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spark[★]

UPDATES ON STUDENT MOVEMENTS

Students protest at Azim Premji University

On Dec 2nd, students in APU protested against the shuttle fees imposition of Rs. 8,500 by the administration for the first year students living in hostels. The students condemn this move as this temporary hostel is located 3 kms away from the University and the way from hostel to campus is not safe. A student said that "it's not their fault that the administration opened the university for students even before the hostel is ready." When students met the Registrar, he said that the university can't bear this burden and that they would look at individual students' needs and problems. Another student said, that "it's not about the money. The administration should take care of students' security." Students are planning to continue their protest again when next semester begins. They urge all students to join.



Central University of Karnataka PhD students protest for better facilities

PhD students from Central University of Karnataka, Gulbarga are protesting against allotment of extra occupants in the rooms of PhD students. This is one of the many hostel and academic issues plaguing the students of CUK. So far the administration has paid no heed to their demands besides actively suppressing dissent from students.

Student strike at KR Narayanan Institute, Kerala

The students from the university named after the first Dalit president of India, are on an indefinite strike for the last 11 days against caste discrimination in the institute. The students have accused the director, Shankar Mohan, of vindictive action against students from Dalit communities. Several allegations of the director preventing students from completing the course have been raised. The protest reached the venue of the International Film Festival Kerala when known filmmakers extended support to the students.

Student protest in Film and Television Institute of India

Around 300 students from the FTII, Pune gathered and held placards that spoke of the need for diversity in India, attacks on minorities and various issues concerning the institute on the day IB minister Anurag Thakur arrived. The student union of the university expressed their dissent towards his calls for genocide pre-Delhi pogrom.

Student suicide in IIT Kharagpur triggers protests

In IIT Kharagpur, Faizan Ahmed, third year mechanical student, committed suicide. Ahmed's body was found in a hostel room of the institute on October 14. After massive agitation from the students, the DEan of student affairs turned in his resignation. Later on students gathered in thousands and gheraoed the Director of the university demanding his resignation over handling of the situation following Ahmed's death.



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COVER PHOTO - 13th December 2022 - Students burning PM Modi's effigy in protest against scrapping of MANF at Chandigarh University

“ 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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National Exclusion Policy: Road to Privatization

Rohit

NDA government introduced the National Education Policy two years ago, generally called NEP 2020. However, the root of NEP can be traced back to around the period of implementation of Liberalisation Privatisation and Globalisation (LPG) in India. In 1996, it was proposed by the World Trade Organisation of which India became a member in 1995 that education be brought under the ambit of GATS. Thus, binding the member countries to turn education along with 12 other services like health as a tradable commodity, thereby allowing unrestricted access to the education market by foreign and domestic capital. Since then, there has been increasing privatisation of education causing education to get costlier day-by-day. In 1998, Murli Manohar Joshi, then HRD minister from BJP, at a UNESCO conference on higher education said, "higher education benefits the individual, so individuals should pay for it." Hence, NEP 2020 should be seen as an accelerated and consolidated form of privatisation and commercialisation with saffronisation as an added component.

The steps taken by the present government clearly shows that they are on the same path. Recently, the central government scrapped the Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF) meant to provide scholarships to students coming from minority communities to pursue MPhil or Phd in Indian universities. MANF was brought as per the recommendation of Sachar committee that exposed the socioeconomic gap between minority communities and the Hindu majority. Recently, the central government also scrapped pre matric scholarships for students from SC, ST, OBC students.

Karnataka being the first state to implement NEP, there has been a recent reduction of fellowship amount from Rs 25,000 a month to Rs 10,000 a month for minority PhD students. All state and central government universities are already reeling under severe fund crunch.

Going through some of the NEP 2020's suggestions will help us understand the exact future plans of the government regarding education. For example, research funding will get worse because NEP 2020 suggests establishing a centralised body called National Research Fund (NRF) which will finance and direct research across all disciplines, like humanities, science, etc. The same document says that 'the higher education system must aim to form the hub for the next industrial revolution.' (MHRD 2019: 203). It is clear from this point that this NRF will also focus on catering to research benefitting industries, kicking aside social or basic sciences.

It encourages setting up of Higher Educational Institutions (HEI's) following a public -philanthropic -partnership model, which is a whitewashed term for private institutes. These institutions that need not follow reservation guidelines will become shops where one can buy education according to their class or few can get institutional 'mercy scholarship' on identity/class basis. This will ensure better ranking in the global market as well as prevent marginalised students from moving on economic issues as has been the trend in all government institutes like JNU, HCU, JU etc. With the introduction of centralised tests like CUET for undergraduate admissions for all central universities, inequalities will get amplified with free

loot by coaching institutes. Even for school education, hardly any stress is given on education being a fundamental right for all Indians by this policy. Vocational training as per 'local needs' is being pushed very early on. There is no mention of 'Reservation' anywhere in the document. In a nation that has not yet achieved 100% electrification, online education is being promoted extensively by the NEP 2020.

