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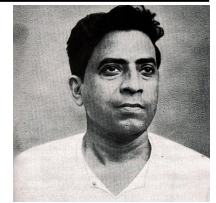
Spark[★]

UPDATES ON STUDENT MOVEMENTS

"The pen that does not attract the wrath of the state has sold itself off already."

- Saroj Dutta

(Communist revolutionary and writer, central committee member of the undivided CPIML)



Darshan Solanki



Dr. Pamposh



Preethi

Rohith Vemula, Payal Tadvi, Darshan Solanki, Dr. Preethi, Pamposh... Institutional murders in Indian academia continues

On February 12, 18-year-old Dalit student Darshan Solanki died by suicide at IIT Bombay by jumping from the seventh floor of a hostel building because of the caste discrimination he faced from his peers. This led to massive outrage across the nation. It is now reported that according to IIT Bombay's internal investigation committee, there is no "specific evidence of direct caste-based discrimination" rather he died by suicide on account of his degrading academic performance. This blatant show of institutional discrimination once again laid bare the deeply Brahmanical nature of elite Indian institutes. Student groups from across India have condemned this administrative apathy. After police investigation, a suicide note has also been recovered from his hostel room that points towards caste discrimination.

Close to the heels of the suicide of Darshan, Dr Preethi, a scheduled tribe (ST) student from Hyderabad died by suicide after being subjected to ragging. The third case was also of a medical student. Scheduled caste MBBS student named Pamposh died by suicide in a hostel room of a medical college in Amritsar, Punjab.

There has been massive outrage from all sections of students in the aftermath of this unending chain of deaths across India.

Spark team condemns the institutional violence that caused these deaths.

Vet students across Karnataka launched state-wide strike

Over 2,000 veterinary students have launched a state-wide strike, demanding an increase in stipends. Protests started on February 28 across the veterinary colleges of Karnataka. Students at Veterinary college, Hebbal have been doing sit-in protests for more than 3 weeks now. Students have also sent letters to the Department of Animal Husbandry and Animal Husbandry Minister Prabhu Chauhan several times in the last six months, asking for an increase in stipends. Currently students get a monthly stipend of 14,000 rupees which they want to be increased to at least 30,000 rupees a month.



Anti-fee hike protest at Osmania University

Osmania University students protested against the ten fold increase in the PhD fees on 21st March. The course fee for PhD research students of Social Sciences, Arts, Education, Commerce, Management, and Oriental Languages was Rs 2,000. Recently It has been increased to Rs 20,000. The student union in their press release said that many poor and middle-class students at Osmania University are confused about whether to pay the fees fixed by the university or to drop the admission. They demanded a reduction in the fee to ensure that students don't drop out of the admissions.

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“ Spark is a monthly magazine run by students and youth. Today, the state and the corporate controlled media are constantly propagating lies and fabricated news that suit their interests which makes exposition of the truth an imminent task. The intention of Spark is to provide an alternative perspective on issues that affect the majority of population. ”

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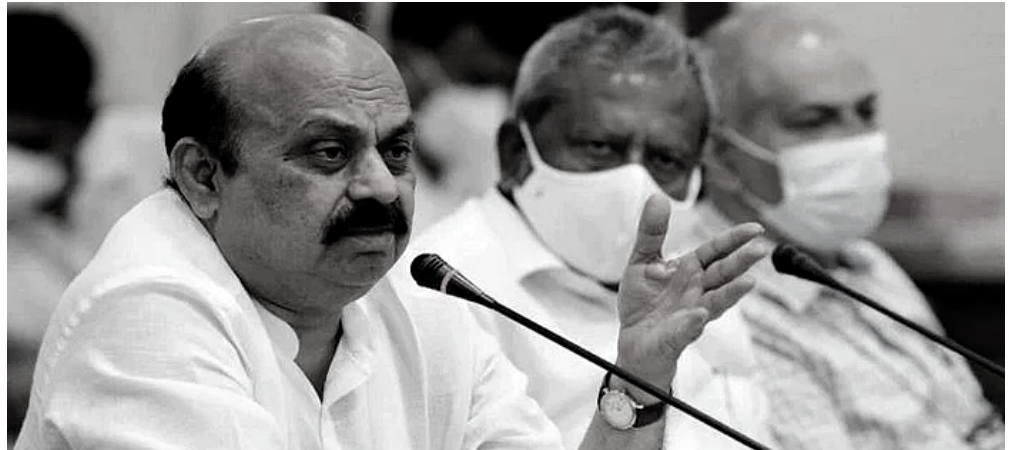
Scrapping of OBC quota for Muslims: A Toxic Mix of Communalism and Casteism by BJP

In a completely arbitrary decision taken by the BJP-led Karnataka government on 25.03.2023, the reservation for Muslims under the category of OBCs has been scrapped and distributed between two dominant communities - Vokkaligas and Lingayats. In fact, Home Minister Amit Shah has hailed the regressive decision of the Karnataka Government.

For the fact, Muslim OBCs have been included in the list not because of their religion, but based on their socio-economic conditions and recommendations by L.G Havanur and Chinnappa Reddy Commission. That was later only reaffirmed by the Sachar Committee Report. Clearly, the BJP in Karnataka has taken this decision so that they could use it as 'political mileage' in their narrative of Hindutva supremacy in the upcoming state elections at the cost of socio-economic conditions of Muslim OBCs.

This decision also goes against the Supreme Court's Judgement in Indira Sawhney case which says that any addition or deletion of a community from the list of categories that have rights of reservation must be based on empirical data-based study by the commission. But contrary to it, what happened is BJP government taking decision without any final recommendation from Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes. This is only in continuation of blatant and systematic attempts by BJP government to structurally weaken the backward communities and further marginalise them.

Recently in a post-budget webinar, PM Narendra Modi said, "among our minorities, especially among Muslims we have Pasmada Muslims. How we have to take benefits to them... as even today, after so many years of Independence, they remain far behind." Pasmada constitute backward sections of Muslims. But it becomes clear that these words by PM Modi were only part of BJP's Jumla for electoral benefits. While in reality, all that the BJP government in Karnataka has



done is taken away the right that has been there for the improvement of their socio-economic conditions of OBC Muslims. We have also seen that there has been a consistent effort to marginalise minority students in Karnataka, with the ban on hijab in educational institutions, the slashing of scholarships of minorities at the State and rollback of Maulana Azad National Fellowship by the Centre. Social Justice provisions enable opportunities to socially marginalised communities to avail quality and affordable education by breaking the hierarchies that hinder their progress. However, there seems to be a proactive effort to exclude Muslim students from availing education.

It has become a matter of routine for BJP to sabotage the idea of social justice for the marginalised in the country. For example, the adoption of EWS quota against the perceived aim of constitution makers and basic feature of constitution has been a mere political tool for the BJP government to appease Upper Castes. By providing 10% reservation based on 'economic criteria' and at the same time excluding Dalits, Adivasis, and OBCs from having its benefit falling under same economic criteria only exposes the divisive agenda of BJP. Notwithstanding, social discrimination based on caste system being the main reason for backward/disadvantaged groups in India, the government's implementation of EWS as poverty alleviation program is against the tenets of reservation envisaged by our constitution makers.

Moreover, one needs to pay attention to what has been happening in the past few years in the name of social justice. By failing to fill over 30 lakh Central Government jobs which are lying vacant, the Modi government has shown how it's not bothered at all about social justice and reservation policy. As private sectors refuse to properly adhere to reservation policy, the whole concept of social justice through reservation is being rendered meaningless in employment opportunities. Similarly, the National Education Policy 2020, which is replacing public-funded education model to loan-based corporate education model, has not used the word 'reservation' in its whole document, implying that the New India under Modi doesn't care about social justice policies in the education sector.

Therefore, BJP's corporate-communal politics and anti-people stance has declared an all out attack from every front against the common people of this country. Curtailment of rights of minorities and backward classes given in education and employment opportunities have been constantly exposing the propaganda and lies of Modi government which talks about 'Sabka Sath-Sabka Vikas'. Clearly, poor, marginalised, and minorities do not fall in the BJP's idea of 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas', as time and again its policies and decision has been against the principles of social justice.

Haveri: Persistence of Caste in the Heart of Karnataka

Rohit and Shri Lakshmi

Whenever the discussions around caste discrimination happens, while Brahmanwadis lay claim that caste doesn't exist, liberals and even some progressive people say that the caste structure is getting diluted and it will wither away in shortly if it keeps progressing this way. The reality is neither, it seems. The recent caste atrocity at Haveri district of Karnataka once again laid bare the deeply Bramhanical nature of Indian society.

