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UPDATES ON STUDENT MOVEMENTS



Students of Bangalore University stage a huge protest in the campus over lack of basic facilities

On 11th July, the PG and PhD students' union of Bangalore University staged a huge protest in the Jnanabharati campus. A list of demands were put forth. Some of the important demands were providing free sanitary napkins to all girl students, keeping updated books at library, better dormitories, Wi-Fi at all places at campus, good Labs and equipment etc.

Students in TN block road demanding bus services to the school in Vadugapatti

Over a hundred Students of Vadugapatti village in Salem district blocked the road demanding Bus services to their school. The students stated that there were adequate government buses on their school routes before the pandemic. However, post-Pandemic, the government has stopped the buses on that route.

The University of Hyderabad students stage a protest over communalisation after an RSS event on campus

The Students' Union of the University of Hyderabad has been on a sit-in protest in front of the varsity's administration block since Friday, voicing various demands, ranging from stopping the 'communalisation' of the campus to revoking CUET-UG and PG application fees. The protest started days after the alleged removal of the university's dean of students' welfare (DSW), a Dalit professor after an RSS event was held on the campus.

Students at Osmania University hold a protest against Manipur violence

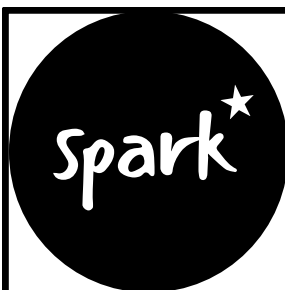
Students from Osmania University and its affiliated colleges took out a rally from NCC Gate to the Arts Colleges on the campus on Friday over the ongoing violence in Manipur. At the rally's end, gathering at Arts College, they displayed placards and shouted slogans demanding justice for the victims of the violence in Manipur and that the culprits be punished.

AISA spearheads anti-NEP movement in Bihar

The central government continues to intrude the National Education Policy 2020 in the universities and education system through the Governor of Bihar. All kinds of appointments and changes in the syllabus are being made without consulting the state government. At present, the Four Year Undergraduate Degree Program (FYUP) has been implemented in the universities of the entire state just by a decree of Rajya Bhavan. In the universities of Bihar, there is a huge shortage of teachers and staff where a three-year bachelor's degree gets



completed in 5 to 6 years. In such a situation, the four-year graduation program has been implemented in a hurry without any dialogue. This course is a preparation to evict the students coming from the poor deprived community from education. This is going to result in a massive fee hike. Due to the FYUP being implemented from this session, there is resentment among the common students regarding the exorbitant fee hike in all the courses. Against who All India Students' Association's serial campaign is being run. A two-day hunger strike was carried out in all the universities on July 4-5th by campaigning in various state universities including Patna University, Mithila University, and Veer Kunwar Singh University very successfully. Against this, a Raj Bhavan march was organized in Patna on 17th July in which hundreds of students from all over the state participated. In the future, the movement against this fee hike and FYUP will be intensified on a wide scale.



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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 masses. ”

Please send your valuable opinion, comments, criticism and articles to

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Dissent and Democracy in Bengaluru

Vinay Sreenivasa (Advocate)

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Koramangala is one of the trendiest areas of Bengaluru. The road from Nexus mall to the National Games village is an important road in the area. It has several posh eating joints, a few pubs, and street vendors selling food. A few years ago several street vendors in that road were evicted by the traffic police without any notice or reason. When one of the inspectors was asked for a reason, he said that it was because many IT professionals travel via that road to either Whitefield or electronic city and vendors block these Important tax-paying professionals. It is to be noted that evicted vendors occupied a space of 6 feet on a 18 feet footpath not obstructing traffic and in fact what took space on the road were parked private vehicles. This is the general attitude in Bengaluru – that IT-BT professionals are most important and everyone else, especially the working class don't really matter.

When working classes protest in Bengaluru, the media sometimes focus on the issues raised and sometimes focus only on traffic which may get affected as a result! Sometimes there is no reportage either. For instance, when over a lakh members of the Dalit community protested in Bangalore against the removal of the portrait of Dr. Ambedkar in a Republic day function, barely any English media reported on it. This bias is most strongly illustrated by what happened in March 2021 when Anganwadi workers and state run road transport corporation employees held protests and rallies in the city seeking a pay hike ahead of the state budget on March 8. Newspapers reported that the protests caused a traffic jam.

Shortly later, a sitting judge of the high court writes to the Chief Justice highlighting how the protest caused a traffic jam. On the basis of this letter, the High Court initiated a suo-moto case to regulate protests in Bengaluru. We do not hear of judges writing letters saying why Anganwadi workers are protesting on the road, or why street vendors are

being evicted in violation of the law. But here, because traffic got jammed, a sitting judge wrote a letter and the court initiated a PIL.

During the course of the PIL being heard, without any consideration to the citizens' fundamental rights of assembly or right to free speech, the Karnataka High court passed an interim order disallowing protests anywhere except freedom park and prohibiting all rallies! A constitutional court which is supposed to protect our fundamental rights instead passed an order which took away our rights.

The result of this order shrunk democracy in Bengaluru. The order resulted in many cases being filed against several marginalised communities for engaging in their constitutional right to protest. This includes workers for the traditional May Day rally, farmers protesting land acquisition in Devanahalli, Dalit activists seeking internal reservation, Powrakarmikas protesting for their rights, and residents of Malleswaram for organising a walk on the Sankey flyover issue. As a result of this order the pride march which happens every year in November was also disallowed, negating an important space of self-expression for the LGBTQIA community.

This order emptied the right to protest of its very content as protests often have meaning specific to an area. Farmers of Devanahalli protested the acquisition of their lands in Devanahalli. They had a case slapped against them since they didn't protest in Freedom Park! The same became true of Malleswaram's residents. If people are not permitted to protest at the place where the protest is relevant, the purpose of the protest is completely lost. Why should people be forced to travel to Freedom Park to protest?

What is most distressing is that no political party resisted this interim order. Before the final order of the High Court was passed, the police themselves brought out a new set of guidelines to regulate protests - the Licensing and Regulation of Protests, Demonstrations and Protest Marches (Bengaluru City)

Order, 2021(1). No political

party resisted this either. As civil society we must also introspect

as there was no civil society protest against this order as well. Why did we let the court and police restrict our rights without conducting any public protests?

It is only such protests that have made India the world's largest democracy. The protests after the 2012 Delhi gang-rape saw a strengthening of anti-rape laws; protests by garment workers resulted in new PF rules being scrapped; Anganwadi and ASHA workers have got pay raises only after protests; the farmers' protests led to the withdrawal of the farm laws. Bangalore owes much of its magnificent green cover only because of ordinary people protesting the arbitrary felling of trees. The Modi government's plan to introduce NRC-CAA was also stopped only because of the wide protests.

Even though as civil society we did not act when the restrictive orders came in place, we are now moving to reclaim lost ground. Last month a civil society campaign 'Horatada Hakkigaagi Janandolana' was launched to get back the right to freedom of protesting. Comprising farmers groups, women's groups, left and Dalit groups, student unions and several progressive individuals, this campaign aims to get back the right to protest. In addition to online and offline signature drives, members of the campaign have also met the Chief Minister to apprise him of the issue. We do hope that this government which promised to restore the democratic ethos of Karnataka will ensure that citizens again have a right to protest. If not, rest assured citizens will hit the streets again and not rest till the fundamental right to protest is upheld.

1. Licensing and Regulation of Protests, Demonstrations and Protest Marches (Bengaluru City) Order, 2021
(https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tUvhrSNn4Bnv9uXlYmJw_VskisW13kN/view)
S P A R K | 4

Academic Freedom in Scientific Institutes

Suvrat Raju

Last week, more than 500 scientists and academics wrote to the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) criticizing its administration for prohibiting a discussion on the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. In response, the director of a different research institute, the Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research (IISER) at Mohali, issued a show-cause notice to two faculty members at his institute who had signed the letter to IISc. As another signatory, I would like to explain why it is important for scientific research institutions to encourage social and political discussions, rather than seeking to shut them down like the IISc and IISER administrations.

