

**POLICIES AND
PRACTICES**

123

Two Essays on Ethics and Practices of Care and Solidarity



November 2021



Policies and Practices 123

November 2021

Published by:
Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group
IA-48, Sector-III, Ground Floor
Salt Lake City
Kolkata-700097
India
Web: <http://www.mcrg.ac.in>

ISSN 2348 0297

Printed by:
Graphic Image
New Market, New Complex, West Block
2nd Floor, Room No. 115, Kolkata-87

This publication is brought out with the support of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. It is a part of the research programme of the Calcutta Research Group on migration and forced migration. It is conducted in collaboration with Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Institute of Human Science, Vienna, and Several Universities and Institution in India.

The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) is a German-based foundation working in South Asia and other parts of the world on the subjects of critical social analysis and civic education. It promotes a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic social order, and aims at present members of society and decision-makers with alternative approaches to such an order. Research organisations, groups working for self-emancipation, and social activists are supported in their initiatives to develop models that have the potential to deliver social and economic justice. The work of Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, South Asia can be accessed at www.rosalux.in.

Sponsored by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung with funds of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany. This publication or parts of it can be used by others for free as long as they provide a proper reference to the original publication. The content of the publication is the sole responsibility of the partner and does not necessarily reflect a position of RLS.

**Two Essays on Ethics and
Practices of Care and Solidarity**

**Samir Kumar Das
Ranabir Samaddar**

2021

Content

1. **Ethics and Practices of Care and Solidarity**
by *Samir Kumar Das* 1-12
2. **Layers of Solidarity**
by *Ranabir Samaddar* 13-29

Ethics and Practices of Care and Solidarity

Samir Kumar Das *

Never before in our recent past history has life per se - regardless of class, income, ethnicity, race, identity and so forth - acquired so much of importance as it has now. The global pandemic does not differentiate between the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the Hindus and the Muslims and calls for protection of life per se while most of the State¹ responses to the imperative of protecting life have been highly differential - if not discriminatory. This paper argues that all these responses by and large follow the neoliberal script of governing the pandemic. The first part of the paper discusses the ethical premises underlying the neoliberal script. The global pandemic has at one level tightened the grip of neoliberal governance. At another level it has also set off new and hitherto unprecedented experiments with practices of care and solidarity. The second part of the paper seeks to understand the nature of social solidarity sought to be developed through this complex web of social practices by way of tracking their ethical justifications back to Modern Indian Political Thought. A genealogical study of ethics prompts us to take notice of how inflections and turns, 'fundamental transformations and disruptions, psychological innovations and moral inventions' are wrought in the dominant script of neoliberal responses to the pandemic.² Given the limitations of space, we restrict ourselves to an analysis of some select writings of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948). While both Swami Vivekananda and Gandhi had had the direct experience of dealing with diseases like plague and leprosy, Tagore is known for his many novel experiments with rural reconstruction in Sriniketan and other adjoining areas of Shantiniketan.

Ethics of the Neoliberal Script

Neoliberal script, first of all, is driven by an evidently Darwinian race for our survival. When pandemic polarizes the world into the healthy and the diseased, it becomes imperative on everyone's part to protect oneself from others. Everyone else in the society is a potential suspect who might be carrying the deadly virus in her body. As the anxiety of being infected by the deadly pathogen rapidly engulfs us, we are as it were increasingly closed in on ourselves, isolated from others in the society and are finally left alone for the sake of our own survival. The sight of hundreds of migrant workers walking back home from their place of work during the initial weeks and months of lockdown is still fresh in our memory. The Solicitor General of India testified before the apex court that the Government had had no knowledge of the number of workers stranded in different parts of India as

* Professor of Political Science and Director, Institute of Foreign Policy Studies, University of Calcutta Policies and Practices, Issue No. 123, November 2021

a result of the nationwide lockdown declared in the midnight of 24-25 March 2020. Nor did the Government have any knowledge of accidental deaths of the migrant workers during their long journey back home. The Government also refused to accept that there was any hunger death during the lockdown although as per several reports prepared by a section of civil society organizations, the informal sector workers suffered heavy job loss, were not paid up their dues by the employers and starved of food and medicine for weeks. Growing differentiations from others, as most of the empirical accounts suggest, reinforce the pre-existing lines of separation and social inequality and more often than not take on a racist character. Many students from the Northeast residing in such metro cities as Delhi, Bengaluru, Pune, Kolkata and Mumbai, for instance, were targets of hate attack because of their phenotypical similarities with the Chinese who are accused of having introduced the virus to the world. Many of them complained of being addressed as ‘corona’ by others and were not allowed to use the common staircase, elevator of their residential apartments and prevented from visiting the shopping malls and dining in public in the restaurants and eateries. Unable to bear the persistent insult for weeks and months, over 300 nurses left Kolkata for Imphal in 2020. The Government of Manipur organized buses to take them back to their home state. Kolkata was starved of their service at a time when the demand for it was at its highest.

Secondly, insofar as the informal labour migrating from the workplace across the country becomes emblematic of this anxiety, we need to fence us off from them. The racism now expresses itself through the new apartheid. Any contact with them must be avoided at all costs for they are suspected to be carrying the deadly virus within their bodies. The image of tens of migrant labourers being intercepted and herded together on an interstate border of Uttar Pradesh and being generously sprayed with highly poisonous pesticides did not seem to surprise us at all. While they are left alone to fend for themselves or if necessary to perish, we will do well to protect ourselves from their contact. Bamboo fencing was erected at many places of Kolkata in order to protect the neighbourhoods and localities from the outsiders and all this was done at the initiative of the locals themselves. The obsessive concern with our individual survival has the effect of cutting into the very sociality that makes us a social being in the first place. Esposito calls it ‘progressive desocialization of one from one’s community’ (Esposito 2011:140).

Thirdly, the pandemic has left us with the mutually exclusive option between life and livelihood. As long as we care for our life and stay indoors – whether in quarantine or under lockdown and restrictive conditions – we surely lose the means of our livelihood. As we come out and search for livelihood, we put our life at risk. Our society faces the challenge of finding out a bridgehead that will be able to connect the two. The poor, cheap and unskilled labour is brought back to serve as that crucial bridgehead that sets the economy back into motion. They make the market hitherto coming to a standstill move and, if possible, bounce back. They are supposed to work as the spearheads of herd immunity. Our ‘life’ is critically dependent on their (exposure to) ‘death’. The worldwide pandemic thus marks the high point of convergence of the presently pursued neoliberal policies with a neo-Malthusian turn. In the last chapter of his book published in 1798, Malthus argued that those whom the nature is unable to feed because of her inherently limited resources are to be considered as dispensable, do not deserve to live and must die as the nature takes ‘positive checks’ (i.e. natural disasters, calamities, epidemics and pandemics etc) in order to ease out the excess population. He realized that asking people to ‘exert’ themselves ‘intellectually and mentally’ while subordinating their bodily instincts, might appear to be a ‘moral evil’ by them – but asking them to ‘avoid’ moral evil goes against what Malthus calls ‘the principle of population’. Insofar as such ‘exertion’ and ‘moral evil’ are in accordance with ‘the principle of population’ it enjoys the sanction of God and is considered as ‘moral’ for the society as a whole.³ Remember his axiom –

‘moral evil is the road to moral excellence’ (Malthus1998:198). Their (the migrants, refugees and others) disease and death, in other words, are subordinated to the ‘demands of our life’. In simple terms, these policies under conditions of pandemic necessitate sovereign ‘arbitration’ of death. Borrowing from Esposito we may say that governing life at the time of pandemic calls for – not caring for any and every life but ‘the subordination of even [their] death to the demands of reproducing [our] life’ (Esposito 2011:136). The pandemic has made it imperative on the part of States to decide on the ‘value’ and ‘non-value’ of human lives. It has invested the State with the ‘sovereign’ prerogative of deciding who must die in order that the rest of us live and the society as a whole does not perish. The labour of delivery people, frontline workers, sweepers and manual scavengers, health professionals, doctors, nurses, other informal sector workers is absolutely essential for us to survive. States and societies in history are not known to have cared for any and every life. The decision on the ‘value’ and ‘non-value’ of life, as Agamben tells us, is a sovereign decision to be taken by only a sovereign authority:

In modern biopolitics, sovereign is he who decides on the value or the non-value of life as such. Life, which with the declaration of rights, had as such been invested with the principle of sovereignty – now itself becomes the place of a sovereign decision (Agamben, 1998:142).

The rise of the neoliberal State – unlike its classical liberal counterpart - has added only differential value to human life and made it into an object of sovereign decision.

Ethics of Solidarity

Individual life per se, according to neoliberal ethics, does not have any value unless one comes to know how it is tied up with the productive economy of the society. While some lives must be lost as the necessary price to be paid for attaining the twofold objective of protecting the life of others that is of value and restarting the economy, not all lives are of equal value. Since determination of value calls for a sovereign decision, neoliberal script of governance has brought sovereignty at its centre. The price of course was forbiddingly high. No one knows how many informal sector workers’ lives were lost in India whether due to pandemic-induced hunger and starvation or due to exhaustion and road accidents in course of their journey back home during the nationwide lockdown or both. The pandemic, according to a report released by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 24 May2021, as many as 1,15,000 health workers lost their lives. The Secretary General of WHO considers it as ‘disgrace’ insofar as he attributes the astronomical figure to the lack of investment in the health sector. Until 15 July 2021, compensations were paid to the next of the deceased of 921 healthcare workers in India from out of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana. The unofficial figure of the deceased health workers is believed to be higher. The human toll that the neo-Malthusian turn took was particularly evident when human bodies remained dumped for hours in long wait when electric crematoria were running beyond their capacity and broke down as a result, parks and playgrounds were converted into makeshift burning centres, when the burning centres ran out of firewood, log and fuel, when bodies were dumped together and burnt *en masse* with utmost indignity in the absence of near and dear ones and without the death rituals being performed, when corpses were flowing in the Ganga and other rivers in Uttar Pradesh and were shown on national TV channels or were buried by the banks of the river because poor households were unable to meet the funeral expenses, when bloated bodies were being eaten by birds and animals and so forth. These gory pictures – all of them being in public domain – are a constant reminder of differential value of human lives.

Differential value of human life - central to the neoliberal script of governance in general and responses to the pandemic in particular - leaves us alone in this mad race for survival, atomises us and cuts into the very foundation of our existence as social beings. Solidarity and mutual aid, by contrast, connect us with each other, bring us together within a community and enable us to survive through collective efforts, initiatives and practices. Drawing on the same Darwinian logic of survival yet summarily rejecting its competitive route discovered by him, Kropotkin urged us to take lessons from the world of living beings:

[T]hey find in association the best arms for the struggle for life: understood, of course, in its wide Darwinian sense -- not as a struggle for the sheer means of existence, but as a struggle against all natural conditions unfavourable to the species...The unsociable species, on the contrary, are doomed to decay. (Kropotkin 1902:273)

The ability of the living world to infinitely ‘associate’ has the potential of pooling up the commons each of us can fall back on in times of crisis and need, deploy it for the pursuit of public good and thus ensure mutual survival at a time when our very survival is under threat. Unlike Malthus and the neo-Malthusians, Kropotkin considered the principle of mutual aid as the “real foundation of our ethical conception” (Kropotkin 1902:280). Unfortunately our institutions (like the State), according to him, are yet to realize it.

If the pandemic has atomised us and taken away from us the scope for social interaction in the name of protecting us from the deadly virus at this age, it has also set off an incredibly rich series of initiatives and practices of care and solidarity that also helped in ‘destructuring’⁴ the neoliberal script otherwise sanctioning the intense race for survival. The post-pandemic world has been a standing witness to many a solidarity initiative and practice. We broadly locate three moments in the elaboration of these initiatives and practices. The term ‘moment’ should be taken in the Hegelian sense – more as a determinate configuration of forces than as a distinct stage in a linear time sequence. We try to read these initiatives back into the writings of Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Gandhi – each of whom is well known as a great practitioner of care and social service. In the first moment solidarity is defined in terms of the practice of enacting it on an everyday basis. For Tagore, solidarity is to be continuously enacted and re-enacted in order that it does not wear thin with time and the society does not fall apart. Secondly, if for Swami Vivekananda ‘Mother Goddess’ will save all those monks of Ramakrishna Mission who have unhesitatingly dedicated themselves to the care for and service to the plague-affected victims without caring for their own safety and survival, modern organizations like the political parties, pressure groups and a plethora of non-governmental organizations seem to have replaced God. The third moment is marked by the emergence of voluntary action as the new idiom of care and service. While for both Tagore and Swami Vivekananda care and service are held as obligation for all of us as members of the social body, for Gandhi one must respond to one’s own conscience before one prepares for fulfilling the obligation. The following three subsections revolve around the above three moments of the ethics of solidarity in contemporary India.

