophic tendencies inherent in them, posing the possibility of a complete emancipation of humanity from class exploitation and oppression. Transcending capitalism requires a complete negation of its essence. Marx saw its eventual transcendence only in class struggle and conscious endeavours of the proletarian class - the only class capable of completely breaking away from the 'prehistoric' (or rather trans-historic) nostalgia that afflicts all the other classes. These conclusions were the result of his immense research in and a thorough critique of the political economy of capitalism. Although Marx was always conscious of the political transformations throughout the globe and was involved in vocalizing the evolving agenda of the working class politics, he was still striving towards a dialectical conceptualisation of capitalist reality, and its logical and historical processes.

During Marx's time, capitalism had just become politically triumphant with the 1848 revolutions, that too with enormous compromises. Marx found Germany and the rest of the Continental Europe still suffering "not only from the development of capitalist production, but also from the incompleteness of that development." (Marx, Capital Vol.1) The possibility of a wide-scale proletarian upsurge against the system was still not evident anywhere (Paris Commune of 1871 being the first experience), hence it was not possible for Marx or anyone at that time to pre-empt all the intricacies of the world revolution coordinating varied class experiences in the societies at various levels of capital development.

This is not to say that he did not have any theory of revolution at all, but it was still latent in his political economic researches. It is in this light that we can understand Lenin's view that imperialism is the age of socialist revolutions, and during Marx's time capitalism was still in a pre-imperialist phase. Marx's writings starting from the Communist Manifesto to The Civil War in France, on Paris Commune etc must be studied as his reflections on the objective conditions and social changes that were effected by the French Revolution and the growth of industrial capitalism, culminating in the rise of industrial working class movement which first came into the forefront with the 1848 revolutions. Of course, Marx's contributions in this regard were not simply historical "interpretations"; rather they established the theoretical foundation for revolutionary proletarian praxis directed towards "changing the world". But Marx more than anybody else was aware that "men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they cannot make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past." (Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte) Hence, the circumstantial limitation imposed on the proletarian praxis at the time.

Kumarila is left political activist who has worked in various parts of India.
delimited its direction. This is true for all conceptual and practical aspects of revolutionary praxis of all ages. The same holds good for Lenin's theory of imperialism or Trotsky's “permanent revolution”.

It was in the struggle against Bernstein's evolutionism at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth that the issue of the relationship between class-consciousness and the negation of capitalism became most prominent in the revolutionary discourse. Bernstein saw socialism as a result of the natural processes within capitalism, thus he rejected any revolutionary endeavor for building it. He was severely criticized by his comrades in the Second International, especially Kautsky and Plekhanov, who foregrounded the issue of a conscious destruction of the capitalist system.

The radical bloc of social democracy led by Kautsky and Plekhanov did the groundwork for the future revolutionary critique of the Second International and social democracy found in the works of Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky and others. These revolutionary ideas for the first time systematically confronted the issue of revolutionary agencies and the nature of revolution itself. One reason for this was essentially conjunctural, as capitalism was exhausting its capacity to reproduce itself after the crisis of 1890s. This state of moribundity leading to imperialist clashes and regimentation, to an upsurge in working class radicalism with the increasingly cohesive national liberation struggles in the colonies, made an eventual collapse of the world capitalist system seem sufficiently possible, forcing the revolutionaries to take the task of making this possibility a reality through insurrections, mass strikes, soviets and workers controls. The last hours of the traditional working class parties in Europe and their accommodation in the political competition characterizing bourgeois liberal policy compelled the revolutionaries to polemicize against the legalist leadership of these parties, and sharpen the conceptual and practical tools simultaneously. The strategic and tactical formulations comprising the major theory/theories of revolution were the product of this burning time.

Till this period the Marxists always viewed proletarian politics in an international framework aiming towards an eventual destruction of world capitalism. It was not that they glossed over the local specificity, but they saw capitalism as a world system thriving on unevenness, hence the coordinated efforts of the revolutionaries all over the world were the only possible way of realizing socialism. The minimal tasks defined in a particular locus have to be coordinated to realize the maximal goal, their dialectical convergence being the only radical resolution of the crisis determining both. Their mechanical separation led to revisionism and scholasticism, evident in the Second International. This was the conclusion to which all the formidable critiques of the Second International came separately or together. This conceptual solidarity led to their eventual camaraderie whenever the situation demanded despite their mutual diatribes of many years, during the Zimmerwald Congress and the October Revolution. Trotsky recognized this when he said that by reissuing his 1905 work, Results and Prospects (where he for the first time tried to systematically deal with the theory of permanent revolution), in 1919 he “only desires to explain the theoretical principles which rendered it possible for him and other comrades, who for many years had stood outside the Bolshevik Party, to join their fate with the fate of that party at the beginning of 1917.”

The phrase ‘revolution in permanence’ was used first by Marx in his 1850 address to the CC of the Communist League. Marx took revolution to be continuous, an uninterrupted bottom-up negation of capitalism. He viewed capitalism not as any pure and even system, which many have endeavored to put in his mouth, but as essentially comprising of simultaneous existence of various levels of capitalist development even combined with pre-capitalist vestiges. Hence, anti-capitalist revolution cannot be achieved in installments, but continuously. But as noted earlier the circumstantial limitation delimited Marx’s reflections. He could provide the basic foundation for such conceptualization, but the task of its elaboration was left to future generations.

The concept of permanent revolution as understood by Trotsky was representative of the revolutionary spirit prevalent at that time, which recognized capitalism as a global system on the one hand (thus its negation had to be global too), while on the other it took into account the unevenness of capitalist development (thus necessitating the strategic-tactical formulations specific to locations). It is dialectical to the very core viewing revolution as a continuum embedding the particular in general and appearance in essence, with the latter necessarily getting represented through the former. It seeks to stress that the localized peasant struggles and the struggles of other classes and communities against their oppression and alienation can be successful only if they are articulated with and in the world proletarian struggle against capitalism. This becomes more and more true with the evermore intensification of capitalist accumulation that thrives on the continuous subsumption of living labour by capital (formally or actually).

With the introversions of the Russian Revolution as the world revolutionary situation subsided after the defeat of the German revolution, the Soviet Union became more and more isolated—being in power and creating firewalls around it became an existential problem leading to the petty bourgeois nationalist formulation of ‘socialism in one country’. Socialism in this framework was reduced to nationalization, cooperatives and planned economy. This reaction concurred with the nationalist introver-
sion throughout the world due to the particular crisis that capitalism faced with the 1929 Great Crash. With direct colonialism becoming burdensome and unsustainable, the regime of capitalist accumulation demanded a reconstitution of national economies. In this situation, the world revolution lost its immediate appeal, as the ruling class everywhere found the nationalist shell of Keynesian/welfarist policies not only effective in refurbishing the capitalist economies, but sufficiently ideological too to contain the anti-systemic mobilizations through welfarism, full employment and doles. One finds a strong structural and ideological affinity between the political economic governance under 'socialism in one country' and Keynesianism, thus licensing the conceptualization of the Soviet economy as State/State-Monopoly Capitalism. But the scope of the hegemonic struggle between the bureaucratic/intermediate class/petty bourgeoisie and proletarian segments in the party and the state justified the notion of a 'degenerated workers' state' of Trotsky.

Simultaneously, the fascist menace that capitalism nurtured to gather the fruits of reaction after the defeat of the European proletarian radicalism in the 1920s and pre-empt any further working class consolidation became a very dangerous option for global capitalism itself, as it began curbing the reconstruction of advanced economies devastated by the Great Crash. It was in this phase that the Comintern's existentialist policy of the United Front was envisaged in their late attempt to counter fascism. This definitely provided a popular base for the Allied forces in the Second World War. This tactical formula when transformed accordingly and sustained was sufficiently corporatist and useful for bourgeois polity, as it could delay any radical resolution of the capitalist crisis co-opting the leadership of the working class in its service. And this was what the existential logic of socialism in one country led to in the Cold War phase—the Soviet Bloc in order to sustain its influence around the globe blunted the radical movements by nurturing collaborationist tendencies so that the ruling classes of the newly liberated countries were not alienated and did not fall in the lap of the Anglo-American bloc. Hence, the United Front was extended to the anti-imperialist struggle, quite contrary to Lenin's conceptualization, thus disarming the struggle of its anti-systemic tenor. This trend of disarming the working class by preaching neo-corporatism got its ultimate representation in Khrushchev's theory of peaceful coexistence.

Nonetheless the Soviet model was posed as a model for nationalist reconstruction in opposition to the liberal model sold by the Anglo-Americans and their agencies. This competition coupled with militarism marked the global polity in the post-World War II era. It is not to say that revolutionary situations did not arise during this phase. They definitely arose, but at the wake of no preparation and frequent betrayals by the unconfident 'vanguards' in the name of countering and curbing anarchism and adventurism, they were crushed easily but bloodily. Wherever radical upsurges really became successful they had to struggle against isolation and regimentation before getting recognition, as Cuba and Nicaragua. The existence of the Soviet bloc definitely was a boon for the ruling classes of the underdeveloped world as it allowed the latter to bargain in the world polity. But it acted as a hindrance in the radicalization of the movements against exploitation and oppression, as its own existential problems demanded stable support from the regimes there. This pragmatic requirement guided the officialisation of the formulaic Marxism (which DD Kosambi termed as OM - Official Marxism) that was nurtured to suit the exigencies of the Cold War. This brand of Marxism reified tactical notions and presented them as universally applicable laws and principles. Varieties of 'democratic revolutions' were conceptualized to explain the popular upsurges under the communist leadership. They not only explained the class limit of these upsurges, but more importantly they inhibit their transformation into an "uninterrupted revolution" under a proletarian leadership. These conceptualizations became weapons to contain working class radicalism, preaching class collaborationism and blunting the class offensive at crucial junctures as in Indonesia and Iran. The 'stage theory' of revolution is always defined in a nationalist framework, despite the lip service paid to proletarian international. It mechanically dissociates anti-capitalist revolutionary politics from democratic struggles, which are essentially reformist. This deconstructs the uninterrupted revolutionary politics of the working class into discrete moments never allowing it to heighten itself onto a newer 'stage'. And this is justified in the name of pragmatism and practicality.

In retrospect, the struggle between the dialectical conceptualization of permanent revolution (involving a continuum between maximal and minimal agenda of the working class movement) and that of socialism in one country is a struggle for ideological hegemony over the working class movement between the proletarians and national/petty bourgeoisie. This struggle has been going on right from the time of Marx and Engels, when they contested Proudhon, Lassalle and Bakunin. The importance of Trotsky's concept of permanent revolution lies in its analytical ability to discern moments in revolutionary politics without reifying them. It takes revolution to be continuous.

Rereading Trotsky's classic works on 'permanent revolution' acquires a new meaning today with the collapse of 'official Marxism', on the one hand, and with capitalism being in a perpetual crisis, sustaining itself through the export of this crisis from one region to another, on the other. It provides a formidable departure point for a critical assimilation of revolutionary struggles dominated by the tendencies of which it was one of the first critiques. Furthermore, at the time when proletarian internationalism is evidently the only answer to capitalist globalization, the concept of permanent revolution provides us with a powerful tool to confront programmatic issues in coordinating local struggles and articulating them within the anti-capitalist struggle, which is intrinsically international.
Discovering Nuclear Energy for Justifying Bad Deal

Prabir Purkayastha

Not only is nuclear power more expensive, it will also have adverse effects on the entire electricity sector. Going in for huge investments for imported nuclear power plants — three times the cost of similar coal fired units — would mean starving the Indian economy of other investments.

We are having a discussion in the country of the importance of nuclear energy to our energy basket only in the context of the India US nuclear deal. The Government and the Prime Minister has gone in an overdrive in order to sell the India US nuclear deal, stressing on its importance for India’s energy security. If indeed nuclear energy were so important to India’s future, why is it that no serious techno-economic study has ever been presented impressing upon us the vital importance of nuclear energy?

Currently, nuclear energy stands at 4,120 MW, which is a little less than 3% of our installed capacity of power plants. A part of the reason has been the nuclear isolation we have faced and therefore the much slower development of our program. However, this is only a part of the reason. The other part is the techno-economics of nuclear power and its relatively high cost. The key issue is what the total amount of power that can be added using the nuclear route is and what its cost will be. We will deal with the techno-economics of nuclear power later, but let us first take up the possible proportion of nuclear energy, both in terms of its contribution to electricity generation and as a proportion of the primary energy basket.

