

Keynote Address

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Biographical Note

Himani Bannerji is a Professor Emeritus and Senior Scholar in the Department of Sociology at York University, Toronto, Canada. Her research and writing life extends between Canada and India. Her interests encompass anti-racist feminism, marxism, critical cultural theories and historical sociology. Publications include *Demography and Democracy: Essays on Nationalism, Gender and Ideology* (2011), *Of Property and Propriety: The Role of Gender and Class in Imperialism and Nationalism* (edited and co-authored with S. Mojab and J. Whitehead, 2001), *Inventing Subjects: Studies in Hegemony, Patriarchy and Colonialism* (2001), *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Racism* (2000) and *Thinking Through: Essays on Feminism, Marxism and Anti-Racism* (1995). Her most recent research on Marx has appeared as chapters in A. K. Bagchi and A. Chatterjee (eds), *Marxism: With and Beyond Marx* (2014), E. Dua and A. B. Bakan, *Theorizing Anti-Racism* (2014) and S. Mojab (ed), *Marxism and Feminism* (2015). She has a book forthcoming on the modernity and radical humanism of Rabindranath Tagore.

Abstract

In this article I wish to exemplify how an anti-ideological critique on “violence against women” in the era of neoliberal India may be conducted. My main source lies in Marx’s critique of ideology as a body of content, of “ruling ideas” which are hegemonic, as well as the epistemological process of their production. With this understanding I want to speak about the current conjuncture in India of global neoliberal imperialism, of ideological and political use of religion and patriarchy. It appears to me that this fascistic agenda is present elsewhere in the world, where expanding neoliberal capitalism and fundamentalist religious ideology enter into a holy alliance.

Keywords

Capitalism, neoliberalism, fascism, primitive accumulation, accumulation by dispossession, violence, gang rape, ideology

Acknowledgement

I sincerely thank the organizers of The Society for Socialist Studies for inviting me to present this talk. I hope that I will be able to provide an overview of some issues and suggest approaches for further consideration for students of socialist thought.

Introduction

As I spent the last five months in India I decided not to go through writing about a survey of various versions of the notion of 'ideology' in Marx and among marxists. When in India, which I am almost every year, certain issues impressed themselves on me. There is a veritable maelstrom worked up by predations of neoliberalism (code-named 'development') and the ideological agenda of the hindu supremacist national government Bharatiya Janata Party (National People's Party - BJP) and its civil society organizations, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteers' Organization - RSS) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Association - VHP). In the last years there has been an exponential increase in violence against women – especially of gang rapes, including those by the police, the paramilitary and the army. None of these are 'new' phenomena, as they are developing over decades, but with the coming of the BJP to power federally and in some states/provinces and their civil society groups gaining greater organizational and ideological influence, things seem to have reached a tipping point. The roots of these increased occurrences lie, however, not only in the BJP combine, or as they say, their Sangh Parivar (monastic family), but also in the types of economic, political, social relations and moral regulations developing in the Indian civil society and the ideological apparatus of the state over time. There is, therefore, a continuity between the previous liberal democratic secular state and its social agenda and the present era, which shows the beginnings of a political and social fascism.¹

I was struck by the enormities of violence against women, particularly by the increase in gang rapes and the grotesque ways in which they were conducted. They included tearing apart of women's bodies – in most cases raped to death – inserting objects into the genitalia, the number of men involved and the fact that the perpetrators were publicly known. Equally striking were police involvement in these and other activities as well as their negligence, and the lack of implementation of laws that already exist. These phenomena, accompanied by the hindutva² agenda of the BJP and its civil society groups' stance of moral high ground,

¹ On fascism, see Himani Bannerji "Demography and democracy: Reflections on violence against women in genocide and ethnic cleansing" in *Demography and democracy: Essays on nationalism, gender and ideology*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press (2011). See also Chirashree Das Gupta, *Neoliberalism and neofascism in India* in *Vikalp: People's Perspective for Change*, http://www.vikalp.ind.in/2015_06_01_archive.html.

² *Hindutva* (hinduness) is an essentialized version of a heterodox diverse set of ideas, gods and practices of hindus. It is rather a mythic civilizational construct – it has elite intellectual adherents as well as adherents among 'the people'. This task of creating the hindu subject of the nation is not a matter of ideas and

preaching the sacredness of women in hindu culture and in the family, the national imaginary of a perfect hindu/Indian Civilization, have placed me and others in a desperate need of understanding and appropriate action. The need for an explanation of why – despite large protests mounted across the country – the impact of the resistance is so little? What is giving this near total social violence the strength to grow?

In search of answers I decided to call Marx's critique of ideology to my aid. This critique I consider not to be restricted within the intellectual sphere alone, but to be found in the knowledge which discloses social formations and the interconstitutive relations between them and their prevailing forms of consciousness (political, economic and social). A critique of ideology provides revolutionary, not just interpretive knowledge.³ In this paper I wish to exemplify how an anti-ideological critique on 'violence against women' in the era of neoliberal India may be conducted. I am developing my method of inquiry and its presentation and still need to formulate a more appropriate type of presentation. Presentation, as Marx said, faces us with another set of problems from those of research.⁴ I am at the early stages of both. My main source lies in Marx's critique of ideology as a body of content, of 'ruling ideas' which are hegemonic, as well as the epistemological process of their production.⁵ With this understanding I want to speak about the current conjuncture in India of global neoliberal imperialism, of ideological and political use of religion and patriarchy. It appears to me that this fascistic agenda is present elsewhere in the world, where expanding neoliberal capitalism and fundamentalist religious ideology enter into a holy alliance.

An anti-ideological critique which is conjunctural and not directly causal should display in its method of presentation the critique itself. This issue is captured in the debate on realism and representation among Brecht, Benjamin, Bloch, and Lukaćs in an edited

proselytization alone, but of mass reconversion ceremonies which suck back those who once in history sought to escape the violence of the hindu caste system. See Himani Bannerji, "Making India hindu and male: Cultural nationalism and the emergence of the ethnic citizen in contemporary India", in *Ibid.*

³ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Theses on Feuerbach" in *The German Ideology*, ed. C.J. Arthur. New York: International Publishers (1970). See 11th Thesis.