As recently as 5th March, villagers from Nandihalli village in Haveri district surrounded the houses of two Dalit families and set the houses on fire. The villagers who were members of the dominant Lingayat community were enraged after two members from the Madiga community - a subcaste of the Dalit community in Karnataka - attempted to enter the Basaveshwara temple in the village. Haveri District of Karnataka has a long history of caste discrimination. In March 2017, when members of the Madiga community of Haranagiri village demanded that they be allowed to enter barber shops and pay to get a haircut, the owners of all three barber shops in the village shut down their outlets. The barbers now visit the homes of people belonging to other communities to serve them. They refused to serve the Madigas, who had to otherwise travel 19 km to get a haircut. Though the police registered the arson case in the March case, how much we can expect from the judiciary is another question. When this news was breaking out, the high court judgement on Hathras rape was also becoming the headline (at few small media houses). In Hathras case, where the Dalit girl was brutally murdered after getting raped, the three accused were set free while one was charged with homicide (not rape). While some people are questioning the merit of the judgement, most people are supposed to believe in the unquestioned 'sanctity of courts'.

Taking in the bigger national picture one finds that the practice of untouchability is as prevalent as ever, this includes exclusion from temples, the use of caste slurs, etc.

Despite the fact that manual scavenging is a prohibited employment activity, it is still a commonly imposed practice upon the Dalits of India. Dalits also form a major chunk of landless agricultural labourers. In a survey conducted by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, about 58,098 manual scavengers have been identified with two thirds of them belonging to Uttar Pradesh.

The latest NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) data we have on crime against dalits, is from the year 2021 and it shows that the crime against Dalits has increased by 1.2% (from 50,291 in 2020 to 50,900 in 2021). Some of the incidents of Karnataka state which could become 'highlight' among these in past few months were: in December a minor dalit girl was raped in Hassan several times by the upper caste men under who she was working, in November a water tank was cleaned by cow urine in Chamrajnagar because a Dalit women drank water from it, in October a pregnant Dalit lady lost her child because she was held hostage along with 15 other Dalit workers by the upper caste coffee plantation owner, in this case the accused is still absconding. Another common misconception, or rather blatant ignorance is that the practice of caste is limited to rural areas. On the contrary, in Bengaluru, crimes against SCs numbered 133 in 2020, but rose to 166 in 2021. Bengaluru remains the most atrocity prone city (metropolitan city with >20 lakh population) as of 2021. Annually, over 3,000 dalits (around nine persons per day) become victims of caste atrocities and discrimination. In the 2015 census by the Karnataka government, it was found that only 4% of all the married couples in Bengaluru had married outside their respective castes while a little over 4% of the marriages were inter-religious. This means, till this day, about 92% of Bengaluru's population marry not only within their religion but also within their respective castes. It is thus evident that caste pervades every aspect of life in Bengaluru. Between April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, there have been 2,327 cases of murder, exploitation, and other



cases targeting members of the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) community in Karnataka. According to data from the state government, there is an increase of over 54% from the previous year, wherein the total cases reported were 1,504, the report further read. Of them, 87 are murders cases, 216 cases are of exploitation, 2,024 other instances, and three incidents of fire. Many cases were related to hate crimes, rape, name-calling, denial of services, and assaults on untouchables have gone unreported. Do all these data by any chance show a 'progress' or change in the structure of caste in our society? Not at all!

Since most issues of people from marginalised sections don't become 'news', some people expect if an issue makes it through news headlines they will get justice because of public pressure. Will the victims of Haveri get justice or will this incident also have a fate like the Hathras incident? Without a true people's movement it would be foolish to think that the judiciary controlled by the brahmanical ruling class will deliver justice. Only when all the oppressed people will come together and break this system and build their own order, true justice can be imagined. Otherwise 'progressive' media will come up with creative headlines like 'everyday 4 Dalit women are raped', 'every 15 minutes a crime against Dalits is committed' in our country. While the Haveri atrocity will forever remain a blot on not just our criminal justice system but our collective shame, let us strive to uproot this feudal system so that Haveri, Hathras, Khairlanji, Kambalapallis come to a permanent halt.

Image credit- Kalyani

Babasaheb Ambedkar on the Land Question

Rahul

As the 132nd birthday of Dr. Ambedkar is approaching and the capital has witnessed historic resistance from the farmers recently, the agrarian crisis, land question, and related rights have resurfaced in the political arena. The opposition and the Dalit parties have tried to address the question in their restricted frameworks. In such a scenario, we try to look at Ambedkar's position on the land question.

Ambedkar acknowledged that in a predominantly agricultural society, where land was the major source of sustenance, Dalits were not in a position to purchase this resource. However, the barriers to Dalit land ownership inherently go beyond economic reasons. He believed that the entire agrarian structure is anti-Dalit and would persist if not resisted effectively. To be more specific, caste Hindus would always oppose Dalits to hold lands as that would generate Dalits as an economically independent class. Ambedkar wrote "In an agricultural country, agriculture can be the main source of living. But this source of earning a living is generally not open to the Untouchables. This is so for a variety of reasons. In the first-place purchase of land is beyond their means. Secondly, even if an Untouchable has the money to purchase land he has no opportunity to do so." (Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches (BAWS), Vol. 5, p.23). Ambedkar also described the nature of Indian land titles and asserted that land was not just an economic issue, but an issue concerning social status and hence, "a person holding land has a higher status than a person not holding land" (BAWS, Vol. 15, p. 913). He realised that land ownership in India was not only a matter of social and economic freedom, but also of dignity. From his early days in 1918, Ambedkar in his article "Small Holdings in India and their Remedies" observed the significant quantity of smallholdings and the social divisions among farmers as the root of the agrarian system in India. He argued firmly against the system of land tenure (Kothi) where rural Dalits were subjected to sheer exploitation. This writing has been mentioned as one of his finest articles related to economy. He

identified the innumerable number of smallholdings and social classification within the peasantry as the fundamental basis of agrarian question. The article deals with the uneconomic nature of the smallholdings which Ambedkar identified not only in terms of size of holding but also in measure of the several necessary attributes for generating an optimal production. He wrote "A small farm may be economic as well as a large farm; for, economic or uneconomic does not depend upon the size of land but upon the due proportion among all the factors including land" (BAWS, Vol. 1, p. 468). On the question of transformation of the agrarian sector, Ambedkar was convinced that consolidation of land holding alone cannot play a pivotal role if not supported by



appreciable capital and corresponding development of industries to employ the huge labour from the agrarian sector and reduce the pressure on land. Unfortunately, the Dalit movement that restricts Ambedkar within the framework of Constitution consciously or unconsciously avoids this text in general reading or at a theoretical level in formulating the pathway of Dalit liberation.

The thoughts of Ambedkar related to land exploitation and class subjugation of farmers were reflected even before that, during his dissertation at Columbia University, where he presented an elaborate and comprehensive critique of the land revenue system that the East India Company had implemented in different parts of the country highlighting the

extraordinary rents and land taxes extracted in zamindari area of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa and ryotwari areas of Madras. He expressed the inhuman suppression and exploitation of the farmers by the government-appointed officers and other intermediaries in the complete system of revenue collection in his writings (BAWS, Vol. 6, pp. 5–50). In 'The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India: A Study in the Provincial Decentralisation of Imperial Finance' (1925), Ambedkar questioned the fundamentals of his coinage "State Landlordism", or the right of the State to collect land revenue. This challenge generated from his in-depth study of the periods between 1792–93 and 1855–56 where he noted that the average share of land revenue in total revenue in India was about 54.1%, varying from 66.2% to 31.7%. The humongous amount of land tax deprived the people of almost all the benefits and put a stop to further development of the agricultural production system. Even he pin-pointed that the revenue was fixed on a unit of land without considering the revenue generated from it in a year. He depicted that the land revenue administration "taxes the poor peasant with only one acre to cultivate and the landlord owning hundreds of acres at a uniform rate without realising that as the total incomes of the two must be vastly different this uniformity of taxation must produce a glaring inequity of treatment as between the rich and the poor" (BAWS, Vol. 6, p. 231). In 1927, in the Bombay Legislative Council, Ambedkar highlighted the levy of land revenue on rich, small and poor farmers in the context of income tax. His arguments stood for exemption of land revenue derived from the same principle that allowed unemployed people to pay no taxes (BAWS, Vol. 2, p. 3). In 1934, in the Kolaba District Peasants' Conference, Ambedkar opposed the term shetkari (farmer) as it encompasses everyone from the landlord to the landless agricultural labourer. He spoke on similar lines in the Constituent Assembly in 1949 where he claimed the word "agriculturalist" to be misnomer as it included big landlords as well as small cultivators (BAWS, Vol. 13,

p. 933). In March 1947, Ambedkar wrote "State and Minorities: Their Rights and How to Achieve It in the United States of India" where he pointed land-ownership to be root of arrogance of large land-owners and the humble nature of the landless. Several other instances could be cited to project Ambedkar's position against zamindari and his empathy for the vast section of farmers and his consciousness on social classification within the peasantry. In short, Ambedkar's view on land was comprehensive as it identified the crux of landlordism, peasant differentiation and the context of the landless Dalits. Ambedkar's idea of collective farming and nationalization of agriculture was prominent in his famous statement made in the Constituent Assembly on 15th March 1947 where he demanded the incorporation of State Socialism into the Indian Constitution. He argued that agriculture would be a State Industry and land should

