

Transcript of Zoom Meeting at 5.00 pm on January 7, 2026

This transcript is mostly uncorrected and has machine-made errors. For example, the Hindi words लोकविद्या (lokavidya), बहुजन (Bahujan), ... are rendered variously! But much of it is understandable. Request all to go through their own parts and send me corrections. The docx file is available in the shared Google Drive sub-folder 2026-01-07 in the shared folder [Lokavidya Debates](#). – Girish

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Ok, we can start. There were two points on the Agenda. First, Sunil wanted to talk about the issues for Trust Meeting in March. Second, I had requested Gandhi to initiate a discussion on his response to Sunil's Note on Bahujan Darshan ... the response he gave in the WhatsApp group. So, Sunil, आप बोलिए ...

Sunil Sahasrabudhey:

You see, not... no, this is the old ... uh... question of... to which we have not seriously attended ... about the future of Vidya Ashram. You see, it may not... it would not be so important if we did not have the property in the name of Vidya Ashram. So important in the sense it would be important, but not pressing in any way. Like, one could lie low for a while and so on. We can still do that. But, we are a going organization. And, should have some clarity on, the future of Vidya Ashram... with practically those who are working are not so old, many of them... most of them. But some of us, who are the organizers here, In Varanasi are old now. Old in the sense, also, not well. Only old doesn't matter, I guess, but, not well. So, some serious thought needs to be given. As to how we want to... We were discussing here and... the... the point to which we return again and again... I have talked to some of you, very few, two-three of you, on phone separately, maybe, but, it doesn't take us, anywhere. So, what I've been discussing with Chitraji, and what transpires mainly is this. That we first build a program for, let's say, 2 years or 3 years. Next 3 years. Starting April, May, June, sometime this... this year. That is, in the next, 4 months, 3-4 months. We develop a program. Take a serious view of the program, and which take us to a decision in the trust meeting. For 3 years. This trust meeting is also... the office bearers will... would have completed their 3 years. the president, the coordinator, and the treasurer. These are the three office bearers according to the trustee. They would have completed, 3 years, and it's a 3-year term. So, if before the trust meeting, we come to some... good conclusion on a program, then, from the point of view of the implementation of that program we can reconstitute the... Trust Office. This is how...

But on program, there is more input that is desired... because any program, for that matter, whether on the ground or otherwise, requires a lot of time input. It will require, those who take the responsibility ... (they) would be required to... give enough time. Time, I mean, not just time ... time and mind, that is to keep it alive, keep it going, and etc. So it is there... if people think that it is alright to go about it like this then we can decide on the Office bearers accordingly in the light of that program. You see the... Nobody actually needs to be in Varanasi in that sense. Since we are

going to be in Varanasi anyway. So, no office bearer, strictly speaking, needs to be in Varanasi. But, I don't know. Someone, someone has to apply sufficient mind to it. If we change the office bearers, then the... you see the expenses they're reporting, since we have Vidya Ashram premises in Varanasi, which is the head office, headquarter, what is it called... permanent address or something of the... So, how does one go about whether CA outside the... outside Varanasi is all right, or CA has to be in Varanasi? How will it all be organized? You see, we are not men from... I am not from finance, so I... I am not very clear about... you know, and to the extent the common sense goes, we can think, but it doesn't always work that way in many of these cases, particularly legal and financial cases. The... the common sense is not the final word. So, this is all that I wanted to say. And... We would like more ideas on the nature of the program that we should be... and we should be adopting a program. That is the view here, at least. Where if somebody thinks that we should close it, and so on, should say so and give the arguments... require... arguments for that, whatever the case. I mean, I'm not saying that we need to think about the program only. There could be other ways in which one can imagine a future with the Ashram. It could become all online, for that matter. It depends. A suggestion has to come with a with a proposal. That's all. And in light of that, we will then have the March meeting, where the March meeting this year can be an actual meeting or a virtual meeting again? If it has to be a... it can be an actual meeting. If people are ready to come, then... we can have it in Mohali. I mean, we will have to have it in Mohali, maybe. That is the constraint. We may not be able to leave in March from here, because the last chemo is in March. That would come around 10th of March or so, and 20 days after that, there's no situation... I mean, moving becomes very difficult within 20 days after a chemo. 20... about 3 weeks after the chemo is... the condition is not very good, and one cannot move. In the sense that it's very tiring, and etc., whatever goes with it. So that is how things... are at the moment.

We will also work, but we may not be able to work with great precision on... on a future program, we would... we would do, would... would like to send something in less than a month, maybe. So that there is at least a month to talk about it, before the March meeting takes place. March meeting could be in the later half of March, whether it is actual or virtual. The date can be decided upon later, whatever is convenient to everybody. I mean, what we have been doing is converting ... one of these... these Wednesdays to a... Trust Meeting, which is... which kind of works well, because people know that Wednesday there is a meeting, so... no extra kind of effort is needed.

There was one idea which, in a certain context, I had raised... I had asked GSR also, and CN Krishnan about, what is the... I mean, about the... nature of, nature of governance... in southern parts of India, in pre-British period... like, we have been talking about Swaraj. Mostly taken from the national movement with a conception that Swaraj is not... that the idea of Swaraj is older than the... the national movement. When it started and what happened, etc., we don't have a historical sketch on that, but even the Dharampal book, which was published by PPST, talked about Swaraj in Indian tradition. That is, most people, most people like us have an understanding or have a belief that the idea of Swaraj is much older. Maybe Gandhiji has said here and there also, that there was Swaraj here, and so on. But, so, I mean... And the work, actual work that we have is, mostly related to (the) South... Dharampal's work is related to South Tamil Nadu Panchayat and

all, and Karnataka, and so it would be... and we keep talking about Swaraj... so there may be a better name for it. South Indian languages may have a name which is similar to, or whatever it is... it refers to the idea slightly differently, creates a slightly different idea in the name of self-governance in pre-British India, or whatever, in the name of governance in pre-British India... like that. And many of us are from South, you see, who speak a Southern Indian language and have lived there for different periods. So can we, how do we approach this? If this is cracked... this nut is cracked to whatever extent... maybe we will have a program for the next two years... 2 or 3 years. It would be a very good program.