Solidarity as Enactment

The initial days of lockdown took us completely by surprise. As the migrants return, their native villages face the renewed threat of contracting the virus. Newspaper reports are full of stories of how they were stopped on the fringes of their villages, accommodated at the gateway - in floating boats, in

makeshift shanties, in bachelors' dormitories, on treetops and woods, even in crematoriums and burning *ghats* and so forth. Food was offered to them by the villagers during their quarantine period. In many cases, local clubs tuned into quarantine centres - often doubling as oxygen parlours as well providing the essential service at extreme emergencies.

In Europe, modern State emerged as the principal agent of social unification. In our country, the society has embodied the 'unity' within itself without having to depend on the State and protected itself against 'revolutions, repressions, unfreedom and downfall' with the effect that society remained by and large unaffected by any of these upheavals and turning events (Tagore 2015:91). It is the colonial rule that has made us dependent on the State for the first time in our history and we have become unmindful to our historically abiding 'duty' (*karma*) of contributing to the well-being of the society without having to depend on the State. It is by way of performing our 'duty' that the society 'ties all of us from below right up to the top with a knot of selfless well-being; this is the greatest of all endeavours' (2015:93). Tagore was not so much concerned about what we achieve by coming together – the outcome. For him, that we could come together is a way of affirming and enacting the social solidarity. Tagore describes it as *atmashakti* or power of the collective self. It is not to be confused with the power of the individual self, although the power of the individual self derives itself from the power of our collective self. We are powerful to the extent our society makes us so and the society can make us powerful to the extent we enact social solidarity through our everyday practices and initiatives. For Tagore, *melas* or social congregations are occasions of reminding us of our social nature.

Our relation to the social body, Tagore would argue, is not one of contract as the contractualists of the West would have us believe. For, we get nothing in return for ourselves as we perform our duty of serving and caring for others. But care and service to others define just one of the many ways of remaining attached to the society or to borrow a term that Durkheim used while describing the nature of 'mechanical solidarity' – 'the condition of our collective type' (Durkheim 1984:60). Solidarity per se is of value to the existence of the society although it otherwise 'lacks in utility' and the costs of maintaining it may be 'disproportionate to its usefulness' (Durkheim 1984:62). One is ready to even sacrifice one's life for the self-evident end of remaining together. Mechanical solidarity, for him, is an end in itself. Much in the same way, Tagore keeps social solidarity outside the pale of argumentation and contention. We enter the society – not because it serves any of our interests. We are integral to the society – it makes us what we are. It is important that we come to realise it from within us soon and he therefore calls for 'cleansing our hearts of petty partisanship, tortuous argumentation, speaking ill about others (*paroninda*) and cunning (*otibuddhi*)' and throwing into the scrapheap the fraudulence of subtle rationalism shorn of any social objective' (Tagore 2015:106).

Tagore was an avid critic of charity that is issued from what he calls 'the intoxication of self-vanity' (*atmabhimaner mod*) (Tagore 2015:1016). As we do charity to others, we necessarily 'differentiate' us from others and view us as superior to those who are the objects of our charity and philanthropy. For him, caring for others presupposes that we qualify ourselves for the task by way of 'identifying' ourselves with them. The *bhadraloks*⁵ could seldom do away with the vanity and social hierarchy that is ingrained in their very being. He was in fact emphasizing the need for re-establishing the 'connections' – whether through a 'highway' or an 'alleyway' – that will put one in a complex web of solidarity with another (Tagore 2015:1020): 'The more the mind stretches itself and reaches out to others, the more one becomes a human' (Tagore 2015:1020).

Significantly Tagore draws an analogy between a human body that is afflicted by disease from outside and the social body that too comes under threat when it faces an 'evil' (*amangal*)

emanating from outside. Unless the latter has the *kartrishakti* or the power of taking command of itself it is unlikely to succeed in ‘restoring the health back to itself’ (Tagore 2015:104). That power may be entrusted with an *odhipati* or authority having the ability to seek remedy should such a crisis hit the society. Tagore calls this ‘social-kingship’ (*samaj-rajtantra*) – literally kingship in the social domain as distinguished from kingship in the political domain. But what if such a king ever tries to become predominant and keeps the society at his beck and call? Tagore has the answer: “It is the kingdom that gets the kind of King it deserves ...The King may sometimes be good, sometimes bad. [I]f the society remains awake, then no individual can ... do any harm to the society” (Tagore 2015:104).

The Modern God

While Tagore was not keen on lending to the social initiatives and practices any organized shape and considered care and social service as a universal obligation, both Swami Vivekananda and Gandhi felt the importance of organization and mobilization in providing care particularly during the outbreak of epidemics. Vivekananda had had the direct experience of treating the plague victims in 1898 while Gandhi’s care for the lepers particularly in the early 1930s is legendary. The role of Red Volunteers during the pandemic deserves a special mention in this connection. Red Volunteers is a left-wing, non-profit and voluntary organization founded by the Democratic Youth Federation of India – the students’ wing of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) amid the acute oxygen crisis in the middle of 2021. During the peak of the crisis often called the second wave, they used to receive 2500 to 3000 requests everyday for oxygen from the patients and their parties. The organization was launched with only 83 members to deliver medical and social help to the people who are sick or in distress regardless of their party affiliations. They also provide Red Ambulance services with CITU (Coordination of Indian Trade Unions - the trade union wing of the CPI-M) for faster patient mobility to and from hospitals. Red Volunteers run Red Canteens and Red kitchens for delivering food at low price. They became famous in no time and were fondly called "Oxygen of Bengal". The number of their membership has now crossed over 80,000.

Red Volunteers could do what they could because the robust organization of the CPI-M formed its nucleus. There was the pre-existing organization of the CPIM with its two wings of DYFI and CITU. But the membership was by no means restricted to the party cadres and members. There were many others who joined it out of their own volition. Nor was the scope of beneficiaries limited to the party cadres and members. In fact, they earned accolades from the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal. Swami Vivekananda also recognized the importance of an organization in mobilizing and steering the works of care and social service. He founded Ramakrishna Mission a year before the outbreak of plague that could act as a vanguard with the only difference that that the Communist Party today has arrogated to itself the role being the God replacing the conventional one. Service to humanity, for him, is the same as service to God.

The deadly epidemic struck the city of Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1898 a year after the Ramakrishna Mission was founded. Swami Vivekananda, its chief architect, drafted the ‘Plague Manifesto’ to combat the disease and circulated it in both Bengali and Hindi. He had had two dedicated disciples to support him in this endeavour - Sister Nivedita and Swami Sadananda of Ramakrishna Mission - who led the relief operation at that time completely disregarding the danger involved in it. What Tagore calls ‘identification’ is nowhere more eloquently expressed than in the first article of the Manifesto addressed significantly to the “Brothers of Calcutta”:

We feel happy when you are happy, and we suffer when you suffer. Therefore, during these days of extreme adversity, we are striving and ceaselessly praying for your welfare and an easy way to save you from disease and the fear of an epidemic.⁶

Vivekananda's concept of brotherhood, as we see in the above excerpt, is critically predicated – not on sympathy – but on empathy. Both the caregiver and the care-recipient are inseparably bound up as it were with each other and form one and the same person. They are together whether in their sufferance or in their happiness. This organic understanding of solidarity resembles that of Tagore.

But he did not stop merely at that. He was also envisaging a band of dedicated monks who would identify themselves with the society without retaining any part of their being with them. Needless to say, these monks of Ramakrishna Mission may have renounced their home, but do not seek salvation in the Himalayas far outside the society, but commit themselves to the task of delivering the society from such evils as disease, illiteracy, poverty, hunger and so forth. Not all will respond to the call of duty in the same way, if at all. We are too invested in the concern for our life to care for the infected and risk our lives. We are too much tied to our worldly happiness. Only the dedicated monks who do not care for their life and have completely renounced their worldly happiness can respond to the call of duty. Tagore wanted everyone in the society to be imbued by the spirit of solidarity. Swami Vivekananda underlined the importance of a dedicated organization in this regard.

Notwithstanding their difference, this collective undertaking by both of them in a sense turns Malthus by his head. For, it implies that an organization of committed monks who do not care for their life willingly offers itself to care for those who are in acute need of it. The task is by no means easy for the recipients of their care suffer from a ferociously infectious disease and the monks know full well that their life might be in danger. But they do not mind dying for others. If social solidarity at the time of pandemic extracts a price, we need an organization of highly indoctrinated members for whom – true to the Hindu tradition - life and death do not make any difference. Swami Vivekananda had deep faith in the 'Mother Goddess' who, he declared, would save them if they ever fell sick while attending to others:

If that grave disease — fearing which both the high and the low, the rich and the poor are all fleeing the city — ever really comes in our midst, then even if we perish while serving and nursing you, we will consider ourselves fortunate because you are all embodiments of God. He who thinks otherwise — out of vanity, superstition or ignorance — offends God and incurs great sin. There is not the slightest doubt about it.

For him, service to man is the same as service to God or Lord Narayana (*Narayan Seva*). The householders deeply immersed in worldly affairs would worry for their life. But the least they could do was not to panic. As he argued:

We humbly pray to you — please do not panic due to unfounded fear. Depend upon God and calmly try to find the best means to solve the problem. Otherwise, join hands with those who are doing that very thing.

If we are unable to risk our life to care for others, he simply asks us to stay calm without being constantly hammered by the dark thought of death. Article 6 (c) of the Manifesto advises us:

Always keep the mind cheerful. Everyone will die once. Cowards suffer the pangs of death again and again, solely due to the fear in their own minds.

Swami Vivekananda's 'Plague manifesto' also lays down the strict regimen of dietary, hygienic and other practices. He also argues that as long as we do not clean ourselves from within, we will allow our bodies to host virus and disease: "Let us live pure and clean lives... During the period of epidemic, abstain from anger and from lust — even if you are householders."

Writing towards the fag end of the nineteenth century, Swami Vivekananda was perhaps anticipating how the pandemic in the twenty-first century has hardened the fault lines of gender, sex, race, religion, nationality, sect, ethnicity and so forth which come in the way to the unity and solidarity so essential to address the CoVid19 disaster. Both the caregiver and the recipient have the responsibility of maintaining the solidarity at the time of crisis.

Solidarity as Volunteerism

UNITED SIKHS – an organization with world-wide reach across 10 global chapters in the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia – was founded in 1999. It is committed to the objective of 'transforming, alleviating, educating and protecting the lives of underprivileged, individuals and minority communities impacted by disasters - natural or man-made, suffering from hunger, illiteracy, diseases or from violation of civil and human-rights' so that they become 'informed and vibrant members of society by fostering sustainable programs regardless of colour, race, religion or creed'. It raises resources through donations from the 'kind-hearted donors' and the voluntary work contributed by the volunteers. This brings down the administering cost of running the projects to as low as 1.08 percent of the total cost incurred as their website informs us with the effect that they are 'able to funnel almost all the money gifted by our kind hearted donors into relief services'. The CoVid19 relief programme took off with 'a request from the New York Office of Emergency Management in March 2020 to deliver over 30,000 meals to New York City as the pandemic cast its dark shadow on this global city'. They set up an emergency hotline in North America to serve the needs of the most vulnerable from frontline workers, homeless, elderly, poor and at-risk individuals. Eventually the scope of their work was extended to serve communities from the US to Europe, Australia, Asia and India. As its website announces:

Hundreds of volunteers from all walks of life have stepped forward to serve. Generous donors have provided funds and grocery supplies to make our work possible. We are committed to offer basic life affirming needs of countless impacted around the globe by this pandemic.⁷

What is important to note is that the UNITED SIKHS banks on purely voluntary activity. Inspired as it is by the virtue of social service that is one of the cardinal principles of Sikhism, it does not impose care and service as an obligation on each and every member of the society – not even on the Sikhs. Unlike Swami Vivekananda, Gandhi felt that it was important to expand the network of care and social service beyond the four walls of his ashrams; but unlike Tagore he did not make them a universal obligation to be fulfilled by each and every member of the society. Gandhi left it to the conscience of the individual members to take a call and decide on their own if they would be involved in these activities. He encourages everyone to perform this ethical duty, but refrains from making it mandatory. For him care and social service are a matter of voluntary action.