be cultivated as per the directions 88 of the government and the state should provide the finance to agriculture. This idea was completely contradicting the demands of Congress in British India which had nothing to offer to the small farmers. Even the agenda of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee set up by the Congress Party in 1948 was quite complex as it could clearly defined whether whether agrarian reforms simply meant zamindari abolition or the implementation of the longstanding demand of "land to the tiller" and Ambedkar believed the land-reform policy to be useless for the Dalits. This made him more focused on the question of land for the Dalits and in the Report of Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Tribes for 1953, Ambedkar emphasized on methods through which land could be given to the Dalits. He took up Uttar Pradesh as an instance where the average size of landholdings was small, and most of

the cultivable land was occupied. Ambedkar's vision of land reform influenced renowned RPI leader Karmaveer Dadasaheb Gaikwad who led the massive statewide satyagrahas of the landless in 1959 and 1964. In this movement, the leaders of the Communist Party like Shamrao Parulekar, Godavari Parulekar, Krantisimha Nana Patil, R B More and thousands of peasants and agricultural workers took active part and courted arrest. For the first time in history, the red flags of the Communist and the blue flags of the Republican Party came together in struggle. Truly speaking, the wish of Ambedkar for land to landless Dalits got partially realised through the Naxalite movement where the militant struggles gave the flavour of land and political power to the oppressed ('oppressed' as per the Brahmanical ideology) in certain parts of the country.

"I strongly believe that equitable, universal, quality education is the foundation for a country's development."

Educationist Niranjan Aradhya's thoughts on current trends in the sphere of education

Q. How were you initiated into the politics of democratisation of the education sector?

I was part of the student movement in the country. I strongly believe that equitable, universal, quality education is the foundation for a country's development. Education is a social good and a powerful tool for social transformation. Every citizen of this country has a bounded duty to make India truly into a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic as envisioned in the Constitution. India being wedded to parliamentary democracy, the role of education, especially universalisation of equitable quality education for all children becomes a prerequisite to deepen and strengthen our democracy in true spirit. I took active participation in creating democratic spaces for students for a dialogue with the authorities right from PUC till my post graduation. Democratisation of spaces wherever we are is the first step towards creating a democratic dialogue. I started this process in school education way back in 2001 by

empowering parents of school going children in public schools by constituting School Development and Monitoring Committees at the school level in close collaboration with the state.

Q. Tell us a little about the long-term activism in the sphere of education you have been associated with.

As I mentioned, I got into the student movement in 1982. Since then, I never turned back from my activism. Participated and played a crucial role in many historic struggles to ensure justice to children during my student days. Built a powerful student movement both at national and state level. I was part of the Total Literacy Movement in the 90s. Since my student days I have been strongly advocating neighbourhood common school system (CSS) as recommended by the Education Commission 1964-66. My activism continued even after joining a teacher education college in 1990 and CCL, NLSIU in 2000. I am happy to say that I am an Activist cum Academician. Q. As an educationist, you have been closely

associated with government institutions.

Q. How effective do you feel the existing institutions are in terms of addressing structural issues?

I believe in constructive and critical engagement with the state. We need to use the available space to advance our vision of democratising education and thereby strengthening democracy as envisioned in the Constitution. When I worked with the state from 2000 to 2017; almost around 17 years, I had a feeling of accomplishing incremental changes in the school education system in Karnataka. That was the period when SDMCs were formed, many proactive measures to strengthen government schools, a number of programmes to bring back out of school children, efforts to bring linkage with SDMCs and PRIs through a delegated legislation, many programmes to improve quality education, etc. were taken. This was followed by our struggle to make education a fundamental Right as per the Unnikrishnan Judgment. The Constitution was amended in 2002 and RTE Act was

enacted in 2009. However, after 2018, this democratic space gradually reduced and now the state is doing everything to destroy public education. No such democratic spaces to engage with the state, forget critically, not even constructively. It is an undemocratic and regressive state. Though there were visible changes, I should agree very less has been done in terms of structural changes to ensure equitable education. As a result, inequality, discrimination, segregation and hierarchies continues to haunt the state education system.

Q. At both state and national levels, do you find any significant difference in education policies taken by the BJP and the Congress?

Immediately after independence, many measures to expand the process of universal education were taken. A large number of schools were opened. A considerable achievement in terms of infrastructure, teachers and access to schooling. It had tremendously increased the enrollment. Policies were formulated in 1968 and 1986 and the 1986 policy was revised in 1992. One good thing about these policies was that all the policies reiterated the commitment of CSS. Many public higher institutions were opened in the country. I would say Congress was better in terms of commitment till 1990. Later, as part of LPG, the distortion started and external funding and privatisation of education started. I still believe, Congress cannot be compared with BJP. The BJP always used and has been using education as a tool kit to achieve the goal of Hindu Rashtra by subverting the Constitution and bringing religion and communalism to the forefront. It is clearly manifested in the National Education Policy 2020.

Q. What was the motivation behind the release of the education manifesto?

As I mentioned, everyone who believes in making India into a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic should choose education as the route. India being wedded to parliamentary democracy, the elections and the process of conducting free and fair elections keeping the best interest of people becomes crucial. Therefore, I feel that discussion and debating the issues of people as prime issues in election makes them objective value based politics. In this process, the

political parties' manifestos serve as a toolkit to realise the aspirations embodied in the Indian Constitution. Children's Education should be the top priority and prerequisite for national development. Therefore, guaranteeing equitable quality education to all children from 0-18 years should be a non-negotiable demand for political parties' manifesto. Therefore, we started this movement spearheaded by People's Alliance to Fundamental Right to Education (PAFRE). The charter is endorsed by 29 mass organisations. PAFRE calls upon people of Karnataka in general and SDMCCF and other mass organisations in particular, to flag RIGHT TO EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION as one of the prime issues in the forthcoming assembly elections before all the political parties as well as their candidates contesting for elections.

Q. You are one of the few voices who have been talking since long about the dangers of NEP 2020. What detrimental effects do you feel would be coming to the fore in the next 4-5 years?

It is a deliberately designed policy rather a toolkit to destroy everything that has happened in the last 70 years. It has three Cs, one P and two Is in its tool kit. 3 Cs; Centralisation, Corporatization, and Communalisation; 1 P; Privatisation and 2 Is; Sankritisation in the name of Indianisation and Indoctrination to achieve the goal of Hindu Rashtra. In the next 4-5 years we will witness the aggressive implementation of an undemocratic, unconstitutional and hidden policies and programmes to destroy whatever little that has been achieved in the past and thereby denying education to masses. Privatisation, commercialisation, Commodification and Communalisation will be the new order in education.

Q. Recently, the Azim Premji Foundation colluded with the state government in a bid to uplift a certain number of public schools in Bangalore. How would you interpret this move?

It is much against our understanding of Fundamental Right Education and State's obligation to realise the same.. FR means; universally available, state has prime obligation and state should make substantial investment of resources to create fully state-funded education from Nursery to PG. However, the state is



outsourcing this to NGOs and corporate led bodies by abdicating its prime responsibility. After all that is the VISION of NEP 2020! This is nothing but the arrogance of a corporate house to substitute the state. If they really believe in upholding the Constitution, then they should advocate for a fully state funded common school system by stopping knee jerk reactions and should join the Peoples' movement. Otherwise, what is the meaning of equality of opportunity, equity, non-discrimination, social justice and a humane society? While enacting the right of children to free and compulsory education act to realise the fundamental right provided in the Constitution under Article 21A, the purpose of the legislation was clearly spelt in Para 4 of the statement of objects and reasons. It is worth reproducing. "The proposed legislation is anchored in the belief that the value of equality, social justice and democracy and the creation of a just and humane society can be achieved only through provision of inclusive elementary education to all..."

Q. What is your message for student activists who demand scrapping of NEP 2020 and a move towards universal education?

This is the time before we lose everything we had achieved in independent India; students, teachers and conscious citizens should come on the street to reject the NEP 2020 in toto. This should be nothing less than second freedom struggle to save Constitution and thereby Save Democracy to ensure universal quality education to all children of this country from Nursery to PG. This is the challenging task before the Indian youths and students to transform India truly into a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic as envisioned in the Constitution.

Chittagong 1930: A Glorious Chapter in Freedom Struggle

Soumen



18th April, 1930 was the day of historic Chittagong(Chattagram) Armoury Raid, the day when a band of young revolutionaries from a small village in undivided Bengal shattered the whole British colonial rule. Since the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, also known as the first war of Independence, this was the first successful attempt when freedom was snatched from British imperialist power through direct armed confrontation, the national flag was hoisted, and a provisional revolutionary government was proclaimed, at least for a few days. This article is an attempt to brief the events of the day and the aftermath.

