

RESEARCH ARTICLE



GURCHARAN DAS'S IDEOLOGICAL POSITION
To
MAP INDIA ON THE MILLENNIAL CONJUNCTURE-A STUDY OF
INDIA UNBOUND: FROM INDEPENDENCE TO THE GLOBAL INFORMATION AGE
(2000)

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ABSTRACT

India Unbound, published at the millennial conjuncture (2000), is one of the best-known expositions of twenty-first century's neo-liberal conception of India. Das talks about India, particularly in terms of its economic liberation from the license raj of socialist days. As the title indicates, the book attempts to trace recent Indian history "from independence to the global information age". Even a casual glance shows that it is the celebration of neo-liberal culture in India; Das views the emerging free capitalist market as a promise of better future. His heroes are not the old nationalists but new capitalists and politicians including Narasimha Rao, Aditya Birla, and the Ambanis who, according to him, have brought a new hope to India. Writing about India, he ignores many aspects of a common man's everyday life. The focus of this paper is to study his ideological position to write *India on the millennial conjuncture*.

Key Words: India, Unbound, Millennial Conjuncture, Ideology, Position.

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Das divides modern Indian history into three major phases: 1. Our Spring of Hope (1942-65); 2. The Lost Generation (1966-91); 3. The Rebirth of Dreams (1991-99). The first phase, according to him, was marked by hope. They had many hopes after independence; they would be able to lead a better life. The next generation, according to him, was the lost generation because none found the India of his/her aspirations. After the death of Nehru in 1964, there was a crisis in Indian politics. The Nehruvian socialist policies were of little use in improving the living conditions of the people. Das

adds that Mrs. Indira Gandhi also could not do much and the situation even deteriorated further. The third phase begins with the introduction of economic reforms by Narasimha Rao's government in 1991. The economic reforms initiated a revolutionary change in Indian economy as well as in life, according to him, and the Indian people resumed dreaming. Das celebrates this new culture of the free market and the information age. He describes the economic reforms of the 1990s as India's second independence ("Introduction: The Wise Elephant", *India Unbound* xi). He launches an

attack on the socialist policies of Nehru's government and the perpetuation of those policies by Mrs. Gandhi.

Das welcomes the emergence of free-market democracy which, according to him, had been killed before its birth at the time of formation of India as a nation-state. He argues that with the actual practice of democracy (after economic liberalization) Indian economy and society would both flourish.

The book is partly autobiographical; Das traces the history of India after independence along with his own growth from childhood to maturity. He states that in his youth he passionately believed, like many others, in Jawaharlal Nehru's dream of modern India. But later, all realized that "Nehru's economic path was taking [them] to a dead end, and the dream soured. Having set out to create socialism, . . . [they] had instead created statism" (x). He argues that things went from bad to worse and "[the] sense of disillusionment reached its peak during Mrs. Gandhi's autocratic rule in the seventies" (x). However a margin shift happened in 1991:

[i]t was not until July 1991 that [their] mood of despair finally lifted, with the announcement of sweeping liberalization by the minority government of P. V. Narasimha Rao. It opened the economy to foreign investment and trade; it dismantled import controls, lowered customs duties, and devalued the currency; it virtually abolished licensing controls on private investment, dropped tax rates, and broke public sector monopolies. As a result, growth picked up to 7.5 percent a year in the mid-nineties, inflation came down from 13 percent to 6 percent by 1993, exchange reserves shot up from \$ 1 billion to \$ 20 billion. (x)

Das notes that Indian independence had been incomplete until the economic reforms of 1990s and so he identifies 1991 with the second independence of India, even comparing it with the Chinese revolution of 1978 (xi).