If we assume that we need to add about 100,000 MW in the next 10 years, as the Ministry of Power is asserting, what is the best-case scenario for nuclear power? According to the Planning Commission’s study (Integrat-ed Energy Policy, 2006, Planning Commission), taking the most optimistic scenario, it is 15,000 MW.

Table 1: Planning Commission’s Optimistic Nuclear Power Scenario

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2016*</th>
<th>2021*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Installed Capacity in GW</td>
<td>134.7</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>445</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nuclear Capacity</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nuclear as a % of total</td>
<td>3.06%</td>
<td>4.95%</td>
<td>6.74%</td>
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Note: * Integrated Energy Policy, Planning Commission, August, 2006

"Prabir Purkayastha is an engineer, a science activist and one of the founding members of Delhi Science Forum. He has written and published extensively a variety of science and technology policy issues in several leading journals and newspapers."
by 2015 and 29,000 MW by 2021 (Table 1 below). These targets include 8,000 MW of imported reactors. Even though these targets have already been admitted as quite ambitious by the Planning Commission (Planning Commission calls it the Optimistic Scenario), let us assume for the sake of argument, that they can be met. Even then, nuclear energy will only add up to about 7% of our total installed capacity. And if we take the even more ambitious figures that the Government is now bandying about – 40,000 MW by 2020 – this will still be less than 9% of our total installed capacity. Figures such as 40,000 MW by 2020 have no relation to the actual capabilities on the ground, or the need for huge amounts of capital for such a program, or the cost of such power if these plants are set up.

However, even by these "optimistic" of scenarios, it is clear that nuclear power is going to meet only a small part of our electricity needs. And as the technoeconomics will show, going ahead with such an ambitious nuclear electricity program will come at a high cost and will dry up investments in other sectors.

In the ‘60s and ‘70s, there was a lot of euphoria about nuclear power. By the 80’s, it became clear that nuclear power was expensive. In the West, nuclear plants routinely overshot their budgets and the time required to erect them. With discovery of gas in large quantities and increased efficiency of thermal power plants, nuclear plants were perceived to be too expensive. This was quite independent of the debate regarding the potential hazards, de-commissioning costs, and the problem of storing nuclear wastes.

The Indian experience in this regard has been no different. Nuclear power plants are about 25%-30% more expensive, even when using domestic technology and equipment. However, as they take a long time to build, before the plant starts producing power, a large amount of capital is locked up during construction. If the plant is built using a mix of equity and debt, this cost of locking up money is known as Interest During Construction (IDC); the capital cost of building a plant, without taking its IDC into account, is called "overnight" costs. This is the way that all conventional power plants are built and is also the way NPC is proposing to build plants in the future Taking IDC for both thermal and nuclear plants, the capital cost of nuclear power plants would be twice that of coal-based thermal power plants – about Rs. 8.1 crore per MW (about Rs. 6 crore as overnight costs and 8 years to construct the plants) for nuclear plants, as against Rs.3.73 crore per MW (Rs. 3.2 crore

### Table 2: Govt’s Current Optimistic Nuclear Power Scenario

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<th>Items</th>
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<td>8.99%</td>
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### Table 3: Comparison of Capital Costs and Tariffs Coal vs Nuclear

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Coal 2*500 MW</th>
<th>Nuclear 2*500 MW (Domestic)</th>
<th>Nuclear 1000 MW (Imported)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Cost/MW</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>– without IDC (Rs. Crore)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Cost/MW</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– with IDC 4 years (Rs. Crore)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Cost – Plant without IDC (Rs. Crore)</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Cost – Plant with IDC 8 Years (Rs. Crore)</td>
<td>3,733</td>
<td>8,092</td>
<td>12,138</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tariff per unit (Rs.)</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>5.47</td>
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as overnight costs and 4 years time for construction) for coal fired plans. That means that the cost we incur to put up nuclear plants that will generate 10,000 MW of nuclear power is far greater; with the same amount of money we can put up 20,000 MW of coal-fired plants.

If imported reactors for nuclear power are considered, the situation becomes even worse. The cost of nuclear plants, as overnight costs is Rs. 9 crore per MW. A number of studies have taken this as the base cost of nuclear power plants. Though the nuclear plant suppliers have claimed a lower figure, all existing plants have cost more than $2,000 per KW and therefore this is a reasonable base for our calculations. Taking into account the IDC component, this translates to 12.1 crore per MW or three times the cost of coal-fired power plants. In other words, with the same amount of money we could put up 30,000 MW of coal-fired power plants instead of 10,000 MW of imported nuclear plants. For a 40,000 MW nuclear power program, it would mean importing 20,000 MW of imported reactors with 20,000 MW of indigenous reactors. This means an investment of Rs. 400,000 crore, which is equal to the total amount of investment we have planned for the entire 100,000 MW in the next 10 years. Incidentally, India’s total capacity addition in the last 10 years has been less than 40,000 MW, the figure that is now being proposed for nuclear power alone.

The cost of power from nuclear plants, as compared to that from coal-fired plants, is also quite a bit higher. Coal-fired plants today produce electricity at the plant end (not as delivered to the consumer) cost about Rs. 2.50 depending on the coal cost at the location. For nuclear plants with domestic reactors, the cost is about Rs. 3.90 per unit. For imported reactors, it is about Rs. 5.50 per unit. Not only is nuclear power more expensive, it will also have adverse effects on the entire electricity sector. Going in for huge investments for imported nuclear power plants — three times the cost of similar coal fired units — would mean starving the Indian economy of other investments. It would mean either giving up much larger investments in the power sector or starving other infrastructure sectors.

For those familiar with Enron, there is a sense of history repeating itself. First, there is a political decision to give Enron a 2,000 MW project, then the fuel policy and power policies are changed to suit Enron. The liquid fuel policy of using naphtha as fuel for power plants came out of the need to accommodate Enron. Today, it is clear that such a policy, decided without application of mind.
and the techno-economics of the sector, has resulted in a major crisis for Maharashtra State Electricity Board and idling of plants using naphtha. Unfortunately, a similar exercise is underway with respect to nuclear energy. In order to justify the India-US nuclear deal, we are now talking about 40,000 MW of nuclear energy, without taking into account its capital cost or the price of electricity from such plants. If the MSEB crisis was the result of adding a 2,000 MW Enron plant, we can only imagine what would be the impact of introducing 40,000 MW and its high cost power.

The talk of using imported nuclear reactors for providing energy security is also misleading. Unlike the three-phase nuclear cycle, which envisages the use of enriched uranium in Pressurised Water Reactors (PWR), then using reprocessed plutonium of the PWR's in Fast Breeder Reactors (FBR), and finally plutonium and thorium mix in Advanced Heavy Water Reactors (AHWR), the imported Light Water Reactors (LWR) plants use only enriched uranium. In such a cycle, the requirements of uranium are much higher, and we need continuous imports of large amounts of uranium. If we concentrated, instead, on the FBR and AWHR route, this would require much smaller amounts of uranium and would provide much greater fuel security than the imported reactor route that the Government is currently pushing.

Electricity is only a part of our total energy needs. We need fuel for transport and also for manufacturing fertilisers and petrochemicals. The requirements of primary fuels would of course also depend partially on what kind of fuel we use for electricity generation. However, it is clear that in any scenario, the bulk of India's electricity needs - from 91% as the best-case scenario to 95% as per current plans - would have to come from non-nuclear sources. For the foreseeable future, nuclear option is going to have little impact on our need for other sources of energy.

Oil has been used in India primarily for transport and industry. The Tenth Plan has this to say about the growth of hydrocarbon demand: "The share of hydrocarbons in the primary commercial energy consumption of the country has been increasing over the years and is presently estimated at 44.9 per cent (36.0 per cent for oil and 8.9 per cent for natural gas). The demand for oil is likely to increase further during the next two decades. The transportation sector will be the main driver for the projected increase in oil demand. Consequently import dependence for oil, which is presently about 70 per cent, is likely to increase further during the Tenth and Eleventh Plans." It has been estimated that by 2015, Indian demand for crude oil would be around 4.25-4.5 million barrels/day (mb/d) and it would be importing about 80% of this, almost entirely from the West Asian region.

The important issue here is that if we look at the power sector demand, oil does not figure in this. So nuclear energy, which can be used to produce electricity, is not a substitute for oil under any circumstance. While India account for only about 2% of world's oil consumption, it is already amongst the 10 largest importers of oil in the world. With increasing oil consumption, this trend is likely to continue with India and China emerging as major importers of oil accounting for at least 15% of world's oil demand. As there is no way nuclear energy can go into trucks, buses and cars, the transport sector will continue to be heavily dependent on imported hydrocarbons. If we take nuclear energy as a fraction of the total primary energy needs of the country, we find that this is not more than 3%-5% of our total primary energy basket (the 5% to 9% of the electrical energy translates to 3%-5% in primary energy terms). If we look at oil and gas, even with an ambitious nuclear energy program, they will constitute more than 30% and 10% respectively, and together more than 40% of our future energy needs. More than 40% of our energy needs in the future is going to come from oil and gas -- and this, independent of our nuclear energy program.

Therefore, the nuclear deal that has been signed between India and the US will help us only marginally address our primary energy needs. The argument that nuclear energy is the energy for the future is not backed up by either an analysis of India's energy needs nor does it take into account that nuclear energy is an option very few countries are exercising today. We need to keep the nuclear option open, looking at possible long-term needs; but to present this as a panacea for our current energy needs flies in the face of reality. If India has to take measures for its energy security, its primary concern must be to secure oil and gas supplies. It is in this context that peace and stability in West Asia is of such vital concern for India; its delight in being seated at the international high table, courtesy the US of A, is just a diversion, and a harmful one that is against the country's national interests.
The Art of Naming: Meditations on Queer Activism in Delhi

Akhil Katyal

...when words found mouths
when tongues wagged their way
into minds,
and each object shrank, suddenly,
to fit its own precise outline.

You could say
that was when the trouble started:
When things stepped into the cage
of a purpose I must have had
somewhere in my mind.

- Imtiaz Dharker,
'Words find Mouths'

"Queer activism, here and now in Delhi, as I have lived through for the past three years, is composed of varied definitional excursions that are precisely that, definitional excursions, baggy monsters, simplifying technologies that take enormous and complicated raw material, let's say of the morass of human sexuality and try to produce, indeed with success, finished products, peculiarly sexualized individuals, gay or straight."

What is in the name: homosexual?
If you say it again and again, homosexual, homosexual, homosexual and so on, it begins to sound like a creepy symptom. It is one of the bad habits of words to give way on the slightest bit of repetition. The word leaks out of itself on being repeated, becomes what it originally (!) was – the deceived one brought into the menacing contract of meaning making. Repetition is a paradox: it both consolidates and shatters. To repeat something is to validate it, confirm its thereness and give it a nod of approval; at the same time, for repetition's sake has a sincere cheek; it kills the word with a master stroke: pulls it out of contingent frameworks and shows the ghastly madness of the name. The words straight, lesbian, gay, homosexual, MSM are names with the classic weaknesses of names; words which totter if they are not continuously and shamefacedly propped up by dense political, medico-legal or religious frameworks of conception that are consubstantial with their usage. Every name is a product of a particular framework. The name does not define; it is rather a variable within a hopelessly circular (infinitely repeatable!) process – that first gives the premises of naming and then performs the very act of naming based on these premises – and then smugly locates this whole process at the origin of things, before everything else, 'I am gay', 'Are you a lesbian?', 'We are queer, we're here, get used to it.', exercises in definition making, processes of self-identification, loveable repetitions but not simply so!