Gandhi had had the direct experience of attending to the lepers very early in his childhood. Leprosy in his time and even now is considered as both 'infectious' and 'a curse' that falls on one for

some misdeeds done in an earlier incarnation of one's life.⁸ Gandhi's early encounter with the lepers in Porbandar and in South Africa, as his biographers inform us, took away from him much of the fear from both the disease as well as the diseased that otherwise would mark the people during his time.

For both Tagore and Gandhi, care and solidarity are inseparably bound up with each other. Gandhi maintains that community prayers and *yajnas* (ritual sacrifices) everyday ways of re-enacting the social solidarity. As he puts it:

Social activity is as necessary as individual activity. Each one of us is unique as an individual but we are also social beings. If there is no society we too are nothing. That is why it is our dharma to take part in community prayers and community yajnas. (Gandhi 1996:373).

Is solidarity an end or a means to an end? While Christian missionaries were perhaps the first responders to the disease in our country amidst overwhelming stigmatization and ostracization of the lepers and did what Gandhi would consider as 'wonderful work', 'the bulk of India's population in our villages has been untouched' (Gandhi 1996:80). Besides, through their intervention they were 'transplanting the entire system of western medicine into India' at the great cost of undermining our 'indigenous drugs and medicines' (Gandhi 1996:80-81). For Gandhi, the controversy is not so much about the West or the East. He thought that the Western medicine is 'unaffordable' for us. If Gandhi was full of admiration for the work done by the Christian missionaries, he was absolutely critical of the selective nature of their care restricted to only a few towns and cities and throwing our indigenous systems of medicine into the winds.

While for Tagore caring for others is what strengthens social solidarity which for him is an end in itself, for Gandhi serving the lepers is an end in itself and is as good as service to God. The Missionaries subordinated this to purposes that would only serve them.

The picture of Gandhi extending a healing hand to Parchure Shastri – a Brahmin priest suffering from leprosy and serving in Yeravada Jail in 1932 - is by now widely known to us. In 1939, Shastri wrote to Gandhi begging for his 'permission' to come and spend a few days in his ashram at Sevagram. Gandhi was faced with a dilemma. For, he was not sure if it would be safe for him to visit the ashram where there were many others including the women and children. On the other hand, if he turned him away, he would have been 'insincere to his own pronouncements.' Gandhi shared this dilemma in one of his morning prayers and left it to the judgment of the individual ashramites. The ashramites, however, greeted the proposal without any hesitation and Parchure Shastri lived in the ashram for two years and 'sufficiently recovered' to be able to act as a priest to supervise a wedding ceremony in the ashram in 1940 at Gandhi's request. In other words, care is not simply a universal obligation. It is for an individual to feel it within her, take the call and decide how she responds to it.

Towards an Indian Theory of Practice

Above ethnographies conducted by us during the pandemic seem to point out how these initiatives and practices 'escape the theorization effects' of the neoliberal script, how the script is 'played out in and strategically with time' and is thus 'negated *qua* theory' and at the same time 'goes back' to the same script without being able to completely discard it (Bourdieu 1990:80-86ff). Bourdieu locates these practices and initiatives in the vast grey zone that, according to him, spans between the high canons of the neoliberal script and their complete destruction. In simple terms, the solidarity initiatives and practices have the effect of what he calls 'destructuring' the neoliberal script without

completely doing away with it.⁹ While the first part of the paper dwelt on the cannons and technologies embedded in the neoliberal script of governing the pandemic, the second part referred to a series of our recently conducted ethnographies on these initiatives and practices that – as we have already noted - have their ethical allusions to Modern Indian Political Thought developed mainly in the cusp of nineteenth and twentieth century. Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi – unlike many of their contemporaries in India – were directly involved in a variety of social initiatives and practices and focused much of their thinking on how these initiatives and practices could serve as a critique of the dominant script of governance in times of crisis and with what effects.

First and foremost, all of them agree that any crisis of the magnitude of an epidemic or a pandemic helps reinforce the pre-existing social divisions and often introduce newer ones. In other words, a crisis – more than taking a toll on human lives - correspondingly cuts into our ability to respond and overcome it. Solidarity is eroded at a time when the society faces the utmost need for it. For all the three, the more solidarity is reduced to a means to serve the interest of one or few individuals, the more it proves fragile and is likely to collapse at the very moment of a crisis. While for Tagore solidarity is a universal obligation to be fulfilled by anyone living in the society, for Swami Vivekananda the Mission with a dedicated band of monks is best suited to fulfil the obligation. Gandhi by contrast leaves it to individual conscience. Although all of us are social beings, we must feel this at the depth of our mind and respond to the obligation of care and service depending on how we are moved by what we feel.

Secondly, some of the leading thinkers from the West seek to build solidarity across the lines of groups, communities, ethnicities and nationalities based on the principle of love. Borrowing from Badiou, one may say that the advocacy for solidarity entails ‘the idea of celebrating love, a cosmopolitan, subversive, sexual energy that transgresses frontiers and social status at a time normally devoted to the Army, the Nation and the State’ (Badiou 2012:2). Only love, according to Badiou, has this rare potential of defeating ‘the logic of identity’ (Badiou 2012:98). While love is central to the practices of Vivekananda and Gandhi, none of them posits it as an end in itself that is bound to stir us from within - independently of any external mediation. Both of them would have us believe that the love that brings solidarity into existence is in its turn synergized by our faith in God and the reassuring belief that we are the children of God and it is the ‘Mother Goddess’ who will protect us from the contagion. Only those who are driven by this belief, form a community of their own – the Mission or the ashram – and dedicate themselves to the practices of care and solidarity. Solidarity is too difficult a responsibility to be borne by one and all in the society. But as recipients of care, all of us too have some responsibilities to perform which are not as much difficult as those to be discharged by the caregivers. Modern organizations like the political parties and pressure groups have effectively replaced God and have become modern Gods Themselves. On the other hand, Tagore thinks that care and social service are a social obligation. Solidarity, for him, is an end in itself for it represents the trinity of freedom, justice and welfare. These three principles figure in Tagore’s writings off and on like God. The trinity is the modern representation of God. In his writings, solidarity serves as a synonym for each of these principles in the trinity.

Thirdly, unlike the neoliberal ethic that only attaches uneven and differential value to human life by way of privatizing life and denying the right to life to many others, Indian theory takes life as a common in the sense that it should not be made into a private property to be accessed and enjoyed only by those who have the capability of affording it in the first place. Not everyone, neoliberal ethic emphasizes, is entitled to the right to life. Mere abolition of life being made into a private property, Michael Hardt warns us, will not do for it entails production of new subjectivity –‘a new seeing, a

new hearing, a new thinking, a new loving' (Hardt 2010:356) that 'sees, hears, thinks and loves' life per se regardless of its contribution to the productive economy - not in instrumentalist terms but as a value in itself. If pandemic has made us realize the value of life per se, it has also highlighted the integral connection between life and solidarity. Our right to life is ensured to the extent we are able to generate solidarity and enact it through our initiatives of practices of care.

It is not a miracle that we live in spite of many an onslaught on our life and livelihood.

[Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from original non-English sources are mine. I thank Tapan Chattopadhyay and Abdus Samad Gayen for directing me to a few readings of Gandhi that I was not initially aware of. Lapses, if any, are entirely mine.]

Notes

¹We use the term 'State' with 'S' in capital to refer to the Indian State while the term 'state' with 's' in lower case is used to refer to any of the constituent states within the Indian Union.

²We take 'genealogy' more as a philosophical method drawing on Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality* (2006). The genealogical method has the objective of disrupting not only the neoliberal script but also linearities of time - in this case by pushing history backwards.

³Malthus does not seem to make the by now commonplace distinction between the moral and the ethical. While his concept of 'moral evil' is considered as 'evil' when viewed from the perspective of an individual, his concept of 'moral excellence' is close to contemporary understanding of ethics, that is to say, what is considered as good for and by the society as a whole.

⁴We use the term in the same sense in which Pierre Bourdieu has used it. We will return to the subject of 'destruction' in the last section of this paper.

⁵It has a specific connotation in the Bengali society. The *bhadraloks* – literally the genteel people of the polite society – are the urban, Western-educated, upper caste elite who harbour a bloated sense of their ego and honour and correspondingly loathe doing manual labour themselves and anyone doing it.

⁶All quotations are taken from the 'Plague Manifesto' (Vivekananda 1997:484-495).

⁷<https://unitedsikhs.org/> accessed on 23 October 2021. All quotations above are also lifted from their website.

⁸Many Hindus believe in the theory of rebirth in different incarnations depending on the kind of work they do in one life.

⁹Samaddar describes it as 'militant philanthropy and solidarity' (Samaddar 2021:166).

References

- Agamben, Giorgio (1998): *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Rozen. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Badiou, Alain with Nicholas Truong (2012): *In Praise of Love*. Translated by Peter Bush. London: Serpent's Tail.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1990): *The Logic of Practice*. Trans by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Polity. Reprinted 1997.
- Durkheim, Emile (1984): *The Division of Labor in Society*. With an Introduction by Lewis Coser, Trans. by W. D. Halls. Illinois: The Free Press. First Published 1893
- Esposito, Roberto (2011): *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life*. London: Polity.
- Gandhi, Mohandas K (1979): *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. Vol.75. Delhi: Publications Division.
- Hardt, Michael (2010): 'The Common in Communism' in *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 22, Issue 3. Pp.346-356.
- Kropotkin, Peter (1902): *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. New York: McClure Philips & Company.

-
- Malthus, Thomas (1998): *An Essay on the Principle of Population: An Essay on the Principle of Population as It Affects the Future Improvement of Society with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Goodwin, M. Condorcet and Other Writers*. London: Publisher's name not mentioned. First Published 1798.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich (2006): *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Ed, Keith Ansell Pearson, trans. Carol Diethe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Samaddar, Ranabir (2021): *A Pandemic and the Politics of Life*. New Delhi: Women Unlimited.
- Tagore, Rabindranath (2015): *Rabindra PrabandhaSamagra* (in Bengali) [The Full Collection of Tagore's Essays]. Kolkata: Kamini.
- Vivekananda, Swami (1997): *Complete Works*, Volume 9. Almora: Advaita Ashama.

Layers of Solidarity

Ranabir Samaddar*

... the very least that I can do for my country is to take all consequences upon myself in giving voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen, surprised into a dumb anguish of terror.

The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in the incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part, wish to stand, shorn, of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who, for their so called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings.

--- Rabindranath Tagore in his letter to the British Viceroy renouncing his knighthood after the Jallianwala bagh massacre (1919)

The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of all countries unite!

-- Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848)

I

Following the emergence of a new variant of the Covid-19 strain, and massive gatherings such as the Kumbh Mela in Uttarakhand and election campaigns and administrative-security mobilisations in poll-bound states of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, and West Bengal, India once again was in the midst of a Covid-19 crisis. This time the pandemic hit harder. There was a sharp rise in Covid-19 cases all over the country from March 2021. India was engulfed in a severe crisis of shortage of hospital beds, plasma donations, and oxygen cylinders. Government institutions of healthcare and medical assistance collapsed in a matter of one week. On 1 March number of active cases in the country was 168,627; on 29 April it rose to 3,084,814. The country's public and private health infrastructure was pushed over the brink under the unrelenting spread of the virus.