Das observes that Nehru and his planners attempted to achieve industrial revolution through the state and discouraged private entrepreneurs. There were at least six things that went wrong with old Indian policy: one, it adopted import-substituting path rather than export-promotion; two, it established inefficient, massive, and monopolistic public sector; three, it overregulated the private entrepreneurs; four, it discouraged foreign investment; five, it pampered organized labor to the point extremely low of productivity; six, it ignored the education of children (xii). He discusses the Indian democracy's functioning before 1990s as "a story of the betrayal of the last two generations by India's rulers" (xii). It is significant that Das does not conceptualize nationalism in cultural, religious, or emotional terms like Sri Aurobindo and Jawaharlal Nehru do, but tries to define India in economic terms. He is a believer in economic liberation; he argues that most of the countries have realized need for it. Discussing the causes of India's backwardness, he states that "India embraced democracy first and capitalism afterwards and this has made all the difference" (xviii). He is pleased with the performance of India in the global free market since the 1990s: [India] is an elephant that has begun to lumber and move ahead. It will never have speed, but it will always have stamina" (xix).

The first part of the book titled "Our Spring of Hope (1942-65)" (1-99), has seven chapters on the economic and political condition of India from 1942 to the death of Jawaharlal Nehru. The first chapter titled "Ranting in English, Chanting in Sanskrit" (3-15) deals with the struggle against the British domination. Das examines the impact of the British over Indian life with reference to his personal life. He states that a new professional class had emerged under the British rule with the introduction of English and Western education system in India. Thus India started to change from a traditional identity to a professional identity. The newly educated class became a threat to the local landlords as well as to the Brahmins who enjoyed intellectual monopoly. But, according to him, the Brahmins also started to learn English and could now rant in English and chant mantras in Sanskrit. He argues that by introducing English in the schools

and colleges of India, "the British dug their own graves" (11).

Das compares Gandhi and Nehru's policies to analyse their inability to significantly develop the country. He notes that Gandhi distrusted technology but not businessmen; on the other hand, Nehru distrusted businessmen but not technology. And "[i]nstead of sorting out the contradictions, we mixed the two up" (11). Das thus rejects the visions of both the leaders. At the same time, although the British adopted the policy of divide and rule, the British Raj was the most important event of Indian history. It contributed to the modernization, democracy, industrial revolution, economic growth and education. The worst effect of the British rule was the emergence of two classes: the educated and the uneducated (14-15). It can be noticed that Das overlooks the demerits of the British rule. English language, industrial development and modern education are the wheels of success for a nation, according to him. These were introduced by the British. Thus, his idea of India does not emerge from any anti-colonial or nationalist experience or sentiment. This is an important distinction between Das's idea of India and Sri Aurobindo and Jawaharlal Nehru's idea. Moreover, Das tends to dismiss too hastily the Gandhian and Nehruvian visions as narrow, without paying attention to their merits.

In the chapter "Smells of Bazaar" (16-26), Das discusses the commercial situation in India during the culmination of India's freedom struggle. There were not more capitalists; only the Birla family was substantially engaged in industrial business and, according to him, the Birlas' assets grew manifold during the Second World War. G. D. Birla became the supporter of the Congress movement due to his friendship with Gandhi. However, Gandhi did not believe in capitalism but was of the opinion that a businessman should hold wealth as a trustee of society. After independence, industry could not grow due to the socialist policies of the government, according to him. He argues that as a result India failed economically: "It has little to do with our colonial past. Neither is it a problem of national character. Nor is it the fault of our "soft democracy". The chief reason for non-performance [was] our wrong "mixed economy" model, which allowed our obstructive bureaucracy to kill our

industrial revolution at birth" (25-26). The Nehruvian model of economy becomes Das's main target of attack.

The chapter "The Train to Nowhere" (27-43) is about the aspirations of the Indians after freedom and Nehru's failure as a prime minister to fulfill them. He argues that Nehru could neither abolish poverty nor illiteracy and failed to establish equality on account of his economic policies. He writes that as a consequence even "[a]fter fifty years the failure is staggering: four out of ten Indians are illiterate; half are miserably poor, earning less than a dollar a day; one-third of the people do not have access to safe drinking water; only a sixth of the villages have modern medical facilities" (28). Talking about the role of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in perpetuating Nehru's legacy in economic matters, he writes that she "perfected actually suppressed growth" (28).

