

# India and the new untouchables - Casts, Hinduism, capitalism, Marxists and Ambedkar

Friday 9 December 2016, by [JAL Murzban](#) (Date first published: 10 April 2016).

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*"We would therefore propose to replace the state everywhere by Gemeinwesen, a good old German word which can very well convey the meaning of the French word commune."* Frederick Engels.

*"Inequality is the soul of Hinduism. The morality of Hinduism is only social. It is unmoral and inhuman to say the least. What is unmoral and inhuman easily becomes immoral, inhuman and infamous."* B.R. Ambedkar.

## Understanding Fascism in India

It must be clear by now, after almost two years in power of the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the political organ of the extreme rightist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), that the contemporary government in power is fascist through and through. The attack on the JNU by the BJP is just the starting moment of the fascist attack on the intellectual legacy in democratic India. What needs being done now is to understand the Indian variant of fascism as also understanding that a blanket definition of fascism as the "most reactionary dictatorship of finance capitalism"—the definition that was the basis of the Comintern understanding of fascism—would be abstracted from concrete conditions. By and large, this form of economist definition of fascism lacked the cultural and ideological study of fascism. It lacks the understanding that fascism, though being driven by the crisis of capitalism, was and is essential plebian in character in its cultural and ideological character. It was earlier Trotsky who mentioned this plebian character of fascism and now it is Jairus Banaji who repeatedly raises this issue of the mass character of fascism, an argument that he picks up from Arthur Rosenberg's *Fascism as a Mass Movement*. The inability to understand this plebian mass character would unwittingly strengthen fascism even further.

What needs being done in the study of fascism is to look at its (1) economic roots, especially in understanding the formation of the Industrial Reserve Army in the crisis of global capital accumulation, (2) the political crisis of legitimacy of liberal democracy, and (3) the cultural and ideological expressions of people against liberal democracy where the ideology and politics of racism and militaristic nationalism become dominant. Here it is important to understand that liberal democracy has two opponents: the communists and the fascists. Both want open rebellion against the liberal order, the only thing is that the rebellion that fascism advocates is totally inauthentic. In fact this rebellion against liberalism is a pseudo-rebellion, a rebellion that is totally in support of capitalism and imperialism. Yet there is the character of the Cultural Revolution that seems to be

missing from mainstream left parties who have either being looking at merely the political aberrations of fascism.

What mainstream left in India also did was that it totally missed the deep revolutions that Jyotiba Phule and B.R. Ambedkar invoked. What both these radical thinkers said was that within the dominant form of thinking that we call the “Hindu order”, the question of democracy and critical thinking would be totally missing. And since the contemporary government intends to create a Hindu state and demolish secularism and democracy, it is necessary to attack this fiction-phantasmagoria called “Hinduism” in order to preserve secularism and democracy. We are claiming that the very word “Hinduism” is a fiction because it is not indigenous to Indian history and society, but a term of West Asian origin which became the dominant discourse of the ruling elites only after the failed 1857 Indian revolution. In the modern and contemporary sense, “Hinduism” is an invention of colonialism. In this sense nothing called “Hinduism” had ever existed in the Indian subcontinent.

This essay is a political attack on not only the proponents of Hindutva, but also an attack on the liberal democrats. We thus begin with the question of religion, namely the question of Hinduism that Ambedkar had critiqued as the worst form of anti-humanism that could ever be found. We begin however with a question: “Why does one say that the “critique of religion is the prerequisite of all critiques” [1], and how does one concretize this critique in radical politics?” And since we have been told by the political right in India that the Indian state ought to be a “Hindu state”, we are concretely setting the agenda of revolutionary politics to understand the possible alternatives to not only the fascism of the Hindutva Parivar, but also the politics of liberal democracy that is itself nurturing this form of fascism. Our concern is democracy and by democracy we mean real democracy, not formal democracy that parliamentary democracy advocates. In this struggle of democracy we see how Hindutva becomes a symptom/fetish of an underlying anti-democratic social system. Whilst the symptom/fetish is a phantasmagorical mode of appearance of a concealed social structure (namely neo-liberal capitalism), it has also a life of its own. This is because this symptom/fetish called “political Hinduism” is similar to the value form that Marx outlines in *Capital* where the process of metamorphosis of commodities determined by the trio: alienation (implying the loss of the self)-reification (meaning a form of “thingfication” or the de-humanization of humanity)-fetishism (or the succumbing of humanity to this monstrous thing) rules the roost not only in market economies, but also in the ideological practices of post-colonial nation states. We say that in the production of commodities there is a loss of human and material form and the production of a dubious double where a type of a monstrous machine is produced that itself creates another double that Marx calls the “ghost” [2].

