

Transcript of Zoom Meeting at 5.00 pm on July 23, 2025

This transcript still has some machine-made mistakes. Thanks to Krish and Suresh for correcting and editing their parts for clarity. I have put in the Devanagari part and corrected some errors elsewhere. - Girish

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Is that Naresh? Yes. Ok, so maybe we can start ... so suresh, can you just initiate this.

ಡಾ|| ಜಕ ಸುರೇಶ್ (Suresh) : :

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Okay.

ಡಾ|| ಜಕ ಸುರೇಶ್ (Suresh) : [edited by Suresh for clarity]

What I aim to present today are a few elementary thoughts, very preliminary thoughts. And I do hope that this may trigger off a process of further thinking about what a new political imagination should be. So it's by no means complete or very well. It appears to me that all of us believe that a political imagination is needed because it helps us summarize various existing political processes as parts of a grand arrangement of relationships between power, knowledge and people. And I would like to stress that this is our shared assumption because in a certain sense, it's an article of faith or belief in us that they constitute the most important driving forces for society, even historically. On the other hand, regarding rituals in society, propaganda, control, various cultural expressions, and so on, we tend to see them as somewhat independent from these aspects, but ultimately subordinate to them. So, in a certain sense, we have a priority among these aspects, i.e. we have a predilection to looking at society through these 3 primary elements, while also acknowledging that other factors may influence them, although not in a very fundamental sense.

It is in this sense that we understand political imagination as serving an important need to evaluate, assess, and understand societies and their behavior, their conduct, and the forces which control them. It is possible that we will bring in, as a part of this understanding, other elements which need to be understood, such as economics, study of society, etc. But then we deem that these 3 are very essential and central to the life of a society.

Regarding the need for a new political imagination, it appears to me that we must understand it in the context of the existing current political imagination as it is represented by all politics in this country. Not merely what is practiced, but also what is idealized and understood theoretically by protest movements of various kinds, by thoughts which disagree with the current political system. We believe that they have become outdated or defunct, or do not adequately describe the current state of society, and, more importantly, its dynamics. It is this politics that leads to the productions of culture, of society, of politics, and of economics. So perhaps the need for a new imagination of politics possibly also comes from this reason, that the current political imagination does not yield

adequate results. The new imagination must cater to an understanding of not only what exists now, but what is about to take birth tomorrow and the day after. To give an example the current imagination of politics, left oriented, centrist, right etc., in whatever denomination that we accept or don't accept - could not have possibly anticipated developments in the last 20 or 25 years, where the so-called gains of the colonial struggles were not merely setback, but also reversed in a fundamental way. We have reached a situation where, for example, in 2020 or thereabouts, the level of inequality in India actually went back to the worst of the colonial times, which was 1924. This is something that is evident to all of us, and therefore provides the rationale for demanding that one looks for a new political imagination because what exists seems to be stagnant, unable to inform us about what happens in the today and the tomorrow. This perhaps is why we are looking at a new political imagination and not a new politics. Such a demand also rests on an assumption of ours that a new politics can only arise from a new imagination of the world, or from reimagining the relationship between power, knowledge, and society, and therefore which has to necessarily precede a new politics itself. And we also believe that a new politics should not be a derivative of the imaginations of the past 200 years of the West, and this conviction is possibly borne out by both the success as well as the failure of the Colonial and the post-colonial phases in our recent history. There may also be other assumptions in this exercise when we further investigate the actual relationship between power, knowledge, and people. But we can actually look at that in a later time.

One question that arises here is, can we really jettison the past 100 years of the Western influence? Can we really escape the effects of colonialism or of Western thought at all? I am reminded of a review of a very recent book which GSR forwarded to me a couple of days ago, which is Meera Nanda's book on the rise of the right in post-independence India. She builds an argument that the post-colonial left's understanding of the West, and of questioning the very basis of the Imperialist development of the previous 200 years in the West specifically, and what it did to the non-West involved rejecting the categories of secular values and rule. This inadvertently was helpful in strengthening the hands of the right which is now actually going unchecked and unstoppable by anything else in the process. The critique of the secularization of society and administration, and the politics of the West has actually become a powerful instrument in the hands of the right which might have aided the rise of fascism across the world. One may agree or disagree with Mira Nanda but then we also ought to understand that the perspectives through which you understand the world, either that of the left or modified left, or any other, can provide new interpretations that seem at variance from those of fifty years ago - what seemed an unequivocal attack against the right can itself be cannibalized by the right. Therefore, while speaking of a new politics, we may have to accept that it may be difficult to jettison and throw out the 200 year old conceptualization of the world because it has a habit of re-entering our debates through new points of entry.

The next question for me would be the question of what this new political imagination is, or what constitutes a new political imagination at all? Would it be a set of old ideas in a new combination which finds relevance because of the changed circumstances of today? Or is it a set of new ideas themselves? So one is not very sure about that, but I do see that there are certain pointers to these two choices in the following.

There seems to be a continuity of sorts in the steady deterioration of politics and society of India in the last 25 years which is somewhat different in character from the previous fifty years after 1947. To a large extent this seems to be influenced by the dynamics of power and wealth, concentration, in addition to other things such as inequality, etc. This is visible to us when we consider India qua India. In other words, it is when we consider India in itself, and of and by itself, we are able to sort of see it as a as the dynamics of power and wealth, concentration due to our policies, kinds of processes which have been taken up in the economic and social dimensions of society. In the background, we do suspect and perhaps understand to some extent the international influence and the similarities that are developing between the Indian situation and that elsewhere. For example, when we say that there is a rise of fascism all across the world, including the Western world, and so on. We might have different interpretations of that. But we do acknowledge that. These are the types of developments which are happening there. But the focus in this analysis seems to be almost exclusively on India.

My suggestion is that we need to consider the international order and the dynamics of the economics and politics of the Empire. In this second approach, a clear sense of the drivers of the current ongoing phase of extractivist neo-feudal and colonial development of the new imperialism of the 21st century can be understood. It may be easier to see why it is extractivist and neo-colonial in its nature. Hopefully we will demonstrate why it is also neo-feudals. We'll have some time to address that; that it is colonialism, and it's a new form of imperialism is possibly granted by most people from this perspective. The second approach provides an outside-in kind of a perspective, as I would like to call it.

