

India's Tryst with Destiny: Freedom Struggle from Exploitation and Degradation Is Global

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Theme: [History](#)

Today, we are in the grip of a globalised system of capitalism which drives narcissism, domination, ego, anthropocentrism, speciesism and plunder. A system that is using up oil, water and other resources much faster than they can ever be regenerated. We have poisoned the rivers and oceans, destroyed natural habitats, driven wildlife species to (the edge of) extinction and have altered the chemical composition of the atmosphere with seemingly devastating effects.

With its never-ending quest for profit, capitalism thrives on the exploitation of peoples and the environment. It strides the world hand in glove with militarism, with the outcome being endless destabilisations, conflicts and wars over finite resources and the capture of new markets.

This is sold to the masses as part of an ongoing quest to achieve human well-being, measured in terms of endless GDP growth, itself based on an ideology that associates such growth with corporate profit, boosted by stock buy-backs, financial speculation, massive arms deals, colonialism [masquerading as philanthropy](#), [manipulated and rigged](#) markets, [corrupt and secretive](#) trade deals, outsourced jobs and a resource-grabbing militarism.

That such a parasitical system could ever bring about a 'happy' human condition for the majority is unfathomable.

Over the last 70 years, material living standards in the West have improved, but how that wealth was obtained and how it is then distributed is what really matters. Take the case of the UK.

While much of manufacturing has been outsourced to cheap labour economies, welfare, unions and livelihoods have been attacked. Massive levels of tax evasion/avoidance persist and neoliberal policies have resulted in privatisation, deregulation and the spiralling of national and personal debt. Moreover, the cost of living has increased as public assets have been sold off to profiteering cartels and taxpayers' money has been turned into corporate welfare for a corrupt banking cartel.

Meanwhile, the richest 1,000 families in the UK saw their net worth [more than double](#) shortly after the 2008 financial crisis, the worst recession since the Great Depression, while the rest of the population is confronted with 'austerity', poverty, cutbacks, reliance on food banks and job insecurity.

But let's not forget where much of the UK's wealth came from in the first place: some \$45 trillion was sucked from India alone according to [renowned economist Utsa Patnaik](#). Britain

developed by underdeveloping India. And now the West and its (modern-day East India) corporations are in the process of 'developing' India by again helping themselves to the country's public wealth and natural assets (outlined further on).

Under this system, it is clear whose happiness and well-being matters most and whose does not matter at all. According to researcher and analyst [Andrew Gavin Marshall](#), it is the major international banking houses which control the global central banking system:

"From there, these dynastic banking families created an international network of think tanks, which socialised the ruling elites of each nation and the international community as a whole, into a cohesive transnational elite class. The foundations they established helped shape civil society both nationally and internationally, playing a major part in the funding – and thus coordinating and co-opting – of major social-political movements."

Additional insight [is set out](#) by David Rothkopf in his 2008 book 'Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making':

"The superclass constitutes approximately 0.0001 percent of the world's population. They are the Davos-attending, Gulfstream/private jet-flying, money-incrusted, megacorporation-interlocked, policy-building elites of the world, people at the absolute peak of the global power pyramid ... They are from the highest levels of finance capital, transnational corporations, the government, the military... and other shadow elites."

These are the people setting the agendas at the Trilateral Commission, Bilderberg Group, G-7, G-20, NATO, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. They decide which wars are to be fought and why and formulate global economic policy.

Tryst with destiny

In 1947, on the steps of the Red Fort in Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru spoke optimistically about India's tryst with destiny. Free from the shackles of British colonialism, for many the future seemed bright.

But some 72 years on, we now see a headlong rush to urbanise (under [World Bank](#) directives – India is the biggest debtor nation in the history of that institution) and India's cities are increasingly defined by their traffic-jammed flyovers cutting through fume choked neighbourhoods that are denied access to drinking water and a decent infrastructure. Privatisation and crony capitalism are the order of the day.

Away from the cities, the influence of transnational agricapital and state-corporate grabs for land are leading to violent upheaval, conflict and ecological destruction. The links between the Monsanto-Syngenta-Walmart-backed Knowledge Initiative on Agriculture and the associated US sanctioning and backing of the opening up of India's nuclear sector to foreign interests show who really benefits from this.

