

PAUL ROBESON

125 birth anniversary of a warrior for peace and justice

Historical Tributes to Paul Robeson
from India

Paul Robeson: Hero of the Darker
World

Paul Robeson and the Struggle for a
People's Culture

Paul Robeson: A Great Fighter for
Peace

China Steps Up

Perin Chandra: Democratic Strivings
and the Battle for Peace

Report on Nai Taleem, Training for
Socialism

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Celebrating 125 years of Paul Robeson

This year marks the 125th birth anniversary of revolutionary artist and freedom fighter Paul Robeson. We dedicate this issue of Vishwabandhu to his memory and legacy. Paul Robeson was loved and celebrated by the peoples of the world. Many Indian thinkers and activists have paid tributes to this great man, and his 60th birth anniversary was celebrated in India under an all India committee under the leadership of M.C. Chagla and Indira Gandhi. In this issue we have collected and republished some moving tributes by Indians to Paul Robeson, including an english translation of a poem by Ali Sardar Jaffri. The issue also includes four articles on the relevance of Paul Robeson's ideas and life today, an article on China and current world affairs by M.K. Bhadrakumar and an article on Perin Chandra and the Indian peace movement. Lastly, the issue includes a report on a reading group, *Nai Taleem*, started by Gandhi Global Family. Republished with this report is the last reading undertaken by the group, *Training for Socialism* by Aruna Asaf Ali, along with its translation into Hindi.

Paul Robeson: Hero of the Darker Nations

Archishman Raju



Paul Robeson was an artist, singer, philosopher, linguist and political revolutionary. To understand Paul Robeson as a figure, one must not confine him to any narrow aspect of his personality but attempt to understand the *whole of his life*. In 1935, Robeson had written, "The race which first learns to balance equally the intellectual and the emotional---to use the machines and couple them with life of true intuition and feeling such as the Easterns know--- will produce the supermen." In some ways, he himself came to become the embodiment of such a superman, a man the likes of which the world has perhaps never seen since. He represented a new kind of human being, who heralded the emerging freedom of the darker peoples of the world.

It is no surprise then that Paul Robeson was a hero to the darker nations and peoples of the world. The names of the people who admired him include Jawaharlal Nehru, Krishna Menon, Indira Gandhi, Kwame Nkrumah, Oliver Tambo, Yusuf Dadoo, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Mme. Sun Yat Sen, Fidel Castro and many more.

The U.S. Government confiscated Paul Robeson's passport because it did not allow him to travel to the newly independent nations and expose the truth about U.S. society. They practically said as much. It is difficult to find an anti-colonial struggle at that time that Paul Robeson did not actively support and fight for. Paul Robeson was thus a figure who wielded immense moral and political authority in the darker world.

Paul Robeson was an early supporter of the Indian struggle for independence. In 1942, as the whole Congress leadership was arrested following the Quit India movement, the Council on African Affairs, which he founded, held a Free India Rally in New York. Paul Robeson spoke at the rally and told the audience of his early friendship with Indian revolutionaries. Jawaharlal Nehru would later say “Paul Robeson is one of the greatest artists of our generation”

Similarly, Robeson would support the Chinese Struggle against Imperialism. He became close friends with Liu Liangmo, a Chinese musician and collaborated with him to produce an album of songs, Chee Lai, Songs of New China. This was to become China’s national anthem. Soong Ching Ling, also known as Madame Sun Yat Sen, said Robeson is “the voice of the people of all lands”. Robeson was appointed honorary director of the China Defense League that she founded .

Robeson had started the Council on African Affairs in 1937. The task of the Council was “to give concrete help to the struggle of the African masses” and “to smash the iron curtain of secrecy and double talk that surround the schemes for intensified imperialist exploitation of Africa and its people”. A young Kwame Nkrumah would participate in the formulation of the Council’s objectives. The Council held rallies to free Africa as well as worked to combat apartheid in South Africa. Oliver Tambo later called Robeson “a universal idol and a friend dear to all who know him”. Yusuf Dadoo would say Robeson had done “Pioneering work in mobilising World Public opinion against Racism and Colonialism and For Peace”.

Robeson participated in a rally denouncing the American intervention in Korea in June, 1950 saying “we may be sure the people of Korea, Indo-China, the Philippines and Formosa will not treat their invaders lightly any more”, just days before the order would come to confiscate his passport. He later would call Ho Chi Minh “the Toussaint L’Ouverture of Indo-China”.

In some ways, the Bandung Conference was the coming together of these many struggles that Robeson had known and participated in. It is no wonder that he said “How I should have loved to be at Bandung!” As he said in his message “I have long had a deep and abiding interest in the cultural relations of Asia and Africa. Years ago I began my studies of African and Asian languages and learned about the rich and age-old culture of these mother continents of human civilization. The living evidence of the ancient kinship of Africa and Asia is seen in the language structures, in the arts and philosophies of the two continents. Increased exchange of such closely related cultures cannot help but bring into flower a richer, more vibrant voicing of the highest aspirations of colored peoples the world over”

Indeed, in 1934, Robeson had declared “I want to be African”. He had articulated the challenge of understanding and realizing his relationship to the civilizations of Africa. He said the natural question that faces a young black person is “What of value has Africa to offer that the Western world cannot give me?” Similarly, he said a young Chinese at a University in England might say “What has the chaos of conflicting misgovernments and household gods and superstitions to offer me?” As Robeson said, what they were looking at was “broken remnants of what was in its day a mighty thing; something which perhaps has not been destroyed, but only driven

underground, leaving ugly scars upon the earth's surface to mark the place of its ultimate reappearance”.

Robeson thus saw that these ancient civilizations had something to offer to the world, but their own members must be willing to conduct patient inquiry and regenerate them for modern times. He himself dedicated himself to such inquiries and made many discoveries that have not been fully explored yet. Robeson discovered that “African languages...had exactly the same basic structure as Chinese”. As he said, “both the Chinese and African people make extensive use of *tone*”. Robeson was also fascinated by the Russian language and considered the Soviet Union as closer to Asia than to the West. It is not appreciated that Robeson spoke 25 languages, if not more. Apart from African languages like Swahili, Zulu and Yoruba, he spoke Chinese and Russian.

Robeson suggested the possibility of a comparative study of civilizations in Asia and Africa, which remains to be fully done to this day. However, this comparative study could not be left to academics but must be done by revolutionaries who seeked to discover the commonalities that bind India, China and Egypt. Robeson would often remark about the similarities between these civilizations that were not fully understood. It should be noted that Robeson considered civilization to be a creation of ordinary people and also their inheritance. Thus, he paid particular emphasis on music and folk songs, which he felt had a potential to unite working people around the world. It is here that Robeson's relationship with Liu Liangmo and Bhupen Hazarika attains special significance. Bhupen Hazarika had worked on Bistirna Parore based on Robeson's rendition of Old Man River. He was also very influenced by Robeson's emphasis on the Negro Spirituals.

Robeson felt that this study of civilizations had an essential meaning for his time. He argued that Western bourgeois mind had become overly abstract and intellectual. In doing so, it had lost the creative intuition that informs the best of art, the vitality that underpins the human soul. Robeson held the hope that it would be the darker nations of the world that would provide this vitality. His emphasis on creative intuition is familiar to students of Indian philosophy who recognize that this kind of intuition was considered a legitimate form of acquiring knowledge. In some ways, his philosophical analysis carries even more significance today. Western science, particularly physics, has veered off into abstraction that few can even understand. The advent of Artificial Intelligence has created a new debate on the meaning of human beings and human intelligence. Despite the best attempts of the Western ruling elite, they will fail at trying to resolve the fundamental question of what constitutes a human being without considering the darker nations. These nations in turn must contribute to the resolution.

Finally, Paul Robeson linked the concept of peace with culture. The question of war and peace haunts us, and peace is the precondition for human advancement. All our efforts must go towards fighting for peace which sets the precondition for human development.

On Robeson's 60th birthday in 1958, there were celebrations held for him in India, China, Vietnam and several parts of Africa. This no doubt contributed to Robeson finally getting his

passport back soon after. In 1962, Kwame Nkrumah invited him to come to Ghana and teach. It was an offer that Robeson was unfortunately unable to take up because of his health. Nevertheless he spent the last years in the black community in Philadelphia. We must consider Paul Robeson to be our teacher today for he has left us a rich legacy which will guide the continuing struggle of the darker nations to realize themselves fully.

Archishman Raju is contributor and editor of this journal.

Paul Robeson and the Struggle for a People's Culture

Neha Chivukula



“And so by fateful chance the Negro folksong—the rhythmic cry of the slave—stands today not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side the seas.....it still remains as the singular spiritual heritage of the nation and the greatest gift of the Negro people.”

Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois [1]

Paul Robeson was one of the greatest artists our world has ever seen. He was one of the greatest not just because he was a prolific singer and an actor but because of how he used his art to become one with the people of the world. Robeson believed that art and the artist cannot be separated from the struggle for humanity's deepest strivings- freedom, peace, and dignity. In this fight, “the artist must take sides”. The moral imperative that Robeson felt as an artist reflected in the life he lived. He used his talents to further the cause of humanity and exemplified courage and a spirit of sacrifice that earned him the love of people worldwide. Once accepted as a talented artist by the US ruling class, when he used his art for the emancipation of his

people, he was intensely persecuted. Despite many attempts by the American government to isolate Robeson and his ideas from the people, progressive humanity worldwide marched under the banner of his name

Culture, as Robeson believed, originates within the masses of people and is a reflection of their aspirations and their history- that is, relationships between individuals of a society and between an individual and the environment. Thus, a people's contribution to furthering human civilization is unique. Yet this culture, though unique in its character, can connect you with the universal -- it speaks of the suffering, the struggle of the people, their philosophy of life and their hopes and aspirations. Speaking of the music of his own people, the Black Spirituals, Robeson said: "...*this enslaved people, oppressed by the double yoke of cruel exploitation and racial discrimination, gave birth to splendid, inspired, life-affirming songs. These songs reflected a spiritual force, a people's faith in itself and a faith in its great calling; they reflected the wrath and protest against the enslavers and the aspiration to freedom and happiness. These songs are striking in the noble beauty of their melodies, in the expressiveness and resourcefulness of their intonations, in the startling variety of their rhythms, in the sonority of their harmonies, and in the unusual distinctiveness and poetical nature of their forms*" [2]. These songs of struggle spoke to millions of oppressed people worldwide and inspired many of the anti-colonial movements. Robeson said: "*I have sung my songs all over the world and everywhere found that some common bond makes the people of all lands take to Negro songs as their own.*" [3] Robeson saw the Black struggle as part of a larger struggle of darker humanity against exploitation and for freedom and positive peace.