Scientific research institutes are part of the broader society and so their members have the same constitutional right as others to participate in social discussions. Researchers at such institutions are offered the leisure and the training to pursue critical inquiry into a variety of subjects. This privilege, which relies on the public support that these institutions receive, means that they have an added responsibility to educate and express themselves on matters of public interests. For scientific researchers to fail to stand up for justice, especially at a time of great social turmoil, would be an abdication of this responsibility.

A narrow perspective might suggest that scientists should restrict themselves to science and stay away from social questions. However, it is artificial to erect intellectual silos around what is considered “science” and proscribe discussions outside those limits. For instance, an investigation of the science of climate change can naturally flow into complex geopolitical issues about colonialism and historical responsibility. This, in turn, leads to broader questions about inequality and justice. These issues are not peripheral to the subject but help to determine which scientific questions deserve focus. As another example, research on energy policy

cannot be separated from environmental concerns or questions about the usage and equitable distribution of energy. Most recently, research on artificial intelligence has thrown up a host of ethical dilemmas.

Some scientific fields, such as quantum physics, are further separated from current affairs. But the generous public support for research in these areas — the recently announced “national quantum mission” involves an investment of 6000 crores — arises from the expectation that this research, either directly or through spinoffs, will lead to public benefit. However, scientific and technological advances do not automatically lead to social progress; they can also facilitate oppression or entrench inequality. So it is important for scientists to involve themselves in decisions of how science is deployed, and not cede this ground entirely to capitalists or the government. Therefore, a broader political and historical perspective on scientific research is helpful even in pure science. India has a rich and unique tradition of scientists who have engaged with social issues. Apart from prominent individuals like the physicist, Meghnad Saha, the mathematician, D. D. Kosambi, and the chemist, Amulya Reddy, this tradition includes the peoples’ science movements. The Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad, whose slogan is “science for social revolution” has contributed enormously to spreading scientific values in the state. The All India Peoples Science Network has consistently advocated that science be used for social benefit rather than private profit.

To be clear: it is possible for individual scientists to focus on narrow scientific topics and ignore larger questions. My argument is simply that scientific issues are often related to broader political issues, and that society has benefited from the participation of scientists in these discussions.

Given these facts, why are some scientific administrators uncomfortable when political discussions are hosted in their scientific institutions? The reason is not hard to find. Administrators worry that they might be seen as promoting



A still from the talk at IISc

views that are hostile to the government of the day and might incur its wrath. Often, they do not even wait for instructions from the government but proactively censor discussions deemed to be controversial.

This attitude predates the current government. However, it is no secret that the pressure to conform and the level of self-censorship has increased significantly under the current dispensation.

In some cases, such as IISER (Mohali), administrators invoke the Central Civil Service (Conduct) rules that prohibit “criticism of ... the ... government”. However, these rules are designed for government bureaucrats and are irrelevant for academic scientists. Indeed, the Allahabad High Court held in 2015 that the CCS rules “have no application to a Central University”. Moreover, the Tripura High Court ruled in 2020 that even when the rules apply, they do not deprive citizens of their “right of free speech” which is “a fundamental right.”

Unless this censorship is resisted robustly, academic freedom in scientific institutions is likely to come under further attack. A key value in science is to challenge the arbitrary use of authority. It is time for members of the Indian scientific community to put this value into practice in their own institutions.

(Suvrat Raju is Professor of physics at the International Centre for Theoretical Sciences of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. The views expressed are personal and do not reflect the official position of the institute.)

Role of the Big Bourgeoisie in the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent

Soumen

The partition of the Indian subcontinent was one such event that still influences the geopolitics of the region. Be it the abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir or be it NRC-NPR-CAA – the roots of such recent issues can be traced to Partition. The mainstream narrative centering Partition vilifies Jinnah and the Muslim League as primarily responsible for that unfortunate event which created the two states – India and Pakistan at the cost of millions of innocent lives. Congress, being the ruler of this country for several decades after the sham independence, propagated this one-sided view, suppressing its own role in the process. On the other hand, BJP – the electoral front of militant right-wing organizations – vociferously blames Congress for Partition and directs a hardline communal politics with an absurd promise of ‘Akhand Bharat’. The historicity of both these narratives must be challenged and the real class characters of all these forces has to be analyzed properly.

The Congress was founded in 1885, in the backdrop of continuous armed resistance against British rule throughout the subcontinent. Allan Octavius Hume – then a retired secretary of British-India and the would-be father of the Congress party – noted that “A safety valve for the escape of great and growing forces, generated by our own action, was urgently needed and no more efficacious safety-valve than our Congress movement could possibly be devised.” The subsequent history of Congress, with a few exceptions of its revolutionary factions, is the history of that “safety-valve”, with comradely negotiations with the British in the garb of ‘non-violent’ resistance. This party and its principles were influenced and funded by the interests of native landlords, usurers, and Marwari-Gujarati-Parsi big bourgeoisie, all of who envisioned Partition in religious line and dreamt of a Hindu-majority

state, with a strong Centre enjoying ‘overriding powers’ over the provinces, as a remarkable market for their business. Thus, one should not be surprised by observing Birla – who significantly financed Gandhi’s ashram and other organizations, besides his political, social and moral campaigns – constantly putting pressure on Gandhi and Congress to agree to the Partition. He even suggested “we should consider Hindustan as a Hindu State with Hinduism as the State religion.” to Patel. By 1945 other compradors like Tata were also expressing their views in support of partition.

In Bengal, the Partition question took a complex shape, as there was a strong demand for United Bengal, which would neither join India, nor join Pakistan after

demand of langol jaar, foshol taar (crop belongs to the tiller). In towns, thousands of workers from mills and factories were organizing back-to-back strikes, keeping aside their religious differences. Undoubtedly, a United Bengal, with such a religious and class-based unity would be detrimental to the interests of the landlord-capitalist class. That is why we can find Birla happily congratulating Patel for the adoption of the Mountbatten Plan of Partition, telling him “things have turned out according to your desire... I am very happy that the Bengal partition question has also been settled by you.” A settlement that soon led to the death and displacement of millions!

The position of Muslim comprador bourgeois was no different. Let us look at Ispahani and similar Muslim businessmen, who were entrusted with the task of organizing the League in Bengal. Ispahani was a member of the League Working Committee, and a close associate of Jinnah as Birla was of Gandhi. In the veil of “self-advancement of Muslims” and “economic emancipation of Muslims” these Muslim capitalists envisioned their business interests in partitioned “moth-eaten” Pakistan, where they would not face competitions from their Marwari, Gujarati and Parsi counterparts. In August 1946, the League’s general secretary Liaquat Ali clearly expressed such feelings towards a member of Viceroy’s Council. He said, “so long as Marwaris and other Hindu capitalists had a money stranglehold anywhere in India, Muslims could never improve their lot.” Even the then Viceroy and Governor General of India, Lord Wavell wrote to Pethick-Lawrence – a British Labour politician, “The whole question of Central control over industry in India is bound up with the political problem... the Muslims in the Pakistan Provinces believe that their industrial development may be strangled by a Hindu centre.”

(contd. on page-13)



Partition. This could have avoided numerous communal riots, and thus, could have saved millions of innocent lives. Jinnah-led Muslim League was ready to accept the demand. However, the Congress high command and the landlord-capitalist class they represent were vehemently opposed to the demand. Bengal had a glorious past of revolutionary uprising against oppression. Since the 1920s a shift towards communist principles was observed there too, with concrete demands like “abolition of zamindari without compensation”, “immediate steps for the fixing of a minimum price of raw jute” etc. The Tebhaga peasant rebellion of 1946-47 in rural Bengal, under the leadership of All India Kisan Sabha – the peasant front of the undivided Communist Party of India was creating burning examples of Hindu-Muslim peasants fighting unitedly against the unjust oppressions of landlords, with the revolutionary

Awaited Independence

Sharath

Let us declare that the state of war does exist and shall exist so long as the Indian toiling masses and the natural resources are being exploited by a handful of parasites. They may be purely British Capitalist or mixed British and Indian or even purely Indian. They may be carrying on their insidious exploitation through mixed or even on purely Indian bureaucratic apparatus.

- Bhagat Singh

It has been 76 years since the British and their standing army left India however it is quite questionable whether the imperialist influence has ever stopped and whether the country has been completely autonomous.