The spread of socialist ideology in British-India after the success of the Russian Revolution (1917), the subsequent working class movements in India, the disillusionment of revolutionary factions within Indian National Congress (INC) after the debacle of non-cooperation movement, the growing frustration among the educated middle class in the midst of an ensuing global economic crisis - all of these brought a qualitative transformation in the anti-colonial struggles in the later half of 1920s. Chittagong Armoury Raid, along with events of 18th April, 1930, manifested that. Starting from day-selection, the events of Chittagong Armoury Raid and simultaneous attacks on various targets, were perfectly planned and executed. The day - 18th April, 1930 - was selected because it was the day on which the underground military organisation of Irish freedom fighters - Irish Republican Army - that was waging armed struggle against the British rulers, tried to capture the capital of Ireland - Dublin, in the year 1914. Moreover, it was Good Friday, when the enemy would be busy with celebration and merry-making. This became a tactical reason for selecting the date. Surya Sen and his comrades meticulously planned simultaneous attacks on different targets. The whole band was divided into several groups to execute these different tasks, and bravehearts like Ananta Singha, Ganesh Ghosh, Loknath Bal, Nirmal Sen, Ambika



Chakraborty were entrusted with the leadership of these different groups. A leaflet was circulated in the evening of 18th April, 1930, on behalf of 'Indian Republican Army' declaring an armed struggle against the British rulers, with an appeal to the people to join the struggle for Indian independence.

Under the leadership of Ananta Singha and Ganesh Ghosh, several dozens of comrades, dressed in military attire attacked the police line in the darkness of night, with just a few revolvers and pistols. The surprise attack completely destroyed the morale of the personnel present in the barrack. Panic-stricken, they all fled the spot. The revolutionaries captured the armoury, quickly armed themselves with as many guns and bullets as possible. The simultaneous attack on the auxiliary force armoury by a different group under the leadership of Loknath Baul and Nirmal Sen was also successfully executed, despite an armed confrontation. The telephone exchange and the telegraph office in Chittagong town were destroyed by the designated group under the leadership of Ambika Chakraborty. The groups that were tasked to dismantle rail lines, also executed their job successfully in the outskirts of Chittagong town. The Superintendent of Police, the District Magistrate, and other high officers came to know that something terrible had happened but they were unable to communicate with one another. Only the plan to attack the European Club, to avenge the barbaric killings of Jallianwala Bagh, Chauri Chaura and other places, was unsuccessful due to a

delay in procuring vehicles. By the time the revolutionaries reached the Club, the Europeans had gone back to their homes. After executing all the plans, the different groups of revolutionaries, without having any casualties till then, assembled at the police line for further planning. As President of the Indian Republican Army, Chittagong Branch, Surya Sen hoisted the national flag, replacing the Union Jack - the symbol of colonial slavery. Independence pledge was read and Chittagong was declared as liberated land. Before dawn, the revolutionaries decided to move towards the hills. In the next few days, accompanied by hunger and thirst, 57 revolutionaries under the leadership of Surya Sen walked through the hills, and finally took shelter in the Jalalabad Hill, where they waited for the enemy attacks. After rigorous searching, on 22nd April the British military finally tracked down the revolutionaries on Jalalabad Hills, and a direct armed confrontation took place between them. The British forces retreated at night after huge casualties at their end (approximately 74 British soldiers died and 150 wounded). In this battle, which is famously known as 'The Battle of Jalalabad', around 10 revolutionaries were martyred. The next day, British forces started aerial attacks. Surya Sen and other leaders realised that it would be difficult to sustain in such an unequal battle, and thus, decided to spread over the nearby villages and to launch sudden guerilla attacks whenever necessary. Surya Sen and his close associates, took secret shelters in villages, and continued their revolutionary activities. The battle of Dhalghat and the attack on the Pahartali European Club were two burning examples

of that. On 14th June 1932, Surya Sen and his comrades were attacked by armed police, while residing in a shelter at Patiya village in Dhalghat thana. Nirmal Sen and Apurba Sen sacrificed their lives while helping Surya Sen, Pritilata Waddedar and Kalpana Dutta to flee from the place. Later, Pritilata - the fearless lady revolutionary - attacked the Pahartali European Club with arms and bombs. Several British and Anglo-Indian

officers were wounded in the attack. Pritilata herself got wounded, and realising that it will be difficult for her to escape in such condition, she committed suicide by swallowing cyanide capsule. Surya Sen was finally arrested in February 1933 from one of his secret shelters at Gairala village near Chittagong town, after a long armed conflict. His comrade Tarakeswar Dastidar, who also took part in the Chittagong

Armoury Raid, was arrested in May 1933. Both Surya Sen and Tarakeswar Dastidar were hanged to death on 12th January 1934. The dreams of Surya Sen are yet to come true. The anti-colonial struggles are still going on in this land in newer forms. Let us fight that with similar courage! Let the heroic events of Chittagong and the selfless sacrifices rekindle our revolutionary conscience!

Lenin's April Theses

Suryashekhar Biswas

Between the February Revolution in Russia, and the historic October Revolution which led to the formation of the world's first workers' state, came Lenin's April Theses. To fully understand and appreciate their importance, some context is helpful.

In the February 1917 revolution, the 300-year tsardom came to an end, and the entire society was taken by a whirlwind. Workers exercised political power through the Petrograd Soviets- a form of workers' councils that would later become the basic unit of the proletarian state. There was another site of political power - the temporary committee of the fourth Duma, which was a parliamentary setup, at the service of the bourgeoisie. This formed the Provisional Government constituted of 'dual power'.

The workers in the Soviets were influenced by the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks and the Social-Revolutionaries. The Mensheviks were constrained by their dogmatic, mechanical understanding of revolution - and believed that nothing more than a bourgeois democratic revolution could happen in the backward Russia, and therefore the workers in the Soviets seizing all political power was out of the question.

This was the situation when Lenin returned to Russia. Lenin asserted that the workers should give no support to the Duma ("No Support to Provisional Government"), withdraw the troops from participating in the imperialist war, and there can be no reconciliation between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. The only way to retain the meagre wins of the February revolution was to extend it into a proletarian revolution, with the working class seizing political power into its own hands. Lenin's calls were initially not received well and led to fierce resistance and debate until eventually, his call received the support of the majority of the Bolsheviks. Lenin's speech asserting these points was delivered on 7th April, and published in the newspaper Pravda as the April Theses. Among various points it articulated, some were: no support to the Provisional Government, All Power to the Soviets, political power in the hands of the working class, and the poorest sections of the peasantry, and an end to the ongoing war which Lenin saw as an imperialist war.

Formation of CPIML: A New Direction in the Indian Revolution

In the course of a protracted struggle between its opportunist and revolutionary wings, the Communist Party of India underwent its first split in 1964 and a new party was formed in the shape of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). It did not however take long for the revolutionary wing to realize that the leadership of the new party had been seized by the centrist trend of the movement, an inner-Party struggle ensued. In a concentrated form, it was conducted by Comrade Charu Mazumdar through his famous Eight Documents, written between 1965 and 1967. Marked by



First Congress of CPIML in 1970

a nationwide outburst of mass movements, this was also the period that saw the first major turn in post-1947 Indian politics. The peasant uprising in Naxalbari, organised by the Charu Mazumdar-led wing of the Party precipitated the first showdown between the two strategic perspectives and tactical lines within the CPI(M). True to the tradition of social-democratic betrayal, the party in power responded with bullets, and the simmering revolt within the party spread like wildfire. With revolutionary communists throughout India detaching themselves from the party and rallying around the emerging centre, the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR), the CPI(M) suffered its first major split. The emergent centre organised itself into the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) on Lenin's birthday 22 April, 1969 (Comrade Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov 'Lenin' was born on 22nd April, 1870 in Ulyanovsk, Russia), giving a centralised shape to this new centre. The CPI(ML) held its First Congress in Calcutta in May 1970 and Comrade Charu Mazumdar was elected the General Secretary of a 21-member Central Committee. It was held clandestinely under the garb of a marriage ceremony as the party was underground at that time.

Justice Denied to the family of Hathras Rape and Murder Victim in Yogi's Uttar Pradesh

On 14th September 2020, four upper caste men gang-raped a Dalit woman in Hathras, Yogi's Uttar Pradesh. About two and half years later, three out of four of the (Ramu, Luv Kush, and Ravi) rape accused have been acquitted. Even the main accused has not been charged with rape, instead, he has been charged with culpable homicide and SC/ST atrocities act. The BJP government time and again prides itself by asserting the decrease in crime rate in Uttar Pradesh during Yogi's tenure, and the mystery has been solved. If the Yogi government keeps acquitting criminals, rapists, casteists, murderers, there would be no criminal record left to account for.

The Hathras gang rape case shook the country, not only because of the gruesome act, but also because of the police and administration's impetuous and insensitive approach towards the case. The victim and her family received absolutely no support from the government, instead, the entire state machinery was deployed to hush up the case. The Police and administration worked hand in gloves to intimidate the family members of the woman by denying them right to legal remedy, justice, and even a proper funeral.

