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ROSA LUXEMBURG

Band 2 • Nachwirken



BÜCHNER

Rosa Luxemburg. Band 2: Nachwirken

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Frank Jacob • Albert Scharenberg • Jörn Schütrumpf (Hg.)

Rosa Luxemburg

Band 2: Nachwirken



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Rosa Luxemburg. Band 1: Leben und Wirken

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Einleitung

Frank Jacob, Albert Scharenberg und Jörn Schütrumpf

Hier liegt begraben
 Rosa Luxemburg
 Eine Jüdin aus Polen
 Vorkämpferin deutscher Arbeiter
 Getötet im Auftrag
 Deutscher Unterdrücker. Unterdrückte
 Begrabt Eure Zwietracht!¹

Die Ermordung Rosa Luxemburgs und Karl Liebknechts am 15. Januar 1919² bildete eine Zäsur der deutschen Geschichte, und die Schüsse, denen die beiden erlagen, wurden mitunter als die »ersten Schüsse des zweiten Weltkrieges«³ bezeichnet. Das Schicksal Luxemburgs, also die »persönliche Niederlage und ihr schrecklicher Tod« lassen sich dahingehend »als eine Art figurative Vorwegnahme des Schicksals der sozialistischen Bewegung im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert insgesamt auffassen«.⁴ Die Ermordung, die von Vertretern der

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- 1 Bertolt Brecht: Grabschrift für Rosa Luxemburg in: ders.: *Gesammelte Werke* Bd. 10, *Gedichte* Bd. 3, Frankfurt a. M. 1967, S. 958, zitiert nach Helmut Peitsch: Rosa Luxemburg in der deutschen Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts, in: *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 65/2013, H. 2, S. 152–172, hier S. 160.
 - 2 Vgl. dazu Annelies Laschitzka/Klaus Gietinger (Hrsg.): *Rosa Luxemburgs Tod. Dokumente und Kommentare*, Leipzig 2010.
 - 3 Alexander Abusch: Bomben auf das Eden-Hotel, in: *Freies Deutschland* 3/1944, H. 1, S. 10 f., hier S. 11, zit. nach Peitsch: Rosa Luxemburg, S. 160.
 - 4 Dietmar Dath: *Rosa Luxemburg*, 2. Auflage, Berlin 2019, S. 130.

Gegenrevolution als warnendes Beispiel genannt wurde,⁵ wurde von Elisabeth Hannover-Drück und Heinrich Hannover, die bereits 1967 dieses »politische Verbrechen« zu dokumentieren suchten, als »ein typisches Ereignis, nämlich Teil des Klassenkampfes zwischen antagonistischen gesellschaftlichen Gruppierungen« bezeichnet, denn Luxemburg und Liebknecht »waren nicht gefährlich, weil sie etwa über physische Gewalt verfügt hätten, sondern weil sie im Begriff standen, die deutsche Arbeiterschaft über ihre Klasseninteressen aufzuklären und damit den ersten Schritt zur Selbstbefreiung des Proletariats aus einer längst anachronistisch gewordenen Herrschaft des Kapitals zu tun.« Die Ermordung war für die Gegenrevolution dadurch beinahe zu einer *conditio sine qua non* geworden, denn gegen Aufklärung, so Hannover-Drück und Hannover weiter, »hat eine Herrschaftsordnung, die weder moralisch noch vernünftig zu rechtfertigen ist, nur ein Mittel: die Gewalt.«⁶ Während Luxemburgs politische Gegner weiter das Bild der »blutigen Rosa« propagierten, trauerten ihre Anhängerinnen und Anhänger über »die fehlgeleitete Revolution«⁷ und erhoben Luxemburg zur Märtyrerin der Revolution.⁸ Diese Verengung der Perspektiven auf Leben und Wirken der Sozialistin wurde im Laufe des 20. Jahrhunderts fortgeschrieben, und das nicht nur in

5 Frank Jacob/Cornelia Baddack (Hrsg.): 100 Schmä- und Drohbriebe an Kurt Eisner 1918/19, Berlin 2019, Nr. 42.

6 Elisabeth Hannover-Drück/Heinrich Hannover (Hg.): Der Mord an Rosa Luxemburg und Karl Liebknecht – Dokumentation eines politischen Verbrechens, Göttingen 1989 [zuerst: Frankfurt a. M. 1967], S. 7, zitiert nach Peitsch: Rosa Luxemburg, S. 162. Zur Eskalation von Gewalt zu Beginn der Weimarer Republik vgl. Mark Jones: Am Anfang war Gewalt: Die deutsche Revolution 1918/19 und der Beginn der Weimarer Republik, 2. Auflage, Berlin 2017.

7 Alexander Gallus: Die vergessene Revolution von 1918/19 – Erinnerung und Deutung im Wandel, in: ders. (Hrsg.): Die vergessene Revolution von 1918/19, Göttingen 2010, S. 14–38, hier S. 17.

8 Peitsch: Rosa Luxemburg, S. 156.

historischen Arbeiten, sondern ebenso in literarischen Auseinandersetzungen mit Luxemburg.⁹

Zwar gab es Versuche, die ermordete Revolutionärin dieser Dichotomie der Extreme zu entreißen; diese setzten sich jedoch in einer Zeit, in der die Deutsche Revolution 1918/19 per se keine positive Wahrnehmung erhielt, außerhalb der engeren Anhängerschaft, die Luxemburg noch persönlich gekannt hatte, nicht durch. 1923 wies die Dichterin Berta Lask (1878–1967) auf die Problematik hin:

»Die blutige Rosa«, so lebt ihr Zerrbild im Volk, nicht erst seit der Spartakuswoche. Die Parteigenossen, die sie an Temperament, Geist, Klarheit überragte, gaben ihr den Namen. [...] Wie befremdend war [...] ihr Sozialismus, der mehr als Wissenschaft, der Idee von religiöser Kraft war, wie fremd und beunruhigend die Einheit von persönlichster Hingabe, wissenschaftlicher Klarheit und Schärfe, leidenschaftlichem Mitschwingen und kühnem, hartem Wollen.«¹⁰

Von Seiten der KPD wurde der Ermordeten zwar als Opfer der Gegenrevolution gedacht, ihre Schriften und die darin zum Ausdruck gebrachten Ideen und Meinungen aber wurden ignoriert und später, in Zeiten des Stalinismus, zum sogenannten Luxemburgismus pervertiert.¹¹ Dies war umso leichter, als die Sozialdemokraten Rosa Luxemburg seit der Weimarer Republik mit Desinteresse strafte.

9 Vgl. dazu ausführlich: Julia Killet: *Fiktion und Wirklichkeit: Die Darstellung Rosa Luxemburgs in der biographischen und literarischen Prosa*, Hamburg 2020.

10 Berta Lask, *Rosa Luxemburgs Briefe aus dem Gefängnis*, in: dies., *Unsere Aufgabe an der Menschheit*, Berlin 1923, S. 55–59, hier S. 58, zit. nach Peitsch: *Rosa Luxemburg*, S. 157.

11 Ernst Piper: *Rosa Luxemburg. Ein Leben*, 2. Auflage, München 2019, S. 12. Dazu auch: Dath: *Rosa Luxemburg*, S. 130 f. und Jörn Schütrumpf: *Zwischen Liebe und Zorn. Rosa Luxemburg*, in: ders. (Hrsg.): *Rosa Luxemburg oder: Der Preis der Freiheit*, 3. ergänzte und überarbeitete Auflage, Berlin 2018, S. 11–100, hier S. 96 f.