Robeson's view of art and culture is deeply philosophical. For him, art and culture rooted in the people are concrete and depict an inner emotional or intuitive capability which adds vitality to the creation. It is the interaction of the incalculable human capacity with the physical reality that gives birth to something that speaks to the human spirit. This expression of the human spirit is what binds all art and music originating in the East. Robeson asserted that the people of Africa in particular, and Afro-Asia have made some of the greatest contributions to furthering human civilization, particularly in art and culture. It is only in applied science that the West rose ahead and claimed its superiority on this basis. However, this excessive emphasis on applied science has led to an abstract intellectualism and hollowness among the Western bourgeoisie. In developing his intellectualism, the Western bourgeois man lost touch with his creative side. This meant that Western art got trapped in unrooted abstractions that do not speak to an inner human striving and are often lifeless. Robeson said: "*A blind groping after Rationality resulted in an incalculable loss in pure Spirituality... we grasped at the shadow and lost the substance and now we are altogether not clear what the substance was.*" [4]

Culture, through its reflection of material and spiritual conditions of a people, serves as a touchstone to assess the historical claims made by imperialism. Robeson argued that Africa with all the linguistic and artistic diversity represented a highly advanced civilization similar to other civilizations, like China. He recognized that imperialism relied on denying that darker humanity, especially Africa, had made any contributions to the world and that they were "primitive" in order to justify the exploitation of the colonized people. The history and social roots

of Black music and art were distorted to portray Black culture as imitative, and produced by people who were meek and submissive. So, he made it his mission to educate the world about the immense contributions that his people had made to the world. Robeson declared: *"In my music, my plays, my films, I want to carry always this central idea; to be African. Multitude of men have died for less worthy ideals; it is even more eminently worth living for."* He urged Black people to not fall prey to the racist theories of inferiority of the African race and embrace their roots. He said: *"He (American Negro) sees only the savagery, devil-worship, witch doctors, voodoo, ignorance, squalor and darkness taught in American schools. Where these exist, he is looking at the broken remnants of what was in its day a mighty thing; something which has perhaps not been destroyed but only driven underground, leaving ugly scars upon the earth's surface to mark the place of its ultimate reappearance."* [5] He felt that only the Black man with his "immense emotional capacity" could revive and bring new life to the culture in America. But, if on the other hand, the Black man were to imitate the White society, he would lose the immense artistic wealth that his people had accrued over the course of history through struggle.

Art and culture thus, represent a life-world-- a means of experiencing the universe or truth through subjective interpretation collectively. As art brings people closer to the human universal, it serves as the broadest approximation of truth. This collective quest for truth is not just determined by history but also determines what future the human civilization will move towards. It is this agency that revolutionary culture nurtures in people which allows them to see the sky of possibilities and hope and work towards a better future even when they are enveloped with dark and troubling times. According to Robeson, *"the whole problem of living cannot be understood until the world recognizes that artists are not a race apart...Each man has something of the artist in him."* [6]

The culture promoted by the ruling elite is contrary and opposed to revolutionary culture. It relies on a belief that the ability to see and appreciate beauty in art and music is inherited by a handful of people and the rest of humanity is viewed as "uncultured" and unworthy. This culture celebrates a life of materialistic indulgences and consumerism and upholds these as ideals worth aspiring to. Within this framework, the masses of people are portrayed as morally depraved without the right to claim their future. Such a culture tries to obscure the paths available for collective human struggle to reach a future where all human beings can express their maximum potential. It thrives by creating a nihilistic and grim view of the future that almost paralyzes people from engaging in any kind of struggle and makes them retreat into an individualistic life. Art and culture therefore cannot be separated from the ideologies that they represent. As Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois said in the *Criteria for Negro Art*, "all art is propaganda." [7]

The basis for evaluation and appreciation of all art must be rooted in an understanding of morality and the contribution of art to the struggle of people. One cannot merely appreciate art or culture without embracing the people who produce it or the ideals that shape it. Robeson criticized the white "cultured" elites of America who claimed to appreciate or even appropriated the art produced by the Black people but refused to recognize the Black man as a human being. Racial discrimination and segregation continued to oppress the Black population. The music and art that was produced during the Harlem Renaissance was highly appreciated by the White

American society and became an object of national pride, while the creators of the art-- the Black artists and people continued to be denied social, political and economic equality.

Robeson was seen and loved by the people of dark humanity, especially people in India. The memory of his songs of struggle carried across generations who felt their souls stirred by Robeson the man and his voice. People participated in rallies and stood in protest of the imperialist and fascist American government's attack on Robeson. They also celebrated Robeson despite the threats by the American government. But today this collective memory is dormant. It is dormant because the Indian people have been robbed off their revolutionary history and the organic connection with Black America because of the West-facing Indian intellectuals. The Indian freedom struggle produced artistic and literary expressions that reflected the strivings of the masses of Indian people and united us with the world humanity's struggle for freedom from exploitation, famines, poverty and war. Together, we aspired for a world where we could determine our future and every human being had a right to reach their highest potential.

We must revisit and remember the deep spiritual and cultural connection that we have with Black America. Instead of trying hard to assimilate into and seek acceptance from the White world, we must return to where we belong naturally- with all of darker humanity and its system of values.

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- [5]. Paul Robeson, "To Be African,", quoted from *Paul Robeson The Great Forerunner*, page 55.
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Paul Robeson: A Great Fighter for Peace

Jahanzaib Choudhry



Paul Robeson is an example of an outstanding fighter for world peace, who sacrificed fame, fortune, and health for the future of humanity. We celebrate Paul Robeson's 125th birth year at a time when the US government is waging its most dangerous war since the Second World War. At the same time the US population has a historic anti-war and anti-government feeling. Events since the start of 2023 especially the Rage Against the War Machine March held in February signal the possibility of a new organized movement against the US administration's criminal war policies. However, the task of building an effective peace movement will only be successful if it is anchored in the example of Paul Robeson.

At a time when activists working for labor and civil rights were compromising with the Democratic Party administration of Harry Truman, Robeson refused to compromise and stood with world humanity. He did this despite the cost it put on his career as a performer and artist. He became a co-founder of the World Peace Council which sought to build an opposition to the West's policy of cold war confrontation and a nuclear arms race by bringing together

progressive Americans with others from around the world including the Soviet Union. Upon receiving the Stalin Peace Prize in recognition of his brave stance for world peace in 1953 Robeson said:

“The American Peace movement reached out its hands across the borders to join with the millions of peace fighters in the world peace movement. Gradually it has become crystal clear that the mighty strength of the world movement representing peoples of all lands is strength for us here. As Americans, preserving the best of our traditions, we have the right—nay the duty—to fight for participation in the forward march of humanity.

We must join with the tens of millions all over the world who see in peace our most sacred responsibility. Once we are joined together in the fight for peace we will have to talk to each other and tell the truth about each other. How else can peace be won?...In this framework we can make clear what co-existence means. It means living in peace and friendship with another kind of society—a fully integrated society where the people control their destinies, where poverty and illiteracy have been eliminated and where new kinds of human beings develop in the framework of a new level of social living.

The telling of these truths is an important part of our work in building a strong and broad peace movement in the United States.”

The media colluded with the US state to slander and then ignore Robeson’s activism in press coverage. Though his activism received little coverage outside of the black community and the Communist movement in the US, he became a symbol to people throughout the world of a principled American. It is very interesting to note that poems were written about him in many languages including Turkish, Russian, Chinese, Urdu, Bengali. As W.E.B. Du Bois said at a rally in support of Robeson in Harlem:

“He is without doubt today, as a person, the best known American on earth, to the largest number of human beings. His voice is known in Europe, Asia and Africa, in the West Indies and South America and in the islands of the seas. Children on the streets of Peking and Moscow, Calcutta and Jakarta greet him and send him their love. Only in his native land is he without honor and rights.”

Du Bois' statement points us to how famous Robeson was prior to and despite the repression he faced. After many years of litigation he received his passport in 1958 in time for him to resume his travels. Having opposed the Korean War, he strongly opposed US policy in Indo-China, and also stood in solidarity with the Cuban Revolution of that period. According to his son after concluding a concert tour in London in 1961, he traveled to Moscow in order to transit to Cuba to show his support for the revolutionary Castro government. This was bound to be an embarrassment to the US deep state which had already made plans for the Bay of Pigs invasion. It was in Moscow that he was first targeted with a potent dose of LSD, which according to his family drove him to attempt suicide. His son maintained that this was part of the CIA's MKULTRA drug program, which recent evidence has shown weaponized LSD to control human

behavior. Doctors in Moscow advised him to return to Harlem where he would be in a healthy environment and protected from the wrath of the intelligence agencies. Unfortunately he would be hit with two more devastating drug attacks in Britain and the United States. The final one left him damaged but he was conscious enough to make the decision to retire from public view, with the hope that his public image would stay intact. He lived the remaining 13-14 years of his life in his sister's house in West Philadelphia, rarely receiving visitors, not even appearing at a 75th birthday celebration organized for him at Carnegie Hall though he sent a taped message saying:

"Though I have not been able to be active for several years, I want you to know that I am the same Paul, dedicated as ever to the worldwide cause of humanity for freedom, peace and brotherhood."

Though the repression of McCarthyism and the Red Scare meant he was not known very well by the generation that came after him or the generations since, he has lived on in the black community and in groups dedicated to peace and justice. Dishonest intellectuals have tried to de-radicalize Robeson and promote petit bourgeois theories of "woke" anti-racism in his name. This woke agenda seeks to separate his struggle against racism from his struggle against imperialism. These theories are all cynical ploy by a US elite in crisis to rebrand and reconsolidate itself. Robeson was an avowed enemy of imperialism and of the deep state. He gave his all to the struggle against the permanent warfare state, including the struggle against NATO. Just as he stood up to the reactionary in liberal clothing, Harry Truman, he would stand up to Biden today, who is in many ways pursuing a foreign policy against Russia that is reckless and even insane.

If he were alive today he would stand against witch hunts like Russiagate just as he stood against McCarthyism and the Red Scare. He would stand against the collusion of intelligence agencies with big tech and the media to repress anti war voices. As he stood with the working class in every struggle they waged, he would reject the characterization of all those who refuse to vote for warmongers as deplorables or fascists. In his life he believed that if given the choice, the American people would always choose peace over war. Further, he believed that racism was embedded in the blue-blooded elites, not the working class. If Robeson were alive today, he would call to organize the whole US working class, black, white and otherwise against the current administration's policy of immiserating the working poor to fund a Ukraine proxy conflict. He would call for the dismantling of not just NATO but all 800 military bases around the world as well as the cutting down of our criminally high defense budget. He would call for the release of political prisoners, whistleblowers and journalists like Julian Assange victimized by the US deep state.

It must be said in no uncertain terms that Robeson would see the significance of this country's main opposition leader, the former president of the US, Donald J. Trump. Trump has been outspoken in opposition to the Ukraine War and both he and the movement behind him have become targets of the national security state. As Robeson fought for black-white unity for peace in his day, he would be in the thick of seizing this moment to build a peace movement of a new type across racial and partisan lines; a coalition of the dispossessed to stop this administration's

insane warmongering and to reconstruct America's economy on a peace basis. As he stood with Bandung and anti-colonialism in Asia and Africa, he would stand with the emergence of BRICS. He would stand in solidarity with the peaceful rise of Asia and the possibility of a new and sovereign Africa, which signals a move from a Western world order to a human one.

