

The post-COVID scenario has shown that the development path India has traversed can likewise create cities that can be what B. R. Ambedkar called a “republic of humiliation”; the experience of exploitation, oppression, violence, indignity, and exclusion is not the exclusive prerogative of the “village republic.” While the post-COVID effects can in no way be restricted to the “migrant workers,” and neither can the “working class” be reduced to them, our focus remains largely on migrant workers for reasons that are not of either their or our choice but of history.

India’s “working class”—the large mass of “performers of surplus labor” in both organized and unorganized sectors, in formal and informal units—are either waiting outside locked factory and construction premises, workhouses, shops, and warehouses or have already been thrown out of jobs, mercilessly, or are taking a long walk—exceeding at times 2,000 kilometers—back to their homes. They are walking away from the unimaginable cruelty of Indian cities that could not host them for the sixty days of complete lockdown—cities that house a large mass of “appropriators of surplus”—and back to

their rural homes or forest societies. As the surplus appropriators turned away from the plight of the surplus performers during lockdown, the surplus performers have turned toward their rural homes.

They are walking away from marginal locations *within* the circuits of global capital—from being a low-paid delivery worker for Amazon, open to hire and fire—to what we call the *world*

of the third—to the world of diverse agricultural and informal class processes in rural and small-town India and the gathering/rearing processes in forest societies (Chakrabarti and Dhar, 2009). They are walking away from class and non-class locations around the household and residential complexes—domestic workers, street vendors, and so on—that procreate *outside* the circuits of global capital in the urban world of the third. This is hence not just a story of “migra-

tion” and “reverse migration”; this is a story of *unlivable desire* (and of betrayal during the lockdown): the unrealizable desire to be *inside* the circuits of global capital met by a forced return to existences *outside* those circuits. This is hence a moment of both despair and hope: despair within the circuits of global capital in COVID times and the impossible hope of *being outside*, post-COVID.

The Condition of the Working Class in India

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Ajay Gudavarthy (2020) shows how 38.4 percent of the so-called migrant workers who were returning to rural India were OBCs (Other Backward Classes, a collective term used to classify castes that are educationally or socially disadvantaged). The rest of the migrants are largely constituted by the Dalits (Scheduled Castes), indigenous people (Scheduled Tribes), and Muslims. The condition of the working *class* in India is thus tied in a mutually constitutive relation with the condition of the working *castes* in India, which begs a careful, grounded introspection of their overdetermined relationship (Singh and Rawat 2020).

The working-class subject in India has—as if—*had* two faces. One directed toward the circuits of global capital. The other directed back home. For decades, the income/employment lure and glitter of “free” life in cities had drawn many to take jobs—even if insecure—at the peripheries of the circuits of global capital, as *mere* performers of surplus labor or as condition providers of such organizations of surplus (broadly, the “employee population” (Wolff 2012)). The apathy of the cities has now turned what looked to be the repository of hope into a register of despair and betrayal. The rural subject who was in the process of becoming urban is now returning back to the space that has been traditionally designated as backward, as lacking in development, as lagging behind, as third

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world-ish. This, however, is paradoxically that space consisting not only of regional variations in land ownership but is also where non-exploitative organizations of surplus—independent, communist, and non-exploitative communitic, say, in an individual or family farm—coexist alongside relations of exploitation—including global capitalist farms—made up of the nexus of class and nonclass positions occupied by surplus appropriators-landlords-traders-moneylenders.

In spite of an increase in food-grain production that made India self-sufficient in food, the agricultural sector does suffer from insufficient income growth, producing the much commented upon rural/farmer distress. The latter has happened, with regional variations, due to the overdetermination of multiple processes, some of which we highlight: through the state-capital nexus, conditions of agricultural processes were systematically decimated; land was rendered barren, land fertility and its capacity to retain moisture reduced through the introduction of hybrid or high-yielding seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and so on; where through deforestation and the resultant depletion of water tables and the cordoning off of forests by the Indian state, a crisis in rural world-of-the-third spaces was systematically engendered; all of which contributed to a breakdown of the conditions of existence within the world of the third and the resultant uprooting, leading to the

long-drawn process of migration. Nevertheless, it is to this complex rural space that they are now returning. Given this historical conjuncture, we turn our focus to a particular (by no means the only) issue: can a postcapitalist reconstruction of this space *now* happen? Can it become the seed for a future, given that the hope of a life inside the circuits of global capital now looks a distant dream, at least in the immediate future?