There is no point in talking about the Chola period. I mean, there is a huge exercise going on in the name of It keeps coming on Facebook or in some other manner. I keep seeing, again and again, about everything that is... that has gone in the name of Hindu... maybe since 1860 or so... is now being claimed as Buddhist... on which a Hindu name has been, kind of, grafted... whether they are temples, whether they are shrines, all kinds of things. Just as these people charge that every masjid has a temple underneath. There is a claim that every temple has a Buddhist place underneath. And this is a huge claim, that the claim is going to the extent of saying that the Vedas, the Vedanta particularly, I don't know how much it will stand the test scrutiny, but they are claiming that most of the Vedas were written after the Gupta period... in the... in the... in the period of some kind of resurgence. They are saying that Sanskrit was not there at all. Now, we were told that even Nagarjun and Gautamakshapat, the discussion on the question of logic... Indian logic, or whatever, Buddhist logic, and Indian Gautam Sneaay... that it has gone on... it has been in Sanskrit. But then you need some expert opinion on this, whether the originals are in Sanskrit... or whatever is in Sanskrit is discovered only in 10th century... because nobody going to tell us of their own, nobody tells these things. Maybe it was only reconstructed in 10th century, the debate between Nagarjun and Akshap Gautam. And was projected back that this is what happened. So the... everything has taken a... it's become a volatile kind of, is moving, just as we talked about a Bahujan narrative. There is already a Bahujan narrative of sorts in the name of a Buddhist narrative, which predates, in every sense, a Hindu work, whether an actual work of construction on the ground, or a work on, a theoretical work like Ashtadhyayi or whatever.

So... I don't know, we are... I think we are the group who... who would be able to have some... a reasonable point of view, which is also not at great variance with the politics of the day, or the desired politics of the day, because narratives cannot be independent of a contemporary narrative. Narratives of older times cannot be in contradiction to the present day narrative for change. There is no concept of truth in that sense. The idea of truth in the past, truth in history, is only as old as maybe 200 years or so. Something like that, post-Kant, maybe. The idea of truth. This is because of the nature of science we have that you talk about truth everywhere. What is the truth about the universe, and what is the truth about the atom, and what is the truth about our great past, whether millions of years earlier, you always ask the question about truth.

Maybe then we will no more ask this question after this. All this business of computer has come in in place of genuine scientific activity. So all this has kind of... opened up. And we are right there.

We are absolutely right there. That is, if we start with Lokavidya, we start with no assumptions. And there is a method of starting without assumptions that Lokavidya and Ordinary Life gives. If we assume that Lokavidya is knowledge without a condition, and Ordinary Life is life without a condition. That means if you start with ideas of Lokavidya and Ordinary Life, whatever they are ... they don't... then you don't have to start with any assumptions. You kind of... There is a dialectic of, growth of ideas without there being initial, I mean, assumptions, postulates, axioms, whatever they are called, which is, again, a 19th century, 20th century phenomenon, late 19th century phenomenon. To talk through axioms. So, we need to dig into this. Can we, collectively? If there is a way, maybe we will be able to evolve a program, a practical one as well as with Bahujan Swaraj Panchayat. A genuine theoretical program of what is the idea of Swaraj in different linguistic regions? Three, four regions we can, We can... we can power our arguments in 3-4 regions. Kerala has produced that book, Knowledge Systems in Kerala, Systems of Knowledge in Kerala. They don't say Knowledge in Kerala. They say Systems of Knowledge in Kerala. It suits both. It suits the Marxists sideways, the right and the left. Both. It suits to not talk about knowledge, but to talk about systems of knowledge. It suits them both. Because anybody who is asking for a strong state apparatus to be captured by them will always talk about systems. It seems so. Anyway, so that is what I wanted to say. To start with our Bahujan vision can kind of gel with these ideas and discussion on Bahujan Darshan to give us a way forward from here. And I sincerely believe that we are still capable of working out a way forward, for a few years at least, for ourselves, and for all those people who would work with us.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Okay, any brief responses to this? I mean, some immediate, quick responses. Suresh? Suresh, can you, hear?

ಡಾ. ಜ ಕ ಸುರೇಶ (Suresh):

Hello? Hello, hello? I'm sorry. some trouble with the mobile, and I thought I'd say a couple of words quickly. And, the first stage, you know, I really want to think a little more after looking at the transcripts of the first part of what Budhey spoke about.

Regarding the second one, I have an immediate, response. Maybe one has to add to that in a certain sense. It appears to me that, some of the things that he speaks about the Buddhist background of both our scriptures, so-called scriptures, and the temples, and so on... a lot of that is fairly well known, at least in the southern parts. And perhaps, I mean, more so in Karnataka. I do not know about other areas. That, the Jains. were, in a sense, prominent, not merely through the first millennium, but also through the second millennium. And it is only around 14, 15, 1600's, even after the so-called fabled conversion to Vaishnavism of the Hoisala Empire, and so on, till almost 16th, 17th century... Jainism seems to have been thriving in various parts of Karnataka... in significantly different parts of Karnataka. And some of these recessive pieces of knowledge - I call them recessive because those knowledge continues to reside amongst groups of people, except that the political influence seems to be waning...

Just as in the 20's and 30's, right through Gandhi's time as well, there are these big meetings that used to happen after the Congress meetings. This started as early as 1885, the record seemed to show that after the Congress meetings of EO Hume and the whole set of people what used to happen is... there used to be these Gorakshak meetings, where the Brahmins used to come and, went out against the Gohatya and so on, and it appears that as early as, 1860s, 70s, and so on, there were posters all across Uttar Pradesh, for example, some parts of Haryana, today's Haryana in Punjab about this wild Muslim trying to kill the cow and so on. So, there was this aspect of Gohatya and so on and so forth, all through the freedom movement. In a certain sense even Gandhi seems to have acknowledged this when he speaks in one of these, (19)19-20-21... around that time, when he speaks about the... you know... that the British are killing 32,000 cows per day and so on, which looks like a tall claim. But nevertheless, this particular point comes from Dharampal's book on this cow slaughter and so on. The rest of them are from other records which I've seen over time. So, these were really recessive. The idea that we don't want a secular kind of a country and so on, as most of us already know, and the RSS would be sort of against that... But right through the 50's and 60's, even after independence, these recessive forces really gathered certain kind of... both courage and a certain following, which in some sense seems to have rectified in the 90's with the Babri movement and so on and so forth.