One may strive to interpret post-colonial developments in the non-western world in 3 ways. The 1st is as societies trapped by colonialism, with their previous structures being destroyed, unable to link with their past, and being forced to adapt to modern political, social, and economic structures. Such a process inevitably leads to elite power capture and a dysfunctional system in most parts of this world. Here, the active drivers are seen as endogenous. I would like to give an example of this, and say that much of the work of PPST, and the ideas which were developed through PPST seem to follow this particular route.

The second is that the West, through its manipulations, sets up semi-feudal arrangements with new independent States, props up Juntas and coteries from within the elite which are typically Western educated, and extracts raw materials and labor exploitatively while making them dependent and unable to restore actual independence. There is enough evidence to actually see that much of what has happened in Africa, most of Asia, and so on, including India, wholly or in parts of their economies and social development, is influenced through these Western manipulations as a direct establishment of client states with a new feudal arrangement. We also understand that force, regime change, manipulation of various kinds of the West is integral to this particular process. This is in some sense what may be called as an exogenous perspective into understanding developments in the non-western world. Interestingly, some of these may also be applicable to the Western world itself. For example, Eastern Europe, and parts of the undeveloped parts of West itself.

And the 3rd possible perspective is that we view the world, the post-colonial world, as composed of societies which are able to adapt and create multiple variants of capitalist industrial developments to efficiently fit into the larger supply chain which ultimately benefits the West. But then it also benefits these countries. This process is driven by the West, but such countries participate in this arrangement. Ready examples of this would be a part of India, all of China, Korea and Japan, and so on, and so forth.

It appears to me that these 3 perspectives may help us understand several possible ways in which the current world politics actually expresses itself. And going further, it is possible for us to postulate that by considering any or all these 3 ways of looking at it, there seems to be a new type of crisis that the world faces today. We are very familiar with market crises, and what are called as the crises of capitalism itself, every 5 years, every 3 years, etc., which happen because of its very nature, and which is manifest in the West. Its ripples and its effects are found all across the world. While it may not be evident that there are these 3 or 5 year cycles in India, for example, one can find this crisis in terms of either the amount of capitalization of industry, or the extraction of surplus from various raw material producing parts of the economy. It is far more clearer in the West. And a new form of crisis which goes beyond this 3 or 5 year crisis of capitalism seems to have to do with an unwinding of the social, economic, and political arrangement of the West of the last 300 years. I'm saying this in a certain conscious sense that it is not merely economic, it's also social and political. If you consider the political arrangements of the West, in the last 300 years, they were able to grasp and keep control of the economic fallouts primarily by externalizing them into the world outside. And were able to redistribute some parts of these exploitative extractive mechanisms, to keep the society in control. All of these 3 seem to have rapidly escalated towards some dysfunction in the last about 10 to 15 years, and each year seems to bring a new level of crisis in the West in terms of its social relationships and compact, or the social contract within its society, influenced by the economic and political arrangements that seem to be unwinding in recent years with acceleration. And there seems to be evidence in much of what I've read that the relationship between the real economics and the actual economics of production, consumption, and distribution as well as the practices of political economics of the West are no longer explainable by neoclassical theories or libertarian beliefs.

This seems to bring us to the idea that the West is driven by a fictitious financial economics, that there is a fictitious economy which is run by a fictitious concept of money rooted in a perverse relationship between labor, rent, wages and profits, and so on. Where rent has become something central to the economics, and that seems to distort to a large extent the relationship between economics of production, and consumption and distribution, and so on. And it is possible that one may have a separate look at that through a more detailed analysis. But I have a few articles that I can forward to help us come to a very common conclusion of the summary of what these people are saying. But this fictitious capital, these fictitious economics, seems to have led to serious problems, while it also continues to presume or underlie the claims of power of the West. The real power of the West seems to be waning, as is seen in recent times, and perhaps we should focus on some recent displays of opposition to the West as being a consequence of the real reduction in power which comes from the conflation of fictitious economics as a source of great power of the West enabling it to use its military power to subdue the rest of the world. So it appears that in the larger context of geopolitics, the failure of the West seems to be beginning in a fairly big

way, in a different way than what we saw in the reverses of nineteen fifties, sixties, and seventies in Vietnam, Cambodia, Iran, etc. in character and in quality.

Something very fundamentally seems to be changing in terms of its presumed power versus actual power. This unraveling may threaten the hegemony of the political economy of the West in possibly 2 ways. One is the dilution of its economic power, which actually leads to a reduction of its political and military power. This provides an opportunity to develop the idea of a new imagination of politics that has the character both of what I believe we lack today, of the outside-in perspective and the inside-out. Such an analysis incorporates the outside-in perspective to the extent that it understands the effects of the political economics of the West and factors outside of India as they evolve rapidly, and that of our own somewhat mature understanding from the Lokavidya angle which I deem still is in need of a fresh perspective.

But what I believe is that in such a development, if we are willing to do this, we may have to imagine stages of evolution of the politics and society of today, rather than insist on starting with the end state and coming back to consider where we are today and what we must do, because the jump seems to be too high. When I look at, let us say, the idea of Swaraj, the idea of self-development, or self-sufficiency, or political decentralization, spiritual decentralization, etc. They seem to be really, very, very far off today.

Because of the desire to look at India qua India from within itself, and trying to imagine a future state to which we must reach, leads to a problem of size of effort. But I'm trying to formulate it in a slightly different fashion that we use the outside in perspective in addition to the inside out perspective, to imagine incremental changes to reach where we want to go, but perhaps insisting on small changes, and how we view, analyze, assess, and evaluate even these small changes which are happening.

Once, long ago, possibly 30 years ago something that Krishnarajulu said to me struck me as being very important. He said that one of the greatest strengths of the Mazdur Kisan Niti group was that it could understand Bourgeois politics in a manner that many of the hand waving leftist parties could not do. There is an element of truth to that in the sense that the while the left looked at the class character of Indian politics after independence it was somewhat dismissive, or perhaps ignorant. Perhaps they didn't want to actually look at the effect of caste, for example, the effect of other elements internal to India, because they did not fit into the larger idea of the imagination of the left, of what society means, or what revolution really means, and so on. So, in a certain sense, if that was really true of Mazur Kisan Niti and its people 30, 40 years ago, maybe we should also try to restore a little part of that by trying to understand bourgeois politics or the politics of India today. It may not even be necessary to qualify it as bourgeois politics while studying the politics of India from 2 perspectives, one from the outside in and the other from the inside out.