⁴ See Marx, *Capital*, Vol I, Moscow: Progress Publishers (1971): "Of course the method of presentation must differ in form from that of inquiry. The latter has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyze its different forms of development, to trace out inner connexion [sic]. Only after this work is done, can the actual movement be adequately described. If this is done successfully, if the life of the subject-matter is ideally reflected as in a mirror, then it may appear as if we had before us a mere *a priori* construction." (Afterword to the Second German Edition, p. 28)

⁵ "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance" (Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, p. 64, original emphases).

collection with an afterward by Fredric Jameson.⁶ In this collection the Aristotelian linear narrative advocated by Lukaćs is pitted against the expressionist epic/episodic form adopted by Brecht in his theatre and by Benjamin's advocacy of a theory of bricolage. Attempting to direct attention to and reflecting in the method of presentation the simultaneity of reality, these anti-ideological expressionists proved the superiority of bringing disparate, seemingly unconnected images and happenings together – thereby creating a mosaic or a do-it-yourself art or knowledge form. If the erasure of fissures, differences, of social contradictions and their coexistence marks the social organization and reproduction of capital, it cannot be narrated in a seamless and causal way. Our presentation must be a mimesis of these complexities using a wide range of mosaics of happenings and their diverse placements. From this presentational method – rarely used by social scientists but more by literary writers – we can cobble together a reality not 'always already there' and in sequence but occurring more as 'always, all at once'. My approach will be one of juxtaposition of various aspects of capitalism now to create a collage by using seemingly unconnected pieces of news along with those of violence against women. Marx's critique of ideology is deeply concerned with part-whole, general-particular relations – not allowing one to usurp the position of the other while building the big picture. Marx himself in *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* begins with the idea of a pageant or a masque ball, in which several characters present a story (history) in which the mythical elements play a deeper part than they realize.⁷ This type of critical exercise consists of flashing the fragments of current or past events next to each other as a method of encouraging the reader/audience to look deeper. One of the ways of achieving this simultaneity and multilayered dimension is in the Brechtian dramaturgy, especially of the alienation effect achieved by the use of an episodic form of narration.⁸ It is as though we were rotating the newspaper items around the focal event(s) that we are trying to both describe and understand at the same time – thus, for example, reports of gang rapes and rapes of nuns can be juxtaposed with those of land bills for expropriation of peasants, attacks on churches and pressured re-conversion of muslims and christians to hinduism.

No one thinks alone, so I want to thank at the outset some who have been of particular help for me. Many names will have to be left out, but with no less gratefulness. Of direct relevance are Dorothy E. Smith, David McNally, Judith Whitehead, Maria Mies, Silvia Federici, Jasodhara Bagchi, Uma Chakravarty, Amiya Bagchi, Samir Amin, Utsa Patnaik, Prabhat Patnaik, Shahrzad Mojab and Nahla Abdo. At a distance Raymond Williams, Louis Althusser, David Harvey come to mind. Over my long stretch of learning life, Karl Marx has always been the basic source of illumination and inspiration. The footprints of all these authors will be found in my text.

⁶ *Aesthetics and Politics*, tr. ed. R. Taylor, afterward by Fredric Jameson. London: New Left Books (1977).

⁷ K. Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, New York: International Publishers (1991)

⁸ See Brecht on epic theatre in Bertolt Brecht, *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, Tr. J. Willett. London: Methuen (1965)

Part I On Ideology – a Recapitulation

At the outset we need to get a basic idea of what I mean by a critique of ideology. In this I follow Marx. His critique of ideology is most explicitly stated in *The German Ideology* and *The Holy Family*, and contra Althusser and his followers, I believe that this critique has provided a major part of his analytical thinking throughout his intellectual and political life. *The 18th Brumaire*, for example, exemplifies an anti-ideological reading of writing and making of history and provides us with a template of materialist historiography. *Capital* takes apart the ideological pretensions of the political economists and displays their occlusive, dehistoricizing presentation of capitalism's development. It is through this method of inquiry that we see that 'capital' is not a 'thing' but a social relation and achieve a demystified, de-fetishized look into its systemic and subtle workings.

In *The German Ideology* Marx situates 'ideology' at the point of bifurcation of manual and mental division of labour, which has been interwoven with and built upon previous sexual and social divisions of labour. The section on ideology provides us a comprehensive method for analyzing forms of consciousness produced by certain conceptual/epistemological practices which arise with social relations of any given, but especially, of the capitalist mode of production. Marx's critical epistemology admits of and enquires into different kinds/forms of consciousness and methods of knowledge production which are comprehended by the overall complexities of the mode production. By analyzing their specific constitution Marx's method can expose the ideological composition of seemingly independent discourses or textualities, the modes of generation and deployment of particular concepts. Thus we can pursue ways of knowing which reveal what is actually happening currently in society or had happened in social history. Thus we gain access to the complex (dialectical) composition of the social.⁹

Thus, though not apparent to many, Marx attended to both the 'content' of the ideological concepts or ideas and their process of production and textual deployment, which assumes and creates a separation of theory from practice, from social organizations and relations. His critique exposes an extrapolatory device of abstraction and deployment of ideas which shifts them from their situationally grounded status to timeless, ahistorical, immaterial metaphysical forms.¹⁰ Thus ideology is not to be treated only as a body of bad 'ruling ideas', especially political ones, but consists of using seemingly critical ideas to an historically occlusive effect. The interlinking process of creating ideology involves the connecting of ideas to other ideas, instead of social existence and practices, thereby creating a second level, solipsistic representational form. Thus ideas produced for different reasons

⁹ Dorothy E. Smith, *Writing the Social: Critique, Theory and Investigations*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (1999). See in particular the essays in the sections "Theory", "The ruling relations" and "Telling the truth after postmodernism".

¹⁰ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (1977). See the chapter "Ideology".

and contexts are brought together, obeying solely a theoretical logic, thus influencing the relationship between the knower and the known and among the knowers themselves. A proper critique of ideology, therefore, is not to be found by exploring within a statement, or in counterposing one interpretive mode with another. For an idea or statement to be called ideology, we need to situate ideas and assumptions and so on to their socio-historical contexts, their imperatives and the mode of knowledge production. That certain ideas render the world meaningful for a subject is no guarantee of their being true. Internal coherence is not all that matters, the basic premises on which they are articulated need to be scrutinized. Ideology is thus not quite the same as an interpretation or worldview, either articulated or tacit, but rather a particular type of knowledge production.¹¹ As pointed out by Dorothy Smith and others, the hegemonic apparatuses of the modern capitalist state make categorization and standardization indispensable for governing and formation of necessary institutions. We can also see in the workings of capital certain epistemological stances which produce reification and commodity fetishism. These structuralization necessities convert descriptive, empirical, contingent knowledge forms to categorical reifications. These categories assume the status of generality and lack transparency. The empirical, thus, takes an ideological flight transferred onto an ahistorical, non-materialist ground. Any particular behaviour of a social group or an individual in the context of a given time and space is then abstracted into quintessentiality, e.g. the idea of ‘race’. Certain cultural traits are reified and homogenized as ‘human’ or ‘savage’, or whole complexes of social consciousness are synthesized into civilizational essences.