I am not sentimental about LGBT activism (with about twenty years of a movement behind us in India, no one

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better be!) but I would be a part of all of it all the same, with an unforgiving self-irony and a constant clapping on one’s own head. Queer activism, here and now in Delhi, as I have lived through for the past three years, is composed of varied definitional excursions that are precisely that, definitional excursions, baggy monsters, simplifying technologies that take enormous and complicated raw material, lets say of the morass of human sexuality (itself a finished product of another technology of conceptualisation), and try to produce, indeed with success, finished products, peculiarly sexualised individuals, gay or straight. These are historical occurrences; contingent responses for a world that can only be dealt with strategic generalisations, with the steady repertoire of names, with banners asking for gay rights, hijra rights, lesbian rights, or with pleas composed of canny statistics. Queer activism in Delhi then, composed of a heterogeneous lot of organisations, collectives and individuals responds practically(!) to this situation of frameworks. For the current case that the Naz Foundation and Voices Against 377, a collective of several queer, child-rights, women and human rights groups, are fighting in the Delhi High Court against the anti-sodomy law, section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, we (the activists? I won’t dare choose to speak for everyone, though!) would present ourselves as minority legal subjects within the immediately available framework of the Indian legal system. Using the weapons at hand, we would shape ourselves strategically and then indulge in another process of self-definition: legal State citizens, Indians, homosexuals et al. That some of us provisionally or really buy into such logics of articulate, if not artificial, self definitions and make them the markers of understanding ourselves for ourselves (in our personal diaries!), can not and should not be denied (because why not? we encounter another circular logic here, albeit of much socio-political significance!). Politics is a name for strategies; the desire for and the social process of change have to make use of available names, categories and obstructions and then plunge into a continuous process of remoulding these. We can not start (or end) with something that is already mutatis mutandis. Queer activism, as I have seen in process in Delhi, is the utopian process that deliberately excludes the possibility of a Utopia. It is a utopic process that finally understands the concept of Utopia (for it is only the concept we can possibly discuss; Greek ‘ou’ is ‘not’, topos is ‘place’, ‘utopia’ is a ‘nolpace’, it does not exist!). The Utopia is the defeat of all that is utopian and not what we could and have always easily and non-rigorously believed in, that utopia is a the realisation of the utopic. The Utopia is implicit within the utopic; it does not follow it like a flower does a bud or like a child does a foetus.

The legal framework then becomes (pardon the repetition!) precisely that: a framework. The relationship of a framework of conceptualising people and that of the people’s processes of self-definition is a complicated one, like the contract of the name with the person that it names is a contingent and necessarily self-short-circuiting one. This is not to judge the process of naming as simply undesirable or desirable within activist agendas, to get caught in the enquiry of whether it is right or wrong. One of the editors of this magazine, Labanya, mailed me, saying ‘We’d be glad if you write a non-fiction piece on Sexuality, Identity and the Indian State (this is not the title of course, I’m not deciding anything for you). By this I mean that while writing through your subjective experience on what it is to be homosexual in India, you also make mention of Article 377 and it’s practical/psychological impact on the everyday.’ Labanya would of course forgive me for quoting from her email, a text sent casually, an anticipatory text in preparation for more formal, definitive texts to follow (“I’m not deciding anything for you.”). It is of course not an act of misrecognition; she could not possibly have been off the mark by saying I could write about being ‘homosexual in India’. To narrate my subjective experience then would be a narration that would consolidate an essay on the homosexual in India, generalised from a grossly localised somewhere of myself and my everyday. The essay would be a point of departure and also the point of arrival, having traversed unrepentant the multiplicity of homosexual subjective (or subjective homosexual?) experiences available within the available ground-space of India. Acts of narration are
thereby also acts of naming if they eddy around word clusters, points of identificatory gestures. To say that the concept of the name works contingently i.e. historically, that we circularly imagine them into being within certain points of history, is not to say that they are unreal or fantastical with no palpable effects (the provisional bridge between the editor and me was the common grounds of understanding, by which we imaginatively place each other; homosexual in India or young editor who I’d like to know more). This terrain of the imagined, with all its imports, can hardly be dispelled or easily demarcated from the real. There is no escaping the realities of the name (as if that was desired or possible; names are the basis of how we interact, it is how we generalize ourselves, names mark our presence even when we are absent, kill me, I’ll still be known by my name! The name is everything!) but it is possible for all of us to see what conditions make what names possible for which people within certain moments of history. I could call myself gay; have done that in the past, will do that in the future, but what are the stakes involved here; not the stakes of security, rather the stakes of the very process of finding and legitimating a name for oneself, queer for instance, or even Akhil. When and how does the fact that I love men, that I want to fuck them or get fucked by them, become a variable for what I – want to – call myself? When does the sex-bit get into the name-bit and how does this process work?

“When and how does the fact that I love men, that I want to fuck them or get fucked by them, become a variable for what I – want to – call myself? When does the sex-bit get into the name-bit and how does this process work?”

organised to mark this now historic date of August 11th was when we met at a particular venue at Cannought Place, made presentations about queer urban histories, talked about them, talked about personal experiences and all our first protests, loves, kisses, and then wore T-shirts that we had painted a day ago and walked around the inner circle of Cannought Place wearing those T-shirts with red roses in our hands (the first(?) public LGBT gatherings in Delhi used to happen on the terrace of the India Coffee House in CP; they used to keep a red-rose on the table as a clue, a locally acknowledged symbol; we chose to extend this curve of history, keep on a tradition, use their strategy of self-identification, use their name) and finally got together in Central Park and ended the evening with more songs and chats. The T-shirts we wore (see the Figure) on that day with slogans such as 377 Stinks, We’re Queer, We’re here, Get Used to it, Aadmi hoon Aadmi Se Pyaar Karta Hoon, Queer and Lovin Itl, Aawaz Do Hum Anek Hain et. al. function like names; they form a visual vocabulary for self-identification within a dense public space like CP in Delhi. They want to disrupt the unmarked heterosexual space, dirty it and produce effects of alternative and strategic namings and spellings (new spells that we cast?). These names, as I have pig-headedly(?) tried to drive home the point, are not at the beginning or the end of things; they are caught in the mire, just like the people they seek to stain.
On Ramanujan’s 300 Ramayanas and the Controversy

Mahesh Rangarajan, member of faculty of the Department of History, University of Delhi, speaks to Bhumi and Paresh, on Ramanujan’s essay and the protest that followed the decision to include it in the syllabus of a BA Honors course.

Q1. Just to begin our discussion perhaps you can recount the sequence of events the way you know it?
A. There are certain distinct elements that are important in this entire episode and the discussions it has evoked. To lay out some of the facts, the essay called “300 Ramayanas” by AK Ramanujan (who was one of the greatest scholars of Indian languages, notably Sanskrit, Tamil and Kannada and also a very accomplished translator) was included in the syllabus of B.A. Honors second year concurrent course. In reaction to the inclusion of this essay there had been a build up of opposition since late 2007 which culminated in the protest which included an attack on the Department of History, in which property was harmed and the Head of the Department was manhandled (by activists of the ABVP, which was the organization leading the protest against the essay’s inclusion in the syllabus). This incident was followed by a demonstration against the attack. The Academic Council of the University also met a week later and issued a statement condemning the attack. The plaintiffs went to Court and the Court eventually decided to uphold the right of the University to decide the syllabus. I was a part of the protest, being a part of the Department of History. Faculty members and students from around the university also joined the protest. The Department of History has a fairly large faculty with roughly 350 faculty members from over 50 colleges. The protest had some effect—the groups that had indulged in violence conceded that their method of protest was not correct and there were no more incidences of violence though non-violent demonstrations continued for some time.

Q2. In sum, what is the text about? What is the leitmotif, if there is one?
A. AK Ramanujan says in this essay that the Ramayana has been written in twenty-five languages. In Sanskrit itself, there are many versions that differ from each other. There’s a rich variety in the manner in which the Ramayana is told, written, sung and performed. He sees all this as testament to the great pluralism of this tradition. Challenging many aspects of the Ramayana that we assume to be given, he describes it like all other epic narratives—as one containing great diversity and variety that we must appreciate.

Q3. Do you see this violent protest by the group in question against the inclusion of this text in the syllabus as an attack on academic freedom?
A. You know, what is interesting is that when you read the memorandum they submitted you realize how cleverly they negotiate the terrain. Academic freedom is never explicitly attacked. They specifically say that they have no problems with this reading being taught at the post-graduate level or with it being used in research. They are, however, worried that it might negatively influence the minds of young undergraduates. What is clear here is the lack of realization that an undergraduate is someone over the age of eighteen, is someone who can vote and who can be tried for crime. These are adult citizens you are dealing with and not school children. However implicit, their attempt to get the essay banned was an attack on academic freedom, especially when
Q4. Two aspects of this issue are often hard to differentiate. One idea at stake is that of pluralism and their being many Ramayanas as opposed one "authentic" text. The other thing is that the text perhaps invokes certain images or episodes that might seem threatening to some people's religious beliefs. To be seen in conjunction with this aspect is whether the discussion of this text entails questioning of the Hindu religion. The groups opposing the inclusion seem to be moved by both ideas.

A. This is an important distinction that needs to be made. Ramanujan says that there are versions of the Ramayana not only across South East but North Asia as well. As the epic traveled it changed form as well as content and to be able to appreciate this diversity we need to leave behind the desire for one subscribed truth and a single "authentic" text. There is no questioning the fact that there indeed are many Ramayanas.

For example, in one version of the Ramayana, Ravana does not actually lay hand on Sita, he lifts her with the earth where she was standing. In another version, Sita and Ram see each other before the Swayamwar; Sita is standing on the terrace when she sees the cavalcade passing by—this is actually a very well known version and you can find it even in RK Narayan's book. In the Ramanand Sagar version on TV, the series ended with the return of Ram and Sita to Ayodhya after which they lived happily ever after. Following this there was a protest by the Dalits in Punjab who claimed that this version differed vastly from the Apoor version which includes the encounter of Luv and Kush with their father and the return of Sita and so on and so forth. Ramanand Sagar had to then add these parts to the version shown.

Anyone who is aware of this rich tradition would know that Ramanujan is someone very important in the study of the Indian epic. Not only was he an expert transcreator—I deliberately don't say translator—but he also searched for universal truths in these epics, for these were essentially about ethical and moral dilemmas that are larger human questions. The essay titled "Is There An Indian Way of Thinking" is a very good example of that.

The second problem comes when people pick up passages and select interpolations (can this word be used in plural form?) of different Ramayanas—because there are interpolations that can contradict or go against some people's religious beliefs. He says there are many Ramayanas but that does not mean that he is endorsing what these versions of the epic say. I don’t think any of it involves questioning of the Hindu religion. Here I speak only of myself—I have many students who come from very devout Hindu families, who felt very deeply against this incident that they rightly saw as deep disrespect to not only the teaching community but also the logic of education.

I can see certain groups using some people's religious sentiments, the Shradha of those who might feel threatened by the text or something. But I don’t feel that the text actually interferes with any person’s belief. One must understand that here nothing is being imposed. It is not a text being taught by the liturgy in a classroom. You are not being given this text as the "truth", you are being given Ramanujan’s description of the Ramayanas and you are free to disagree with it if you have logical reasons for it. There is no right answer.

Q5. Yes, one is free to disagree with it in theory but given how the system works, it is not always possible. Would you not say that the ABVP has every right to protest against the inclusion of Ramanujan’s essay, as long as their protest does not deteriorate into an assault? As “liberals”, our first reaction to any protest by a right-wing organization is to call it an assault on academic freedom etc. but as long this “assault” isn't literal (as it was in this case), the ABVP has, in theory, as much reason (and right) to protest against the syllabus as the people campaigning for the desaffronisation of our school history textbooks, no?

A. The creation of a liberal space is what we all need; the most illiberal of us need it the most. They are part of the space and they should be acted upon only when they violate the law. Otherwise they should have full freedom to articulate their view. This happens only when they recognize and respect the freedom of others as well. We know that regimes that believed that they had monopoly over the truth denied it to others. I can think of a popular Chinese story in which a courtier takes a horse to the emperor’s court. The emperor calls it a deer and all those who disagree have to part with their heads. And this is the story of all parties. Has there been a serious debate over why 1989 happened or why the Berlin Wall came down? Why did the USSR break up? Why did a Marxist regime produce a dynasty of rulers? Look at the situation where one of the founders of this country was a person who was against all technology—not that I agree with him— and in the same country, the same party cracked down on people who disagreed with the idea of having big dams!