Something similar could be said about this, the appearance of the Buddhist background, the Jainist background, and so on. There are records, many, many records in Karnataka, of how the sacred guards of Jainism, the... there is a specific term for that, my term of god is wrong. And there is this Mahalati, and there is this Padmini, and Padmavati, and so on. Many of those actually look a little close to Parvati, and Lakshmi, and so on and so forth. So, that is what is seen. on many of the temples, I mean, you know, across Karnataka, even today, and they have tried to deface them, or change them in a certain way, or call them as, you know, Lakshmi and so on, whereas the features and the mudras very strongly suggest that there are actually Jain temples and so on. So this has been there, but what is important is, possibly, for it to become politically relevant, there has to be enough of a backlash, I think, against this particular form of Hindutva, which is, to a large extent. let's say ideologically very bare, because its, its shallowness can be very easily brought out, and there are already forces, especially of the backward caste, and the, yeah, essentially the backward caste... the non-Lingayat. the non-Wokkaliga kind of, I mean, groups in Karnataka.... among them, the intellectual leadership seems to understand this very clearly, and while much of that used to be said even 10 years ago, after Hindutva became prominent... I think they're gathering a little bit of support, but how much of that is beyond the social media, and how much of that translates into a certain political position needs to be seen? And it's interesting, it is possible, in my opinion, to look at this and try to see if some sense can be made out of, this particular development, and try to sort of associate that with the idea of the Bahujan, and so on.

I'm not very clear about how Swaraj could be interpreted in terms of the governance structures of pre-British India, but possibly if one looks at the various records of There are some very comprehensive 1,600-page records of some of these Englishmen who traveled through Canara, through modern-day Karnataka, and so on and so forth. It is possible, I will have a look at some of

the... to see if one can glean anything at all about the larger governance structure and so on. And something similar is also the case in a book which was pointed out to me by GSR Krishnan about Tamil Nadu, especially the so-called Thunder Mandalam area, which is the areas around Tamil Nadu, Madras, Chennai, and nearby districts and so on. So, there is a very great description of the social circumstances in the British era, as they were getting transformed. So it is possible that GSR Krishna may be able to add a lot more to this, but I will try on my side to have a look at that to see if the first question of Budhey about the governance in pre-British India... if there are concrete terms, terminologies, and practices which are associated with that, if one might be able to sort of discover some of this. So that's it from my side. I'm done speaking.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Okay, thanks. Oh... Krish, a brief response ?

Krishnarajulu:

Yeah, Krishnan, told us about, some local organization, I mean. Panchayat organizations and the kind of decisions that they took at pre-British India, which is recorded in those books and... Hold up. But what, you see, when Karl Marx says... that India is essentially a collection of You know, small republics. In his, that's it. He probably... I mean, it was the fact that he based his, ideas about, governance in pre-British India, I mean, these local - the republics, as he refers them to, on some data that was presented to him, or was available to him, or something. I mean, writings. And this is, mid-18... I mean, mid-19th century, at about the time when he's writing. And, you probably... hmm... I don't recollect, but he probably thinks that a lot of, Organizational strength. of the 1857 War of Independence. Grew out of. The consciousness of the local Of local governance, in the sense that whatever norms or whatever things they were used to, or had in there. the collective... memory. Some of it was being evoked. in this, moment. And people said, probably they didn't like this centralized, things that were being imposed on them, or something like that. I mean. What I'm saying is that he was referring to the way these things were functioning like small republics all over the place. I mean. the concept of a republic, of course, which took place in the West, is based, probably, on Plato and other things, but... and then it took some kind of a shape. After the French Revolution. In terms of that. But local self-governance was probably the thing that existed in India for a very long time. And as many commentaries have stated. the war ruled from, let's say, Delhi, let's say, 12th century onwards, or whatever it is. All the... mainly the Muslim rulers up there in Delhi, and then there were other things. You see, even the... the times in the south, the rule of the Cholas, or the Pandyas, or whatever it is. I don't think... they... Interfered with whatever existed in terms of local self-governance. I mean... these, Local self-governance, Panchayat raj, you call it, whatever you want. And they must have had, definitely, in those texts, there must be names, nomenclature for These kinds of local units of governance. Decision-making, even conflict resolution, everything. I mean, talking about society. And importantly, I think... Which is what, I think it's important for us in this debate, especially Gandhi, in his note, in the last thing he says, that he would like to include the Idea of... the concept of development, or the concept of progress. You see, because... progress of the society, and then when I say society, I mean local society. was always... paramount in the development of whatever

ideas took place, and if there were reforms or some things, some improvements that have been sought to be made in local areas, both economic and social and other things. There must have been an idea of what is a progressive society. What does one mean when we say that the society has actually developed or progressed? In order to measure progress, there must have been ideas social, economic. And to that extent, political in the sense of, you know. how do you organize decision-making committees, or bodies? Something like that. So, this, concept of development progress. When would we say. that we've, we are more developed than, say, 50 years ago, or 100 years ago. People would talk about that. The urge is to always improve. improved, I'm saying, in all these, multidimensionally. And there must have been a concept of what is... what would we consider as progress? That is, the society of today is better than the society of yesterday. When would we be able to say that? What are the criteria we would use to say that? There must have been A common thread about what is to be done. in all this. And, to my mind, If there was some... Destabilizing factors especially social factors like, increase in hierarchy, caste discrimination, whatever kind, economic hierarchy, whatever it is that must have been at times reached a point where it required the intervention of an influential person, whom today we refer to as sants, or something like that, who came and said, no, this is not the way you need... you need to submit a social reorganization, a re-fixing of goals. developmental goals. When I mean self-development, I mean social, economic, everything. This is the way in... you need to, what do you call it, look at things, the progress. So this concept. As, of course, Apparently, all over the country got replaced slowly. with the intervention of mercantile capitalism, and then later on, industrial capitalism and everything else that took place, with the advent of Western rule. More so, and with the... fortification... I mean, after 1857, you see, the British had a hegemony over all these arguments, debates, and commentaries, and whatever it is, and they just put their thing. We did not... Want to record. What existed. In local literature or local commentaries. about the situation in, say, pre-British India, etc. I mean, some... a lot of it. has been sort of indirectly dug up and presented by Dharampal ji in his writings. We get a glimpse of what was going on. And certain things which were encouraged and practiced. I mean, all that. You see, when his book in Science and Technology, there are so many things which appear to be very surprising, but then, obviously, it's a result of a continuous, period of, what you call it, research. development into inquiry, and, which is supported by the community. I mean, that means the community had an idea that certain things have to be, encouraged in order to... in order that the society develop or progress. So, you see. We need to... Look at these aspects, because there would be... there have been reorganization of society on and on, especially social organizations, there have been very big moments towards that. It's not that it didn't exist. And some of the stories that we read. the great, some of the Tamil Olympics, for example. I've read the commentaries, of course. They talk about something. Which leads to, social rethink. About, whatever it is, justice, various concepts. So, I think... One needs to... If one wants to see. talk about governance in pre-British India, these are some of the aspects that we can try to, think about. Think about, in the sense, try to gather information about. There has been a work... a lot of work in that direction. I think, I mean. One of the important ones is, of course, Dharampal ji's work, about which we sort of got to get aware of. Through his writings and books. But, other people are also now slowly digging up these things, in various ways, you know, there are various The books that have been published in the past few years that talk about various