Marx’s concept of ideology enjoins us to remember that though the ruling ideas of any age are crucial to our social critique and politics, it is also important to know how these ruling ideas are produced and how they are connected to the formation and realities of the ruling class itself. We should now bring in Marx’s much neglected ‘three tricks’ for producing ideology - the tricks of metaphysicalization or immaterialization and reification of the social nature of ideas and their relations to each other. Expanding the epistemological purview, *The German Ideology* also tells us that there are some forms of knowledge which are ideological but others are not, for example, knowledge generated through practical consciousness. These knowledges are both historical and experiential, gleaned through doing in tandem with thinking. The example Marx provides for practical consciousness is language itself, which is wholly social and practical, and also enabled by biology.¹² This historical and concrete way of

¹¹ An inquiry into it discloses congelations of social relations of power at all levels and thus helps to solve the riddle of hegemony. Dorothy Smith’s inquiry into ‘social organization of knowledge’ combined with her consonant ‘institutional ethnography’ shows how knowledges are formed and reified into ‘ruling categories’. Distributed in her writings throughout, a very important collection of essays is *The conceptual practices of power: A feminist sociology of knowledge* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990), especially on Marx’s method and critique of ideology. See also Smith’s demonstration of Marx’s method in *Institutional Ethnography: A sociology for people* (Toronto: AltaMira Press, 2005)

¹² Along with discussing “primary historical relationships”, Marx speaks of “consciousness... which here makes

knowing which keeps an eye on the many determinations of ideas, when rubbed against the ideological ones, by putting history against mythology, experience against stereotypes, practice against theory, can produce ‘scientific’¹³ as opposed to simple interpretive knowledge for revolutionary social transformation.

Thus all expressions, concepts or phrases can become ideological if used categorically to substitute or displace a contextual, historical way of using them. Certain uses of the notion of ‘woman’ or ‘women’ can illustrate an ideological use when treated as an unsituated, exclusive, universal or abstract category. Similarly concepts such as ‘man’, ‘race’, or ‘development’, for example, can serve as ideology to create illicit generalizations which deflect criticism and legitimize the status quo. They admit no epistemological disclosure as to their own construction. Pulled apart from their ordinary, descriptive and locative usage such concepts or words are arbitrary interpretive devices. They are pulled away from their historical materialist axes and transported elsewhere to serve another need. Examples can be found in liberal feminists’ theoretical use of the word “woman”, where one uniform idea of woman stands for all.¹⁴ The complex and contradictory social location and relations of different groups of women are then lost. The understanding of patriarchy found here is one-dimensional, isolated from the social organization as a whole. This serves to occlude the relations and processes through which women become individuated social subjects in history and develop agency for self and social emancipation. The space created by the erasure of social relevancies and historicity then fills up with the concerns of those who theorize in the strict context of intellectual division of labour. Consciously or unconsciously these women are members of the elite, part of the ruling classes, and help to create relevant conceptual apparatuses. Devoid of concreteness, the unadjectivized use of the concept ‘development’ serves the same hegemonic purpose. Missing the qualifiers of ‘economic’, ‘capitalist’, ‘class’ or ‘racialized’, such a ‘development’ can only serve the purpose of racist patriarchal capitalism. On the contrary, an anti-ideological critique informs us that differently located people inhabit different spaces in the topography of the social, while such topographies are constructed and connected in reference.¹⁵ To resist and defeat patriarchy we have to situate

its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, of language. Language is as old as consciousness, language *is* practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness arises, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men.” *The German Ideology*, p. 51.

¹³ Marx’s use of this notion of ‘science’ is not positivist or empiricist. It is materialist in the sense of a social inquiry suitable to its object of investigation, and historical. Historical materialism is this sort of ‘scientific’ knowledge. *The German Ideology* discusses this topic extensively, as do Marx’s various ‘prefaces’ and ‘afterwords’ to *Capital* Vol I.

¹⁴ On the ideological use of classificatory and descriptive categories, see H. Bannerji, “But who speaks for us?” in *Thinking Through: Essays on feminism, marxism and anti-racism*, Toronto: Women’s Press (1995). See also H. Bannerji, “Ideology” in S. Mojab (ed), *Marxism and Feminism*, London: Zed Books (2015).

¹⁵ In *Writing the Social* Smith teaches us a method of mapping, connecting the local with the extra-local, which allows us to step out of the binary use of the notions of ‘here’ and ‘there’. See especially pp. 125-130.

our struggles within the social. Conversely, the notion of class and the phenomena of class struggles cannot be conducted outside of this differentiated and composed social terrain. Struggles against the state must be waged on the ground of civil society, while transformation of the everyday life of civil society must attend to the constitutive impact of roles of the state.

Part II An Anti-Ideological Understanding Of Violence Aimed Towards Understanding Violence Against Women

In the last few years there has been an exponential increase in violence against women in India. Rapes, gang rapes, rapes in police custody, rapes by members of the Indian army – ranging from urban centres and villages to forest and agricultural lands inhabited by peasants and tribes – are ubiquitous. These activities have been accompanied by acid attacks, sexual harassments of all kinds, and have become staples of the news media. They have expanded earlier and established practices of rapes, dowry murders, female foeticide or infanticide, dictates of caste *panchayats* (caste councils), rapes of all kinds in communal riots and pogroms against muslims (Gujarat 2002). We should also explicitly mention marital rapes, whose sanitized expression is ‘domestic violence’ which hard-wires family lives in all patriarchal societies.

The pervasiveness of violence, of hatred and degradation of women of all ages, has made ‘violence against women’ a legal category not only in India but everywhere else, including international agencies. Time and again great resistance of women’s and other social movements, left and liberal political parties has led to the establishment, extension and amendments of laws. But even so the executive apparatuses of the Indian central and provincial governments have not displayed any great effectiveness in this matter. This is revealed by police negligence and by the slowness of the justice system in taking up and deciding cases, along with the occurrence of rapes in police custody or by Indian armed forces enjoying the immunity of the Armed Force Special Powers Act (AFSPA). Justice is not only denied by delay, but rendered inconceivable for many by the absence of proper police records and implementation of laws, and by court acquittals of perpetrators. This ‘violence against women’ and neglect by institutions of law enforcement demand an historical, materialist/anti-ideological analysis. This requires that we place this current state of affairs in the prevailing socio-economic, political situation and dominant ideologies.