Why are people so scared? I believe it comes from insecurity. First there is a belief that I know this corner of the wall and second there is the fear of the unknown. Furthermore there is the fear that someone would throw new light on what I knew and what I thought true would be falsified.

I genuinely believe in the Indian Constitution and its capacity to create a democracy because of the manner in which it came about. A part of people’s anger has always found legal expression in this country. To make sure that these potentialities actually emerge we must be alert and debate must
not stop. Debate is the only thing we have! This country has little resources, little land, a lot of people and not much fuel. The one thing it has to contribute is in terms of ideas. It is true that the argumentative Indian has had a long tradition but s/he is under attack. Where is s/he when we need him/her? When the question of reservations is being discussed? Or SEZs? Why just two groups of people throwing abuse at each other? Why exclude the others? Why can’t the much larger section that is watching be a part of it all? The person who is openly intolerant is the least of our worries. The real issue at stake here is how we reach to this large, silent group? This will happen only when they think it is in their interest to join and that will not happen if this remains a slanging match between two groups.

Q6. (With reference to your earlier answer) “Hurtling sentiment” is rather vague. Do you think the Indian Constitution, in its liberalism, allows such intolerance to creep in and find space in so far as unqualified assertions of injury to sentiments of a sect can be used to hamper people’s freedom of expression?

A. No. I think the Indian constitution walks a fine line. While recognizing the basic rules of secularism like the right of people to propagate their religion, it also recognizes that there are certain situations which may require powerful state intervention. For instance, until the 1930s untouchability was legal; people had the right to practice it. The state in such cases should have the right to intervene even where religious matters are concerned to uphold a sense of dignity. It may not interfere with basic religious structures but it needs to ensure that the right to dignity is not denied. I would argue that the Indian Constitution achieves a very fine balance between individual rights and group rights. Of course there are imbalances and sometimes the pendulum shifts one way and at other times it shifts the other way. It is hard to give a one-line answer—should the state be indifferent to questions of faith assuming that the empire of reason lies beyond it or should it recognize and respect such rights actively. In life, you will find we generally practice a mixture of the two.

Q7. So you think the problem is not inherent in the Indian Constitution. However in case some one does seek to misuse this clause, do you think the Indian judiciary will rule fairly? Or do you see the ruling of the Court in your favor as an exception? Is it not true that more often than not books are banned if seen as “controversial”?

A. You know, the Court’s ruling depends on the judge and it depends on the case in particular. I think in most cases where there have been bans they have been a result of political or executive action, the court does not normally interfere. For instance a few years ago, a biography of Basava was published. According to the evidence given by the author, Basava had partial Dalit lineage. The Lingayata committee not only got it removed from universities, not only got it banned, they publicly beat up the author and the police did not do anything. The political parties competed against each other to uphold the case. In most cases the political leaderships seems to decide such matters—Rajiv Gandhi banned Rushdie’s book, BJP got the ban removed, and so on and so forth. Then there is this biography of Shivaji by an outstanding scholar, Y. D. Phadke. This biography has not only not been published, it has not even been disclosed. The political leadership in Maharashtra decided that this biography should never be published!

Q8. All discussions of the incident have taken to task the manner of protest and the violence the group indulged in. While the violence is easy to condemn, how do you put it in perspective? Is there a larger tendency in question, a lack of debate?

A. The problem with all such protests is that they start by asking the text in question to be banned. The archetypal argument consists today of a statement, an assertion and a restatement, normally backed up by an anecdote. This is not a serious, philosophically sound way of argument! An argument need not agree with another point of view but it must have a logic to it. You can see our point of view and differ with it. What is the use of an argument that is completely self-contained and doesn’t even engage with another point of view? If the other person is not even ready to engage with the possibility of my being correct then how do I engage with him/her?

Most of those protestors were probably not aware of the richness of this tradition or the way in which Ramanujan, in very simple language articulates/describes this richness. To question the authenticity of an essay by a genius like Ramanujan in this fashion, without being aware of what he writes is certainly problematic—and mark what I say—it is the ignorance of those objecting about what they object to that is problematic. This ignorance does away with any chance of debate. The point of reading Ramanujan is not to agree with him. You can read him and completely disagree with him and say that you think there is only one way of looking at the Ramayana. And this argument would be perfectly understandable because for centuries there were only Sanskrit versions of the Ramayana; eventually other versions in other languages came up. But you must engage with what he says. This is where the problem lies, and this problem is not limited to any party. This inability to engage in debate, it cuts across ideological differences. Something is lacking in our civic society and our civic sense and there is a tendency to shy away from debate. If someone disagrees with Ramanujan then come and debate. Write a book! That is the best way! An attack like this one is directed at the very heart of the enterprise of the university. If one goes back into history one sees that whenever there has been an attack like this on the university, which is a center for the exchange of ideas, it reflects a larger repression of the culture of debate and enquiry in the society.
Almost all theorists of our times have spoken of the trespass of consumerism in all spheres of modern existence; some may seem to like it while others may seem to dislike it, some may like it while others may dislike it, but they do not deny it. Instead of locating signs of this trespass on television or in the mall, which are typical instances used for the criticism of consumerist culture, one needs to spare a glance for what seems to lie at the opposite end of the line. Instead of regurgitating what we as part of this resistance have swallowed from books and essays, we must try something different; we have been walking on feet for too long, it is time to walk on our hands (as some like Slavoj Zizek have tried to do). The observer needs to observe and understand how resistance to consumerism changes into consumerism of resistance—like in all times one must not underestimate the stubbornness of capital, a system that has been able to survive for decades apparently in a moribund state surely has great capacity to integrate all resistance into its folds.

The following paragraph is a somewhat passionate report a propos the recent protests that followed an incident of sexual molestation of girls from Delhi University, published in a hypothetical daily.

‘A Sunday morning saw the future law keepers of the country participate in a private pogrom. A group of men who had come to that area to attend a police examination decided that they deserved to celebrate the end of exam by molesting a few hundred girls. Such ‘celebrations’ made the students angry and their souls rose against such injustice. The result was discerned in the series of protests in and around the university. A memorandum was brought that asked for the exam to be annulled. Various other demands were also on the list. Delegates visited the vice-chancellor, the commissioner of police, the NCW, the Home Ministry and even Arjun Singh. What went wrong then? If such was the anger in their hearts then why did it stop? And what came out of it? At least we tried—somebody replies; our hearts can be easier.’

It would be stupid to explain the short-lived-ness of this agitation purely with reference to conditions specific to it. So before going into a discussion of those specificities I will try to locate the failure of this movement into what has become a tradition of failed protests—the easy acceptance of the failure of agitations that seem astonishingly effervescent to begin with is not uncommon these days. Did the massive anti-war demonstrations in New York and London stop the war in Iraq? An acquaintance of mine who returned from the US recently had me understand that many protests in the US take place on Sundays for matters of convenience. It is strange because these demonstrations supposedly signify a motion against the establishment and yet clearly the principal interests of both the establishment and resistance coincide—workdays and workday traffic cannot be interrupted. In this light the demonstrations were not failures at all, in fact both sides came out of it satisfied—it is a “strange symbiotic relationship between power and resistance” [Zizek], to use Zizek’s words. “The protesters saved their beautiful souls”—they made it clear that they did not accept such attitude from the administration. It is a perverse (and the usual) form of consumerism, the

Without the clause of class-consciousness that makes the connection between career and exploitation plain resistance becomes a perverse (the usual) form of consumerism, the commodity bought and consumed is “peace of mind” and the cost is a few days out in the sun.
commodity bought and consumed is "peace of mind" and the cost is a few days out in the sun. Such battles are fought not to change the world, but achieve a sense of satisfaction that I have done my part—and now that my conscience is at ease the world can go to hell. Every advertisement on television tells me that I am not a perfect person unless I consume that product; similarly "resistance" becomes a product advertised in politically correct classrooms.

In the last analysis the interests of the agitators and the administration were the same. During the IP College protests this fact came out in the open most blatantly when on one of the days of demonstrations the students from IP College became rather disconcerted on hearing a rumour that the college would be sealed if the protest continued. It might have been due to the highly institutionalised setup of that college that kept the students in a convent like state of innocent ignorance that they were unable to see through the joke. They were unable to realise that the fight was not between the college and the university; it was hard for them to perceive that the smaller as well as the larger entity were seats of the same central power that the students needed to fight. But more importantly, it became clear that the prospect of really shaking things up had never occurred to them.

At no point are such protests directed at the base of power; rather the people in power are accused of betraying their own professed principles. The protests in this case were directed against the "unsympathetic attitude of our vice-chancellor and our police"; as if the entire episode was an aberration and not the rule. A strange but expected conjecture entirely in observance of the customary practice of complaining about the ever-increasing number of "injustices" and not questioning the status quo. The "solution" that was proposed by the students—nullification of the exam—was more a form of appeasement than anything else. What if this demand had been met? Would that have led anywhere? It is a strange situation—if a movement like this fails in achieving the goals it sets then it gets buried, since all that could have been done is done and nothing came out of it. In future agitations of the sort, those who participated this time would opt out since they know that it would not work. If the demands are by any chance met, even then it gets buried. Mission accomplished. Either way the eventual result had to be the same, so in a fashion logical enough, the easier way was taken. It cannot be denied that each battle has its particular aims and large distant goals alone cannot keep things going, but the strange part is that since this battle was fought only to wear the armour and get a photo clicked, warriors returned home after the horn was sounded. Because of the lack of a larger anti-establishment perspective the demands became ends-in-themselves, incidental to the desire of putting up a show and effectively inconsequential to the agitators; the administration knew that they did not need to satisfy the former. The demands need not be met for in the act of putting forth demands the demanders had been satisfied.

That under all circumstances we stay a part of this system remains the single most important idea that governs our actions. It defines our interactions with the system, whether the interactions are friendly or antagonistic. What we observed above was that even those interactions, which are apparently antagonistic, are often undercut by "faithfulness" to the system. However the dialectical contrary of this understanding, which is that even when our interactions are on surface-friendly, underlying it is a deep antagonism, escapes us. I will come to the nature of this antagonism at the end of the essay. Meanwhile I will move on to an analysis of the specifics of the protest that made it so short-lived.

**A Digression and a Return**

Jean-Paul Sartre differentiates between two modes of existence for an individual as a part of society. In one case persons perform roles that can be described as being those of "we-subjects" while the in other case they can be described as "we-objects". The role of persons as "we-subjects" corresponds to a way of associating with other people that Sartre calls "seriality". Sartre uses the concept of seriality to describe circumstances in which a person's relation to others is limited to a uniformity of behaviour and isolation otherwise [Jameson 238]. Each person models her/his mode of being after what s/he thinks is the mode of being of the Other, or individuals inhabiting society at large, but any real association with them is lacking as the others don't really exist, except as a "vast optical illusion, a kind of collective hallucination projected out of individual solitude onto an imaginary being thought of as 'public opinion' or simply "they"" [Jameson 239]—such a relation has no real meaning for individuals. For instance when one is in a theatre one feels a part of some sort of community (of viewers); however this feeling of community has no consequence for anyone, self or the other. The situation of those involved in the protest that is being analysed remained by and large a serial situation—being part of the demonstrations had no real consequence for an overwhelming majority of the people that included most of those who stood at the forefront. The aspect of conscience easing is included in this concept; for in this case too the person in question enters the demonstration to fulfil what s/he thinks is the duty of every responsible person—an idea that is defined once again by the clause of public-opinion. Here too genuine association with others that is required for continued participation is lacking.

The second mode of existence, that as "we-objects" depends upon the formation of genuine groups to get over the helplessness of a serial situation. Such a group is formed only when "I feel myself become an object along with someone else under the look of such a "third" that I experience my being as a "we-object"; for then, in our mutual interdependency, in our shame and rage, our beings are somehow mingled in the yes of the onlooker, for whom we are somehow "the same"..." [Jameson]. How a group maintains its authentic existence (an existence of this mode i.e.) is not our concern here—but it comes into existence against some common enemy and is defined by the vision of the Other. On this occasion the common opponent eludes all concrete formulations and the concept stays limited to a faceless crowd. If this protest had been connected to a larger anti-establishment perspective it would have been easier to sustain, and the demands might have been formulated in a more fruitful
manner. It is not strange to find that it was because of a few individuals who formed such a group that held such an anti-establishment that the movement survived for whatever length of time it survived.