In the chapter "If We Were Once Rich, Why Are We Now Poor?" (52-68), India's poverty is analyzed. Das rejects the argument that colonialism was the only cause of India's poverty; rather, he argues, the British helped to develop India in many ways. He is of the view that it is difficult to fix one reason for India's poverty; to support this observation he refers to many writers who have analyzed the condition. They have noted that Britain's industrial revolution wiped out small Indian textiles; both Indian as well as the British capitalists made large profits during the first World War; the Indian social system (particularly caste) was a major obstacle in development; in addition, less technology, low productivity, illiteracy, and the lack of proper economic policies were also responsible for the decay of Indian economy.

In "Capitalism for the Rich, Socialism for the Poor" (85-99), Das ascribes the failure of industry to the socialist "license raj". He notes that Indian businessmen came together in 1944 to make a plan for industry in India, which came to be known as "Bombay Plan". They argued for technology and foreign capital but they wanted it to be state control, and this was a blunder, according to him (87). Das argues that state control did not allow industry to grow in India:

The most bizarre and damaging was the licensing system. It began with the

Industries (Development and Regulation) Act of 1951, which required an entrepreneur to get license to set up a new unit, to expand it, or change the product mix. The purpose of licensing was (a) to create the planned pattern of investment, (b) to counteract monopoly and the concentration of wealth, (c) to maintain regional balance in locating industries, (d) to protect the interests of small-scale producers and encourage the entry of new entrepreneurs, and (e) to encourage optimum scale of plants and advanced technology. All these were good intentions, but the way that the bureaucracy went about administering the licensing system created a nightmare for the entrepreneur. (94)

The need for approvals on every step from bureaucracy and ministries hampered the economic growth. C. R. Gopalachari's Swatantra Party disapproved of these controls in the early 1960s; it was Rajagopalachari who termed Nehru's socialism as "License Raj" (97).

The first part of the book thus claims to examine condition of Indian industry before independence. The second part, titled "The Lost Generation (1966-91)" (101-210), is an attempt to study the situation in Indian after the death of Nehru. In the seven chapters of this part of the book, Das traces the history of various policies of Indian government which turned the economic condition from bad to worse. In the chapter "Bazaar Power" (103-22), he compares the market and the bureaucracy. He states that Indian bureaucracy is not disciplined but corrupt and its behavior with clients/customers is very harsh. He writes that he once went to a shop to buy a saree. The shopkeeper showed him a hundred sarees although he did not buy a single one; on the other hand, he has to always wait in long queues to buy railway tickets and pay electricity bills, and he is always mistreated by government employees (112). He argues that the customer is always well-served by private sector. Das also suggests the ways to develop private business on the basis of his experiences which he has gained from working in various multinational

companies. He seeks company to capture the mind of customers to make its product popular. He states that the fate of a nation and its people depends upon its market. Das thus totally ignores the advantages of the public sector.

In the chapter "Lerma Rojo and Taichung Native No. 1" (123-38), Das discusses Mahatma Gandhi's policy of local handicrafts and industries. He argues that Gandhi stuck to simple village life and small industry and did not have a broad vision for modern development (126). He also recounts briefly Lal Bahadur Shastri's tenure as prime minister after the death of Nehru. Shastri placed C. Subramaniam, a dynamic and intelligent man, as a minister of food and agriculture to introduce agricultural reforms. Subramaniam imported fertilizers and invited foreign private investment in fertilizer plants, which led to the Green Revolution (130). He adds that only rich farmers took advantage of this revolution because they could afford the risk of investing in agriculture; the leftists complained of growing inequalities but Thorner predicted then that these farmers would one day solve the food problem of India (135). Das also recommends certain measures for the development of agriculture in India:

First, we must change our "poor starving country" mentality and regard the World Trade Organization and the global economy as not enemies but allies. Second, we will not conquer the world through peasant farming, but through technology and capital. Remember, the first green revolution was technological revolution. Third, technology is now with international companies and they will have to play an important role. All the talk about terminator technology is rubbish. We heard the same talk about Mexican wheat in the 1960s. Fourth, we have to liberalize agriculture and remove needless controls. (136)

In the chapter "Caste" (139-54), Das goes into the issues of caste in India, not from a socio-cultural point of view but from the viewpoint of its impact on industry, business and economy. He writes that caste has always played a major role in