The ways in which Yogi government and UP Police protected the Rajput men (same caste as the CM) of Hathras who raped a 19 year old Dalit woman are:

1. The Police in Hathras burnt her funeral pyre in the middle of the night against the consent of her family. The Dalit woman was dehumanised in life and even in death.
2. The victim had clearly given a statement to the police, whilst still hospitalised due to her injuries, stating that the four Rajput men had raped and assaulted her, the assault that ultimately lead to her death on 29th September 2020.
3. On October 1, the UP ADG (law and order) Prashant Kumar made claims that the victim was not raped based on a forensic lab report that was collected eight days after the offence took place, although the standard procedure is to get these samples as soon as possible.



4. Soon after the incident, "Rashtriya Savarna Parishad" came out in support of the rapists, and several other organisations and politicians associated with the BJP-RSS nexus, like the Bajrang Dal and Karni Sena, joined in their support.

5. A Mumbai-based private PR firm circulated a clarification note on behalf of the Yogi government. This firm tried to push the agenda that the entire incident is not actually based on the rape of a Dalit woman but is actually a 'conspiracy to push the state into caste turmoil'.

6. On the pretext of preventing 'caste turmoil', the Yogi administration attempted to prevent leaders from opposition parties from meeting the family of the victim. Journalist Siddique Kappan was arrested for two years on his way to cover the news under UAPA.

The Hathras incident remains a ghastly reminder of the feudal caste-structures in our country. It is true that our constitution has criminalised discrimination on grounds of caste, religion, and gender, but the truth is that all such principles are notoriously subverted by fascist forces like the RSS and BJP. They willfully want to keep India a caste society, where access to all tangible and intangible resources remains concentrated in the hands of those born into upper caste families.

The Dalit girl from Hathras was not just a victim of caste but also of the state government's divisive politics. The ruling government has consistently used the structures of gender and caste-based violence as a political tool to establish its power. From the Laxmanpur Bathe massacre of 1997, where Ranvir Sena

raped and massacred around 58 people from the Dalit community to the Hathras gang rape, the powers of the RSS and its tentacles have turned the Dalit woman's body as a site of violence.

And as if the act of violence in itself is not enough, what came after the incident is even more harrowing. For the victim's family, the first few days after the incident were a mix of grieving for their daughter as well as dealing with the extreme backlash, from their own villagers to the national media, all calling them liars. Today, more than two years after the incident, the three young girls in the family have not gone to school. The victim's sister-in-law cannot step outside the house without security because the Upper Caste goons still threaten them, and the house is surrounded by CRPF personnel and barbed wire. The members of the family have still not received the government jobs they were promised. Kamal KP, a former PFI member, was arrested under UAPA in the Hathras case "for disturbing communal harmony after the death of a Dalit girl" on the same day the Thakur men were acquitted. Now, the upper caste men are roaming free in the streets of Hathras, as if September 14, 2020, never happened, while those who protested are being jailed.

Four Dalit women are reportedly raped every day in India, and NCRB data shows that the conviction rate for these cases is much lower than the rest. This is a result of the institutional and structural bias built around caste solidarities between the criminal justice system, the police, and the judiciary. The Hathras incident is not just a reflection of the absence of law and order in UP; it is an outcome of the structure that has been carefully moulded into perfection by the current regime, a structure that allows and even rewards atrocities against the people living in the margins of society.

Only strong voices of movemental resistance can defeat these structural violence and the political forces that cultivate them.

Space Age: The Soviet Experience- Part IV

Sushant

"And if I am still determined to make this flight, it is because I am a Communist, because I am following the example of the dauntless heroism of my compatriots—the Soviet people." - Yuri Gagarin (before the flight of Vostok)

The first manned space flight in history was accomplished on April 12, 1961, when the Soviet spaceship Vostok with a man on board, went up into space, and after orbiting the Earth, safely returned to earth. The first man in space was Yuri Alexeyevich Gagarin. Gagarin's flight marked a major milestone in human history and proved that it was possible for humans to survive and function in space. It was an unparalleled victory of man over the forces of Nature, an immense achievement of science and technology, and a triumph for the human mind. Later, Neil Armstrong, the first man to step onto the Moon said, "He (Yuri Gagarin) opened the way into space for us all".

The Soviet Union was one of the pioneers in space science and technology, with several significant achievements that shaped the history of space exploration. From the launch of Sputnik, the first artificial satellite, to Yuri Gagarin's historic spaceflight, the Soviet Union made significant contributions to the development of space technology. Tsarist Russia was a backward country, science and technology were not developed, and most (> 80%) of the population was illiterate. When, in October 1917, the working class seized power, the revolutionary reconstruction of education made it accessible to all. In April 1918 Lenin wrote the famous "Outline of the plan for scientific-technological works". The outline was followed by concrete measures, promoting the development of scientific activities in the country, helping to solve the basic problems of industrialization, socialistic reorganization of the rural economy, and carrying out the revolution in Science and Technology. Providing education to all, the Soviet Union created a scientific society with a culture of thinking that later appeared in the rapid advancement of the Soviet Union in Science and Technology, especially in Space research. Research into Space Science was given special state importance in the U.S.S.R. back in the early years of the Soviet republic and a laboratory for

Space research was established in 1921. This made it possible, early in the thirties—long before similar work had begun in other countries—to conduct bench tests of rocket engines in the U.S.S.R. On August 18, 1933, the Group for the Study of Reactive Motion (GIRD), led by Sergei Korolev, launched the Soviet liquid-fuel rocket GIRD-09. In 1933, a rocket designed and built by M. K. Tikhonravov, for meteorological observations, was launched successfully. The Soviet Union was the first to launch an intercontinental ballistic missile, the first to put a man-made earth satellite into orbit, and the first to send a spaceship to the Moon. The Soviet space program pioneered many aspects of space exploration: the Space Age started with the flight of Sputnik-1, launched on October 4, 1957. It was the first artificial satellite. The Soviet Union followed up the success of Sputnik-1 with the launch of Sputnik-2, carrying the first animal, a dog named Laika, into orbit. In 1963, Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman to fly in space aboard Vostok-6. In 1965, Alexei Leonov became the first human to perform a spacewalk. In 1971, the Soviet Union launched the first space station, Salyut-1. In the 1980s, the Soviet Union developed the Buran spacecraft, the first space shuttle capable of autonomous flight and landing. The Soviet Union contributed to the exploration of the solar system, launching several missions to study the Moon, Venus, Mars, and other planets, which were the first study of these planets. The Luna program, which began in 1959, successfully landed several robotic probes on the Moon and returned soil samples to Earth, and it was the first program to study the Moon from space, Luna-1 was the first man-made object to escape Earth's gravity and Luna-2 was the first spacecraft to impact the Moon. The Venera program, which began in 1961, sent several probes to study Venus and was the first mission to successfully land on another planet.

These Soviet successes raised a great deal



of concern in the United States and the Western World. It created the so-called "Sputnik crisis" in America and the "Space Race" started. Bernard Baruch, an economist, wrote in an open letter titled "The Lessons of Defeat" to the New York Herald Tribune: "While we devote our industrial and technological power to producing new model automobiles and more gadgets, the Soviet Union is conquering space... It is Russia, not the United States, who has had the imagination to hitch its wagon to the stars and the skill to reach for the moon and all but grasp it. America is worried. It should be." In a meeting of the Office of Defense Mobilization Science Advisory Committee (SAC) with president Eisenhower, Edward h. Land explained to the president the reasons for Soviet success: "the structure of Russian culture and thinking is such that they are learning to live the life of science and its application. . . Is there a way to tell the country that we should set out on a scientific adventure in which all can participate? If this can be done, with our concept of freedom and the independent, unfettered man, we can move far ahead. We need a scientific community in the American tradition." The success of the Soviet Union in Space Science forced America and other developed nations to spend more on public education and science research. John Jefferies, a scientist at the High Altitude Observatory, in 1957 said: "The week after Sputnik went up, we were digging ourselves out of this avalanche of money that suddenly descended."

Jenu Kuruba: A Story of Resistance against Colonial Conservation Models and a Vision of Radical Community Ownership of Forests

FridaysForFuture Karnataka

Jenu Kurubas (literally "honey gatherers") are an indigenous tribe living in the forests of southern India, primarily in the states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. Over the past several decades, the Jenu Kurubas have been facing a range of challenges related to their land, livelihood, and cultural identity- at the hands of colonial conservation laws, large conservation NGOs and eco-tourism industries.

One of the key issues that the Jenu Kurubas have been fighting for is their right to access and control over their ancestral lands and forests, rights enshrined to them in the Forest Rights Act of 2006. Over the years, the forests and lands that the Jenu Kurubas traditionally inhabited and depended on for their livelihoods have been taken over forcefully by the state, private companies, and other actors, leading to displacement, loss of livelihoods, and other social impacts. This has also led to environmental impacts as forest lands became increasingly available for commercial repurposing- leading to shrinking forests. The Jenu Kurubas have been fighting for their rights to reclaim and manage their ancestral lands and forests, and for recognition of their traditional knowledge and practices related to forest conservation and sustainable use.