This critique needs to refer to the anti-ideological epistemological method I mentioned earlier through bringing disparate, seemingly unconnected topics together. To critique ‘violence against women’ we need to introduce our knowledge of history as a part of the collage. In the immensely long persistence of patriarchy we have noted the symbiosis between social and sexual divisions of labour in all aspects of the mode of production. They are manifested in the social organization and relations and in the accompanying forms of consciousness. In every mode of production which is based on private property and its apparatus of administrating and ruling we find patriarchy as a core element implying overt

and covert violence against women.¹⁶ This is a structural economic as well as a cultural-moral and religious matter. Countless writings on women and sexuality have uncovered constitutive relations between property and propriety.¹⁷ The mode of production is inclusive of civil society and the state, which are elaborated from a synthesis of patriarchy, class and other cultural-social relations of production, reproduction and power. Common sense of morality and religious institutions contain, for instance, definitions of female morality, of good and bad women and the resulting triptych of the virgin, the mother and the whore. All religions, even those which are otherwise antagonistic to each other, subscribe to the same or similar proscriptive norms regarding women, grounding them in a hierarchical space. Ideologies of femininity have co-existed with simultaneous deifying mythologies and demonization of women. It is never trite to remember that sexual, social and labour ownership of women and their children, whether in marriage or not, have provided the moral and administrative apparatuses of the church, the state and the family. Until now, and even now in most countries, the family is conceived possessively and is the possession of the father, not the mother. Not only are the patriarchal ('normal') familial institutions intrinsically violent, especially violating of women's bodies and minds, but many societies and states contain legal threats of disciplining and punishing the deviants. With the waning of feudalism and the rise of capitalism societies changed somewhat, but patriarchy did not disappear. It actually elaborated and mutated, became materialized in and through spatial and labour segregation between the private and the public spheres – production and reproduction – with continuing moral patriarchal valence as well as religious authoritarianism.

It is evident that patriarchal capitalism has normalized violence of many kinds for centuries within and outside of family lives. Many dehumanizing practices and their legitimating forms of consciousness enshrined in the economy, the state, religion and social conventions proliferated. This normalization of violence in protean forms threatening life itself is brutally evident in Marx's critique of "so-called primitive accumulation" mocking Adam Smith *et al's* ideology of piety and hard work (work ethic) of the rich/the capitalist.¹⁸ Primitive accumulation affects not only men but equally women, though differentially,

¹⁶ On family as a form of slavery through sexual division of labour, see *The German Ideology* and F. Engels, *The origin of the family, private property and the state*, New York: International Publishers (1964).

¹⁷ H. Bannerji, S. Mojab and J. Whitehead (eds), *Of Property and Propriety: The role of gender and class in imperialism and nationalism*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press (2001). See 'Introduction'.

¹⁸ Marx, *Capital*, Vol I, Part VIII: "In times long gone by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent and, above all, a frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living... Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell but their own skins. And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority that, despite all its labour, has up to now nothing to sell but itself, and the wealth of the few that increases constantly although they have long ceased to work. Such insipid childishness is everyday preached to us in the defence of property." (p. 667)

combined with the violence of commodity fetishism and alienation. This is what we need to remember to understand the present-day onslaught of global neoliberalism – the form of capitalism of our times – and its impact on lives of people. ‘Primitive accumulation’ as it obtains now in India and elsewhere is in a continuum with a wide range of on-going violence against all, and especially women.

Primitive accumulation is both prior and coterminous, external and internal to the process of capitalist development. Though it infiltrates as well as directly invades and destroys the lives, labours and societies which were pre-capitalist, it cannot be still relegated to history. The eviction and dispossession that happened in the earlier phases also exists within the economic system with the help of the evolving and expanding capitalist state. This apparently socio-legal, yet brute and armed force, while not directly within the circuit of capital, still undergirds the whole mode of production and should be seen both as the source of capital’s birth and its mode of renewal. Not only was primitive accumulation once written in ‘annals of blood and fire’, in wars, invasions, colonization, slavery and bonded labour, but it is continually being rewritten up to now. No sustained distinction can be maintained, therefore, between primitive accumulation of growth and dispossession, as some have done.¹⁹ Territory is still vital for capital, thus land is a crucial element, but along with that, labour, bodies, natural and industrial resources are constantly annexed and re-colonized. The ideological use of the notion of ‘development’ covers this truth and sanitizes the entire violence of the accumulation project and its processes. Capital’s expansion depends on the annexation of spaces and speeding up of time. Lives hitherto outside capitalism come into its grip and are constantly re-worked. Older forms of capitalist spaces and time schemes re-settle the earlier settled spaces, thus re-invent spaces of capital. Capitalist growth and human dispossession are twins. This constant reworking of the same grounds can be metaphorically captured by the trope of ‘gang rape’, where the same body is repeatedly violated. In spite of claims to the contrary, human and capitalist development cannot really happen together. Capital’s grab for natural resources, markets, human labour and bodies are composites of a total violence. Furthermore this violence nourishes the symbiotic relations of the state and the civil society in their porousness and circulatory constitution. Spaces for expansion and reproduction of capital are conquered and re-invented within a time frame of hyper-rationalized labour that resonates with the taking over, breaking down and re-construction of productive spaces.²⁰ I

¹⁹ See David Harvey, for instance, the originator of the notion of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ in *The new imperialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2005), taking his cue from Rosa Luxemburg. There have been debates on the difference between those who espouse primitive accumulation as understood (supposedly) by Marx, and Harvey’s position. Bill Dunn, in “Accumulation by Dispossession or Accumulation by Capital? The Case of China” in *Journal of Australian Political Economy* No 60, pp. 5-27, gives a rundown on these discussions/debates. Judith Whitehead, in *Development and dispossession in the Narmada Valley*, Delhi: Longman (2010), tries to mediate between these positions, and in my opinion succeeds, as she demonstrates through her study of eviction and resettlement of people victimized by the Narmada dam project in India.

²⁰ See ‘creative destruction’, a term coined by Joseph Schumpeter and later used with reference to neoliberalism

will return to this frenetic sense of time later.

We must, therefore, see both the continuity and change in capital's development. The territorial expropriation and devastation presently growing in India and elsewhere means also the eviction of the inhabitants and the extreme exploitation and repression imposed on them. Not only cheap labour but sexual and biological bodies of the world's majority who cannot find a space in the labour market are thrust through capital's workings and turnovers into homelessness and dangerous flights resulting in various kinds of 'slavery', including what I call bio-slavery.²¹ The quintessential violence of all these factors is both obvious and subtle and present every day. It is not a surprise, therefore, that the violence of patriarchy, in conjunction with the penetration of the market in every aspect of life, has been erupting so powerfully in India in its convulsions to birth neoliberal capitalism.