So just as we have two dubious doubles: the monstrous machine and the ghost in commodities, we have the same in the production of the commodity called “political Hinduism”. That this model of political Hinduism that V.D. Savarkar first outlined in his *Essentials of Hindutva* in the early 1920s parallels the renderings of Maulana Maududi (the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami) and Syed Qutub (the author of *Milestones* and the inspiration behind the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt) ought to be noted. Both, whilst being messianic in the fascistic sense, are also anti-secular and anti-socialist. Whilst political Hinduism needs being critiqued, one also needs to say that this entire discourse called “Hinduism” is a fuzzy term. That the RSS as a self-professed extreme nationalist organization borrowed from the repertoire of Zoroastrian Iran and then from the cultural baggage of Abbasid Iran and Mughal India should be noted. And with this noting, one should also note that the RSS’s version of mythical nationalism does not have its own conceptual framework. Taking Ambedkar we say that Hinduism is essentially a right-wing fuzzy myth, since “Hindu society as such does not exist. It is only a collection of castes...A caste has no feeling that it is affiliated to other castes except when there is a Hindu-Muslim riot. On all other occasions each caste endeavors to segregate itself and

distinguish itself from other castes. ....Indeed the ideal Hindu must be like a rat living in his own hole refusing to have contact with others. There is an utter lack among the Hindus of what the sociologists call 'consciousness of kind'. There is no Hindu consciousness of kind. In every Hindu the consciousness that exists is the consciousness of his caste. That is the reason why the Hindus cannot be considered to form a society or nation" [3].

One then needs to ask; "if Hinduism is a fuzzy right-wing myth, then why would one want to be identified as this fuzzy mythical character and try to create political Hinduism?" There are two basic explanations: one that takes us back to the 10<sup>th</sup> mandala of the Rg Veda that serves as the foundational myth of the caste system where caste implies class+race+neurosis+psychosis+schizophrenia. I have said this in *The New Militants* and *Why We Are Not Hindus* that caste is to be understood as "enclosed class" as also a type of gang and clique that bases its exploitative mechanism on a deeply entrenched hierarchical system where the upper caste elites are considered as "pure" and the working multitude said to be "unclean". However besides this classical formulation of understanding caste there is also the understanding that caste is similar to a form of racism as also a form of a new psychological disorder which I call "neurosis-psychosis" that has transcended the earlier classical psychoanalytic formulation of the separation of neurosis and psychosis. From this psychoanalytic observation of caste and from Ambedkar's observation that Hindus can in no way form a nation, we move to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century observations on political Hinduism. See how absurd these formulations of political Hinduism are. Consider also their megalomaniac and narcissistic character.

Note three observations. The first is by Aurobindo, who claims that "nationalism is not a mere political programme. Nationalism is a religion, so Aurobindo continues, "that has come from God. If you are going to be a nationalist, if you are going to assent to this religion of nationalism, you must do it in the religious spirit. When it is said that India shall expand and extend itself, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world (both emphases mine, M.J.)" [4], whilst the second is of that Keshab Chunder Sen who sees British colonialism as a meeting of the Britis and Brahmans: "in the advent of the English nation in India we see a reunion of parted cousins, the descent of different families of the ancient Aryan race" [5]. But now look at Vivekanand who links spirituality with world conquest: "This is the great ideal before us and everyone must be ready for it—the conquest of the whole world by India. We must go out, we must conquer the world through our spirituality and philosophy". One should relate these observations with a distinctive fascist version of Sanatan Dharma: Hinduism, once, used to extend over what is now Afghanistan, over Java, over Cambodia. Powerful Hindu India could reconquer these lands and give them back the pride of their Indian civilization. She could make Greater India once more a cultural reality, and a political one too....She could teach the fallen Aryans of the West the meaning of their forgotten paganism; she could rebuild the cults of Nature, the cults of Youth and Strength, wherever they have been destroyed; she could achieve on a world-scale what Emperor Julian tried to do. And the victorious Hindus could erect a statue to Julian, somewhere in conquered Europe, on the border of the sea; a statue with an inscription, both in Sanskrit and in Greek: What thou hast dreamt, We have achieved [6].

Compare this with the political fascist understanding: It is worth bearing well in mind how these old nations solve their minorities' problem. They do not take to undertake to recognize any separate elements in their polity. Emigrants have to get themselves naturally assimilated in the principal mass of population, the National race, by adopting its culture and language and sharing in its aspirations, by losing all consciousness of their separate existence, forgetting their separate origin. If they not do so, they live merely as outsiders, bound by all the codes and conventions of the Nation, at the sufferance of the nation and deserving no special protection, far less any privileges and rights. There are only two courses open to the foreign elements, either to merge themselves in the national

race and adopt its culture, or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and to quit the country at the sweet will of the national race. That is the only sound view on the minorities' problem. That is the only logical and correct solution. That alone keeps the Nation safe from the danger of a cancer developing into its body-politic of the creation of a state within the state. From this standpoint, sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the foreign races in Hindustan must either adopt Hindu culture and language, must hold to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu religion and lose their separate existence, to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment—not even citizen's rights. What we see in all this renderings of nationalism is the nationalism of upper-caste elitism which develops as cultural megalomania with its obsession on spiritualism and power a form of nationalism that does not have anything to do with the toiling masses. But what we see in the last rendering is the complete fascistic version, where the regime of rights of people is completely erased. [7] [8]

### **State as Counterrevolutionary Tool**

The fact that the RSS is able to impose its fascistic character of nationalism that they have ironically borrowed from European fascism, should not surprise us, since these phantasmagorical characteristics were born in 19<sup>th</sup> century's idea of nationalism. That Indian nationalism had always had a Hindu characteristic controlled by the upper caste elites that subdued all forms of subalternism should be noted. Besides this idea that was borrowed lock stock and barrel from Europe's idea of the nation state should also be noted. Nationalism always needs the state for its existence. In my book *Why We Are Not Hindus* I said that theories of the state, both classical and modern, stand on both rigorous and shaky grounds. It is necessary to understand this contradiction. This ironical situation is because the state is predicated on conflicting and warring classes and consequently represents the interests of only the dominant classes. I am saying this because of the revolt that has broken out in JNU could get trapped within the mechanisms of the state. It is necessary to go into theories of the state in order to look at the possibilities of real emancipation of the subaltern classes-castes in India.