The Jenu Kurubas have also been advocating for their cultural and political rights, including recognition of their tribal identity, language, and customs, and representation in decision-making processes that affect their lives and livelihoods. They have been fighting against discrimination, marginalization, and exploitation, and for greater inclusion and participation in the governance of their lands. They are not alone in their fight, indigenous communities across the Global South, including Africa, South America, Asia- are being systematically undermined and having their rights violated in the name of conservation.

As a youth movement for climate justice, we volunteers of FridaysForFuture Karnataka did not want to continue to perpetuate appropriation, violence and injustice in the name of conservation. Instead, we stand in solidarity with the demands of the Jenu Kuruba, and advocate

tenure compared to areas they did not for the radical community ownership of forest commons by forest communities. In fact, studies show that this is the best thing we can do for our forests: deforestation rates in Brazil is 66% lower in areas where indigenous communities had secure land (Baragwanath and Bayi, 2020).

Inequality and climate change are the biggest challenges of our time, and more democracy is the answer to both. The Jenu Kuruba along with other Adivasi groups affected by colonial conservation have formed a Community Network Against Protected Areas (CNAPA). CNAPA held a two day inter-community dialogue on 22-23 March to debunk colonial conservation and foreground radical community ownership of forest commons.

The Elephant Whisperers, an Indian film on human-animal relationships won an Oscar for Best Documentary Film. While we celebrate that a story that centers indigenous people is being celebrated worldwide, unfortunately the

rights and struggles of the same tribes do not get the same kind of attention and support. It's time to move beyond just celebrating Adivasi stories on screen but also stand in solidarity with the Adivasi movement for our remaining forest commons. Here are some ways you can start:

- Join the CNAPA dialogues in the future
- Learn and share widely about colonial conservation and how it has impacted tribes like the Jenu Kuruba (Read report co-written by FFF on Counter Currents titled "We can live with the Tiger but not the Forest Department")
- Sign petitions in our bio by Survival International ("Don't evict the kings of the forest") and There is No Earth B

(savenagarahole.thereisnoearthb.com)

DREAMS

-Written by Satyakaam, translated by Rida

It is said

That the most dangerous thing is the death of our dreams

But dreams do not simply die

They are killed

Broken into

Twisted and wrung out

Squeezed and stepped on

They are suppressed and

Crushed and finally destroyed by the heart felt taunts of capitalist society

The merciless laughter of the sahibs

Sitting in the offices and the shameless neglect

Of the management in universities

In a room of the house

In a remote corner of the

Heart, in a small nook of the

Mind, in the woes of mothers

In the tearful eyes of fathers,

In the deafening screams of sisters

In the compassionate voice of brothers, in the motionless legs of a young man, the still

Arms In my lifeless mind

And dead body, the dreams

Of all the disheartened youths, the dreams of Vemulas and Solankis

The dreams of Tariqs and Tabrez

The dreams of all those

Labourers and oppressed farmers,

These dreams do not die, they are killed.

Messengers of Hate: The Dangerous Similarities between Indian Media and Radio Rwanda

Sushant and Sharath

“If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing.” - Malcolm X

In February, rumours of violence against North Indian migrants in Tamil Nadu were spread by BJP leaders and mainstream media. Fake videos claimed that Biharis were brutally killed by Tamil locals. Several tweets about the purported attacks and “public murders” became viral. Then newspapers such as Dainik Jagran ran headlines like “Murderous attack on Hindi-speaking workers in Tamil Nadu.” BJP IT-cell amplified this news for political benefit and intensified the problem. BJP leaders used the occasion to shred apart the opposition’s bonhomie: the RJD-JDU government in Bihar and the DMK government in Tamil Nadu. Disinformation was spread via WhatsApp forwards. Later it was found that these were fake news. In the last few years, we saw how social media has become a tool for spreading hate, and the mainstream media is constantly trying to give them tough competition and consistently spreading hate. In many recent incidents, social media and mainstream media have misinformed people and spread hatred between communities.

Historically, there have been many cases where the media was directly involved in orchestrating genocide. For example, Radio Rwanda and RTLM(Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines) played a pivotal role in the 1994 genocide of the Tutsis, an ethnic group in Africa. Radio Rwanda and RTLM were widely listened to by the masses and propagated racist propaganda against the Tutsis, moderate Hutus, and Belgians. The genocide was sparked by the death of Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu. His plane was shot down with missiles on April 6, 1994. Hutu extremist groups (‘Akazu’, ‘Hutu Power’ and its militia ‘Interahamwe’) blamed the Tutsi ethnic minority for the president’s death and used it as a pretext to carry out their plan to exterminate the Tutsis. Over the next three months, Hutu militias and ordinary citizens went on a killing spree, with government support, using machetes, clubs, and other weapons to murder an

estimated 800,000 people, mostly Tutsi, but also some moderate Hutu who opposed the genocide. Secret arms caches were kept ready for use by government soldiers and the party militia, the core cadre of which had been trained in the tactics of slaughter. Lists of Tutsis and their Hutu sympathizers had been compiled for targeting. The killing of the Rwandan President acted as the trigger. RTLM started operating just months before the genocide. It was bankrolled by the Rwandan Businessman Felician Kabuga, who was also a close aide of the President and the Hutu extremist group Akazu. From its beginning, RTLM started spreading anti-Tutsi propaganda and inciting violence against the Tutsi. By March 1994, Hutu Power’s proliferation of hate media (print media such as Kangura and the radio station RTLM and Radio Rwanda) had created a climate of fear. The radio broadcasts were particularly effective at reaching a wide audience and were used to mobilise the Hutu militias and ordinary citizens to carry out the killings. The media also disseminated lists of Tutsi targets, making it easier for the killers to identify and track down their victims. The international media also played a role in the genocide. Many Western journalists and media outlets failed to report on the killings or downplayed their significance. This lack of attention and action allowed the genocide to continue for several months before any significant intervention was made.

The same trends which were seen in Rwanda are dangerously found in Indian corporate controlled media houses. Like RTLM, Indian media is reporting less news and more propaganda debate which incites hate by pitting one community over the other. The reporting on the Delhi riots of 2020, COVID-19, and farmer’s protests are examples of spreading hate and fake news through mainstream media to support the government. The trend of RTLM to invite bigoted members of the



ruling government who are well known to be disrespectful towards a community in the public eye can be seen in the Indian context. Public figures such as Sambit Patra who openly disrespect Muslims on live tv and make half-wit humour at the cost of a community can be seen outright. News channels like Sudarshan news, Aaj Tak etc. conducting shows such as ‘UPSC jihad’ and ‘muslim mukt bharat’ (muslim free india) are instrumental in spreading islamophobia.. It shows great similarities in how the RTLM in Rwanda indulged in disrespecting and dehumanizing the minority Tutsi population.

The Indian laws which regulate media can be seen as widely ineffective as no prosecution takes place on the anchors, spokespersons, or the stakeholders of media who partake in such acts. This has created a sense of impunity. Indian media was given a self-regulatory mechanism through the Press council act of 1978, where a council made up of nominated individuals from news agencies and sitting members of parliament would keep the media in check. However, these news agencies and members of parliament who have vested interests in such ‘hate mongering’ refuse to take any actions against the individuals who spread misinformation and participate actively in promoting disharmony amongst the masses. Also, these news channels are supported by ads from the government and corporate, therefore serving them and making more profit. The nexus between neoliberalism and Hindutva plays out around the fourth pillar of democracy as well.

UCC- Another BJP Masterstroke

Atikaa

"As the vilest writer has his readers, so the greatest liar has believers. And it often happens that if a lie be believed only for an hour, it has done its work, and there is no farther occasion for it. Falsehood flies and truth comes limping after it" - Jonathan Swift

The BJP government has been proposing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) for quite some time now. To understand the implications of a fascist party promoting a liberal agenda, we first need to understand what UCC is.

In India, we already officially have a uniform criminal code, so if one commits a crime, irrespective of your religion, one will face the same punishment but we don't have a UCC, citizens of various religious backgrounds have different personal laws on subjects such as marriage, adoption, succession, inheritance etc. A few of the personal laws are – Muslim personal law, Hindu personal law, Christian personal laws etc.

The stated problem with community-level personal laws is that it burdens the judiciary, making the whole process complicated. Now, why would a bigoted party like BJP want something like that? Do they really want judicial reform? Well, if you think like that, congratulations, you have been consumed by right-wing propaganda.

During election season, the party in power has us believing that a new amendment to the constitution will be ground-breaking, it would pacify the public, uplift women, and uphold human rights, making India the Vishwa guru. Truth comes 'limping' post election.

Close to the Rajasthan elections, Mr Kirodi Lal Meena (Rajya Sabha MP from Rajasthan) got his private bill on UCC passed in the upper house, albeit having tried and denied six times already by BJP itself, so what changed now? As Rahat Indori wrote "There seems to be tension on the borders, are elections coming up?", hence the urgency.