In the previous year the shock situation had produced the "migrant crisis". This time the situation was reflected in the "oxygen crisis" and the "bed crisis". There were countless incidents of patients dying within hours of hospitals running out of oxygen supply, or dying while waiting for beds outside the hospitals, in ambulances and cars rushing from one hospital to another where relatives pleaded desperately for admission of their near and dear ones. And as during the migrant crisis in the previous year, this time too, the shock situation has produced levels of solidarity not seen in usual time. The surge of solidarity last year was chronicled by journalists, diarists, commentators, news portals, and photographers. Solidarity activists emerged from all

* Distinguished Chair in Migration and Forced Migration Studies at the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group Policies and Practices, Issue No. 123, November 2021

walks of life. They mobilised and provided food, money, shelter, medical treatment, and passage assistance to migrant workers returning home. They also provided strength to the migrant workers who were defying the unnecessary restrictions imposed on them by various governments of states the migrants were passing through to return home or trying to hold them in the cities they had been working and where they had now no place to stay, no food to eat, and no work to do.¹ This year too through the last fifteen days the shock surge of solidarity has become evident. Young people, political activists, philanthropists, militant journalists, citizen reporters, humanitarian activists, officials at lower levels, doctors, nurses, care workers, noble hearted shopkeepers and drivers, municipal employees, artists, performers, and others have started rallying once again. Many activists have taken to social media platforms to send and relay SOS requests in attempts to crowd-source emergency requirements (including critical medical supplies) for the needy ones – often beyond the boundaries of families and friends. As had happened last year, government help lines have been unresponsive, and once again the central government has dished out assurances after assurances to the courts and the media that it was in control of the situation and supplies of oxygen and medicines were in order. In this situation, many have compiled lists of resources in the form of help lines, telephone numbers of local volunteers, to inform the needy of the availability of hospital beds, oxygen cylinders, and plasma donations in various areas. Once again, home-cooked meals for home-quarantined patients are being prepared and supplied to the respective homes. Last year, we may remember, in umpteen numbers of places public kitchens and food centres for returnee migrant workers and other poorer sections of population thrown off jobs due to lockdown were opened by volunteers, political workers, and community leaders, and these kitchens and centres ran for months. Some still continue.

To have a rough idea of the magnitude of distress and calls for solidarity: one estimate put the number of tweets in March and April this year to 81.63 million – asking for help or responding with a relevant link, list, or contact over the same time frame. Out of the said 81 million tweets, 36.9 million were related to sourcing or refilling oxygen cylinders, 14.1 million were related to the broad-spectrum antiviral medication Remdesivir, followed by 13.9 million tweets relating to getting hospital beds. Social and political activists were most tagged or they were sending messages to countless others to mobilise help. Messages to organise flowed from various parts of the affected regions and sub-regions, though we must remember that many towns and villages with substantial caseloads remained outside the digital network. We can hope that as in previous year, with the lockdown condition of Delhi, UP, parts of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and other states, users of social media and have been able to communicate with the victims and the social network rebuilt itself around the principle of solidarity. According to the report mentioned earlier, of the “519,000 individual accounts actively engaged with SOS and emergency tweets from other Indian users to help provide relevant information or medical aid, over three-quarters of these accounts (356,000) belonged to ordinary citizens lacking official Twitter verification or large followings on the platform. The engagement of ordinary Indian citizens far outweighed that of prominent social media influencers as well as other public figures in media and government.”²

While it is true that this virtual activity of mobilisation could not always translate into material support, the significance of its belonging to a principle of solidarity was immediately realised by the State and taken as a threat to the legitimacy of a centralised and authoritarian order. In one case, for instance, the UP police filed criminal case against a young person who tweeted to seek oxygen support for the grandfather. In other cases, local police and state government officials sought to intimidate users posting SOS tweets on the platform. The Twitter platform removed hundreds of tweets that demanded the resignation of the Prime Minister Modi

for mismanaging the Corona crisis leading the country to a hell like situation. On the other hand, these hundreds and thousands of messages relayed in almost all cases several times showed in bare outlines the power of support and solidarity when it turned into a material practice of ordinary individuals of communication and organisation in moments of collective adversity.

Collective adversity is an important factor in the chronicle of solidarity. Instances of virtual mobilisation transforming into material actions to mobilise support to the needy were frequent in the media. A typical report of such activities in the city of Kolkata ran like this:

People living in shanties near Ballygunge railway station will get hot khichdi from Wednesday evening. Slum dwellers around Jadavpur railway station will get cereals and pulses from this week.

The Covid containment measures announced by the state government, and which came into effect on Sunday, have robbed thousands of people of their daily earnings and two square meals.

But from young students to social activists, people across the city are extending a helping hand to feed as many as they can. A guest house adjacent to Gariahat police station has been turned into a kitchen, helmed by the volunteers of Jatiyo Bangla Sammelan, a platform of youth and social activists, to feed poor and destitute people in neighbouring areas.

“Ever since the lockdown was announced on Saturday we have stocked up 200kg of rice, 60kg of pulses, potatoes and onions to prepare khichdi and other dishes. Our volunteers have hired autos to ferry the food in the evening. The auto drivers will be paid Rs 350 each daily and also fed from the kitchen,” said Siddhabrata Das, a spokesperson for the platform.

The volunteers will deliver food to around 200 people living in shanties near Ballygunge station, Bijan Setu and under the Gariahat flyover every day.

“In the coming months, we have plans to serve food to people in areas like Tollygunge and Bijoygarh,” said an organiser.

The organisers have taken to crowd-funding to raise money for the kitchen. So far, they have raised Rs 1 lakh and spent the amount on buying essentials and hiring vehicles for delivery... Das said they were starting the kitchen in Dover Guest House so that the cook of the facility, which does not have any visitors over the past couple of months, could be gainfully employed.

“He was not earning anything owing to the absence of the visitors. The community kitchen will enable him to make some earnings. Two more helpers are being engaged,” said Das.

Explaining how the sudden imposition of the containment measures has impacted the poor people, a volunteer said most people in the neighbourhood depend on daily wage for their survival. Many in areas like Gariahat and Kasba earn a living by plying autos or running small tea stalls. “...Many of them survived by working as domestic help. With the surge in Covid cases, a lot of households are refusing to let them in and have discontinued their service. They will die out of starvation,” he said.

Members of Jadavpur Commune, who had run a community kitchen last year for 288 days, have started collecting items such as rice and pulse. The commune has been formed by current and former students of the university.

Debjani Sengupta, a member of the commune, said... “These families have been badly hit by the lockdown. Several of them are masons, attendants and drivers who cannot earn now. We will start with giving ration and have plans to resume the community kitchen”...³

Collective adversity is a shock situation. Once again let us go back to the time of lockdown last year: collective adversity that the migrant workers faced produced what has been called “shock mobility” not only in India, but the world over (for instance, in Italy, UK, Philippines). These migrant movements may have been for one or two months, but the duration of their impact was long – on themselves, the populations in general, on their homes, in short the impact was of a general and pervasive nature. This is crucial in understanding the emergence of solidarity with the migrant workers we witnessed last year. Solidarity was the moment of link

between the victims that is the migrants and the society. The link-moment symbolised the dramatic changes unfolding before the society. Yet as I have argued elsewhere, these shocks while producing practices of solidarity also provided opportunities for the ruling order and the capitalist system as a whole to effect changes. Thus the Indian government used the shock situation to introduce a slew of economic reforms at the expense of labour. The solidarity the country witnessed could not stop this or sway even the judiciary to put a brake on anti-labour steps. Solidarity was epiphenomenal. It was transient. It remained confined to the civil sphere. It could not transcend the moment of “shock” to become durable and political. Though, it can be argued with some justification that these acts of solidarity played an important role in bringing out the cruel nature of the State that had left its citizens at the mercy of an epidemic and put them in a bottomless public health crisis.

Indeed as mentioned earlier, these acts of solidarity appeared threatening the legitimacy of the State, so much so that the Supreme Court had to intervene and say, “We don't want any clampdown of information. We will treat it as a contempt of court if such actions are taken”.⁴ Solidarity with the victims of the pandemic was felt across boundaries of nationalism and hatred. A wave of empathy swept across Pakistan. One report had this to tell,

As the situation in India kept getting bleaker and bleaker, Pakistanis expressed solidarity with their Indian brethren. From trending hashtags like #IndiaNeedsOxygen and #PakistanStandsWithIndia, Pakistanis have sent their prayers across the border. Last Saturday, Prime Minister Imran Khan tweeted his support for India in its fight against the Corona virus. Pakistan's foreign minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, tweeted that Pakistan has officially offered relief and support to India. It shows that even if the ties between the two countries may not be ideal, when it comes to humanity, everything else is set aside as it should be.

We saw some heart warming stories as well during the current crisis. Ashish K. Singh, an Indian journalist, recently tweeted whether any of his friends in Pakistan could “pay an obeisance at Data Darbaar” for him, his wife and his friends suffering from Corona virus. Data Darbaar, located in Lahore, is the largest Sufi shrine in South Asia. The same day, some journalists in Pakistan got it done. One of the Pakistani journalists, Ghulam Abbas Shah, arranged prayers for Ashish and his family not just at Lahore's Data Darbaar but also at the Abdullah Shah Ghazi shrine in Karachi and Baba Farid Ganjshakar's shrine in Pakpattan. Such gestures show that despite the tensions and animosity between the two neighbours, the people of these countries will always rise to the occasion, helping each other out when the time comes. It gives one hope that we can rise above politics when it matters. The solidarity between the people of India and Pakistan at this moment of grave crisis is quite amazing.⁵

In moments of crisis the social mechanism of solidarity activates. It is not that there is an inherent god given mechanism. However, such practices of solidarity borrow from social memory to react to pressure in ways they are already familiar with. That is, the historical tradition of mutual aid, empathy, protection, and collective ways coping with adversities come to life. In some sense these are routine coping strategies of a society. However in each crisis, at least in a grave crisis, we see a magnified emergence of these strategies of solidarity. Thus, as never before, we have witnessed the emergence of what we call by now “frontline workers” - doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, ayahs, ASHA workers, waste disposal workers, community workers of various types, and now increasingly intrepid reporters - who become the heroes and heroines in the landscape of solidarity. The saga of solidarity as now in the epidemic time is on one hand a distorted reflection of the everyday functioning of the order and its capacity limitations; on the other hand it is a capacity which is in excess, which is always on the frontier, always telling us what may be possible, but is unrealizable in banal time. In the COVID time Bengal for instance has experienced a surge of solidarity, a kind of

renaissance of a social spirit that was seen in the colonial time when cooperatives, mutual aid associations, literacy and medical aid movements, flood relief campaigns marked the nationalist spirit. An overwhelming sense encouraged these efforts, namely that life of the people in colonial rule was in grave danger.

Solidarity is thus a life question, but one of life at its limit. Solidarity reflects the bio-political nature of a collective at a time of crisis, life in crisis; yet what is paradoxical is that it is through acts of solidarity that a collective comes into being. There is no pre-given collective, and we leave out here the anthropological explanations of a collective, even though there too practices of solidarity contribute to the making of a collective. At least politically speaking, there is no collective without solidarity, at the same time this collective must inhere differences without which an act of solidarity cannot take shape. One cannot have solidarity with oneself; which also means that a collective would have differences within, yet in the time of a crisis – to remember again, crisis of a life as a collective – that acts of solidarity emerge. Therefore solidarity is not pity, charity, or disinterested assistance, but an act that conveys that if the life of a collective is to be secured the principle of solidarity must be organic to this life. This is paradoxical, yet is this not the way in which workers' associations of various countries united in the last one hundred and fifty years, nations got united on common cause, and internationalist acts inspired thousands towards a dream or defiance?

We have to however stop here and think once more on the issue. What shall we say of solidarity practices of a religious institution like the *gurudwara* (institution of prayer of the Sikh religious community, a Sikh temple plus an institution of help)? Its assistance extends to non-Sikhs in need of water, food, shelter, and in many cases medicines? What shall we say of the many churches in Europe which protected the refugees whom the European states wanted to expel and herded them in unspeakable conditions?⁶ In these cases, piety, mutuality, and assistance contributed to the spirit and practices of solidarity. In many cases, “the cities of refuge” sprang from this spirit.⁷ There is no common cause other than the cause of hospitality. The noticeable feature here is that solidarity represents an ethical attitude of a community and is hence institutional. It is not individual.