We build our response on three interrelated hypotheses: one, the economy is a complex and overdetermined ensemble of class processes—both capitalist and noncapitalist (the noncapitalist processes in turn could be exploitative and nonexploitative) as well as between-class processes and nonclass processes; two, the working class is embedded in an economy that is decentered and disaggregated in terms of processes of performance of surplus, appropriation, distribution, and receipt; third, such processes and the relations they produce are sites of anti-capitalist resistance to surplus appropriation by nonperformers and of postcapitalist reconstruction toward nonexploitative futurities. We arrive at three conclusions: (a) India's dominant economic form, "capitalist development" ("as we knew it"), is facing its worst crisis; (b) leftist politics—driven by progressivism, modernism, and industrialism (at times urbanism)—needs serious rethinking; and (c) ecological sensitivity, decentralized small industries, intermediate technologies, and world-of-the-third Marxism in both rural and urban spaces could characterize a possible future.

Desire: The Future of a Pre-COVID Illusion

The substance of India's economic transition is marked by the movement of the originary multiplicity of class processes—constituted in turn by diverse modes of distribution of the surplus and other nonclass political, cultural, and natural processes (such as COVID)—toward capitalocentric and Orientalist directions. Such a direction has remained, a priori, unquestioned in state policy even as its emphasis has shifted from being driven by "state capitalism" in the 1950s–80s (the centrality of state capitalist enterprises for capital accumulation and centralized planning for allocation of resources to the "poor") to being driven in the post-1990s period by "neoliberal globalization" (the centrality of global private capitalism and local-global markets) (Chakrabarti, Dhar, and Dasgupta 2015). The pre-COVID economic formation (1990–2020) was marked by the twin centricities of globally generated surplus-value processes and the global commodity chain connecting local-local to global-global markets through the local-global conduits crystallized by a global order. The expanding circuits of global capital connect capitalist and noncapitalist class processes (along with attendant nonclass processes) to the hub of global capitalist enterprises (industrial, agricultural, technological, financial, merchant, etc.). India had thus moved from the erstwhile centrality of state capital during the "planning period" to a globally dispersed private mode of performance, appropriation, and distribution of surplus. The circuits or interconnected matrix of global capital was, however, not all encompassing: there was an *outside* that was not connected to the circuits of global capital and to

local-global markets. Such an outside (noncapitalist as well as capitalist)—materialized across urban and rural India and designated world of the third—is constitutive of exploitative, non-exploitative, and self-appropriative modes of performance, appropriation, and nonclass processes that contain, among other things, oppressive (even within communities) and nonoppressive apparatuses. No a priori value—good, bad, ugly—can hence be attributed to the rural world of the third to which the migrants are returning. It is just that a large mass of India’s working class is perhaps walking away from an insecure subject position (working essentially as casual and daily laborers) within the circuits of global capital and walking instead to an outside in their rural homeland—where they once had and will now again occupy multiple class and nonclass positions, the collective reconstruction of which in nonexploitative and just directions could offer a future.

However, developmentalism in India works through a foregrounding of the world of the third as *third world* and *noncapitalist* processes as *precapitalist*, thus presencing what had been marked as *differance* as the lacking/lagging other of the developed. The rural is also seen as that which is not yet urban/modern. Capitalocentric Orientalism, as Amie Césaire (2010) argues, was the grafting of the modern abuse of under-

development onto ancient and existing injustice within world of the third. Crucial to the presencing of the world of the third as homogeneously underdeveloped are the foreclosure of class as processes of surplus labor and the foregrounding of a logic of transition: precapitalist to capitalist, rural to urban, third world to the circuits of global capital. The expansion of the circuits of global capital continued unabated through a triadic process: (a) primitive accumulation and the consequent elimination of indispensable conditions of existence within world of the third; (b) “inclusive development” in the form of the distribution of “social surplus” for “social needs”; and (c) discursive crypting of noncapitalist, nonexploitative, or self-appropriative life forms within world of the third, thus making life within world of the third look increasingly unsustainable and, by default, making life in the circuits

of global capital look lucrative and seductive, thus directing the graph of desire toward the circuits of global capital. However, even as rural subjects were beginning to move toward cities, a vast number of them (designated “migrant laborers”) neither sold off nor abandoned their land and assets nor cut the umbilical cord with their communities. They planted one foot in the city and the other in their village or small town. It was, however, not just rural destitution that

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brought them to the cities. There was also desire to be inside the circuits of global capital. There was likewise a longing for “home,” too. The rural-informal subject was thus split, ambivalent.

