

SPEECH BY : P.SAINATH

TRANSCRIBED BY: DR AJAY JOSHI

On my flight from Mumbai to Mangalore, I read two items in the Times Of India, that quite to my mind were interesting. One was an announcement that the Elite schools of Mumbai had again revised their fees upwards. These are anyway schools that charge about 200,000 a year as fees and they had made a 45% revision of fees or something upwards. The other item was a rant by Mr. Chidambaram. Attacking persons unknown, unnamed, but quite identifiable. In that he was disgusted, he said, by people who attack growth as meaningless. I mean the people he was referring to have mentioned a particular type of growth that doesn't benefit anybody, except a very tiny percent of the population. But both items were very interesting. I mean if you look at the kind of growth My Chidambaram is talking about, but we will get to that a little later. But the schools, the elite schools- I derive considerable entertainment by visiting the websites of these schools. You know 10 to 15 years ago they didn't exist. Let me share with you some of the excerpts from the websites of my favorite schools. This is from the Website of the Goenka International School Delhi. Now in this globalised age, to use one of the worst clichés of all times, in this globalised times, the school; promises to make your child a truly global citizen, a well rounded global citizen. So that you know it's not just about learning more about the stock market, it's also about cuisine, and I quote for you, ' your child will be served food from many traditions including Indian, continental, Chinese. Now this is a school, it's a school, an air- conditioned school, but it's a school. And let's be fair they have fitted in Indian on one day. Okay, Mexican, Chinese, and continental and other stuff, but they say the element is not lost. So let's be fair to them. Meals are carefully prepared, quote again verbatim from the site, by expert dieticians and only, only premium quality mineral water, juice and organically cultivated fruit, vegetables and eggs are utilized. So it's only premium quality mineral water and organically cultivated vegetables and eggs. But we shall return to it. It's very important in this inequality business. Another of my favorite schools, also in Delhi, is the Sanskriti School, run for the children of the elite of the elite. Sometimes Ministers kids fail to get into that school, which is given grants in excess of 15 crores, 150 million from different governments. The Sanskriti school announces on its Website or did announce until I wrote about it and they removed that line, ' the chairperson of our board will always be, whoever is the wife of the serving cabinet secretary. I did raise the question, what happens if the cabinet secretary is a woman. Let's be optimistic, okay. So that line disappeared from the website, but I have saved that page, so it's there. It's part of my Memorabilia and all that stuff and it will go into my museum of great websites.

Then I can't leave out my place of residence- Mumbai. My favorite school there is the Bombay Scottish, which last year, particularly in January last year, was the site of a bitter and intense class struggle. You see when they hold the school day, they have a shamiana, a special shamiana for the millioners, not for the children, the children still get to be children to some extent. Into this Garden of Eden crept a serpent in the late 90's called the billionaires. Yeah! So then there was a huge problem of how to seat the super rich

among the merely, obscenely wealthy. So they created a separate enclosure and for three days it was on the front pages of Mumbai's newspapers, as it left a lot of disgruntled millionaires, who felt that they had been discriminated on a class basis. So there was this intense little struggle between the millionaires and the billionaires. I am not quite clear how it was resolved, but I can catch up with it when the next episode appears. Maybe when the mobs of millionaires take to the streets burning lexuses and Mercedes. For millions of children in this country, estimated between 8 million and six times that number, there are no schools at all to go to. Okay! Millions of children in this country don't go to any school at all. 14 AND A HALF % of those who go drop out in 1st grade and a much larger by the time they go to grade 5. If you look at the census of India 2001 data, it's fascinating. The census household data shows you, places of religious worship in this country, as you know we have a serious shortage of worship places in this country, we always want to build one more. Places of religious worship in this country 2.4 million. Schools, colleges, polytechniques, technical institutes, universities, Vishva Vidhyalaya, science and research centers, hospitals, primary health care centers, tertiary hospitals. Superspeciality hospitals, everything put together 2.1 million. Places of worship 2.4 million. That's the equation. In the United Nations education for all report, you know for the U.N. it is mandatory, that every 6 months you say something that will depress the world. On the listing on performance on the basic globally accepted parameters of education, India ranks 115th in 129 Nations surveyed, despite Goenka, Despite Sanskriti, Despite Bombay Scottish. And that too actually after years and years of liberalization, a fall. We were up at 100 once, but we have come down. The 59th round of the National sample survey organization, the biggest data survey we have in the country or the biggest gatherer on such information on a regular basis, tells us something about what rural Indians, particularly farmers, what do they spend on education. At one end are the schools where you spend lakhs of rupees to send your children here to eat Thai and continental and at the other end the monthly per capita expenditure of the farmer or people in the farming sector is Rs 17 a month or 50 paisa per day. And what education you can buy on 50 paisa a day, you tell me, I'll like to know. So you're talking of hundreds and millions of people whose per capita expenditure on Education is 50 paisa per day, because that's what they can afford. They spend twice that much on health. So at one end you have this phenomenal, this absolutely incredible schooling system anywhere and on the other you have a nation spending 50 paisa per day on education, as individuals.

Worldwide there have been several processes, and I am going to summarize them very crudely, which have unfolded across the globe, in most countries, in the last 15 to 20 years, a period I describe as the collapse of restraint on corporate power. Now what are these processes? They are much pronounced in India and much worse in Latin America, over the last 15 to 20 years.

1. Withdrawal from the state from sectors that matter to the poor. The state has not withdrawn, the state has not withered away, and the state is far more interventional than it ever has been, on behalf of the rich, on behalf of the corporate power.
2. Huge expenditure cuts in the social sector on health, on education. On a listing of 182 countries, in their expenditure on health, India ranks 179. You are the 4th most privatized health system in the world. Anyway. The current budget, the

- farmer's budget, actually gives huge sops, huge incentives to corporate hospitals in rural areas.
3. Shrinking of subsidies and support for the vulnerable people.
 4. The steady and systematic transfer of wealth and resources from the poor to the rich. This is a worldwide process, you take the United States, you take the United Kingdom. You take India, you'll see it. It's extremely rapid in the United States, it's quite fast in India. This transfer of wealth and resources take place in many ways around you, but we don't necessarily recognize it. It takes place in all the cities we live in. Take for instance the transfer of public land in Bandra, costing crores of rupees in acres, to the Leelavati Hospital, on the ground that they will reserve 30% of their beds for poor people. Well they haven't performed even 10% of that in their existence. Apollo Hospital, Delhi, did not realize even 5% and was pulled up by the Delhi High Court, more than once for it. But you have transferred billions of rupees worth of land to them, in the name of this, the transfer of resources from the poor to the rich. Secondly all these hospitals, through the 90's imported millions and millions of dollar worth of custom duty free of equipment. In the name of serving the poor, the gigantic instrumentation that they have bought from overseas, was exempt from custom duties. Yeah! This was transfer of public revenue to multibillionaires, who live in Antwerp.
 5. The fifth and the most central process is the unprecedented rise of corporate power. This is the most central and important thing, if you want to know what is going on. There are huge dramas around us, whether in the countryside or the cities. I think one of the mistakes that Mr. Chidambaram was making, even when he was speaking yesterday in anger against unnamed and unknown journalists, who throw a dampener on everything, was the whole business of disconnecting rural India from urban India. It's a very bad idea. If you want to know what is happening, the action is in urban India, the rural India is usually fallout. But don't try understanding these two separately from each other. Those of you who watch the budget, it's been more this year than every year, the opening of the prime time news. The first line that the anchor says, 'And the bad news in the budget is that India India inks wish list has been ignored. There isn't pretence in the panelists, you know, the distinguished panelists are indistinguishable from each other. The rise of corporate power out of these two processes is so central. The Australian Sociologist Alex Carey, explains this in a beautiful way. He says that there are three major developments in the 20th century. He describes the entire 20th Century in three propositions. The rise and growth of Democracy, The rise and growth of Corporate power the rise and growth of corporate propaganda to stifle the rise and growth of Democracy. And I think it captures most of the situations of the 20th century fairly well. But the sixth process
 6. Imposition of user fees and user charges on people who cant afford them, simply impossible for them to afford them.
 7. What I call the privatization of every thing, including intellect and soul. And I mean everything. The latest in Mumbai, those of you who have traveled or who travel very regularly by Mumbai's public transport, have you ever noticed that in all the railway stations of India there are little kids sitting, polishing shoes, even In Mumbai. They have privatized even the space of the shoeshine polish boy and