Robeson's significance for today animates the possibility of popular resistance to the Biden regime and the deep state. Events since the start of 2023 show the possibility of a new peace movement emerging, most significantly with the holding of the Rage Against War Machine (RAWM) march held at the US capital in February which deliberately crossed the partisan political lines imposed on the people by the US elites. A so-called Left-Right Alliance, the march was organized by the Libertarian Party and the People's Party. It included speakers from both the Democratic and Republican parties as well as independent journalists. The march broke with the kind of anti-war organizing that has occurred since 9/11, in which sectarian groups have used social issues like gender and sexuality as a litmus test to exclude large sections of the US people from participating. Even more significantly the march organizers refused to bend to liberal anti-Trump politics, which seeks to exclude the Trump movement's anti-war voter base from the peace movement. Thus, the march became a target of attack for the small and sectarian left organizations and anti-war coalitions which criticized it for supposedly playing into the hands of white supremacists and racists.

The unique composition of the RAWM was matched with an extremely radical set of 10 demands. Among these were "Not One Penny More for Ukraine", "Negotiate Peace", "Stop the War Inflation", "Slash the Pentagon Budget", "Abolish the CIA and Military-Industrial Deep State", and "Abolish War and Empire". These set of demands clearly link the Ukraine War to the broader struggle against the permanent warfare state and the imperialist ideology perpetuated by the ruling elite. Though the turnout numbers were likely 2-3,000 people, with a much larger number watching on social media and participating in solidarity marches around the country, the ideological strength of the march meant that it punched above its weight. An exemplary speech was delivered by former Democratic Congressman Dennis Kucinich who went on the offensive against a president from his own party. Kucinich took direct aim at the Biden administration for its bombing of the Nordstream pipeline, as revealed by Seymour Hersh, and said "we will not rest until you are held responsible by the Congress, the International Criminal Court, and the American people at the next election." He criticized American elites foreign policy of continuing NATO expansion, which is bringing the world to world war in Ukraine and Taiwan. He took aim at the Biden administration's anti-people domestic record as it related to the Covid pandemic and civil liberties. He even quoted a passage from the declaration of independence which reads: "That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

Other speakers echoed this feeling of revolt as well as spoke about the need for the US to seek collaboration with Russia and China to solve world problems, especially poverty. Kucinich's speech shows the radical energy in the RAWM march attendees and how they are open to the

project of a democratic remaking of US state and society. Though the turnout was largely made up of white Americans, the fact that increasing sections of White America are supportive of such radical demands is a major shift in US politics. It is clear that Robeson would stand with the RAWM, even as he would offer constructive criticism in engaging deeper with the African American community and world humanity. Robeson's brand of anti-racism would never allow the struggle against racism to be misused to attack peace activism, especially at such a vulnerable time for world peace.

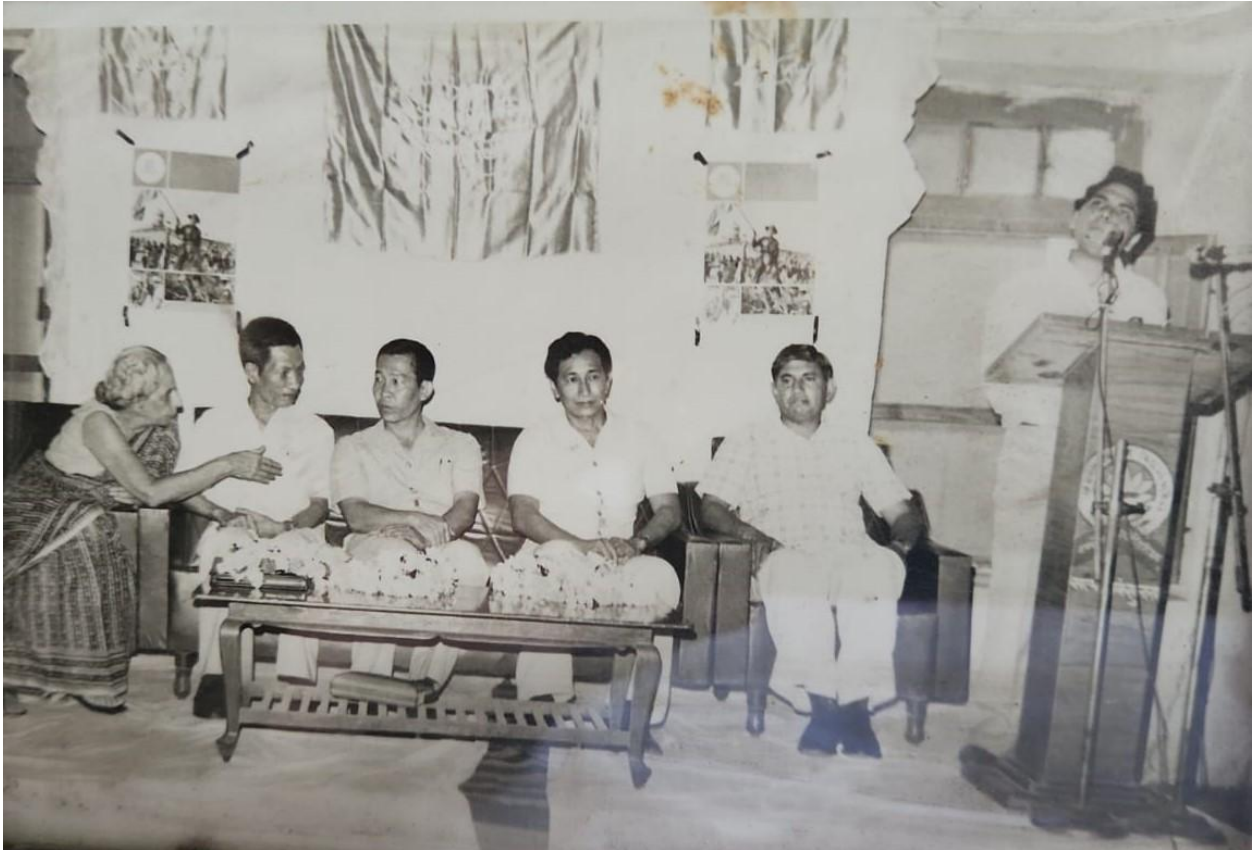
Though Trump was not at the rally his opposition to the Biden regime's policy loomed in the background. Since the march Trump has issued even more radical statements calling for the "complete dismantling of the neocon globalist establishment that gets us into endless wars." In the same statement he also said that America's real enemy is not Russia or China but its own "America last elites". It is not a coincidence that soon after issuing this statement he was indicted by the Manhattan County District Attorney on an election finance technicality. Similarly, Pro-Trump House Republican Matt Gaetz publicly challenged the role of the United States Africa command (AFRICOM) and organized a resolution to withdraw US troops from the illegal occupation of Syria. At the end of April, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. officially entered the Democratic Party presidential primary on a populist platform. Having gained notoriety as an outspoken critic of Anthony Fauci and big pharma's corrupt handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, RFK Jr also invoked the Kennedy legacy of his father and uncle in their opposition to the CIA and the military industrial complex in calling for an end to the Ukraine War and US militarism abroad. All of this indicates a furthering political crisis for the warmongering elites and the possibility of a consolidated political leadership with an alternative vision.

Though much work remains to be done to solidify these parts into an ideologically clear whole, there is great reason for optimism that the American people can play a decisive role in the struggle for world peace. Thus, in his 125th birth year Paul Leroy Robeson stands tall as a model of what the people of his nation must strive to become in order to fulfill their highest aspirations for peace and democracy.

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Perin Chandra: Democratic Strivings and the Battle for Peace

Nandita Chaturvedi



Perin Chandra (extreme left) with a Vietnamese delegation in Panipat. Speaking at the podium is Ram Mohan Rai.

It was while living in the US and working with revolutionary scholar Dr. Anthony Monteiro that I first heard of Romesh Chandra. I was introduced to him as a revolutionary human being, told stories of how he would carry himself, how he spoke, and the spirit of the world communist movement he carried with him. These formed a deep impression on me as a young person who was still trying to find out the right ways to be and act in a complex and often hostile world. These stories made him real to me, a human being like myself who was compelled to take righteous and difficult actions by a moral calling.

I and my comrades went on to research his life, we read his speeches and went to the archives. We began to refer to him as Romesh, as if he was one of us. It was through this research that I first learnt of Perin Chandra. She was mentioned in many of the writings we read and mentioned in passing by many people. People on the Indian left would talk of 'Perin and Romesh Chandra'

as if they were two sides of the same person. We went on to meet Primla Loomba while visiting Delhi for a few months and she told us of how she was comrade in arms with Perin, they would spend days on end together, always engaged with intensity in political work and interacting with the Indian people. Yet, I did not fully grasp Perin's life and the importance of her work.

Recently, in a conversation with a trade unionist my colleague was explaining our plans to honor Romesh Chandra and Paul Robeson together. Upon hearing Romesh's name, he stressed that we must put Perin alongside them. He went on to describe his work with her. At the end he said, 'She was like a mother to me.' We were compelled by this moving testimony to research her life more, and yet could find few resources in terms of books or articles.

Perin Chandra is one of those self sacrificing revolutionaries produced by the Indian freedom struggle who lived completely and absolutely for the Indian people, and for humanity at large. She did not leave behind a memoir because she did not think it important to talk about herself. Yet, she remains alive among those who worked with her and knew her. Since that conversation I have spoken with many others who knew her, and each one of them has repeated the sentiment, she was like a mother to me.

Few among the younger generations know that a Perin Chandra existed, and this limits their imaginary for what they see possible for their own lives. This article is an effort to document what the people around her remember of her so her life can be made available as pedagogy to the youth.

Indian Freedom Movement

Perin Bharucha was born on October 2, 1918, the year of the satyagraha struggle in Kheda, exactly 51 years after Gandhi's birth. She was born in Chaman, Balochistan which now falls in Pakistan, the daughter of Phiroze Byramji Bharucha, an army doctor and later Surgeon General of Lahore. She became involved in India's struggle for freedom during her student days in Lahore. She soon became a leader in the student movement in Lahore, organizing a strong cadre of young people to participate in relief efforts for the Bengal famine, and other activities of the freedom movement.

After her graduation, she joined the Communist Party of India. In 1941 she was elected the first woman General Secretary of the All India Students Federation. Perin made a serious and stern student leader. In the year the Quit India movement was launched, 1942, she married her comrade Romesh Chandra. The two of them immersed themselves in political work of the party and the Quit India Movement in Lahore. Her closest associates in this time included Primla Loomba who would later lead the National Federation of Indian Women and with whom Perin also worked closely later. Also in 1942, Rameshwari Nehru was released from prison for her involvement in the Quit India campaign. Rameshwari was then head of the Punjab Women's Self-Defense League and she met with Perin to take over the organization of All India Women's Council. Perin had collected a small group of young women with whom she worked among the poor to politically engage them and draw them into the struggle for freedom.

Perin and Romesh's lives were uprooted in the partition of India and they shifted to Bombay, and then to Delhi. After India's independence, Perin joined the Patriot, a newspaper started by Aruna Asaf Ali. In the 1960s she left the Patriot to work in the peace movement.