Der Sozialdemokrat und nachmalige Bayerische Ministerpräsident Wilhelm Hoegner hat es im April 1945 in seinem schweizerischen Exil auf den Punkt gebracht:

»Die Sozialdemokraten Ebert und Noske hatten in den Jahren 1918/19 die spartakistischen Aufstände nur mit Hilfe der kaiserlichen Generale niederschlagen können. Seit dieser Zeit ging ein tiefer Graben durch die deutsche Arbeiterschaft, und dieser Graben war mit Blut gefüllt. Er konnte in der Folge nicht mehr zugeschüttet werden.«¹²

Gleichzeitig wurde ihr Werk, aufgrund der existierenden »Unabgeschlossenheit«¹³ desselben, verschiedenen Interpretationen unterworfen, wobei die Versuche sehr weitläufig zwischen Unverständnis und völliger Perversion rangierten. Vom »demokratischen Kommunismus«¹⁴ bis zum »permanenten Fehler«¹⁵ wurden ganz unterschiedliche Deutungsmuster entwickelt, die insgesamt betrachtet jedoch weder der Diversität noch der Komplexität von Luxemburgs Schriften gerecht wurden. Im Gegensatz zu Rosa Luxemburg hat es »[d]ie politische Linke [...] selten verstanden, ihre abstrakten Ideen von Freiheit und Emanzipation so darzulegen, dass sie für Außenstehende verständlich und vor allem attraktiv geworden wären.«¹⁶ Darüber hinaus gab es allerdings noch ein anderes Problem: »Der mit Verrat und Verleumdung, Entwürdigung und Entmündigung, Folter und Mord beladene Sozialismus des 20. Jahrhunderts lastet wie ein Alb auf den Hirnen der Lebenden.«¹⁷

12 Rudolf Ritter (d. i. Wilhelm Hoegner): Lehren der Weimarer Republik, in: Schweizer Monatshefte, 25. Jg., H. 1 (April 1945), S. 22.

13 Piper: Rosa Luxemburg, S. 11.

14 Hermann Weber: Von Rosa Luxemburg zu Walter Ulbricht Wandlungen d. Kommunismus in Deutschland, 4. Auflage, Hannover 1970.

15 Wladimir I. Lenin: Notizen eines Publizisten, in: ders.: Werke, Bd. 33, Berlin 1962, S. 188–196, hier S. 195.

16 Schütrumpf: Zwischen Liebe und Zorn, S. 11.

17 Ebd., S. 13.

Luxemburg, die – neben Ernesto Che Guevara (1928–1967) und Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) – zu den wenigen Linken zählt, deren Ansehen nicht durch die genannten politischen Persionen, vor allem dem moralischen Verderb revolutionärer Ideale¹⁸, beschädigt worden war, »hätte sich [zudem] von diesem Alb längst freigemacht – so wie sie 1917/18 zu den Ersten zählte, die die aufziehende Katastrophe zu analysieren suchten: in ihren Arbeiten über die russische Revolution.«¹⁹

Während der italienische Kommunist Giuseppe Berti (1901–1979) bereits 1968 den Wert der Schriften Rosa Luxemburgs hervorhob²⁰, argumentierte der amerikanische Philosophieprofessor Dick Howard knapp ein Jahrzehnt später, dass es unmöglich sei, Luxemburgs Optimismus für den Sozialismus zu teilen.²¹ In Deutschland wurde gut zehn Jahre nach der deutschen Vereinigung ein Denkmal für Rosa Luxemburg in Berlin diskutiert. Im Zuge der Debatte bezeichnete Andreas Wirsching, der Direktor des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte in München, Luxemburg als eine »im Kern [...] totalitäre Theoretikerin«²², eine Aussage, die eher als politische Stellungnahme denn als historische Bewertung zu verstehen sein dürfte. Ähnlich determiniert äußerte sich Heinrich August Winkler, der den Streit um das Denkmal als einen Kampf um »kulturelle Hegemonie« beschrieb, indem es der PDS einzig darum gegangen sei, »an einen Kommunismus mit menschlichem Antlitz [zu] erinnern«.²³

18 Vgl. dazu: Frank Jacob: 1917. Die korruptierte Revolution, Marburg 2020.

19 Schütrumpf: Zwischen Liebe und Zorn, S. 14.

20 Giuseppe Berti: Gli scritti politici di Rosa Luxemburg, in: Studi Storici 9/1968, H. 1, S. 225–232, hier S. 225.

21 Dick Howard: Rosa Luxemburg: théorie et pratique, in: Esprit, Nouvelle série 454/1976, H. 2, S. 263–285, hier S. 263.

22 Andreas Wirsching, Direktor IfZ München, Stellungnahme zur Diskussion um ein Denkmal in Berlin 2002, zitiert nach Peitsch: Rosa Luxemburg, S. 152.

23 Heinrich August Winkler: Nachdenken über Rosa L.: Ein Denkmal als Kampf um die kulturelle Hegemonie, in: ders. et al. (Hrsg.): Arbeit am Mythos Rosa Luxemburg. Braucht Berlin ein neues Denkmal für die ermordete Revolutionärin? (Reihe Gesprächskreis Geschichte, 44), Bonn 2002, S. 9–15, hier S. 9.

Rosa Luxemburg pflegte sich wenig missverständlich auszudrücken. 1918 schrieb sie: »Freiheit nur für die Anhänger der Regierung, nur für Mitglieder einer Partei – mögen sie noch so zahlreich sein – ist keine Freiheit. Freiheit ist immer Freiheit der Andersdenkenden. Nicht wegen des Fanatismus der ›Gerechtigkeit‹, sondern weil all das Belebende, Heilsame und Reinigende der politischen Freiheit an diesem Wesen hängt und seine Wirkung versagt, wenn die ›Freiheit‹ zum Privilegium wird.«

Das hindert Heinrich August Winkler indessen nicht, immer aufs Neue zu behaupten:

»[U]nd dieses Wort von der Freiheit der Andersdenkenden bezieht sich auf den sozialistischen Pluralismus, auf die Meinungsvielfalt des revolutionären Lagers. Nicht gemeint ist damit Freiheit für Gegner der Revolution, der – von ihr, von Rosa Luxemburg so genannten – Halunken in der Mehrheitssozialdemokratie. Nein, dies ist kein liberaler, kein demokratischer Pluralismus, der mit diesem Wort angestrebt wird, es ist ein Plädoyer gegen die Diktatur einer Parteiführung oder auch einer selbst ernannten Avantgarde, aber mehr als das ist es nicht. Und insofern wird dieses wunderbare Wort, das jedenfalls so eingängig klingt, meistens falsch interpretiert.«²⁴

Für einen Teil der SPD bleibt die Erinnerung an Rosa Luxemburg offensichtlich auch mehr als neun Jahrzehnte nach der Deutschen Revolution problematisch.

Die Schriften Rosa Luxemburgs haben ungeachtet solcher »Fehlinterpretationen« – um kein stärkeres Wort zu verwenden – bis heute nichts von ihrer Aktualität verloren und wirken mit Blick auf die Pro-

24 Heinrich August Winkler: Ausdruck von Lernverweigerung? In: Deutschlandradio Kultur, 6.1.2011. Online: https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/ausdruck-von-lernverweigerung.954.de.html?dram:article_id=145928.

bleme des 21. Jahrhunderts mehr als zeitgemäß.²⁵ Vielleicht tauchen sie gerade deshalb immer wieder in den Diskussionen um mehr Freiheit und Gerechtigkeit auf. Klaus Kinner und Helmut Seidel haben aus diesem Grunde bereits 2002 nicht zu Unrecht die folgende Frage gestellt: »Ist es nicht an der Zeit, das Erbe von Rosa Luxemburg neu zu bedenken und in Beziehung zur Gegenwart zu setzen?«²⁶ Selbst heute, über 100 Jahre nach ihrem Tod, fühlt man den revolutionären Herzschlag in ihren Arbeiten²⁷ und das auch jenseits der theoretischen Debatte zwischen Luxemburg und Lenin, die lange, intensiv und in unterschiedlichen Kontexten geführt wurde.²⁸

Heute ist Luxemburg erneut von großer Bedeutung, denn »[w]er [seit] Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts aktuelle Schriften der weltweiten, sich gerade erst von schwersten Niederlagen erholenden Linken studiert, begegnet überall Luxemburgs Denken.«²⁹ Und das bleibt nicht ohne Wirkung: »Die Theoretikerin sorgt, wo sie fortwirkt, für das, was ihr am liebsten war – Bewegung.«³⁰ Gerade weil Luxemburg nicht einfach in eine Schublade gesteckt werden kann, weil ihr Werk ebenso vielschichtig ist wie die Erfahrungen ihres bewegten Lebens, sprechen ihre Worte uns auch heute noch in vielerlei Hinsicht an.³¹

25 Vgl. exemplarisch Stefanie Ehmsen/Albert Scharenberg (Hrsg.): *Rosa Remix*, Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, New York 2017.

26 Klaus Kinner/Helmut Seidel: Vorwort, in: dies. (Hrsg.): *Rosa Luxemburg. Historische und aktuelle Dimensionen ihres theoretischen Werkes*, 2. korrigierte Auflage, Berlin 2009, S. 7–9, hier S. 8.