Indian economic life. Various jobs were distributed according to the caste. He states that between 1960 and 1990 when labor became militant, many businessmen began to hire labor only from their own caste. They thought that their caste brethren would not cheat them. But, he argues, with liberalization in the 1990s the condition as well as the situation has changed; competition has become fiercer. Business families have started to look for talent instead of caste, and education has emerged as an answer to caste (143-44). He states that caste consciousness is still stoked by politicians in backward rural and semi-urban areas while in modern cities it has been almost abolished. He argues that lower castes how begin to realize that better opportunity for them is in privatization; so they will hopefully turn to education rather than reservations (153). The caste is thus no longer an issue for Das in today's global information age. No doubt, caste should ideally not be an issue in our society, but Das overlooks its actual domination in the current Indian society; it is still a major problem in India: the riots in various parts, the clamour for more reservations in government jobs in the name of caste, "honor-killings", elections in the name of caste, all these show that caste still plays a major role in India.

The next chapter titled "Multiplying by Zero" (155-75) is focused on the period of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's prime ministership. Das states that Mrs. Gandhi tightened the economic controls introduced by Nehru and so industrial production deteriorated. He argues that "[m]odern India's tragedy is not that we adopted the wrong economic model in the 1950s, but that we did not reverse direction after 1965" (158). He states that Mrs. Gandhi ruled in the name of the poor and "garibi hatao" ("abolish poverty") was her winning slogan, but she suppressed economic growth and destroyed the chances for the poor (158). She nationalized the banks to give credits to the neglected sections. But, he argues, the whole system sank within a short period; the expenses of banks rose and most of the banks became bankrupt due to bad debts and corruption (164). Das concludes the chapter, stating that "by suppressing economic liberty for forty years, we destroyed growth and the future of two generations" (175).

In the chapter titled "Merchants of Marwar" (176-86), Das discusses the story of Marwaris, particularly of Aditya Birla, who suffered during the license raj but emerged as a big industrialist after 1991. He writes that the Marwaris were rich and most of them made great fortunes during the First World War (179). He mentions that Aditya Birla was educated in America and wanted to establish industry in India but Mrs. Gandhi's policies were not favorable, so he set up his base in Southeast Asia in 1970s. He returned to India after the economic reforms in 1991 and today he is a known capitalist in Indian as well as in international market. Das has devoted this chapter to Birla's story as an example of the changing situation.

The next chapter titled "Dreams in Kabutarkhana" (187-95) is also dedicated to the success story of Dhirubhai Ambani. Das writes that he was "a master gamesman who managed the License Raj to his advantage and come out on top" (187). Ambani started with nothing in hand but earned everything with labor and dedication; he slowly entered business and grew even under the license raj by making internal connections in the government. Here, Das indicates that license raj government protected those who had personal networking with politicians and bureaucrats. Towards the end of 1980s, Dhirubhai Ambani's two sons, Mukesh and Anil, with MBAs from America, took charge of the business and, as the government introduced economic reforms in 1991, their business flourished.

It is noteworthy that instead of taking a macro-level view of the post-reform India's story, Das chooses to tell two particular stories (of the Birlas and the Ambanis) to support his case.

The third part of the book is titled "The Rebirth of Dreams (1991-99)" (211-357). In Das's words, it deals with the "second independence of India" after the economic reforms were introduced in 1991 by Narasimha Rao's government. All the chapters in this part are written in celebration of the new economic order. The first chapter is titled "The Golden Summer of 1991" (213-27). He is so enthusiastic towards the economic reforms and that he compares them with Nehru's policies, noting that "[t]he economic revolution that Narasimha Rao launched in the middle of 1991 may well be more

important than the political revolution that Jawaharlal Nehru initiated in 1947" (213). He argues that even after political independence in 1947, Indian economy was remained static; it started to flourish only in the 1990s and hence he describes the nineties as "the best years in India's economic life" (213). He cheerfully narrates the story of economic reforms under P. Chidambram, Montek Singh, Manmohan Singh and Narasimah Rao and writes that the old Congress guards had glum faces over the reforms because "[t]hey had led an unexamined life. They had never really thought about the old policies - they had just accepted them as party policies" (218). He then goes on to list the achievements that followed the reforms:

The central government's fiscal deficit came down from 8.4 percent of GDP in 1990-91 to 5.7 percent in 1992-93. Foreign exchange reserves shot up to \$ 20 billion from \$ 1 billion in July 1991. Inflation came down to 6 percent from 13 percent by mid-1993. The reforms virtually abolished industrial licensing. They freed large industrial houses from the control of MRTP Act, which had hindered expansion and investment. They drastically cut the realm of public-sector monopoly and opened banking, airlines, electric power, petroleum, and cellular telephones, among other businesses, to the private sector. They opened the country to foreign investment, allowing "automatic entry" in 34 industries and majority foreign ownership; they set up the Foreign Investment Promotion Board, which established a record of speedy clearances under A. N. Varma's leadership. Foreign investment began to double each year, and it rose from \$ 150 million to \$ 3 billion by 1997 (and would have been much higher but for our failure to deregulate the power and telecom sector properly)". (220)

Das treats the economic reforms as the harbinger of a new life. He hopes that these will change the face of India within years. The main players of this game are, according to him, Narasimah Rao, Manmohan

Singh, P. Chidambram, Montek Singh, A. N. Varma, Ashok Desai, Rakesh Mohan, and Deepak Nayyar. They are the heroes of this Indian economic liberation. Significantly, Das prefers to sing praises of them rather than nationalists. He rejects the left parties as they are against the reforms. He also criticizes the performance of BJP government because, according to him, wealth and poverty were a secondary issue for it (227). It is notable that he also does not talk about the life of the common people and there is very little mention of poverty of India.

In the next two chapters titled "New Money" (244-60) and "Old Money" (261-78), Das discusses the changes in business and economy that have come after the economic reforms. There are a many more of millionaires and entrepreneurs in India within one decade of the reforms (244). There are a number of companies producing international brands even in the small towns. There are private institutions providing high-tech education to the learners. And everyone is becoming rich by learning the new skills. Moneymaking is now seen as respectable (262). He argues that everyone is busy in making life better because "[b]efore 1947, it could blame the British Raj; after 1947, it could blame the overregulated license raj. Now, after the 1991 economic reforms, it has no one but itself to blame" (278). With Das, a materialistic idea of India comes to dominate discourse. It is very different from the Hindu cultural nationalists' idea which saw India as a spiritual and mystical entity.

In the chapter titled "The Rise and Rise of a Middle Class" (279-90), Das analyses how economic development in India has led to the emergence of a powerful middle class. On the basis of its consumption patterns, he describes it as the "consuming class". According to Das, the consuming class has been increased three times in ten years. NCAER projected the consuming class to reach 91 million households by 2007, or 450 million people. Das asserts that it may be too optimistic but it is difficult to imagine that "the middle class could become 50 percent of the population west of the imaginary line linking Kanpur and Madras by 2020, and east of the line by 2040" (287). He argues that this class pushes politicians to liberalize and globalize, and most of them have now understood

the value of new economic culture (287-88). Das's underlying ideological yardstick can be noticed in the following comparison which he makes:

Eighty years ago, their heroes would have been the nationalists Gopal Krishna Gokhle and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Fifty years ago, they would have been Gandhi and Nehru. Today they are business tycoons like Ambani and Azim Premji. It is a sign of our changing times. (289)

In the chapter titled "Modern vs. Western" (291-309) Das attempts to define modernity and to differentiate modernity and westernization as, according to him, many Indians use these terms alternatively. Modernity is no longer the property of the West but is universal; critical way of thinking belongs to all rational and civilized people. He argues that beginning with Rammohun Roy in early nineteenth century the Indians started to relate modernity with improvement in society (291-93). He further adds that "Nehru was our chief modernizer" but he failed in his project because his "main preoccupation was foreign affairs" (295-96). Das argues that Nehru erred by being his own foreign minister. He could not delegate power "but felt compelled to do everything himself" (296). Then Das turns to Mahatma Gandhi's view of modernity and judges it as a failure because of Gandhi's ambivalent attitude to it. He writes:

Although Mahatma Gandhi took modernity to the masses, he suffered deeply from the dilemma that continues to afflict many educated Indians. He used the railways and the telegraphs vigorously, but he hated them. He linked Western technology to colonialism and regarded it as a tool of enslavement. He could not reconcile himself to the idea that Western technology was a rational approach to solving universal problems, and its products, once created, were the universal property of all human beings. He felt that modern urban man had become dehumanized and a victim of machines, and

he yearned for the self-sufficient village. (296-97)

Das's point is that the nationalist leaders did not take the right view of modernity, as a result of which the majority of people remained sunken in poverty.