Beginnings of the Indian Peace Movement

The All India Peace Council was founded in 1951 to respond to the need for championing peace following the destruction of the second world war, and to carry out the education of the people on the link between imperialism and war, and the importance of peace for a newly independent nation such as India which was struggling with crushing poverty, hunger and illiteracy. Its founding members included Congress freedom fighters Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Pandit Sundarlal, communist party leaders Ajoy Ghosh and A K Gopalan, revolutionary scholars such as D D Kosambi, and revolutionary artists like Prithviraj Kapoor, Balraj Sahni, Rajendra Singh Bedi, Vallathol, among others. Romesh Chandra became its general secretary in 1952 with Saifuddin Kitchlew as President and several vice presidents that included DD Kosambi and Mulk Raj Anand.

On the other hand, the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation was founded in 1957 in Cairo to build solidarity with national liberation movements that were still struggling for freedom from colonial oppression across Africa and Asia and their promotion on the world stage. AAPSO aimed to mount an ideological defense of newly independent nations against world imperialism that was determined to prove that darker nations were not fit to rule themselves. The organization of AAPSO aimed to build on the legacy of the Bandung conference in 1955 to organize conferences attended by people from all the world and increase friendship and understanding between darker nations. It was organized in 1957 following two such conferences open to ordinary people held in New Delhi; the Conference of Asian Countries on the Relaxation of International Tension held in 1955 eleven days prior to the Bandung conference and attended by thousands of people, and the 1947 Inter Asian Relations Conference.

In India, the aims and activities of these two organizations were so closely linked that they merged together to form the All India Peace and Solidarity Organization in 1972. AIPSO adopted the slogan 'Peace is everybody's business'. Perin Chandra assumed leadership of AIPSO in 1972 and remained its general secretary till 1991.

AIPSO and the Struggle for India's National Sovereignty and People's Liberation

Under her leadership, AIPSO engaged in work on broad issues that had to do with India's sovereignty, the world peace and solidarity movement. AIPSO was a broad movement, and the very antithesis of sectarian politics.

AIPSO was instrumental in organizing events and conferences in support of the people's liberation struggle in Vietnam against American occupation, as well as the cause of the Palestinian people. It also played a huge role in Indian support for the struggle against apartheid

in South Africa. AIPSO worked to inform the Indian people about the genocide in Bangladesh, the Bangladeshi liberation struggle and developing political support for it. They organized relief efforts for the refugees flooding into Bengal from East Pakistan. The threat of direct war with the US made stronger by the American government sending their navy's 7th fleet to the Bay of Bengal in support of the Pakistani genocidal army made a deep impression on the Indian people. After the independence of Bangladesh, the WPC awarded Sheikh Mujibur Rehman the Joliot Curie Peace Prize in 1973. Romesh visited Bangladesh to confer the award on him, and stayed in Bangabandhu's house.

Perin's consciousness was formed in the struggle against British imperialism and she was witness to the assault of American imperialism on African, Asian and Latin American liberation movements, including the assassination of leaders like Patrice Lumumba and Salvador Allende. She understood the workings of imperialism, and the American intelligence apparatus in particular. She did not underestimate the threat that American forces in India posed to the sovereign Indian state. It was in this context that she understood Indira Gandhi's declaration of the emergency in 1975 in response to the Jayaprakash Narayan led movement to oust Indira Gandhi. She saw the importance of defending the Indian state, which was born out of a struggle that she herself had fought in. In this period Perin and AIPSO worked in tandem with the Indian state and Indira Gandhi's government. In 1975, AIPSO organized the Patna conference against fascism.

The Patna conference was a marvel of organization. It collected about 6,000 delegates from all over India. A vast tent city was set up with space for the sessions, exhibitions, kitchens etc. The city was named after the Indian minister Lalit Narayan Mishra, who had been assassinated in a suspected CIA supported plot the same year. Halls and gates in the city upheld the names of anti-imperialist fighters from all over the world -- Salvador Allende, Mujibur Rehman, Martin Luther King Jr, Patrice Lumumba and Amilcar Calbral among others. Leading up to the conference rallies and conferences were held in every corner of India against fascism, in which tens of millions of people participated.

The Patna conference put forward important ideas to understanding the world and domestic situation at that time, and its contributions remain relevant today. The conference put forward a 'Declaration of Solidarity with the Struggle of the Indian People Against Imperialism, Fascism and Reaction' which extended the full solidarity of the conference to 'democratic forces in India and to the Government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi'. They recognized the CIA's efforts to sabotage democratic movements in the Indian subcontinent, most recently through the murder of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. The American military had then been building a nuclear base in the Indian Ocean on Diego Garcia, which continues to be in American control today. Arms were being pumped at that time into Pakistan.

Further, they saw fascism expressing itself in India through the coming together of 'right extremists and Left adventurists' under the slogan of 'total revolution'. They saw the emergency as a blow to fascist conspiracy in India and a win for the struggle for democracy. The way the Patna conference saw the forces of fascism is in contrast to the way the term is used today.

The Patna conference tied the struggle against fascism to the struggle against multinational corporations, feudal and monopoly interests, poverty and hunger. Fascism to them was linked to the action of forces aligned with world imperialism acting against a democratically elected government of the Indian people. They quoted Nehru to say that fascism and imperialism were twins. They saw the Indian state as an expression of the people's democratic aspirations, and a bastion against fascism. Today, the labeling of a democratically elected Indian government as fascist by the Indian intelligentsia is in stark contrast to this. The role of imperialism in Indian politics today is underappreciated, and to determine the nature of the Indian state, we must understand the state's relationship to Western imperialism.

Another remarkable conference was held in Bhopal in 1985 to observe one year since the horrific Bhopal gas tragedy. The gas tragedy had claimed around 4000 lives in and around Bhopal when a lethal gas leak occurred from American company Union Carbide's factory in December 1984. Over 500,000 people were exposed to the highly toxic gas, leading to highly disabling and long term injuries in some cases. Union Carbide refused to take complete responsibility for the leak, despite conclusive proof of negligent practices. Several cases linked to this still remain open in Indian and American courts. AIPSO took up the charge for this and the conference organized in 1985 addressed multinational corporations in India and their contempt for the Indian people.

Perin also remained politically close to Indira Gandhi throughout her time in government. After the assassination of Indira Gandhi by operatives of the Khalistani movement, religious riots erupted in Delhi and Punjab. It was clear that this religious polarization was linked to Western and CIA support of the Khalistanis. In the years following this, Perin and AIPSO followed in Gandhi's footsteps, working among the people to quell violence and mistrust. Massive peace rallies were held in Delhi in 1986 against religious extremism and for peace among the people.

AIPSO served as a broad forum for discussion and airing of different subjects to do with the Indian people's struggle for democracy. Under Perin's leadership, it concerned itself not only with the struggle for international solidarity and peace, but any topic that had to do with Indian society's struggle against poverty, illiteracy and foreign domination. This followed naturally from their ideological linking of peace with national sovereignty and self determination.

The Conduct of a Revolutionary

Perin worked closely with Aruna Asaf Ali and Primla Loomba in Delhi who were President and Vice President of the National Federation of Indian Women. In studying the lives of Indian women revolutionaries one realizes how closely integrated into the freedom struggle was the movement for women's liberation in India. It is through this history, and the support of these revolutionary women for the leadership of the national movement, as well as the history of leadership in the national movement by revolutionary women, that we must view the attacks on Gandhi as a misogynist.

Romesh Chandra was elected General Secretary of the World Peace Council in 1966 and spent the majority of his time traveling outside of India in connection with this work. In this time Primla Loomba and Perin would spend many days engaged in political work together from morning till evening. Like other revolutionaries, Perin formed deep and close bonds with her comrades based on shared commitments and the common trials of political life. She was loved deeply by those younger than her. She saw the development of younger cadres in the peace movement a central part of her work. She concerned herself with not only the political aspect of their lives, but also the personal. Dr. Sadashiva, who worked closely with her in the 1980s, told me that if he did not come to the AIPSO office for more than a few days she would personally drive over to his home to ask where he had been. She took responsibility for the younger people around her to train them to think not only politically, but to also deal with the trials of life. She viewed them as not only her cadre, but as the future of the nation.

Ram Mohan Rai, who came up in the student movement when Perin was leading AIPSO, narrated to me how she embraced the youth. As young people interested in the Soviet Union, Ram Mohan Rai and his colleagues were trying to organize a youth conference on friendship between India and the Soviet Union and decided to start a youth society for this purpose. The older leadership of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society (ISCUS) dismissed and discouraged them; they saw this endeavor as a competing organization to ISCUS. This of course was contrary to the spirit of solidarity movement, which has always attempted to engage and educate the youth on world affairs. It was Perin who lent her support to them at this time and made sure that a representative from the Soviet embassy attended the conference that was organized in Saharanpur. Perin strove to keep the culture of the peace movement broad and open, away from sectarianism and petty power politics.

Ram Mohan Rai visited Tashkent in 1981 under Perin's recommendation for a youth summit. The experience influenced and affected him greatly, as he met students and youth from all over the world. The people he met there would ask him about three Indian figures -- revolutionary film actor Raj Kapoor whose films were popular all over the world, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who was then loved in the Soviet Union, and Romesh Chandra. They would be greatly impressed when he told them of how he had attended classes in Delhi both with Romesh and Perin Chandra.