things. Which, reflect on what was going on in society, and this is independent of... I mean, it is all sort of localized. And a collector... a collection of localized activities that sort of make the society go in a certain direction. In every sense. So I think, this is important. If you want to get, view, about, the alternate. the alternate paradigm, I mean, you see, the crisis of the capitalist market system, now it's absolutely come to the head. With this, recent (...) that Trump has done. But, it's not that people don't agree to that. Lots of people are saying, yeah, you did the right thing. You see, because this is what is accepted, you see. At some point, It's the might is right becomes... becomes right. Kind of thing. And it doesn't slowly get accepted. People just look aside. I mean, just as an instance. You see, in the... with the advent of mercantile capitalism, you know, or whatever it is, right? The Dutch were the... in forefront in this, but in the middle of the 14th century, there was this British guy called Francis Drake, who was a... after that, he became... he was knighted. He was actually a bloody pirate. instead of going all the way to Java, Indonesia to, you know, trade in spices and then bring back the stuff, you would just raid the Dutch ships that were sailing across maybe the Arabian Sea or whatever it is. And, loot them all. And that's the way he began to fill the coffers of the British monarchy in those days. I mean, they're playing decoy. Just... You let the other guy do the dirty work, and you just take the spoils of that work, the resources, or whatever it is that was. This is what, we've come back to. The capitalist market system is now poised to do exactly that. In a very crude way, and... It does. So... You see, we... You see, society, which is now, to my mind, and this is a global phenomenon, they think that there is no other alternative. that this capitalist, development, the way they organize governance, everything, all these things, the forms of, what, nationalism are some of the points that Gandhi has also touched on his note. These are the things that, are here to stay, and what do we do to reform all of them? But there's no... I mean, they have the dynamic of their own. And, just like imperialism was predicted, by Karl Marx as the final stage of capitalism. Actually, it's not merely imperialism, but it's a kind of fascist, imperialism. Fascism is now the order of the day. And it's going to... Increase. So... You see, people should think. I mean, there is a background that, It does not... I mean, at least I can see in India that Fascism wasn't, Ever seen as a desirable thing. It appears from what one hears about the previous, previous kingdoms, or people... the way people ruled, or what they talked about, or wrote about, and all that. Nyaya, especially. You see, all these concepts. Now. it's there in the... public mind. It's there in our historical perception. And it's been sought over the past so many hundred years to be suppressed or subjugated to some kind of... what they have tried to pose as a superior logic of human development and stuff like that. But, we have to rid I mean... Try to invoke that consciousness, maybe... which was done from time and again. I mean, I'm saying 1857, the first war of independence, maybe, that was invoked, and certainly after that, Gandhiji tried to certainly book. I mean, that... that is part of the reason why He had such a big mass following. But it didn't stick. Because, this kind of capitalist pragmatism was driven into the minds of ordinary people. They were also, Subjected to extreme poverty and deprivation. And at that time, I suppose, it's the... I mean...

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Yeah. Oh, okay. Avinash, any comments on what Sunil said?

Avinash Jha:

Yeah, just briefly about the first part, about the Swaraj. I think it is worthwhile taking up this exploration, what the... traditions of Swaraj that may have been there in various regions of India. Now, I don't know much about this, but from whatever I've gathered, that there seems to be, such dynamics in society, which seems to be in consonance with the idea of Swaraj. In, in, in, in various ways, In terms of, the culture and, I'll, people regard... Hp. I regarded as knowledgeable. They just... kinds of people. So, from whatever the kind of tradition of Swaraj... the idea of Swaraj... Sorry?

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Yeah, no, no. Some, problem with your link, maybe...

Avinash Jha:

I'm having a... Can you hear?

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Just about. Some, your link is unstable, Maybe you can just, go to our... Yeah, the link is... you can try to switch off your audio ...

Avinash Jha:

Can you hear better now?

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Better, yeah.

Avinash Jha:

So ... anyway, I was saying that Swaraj seems worthwhile, this, idea of Swaraj, exploration of Swaraj in various regions. The other part, this Buddhist thing, I'm not aware of the... what Sunil ji has mentioned, that this is going on in Facebook and so on, various things. I'll have to look it up. But, it sort of clashes with, even in philosophy, I'm not so interested, like, in a... when you study Indian philosophy, the first Part is always which year this philosopher was, and there is always an uncertainty about that, and so on. I usually skip that. And, but, the one debate about knowledge and Pramana theory that I have sort of, followed First of all, There's this thing that, after 12, 13th centuries. There are no Buddhist philosophy texts available in India, so there's some kind of a disappearance of, Bundle's philosophy. And, particularly in, Praman theories and, theory of, no, no, Nyaya theory of Pramana, it was a very long... How's in New York? debate between which took place, no, Buddhists, Nyaya, and Mimansa in particular. Others were also there, but these three were the main ones. And when we follow that debate, there is a kind of a... Even if you are not reading historical sources and all, through just the... how somebody has responded to the previous thinker, and then again that has been responded to by some Nyaya thinker, and then again there is a response from Buddhist, or some Mimansa guy, like, there is... you can sort of get