Despite India having entered into a momentary recession in 2019, with income and job losses, extreme income/wealth inequality, and a farmer income/debt crisis, India’s pre-COVID transition to neoliberal globalization was presented by its economic apologists as a resounding success in terms of sustainable income growth and poverty reduction, and hence as irreversible.

The same pre-COVID phase also witnessed the large-scale decimation of trade unions and the decline of the Left. Except in a few states, the erstwhile Left’s “organic intellectuals” in villages and in small towns gradually lost touch with the “masses.” It was the right wing that connected to rural and small-town life in an organic, culturally rooted way, through religious leaders, school teachers, and social workers. Capitalism in this phase has itself been and is currently in deep crisis and, some argue, in permanent decay (the COVID period has turned this decline into a disaster). However, the crisis of capitalism and the rise of the Right were coterminous in India.

Despair: The Inhospitability of the COVID Period

Setting aside empirical details and perversions of political machinations that usually follow such an event, we flag two fundamental effects of COVID that are integrated into the above-mentioned growing economic instability in India. Together they have induced a structural earthquake that has ripped apart the old economic “normal” and have turned India’s recessionary economy into a full-scale depression (the first in postindependent India).

It would not be too out of place to remind ourselves that among the five recessionary periods, two have been induced by agricultural shock (1958, 1966), two by energy shock (1973, 1980), and the present one by a pandemic-induced shock largely passing through the industrial sector.

First is the collapse of global capitalism. The capitalist production, distribution, and consumption chain linked through local-global markets have literally fallen apart, at least for the last few months. However, even amid this, the effects of erstwhile income and wealth inequality continue to be consolidated as the capitalists and their coterie do everything to protect their interests. As the top income bracket insulated themselves somewhat from the pandemic by using their savings and protecting their assets, the working-class/caste inside the circuits of global capital found themselves with

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three options: those who still had a job worked from home via internet access (except for the “essential” service providers); those who lost employment faced wage cuts; and others sat at home with the anxiety-prone prospect of losing employment (many among the last two are “migrant workers”). This recasting of India’s working class within the circuits of global capital complements the equally distressing scenario in the surrounding world-of-the-third in cities and industrial hubs.

Second is the collapse of the development model, signified by perhaps the largest “reverse migration” in the annals of human history. We have, however, *rewritten* reverse migration in India *in class terms* as a turning away from the hub of global capitalist class processes in cities and a turning toward a diverse class space in rural India—both exploitative and nonexploitative. *In spatial terms*, these are employees with(in) the circuits of global capital, especially at its margins or populating the world-of-the-third spaces in urban centers as both surplus performers and self-appropriators. Faced with the breakdown of conditions of existence in erstwhile rural spaces, their decade-long journey from rural to urban India has been hailed as the success of India’s development model. They had formed the underbelly of the organization of surplus, particularly the exploitative, which drove the juggernaut of India’s capitalist development that mainstream economics had analyzed in terms of market principles, optimization, capital accumulation, inclusion projects, people’s aspiration, and so on. Nowhere was there any mention of exploitation or of the deep-seated role of primitive accumulation in experiences leading to

migration.

Faced with the pandemic, the Indian state announced a total lockdown, thereby freezing not only the circuits of global capital but also bringing it to crisis with the class processes within the urban world of the third economy as well. In a matter of days, the workers realized that the city would only be hospitable to them as long as they were a *living machine of variable capital* supplementing the *dead machine of constant capital*. They were also considered dangerous by virtue of being potential carriers of the virus (for, in their living conditions in the cities, physical or social distancing is unimaginable).