The larger question at stake in this entire episode was that of sexual harassment and gender and the shared identity that had to be interpreted in a manner to allow for the construction of an authentic group – that of students. This article is an attempt at analysing this protest and the reason behind its short-lived-ness. So the larger question of gender would be a pointless digression; it might also prove a question too large to cope with in an essay like this. When I call it a digression I refer to the fact that in this essay my attempt is to analyse the construction of authentic student groups. The fight against sexual harassment can also allow for the construction of such groups. Further on I will attempt to locate the identity of being anti-sexual harassment fighters in the scheme of things, but I feel the need to warn the reader that this attempt might seem half-hearted owing to its contingency as far as this article is concerned.

For now however this leaves us with the identity of being students. Many locate this identity in a vague notion of a shared journey through the realm of knowledge. Another popular perspective would place the experience of being students in the set of consumer experiences that constitutes modern existence: education being the commodity consumed. Both these notions and most others still remain stuck in definitions of persons as “we-subjects” and a genuine group identity (defined in opposition to something) is denied. I shall proceed to propose one possible definition of a student that could allow for the formation for a genuine group (this would take us to the idea that was left undeveloped at the end of the first section).

We as students are workers-in-making. This statement needs to be qualified for the understanding of who is a “worker” might be different for the reader and the writer of this article. “Worker” here refers to every person whose participation in production is as a wage earner. A worker is a person who owns no “means-of-production” and depends upon his “labour power” to earn his livelihood; in this sense a worker could be a factory “hand” earning a few hundreds a week or a CEO earning in millions or for that matter a college professor earning a few thousand. If this is the definition of a worker most students are workers-in-making. This agreed upon, it is not hard to see that the basis of an authentic student identity that will allow for the formation of genuine groups, genuine students’ organisations that is, will have to depend upon an understanding of the fact that our current relationship with the system remains one defined by class struggle; the aspect of our existence in the eye of the system that we oppose will be our existence as workers-to-be.

Another digression would allow us to look at the role of groups formed against sexual harassment or for that matter all sexuality/gender related questions. Duncan Foley says somewhere that there is never a “democracy of determinants”. In a capitalist society the system of class and the process of class struggle are the determinants that sit on top of the hierarchy of determinants. All other determinants (or structures of exploitation—for all societies till now have structured themselves so as to base themselves on exploitation) form the guard that surrounds this determinant. Race, gender, and caste—all of these are systems that capitalism uses to run its show. However it is important to note that capitalism does not depend upon these structures to reproduce itself. As a result whenever a stage is reached where these structures become hindrances to capitalism, they are questioned—which is not to say that feminist struggles are an offshoot of this tendency, but merely to suggest that the development of capitalism in its industrialized form facilitated, or made it relatively (when compared to earlier modes of production) easier for these struggles to be waged with greater success.

All movements and all groups need a degree of self-reflexivity to maintain their revolutionary potential. At this point in history feminist movements need to understand the manner in which capitalism has been able to bottle the revolutionary potential of feminism in revolutionary moments that are past. To free this potential of the chains it has been bound by the fight against patriarchy and harassment made possible by the system of patriarchy needs to be combined with struggle against capitalism. If the power equation in society is decided on the ownership of means of production then the social location of the proletariat provides the proletarian identity a revolutionary potential that is unique among all identities. Our fight against sexual harassment and gender discrimination will become all the more potent if combined with our struggles as workers-to-be and subsequently workers.

In all circumstances a student, consciously or unconsciously understands this relation in whom s/he is bound to the system, what is lacking is the clause of class-consciousness that would make the connection between career and exploitation plain. In the above case, as in most cases this connection is not perceived and the result is submissiveness that exists under the facade of resistance. If and only if this submission is transformed into struggle, would any agitation succeed for the success of all agitations would lie in the manner in which they fit into the battle against the system. Until a vision of this larger battle informs our actions our attempts would be directed towards reform, and the discourse of reform is pointless in a system that cannot exist without inequity. The pointlessness of the demand of increasing police security in the campus, when the people who committed the crime were aspiring policemen is a remarkable instance of the uselessness of reform unconnected from a larger logic of struggle. A system that is defined on the leitmotif of profit cannot be reformed into being a “considerate” system—it can of course sell “consideration” in the market.

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Over the last two decades, there has been a lull on the campuses. There has been no major student movement on “real” issues concerning the middle and lower middle class students and what we witness is a dead silence. It does not mean that there is a dearth of issues. On the contrary, the number of issues worth struggling for has only increased, especially during the last decade. In accordance with the general policy of the HRD ministry, the ratio of number of seats available in higher education to the (increasing) number of aspirants has been declining continuously and the fees have been increasing. In such a scenario, it becomes imperative to probe the reason behind the deadly silence on campus. Our approach will involve a critical examination of hard facts and so it will be necessary to cast a glance over some statistics related with higher education.

India is known to have a large number of students in higher education. In fact during the last two decades it has often been said that the number of higher education students in India is too much. But this claim does not hold much water. Whether the number of students in higher education is high or low, should be determined by the ratio of total number of students in higher education to the total number of aspirants for higher education. On the one hand, the government admits that the “signaling effect” of conventional education is fading away and on the other, newer forms of higher education, for instance, vocational and professional education which does have some “signaling effect”, cannot be afforded by the common youth. Except for a few central universities and big universities, the standard of conventional higher education has sunk to such a level, that it has lost whatever remained of its remaining “signaling effect”. We all know that barring a few exceptions, only upper and upper middle class students can reach IITs or medical colleges. Institutions like IIMs have been monopolized by the rich and management students generally dream of making it big abroad. They do not intend to stay in India and their entire education is geared towards bettering their prospects of going abroad. At the same time, we are witnessing a rapid “elitisation” of the university campuses. Especially after the New Education Policy of 1986, even conventional higher education is being brought to a stage where it increasingly becomes a prerogative of the richer classes. This process acquired even greater momentum after the implementation of new economic policies of liberalization in the decade of the 1990s, as the statistics related to higher education shows.

By the middle of 2005, there were 342 universities in India including 18 central universities, 211 state universities, 95 deemed universities, 5 institutions founded as per the state laws, and 13 institutions of national importance. The number of colleges was 17625, among which 5386 were recognized by the UGC. The number of students studying in these institutions was 10.48 million; this number is greater than the corresponding number for the previous year. However, the number of those eligible for higher education has increased at a much higher rate. In any case one cannot forget that only 7 percent of the

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total number of those eligible reach
- es campuses of higher education. It is way below the share of students in higher education in developed count ries which is almost always higher than 25 percent. The government expenditure on higher education has decreased considerably during last three decades. In the 1970s the gov ernment spent 1 percent of the GNP on education which fell to 0.35 percent in the 1990s. The larger share of the expenditure on higher education is now being extracted from the students themselves. In 1983, that is, before the introduction of Rajeev Gandhi’s New Education Policy, the government provided 80 percent of the expenditure on higher education. In 1999, the government’s share was brought down to 67 percent. The amount paid by students in 2004 was eleven times of what they paid in 1988. The government’s determination to commodify higher education is made clear by the objective of the HRD ministry to make higher-education completely self-financed by 2010. The process has already been started, resulting in a rapid decrease in the demographic area covered by various forms of higher education. Only the rich will be able to afford higher education.

A similar story can be perceived in the statistics pertaining to professional courses. Private institutes made up for 15 percent of the total seats in engineering education in 1960. In 2004, this figure shot up to 86.4 percent. In the 1960 the corresponding figure for medical education was 68 percent. This figure increased to 40.9 percent in 2004. In management related course 90 percent seats are accounted for by private institutions.

It is not hard to draw conclusions from these facts. These statistics demonstrate that the government is commercializing and privatizing both kinds of higher education—the conventional higher education of the conventional university campus as well as professional education (enginee ring, medicine, management). Higher education is being changed into a commodity and as a result, students from humble backgrounds are finding increasingly difficult to reach the university.

The motive behind this is pretty clear. The government openly admits that the country will now witness “jobless growth”—in the era of globalization, one cannot expect the government to provide education, jobs and health facilities; even the so-called “left” government of West Bengal echoes these proclamations, though it hums a different tune in national politics, as it were continuing with its sham opposition to inflation, unemployment, etc. One concedes that it is structurally impossible for a national government to provide full education and employment in a global capitalist framework. The deficits caused due to the government’s concentration on job-creation and provision of education, instead of maintenance of a high growth rate, would be large and this in turn would lead to a slump. The point however is that a large number of graduates and post-graduates unable to find jobs or jobs they think fit for themselves, will probably be more enraged than those who fail to make it to the university altogether. After spending years in the campus, spending thousands of rupees to acquire degrees so that s/he can get a job, if a youth is left to wander jobless on the streets s/he will no doubt be full of rage against the system. The policy-makers are well-aware of this. The Birla-Ambani report on education even alludes to this factor and recommends greater investment in primary and secondary education and in ITIs and poly-technics so as to create a large skilled labor force, abundant and cheap. Commercializing conventional higher education proves a double-edged weapon as it reduces the rate of generation of graduates and post-graduates and enables the government to create a large and cheap skilled labor force by greater investment in technical and school education. With the help of the media and various agencies the government has been able to manufacture the consensus that higher education is provided at the expense of school education. The government till the last year spent less than 3 percent of the GDP on education, though the promise made spoke of 6 percent. In the 1980s, the share of higher education in the total expenditure on education was 15 percent; now it has fallen to 10 percent.

Another phenomenon worthy of note is the formalization of education. Facts demonstrate that students are encouraged to enroll in “correspondence education” rather than regular courses. Correspondence courses are being advertised more in the media and universities too are promoting this trend. The typical argument used to convince students is that regular college has no advantage over correspondence education as far as getting a job is concerned whereas the latter has the benefit of allowing a student to work while studying. Large numbers of lower-middle class students fall prey to this propaganda. Statistics tell us that ill-equipped correspondence departments of universities fail to give a success percentage of even 40 percent. The pass percentage in IGNOU, which is the largest correspondence university in Asia, was 5 percent in 2006! The number of
students enrolled in IGNOU in 2006 (1,311,145) was 9 times more than the total number of regular students in Delhi University. The whole system of correspondence education is designed it seems, to force into depression those poor students who are lured into it by the idea of being able to study and work simultaneously. Another benefit (for the administration) of this “informalization” of education is that students are prevented from gathering in large numbers at one place. While legally and academically they become students, they fail to develop a sense of belonging with the entire student community and are denied an important way of developing radical class consciousness. An analogy can be drawn with the process of informalization of industries and the working class. The big industrial units are broken into a number of small industrial units which are scattered not only across the country, but across the world. Termed the construction of a “global assembly line” by social scientists this process works to decentralize and geographically scatter the working class.

As a result of these steps thought out by the policy makers, the campuses are becoming hubs of the neo-rich class and the entire class character of campuses is undergoing a profound metamorphosis. It is not that poorer students are not reaching the campus at all, but their ratio in the student population is decreasing rapidly. They still form the bulk of the student population, but if the present trend continues the lower middle and poor classes will surely become a minority in campuses (while becoming a greater majority in the national population). This is especially true for elite campuses like Delhi University, J.N.U. and the lot (inspite of all their island and picnic activism).

These developments have transformed the face of student politics in the last two decades. Student politics has become a stronghold of name-sake student organizations that are dominated by lackeys of bourgeois parties. It serves as a training and recruitment centre for national electoral parties. Their newer generations come from the neo-rich—lumpen elements that have the money and muscle that makes them well-suited for the representation of the richer classes in national politics. The class which can give a revolutionary turn to student politics is stopped at the gates of the campuses or is asked to go to ITIs and polytechnics. Democracy in the campus emanates from class contradictions present inside it. The struggle for hegemony amongst various political organizations representing different classes creates this democratic space. If students from humble backgrounds do not reach the campus, there will be no force to challenge the money and muscle-power politics of the neo-rich classes. That is why the democratic traditions of university campuses have declined in the last two decades.