Let us have a brief look. Two main motifs emerge from theories of the state, one that the state stands for the public good and is the embodiment of morality. Aristotle's *Politics* and Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* are the best examples of this idea of the state. The exact opposite emerges from the philosophy of Marx, namely that the state is nothing but the managing committee of the global bourgeoisie [9]. For Marx, then the public good stands outside the realm of the state. If Hegel thought that the state was the embodiment of the moral good, for Marx it was the embodiment of the immoral evil. Thus for Marx one had to transcend the realm of the state for the possibilities of the realization of this moral good. Yet a sort of tragedy struck Marxism with Stalin's counterrevolution against the Bolsheviks. What happened in Soviet Marxism was that Marxism was made to stand on its head, where the counterrevolution against Marxism spoke strangely in the name of Marx. One did not have merely a duplicate Marx, but an inverted Marx. And this inverted Marx would not only haunt the whole world, it would stalk it. India would be no exception.

It is important to note that fascism emerged in Italy, in 1922 in Germany in 1933 and in Iran in 1979 only on the basis of the crisis of liberal capitalism and the ashes of the failed communist revolutions. It seems that 1922, 1933 and 1979 would return this time to haunt India. This would be one great tragedy. But there is the tragedy outlined in the above paragraph—the tragedy of the Stalinist counterrevolution. If tragedy struck the Marxist movement for human emancipation where state capitalism under the stewardship of Stalinism would turn out to be its goal; modern India led by the

neo-liberals was likewise struck by a new tragedy, the definite sign being the acceptance of the American led ideologies and economic policies of neo-liberal capitalism since the early 1990s. What this America led neo-liberalism did was attack not only the ideological foundations of social democracy. It would also attack the ideology of secularism, as if neo-liberalism would be able to construct a neo-conservative and anti-secular agenda for India. However this “post-socialist” age would give way not to the neo-liberal fantasy of making the whole world in the image of capitalism. Multiple contradictions would emerge where the Congress party that held all the contradictions of India in its own fold, would now burst in multiple contradictions.

The most dominant image emerging in this “post-Soviet” age would be the communal image of the Hindutva rightists. And with it the destruction of the historical Babri Mosque in 1992 by the right-wing extremists, followed by the seizure of political power in New Delhi by the BJP, an ideology emerged that did not merely differ from that of Constitutional Democracy, but sought to destroy this very Democracy. What they did was launched a war of attrition on Indian Constitutional Democracy, where they dug trenches in Indian democracy and put their ideological paratroopers in these political trenches. The Indian state, so we learnt from the early 1990s, had to be a “Hindu state” governed by the ideology of “Hindutva”, where Indian ideology was no longer determined by the idea of citizenship, but by the idea of nationalist biological descent. Consequently racist ideology supplemented democratic ideology. The Indian heritage and Indian ideology soon mimicked the ideologies of Nazi Germany and Zionist Israel. Yet as we learn from Perry Anderson’s *The Indian Ideology* that this fantasy of the “Hindu state” grew in the cranium of the Indian national movement itself, with Gandhi being a proponent of this fantasy. What we learn thus is that liberal democracy did not exclude the right-wing idea of this “Hindu state”.

So how does one refigure the political philosophies of human emancipation, especially when liberal democracy was firstly at least since the past one and a half years year promoting Narendra Modi (the genocide overlord of Gujarat who oversaw the 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom) as the most successful Prime Minister of India? And sadly when liberal democracy did achieve its aims of putting the Gujarat satrap as the Prime Minister in May 2014, the brutality, incompetence and incompetence of liberalism comes to the fore. And with the new government that is actively promoting its fascist Hindutva agenda, and both the liberals and the Stalinists totally bewildered by the triumph of fascism, the philosophy of emancipation that Marx first drew in his *On the Jewish Question* (where humanity would be freed from the brutality of semi-feudalism, capitalism and the state) would gain greater importance. One here recalls Walter Benjamin’s idea that “every rise of fascism bears witness to a failed revolution”, an idea that is recently echoed by Slavoj Žižek.

One possible answer to this question of human emancipation and the critique of not only the fascist project of Hindutva, but also the critique of Hinduism as such, comes from the radical left and dalit movement which answer to the phantasmagoric idea of the “Hindu state”, by claiming that one needs to deconstruct the very idea of Indian ideology as “Hindu ideology”. One knows that besides the works of Jyotiba Phule, Periyar and B.R. Ambedkar who had all launched wars of position against this phantasmagorical “Hindu” ideology (we are keeping the word Hindu in phenomenological brackets, because this very term needs to be seen with suspicion—it is not a part of indigenous subaltern Indian tradition, but an Orientalist invention created by the colonial authorities with the help of the Sanskritized elites and pundits in the service of the British empire), it were the great Indian historians starting with D.D. Kosambi, R.S. Sharma and Romila Thapar who questioned this “Hinduism” itself, claiming that Hinduism was basically a class-caste ideology determined by the ruling elites and in no way could be reduced to the culture of the popular masses. It is by putting this “Hinduism” under the hermeneutics of suspicion that the radical democratic movement in India would be able to redefine itself.

