



Second  
Satyendranath Majumdar Memorial Lecture 2015

**WORLD PEACE IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION**

by

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West Bengal State Committee  
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## **Preface**

The 'Satyendranath Majumdar Memorial Lecture' was instituted by the All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation (AIPSO) West Bengal State Committee in 2014 with an objective to initiate public debate on issues related to peace and solidarity movement in the present context.

The lecture is named after a legendary journalist, editor and author Satyendranath Majumdar (1891-1954), who truly symbolizes the glorious tradition of our anti-imperialist peace movement.

The First Satyendranath Majumdar Memorial Lecture on the subject '100 Years of the First World War' was delivered on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2014 by Mr. Sitaram Yechury.

The Second Satyendranath Majumdar Memorial Lecture was delivered on Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015 by Mr. Amanulla Khan. He spoke on the subject 'World Peace in the Era of Globalisation'.

Based in Bangalore, Mr. Amanulla Khan has rich experience of over four decades in the trade union and democratic movement. Mr. Khan now is the President of All India Insurance Employees' Association, the largest trade union in the Public Sector insurance companies.

He is also the Secretary of the 'Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights' (SIGTUR), an alliance and a movement of democratic unions in the Global South (Latin America, Africa, Asia and Australia).

He is a prolific writer and contributes regularly to various journals on economic and social issues. He has authored a number of books, including 'Understanding the Financial Crisis' published in 2010.

Mr. Khan is also the Editor of 'Insurance Worker', the monthly journal of All India Insurance Employees' Association.

The programme was held at the State Youth Centre, Moulali, Kolkata. Prof. Ashok Nath Basu, former Vice Chancellor of Jadavpur University and Chairman, AIPSO State Committee Presidium presided over the function. The programme started with an inaugural song by noted singer Mr. Subhadas Nandi Majumdar. Mr. Utpal Dutta, AIPSO Secretariat member moderated the programme. Prof. S N Bera (Anjan), General Secretary (Coordinator) AIPSO State Committee made an introductory comment. Prof. Ashok Nath Basu presented a memento to Mr. Khan. Mr. Jayanta Kumar Mukherjee, Secretary, Eastern Zone Insurance Employees Association and AIPSO State Secretariat member presented a flower bouquet to Mr. Khan. Mr. Ashok Guha, AIPSO State Secretariat member, delivered the vote of thanks.

# **WORLD PEACE IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION**

Amanulla Khan

I deem it a great honour to speak in a program organized in memory of Satyendranath Majumdar, a pioneer of peace and solidarity movement. I thank the organisers for inviting me, a trade union activist to speak. I believe that a trade union activist necessarily has to be a peace activist. For a trade union, the only war is the war against poverty, exploitation and oppression and the peace movement is an inherent component of the working class struggle. The struggle for peace by Satyendranath Majumdar was a product of his understanding that peace is essential for progress and development of humanity. He had seen the devastation caused by the two world wars that claimed 80 million lives and caused massive miseries to tens of millions across the world. Both these wars were the result of financial and economic rivalry between imperial powers. Therefore, he had a firm conviction that imperialism is the biggest enemy of peace and a struggle for peace essentially involves a struggle against the designs of imperialism to shape the world to suit its own economic and political interests. The experience of the past decades proves the correctness of his conviction and understanding.

Today, I am asked to speak on the subject 'World Peace in the era of Globalisation'. It is a very important, vast and relevant subject. I would like to limit myself to the contemporary developments on this issue. We know that Wars and globalization are not new to human race. It is seen from history that wars have helped expansion of capitalism leading to integration of the vast regions of global economy into the architecture of world imperialism. Markets are fundamental to capitalism. Therefore, capitalism has to necessarily tear down all barriers to conquer the entire earth for its market. This was done earlier through colonialism and today it is being attempted through imperialist globalisation. This often requires not just diplomatic pressures and economic cooperation between the nations but also results into armed conflict for capture of critical natural resources. Globalisation is therefore, not external to capital but is a natural way in which capital expands and exists as capital. So I am of the firm opinion that the meaning of Peace is not just a world free from wars. Peace also means constructing of societies that are just, fair and equal having the potential to free the world from all conflicts including those on economic and social inequalities. It simply means that there can never be peace without justice and equality.

## **GLOBE A THEATRE OF WAR**

Today it is frightening to note that the entire globe has become a big theatre of wars and conflicts. No country or region is safe and peaceful. A dispassionate analysis of the situation makes it clear that US imperialism has played a major role in creating these conflicts for its own strategic and political reasons. Afghanistan to Iraq and Yugoslavia to Ukraine, the footprints of US imperialism are clearly seen in fanning and sustaining these conflicts and wars. The drive to capture new areas as markets and control strategic resources gained momentum with the collapse

of the Soviet Union. The countries which own critical natural resources became the targets. Oil has always been a strategic commodity and therefore the control and domination of the region stretching from Iraq to Central Asia becomes very important to shape a new world order. The Gulf, Iraq, Iran and Central Asian States are known to have nearly half of the world's total oil and gas reserves. These countries are also estimated to have the largest unexplored potential future supplies. Therefore, political, military and economic domination of this broader region is the core of US foreign policy.