Another section of neo-rich students, especially those who belong to the urban educated middle class, becomes associated with sham “left” student politics or the dangerous NGO politics, attracted by their reformist nature which still seems to have a material basis. This reformist politics effectively co-opts the radical potential of students by offering them a comfortable way of becoming paid revolutionaries. It very effectively prevents a large number of sensitive and progressive students from turning towards revolutionary politics. A revolutionary student organization will need to propagandize against lumpen bourgeois politics, the sham “left” politics as well as the reformist NGO politics. A revolutionary model in the campus can only develop as an anti-thesis to these reactionary trends.

The ground for a campus-based student movement is shrinking rapidly. We need to think beyond the boundary walls of the campus. While we need campaigns and movements of students against the increasing commercialization of education and campus-based issues like hostels, bus passes, etc, we also need to establish contact with the youth movement at large. The progressive and sensitive student must develop links with the massive youth population which is wandering on the streets for jobs, which deserves to be in the campus but cannot afford higher education. The majority of this youth population is a part of the unemployed labor force of the country. Another big chunk of this population has been proletarianized and has joined the ranks of the working class. Progressive students need to organize this population and channel its anger and discontent by propagandizing and agitating among these people. Movements for the right to education and employment as well as various cultural activities should be organized involving this population. The possibility of a campus-based student movement has shrunk considerably and is still shrinking with the changing class character of the campus. We need to think about a unified student-youth movement which will have equal and free education for all and employment for all as its central demands. Only such a movement will have the strength and potency to achieve such aims. It is true that while remaining within the ambit of the present socio-economic system, education and employment for all is virtually impossible. But the vast majority of the youth population will understand this only through practice, i.e. through various movements concerning education and employment for all. In this process we have to keep exposing the bourgeois electoral politics, pseudo “left” politics and the reformist NGO politics, apart from doing a positive politicization of the student community through propaganda and agitation. Only then we can face the new challenges arising due to the change in the class character of the campus.
Need to Reinforce Marxism as a Method

Recent developments in some of the North Indian states have raised serious questions about the existing analysis of structures and stratification in Indian society. One such question relates to the debate over the continued validity of caste as a basis of social stratification. Is it right to depend solely upon the study of caste to understand relations in Indian society rather than pursuing the analysis of class as the defining factor? This battle is an old one and has invoked lengthy debates not only among intellectuals but political formations as well—understandably, it has been impossible to separate the “social” from the “political”. Furthermore the debate has become increasingly dense as a result of “assertions” by backward castes (BCs) and Dalits which, in spite of having been in existence for quite some time in other parts of the country, have been a relatively new phenomenon in North India, especially in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Intrinsic to this debate has been the issue of ‘identity politics’, a debate that has been raised aggressively after the sudden discovery of ‘multiple subjectivities’ by the various post-isms and the proponents of the so-called new social movements. Indian social sciences have not remained detached from this discourse, with a further impetus from the numerous assertions by different ‘social’ categories across the country. There are many issues involved in these debates and tendencies, one of them being the well thought-out marginalization of certain schools of thought such as Marxism, which are better equipped to explore and explain these developments.

The most important offshoot of this marginalization has been the negation of dialectics as a method to be employed in understanding society. Some might argue that dialectics is not really a method, but in agreement with Allman, I would argue that though dialectics is not a method in the strict sense of the word it has been vital in the development of a specific type of critical thinking. “In other words, it is not an abstract, formal, step-by-step approach but rather a manner of intellectually grasping the truth, or the internal structure/essence, of any real phenomenon, which is not transparently obvious or observable” (Allman: 2007: 04). The marginalization of Marxism in social sciences is not a problem particular to India. Following Simon Clark and others, Allman et al. argue that, “we witness the virtual abandonment of the notion of the working class—not just by erstwhile postmodernists, but also by mainstream social scientists. Most people who analyse social class today do no such thing; rather they have social inequality and stratification in view. Social class itself is evaded and avoided. This bad seed at the heart of capitalist society, indeed its structural core, is covered in mounds of obfuscation …” (Allman et al., 2005: 135).

Looking Beyond the Veil of Identity Politics

An effort has been made here, by trying to overcome these methodological shortcomings of the mainstream social sciences, to understand the repercussions of collective identity politics, with special reference to caste. The analysis will largely focus on the reasons behind
the fact that despite strong assertions in North India by Dalits and Backward Castes, in the recent past their situation has remained largely unaltered except that the elite from these sections has started participating in the market and the states. Perhaps, as Mukherjee (2000) argued, we need to move beyond “[the] mystification of class formation in Indian society” so as to be able to more fully grasp the manner in which the “resistance identity” (see Castells: 2001 for conceptual elaboration), in this case that of being from a lower caste, has increasingly been co-opted into mainstream and hegemonic structures of power. Resistances characterized and defined by caste identities have gradually had submit to the dictates of capital. Perhaps even the most radical “identity” discourses stop short of suggesting an alternative system and better accommodation in the existing order of things is the agenda of the struggles they lead. If this is so, we need to be better equipped in our struggles and the need for a dialectical sociological analysis becomes paramount.

The use of dialectics as a method here becomes relevant because “reality is more than appearances and...focussing exclusively on appearances, on the evidence that strikes us immediately and directly can be extremely misleading” (Ollman: 2003: 13). We need to make a conscious effort to go beyond the apparent, to the actual, because the visible caste based social formations have more to them than just the (apparent) social. We must locate our understanding of caste within the wider production context of the capitalist mode of production. Empirical studies on villages must be seen in relatedness not only to diverse elements within the village but also outside the village. Indian sociology has much catching up to do on this account and dialectics can be one way of addressing the concerns over the failure of sociology to deliver in times of post the Mandal Commission (as expressed by Deshpande (2004) for example).

Today, caste has emerged as an instrument of political practice. There is continued need of caution while dealing with the struggles of caste associations at various historical junctures—rigid, unreflective ways of dealing with the question and issues of caste show a lack of understanding of history. The role played by the Dalit movement and backward caste associations in pre- and post-independence India has been completely different. Different agendas have mobilized them in the different politico-economic contexts that have existed in these periods. Understandably then, struggles and organizations based on caste cannot, at all times, be the basis of radical social and economic transformation. Today, for instance, the electoral representatives of the BC collective identity in the two states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have been working in alliance with capital instead of looking after the interests of landless agricultural workers and poor peasantry belonging to their constituencies. But their militant portrayal and posturing after the Mandal Commission and the subsequent political developments did put into wide currency their image as the “real” representatives of BCs, irrespective of class. (This, along with the decision of the Left to side with them contributed to the weakening of the Left in these states). Whether the question is of land reforms, decimating the social sector (which is essential for social justice to prevail in real terms), or addressing the issues of wage or labour rights, the representatives who entered the scene in this phase of BC mobilization, when in power, failed on all accounts.

These developments in the situation of Backward Caste movements show how caste is increasingly being used within the politico-economic paradigm of capitalism to further the consolidation of capital. It has in fact become an effective instrument to retain economic inequity in society, as caste mobilizations diminish possibilities of cross-caste, working class mobilisations. The idea of social justice built on the foundation of distributive justice and the rhetoric of social dignity has not been effective enough to take the Backward Castes beyond their economic miseries. What has happened instead is that a section has emerged as the ruling elite within the Backward Castes and has monopolised the advantages offered by capitalism. A large chunk of the Backward Castes, comprising landless labourers and poor peasants, has remained stuck in a state of economic deprivation. Wealth has remained concentrated in a few hands.

As mentioned before, the emphasis on caste as the determining characteristic of stratification in Indian society is partly about establishing the social as superior to the economic in the hierarchy of determinants. It has been argued ad nauseam that caste discrimination emanates from social values, attitudes and locations. The role of economic aspects has invariably been played down by analysts in understanding the assertions of identity politics, ignoring the way in which caste becomes an instrument of mobilization for the BC elite so as to demonstrate its power and enhance its access to the market and the instruments of state. The point is not so much about positing the social against the economic but about looking at their dialectical relationship—they interact with and alter not only each other but also political and cultural variables. This in turn will help us understand why, despite the overwhelming participation of Backward Castes in the movement, only a certain section takes away the benefits. Why does the relationship between the rich and the poor Koeri, or the rich and the poor Yadav not alter even though all of them have been part of the Backward Caste assertion? What retains the inequity within or between castes? Which takes us to the question—why do we not consider the aspects of class, competition and co-option as innate to Indian society today? There are many more such questions which are unanswered as every analysis—like that of social change, status quo and forms of resistance—remains restricted to particularities devoid of any attempt to understand the influence of interactions with other realities. There is a necessity to rank our variables of analysis. For instance the economic
is a stronger determinant than the social when it comes to understanding the absence of land reforms, equitable educational opportunities, employment generation, ensuring at least minimum wages, health facilities to all etc. on the agenda of Backward Caste collective identity politics.

Indian sociology has not been able to identify the developments in the sphere of caste based mobilizations and identity politics because of its uni-focal attention on caste, which translates largely into the social, divorced from other elements such as the processes of production determining the location of an individual or group in society. It is this limited analysis which has led to the continued emphasis on the potential of caste based identity politics, which conveniently excludes other determinants of one’s social location, and has failed to understand the problems brought about by the emergence of caste as the defining characteristic of social movements. Identity politics, based on the principle of homogenizations, segregation of social realities into unconnected, autonomous modules, has allowed the expansion of capital, thwarting any possibility of resistance against the system. What one sees is a shift in trajectory, where movements are bilked of their radical potential and are transformed into reformatory drives (to make the system better)—implying successful co-option of resistance in to the system. Examples abound and caste is just a case in point. Emerging as a movement for social justice, raising demands against discrimination, Backward Caste identity politics in Bihar in the pre-Independence period was aimed at attaining a scenario of democratized opportunities. The post-Independence period on the other hand witnessed a reification of this identity, which got limited to being a tool of mobilization used by the new emerging elite to serve its purposes. While this example gives us a useful picture to substantiate the argument about the difference between caste based identity politics before and after Independence it also allows us to enter into a discussion of the effects of conceptualizing caste as a homogeneous identity on the entire backward caste population.

I cannot help reiterating this time and again—Indian sociology has, by and large in a very unperceptive manner continued a celebration of this identity politics. Strangely even political formations publicly accepted their over emphasis on class. Located within a context where economy and society are witnessing rapid changes in light of the transforming character of capitalism it is important to consider what is the purpose of collective identity politics in its reified form. Caste is no longer the rigid and hierarchical determining element of social relations that it once was. It was such when the village economies, or economies in general, were able to sustain people on basis of their traditional occupations. Now what one does to sustain oneself is not always constant. Nature of the economy determines occupations; new criteria are skill, human resources, technical know how etc. Even in villages where people are still engaged in settled, and relatively non-fluid occupations of labourers, peasants and landlords, the situation has altered considerably and traditional occupations are not always the basis of livelihood. Then where does caste exist?

It exists as an identity and as an ideological apparatus. It has been kept alive in discourses that characterize family networks, socialization processes and rituals which are so innate to even a modern Indian’s life. Does that mean then that caste defines the everyday social life of an individual? Scholars would argue in the affirmative: look at everyday violence, discrimination in temples, in use of water resources, marriages etc. Oppressed and oppressors exist! And truly enough, one does come across incidents of these kinds. I would argue however that what is manifested in everyday relations is the apparent, with its own consequences of discrimination and atrocities, but an analysis of the underlying reality reveals how caste becomes a non-entity when alliances across castes are forged against a common opponent, such as in case of the landless versus landed. Within caste, there exist sharp divisions of class, an aspect that has not emerged clearly in Indian sociology due to its seeming apathy towards class as something that could offer a useful study of social difference and its tendency to look at caste as homogeneous. Because the analysis begins not from the nature of the production process, which shapes social relations, but from caste as a given social relation, it perceives the relationship between castes as having an a priori configuration in Indian society. There is a problem in the ahistorical analysis which does not look at the question of identity as in state of constant flux, as a process running in conjunction with the changes taking place in the larger system, of which nobody is untouched.