One recalls Kancha Ilaiah here: who says: “Now in your own interest and in the interest of this great



country you must learn to listen and to read what we say. A people who refuse to listen to new questions and learn new answers will perish and not prosper". [10] And with the RSS in charge of political power the question of the political elites listening to people is totally out of question. The death of Rohith Vemula and the charges of sedition against Kanniah Kumar are only two examples that the right-wing elites refuse to listen to new voices—the voices of reason which speaks of human emancipation. But how would this cultural movement for human emancipation relate itself with the Marxist question of socialism, especially how human emancipation defined as class-caste-gender emancipation relates itself with the classical Marxist question of the dictatorship of the proletariat? Would this idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat be an aberration from the democratic ideals or should one read this idea as the realization of direct democracy?

Probably due to lack of study of historical materialist dialectics, the Marxist theory of the state, especially the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat has not been sufficiently understood. And also because the Stalinist counterrevolution pretended to be a form of an authentic Marxism, and also because the counterrevolutionary Soviet state since 1928 that was built on the political economy of state capitalism and the political idea of the Oriental despot, the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and following it the Marxist theory of state and radical democracy was totally left totally opaque and misunderstood. It was forgotten that for Marx, there is no state in communism (even in the first stage of communism, the so-called lower stage as he called it in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*). The state, for Marx has to be smashed [11], this smashing that is not replaced with another form of state, but what one calls the "anti-state". What then is this anti-state and how does real democracy appear on the scene of real history? Whilst it has been recognized that Marx insisted on a political logic of historicism and humanism where it was always the masses that make history and no substitute could replace the working masses, it seems that post-Marx-Marxism had blundered where the finger of suspicion went to Lenin, who seemingly replaced Marx's humanism with a brutal form of socialist dictatorship. This of course is incorrect. Consider Lenin's political logic where revolutionary seizure of power is said to be based on the initiative of the "people from below" [12], where "the source of power is not a law enacted by parliament", but on the "direct rule of the people" [13]. The Republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies is contrasted to the rule of the police, army and the bureaucracy [14]. Lenin thus recognizes two distinct forms of power: the bourgeois "centralized power" and the "direct initiative of the people from below" [15]. What Engels called the *Gemeinwesen* (seen in the above quote) is literally the rule of what we know now as the rule of the "commons", where the abolishment of private property and the state with the abolishment of commodity production is the sine qua non of revolutionary politics [16].

One will have to move from this theoretical understanding of the state to more mundane concerns to further the cause of democracy. Now take the case of the recent death of a not so recent fascist—the infamous Bal Thackeray, the founder of the fascist Shiv Sena—where it was not so much that the Indian fascist who wailed and moaned, but the Indian liberal who said that this recently dead fascist was a "very liberal and tolerant man". There has to be something extremely wrong with this "Indian Civilization" (that people from William Jones to Vivekananda and from Bankim Chandra to Gandhi boasted of), if fascism is said to become tolerant. We once knew of the barbaric fascist who created Auschwitz. Now we have heard of the liberals who moaned the death of the fascist, Bal Thackeray. Because of the blurring of the distinctions between liberalism and fascism, and also because the caste question could not be articulated, in fact actively suppressed by people like Gandhi who insisted on the so-called glories of the apartheid caste system, one recalls Slavoj Žižek's observation of Gandhi as a "social fascist".

One needs to involve a critique of Indian liberalism that has time and again compromised with their fascist cousins. We claim here that since the deep seated Cultural Revolution against organized

religions and the established class-caste system could not be created in a form where it gripped the masses, the old caste system albeit in a new mode of appearance, marched into the little scene of Indian history. The RSS is the final realization of the resurrection of the old caste system with the imaginary warrior-priests as the New Rulers. Hindutva and Liberal Democracy One begins with a sort of confession. For in saying that one “can never be a Hinduvawadi”, one could be said to be implying that a type of confusion reigns where the borders of the descriptive, explanatory and the normative are set up. For in claiming that one “can never be a Hinduvawadi”, one also means that “one cannot be a Hindu”. One thus needs to new identities to find the soul of the Indian revolution. After all, we well know that there can be no Hinduism without caste, and however much one tries to purge caste from Hinduism, caste as the eternal insane neurotic returns once again. Hinduism is based of caste and caste on extreme borders that separate one group from the other. But if borders are the essence of all class societies, they are the Essence (with a capital “E”) of Indian caste society. I would repeatedly insist that borders, in fact what Etienne Balibar has called the “borders of cruelty”, become a type of a Hegelian Wesen (essence) that is so deeply ingrained in Indian society that to imagine a casteless, classless and democratic society seems to be improbable. It is our concern to turn this improbable into the probable and to link the Marxist philosophy of the dictatorship of the proletariat with the very important idea of annihilation of caste.