The only field where the government is investing is 'skill training programs', where young people are trained 'free of cost' for a month or two so that they can directly serve as cheap labourers. Some also encourage self-employment among youth through these programmes, but without capital, they can't start a business and if they had capital, why would they not go for higher education.

Our government has already been quite successful in privatising and commercialising the basic necessities like health, education, etc. NEP 2020 is a perfect example of how the government has officially declared that only individuals who can afford the costly education can dream of having a safe and secure career. If we do not unite and oppose this tooth and nail, in a decade or so we will find an army of workers churned out by a post-NEP system that would only serve the system without any zeal for fighting societal inequality left in them.



The Saffron Way to Exclusion - National Education Policy 2020

Aratrika

“60-70 percent of our demands have been accommodated in some form or the other.”- KG Suresh, spokesperson of Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal (BSM)

For the uninitiated, the BSM is one of the many affiliates of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh(RSS) with the motto ‘completely Bharatiya system of education rooted in Bharatiya culture at all levels’(sic). At this very moment the country is reeling under the abrupt scrapping of pre-matric scholarship for SC/ST/OBC students and Maulana Azad National Fellowship for minorities. Such clear efforts to uphold Sangh’s idea of this saffron, culturally monolithic, exclusionary ‘Bharat’ , is seen throughout the National Education Policy(NEP), 2020 document. Although all BJP-led central governments have tried to saffronize education, what sets this particular exercise apart is the codification of steps for moulding education in the ‘right’ direction. Now, it is time to decode these policies!

At the very introduction the document states, ‘The rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought has been a guiding light for this Policy.’ This ‘Indian knowledge system’ phrase recurs throughout the document without any concrete definition. It omits the rich tradition of Buddhist or Jain schools of philosophy, the materialist schools of Charvaka, Kapil, Kanad, contributions of the mediaeval Sultanate and Mughal dynasty alongside the role of the indigenous people of India in conserving nature and natural resources. It also promotes the Brahmanical ideals of ‘dharma’ and ‘karma’ that form the

ideological basis of the caste system. It upholds ‘traditional Indian values’ like ‘seva, ahimsa, swachchhata, satya,...’ which is a terrible mockery of the fact that the ‘avarnas’ or Dalits have been historically engaged solely in manual scavenging.

Another striking aspect of the document is the emphasis put on Sanskrit language while there is only passing mention of India’s other classical languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia as well as Pali, Persian and Prakrit. The document directs schools to offer Sanskrit ‘strongly’ as part of the disputed ‘three-language formula’. All higher education institutions have been directed to come up with departments devoted to promotion of ‘Sanskrit Knowledge Systems’(SKS)that include pseudoscientific practices like Ayurveda and Yoga.

The document also opens up a provision for including local ‘volunteers’ in aiding day-to-day activities of government schools. For BJP strongholds this translates to inclusion of swayamsevaks in schools. It advocates vocational training starting from as early as grade 6 like ‘carpentry, electric work, metal work, gardening, pottery making, etc., as decided by States and local communities and as mapped by local skilling needs.’ This provision in the wrong hands will facilitate ways to impose caste-based occupation very early on.

Coming to the implementation, the state of Karnataka has long been serving the Sangh Parivaar as a saffron lab. Expectedly, this became the first state to implement the National Education Policy, 2020 last year at undergraduate levels. This year the target has been school education starting with

overhaul of all government textbooks. The changes were made by a textbook revision committee constituted in September, 2021, headed by Rohith Chakrathritha- a known right-wing writer and orator.

Some of the glaring changes are given here. A lesson on Ambedkar’s early days has been deleted. Stories of Tipu Sultan, Sangolli Rayanna etc. have been replaced by examples from Vedas and Mahabharata in a social science textbook. RSS’s ‘Akhand Bharat’ map has been introduced as well. A chapter wherein VD Savarkar, the man who recruited soldiers for the British Army for its fight against the Azad Hind Fauj, is portrayed as a nationalist icon. A big change is the introduction of a speech by RSS founder Keshav Baliram Hedgewar titled “Nijavada Adarsha Purusha Yaaragabeku?” (Who should be the real role model?) translated into Kannada. Around the same time, the Karnataka Government submitted 26 position papers making several regressive and pseudoscientific inputs towards the review and re-design of the National Curriculum Framework. One of these papers suggests removal of eggs from mid-day meals as Bramhins deem it non-Sattvik!