According to an Indian proverb, land and women are spoils of heroes. A crucial mode of entry into Indian patriarchal neoliberalism is through the struggles waged over land and common natural resources. Villages, water, forests and other resources are sought to be privatized, of which one method is through amendments introduced to the 2013 Land Acquisition Act now being rushed through by the BJP government through the promulgation of ordinances.²² Though a 'development' agenda has existed under the earlier phases of Congress government, there has been a redirection in the last few years from a modicum of concern for the rendered poor, to the present, when such people are not seen as deserving protection in any way, neither as shareholders nor as stakeholders. This Land Acquisition Act, which was pushed through under pressure from the left and progressive political elements, had tried to stem, if limitedly, the primitive accumulation through the devastation of agriculture, forest lands, rivers and water systems, and of the environment in general. It had clauses pertaining to impact assessment on the population, on their livelihood and the environment, compensation and rehabilitation for the evicted and the displaced. Though it has had no time to be actualized, this Act offers a formal and minimal recognition of popular possession through prior occupation of land or use of resources. The ordinances brought in by the Modi government are bent on destroying that. This is done to "open up" India for 'free trade', with no barriers for foreign as well as national private investments, freeing the investors to 'develop' at will with no liabilities or compensation, privatizing state based enterprises. Instead the Indian government is offering to pay minimally for the harms inflicted by these private corporations from the public exchequer. Though slowed down somewhat by the

by Harvey, Marshall Berman and others.

²¹ I use this term to express the near absolute dispossession and bondage of this evicted, 'surplus' labour, whose very bodies and body parts become commodities, rather than their embodied labour. 'Harvesting' organs to patenting genes, to the renting of wombs and producing of babies as commodities, are all part of this process. The notion of 'slavery' here is iconic in the sense in which the nazi holocaust is the central representation for measuring extermination of 'others'.

²² See T.K. Rajlakshmi, "Land Bill hits a wall" in *Frontline*, March 20, 2015, pp. 26-29; also Prafulla Dasi, "Hill of Resistance – Fight against bauxite mining in Niyamgiri", *Ibid.* pp. 30-32.

complexities and resistances of a parliamentary political system, regional and state government disagreements and the resistance of the left political parties, unions and left popular movements, primitive accumulation of the neoliberal era is fast accelerating. In this attempt at invention of space for 'growth', not only are the 'undeveloped' (forest, mountain terrain and other mineral rich) areas being annexed, but previously developed agricultural holdings of middle to better off farmers are also constantly preyed upon and their assets de-developed and land sold for other purposes. The perils of loans sustaining competition with larger capital can be measured in thousands of suicides by indebted farmers.

The violence of this primitive accumulation is sought to be concealed by the ideological discourse of 'development' with its feel good, fuzzy quality.²³ Modi's enormously funded election campaign was fought on this platform of promise of development (*vikas*) for all expressed in slogans of *acche din sabke liye* (good days for everyone), and *sabke sath, sabke pas* (with everyone, near everyone), spinning a rhetorical web of inclusivity. The Indian state's earliest aspiration to take on the guardianship of the poor to some extent in their food security, livelihood, health and education, as well as to strengthen the national industrial bourgeoisie, is being mowed down by a storm of structural adjustment imperatives resting on privatization and foreign direct investment. The significant tense shift in Modi's governmental rhetoric to "make in India" (becoming the outsourcing site for foreign capital) from the earlier governments' "made in India" (of import substitution) marks the distance traversed by the Indian state between the much earlier and the current stages of capitalist development.

In India, as elsewhere, 'development' through strong industrial organizations of the state and private capital is being destroyed, but 'development' for profit is taking place in the countryside by predatory private capital in mining, lumber and agribusiness. This phenomenon has been discussed by social scientists and journalists from India and elsewhere, but not to much effect.²⁴ State sector enterprises are predominantly privatized now, and sold off as time passes. In the new scheme of affairs the city eats up the countryside. Building construction for housing (for the rich/middle class), land deals, corporate office towers, production and call centres figure prominently on this list, as also do shopping malls, recreational and leisure facilities (resorts, spas, golf courses). The penetration of agriculture by biotech, chemical and pharmaceutical companies have been attested by great destructive

²³ On Modi's development agenda see Varghese George, "A leader and his narrative" in *The Hindu*, Magazine Section. "Modi's doctrine in civilizational terms has proposed a new social contract in which the minorities and Dalits have limited or no place in political power. In Parliament, State Assemblies and councils of ministers at the centre and states, the Muslims' representation has become negligible; for the first time in India there is not a single Muslim MP in the leading party of the ruling coalition. This way the proposed social contract suggests development not as a participatory process." P. 1

²⁴ See *Economic and Political Weekly*, which has carried a large amount of material on Indian development agenda both in its current and past issues. A qualitative change in the idea of 'development' and its euphemistic uses in India and elsewhere may be traced through this journal.

chaos. Vast numbers of people live in great poverty and die from malnutrition due to near starvation. The country is constantly traversed by fleeing voluntary or involuntary internal migrants. They are people rejected by the labour market, denied subsistence on agriculture, many living and dying on city sidewalks. Neoliberalism has forced the growth of 'cities of slums' and trafficking of women, children and men for domestic or other lowest paid labour, including sexual.

Everything I have touched upon is a matter of capitalist development and violence. Violence is the foundation of the metabolic system of the capitalist mode of production, and neoliberal capitalism is its most logical and mature phase up to now. As feminist scholars have shown, capitalism's organizational necessity of patriarchy – both in production and reproduction – is also foundational. Cultural mores of high profit margin are made with moral regulation. They work constitutively between the social relations of the state and civil society and together subjugate women and the majority of the population. What Althusser called 'the ideological apparatus of the state' is central to this mix. In this era of super mobile and developed technology primitive accumulation now is not only securing cheap and almost unpaid labour, but nationally/locally or internationally active transportive organizations are supplying bodies for 'harvesting'. In this sense the model/ideal type of 'primitive accumulation' found in *Capital* (Volume I) needs a stretch as capital is no longer in crucial need of an older style proletariat for putting in place industrial enterprises of scale or for populating colonies. In the global south as well as north a precarious, semi-bonded labour is found in the special economic zones of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Philippines and in piece-work factories in/around California. The eviction through various forms of primitive accumulation in 17th – 20th century Britain, led to the substantial creation of a working class for giant industries which were spatially located, as for example in Manchester, Birmingham and Sheffield. The colonial conduits and the army relocated European populations at the cost of indigenous peoples of the Americas. The neoliberal form of commodity producing capital does not need either a huge or a spatially concentrated, long term labour force. Through the manipulation of high technology the poorest labour, often women, can be inserted in the labour process. It has robbed people entirely of their life entitlements, preventing them from selling their labour except under strict conditions of others' mercy. For many in India, Africa and elsewhere, to be alive is a privilege. They can participate in the market neither as consumers nor as producers. What has been called 'precarious' life or 'bare' life is their permanent mode of chance existence.²⁵