Whilst the RSS version of politics is the most brazen version of caste-class politics, it must be noted that liberal democracy did nothing to deal with the caste question. Despite these deep rooted borders whereby the fascist have dug deeper trenches into the political life-world with the political signboard that reads “Hindutva”, we insist that we say: “we can never be Hinduvawadis”. We do not say: “why we ought not to be Hindutvawadis”. We do not intend to insert a Kantian norm of the metaphysical “ought” onto reality. On the contrary one is thus trying to stretch the possibilities of Marxist science of historical materialism into the social and political life-world on modern India where the Indian subaltern thinkers, especially Jyotiba Phule and B.R. Ambedkar form the basis of our theory of radical democracy. Unlike the form of historical materialism sanctified by the Stalinist counterrevolution and which worked in a bland form of metaphysical positivism, our understanding of historical materialism is to re-think it as a “Revolution with a Revolution”. What needs to be told is that because of the dominant strand of the left in India, because of its worship of the parliament, not to forget suffering from Stalinist cretinism, got totally alienated from the masses and wanted a “Revolution without a Revolution”—and not a “Revolution with a Revolution”. One knows that this term of Robespierre (“Revolution with a Revolution”) is recalled presently by Slavoj Žižek. One also knows that it evokes a certain form of radicalism where Lenin and Gramsci’s philosophy of praxis are reworked in the context of the understanding of social formations in India, especially in the context of the caste question. Not only will the caste question be part of our discourse, but also the critique of the Indian nation state that was built on the inherent communal ideas of a re-worked neo-Hinduism. It must be noted that by Hinduism and Hindutva, we imply the very concrete context that Ambedkar worked in. Whilst our understanding is built on rigorous forms of Revolutionary Marxism we will also be involving what we call a “Marxist-Ambedkarite” understanding of social formation and the role of the Indian liberal state. In this sense we are re-visiting the sites of radical praxis—of a re-invention of a radical left in the age of neo-liberalism. Again in more than one sense we are re-visiting the sites of extremely serious social sciences, a seriousness where the voice of radical subalternism of what I call “Marxist-Ambedkarism” is heard. This form of “Marxist-Ambedkarism” firstly relates Indian society in terms of caste-class and then brings in the Leninist idea of learning insurrection as art. Unlike the established left—led by the CPI (M)—in India that has by and large ignored the caste question (or simply has not been able to understand it largely because it could not understand Marx’s idea of multilinear history where caste based on the theory of the Asiatic mode of production was Marx’s main idea of Indian history) and also unlike the established left that has operated at the level of the state, forgetting Marx’s dictum on the smashing of the state, we take this idea of multilinear history with caste-class as its basis as also take Marx’s anti-state understanding

of radical politics.

This brings us to the first of our propositions: there can be no real revolution without a Cultural Revolution where the old anti-humanist morality determined by the class-caste system is transcended. In a very Ambedkarite sense it also means that this needs a transcendence of not only the caste system with its absolutely outdated sense of morals, but needs a transcendence of what one calls “Hinduism” itself. When we are using the terms “Hindus” and “Hinduism”, we are using it in the Ambedkarite dialectical perspective. It is here that we need to say that Hinduism, as we know it since the last century, has two main motifs: (1) one that originated in Brahmanical society, but whose imagination largely developed from a type of romantic idealism that began possible with William Jones and perfected by Max Müller, a motif that culminated in Gandhi and Nehru, and (2) the right-wing sense that began with Bankim Chandra which culminated in the discourses of Hindutva. ‘Hinduism’ as we know it today is a kitsch of these two types of discourses: the romantic and the fascist. What needs to be highlighted is that the Brahmanical base will remain as the core of both these versions.

Origins are always said to be problematic as Ambedkar notes in his *Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development*. As he says, “the question of origin is always an annoying question and the study of caste it is sadly neglected; some have connived at it, while others have dodged it” [17]. Yet the origins of Hinduism lie in the 10<sup>th</sup> mandala of the Rg Veda where a certain form, not only class and race based stratification, but also a form of schizophrenia was written on its banners. And since we have been told, more than once by the established order of things, that “we”, the “we” that comprises the Indian nation state is basically the “we-ness” of Hinduism, the “we-ness” that is said to lie as the metaphysical basis of so-called “Indian civilization” we turn once more to the seriousness of both social sciences as well as to the site of radical praxis that seeks to overthrow this “we-ness” of classes-castes along with its inherent racism and schizophrenia. If the Indian collective is said to be a “Hindu collective”, then it is truly a false collective, a collective that refuses to think. Consider the foundational myth of both caste stratification as well as Hinduism where the Brahmins are said to be the mouth whilst the other social groups are said to be the arms, things, feet and other unmentioned parts. The foundational myth does not talk of the brain or the heart. It thus does not (and cannot) talk of thinking and feeling. Take this case and relate it with Ambedkar’s radical thesis of a Cultural Revolution not only against the social structures of caste stratification, but also against the system called “Hinduism” that protects and nurtures not only this form of stratification, but all forms of stratification and all forms of regressive thinking. The point therefore is to study the false sense of the “Hindu collective” that makes impossible the construction of an “Indian collective”, a true collective where the unity of the popular classes is possible. It is also a critique of this false sense of Indian liberalism, especially on the parliamentary system that protects and nurtures this false collective. In this sense we agree with Žižek [18]: Fidelity to the democratic consensus means the acceptance of the present liberal-parliamentary consensus, which precludes any serious questioning of how this liberal-democratic order is complicit in the phenomena it officially condemns and, of course, any serious attempt to imagine a society whose socio-political order would be different. We also agree with Ambedkar who had said that There is a great need of someone with sufficient courage to tell Indians: ‘Beware of parliamentary democracy; it is not the best product as it appears to be.’