A Model for Us

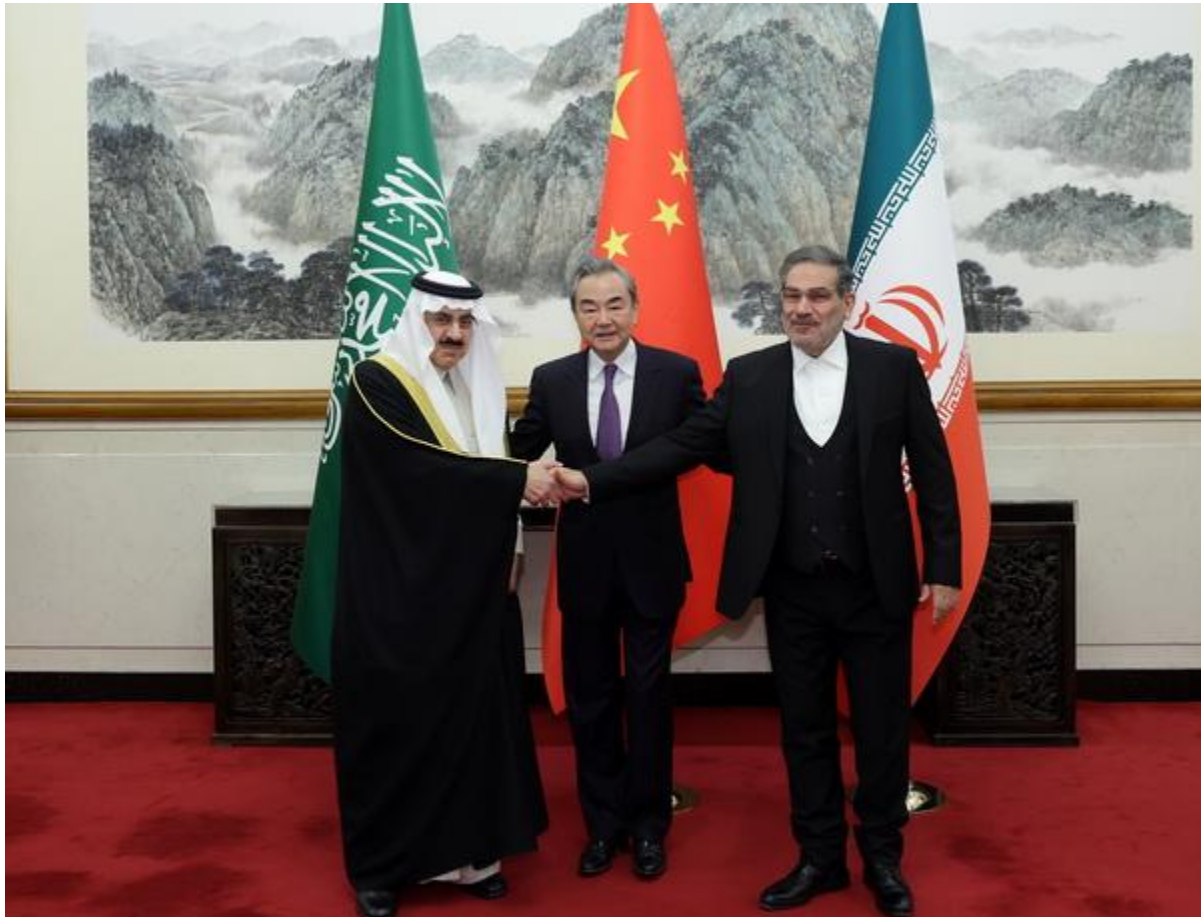
Perin Chandra's life and her work in the peace movement deserves study. In a time when the youth of this country are starved for models that are worthy of them, she shines as an example of a life of purpose and sacrifice. Her name should be known among the people of India, for she represents the best of the tradition of the Indian freedom struggle. Among those who knew her, she is remembered dearly as a kind but firm teacher who taught equally through example and intellectual training. At this time, when India stands at the crossroads between the dying West and the multipolar world in the process of being birthed, we look to her for the direction we must take. How can we stand in solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the world and our own country? Can we imagine a different future where peace is not a distant dream but the norm

upon which human creativity, art and science can prosper? Her life shows us that we must fulfill our destiny as a people, complete the project of the freedom struggle she worked so hard to build, and achieve our country.

Nandita Chaturvedi is a contributor to and editor of this journal.

China Steps Up: A New Era has Dawned in World Politics

M. K. Bhadrakumar



The agreement announced on Friday in Beijing regarding the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran and the reopening of their embassies is a historic event. It goes way beyond an issue of Saudi-Iranian relations. China’s mediation signifies that we are witnessing a profound shift of the tectonic plates in the geopolitics of the 21st century.

The joint statement issued on Friday in Beijing begins by saying that the Saudi-Iranian agreement was reached “in response to the noble initiative of President Xi Jinping.” The dramatic beginning goes on to state that Saudi Arabia and Iran have expressed their “appreciation and gratitude” to Xi Jinping and the Chinese government “for hosting and sponsoring the talks, and the efforts it placed towards its success.”

The joint communique also mentioned Iraq and Oman for fostering the Saudi-Iranian dialogue during 2021-2022. But the salience is that the United States, which has been traditionally the dominant power in West Asian politics for close to eight decades, is nowhere in the picture.

Yet, this is about the reconciliation between the two biggest regional powers in the Persian Gulf region. The US retrenchment denotes a colossal breakdown of American diplomacy. It will remain a black mark in President Biden's foreign policy legacy.

But Biden must take the blame for it. Such a cataclysmic failure is largely to be traced to his fervour to impose his neoconservative dogmas as an adjunct of America's military might and Biden's own frequent insistence that the fate of humankind hinges on the outcome of a cosmic struggle between democracy and autocracy.

China has shown that Biden's hyperbole is delusional and it grates against realities. If Biden's moralistic, ill-considered rhetoric alienated Saudi Arabia, his attempts to suppress Iran met with stubborn resistance from Tehran. And, in the final analysis, Biden literally drove both Riyadh and Tehran to search for countervailing forces that would help them to push back his oppressive, overbearing attitude.

The US' humiliating exclusion from the centre stage of West Asian politics constitutes a "Suez moment" for the superpower, comparable to the crisis experienced by the UK in 1956, which obliged the British to sense that their imperial project had reached a dead end and the old way of doing things—whipping weaker nations into line as ostensible obligations of global leadership—was no longer going to work and would only lead to disastrous reckoning.

The stunning part here is the sheer brain power and intellectual resources and 'soft power' that China has brought into play to outwit the US. The US has at least 30 military bases in West Asia — five in Saudi Arabia alone — but it has lost the mantle of leadership. Come to think of it, Saudi Arabia, Iran and China made their landmark announcement on the very same day Xi Jinping got elected for a third term as president.

What we are seeing is a new China under the leadership of Xi Jinping trotting over the high knoll. Yet, it is adopting a self-effacing posture claiming no laurels for itself. There is no sign of the 'Middle Kingdom syndrome,' which the US propagandists had warned against.

On the contrary, for the world audience — especially countries like India or Vietnam, Turkey, Brazil or South Africa — China has presented a salutary example of how a democratised multipolar world can work in future — how it is possible to anchor big power diplomacy on consensual, conciliatory politics, trade and interdependence and advance a 'win-win' outcome.

Implicit in this is another huge message: China as a factor of global balance and stability. It is not only Asia-Pacific and West Asia who are watching. The audience also includes Africa and Latin America — in fact, the entire non-Western world that forms the big majority of world community who are known as the Global South.

What the pandemic and the Ukraine crisis have brought to the surface is the latent geopolitical reality accruing through decades that the Global South rejects the policies of neo-mercantalism pursued by the West in the garb of 'liberal internationalism.'

The West is pursuing a hierarchical international order. None other than the EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell blurted this out in an unguarded moment recently with a touch of racist overtone when he said from a public platform that 'Europe is a garden. The rest of the world is a jungle, and the jungle could invade the garden.'

Tomorrow, China could as well be challenging the US hegemony over the Western Hemisphere. The recent paper by the Chinese Foreign Ministry titled 'US Hegemony and Its Perils' tells us that Beijing will no longer be on the defensive.

Meanwhile, a realignment of forces on the world stage is taking place with China and Russia on one side and the US on the other. Doesn't it convey a big message that on the very eve of the historic announcement in Beijing on Friday, the Saudi Arabian foreign minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud landed suddenly in Moscow on a 'working visit' and went into a huddle with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov who was visibly delighted? ([here](#), [here](#) and [here](#))

Of course, we will never know what role Moscow would have played behind the scenes in coordination with Beijing to build bridges between Riyadh and Tehran. All we know is that Russia and China actively coordinate their foreign policy moves. Interestingly, on March 6, President Putin had a telephone conversation with Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi.

Audacity of hope

To be sure, the geopolitics of West Asia will never be the same again. Realistically, the first sparrow of spring has appeared but the ice was melted for only three or four rods from the shore. Nonetheless, the sun's rays give hope, signalling warmer days to come.

Conceivably, Riyadh won't have any truck further with the diabolical plots hatched in Washington and Tel Aviv to create an anti-Iran alliance in West Asia. Nor is it in the realms of possibility that Saudi Arabia will be party to any US-Israeli attacks on Iran.

This badly isolates Israel in the region and renders the US toothless. In substantive terms, it scatters the Biden administration's feverish efforts lately to cajole Riyadh to join Abraham Accords.

However, significantly, a commentary in Global Times noted somewhat audaciously that the Saudi-Iranian deal "set a positive example for other regional hotspot issues, such as the easing and settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And in the future, China could play an important role in building a bridge for countries to solve long-standing thorny issues in the Middle East just as what it did this time."

Indeed, the joint communique issued in Beijing says, “The three countries [Saudi Arabia, Iran and China] expressed their keenness to exert all efforts towards enhancing regional and international peace and security.” Can China pull a rabbit out of the hat? Time will tell.

For the present, though, the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement will certainly have positive fallouts on the efforts toward a negotiated settlement in Yemen and Syria as well as on the political situation in Lebanon.

The joint communique emphasises that Saudi Arabia and Iran intend to revive the 1998 General Agreement for Cooperation in the Fields of Economy, Trade, Investment, Technology, Science, Culture, Sports, and Youth. All in all, the Biden administration’s maximum pressure strategy toward Iran has crashed and the West’s sanctions against Iran are being rendered ineffectual. The US’ policy options on Iran have shrunk. Iran gains strategic depth to negotiate with the US.

The cutting edge of the US sanctions lies in the restrictions on Iran’s oil trade and access to western banks. It is entirely conceivable that a backlash is about to begin as Russia, Iran and Saudi Arabia — three top oil/gas producing countries start accelerating their search for payment mechanisms bypassing the American dollar.

China is already discussing such an arrangement with Saudi Arabia and Iran. China-Russia trade and economic transactions try to shun American dollar for payments. It is well understood that any significant erosion in the status of the dollar as ‘world currency’ will not only spell doom for the American economy but will cripple the US’ capacity to wage ‘forever wars’ abroad and impose its global hegemony.

The bottom line is that the reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran is also a precursor to their induction as BRICS members in a near future. To be sure, there is a Russian-Chinese understanding already on this score. The BRICS membership for Saudi Arabia and Iran will radically reset the power dynamic in the international system.

M.K. Bhadrakumar is former ambassador and political commentator

Mission Statement for Celebration of Paul Robeson in Chicago

We are reproducing below the mission statement for a celebration of Paul Robeson being organized in Chicago on the occasion of his 125th anniversary. More details can be found on the website <https://www.robesson125th.org/>.



We celebrate Paul Robeson on his 125th birth anniversary as a man for our times. As the world transitions from the age of empire to the age of humanity, Robeson's legacy teaches us how we must prepare for the world to come.

In 2023, the world is at a crossroads. The darker nations are rising, and demand a new democratic world order. South Africa, China, Russia, Brazil, India, Argentina, Mexico, Mali, Central African Republic, and Saudi Arabia join together in their common interest after decades of imperialist destabilization and division. Western economies face high inflation, rising interest rates, and bank failures. Meanwhile, the Western elite push humanity towards nuclear disaster in Ukraine and threaten China. The American people confront the ruling class with a crisis of legitimacy. As Martin Luther King prophesied in his speech "A Time to Break Silence", the people reject the elite consensus of racism, deindustrialization, and war. They cry out for a new economic and social system based on human dignity and peace. Paul Robeson shows us a way forward in these turbulent times.