Under these circumstances what was called 'formal' - i.e. normal - labour with a degree of predictability in duration and physical concentration and better wages has been replaced by the new normalcy of what was once called 'informal', i.e. occasional, casual or flexible labour. This new normalcy has resulted in a growing decline in the older forms of

²⁵ See G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*, Stanford: Stanford University Press (1998); also J. Butler, *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*, London: Verso (2004)

trade unions or labour organizing in terms of their strategies of class struggle. The older ideas and practices need innovating and expansion. This is happening very slowly due to the persistence and expansion of the now normalized precarious and temporary labour force. For the majority of Indians their living bodies and labour are *de facto* redundant and their life spaces and sustenance are out of reach.

In earlier communist literature, beginning with Marx, there was an expectation of 'withering away of the state' when communism becomes the mode of production. The agents of this withering were the conscious proletariat and its growing democratic participation in shaping all aspects of life. But that has not been the case in communist states and societies we have seen so far. Before they could reach this state they were caught in the stranglehold of world capitalism led by the U.S or the trammels of capitalist development in their own countries. Instead the slogan of less state has been raised by neoliberalism. 'Free trade' stands for this 'freedom'. But is there an actual withering away of the state by neoliberalism? It is certainly the case that from the mid-1980s or so there has been a withdrawal of the state through the structural adjustment fiats. The state was pulled away from a protective or ameliorative role toward the poor into eventually wholly augmenting free enterprise. India from the mid-1980s onwards embarked on this venture and submitted to conditionalities of 'austerity' forced for the submergence of or the integration between Indian (national) and global imperialist capital. Doing this required much violence and continues to do so. SAP devastated the global south – the new European 'austerity' measures faced by Greece are now devastating the north in a similar fashion.

In India the privatization mandate has forced an orgy of de-institutionalizing of the state in its social welfare and democracy promoting functions. Has this anything to do with the inertia of the Indian state in dealing with violence against women, for example through police negligence and contribution towards crimes against women and the poor?²⁶ Has it also not exponentially increased a cynicism about 'law and order', so that we see a rise in mob justice and so-called conflict resolution privately? The state in the global south, with its colonial inheritance of loss and 'progressive' development, had an element of a comprador state and is now matured to a great collusion with national and foreign capitalist classes. In India and elsewhere it quickly gave up the idea of public good. Has this anything to do with the corruption and crimes that have been overwhelming India? The Indian state's withdrawal is nearing its completion in handing over the poorer segments bound hand and foot to the freedom of the market and finance capital. Thus for the poor an 'end' of the state as an enabler is truly in sight, its due diligence for public good is ended by becoming a total instrument of

²⁶ For an example of police contribution to violence against women in India see *Times of India*, January 2, 2014, p. 1, a news report under the headline: "Cops tell gang-rape victim's family to go back to Bihar: forcibly try to cremate body at night". The article begins: "Gang-raped twice and dumped in government hospital for three days with fatal burns, the 16-year old victim had no peace even after death. Police hijacked the hearse carrying her body on Tuesday night and forcibly took it to Nimtolla Ghat for cremation, ignoring the family's request to wait until Wednesday."

capitalism. In its capacity of a national state it has signed away the rights and resources of the majority of the people.²⁷ In matters of financial liability, insurance, legalization of all forms of primitive accumulation, the state has created a landing pad for invading foreign and national private capital. This entails a derangement in Indian lives and societies. The situation is tantamount to a state of war which is both economic and military.

Global neoliberalism, the imperialism of our time, is a human, social and ecological disaster. Rife with wars and civilizational destruction, we see masses plunged into abysmal existence and death. The very content of the word “human” is being emptied out and filled with screams of agony of those condemned to it. In this atmosphere of violence how can violence against women not intensify, almost as an excrescence of this ordered disorder? Newspapers in India report occurrences of gang rapes, rapes of children and the elderly routinely. Patriarchy has been violently activated through the loss of livelihood and the ferocity of the market. Violent masculinism pumps up the ethic of grabbing fast all ‘goods’ including bodies of women. The whole social scene is one of a display of bodily and economic prowess. A proper understanding of violence against women, then, needs to be mapped within the polity and economy of neoliberalism that I have outlined so far.²⁸

Having described the lethal combination of patriarchy and neoliberalism which structure social life in India, we will now move on to discuss how ‘violence against women’ can be deployed as an ideological category to limit its efficacy and to keep it apart from being an essential component of class struggle. Here we need to remember how phrases or words achieve an ideological status through a certain epistemological grammar, through linguistic and re-connective usages that wrench them out of their specific socio-historical contexts and locations. As stated above, ideological practice involves the conversion of a descriptive word into a self-standing conceptual category – which then has to connect with spheres of discursivities which generate elsewhere. Also ideas which have no real connections with each other are bound together with ruling and exploiting relations and intentions. Here we can see how Marx’s three tricks for producing ideology can be applied to the notion of violence against women. Rather than being an analytical category it serves as an interpretive one. Rather than describing social behavior of a particular social moment, this becomes a standardizing category relating to the current state and governance, mainly for sociological coding and legal reform. This move helps to abstract what is happening to women in a particular sphere but does not necessarily encourage us to link it back to the relevant

²⁷ The role of the state in neoliberalism needs to be understood not only in its withdrawal but in its instrumental crucial role as the host of neoliberalism, signing away to private corporations all of what belongs to the people of India. See Chirashree Das Gupta, *op. cit.*; also David McNally, *Global Slump: The economics and politics of crisis and resistance*, Blackpoint, N.S.: Fernwood (2011).