It is with this understanding that United States and its allies are waging wars in different countries. Strangely these wars are called as humanitarian endeavours to free countries from despotic regimes and expand democracy to make the world safe. Saddam had to be removed as his regime possessed imaginary weapons of mass destruction and posed a danger to human existence. Syria has to be freed from Assad for the sake of democracy and expansion of democratic rights. Afghanistan has to be tamed and kept in control due to its strategic location. The global population is being told that war is peace and imperialism is under compulsion to wage wars to establish peace. Therefore, US imperialism and its allies are doing a great service to humanity. This commitment to peace and democracy sounds ridiculous when these very forces support, protect and patronize the Gulf monarchies including the worst advocate of religious fundamentalism and human rights violator Saudi Arabia. The US imperialism also is a benefactor of Israel that is committing horrendous crimes against Palestinians as that country is critical to its regional strategic interests.

## **HUMANITY PAYS A HEAVY PRICE**

Humanity has paid a very heavy price for these acts of imperialism. It is estimated that more than one million people perished in Iraq and nearly 2.7 lakhs killed in Syria and millions have been rendered homeless. Libya has virtually been made a failed State. Children, women and elderly have to face the brunt of these imperialist wars. It is estimated that worldwide nearly 30 million children have been displaced due to wars and persecution. Imperialism has to be held accountable for the crimes it has committed against humanity. It is acknowledged even by sections of US administration that these imperialist wars have created monster outfits like Al-Qaeda and ISIS. The support these organizations have received from imperialism and their allies like Saudi Arabia and Qatar have made them very powerful. They have become a threat to world peace and no place is safe from their terror attacks including the Western nations that helped their creation.

It is becoming increasingly clear that war is big money today. The global military expenditure annually is estimated to be around 1.6 trillion US dollars which is close to around 3 percent of the world GDP. The military spending of US alone in 2014 is 610 billion US dollars. With 31 percent share in the global arms trade, the US is the largest exporter of arms. The US military industrial complex is the biggest beneficiary in the trade of weapons of mass destruction. It is, therefore, not surprising when Washington Post comments that 'Wars make us safe and richer'.

This massive military spending is a crime against humanity. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that despite the huge wealth created globally, there is large scale starvation in many parts of the world. More than 805 million out of 7.3 billion in the world suffer from chronic undernourishment. More than a billion poor across the globe live on less than 1.25 US dollars according to the World Bank. The UN estimates that less than 4 percent of the annual military expenditure would be enough to achieve Millennium Development Goal of lifting all people out of poverty. This makes it abundantly clear that peace is fundamental to human progress and conditions of peace cannot be established without carrying out a sustained struggle against imperialism and its war drives.

### **DANGEROUS SHIFT IN INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY**

It is in this background we see with lot of concern the shift in India's foreign policy. India was the founder of non-aligned movement. This policy of keeping equidistance from the competing super powers to advance the interests of the third world countries earned India lot of respect and goodwill. Today India has become a strategic partner in the global strategic designs of US imperialism. The US and its allies have created a number of economic blocks and encirclement of the nations that are perceived as competitors to US imperialism has become central to the policy of global domination. India has become central to the United States policy aiming at encircling China. The militarization of Japan and the military alliance of US, Japan, Australia and India aiming to encircle China have heightened tensions in the region and tensions between India and China. China and India account for nearly 25 percent of the global GDP. Better relations between China and India can boost the economic ties which could be beneficial to both the countries and may prove helpful in solving the border dispute between these two nations. Unfortunately, the policy of strategically aligning with United States does not portend well for peace in the region. In the recent period India has also developed strategic relations with Israel and there are clear signs of dilution of our stand on the struggle of Palestinian people for an independent nation. These deviations in India's foreign policy have to be resolutely opposed.

### **GLOBALISATION CREATE INEQUALITIES**

It is argued that globalization and free trade benefits all countries and all sections of the people. The real experience is different. Globalisation has widened inequalities both between the nations and within the nations. Globalisation which entered a new phase in 1979-80 has seen massive accumulation and concentration of wealth. This process involved the sale of public assets to help private gains, de-regulation and exploitation of the workers. This massive accumulation of capital gave rise to financialisation and internationalization of capital. Financialisation enabled creation of huge artificial wealth totally unconnected from production of goods and services. As the financial wealth gained autonomy from production, capital became speculative.

The 2008 global financial meltdown is the result of these speculative activities of finance capital. The global economy is in a deep crisis. This crisis has devastated a large number of nations and

the living standards of the people across the world. There is a general consensus that this is no ordinary cyclical crisis of capitalism. The scale of this crisis can be compared only to the great depression of the 1929. The world is yet to recover from this crisis and nobody is willing to guess how long it will take the global economy to emerge out of this crisis.

The crisis has shattered the living and working conditions of the people across the globe. Capital has virtually declared a war on the working class through austerity measures. It is being said that workers have to go through the pains of austerity to help the economies overcome the crisis, in the making of which, they had no role to play. Global unemployment is at an all-time high. Youth unemployment has reached dangerous proportions. In Greece and Spain 50 percent of the youth are unemployed. The wages and pensions are under attack. Social security schemes have been curtailed. The working class in all countries is heroically resisting these attacks.