The British who ruled India directly under its crown for over 200 years, built its own system in the already exploitative society of India. They used feudal relations such as the Zamindari system in establishing control over the country. The crony landlord class as well as the trading class constituted by the upper caste Hindus collaborated with the British and undertook the treacherous task of establishing British rule in India. Fast forward to 2023, the same treacherous classes are facilitating imperialists to control India.

The workers in the cities are slogging for more than 12 hours a day, multiple days a week. Major industrial areas in India do not see implementation of any labour laws. The contract system has become the norm where workers working on the same factory floor for decades are termed as casual workers and denied rights. Peasants in the countryside are facing relentless oppression by the landlord class. Denied basic land ownership, they are forced to be dependent on the landlords, who pay them meagre wages.

The recent World Hunger Index showed that out of 121 countries India fared 108 in the ranking. The people of India are subjected to cattle-like living without any social or economic security.

International Financial Institutions and Neocolonialism

International financial institutions like International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank are used to lend “financial assistance” to “developing nations” and in turn these institutions place conditions like changing their economic policies to favour imperialist plunder, causing the “developing countries” e.g., India to get into a vicious debt cycle and lose its sovereignty. Puppet governments in Asia, Africa and Latin America implement these imperialist policies deceiving their people. The policy shifts of Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation which destroyed public sectors and collapsed Government schools and Hospitals in India can be attributed to this phenomenon.

The Indian big bourgeoisie and the puppet governments are acting as agents of imperialists and facilitating plunder of natural resources and super profits created in India. The forests have been allowed to be encroached by corporates like Vedanta and Hindalco, evicting the indigenous people from their jal-jangal-jameen.

Ruling Parties

The two main parties in India today have been in a crony relationship with the British in the past. These parties consist of the Landlord class and are funded heavily by the corporates thus serving their interests. The Indian National Congress was a party advocating for reformism under British rule. It is the same party which imposed the Emergency to crush people's movement and in 1991 brought about the neoliberal reforms. The ideological backbone of the Bharatiya Janata Party i.e. the RSS facilitated British's divide-and-rule policy. Its leaders such as Savarkar played a pivotal role in dividing the working class of India, thus helping the British maintain its order. The contemporary BJP government can still be seen promoting communal disharmony to divide the people so that they may be deflected from real issues such as land issue and workers' rights

thus facilitating the plunder.

India is still seen following colonial laws, where sedition laws in Indian penal code, 1860 is still used to curtail voices raised against the government.

Indian State Machinery

The Indian state which represents the interests of the comprador classes has brought in various anti-people laws such as National Education Policy, Farms Laws, four modified labour codes to intensify the oppression on the people of India. These imperialist interests are imposed through iron will by the utilization of Indian state machinery. A fascist onslaught is carried out by the state where dissent is curbed. Armed forces are deployed upon the people in Kashmir, northeastern states, and central India. Any dissent to the status-quo is suppressed by invoking colonial sedition law and UAPA. Political prisoners such as CAA - NRC protestors, Bhima Koregaon case etc. are left languishing in jails for years without trial. Ranking of Freedom of press has slipped to 161 out of 180 countries. People of India are suppressed socially, politically and economically.

When such is the scenario our people are facing, every patriotic and democratic minds of the country should ask if they really are free? Is 'Poorna Swaraj' (Total Independence) already achieved or yet to? It is the existing economic structure that is the root cause of oppression in such ex-colonies and emancipation of these countries would not be possible until the puppet governments are smashed by the respective people. It is only through breaking the hands of the neo-colonialists that India can achieve its independence, the hands being the treacherous class of Indian big bourgeoisie who are facilitating foreign plunder and the landlord class who are maintaining feudal relations. A relentless struggle has to be carried forward by the toiling masses of India to break these shackles and achieve its long awaited independence.

Inquilab Zindabad!

Remembering the Glorious Telangana Peasants' Revolt : Part II

Sushant

When the Communist Party(CPI) was working together with Congress to overthrow the feudal rule of Nizam, Congress leaders were secretly making alliances with landlords. In 1946, when Sangham started seizing and redistributing the land of big landlords, Congress squads started raiding and launching attacks on the people, in support of the exploiting landlords. Congress had adopted the policy of expelling all CPI members holding office in the Andhra Mahasabha and other organisations. Congress was legalised by the Nizam in 1946. When the agitation started, and the forces of Nizam unleashed a crackdown on communists, the state Congress remain neutral. In 1947, Nehru signed the standstill agreement with Nizam, despite ongoing atrocities by Razakars, because of the fear that Indian invasion will help the communists to strengthen their position. This agreement allowed the Nizam breathing space to organise repression. The direct fight against the Razakars during the one year of the standstill agreement was taken up solely by the Communist Party of India. Indian army marched into Hyderabad on September 13, 1948. The military intervention was welcomed by the peasant communes. They believed the army was there to help them defeat the Nizam's government. The rebels handed over arms and ammunition to the army and returned to their villages with the belief that the armed conflict was over. But, Nehru Government not only permitted the hated Nizam to continue as Rajpramukh and Kasim Razvi to migrate to Pakistan, but also directed its main attack against the hard-won gains of the Telangana peasantry. The communists were described as the primary target rather than the Nizam and the Razakars. V.P. Menon (Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of the States) had briefed the American embassy about the intervention and

promised them that the communists would be eradicated in return for their support in justifying the military action to the international community. The military administration promoted feudal restoration in Telangana. The CPI was banned and the army launched a military offensive against the peasant communes. The destruction of the popular democratic peasant movement became the principal aim and the immediate task of the Indian Government and its armed forces. A huge 50,000-strong force of armed personnel of different categories was deployed to violently suppress the movement and restore the shattered landlord rule. The class that benefitted the most from the military regime was big landlords. They became allies of the police and returned to their respective villages to identify Sangham leaders and members of the Communist Party to teach them a lesson. The redistributed lands were granted back to their original owners. Army ordered indiscriminate arrests, burning down of entire villages where land redistribution had occurred and extrajudicial killings of suspects after capture.

By December 1949, as many as 6,000 peasants were killed; more than 10,000 Communist cadres and people's fighters were thrown into detention camps and sentenced to life imprisonment; some to continuous imprisonment of 40 to 50 years, out of which 108 were sentenced to death; more than 50,000 people were dragged into police and military camps from time to time to be beaten, tortured, and terrorised for weeks and months together; tribal communities were evicted from their villages and placed in large detention camps, thousands of communists were hanged along the trees leading to the villages, several lakhs of people in thousands of villages were subjected to regular police and military raids and suffered cruel lathi charges and firing, thousands of women were molested and had to undergo all sorts of humiliations and indignities; in a word, the entire region was subjected to a brutal police and military terror rule for

five years, initially by the Nizam and his Razakars, and subsequently by the combined armed forces of the Union Government and the State Government of Hyderabad. After the communists, the poor Muslims became the target of police action, the basis of which was the rule of Muslims over a predominantly Hindu population. The fact that the feudal rule of Nizam was as oppressive as the rule of any other Hindu Raja was sidelined. The conditions of the peasantry in other princely states ruled by a Hindu King were no less different. Surprisingly, ruthless individuals such as Kasim Rizvi, leader of the Razakars, big landlords, and Nizam were let off by the police. Ironically, the Sunderlal Committee, in its investigations, noted that in Latur, the hometown of Rizvi, almost 1,000 Muslims had been killed by armed forces. Communalism became rife when Hindu communal organisations Hindu Mahasabha and the Arya Samaj became active (Patel's strategy against Nizam's Hyderabad to save the Hindu Mahasabha leaders in Gandhi Assassination Case and to use them in Hyderabad). Incidents of forceful conversion and tattooing of Muslims, including women, with Hindu symbols were widely noted by the Sundarlal committee report. The Communist Party played its role during this period of communal conflagration. The reprisals against Muslims after the 'police action' were prevented in the Telangana area where the revolution was strong and Sanghams were present, whereas in many areas in the Marathwada region, where the movement was not as strong as in Telangana, reprisals occurred on a large scale.