27 Dana Mills: *Rosa Luxemburg*, London 2020, S. 7.

28 Charles F. Elliott: Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and the Dilemma of the Non-Revolutionary Proletariat, in: *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 9/1965, H. 4, S. 327–338, hier S. 327. Vgl. dazu auch: Vincent Streichhahn: Luxemburg und Lenin im Streit – Was bleibt? Eine Kontroverse im Spiegel ihrer Rezeptionsgeschichte, in: Frank Jacob/Riccardo Altieri (Hrsg.): *Die Wahrnehmung der Russischen Revolutionen 1917 – Zwischen utopischen Träumen und erschütterter Ablehnung*, Berlin 2019, S. 361–386.

29 Dath: *Rosa Luxemburg*, S. 8.

30 Ebd.

31 Mills: *Rosa Luxemburg*, S. 9.

Im Zentrum standen und stehen dabei ihr »Bekenntnis zur demokratischen Politik«, welches bis heute »ihr ausgeprägtestes intellektuelles Vermächtnis« ausmacht.³² In ihrem Werk formulierte Luxemburg die Idee eines »partizipatorischen Sozialismus« im Sinne des frühen Marx, in welchem sie Freiheit und Gleichheit höher bewertete als den unbedingten Willen zur Macht.³³ Deshalb werden ihre Arbeiten heute auch außerhalb Europas gelesen und diskutiert, wo »Rosa Luxemburg gleichsam als erste Verkünderin einer Reihe von Hoffnungen [erscheint], die sich an die historische Aufgabe der Dritten Welt knüpfen, einer politischen Befreiungstheologie, die doch wiederum dort, wo sie nationalistisch – und sei es befreiungsnationalistisch – auftritt, Mühe haben wird, sich auf Luxemburg zu berufen.«³⁴ Das Nachwirken Rosa Luxemburgs sollte deshalb in globaler Perspektive untersucht werden, wenn es darum geht, das von Kinner und Seidel schon 2002 benannte Desiderat, »eine von heutigen Erfahrungen ausgehende historisch-kritische Analyse ihres theoretischen Vermächtnisses«, ³⁵ zu beantworten. Die vorliegende Zusammenstellung bietet eine solche Analyse an, wobei die Auswahl im Sinne der größtmöglichen Pluralität erfolgte und damit einer Idee von Meinungsvielfalt folgt, wie sie schon Kinner und Seidel, wenn auch auf den deutschsprachigen Raum beschränkt, verfolgten: »So finden sich in den Beiträgen unterschiedliche, zum Teil gegensätzliche Sichten und Polemische. Die Herausgeber haben sich jeder Einebnung dieser Differenzen enthalten. Ihnen schien im Gegenteil der Diskurs über das theoretische Werk Rosa Luxemburgs der geeignete Ort, über Weg und Ziel des demokratischen Sozialismus zu streiten.«³⁶

32 Eric D. Weitz, »Rosa Luxemburg Belongs to Us!« *German Communism and the Luxemburg Legacy*, in: *Central European History* 27/1994, H. 1, S. 27–64, hier S. 27.

33 Ebd., S. 28.

34 Dath: *Rosa Luxemburg*, S. 9.

35 Kinner/Seidel: *Vorwort*, S. 7

36 Ebd., S. 9.

Luxemburg selbst hätte diese Pluralität der Analysen sicherlich begrüßt. Die hier präsentierte Bestandsaufnahme wichtiger und zeitgemäßer Fragestellungen, mit denen ihr Werk weiterhin untersucht bzw. ergründet werden kann, soll dabei zudem als Anreiz dienen, die mögliche Lösung der Probleme unserer Zeit im Sinne eines »Luxemburgischen«, das heißt vor allem: demokratischen und partizipativen, Sozialismus kritisch zu reflektieren.

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Tracing Rosa Luxemburg's Legacy

Economic and Political Debates within Contemporary India

Jigisha Bhattacharya

Introduction: Why Trace Rosa Luxemburg in India?

The political and ideological legacy of Rosa Luxemburg has long been pondered upon by the leftist and progressive forces within India, in praxis as well as in theoretical precincts. Her incisive works around the concerns of imperialism, capitalism and nationalism have resonated with the peculiar political formations in India in many ways. However, historically she has not been as widely studied within the Indian leftist traditions as the male thinkers of her time, even when her writings reflected critically on the concerns of nationalism, imperialism and capitalism. As the organized left has been in decline over the decades, both within India and beyond, Luxemburg and her contributions further faded from public memory and interest. At a time when India is at its peak of the »National Question« with a Hindu majoritarian party in the center, revisiting Luxemburg's thoughts has become more important than before to offer us a possibility to think critically. In the search for a new language of socialist solidarities, this paper seeks to revisit Luxemburg 150 years after her birth against the backdrop of Indian political currents. This paper, thus, looks at the inter-linked contemporary concerns of labor, caste and gender within a neoliberal economy of India through the political lens provided by Luxemburg and her ideas regarding imperialism, nationalism and capitalism.¹

1 It should be noted that the paper only focuses on certain tenets within the theorization of the contemporary debates in India to have a possibility of

I was first introduced to Luxemburg in my childhood when I got my hands on a thin biography published by one of the many leftist presses then popular in India. Eventually, when I joined a university as a student of literature, my interest in contemporary leftist-progressive politics resonated with an interest amongst peers in Luxemburg's life and work. Incidentally, a common slogan in the protest demonstrations was, »Rosa-Clara Zetkin/We shall fight, we shall win!« – acknowledging the legacy of many thinkers around the globe within our political formations. It was with this anecdotal reference that an impulse was born to trace Luxemburg's legacy in places far removed from her primary habitus. To this end, this contribution is an inquiry into the possibilities Luxemburg inspires us to imagine. It should also be clarified here that this paper is not just an academic inquiry, but an inquiry that is also deeply political, perhaps with a »commitment to liberation.«² This essay follows political debates regarding gender, caste, nationalism and capital by scholars identifying with some strands of socialism in India. Commentaries by thinkers will be quoted extensively to avoid the risk of a selective reading of the propositions, or their contexts in this political inquiry.

tracing Luxemburg's ideas to arrive at a new language for socialist solidarities. In no way does this paper offer a holistic picture of all leftist/progressive debates within India.

- 2 Bernard D'Mello: Angela Davis, Anuradha Ghandy, and BlackLivesMatter, DalitLivesMatter. Redspark, 11.1.2017, www.redspark.nu/en/peoples-war/india/angela-davis-anuradha-ghandy-and-blacklivesmatter-dalitlivesmatter. The author-activist D'Mello here differentiates between academic intellectuals and intellectual activists, while commenting on Angela Davis, saying that intellectual activists are always marked by a deep »commitment to liberation« against the former bunch.

Rosa Luxemburg and the Concern of Capital: The Case of Imperialism in India

The Indian subcontinent was indelibly marked with the event of its colonial domination by European forces. Traditionally, the critical relationship between colonialism and the flourishing of global capital has not received wide attention around the globe. Noted Indian historian Irfan Habib, for example, comments that

»Marx's theory of capitalist production and circulation was mainly set forth in *Capital*, in the first volume published in 1867, and in the two posthumous volumes edited by Engels. This largely fixed the framework for Rosa Luxemburg's *Accumulation of Capital* (1913). Yet her work acquired something of a landmark status, since she tried to look at Marx's analysis critically, while fully remaining loyal to his method and his cause. The political significance of Luxemburg's critique was that capitalism could now be seen as exploiting not only the working class in the capitalist countries, but also peoples living outside the capitalist order ... Her writing, though, should have had a greater appeal instinctively for people whose countries have had colonial pasts or have otherwise suffered from the inequities of imperialism.«³

While colonialism has had different manifestations within settler and non-settler colonies, the specific formations of social, political and economic life have definitely been marked by the onset of the colonial plunder, which continues to shape life within the erstwhile colonies. It is here that Luxemburg, who envisaged a critical attention to the experience within the colonized countries and its diverse political

3 Irfan Habib: Capital Accumulation and the Exploitation of the »Unequal World: Insights from a Debate within Marxism, in: *Social Scientist* 31/2003, no. 3–4, p. 7.

manifestations with capital, needs to be invoked. In the words of the noted Marxist economist Prabhat Patnaik,

»Rosa Luxemburg was certainly the first author to have argued that continuous encroachment on the precapitalist sector was *essential* for the dynamics of capitalism. Even though Marx wrote more than almost anyone else located in the metropolis on the exploitation of the colonies under capitalism, this sensitivity did not get reflected in the core of his theoretical analysis, which took a self-contained capitalist economy, consisting only of capitalists and workers, and divisible only into departments of production, as its point of departure. Indeed, one can go further. To date, Rosa Luxemburg is perhaps the only author of note to have argued the theoretical necessity of the precapitalist sector for capitalist dynamics. A large number of Marxist and third-world nationalist writers have underscored the historical fact of colonial exploitation.«⁴

As Patnaik further comments incisively, while many have acknowledged that capitalism indeed flourished riding on imperialism, Luxemburg was one of the foremost thinkers who located the intrinsic dependence of capitalism on its imperial machinery.⁵ While there might be critiques of her proposition regarding the eventual fall of capital, Luxemburg was a visionary in pointing out the increasing degradation and exploitation within the societies still grappling with their imperial history of subordination.