As a Black American, Robeson saw himself in the masses of Asia and Africa and the working people world over. Though the American government barred him from attending the Bandung Conference of 1955, he sent his unwavering support, declaring that the very fact of the convening of the Conference signified a historic turning point in all world affairs and a new vista of human advancement. He expressed the support of the working people of the West, who had a vested interest in the defeat of imperialism abroad, since it was inextricably tied to racism and exploitation at home.

Paul Robeson believed in the connection of Africa and Asia unmediated by the West. He observed that Western civilization was exhausted because of its obsession with reason and intellect at the expense of intuition and feeling, and left it to the great cultures of the non Western world to create a new human being who could use scientific knowledge for the upliftment of human life. He saw, as Du Bois did, that "Science is a great and worthy mistress, but there is one greater and that is Humanity which science serves; one thing there is greater than knowledge and that is the Man who knows." He observed the continuity of the great cultures of the East with the great cultures of Africa, developing in a belt extending into Russia.

He recognized folk culture as the expression of the wisdom and humanity of the people reflecting their historical journey and experience. He foresaw that this art and culture could be the basis of a forward movement of all humanity towards peace and love. So committed was he to folk culture, that he learned, spoke, and sang at least 25 languages including Chinese, Russian, and Yoruba.

As Robeson believed in the darker nations, so too did he believe in the working people of the world. He believed in their ability to come together in defiance of the white supremacist warmongers. He identified racism with the bluebloods of Princeton and in the halls of Congress rather than with the majority of Americans. He believed in the moral capacity of working people to follow the Black tradition into the struggle for peace. He encouraged all Americans to join his people in singing their song, "I'm going to lay down my sword and shield down by the riverside... I'm going to study war no more!"

Paul Robeson believed in the reconstruction of the American economy on the basis of peace and justice. He rejected the war economy created by white supremacist elites with its inflation, unemployment, deindustrialization, exploitation and hunger. He embraced a peace economy, with a monetary system for the people rather than the financiers, full employment, dignity, and self-determination. He advocated that the nations of Africa and Asia had the right to choose their own economic system in accordance with the needs of their people and to advance their civilizations without fear of retaliation. He knew that Western civilization's greed would be its undoing, and judgment day was near for the great white masters of the world.

Robeson believed that the artist must choose a side and elect to fight for freedom or slavery. He took positions that were neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but because his conscience said it was right. He lived his life with extraordinary courage and humility, even in the face of political persecution. The House Un-American Affairs Committee tried to destroy him. The government denied his passport and took away his means of work. His so-called friends and allies canceled him. The ruling class tried to turn him from the most celebrated Black man on the planet to a nonentity. Throughout it all, he remained unbowed and unbroken. He never apologized for his stances and welcomed every new stride toward freedom. Even as his government tried to cancel him, his people and the people of the world rallied around him and loved him even more. As Urdu poet Ali Sardar Jafri wrote, "Whether or not you are proud of your songs/Songs are proud that they are your art/Our lands lie far apart/ But not our hearts/Your garden lies just beyond mine".

As a new world order rises and the old crumbles, we celebrate Robeson as a figure for our times. Robeson teaches us to believe in the capacity of the working people to reject the warmongers and embrace humanity. He teaches us to practice love in the sense Martin Luther King practiced it, not as sentimental bosh, but as the unifying principle of life, and the key that unlocks the door which leads to the ultimate reality. We must sing Robeson's Song of the Rivers, which speaks of the merging of the Nile, Ganga, Yangtse, Volga, and the Mississippi into "the mightiest river of all—the people's will for peace and freedom now surging in floodtide throughout the world".

Report on Nai Taleem and Training for Socialism

A reading and discussion group called 'Nai Taleem' has been meeting with the initiative of the Gandhi Global Family. The group was started as a way to discuss and debate the ideas that can



form the future of Indian and world humanity. For this purpose, the group plans to read writings of figures who participated in and led world revolutionary movements such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Aruna Asaf Ali, Martin Luther King Jr., W.E.B. Du Bois, Ho Chi Minh, Amilcar Cabral, Kwame Nkrumah, VI Lenin and many others. These figures will be read because history is not merely the past, but it is something that all people carry with them in their assumptions and ways of being. It is to history we look to clarify our future. Further, the group hopes to develop a new pedagogy, or a way of teaching that comes naturally from the Indian and world freedom struggles for an education of a new type. The group is open to all and no previous experience is required.

Here we are reprinting an essay by Aruna Asaf Ali, Training for Socialism, that was read in the last session, along with its translation in hindi.

बहस उन विचारों पर होगी जो भारतीय और विश्व मानवता के भविष्य का निर्माण कर सकते हैं. इस उद्देश्य के लिए, समूह महात्मा गांधी, जवाहरलाल नेहरू, अरुणा आसफ अली, मार्टिन लूथर किंग जूनियर, डब्ल्यू ई बी डू बोइस, हो ची मिन्ह, अमिलकार कब्राल, क्वामे नक्रुमाः, व् ई लेनिन और कई अन्य विश्व क्रांतिकारी आंदोलनों में भाग लेने और नेतृत्व करने वाले लोगों के लेखन को पढ़ने की योजना बनाई है। इन आंकड़ों को पढ़ा जाएगा क्योंकि इतिहास केवल अतीत नहीं है, बल्कि वह है जो सभी लोग अपनी धारणाओं और होने के तरीकों में अपने साथ लेकर चलते हैं। हम इतिहास को समझते हैं ताकि हम अपने भविष्य को स्पष्ट कर सकें। इसके अलावा, समूह एक नई शिक्षाशास्त्र, या शिक्षण का नया तरीका विकसित करने की उम्मीद करता है जो भारतीय और विश्व स्वतंत्रता संग्राम से स्वाभाविक रूप से आता है। सभी का समूह में स्वागत है, और किसी पिछले अनुभव की आवश्यकता नहीं है।

गांधी ग्लोबल परिवार की पहल पर 'नई तालीम' नामक एक पठन और चर्चा ग्रूप की बैठक हो रही है। चर्चा और

यहां हम अरुणा आसफ अली का एक निबंध, ट्रेनिंग फॉर सोशलिज्म, को हिंदी में अनुवाद के साथ पुनर्प्रकाशित कर रहे हैं, जिसे पिछले सत्र में पढ़ा गया था।

Training for Socialism Aruna Asaf Ali

This is the seventy fifth year since Jawaharlal Nehru was born, and the first he is not with us. It is no longer like what it used to be when with incorrigible faith we comforted ourselves saying : "Nehru is with us : All is well with the world."

A sadness that is hard to define comes upon us as we try to reconcile ourselves to the thought that this business of living has to be seen through even though Nehru is no longer alive. There are several questions that keep haunting us.

Is the age to which his sophisticated and enlightened mind gave its tone and timbre really over? Dare we believe those who make half-hearted gestures and assure the people that Nehru's unfinished tasks will be accomplished?

Loud in their protestations of love and loyalty to Nehru and his ideas, are they not frittering away their inheritance by highlighting what is trivial and ignoring the significant? Their mechanical professions of faith and belief in his ideals have an empty ring and the fact that among the men and women who are at the helm of affairs today there are quite a few who have denied him even before the proverbial cock crew thrice, intensifies the uneasiness.

Instead of providing the people with a decisive, coherent and united leadership, those in high places seem to revel in the thought that they are ruling the destinies of 500 million Indians.

Obviously, these musings can be treated as extremely subjective reflections. They probably are exaggerated expressions of an anxiety complex, and -present too gloomy a view of the future. But clearly we are going through a period of intense confusion caused by the absence of one who directed our affairs for nearly half a century.

The negative aspects of our backward and slow-moving conditions ought not, of course, always dominate our thoughts and we should be less inclined to underestimate the positive achievements of the post-liberation period. Defeatism and a feeling of dejection have to be fought back in the belief that the lessons from Nehru's life and teachings can never be forgotten. We must assure ourselves that they cannot but find creative fulfilment in times to come, because his ideas were based on concepts and principles that are the warp and woof of civilization and the processes that take humanity forward.

New Leaders

Despite the apparent disregard and even deliberate distortion of what Nehru stood for (in circles hostile to his message of social equality), it has to become the rallying point for the victims of social exploitation and oppression.

To whom can we turn for the sustenance of our faith in the inevitable triumph of his ideas? An entirely new leadership must emerge from amidst the people so that men and women with the passion and zeal of Jawaharlal Nehru may lead them in their search for a better life.

Immediately, this new leadership, individual and collective, will have to hold itself responsible for creating a climate wherein the present vagueness about our objectives will disappear; otherwise confusion in an increasing measure is bound to continue. But to achieve clarity, the theoretical roots of a society in which the majority are the worst sufferers and the minority its beneficiaries, have to be understood by the masses. An organisation to study the history of revolutions and the emergence of socialist thought will be necessary on a mass scale because the days when Nehru wrote and spoke to the people so that they may learn from the past and understand the present, are over.

His 'Classes'

His vastly attended meetings were more in the nature of massive study classes than just political gatherings. His was never a fiery orator's performance; they were more like lectures one listens to in a class room. Like Gandhiji before him, he took the people's hunger for learning for granted. because he knew that the bulk of them were denied the opportunity to read or write. They had to be told how they could and should behave as a people.

Nehru was their teacher as also the man who compelled them to resist their alien and authoritarian overlords. Post-Nehru India will therefore require his substitute as a collective educator, and those who perform this task will have to work hard to acquire the intellectual capacity to comprehend the nature and meaning of modern times. A great deal will depend on their ability to think for themselves and suggest practical solutions. For this Nehru's writings over the years can provide a considerable amount of thought-provoking material.

However, the initiation and organisation of a well-planned study movement must steer clear of such politicians as are obsessed with the struggle for power for factional and personal ends.

Recently, several laudable attempts at propagating socialism have failed to enthuse the people because they were unable to inspire confidence. They were suspect because the motivating factor appeared to be the attainment of personal influence and not the spread of knowledge for the commonly felt need to change social conditions.

Jawaharlal Nehru was fully aware of the need to make organised and sustained efforts to politicize the people. He knew they would function responsibly only when their awareness was based on intellectual awakening and not merely that of emotional provocation. He very often spoke of the manner in which, soon after the 1917 Revolution in the Soviet Union, "Lenin

Corners" were organised in every urban and rural district to enable the people to grasp the significance of their leader's interpretation of Marxism and how it could revolutionise society.

In fact he had earnestly, perhaps wishfully, hoped that the Indian experiment in Community Development would impart the message of India's renaissance to her simple working people in their own language. But he was disillusioned because of late he mistook the career bureaucrat for the impassioned crusader. Instead had he succeeded in winning the support of Congressmen and others with socialist convictions for carrying out this important national work, he might have witnessed that "fruition of desire" which is "the end of our willing." But that was not to be.

Nehru denied himself the opportunity of organising a cadre to whom socialism was a matter of conviction and not an opportunity for self-advancement. As a result, none of the several officially sponsored agencies have succeeded in inspiring the sort of patriotism that seizes a newly liberated people with the urge to live and strive for ushering in the good life for all.