On 25th October 1951, the CPI Central Committee officially declared the end of the rebellion. The struggle was withdrawn, without talking to the guerillas and party ranks or consolidating whatever achievements were made. The Polit Bureau, instead of realising the correctness of the line and

(contd. on page-16)

Manipur: Replay of the Tried and Tested Neoliberal Hindutva Formula

Arindam

A video of two Kuki women being paraded naked in Manipur went viral on July 19th, sparking nationwide protests. The incident occurred on May 4th, but no FIRs or actions were taken by the state government until the video went viral. Our "Hindu nationalist" PM Narendra Modi remained silent for 70 days before addressing this issue that has resulted in over 160 deaths, burnt churches, and 60,000 displaced just for a few minutes. The ethnic tension between Christian-majority Kukis-Nagas and Hindu-majority Meitei have intensified, leading to demands for separate administration in Manipur's hill and valley regions.

Addressing the media, Modi deliberately avoided to single out Manipur. The Lok Sabha was adjourned again on 25th July amid protest by opposition parties on this issue and a motion of no confidence was planned to be passed by the opposition. Amidst all these mayhem, why is Modi not asking the BJP CM Biren Singh to resign and address the issue? The answer has to be found in the politics of RSS whose electoral front BJP spearheads a Hindutva fascist rule. Fascists typically identify a particular group, often based on ethnicity, religion, race, or political beliefs, as the enemy or threat to their vision of society. Biren Singh is carrying forward the politics of communalized-majoritarianism by otherizing the minority Kuki community, following the model brought in by RSS-BJP to consolidate its rule.

One can easily draw parallels with the role of Modi in 2002 Gujarat riots and the role of Biren Singh in Manipur. Treatment of sexual violence in Manipur reminds us of Bilkis Bano. Ehsan Jafri is reminded when we learn the news of a close associate and neighbour of Biren Singh, a Kuki minister Letpao Haokip's house being burnt to ashes. In spite of Mr. Haokip's call for help to Biren Singh, no help was extended. Biren

Singh is nothing but a reflection of 2002's Modi and Assam's Himanta Biswa Sharma.

While contradictions between dominant Meitei community and tribals are longstanding, a communal colour is being given to it by the RSS-BJP double-engine sarkara which has made Meiteis their base to dominate the region. General Secretary of Kuki People's Alliance stated in an interview that Biren Singh government deliberately heckles the Kuki people in the name of forest conservation laws and poppy cultivation. He says that all the communities in Manipur have stayed peacefully for years but in the last 4-5 years BJP's Biren Singh have converted the Manipur government to a Meitei Government facilitating ethno-communal-radical organizations like Arambai Tengol and Meitei Lepun thus worsening the situation.

Meitei Lepun Chief Mr. Pramot Singh openly "worships" BJP CM Biren Singh for his anti-Kuki stand saying that he has been heavily influenced by the ABVP. He calls for "annihilation" and "wiping out" of the Kukis. This group has been at the forefront of the conflict exemplifying the injection of Hindutva venom in Manipur using longstanding ethno-national contradictions among different groups. This results in worsening of this conflict, suppressing the regional and democratic aspirations of the people.

In Manipur, the Meitei community is numerically dominant, making up to 53% of the population and holding political power, mainly in the plains of Imphal valley, which covers only 10% of the state. On the other hand, the Naga and Kuki tribes form 36% of the population but inhabit 90% of the geographical area. Despite the hills being 90%, it is mostly uninhabitable and tribal communities argue for equal land pressure. This population-power versus land-natural resource distribution imbalance forms the core of the ongoing conflict. Unemployment among Meitei youth adds to the tension who along with other democratic forces have been

opposing the AFSPA for decades.

Some Meitei leaders had sought tribal status through the court to gain access to tribal land. A judge ordered the Manipur government to consider giving them tribal status. Later, the government evicted Kuki families using an old boundary notification. These events combined to light the fuse, tensions escalated, and violence erupted on May 3rd during a Naga-Kuki demonstration against the court's judgment.

One of the prevalent arguments in widely circulated narratives is that the Kuki-Zo people are not the original inhabitants of Manipur. They are insulted as immigrants, refugees, and foreigners from Myanmar and Bangladesh. However, census records from 1901 to 2011 show only a 1.5% increase in the Kuki population over 110 years, debunking claims of massive infiltration. This narrative originated from British times when the Kukis resisted serving as porters in the first World War and faced British army attacks. After their defeat in the Anglo-Kuki war of 1917-19, the British evicted and dispersed them, justifying their actions with a myth that the Kukis were encroaching nomads.

At the root of the present conflict as well as the one going on for a long time is the question of controlling land and resources of the region. In April, an agitation occurred against attempts to displace tribals from their lands under the guise of creating a wildlife sanctuary. The government's interest in wildlife conservation is a camouflage to hand over tribal land to corporate interests, a trend seen all over the country. The implementation of the Forest Rights Act 2006 has been poor, while the Forest Conservation Rules, 2022, and proposed changes in Forest Act further exacerbated the situation, reflecting the neoliberal Hindutva agenda.

(contd. on page-10)

After Effects of NEP in Uttar Pradesh: NEP's Four Year Undergraduate Program is Graded Inequality and Exclusion

Prachi

We have seen how the forceful and mindless implementation of the Four Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) at Delhi University in 2013 turned out to be disastrous for the students. Thousands of teachers and students participated in numerous protests since the day it was unilaterally implemented. Then, AISA organised a Students' Referendum on FYUP, where out of 11,556 students 10,519 students (91.02%) voted against the FYUP. It was clear that if FYUP is allowed to stay and spread then it will completely ruin the higher education system of our country. And no country can build a secure future without securing the quality of its universities and the future of its students. But this time it comes to us in a well-packed box of horror called the National Education Policy.

The Union Education Ministry wants to start the implementation of a 4-year undergraduate course (FYUP) in all the universities of the country, especially in the central universities. NEP 2020 talks of choice based credit system with a multiple entry/exit four year undergraduate programme. On the face of it, it seems that the FYUP will provide options to students where the student can exit after studying first year or second or third with a certificate or a diploma depending on level of exit. However, in reality the "choice to exit" is a well planned strategy to force students belonging to middle and lower classes to drop out early from higher educational institutes. The 'multiple

exits' options are nothing but attempts to cover-up 'dropouts'. The fourth year is also an extra financial burden which most of us cannot bear. The FYUP enhances the existing inequality of our society as students from underprivileged sections, being burdened with useless courses, will be forced to drop-out in between with 'drop-out' degrees. In spite of having spent both time and money on an extra year, it provides no meaningful academic content and the students will have less knowledge of their core discipline than earlier students who had acquired an Honours Degree in three years.

In 2021, the University of Lucknow became the first university in Uttar Pradesh to implement FYUP. AISA conducted a survey among the first year students of Lucknow University with respect to the implementation of NEP at various levels. It was found out that many classes in co-curricular and vocational courses (introduced to the LU syllabus of all courses under FYUP) aren't conducted at all. Many students said that classes of core subjects were either happening irregularly or not happening at all. The survey also found how ill-equipped LU is to handle the changes being brought in due to FYUP. The NEP requires multidisciplinary teaching and research with emphasis on the all-round development of students. But a total of 180 permanent posts are lying vacant at the institute for the past 5 years (as per Times of India, 2022). The crisis has not only increased the burden on existing teachers but has also affected the academic activities. The students are, therefore, questioning why such



unnecessary courses that have no benefit to their particular discipline are being introduced at the cost of the core papers. In Lucknow University, many students will feel the pressure from families to drop out of their education whenever there is a problematic financial situation, and it is almost unlikely that at a later stage, they will enter the field of education again.

The student from FYUP who exits after 2 years and 3 years with Diploma and Bachelor degree respectively will have an incomplete degree where s/he will only complete a certain number of courses of the entire 4 year programme. The biggest fallout will be in terms of the employability of the Diploma and Bachelor degree students because they will be considered as students who failed to complete the entire 4 year programme. FYUP aims to change the higher education model of 3+2 to 4+1 to correspond with the American and other Western forms of educational systems, opening up the Indian education system for global capital. It is high time we see beyond the rosy dreams and false claims of "employability", "flexibility" and "multidisciplinary approach" and make an honest factual assessment of the dark reality lurking behind the false claims made by the FYUP because it is the students who will suffer from these changes in the University.