they have sold it for fifteen lakhs per space to corporations which then will put a shoeshine, a massage, a massage machine, Coke and Pepsi and cigarettes. But the shoeshine boy's space has been officially privatized. I think that must be a world first, at least in our parts of the world. The privatization of everything including intellect and soul. It's one of the reasons why we use this rather pompous term, in the last 10 years, Public intellectual, because the rest of it has become private. We belong to some kind of bureaucratic intellectual, so we have to say I am a public intellectual to be distinct, that I am not owned by Ambani.

8 The eighth process is the stunning rise in inequality which is the fallout of this and which is the defining feature of our time.

9 The ideology of Market fundamentalism, which I won't go much into. The market is beyond reproach, not at this moment when people who have been bred on this ideology are suddenly being told that the Indian economy had tanked because someone sold a bank in the United States. *****[bests analysis?] Is down the tube in the U.S. so you are in very big trouble. Don't mind if you cannot pay your home loan because *****[Bests analysis?] was sold in the U.S. But it is a very important ideology; it is the driving ideology of the ruling Indian elite at this time.

10. The takeover of governance by Non representative bodies whether through world bank arbitration or intervention or I.M.F. or whoever and some of this has been achieved everyday in the city around you through privatization of water, through undermining of the elected bodies and very often with the aid and co option of the so called civil societies organizations, which are unrepresentative, un-elected and undermine the municipalities and other bodies.

So these are the sorts of processes that we will cover today.

Come back to the schools. We have seen schools like and all, now let's see the other schools. Take the Vidharba schools. Last year Mumbai posted a record pass percentage in H.S.C 76%. Vidharba had the topper; the state topper from Maharashtra. Vidharba's pass percentage in the H.S.C was 49%. Marathwada's pass percentage in the H.S.C. was 49.1%. What are we to conclude from this? The children of Vidharba are stupid, that they don't study, kids of Marathwada are dimwits, and some might even cite as evidence that the Chief Minister comes from there. So how was Mumbai's pass percentage 76%? The difference is this that most of Mumbai's kids go back to homes with electricity, with 24 hrs power connection, with internet connections often broadband, with tuitions outside schools and to schools where teachers actually take classes and coaching classes at the higher level. In Vidharba and Marathwada again it's happening. As the exam period approaches 15 to 17 hr power cuts. Even the Panchayat Bhavan doesn't have power. Those Panchayat Bhavan's that have bulbs. Do you know what it would take to give them power? Who are the biggest consumers of power and electricity? Malls and multiplexes. In Mumbai if we impose a 15-minute power cut, all eleven districts of Vidharba would have 2 hr power. But we cannot do that to the beautiful people. I think there is incredible drama in this- that because we cannot take away 15 minutes of power from Mumbai, the children of Marathwada and Vidharba- by the way Vidharba produces most of the electricity of Maharashtra, generating far more power than Western

Maharashtra or Mumbai Konkan, are paying the price of your Children's education. It's an inequality.

If you went right now to rural Nagpur, Bajargaon is a village within the rural Nagpur district. Bajargaon children will be sitting without any electricity, without water. The exams are on, the teachers are off, and everything is normal. In the same premises of Bajargaon, is what is called, Asia's largest or India's largest fun and food village for the children of the elite, who come in from Nagpur, Yawatmal town, the rich towns of Vidharba. I visited the fun and food village, which is owned by a Delhi company. It has, in an area classified as drought prone and with severe drought, 18 different kinds of water slides. So you can get wet in 18 different innovative ways. It had, until a storm went and destroyed everything, a snow dome, not a skating ring a snow dome, a huge complex that created snow at incredible use of electricity. You are talking of lakhs of units of electricity to create snow. Reassembled all the way from Japan, no less. It has a bar off course. In the snow dome you can frolic in the snow, while outside the measured temperature was 49 degrees centigrade, which is Vidharba in summer anyway. Amravati and Nagpur have 47 and 48 quite easily. The entire Bazargaon fun and food complex lives at the expense of the Bazargaon village. What does the Bazargaon village get from the village? This was supposed to create jobs, it did. It created 9, -the mali, jamadarni, the toilet cleaner, all these sort of jobs it created for them. It earns during season, fun and food village, on ticket sales, let alone food, refreshments, anything, it earns 1lakh to 1lakh 30,000 a day at the gates. The annual rent given to the Panchayat of Bazargaon for the whole year is 45,000. , which is less than half of what it earns at the gate, in a single day, in season. So that is Bazargaon. And Haldiram has opened his own water park, in Nagpur, at the edge of the Bhosle Lake, from where the water is taken, on which the city of Nagpur was built several hundred years ago. The levels of the water are going down even as you frolic there. I think he has 19 forms of water slides or something like that.

Oak the fastest growing thing in this country is not IT, it's not software, it's not the census, certainly not at this point, it's inequality. And it has grown faster in the last 15 years than it has at any point in the last 50. The levels of inequality, you are looking at today around you, last existed in the colonial period and we are making a pretty good shot at outdoing that. Let me tell you the good news stuff, we don't want to be too depressed. Some of my favorite reading when I can tear away from Sanskriti's website is that India now ranks 4th in the world in the number of dollar billionaires, and that's a list of all the countries in the world that have billionaires. We have three and a half times more billionaires than all the Scandinavian nations put together. Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, the lot of them have 15. We have 53. Our dad's are richer than their dad's. The U.S. has 469, Russia with it's highly mafiased economy, 87. Germany 59, India 53. We are closing in very fast on Germany. We can be sure of one thing; we will beat Russia at some point because about half their billionaires will end up in prison. Beserowski [????????] and others will need company, they will run a casino in there for them. So we will be there and one-day wills erase the National humiliation of having fewer billionaires than the U.S.