To Serve

This task of stirring a human being deeply and making him a catalytic factor cannot be left to "experts" or "specialists". We have to entrust this task primarily to men and women who have a natural aptitude to serve others rather than only themselves, and to whom self-effacement comes easily. They alone can bring about a just political and social order because they alone can earn the people's trust and confidence. To find men and women of such stuff will not be easy. The history of other countries tells us how long it takes to find men who are willing to endure the hardships and heart-breaks of turning chaos into order.

In some ways we were fortunate because a Gandhi and a Nehru emerged together and carried the cross almost entirely on their own strength. Their individualised and inspired mission made them institutions. Consequently in their lifetime they were able to make the masses respond so magnificently that collective and organised work appeared superfluous. However, that historic period is over and no longer can we ignore the need for organised action. Without centralised direction at every level—economic, social and cultural—in fact, in every sphere of our existence, the concept of the new socialist society that must replace the present will continue to be vague and shadowy.

The Question

Nehru had the foresight and vision to initiate the struggle for socialism. It was his conviction that the Indian National Congress alone could lead this struggle because of its anti-imperialist traditions and mass character. Will the Congress be able to fulfil his high expectation and carry on the task of remaking society? Have its leaders the necessary incentive to refashion the party's structure, its mode of functioning, and above all its attitude to socialists outside its organizational fold? Should the answer to these questions be in the affirmative, then the

Congress will be in a position to unite and lead the people once again and justify Jawaharlal Nehru's faith in its capacity to bring about revolutionary transformations in this land of hope and despair.

समाजवाद के लिए तैयारी
अरुणा आसफ अली

जवाहरलाल नेहरू के जन्म को आज 75 वर्ष हुए हैं, और यह पहला वर्ष है जब वह हमारे बीच नहीं हैं। आज वह समय नहीं रहा जो पहले था जब हम अमित विश्वास के साथ खुद को यह कहते हुए सांत्वना देते थे: "नेहरू हमारे साथ हैं: दुनिया में सब ठीक है।"

हम पर एक ऐसा दुःख छा जाता है जिसे परिभाषित करना कठिन है, जब यह अहसास होता है की आज नेहरू हमारे साथ नहीं हैं पर फिर भी ज़िन्दगी जीने का काम आगे बढ़ाना है। ऐसे कई सवाल हैं जो हमें परेशान करते रहते हैं।

क्या वह युग जिसे उनके विद्वान् और प्रबुद्ध दिमाग ने उसका भाव दिया था, वास्तव में खत्म हो गया है? क्या हम उन लोगों पर विश्वास कर सकते हैं जो आधे-अधूरे मन से इशारे करते हैं और जनता को आश्वस्त करते हैं कि नेहरू के अधूरे कार्य पूरे होंगे?

भले ही वह नेहरू और उनके विचारों के प्रति प्रेम और वफादारी व्यक्त करें, क्या वे तुच्छ चीजों को उजागर करके और महत्वपूर्ण को अनदेखा करके अपनी विरासत को बर्बाद नहीं कर रहे हैं? वह जिस औपचारिक तरीके से नेहरू के आदर्शों में अपने विश्वास को घोषित करते हैं, कहीं उस पर भरोसा करना मुश्किल है। नेहरू को गए एक साल भी नहीं हुआ लेकिन आज जो लोग नेतृत्व में हैं, उनमें से कुछ ऐसी भी हैं जिन्होंने नेहरू को नकारना शुरू कर दिया है।

लोगों को एक असंदिग्ध, स्पष्ट और एकजुट नेतृत्व प्रदान करने के बजाय, उच्च पदों पर बैठे लोग इस विचार में आनंदमय प्रतीत होते हैं कि वे 50 करोड़ भारतीयों की तकदीर पर शासन कर रहे हैं।

जाहिर है, इन चिंतनों को बहुत सब्जेक्टिव माना जा सकता है। वे शायद एक घबराहट की अभिव्यक्ति हैं, और भविष्य का बहुत ही निराशाजनक दृश्य प्रस्तुत करते हैं। लेकिन यह स्पष्ट है की हम बहुत अव्यवस्थित दौर से गुजर रहे हैं जिसका कारण लगभग आधी सदी तक हमें निर्देशित करने वाले की अनुपस्थिति है।

बेशक, हमारी पिछड़ी और धीमी गति से बदलती हुई स्थितियों के नकारात्मक पहलू हमेशा हमारे विचारों पर हावी नहीं होने चाहिए और हमें आज़ादी के बाद की सकारात्मक उपलब्धियों की कम आंकना नहीं करना चाहिए। पराजित और निराश भावनाओं को हमें इस विश्वास के साथ लड़ना होगा कि नेहरू के जीवन और शिक्षाओं से मिली सीख को कभी भुलाया नहीं जा सकता। हमें खुद को आश्वस्त करना चाहिए कि आने वाले समय में उनके विचारों को रचनात्मक पूर्णता मिलेगी, क्योंकि उनके विचार उन अवधारणाओं और सिद्धांतों पर आधारित थे जो सभ्यता की नींव है और जो मानवता को आगे बढ़ा सके।

नए नेता

नेहरू के विचारों की स्पष्ट उपेक्षा और उन्हें जान-बूझकर तोड़-मरोड़ कर पेश करने के बावजूद (सामाजिक समानता के उनके संदेश के प्रति विरोधी समूहों में), उन विचारों को शोषितों और पीड़ितों के लिए एकजुटता का प्रतीक बनना होगा।

उनके विचारों की अनिवार्य जीत में हम अपने विश्वास को सहारा देने के लिए किसके पास जा सकते हैं? लोगों के बीच से एक पूरी तरह से नया नेतृत्व उभरना ज़रूरी है ताकि जवाहरलाल नेहरू जैसे जुनून और उत्साह के साथ ऐसे पुरुष और महिलाएं आगे आएँ जो जनता को अपने बेहतर जीवन की तलाश में नेतृत्व प्रदान कर सकें।

तत्काल में, इस नए नेतृत्व, व्यक्तिगत और सामूहिक, को एक ऐसा माहौल बनाने के लिए खुद को जिम्मेदार मानना होगा जिसमें हमारे उद्देश्यों की वर्तमान अस्पष्टता गायब हो जाए; वरना हमारी अस्पष्टता की स्थिति बढ़ती ही जाएगी। लेकिन स्पष्टता प्राप्त करने के लिए, एक ऐसे समाज की सैद्धांतिक जड़ें जनता को समझना ज़रूरी है जिसमें अधिकांश आबादी सबसे ज्यादा पीड़ित हैं और मुट्ठीभर इसके लाभार्थी हैं। क्रांतियों के इतिहास और उभरते समाजवादी विचार का अध्ययन करने के लिए बड़े पैमाने पर एक संगठन की आवश्यकता है क्योंकि वह दिन आए जब नेहरू लोगों को लिखते और बोलते थे ताकि वे हमारे अतीत से सीख सकें और वर्तमान को समझ सकें।

उनकी 'कक्षाएं'

उनकी बैठकें, जिनमें सैकड़ों लोग आते थे, सिर्फ राजनीतिक सभाएं ही नहीं, बल्कि बड़े पैमाने पर अध्ययन की कक्षाएँ थीं। उनका प्रदर्शन कभी भी उग्र वक्ता का प्रदर्शन नहीं था; वे किसी कक्षा में सुने जाने वाले व्याख्यानों की तरह था। गांधी जी की तरह, उन्होंने लोगों की सीखने की अभिलाषा को मान के ही चला। क्योंकि वह जानते थे कि उनमें से अधिकांश लोगों को पढ़ने या लिखने का अवसर नहीं दिया गया था। उन्हें बताना था कि उन्हें एक-जन के रूप में कैसे कदम उठाने चाहिए और कैसे नहीं।

नेहरू उनके शिक्षक होने के साथ-साथ वह व्यक्ति भी थे जिन्होंने उन्हें अपने विदेशी और तानाशाही शासकों का विरोध करने के लिए हौसला दिया। इसलिए नेहरू के बाद के भारत को एक सामूहिक शिक्षक की आवश्यकता है, और जो लोग इस कार्य की जिम्मेदारी उठाएंगे उन्हें आधुनिक समय की स्वरूप और सच्चाई को समझने के लिए जो बौद्धिक क्षमता ज़रूरी है उसे हासिल करने के लिए कड़ी मेहनत करनी होगी। बहुत कुछ उनकी खुद के लिए सोचने और व्यावहारिक समाधान सुझाने की क्षमता पर निर्भर करेगा। इसके लिए वर्षों से नेहरू के लेख काफी मात्रा में विचारोत्तेजक साबित हो सकते हैं।

हालाँकि, एक सुनियोजित अध्ययन आंदोलन की शुरुआत और संगठन को ऐसे राजनेताओं से दूर रहना चाहिए जो गुटों और व्यक्तिगत हितों के लिए सत्ता के संघर्ष से ग्रस्त हैं।

हाल ही में, समाजवाद के प्रचार-प्रसार के कई प्रशंसनीय प्रयास, लोगों को उत्साहित करने में विफल रहे हैं क्योंकि वे लोगों में विश्वास प्रेरित ना कर पाए। वह संदेहयुक्त थे क्योंकि ऐसा लगता था की यह प्रयास व्यक्तिगत प्रतिष्ठा की लालच से ज़्यादा प्रेरित थे न कि सामाजिक परिस्थितियों को बदलने की आवश्यकता से।

जवाहरलाल नेहरू लोगों के राजनीतिकरण के लिए संगठित और निरंतर प्रयास करने की आवश्यकता से पूरी तरह अवगत थे। उन्हें पता था कि वे जिम्मेदारी से तभी कार्य करेंगे जब उनकी जागरूकता बौद्धिक जागृति पर आधारित होगी न केवल भावनात्मक उत्तेजना पर। नेहरू इस बारे में अक्सर बात करते थे कि किस तरह सोवियत संघ में 1917 की क्रांति के तुरंत बाद हर शहरी और ग्रामीण जिले में "लेनिन कॉर्नर" का आयोजन किया गया था ताकि लोग अपने नेता की मार्क्सवाद की व्याख्या का महत्व और उन विचारों का सामाजिक क्रांति से रिश्ता समझ सकें।

वास्तव में, उन्होंने ईमानदारी से, शायद थोड़ा आशावादी सपना देखा था कि देश के पुनर्जागरण का संदेश सामान्य मेहनतकश लोगों तक, उनकी अपनी भाषा में, भारत का नया कम्युनिटी डेवलपमेंट एक्सपेरिमेंट पहुंचाएगा। लेकिन उनका मोहभंग हो गया क्योंकि उन्होंने गलती से करियर ब्यूरोक्रेट को एक अवधारित सैनिक समझ लिया

था। इसके बजाय यदि वह इस महत्वपूर्ण राष्ट्रीय कार्य को करने के लिए समाजवादी विश्वास वाले कांग्रेसियों और अन्य लोगों का समर्थन हासिल करने में सफल होते, तो शायद उन्होंने "इच्छाओं की पूर्ति" देखी होती, जो "हमारी कल्पनाओं का लक्ष्य" है। लेकिन वह नहीं हो सका।