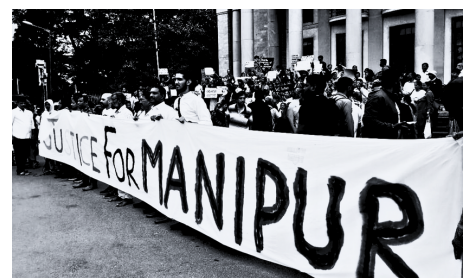
(Manipur...contd. from page 9)

Tribal land, livelihood, and identity face significant threats from ruling classes seeking to exploit the region's mineral and forest wealth. Development projects are used as a pretext to displace tribals from their ancestral lands and habitats. Democratic and progressive citizens should condemn Manipur's Biren Singh-led RSS-BJP government for its attacks

on tribals and demand his resignation.

Protecting tribal rights over their land and habitat, without any dilution, should be demanded. Mediation between community leaders should be facilitated to restore peace. Development without displacement should be demanded. The evil designs of corporate backed Hindutva rulers to divide and displace should be resisted. Further, AFSPA

should be withdrawn from the state immediately.



Bulldozer Raj Spreads Its Fangs

The Many Fangs of Bulldozers

Akash Bhattacharya (CPI-ML Liberation)

On 4 July 2023, a footage of Pravesh Shukla, a leader of the Bhartiya Janata Party, (BJP) urinating on Dashmat Rawat, an Adivasi man, in the Sidhi district of Madhya Pradesh went viral on social media. The BJP government in the state immediately stepped in to dispense ‘justice’ or rather to make a spectacle out of it. Within two days, part of Mr. Shukla’s house was bulldozed. ‘Bulldozer justice’ is hardly the exception now. The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has made a name for himself by dispensing it. He has even been christened as Bulldozer Baba!

This form of justice has usually been deployed by the BJP governments against Muslims – citizens, dissenters, or gangsters. The demolition of Shukla’s home was a clever ploy statement to accord legitimacy to the state’s bulldozers. It was a response to democratic citizens who rightly believe that this is essentially a form of majoritarian justice.

Beyond the brutality and spectacle of Hindu majoritarian violence perpetrated by the state, bulldozers are being extensively used to evict and demolish homes of the rural and urban peasants and workers. The national capital territory of Delhi has witnessed demolitions on an unprecedented scale over the last one year. The demolitions have been accompanied by police violence and have often violated the procedures of law laid down by previous governments in Delhi.

There are many reasons behind the recent escalation of demolitions in Delhi. The beautification drives due to the upcoming G20 sites, the inadequacies of the Delhi Master Plan 2041, Bhartiya Janata Party’s (BJP) vendetta politics and the Aam Aadmi Party’s (AAP) convenient silences, the lack of protection accorded by the courts, and sometimes the eager encouragement of the courts, have all

come together to displace large numbers of people without even the promise of rehabilitation. The bulldozers have not even spared kid’s footballs and milk bottles lying in the rubble.

Dispossession in Urbanizing India

Let us look at some of the recent demolitions in Delhi. In Kharak Satbari, Chhattarpur, officials of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) – a union government agency – arrived on 21 October 2022 with a full police battalion, without any prior notice, and without even carrying an official demolition order. In their hurry to demolish the homes, they even refused to let a mother take her child’s medicines out of the house with her. The child subsequently died. Many men and women were injured as the police beat the residents to submission. The courts have failed to censure the DDA for its actions.

On 1 May 2023, bulldozers arrived in Tughlakabad to demolish hundreds of homes. The demolition started at 9 am, giving people hardly any time to take out their furniture, clothes, utensils, medicines, and other essential items. Over the next three days, over 2000 homes were demolished. On 11 January 2023, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) – a union government agency, had issued eviction notices to all ‘unauthorized’ households within a radius of 100 meters of the historic Tughlakabad Fort, upon orders of the Supreme Court. The demolition happened after several months of back and forth between the ASI, the courts, and the residents. The displaced people have not been provided with rehabilitation so far and it does not look likely in the foreseeable future.

The people being dispossessed are all workers who build and sustain the city through their labour. They largely belong to Dalit Bahujan and Muslim communities. Most of the homes are

actually concrete constructions, built after a generation of work and earning in the city. Many families were on the cusp of inter-generational upward mobility when their homes were demolished. A despondent lady in Mehrauli quipped soon after her home was bulldozed: ‘they snatched our jobs and now they are snatching our homes, where will we go, what will we do?’

The situation in Delhi suggests that as urbanization increases, as land becomes more scarce and the environment becomes vulnerable, land wars begin to feature in towns small and big, in the cities and in urban peripheries, in addition to villages and forests. The continuation of pro-elite development policies means that it is the poor and working people who bear the burden of development through displacement. In areas such as Gyaspur in the Yamuna Flood Plains, the homes have been demolished to make way for amusement parks! At the same time, Hindu supremacist forces are keen to use these land wars to further exclude (socially and spatially) already marginalized Dalit and Muslim populations.

The ‘Encroacher’ Discourse

The courts and the government claim that the affected people are all encroachers. This is not quite correct because in many places the houses were built on land purchased by the residents through the power of attorney. Power of attorney of course has no legal standing as proof of ownership. Still, the purported illegalities need to be contextualized.

‘Illegal’ colonies are seldom settled without the cooperation of political parties, local landholders, the administration, and the police. Subsequently, electricity connections are provided, and government identity cards issued at these addresses. These addresses form the basis of voter lists and are deemed legitimate for election purposes. This is a kind of ‘planned illegality’. (*contd. on page-15*)

Democracy at Grassroot: A Bloody Upshot in the Rurals of West Bengal

Debjani

Panchayat Elections in West Bengal have always been an event of tremendous anticipation and an apparent reflection of a change in the political litmus of Bengal. The first clear indication of the changing political scenario of Bengal has ever been reflected through Panchayat Elections.

The mandate of the people brought about through elections at the grassroot, has seldom been free of violence and poll manipulations. For instance, in the 2018 Panchayat Elections, reportedly 34% of the gram panchayat seats went uncontested. This was thrice the seats won uncontested by the CPI(M) government i.e. 11% during the 2003 elections. The elections could be reflective of the undercurrents of democracy at the grassroot. However, people on the ground think otherwise. We spoke to certain resident voters in Nafarganj village in the Sundarbans, located at a distance of 90 km from Kolkata, to assess the issues of voters in rural Bengal.

“If panchayat elections are left untampered, BJP may win with a good margin this time,” said Gopal Biswas (name changed), a man in his 50s. We met him by the bank of the Matla River, just a few yards away from his shanty where he welcomingly invited us in. A farmer by profession, he spoke by and large about the state of agriculture, wage labour, and welfare in the village, marred with a high state of corruption in the gram panchayat and panchayat samitis in his own as well as neighbouring villages. His statement on the Panchayat Election was more of a satire rather than a desire. “The ruling party exercises bureaucratic control over the agricultural land. Last year, they took over my land, arbitrarily reaped the harvest and I was left with nothing” he said. He even obliged to answer our queries on the ownership of land in the village.

He mentioned that nobody in the village

has been given documents of ownership of the agrarian property even when the land reforms took place under the Left Front Government. Thus, with every subsequent shift in the local and state government, the bureaucratic control of the land shifts. It is redistributed to the people in the good books of the local government while the actual owners, who in most cases are Schedule Tribes and Adivasis, are evicted from their lands.



The celebration of democracy at the grassroot has always been a bloody business. Death is a common consequence. As per statistics, 76 people were killed during 2003 Panchayat Elections under the reign of the CPI(M). In the subsequent panchayat elections in 2008, 2013 and 2018, the death toll stood at 36, 39, and 29 respectively. Even as the results unfold this year, the death count has already reached 20 and fresh violence continues to erupt.

Speaking about the apparent corruption with regard to the PMAY(G), our interviewee said, “Cut money is the norm here. It ranges from Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000 for PMAY (G) application.” However, he mentioned that many in the village have not received the benefit of the scheme despite having paid the “cut money.” Funds for PMAY(G) have gone into the accounts of those in the good books of the local leaders; most of them are ineligible to receive benefits under the scheme for already having pucca houses. As the conversation progressed, we were told that MGNREGA jobs in the village are an open eye-wash. “MGNREGA job cards of a chunk of

villagers are put up on the muster rolls while the actual lake restoration work is either not done at all or is done through JCB.” He also mentioned how the direct transfers in the account of the job card holders are threateningly extracted from them. “The wage in the area for a day’s work is Rs 400; the goons of the local leaders take Rs 300 and let the individual keep the rest” he mentioned.