Faced with four hours’ notice before a total lockdown (contrast this with how people traveling in international flights were treated) that froze transport (including railways, the most important mode of transportation for the working class, and also interstate buses) along with their jobs, income, and ability to sustain their reproduction of life (such as by paying rent), the millions of the *makers of modern India* walking with their family members, travelling in cycles and trucks for days and weeks, with hundreds perishing on the way, will remain one of the haunting images of economic, social, humanitarian, and health disaster in India. When the authorities relented after nearly one and a half months of lockdown, regional governments secretly supported by business lobbies (e.g., in construction), which are particularly dependent on these surplus performers, tried to stop the trains so as to spatially enslave them, but to no avail. The journey has perhaps become irreversible. While the dead machine of constant capital remained, the living

machine of variable capital moved on. It is not that the scenario in the rural and small towns of India is brimming with prospects of dignified livelihoods following the decade-long process of its submission to capitalist development, which has broken its back, but it seems that the little land, assets, and support system that they may have retained is considered enough to outweigh their present collective suffering from the rampant exploitation and indignity of standing in a long queue for hours to get a bowl of food from government functionaries. The development theories (Basu 1997; Eswaran and Kotwal 1994) of structural transition—à la Lewis-Ranis-Fei-Harris-Todaro models—from rural/agriculture to urban/industrial economy, from informal to formal, all those categorical divisions with abstract, imbued values ascribed to their relations (the former being inferior to the latter) have literally been blown away by this “long march” of urban employees back to the rural world of the third. It is as if the Indian economy—as we knew it—has collapsed. The formal economic history written by the literary class has literally been crossed out by the peoples’ history. Quite paradoxically, Indian agriculture, relatively unscathed from the effects of the post-COVID meltdown that till now has been essentially an urban phenomenon, has emerged with a good harvest as the only saving

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grace.

The Indian government, after two months of lockdown, decided to put in place a corona stimulus package, perhaps to mitigate the rising anger of the migrants, of additional Rs 40,000 crore (\$3.08 billion) for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).¹ To what extent this rescue package, depending upon when and how it will be released, will mitigate the vast income and

employment problem in the now even bigger world of the third is another question. In fact, there are now calls in some quarters to expand MGNREGA to the urban poor.

Along with a good harvest, what perhaps saved the Indian working population in general from mass hunger, and perhaps what saved the Indian state by extension, was the five-decade-long social-sur-

plus-distribution program for India’s food security, which included building a huge buffer stock through minimum support price and a public distribution system (PDS) for mainly food items through fair price shops or otherwise. This was something that the mainstream economists, barring a few, have consistently opposed and/or diluted on grounds of efficiency and market distortions by first arguing in favor of shifting PDS from universal to a targeted system (which did happen in the 1990s) and then attempting to get

¹ MGNREGA was a contribution from the Congress-party-led alliance of the first United Progressive Alliance government (2004–9) that included a substantial presence of leftist parties (MacAuslan 2008). Criticizing this program for its corruption and leakage, the present government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) after it came to power in 2014 had been trying to demote the program and perhaps gradually prepare the ground for its disappearance, until the pandemic struck. See “Modi Tears into UPA Claims on MNREGA, RTI,” *Hindu*, 21 May 2016, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/modi-tears-into-upa-claims-on-mnrega-rti/article5887687.ece>.

rid of it in the last decade. The counterfactual to the so-called inefficient PDS that prevented catastrophic fallout is what would have happened, especially for the lower-income and now unemployed working masses, if it had not been in place. The experience of the COVID period not only delivers historical proof of the absurdity of such efficiency logic in public policy but also demonstrates its criminal complicity and that of the theories that promote it in facilitating possible mass starvation, famine, and destitution, which would otherwise have transpired in India. It is also a good reminder that the Left is who led the “food movement” as a radical perspective on people’s needs before and after independence, combined with the food crisis of the 1960s that compelled the Indian state to introduce a gradual policy change in favor of food security and PDS.

The rescue package (officially called the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan economic package) had two angles: qualitative and quantitative. Its quantitative form to the announced 20 lakh crore was said to be 10 percent of GDP and was on introspection found to be mostly in the form of promised loans and moratoriums to be granted by the government, with approximately 1 percent of GDP reserved as extra fiscal stimulus, including for MGNREGA.² What effect it will have is already being debated, with even many in the

corporate sector and rating agencies doubting its tangible impact toward inducing recovery.

The qualitative content of the present set of reforms reflects an attempt in the continuation of supply-side policies of liberalizing and privatizing in favor of global capital (both Indian and foreign, particularly from the United States, Japan, and South Korea) and deepening the presence and widening the reach of local-global markets through a reworked geopolitical alliance that

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sidelines China. The present collapse of global capitalism and doctrine of free trade on a world scale (as the WTO would demand and the World Bank/IMF has hitherto asserted) does not mean that India has given up on global capital; the Hindu nationalist assertion does not imply economic nationalism in the traditional sense that we used to see in the planning period. Rather, India is trying to re-compose its structure to compete with and

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² See Basu (2020) and “Government’s Economic Package Only 1% of GDP, Say Analysts,” *Times of India*, 20 May 2020, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/govts-eco-package-only-1-of-gdp-say-analysts/articleshow/75837840.cms>.

by following a discretionary rather than the erstwhile rule-based policy is thus intrinsically tied with the aspirations of becoming a global economic superpower—all, however, at the expense of the working class.