Das then moves to cultural nationalism in modern India. He observes that Bharatiya Janata Party tries to perpetuate the idea of nationalism in India but he finds it inappropriate. He states:

Nationalism has two fatal charms: it presupposes self-sufficiency, which is a pleasant prospect, and it suggests, very subtly, that we are superior just because we belong to a certain time and place. Unfortunately, both these assumptions are wrong and even dangerous - especially now, when we live in an independent, globalized world. (303-04)

Das rejects the idea of nationalism, particularly as represented by the BJP. Then he denounces the idea of Swadeshi. He enlists ten reasons to reject it: it reflects inferiority complex; it seeks to protect the interests of a few thousand industrialists at the expense of millions of Indians; it does not further the interests of our companies either; India needs \$ 200 billion to build up its infrastructure; the protectionist is wrong in believing that India can open its doors to foreigners in infrastructure and close them to consumer products; there is nothing new about swadeshi as it has been practiced since independence and it has only delivered shoddy, high priced goods and weak, uncompetitive companies; every country has its swadeshi movement, but smart governments ignore their swadeshi lobbies; it leads to license raj; it presumes that someone should tell me what is good for me; and in the last, "swadeshi is irrelevant [. . .] in a country where a third of the people live in poverty and half are illiterate" (304-05). He further counters those who argue that Indian civilization faces a threat from the globalized culture, stating that it is "so diverse and plural, and has been shaped by so many influences - Dravidian, Aryan, Hindu, Greek, Buddhist, Scythian, Islamic, European that it should be able to withstand the influence of globalized culture" (306). He thus

assails one by one the components of the ideology of cultural nationalism and openly advocates an idea of India based on free markets.

In the next chapter "Democracy First, Capitalism Afterwards" (310-24), Das defines the nation and observes that "[a] successful nation has three attributes: politically, it is free and democratic; economically, it is prosperous and equitable; and socially, it is peaceful and cohesive" (324). The Indian nation enters in twenty-first century with all the three attributes, according to him. Here it is notable that his idea of India is very different from the idea based on the traditional concept of nationalism. His India is neither a mythical sparrow of gold, nor a mystical identity rather he views India in its economic growth in the era of globalization.

In the chapter "Knowledge is Wealth" (325-44), Das advocates knowledge economy for the construction of a better nation. He argues that technological revolution "offers the opportunity for bridging the gap between the have and have-nots" (325). He celebrates India's success in information technology. He argues that India is doing better in knowledge economy than in industrial revolution and this has changed the face of India. He adds that Indian pop singing and writing in English are becoming internationally popular due to the globalization. He hopes that "[a]fter e-commerce and business, the next revolution may be e-government" (342). Then he adds on a personal note that he has two sons and both of them had gone abroad in their twenties due to lack of opportunities in India; but today the scene has been changed and they are planning to return.

In the last chapter titled "A New Country" (345-57), Das continues to praise the newly emerging India. He argues that "[w]e have realized that our strength is our people. Our great weakness is our government. Our great hope is the internet" (346-57). He narrates the story of an ordinary Indian boy of fourteen years, Raju, who works in a hotel during day and learns computer at night and has a dream to become "Bilgay" [Bill Gates]. "These are images of brave new India" (347). Delineating the picture of India on millennial conjuncture, he writes:

The new India is increasingly one of competition and decentralization. And now,

thanks to our intellectual capital and the opportunities opened by technology and globalization, we face the very real prospect of conquering the pervasive poverty that has characterized the lives of the majority of the people. We have good reasons to expect that the lives of the majority of Indians in the twenty-first century will be freer and more prosperous than their parents and grandparents lived. Never before in recorded history have so many people been in a position to rise so quickly. (357)

In an "Afterword" (357-73) to the book written seven years later in 2007, Das claims the worth of his predictions given in the book in 2000. He glorifies India's performance in the globalized neo-liberal culture. He argues that the progress of India after economic reforms has proved him right. He is happy that "license raj" has gone but laments the "inspector". Then he discusses the contribution of English in the development of Indian economy. He argues that English is an essential skill. He warns Indians that "[i]f we do not seize the moment and improve our governance and accelerate the reforms, then history will not forgive us" (368).