Out of the 53 billionaires, 21 live in Mumbai. You know that, 21 of them have Mumbai addresses. I'll get there. These 53 individuals, the net asset worth is 334.6 billion dollars. Which means that 53 Indians have a net worth equal to 31% of your gross domestic product and probably more because now we are finding that our GDP was wrongly calculated on the basis of an outdated purchasing power parity system and that it's actually 40% smaller than we thought. But still the billionaires are real. 4 of the richest men in the world are Indians. Lakshmi Mittal, Mukesh Ambani, Anil Ambani and K.P. Singh from the DLFC. Those 4 alone have a net worth of 160 billion dollars which is more than the GDP of about 40, 50 countries. If you look at the small nations and stuff like that, you are looking at something very interesting. The net asset worth of these people is not 4th in the world; it is 2nd in the world, 2nd only to the United States. The net asset worth of the Indian billionaires is over 40 billion dollars higher than the net worth of Germany's 59 billionaires. Our net asset worth is higher than those of the Russia's 87-dollar billionaires. But if you want more fun with numbers read my favorite required reading, The Times Of India of a morning. The Times Of India of October 8th²⁰⁰⁷, gave me this utterly fascinating information. Just 2 years ago we ranked 8th, today we rank 4th. We apparently are adding one and a half per month to the billionaires list. The Times Of India tell me that the top 10 richest Indians in 2007 between July, August and September, in 90 days, added 2 lakh 51 thousand to their worth. Meaning 65.3 billion dollars, which means that 10 Indians added 100 crores every hour for 90 days to their worth. Which means that they adding 2 crores per minute. Of which Mr Mukesh Ambani alone, according to the Times which is very helpful in telling him n these things says that. Mr Mukesh Ambani added 40 lakh rupees, 4 million rupees per minute. Which made me think, 40 lakhs a minute. I then checked up and I could not find any records that showed me, let alone 40 lakhs a minute, the poorest sections of Indians are agricultural laborers. I could not any evidence to show that in 10 years they had added 40 rupees to their wage. Let alone 40 lakhs, let alone in a minute, in 10 years the wages of the agricultural laborers had not gone up by 40 rupees. The concentration of wealth is now so serious that if find the findings of Abhijit Banerjee and Thomas Pickety, in 1956 income inequality in India went down considerably at the top level. In the mid 80's it began to rise again with a difference. In the 80's the rise in inequality saw the top 1% grab most of the benefits. In the 90's it is not the top 1% who has taken the Lions share of the benefits. It is the top 0.01% of the population that has taken the Lions share of the benefits. Locate this against the most important government report to have come out in 20 years. Perhaps the most important government report to have come out in India since the first Labour commission's report. Some of you may have heard of it- The National commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector. A team chaired by a gentleman with all the right qualifications, Dr Arjun Gupta, Planning Commission, World Bank. IMF, you name it, he's been there, and he's done that and also having other planning commission members like Mr D.N. Yוגandar, all of them on his panel. Let me tell you what it says, in it's own words- 836 million Indians or 77% of the population live on less than 20 rupees a day. The World Bank's definition is less than 1 dollar a day, while 836 million Indians live on less than 50 cents a day. That is the Government of India's report Page 1. I am reading out a quote from the report, ' 79% of informal and unorganized sector belong to this group without any legal protection of their jobs or working conditions or social security, living in abject poverty and excluded from all the glory of a shining India.' The report

also shows you there has been virtually no increase in employment in this period. Indeed there has been a huge rise in labour productivity, and a huge fall in real wages of labour. The International Labour Organization tell us that for the reforms period, the key years of the reforms period, that the labour productivity rose 84% but real wages of labour and manufacturing fell 22% because the productivity rise was engineered by making higher output per worker, greater use of technology and throwing of many people from jobs. Take for example Tata Motors. Take Tata 's in Jamshedpur steel. In 1991 the Tata's produced 1 million tons of steel with 84000 workers. In 2005 they produced 5 millions of steel with half that number of workers. Bajaj, you just can't beat a Bajaj, Bajaj motors, Pune 1 million two wheelers with about 24000 workers. 2005 2.4 million two wheelers with about 10,500 workers. Employment has gone down with a factor of half and productivity has gone up by a factor of 1 to 2.4. So this is what the report is saying. Even such employment such has been added to the organized sector really constitutes in formalization of the formal sector. Like what's happened to women. When the major expansion in employment has come in garments, which is now taking a hit with the rising price of the rupee, with the rising strength of the rupee, so exports are falling. So women take a real hit. The other sector which has opened up for women is domestic worker. So what is called the rise in employment in the organized sector is really the informalisation of the formal sector. By the way who are these 836 million people. Do they have a face? Yeah! 88% of all Dalits and Adivasi's fall into this group. 85% of all Muslims fall into this group. Something like 72% of OBC's and so on the list goes. What does this show you? It shows you that in this Country that the gap between the super rich and the rich is perhaps larger than the gap between the merely rich and the poor. Because what does it take to be in the top 5% in this country? Not much. If you have spent 15,000 rupees in the last month you are in the top 5%. That's the expenditure class for the top 5%. 15,000Rupees. There are lots of people here who will fall within that. So what I am saying is that the gap between the super rich and the merely wealthy, like that gap in Bombay Scottish, that is the gap. That is the gigantic huge gap at one end. The rest of us are not so well off but pretending to be, with chasing Australia and Japan and the rest of that stuff. Now here is another very interesting thing and I should tell you about poverty calculations in this country. I never take the BPL figures very seriously; I don't base my work on them. It doesn't matter if BPL, below poverty line, is 36% or 39.3 % or 27.9%. The counting is always done by the top 1%. Which means that your 836 million people live on less than 20 rupees a day but less than one third of them are below the poverty line officially. Actually for achieving the status of being below the poverty, you have to live on less than 12 rupees a day. Then, only then, you will have learnt the hard work of being poor. So that is the situation .It means that for 1% or 2% of the population the benchmarks of United States, Australia, Japan, Western Europe, for 60% or more of the population, Sub-Saharan Africa would be a useful benchmark .So here we are as a society, 4th in the list of dollar billionaires, 128th in human development. In billionaires only 3 countries are ahead of us. In human development, in the basics of human existence, in access to basic education, literacy, sanitation, water, who are the countries that are ahead of us? Let me quickly give you a run through of some of them- not all of them because there are a 127 of them ahead of us. El Salvador that fought a war for one and a half decade, it's ranked 103, 25 places ahead of us. Bolivia, poorest nation in Latin America, 11 places ahead of us. Guatemala, 36 years of a civil conflict, which hasn't,

ended yet, 10 ranks ahead of us. Africa, Gabon, Botswana both of them ahead of us. Nicaragua 110 ahead of us. Honduras 113 ahead of us. Ecuador is about 40 places ahead of us. Cuba ranks 55th in the Human index, we rank 128. You can figure out how many places ahead of us, Cuba is. When you are 128th is a list of 177, you are already in the bottom 50 Nations in the world. But suppose we took out Dalits and Adivasis, who make up 250 million people in your population, that is the 5th largest nation in the world after China, India, Russia and the United States. It's bigger than Indonesia. Suppose we treat this as a separate Nation they will not rank in the bottom 50, they would rank in the bottom 10 Nations of the world. Suppose we treated India as a whole all 1 billion of us, we are in the bottom in the world if we take children as the criteria. If we take Child literacy and nutrition you are below Ethiopia, you are below Burkina Faso [????????????], you are below Chad. Percentage of children below the age of 5 underweight, Ethiopia 15%, Chad 22%, India 30%. And as you take all children India is 47%. Why am I including all these so-called Basket case countries in the lot? Very important because non of them has 10% growth, non of them is a IT superpower, non of them is an emerging nuclear power, non of them has a sensex, all the countries together don't have even 4 billionaires, you have 53. All Scandinavia don't have one-third of what you have. Ok, so this is the position. So why is inequality today different? We've always seen inequality, it's not as if we grew up in some kind of egalitarian paradise. But there is a difference. In the last 15 years the difference is that never in our history as an Independent nation and in the world at large, has inequality been so ruthlessly engineered, so cynically constructed, in the transfer of wealth, in the transfer of power, in the undermining of elected bodies, the transfer of resources to the super rich. And then what has happened at the bottom end of the spectrum in those 15 years?