We must analyze not only the given locations of certain people in society, but also the relations that are forged in the process of production in society. In capitalism, the relations formed in this process lead to the emergence of propertyless and propertyed sections—there are also sections which appear to fall in between, but in times of crisis take sides determining their location in society. The sole motive that drives the ruling class is the maximization of the surplus so as to propel the growth and expansion of capital. This motive leads the modern Indian ruling class into three types of well concerted actions: (1) allowing caste as an ideological apparatus to persist— to allow for the creation of the ‘other’, with whom they compete (as in the case of upper castes versus Backward Castes—Koeris versus Yadavas etc); (2) the consolidation of their strength through the forging of collectives based on rhetoric of caste so as to extend their monopoly over instruments of state and market; and (3) making all efforts possible to retain and expand their hegemony within the caste as well as in society as a whole—for which, once more the role of caste as a homogeneous entity becomes important as it prevents the emergence of any organized opposition.

In order to understand better what identity politics has done
to the political scene beyond the apparent, considering the example of Bihar would be useful. The year 1990 became a landmark in the political history of Bihar and of India. It provides us with useful fodder to analyze and understand the nature and purpose of caste-based identity politics. The triumph of Laloo Prasad Yadav is understood to be the first Backward Caste majority government in Bihar. His government came into power because of tremendous support of the poor in the state and seemed to be a near complete rebuttal of upper caste hegemony in political power. However, the years 1990-2004 decimated this political collective identity—it fragmented under the weight of its own failures and was unable to reinvent itself as the political elite in the state. This category was populated by the fluid social groups searching for political power, shuffling between Bharatiya Janata Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Congress Party, Lok Janshakti Party and Janata Dal (United). But the changes that came over the scenario were not limited to this as election analysts, through short-term quick analyses, seem to suggest. It is this excess, unnoticed as it was by the mainstream that gives us the opportunity to understand how identity politics digests its own entrails at particular historical conjunctures.

Laloo Prasad Yadav’s ascendance to political power meant initially the possible empowerment of the poor, a new era of governance (Bharti: 1990: 1373-74)—the empowerment of Backward Castes through the new agenda of social justice which held sway over voters. (Bharti: 1991: 1895-97). It definitely did transform the social landscape of Bihar, despite the fact that it represented the elite of the Backward Castes the fifteen year long regime did generate a confidence among this section of the population at large. Analysts acknowledge his “deft political management” in rallying the Backward Caste’s for a movement for social justice (Gupta: 2001: 2743). In the larger political macrocosm of State, Backward Caste politics made a substantial difference—and the elite of these castes emerged as strong contenders for political power. But as far as the larger picture is concerned the development only proved how sharply differentiated are the ‘apparent’ categories of caste collectives on the level of the economic. Ultimately the so-called Backward Caste assertion while allowing the democratization of confidence did not make any fundamental difference to the actual living conditions of the large mass of Backward Castes. They remained as underdeveloped as before and in a certain sense their condition deteriorated with the government following its agenda of withdrawal from the social sector—a process that has been speeded up by the current Nitish Kumar’s government. For the poor the Laloo Prasad government in actual terms remained a mere substitution of one section of the elite by another: Hardly any material benefits accrued to them and everyday life was unaltered. In 1990, the Backward Caste government came to power over the agenda of social justice, identifying the ‘other’ as the enemy shouting slogans which sought destruction of caste system and brahminism. But after 1995 a tremendous change came over this politics. While Nitish Kumar broke away and aligned himself with the Bharatiya Janata Party, a political formation with a support base among the upper castes, Laloo Prasad Yadav inducted more and more upper castes into his ministry. Though there was general discontent among the Backward Castes who constituted his support base, the elite at the state level appeared to be heading towards a cross-caste alliance. Is this to be termed a new phase of Backward Caste identity politics—dissolution of the agenda of social justice, because the upper castes have become more accommodating or is it that the Backward Caste elite’s interests have decided to pursue the agenda of capital? This is not an isolated development that has taken place in some villages but state level politics indicates how there has been a mixing of representatives from different castes and a commonality of political understanding has developed on the issues of pushing forward the agenda of private capital at state level.

This essay was an effort to understand not only the manner in which caste-based identity politics has had suspect agendas in the recent past but also the manner in which this agenda as well as the essence of this politics is constantly misconstrued by political analysts as well as sociologists. Divorce of the process of formation of identities from the actual social and material processes results in convenient status quoist analysis. Discourse and analysis are not autonomous, they are rather, products of particular political milieus. Discourses that have ignored the relationship between caste, class and identity have primarily emerged from “anti-class” positions in Indian social sciences, which if explored further seem to emanate from a bias against an analysis that does not consider it inappropriate to take a position or defend certain sections/ideas. This bias is generally called the principle of value-neutrality in social sciences.

References:
Q1. You have taken on the holy cows, the big boys of the Indian subcontinent - Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, Sheikh Abdullah... Who according to you, did his people and the people’s movements most harm? Which, or whose actions, most influenced the way the class picture of the subcontinent looks today?

A. I don’t think that all these leaders can be evaluated on equal terms and their roles be subjected to the same degree of critical analysis. But the role played by the political representatives of the local elite was clear enough in the freedom struggle. Even the serious mouthpieces of British Imperialism conceded the clear class divide and conflicting interests in the movement of National Liberation in India. I quote from the editorial of the London Times of January 29, 1928. It said, “There is no real connection between those two unrests, the labour and congress opposition, but their very existence and co-existence explains and fully justifies the attention which Lord Irwin gave to labour problems”. I also want to assert that these politicians could only play this role because the leadership of the CPI in reality abdicated the struggle of independence by collaborating with the British under the instructions from Stalin’s Moscow where the bureaucracy was carrying out its foreign policy for the national interests of “Russia” rather than following the Marxist-Leninist path of proletarian internationalism. I think all of these ‘leaders’ influenced the post-colonial politics in different ways and to different degrees. Again the reason has been the lack of a clear alternative for irreconcilable class struggle.

Q2. Your attitude to Gandhi is really interesting and it of course overturns the popular perception of him. On the one hand, there is his formidable reputation as the saviour of minorities, as he did at Noakhali in 1947. On the other hand, as your book shows, in 1922 when Hindu soldiers from the Garhwal Rifles refused to fire on an anti-imperialist demo by Muslims, Gandhi supported them. Is there a contradiction between the two?

A. The ideological foundations of Gandhi’s policies were confined within the parameters of semi-feudal, semicapitalist social economic relations. Hence all his political actions flowed from this thought. All the confusion and divinity aside, the reality is that India won Independence through a compromise and 2.7 million innocent souls were lost in this bloodshed. Sixty years later, India and Pakistan are the bastions of most disgusting destitution and poverty in the world.

Q3. You seem to suggest that Gandhiji’s protection of Muslims was actually an extension of a kind of state support to one’s subjects.

A. The liberation movement would not have stopped at the ‘stage’ of national liberation and could have moved on to social and economic emancipation through a socialist revolution. It was cut across by the religious frenzy to restrain it within the clutches of capitalism and the system of continual imperialist exploitation.
Gandhi wanted a peaceful derailment of the class struggle, which is a utopia. He might have had an honest sentiment to protect the Muslims but once the forces of reaction and communal hatred were unleashed even Gandhi failed to restrain them.

Q4. Leon Trotsky believed that the Indian bourgeoisie could never lead a revolutionary struggle and went on to call Gandhi an artificial leader and false prophet. Would you say the same of Jinnah? You mention an oyster dinner at the Waldorf hotel in 1933 when he laughed at the idea of Jinnah's resigning from Woldorf. Does this show the evolution of Jinnah from Woldorf hotel in 1933 to Karachi assembly in 1947. There were innumerable zigs and zags in that journey. Although Trotsky didn't analyze him individually but from the point of view of his theory of permanent revolution, Trotsky's analysis of Jinnah would not have been any different from his analysis of Gandhi.

Q5. Would you attribute the shaky structure of democracy in Pakistan to the class biases of its founding fathers? A. All leaders were subject to change through the dynamics of the movement and dictates of the vested interests of the class they represented. Jinnah was vulnerable to that too. This shows the evolution of Jinnah from Woldorf hotel in 1933 to Karachi assembly in 1947. There were innumerable zigs and zags in that journey. Although Trotsky didn't analyze him individually but from the point of view of his theory of permanent revolution, Trotsky's analysis of Jinnah would not have been any different from his analysis of Gandhi.

Q6. Bhagat Singh was of course one of the most progressive and thinking radicals of the liberation movement. But what is it about him that the Left, the Right and the Centre rush to adopt him as their own? A. Bhagat Singh was no doubt an icon of the struggle against British imperialism. He developed his political policies and ideology when he had a chance to read works of Lenin and Marx while in prison. He was still forging his political position when he was hanged. Hence when his position of “Inqilaab” is put forth, its ideological and theoretical foundations are relatively shallow and not entrenched in scientific Marxism. Hence it is easier for the left, the right and the centre to rush to adopt him as their own. Thus it is vital that unless the youth who are inspired by Bhagat Singh are developed into Marxist cadres, mere sloganeering of ‘Revolution’ could lead them in any direction. They can even blunder into certain reactionary movements displaying a revolutionary rhetoric. It is the tragedy of cultural primitiveness that the role of the individual in political movements is exaggerated. Icons are mystified and even worshipped. This devastates the role of a collective leadership in a revolutionary struggle and undermines the importance of scientific theory and practice.

Q7. Pakistan has mostly been under military rule. It has had democratically elected governments only thrice in 60 years. What is the reason that Marxism has never been an option, not even as an experiment? A. In 1968-69 there was a revolution in Pakistan. From Chittagong to Peshawar, there was only one slogan in the air - Revolution! Revolution! Socialist Revolution! Workers occupied factories, the peasants besieged the landed estates and the youth were on the streets, refusing to pay fares in trains and buses. The prevalent property relations were being challenged by the revolution. From November 6, 1968 to March 29, 1969 there were at least 7 occasions when the capitalist system and state could have been overthrown through a revolutionary insurrection. Unfortunately due to the lack of a Bolshevik party this historical opportunity was missed. The Pakistan Peoples Party was a product of this revolution, as its founding documents clearly stated: “The ultimate objective of the party’s policy is the attainment of a classless society which is only possible through Socialist Revolution in our times.”

Z. A. Bhutto recognized that the character of the (1968-69) movement was socialist and not national democratic. That is why he became a legend of the masses for three generations. But he had no organised Bolshevik party or a strategy to carry this revolution through to its victorious end.

The so-called democratic regimes in Pakistan were only inducted by the ruling state either to diffuse a rising revolutionary upsurge or as a preemptive measure to deviate and confine the raging movements against military dictatorships within capitalist structures. In any case the basic fault lines in Pakistan are not between democracy and militarism or extremism and moderation. The fundamental contradiction is that of class interests and no stability can come without the resolution of this contradiction.

Q8. Please tell us about your introduction to the Left ideology. Who were your mentors, your peers? You were born ten years after Independence. In the 1970s you were a student leader resisting the despotic Zia regime. Was Marxism a natural progression of a politics of student activism? A. The first time I got to study Marxism was in 1976 when I was incarcerated in Multan Central Jail after a clash with Islamic fundamentalists; we were tortured by the state. In the prison library there were some works of Marx and Lenin lying in a corner. They were left there by some communist prisoners during the 1940s. After I was ordered to be shot at sight by the Zia dictatorship on June 10 1980, I had to flee to exile in Amsterdam. In Europe I had the opportunity to meet and discuss with comrade Ted Grant, who was...
my friend, mentor and teacher. I think that after Trotsky’s assassination, Ted single-handedly held high the red flag of revolutionary Marxism. His contribution in Marxist theory is enormous. For more than sixty years he resolutely worked to deepen and enhance perspectives and strategy to lay the foundations of a new and genuine Marxist international.

Q9. When did you become Lal Khan? Why did you choose this name?
A. Lal Khan was the name of a sergeant in the British Indian army. He was my uncle and had been a prisoner of the Bolsheviks in 1919 when 21 imperialist armies attacked the nascent Soviet state. As a child I used to listen to his stories about how the Bolsheviks had treated the Indian military prisoners. Sometimes in dearth of food supplies the Bolshevik captors used to remain hungry themselves but fed their Indian prisoners. I was so amused and impressed that when, in 1981, I had to choose a pen name under the vicious Zia dictatorship I opted for that name. It also means Red. As I have been writing under this name for more than 26 years it would be useless to change the name which is recognized by workers and youth and linked with an ideological tendency.