a kind of idea of a development. So... Nagarjun cannot come before, cannot come, after Dignaga. Nagarjun cannot come after, Prasastipad, or something, or after Bhartruhari, or something. So, there is a... and after dinner, there is somebody, Dharm Kirti is there, and then that is responded with Dyotkhar Nyaya response, and then Kumaril from Mimamsa responds. Then there is Udayana Char. And finally, Gangesh comes, who consolidates. And, there is no rest. Buddhist response after that. And in 20th century, when some scholars started trying to study this Dinagiti, they found that the pundits, traditional Nyaya scholars, and all those. they don't even, they don't know, actually, what the Nag, because, said, and how... so they don't understand parts of their own text where it, involves actual, debate between, say, the Dharmkirti and Samyaigai, or like that, because they have lost that knowledge. So it seems it did vanish in certain sense, and... Even the texts and all, Dindag and Dankiti, they were discovered and translated back to some degree from other languages, like Tibetan or Chinese and so on. So... What I want to say is that... Actually, my impression from whatever I've been studying is that you cannot just take Buddhist as completely independent, pull it out. out of the development which is happening in non-Buddhist things. So, I mean... It's very much integrated into what's happening in the whole Indian context. When the Buddhist... developments are part of that, at least in India, what's happening. When it goes somewhere else, like in Tibet, then... It follows its own in China, it follows its own direction in Japan, it follows its own direction. And, that is something... Interesting in itself, like, and, So as... I don't know, I have to sort of look it up. I just had one... there was one scholar who died recently, Dr. Gyanashree Mahasthavir (?). He... has written a series... three books or something of a historical nature, and he said that there's a Magadh region which was completely separate, independent developments taking place, and there is this region, which is, like, no, where the Vedic things took place, and... like Haryana and this area, Delhi, Haryana, Delhi, and all this whole area, which is a completely independent development. And he has tried to sort of reconceive the whole history in terms of this Magadha and this non-Magadha thing. I sat with him in a whole reading session for 3 weeks. here, which Rajiv Bhargav organizes. So I found it, very, problematic, his thing, because he's... I'll have to look up my notes. This was 3-4 years ago. 4 or 5 years ago. But he has that book, and maybe, many of this... some of these things are inspired by, his thing. So, one was Magadha, one was something like how the Brahmins won, and so on. So, anyway, I'm saying this Buddhist thing... I'm skeptical of how... what I gather from what Sunil ji said. to that extent. That doesn't mean that all of it is, false. All... any kind of revisionism is false. But, we'll have to see. I think I'll stop there now.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Okay. Okay. GSRK? No, can't hear you. ... unmute yourself, yeah.

Sivaramakrishnan Ganesh:

I hope ... Are you able to hear?

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Yeah, just about slightly louder, if you can ... please...

Sivaramakrishnan Ganesh:

Yeah. No, no, what Budhey said is interesting, but then I have my doubts about this Buddhism claim. Because at least so far as Tamil Nadu is concerned. This talk of Buddhist, thing is very recent, from the Dalit groups. They have been digging up certain things and then trying to make a claim. That they are the original... Adi Dravidas kind of thing, etc. It has come from the Dravidian movement. One section went into the question of who are these Adi Dravidas, and I mean, they started talking of Adi Dravida, not the Dravida. I mean, then there was a man in Kolar area, in, you know, Karnataka, one Pandit Jyoti Ayogeddas, etc, etc. He's a Christian. But then he's some sort of a scholar. And it's all in 19th century ... He wrote something in a kind of a journal saying that ... the original people of Tamilnadu are the Adi Dravidas, that is a scheduled caste. And their religion is Buddhism. This has been completely, you know, it has been ignored by the other scholars and so on. All the Buddhist temples, all the Buddhist Vihars have been demolished, and Hindu temples have come up, etc. This kind of holds... this is some kind of a theory going around everywhere. All the time, you know, that many of the temples of South India are actually Jain or Buddhist monasteries, and so on. And they were destroyed, and they were, changed, including Tirupati, for instance, is supposed to be some Buddhist or Jain kind of thing, etc. This is one part of it. Secondly, you see, in the Jain and Buddhist influence in Tamil literature, etc, is very well known. In fact, the greatest work of, I mean, which is being talked about as the greatest Veda of Tamils, etc. is itself a Jain Work, which is acknowledged, not today, I mean, much earlier... though there may be some dispute today that Third World War may be called some kind of a great Hindu, kind of an icon, etc, by the Bhartiya Janata Party, and others. They have put the Hindu symbols to him. They have tried to chaperonize him. But he is basically a Jain kind of a thinker who wrote that famous Quran. So this is all well known. But I'm not sure whether... what Budhey is saying, you see, that there is... this trend is increasing. It's not... Hindutva, in my view, at least my reading of it, is it has made the schedule castes and other groups in Tamil Nadu and the longer I mean, groups take the Hindutva as some kind of a respectable thing which to, now, you see, here, they have been given a certain respectability by Hindutva, and some of the agitations that are going on now, political, of course, are trying to... light the lamp somewhere, and doing this, and making a claim, you know, trying to make an anti-Muslim kind of a front, etc. Most of the supporters are not... I mean, are very insignificant. They may be giving some ideological support, but then the real Muslim support is from the non-Brahmin groups, and especially from the lower caste. So they have succeeded in making, you know, the lower caste in Tamil Nad take to Hindutva as some kind of a great, passionate kind of a thing, and I won't be surprised if in the next election, they make a big dent in Tamil Nadu in terms of political gain, et cetera, et cetera.