So I have come to the end of my part and I have nothing concrete to offer in terms of what the content of this imagination could be, or how do we evaluate these things. But we must strive to look for a way to elicit ideas from various people and evaluate them to see how that fits into this larger framework, and the framework seems to be for me a political economic basis which establishes the drivers of society, politics, and economics in an interconnected world, focusing

on efforts that are being made today to decouple national economics and therefore national politics from that of the International. Or what may be called as a de-globalization initiative which is ongoing because it no longer suits the interests of the world of the West. It suited their interests a couple of hundred years to around 2010 or so, but then it now does not suit it, and therefore the West wants to de-globalize, and much of the strife that we see – political and economic games being played, the violence, etc., seems to be related to this.

If that is the case, then it also puts us in a certain favorable state to understand these developments through the flux of politics, economics, and other ideas of the time. Perhaps the time has come for us to break free from the post renaissance ideas of the world. Buddha used to talk in the past about the world of forces and objects. How that has been replaced by the idea of information. And how the world of forces and objects has become subservient or subordinated to the idea of information, the idea of data, the idea of knowledge, and so on.

But then, we are possibly past that stage where information has any value. There seems to be a very direct relationship between information control and the way in which information can be projected to the world outside. And we are no longer in a world where the innocent initial Internet was, where information could actually change people, ideas and so on. Because now we are in an algorithmic world where you see what you are allowed to see. Somewhat similar to psychologists who understand the brain in terms of what the brain allows you to see, that is what your heuristics and biases allow you to see. In the same way, governments, and the society itself has transformed itself to allow you to see only that which is ought to be seen as it deems fit. In other words, there is a certain virtuality to this world that has actually created relationship between virtual objects in a manner which we have not seen before that this virtuality has created a certain capture of human attention. I would like to emphasize that while we thought the cognitive capacity, economic capacity, and so on and so forth determine the world, it is a most important discovery of our times that it is attention which happens to be the scarcest resource in this world, and if I capture your attention, I can actually bend you to my will, and this has become not merely an economic tool, but a political tool, a conceptual tool, a philosophical tool to manipulate the world.

And you see the consequences of all this all around us. Question here is, how do we actually recapture the attention of people to what is important in terms of the ideals that we think are important for human society to survive?. The virtuality of this world, where tokens are, you know, things which are based initially on a real substratum, but slowly associate themselves with more and more virtual things and over time merely reflect a network of virtual things that are dissociated from reality completely. But this virtual world acquires a life of its own, and it is through interaction with virtual objects in the virtual world that one actually gets fulfilment, happiness and satisfaction. And this virtual reality is completely detached from the real. At some point there is nothing which is real which provides a backing to this virtual world. And that is happening in the world of stablecoins, for e.g. in the world of digital money. This possibly could indicate the collapse of the old world, that is, virtuality is creating circumstances which may perhaps lead to a collapse of the Western order.

It is in studying this, trying to consider this, analyze this and read about this, and perhaps discuss this, that a new perspective, which is what I call, as the outside-in perspective, could help our

hitherto inside-out perspective to help us arrive at a new imagination. That's it from my side. These are somewhat cluttered up ideas of mine. I would like to hear your responses and see how we can take this further. That's it from my side.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Okay, thank you, Suresh for this very complete kind of statement which you have made about what you think the political imagination we are talking about ... the kind of issues it has to address. I mean the various things you have brought out ... I think everybody will have some opinions about that ... right from what are the main issues to discuss and how to take into account the kind of things which have been happening in the around the world in terms of changes in the capitalist system, and the kind of developments it has been going through ... the multipolar world which is emerging etc. Does it give us any kind of opportunities in the long run, etc, etc. So maybe some of us can come back on this now. Who do we start with? Naresh, would you like to start?

Naresh Kumar Sharma:

Oh, unfortunately, I joined a little late, so maybe I lost initial the thread... Can you hear me ...?

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Okay, yes, yes, we can hear you.

Naresh Kumar Sharma:

So. One thing is that I will carefully listen to the audio recording. I think it is being recorded. Right?

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Yes, yes, yes.

Naresh Kumar Sharma:

So not only transcription, but also recording, because sometimes transcription is not very faithful one or 2 things that later part because more system the way it works, and the the part that I caught. I think I need to listen to the early part also. but on one of those things there are perhaps not central. What you're saying. I still that's just my view on that one is about control of what that was mentioned towards last part. Oh, but that makes me slightly troubled, because there are so many things that can be said once we except that being the case. My own belief is that the expression of thought maybe controlled, but force themselves cannot be controlled indirectly. So whether it is worse today compared to say, even 100 years ago. I'm not sure, in the sense that it is exposure to various kinds of things or much more control. So how do we control that control anybody's thoughts. I'll just give you one small example where the problem lies. Long ago I was reading Omart Sen. He it is in one of his papers or in book. is talking about the self perception of the well-being. and he was saying that because they have, they talked about Kerala model, many of them remember, said so. He says that if you look at the up. the self-perception of well-being among the up is much higher compared to Kerala. and then he says that. But you can internalize that right? So you have to look at the objective criteria and don't go by the self perception. Now I find that is a very problematic that you are trying to negate what people themselves perceive. Given all the

kind of constant that are there. so one can talk. Talk about the processes which influence, but then everybody is brainwashed. See? Education? If you like it, we'll call it enlightenment. We don't like it. We'll call it brainwashing. right? So there is nobody who has raw intelligence is all influenced by whatever we get to the society. So when we call that, it is controlled, and when we call it is not controlled itself becomes a problematic because those who are commenting themselves have been through the same process. So there, there is a fundamental issue there to me. So that is one thing. And this is not that. This thinking is that I'm thinking on the feet is something that so these kind of things they keep hearing all the time. So that is one thing. Second thing I'd also like to say, that is not again about suresh what you said. So we have talked about capture system many times, and many of us have talked about. Now system is changing over. Say, 100 and 50 years, or 200 years.