²⁸ See C. Das Gupta, *op. cit.* and Elizabeth Armstrong, *Gender and Neoliberalism: The All India Democratic Women’s Association and globalization politics*, New York: Routledge (2014) on neoliberalism’s multiple violences on lives of Indian women, including sexual violence. See also V. Butalia and T. Sarkar (eds), *Women and Right-Wing Movements: Indian Experiences*, London: Zed Books (1995)

historical, socio-economic and political contexts. This is apparent if we juxtapose ‘violence against women’ as a bounded legal category, a textually mediating term, with the descriptive and situating use made in the reporting of events pertaining to women. The newly abstracted category can be used instrumentally and manipulated to devise exclusive laws which do not provide elements for creating wider political and social struggles for women’s emancipatory subjectivities and agencies. This same ideological conversion of notions such as ‘development’ can be found in the workings of the Indian economy and other social laws in the interest of the capitalist classes. We can claim that binary concepts, the constructions of public and private social spaces, social and sexual divisions of labour, commoditization and degradation of labour and human bodies, especially of women’s productive and reproductive bodies, normalize violence in the family and society at large. This normalization is itself a violence and provides the ideological core of ‘violence against women’. What has to be stressed is that without rendering capitalist patriarchy invisible as violence, without normalizing the violence against humanity implied in capitalism, violence against women cannot arise, sustain or increase. The extreme violence of gang rapes, dowry murders, witch burning, *satidaha* (burning women on their husbands’ pyre) and cruelties of caste or community organizations towards women could not arise without the ‘normal’ violence of entire ways of life. Neither women nor men, neither the poor nor the rich, are immune to this overall dehumanizing ethos.

Lest we give the impression that ‘violence against women’ cannot be used as a concept or to describe or to fight for justice because capitalism is inherently patriarchal and we must wait until it ends, we need to stress that latent violence in social organization attains blatant forms under some circumstances more than others. In the present neoliberal social condition in India and elsewhere the conjuncture of forces is right for this extreme blatancy as all parts of societies are undergoing a massive upheaval through dispossessions of life sustenance, wars and invasions. As a ruthless primitive accumulation is tearing up Indian society by its roots to institute neoliberalism’s legitimation mechanisms, violence or brute strength has become the dominant political modality. Casting aside social bonds in favour of profit and consumption, in the neoliberal phase of capitalism the imperatives of the ‘base’ have themselves become the ‘superstructure.’²⁹ As we have seen in the last decades, riots, pogroms against muslims and other minorities and militancy and police confrontations in wars for resources have become mobilizing political manoeuvres of political parties of the right.³⁰ We also need to remember the importance of ideology in such situations and note that violence takes its most extreme forms when legitimized by moral justification or faith in religion, for

²⁹ See D. Harvey, *New Imperialism*, ch. 4: ‘Accumulation by Dispossession’. See also Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and its discontents*, New York: New Press (1998).

³⁰ On riot and pogroms as modes of mobilization for the BJP and other hindu right wing parties, such as the Shiv Sena, Maharashtra Navanirman party, etc., see H. Bannerji, “Making India hindu and male”; also A.G. Noorani, *The RSS and the BJP: A division of labour*, New Delhi: Left Word (2000), and T. Basu *et al*, *Khaki shorts, saffron flags: A critique of the hindu right*, New Delhi: Orient Longman (1993).

example, or in ethnic nationalism. When violent imperatives are thus embedded in popular moral, emotional and imaginative lives they take on an unconditional existence. This is where the extensive civil society based ideological fieldwork of the Sangh Parivar since 1925 provides their inputs. Their ideal of *hindutva*, a distillation of casteist hinduism, is a moral-political ideology poisoning the entire society. Presented as moral imperatives in the name of the hindu pantheon and a pure and exalted form of civilization, this ethnic nationalism calls hindus to social/political action against their 'enemies', namely the muslims. Armed with this moral and divine strength, wearing masks of gods and heroes, violence against women, muslims or any other group assumes a great public and spectacular form. Spectacles of force of religion and the state are the order of the day, and gang rape is also such a spectacular display of masculine power, which invests its perpetrators with a more than life-size brute force – a full synthesis of embodied masculinity. The deathly acts of the cadres of hindu supremacism are projected as social/collective punishment for 'erring' women and overreaching religious minorities. Muslim and other minority women are specially targeted because hindu brahmanical masculine virtue must undertake it as a duty to preserve social order. These punishing acts range from caste panchayat (council) fiats to honour killing to gang rapes, all under the rubric of preserving moral purity. Rape then branches out from within the marital and family fold and private actions of individuals to the status of social or civilizational corrective. In the age of neoliberalism, where the idea of the social and binding social relations are sought to be erased and deranged, we are left with a macabre collage of patriarchal neoliberal capitalism with its ethics of hyper consumption, fundamentalist hinduism and the nation state based on ethnic supremacy. 'Violence against women', taken as a singular legal category, as a solely 'patriarchal' behavior rather than an expression of violent social relations, deflects our scrutiny from this composite reality and encourages us to treat women's maltreatment as a single issue, that of the power of men over women. Without the acknowledgement of this complexity of social formation not even a hint of an answer can be provided when people ask why violence against women in India is so rapidly increasing.

Neoliberalism's use of religious fundamentalism rather than secular modernity is a consciously undertaken ideological-political project. The moral appeal of this stance can be found the world over. The religio-ethnic/communalist hindu supremacism is thus not different in essence from islamic or zionist fundamentalisms that become state ideologies, nor is their union with neoliberalism so exceptional. Christian civilizational supremacism and all these other national and imperial projects rely on the evocation of the religious past and invented cultures and traditions. Mythification of history and politicization of myths to create ideological foundations for nation states are particularly important in an era that grows by fracturing the social space. These religio-ideological stances are loaded with hatred against the 'other', invented enemies such as women, ethnic 'others' and poor labouring people. Women according to this view are not quite 'human', but equated both with nature and as cultural objects of male consumption. They are also treated as plinths of the hindu family

edifice and as properties of men and masculinist society. This owned and subordinate status of women in all patriarchal societies has given rise from times immemorial to the idea of shaming the male 'others' of another group by raping 'their' women – India is no exception.

The pseudo-historical recuperation by mythic ethnic nationalisms, the pageants of holy war and claims of being the chosen of god, nurture a cult of heroes with a violent dark side. In fact without having the power of inflicting arbitrary violence, no one can be a hero at all. *Purushatwa* (masculinity) is the vital force of this domination. The code of conduct for the heroic and holy nation is of a perpetual war and the need to treat society as a battlefield. This war is against those designated as both dangerous and inferior, in the case of India they consist of religious minorities, communists, feminists and secularists. But their war is also against the weak, the poor, the defenseless, who hold the nation 'back'. They are the 'inferior' people whose lives are solely meant to provide services for the upper classes and upper castes. Women, religious minorities and the other 'others' must thus be held down in their place by the 'order' of this aggressive fundamentalist and capitalist masculinity in its most marketized and advertised form. There is an active and pre-emptive war going on against any popular democratic aspiration on the people's part. Any desire on the part of women and 'others' to control their own bodies, livelihoods and rights to justice is wholly unacceptable to these holy-minded illiberal neoliberals. In the Indian instance the word *purush*, signifying a quintessential maleness, performs an ideological function for the recruits of the hindu right. This high caste or brahmanical male typology projects rectitude, valour and sternness which conceal in an ideological cloak of austerity the reality of a rapacious mode of production and societal injunctions. This political vision is not so different from the social vision of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, in which society is a man-made jungle with its 'natural' laws of cannibalizing and ruthlessly eliminating those who are weak and fall behind.