This is one part of it... About this Swaraj and village republics, etc, I think... this is the way, just as the British took this Republic idea very seriously, because it appeared to them, as Dharampal himself says, that when they came here, and they saw our villages in contrast to what they have been familiar in Britain or Europe, they... our villages must have appeared to have greater freedom and governance, etc, etc, to them. Therefore, they went on praising it as some kind of a republic in... in some romanticizing it. And this is... I mean, in a way romanticizing, because the self-sufficiency and the nature of governance, etc, is much made up by some of the British reports,

which... Marx also quotes in his, you know, writings on India, and then that becomes, even inspiring to some of our own freedom movement kind of a thing, including, perhaps, Gandhi. They take... they quote this from British records, and then say, yes, we were republics, etc. I mean, to make a very tongue-in-cheek remark, I might even say that what appears sometimes... now, I'll keep... I mean, thinking on these lines. Perhaps we are trying to make a virtue of a necessity. Because many of these villages that appear to be self-governing around the time when some of these people are making observations... was a situation where... there were not many big kingdoms around in South India, at least. They had all become small, small rulers, and mostly Polygars. Polygars are what are called people who were some kind of controllers in a certain area, collecting some tax. making... assuring the people certain security, not anything more, some security from robbers and thieves and people who molest them, etc. There were some Polygars, there were local kind of leaders, you know, who... they would control a small area of a district or two districts and so on. And they were the rulers, and in a situation like that. And perhaps these villages were left to themselves, you know, to govern, manage their affairs, or take care of this, take care of that, which were perhaps done better by a larger kingdom earlier. Because the king would have a certain amount of resources to even, you know, erect certain structures or provide for certain... Whereas, at the time when things were so broken in South India, and perhaps the whole of India. around the time the British and others tried to colonize us. It was kind of a broken system in one sense. According to some people, you know, Dharampal would say, well, this was a time of great, we were all independent, in a sense. It was not chaos, it was not... I mean, the Mughal rule had ended, etc. They were all trying to assert their independence, the small rulers, etc. This is one way of looking at it. The other way of looking at it is in a situation where things were broken down, there were no big rulers. Maybe the villagers gave the impression to observers as some kind of self-governing, because they had no other option but to govern themselves, because there is nobody to really govern them from a distance. So, there are various ways of looking at it, and therefore, let us not make... I don't think we should make much of this, you know, self-sufficient republics of South India, or India. Because I think this is more romanticized than real. And one has to maybe look at various records, etc, and really get into the details. There are accounts of South India, especially, which are not in keeping with what Dharampal has been saying. there is some Japanese historians Karashima, etc. There is this famous Irishikh, who also studied the same sources that Dharampal has. He had the Jangalpur data. Karashima also had the Jangalpur data. Their interpretations are not the same as what Dharampal is saying. Slightly different. I mean, they are not contradicting everything. What they are saying is that... I mean, what I was trying to say, that things were broken down, and therefore, the village councils, our elders, etc, took some greater initiative in organizing things, and so on and so forth. So there is a way of looking at the same data, or the same situation, differently.

And in my view, therefore, without us rushing into this Buddhist or other kind of hypothesis. we should, make, even, take time to look at these things again, more objectively, and more, I mean, with greater attention, etc. We might come to different conclusions, ultimately. I mean, that's for it now, I mean, my immediate reaction. I can make a, I mean, somewhat a detailed note later, and then separate it also, perhaps.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Okay, thank you. Naresh? You want to say anything? Naresh?

Naresh Kumar Sharma:

One second. Hello? Hello? Just two things. Because the discussions has gone to the substantive issues, which... Perhaps, require... More than one... Station, or, perhaps... Maybe holder session also, if what is talking about those. But the agenda, if I just go back to that, to me, it appears there are two things, basically. One is that, where does Vidya Ashram go from here? And, Who should be, formally, in the position, Bruce. Those positions, and... Informally, people in Varanasi will be, anyway, doing bulk of the work, but... These two things seems to be the... As soon as the first agent vacuum, he told us about the... Trust meeting, that what should be there. I think somehow that has not got discussed properly, that we're... Vidy as soon goes from here, and in the light of that. Who will be more appropriate to, to be? new, office bearers, basically. So, I just thought that I'll just mention that. Now, it is already one hour is over, so... Maybe over, Offline, basically, offline in the sense that through WhatsApp group, or... to emails, one can discuss those points. The substantial issues are far larger, I... I... Don't see they're getting resolved in this. I, too, have some views on that, but... Essentially, my take will be to... Look at the evidence of every one of them, and then... Try to understand. What was it? What is this listing? Some of the issue, there is so much mutilation. That whatever is being said here would be... A very, very small... Correction of what can be said about the issue. That have been discussed. So, maybe if one wants to take them up, they should take them up independently of that. Trust the meeting isn't like. That is very good. I hope I was audible.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Yeah, okay, more or less, yes. Okay, thanks. Yes, I mean, we had actually two points on the agenda. But the discussion on this, what Sunil said later in his, submission, many people... Gave their opinions on it, and expanded into various ways. So, I don't know, we don't... can't really take up the second, it's already 6.15, but I would like, Gandhi to, give his response, in general to... whatever Sunil said and others said, and then maybe we can take up Gandhi's response to the Bahujan Darshan note next time. We... so, Gandhi, if you can just, respond to whatever Sunil said and other people said. We can stop there, and maybe we can take up your response next time. Is that okay?

Krishna Gandhi:

Yeah, that is okay.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Yeah, yeah, because it's already 6.15. So go ahead, please.

Krishna Gandhi:

Okay, so Sunil was saying about the future of Vidya Ashram, and related it to what kind of program we can take for the next 2-3 years. So, I think, the program discussion has to be... Foregrounded. And then, only on that basis, we have to discuss about the organizational aspect. So, regarding this, program, Sunil, suggested taking up the issue of, Swaraj traditions. In India, especially in South India, etc. So, related to that, some discussions are, going on. So, basically. I think that one of the things that can be done, if we are really serious about, Swaraja... traditions. Then, we should be looking at... the literature. Old literature, of those times, And try to glean... The issues of governance, what was said about governance of those times. So, in the Tamil context, I think, These, Tamil literature, Sangham literature is there, and it is, considered at least 2,000 years old. Or maybe around that. So, we have got a lot of, authentic, original, Tamil or a Sangam literature, and maybe we should be... Able to get some people. Or... at least those who know Tamil and can attempt to do it themselves. So, one of the programs... For the next 2-3 years, maybe. Looking at that... Literature, regional literature in different parts of India, and Old literature, classical or otherwise, When we try to find out from that literature what were the traditions of governance in those times. We can also... In this context, take up the... Buddhist and, jana... Jenna... Literature. Because, Jaina, Puran, etc, they are independent. They are independent of, the Hindu kind of literature. So, there will be many informative ideas that... information that we can gain from looking at non-Hindu literature, that is, specifically Jain and the Buddhist. Buddhist, there may not be much, because... They were destroyed, maybe. So, we will have to look at the Tibetan... And, travelers, accounts, those kinds of things. But, Jaina people, they have maintained their libraries, and many Jaina libraries are there, even in today's times, which are very well kept. I... I'm informed, so... Some of the projects may be related to that. Discovering the traditions, of Swaraj in India through literature. Ancient literature, or classical literature, or whatever. Old literature we can access. But in this context, one question is always there, that, is, our, quest for Swaraj, is it... Really a question of reestablishing a tradition, or is it... Our, an existential... Crisis. The capitalist or imperialist... fascist crisis that we are facing in the world today. So, is there any alternative to it other than Swaraj? That is the question. So, whether Swaraj was there in the past. Or... not. It doesn't appear to me a very... very crucial question, as far as our attitude to Swaraja today is to be... Decided. So... Because there is no other alternative, that is how I look at Things. So, we may use the traditions of Swaraj As some kind of a... So, support... That we can... get for our ideas, but otherwise, even without the support of the traditional traditions of Swaraj. We should be able to put forth... our ideas on Swaraj, or it's... it's an imperative, necessity today. Irrespective of the past. That is what I feel. So, the... regarding the project, We can... Do, many, maybe, other things also, other than checking up the past literature for Swarajist traditions. And do you even know... some parts of India, maybe Swaraja traditions are there in tribal areas. So, we may be able to... Go to those areas and look how they are conducting their affairs. So... It is not that Swaraj was there in the past only, it is there even today. So, where are those, Swaraj... in practice, practiced today in different parts of India, that is also one. possible project... Program. So, these are some of the reactions that I want to give. And another thing regarding this, trend of, looking at, Buddhist and the giant, this thing, claims. that all the Hindu temples are originally Buddhist and Jaina

temples. I think there is a lot of substance in it. And, if, there are many historians who have done their studies, and they have shown that most of the important shrines In South India, they were originally either Jain or Buddhist? So... That is another thing, but that is also... Whether it is relevant to our Swaraja tradition or not, that's a different thing. But, when we are talking about, Bahujan, At least, in... in South... We have to understand that the original religion. was, Jaina religion throughout India. I think... from the Indian Industrial Valley Civilization onwards, Jaina religion was the... one of those... basic religions followed throughout India. That is, what I am able to understand. And, throughout India, it was there, and even the first Tirthankara, his name is... Vrishabh Nath. So... So you make... say that, the Shiva... He's also described as Vrishabha, not, you may say. So... there is a lot of, this thing... thing that we can gain by studying Jaina, literature, that is what I feel, and their Purana and their literature, we may do as some kind of a... project... So, that is one thing that I feel. So, this is all I want to say. For the present regarding with this, this thing proposal. Thank you.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Okay. Abhijit, you want to say anything? A widget?

Abhijit Mitra:

Just a moment.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Hello! Lost connection. Oh, I think he is.

Sunil Sahasrabudhey:

He said, just a moment.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Hmm. Yeah, but he lost connection. Connectivity challenge. Anyway, all I wanted to say was that this, we have to carry forward this discussion on program, which, Vidya Ashram can take up for the next, 2-3 years, or whatever. And, before the Trust Meeting, we have probably, only 4 meetings, which we can devote to that. We can, of course, meet in between sometime also, so maybe 4 to 5, before we will have this Trust Meeting, whether it is online or physical, whatever it is. So, from... I suppose from next time, we can try, to think more directly in that, about the programmatic, yes. Abhijit? ...

Abhijit Mitra:

I got disconnected, I don't know what happened... Ok... I tried to unmute. No, I don't have anything to say. Lots of things were said, some of it I could not understand so well, because I am absolutely unfamiliar with the JN literature and some of the other things that were being spoken about, but it was interesting, I'll try to follow up. No, I don't have anything specific to say.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

हाँ ..., चित्रा जी ?

Chitra Sahasrabudhey:

एक ही बात लग रही थी ... बहुत देर से मैं ... सुनील जी ने बात की है ... दो तीन बातें ... उसमें जो उसमें जो बुद्ध का यह कहा है कि ने कहा है कि बुद्धिस्ट इसमें ... पहले सारे मंदिर बने हैं पर बने हैं वे बुद्धिस्ट इसपे बने हैं ... क्या इसकी बात की जाए। लेकिन मुझे ऐसा लगता है कि अगर हम स्वराज की बात आज के इससे जोड़ें तो संगठित धर्म के मार्फत न जोड़ी जाए, अगर हम संगठित मार्ग धर्मों के लिटरेचर या उनके जो बचे हैं खँडहर उनके मार्फत देखेंगे तो हमें स्वराज का कोई पाया नहीं मिलेगा, ऐसा मुझे लगता है, उसकी बजाय बार बार कोशिश की जाए कि ... यह जो कृष्णराजुलू कहते हैं कि लोक विद्या धर्म या स्वराज धर्म या लोक धर्म क्या है, इसकी प्रवृत्ति को समझा जाए और उसको सामने लाया जाए क्योंकि मुझे नहीं लगता कि संगठित धर्म जिस तरह से आज की दुनिया में स्थापित किए गए हैं, उसकी कहानी बहुत साल पुरानी होगी। ये पीछे मुश्किल से दो सौ तीनसौ साल जाता हुआ था, लेकिन अब तक अलग अलग धर्मों के अलग अलग इलाकों में और देशों में जाते आते रहे हैं। उनकी प्रवृत्ति ... केवल संदेश ले जा सकते हैं और वहां से पर धर्म के जो प्रकार हैं उसको समझने की ... धर्म परिवर्तन का ऐसा कोई या ,, अपना राज बनाने का ऐसा कोई मंशा हमें नहीं दिखायी दी है, तो हो सकता है वो इतने लोग उस पर ये कर सकते हैं तो पर मुझे लगता है हम लोग को इसका संबंध स्वराज के विचार और इसको बनाने में देखनी चाहिए। संगठित धर्म बाधा बन रहा है बहुत बड़ा।

Sunil Sahasrabudhey:

Give me 2 minutes to 3 minutes...

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Yes, yes.