1 Hunger has grown at an unprecedented rate since the crisis of the 60's. The per capita food available per Indian in 1991 was 510 gms, the highest ever for independent India. The 2006 figure which is the last full year figure available, 2007 numbers are provisional, 422gms. Now please look at this dichotomy. Everyone sitting in this room know that we are eating better in the last 10 years than we had ever eaten in our lives. The reforms have favored people like us, they have favored of our class backgrounds. Yet we are eating better and better, the top 12% to 20% of this country is eating better than it ever did, but actually the amount of food is falling, we are now importing wheat. And from 510 gms you fell to 422gms, that's not a fall of 80gms per Indian. That's a fall of 80gms into 365 days into 1 billion Indians, which means that the average family is consuming 100Kg of food less today than they did just 10 yrs ago. And then if at one end of the spectrum if 20% are eating better than ever before, the cake is shrinking then the question comes up, what the heck are the other 40% or 60 % eating. **WHAT ARE THEY EATING?** Let me tell you what they are eating. If you went to Rajasthan just now, you went to South Rajasthan, you went to the Kothra [??????] Tehsil in Udaipur, at this moment the Adivasi's in this season, what are they practicing? They are practicing something called as rotating hunger. There is some work to be had, people are too weak to do the work. You know who is the weakest? Women! Their nutrition has collapsed in the last 15 years because they eat last and they eat least in the household. So what happens in the household whether there are 8 Adivasi's or 9 Adivasi's – they rotate hunger. Which means that 2 out of the 8 will eat well that day and go out and work. The next day there will be another 2. They are rotating their hunger to keep their family

going. That's what is happening at the bottom end of the spectrum. There are two indexes of hunger in the world – one is the FAO , Food and agriculture organization, the other is IFPRI, international food and policy research institute. IFPRI's Global hunger index. India 4th in billionaires, 94th in the Global hunger index of 131 nations. Who's just ahead of us- 93 Zimbabwe which is having food riots. 2nd Index of IFPRI – Global hunger progress indicator, means how well have you handled your hunger. Who's just ahead of us in that index- Ethiopia. This is a country in which a new restaurant opens everyday in some Metro or city. This is a country where people are eating a 100 kg less than they did just 8 to 10 years ago. The nutritional status of women is worse, there is rotating hunger. This has happened in a period because indebtedness in the peasantry has doubled. You see hunger now in farm households very severely, not in landless labour households because there hunger is a permanent feature. You go to a farm household, in Vidharba, Marathwada they are giving you tea without milk, and because they are selling the milk they are not giving it to the child. If there is any milk it's going to be sold for money. And it has created a situation and here is your drama. Here are the things that I would like to see reflected in the medias and the goddamn newspapers themselves for a start but also in theatre and film.

Migrations have gone berserk. We have very bad institutions to count migrations. The NFF and the census only treat migrations as a one shot process. You have gone from the village in Raigad to Mumbai, you are a migrant. And you are only counted as a migrant if you have stayed in Mumbai for 6months. Today's migrants do not stay 6 months anywhere. They come from Orissa, they work one month in Mumbai, they go to Sangli to work on the dam, their contractor takes them to Satara to work on the road, and then they are off the Vijayanagaram to make bricks. They are not anywhere 6 months. They are not counted as migrants. But since 1993-94. Prof Nagarajan, MIDS, is working on this. The migrations have gone completely berserk. This whole sterile attitude that migrations went from deep village to urban metros is all wrong. It's like a giant anthill. There are migrations going on from rural areas to rural areas, then there is rural to non- urban metro, rural to small towns, small metros, then rural to urban metro- the classic pattern, there is urban to urban migration on a very large scale and then there is urban to rural migration as urban jobs collapse and companies find that they get cheap land and water in the countryside and shift to the countryside where wagers are so depressed that people will work for almost nothing. Let me give you one example. In the constituency of one of the most dynamic minister we have in India, who has won so many prizes for his dynamism for running the worst civil aviation Ministry in a decade, Mr Praful Patel, the beedi king of Gondia. His father, the late lamented senior Patel, discovered that Labor is 5 rupees cheaper per quintal in Chattisgarh. So the Beedi enterprises of this place have all moved out of Vidharba to Chattisgarg and Jharkhand to save that 5 rupees per quintal or whatever that obscene amount it be. What do we care? That has left thousands of women destitute because their household income came from Beedi. So now if you went to Gondia, I am talking of Rural Gondia, I am talking of Tiroda, mofussil headquarters, Tehsil headquarters, go to the station. It is crowded with women early in the morning going to rural districts of Nagpur to work for 25 rupees a day, 30 rupees a day as agricultural laborers, urban women who have never worked in the fields. Rewantabai Kamble, who told me that because they leave home so early, they spend 4hrs a day at home, traveling about a thousand kilometers a week to earn 25 rupees a day, Rewantabai

Kamble told me that her youngest baby doesn't recognize her any more because she has never been awake when she has come home for 6 months. The baby has stopped recognizing the mother. I traveled this whole distance with these women two, three times and half their life is spent in this journey traveling up and down, apart from the 8 to 9 spent working in the fields. It is just stunning; there is so much drama in it. There is a beehive of activity, at incredible misery. These women in the train pass Bazargaon and see the fun and frolic and the 18 water slides. There is a beautiful line from that old Don McLeen song called HOMELES BROTHER [????????], which I think of when I look at this:

Down the bowels of a broken land

Where numbers live like men.

Where those who keep their senses,

Have them taken back again.

Where the nightstick cracks with crazy rage,

And madmen don't pretend.

And wealth has no beginning,

And poverty no end.

And you who live on promises,

And prosper as you please,

The victim of your riches,

Often dies of your disease.

There is incredible stuff happening over there, if we want to report it, if we want to capture it, if we want to tell their story. The migrations are just one part of it, but they are a huge part of it because at any given moment now, 70 million Indians are on the move all over this country. In 1993, I took a bus with migrants from Mehboob Nagar in Andhra Pradesh to Mumbai. It took 36 hrs, there was only one bus a week. 2003 I took the same bus, there were 47 buses a week, all of them traveling at three times capacity. In the first bus there were only Adivasis, Lambada Adivasis. In the 2003 bus the people traveling on the bus included landed farmers with 12 acres and the most poignant part was sitting next to the landed farmer with 12 acres was his former bonded laborer. Both of them were going to Mumbai to seek their fortune. That is the kind of pressure we build up in the countryside over this time. The obscene gaps that I talk about, you can see them. Well very far from here, across the border in Kerala, Vionad. [????????]. Vionad to Kutta in Karnataka, zero state transport buses in 1995: KSRT buses in 1997 two: 2005, 27 bus trips a day between Vionad and Kutta. With Keralites migrating to Karnataka, to work for

half the minimum wage, because the agrarian crisis had destroyed the work in Vionad, iduki and palakad [?????????]. You can see it in employment, you can see it in jobs, and you can see it in weddings.