In these social acts of solidarity most evident is the particular nature of social leadership, which activates the ethical as well as institutional mechanisms of solidarity. Thus a political activist of a locality, a village headman, or a restless woman appreciated and admired by the society, a teacher, a slum leader, a club secretary – they are all instances of social leadership. They produce solidarity from below. They also demonstrate the ethical dimensions of solidarity. Thus they may insist on providing hospitality to a person fleeing persecution, aiding someone in distress, taking a sick individual to a hospital, raising resources to save the needy in grave crisis, and according dignity to the vulnerable, or carrying a dead body left somewhere in a desolate place by villagers in fear of the virus . There is something common to an ethical act like this and politics, namely the element of risk marking the acts of solidarity. You can think in the same breath of Florence Nightingale and the members of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War, who perished in battles in Spain (15,000 out of about 50,000 members). Acceptance of risk is the first condition of hospitality and solidarity. More often than not, the advent of an act of hospitality is always in the dramatic context of solidarity. By providing hospitality we declare solidarity. This is solidarity with the victims of oppression, discrimination, misfortune, and crises. It is a unique way to establish friendship. But we must remember that friendships do not do away with hierarchies. An ethical act of hospitality by itself does not create a chain of equal and equivalent relationship. Likewise, solidarity with the victim does not assume non-discrimination. Reciprocity may be a symbol of solidarity. But reciprocity is conditional. Each reciprocal act reproduces life on latter's existing template. Ethical act of solidarity does not end discrimination. The ethical virtue in this way is contradictory from within.

The transformation of the social and ethical acts of solidarity into a political will to unite depends thus on an understanding of the paradoxical nature of solidarity. Contingency, difference, mutual aid and support, ethical imperative, and the sense of a common goal – these attributes of solidarity do not sit coexist in a seamless manner. Solidarity is therefore, and not surprisingly, often marked with tension.

II

The contingent nature of solidarity is evident in for instance what is known as “solidarity economy”. Solidarity economy is not conceptualized on the basis of economics alone; there is always an attending and an equally crucial dimension, namely a social aspect. Hence we may call it social and solidarity economy. Thus, purely financial profit is replaced by what is known as “social profitability”, which would mean besides gains that go beyond calculation a participatory nature of governance in decision-making processes. Some suggest that solidarity economy symbolizes transformative economic qualities, practices, and foundations existing in the world in various forms. Thus, specialized cooperatives, reasonable exchange practices resembling gifts, or dynamic associations are forms of economic organizations, which seek to improve the life of a region or community on the basis of solidarity often through local businesses and not for profit operations. It is a tradition that perhaps began with the campaign to develop solidarity among workers’ collectives in urban and rural areas. Ideas of solidarity economy became popular during military dictatorships in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s. These efforts broadened the idea of solidarity economy to indicate that production, distribution and consumption activities must contribute to the democratisation of the economy via citizen engagement at the local and global level, and that enterprises are to be created to serve the members of the community instead of simply striving for financial profit. People and work have to be prioritized over capital in the distribution of revenue and surplus. In this way, principles of equity, environmental sustainability, cooperation, territorial responsibility of the economic organizations, balance between multiple objectives, mutualism, social well being, and pluralism will develop economic processes that will be intimately linked to local realities, preservation of the environment and mutual cooperation. The final institutional stamp of practicality and ethicality on solidarity economy was given by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations that formed an Inter-Agency Task Force on the Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSSE) in order to raise the importance of solidarity economy in policy circles towards sustainable development. The UNTFSSSE is considered as a conduit for civil society voices to interface with policy making on sustainable development and environmental protection. Currently chaired by the ILO, the Task Force consists of several UN Agencies and the OECD with some civil society organizations as observers.⁸

The logbook of principles of solidarity economy records few cardinal principles, which we may summarise as follows: Solidarity economy is visualized as a global post-capitalist order, which will put the people (both as producers and consumers) and environment at its centre in place of profit maximization. It is a broad range of economic practices marked by values of participatory democracy, cooperation, reciprocity, mutual aid, equity, sustainability, and pluralism. These values make an economy solidarity economy. In some cases the economic practices marked by these values are already in existence, and some are introduced as alternatives in “every sector of the economy: production, distribution and exchange, consumption, finance and governance/state.”⁹ We may think of cooperatives, credit unions, community land trusts, participatory budgeting, community kitchens, fair trade practices, practices of care work, and a host of other activities and institutions existing

around the idea of the commons.¹⁰ These would imply, as one author puts, increase of self-provisioning and community production, moving money to new economic institutions, prioritizing housing for use in place of speculation, and finally connecting with others in the emerging solidarity economy. Advocates of solidarity economy argue that these are not mere ethical projections; community management of forests, fisheries, pasture lands, water, etc. has proven to be efficient, sustainable and equitable. For this, solidarity economy calls for institutional mechanisms to govern the commons, and rules and regulations to prevent anyone from taking unfair advantage.¹¹

In short, solidarity economy suggests the institutional dimension of solidarity. Pure ethical urge is not enough. It calls for appropriate institutional management of solidarity practices. This also means that we cannot leave it to spontaneous surge of solidarity to leave a durable mark on society.

Yet solidarity economy has been unable to answer the question, namely is it able to transcend market economics in a significant way? Or, is it subsumed by market economy? Will not laws of market economy (particularly in neoliberal conditions), such as the credit and debt game, wage squeeze, falling rate of profit, division of labour, etc., affect solidarity economy? While we may leave the final answer to history, we may say at least this much that the idea of solidarity economy tells us of some of the features of a desirable future. On the other hand, there are both economic arguments and political arguments, the latter revolving around the question of power, which suggest that solidarity cannot be an innocent idea. Such an idea has to cope with the contentions and contradictions of society. Solidarity, to put it in one line, is a contentious concept and has a contentious history. It explains the ambivalent attitude of social scientists and Marxist scholars in particular to the cooperatives, one of the key institutions of a solidarity economy. Marx himself praised the cooperative movement in the augural address to the Working Men's Association. At the same time he was cautious about the possibilities of cooperatives in a capitalist economy. It is worthwhile to listen to him in some details. Referring to the Ten Hours Bill in the British Parliament he continued:

But there was in store a still greater victory of the political economy of labour over the political economy of property. We speak of the co-operative movement, especially the co-operative factories raised by the unassisted efforts of a few bold "hands". The value of these great social experiments cannot be overrated. By deed instead of by argument, they have shown that production on a large scale, and in accord with the behests of modern science, may be carried on without the existence of a class of masters employing a class of hands; that to bear fruit, the means of labor need not be monopolized as a means of dominion over, and of extortion against, the laboring man himself; and that, like slave labor, like serf labor, hired labor is but a transitory and inferior form, destined to disappear before associated labor plying its toil with a willing hand, a ready mind, and a joyous heart. In England, the seeds of the co-operative system were sown by Robert Owen; the workingmen's experiments tried on the Continent were, in fact, the practical upshot of the theories, not invented, but loudly proclaimed, in 1848.

At the same time the experience of the period from 1848 to 1864 has proved beyond doubt that, however, excellent in principle and however useful in practice, co-operative labor, if kept within the narrow circle of the casual efforts of private workmen, will never be able to arrest the growth in geometrical progression of monopoly, to free the masses, nor even to perceptibly lighten the burden of their miseries... To save the industrious masses, co-operative labor ought to be developed to national dimensions, and, consequently, to be fostered by national means. Yet the lords of the land and the lords of capital will always use their political privileges for the defense and perpetuation of their economic monopolies. So far from promoting, they will continue to lay every possible impediment in the way of the emancipation of labor. Remember the sneer with which, last session, Lord Palmerston put down the advocates of the Irish Tenants' Right Bill. The House of Commons,

cried he, is a house of landed proprietors. To conquer political power has, therefore, become the great duty of the working classes. They seem to have comprehended this, for in England, Germany, Italy, and France, there have taken place simultaneous revivals, and simultaneous efforts are being made at the political organization of the workingmen's party.

One element of success they possess — numbers; but numbers weigh in the balance only if united by combination and led by knowledge. Past experience has shown how disregard of that bond of brotherhood which ought to exist between the workmen of different countries, and incite them to stand firmly by each other in all their struggles for emancipation, will be chastised by the common discomfiture of their incoherent efforts...

If the emancipation of the working classes requires their fraternal concurrence, how are they to fulfill that great mission with a foreign policy in pursuit of criminal designs, playing upon national prejudices, and squandering in piratical wars the people's blood and treasure? It was not the wisdom of the ruling classes, but the heroic resistance to their criminal folly by the working classes of England, that saved the west of Europe from plunging headlong into an infamous crusade for the perpetuation and propagation of slavery on the other side of the Atlantic. The shameless approval, mock sympathy, or idiotic indifference with which the upper classes of Europe have witnessed the mountain fortress of the Caucasus falling a prey to, and heroic Poland being assassinated by, Russia: the immense and un-resisted encroachments of that barbarous power, whose head is in St. Petersburg, and whose hands are in every cabinet of Europe, have taught the working classes the duty to master themselves the mysteries of international politics; to watch the diplomatic acts of their respective governments; to counteract them, if necessary, by all means in their power; when unable to prevent, to combine in simultaneous denunciations, and to vindicate the simple laws or morals and justice, which ought to govern the relations of private individuals, as the rules paramount of the intercourse of nations.

The fight for such a foreign policy forms part of the general struggle for the emancipation of the working classes.

Proletarians of all countries, unite!¹²

In other words, the principle of solidarity as enunciated in the idea of solidarity economy cannot be an isolated one. It has to be socially and politically transformative.¹³

Before we move on to further discuss the idea of solidarity, let us note that this article leaves out the huge anthropological literature on solidarity — thus clan solidarity, tribal solidarity, solidarity of religious groups and followers, solidarity of localities, gang solidarity, caste solidarity, and the literature on the extensive gift cultures in various societies across the world. In each of these cases the remarkable fact is that the solidarity is based on some fault line. Thus gang wars, religious wars, caste wars, and other histories of enmity are the other of the histories of friendship. Countless libraries are filled up with this literature. Recounting them here even very briefly will serve no purpose, save to remind us that practices of enmity and friendship have various anthropological stories to tell.¹⁴

This is not say that group solidarities have no political significance. Solidarities often interface, they cut across each other. They are so to say often impure. Thus solidarity with the Palestinians may spring from Arab identity, Muslim identity, also various anti-imperialist identities — singly or meshed together. Likewise, solidarity of coloured people may spring from anti-colonial history, the history of a continent, and many other histories. In a remarkable account of feminist solidarity the eighties and nineties of the last century in South Asia, Ritu Menon, a feminist publisher, has written,

Over the years, as these issues became entangled with movements for self-determination across the region, we worked collaboratively with women's groups, convinced that we needed to act in solidarity as *South Asians*, because what happens with regard to the issues in one country has repercussions in

all. The women's movement was not alone in this belief: the peace and environment movements, the labour movement, Physicians against Nuclearisation, the independent human rights commissions in each country, working in tandem, releasing statements; engaging in Track II diplomacy; organising people-to-people conferences; working on projects together – and publishing books.¹⁵

Such interface is truer in the case of anti-racism movement. From the writings of Franz Fanon (“We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe”) to “I cannot breathe” moment of our time – black consciousness is a remarkable political account growing out of our anthropological pasts. At the same time, Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* tells that the foundations of anti-colonialism, anti-imperialist solidarity, consciousness of racist oppression, national liberation, and internationalism form a complex that speaks of a particular politics of solidarity. Noticeably, Fanon notes how inter group clashes in a colony build on certain anthropological facts to become features of the life of the colonised people. They become expressions of masculinity and domination. In his words,

The colonised are caught in the tightly knit web of colonialism. But we have seen how on the inside the colonist achieves only a pseudo-petrification. The muscular tension of the colonized periodically erupts into bloody fighting between tribes, clans, and individuals.¹⁶

And then,

In the colonial world, the colonised's affectivity is kept on edge like a running sore flinching from a caustic agent. And the psyche retracts, is obliterated, and finds an outlet through muscular spasms that have caused many an expert to classify the colonized as hysterical. This overexcited affectivity, spied on by invisible guardians who constantly communicate with the core of the personality, takes an erotic delight in the muscular deflation of the crisis. Another aspect of the colonised's affectivity can be seen when it is drained of energy by the ecstasy of dance. Any study of the colonial world therefore must include an understanding of the phenomenon of dance and possession. The colonised's way of relaxing is precisely this muscular orgy during which the most brutal aggressiveness and impulsive violence are channeled, transformed, and spirited away.¹⁷

Yet Fanon knows, “Violence unifies the people”.¹⁸

III

We have discussed the ethical and the economic aspects of the practice of solidarity, and have noted the anthropological narratives of solidarity. However, in the modern age of nationalism and massive wars the international as the field of solidarity has received the greatest attention. Various conceptualized as cosmopolitanism, world citizenship, human unity and human solidarity – these ideas have been expressions of the great liberal times of the past. Noticeably these ideas did not build on any fault line, but on the fact that humanity was one. This presented a paradox: On one hand the cosmopolitans could say that the world was one while all knew that world was not, on the other hand they could say that they upheld the rights of the victims of gender or race oppression, or colonial and national oppression, and it was in this way that they championed the value of the humankind, the value of *one world*.¹⁹ If we are not to engage in quarrels built on rhetoric, we can acknowledge that cosmopolitans have played their roles in practising solidarity.²⁰ They have also discussed appropriate institutional ways to realise the high ideas of cosmopolitanism. They cannot be dismissed as just dreamers.