Bringing the UCC in today's India is neither a secular nor liberal agenda, those

are the very things the BJP stands against. Vinod Bhansal, the spokesperson from VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad) tweeted that to kill secularism we need UCC, and he couldn't be more right in exposing the true intentions of the BJP. Under no condition would they pass a UCC that undermines the pre-existing rights of the Hindu majority, so why should the minority communities accept a "Hinduised" version of a UCC.

The Law Commission of India has opined that a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is not required to reconcile conflicts in personal/family laws with the Indian Constitution. And that UCC is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage. Moreover, the proposition of a UCC is in violation of article 25 of the constitution (right to profess , practice and propagate their religion) and Article 29 (right to conserve distinct culture) and if BJP government does try to extend UCC to tribal communities in the north-east, it would then be in violation of article 371(a) and article 371(f) that grants distinct rights to people from Nagaland and Mizoram respectively.

If UCC was what the BJP always wanted, why didn't Modi implement it in Gujarat when he had power there for 12 years or later. Marriage, adoption, succession are matters that come under the concurrent list. Makes one wonder why no BJP ruled state ever brought UCC.

The BJP has reduced Central administrative tribunals under their rule (from 26 to 19 in 2017), and they even brought tribunals reform act of 2021 abolishing 9 tribunals, leading to cases piling up in the high courts. Their projection of UCC reducing judicial burden is hypocrisy at best.

And will this UCC address the issue of HUFs (Hindu undivided family- a provision under Hindu personal law that registers families as taxable entities)? Will it be extended to all communities under this proposed UCC or will it be abolished? HUF is discriminatory in its

very nature, and does not give equitable taxing. Why is it that only Hindus enjoy tax benefits and use it as a tax saving tool? The grim reality is that a majoritarian government that is fascist in deeds, cannot be trusted by anyone to bring a UCC, uniformity is exactly what they are against.

Another argument of the BJP is that they want to bring a UCC as it is a directive principle of state policy (DPSP) in part 4 of the constitution. A true intent of implementing DPSPs would ensure implementing article 39 that assures equal rights to men and women for a decent livelihood in this time of rising unemployment and widening gender gap (in Gender parity index, India ranks 135/146), implementing article 39 to avoid concentration of wealth (77% of national wealth is held by top 10% of the population), article 47 to improve public health and nutrition (India ranks below Pakistan at 107/121) or article 48(a) to protect nature (India ranks 8th amongst countries with the worst air quality index) etc.

Development, Upliftment, or Uniformity is not their goal, their goal is a Hindu Rashtra where loot of resources by foreign exploiters is rampant. No one alone can destroy a nation, but a fascist government, a subservient media, and a pliant judiciary can be dangerous and this is what they are working towards.

Image credit- The Quint



Bar Council of India Rules on Foreign Lawyers/ Law Firms : A Case of Misplaced Priorities!

Statement by All India Lawyers' Association For Justice

On 10.03.2023, the Bar Council of India released the “Bar Council of India Rules For Registration and Regulation of Foreign Lawyers and Foreign Law Firms in India, 2022”, permitting foreign lawyers and law firms to practise in areas such as foreign law, international legal issues and arbitration matters in India. This sudden volte-face by the BCI, from its previous stance of opposing such entry, has been done without any consultation with the larger body of advocates across the country. This comes in the context of ongoing negotiations between India and the UK towards a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which has at its centre trade in “services” including the Indian legal service sector and the removal of restrictions for foreign lawyers to practise in India. These BCI Rules are the first step in the liberalisation of the legal sector, the consequences of which are being consciously underplayed in the name of development of law. We must add that the fact that the BCI, rather than address pressing concerns being raised by advocates, has instead chosen to frame these rules, reveals with clarity the warped priorities of the BCI and the interests they serve.

Today, nearly 80% of advocates in High Courts, with up to two years of practice experience, earn only between Rs. 5,000 to 15,000 monthly. In districts, the pay is even less. Women advocates and advocates from Dalit, Adivasis and other socially disadvantaged sections face lack of opportunities and discrimination, and this manifests in their absence in the judiciary, which is dominated by upper castes and men.

In regard to these and other issues, AILAJ initiated a “Campaign for the Social and Economic Justice for Lawyers” in January 2023, which was held in various states across the country. Representations were addressed to the Chief Justice of India and the BCI raising various demands. In view of the discrimination and worsening situation of junior advocates, first-generation advocates, women advocates

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In regard to these and other issues, AILAJ initiated a “Campaign for the Social and Economic Justice for Lawyers” in January 2023, which was held in various states across the country. Representations were addressed to the Chief Justice of India and the BCI raising various demands. In view of the discrimination and worsening situation of junior advocates, first-generation advocates, women advocates and advocates from Dalit, Adivasis and other socially disadvantaged sections, we highlighted the need for BCI to frame a comprehensive Welfare Scheme in this regard, including financial assistance and special protections towards these sections of the legal fraternity. We also demanded that “Committee for Gender Sensitization and against Sexual Harassment” be constituted in every Court complex, as also the demand that an Advocates Protection law be enacted to take account of growing instances of physical assault, murder, illegal arrests and threats from the police and other state agencies. The BCI has not responded to any of these demands that raise issues of daily significance for the majority of lawyers across the country. In this context, the step to liberalise the Indian legal sector is clearly a misplaced priority.

In fact, these Rules go beyond and against the decision of the Supreme Court in *Bar Council of India Vs. A.K. Balaji and Ors.* [(2018) 5 SCC 379], where the Supreme Court held that foreign law firms/companies or foreign lawyers cannot practise the profession of law in India either in the litigation or on the non-litigation side. The Supreme Court however clarified that there was no bar on foreign law firms or foreign lawyers visiting India for a temporary period on a “fly in and fly out” basis for the purpose of giving legal advice to their clients in India regarding foreign law, their own system of law or on diverse international legal issues



regarding which the Bar Council of India or Union of India will be at liberty to make appropriate Rules.

The BCI Rules now permit foreign lawyers and law firms to practise in non-litigious matters. The areas of practice of law by a foreign lawyer or Foreign Law Firm shall be laid down by the Bar Council of India and if need be, the Bar Council of India may consult the Govt. of India, Ministry of Law and Justice in this regard. While restricting such advocates and firms from appearing before a judicial forum including tribunals and other statutory or regulatory authorities, it permits a large range of other practice. These include transactional work/corporate work on reciprocal basis; doing work or giving advice concerning the laws of the country of the primary qualification; providing legal services to people or bodies having an address or principal office or head office in a foreign country in any international arbitration case which is conducted in India, etc. Moreover, they permit such lawyers/firms to represent persons/bodies to open up law offices, engage and procure legal expertise of Indian advocates registered as foreign lawyers, or Indian advocates in respect of Indian laws, and to enter into a partnership with one or more foreign lawyers or foreign law firms registered in India under these Rules.

The BCI Rules mandate registration fees of USD 25,000 for foreign lawyers and USD 50,000 for Law Firm or LLP, and renewal fees are USD 10,000 for Lawyer and USD 20,000 for Law Firms. In addition there is an application fee to be accompanied by a Security Deposit of USD 15,000 for Individual lawyers and USD 40,000 for

Law Firms.

Why this sudden change on the part of the BCI, which has been relentlessly opposing the entry of foreign lawyers and law firms? Given the obvious pressure of the ongoing negotiations for the FTA, under which the opening up of the Indian legal service sector forms a key component, it is fairly certain that this is the first step in a long process of liberalising the legal service sector as evident from other service sectors. The BCI has eschewed its independent status and become an

appendage to the Modi government by sacrificing the interests of the Indian legal fraternity for the sake of the FTA between the UK and India. The argument that this entry is restricted and regulated on a reciprocity basis, is a ruse to soften the initial hard blow that this decision has landed. It is obvious that rather than being controlled, this is a phased entry. Many questions are left unanswered. What happens to the majority of the Indian lawyers who are already at a disadvantage, due to structural, social, and economic

realities, even when compared to the elite Indian lawyers? Will the small and medium law firms be able to compete with the foreign firms? Will foreign lawyers be allowed to practise without a qualifying exam like AIBE? What was this urgency to bring in these Rules without any prior consultation with the legal fraternity? BCI has much to answer, and should do so before taking any step towards liberalising the Indian legal service sector.

~ Maitreyi Krishnan (President)

~ Clifton D' Rozario (General Secretary)

ARCHIVE OF GRIEF

~ Rida

Grief sits in the corner of the room legs folded,
Tongue amputated the committee commemorates
The office holds the meeting
The news houses publish soundbytes of the truth
Caveats are carved in the orifice of the body
Universities remain houses of unrest and
Grief sleeps in a corner on an empty stomach
Administrations morph into lapdogs
The farce parades as democracy

And democracy parades as grief
While grief shifts in his bed learning the new alphabet
What is to be done?
The pamphlet asks what is to be done?
The author echoes what is to be done?
The institution stifles the question
Sits on a hunger strike
Grief rings the death knell and
The rhetoric falls on deaf ears

UPDATES ON PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS

Job regularisation: Bengaluru's sanitation workers went on a strike from March 20

BBMP Pourakarmika Sangha under the AICCTU along with many other organisations held a strike since 20th of March with the demand of regularisation. They struck work for multiple days, throwing out garbage on the streets as a form of protest. A huge congregation was held at Freedom Park. The workers are not getting minimum wages, ESI and PF services. They added that BBMP has not provided them with protection equipment resulting in many workers facing health challenges.