Incidentally I kept giving you all these lists where we are 4th and 128th, there is one list where India is No 1. Costliest weddings in the world, Forbes. com. The costliest wedding in the world was held by Mrs Laxmi Mittal, it was in France. You have to sympathize with the guy. It's difficult to get a wedding Pandal in Paris, in season time. So the poor guy just ended up hiring the Palace of Versailles instead and took down a bollywood crew to make a production number so you can see Mittal the movie shortly. You look all around you. Watch in the very cities where you are. Are you looking at the emergence of theme weddings. Say around the Udaipur Fortress or the Taj Mahal. Now if you are Bengali and given to high culture it is the Cysteen Chapel [?????????] and if you are a Delhiite and very patriotic it's Kargil. The KARGIL WEDDING- ONE AND HALF Acre of billowing white canvas with plastic dead soldiers on the top. Doubtless to impress on the young couple the seriousness of the holy vows of matrimony. But the theme weddings started in Mumbai in 1989, with one of those billionaires associated with the super specialty hospitals. But they were very modest, they planned for about 1000 guests but there were many gate crashers, because everybody wanted to be there at the biggest theme wedding. It was a start, since they have been outclassed very thoroughly. Anyway that wedding collapsed after 9 days because the bridegroom eloped with another man. So that ended very regrettably, not from the point of view of the bridegroom, just from that of the family. One end are these weddings going on. Now you go across the border into Kerala and you look at the Church registered in the Christian dominated areas of Vionad [?????????]. Pulpalli Panchayat has more churches than any other part of the world, 27 churches in one Panchayat. God has many addresses in Vionad. You look at the wedding registers. Weddings fell 50% in the agrarian crisis years- they are now going up again. They fell 50% because couldn't afford them. Government of Maharashtra's official figure on Vidharba. 300,000 families are unable to get their daughters married. You have to be a true Indian to understand how explosive that situation is for poor families. So they are doing mass weddings. It's the only thing in Vidharba that the Government of Maharashtra has done that I support. They are holding 600 weddings, 800 weddings. At the same time that Vilasrao Deshmukh holds his son's wedding with 12,000 guests at the turf club, with all the exotic cuisines of the world. At the time when Mr Mittal's daughter wedding was all the rage I was in the house of a Banjara tribal called Gosavi Pawar-The patriarch of the Banjara clan of Yawatmal. We are talking of a very small Pawar, he doesn't play cricket. This Pawar is a patriarch and the banjara's gather from all around the country for the wedding because they are Nomadic people. They have come from Rajasthan, they have come from Karnataka. They have decided to have several weddings at the same time to save on cost. They had 3 weddings at the same time and Mr Gosavi Pawar couldn't afford to buy the saris required for the wedding. He was humiliated by the moneylender, by the merchant, by the shop owner. He committed suicide. He was already in trouble, in debt in the collapse of the cotton economy of Vidharba. I landed there sometime shortly after to witness, for the only time I hope in a lifetime I will ever see a household, which had 3 weddings and a funeral in the same day, in the same 24hrs. The worst part was when the wedding procession left the house and met the funeral procession on the highway. Then those carrying Pawar's body

ran into the fields, to hide, so that the ill omen will not affect. By the way if we are talking about weddings lets talk about funerals. Lets talk about Karnataka and funerals. The one funeral that I attended forcibly, which I attended under duress was that of Dhirubai Ambani in Mumbai. I got stuck in traffic because it was a funeral procession with the largest number of cars, and ministers and lal battis. And the newspapers described it so eloquently – Mr Dhirabhai Ambani atop a pyre of 450 kg of pure sandalwood flown in specially by a special plane from Karnataka. And I thought what a wonder full man, even in death he was doing some service to entrepreneurs like Veerappan. Because that is the only way you can get 450 kg of pure sandalwood. In this state, at that time, there was the funeral of Bandiyappa, a Dalit in Gulbarga, whose wife was stoned because she tried burying him in the regular graveyard of the village and he was a Dalit. Then they tied a rope around the body and dragged it out of the ground. Then she tried to burn the body but she didn't have enough money because she was an agricultural laborer. And I saw a body that had been half buried and half burnt. This is the spectrum of wedding inequality in your society. You can see it in health, you can see it in education, you can see it in water, and you can see it in the farm crisis, which has now claimed 166,000 suicides according to the government of India. One farmer commits suicide every 30 minutes in this country, which is confirmed by the agriculture Minister, in a question session in the Rajya Sabha on Oct 30th. Inequality doesn't just breed obscenity, it breeds the mindset of inequality, it breeds that mindset. So that I have in Nagpur. Vidharba which has had the highest number of suicides in the damn world for farmers and a journalist asks me that question- is it not true , sir , that all these people have died because of excessive alcohol consumption .To which I said, yes, alcohol is a problem. It's not a problem only in farmers. Dammit if excessive alcohol drove suicides there would be no journalists left in the world. As I told the meeting, I would be an exempted being a teetotaler but I cannot guarantee the survival of the many familiar faces in the audience.

80 LAKH PEOPLE, 8 MILLION HUMAN BEINGS have quit farming between 1991 census and 2001 census. When the 2011 census comes you will find that number will be double. I am willing to bet on it. There is a hell of a lot of people because the crisis has really sharpened after 2001 and 2002. 80 lakh people. Number of cultivators in 1991 census 111 million, 2003 census 103 million. Where did they go? Your guess is as good as mine.

Now you are looking at the income of these people –the Goenkas, the Ambanis, the Mittals. Look at the income of the farming community. Let alone the agricultural laborer, which is much lower than any one of these. The average monthly per capita expenditure of the farm household in India – landlord and half acrewalla combined average 503 rupees out of which 60% goes in food, 18% goes up fuel, clothing and footwear, which leaves precious little for anything else. Which means they are spending 34 rupees a month on health and 17 rupees a month on education, which means they spend twice the amount on health than what they spend for education, because health is the fastest growing cost in your economy and the second fastest growing cost of rural family debt. Many of these people who killed themselves had debt of 2lakhs, 3 lakhs, because the health sector is the most rapacious sector. Outside the input sector in agriculture which is THE most rapacious sector. And Mr Chidambaram who speaks of meaningless growth

and attacks those who speak about meaningless growth, closed down more banks as a finance Minister in the history in rural India, 1503 bank branches in rural India shut down in 2006 alone, the last year for which full data are available not provisional data. That means in Mr Chidambaram's watch, the friend of farmers, one rural bank branch shut down every six hours. The story will appear, so you will see all the details in it soon.