नेहरू ने खुद को एक ऐसे कैडर को संगठित करने का अवसर नहीं दिया, जिसके लिए समाजवाद दृढ़ विश्वास का विषय था और आत्म-उन्नति का अवसर नहीं। नतीजतन, आधिकारिक तौर पर प्रायोजित कई एजेंसियों में से कोई भी उस तरह की देशभक्ति को प्रेरित करने में सफल नहीं हुई है, जो एक हाल ही में आज़ाद लोगों को जीने और बेहतर जीवन के लिए संघर्ष करने की ललक से भर देती है।

सेवा करना

मनुष्य को गहराई से प्रेरित करने और उसे एक उत्प्रेरक कारक बनाने का यह कार्य "एक्सपर्ट्स" या "स्पेशलिस्ट्स" के भरोसे नहीं छोड़ा जा सकता। हमें यह कार्य मुख्य रूप से उन पुरुषों और महिलाओं को सौंपना है, जिनमें स्वयं के बजाय दूसरों की सेवा करने की स्वाभाविक क्षमता है, और जिनके लिए आत्म-विलोपन आसान है। वे अकेले ही हैं जो एक न्यायपूर्ण राजनीतिक और सामाजिक व्यवस्था ला सकते हैं क्योंकि वे ही लोगों का विश्वास और भरोसा जीत सकते हैं। इस तरह के आदमी और औरत को ढूंढना आसान नहीं होगा। अन्य देशों का इतिहास हमें बताता है कि ऐसे लोगों को खोजने में कितना समय लगता है जो अराजकता को व्यवस्था में बदलने की कठिनाइयाँ और उस रास्ते के दुख सहने के लिए तैयार हैं।

कुछ मायनों में हम भाग्यशाली थे क्योंकि एक गांधी और एक नेहरू एक साथ उभरे और उन्होंने लगभग पूरी तरह से अपने बल पर इस जिम्मेवारी को उठाया। उनके व्यक्तिगत और प्रेरित मिशन ने उन्हें संस्थान बना दिया। नतीजतन, अपने जीवन में वे जनता को इतनी भव्यता से उठाने में सक्षम थे कि सामूहिक और संगठित कार्य अनावश्यक प्रतीत होता था। हालाँकि, वह ऐतिहासिक काल समाप्त हो गया है और अब हम संगठित काम की आवश्यकता को अनदेखा नहीं कर सकते। हर स्तर पर केंद्रीकृत दिशा के बिना- आर्थिक, सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक- वास्तव में, हमारे अस्तित्व के हर क्षेत्र में केंद्रीकृत दिशा के बिना, वर्तमान समाज की जगह जो नया समाजवाद खड़ा होगा वह हमें अस्पष्ट और स्याही से घिरा हुआ दिखाई देगा।

महत्वपूर्ण सवाल

नेहरू के पास समाजवाद के लिए संघर्ष शुरू करने की दूरदर्शिता और दृष्टि थी। उनका यह विश्वास था कि साम्राज्यवाद विरोधी परंपरा और जनता का भरोसा होने के कारण भारतीय राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस अकेले ही इस संघर्ष का नेतृत्व कर सकती है। क्या कांग्रेस उनकी इस उच्च उम्मीद को पूरा कर पाएगी और समाज के पुनर्निर्माण का कार्य जारी रख पाएगी? क्या इसके नेताओं को पार्टी की संरचना, इसके कामकाज के तरीके, और सबसे बढ़कर--इसके सांगठनिक दायरे से बाहर समाजवादियों के प्रति इसके रवैये--को नया रूप देने के लिए आवश्यक प्रोत्साहन मिला है? यदि इन प्रश्नों का उत्तर सकारात्मक है, तो कांग्रेस एक बार फिर लोगों को एकजुट करने और उनका नेतृत्व करने की स्थिति में होगी और आशा और निराशा की इस भूमि में क्रांतिकारी परिवर्तन लाने की अपनी क्षमता में जवाहरलाल नेहरू के विश्वास को सही ठहराएगी।

Archive: India Pays Tribute to Paul Robeson

M. C. Chagla

Shri M. C. Chagla was former Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court and former Cabinet minister



In my presidential address at the Paul Robeson 60th Birthday Celebration in April 1958, I stated that in Robeson's view it was the duty of an artist to give expression, through his medium, to the sufferings of his people, to use his art to give them hope and solace, and the assurance that one day they would reach the promised land. Robeson felt that an artist must use his art as a powerful weapon to wage war against cruelty, oppression and inequality. Robeson was fighting against the insolence and arrogance of a "superior" race, and the sense of

dominance which comes from a lack of pigmentation in the skin.

I also drew the attention of my audience to the fact that there were 28 countries where Committees had been set up, and who were paying tributes to this great artist, and, as a matter of fact, the initiative for these celebrations came from a country in the West— England— one of America's allies. A very strong and powerful Committee had been set up there, and among the members were the Lord Bishop of Birmingham and Earl Baldwin of Bewdley, and I did not think that either of these venerable gentlemen could be accused of being communists. I ended my speech with the reminder: "We have been told on high authority that 'it is the humble who will inherit the Kingdom of God'. If there is a God, and God is only another name for compassion and kindness, the Negroes must be dearer to Him than any other people, because today they are the oppressed and the downtrodden. I have no doubt that they would inherit the Kingdom of Heaven".

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya was a freedom fighter and socialist who worked greatly towards the revival of Indian handicrafts

The Negro's most outstanding genius is in his divine gift of song. The Negro music was born out of the boundless loneliness of his soul, seeking solace in the outpouring of his heart in melody. Its piercing pathos, its solemn simplicity, its gay swing, are indigenous to the Negro and a part of him... The Negro spirituals are unequalled in their delicate beauty. There are few finer musical treats than their church music. Nor must the fact be overlooked that many Negro composers have ventured into the broader fields of musical endeavour, including operatic music.

And few forces have so successfully cut across the rigid race barriers as music. Those who have witnessed the enormous crowds of hundreds of thousands and more rise spontaneously to honour Paul Robeson or cheer lustily Marion Anderson, can perhaps gauge the wonder of this miracle. For when Paul Robeson sings he becomes something more than a singer. He transcends all human limitations and becomes the disembodied melody, which knows neither colour nor race. He interprets the ageless, deathless spirit of his lost land of Africa, his priceless heritage, before which even the hooded order of bigotry and hate spontaneously retreat.

Jawaharlal Nehru

Jawaharlal Nehru was the first Prime Minister of India

I am happy to know that an All-India Committee has been formed under the distinguished chairmanship of Chief Justice Chagla, to celebrate the sixtieth birthday of Paul Robeson. This is an occasion which deserves celebration not only because Paul Robeson is one of the greatest artists of our generation, but also because he has represented and suffered for a cause which should be dear to all of us - the cause of human dignity.

The celebration of his birthday is, therefore, something more than a tribute to a great individual. It is also a tribute to that cause for which he has stood and suffered.

I send all my good wishes to Paul Robeson on this occasion and I trust that he will have many long years before him to enrich the world with his great art.

Ali Sardar Jafri

Ali Sardar Jafri was a poet, critic and one of the founders of the Progressive Writers Movement in India

अपने नगमे पे कोई नाज़ तुझे हो कि न हो
नगमा इस बात पे नाज़ाँ है कि है फ़न तेरा
देस हैं दूर बहुत दिल तो बहुत दुर नहीं
मेरे गुलशन ही के पहलू में है गुलशन तेरा
तेरे नगमे ने लिया देहली-ओ-शीराज़ का दिल
मॉस्को तेरा है गर नाता-ओ-लन्दन तेरा
अपनी पलकों से चुना खूने-शहीदाने-हबश
कितने गुलज़ारों से गुलरंग है दामन तेरा
तेरी आवाज़ बिलाले-हबशी की है नवा

नूर से दिल के तिरे हर्फ है रौशन तेरा
बूए-गुल रह न सकी कैद-ए-गुलिस्ताँ में असीर
सरहदें तोड़ के सब फैल गया फ़न तेरा
कृश्न का गीत है, गोकुल की हसीं शाम है तू
आ कलेजे से लगा लें कि सियह फ़ाम है तू

You may or not take pride in your song,
The song takes pride in being sung by you,
Our lands are far but our hearts are not,
My garden of flowers is right next to yours
Your song has won the hearts of Delhi and of Shiraz
If London is yours, then so is Moscow
With your eyelashes, you painstakingly picked up
Each drop of blood shed by the Black martyrs
Many springs color your bosom
Your voice carries the melodies of Black Bilal
Your words are illuminated by the light of your soul
Like the fragrance of flowers,
Which could not be kept constrained in the garden,
Your art has broken through all boundaries and perfumed the world
You are the song of Krishna, the beautiful dusk of his town, Gokul
Let me embrace you to my heart, for you are the color of ink

Rikhi Jaipal

Rikhi Jaipal was a former Indian diplomat

Paul Robeson entered our consciousness at an early age, during the years before the Second World War, when Asians were struggling to regain their nationhood from Western imperialism. We remember him as a great American, great in every sense, in body and soul, larger than life. It is not only the things that he stood for, but the manner in which he said and sang about them that compelled the attention of the world. He had a largeness of heart, and a loftiness of spirit which embraced the entire human race in the universal brotherhood of man. His voice, always vibrant with love and compassion, stirred the depths of one's being. It was a voice that could not be silenced. It demanded freedom and the fullness of the promise contained in the American Constitution for all American citizens regardless of race. It demanded also the right of the Negro people to take what was theirs---equality in the constitution. Paul Robeson related this American dream to the larger concept of the dream of one world in which every human being would freely enjoy equality in conditions of peace and security.

This interrelationship between him and the peoples fighting for freedom everywhere was bound in the same web of history, human suffering and human aspiration. Inevitably, he became a part, and indeed a symbol, of the world movement for freedom and liberation. His songs were the purest expressions of the essence of humanity. Like the rest of us, he too was a victim of the

white man's law and the white man's world. But not for long, because the victims of yesterday have now become the children of destiny of today and tomorrow.

Vijay Laxmi Pandit

Vijay Laxmi Pandit was a freedom fighter and former diplomat

Paul was, besides being a great artist, an even greater human being. We spoke about his coming to India some day, where he said he would like to study Indian folk songs...The last time I saw Paul he was in Harlem. He was not too well, and the emotional damage he had suffered from the way he had been treated in his own country had hurt him beyond measure. He was a great American and America had rejected and humiliated him, or tried to do so. No one can humiliate a man of the dignity, courage and faith in values that Paul possessed.

Romesh Chandra

Romesh Chandra was former president of the World Peace Council

We think today of Paul Robeson not being allowed to sing by fascist whites. Paul Robeson sang for all---not only for his own black people, but for all America, white and black and brown and red-- for that real America which today stands for the freedom of all people and stands against United States imperialism at the same time, because it knows that there is no future for the people of the United States without a world at peace and a world in freedom....Paul Robeson himself is here. He did not die. He lives on in the hearts of all the people in the United States who fight for peace, who fight against racism and racial discrimination. The people of the United States shall win. Their struggle is one with the fight of all other peoples who are fighting against imperialism and oppression, who are fighting for peace.