It was hardly »absentmindedness«⁶ with which the project of imperialism flourished and left its indelible economic impression on

4 Prabhat Patnaik, *The Value of Money*, New York 2009, pp. 212–213.

5 Patnaik further contradicts Luxemburg on her theory of the inevitable collapse of capitalism, following Lenin and Althusser, but acknowledges the basic premise of Luxemburg's thought on the colony and capital. *Ibid.*, 213.

6 English historian John Robert Seely's famous quote mentioned in Surendra Rao: *Disrobing Colonialism, and Making Sense of It*, in: *Social Scientist* 38/2010, no. 7–8, p. 24.

its erstwhile colonies. It was, rather, the active exploitation of the un-industrialized parts of the world that ensured the flourishing of the British Empire to the point of their 20th-century global domination. The economic exploitation of the colonies was not limited to an early phase of industrialization, where the idea that the colonies supplied raw materials and the Empire sold processed goods back to the colonial market does not provide an adequate picture. Rather, the Empire depended on the colonies for labor, the appropriation of resources and an active resistance to industrialization within its colonies to ensure the continuity of an »unequal exchange.«⁷ Historian Aditya Mukherjee comments,

»With industrialization and capital becoming the key factor of production, the use of labour from the un-industrialized parts of the world for capital accumulation was combined with huge transfers of capital from the colonies to the metropolis in the form of the colonies' export surplus of unremitted commodities (the process of drain or tribute collection). In today's world, a major form of surplus appropriation is in the form of »brain drain« to the advanced countries from the backward ones.«⁸

Following Marx's early writings on colonialism, Mukherjee further comments on how, within leftist frameworks, only the violent destruction of the British Empire was widely critiqued and how it was accepted as a historical necessity for the colonies progressing to capitalism.⁹ Very soon, Marx and other Marxist thinkers deviated from such a view and rather accepted the need to overthrow colonialism to

7 Arghiri Emmanuel: *Unequal Exchange. A Study of the Imperialism of Trade*, New York/London 1972. Quoted in Irfan Habib: *Capital Accumulation and the Exploitation of the »Unequal« World: Insights from a Debate within Marxism*, in: *Social Scientist* 31/2003, no. 3–4, p. 15.

8 Aditya Mukherjee: *How Colonial India Made Modern Britain*, in: *Economic and Political Weekly* 45/2010, no. 50, p. 74.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

achieve the flourishing of capitalism within the colonies.¹⁰ The Empire, in its initial phase of expropriation, was profiting from its colonies to such an extent that, even while the British continued to exploit their own working class and peasantry, the average living conditions of the working masses were far superior to those in the colonies. The Empire continued its expropriation in different forms and degrees in the subsequent stages of mercantile and finance capitalism.¹¹ India was of critical importance to establishing Britain's economic (and political) supremacy over the world, leaving the colonial masses in unbridled misery. Even after independence, the Indian nation-state struggled to establish the capitalist order with its morals of civil liberties and democracy, constantly striving to negotiate the gap manufactured by the Empire.¹² It was essentially the possession of resources by European imperialism and the resultant dispossession of the colonies that made the unbridled expansion of global capital possible.

Going back to Luxemburg's political economic theses on imperialism and capitalism, we receive a farsighted commentary on the foundational role that imperialism played in the flourishing of global capitalism. She suggests that it was on the basis of the »price of the pains and convulsions of the whole of humanity«¹³ that the global expansion of capital was possible. Luxemburg carefully proposes the distinction between empire and colony in terms of the effective mechanisms adopted in order to fight the »good fight«: »In Europe, force assumed revolutionary forms in the fight against feudalism (this is the

10 Ibid. Mukherjee also comments on such a lacuna elsewhere, »[Hence] Marx increasingly emphasised the necessity of the overthrow of colonialism, a position taken further within the Marxist tradition by Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and others.« See Aditya Mukherjee: *The Return of the Colonial in Indian Economic History. The Last Phase of Colonialism in India*, in: *Social Scientist* 36/3/4/2008, pp. 3–44.

11 Mukherjee: *How Colonial India Made Modern Britain*, p. 76.

12 Ibid., p. 75.

13 Rosa Luxemburg: *Introduction to Political Economy*, London 2013, p. 120.

ultimate explanation of the bourgeois revolutions in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries); in the non-European countries, where it fights more primitive social organisations, it assumes the form of colonial policy.¹⁴ The resultant dispossession engendered by the reality of imperialism, therefore, not only happened in the economic realm but also deeply affected the social reality within the colonies. Brute military force coupled with strict colonial laws and an imposition of the colonial model of civilization accentuated the consolidation of existing forms of social hierarchy and exploitation. It is worth quoting Luxemburg's proposition at length here:

»As early as 1793, the British in Bengal gave landed property to all the *zemindars* (Mahometan tax collectors) or hereditary market superintendents they had found in their district so as to win native support for the campaign against the peasant masses. Later they adopted the same policy for their new conquests in the Agram province, in Oudh, and in the Central Provinces. Turbulent peasant risings followed in their wake, in the course of which tax collectors were frequently driven out. In the resulting confusion and anarchy British capitalists successfully appropriated a considerable portion of the land. The burden of taxation, moreover, was so ruthlessly increased that it swallowed up nearly all the fruits of the people's labour. This went to such an extreme in the Delhi and Allahabad districts that, according to the official evidence of the British tax authorities in 1854, the peasants found it convenient to lease or pledge their shares in land for the bare amount of the tax levied. Under the auspices of this taxation, usury came to the Indian village, to stay and eat up the social organisation from within like a canker. In order to accelerate this process, the British passed a law that flew in the face of every tradition and justice known to the village community: compulsory alienation of village land for tax arrears. In vain did the old family associations try to protect themselves by options on their heredi-

14 Rosa Luxemburg: *The Accumulation of Capital*, London 2003, p. 369.

tary land and that of their kindred. There was no stopping the rot. Every day another plot of land fell under the hammer; individual members withdrew from the family unit, and the peasants got into debt and lost their land. The British, with their wonted colonial stratagems, tried to make it appear as if their power policy, which had in fact undermined the traditional forms of landownership and brought about the collapse of the Hindu peasant economy, had been dictated by the need to protect the peasants against native oppression and exploitation and served to safeguard their own interests. Britain artificially created a landed aristocracy at the expense of the ancient property-rights of the peasant communities, and then proceeded to »protect« the peasants against these alleged oppressors, and to bring this illegally usurped land into the possession of British capitalists.«¹⁵

While missing a few historical accuracies, such an analysis of the British rule of India remains prescient to the resultant social formations that would continue to consolidate the deep inequalities within Indian society. Coupled with the »civilizing mission,« such as the increased development of railways, ports and other methods of connectivity, »modernization« and capitalist exploitation continued hand in hand.

Rosa Luxemburg and the Social Reality of the Colonies: The Persistence of Caste in India

Such an understanding enables us to analyze the contemporary political situation within India with a different lens full of critical possibilities at a nuanced political understanding. It further accommodates a view of the varied manifestations colonialism has engendered within social, political and economic life in India that continue to dominate its present. Even while India has been witnessing a promise of »In-

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 353–354.

dia Shining»¹⁶ since its economic reforms,¹⁷ the so-called feudal (or pre-capitalist) structures of caste, gender, and religion have continued to permeate its social and political life, rather than fading into oblivion. The »spatio-temporal«¹⁸ expansion over cartographies ensured the interlinked future of nationalism and social exploitation in the colonies (albeit not in identical manners). The apparent reality of the faceless existence of global capital and its project of globalization happened in specific territorial ways, engendering further segregation and oppression within such territories. The reality of a caste-based society in India (akin but different to the concern of race¹⁹ in the Global North), however, has often been at loggerheads with a dogmatic understanding of Marxian theory.²⁰

16 India Shining was a marketing slogan aiming at a rapid economic growth of India post its liberal reforms. This slogan was popularized by the then ruling Bharatiya Janata Party for the 2004 Indian General Elections. (See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India_Shining)

17 The liberalization of Indian economy began in 1991 with the promise of expanding its market globally, and bringing in more investment from private foreign funds within the Indian private and public sectors. See Dipankar Bhattacharya: Political Economy of Reforms in India, in: *Economic and Political Weekly* 34/1999, no. 23, pp. 1408–1410. Also see Malini Bhattacharya (Eds.): Perspectives in Women's Studies: Globalization, Delhi 2004.