If you talk about Cap, this system has been there for so long, and I think from time to time specification of that system is required. Can we say the capitalist system of 1,900 and kept? This is not today. They are not very different. Are they fundamentalists, at least fundamentally same, even if they're different detail. If they are not, then I think we need to be mindful of that also as well. Could you talk about how things are changing. and in what direction, in what way they are changing? How are they relate to economy. political system? And so and so. So these 2 things. I just thought that they are not really my thought about what for this time, because I had not heard it fully. So I will. I will carefully go through that, because I think he he has presented a we hadn't thought so. It really important for me to listen to the entire 2 immediate things that came to to my mind, because not because she said, but because they have been there in my mind. That's why in this quantized machine this much for now, but maybe oh. later, when if something occurs in by listening to others, or I'm sure Suresh will also say more things. so when he comes I'll come back.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Okay. GSRK. yes, sir, would you like to say anything at this point.

Sivaramakrishnan G:

Hello, yeah, yeah. I don't have any any immediate reaction, because I'm what Suresh said. The much of it I share. We have been talking to each other over these months about some of these things. but then immediately, I have nothing to say. But whatever he mentioned on. I think uppermost in at least my thinking. Also, we have been discussing together some of these ideas. and we intend to put them down in every I mean in a paper which can be even lengthy paper kind of a thing hopefully sometime. So right now I have nothing to immediately say. But whatever you said, I think are very important. We must discuss it further, you see, in terms of others reactions. And so.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Okay. Avinash. Well, yeah.

Avinash Jha:

No, I think there were too many things, so I have to listen to it again in order to sort of understand what Suresh is trying to say. but some things which are, of course, with obvious like meaning, which are easy to sort of grasp was like looking at from point of view of India and looking at in a more global perspective. So I agree that both these perspectives have to be taken into account for any kind of reflection on political imagination, the basic meaning of political imagination something to do with imagination of social transformation. What? How can we imagine a social transformation from what it is, there's something more better. and the good social transformation. So whether when we say new political imagination. so whether we are talking about and new a way of imagining this transformation, so compared to the old method of transformation or old imagination of social transformation, seems to be rooted, I mean, at least the leftist imagination seems to be rooted in in in some way, intensification of conflict. So look at what is the most important conflict in society? And trying to imagine? what is the most fundamental conflict in society, and the transformation comes about by sort of bringing up that out that conflict and intensifying it, and to sort of then try to whatever. So one question that is there is, whether is that? Is that the only way of imagining social transformation? Or is there some other way of thinking of social transformation in terms of So some kind of more geared to resolution of conflicts. Yeah, other than intense application of conflicts. That is one sorry and in terms of the rise of right wing and rise of right wing, fascism, and all that. because I don't agree with Meerananda's kind of analysis like which. that if you critique, if you are against science, if you are against this kind of a rational thing, then you have allowed the growth of right wing politics. Because I think passism, if we look at passism, is a basically a product of the kind of demo, it is productive democratic politics. at least passism that we have known in 20th century, and that we know now from right from what happened in Germany and all it it. It came as a kind of which some people will say, because of distortions of democracy. But it may not be distortions of democracy. It may be the nature of democracy to democratic politics, not democracy, many in some fundamental sense, but modern democratic politics. And because everywhere it has emerged from within that democratic, political culture, modern, democratic, political culture, this fascism, and that we are seeing now. Also, it's emerged from that only. From that that path only it comes pacidum is not sort of a reason in some non democratic backward part parts of the world out of nowhere, or something like that pretty neat. So one another important point is to sort of in imagining a new political imagination is to think, how? What is the problem with this modern democratic politics, and how? One because one is not obviously saying that this democratic we don't need democracy. We need authoritarianism. But this kind of dichotomy, which is the main Western dichotomy in the in the global geopolitics. democratic countries, and authoritarian countries, you have the Us. And the West is all exemplars of democracy, and then you have Russia and North Korea and China, and all authoritarian. So in a more. So so if which is, of course. in some way totally wrong. And because in some way, what what is called authoritarian countries it is a kind of systems which they have is, it has evolved to withstand the pressure of so-called free countries, free world. the tax of free world. So their way of sort of subverting any kind of independent kind of development which has been made over the last 80 years has been A tool has been this democratic, modern democratic politics. So I think that is another very important thing to examine. And in terms of the West, I think, yeah, it is true, as some weakness is there. But it's not just some military or economic weakness that is also there. But I think West is improving in some way all its achievements and all

its its own imagination. Of itself. Everything is sort of just It lies in tatters like, and it's ethical superiority in, in a certain sense, all everything at at the some level it was like, based on this ethical superiority of the Western. That also matters. But I think in response to that, what is happening is that now the ethical itself is being sort of given up. It's being In some sense. Now the argument is that the ethical is not a proper argument. We don't require ethics. And some kind of nihilism. What is what was in Western discourse. It has been called nihilism. So some kind of nihilism is there, and that nihilism we see around ourselves also everywhere. I think that's also connected to in some way this modern democratic politics and other things. So I think right now, I only have these comments.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Okay. Vijay, have Bolingay up, muted him muted? Hang up.

Vijay jawandhia:

I could not grasp completely what he said, but what I understood ... उन्होंने जिक्र किया था ग्लोबलाइजेशन का। तो मैं इतना समझ रहा हूँ कि अभी के कैपिटल ईस्ट पॉलिटिक्स में। जो ग्लोबलाइजेशन का चर्चा शुरू हुआ, उसमें मजदूरों के नाम नीति और पीपीएसटी के माध्यम से जो कुछ भी बातें कही जा रही थी, उस अंडरकार्लेट हो गई और वो इसलिए हुई कि ग्लोबलाइजेशन के माध्यम से इन्हीं लोगों को कैपिटल एक्यूमेशन के प्रोसेस अलग ढंग से चलानी थी, और जो कॉलोनियलिज्म में दुनिया के लूट कर रहे थे। उसको अलग ढंग से लूट की व्यवस्था को बढ़ाना था। अब उनके ध्यान में आ रहा है। यह ग्लोबलाइजेशन के माध्यम से उतना अच्छा नहीं हो सकता है। उनके देश में भी डिस्पैरिटी बढ़ रही है तब वो उसको डील ग्लोबलाइजेशन की तरफ ले जा रहे हैं। अब यह ग्लोबलाइजेशन डी ग्लोबलाइजेशन में मॉनिटरी पॉलिसी का क्या गेम है ... और उससे किस तरह से जिनकी लूट हो रही है, उनको भी स्पष्ट होना चाहिए या उनको क्या पॉलिसी चेंज करना चाहिए मैं इकोनॉमिक्स नहीं हूँ, पर मुझे ऐसा लगता है कि उस पर भी जब तक यह चर्चा नहीं होती है तब तक के शायद इसका जवाब नहीं मिलेगा और जो सशक्त लोग हैं जो पिक्चर कहता है कि मेहनत से आदमी ग्रामीण भी हो सकता है कैपिटल से आते हैं। बहुत जल्दी अमीर हो सकता है। कैपिटल से कैपिटल अक्यूमलेशन बहुत ज्यादा हो सकता है, सिर्फ प्रोडक्शन से नहीं।