Yet we must also accept the fact that cosmopolitanism has often served as the vehicle of elect nations in strengthening global dominance. Positioning itself against “small nation” mentality, cosmopolitanism works as a template of universalism. Solidarity in the form of cosmopolitanism is a

displaced site of dominance. “Responsibility to protect” is one of the doctrines that enable great powers to intervene. It was in ample evidence in the nineteenth century when the European colonial powers repeatedly declared solidarity with “oppressed Christian subjects” of Ottoman rule. Responsibility was the ruse of invoking solidarity with the “small nations” in Eastern and Central Europe. In the history of international law, the protection of “small nations” is linked with the responsibility to protect them. Likewise, the responsibility is to protect the “people” subjected to extreme state repression, oppression of minorities within countries.²¹ Once again we can see how the principle of responsibility is linked to world solidarity based on the template of global governance run by great powers. As one historian has put it, the question of “small nations” was from the beginning linked to the quest of the great powers for permanent security. The great powers and a group of select thinkers built the issue of protection of the world population from mass crimes a part of their liberal doctrine of global concerns.²² National self-determination combined with the human rights revolution in the post WWII era, which premised itself on universal values and thus solidarity with the right-less peoples. Liberal security had to be permanent and that was possible only with a combination of a nationally constituted post-War order and the human rights revolution. The process of course took decades to complete, and by the time the order appeared firmly set, globalisation and the advent of neoliberalism put the order in disarray. In place of national self-determination and global human rights revolution appeared the “coalitions of the willing” as the new mark of the global. We shall come to that in a moment.

Meanwhile we must not forget that nations (nation as form, also nationalism as an ideology) have produced spectacular acts of solidarity – often bridging the world in unanticipated manners. In a major revision of his earlier theorisation of a self-centric imagination of a nation (*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*²³) Benedict Anderson argued in his later work *Under the Three Flags: Anarchism and Anti-Colonial Imagination* that nationalist imagination developed in the anti-colonial world through interactions with other anti-colonial movements in an imperial universe. Thus Filipino revolutionaries mingled with and sought support from other anti-colonial revolutionaries inhabiting the Spanish colonial world. In his inimitable words, *Under the Three Flags* attempted “to map the gravitational force of anarchism between militant nationalism on opposite sides of the planet.” He wrote of solidarity in the global anti-colonial imagination,

...The near simultaneity of the last nationalist insurrection in the New World (Cuba, 1895) and the first in Asia (the Philippines, 1896) was no serendipity. Natives of the last important remnants of the fabled Spanish global empire, Cubans (as well as Puerto Ricans and Dominicans) and Filipinos did not merely read about each other, but had crucial personal connections, and up to a point, coordinated their actions – the first time in world history that such transglobal coordination became possible. Both were eventually crushed, within a few years of each other, by the same brutish world hegemon. But the coordination did not take place directly between the broken hill-country of Oriente and Cavite, but was mediated through “representatives” above all in Paris and secondarily in Hong Kong, London, and New York. Newspaper-reading Chinese nationalists eagerly followed events in Cuba and the Philippines – as well as the Boer nationalist struggle against Ukanian imperialism, which Filipinos also studied – to learn how to “do” revolution, anti-colonialism, and anti-imperialism... These coordinations were made possible because the last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the onset of what one could call “early globalisation”. The invention of telegraph was rapidly followed by many improvements, and the laying of transoceanic submarine cables. The “wire” was soon taken for granted by city people all over the planet... The inauguration of the Universal Postal Union in 1876 vastly accelerated the reliable movement of letters, magazines, newspapers, photographs, and books around the world. The steamship - safe, speedy and cheap – made possible unprecedentedly massive migrations from state to state, empire to empire, and continent to continent.

A thickening latticework of railways as moving millions of people and commodities within national and colonial borders, linking remote interiors to each other and to ports and capitals...

But the beginning of the early 1880s the preliminary tremors were being felt of the earthquake that we remember variously as the Great war or the First World War. Tsar Alexander II's assassination in 1881 by bomb throwing radicals calling themselves The People's Will was followed over the next twenty five years by the killing of a French President, an Italian monarch, an Austrian empress, and an heir apparent, a Portuguese king and his heir, a Spanish Prime Minister, two American Presidents, a king of Greece, a king of Serbia, and powerful conservative politicians in Russia, Ireland, and Japan... The earliest and the most spectacular of these assassinations were carried out by the anarchists, but nationalism soon followed in their wake. In most cases the immediate aftermath was a mass of draconian "anti-terrorist" legislation, summary executions, and a sharp rise in torture by police forces, public and secret, as well as militaries. But the assassins, some of whom could well be described as early suicide bombers, understood themselves as acting for a world-audience of news agencies, newspapers, religious progressives, working-class and peasant organisations, and so on...

Such is the general proscenium on which the main actors in this book (that is militant anarchist anti-colonialists) played their various nomadic parts. One could put this point more vividly, perhaps by saying that the reader will encounter Italians in Argentina, New Jersey, France, and the Basque homeland; Puerto Ricans and Cubans in Haiti, the United States, France, and the Philippines; Spaniards in Cuba, France, Belgium, and the Philippines; Russians in Paris; Filipinos in Belgium; Japanese in Mexico, San Francisco, and Manila; Germans in London and Oceania; Chinese in the Philippines and Japan; Frenchmen in Argentina, Spain, and Ethiopia, and so on.²⁴

Almost anti-colonial revolutions were marked by acts of solidarity – be they the revolution in China, or in India, or Cuba. In all these cases it was possible as time became the same for various actors across great geographical distances, such as China for Dr. Norman Bethune and Dr. Dwarkanath Kotnis.²⁵ Also nations lived in the same time – the time of colonial oppression. Africa produced the idea of a continental revolution, Latin America produced its own idea of a continental revolution, and Asia dreamt of pan-Asianism. The Tri-Continental Conference of 1966 marked the climax of worldwide anti-colonial, anti-imperial solidarity. It was a gathering of countries that focused on issues specifically related to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Held in Havana from 3 to 16 January 1966, it was attended by about 500 delegates from 82 different countries. It founded the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.²⁶ Characteristically, the solidarity the world witnessed was possible because of the plurality of the idiom of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism.

Lack of clarity about the plural composition of solidarity practices of the nations in the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist time has led scholars of nationalism to take a pedantic attitude to the phenomenon and consequently they have taken leave of the necessary dialectical attitude. For instance, Perry Anderson noted, "Just as there was no social uniformity in the leadership of the different movements of national liberation, so its ideological expressions were hybrid and variegated - at the limit, capable of drawing on rationalist, romantic, positivist and irrationalist currents of thought all at the same time. Kemalism in Turkey, Sukarnism in Indonesia... Combinations or recapitulations of earlier doctrines abounded." He further thought that the most distinctive feature of this anti-imperialism was its capacity to make use not merely of ideologies "of diverse origin within the parameters of classical bourgeois thought, but also of systems of belief either prior to the Enlightenment or posterior to capitalism - that is to say, religion on the one hand and socialism on the other." "These were upheavals qualitatively distinct from the October Revolution to which they looked back. For all triumphed under the banner of the nation..."²⁷

Perry Anderson was clearly unable to grasp the theoretical significance of the nation form in being simultaneously nationalist and internationalist and the complex structure of the nationalist thought in the anti-colonial age. For him, it had to be bourgeois, pre-bourgeois, post-capitalist, pre-socialist, etc, etc.

In fact, the glorious history of anti-colonial solidarity should open our eyes to a paradox – one more - in the idea of solidarity of nations. Nation we may argue is one of the purest forms of solidarity to the extent that it empties all other forms of solidarity and makes national solidarity the most natural and fundamental. Yet, as we have seen, nations have been internationalist in varying ways and degrees.

Thus perhaps by the same token, the assumption that “enlightened” nations share common values and hence should come to mutual aid and mount a common cause has led to various “coalitions of the willing”²⁸ and joining hands to bomb Afghanistan or Iraq or Syria, or in an earlier age a Tom Paine becoming active in Philadelphia and Paris. It is a kind of common liberal will against obdurate locals.²⁹ The Congress of Vienna (1815) and the Holy Alliance was one such solidarity of a continent determined to restore an old order. Much of these coalitions of the willing through the last two centuries had to do with whatever happened from time to time in the camp of capital. The establishment of global institutions at the end of the Second World War such as the Bretton Woods institutions, the advent of Cold War, the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe, the setting up of GATT, the restoration of free trade within a region (biggest example is the European Common Market and the European Union), and subsequent setting up of trade and trade-military blocs (such as the NAFTA or APEC with period adjustments) are different milestones in the history of solidarity of capitalist countries.

Once again we can see how solidarity mostly operates on some deep fault lines.

IV

We may justifiably say that the statement solidarity mostly operates on some deep fault line is only a truism. It tells us nothing more significant. Yet we can ask has there been another vision of solidarity that draws on all these forms of solidarity – partisanship, ethicality, plurality, commitment, mutuality, and unity – and appear as a pure political form? Or rephrasing the point, can we think of solidarity that can appear as pure politics by exhausting the potential of these different attributes of solidarity evidenced in different historical experiences? Can we think of solidarity as politics by itself, or as a pure act?

Every Indian knows of the infamous massacre by the British troops in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar on 13 April 1919. At least 379 people died and over 1200 others were injured. Little after a month of the massacre, poet Tagore on 31 May 1919 renounced his knighthood in protest. In his letter to the British Viceroy he wrote,

... The enormity of the measures taken by the Government in the Punjab for quelling some local disturbances has, with a rude shock, revealed to our minds the helplessness of our position as British subjects in India. The disproportionate severity of the punishments inflicted upon the unfortunate people and the methods of carrying them out, we are convinced, are without parallel in the history of civilised governments barring some conspicuous exceptions, recent and remote. Considering that such treatment has been meted out to a population, disarmed and resourceless, by a power which has the most terribly efficient organisation for destruction of human lives, we must strongly assert that it can claim no political expediency, far less moral justification... the universal agony of

indignation roused in the hearts of our people has been ignored by our rulers- possibly congratulating themselves for imparting what they imagine as salutary lessons... the very least that I can do for my country is to take all consequences upon myself in giving voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen, surprised into a dumb anguish of terror. The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in the incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part, wish to stand, shorn, of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who, for their so called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings.³⁰

This letter memorised by the nationalists and quoted on countless occasions still continues to draw our attention because of its purity. It is not simply politics or say anti-colonialism or simply an act of protest. Solidarity here is a gesture of support to the “insignificant”, those “surprised into a dumb anguish of terror”, helpless as “British subjects in India”, when carrying an “honour (bestowed by the ruler) becomes a shame”. Solidarity here has no ulterior motive, no expectation, only a renunciation of a privilege that the victims will never have. Solidarity is the motive. It is a pure act.