What qualitative change has India to offer to global capitalists as an incentive? For one, it seeks to demolish India's existing labor laws in a way that labor will become literally the "wage slave" of capitalists. Three aspects pertaining to labor process are crucial for the labor-capital relation, which historically has been a function of class struggle: (a) the working day, (b) the workplace/technology, and (c) wage determination. The reform seeks to demolish the existing situation in favor of handing complete control of these over to the capitalists—making the working day elastic (absolute surplus-value production), adopting whatever technology and capital-labor ratio (relative surplus-value production process), and fixing whatever wage they wish (even if it is driven below the necessary labor equivalent, deepening the precarity of the working class). Suspension of all rights is akin to the abolishment of trade-union activities and interference in the profit drive of capitalists. The historical retreat of the Left is now to be turned into a rout of the working class.

The other aspects of this package are the large-scale privatization and sell-off of government property and enterprises to global capital, the further commercialization and corporatization of agriculture, and giving permission for private capitalist investment in hitherto restricted areas, such as in defense and public utilities, including the railways. The regulations regarding envi-

ronmental and other clearances, especially for raw-material extraction, are being wiped off at one go, and their ownership is being privatized; access for easy loans is encouraged, especially for the medium, small, and micro enterprises (MSMEs) needed to reshape competitive hubs (through outsourcing and subcontracting) that the recast circuits of global capital under a new world order will like to coalesce into.

It is another matter that the intended supply-side revival does not address the demand-side collapse that has followed the monumental loss of income and employment under the condition of mounting economic and health uncertainty. The question remains as to how the combination of a low-wage regime and a collapsing global economy will lead to any sustainable economic revival. This revival package bypasses the questions of income generation, standard of living, and the working conditions of laborers. It subsumes these under the full dictatorial power of (global) capital and hopes that investors will rush in with capital to reap future profits and investment, producing in turn future growth and employment. The present episode is, hence, not about class struggle within an enterprise but is a full-scale war against the working class in India; the story of migrants is only the tip of the iceberg.

It is ironic that India's prime minister, in contextualizing this package, made a Gandhian-style appeal to *atma-nirbharta* (roughly translated as "self-reliance"). This is not, at least until now, a return to Nehru's idea of self-dependence, which meant state-led capitalist development through centralized planning and an insulated econ-

omy. It has instead two components: The first is to become the center of global private capital through Make in India, as part of a new geopolitical order. The second is essentially directed at the erstwhile outside of the circuits of global capital—the world-of-the-third subjects whose numbers have now swelled even more as they have either been thrown out of work or have marched away from the circuits of global capital and the urban world of the third. Despite the promise of additional MGNREGA funding, it is clear that world-of-the-third subjects, in both the rural and urban areas, facing income and employment decline/collapse, are directly in line to be cut off from even receiving the extant social surplus from state-funded projects of “inclusive development.” The drastic COVID period decline in produced surplus value means that this class effect is bound to have a development effect on funds for social needs. The resource crunch that the present, already fiscally stressed, government faces from a collapse in tax collection as the circuits of global capital have disintegrated cannot but generate a drastic decline in the social-surplus distribution for erstwhile social needs; this fiscal stress is to be further aggravated by the financial pressure of a looming military face-off with China. Not only are effects of class and needs inalienably connected, it is also true that

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the class war in favor of reviving global capital is pitted against the philosophy of social needs. In its idealized core, the appeal for an *atma-nirbhar Bharat* (self-reliant India) must be understood in the context of the possibility of an impending folding-up of the flow of social surplus that has been put in place over the last five decades. Its invocation represents an attempt at rearticulating and remapping the meaning of social needs through an age-old appeal to world-of-the-third subjects to stop depending upon the Indian

state as far as possible and ride through the depression period and beyond on their own (by taking advantage of schemes such as the cheaper loan facilities offered to MSMEs and the poor, such as the urban hawkers). Nevertheless, the contradiction within the class-need space can possibly represent one pathway in which collective opposition to an ongoing process of rearticulating and remapping social needs—

in terms of commodities (food), nutrition, health and education—can be sought in a new political imagination.