Historically, fascists have always targeted education as their primary medium of propaganda. This Modi-led fascist regime represents a nexus of neoliberalism and Hindutva, NEP 2020 is the realisation of that very philosophy in the realm of education.

All democratic and progressive forces must make a concerted effort to resist these policies to prevent communal poison from entering the minds of newer generations.



Education for All: The Soviet Experience- Part I

Sushant

In July 2020, the Government of India introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The NEP is a tool to privatise and saffronise education as elaborated in the previous articles. It aims to make education inaccessible for the majority of the population. While this government is denying the right to education and making new rules to deprive people of higher education, let's look back at the experience in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which became the first nation in the world to offer universal education.

Eradication of illiteracy:

Before the October revolution of 1917 in Tsarist Russia around 80 percent of the population between the ages of 9 and 50 was illiterate. Especially in central Asian regions of Russia literacy was practically nil (eg., Tajiks 0.5 percent, Kirghiz 0.6 percent). Discussing this situation Lenin wrote: "there is no other country in Europe so barbarous in which the masses are robbed to such an extent of education, light, and knowledge . . . No other country in Europe has remained in this condition; Russia is the exception." He reasoned that without equality in education there could be neither genuine equality nor genuine democracy. To achieve this genuine democracy he outlined a number of aims, not only in the social, political, and economic but also in the educational fields.

The October Revolution brought opportunities for revolutionary reconstruction of education. Problems of great historical importance had to be solved, and the educational monopoly of the upper classes had to be broken. The outlook of erstwhile capitalist nations towards universal education is summed up by the Bishop of London: "It is safest for

both the Government and the religion of the country to let the lower classes remain in the state of ignorance in which nature has originally placed them". For the new nation, the construction of socialism didn't mean only the building of huge factories and grain mills. People must grow in mind and heart to build a nation. In the early years, the young Soviet Republic was beleaguered on all sides by foreign armies and a large part of its territory was occupied by the enemy, but education was the main focus of the new republic.

Lenin focused his attention on universal education immediately after the workers had seized political power. The decree "On the setting up of a State Commission for Education", published on November 22, 1917, defined the main principles underlying the structure of the educational system and its democratic management. Under the new order, research institutes, libraries, publishing houses, newspapers and periodicals, museums, picture galleries, theatres, conservatoires, the radio, etc., were all enlisted to help schools of all levels in the task of spreading knowledge. The Red Army became a vehicle for imparting education. At the third All-Russia Congress of the Soviets, on January 31, 1918, Lenin declared that all scientific and technological achievements would become the property of the people and be placed at their service. In that year Nadezhda Krupskaya became the Commissar for Adult Education. She played a leading role in the spread of education and literacy in USSR.

On December 26, 1919, the Soviet government passed the decree on the elimination of illiteracy in the 8 to 50 age group, and the great educational and cultural drive began. The Soviet

government saw the eradication of illiteracy as a priority for Soviet education since 'economically and culturally we can develop no further without dispelling the darkness of illiteracy'. "Workers faculties" were organized early in 1919 to help workers, peasants, and soldiers whose secondary education was incomplete to join higher educational establishments. 1920 saw the creation of the all-Russian Extraordinary Commission for the Eradication of Literacy, whose role was to concert the efforts of all organizations concerned with literacy; in 1923 a voluntary organization called 'Down With Illiteracy!' was formed. The result was that between 1920 and 1940 some 60 million adults were taught to read and write.

Primary-school enrolment in 1929-30 was double that of 1914-15. In the national republics (in Central Asia, Transcaucasia, etc.) there were three to four times as many primary-school pupils as before the Revolution. Between 1917 and 1928, the construction of 7,780 new primary and secondary schools was completed. Many universities were founded. In 1914, Russia's student population was 127,000 whereas, in 1968/69, 4,470,000 students attended the country's higher educational establishments. Considerable changes were made in the geographical distribution of academic institutions. On the eve of the Second World War, there were 146, including 46 in the Transcaucasian Republics, 47 in the Central Asian Republics, and 20 in Kazakhstan. Many higher education establishments were opened in Siberia. In the 1960s there was not a single Republic, territorial or regional centre without at least one of the country's 794 institutions of higher learning. The Soviet student population included

representatives of practically all the 100 different nationalities living in the USSR. In essence, post revolution Russia showed the world what feats can be achieved in a socialist system.

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Global Investors' Meet 2022 - Behind the Scenes

Arindam

A group of concerned students and youth from All India Students' Association, Karnataka, planned a peaceful demonstration outside the Global Investors' Meet (GIM), Bangalore in November to raise concerns regarding principles of sustainable development being violated by the global investors. The demands were: all emission data be made public, measures for achieving the net zero emissions target before 2050 be taken, compliance of local and international labour laws and environmental regulations by all direct and indirect contractors, and no land acquisition without local consent.