The mindset of inequality you can see it in the media now. Two other points and I'll end there. You can see it in the media to the kind of attention we give to some things and not to other things. One that these are not drunkards and that sort of things. The other – the highest number of suicides, the worst year of the farm crisis in the country for any single state was Maharashtra in 2006. It was so bad that the Prime Minister of the country came down and declared a relief package. While all this was going what was the media doing, what were people like us doing, what were you and I doing, what were journalists doing? At the same time that all this drama was going on in Vidharba, I counted how many journalists from outside Vidharba, the national media in this country means any news paper that publishes from two cities, in English. The number of journalists for Vidharba for one week was 6. And out of those two of them were there because they had missed a flight, otherwise they wouldn't have been there for 7 days. They missed a flight so they had to stay there for an additional day and a half. Why do I use 7 days as a reference because one hour's flight away in Mumbai was Lakme India fashion week. 512 accredited journalists for the whole week plus 100 journalists a day on daily passes. Huh! 6 and 600. At the Lakme India fashion week you saw cameramen fighting each other with tripods for the space because they had to get the right angle on the girls. But there was something very striking about it and it tells you about, I don't know what it tell you about. Let me tell you what it is and you think. What were the girls displaying on the ramp that year? Cotton. They were displaying cotton fabrics. That was the year of the cotton. One hours flight away the men and women who grew the cotton were committing suicide at the rate of 8 per day. But that was not thought to be news. The men and women who grew the cotton were killing themselves at the rate of one per damn 3 hours. There were more journalists at the Lakme India Fashion week then buyers. There were 200 buyers according to the economic times. So journalist's outnumbered buyers by 3 is to 1 and if you didn't buy we beat the shell out of you. This was one hour's flight away. Any news editor in the world would have considered it news.

In health you consider the cost. 2million Indians are no longer seeking health treatment of any kind because they cannot afford it. Chickengunya added more to GDP than Lakme India Fashion week in prescriptions alone. Households had spent 30,000 40,000 for a disease that has no cure, because hospitalization was recommended for one and all. Huge families were admitted, taking huge loans for that purpose and health debt, like I said, is the second fastest growing component of rural family debt. According to the labset [??????????] 78 million Asians have gone below the poverty line in the last decade because of health costs. It's destroyed them below that 1 dollar a day price, the health expenses. Now we are coming to the end of your ordeal.

The big battles are going to be fought. The battles are already on; there is huge resistance to this going on if you wish to see. If you notice I haven't even once used the word globalization, you should thank me for it. Yeah, you can call all these processes that I

described. You can describe it as globalization; you can describe them as neo-liberal economics, all of which would be true. Some of us with limited vocabularies call it capitalism. But the big loot, the really big fight has already begun. It's in the sphere of water privatization. It's coming soon to a city near you. It's already begun in Mumbai, it has already happened in Chandrapur, it's happening very rapidly in Bangalore with the aid of the Civil Society groups and in Chandrapur and other shore, the water has flown from the poor colonies to the rich colonies very very swiftly on the basis of who can pay. Now the complexity of conceptualizing who owns water is an incredible nightmare. But we know, because the World Bank told us so. So we are doing it and we are privatizing water. Understand how big water is. Water is the last resource in the world, not privatized. Only 7% of the world's WATER IS PRIVATELY CONTROLLED. And that produces a market of 200 billion dollars in revenue annually. So you can imagine what can happen if you capture the other 93%. And that is the effort now being made. Here is something about this globalization. Lets accept it as a descriptive word not an analytic one. Here is something very interesting for you. The resistance, the drama, the fight, the theatre of war and conflict is this, of what we call global. The resistance will always be intensely local. It will be the privatization of water in Delhi, in your colonies. The privatization of electricity in your part of the country. The battles are going to be intensely local. Which means that nobody has an excuse for staying indifferent. Nobody has an excuse to say that battles are out in Doha, the battles are out in Seattle. There are a hundred Seattle's a day in the third world. The battles are there at your door, how you react to the privatization of water. It's coming in a very very big way.

I went to Nallamada, in Andhra Pradesh. In Anantpur, which is a dry arid zone, no good water, there is one village that has very sweet water. 2001 I go there, they don't give me water. I feel they are either offended, I have said something to offend them. They shuffle their feet when I ask for water, and then they say- don't drink our water. They show me something full of some green sediment and they looked at my face and they said – but we have Coco-Cola. Matlab panch rupaya ka chhota. The water resources of this country have been hawked to soft drink countries, to water parks, to life style games. You want to understand how large the water market is. In the United States, last year, Americans spent more money on bottled water than they did on movie tickets and iPods. 15 billion dollars, which is more than that spent on movie tickets and iPods. And this year it is estimated to be 16 billion. That's how big that market is. That's how huge it is. In India we have already started the process of privatization of rivers. Shionath[????????] river was the first stretch of a river, in this country, to be officially privatized, leased on to a private sector thing. I guess the government of Madhya Pradesh got tired of selling people down the river and so decided to sell the river. You have Maharashtra which has created the most extensive laws for the privatization of rural irrigation .All these inequalities I have been talking about are global they are not peculiar to India. United States is more unequal than it has been at any other time since 1929. The U.K has a commission looking into inequality. France has seen 15000 senior citizens die of a heat wave in a single season, most of them pensioners in 2003 and 2004.

In this onslaught, the greatest loot and grab sortie in the world to take the wealth out of the hands of the poor and put it in the hands of the rich, there is resistance all over the

world. There are also benchmarks. Paul Kripman[??????] the Princeton economist gives you a benchmark of what is unsustainable democracy. He says that when the wage differential between the Chief Executive officer and the POOREST WORKER IN THE SAME ENTERPRISE is 1000: 1 you cannot have democracy. It's no longer possible in that society. So I got very excited and I checked the differential between the Indian CEO's and their workers. I was very pleased to find that it wasn't 1000: 1, IT WAS 22000:1, in Mamba's factories. If you make that that differential between the Ambani's or top corporate chief's and agricultural laborers, it is 1: 30000. If you make the differential between top corporate executive and southern agricultural laborers, it is 1: 33000 OR 1: 35000. So what happens to your democracy?

There are two things that I leave you with. How do we as people in the media, whether in print, whether in theatre, whether in newspapers, whether in channels, how do we respond to what's happening? Where do we begin? I told you there are no excuses you there is a danger. It is very very easy to disconnect from the misery of the masses. There is a huge history of it in this country.

In 1876 Queen Victoria , held her darbar, the great 1856 darbar. She got tired of being called Queen and decided to rename herself empress and she had acquired a fairly large piece of real estate. We now call it India. So she made herself the empress of India and she had her durbar. The largest dinner party in history with 68,000 guests essentially royalty. 1876 was one of the peak years of famine in British India. Between Mysore and Madras 1 lakh people died of hunger and starvation in that one week of that durbar. The newspapers of that time covered the durbar. Oh yes they covered the starvation also. They write about the starvation. They also write about the police and barricades of the cities Mysore and Madras, clubbing peasants to death as they tried to get into the city to eat some food, but they make no connection between the durbars and the deaths. They don't make the connection. That's exactly what's happening today. You are having the coverage of the farm suicides, somewhat. You are having some reports of the farm crisis. But there is no connection made between the farm crisis, the incredible misery of the many and the unbelievable prosperity of the few. No connection is being made. We need to make the connection. In Queen Victoria's time that dinner party of 68000 guests, REMEMBER THOSE WERE all Raja Rani log, they came with their guys, their security men with their horse keepers, then the guy who cleaned the horse's shit, all that stuff. There were 2000 cooks for the dinner party and the cooks had their own cooks to cook for the cooks. Yet you will find how little it is written about in history. You'll find it in Mike Davi's[????????], 'Late Victorian holocaust' You'll find it in the memoirs of a couple of British Beauracrats. But you 'll not find anything much in history except the number of deaths. It's almost as if it's a secret in history. You can call it Queen Victoria's original secret. It's so easy to disconnect.