What needs to be done is firstly tell people that Ambedkar as being represented as a liberal is completely wrong [19]. Ambedkar was a revolutionary through and through. What we need now to do is to imagine the world whose socio-political order would be different from both the old colonial order as well as different from the liberal one. One thus needs to imagine the re-politicization of the world by what I have called after Antonio Negri and Marco Revelli as the “New Militants” [20]. In this space of the New Militants that the following questions emerge: “Who then are these New



Militants and what do they do? What is their relation with Marx's proletariat and Ambedkar's annihilators of caste? How does this proletariat-multitude become the New Militants? What do they do with the metaphysics of Indian civilization and how do they create the New Physics of the "commons"—a radical New Space—which dissolves the old structures of caste stratification?" After the fascist attack on the JNU, it is imperative to create these New Spaces. We need to critique not only fascism but also liberalism and argue for a different form of radical left politics which operates neither in the spaces of civil society nor the state. Instead we need to argue for the struggle being carried out in the space of the "commons", the "commons" where liberty, equality and fraternity (or 'equa-liberty' as Etienne Balibar calls it) unleashes its attack on the caste-class system, a system where classes are yet unfortunately and tragically "trapped in castes". We are trapped [21]. But freedom is right at the corner.

We stand at the corners of this New History. Communists as "Terrorists" and the "New Untouchables" But in creating these New Spaces as attempted by Rohith Vemula and Kanhaiya Kumar would lead to a total onslaught by the fascist state. It ought to be noted that even when India was ruled by the liberal Congress party, radical dalits were arrested on charges of terrorism. Now by media trial (on the JNU incident) the entire JNU academia is being declared as the "New Untouchables". One can easily locate the "New Untouchables" i.e. the communists who are being painted as anti-nationalists. Whilst the question of the "untouchables" as the excluded other being sociologically placed in the site of casteism is best understood in Ambedkar's radical theory, the philosophical critique of exclusion is best understood in Marx's theory of alienation. The question now is to understand how this process of exclusion-alienation works in demonizing radical dalits and communists. And since the elites have created a corporate managerial state run as a panoptic system and police state, the question of human emancipation becomes even more problematic. What therefore we once knew (made fashionable by contemporary academic sociology) as the discourses of exclusion is in actuality based in the very serious site of Marx's theory of alienation. One knows that at least since 1844 with Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* this theory of alienation entered radical critical theory, despite the structuralist critic of this theory as exemplified by the works of Louis Althusser. This very strange forgetfulness of Marx's theory of alienation has blunted the radical politics of Revolutionary Marxism which forgot Marx's historicism and humanism for a bland theory (one should say theory converted to theology) of historical evolutionarism and parliamentary passivism. One knows that Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Gramsci and Lukács had critiqued this form of passivity within the left movement. Locating the question of the politics of exclusion and the political state in the field of alienation is now the urgent task that we need to perform.

In more than one sense one can locate the period after the 1857 war of independence against the British Raj as holding the manifold contradictions from which both the idea of the modern Indian state as well as the many types of reactionary nationalist ideologies developed, many of them having within them the political logic of exclusion. Now it is both well known and well documented that the primary ideological contradiction as spelt out by the contemporary neo-Hindu right is the spurious opposition between the imagined "good Hindu" vs. the even more imagined "bad Muslim". The fact that this form of neo-fascist ideology has seeped so deep in contemporary India, with the help of imperialist Islamophobia, that one needs to rearticulate Marx's theory of alienation for contemporary times. Turn to contemporary times and recall the previous Prime Minister—the liberal democrat Dr. Manmohan Singh—landing in England and literally telling the imperialist government of the Brits that their role as colonialists in India was not only progressive, but literally to be celebrated. Turn now to the discourses of the Neo-Adam Smiths in India (Chandra Bhan Prasad, one of the proponents of this fiction) which talk of "dalit capitalism" [22], a form of phantasmagorical version of capitalism that is pure fiction, a fiction devoid of the bloody history of primitive accumulation, devoid of what we know since David Harvey as "accumulation through dispossession". Remember that for this form of neo-liberal sponsored fiction, we now do not talk of "victimhood", we

“don’t ask for doles, reservations, favours...(and) complains”. Instead of the struggle of the oppressed, a struggle that is between master and slave—rather lordship and bondage—(a struggle as in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Mind* where lordship is bound to be overthrown), the oppressed are seen as Chandra Bhan Prasad claims, “risen on their own”. The struggle of the oppressed has “outlived its potential and power”, as the neo-liberal claims. That this neo-liberal narrative echoes the narrative that India is the subordinate partner of American imperialism should be stressed. That dalit capitalism is made up of small and medium enterprises based largely on family labour, and subservient to the needs of big capital also should not be forgotten. What also should be noted is that proponents of dalit capitalism that they are recreating the caste system from neo-liberal capitalism—dalit capitalists will only produce spare parts for the Brahmanical-Bania capitalists.