मुझे ऐसा लगता है कि इस पर विचार करना होगा और शायद उसी तरह, उसी के तरफ इस चर्चा में इंगित किया गया। ऐसा मैं समझता हूँ अभी के लिए मेरा इतना ही है।

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Thank you, Vijay ji. Krish?

Krishnarajulu: [edited by Krish for clarity]

A few preliminary statements about what Suresh has said. First of all, I think he has set out the parameters of what we call 'political imagination' fairly clearly. I think that is very important. Then he's clearly stated, and it's something that we have all felt, that the current political imagination that exists world over is is completely inadequate to provide any solutions to the problems faced by humanity. The only kind of solutions they're talking about are ecological or something verging on the economic- which is a major problem of life and living all over the world, in order to solve the various other problems confronting humanity. There is an inadequacy that he has also brought

out in various ways, and can be elaborated on. He has talked about these 3 parameters, power, knowledge, and people. By power I understand it to mean Statecraft viz the structure of the modern state, or how it has evolved. Everybody all over the world, all nations support/adopt this structure because the older one, the feudal structures, have all but disappeared or have been made redundant. So Statecraft means the modern State and the way it's structured. Now this is universal. Nobody is debating that. People imagine that there is a kind of democracy, whether it's a bourgeois democracy or the people's democracy, and that this structure - parliaments, some system of election etc, signifies a large part of what is called Democracy. But with this structure, as Avinash said, Democracy seems to be inadequate. This has obviously proved inadequate, because for a long time in India and maybe the East, there's been a discussion about what we can broadly call Panchayat Raj. Panchayat Raj is quite different, It's alien to the Western way of thinking. Okay, so I'll not talk more about statecraft.

But the second point and the third they're interrelated. That is, Knowledge and People. Knowledge is very important, because the Western knowledge system cannot give rise to a new political imagination, viz. something that gives rise to a new politics, a new statecraft, and the new dispensation for the people who are supposed to be participating in in this political process . There is nothing it has to offer. Because of the thrust of the capitalist market system, They've all veered into fascism. It started with Germany, Hitler was no different from the modern day wannabe fascists and dictators. What they are saying is exactly what he said and wrote about his treatise, a great treatise on the need for fascism for National regeneration and growth. What leaders are doing the world over is exactly that. Because it is the imperative trust of capitalist development. They are not talking of a new development paradigm at all. Those who talk about it, even in the West, are talking about it only because of the ecological problems that they see as a result of that kind of development. But technological problems are just one small aspect of the entire problems that encompass the globe. It's the incapacity of the Western Knowledge System to provide a new holistic Political Imagination for liberating humanity from these problems.

Where is People's Knowledge, what we have called Lokavidya the Knowledge of Bhahujan Samaj? Where does it stand in relationship to statecraft or a new political imagination? The analysts of the West, and all of us who try to analyze these political systems do not take Lokavidya into consideration. I'll just give an example to clarify this and leave it at that. In Iran and now Afghanistan there is the modern state apparatus / statecraft being practised by people whose knowledge base has nothing to do with the West. The West is not able to understand Iran. They don't realise that what is happening in Iran, maybe Afghanistan, maybe other countries also, is a product of the way people who have come into power, think about how to manage the modern state based on their own Knowledge and it's imperatives. The modern state is only manageable through Western knowledge based concepts and not by any other kind of knowledge system. So they are in a great confusion. That's what I feel about Iran. They want to run a capitalist economy with all the modern prescriptions but they don't have the knowledge apparatus or adequately aligned knowledge apparatus to do that. They want to think about things in their own way; and I'm not only talking about civil law and all that. That's an entirely different thing. But even a conception of the State, the role of the state, the connection of state with the people. It's probably quite different in what the the ruling people of Iran, the dominant people there (and now, maybe in

Afghanistan), think unlike us. Gandhiji, if you notice he was also talking about he was talking about social transformation. The Sant Parampara also talked about social transformation but the Sant Parampara never talked about **political** transformation because we were not a political society, and we are not as Gandhiji also said. He was talking about a political imagination based in the way people think, in Lokavidya; to be able to offer a solution to statecraft- not only the structures, but the way things should be done and the moral aspect, the ethics. Ethics is very fundamental to that, because it's the ethics that distinguishes most of Eastern society from most of Western society. So Iran / Afghanistan, they're doing something the West can't understand . The West think it's suicidal or barbaric. So the analysis of the politics from the western point is just not going to work, and it is not going to lead to a new political imagination. We'd rather concentrate on a political imagination that is rooted in Lokavidya. I know we are tackling a very big question, because modern statecraft that exists, and we are all involved in that, voluntarily or involuntarily. We have probably often wondered why the Farmers movement was not becoming political, in terms of forming a political party or something and actually leading the political debate with views of its own. It's just because even the leadership there probably does not believe that Lokavidya can provide the new political imagination. Not that they are insincere it's just that they think it's not possible. Ambedkar wanted social change, but he thought by having a very good Constitution which manages the modern statecraft, This would happen. It hasn't happened, is never going to happen as long as you're basing your knowledge, that important part of that political imagination, on something that is not People's knowledge. Where people will not participate because they know what they are supposed to do, or have a feeling about what they're supposed to do rather than be waiting for instructions in accordance with a Constitution.

This is what I want to say. I think this debate can go on, and it's very important. Thank you.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Thank you. Chitra ji.