Sunil Sahasrabudhey:

Yes, after... It was a good discussion for... You see, but I gave the example of Buddhist, preceding the Hindu... constructions, etc, etc, whatever is going on. Only want the point of view of bringing to the fore a contestation in the narrative. Not a replacement of the narrative. A contestation. That these are narratives of the past... And... any view... it is a sectional view. If you look at it from such an angle, it would... it looks like this. You show the picture, sectional view from this side, from this side, from the top, what it would look like, and so on. Though... it... all views are sectional views. And... in the sense that one is this, and the other point is that, and which I said, is that there is no... nobody commented on that. That the question of truth in history Is it... is it problematic, this thing? Question. What was actually the case? Is a question that we don't want to ask. Aaron? There are different types of narratives with different interests, with different ends, with different postulates, and... all kinds of things are there. So, the issue is not that. What I was suggesting was, in very brief ... what I was suggesting was, That can we have? a Swaraj window. To look at reality. a Swaraj political perspective, or a Swaraj philosophical perspective. to appreciate reality. That's all that I was saying. when that... All... more contestation is there from organized entities. Between organized entities, If Buddhists and Hindus are fighting with each other, There is greater space for, as Farage perspective, to be able to see what it wishes to see. That is all the point that I was making. If one perspective is very, very dominant. Then, others have very little space. Just as when

science was so dominant. Absolute domination in the field of knowledge, everything else had become quackery. Or superstition, or something else. Some ethnic this, that, and the other.

But as it broke down in last 25 years, as we see. There is more and more talk about the knowledge... the field of knowledge has got opened up, because there is no absolute monarch in the field... in the... in the world of knowledge anymore. There are different criteria. There is a market criterion, there is a language criterion, there is a regional criterion, there is a linguistic criterion, and so on. There are various criteria of appreciating the reality. So, the question... what I was saying was that can we develop a program for 2-3 years for us? Not a program of studies, I never used the word program of studies. I never said that we investigate into the literature for this. I did not say that. Maybe it becomes necessary, or it is not necessary. It is all up to us to decide. But I did not say that it is a program of studies. There are various ways of appreciating reality. Studies is only one way of... one part of it. So, he's there. Can we have a program? which has a... with chiefly... with chiefly the Swaraj window. I am not saying that India was a self-governing place before that. Self-sufficiency is a word I did not use, not even once. Not even once. It has been used by others only. I only use the words self-governance. Without that, I used no other word for that situation. which I suggested is a matter of looking at, particularly, Gandhiji's own experience is a North Indian experience, by and large. Well, if Gujarat, Maharashtra is so much the part of North, maybe. I don't know, if you... if you see it that way. Otherwise, a Western experience, mainly. Anyway, we don't get into that. What I am saying is, can we build a program with Lokavidya, Swaraj, we have that Bahujan Darshan statement. It will keep... it will be debated all along. But there are these primary conceptual apparatus we have. We may debate about it endlessly, Bahujan, Swaraj. Panchayat, Lokavidya, Ordinary Life, Kala, Naitikata, whatever. It may go on. You may add 3, you may subtract 2, there is no... this thing. No special, status given to any of... this we have talked about. Whether this creates a window for us to look at reality. To the extent of having a political perspective. It's not just a philosophy... No, philosophy is worthless without a political perspective. To the extent of having a political perspective, can we have a program? Whatever that program may mean. A discussion amongst us, some investigation, some linguistic investigation, some investigation into the knowledge background of the regions, or the self-governing backgrounds of the regions, all kinds of things can be there. We can make that list. We can think about it, and we can arrive at a... at a... Program for Vidya Ashram with... with this Bahujan Darshan conceptual apparatus. as... as the window. We are not claiming that this is what the reality is. No. We don't make that claim ever. We have not made that claim at any time. We have not said that all of India was Swaraj-like, or nothing of the kind has been written from Vidya Ashram. None of us have written anything like that. Because we don't see it that way. The question is whether we can have a Swaraj sectional view. This is a political perspective, by and large. Swaraj is not necessarily only a political concept. And yet, We can call it... a political perspective, for change. Today. Change today... for change today. a kind of Swaraj perspective, Can we have... the question I was posing was, can we have a... Can we spread the words Swaraj by more words coming from different languages which have a similar meaning? I am not asking for a replacement of the word Swaraj by some other word. what is it said in Tamil? What is self-governance, or that kind of thing is said in Kanara, in Malayalam, in Bangala, or in Gujarati, so that we have a more

wholesome picture of the idea of Swaraj. And not get tied down to Swaraj as used in the national movement, which is a... if we get tied down to Swaraj in the national movement. I personally do not think we will find a way forward. Because the entire national movement, as it has been seen in North, I don't know how it would be seen from various different places, like from Mysore, or from Madras, Tamil Nadu, or from Trivandrum, how it will be seen. I do not know, but as it is seen from most of the Hindi region. it has given shape to a Hindu narrative. A Hindu narrative on which the Hindutva stand actually sits. Gandhi becomes a dissenter. Not a creator of that narrative. But a much larger what Suresh was telling, that every time there used to be a meeting after the... So, many things must have happened after the Congress, convention or whatever... of the Pandit Sabhas... how to rebuild the Hindu case, and so on. And that has been... so Mahamana Madan Mohan Malviya was twice the Congress president, as well as twice, I think, the Hindu Mahasabha president. At least once. He was Congress president, as well as Hindu Mahasabha president. And... and very interesting. He was Hindu Mahasabha president later. Before that, in 1916, in Lucknow Congress, when Tilak said that Muslims could be given, or Tilak gave the opinion that Muslims may be given... the... that the Congress take a stand that Muslim be given a separate electorate, as it was being demanded. As early as 1916, it was Madan Mohan Malviya who opposed that. took a much more secular stand, a much more United Nations stand. So... so, I mean, there is no... the national movement doesn't give a single narrative. But a dominant narrative it does construct. And we are not entirely... we are not greatly in agreement with that kind of narrative. It is a post-1860 narrative... everything... literally. Anyway, not going to the details... all I'm saying is that let us not look for What was the case. Let us construct a window, Swaraj-like window, For a better narrative. To propel the change. That's all. If you want a very short statement. That's all ...

Avinash Jha:

Girish? Voice up... Audio... We can't hear you.

Girish Sahasrabudhe:

Oh? I am sorry ... yeah, I was saying, let us stop here. And, uh, let's have some... definite program for next meeting, which we can try to work out during the intervening time h, to define this, uh... yeah, in a more programmatic kind of, you know... 2 weeks from now. So, okay, so let us stop for today. Thanks.