And since this neo-liberal narrative blames Marx for not understanding that capitalism does sweep pre-capitalist societies with brutal force, it must be stated that the neo-liberals have not even bothered to read Marx, forget able to understand him. Consider the dialectical and critical reading of history by Marx and Engels: The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part. The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors,” and has left remaining no other nexus between human and human than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment.” It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless infeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation. The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers. The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation. The bourgeoisie has disclosed how it came to pass that the brutal display of vigour in the Middle Ages, which reactionaries so much admire, found its fitting complement in the most slothful indolence. It has been the first to show what man’s activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former Exoduses of nations and crusades. The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind. The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere. [23].

What needs to be stressed by the radical left is that neo-liberalism forgets history totally. What needs also being told is that Ambedkar was a socialist for whom the workers have two enemies—Brahmanism and capitalism [24], and that Ambedkar was in no way a support of capitalism of any sort. What also needs being told over and over again is that the politics of the neo-liberals who imagine that dalits will be emancipated by capitalism is vulgar to the extreme. When Chandra Bhan Prasad, the advocate for capitalism as the savior of dalits, says: “Montek (i.e. Montek Singh Ahluwalia) is a friend of Adam Smith and Adam Smith is an enemy of Manu, so therefore,

Montek is our friend" [25], and one must shift one's ideal from Mao to Obama, then one needs to state that if in any possible way the Indian neo-liberal wants to imitate the history of American capitalism and imperialism. One knows that capitalism is intrinsically bound to wars and that the crisis of capitalism led to the two imperialist World Wars. In this sense one needs to ask if these neo-liberals want wars. One also wants to know what Prasad did when the 2006 Kharlanji massacre happened and when dalit activists are being arrested as terrorists. The fact that Rohith Vemula's murder by the Indian fascists is also part of branding radical dalit activists as terrorists and anti-nationalists is something to be noted. Fascism allows no dissent. It attacks dalits who protest and then claims that an apartheid version of capitalism needs to be created—i.e. a form of capitalism that is separated from mainstream capitalism. "Dalit capitalism" also implies that "Brahmanical-Bania capitalism" is going to keep dalits in separate enclaves (as dalit capitalists). Here one needs to stress the most, is that not only is Ambedkar's original philosophy of annihilation of caste along with his socialist philosophy conveniently forgotten by the liberals and the neoconservatives for the lust of the fetishism of commodities, but also in this phantasmagorical narrative how the Indian neo-liberal state has called one section of the radical left the "single biggest threat to Indian internal security". In other words one must try to understand how the radical left is being stamped by the Indian state as the "New Untouchables". Kanniah Kumar is both the "terrorist" and the "New Untouchable". The fact that Kanniah Kumar is also charged on charges of treason against the Indian nation and also charged with sedition is a fact to be remembered that the radical left is to be treated as the New Untouchables. The struggle against fascism sets in the new battlefield of the "New Untouchables". And in this new battlefield one needs to de-think not only the rabid version of Hindutva nationalism, but also to de-think (to recall Perry Anderson once again) "Indian ideology": from the 10<sup>th</sup> Mandala of the Rg Veda and Manu to Gandhi, Savarkar and the neo-liberals. For it is in the de-thinking, that the thinking of Phule and Ambedkar on the national question emerges. The Phule-Ambedkarite version of nationalism is distinct from the Gandhian-Nehruvian one, and most certainly from the fascist Hindutvawadi version of xenophobic nationalism. And it is in this process of de-thinking that the struggle between lordship and bondage, Brahmanism and dalit democracy, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat must be fought out. The "New Untouchables" refuse to bow down to the fascists or tail the liberals. The "New Untouchables" have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win!

**Murzban Jal**

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**P.S.**

\* Radical Socialist. Published on Sunday, 10 April 2016 15:05:  
<http://www.radicalsocielist.in/articles/national-situation/770-the-new-untouchables>

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## Footnotes

[1] Karl Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction', in Karl Marx. Early Writings, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 243.

[2] Karl Marx, Das Kapital, Erster Band (Dietz Verlag: Berlin, 1981), p. 52.

[3] B.R. Ambedkar, 'Annihilation of Caste', in The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar, ed.

Valerian Rodrigues (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 267.

[4] Quoted in Romila Thapar, *Past and Prejudice* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1975), p. 12.

[5] Ibid.

[6] *ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

[7] Savitri Devi, *Warning to the Hindus* (Calcutta: Hindu Mission, 1939), p. 142. Also see my 'In Defence of Marxism', in *Critique*, Vol. 40, No. 1, February 2012.

[8] M.S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nation hood Defined*. See Shamsul Islam, *Golwalkar's We or Our Nation Defined. A Critique with the Full Text of the Book* (New Delhi: Pharos Media, 2006), pp. 47-8

[9] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in Marx. Engels. *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977) p. 37

[10] Kancha Ilaiah, *Why I am not a Hindu. A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy* (Calcutta: Samya, 2003), p. Xii

[11] Karl Marx, 'To L. Kugelmann in Hanover, London, April, 17, 1871', in Marx. Engels. *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), p. 671. See also Frederick Engels, 'Introduction to Karl Marx's *Civil War in France*' and Karl Marx, 'Civil War in France', in Marx. Engels. *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), pp. 258-9, 285, 289-290.