Das argues that one of the great achievement of modern times is "a liberal conception of humanity: the view that there are universal and inalienable human rights, and that powers of reason can honor these rights and eradicate poverty and social distress" (354).

In short, it can be said that in *India Unbound* Das counters the Hindu cultural nationalist idea of India and constructs a materialistic idea of India in the globalized market. It is not a mystical, sparrow-of-gold, socialist, illiterate, squalid or idealized India; rather, its identity depends upon its performance in the world economy. There is no place for popular nationalists in Das's discourse; instead, his India is formed by capitalists, industrialists and neo-liberal politicians and bureaucrats. He neither treats India as a supernatural power, nor does he romanticize its culture. He does not trace it in the past but in the contemporary marketplace. Das's criticism of Nehru is very different from Nirad C. Chaudhuri's; it is not

personal; he blames Nehru for his economic policies. Further, for Khilnani, the idea of India is "constituted by politics", but for Das it consists economic progress. It is also notable that Das's work is highly readable than Khilnani's because its author knows the ways of marketing. Further, it is not a serious study rather based on fancy, imagination and one sided view of neo-liberalism. Khilnani glorifies the role of Nehru in forming India as a strong nation-state while, Das finds that Nehru weakened India as a nation with his policy of mixed economy. However it is notable that Das is not against Congress Party but appreciates it for its policies after 1980s. He rejects the Hinduized conceptions of India propagated by the BJP and the Shiv Sena.

Neo-liberalism in Das's discourse is only the freedom of market not of common and poor people. They are free but only to accept/choose what the market gives them. He ignores the evidence of the neo-liberal economic order's impact on widening the class disparities worldwide (1% vs. 99% mar etc.). There is unprecedented scale of corruption (Stamp Paper Scam 2002, UP Food Grain Scam 2003, 2G Spectrum Scam 2010, UP NRHM 2012, Karnataka Wakf Board Lnad Scam 2012, Indian Coal Mining Controversy 2012 etc.). He goes on to celebrate the success of some selected individuals but overlooks the worst living conditions of the millions of poor. Nor does he notice the hard work of the labour class in construction of big buildings, roads, bridges etc.; he gives credit for all this only to the capitalists. The data about growth of India given by him and other neo-liberalists seems inadequate. It is strange that 80% of the population lives on Rs. 20 (less than half a dollar or below) per day. Ravi Kumar writes that "[t]he deregulation in the petroleum sector, rising food prices during the last five years, the displacement of millions from their homes in the name of development combined with slow growth of employment has created a stark inequality in society" (264-65).

Das does not consider Nehru's and Indira Gandhi's policies in their specific historical contexts; it is nowhere examined in the book that did they have the choices that P.V. Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh had? Rao's and Singh's decisions have a particular global economic context that

emerged in the 1970s and got widespread acceptance in the 1980s and later.

Das's book takes no account of the many studies that have explored the underside and the negative impact of neo-liberal economic policies on people and environment. He argues that global information age gave opportunity to learn computers and technology to all but he does not notice that it is not affordable for all. Poor people cannot give their children this education which have become costlier with the privatization and; the quality of education also demands examination and revision in this marketplace. "The inequality in access to education in general and higher education in particular has been there all along as natural consequence of the way capitalism has evolved in the country" (Kumar Ravi 265). Das advocates neo-liberalism blindly stating that free market has open and equal opportunity for all ignoring their caste and community while, in reality there is continuous politics of community and caste and; the assaults on women are growing day by day. In short, Das's account of India lacks balance.

The over-emphasis on privatization, marketization and globalization leads to the unequal distribution of wealth and opportunities. The negative consequences of neo-liberalism destroy the lives of common and poor people. As a result of it, the critique of neo-liberalism emerges in the first decade of twenty-first century which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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