This purity has another aspect. It transcends the problem of mutuality and by implication the perils of a contract. Contract is mutual obligation. Contract has consent as its fundamental element on the basis of which membership of a political community rests. Contract is thus the virtuous basis of civic belonging. In this way solidarity accommodates its opposites in anthropological terms like caste or hereditary aristocracy, which sit perfectly with the protocols of citizenship. We can inculcate solidarity yet be sectarian. Tagore’s letter points out the “insignificance” of people who are persecuted by the colonial power. At the same time, coming in the long lineage of a kind of anti-colonialism that latches on the idea of the subordination of “small nations” (some may think of the Eastern and central European nations in late nineteenth and the decades before the Second World War in the twentieth century) – in Tagore’s case “so-called insignificance” - yet transcending the immediate but the overwhelming reality of smallness, the letter conveys the spirit of solidarity that has attained purity as a “virtue”. Tagore’s letter opens up the idea of solidarity to new impulses, calling without fully imagining a future of the idea of solidarity.

Solidarity as politics recalls this purity: hence solidarity is politics, *pure politics*. Solidarity as politics transcends the sociological boundaries of identity and friendships. Such politics ushers in a society of friendship; or we may say, politics calls for a society of solidarity. *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* ends with these words, “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of all countries unite!” One argument can be that Marx and Engels’ call to the workers of the world to unite is the climax of their expositions about the bourgeoisie as a world force, world trade as a continuously pressing trend subsuming countries and regions ever and ever, and the proletariat as the consistent product of the bourgeoisie, born of it and opposed to it. They thought, “National differences and antagonism between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto.”³¹

However there is a deeper aspect to this call to unite. Marx and Engels did not speak of integration or a world working class that has no fault lines within. Let us listen to the authors of the *Manifesto* as they gave shape to their call,

The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself *the* nation, it is so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.³²

And therefore,
The struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie is at the outset a national one in form, though not in content. Naturally the proletariat of each country must first finish off its own bourgeoisie.³³

Thereby, with the end of exploitation of one individual by another the exploitation by one nation of another will end.

In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another will also be put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end.³⁴

In this way a new language of solidarity was created. *The Manifesto* did not quibble over the terms of solidarity, or possibility of solidarity of workers on certain select demands. Proletarians unite because that is their mode of existence. They may be nationally identified, but they are proletarians who exist because they are a world force. Solidarity is *existence*; *solidarity is the mode of existence*. This was not a programme to achieve. This was the only way communists related to the proletarians. This was and still remains pure politics. Lenin and others like Rosa Luxemburg demonstrated how to take the workers as an international presence as a question of political existence. Of course the authors of *The Manifesto* had a scientific explanation behind their position. But what concerns us here is the way they brought solidarity in their call to the workers. No doubt *The Manifesto* is not only a text about revolution, but also a text for revolution. It was and is a text about solidarity; it is also a text to invoke solidarity as a mode of workers' existence.

To make this point clearer before we end: Proletarians must unite because they are a world force, not because there is “cunning of reason” - to use Hegel's famous phrase - that sets particular ends in the service of a universal, an unconscious tool and organ of a world mind at work.³⁵ Or that there is a sense of the proletariat as a “universal people” as some religious community may think. They will unite as their mode of existence. Therefore there is no graduation here from any lower sense of solidarity to an upper, loftier sense. The other forms are dissolved in the proletarian mode of existence. Solidarity is not thus a matter of strength of some doctrine, but strength of a mode of existence. The mode of existence enables the strength of a political conduct which goes beyond a sense of moral virtue.

The good liberals say that solidarity is well, good, rational, and must be based on enlightened self-interest. Enlightened self-interest guides individuals and nations to coalesce as and when necessary. And, those who practise solidarity as a mode of existence are pig headed, emotional, and are eternally engaged in a mad search for ways of emancipation from the existing order. It is true that these emotional subjects of politics do not want to reconcile themselves with the banality, cruelty, and evil of the “normal” functions of society. But we must not deny the force of this refusal of existing order. Such refusal always takes the emotional subject of politics to a dream of solidarity, harnesses the principle of solidarity to the principle of equality, to an idea of “something in common”, which means nothing other than *freedom to think of a different future*.

Notes

¹ For an idea of what acts of solidarity could do in terms of creating a defiant subject, see the “Migrant Workers Resistance Map” of the Migrant Workers Solidarity Network - <https://mwsn.in/resistance-map> (accessed on 2 May 2021); on details of the “migrant crisis”, Calcutta Research Group's “Living Archive: Covid-19 and

Migrant Labour” - http://www.mcrg.ac.in/CRG_COVID-19/Covid_Migrant_Workers_Home.asp (accessed on 25 May 2021); also Ranabir Samaddar, *A Pandemic and the Politics of Life* (Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2021), chapter 2, “The Migrant as a Figure of the Crisis”, pp. 41-122

² Ayushman Kaul and Devesh Kumar, “What the SOS Tweets Tell us About the Second Wave of COVID-19”, *The Wire*, 30 April 2021 - <https://thewire.in/tech/what-the-sos-tweets-on-indian-twitter-tell-us-about-the-second-wave-of-covid-19> (accessed on 2 May 2021); also the report by Mehbub Qader Chaudhury “Coronavirus in Kolkata: Social Media is Helping COVID-19 Patients to Fight against Disease” (in Bengali), *Anandabazar Patrika Online*, 1 May 2021 - <https://www.anandabazar.com/west-bengal/kolkata/coronavirus-in-kolkata-social-media-is-helping-covid-19-patients-to-fight-against-disease/cid/1278756> (accessed on 3 May 2021); Tamaghna Bnaerjee on community help groups, “Citizens Use Crowdfunding to Help Cov Patients”, *Times of India*, 5 May 2021 - <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/citizens-use-crowdfunding-to-help-cov-patients/articleshow/82393812.cms> (accessed on 6 May 2021)

³ “Calcutta Samaritans Join Hands to Provide Food: Slum Dwellers around Jadavpur Railway Station will Get Cereals and Pulses from This Week”, report by Subhankar Chowdhury, *The Telegraph*, 17 May 2021 – <https://www.telegraphindia.com/amp/west-bengal/calcutta/calcutta-samaritans-join-hands-to-provide-food/cid/1815841> (accessed on 17 May 2021)

⁴ “States, Police should not Clampdown on Citizens who use Social Media to Seek Help for COVID-19: Supreme Court”, Devayan Roy, *Bar and Bench*, 30 April 2021 – <https://www.barandbench.com/news/litigation/states-police-clampdown-citizens-usocial-media-help-for-covid-19-supreme-court> (accessed on 6 May 2021)

⁵ Mehmal Sarfraz, “Shared Suffering: Pakistan Feels India’s Pain in this Difficult Hour”, *The Telegraph*, 30 April 2021 - <https://www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/pakistan-feels-indias-pain-in-this-difficult-hour/cid/1814075> (accessed on 5 May 2021)

⁶ There are several reports on this. For an initial idea of the response of the churches, see collections of reports and resolutions of the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) - “Refugee Protection”, <https://ccme.eu/index.php/areas-of-work/refugee-protection/> (accessed on 21 May 2021); “Migration and Asylum” - <https://www.ceceurope.org/migration-and-asylum/> (accessed on 26 May 2021); “European Churches and Ecumenical Organizations Respond to Refugee Crisis”, Global Ministries, 16 September 2015 - https://www.globalministries.org/european_churches_and_ecumenical_organizations_respond_to_refugee_crisis/ (accessed on 1 May 2021)

⁷ “Cities of Refuge” refers to six Biblical towns on the two sides of the Jordan River where persons charged with accidental murder could claim the right to asylum. Today the name has inspired a number of cities to offer protection to various groups of fleeing individuals like writers, political activists, etc. The movement holds up the relevance of international human rights, as law, practices, and discourse, and aims to demonstrate how local governments in Europe can welcome and integrate refugees. The goal is to contribute to a sustainable, long-term, local solutions of the refugee issue and the reinforcement of human rights law with new insights drawn from practical experiences.

⁸ “Social and Solidarity Economy”, ILO – https://www.ilo.org/empent/areas/WCMS_546299/lang-en/index.htm (accessed on 11 May 2021)

⁹ Emily Kawaono, “Seven ways to Build the Solidarity Economy: We can Transform Capitalism by Encouraging the Better Angels of Our Nature”, *Open Democracy*, 4 September 2018 – <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/seven-ways-to-build-solidarity-economy/> (accessed on 11 May 2021)

¹⁰ Classic on this, Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

¹¹ Emily Kawaono, “Seven ways to Build the Solidarity Economy: We can Transform Capitalism by Encouraging the Better Angels of Our Nature”, *op. cit.*

¹² Karl Marx, “Inaugural Address of the International Working Men’s Association”, 1864 –

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1864/10/27.htm> (accessed on 14 May 2021); Later, referring to the cooperative factories he wrote, “The co-operative factories of the labourers themselves represent within the old form the first sprouts of the new, although they naturally reproduce, and must reproduce, everywhere in their actual organisation all the shortcomings of the prevailing system. But the antithesis between capital and labour is overcome within them, if at first only by way of making the associated labourers into their own capitalist, i.e., by enabling them to use the means of production for the employment of their own labour. They show how a new mode of production naturally grows out of an old one, when the development of the material forces of production and of the corresponding forms of social production have reached a particular stage. Without the factory system arising out of the capitalist mode of production there could have been no co-operative factories. Nor could these have developed without the credit system arising out of the same mode of production. The credit system is not only the principal basis for the gradual transformation of capitalist private enterprises into capitalist stock companies, but equally offers the means for the gradual extension of co-operative enterprises on a more or less national scale. The capitalist stock companies, as much as the co-operative factories, should be considered as transitional forms from the capitalist mode of production to the associated one, with the only distinction that the antagonism is resolved negatively in the one and positively in the other.” – *Capital*, volume 3, 1894 (Moscow: Institute of Marxism-Leninism, 1959), p. 317 –

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Capital-Volume-III.pdf> (accessed on 15 May 2021)

¹³ For a sympathetic account of the question of the cooperatives see, Manas R. Bhowmik and Achin Chakraborty, “Class Processes and Cooperatives” in Achin Chakraborty, Anjan Chakrabarti, Byasdeb Dasgupta, and Samita Sen (eds.), *‘Capital’ in the East: Reflections on Marx* (Singapore: Springer, 2019), pp. 221-240

¹⁴ For a brief but significant reflection of the anthropological issue of friendship and enmity, see Pradip K. Bose, “Anthropology of Reconciliation” in Ranabir Samaddar and Helmut Reifeld (eds.), *Peace as Process: Reconciliation and Conflict Resolution in South Asia* (Delhi: Manohar, 2001), pp. 45-60

¹⁵ Ritu Menon, *Address Book: A Publishing Memoir in the Time of COVID* (Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2021), p. 77

¹⁶ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), p. 17

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51

¹⁹ Buoyant with having travelled the world in a plane during the Second World War, the American diplomat Wendell L. Willkie wrote of humanitarian hopes and convictions of something called world humanity, “There are no distant points in the world any longer. I learnt by this trip that the myriad millions of human beings of the Far East are as close to us as Los Angeles is to New York by the fastest trains. I cannot escape the conviction that in the future what concerns them must concern us, almost as much as the problems of the people of California concern the people of New York. Our thinking in the future must be worldwide.” – *One World* (1943, New York: Arcole Publishing, 2018), e-book - <https://www.amazon.in/One-World-Wendell-L-Willkie-ebook/dp/B07VJDM355?asin=B07VJDM355&revisionId=&format=2&depth=1> (accessed on 15 May 2021)

²⁰ Prominent among ethical cosmopolitans is Heikki Patomaki who has written among others, *Disintegrative Tendencies in Global Political Economy: Exits and Conflicts* (London: Routledge, 2019) and (co-authored with Teivo Teivainen) *A Possible World: Democratic Transformation of Global Institutions* (London: Zed Books, 2004). In the context of currency manipulations in the last years of the last century 2002 Heikki Patomaki wrote, *Democratising Globalisation: The Leverage of the Tobin Tax* (London: Zed Books, 2001), in which he argued that with institutional innovations and political will it was possible to establish a Tobin Tax Organisation (TTO) to implement the suggested Tobin Tax. The potential annual revenue of something like USD 1 trillion could be used for a just world order through expenditure on economic and social purposes to be determined globally.