Let me end with one example, in more ancient history, which I think is the challenge for us. How do we make those connections, how do we capture or how do we just turn away or walk away from it. In Ancient Rome the biggest dinner party was held by Nero, after the burning of Rome. Rome had burned down and people had blamed him for it. Actually he wasn't to blame. He did start the fire, he tried putting it out, and he failed. He then needed to curry awe and favor in the masses. So he held this gigantic dinner party. You

can read all about the dinner party and the scales and all those things on line, thanks to the University of Michigan, which has put the historian Dascidus [????????], a historian and statesman in Nero's time, a minor official also. Dascidus lived in Nero's time, despise Nero, but was fairly objective in his reporting what had happened. In that dinner party anybody who was anybody was invited. Centurions, the generals, the conquering generals from Kartej [????????], the philosophers, the poets, the gossip columnists of the time, the scientists, the greatest minds of the Roman empire were assembled at that party. As Dascidus writes in his prose- the emperor offered his own gardens for the spectacle. Since it was the emperors own garden there was a gigantic statue of the emperor. It made sense. So the who's who of the Roman world, the European world gathered for the dinner. And then they had a problem. The problem was how to create lighting for that dinner. The Romans were pretty efficient; they created aqua ducts to bring somebody else's water all the way from Paris to Rome. So technique wise and engineering wise they were extremely efficient. So they solved that problem of how to create lighting. There was no Enron in those days and they did it themselves. As Dascidus puts it- they brought forth prisoners from the cells and burned them at stake thereby creating the nightly illumination. For me this is not such a great incidence of cruelty in the annals of cruelty. We have done much more in the 20th century. We are doing it now in Iraq. All sorts of things and much worse than what has already happened. The issue was not Nero did. Nero was Insane, all the Roman emperors were wise and just, who routinely fed human beings to the animals in the circus. They were wise and just and wrote the laws of the Western civilization, contradiction in terms, but anyway. The issue was not Nero, the issue was- who were Nero's guests? The finest minds, the philosophers, the poets, the singers, the writers, the statesmen, the politicians were there at the dinner. Not one spoke up against the burning of the human beings to provide the nightly illumination. there is no record that anyone ever spoke up. When I entered the Nehru University in 1997,98, read Dascidus[????] and met Pravin Purkha[????] and got expelled. From then and for the next 20 odd years I was troubled after I read that. For me the issue was always, who were Nero's guests? What kind of mindset did it require to coff [????] another goblet of wine or toss another fig into your mouth as another human being went up in flames? When I started covering the agrarian crisis in 2001, and from then to now. I have my answer on who were Nero's guests. It's the same mindset that allows us to live with as another farmhouse goes bankrupt, another farm laborer kills himself. Another farmer taking his life, another human family going up in smoke It's very easy now to understand who were Nero's guests. I will leave you with this. We can talk about the processes and name them any way we like. But the question is what are we going to do about them, how do we engage with them, how do we make those connections visible and understandable to our audiences? I think we can agree on one thing. Whatever our differences, whatever our views or how we approach things, we will never be Nero's guests.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH P.SAINATH

[Aparna's question not completely recorded. The questions by the other speakers not recorded at all. So P.Sanath answers their questions directly.]

Aparna Dharwadkar: *****[Some part of the unrecorded question]. On debt of farmers, there were huge discussions, on Aaj Tak and other channels. They were saying that wont we make our farmers less responsible as citizens if we give them debt relief. That was one thing. My question is if can you talk about the agricultural budget which supposedly is pro farmer but isn't really. You can give us more details on that.

P Sainath takes on all the questions together:

Ok very quickly. First on the role of population explosion. You know the argument is so old I've forgotten the answers. It's completely a fraudulent argument. Firstly the same population that we were vilifying, today we are claiming as our USP.

And the same elite are saying- what is our unique quality in India- is it Software? It's cheap labor. We are promising the people that we can hold the labour charges down, we can give you cheaper labour and some of that top labour can also understand English. We have been a colony earlier; we are pretty good at it. We have got the skills required. China has a bigger population than yours. It ranks way ahead of you in the human development index. You are actually heading for a demographic disaster because you are killing millions of women each year in this country. And it is the educated class who are doing it worth. The one's who believe that population is a problem. Most educated city in India- Chandigarh. 100% literacy. Worst sex ration of 0:6 girls in the country- Chandigarh 700. 300 less girls. Now they are importing girls from Kerala for marriages in Haryana. You are having such an incredibly bad situation because you've killed tens of Millions of future women. Your population exploding is a different kind of explosion, they're killing them. Secondly that population is now being touted as a resource. What are we saying everywhere when Indian businessmen of CII make their speeches at their annual conferences- we have the youngest population in the world; we have the largest number of people below 35 in the world. We have the largest number of boneheads I n any commercial organization. But population explosion is the story. Third we have 44 million people registered as employment seekers at employment exchangers. That's about the population of South Africa, which is 46 million. Please understand how large 44 million is. If you put then in a single queue like sardines, my nose in the next guy's collar, the queue would be three and a half times the length of your coastline, which is 6083 kms. You calculate. 2 to a meter, 2000 to a kilometer, 44 million well over 22000 kms. We don't have space for 44 million adults because of population explosion, but we have space for 53 million child labourers. There the population explosion doesn't matter because we would rather use child labour. It cheaper, it's docile. There are not too many child labour trade unions. I take your point .I am very glad you took it up, it's very central. It needs to be discussed each and every time. The population explosion is such a red herring . China which has gone in for that has ended up with such serious problem. There's an enormous amount of reporting within China on this. Whole, huge provinces where the sex ratio is 650 and 677. And it has lead to incredible violence because you have villages full of men and very few women. Now they are giving incentives in those provinces to have girls. This is a very tragic idea of the 60's – every 10 years there is a new mantra that will solve everything. Right now it is micro credit but those days it was population explosion.

Now the malls and the complexes. There are lists that are on priorities of exemption what areas will not be suffering power cuts. The malls have not suffered power cuts. You know why? The problem with the malls, why they use so much electricity because all the switches are central. If there are 400 lights on a floor you cannot put off individual lights, you put off sections. You put off 50, you put off 80. You don't have an individual switch for each bulb. That is one thing. Here's something you should know. In the list of exemptions it's very fascinating, I'm glad you asked me about it, army is exempted, fire brigade is exempted, police are exempted. All these are obvious exemptions. In Vidharba they issued a Government Order in 2005, exempting post mortem centers, because suicides were being wheeled in one very 4 hrs, one every 6 hours. But otherwise you pay. I told you about bazargaon using lakhs of units of electricity. Fun and food village paid less per unit of electricity than you and I do. It paid less per unit of electricity than the people of Bazargaon, because it was an industry, it was bringing in enterprise, it was bringing jobs, it was bringing 9 jobs. So it got huge concessions and exemptions as many people get for bringing industrial units to places. That's why you have all that racket on. That's the thing about lists and stuff. I would like to see a list of priorities in what's got to shut down first. Let's make that list. You and I.