The resident villagers express their discontent over the corrupt policies of the panchayat samities that leads to the sale of grains at lower costs than the Minimum Support Price. The panchayat samities are empowered to buy crops directly from the farmers at the Minimum Support Price which is fixed at Rs. 2060 per quintal of paddy. However, as per the testimony of the villagers, the Panchayat Samiti at the village offers Rs. 1400 for every bag of paddy to the farmers they buy directly from, which does not exceed more than a select few. The majority of the farmers are forced to sell their produce to agrarian intermediaries who offer Rs. 800 to Rs. 900 per bag of paddy.

The panchayat samiti is accused of foul play to ensure that the chain of agrarian intermediaries remains in demand for which the local leaders receive a “cut” themselves. “We are barely able to meet the cost of production because of the systematic practice,” our man said.

The system in rural West Bengal paints a clear picture of deterministic and rigid systemic corruption and exploitation which is seemingly immune to parliamentary changes. As the results unfold in many certain and uncertain ways, we set our eyes on observing how the political litmus of the State changes and by how much.

(This article was previously published in People's Review magazine)

How Many Deaths Make Too Many?

The Institutional Harassment of Aditya Prabhu

Suryashekhar Biswas

Aditya Prabhu, a nineteen year old, took his life after being leveled with charges of cheating in an examination, by the management of PES University (Bengaluru). Much of the corporate media went around airing article after article about the boy's supposed act of cheating, and its termination with him paying for it with his life. Indeed, if one only read the news articles, this would be the narrative that they would find. Soon, we came across a testimony by Aditya's mother, where she stated that Aditya had called her in the morning to inform that he had forgotten to keep his phone in the bag, and it stayed in his pocket. Halfway through the exam, when he realized that the phone was in his pocket, he kept it away from him. The phone was in airplane mode. However, he was still detained and accused of cheating. The boy's mother states that he told her that he was being harassed by the management and that "it is better to die, than do such things." The mother's letter also mentions the various attempts made by the university administration to hide this tragic death, brushing it under the carpet. When she arrived at the premises of the institute, she was told that Aditya must be around somewhere, hanging out with his

friends. These were lies. They were well aware that the boy had ended his life. Quoting from the mother's testimony:

"On shouting a lot I was informed that he isn't alive. I asked them to take him to hospital and try to revive him. What I was told next is unbelievable... I was told that I need to recognise him first and sign a statement and then they will take him to hospital and try to revive him. Even though I was alone, they took me (2 or 3 of them holding me) to recognise my son's body. Which is absolutely inhuman when I think about it now. Once I agreed that it's Aditya, they gave me something to sign and told that as soon as I sign, they will take him to hospital. Again and again I was pressured to sign."

Indeed, as our readers may already be familiar with, this is the first point in the safety toolkit that private universities (and some public universities too) have in mind. Harass, target, humiliate, and hide - this is the motto of our educational moneybags. They have created a deeply undemocratic setting where education itself suffers and the cost is paid, it seems, with the lives of our youth. And after all the damage caused, they refuse to be questioned.

After Aditya's mother's testimony gained a lot of traction on social media, and notes of support and solidarity from

various individuals, the university administration was upset. As yet, it has sent legal notices to media houses, with the intent to stop reportage on this issue. It has ensured that the hashtag #JusticeForAdityaPrabhu is categorized as 'misleading' on instagram.

Each and every individual who values human life, must offer our note of solidarity to Aditya Prabhu, and uphold his mother's rightful demand that the university be made to accept its complicity and make amends to its procedure. However, we also need to recognise that this does not end here. Profit driven universities and their iron-law managements across the country have left no room for exercising basic freedom and dignity in the campus. Unions are attacked, intimidated and banned. Students demonstrating against these ills are marked and harassed. And when a mother asks for justice for her son, she is silenced.

If we don't challenge this atmosphere of anti-democratic ethos and suppression of student voices, and sacrificing all else before the endless strive to accumulate profits and maintain their supposed reputation, then we will only be left with smiling photographs of our youth, whose lives were not important enough for the barons of the system.

(Partition...contd. from page 6)

Following their fund-providers' interest, the communal leaders of League manipulated the mass with slogans of "Islam is in danger" and paved the way for Partition from their side.

Partition was not a demand of common Hindu and Muslim masses, who not only lived peacefully, but also waged war against the Raj together multiple times in the past. The Pakistan resolution of 1940 was not even Jinnah's brainchild. Rather, the root of two-nation theory could be found in various places that precedes 1940, starting from the Hindu nationalism of the 1860s to the words of Savarkar in the 1930s, who by then had

become the 'Veer' father of communal Hindutva' politics. It must be noted that the success of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 influenced the anti-British struggle in India to adopt a red path, with anti-feudal peasant movements and working-class movements gaining significant momentum. This shift caused the brewing of reactionary communal politics of 'divide and rule'. The emergence of this communal politics was supported and funded by the comprador capitalist class, in order to fulfill their imperialist masters' dream to establish neo-colonies in partitioned Indian subcontinent, in the changed geo-political scenario post-WWII. The

Thakurdas-Tata- Birla-authored Bombay Plan of 1944 – an outline of creating a close association between themselves and foreign capitalists, mainly British, in the name of economic development for 'India' – and its successful transformation into foreign capital influx and anti-people policies in 'sovereign' and 'republic' India, bear evidence of the above thesis. In a nutshell, partition of the Indian subcontinent was a collaborative project executed by both Hindu and Muslim comprador bourgeoisie. Their successors are still reaping the benefits of it by exploiting the working class in their respective countries using similar means.

Neoconservatism and Social Media

Swastik Roy

In postmodern cosmopolitan societies one of the most significant questions as far as human behaviour is concerned is; what it means to be “woke”. Woke-ism, much like its predecessors, is unpopular, and for obvious reasons. Yet if we look at the roots of this polarizing, often ‘scandalous’ word, we find that it has nothing to do with the way mass media has portrayed it in the last three decades. Woke-ism in its strictest sense is the quality of being accountable to and aware of the needs of the proletariat, marginalized communities, and the common mass in general who are exploited in maximalist class-based societies. For a person who belongs to any one of these categories and even regardless of that, woke-ism means standing up for yourself as much as it is about standing up for the person next to you. Wherever that fact is portrayed as unethical is a tool to weaken the conscience of an enlightened society. And those not ready to compromise on that, more often than not also have the power to suppress such agitations, thereby securing their superiority in society.

Vicious cycles like such have an inlet and an outlet. But when the aftermath and consequence of the same is discreetly covered up by puppets running the media, the outlet fails to grab the attention of the larger public. Yes, the powerful have many minions; but none perhaps as influential as the media. In this age of tech explosion, as the media expands more than ever, conservatism and class conspiracy only find newer avenues to flourish. As with other media, social media too is at the disposal of bourgeois classes and market dominant groups. Many users may feel that social media is a liberating experience; a vital part of contemporary existence as it reconciles the distance between the stakeholders i.e., common masses and the power hungry. But such arguments have no value where there is an overwhelming number of cases where no considerable mobilization of the

public has been possible through media. Capitalism flourishes where there is obstruction of thought. Thus, to sustain the features of a society which allows ready abuse and exploitation of human rights, capitalists depend on traditional institutions and preserving conventional hierarchies which rationalize mistreatment and corruption on both the part of State and individuals. Therefore, it is also reasonable to say that actions done purely on moral considerations have more to them than what meets the eye.

Let us look at a few examples. Social media mega personality Andrew Tate has acquired a tremendous following within a very brief period across various platforms: a following that venerates his much-circulated ideology and life philosophy. Tate promotes all things from heteronormativity to bitcoin under the umbrella of ‘masculinity’ and the controversies regarding him, at this point I think are common knowledge. Yet no amount of evidence or deeply problematic allegations against him can shatter the unity of his followers which though once all male have now even expanded to include females against whom a significant part of his content is targeted. Nationally and globally the Tate Effect has brought a fresh wave of orthodoxy and conformism which runs parallel to his hollow liberalism.