Conclusion

It should be clear by now that due to the frenetic speeding up of time in the rationalization of labour in the present phase of capital, enabled by exponential growth in information technology and extreme financialization, there is a constant undoing and resettling of the same social and productive spaces. The resulting constant fracturing calls for a unifying ideological device if it is not to spin out of control politically. This makes neoliberalism an age of ideology, making working class consciousness which needs a larger segment of maturing time very difficult to emerge. Thus a clearly articulated class struggle on the part of the working class or the unemployed is more difficult to sustain, while the bourgeoisie are replete with their own class power and self-validation and have their victory for the time being. We can speculate as to how to theorize and analyze this rapidity of breakdown and the setting up of neoliberal capital, with its sandstorm of appearances, and what socio-political forms these frantic activities add up to. This makes it all the more urgent to explore and critique the emerging forms of consciousness, the outpourings of ideologies

both religious and secular and their co-existence. To make matters worse, neoliberal hindu fascism is loaded with imagistic and narrative forms. The myth filled, ritualistic nature of hinduism blends in with competitive consumerism and heroic conquest of 'others'. In the latest Republic Day parade attended by Barak Obama – the largest ever held in India – the hindu civil society groups also celebrate hitherto unseen traditional hindu rituals in a more than life-size manner. Processions of towering god figures and religious-patriotic ones, pageants based on the epic Ramayana, the use of caparisoned elephants and horses, hundreds of thousands of men with tridents and spears, marked the Republic Day, along with the state's military paraphernalia. These were accompanied by a dizzying assemblage of sounds, colours and light. The word "overwhelming" is inadequate for description. What is offered is a stimulous for vision and a synaesthetic representational totality that *blocks* seeing itself.

I would like to return to the themes of class and class consciousness based on a Fordist model of capitalism – involving industries of scale, large shop floors, huge assemblage of workers and long durée business plans – and its contrast to neoliberal work places and working modes. The earlier industrial capitalism has needed a collectivist workplace organization and a coordinated continuous labour process over a long period. Vast numbers of relatively skilled workers then worked together for reliable periods of time, which created possibilities of seeing themselves as bound by the same conditions, employers and interests and, as such, as members of a 'class'. This gave scope both to forging labour unions and forming 'proletarian' consciousness. This type of organization of production has been declining in India and other countries, instead falling back on earlier capitalist forms of home-work, putting-out, piece and temporary work, rendering gigantic overall work forces of free trade and export zones practically invisible as a proletarian labour force. These and other semi-slave labour modes found in India, Bangladesh, Mexico, etc. have not yet created legal or substantial social possibilities for organizing of unions or associations. As the former long term workers are being substituted by 'informal', 'flexible', 'temporary', 'part-time', and 'seasonal' labourers spread across different production sites globally, they are presenting needs for innovation in class politics. It is not true that commodity production has disappeared or that value is not really dependent upon concrete labour. But where, how, by whom and for how long – this concrete labour with its massive alterations has rendered earlier theories and practices analytically and organizationally inadequate. A fissiparous, competitive, transient mode of social being has produced a new productive subject whose imagined self and agentic consciousness become those of a vendor.

The steadiest economic activities now facing people are those of corporate capital or micro business enterprises which are constantly proliferating and dying. The primary social continuity and identity lies in being a consumer. The worker and the businessman see themselves as entrepreneurs and consumers. This makes sense as, despairing of proper employment or of any control over their life circumstances, the majority of the population are constantly veering towards small entrepreneurialization. They have been offered a fiction of independence. This petty entrepreneurial consciousness is aided by the training they have

been long receiving through creeping neoliberalism, NGOs, the remedy of micro credit, all for their 'empowerment'. Women in particular have been the trainees of this empowerment, through projects of small loans and so on. As such, a petty-bourgeois consciousness has become normalized as everybody's subjective consciousness. This subjectivity and its agentic forms are ideological ones, moving from the perception of 'people as makers' and producers of value to 'people the sellers and consumers' of whatever is around. This situation fosters primordialist types of consciousness which evade rational understanding. Class consciousness of such socio-economic subjects becomes a prey to competition, envy, and possessive individualism and develops political allegiances which are anti-worker, thus self-destructive. The thugs who now prevent or destroy working class organizing and class struggle from developing were, after all, former or would-be workers, now transformed into market hangers-on. The shock troops of right-wing political parties often come from these groups. They are the economic clientele and patronage seekers of these parties, clearing for them in exchange the social undergrowth of left resistance. This makes the established types of democratic resistance increasingly difficult to mobilize.

It is not a surprise, therefore, to see the appeal of religious communalist ideology or the intensification of violence against women among these subjects. New traditions and re-interpreted ethnicities have been poured into old right wing ideological containers of religion, of nationalisms of blood and belonging and the ethic of ownership of women and land. These are rich sources for group identification sought by the oppressor to pacify the oppressed. These invented and synthesized religions are deeply inegalitarian but create an illusion of equality within the group. Through this process of identity politics of religion and ethnic nationalism the disempowered experience an illusory closure of the gap between themselves and their rulers, and differences between themselves and others. This is the sop that the *hindutva* project of the Sangh Parivar offers to hindus as they destroy life certainties of the 'others'. To create a hindu nation they propose 're-conversion' to increase the national space, making actual social relations of class, caste and patriarchy invisible. This ideology embraces neoliberalism, seeking to conceal violent poverty and inhuman life conditions. Pragmatically speaking, there is also the seduction of the hope of getting closer to those in power who may provide even a meagre livelihood. These ideological expansions are not long sustaining. So they have to be sustained by frequent aggressive actions of superiority, hence the necessity of pogroms, of lynching and riots, and finally – of rape to keep the mothers of the nation in place. Religion and capitalism have now entered into a murderous union and we can see that modernity is not the intrinsic tool for capitalist development. A powerful symbology which cathects social deprivation, frustration and angers to anti-socialism is spreading rapidly. Thus, popular anger is deflected towards the weak, towards people like themselves, rather than attacking the real merchants of misery.