18 Stephen Morton: Capital Accumulation and Debt Colonialism after Rosa Luxemburg, in: *New Formations* 94/2018, p. 93.

19 Even though caste and race have been compared for their likeness, their manifestations within the social life are significantly varied. Aditya Nigam puts it succinctly, »[Parenthetically,] we might note here that this is one sense in which caste can never be race – it can easily be made invisible, as indeed it has been for decades, where the visual presence of race might be impossible to erase.« See Aditya Nigam: Hindutva, Caste and the »National Unconscious«, in: Vishwas Satgar (Eds.): Racism after Apartheid. Challenges for Marxism and Anti-Racism, Johannesburg 2019, p. 123. Also see BR Ambedkar: Annihilation of Caste, an undelivered speech in 1936, https://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/ambedkar/web/readings/aoc_print_2004.pdf.

20 Many have pointed out how a mechanical understanding of the base and superstructure debate by Indian Marxists – both parliamentary and non-par-

Even though there have been a few thinkers who have acknowledged the importance of the question of caste when analyzing Indian social and political formations, the left did not wake up to seeing caste as intrinsically related to its commitment to a socialist revolution or change.²¹ With some degrees of difference regarding the importance placed on the »caste-question,« the parliamentary and non-parliamentary left continued propagating a dogmatic understanding of the base-superstructure debate, deriding every such concern as a distraction to class struggle. For example, in the crucial debate regarding »mode of production«²² that tore apart the previously undivided Communist Party of India into many parts on the parliamentary and non-parliamentary spectrum, »caste« as a category had little recognition in the entirety of the conversation around the agricultural and industrial masses. With the increase of Dalit-Bahujan²³ movements within India, the »caste question« has battled its way into any imagination of liberation. Consequently, it has also established a strong (albeit limited) footing within leftist thought and activism. A renewed emphasis has been put on analyzing the history of colonialism and

liamentary have ignored the material existence of the forces of caste or gender in their analysis of labor. See Aditya Nigam: *Hindutva*, pp. 118–136.

21 DD Kosambi, RS Sharma, Suvira Jaiswal to name a few of the early leftist authors to put an emphasis on caste. See Anand Teltumbde/Shoma Sen (Eds.): *Scripting the Change: Selected Writings of Anuradha Ghandy*, Delhi 2011.

22 A debate in the 1970s which gave birth to the many strands of leftist organizations within India, both within the parliamentary and non-parliamentary spectrum. See Aditya Nigam: *Hindutva*, pp. 118–136. Also see Murzban Jal: *Asiatic Mode of Production, Caste and the Indian Left*, in: *Economic and Political Weekly* 49/2014, no. 19, pp. 41–49.

23 »Dalit« which literally translates to oppressed refers to the way in which the former untouchable castes choose to identify themselves, as inspired by the Ambedkarite movements, while »Bahujan« is a term which refers to a broader political alliance between Dalits and other lower-caste groups of the Hindu caste-order. The Dalit-Bahujan movement, especially in recent decades forms a substantial rung of social and political activism and thought within the Indian subcontinent.

feudalism within India, and a stronger impulse has been identified to study their interrelation to the flourishing of capital within India. Nivedita Menon has argued, »[i]t is impossible to think through Marxism outside of caste any longer in India. This realisation is relatively recent for the left and for feminism, because their politics was located in a secular modernist paradigm that rendered caste illegitimate.«²⁴ Murzban Jal, while analyzing the contemporary reality of the »caste question« within »modern India,« acknowledged the importance of Luxemburg's thoughts in this regard. While recognizing the persistent reality of caste within modern Indian society as interlinked with what he calls »surrogate capitalism,« Jal suggests:

»There is also another fact that necessitates that caste-based pre-capitalist social formations are a dire need for global capital accumulation. Here one needs to articulate Marx's idea of capitalism-at-the-periphery differently from the model of west European capitalism that broke the shackles of feudalism. The Indian variant of capitalism-at-the-periphery could not break its caste-based past. Rosa Luxemburg's idea of the necessity of pre-capitalist formations in the dialectic of capitalist exchange has to be invoked here. Consequently the intrusion of capitalism in Asia has not brought in ›pure capitalism‹ – capitalism with ›free labour‹. Instead it would bring in capitalism with a form of unfree labour, labour that has the stamp of caste marked on its unfortunate forehead. That labour in India exits as both free and unfree labour, and within the parameters of caste stratification should not shock anyone.«²⁵

Since the capitalism that characterized the colonies was evidently different from the flourishing of capital within advanced liberal nation-states

24 Nivedita Menon: *Marxism, Feminism and Caste in Contemporary India*, in: Vishwas Satgar (Eds.): *Racism after Apartheid: Challenges for Marxism and Anti-Racism*, Johannesburg 2019, p. 137.

25 Jal: *Asiatic Mode of Production*, p. 46.

within Europe, the assumption of an erasure of the »pre-capitalist remnants«²⁶ was not held by Indian society. Rather, the expansion of imperialism ensured a further concentration of all the existent backwardness within the colony. Riding on the ugly underbelly of the colonial machinery, uneven development and backwardness further increased with the capitalist vision of globalization, making »[c]apital accumulation necessarily interlocked with various pre-capitalist economic formations.«²⁷ Unlike in Europe, India did not have an over-arching wave of scientific outlook and modernist thought that would drive away all social backwardness; instead, a further accentuation of the same became the very mechanism through which the expansion of capital would happen within modern Indian society.

While the anti-caste thinker and activist BR Ambedkar rightly pointed out how caste is not only a division of labor but also a division of laborers,²⁸ the Indian left elided the problematic of caste while analyzing the working masses. Even while discussing the concept of labor, they paid little attention to the embedded structures of caste within land and property relations, which was supposed to form the very basis of a material understanding of labor. Aditya Nigam has pointed out, a few Marxist authors like the historian Sumit Sarkar introspected and rectified their own understanding regarding the reality of caste, but not many followed suit.²⁹ In contemporary India, a strange amalgamation of its feudal and imperialist history and the flourishing of neoliberal capital have led to the centrality of questions of caste-based discrimination and oppression as being intrinsically linked with those of the mode of production. In other words, the only possible way to understand the intricate relations within labor and

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., p. 47.

28 Ambedkar: Annihilation of Caste.

29 Sarkar, for example, accepted the historic omission of caste in his early works on India, revisiting the case of Bengal where the early-20th century materials reveal caste as a »central theme.« Quoted in Nigam: *Hindutva*, p. 121.

capital in India is to look into the material ways in which labor has existed. Shah and Lerche offer an incisive commentary regarding this:

»We argue that social relations of oppression of Dalits and Adivasis³⁰ are pervasive in the way capitalism has expanded across the country. We propose that these social relations of oppression in the expansion of capitalism in India are entrenched through at least three interrelated processes. The first is the historical inherited inequalities of power, which enable dominant groups and the state to control the adverse incorporation of Adivasis and Dalits in the capitalist economy. The second is the super-exploitation of casual migrant labour, where local labour power is undercut by a more vulnerable workforce, enabling capital to fragment the overall labour force and therefore better control and cheapen it. Third, conjugated oppression of class relations and multiple oppressions based on caste, tribe, class, gender and region is a constitutive part of these processes and includes all-India stigmatisation and other oppressive relations furthering the division of the working classes, also between and within Adivasi and Dalit groups.«³¹

Thus, it is an intermittent coupling of the assumed pre-capitalist and capitalist structures that were reified time and again within the capitalist economy itself to meet the territorial and social needs of its subsistence within the Indian economy. Class was intricately related to the concern of caste in Indian society, demanding an understanding which extended well beyond any assumption of a class struggle that was devoid of caste, gender or ethnicity.