Hope: World-of-the-Third Marxism

There is, however, amidst the ruin, a real opportunity for the future to be reclaimed, provided the political lessons from the defeat are learned. The seed of hope perhaps lies in turning away from—as we would like to reiterate—unexam-

ined progressivism, modernism, industrialism (even urbanism), and—paradoxically—the logic of more (more production, more income, more power); in turning instead to rebuilding habitable rural and forest societies (read nonexploitative registers in world-of-the-third spaces); in struggling over wages, working hours, and social security within the circuits of global capital in both urban and rural areas, in attempts to reshape these spaces through nonexploitative organizational forms; and in struggles over people’s social needs and claims to social surplus. This would mean a rewriting of the rural/urban divide, or of the rural-to-urban telos as the ambivalent interface between the circuits of global capital and the world of the third—in both rural and urban spaces.

World-of-the-third spaces and their “reconstruction”—Tagore (2011) called it *punar-nirmaan*—in nonexploitative and self-appropriative directions have hitherto remained outside the orbit of Marxian struggles in India. The “enlightened” Left has harbored a secret contempt for rural, forest, and indigenous societies as precapitalist, feudal, underdeveloped, backward, superstitious, and colonized by false consciousness; additionally, “brown Orientalism” and capitalocentrism have created a blindness to class as process of surplus labor, as has complicity in the hegemonic representation of world-of-the-third subjects as third-world-ish. The world-of-the-third subjects were thus seen only in the *waiting room of history*, waiting to be assimilated into the higher stage: capitalism—as if world-of-the-third subjects could only be a part of history; as if they couldn’t create history.

The Left’s opposition to capitalist development—in terms of trade-union struggle against capital and primitive accumulation and struggle for more state investment, less market involvement, minimum support prices, and so on—has generally remained trapped because of the unacknowledged capitalocentric Orientalism in the very hegemonic formation the Left sought to oppose. We are not suggesting that these movements have been ill directed (and perhaps they will become even more important in the future), but questions regarding their political language, means, and objectives need to be revisited. This is especially important when there is no guarantee that the crisis in the lives of the Indian working class will necessarily be accompanied by its challenge to the hegemonic order.

Let us end with migration. Migration is not a movement from rural to urban, nor is the movement from urban to rural *reverse* migration. It is, in class terms, a movement from and between diverse subject/class positions, across the rural-urban divide. In the urban areas, migrants had become mere employees in urban workstations, while the rural world-of-the-third space now holds more possibilities—including nonexploitative ones. For example, in areas where indigenous people (or OBCs or Dalits) own land, a farmer could be both the performer and the appropriator of surplus (i.e., in a self-appropriative class process). In other rural areas, highly commercialized exploitative farming, including capitalist ones with wage labor, are prevalent. This complexity of the rural world of the third thus provides an opening, and hope as well. The return of the urban working class to its rural home, of course, has happened in a moment of

extreme distress. However, the return is not just a return to the rural. It is also, in class terms, a return to a form of life in which the landed masses can at least be both performers and appropriators of surplus, actually and potentially. Is it time for what Tagore and Gandhi called *rural reconstruction*? Could this be the beginning of the creation of habitable world-of-the-third spaces—in both rural and urban sites? Rethinking urban world-of-the-third sites is equally important because, in loop with the rural, many of the migrants will perhaps once again go back to the cities to look for income and employment; the only difference is that they now will have a new experience of who they are and would perhaps have no illusion regarding where they are migrating to. Nonmigrant workers, too, urban and rural, having a different set of experiences of what the breakdown of the utopia of capitalist development means for them may reach similar conclusions. There is hope that the combination of these experiences also engenders an independent evaluation and audit of life within the world of the third—in class terms and also in terms of power and meaning.

Tragically, the world of the third has never had an independent audit. It has either been presented as precapital, as a prior stage of capital, as dependent on capital for redemption, or as a “local”/“community” romanticized as a homogeneous good. Can the world of the third become a site for class and need-based struggles, as well as nonclass struggles (Dhar and Chakrabarti 2019)? Can the Left field be reenvisioned as a struggle both within the circuits of global capital and outside it? Can we put to overdetermination anticapitalist (*sangharsh*) critique and postcap-

talist (*nirmaan*) praxis?

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