Closer home we have, jack of all trades, influencer turned God-knows-what, Ranveer Allahbadia better known by his YouTube name Beer biceps. Ranveer who started as a fitness influencer has since extended his horizons into politics, history and religion over which his ignorant and often naïve commentary leaves little to be desired. Moreover, his podcasts regularly feature a plethora of guests with whom he delves into all topics from paranormal theories to Islamophobia. This trend of normalization of malpractices or prejudicial ideas takes up diverse forms over media platforms. While interview clippings or tweets are quick to garner support, an individual’s ideals are converted mostly through spreading misinformation or even blatant lies. Elsewhere influencers cook up



propaganda content, at first subtle and then unhinged. The various methods employed to popularize such content are also interesting. Social media exists on the concept of approval. But when creators, seen as representatives of their communities, sanction that very systemic hate and abuse that disempowers their community, the meaning of approval is severely distorted. Whether such actions come from a place of privilege is a different issue, but today it is not uncommon to see a female creator justifying rape culture, or a queer creator affirming an LGBTQ+ stereotype or a ‘black’ creator rationalizing slavery or xenophobia.

It may seem like the provided examples have nothing to do with some of the wider topics discussed earlier in the essay but directly or indirectly they function towards a greater goal, under a greater authority. As discussed earlier it is not only the mega rich or the mega powerful who benefit from the existing state of affairs but also the class that has been given the upper hand under capitalism. Their sustainment is critical to the sustainment of their superiors and they share a codependent relationship.

That is precisely why we need to go back to being woke. We need to question everything. If the creator is a machine, the powerful are its engines. And every bit of output from this machine drills a nail through moral conscience, political ambition and the aspirations of the common people. It sucks into its vortex more and more people by implanting within their mutual goals the poison of intolerance. By spreading, justifying and encouraging hatred it shakes the foundation of a people’s movement.

A Critique of the Karnataka State Education Budget

Editorial



Spark* recognises the state government's attempts to bring changes in the current education system that is in shambles, but at the same time, also raises the importance of addressing the pressing needs of students. The inadequate allocation of funds, coupled with the absence of comprehensive measures to improve the quality of education, exacerbates existing educational inequalities. The budget fails to prioritize the welfare of teachers, neglects the needs of marginalized communities, and overlooks the urgent need for inclusive policies. It falls short in providing accessible and affordable education for all students, while the government's failure to address the drawbacks in the budget only perpetuates systemic injustices. Some highlights are as follows:

Reversal of Textbook Changes:

While the decision to reverse uninformed and arbitrary changes made to school textbooks is mentioned, the budget lacks specific details on the nature of these changes and how they will be addressed. Without clear guidelines and a transparent process, there is a risk of subjecting students to biased or inaccurate information.

Insufficient Nutrition Support:

The allocation of Rs. 280 crore for providing supplementary nutrition twice a week to 60 lakh children from class one to ten appears insufficient. It comes to 466 rupees per student which is not

sufficient at all. Proper nutrition is crucial for children's development and academic performance. The budget should have allocated more substantial funds to ensure regular and nutritious meals for all students.

Inadequate Funds for Maintenance:

While there is an enhancement in annual funds for the maintenance of primary and high schools, allocating only Rs. 45,000 per school may not be sufficient to address the maintenance needs adequately. This could lead to substandard infrastructure and negatively impact students' learning environment and safety.

Limited Focus on Quality Education:

The budget does not outline specific measures to improve the quality of education, such as teacher training programs, curriculum reforms, or pedagogical advancements. Neglecting these aspects can hinder students' intellectual growth and limit their ability to acquire essential skills for the future. The government has allotted 80 crores to improve the learning skills of 33 lakh school children who are lagging behind in studies by providing them coaching under the 'Marusinchana' scheme, which at first is not sufficient as it comes to 242 rupees per student (including the coaching for 1.5 lakh high school children). Second, it's a bad practice to promote coaching institutes instead of improving the infrastructure and education of the already existing schools. It will also lead to private coaching players to hijack the education system (whatever has remained) which

will lead to the deterioration of the already deteriorated education system.

Neglect of Educational Inequalities:

The budget does not sufficiently address the issue of educational inequalities. It fails to allocate targeted funds to bridge the learning gaps among students from marginalized communities or provide resources to schools in remote or disadvantaged areas. This lack of focus on equity undermines the principles of social justice and perpetuates educational disparities.

Inadequate Emphasis on Teacher Welfare:

The budget falls short in prioritizing the welfare of teachers. 10

crores has been allotted to train around 8000 teachers which comes to only 12500 rupees per teacher. It does not allocate sufficient funds for professional development programs, competitive salaries, or improving working conditions. Neglecting the needs and well-being of teachers can impact the quality of education and lead to demoralized educators.

Note: The money used in promoting the coaching institutes could have been used in training of the existing teachers and recruiting more of them.

Lack of Comprehensive Education Policy:

While the budget mentions the formulation of a new education policy, it does not provide substantial details regarding its content, objectives, or consultation process. Without a comprehensive policy framework, it is challenging to address the complex challenges faced by the education system.

(Bulldozer...contd. from page- 11)

Yet when the state and its agencies wish to take possession of land, they dispossess citizens at will, while courts remain mere spectators if not eager facilitators of such dispossession. The documents which fetch votes to parties are deemed inadequate to ensure adequate and dignified rehabilitation. Isn't it a form of violent disenfranchisement of India's precarious and exploited working classes? The

misleading 'encroacher' dovetails with similar phrases that were sounded to root out 'non-citizens' through the National Register of Citizens (NRC), where once again the 'document-poor' were de facto labelled as people whose citizenship is suspect.

'Unauthorized' colonies comprise 60%-70% of Delhi's residential areas. Elite farmhouses, hotels, government schools, dispensaries can all be found in such 'unauthorized' areas, but

bulldozers fall invariably on the houses of the working classes. In the midst of the government and judiciary enabled 'encroacher' discourse, some crucial questions are falling through the cracks. Why do workers live in 'unauthorized' colonies? If the state does not provide housing facilities to workers arriving in towns and cities in search of work, what options other than low-cost private housing in these colonies do they have?

UPDATES ON PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS

Protests across India against Manipur violence

The woman's wing of the Indigenous Tribal Leader's Forum in Churachandpur, Manipur slamming the ruling BJP for failing to stop violence in the state. The protesters called for the sacking of Biren Singh, Manipur's incumbent Chief Minister. 400 people also held a protest in New Delhi as well. Around a 1000 people on July 21st gathered at Town Hall in Bengaluru to express solidarity with the survivors on ethnic violence in Manipur.

Protests across India against the exploitation of forests in Jharkhand

June 30 saw widespread protests all over India at the call of the Bhumi Adhikar Andolan. The Bhumi Adhikar Andolan's appeal stressed community activism's importance in defending natural resources and forest-dependent people's rights. This solidarity demonstration intended to protect our forests and improve our future. Protesters want the Forest Conservation Act amendment bill rescinded. The platform argues that this law would harm local tribal tribes and their livelihoods. Protesters demanded rapid government action to address this urgent issue.

Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe youth protest against forgery of Caste Certificates in Raipur

A group of protesters staged a nude protest in Raipur on 18th July against cases of forgery of Caste certificates in order to avail government jobs. These protests were sparked by the government's lack of a response to a state government enquiry committee report that found over 267 government officials had used forged caste certificates.

Protests in Delhi against corruption in Flood Relief

Delhi Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on July 16 faced people's anger at flood relief camp as they raised slogans against him during his visit to a flood relief camp in Mayur Vihar in Delhi. The protesters alleged the Delhi government of corruption as heavy rains have devastated the capital's infrastructure.

People of Maldives rise against Indian military presence

Protesters have taken to the streets in Maldives in opposition to the UTF Harbour Development Deal which is a way of allowing Indian military presence on native soil. The campaign alleges that the incumbent Ibrahim Solih government is subservient to Indian interests and is allowing India's military presence in Maldives. On June 29, protests were staged across Maldives, with protests wearing masks depicting Narendra Modi along with "India Out" banners.