»Caste« was only seen as something ossified in history with no relevance to the modern understanding of the social, political and econom-

30 The tribal population within India who have been imagined as completely outside the divisions of the Hindu caste-system. See Anand Teltumbde/Shoma Sen (Eds.): *Scripting the Change: Selected Writings of Anuradha Ghandy*, Delhi 2011. Also see Ambedkar: *Annihilation of Caste*.

31 Jens Lerche/Alpa Shah: *Conjugated Oppression Within Contemporary Capitalism*, in: *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45/2019, no. 5–6, p. 935.

ic formations within India, which led to a further obfuscation of the material manifestation of caste-based oppression within Indian society. While European feudalism and serfdom were being discussed at length in relation to the Indian economy, discussions on caste were forever peripheral in analyses of »labor service« and »agrarian unfreedom.«³² Based on his study of Marxist scholarship, Nigam proposes that the omission of caste on a discursive and political level by Indian Marxists constituted a problem directly connected to the very construction of the »modern self in India.«³³ The fraught interrelation India had with access to modernity was further problematized by its colonial past, which propagated a selective understanding of a secular modernity devoid of any »backwardness« for its own benefit within the new Indian middle class the Empire was using to strengthen its own machinery. In reality, the exploitative land relations, forced lack of industrialization and the relations of production the Empire enjoyed vis-à-vis its colony in India further concentrated the existent social hierarchies on the basis of caste. After India's independence, an increased effort was made within the Nehruvian economy to ensure a swift flourishing of democratic ideals, civil liberties and a secular outlook in tandem with the vision of India's progression into a capitalist economy.³⁴ This modern self, adopted uncritically by the Indian left, derided everything that did not fit a mechanical understanding of a class struggle as backward, or a thing of the past, or as »false consciousness,« thus belittling its material basis within Indian society. In the words of Nigam, »[t]he erasure of caste involved not merely its proscription or ›repression‹ from public discourse, in any obvious sense, rather, it was built into the formation of the self, seen as something that this ›modern Indian‹ had already left behind in some remote past.«³⁵

32 Nigam: *Hindutva*, p. 120.

33 *Ibid.*, 118.

34 Mukherjee: *How Colonial India Made Modern Britain*, p. 75.

35 Nigam: *Hindutva*, p. 122.

Such an understanding is further accentuated by Murzban Jal, who contends that the assumed »pre-capitalist« entity of caste-based relations returned again and again to modern India, not in opposition but in close interrelation with its liberal economic reforms. This is precisely why one needs to go back to Luxemburg and carefully reflect not only on her proposition of the essential connection between imperialism and the global flourishing of capital, but especially on the »human cost« of colonial oppression, because in India, »[c]aste is not something that is outside the ambit of class struggle.«³⁶ As has been pointed out by many intellectuals before, capitalist economies worldwide are thriving on a combination of surplus development and under-development, further accentuating the existing hierarchies between dominant and minority social relations. In the uneven field of development in India, the economic and social dimensions become intrinsically connected to each other on the basis of the consolidation of caste relations. The recent development of Hindu nationalist forces within India have thus remained a mystery to many who were not yet ready to pay heed to the peculiarity of Indian social structures and their embedded nature within the neoliberal framework of economic advancement.

Rosa Luxemburg and the »Woman Question« – Gendered Labor in India

When it comes to women's labor, India offers a picture where the domestic and the professional are intricately linked. Since the family within the Indian context is deeply structured around both caste and gender,³⁷ the resultant coordinates of labor follow a similarly com-

36 Jal: *Asiatic Mode of Production*, p. 47.

37 Meena Gopal: *Ruptures and Reproduction in Caste/Gender/Labour*, in *Economic and Political Weekly* 48/2013, no. 18, pp. 91–97. Also see Lerche/Shah: *Conjugated Oppression*, p. 935.

plex and entangled pattern. Historically, Dalits have been forced to engage with cleaning, domestic help, manual scavenging, tannery or other menial professions which have been seen as unhygienic, filthy and lowly. Meena Gopal points out how the tools of modernization have remained out of reach for such jobs, and jobs like midwifery or manual scavenging³⁸ have continued to form a large chunk of the informal labor sector within India, further diluting the boundaries of the private and public sectors. The reasons for women's involvement in different arrays of jobs vary significantly depending on the dimensions of caste, patriarchal control within and outside families, access to education, poverty, and others, as Menon points out. Many upper-caste women who might otherwise be aware of the techniques of childbirth would not take up a job of midwifery precisely due to the caste taboo attached to that particular profession.³⁹ While a Dalit person can take up the work of cleaning toilets within an upper-caste, middle- or upper-class household, they would never be allowed to do the kitchen work due to the caste-based understanding of purity,⁴⁰ often veiled under the rhetoric of hygiene.

Only recently, the female cane-cutting contract workers in the rural Beed district of Maharashtra, in the western part of India, have had hysterectomy surgery performed on a mass scale where all of their ovaries were removed to ensure that the productivity of their labor is not hindered due to their reproductive abilities.⁴¹ The gendered assumption of labor is so commonplace in India, as Menon points out,

38 Menon following Meena Gopal sees this as the essential result of the social reproduction within private and public sphere. See Gopal: Ruptures, p. 91–97. Nivedita Menon: *Marxism, Feminism and Caste in Contemporary India*, in: Vishwas Satgar (Eds.): *Racism after Apartheid: Challenges for Marxism and Anti-Racism*, Johannesburg 2019, p. 137–156.

39 Ibid., p. 141.

40 Ibid., p. 142.

41 Radheshyam Jadhav: *Why Many Women in Maharashtra's Beed District Have No Wombs*, in: *Business Line*, 8.4.2012.

that domestic labor regarding animal husbandry, childcare, kitchen-gardening and cooking has never even been recognized by the Indian census as »work« for a long time.⁴² This also led women to continue their unpaid labor within the domestic space, which helped shape the work of the men within these families. Since women's entry to the formal and informal labor market happens on deeply gendered terms, the understanding of women's work also needs to be located within the material interlink between gender and labor. Studies have pointed out how women workers often take a pro-owner position to mitigate and overcome their immediate concerns of domestic and public oppression. Rohini Hensman, for example, offers insights as to how such a strive for individualistic solutions towards the betterment of women's working conditions has been the key functioning method of most trade unions within India, barring a few exceptions.⁴³ The managerial, individualistic solutions sanctioned by the neoliberal market have also adapted to such strategies of mitigating labor unrest.

Following Luxemburg, we can understand the need for a dialectical understanding of immediate and long-term goals for any socialist imagination addressing the gendered aspect of labor, as »[i]t follows that this movement can best advance by tacking betwixt and between the two dangers by which it is constantly being threatened. One is the loss of its mass character; the other, the abandonment of its goal. One is the danger of sinking back to the condition of a sect; the other, the danger of becoming a movement of bourgeois social reform.«⁴⁴ The need for formal managerial solutions, especially characterized by the neoliberal framework, cannot be automatically derided as merely opportunistic, without understanding the material conditions ne-

42 Menon: Marxism, p. 142.

43 See Rohini Hensman: Revisiting the Domestic Labour Debate. An Indian Perspective, in: *Historical Materialism* 19/2011, no. 3, pp. 3–28.

44 Rosa Luxemburg: Organisational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy (1904), Marxists.org, 1999: www.marxists.org/archive/Luxemburg/1904/questions-rsd/index.htm.

cessitating such demands in the first place. Here it is imperative to note how the revolutionary activist Anuradha Ghandy's work also resonates with Luxemburg's; Ghandy says that women's emancipation within India has been divided between liberal reformist tendencies, anti-caste movements and workers movements.⁴⁵ For her too, it is not a rejection of »reforms themselves« but a rejection of »reformist strategies« within socialist feminist organizations, which are good for organizing masses on a basic level but envision the overthrowing of »monopoly bourgeoisie« being »gender-blind,« and therefore fail to address the question of »women's liberation.«⁴⁶

Elizabeth Evans, in her critical understanding of third-wave feminism, suggests how the promises of individual freedom and choice create a belief that freedom is available to all, which further obfuscates the material and structural existence of oppression.⁴⁷ The noted economist Utsa Patnaik, for instance, critiques neoliberal economic reforms, suggesting »reform policies represent the interests of imperialism in achieving the economic recolonization of India – as indeed of other third world countries – by reinstituting the most important economic features of a colonized economy.«⁴⁸ Nirmala Banerjee points out how, after the economic reforms of the 1990s, there was a momentary hike and a rapid decline in the number of both rural and urban women's entry to formal and informal workforces. While rural women with some access to formal education gained short-lived jobs within the service sectors, women in the agricultural labor force

45 See Anuradha Ghandy: *Philosophical Trends in the Feminist Movement in: Anand Teltumbde/Shoma Sen (Eds.): Scripting the Change: Selected Writings of Anuradha Ghandy*, Delhi 2011, pp. 145–210.