Don't start me on the budget. Ok! First typically 20% of the budget is for agriculture which supports about 58 to 60 % of the population. That does not change. Second what waiver? Does the waiver benefit millions of farmers? Yes. Are there much larger number of farmers that do not benefit? Yes. The loan waiver does not touch money-lending debt, which is the biggest debt in this country, number one. Number two the loan waiver makes no distinction between dry-land farmers and irrigated farmers. You will find that in dry-land areas like Yawatmal and Vidharba, the most pathetic Adivasi's will own 15 to 19 acres; they will have 12 family members and no irrigation. They will get less out of those 19 acres than you will get out of 3 acres in Western Maharashtra. No distinction was made between these categories. Why is there a loan waiver? Because the whole nation has been moved by the distress in Vidharba and Anantpur. These are the areas exempted from this waiver mechanism. Third Mr Pawar who pulled off this game put a deadline of March 31st 2007 on this waiver. When he did this he was deliberately screwing his political opponents- the congress. The Congress has a base in Vidharba, Mr Pawar in Western Maharashtra. Loans for different crops are taken at different times of the year. Mr Pawar's sugarcane farmers take this loan for this crop in a cycle of Jan to March. Cotton farmers take their loan in a cycle April to June. So there is no 2007 waiver for farmers of Vidharba. Fourth 40% of farmers are eligible for bank..... You know the biggest beneficiaries of the loan waiver are Bengal and Kerala. A. Because of land reforms no one has more than 2 hectares. B. More access to bank credit than anywhere else. Kerala is the only State in the country which has 100% bank accounts. It is the only State in the country that meets the Reserve Bank Of India's financial inclusion clause. 100% financial inclusion in Kerala. Everybody has a bank account, everybody has half an acre. Everybody! It's a waiver. Everybody loves a good waiver. So they are the biggest beneficiaries. Smallholdings and bank accounts. Fourth you've not touched money-lending debts in your budget. Nothing in your budget adds to the income of the farmer. Which means that everybody will be back in debt in two seasons, because you have not increased his income. Fifth. None of the recommendations either of the National commission of farmers or the big union of farmers, not one of the recommendations on

price stability, the issue that really bothers farmers, not one of them appears in the budget. After some of us protested, they are changing some of the details of the hectareage, the acreage. They might increase it in Vidharba, in Anantpur, Bundelkhand and other dry-land areas. And they suddenly realize that there is a rotating cycle for crop loans. So maybe those two things will change. But they are not touching money-lending debt. Please understand that money-lending debt was waived even in the colonial Raj. What is your movie Lagaan about- Karjamafi. What is the drama of Lagaan? It's about Karjamafi. Whose Karjamafi? There were no nationalized banks in the colonial Raj. There was only the moneylender. The 1934 Punjab indebtedness act, the Madras Residency 1937 indebtedness act, the clause of money settling and brokering. The only commission of that sort that exists today is in Kerala. The debt relief tribunal that brokers settlement between money lenders and loanee on the basis of the 1934 act which is- if the loanee has repaid the interest, then the full principal that was borrowed and some interest loan is retired on a negotiated basis. You haven't touched that. So you have done a relief, it is a relief; I believe it is a relief. I welcome that the loan waiver. I am just saying please don't make too much of it. IT'S NOT A BIG SUM OF MONEY. It's 0.25% of your GDP according to Mr Chidambaram P.C. Finance Minister, number one. Number two; routinely every year there is one time, one off, one waiver. Every year in the country, the Nationalized Banking sector, waives off 25,000 crores for a handful of industrialists. In the case of Parikh's classic card company got a 62 crore waive off that was just one of his groups in 202. The NDA, the national democratic alliance, wrote off, the BJP led government, 45,000 crore for 800 to 900 industrialists whose names you can see in the list of defaulters. Why am I telling you this figure of 45,000crores. If we take all farmers in India, who own less than one hectare, they have 72 lakh bank accounts in the banks. There the outstanding on that are 20,499 crores. Then we take the next tyre of farmers, 1 to 2 hectares, they have 58 lakh bank accounts and the outstanding of that are 22,000 crores. So together all your under 2 hectare farmers, there total outstanding are 44,000 crores, which is less than the 45,000 crores the NDA waived off for 800 industrialists. And you are talking about 30 million farmers who own less than 800 industrialists. Every year routinely your airports are privatized, thousands of crores of rupees of public money is been handed over PHOOKAT MEIN to these guys. Every year your alternate survey of the budget [Your question implies that you have seen the alternate survey of the budget] that we give 40 to 50 thousand crores in concession to the top 1%, that corporate power in the country. You can read Prashant Patnaik on the subject; he has written extensively on the subject, all those issues are there. So what you are doing actually is picking one element, which is for a very large number of people and beating the drum for everything on the block, every year. I'll end with this. It's about the ways of seeing. What we see and how we see it and very importantly what do we see it with. How do we empathize with it, how do we feel about it. In 2005 the government of Maharashtra called a committee of top doctors, medical officers, psychiatrists, shrinks, psychologists to Yawatmal to counsel these dumb farmers. Absolute idiots, killing themselves. Must be mad. Obviously they are nuts, right? I mean, imagine how nice it is to live in Yawatmal .Why would anyone want to kill themselves. Such a beautiful place. Not that I am against the idea of counseling for people under stress. Not at all, I think it's important. But a single doubt that has a preposition and it has something to do with what we are discussing about- how we see and how we respond. So they brought these highly qualified doctors

from Vellore, AIIMS, Mumbai. They did a lot of research and they extensive questionnaires. They badgered farmer after farmer in village after village with extensive questions. Finally one old farmer put up his hand and said- May I ask you a question? So the team said- off course, off course. They were very pleased. They were men and women of learning and qualification and skill. So he stood up and said in his typical Indian villager way – Muzhe bada accha lagta hai ki aap bada bada log hamare chhote se gaon me aa gaya, we are so thrilled that you great people have arrived in our little village. You have done so much work. You have given us such good advice. You have asked so many questions – are you drinking too much? Are you fighting with your wife? Gharwali se zhagda kar rahen kya? And you gave us excellent advice. You said- don't fight with your wife, and you said don't drink too much. He said you have asked us all these questions and having asked us all these questions, ask us one more question. Ask us why the farmer's of this nation who put the food on your table, on the Nations table, why are they starving? There was total silence in that team. They were good people, they were totally demolished. One of them later told journalists- I never felt so stupid in my life, that old man just killed us. We had so many answers he had the right question. When you enter Vellore Medical College, from where one of those doctors was, the first thing that you learn in Vellore Medical College is a principle, which is- what the mind does not know the eye cannot see. Which means that if you do not know what is jaundice, you do not know what is Tuberculosis you cannot recognize it by sight. Very sound principle. What the old man was putting to them that day was an amendment of that principle- if the heart does not feel the eye can never see.

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