Chitra Sahasrabudhey:

हाँ, एक तो यह कि मैं देर से आई ... तो सुरेश का पहला पार्ट मैंने सुना नहीं. उसी के साथ जहाँ तक चर्चा हुई है, क्रिश ने जो कहा है मैं उससे सहमत हूँ. इसी को expand करने कि जरूरत है ... चर्चा में लाने कि जरूरत है. और इतना ही मुझे कहना है कि अगर उसपर फोकस कर दिया जाय जो क्रिश ने कहा है और उसकी गहराई में उतरने की कोशिश की जाय जिससे रचनात्मक कार्यक्रमों को आधार मिले ... तो मेरे ख्याल से ये बहुत बड़ा काम है. बस मुझे इतना ही कहना है.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Thank you. Okay, I don't have anything much to say just now. I would like to look at this whole thing ... the recording. And look at what Suresh has been saying in detail. I think there is a need to understand how exactly to understand the kind of developments which he has been talking about if we want to take forward the imagination based on you see ... Lokavidya, and Lokavidya Samaj, and ordinary life ... that is imagination based on the strength of the Lokavidya Samaj and the various other ideas which we have been talking about. If we want to take this forward, how exactly

should we understand the developments which have been taking place, what is important there, what is not important there, whether ... I mean not in terms of ... I'm I'm not saying one needs to admit the primacy of anything there ... the primacy of ... For, if one admits that then there is a difficulty. There is difficulty about ... you see, talking about transformative politics, because a large section of people simply goes out of the exercise and comes in somewhere else after that ... this understanding. Now, what I'm saying is, there is a need to understand ... but in the context of how exactly this huge section of humanity is going to act against ... where is it that they find their basic ideas, basic strength, etc, etc. I don't want to say anything more just now. Let us have Sunil ...

Sunil Sahasrabudhey:

I will hear again ... listen to what Suresh has said again. I have some idea of what he's been saying, or he has said, but not and how it ... How what is going on globally relates to a basic position which, he said, is ours ... about people, knowledge and politics. Let us see, or power ... political part, I'll do that because this is all important for us ... today's discussion. I mean, all other discussions have been important also. But this is where it gets focused, the understanding gets a concentrated kind of ... if region is created for thought to kind of express itself.

I will start. I will stick with the idea of political imagination strictly and not deviate into much into other other things. Economics I don't know the latest technology. Also, I don't know. Well, I thought I knew something about the latest technologies, but that is about 25 years ago, and much has happened after that about which I have no deeper understanding. So, I will not drift into that either. And, ... I will have in support of this ... And understanding that Gandhiji may not have known about quantum mechanics at all. I don't know whether he actually knew. But I am assuming I... it's a presumptuous kind of statement. But apparently, in his... in his talks and lectures and all that, it doesn't occur. All that he may be aware deeply. Maybe after 1940s, it's the preparation of an atomic bomb or something. And where the... it's science lie, some understanding of. Where the theoretical understanding lies on the basis of which this is being done. Uh, not strictly that, but something like that. People like, uh, me. And many others, who have great. Interest in a political imagination ... no, we cannot master an area of science for this purpose. It's not possible to master ... work an area of science, Suresh knows a lot about it, some others do ... who are sitting here, but it has required an understanding of the area. On... it has gone on, last 25 years, or 30 years, or whatever, when the internet appeared in 1990 first time, not here. But somewhere in the West. And since then, it's a different story which has been unfolding. A particular narrative has come down to us. But there may be more narratives to that if one looks at it from a global angle. The narrative that has come down to us is more with the national boundaries and so on, but then that is that. This is...

I come now to... the central question. The political imagination. What are the new... conceptual floats What new concepts have been floated? On the global scene that is, I mean. I say global scene because they have reached us. And they are... they have been floated somewhere far away, some 10,000 kilometers away, and so on, and yet they have reached us. And sometimes they have reached us without coming via Europe. And therefore, they have taken time. All that

comes via Europe comes quickly, and all that interests Europe ... a debate starts on (that). What does not interest Europe, ... even now it is very difficult to have a debate on that. Uh, unless Europe is threatened by that idea, the debate is difficult, even on the question of, for example, the concepts of pluri-National State in East Latin America, South America. Parties which subscribe to the idea of plurinational state ruled places like Ecuador and Bolivia, and lost miserably when they were expected to win in places like Chile. So it's a mobile... it's a very kind of a... Uh, changing situation. The extreme right, the left. And those who subscribe to the idea of pluri-National State. Neither the right nor the left subscribes to that idea. It's a new idea. And the idea is centrally somewhere addresses the question of autonomy. If you look at what it means, it says something about political formations. Autonomy of variety of political formations within a nation-state. That is within Bolivia or Ecuador, or Chile. To... to understand the idea and therefore work towards its establishment through a connection with the great cultural past and so on. And past before the Spanish... the Spaniards arrived. So it's making a connection. So let us not think that we can only connect, or it's very difficult to connect 3 or 300 years ago. They made a connection which is further back. And on the central idea around which they work to produce a new administration for the state, and the new administration created also various things which can be noted as important. But we are not doing that at the moment now, because we are not going to copy an idea of a pluri-Nnational state for our understanding, but we are going to understand the idea of a pluri-National state ... should understand reasonably well. For our political imagination, now in this country, or... even to think globally.

Another idea which has come with force, and much more recently ... I think just 2 years ago, it must be February, just when Russia attacked, uh... just before that, or around that time? When is that? '24 February. That is after Russia, somewhere around that time, when Russia attacked, Ukraine. Around when Putin made that first speech about. You know, about the great Tsaris ... history back... going back, condemned Lenin, etc, and said that they were westernizers. In these terms, he condemned the Communist Party. And talked about the great cultural tradition leading to some kind of a Civilizational State that he imagines to be the correct formulation for Russia. The speech given by, uh... Putin, that is the first speech after the war or some such thing. After they launched the war. Promptly, that speech was distributed among friends by Jatinder Bajaj. The RSS... type, intellectuals are all... very happy to read that speech. As if he was speaking for them. You see, the idea of civilizational state ... first time the word civilizational state was, I think, used Sometime before February '24, or around that time ... '23, maybe. I don't remember exactly. But one can easily see Shashi Tharoor had reacted to that immediately ... for a libertarian or for a democratic state and not a civilizational state. And so on. That is, he had reacted immediately for the Enlightenment values. From the point of view of Enlightenment values, European Enlightenment values. Uh, he has reacted to... he had reacted to the idea of civilizational state. The words, like, if I'm not mistaken, or if I have read correctly that part of historical stretch, were first used by a Portuguese minister. In perhaps some kind of a meeting of, uh. Education ministers of... European states, or some such thing. I can dig that

out. I have that stored somewhere in the computer. I mean, easy to... I think one of you can also easily, those who know how to wade through all this. Can do that that easily. It was taken up by Putin, or Putin said similar thing, maybe independently.