46 *Ibid.*, pp. 182–193).

47 Elizabeth Evans: *The Politics of Third Wave Feminisms*, London 2015, p. 43.

48 Utsa Patnaik: *The New Colonialism: Impact of Economic Reforms on Employment and Food Security in India*, in: Malini Bhattacharya (Eds.): *Perspectives in Women's Studies. Globalization*, Delhi 2004, p. 36.

»moved out of cultivation.«⁴⁹ Thus, in India, the »woman question« poses a challenge that cannot be adequately addressed without taking into account the deeply material existence of gender and labor as related to neoliberal capital. Evidently, following the debates around colonialism, imperialism and nationalism, the development of feminist thought and practices within India has been multi-pronged. Within the left, the »woman question« has long been ignored or understudied, owing to an understanding of this question as another »distraction« from the understanding of a class struggle. How and why to organize and represent women⁵⁰ has been a never-ending debate for the early and late activism within the Indian left and progressive forces. This also gave an opportunity to the Hindu right to construct their own women's organizations that swiftly adopted the vocabulary of a popular feminist assertion within a fold of the Hindu nation. However, slowly but surely, many women's organizations from within the left and beyond have strived to address the question of gender⁵¹ as embedded within the understanding of labor, also marred by the dimension of caste.

Luxemburg was exemplified – sometimes attributed to her Polish origin – as a keen observant of the »human cost«⁵² of the colonial acquisition of land, resources and people. Even though she is often accused of not being as attuned to the »woman question« as her contemporary Clara Zetkin, such a keen understanding of colonial vio-

49 Banerjee: *Globalization and Women's Work*, p. 71.

50 Radha Kumar: *From Chipko to Sati The Contemporary Indian Women's Movement*, in: Amrita Basu (Eds.): *Women's Movements in Global Perspective*, Colorado/Oxford 1995, p. 64.

51 This essay does not reflect on the gender identities as a whole beyond the woman question, which remains a limitation of resources and outlook within this question.

52 Helen C. Scott/Paul Le Blanc: *Introduction to Rosa Luxemburg*, in: Helen C. Scott/Paul Le Blanc (Eds.): *Rosa Luxemburg: Socialism or Barbarism*, London, New York 2010, p. 23.

lence resonates through her understanding of patriarchal exploitation as well. In »The Proletarian Woman,« Luxemburg contends,

»The workplace of the future needs many hands and passionate enthusiasm. A world of female misery awaits deliverance. Here the wife of the small farmer groans, almost breaking under the burden of life. There in German Africa in the Kalahari desert the bones of defenceless Herero women bleach, driven to a cruel death from hunger and thirst by German soldiers. In the high mountains of Putumayo on the other side of the ocean, unheard by the world, death screams die away of the martyred Indian women in the rubber plantations of the international capitalists. Proletarian women, poorest of the poor, those with the least rights, hurry to the fight for the liberation of the female sex and the human race from the terrors of the rule of capital. Social democracy has offered you the post of honour. Hurry to the front and trench.«⁵³

Such a visceral metaphor demonstrating an untainted solidarity for the laboring masses seems not to have lost its due even within the late neoliberal economies in colonies. Women and their labor have continued to be exploited even though the means of exploitation have changed. It is here that it becomes possible to connect the gendered experience of labor with the ever-expansive reality of neoliberal capital.

53 Rosa Luxemburg: The Proletarian Woman (1914): www.merlincarpenter.com/heroesperfinfo.htm.

Rosa Luxemburg and the Question of the Hindu Nation

Rosa Luxemburg's series of articles on the national question came between 1908 and 1909, possibly owing to the issue of national self-determination in Russia. However, the national question has to be viewed differently within advanced nations and in previously colonized nations. Luxemburg was keen to point out the differences between the different kinds of demands for national self-determination as well. Even with certain historical constraints, she offers an understanding of the anticolonial movements with utmost poignancy, and it is worth quoting her at length to see the resonance with the Indian condition:

»Of course, the history of the colonial expansion of capitalism displays to some extent the contradictory tendency of the legal, and then political gaining of independence of the colonial countries. The history of the breaking away of the United States from England at the end of the eighteenth century, of the countries of South America from Spain and Portugal in the twenties and thirties of the last century, as well as the winning of autonomy by the Australian states from England, are the most obvious illustrations of this tendency. However, a more careful examination of these events will point at once to the special conditions of their origins. ... Take first the United States: the element freeing itself from the scepter of England was not a foreign nation but only the same English emigrants who had settled in America on the ruins and corpses of the redskin natives – which is true also of the Australian colonies of England, in which the English constitute 90 percent of the population. The United States is today in the vanguard of those nations practicing imperialist conquest. In the same way, Brazil, Argentina, and the other former colonies whose leading element is immigrants – Portuguese and Spanish – won independence from the European states primarily in order to exercise control over the trade in Negroes and their use on the plantations, and to annex all the weaker colonies in the area. Most likely the same conditions prevail in India, where lately there has appeared a

rather serious »national« movement against England. The very existence in India of a huge number of nationalities at different degrees of social and civilized development, as well as their mutual dependence, should warn against too hasty evaluation of the Indian movement under the simple heading of »the rights of the nation.«⁵⁴

While Luxemburg pointed out the different methods of exploitation in the colonies and the colonizing states, she is also deeply skeptical of the elements constituting the national movement within colonies. In the case of India, her discomfort in referring to the idea of India as one nation is extremely prescient given the contemporary situation within India which has received little critical notice.

After the initiation of liberal reforms in India in 1991, the rise of the Hindu right emerged in the cradle of what Hansen calls a »double discourse.«⁵⁵ Now it was possible for the Hindu citizen to imagine India within the global scale, however morphed that image might have been, and simultaneously to negotiate the space there without losing a certain sense of cultural integrity.⁵⁶ As Arathi Sriprakash and Adam Possamai explain, »[t]he maintenance of this integrity occurred through the relocation and reconstitution of Hindu discourses, images and practices into modern ideals of consumption.«⁵⁷ Not only is it that, historically speaking, neoliberalism and Hindutva as political projects experienced a steady and parallel rise since the late 1980s, it

54 Rosa Luxemburg: The Right of Nations to Self-Determination, in: Rosa Luxemburg: The National Question (1976), Marxists.org, 1999: www.marxists.org/archive/Luxemburg/1909/national-question/choi.htm. For a more detailed discussion also see: Benjamin Zachariah: Rosa Luxemburg on the National Question, in: *Calcutta Historical Journal* 30/2014, no. 1–2, pp. 19–30.

55 Arathi Sriprakash/Adam Possamai: Hindu Normalization, Nationalism and Consumer Mobilization, in: Adam Possamai/Barbalet Jack, et al. (Eds.): *Religion and the State. A Comparative Sociology*, London/New York 2011, p. 213.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

is also that the frameworks of global capital and Hindu Rashtra have proved to be non-antinomian. Gopalakrishnan, for example, argues that these apparently contradictory forces share »similar visions of the relationship between the state, society and the individual.«⁵⁸ Aditya Nigam, in a recent essay, traces the rise of the Hindu right as inextricably linked with a consolidation of caste and an imagination of nationhood, suggesting that

»[t]he invisibility and unspeakability of caste in the understanding of the modern Indian self is something that was achieved through a long and tortuous process of negotiation via nationalism that installed the new, emergent nation as upper-caste Hindu. Talking about caste became anathema – and was seen as a throwback to earlier, pre-modern times, as well as being »divisive« in terms of the nation ... the caste question lies at the heart of the Hindutva project, which along with mainstream secular nationalism had managed to silence it but is once again now out in the open, negotiating its space anew.«⁵⁹

With the increasing rollback of all welfare activities from several domains of social life that we are seeing instrumentalized by a neoliberal state every day, organizations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)⁶⁰ have increased their entry into the everyday social spheres through their »spiritual« and »charitable« activities.

Sucheta Majumdar speaks about how, with the entry of so-called global capital, one lacuna that remained was the »cultural capital« as-

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 210.

⁵⁹ Nigam: Hindutva, p. 123.