Auto driver unions and bike taxi unions hold back to back strikes in Bangalore

Bangalore recently saw back to back protests from auto driver unions as well as bike taxi unions. A recent incident of a bike taxi driver being heckled by an auto driver went viral leading to a lot of commotion around this issue of mutual competition. On the 20th of March, a “bandh” was called by several auto drivers unions across Bangalore demanding a ban on bike taxis just a day after a strike was called by bike taxi drivers. The union has for long been demanding a ban on bike taxis, which it says threaten the livelihoods of autorickshaw drivers. As part of the protest, the auto drivers carried out a march at the Majestic bus stand. It must be noted that despite there being an apparent conflict of interest, existing bike/auto service providers like Ola/Uber/Rapido are infamous for the kind of exploitation they subject the drivers to by charging a hefty commission on each ride, lack of incentives, irregular payment etc.

Joint Committee of Trade Unions oppose Factories Amendment Bill

In a recent move, the Karnataka legislative assembly has passed a bill to increase working hours in industries from 8 to 12 and allow night shifts for women. This bill that was brought after extensive lobbying by foreign companies, has been passed unopposed in the assembly. It goes against the interest of the workers who would now get legal overtime payment only after 12 hours of work. JCTU held a major protest at Freedom Park to oppose this move on Bhagat Singh’s martyrdom day, 23rd March.

A similar protest was held by All India Central Council of Trade Unions' comrades in Peenya on 6th March where industrial workers were also made aware about the detrimental changes brought by this Bill.



Farmers’ long march on the horizon

Farmers from across the country are expected to march to the Indian Parliament, demanding financial assistance from the government. This includes setting up a committee to relieve the debt of poorer farmers and guaranteeing them a minimum price for some crops/produce. Farmers say the government has not fulfilled promises made when it repealed the 3 agriculture laws in 2021. General Secretary, All India Kisan Mazdoor Sabha, AIKMS, Dr Ashish Mittal said, "Govt gave a written assurance to implement MSP at comprehensive cost of production, i.e., C-2 + 50 per cent, but the govt formed a committee which had 26 members who favoured the corporate and openly opposed this demand. Since then, his govt raised prices of phosphatic fertilizers by 50 per cent and cut food subsidy and MNREGA budgets."

Workers' strikes rock Europe

On the 26th of March, public transport workers from across Germany staged a protest demanding higher wages, bringing the nation to a halt. This has been described as the largest nationwide strike in decades, organised by several powerful trade unions.

A series of general strikes and demonstrations began in France on 19 January 2023, organised by people opposed to the 2023 French pension reform bill proposed by the Borne government, which would increase the retirement age from 62 to 64 years old.

Pro-democracy protests in occupied Palestine

Hundreds of thousands of Israelis took part in nationwide rallies Saturday evening for the 12th straight week of mass protests against the government’s radical plans to overhaul the judicial system, ahead of the expected passage next week of a core part of the shakeup. But the pressure on Netanyahu is mounting, with the country’s main labour union announcing a general strike, and calling for the prime minister to withdraw his plan.

UPDATES ON STUDENT MOVEMENTS

(continuation)

Inquilab : A Celebration of People's Resistance

On the 25th of March All India Students' Association, Karnataka organized 'Inquilab: A celebration of people's resistance'. Since 23rd March marks the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, 25th was chosen to celebrate his revolutionary spirit and current trends in people's resistance. It was also the first exposure to politics for a lot of students in the hall, when stories were told and emotions were expressed through poems and plays, it invoked a collective revolutionary spirit. There was a massive turnout of around 120 people. Devanahalli farmers, AICCTU comrades, and student movement leaders shared their experiences demonstrating a sense of farmer-worker-students' unity. The event also hosted playback theatre by CityLamps. It was ended with a collective singing of 'The Internationale' in Hindi. A stall for booklets, pamphlets, artworks, and Spark* issues were also put up at the venue.



Student protest at TISS

Students at Tata Institute of Social Sciences protested against the college administration who denied permission to hold a lecture on Bhagat Singh's martyrdom day. The protest happened on 21st March night outside the TISS director's Bungalow because the event was scheduled on 23rd March to commemorate Bhagat Singh's martyrdom day. Members from PSF and BSML were among the protestors. Students said that the lecture on martyrdom day happens every year and the verbal cancellation of the lecture is an insult to the sacrifice done by the revolutionaries.

Authorities continue hounding students for screening the BBC documentary 'India: The Modi Question'

Delhi University has barred two students Lokesh Chugh and Ravindra Singh from the university for a year for screening the BBC documentary on Narendra Modi on campus on January 27. They will not be allowed to take part in "any university or college or departmental examination for one year from the date of issue of the memorandum. Many progressive and democratic student groups across India have faced police hounding for screening of this documentary that exposes Modi's role in the Gujarat riots. Massive student protests followed this decision by DU.



Student protest at Indraprastha college in Delhi

A group of drunk men created a ruckus at a women's event which was being organised at Indraprastha College of Delhi University in North Delhi. Taking this to Twitter, an activist of AISA (All India Students Association) said, "Today, IPCW's fest was going when drunk men climbed the walls, forcefully entered the campus and harrassed Gender minorities. Men were chanting, 'Miranda IP dono hamara', 'Miranda nahi chhoda to IP bhi nahi chhodenge'." On March 29, AISA, DU started a protest at the IPCW gate at 11 am. The students protesting against the cause have been detained by the Delhi Police. They were also manhandled by the police for protesting against gendered harassment.

ON THIS MONTH

April 4, 1968- Martin Luther King Jr., the face of the civil rights movement in USA, was fatally shot at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. He was a prominent leader of the civil rights movement and a Nobel Peace Prize laureate who was known for his use of nonviolence and civil disobedience.

April 9, 1866 - Birthday - African American actor and people's artist Paul Robeson (1898-1976) was born in Princeton, New Jersey.

April 11, 1827- Birthday of Mahtama Jyotirao Govindrao Phule. His work extended to many fields, including the eradication of untouchability and the caste system, and his efforts in educating women and oppressed caste people.

April 13, 1919- Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, also called Massacre of Amritsar, happened in which British troops fired on a large crowd of unarmed Indians in an open space known as the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar in the Punjab region, killing several hundred people and wounding many hundreds more.



April 16, 1889 - Birthday - Comedian Charlie Chaplin was born in London. Chaplin's classics include The Kid, The Gold Rush, City Lights, and Modern Times. In 1940, he made The Great Dictator poking fun at Adolf Hitler, who bore a resemblance to Chaplin.

April 17, 1961 - A U.S.-backed attempt to overthrow Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba failed disastrously in what became known as the Bay of Pigs fiasco. About 1,400 anti-Castro exiles invaded the island's southern coast along the Bay of Pigs but were overrun by 20,000 Cuban soldiers and jailed.

April 17, 2018- The first raids over the Bhima Koregaon case were conducted on this day. Within the next 3 years more than 16 prominent activists, intellectuals, social workers, lawyers, and artists were put in prison on fabricated, false charges.

"Never forget the 18th April, 1930, the day of Eastern Rebellion in Chittagong. Keep ever fresh in your memory the fights of Jallalabad, Julia, Chandernagar and Dhalghat. Write in red letters in the core of your hearts the names of all patriots who have sacrificed their lives at the altar of India's freedom... Long Live Revolution! Bandemataram!" -Excerpt from the last letter written by Masterda Surya Sen, from Chittagong Jail on 11th Jan, 1934 - a day before his hanging.

April 22, 1889 - marks the 153rd birth anniversary of Comrade Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (V.I. Lenin). Comrade V.I. Lenin was a great theoretician and ideologue after Karl Marx. He led the socialist revolution in 1917 which is celebrated as the great October Socialist revolution.

April 23, 1930- Chandra Singh Garhwali was a soldier in the British army and a hero of the Indian freedom struggle. His refusal to fire on unarmed, peaceful civilians averted a massacre and sparked off the Peshawar revolt of 1930. This important freedom fighter continued to work against caste and communal oppression after India's independence.

April 26, 1944 - Federal troops seized the Chicago offices of Montgomery Ward and removed its chairman after his refusal to obey President Roosevelt's order to recognize a CIO union. The seizure ended when unions won an election to represent the company's workers.



April 28, 1945 - Twenty-three years of Fascist rule in Italy ended abruptly as Italian partisans shot former dictator Benito Mussolini. Other leaders of the Fascist Party and friends of Mussolini were also killed along with his mistress, Clara Petacci. Their bodies were then hung upside down and pelted with stones by jeering crowds in Milan.