Under the guise of 'globalisation', Western powers are on an unrelenting drive to plunder what they regard as 'untapped markets' in other areas of the globe. Foreign agricapital has been moving in on Indian food and agriculture for some time. But it first needs to eradicate the peasantry and displace the current model of production before bringing India's food and

agriculture sector under its control.

Other sectors have not been immune to this bogus notion of development. Millions of people have been displaced to facilitate the needs of resource extraction industries, Special Economic Zones, nuclear plants and other large-scale projects. And the full military backing of the state has been on hand to forcibly evict people.

To help open the nation to foreign capital, proponents of economic neoliberalism are fond of stating that 'regulatory blockages' must be removed. If particular 'blockages' stemming from legitimate protest, rights to land and dissent cannot be dealt with by peaceful means, other methods are used. And when increasing mass surveillance or widespread ideological attempts to discredit and smear does not secure compliance or dilute the power of protest, brute force is on hand.

The country's spurt of high GDP growth was partly fuelled on the back of cheap food and the subsequent impoverishment of farmers. The gap between their income and the rest of the population has widened enormously to the point where rural India consumes less calories per head of population than it did 40 years ago. Meanwhile, unlike farmers, corporations receive massive handouts and interest-free loans but have failed to spur job creation.

Millions of small-scale and marginal farmers are suffering economic distress as the sector is [deliberately made financially non-viable](#) for them. Veteran rural reporter P Sainath says what this has resulted in is not so much an agrarian crisis but a crisis of civilisation proportions, given that the bulk of the population still lives in the countryside and relies on agriculture or related activities for an income.

Independent cultivators are being bankrupted, land is to be amalgamated to facilitate large-scale industrial cultivation and remaining farmers will be absorbed into corporate supply chains and squeezed as they work on contracts, the terms of which will be dictated by large agribusiness and chain retailers.

US agribusiness corporations are spearheading this process, the very companies that fuel and thrive on a five-year US taxpayer-funded farm bill subsidy of around \$500 billion. Their industrial model in the US is based on the overproduction of certain commodities often sold at prices below the cost of production and dumped on the rest of the world, thereby undermining farmers' livelihoods and agriculture in other countries, not least India.

It is a model that can only survive thanks to taxpayer handouts and only function by externalising its massive health, environmental and social costs. And it's a model that only leads to the destruction of rural communities and jobs, degraded soil, less diverse and nutrient-deficient diets, polluted water, water shortages and spiralling rates of ill health.

We hear certain politicians celebrate the fact India has jumped so many places in the 'ease of doing business' table. This term along with 'foreign direct investment', making India 'business friendly' and 'enabling the business of agriculture' embody little more than the tenets of US neoliberal fundamentalism wrapped in benign-sounding words.

Of Course, as Gavin Andrew Marshall notes, US foundations have played a major part in shaping policies and co-opting civil society and major social-political movements across the world, including in India. As [Chester Bowles, former US ambassador to India](#), says:

“Someday someone must give the American people a full report of the Ford Foundation in India. The several million dollars in total Ford expenditures in the country do not tell 1/10 of the story.”

Taking inflation into account, that figure would now be much greater. Maybe people residing in India should be given a full report of Ford’s activities too as well as the overall extent of US ‘intervention’ in the country.

A couple of years ago, economist Norbert Haring (in his piece [A well-kept open secret: Washington is behind India’s brutal experiment of abolishing most cash](#)) outlined the influence of USAID and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in furthering the incorporation of India into the US’s financial (and intelligence) architecture. But this is the type of thing just the tip of a very large iceberg that’s been going on for many decades.

After the recent general election, India seems destined to continue to capitulate to a programme that suits the needs of foreign capital for another five years. However, the focus is often on what India should or should not do. It’s not as if alternatives to current policies do not exist, but as [Jason Hickel wrote](#) in The Guardian back in 2017, it really is time that the richer countries led the way by ‘de-developing’ and reorienting their societies to become less consumption based. A laudable aim given the overexploitation of the planets resources, the foreign policy implications (conflict and war) and the path to environmental suicide we are on. However, we must first push back against those forces which resist this.

On 15 August, India commemorates independence from British rule. Many individuals and groups are involved in an ongoing struggle in India to achieve genuine independence from exploitation and human and environmental degradation. It’s a struggle for freedom and a tryst with destiny that’s being fought throughout the world by many, from farmers and indigenous peoples to city dwellers, against the same system and the same forces of brutality and deceit.

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