While the crisis has hugely impacted the working class, there do not seem to be any impact on the incomes of the richer sections. The top one percent of the US population control over 99 percent of the national wealth. Such massive inequalities cannot be acceptable in a democracy. India which embraced neo-liberalism in 1991, an ideology which is totally hostile to the welfare State and the working class has seen alarming rise in inequalities. This country has the distinction of having 90 dollar billionaires in an economy of less than 2 trillion dollars. It also has the dubious distinction of having the largest number of hungry, malnourished and illiterate people in the globe. The latest surveys show that the top 1 percent of Indians owns more than half of the country's wealth. The top 10 percent of the population have a 76.3% share in the national wealth. The poor 50 percent of the population have to rest content with 4.1 percent of the national wealth. The recent Socio-Economic Caste Census has brought to light a distressing fact that in 90 percent of the rural households, the highest earning member earns less than Rs.10000/- per month. These massive inequalities created by globalization are simply unacceptable and inevitably lead to social tensions and conflicts.

In India, we must also be concerned with the increasing social strife in the past one year. Some forces inimical to unity of the people are making efforts to pit one section of the people against the other for narrow political gains. There are attempts to deny our shared history of over a thousand years through rewriting of history and undermining of all democratic institutions. The denial of our shared history means the refusal to accept the plurality and diversity of our rich culture. The richness of Indian culture, be it music, art, architecture is due to the fact that our culture assimilated everything good that came from other cultures. The world looks at admiration and appreciation at this unique and beautiful culture. Today the richness of this composite cultural is under attack not just from the fringe elements affiliated to the party ruling the country at present but also from the Ministers in the government and other influential leaders belonging to ruling political outfit. A vicious campaign is on to impose majoritarian views in the belief that India is a nation of one culture, one religion and one language. The Indian Constitution is clear that a modern nation-state can be constructed only by respecting the plurality and diversity of Indian culture. The Idea of India essentially emerged as an India of

social, economic and political equality. It rejected the idea of political or cultural dominance of any group over the other. Secularism and freedom to expression became the bedrock of the idea of India. Today it is this Idea of India that is under attack. This poses a serious challenge to the national unity. Therefore, the efforts to create social and communal strife have to be fought uniting all sections of the people. This is the most urgent task for all the peace and trade union activists.

## **GLOBALISATION INCOMPATIBLE WITH DEMOCRACY**

Globalisation has also undermined democracy and the role of the Nation-State. Capital forces the government and the elected leaders to frame policies that facilitate capital even when such policies are against the interests of the people. This undermines both democracy and weakens the nation-state. We have seen in the recent times that the public opinion is bulldozed and the direct action of millions of workers ignored to frame laws to help both the Indian and foreign capital. Greece which was the epicenter of global financial meltdown witnessed a strange phenomenon where the government was forced to accept the conditionalities of the creditors despite the rejection of these very conditionalities by the people in a referendum. This makes it clear that globalization is incompatible with democracy.

Globalisation and Neo-liberalism as an economic system is unsustainable. This system puts profits before people and nature. In order to maximize profits, there is an unbridled exploitation of both the people and the nature. The global warming and climatic changes pose a great challenge to the existence of humanity itself. The capitalist path of development is clearly the culprit.

## **CONCLUSION**

Today humanity is confronted with a host of challenges. As we said earlier, peace is fundamental to progress and development of human society. Therefore, the struggle for peace should be intensified at the global scale. This cannot be done without waging a relentless struggle against imperialism and its quest for capture of critical resources in order to establish a complete global domination. The imperialist wars have created terror groups that are carrying out attacks on innocent people. There is a need for all progressive sections to come together to combat this evil without condoning the crimes committed by imperialism. Neo-liberalism as an economic system has only brought miseries to the vast majority of the people across the globe. This economic system has to be challenged by projecting an alternate economic system based on justice, fairness and equality and a system that also respects the nature. In fine, a struggle for peace and a struggle against imperialism are the two components of a single struggle. Playing our role in such a struggle for the survival of humanity is the best tribute that we can pay to Satyendranath Majumdar.

## Satyendranath Majumdar (1891-1954)

Satyendranath Majumdar (1891-1954) was a legendary journalist, editor and author. As a newspaper editor, Satyendranath was one of the giants in Bengali language journalism.

Unforgettable also Satyendranath's pioneering role in the Anti-Fascist Movement in Bengal during the 1940s. He was one of the founders of the 'Friends of the Soviet Union' (1941) and the 'Anti-Fascist Writers and Artists Association' (1942).

After the end of the Second World War, Satyendranath was among the key figures who took initiative to form an all India platform of the peace activists. Thus, in 1950, the All India Peace Council (AIPC), the fore- runner of today's AIPSO, was founded.

In 1951, Satyendranath also took active interest in founding the 'India-China Friendship Association'.

Satyendranath Majumdar truly symbolizes the glorious tradition of our anti-imperialist peace movement.