(Telangana...contd. from page- 8)

working out a line for Indian Revolution, denounced it outright and rejected as reformist, and decided to participate in the forthcoming elections. This step of the leadership, which was expected to take up the responsibility of helping the struggle in all its aspects, was again a stab in the back of the struggle which was already undergoing critical phases due to suppression by Nizam and Indian military forces. The party betrayed the great Telangana Armed Peasant Struggle and stepped in parliament. This strengthened right opportunism in the Party. If we see the later strategy of the Party, the leadership of the Party made a gimmick of words and started considering India as a fundamentally independent capitalist country. It praised the big, comprador capitalists as progressive and moved to the parliamentary path. However, the

revolutionary faction in the Party never accepted this right opportunist tendency and later in the leadership of Charu Majumdar CPIML was formed.

Telangana will always remain a glorious chapter in the history of peasant struggles. It was a remarkable struggle that was characterized by the radical egalitarian politics and participation of all sections of the peasantry. The violence employed by the state was met by popular resistance, which for a time, employing guerrilla war tactics and all manners of weapons, was able to carve out a political space in which a revolutionary society began to be created. It was the first serious effort by sections of the communist party leadership to learn from the experiences of the Chinese revolution and the teachings of Mao and to develop a comprehensive line for India's

democratic revolution. It was radical not only in its basic questions but also in terms of its pioneering spirit that stands as a beacon for all militant peasant movements in the sub-continent even today. Sixteen years after the official withdrawal of the Telangana armed struggle in 1951, it was Srikakulam which responded immediately to the call given by Naxalbari in 1967. Today, when the Indian government is making new policies to oppress the farmers, when the Indian peasantry has been bled by neo-liberal policies and farmers' suicide has become endemic, we must remember the lessons of the Telangana revolution. An exploitation-free new world can be created and it must be created- comrades of Telangana have taught us this.



The War That We Were Born Into

Samar Ali



(I)

We were born in times of war
My mom tells me
Bullets missing my inches
Blood on the streets
People outside army camps.

Sons leaving for school and never coming home
Fathers picked up in the middle of the night
Daughters made to take off clothes in front of mothers
Mothers held, while sons get taken away.

We were born in times of war
My mom tells me
Only a war we never wanted
A war on the outside
That eats us from the inside.

This one time, dad didn't come home for a week
For there was a curfew outside
Sirens wailed and kids cried
In the dark silent night
All we could hear were funeral cries
And surveillance drones.

(II)

I was just a kid when I witnessed my first
crackdown
It was the middle of the night
In the bloody summer of 2008
When we heard the knock on the door
They had come
I was a boy of 5
And my cousin was 8
Our mothers hid us in the attic
We prayed that they don't take us away
We prayed that they don't find us
They didn't
Ever since that day
I shiver every time there is a knock.

I spent the rest of my life,
Running from the invisible
Scared of my own shadow.

(III)

I smoked for the first time when I was 7
Not the cheap cigarettes, not the expensive one
I inhaled the smoke from tear gas
And choked and choked and choked.

I saw the first bloodshed when I was 7
The kids in my neighbourhood were protesting
A police van came and thus began the firing
Young boys with stones in hands
And freedom in their eyes
And grown men with blood in their eyes
And guns on their backs.

The boys ran away
Cheering, and in chaos.

A young girl watching from her window
Was shot
She died within moments
I was on the other side of the road
Watching from my window.

(IV)

We were born in times of war
My dad tells me
Houses torn down
Families torn apart
Bunkers set up in the middle of the city
In houses, in schools, in cinemas.

This one time
I was coming back home from school
When we were caught in crossfire
That day I looked death in the eye
That day I heard guns being for the first time
I couldn't hear anything for weeks
I couldn't eat anything for days
Without thinking of the blood, I saw on the road.

He tells me stories of his boyhood days
Being a child in downtown
Playing cricket until the army took over the
ground.

He tells me of the time when he had to spend a
week at office
For there was a curfew outside
He tells me he was more worried about home
Then himself
How there was no phone
No internet
No cars.

Just barrels of guns
We were born in times of war
Only a war we never chose
A war that chose us.

(V)

A few years down the line,
I don't know what I will tell my kids.

I was born in times of war
My parents were born in times of war
Their parents were born in times of war.

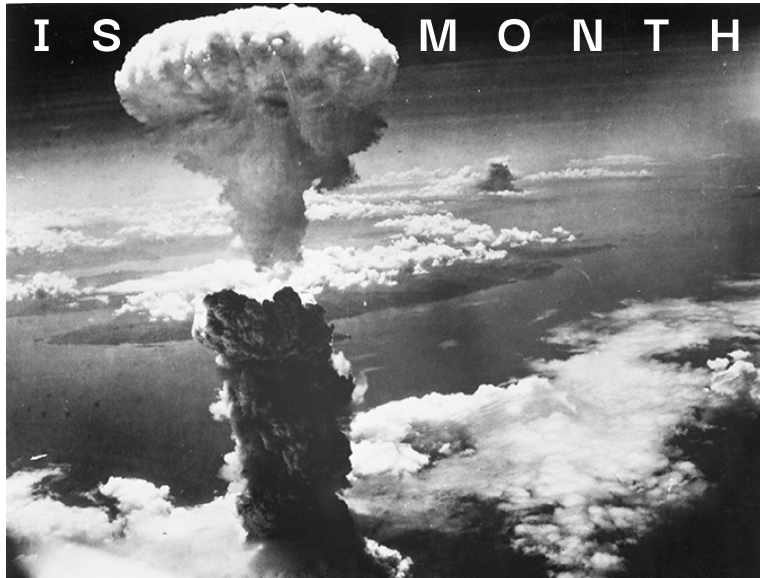
My grandmother doesn't like to talk about her
times
She's become wary of this war
A war she didn't want to be born into
A war that stole from her.

All she has to say is,
"Wayen gassan akki sate
Khatam Karin soriye."

(They should just bombard the place
Once and for all).



August 6, 1945 - At the end of World War II, the United States detonated two atomic bombs over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki leading to the death of almost a lakh of people with multiple generations reeling under health complications related to radiation. The US continues its imperialist exercises all over the world in various forms killing millions of people under the pretext of bringing 'democracy'. Hiroshima Day is observed to pay respect to the victims, promote anti-war sentiment and raise awareness on the effects of nuclear weapons.



August 5, 1895 - Friedrich Engels passes away due to throat cancer. He was a German revolutionary and Karl Marx's closest friend and collaborator. His works include 'The Origin of Family, State, and Private Property', 'Dialectics of Nature' etc. He and Marx co-wrote 'Manifesto of the Communist Party'. He was also responsible for publishing 'Das Kapital' after Marx's death.

August 11, 1908 - Khudiram Bose birth was executed in Bihar, after he was arrested for attempting to assassinate British judge Douglas Kingsford.

August 30, 1948 - Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton of the Black Panther Party was born. He founded the anti-capitalist Rainbow Coalition, a multicultural political organization to help end infighting among gangs and work together for social change. Hampton considered fascism the greatest threat, saying, "nothing is more important than stopping fascism, because fascism will stop us all."

AFSPA, the Law that Kills at Will

Here I pause -Surendranath Sharma Laimayum
At my farmstead
Still, like a post
With fear in my mind
Feet in the slush
With Oxen and plough

Here I lie
At my homestead
Frozen, like a corpse
With fright in my heart
Of what might come by
Betwixt now and morrow

Why your ears in alarm harken
At almost every innocent thud?
Tell us grandpa, your fount of angst
That we may learn to fend or flee
From the spirits of the woods
Before darkness smothers the light

O children, hear me keen
There lives a slayer not a being
Created by peoples' High Council
Short and stout but ferociously wild
Foe of mercy, AFSPA its name
It is a law that kills at will.

Like kids in morbid fear
Of ghouls and ghosts secretly
I fear the AFSPA furtively
From hell may tread their murderous boots
To beat, torture, gag or drag
Or just to ruthlessly shoot to kill!

Like a ravenous hound retained
To watch over the unsuspecting herd
Sentinel or slayer, its shade is grey
Proclaim though to be warden fair
It yet devours man and child
AFSPA, the law that kills at will!

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