I have read articles that Vinay (Sahasrabudhe) has (produced) earlier. A vice president of BJP ... And later, an important person in the cultural setup, cultural ministry, somewhere (on) their cultural committee ... is a chairman of this, that, and the other. He writes also ... and somewhere also lingers on these ideas... lingers on the idea... on the... in the column, Ram Madhav has got... where is it? In Indian Express or Hindu, one of the places ... regular column, where he talks about the neoconservative wave. Uh, sweeping the... sweeping the world. And... that neoconservative conference, which was led by the Hungarian Prime Minister ... and what happened somewhere in Sweden on some... or Denmark somewhere, which was then not allowed to take place, and a fight took place, and so on. This happened barely 6 months ago, or an year ago.

So, civilizational state has got something to do with the neoconservative sweep also. And this neoconservative sweep. It doesn't, at least in words, is anti-West. What they do is a very different kind of thing, we can look at that. And they... they... whether they are actually anti-West or not. Can be determined by a different exercise, but they speak a language which is anti-West. They are not for the nation state that was created, the idea that was created in 17th century Europe. And around which. The state system... glue all over the world. The kind of system, statecraft and system that Krishrajulu was referring to. In which all nation-states were said to be equal. In the UN Charter. And they were very, very unequal in reality. Bulldozed by the strongest states, particularly America. At various points, for different reasons. We have read that book when we were young. The book called... by the name The Enemy. What is the writer's name? The Enemy, the Yellow Book, uh... about imperialism, how it grew, and so on, how America behaved. That the American, at one point, the American ambassador in Greece. writes a letter to the president of Greece that Greece is an ant and America an elephant. And he should keep that in mind while saying or doing anything. That was... that was what was going on, kind of thing, in the name of the nation-state. An imperialism of a certain kind, with which we are familiar. Which grew along with the spread of the nation-state in the third world areas. The imperialism grew with that. Whether the idea came with that or not, we may not bother. So, the idea of civilizational state that one is talking about. It relates to certain things, apparently. It relates to... various pools of power. What is it being called? Multipolar world. You see, Chinese state will be a Civilizational State, the Russian state will be a Civilizational State, maybe the Turks will have a Civilizational State, maybe Iran would have one. One would be a Sunni Civilizational State, another would be a Shia Civilizational State. India will have a Civilizational State, and so on. Civilizational State and plurinational state are the only two words for some kind of new statehood. That I have been able to know. Maybe there are more words. That are being used globally. Both have you come to be used globally, but plurinational state, in a very limited way, it's South American. And Civilizational State. Well, many, like Russia, this India, have used this.

Uh, maybe different countries of the BRICS would. Subscribe to that in the ultimate analysis. And that is where may lie a clash between. Even Donald Trump, some secretary at some level. While talking about what Donald Trump is trying to do, he used these words, saying that he's trying to take a civilizational road. I remember these words used by him. Not Trump himself, one of his secretaries. Use the word that Trump is trying to take a civilizational road. That is the pressure of using the word civilization. Has grown so much. That even Trump's aides are compelled to use the term, America finds it in the most difficult situation when a civilization is talked about. Civilizations cannot be barely 300 or 400 years old. Uh, civilizations are thousands of years on. Generally speaking, I mean, there is no reason why it cannot be 500 years old, but most other civilizations who say that they are civilizations are much older.

Whether they will do what is... what was done earlier or not, that is not the issue. They are using this as a political name, as a political, what is it called, uh, you know, brand name or whatever. I don't know what the brand name is the correct word. But how do we... Swaraj is not globally used. Can we take a position. That... do we have this understanding that Civilizational State can be built in two ways? One as an Empire. That Empire... it doesn't have to be a global empire. All these Civilizational State s which are talking about civilizational politics and state, talk about a certain region of influence. So, China would have a region of influence, Russia would have a region of influence. India would have a region of influence, if at all. Uh, America would have a region of influence which may be a little bigger. Europe may have a... I don't know, France, Germany, etc. The bigger states put together, we'd have... we'll have a region of influence ... not ... who is not dictated terms by America or by England. It's important to note that England had to withdraw from the European ... this thing ... government market, or whatever it was. Uh, in the name of, uh, what was that called? England, uh, on its own. And now they want to start another... it will go on. They will not be completely separable, and they will not become part of Europe. So, because they don't like politics being... led by or ruled by states like Germany and France, which are much smaller than English... English are. Or for maybe other reasons also. I'm not, uh... sticking to an explanation to that. So, can we say that Civilizational State, which is the new state, will either develop as a pluri-national state. Or as an empire ... Imperial center. Can this position be taken?

And therefore, by its implications, for us in India it will take that Civilizational State can be built only as Swaraj ... Swaraj is the civilizational idea of a state in India. And therefore, Swaraj is the way. We may not use the term ... some others may not use the term ... we may use the term ... and it'll go on. But the basic idea would be where you talk about people and knowledge. That if at all a Civilizational State can be built in India, it can be built by Bahujan Samaj and nobody else. That the ruling classes of India have failed to deliver anything in, uh... which can be praised. It can be praised only in comparison with Pakistan or some other neighbor country. Not in absolute terms. Not any of its program space. Signs, fertilizer, steel, anything. Nothing can be praised solely as an achievement of the ruling classes of India. Ruling classes of India. Are unable to do anything proper. And the only classes which can do something properly for