⁶⁰ The *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, or the National Volunteer Organisation is an organisation founded in 1925 which is commonly referred to as the *Sangh Parivar*, or the RSS family. It is a firm believer of Hindu-nationalist ideas, and in the ideology of a Hindu Nation. The RSS was banned multiple times by the post-Independence Indian government. See Christophe Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*. Princeton, 2009.

sociated with the older elites – »thwarted by the class arrogance of the older bourgeoisie, newly rich traders, shopkeepers and small entrepreneurs, bank clerks and office-workers in hundreds of small towns have all found the culture of Hindutva attractive.«⁶¹ Especially in the northern parts of India that reaped both the good and the bad of the Green Revolution,⁶² caste consolidation gave rise to the burgeoning economic crisis, especially as the caste and land relations were already consolidated by the colonial dictum. After the neoliberal reforms, the Green Revolution first initiated a rise and then a debilitating downfall resulting in the agrarian crisis, affecting the lives of many, and initiating new political and social demands. The »romance of blood and violence,«⁶³ as promised by the nationalist Hindu right, further instigated caste pride within such a social order, directly channeling the rising anxieties. Majumdar, in her account of the militant women leaders of the Hindu right, explicates how the economic developments and the flourishing of a religious fanaticism went hand in hand, and were not at loggerheads with each other. She consequently emphasizes:

»If economic development had indeed taken off in post-independence India, as in East Asia or South-east Asia, a large proportion of the population would have probably turned to the business of making money and enjoying the fruits of consumer capitalism. But while capitalism has

61 Sucheta Mazumdar: Women on the March: Right-Wing Mobilization in Contemporary India, in: *Feminist Review* 49/1995, p. 14.

62 »Green Revolution« refers to the adoption of »modern technologies« within the Indian Agrarian Sector which deeply affected especially the northern parts of India. Due to rapid use of technologically modified seeds, pesticides and insecticides, the agricultural land conditions changed rapidly, resulting in massive deterioration within the rural economy and public health. See Wolf Ladejinsky: Ironies of India's Green Revolution, in: *Foreign Affairs* 48/1970, no. 4, pp. 758–768. Also see Wolf Ladejinsky: How Green Is the Indian Green Revolution? in: *Economic and Political Weekly* 8/1973, no. 52, pp. 133–144.

63 Mazumdar: Women, p. 16.

made sharp inroads into the economy and dissolved the patron-client relationships and hierarchies of social and economic control that sustained the old social order, the painful transition to a new set of social relations is still in the making. And the transition has been a particularly long-drawn-out one in India.«⁶⁴

Hindu citizens can consequently imagine India within the global scale, however morphed that image might have been, and simultaneously to negotiate the space there without losing a certain sense of cultural integrity.⁶⁵ This sense of cultural integrity was being reified time and again through the direct linkage between caste, land and labor relations.

This centrality of »caste« to the National Question has long been ignored by both the parliamentary and non-parliamentary left, as was shown earlier. The emergence of the Hindu right nationalists can be traced back to their ideologue Damodar Savarkar (1883–1966), who published *The Essentials of Hindutva* in the 1920s. For Savarkar, Hindutva was no longer just a religious category, but a category intrinsically linked to his concept of the fatherland and the holy land, imagining India as the Hindu nation. Hinduism was no longer only a religious categorization of followers of a certain faith, it became a »political one that defined nationhood.«⁶⁶ This new imagination of Hindutva thus provided a way to assimilate the caste question within the imagination of the nation. Even though the Dalit-Bahujan and questions of (especially Muslim) minorities remained in consistent negotiations with this Hindu nation, this vision was primarily a land-based imagination by the upper-caste Hindu elite. The Nehruvian era saw the rise of an upper-caste Indian elite whose members were

64 Ibid., p. 12.

65 Sriprakash/Possamai: Hindu Normalization, p. 213.

66 Nigam: Hindutva, p. 126.

seemingly »casteless, classless and placeless«⁶⁷ – a prototype of the ideal global citizen, who did not have to succumb to their immediate »given« identities. Taking a cue from Luxemburg's critique of self-determination⁶⁸ strategies by nation-states, such a national bourgeoisie indeed replaced the colonial masters after independence. This bourgeoisie was steeped within their class, caste and gender privileges and opposed any fundamental challenge to these privileges. They did not change the basic conditions of exploitation which existed due to colonialism, imperialism or capitalist exploitation. Not only did they remain in control of the modes of production, they exploited their caste-based superiority and remained vestiges of imperial domination. Luxemburg, speaking on the national question in Germany, suggests instead:

»Naturally, we are not speaking here of a nationality as a specific ethnic or cultural group. Such nationality is, of course, separate and distinct from the bourgeois aspect; national peculiarities had already existed for centuries. But here we are concerned with national movements as an element of political life, with the aspirations of establishing a so-called nation-state; then the connection between those movements and the bourgeois era is unquestionable.«⁶⁹

Contrarily, the Hindutva project suggests immediate specificities for people to identify with, which are »markers of irreducible cultural differences.«⁷⁰ Against the kind of placeless anonymity that the myth of globalization produces, the imagination of a Hindu nation provides a

67 Satish Deshpande: Communalising the Nation-Space. Notes on Spatial Strategies of Hindutva, in: *Economic and Political Weekly* 30/1995, no. 50, p. 3223.

68 Luxemburg: Self-Determination.

69 Rosa Luxemburg: The Nation-State and the Proletariat, in: Rosa Luxemburg: The National Question (1976), Marxists.org, 1999: www.marxists.org/archive/Luxemburg/1909/national-question/cho2.htm.

70 Deshpande: Communalising the Nation-Space, p. 3223.

much more personalized connection with their caste strata. The »profound indifference« to the local and the regional that globalization provides to its people is an »identity anxiety,«⁷¹ which can easily be negotiated in Hindutva through intimate strategies that produce and reproduce the intimate relations with their land, caste groups and, by extension, the nation-state. Nationalism, for Luxemburg, on the other hand, always remained a question that put her at loggerheads with contemporary Marxists. She argued that

»the development of the bourgeoisie has proved unequivocally that a modern nation-state is more real and tangible than the vague idea of »freedom« or national »independence«; that it is indeed a definite historical reality, neither very alluring nor very pure. The substance and essence of the modern state comprise not freedom and independence of the »nation,« but only the class dominance of the bourgeoisie, protectionist policy, indirect taxation, militarism, war, and conquest. The bourgeoisie used to use the obvious technique of trying to cover up this brutal historical truth with a light ideological gauze, by offering the purely negative happiness of »independence and national freedom.«⁷²

All such conditions, as are prevalent within India, have been utilized so far for the simultaneous development of neoliberal economic reforms and an ultra-nationalist euphoria. The movement for a nation-state (and not for self-determination by particular ethnicities) was always seen by her as a product of the bourgeois era. Luxemburg's analysis of the National Question demonstrates her prescience regarding later developments within an erstwhile colonial nation that will thrive on the duality of nation and global capital. Luxemburg suggests,

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 3226.

⁷² Luxemburg: Nation-State.

»Although the bourgeois appetite for markets for ›its own‹ commodities is so elastic and extensive that it always has the natural tendency to include the entire globe, the very essence of the modern bourgeois ›national idea‹ is based on the premise that in the eyes of the bourgeoisie of every country, its own nation – their ›fatherland‹ – is called and destined by nature to serve it [the bourgeoisie] as a field for the sale of products.«⁷³

Capitalism, for Luxemburg, did not expand in a void, but is something which flourishes »in a definite territory, a definite social environment, a definite language, within the framework of certain traditions, in a word, within definite national forms.«⁷⁴

In her proposition on the National Question, Luxemburg connects the economic and political conditions concentrated by the nationalist demands, which seem significant when analyzing the present conditions within India. She further outlines:

»In a word, capitalism demands for its proper development not only markets, but also the whole apparatus of a modern capitalistic state. The bourgeoisie needs for its normal existence not only strictly economic conditions for production, but also, in equal measure, political conditions for its class rule. From all this it follows that the specific form of national aspirations, the true class interest of the bourgeoisie, is *state independence*. The nation-state is also simultaneously that indispensable historical form in which the bourgeoisie passes over from the national defensive to an offensive position, from protection and concentration of its own nationality to political conquest and domination over other nationalities. Without exception, all of today's ›nation-states‹ fit this description, annexing neighbors or colonies, and completely oppressing the conquered nationalities.«⁷⁵

73 Ibid.

74 Luxemburg: The National Question.

75 Luxemburg: The Nation-State.