²¹ At the 2005 World Summit, governments affirmed the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. The doctrine of “Responsibility to Protect” rests upon three pillars of equal standing: the responsibility of each State to protect its populations; the responsibility of the international community to assist States in protecting their populations; and the responsibility of the

international community to protect when a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations. The doctrine was based on an expectation of a future free of these crimes. Yet the doctrine was applied in a discriminatory manner, and great powers were not held accountable for war crimes and crimes against its own citizens. – “The Responsibility Protect”, *UN Chronicle*, [https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/responsibility-protect#:~:text=The%20responsibility%20to%20protect%20\(commonly,and%20the%20responsibility%20of%20the](https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/responsibility-protect#:~:text=The%20responsibility%20to%20protect%20(commonly,and%20the%20responsibility%20of%20the) (accessed on 1 May 2021); for a survey of the relevant literature, Sibashis Chatterjee,

²² A. Dirk Moses, *The Problems of Genocide: Permanent Security and the Language of Transgression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), chapters 2-3, pp. 94-168

²³ Revised and extended (London: Verso, 1991)

²⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 1-4

²⁵ For these two extraordinary lives, Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon, *The Scalpel, The Sword: The Story of Dr. Norman Bethune* (1952, Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009); Tanvi Patel, “Solapur to China: The Forgotten Story of the Indian Doctor Revered by the Chinese”, *The Better India*, 15 January 2019 - <https://www.thebetterindia.com/172490/china-india-history-dr-kotnis-mumbai/> (accessed on 24 May 2021); also Anant Pai, *Dr. Kotnis in China* (Mumbai: Amar Chitra Katha, 1971)

²⁶ For an exhaustive study, Anne Garland Mahler, *From the Tricontinental to the Global South: Race, Radicalism and Transnational Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018)

²⁷ Perry Anderson, “Internationalism: A Breviary”, Editorial, *New Left Review*, 14, March-April 2002, “Introduction, pp. 17-18

²⁸ The term “coalition of the willing” refers to the US-led multi-national force that invaded Iraq in 2003. The coalition was led by the United States. The coalition had 48 countries and 5 contributed militarily. Others either allowed their territory for military purpose or lent other forms of resources to the invasion.

²⁹ There is also a strange psychological twist to the solidarity story. “Civilised” nations declare solidarity with the persecuted in rest of the world as a form of self-purification. Solidarity works as the unconscious tool of self-redemption. The post WWII history of Western nations’ tolerating Zionism and Israel’s acts against the Palestinians is explained as penance for old evil acts.

³⁰ Reproduced in Krishna Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography* (Kolkata: Visva Bharati, 1980), p. 277

³¹ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), in *Marx Engels Selected Works*, volume one (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), pp. 98-137, chapter 2, “Proletarians and Communists”, p. 25 - <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf> (accessed on 22 May 2021)

³² *Ibid.*, chapter 2, p. 25

³³ *Ibid.*, chapter 1, “Bourgeois and the Proletarians”, p. 20

³⁴ *Ibid.*, chapter 2, p. 25

³⁵ G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Introduction*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 74-89; Hegel drew from Immanuel Kant who wrote “Each, according to his own inclination, follows his own purpose, often in opposition to others; yet each individual and people, as if following some guiding thread, go toward a natural but to each of them unknown goal; all work toward furthering it, even if they would set little store by it if they did know it.” - in *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View* (1784), trans. Lewis White Beck, *From Immanuel Kant, On History* (1963) - <https://web.itu.edu.tr/~girayg/comprehensive/docs/Kant%20-%20Idea%20for%20a%20Universal%20History%20....pdf> (accessed on 25 May 2021);

CRG Series on Policies and Practices

113. The Invisible Migrant Workers: In Life , In Death
114. Biometric, Notion of Governmentally and Gender Relations in Rohingya Refugee Camps
115. Media on Migrants : Reports from Field -I
116. Media on Migrants : Reports from Field -II
117. Transition without Justice in the Postcolonial World: Protection Discourses for Refugees & Migrants in South Asia
118. Media Discourses on the Bengal Bangladesh Border
119. Culture, Migration and the Time of an Epidemic: The Nautanki Theatres/ Bhojpuri Natak in 1990s
- 120.COVID-19, Migrants, Media
121. Refugees and Migrants as Subjects of Economy and Politics
122. COVID-19 and After: Work, Life and Salience of Primitive Accumulation

CRG Series on Policies and Practices

74. Cities, Rural Migrants & the Urban Poor-III: Migration & the Urban Question in Delhi
75. Classes, People, and Populism
76. Logistical Space I: Logistics and Social Governance
77. Logistical Space II: Mobilities and Spaces
78. Logistical Space III:Hubs, Connectivity and Transit
79. Logistical Space IV: The Asam Paradigm
80. People, Politics and Protests I: Calcutta & West Bengal, 1950s - 1960s
81. People, Politics and Protests II: Bengal and Bihar
82. People, Politics and Protests III: Marxian, Literary Debates and Discourses
83. The Importance of being Siliguri, or the Lack thereof: Border-Effect and the “Untimely” City in North Bengal
84. Logistical Space V: Representations of Connectivity
85. Logistical Space VI: Logistics and the Reshaping of Global Governance
86. Logistical Space VII: Finance Capital & Infrastructure Development
87. Logistical Space VIII: Trade, Capital & Conflict
88. Logistical Space IX: Conflict & Social Governance in Northeast India
89. People, Politics and Protests IV: Occupy College Street: Notes from the Sixties
90. People, Politics and Protests V: The Creative & Cultural Dimension of the Naxalbari Movement
91. People, Politics and Protests VI: Karporri Thakur
92. People, Politics and Protests VII: The Radical Rural
93. People, Politics and Protests VIII: Left Front Government in West Bengal (1971-1982)
94. Population and Rent in *Capital*
95. *Capital*: Value & Translation
96. The Urban Turn
97. Peasants, Students, Insurgents and Popular Movements in Contemporary Assam
98. Migration and Governance I: Promises and Paradoxes of a Global Gaze
99. Migration and Governance II: Responsibility to Protect- Questions of Race, Religion, Resource and the Unspoken Fourth
100. Migration and Governance III: Population Flows, Refugees, and the Responsibility to Protect in the Global Protection System
101. Migration and Governance IV: Global Capitalism and Refugee and Migrant Labour
102. Migration and Governance V: Statelessness, International Conventions and the Need for New Initiatives ? Addressing the New Frontiers of Statelessness
103. Migration and Governance VI : Migrants and Movements across Asia : Mobility, Global Migration Governance and the European Response
104. Global Capitalism, Informal Economy and the Question of Labour
105. Reflections on the Mediterranean Refugee Crisis
106. Populism- I :Politics, Policies and Social justice
107. Populism- II: States and Political Parties
108. Populism- III: Leadership and Governmentality
109. Interrogating Citizenship: Perspectives from India’s East and North East
110. Auto-Ethnography as a Research Method: Evidence from Field Research on Ethiopian Irregular Migrants in South Africa
- 111 Borderlands, Migration and Labour
- 112 Two Writings on Climate, Disasters and Displacement

CRG Series on Policies and Practices

- 31 Local Dynamics, Universal Context : Border Trading through Moreh, Manipur
- 32 Two Studies on Asylum Seekers and Other Immigrants in Finland
- 33 Endangered Lives on The Border: Women in the Northeast
- 34 Globalisation and Labouring Lives
- 35 Right to Information in a Globalising World
- 36 Bengal-Bangladesh Border and Women
- 37 Between Ecology and Economy : Environmental Governance in India
- 38 Incomplete Citizenship, Statelessness and Human Trafficking: A Preliminary Analysis of The Current Situation in West Bengal, India
- 39 Place of Poor in Urban Space
- 40 Law and Democratic Governance: Two Studies from Europe
- 41 Finding a Point of Return: Internally Displaced Persons in Sri Lanka
- 42 Colonialism, Resource Crisis and Forced Migration
- 43 Situating Transit Labour
- 44 Two Essays on Security Apparatus
- 45 Governing Flood, Migration and Conflict in North Bihar
- 46 A Gigantic Panopticon: Counter-Insurgency and Modes of Disciplining and Punishment in Northeast India
- 47 Public Interest Litigation in India: Implications for Law and Development
- 48 Governing Caste and Managing Conflicts-Bihar, 1990-2011
- 49 Emerging Spaces and Labour Relations in Neo-Liberal India
- 50 Peace by Governance or Governing Peace? A Case Study of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)
- 51 Women, Conflict and Governance in Nagaland
- 52 Tripura: Ethnic Conflict, Militancy & Counterinsurgency
- 53 Government of Peace
- 54 Bengal Borders and Travelling Lives
- 55 Financialisation, Labour Market Flexibility, and Global Crisis
- 56 The Chronicle of a Forgotten Movement: 1959 Food Movement Revisited
- 57 The Religious Nature of Our Political Rites
58. Social Impact of the City Planning Machinery: Case Study of Road-Widening in Bangalore
59. In Search of Space: The Scheduled Caste Movement in West Bengal after Partition
60. Stateless in Law: Two Assessments
61. Failed by Design? : The Limitations of Statebuilding
62. Contesting Ideas on Peace (A Report & Some Reflections)
63. Body/Law/Technology: The Political Implications of Society as Apparatus
64. Accumulation under Post-Colonial Capitalism-I: An Overview
65. Accumulation under Post-Colonial Capitalism-II: War, Debt, and Reconstruction of Economy
66. Accumulation under Post-Colonial Capitalism-III: The Arab Question in Post-Colonial France
67. Accumulation under Post-Colonial Capitalism-IV: Mobile Labour and the New Urban
68. West Bengal-Bangladesh Borders: Humanitarian Issues
69. Policing a Riot-torn City: Kolkata, 16-18 August 1946
70. Labour, Law and Forced Migration
71. Rohingyas in India: Birth of a Stateless Community
72. Cities, Rural Migrants & the Urban Poor-I: Migration & the Urban Question in Kolkata
73. Cities, Rural Migrants & the Urban Poor-II: Migration & the Urban Question in Mumbai

CRG Series on Policies and Practices

- 1 People on the Move: How Governments Manage Moving Populations
- 2 Resources for Autonomy - Financing the Local Bodies
- 3 Peace Accords as the Basis of Autonomy
- 4 Debates Over Women's Autonomy
- 5 Unequal Communication: Health and Disasters As Issues of Public Sphere
- 6 Globalisation, State Policies And Sustainability of Rights
- 7 Autonomies in the North and the North East: More Freedom or the Politics of Frontier Management?
- 8 Examining Autonomy : The 73rd Constitutional Amendment in Assam
- 9 Democracy, Autonomy and the Community Media
- 10 Women and Forced Migration
- 11 Flags and Rights
- 12 A Status Report on Displacement in Assam and Manipur
- 13 Weapons of the Weak: Field Studies on Claims to Social Justice in Bihar & Orissa
- 14 Towards a New Consideration: Justice for the Minorities
- 15 Conflict, War & Displacement
- 16 The Draft National Rehabilitation Policy: A Critique
- 17 Limits of the Humanitarian: Studies in Situations of Forced Migration
- 18 Prescribed, Tolerated, and Forbidden Forms of Claim Making
- 19 Three Studies on Law and The Shifting Spaces of Justice.
- 20 Primitive Accumulation and Some Aspects of Work and Life in India in The Early Part of The Twenty First Century.
- 21 Citizens, Non-Citizens, and The Stories of Camps
- 22 Tales of Two Cities
- 23 Ways of Power, Minorities, and Knowledge on Minorities: An Assessment of Research Policies and Practices.
- 24 Whither Right to Food? Rights Institutions and Hungry Labour in Tea Plantations of North Bengal
- 25 Hunger, Food Scarcity, & Popular Protests in West Bengal
- 26 Cyclone Aila & the Sundarbans: An Enquiry into the Disaster and Politics of Aid and Relief
- 27 View from India: Media & Minorities in Europe
- 28 Protecting the Rights of the Tsunami Victims: The Sri Lanka Experience
- 29 Nation Building and Minority Alienation in India
- 30 Environment and Migration Purulia, West Bengal

POLICIES AND PRACTICES is the research paper series brought out by the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG). Writings under this series can be referred to and used for public educational purposes with due acknowledgment.

ISSN 2348-0297