Q10. Under whose regime was/is it most difficult to conduct Left politics? How irresponsible were Zulfiqar Bhutto, Zia, Sharif, Benazir to people’s movements?
A. There is no situation in a capitalist milieu that is easy and viable to build the forces of revolutionary Marxism. Similarly there can be no objective conditions so bad in which Bolshevik party cadres can’t develop the art of expanding the organization and building revolutionary forces. However the wrath and indignation of the masses against the brutalities of the Zia dictatorship was helpful in gaining recruits. But when Benazir Bhutto came to power, the way she disillusioned the movement and dashed the hopes of the masses, the political apathy and a certain demoralization that had set in, made our work somewhat more difficult.

Q11. What will happen to Kashmir?
A. The ruling classes of India and Pakistan have used and abused the Kashmir issue for sixty years. Now they can neither have an all-out war nor sustain peace. Their systems don’t allow them much room. The masses of Kashmir have been brutalised and subjected to misery by these subcontinental elites. The Americans want a continual sale of their weapons of mass destruction at the expense of the sweat, tears and blood of the subcontinental masses. Without the overthrow of these capitalist regimes, the Kashmir issue cannot be solved. Unless the subcontinent gets independence from imperialist slavery, how can Kashmir gain freedom? Nationalism and fundamentalism are on decline in Kashmir; the youth and workers are moving more onto the lines of class struggle. This has to be linked to the class movements in India and Pakistan. A voluntary socialist federation of the Indian subcontinent would be the only guarantee for a genuine freedom and emancipation of the Kashmiri oppressed.

Q12. In Pakistan, on the one hand, there is the military which somehow has, in a way, been an upholder of liberal will and democratic parties like the PPP that are corrupt and thoroughly discredited. On the other hand, there are the religious rightist forces. What will Pakistan choose now?
A. The liberals and fundamentalists are both entrenched in this decaying capitalist economy. Imperialism and religious obscurantism are two sides of the same coin. Whenever a revolutionary movement of the toiling masses has emerged, the so-called liberal, democratic and religious rightist forces have always and will always join hands to crush any challenge to this exploitive system. The perspective of a mass movement is rejected by mainstream intellectuals in Pakistan. There is always a doom and gloom scenario preached by these apostles of Capital in the media. But a social revolution is the only way-out for the salvation of the people. I am convinced that the working masses shall tread upon this path sooner rather than later. The events of 1968-69 are too glaring a tradition to ignore.

Q13. How supportive are the Indian left of leftist struggles in its neighbourhood in Pakistan? What do you think of its position on the nuclear deal, which many feel, is just an anti-American statement?
A. There cannot be two separate revolutions in India and Pakistan. Five thousand years of common history, culture and society is too strong to be cleaved by this partition. However the left forces can learn from the experiences of each other. Especially the ideological mistakes made have to be rectified and lessons learnt from. Obviously the opposition to the nuclear deal is positive. But from a Marxist point of view it is not the most important of issues in the present situation. The way market economy is ravaging India and throwing the vast majority of population into the abyss of misery, poverty, disease and deprivation is horrendous. I think that after sixty years of the traumatic experiences the left should at least try to understand that the basic character of the Indian revolution is not national democratic but socialistic. Unless they change course the Indian proletariat will force them onto a revolutionary path. The vote of the masses to left parties in the 2004 elections was for a revolutionary change rather than to maintain the existing order. Next time they will vote with their feet. If these leaders still cling on to the redundant theory of two stages they shall perish in the rising tide of a workers upsurge. A fresh revolutionary Marxist leadership shall emerge to make socialist victory a reality in the impending class war about to explode.
London, 11 July 1868

...The chatter about the need to prove the concept of value arises only from complete ignorance both of the subject under discussion and of the method of science. Every child knows that any nation that stopped working, not for a year, but let us say, just for a few weeks, would perish. And every child knows, too, that the amounts of products corresponding to the differing amounts of needs demand differing and quantitatively determined amounts of society’s aggregate labour. It is self-evident that this necessity of the distribution of social labour in specific proportions is certainly not abolished by the specific form of social production; it can only change its form of manifestation. Natural laws cannot be abolished at all. The only thing that can change, under historically differing conditions, is the form in which those laws assert themselves. And the form in which this proportional distribution of labour asserts itself in a state of society in which the interconnection of social labour expresses itself as the private exchange of the individual products of labour, is precisely the exchange value of these products.

Where science comes in is to show how the law of value asserts itself. So, if one wanted to ‘explain’ from the outset all phenomena that apparently contradict the law, one would have to provide the science before the science. It is precisely Ricardo’s mistake that in his first chapter, on value, all sorts of categories that still have to be arrived at are assumed as given, in order to prove their harmony with the law of value.

On the other hand, as you correctly believe, the history of the theory of course demonstrates that the understanding of the value relation has always been the same, clearer or less clear, hedged with illusions or scientifically more precise. Since the reasoning process itself arises from the existing conditions and is itself a natural process, really comprehending thinking can always only be the same, and can vary only gradually, in accordance with the maturity of development, hence also the maturity of the organ that does the thinking. Anything else is drivel.

The vulgar economist has not the slightest idea that the actual, everyday exchange relations and the value magnitudes cannot be directly identical. The point of bourgeois society is precisely that, a priori, no conscious social regulation of production takes place. What is reasonable and necessary by nature asserts itself only as a blindly operating average. The vulgar economist thinks he has made a great discovery when, faced with the disclosure of the intrinsic interconnection, he insists that things look different in appearance. In fact, he prides himself in his clinging to appearances and believing them to be the ultimate. Why then have science at all?

But there is also something else behind it. Once interconnection has been revealed, all theoretical belief in the perpetual necessity of the existing conditions collapses, even before the collapse takes place in practice. Here, therefore, it is completely in the interests of the ruling classes to perpetuate the unthinking confusion. And for what other reason are the sycophantic babblers paid who have no other scientific trump to play except that, in political economy, one may not think at all! ...

Other Suggestions:
1. Marx to Friedrich Bolte in New York, November 23, 1871
   (On Left-Wing Sectarianism)
2. Engels to Joseph Bloch on Konizsberg, September 21-22, 1890
   (On the Dialectic of the Base and the Superstructure)

Source: MECW, Volume 43, p. 67; First published: abridged in Die Neue Zeit, Stuttgart, 1901-1902 and in full in Pisma Marks a h Kugelmanu (Letters of Marx to Kugelmann), Moscow-Leningrad, 1928.
HENRY J. HYDE UNITED STATES-INDIA PEACEFUL ATOMIC ENERGY COOPERATION ACT OF 2006

TITLE I—UNITED STATES AND INDIA NUCLEAR COOPERATION

SEC. 102. SENSE OF CONGRESS. It is the sense of Congress that—(6) it is in the interest of the United States to enter into an agreement for nuclear cooperation arranged pursuant to section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 (42 U.S.C. 2153) with a country that has never been a State Party to the NPT if—(B) the country has a functioning and uninterrupted democratic system of government, has a foreign policy that is congruent to that of the United States, and is working with the United States on key foreign policy initiatives related to nonproliferation; (D) such cooperation will induce the country to give greater political and material sup-port to the achievement of United States global and regional nonproliferation objectives, especially with respect to dissuading, isolating, and, if necessary, sanctioning and containing states that sponsor terrorism and terrorist groups that are seeking to acquire a nuclear weapons capability or other weapons of mass destruction capability and the means to deliver such weapons; (7) the United States should continue its policy of engagement, collaboration, and exchanges with and between India and Pakistan;

SEC. 103. STATEMENTS OF POLICY. (b) WITH RESPECT TO SOUTH ASIA.—The following shall be the policies of the United States with respect to South Asia: (3) Secure India’s—(A) full participation in the Prolif-eration Security Initiative; (B) formal commitment to the State-ment of Interdiction Principles of such Initiative; (4) Secure India’s full and active participation in United States efforts to dissuade, isolate, and, if necessary, sanction and contain Iran for its efforts to acquire weapons of mass de-struction, including a nuclear weapons capability and the capability to en-rich uranium or reprocess nuclear fuel, and the means to deliver weapons of mass destruction.

SEC. 104. WAIVER AUTHORITY AND CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL. (a) IN GENERAL.—If the President makes the determination described in subsection (b), the President may—(1) exempt a proposed agreement for cooperation with India arranged pursuant to section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 (42 U.S.C. 2153) from the requirement of subsection a.(2) of such section; (2) waive the application of section 128 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 (42 U.S.C. 2157) with respect to exports to India; and (3) waive with respect to...
India the application of—
(A) section 129 a.(1)(D) of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 (42 U.S.C. 2158(a)(1)(D)); and
(B) section 129 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 2158) regarding any actions that occurred before July 18, 2005.

(b) DETERMINATION BY THE PRESIDENT.—The determination referred to in subsection (a) is a determination by the President that the following actions have occurred:
(4) India is working actively with the United States for the early conclusion of a multilateral treaty on the cessation of the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.
(5) India is working with and supporting United States and international efforts to prevent the spread of enrichment and reprocessing technology to any state that does not already possess full-scale, functioning enrichment or reprocessing plants.

(c) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—
(1) IN GENERAL.—The President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees the determination made pursuant to subsection (b), together with a report detailing the basis for the determination.
(2) INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED.—To the fullest extent available to the United States, the report referred to in paragraph (1) shall include the following information:

(D) A description of the steps that India is taking to work with the United States for the conclusion of a multilateral treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, including a description of the steps that the United States has taken and will take to encourage India to identify and declare a date by which India would be willing to stop production of fissile material for nuclear weapons unilaterally or pursuant to a multilateral moratorium or treaty.

(E)(i) an assessment of whether India is fully and actively participating in United States and international efforts to disprove, isolate, and, if necessary, sanction and contain Iran for its efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction, including a nuclear weapons capability (including the capability to enrich uranium or reprocess nuclear fuel), and the means to deliver weapons of mass destruction, including a description of the specific measures that India has taken in this regard; and (ii) if India is not assessed to be fully and actively participating in such efforts, a description of—(I) the measures the United States Government has taken to secure India’s full and active participation in such efforts;

(G) a detailed description of—(i) United States efforts to promote national or regional progress by India and Pakistan in disclosing, securing, limiting, and reducing their fissile material stock-piles, including stockpiles for military purposes, pending creation of a worldwide fissile material cut-off regime, including the institution of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty; (iii) assistance that the United States is providing, or would be able to provide, to India and Pakistan to promote the objectives in clause (i), consistent with its obligations under international law and existing agreements;
Dear all,

“Correspondence”, as it has been conceptualised by the current editors, is a political magazine, using “politics” in a very broad sense so as to include all issues, questions and answers that influence our lives. We invite serious contributions on any social, cultural, political or economic issue from counter-hegemonic perspectives, which need not be confined to any established socialist and communist current of thought (though these approaches are most welcome).

Some of the guidelines are:
1. Contributions are to be in English.

2. Writing on film, music, books and sport (the list is not exhaustive) will be accepted, but only when backed by a political/social perspective as is consistent with the magazine.

3. Articles can be sent for republishing but these will be given only second preference.

4. We allow only for non-fiction articles to be published, except in rare cases where poetry/short stories submitted are relevant to the magazine.

5. The length of the articles can range from 800-2500 words. However, essays that are even longer will be accepted on occasion.

6. Articles that are considered unsatisfactory in any way, though can be published with some changes will be sent back to the contributor with suggestions. However, in case of minor editing concerning grammar and syntax you will not be contacted.

7. Articles are subject to rejection. Reasons for this will not be disclosed. Writers will be notified if their article is accepted.

8. Our preference will definitely be for previously unpublished articles submitted exclusively to Correspondence, but we will not restrict their wider circulation and publication. Hence, the copyright resides with the authors; they are free to republish their articles, if possible with a link to Correspondence.

9. During subsequent issues, space shall be provided for readers to comment. Countercomments shall be permitted, though these can remain unpublished depending on the Editor’s judgment.

10. Contributors are requested to provide their e-mail addresses, so that a network between readers, writers and the representing editors can be established. Within this network, issues/ideas/suggestions can be discussed, and objections raised.

11. All submissions are to be sent at submissions.correspondence@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
The Editorial team.

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