[12] V.I. Lenin, 'The Dual Power', in V.I Lenin. *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), pp. 34-5.

[13] Ibid.

[14] V.I. Lenin, 'The Task of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution', in V.I Lenin. *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), p. 31.

[15] V.I. Lenin, 'The Dual Power', in V.I Lenin. *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol. 2, p.34.

[16] See Frederick Engels, 'Letter to Bebel, London, March 18-25, 1875', in Marx. Engels. *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), p. 335.

[17] B.R. Ambedkar, 'Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development', in *The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*, ed. Valerian Rodrigues (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 253.

[18] Slavoj Žižek, 'A Plea for Leninist Intolerance', in *Critical Inquiry*, Winter, 2002.

[19] B.R. Ambedkar, 'The Failures of Parliamentary Democracy', in in Bhagwan Das (ed.), *Thus Spoke Ambedkar. Vol. I. A Stake in the Nation* (New Delhi: Navayana Press, 2010), p. 46

[20] See my *The New Militants* (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2014). See also Antonio Negri, *Reflections on Empire*, trans. Ed Emery (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p. 29.

[21] Javeed Alam, *Classes Trapped in Castes: Left's Ongoing Predicament in India* (Centre for Scientific Socialism: Nagarjuna Nagar, 2011).

[22] I have said this earlier that Ratan Tata and Adi Godrej are mentioned by the pioneers of "dalit capitalism". See my *Why We Are Not Hindus* (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2015). See also 'Capitalism is Changing Caste much faster than any Human Being. Dalits should look at Caste as a crusader against Caste', in *Indian Express*, June 11, 2013. Chandra Bhan Prasad the ideological proponent of the fiction of "dalit capitalism" forgets that "dalit capitalism" is both a commodity needed by the big bourgeoisie, i.e. the Tatas and the Godrejs to produce the spare parts of these global magnates as well as a spectacle. Chandra Bhan Prasad also forgets that the Tatas and the Godrejs do not belong to the clan of the varna fetish worshipers, but belong to a faith that has been diametrically opposed to caste and Brahmanism for well over two and a half millennia. Thus whilst equality (albeit only formal equality) is possible for faiths other than Hinduism, it is impossible for Hinduism to accept any form of equality. Yet the proponents of "dalit capitalism" like the proponents of "Islamic capitalism" (many who are friends of Narendra Modi) forget that capitalism both sweeps the remnants of pre-capitalist societies, as well as builds these same primordial social formations. Therefore Rosa Luxemburg's argument that there can be no neat picture of capitalism devoid of pre-capitalism and that capitalism needs pre-capitalist societies for the realization of surplus value is of great importance.

[23] One can see *Why We Are Not Hindus* for a more detailed version. Also see Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'The Manifesto of the Communist Party', in Marx. Engels. *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), pp. 37-8. In *Why We Are Not Hindus* I have said that the new capitalists in India are nothing but the old Asiatic feudals in changed dress. With regards the translation: "chivalrous enthusiasm" (der ritterlichen Begeisterung) it needs to be stated that ritterlichen could be "chivalrous", but this "chivalry" is intrinsically related to "knightly" that is inherent to Marx's idea of feudal Europe. In the Manifesto Marx and Engels say that that "chivalrous enthusiasm" (of the feudal era) which gives way to "egotistical calculation" (of capitalism) drowns in these "icy waters" of "egotistical calculation". In India, this drowning does not take place. Rather we have the strange melting of feudal chivalry and egotistic calculation, in the melting of pre-capitalism and capitalism. That is why we say that what we see is that in India (like a large part of South Asia) this stupid chivalry and egoism both melt as one. Let it also be noted that this same phrase: der ritterlichen Begeisterung is also related to Marx's idea of Don Quixote, the ideal idyllic-feudal. Marx here means that the revolutionary bourgeoisie "drowned" this "knightly inspiration" (my translation) or "chivalrous enthusiasm" (the standard translation) and "heavenly ecstasies" (die heiligen Schauer) of feudalism into "egoistical calculation" (egoistischen Berechnung). Also see the term: "philistine sentimentalism" (der spießbürgerlichen Wehmuth) which ought to be read as: "bourgeois (or philistine) melancholy". The translation: "sentimentalism" is then innocent, if not totally wrong. The word "Wehmuth" indicates a form of woefulness or melancholy, which as I have said in *Why We Are Not Hindus* is something that Walter Benjamin brings in his works. The fact that Benjamin talks of this melancholy in the era of rising fascism ought not to be missed. What I mean here is that the RSS tries to create a sense of melancholy and then transforming this melancholy into mass hysteria.

[24] B.R. Ambedkar, 'Capitalism, Labour and Brahmanism', in Bhagwan Das (ed.), *Thus Spoke Ambedkar. Vol. I. A Stake in the Nation* (New Delhi: Navayana Press, 2010), p. 50.

[25] See 'Capitalism is Changing Caste much faster than any Human Being. Dalits should look at Caste as a crusader against Caste', in *Indian Express*, June 11, 2013.