this country is the Bahujan Samaj. The Lokavidya Samaj. And be equipped with the ideas of knowledge-based ... Eventually, in Lokavidya, not only in Lokavidya ... but based largely in Lokavidya. The Bahujan Samaj can build a Swaraj, can build ... a civilizational state in India. And similarly placed classes in other societies can build civilizational states. Even in Russia, for that matter, or China, or some other place, or maybe even Turkey. The Caliphate, if we built, will not be a civilizational state. It will be Erdogan's... or Erdogan and his associates. Or the two parties coming together, whoever those two parties are. They may keep fighting with each other. For example, the Congress and the BJP may keep fighting with each other, and still may agree on some kind of contours of a civilizational state. In which the Bahujan Samaj does not have its say. Because both these parties do not look forward to any kind of state where Bahujan Samaj has any say at all. They have always worked ... their administrations have always relied on people who do not belong to Bahujan's hearts. For thought as well as action. So, can we... Can we take a position ... that India can build a civilizational... we will talk in terms of civilizational, because this is the idea that is on the... that is on the table. Let us not think that we can create a new idea to be placed on the table for a global debate. We may be able to do that, but the result will have to wait. For another 25, 30 years. We may or we may not be. I'm not saying that we can't do it. But to the extent we want to have a political imagination, or a new political imagination can we work with the idea of a civilizational state? Which can be built in India only by the Bahujan Samaj. By factoring in very large parts of Lokavidya as the knowledge basis of that state. And work with the idea of a pluri-national state, that is the central idea of pluri-national state is. Some kind of a civilizational tradition. And, autonomy. Autonomy is the central idea. If you read what their... this thing is, autonomy, cultural autonomy, all kinds of political... Finally, political autonomy, not without that. All kinds of... like, when Lenin talks about autonomy... This nation's self-determination. He says it is going to be meaningful only with his political self-determination. Otherwise, cultural self-determination, all that, you can talk endlessly about. So, even here, when we talk about autonomy, it will have to be some kind of a political autonomy. Otherwise, it doesn't make sense. Otherwise, it is not... if it is being rolled out to use by somebody else who can withdraw it anytime he wishes ... We are not talking about that kind of autonomy. And the civilizational state will revolve around the idea of autonomy. And distributed state power. Idea of autonomy, and the concept of distributed state. And this is our concept, which is derived from Swaraj.

And I think those who are familiar with the idea of distribution in modern discourse ... we'll be able to write very well about what a distributed state can mean ... can mean. Enlarge ... kind of ... complex... network whose nodes are seen as autonomous points. And yet dependent on each other, independent and... not independent, autonomous and ... and considerably dependent on other nodes, that is why... that is how those edges would get defined, etc. One can construct a reasonably good model for ... for the university people to understand what we are saying. They will say it's only hand-waving. No, it's not hand-waving ... we will draw a complex network structure and tell you what the edges are, what the nodes are. And how they are related with one another, how they are clustered at one point. They will be all clustered at

6, 7 places. You will have a multipolar world. If they are not clustered anywhere like this, reasonably well distributed. Then you will have a Swaraj-like civilizational state. We can... we can put... put... construct these arguments fairly well ... we are competent to do that. And we can also construct arguments about Swaraj in terms of autonomy, the amount of discussion we have had on autonomy and autonomy of autonomies. We will be able to build a new idea of autonomy under the given circumstances. Maybe through linguistic formations. Maybe political formations, linguistic, it will... it will depend upon who is doing it. Linguistic formations, not... not the 14 linguist languages. But something like some 70-75 languages would be there, around which there would be. They talk about a linguistic region. An autonomy of a linguistic region. What should one mean by an autonomy of a linguistic region? That would be a genuine civilizational state.

Can we enter a global dialogue? I am talking about a global perspective. Can we enter a global political dialogue. To conceptualizing a distributed state with autonomy of linguistic regions. As a civilizational state. Can we construct this idea of a state? If we can, we are there. We are in the global discourse. Recover standpoint, which is in the ultimate analysis, if you talk about people, we have not talked about people so much. We have talked about ordinary life. Because ordinary life extends to people who are also not ordinary people. It has a larger kind of mapping. All professional classes, all professional people, other than their professional life, which may be some one-third of their life or not more. The rest two-thirds of their life is ordinary life. Which is based... which derives arguments from common sense, from regional arguments. From other ideas from the place, and so on, and not from. The formal science that they have learned, from where they derive their arguments to do their professional work. But nothing, nothing at home. No kitchen is run by a formal argument of this time. No children are brought up. By a formal arguments of the professional variety. No management is done of the small capital, particularly the Telaguntiwalas. Do their management, small capital management is outside the professional. Achievements of the modern times. All this makes sense, which we have discussed under the idea of Luk Vidya. All this makes sense while talking about a civilizational state. We need to have the art of being able to write that. We know what is to be written, but we should be able to write that without offending too many people. And being able to say what we want to say with reasonable clarity. Can we do that? We don't have to take pluri-national state. We may at times say that civilizational state is no different from pluri-national state.

But if you stick to the idea of civilizational states as, uh, pronounced by... Say, Modi's people, or whoever are in the administration today. Or, uh, Russian, uh, narrative. Then you will have a civilizational state, which is... which will only talk about a multipolar world and not beyond that. That there will be some 7, 8, 10 centers of power, and all others would be subordinated to that. It doesn't matter even it is 15. It can be as many as that, and still, it will be very far away from the people. Far, far away from the people ... 15 centers globally ... 700 crores, that is 50 crores. What is it? For 15, uh, centers. 50 crores on each. That is almost west... entire Western Europe.

Constituting one. So many people attached to a particular, uh. powerpoint on the... in the global distribution of power, which is an imperial distribution. Which is, uh, to how... which is what is a multipolar world. They are talking about. They are all talking about multipolar world. And they are talking about this world. They are not talking about the civilizational state that can be brought into existence by the ordinary people in practically every region of the world. And India, and in India, very clearly. By what has been called Bahujan Samaj, the ordinary people of this country. Again, are the only ones who can do that. We can construct an argument for that. Why do we say that they are the only ones who can do that? Krishra Lu can easily write an argument for that. And we want to see that argument written. That's all. It will go on. I'm sorry. Thanks.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Okay, so let us stop here. Uh, a very long meeting, actually. ... I'll be sending this recording, I think everybody can, uh... Vote through it again, and also the transcript will take some time, it may be easier to read that once it is met. I'll do that. So, till maybe next time will be on, uh... 29th. 29th Wednesday. 30th ... 30th, yeah, okay.