A research scholar from IISc named Shairik involved in organizing the demonstration was picked up by the Bangalore police from his lab to prevent it. His phone was seized, recently dialled numbers were tracked and his comrades were hunted down for detention. The police managed to pick me up as I was near the station at that time. Since a student was picked up from such a prestigious institute in broad daylight, it created a lot of commotion within the students in the campus leading to pressure being created on the police for our release. We were detained for almost nine hours merely for exercising our right to protest. This ordeal makes one wonder what scared the state so much!

GIM had the theme "Build for the World" this time. The objective of the event was to attract investments from foreign and domestic corporations. By the end of this 3 day event, MoUs worth Rs 9.82 lakh crore were signed. The Karnataka government, over the past year, has held international roadshows in Japan, South Korea, the US and Europe to attract foreign investments. As a result, corporations like Microsoft, Toyota, Thyssenkrupp, Lockheed-Martin etc. joined the meet. Each of these giants are involved in massive ecological damage directly or indirectly. A glance of it is given at the end.

Although we could not pull off the demonstration we planned, what we achieved is a strong realization of what Lenin said around 100 years back. "The state is a machine for the oppression of one class by another, a machine for holding in obedience to one class, other subordinated classes." The state power whose "chief instruments" as Lenin said are "a standing army and police" is a machine in the hand of these big corporations to suppress any kind of dissent against them, to create a "peaceful" environment suitable for investment.

Starting from Karnataka in June, 2000 by the then Congress government, GIM was floated in various states by the World Economic Forum, Davos – a conclave

composed of top businesses, politicians and bureaucrats from the major countries of the world. This was one of the efforts of Imperialism in general and Globalization in particular to exercise direct influence on the state governments. "Globalization" or "Neo-liberalism" introduced by Manmohan Singh's economic reforms of 1991 as per World Bank-IMF diktat came as a crisis management programme to retrieve the imperialists from recurrent recessions hitting them, specially the US depression of 1982. Since then, along with the aggressive push of the neo-liberal agenda, rise of Hindutva ideology is also seen which has blown out of proportion now with RSS-BJP in power.

After decades of globalization, since 1991 about 1.5 crore farmers moved out of agriculture and 6 crore people have been physically displaced by construction of dams, mining, expressways, ports, statues, and industries with mostly poor or no rehabilitation. In 2021, on an average 15 farmers died by suicide everyday! Nearly 0.5 crore people in India were internally displaced due to climate disasters only in 2021. Two major investors of GIM 2022, Sajjan Jindal's JSW and Adani groups committed to invest Rs 1 lakh crores in Karnataka, are also party to this havoc. Recently, in the year 2022, JSW was met with opposition from the people of

Dhinkia, Orissa against displacing them from their land and livelihood for the proposed steel plant. For similar reasons, protests against Adani's Vizhinjam port have rocked coastal Kerala. The Indian State with one of its chief instruments, police are suppressing these stirrs with iron hand.

But are these displacements generating enough jobs? The answer is NO. Even after around three decades of globalization, the unemployment rate was the highest in 45 years. In Karnataka unemployment rate was at its peak of 7.86% in the month of October '22 despite the festive season. In the 2021 Global Hunger Index, India ranks 101st out of the 116 countries, while even

Bangladesh is much ahead at 75. Women account for 60 percent of India's hungry population. A 2020 study from the World Economic Forum estimated that 22 crore people in India sustained on an expenditure level of less than Rs 32 per day. While crores of people are losing their source of livelihood, the billionaire club of just 215 families controls the bulk of the wealth of our country in association with foreign corporates and the collusion of top politicians and bureaucrats. Between 2018 -19, in just that single year, the share of ownership of the country's assets by the top 1% population grew from 58% to 73%. Gautam Adani is the richest person in India and fourth richest in the world ahead of

even Bill gates.

Globalization which had promised jobs and prosperity has only given joblessness, displacement, hunger and precarity to the people of our country. Inequality is starkly rising. What is the reason behind it? To understand this, we need to understand "Globalisation" and its socio-economic and political structure. Does Bommai's "globalized" slogan of GIM - "Build for the World" indicate our capability and strength or is it a desperate call to foreign capital to come and exploit our natural resources and cheap labour to make their fortunes? We will explore all these aspects in the upcoming issues.

Adventures in "corporate social responsibility": A look at some of the biggest foreign corporations who joined the GIM 2022:

Shairik

- **Microsoft:** Bought gold from a legal company in Brazil. This legal company however relies on illegal gold miners who have collectively destroyed huge tracts of the Amazon rain forest (one estimate puts the destruction in the order of hundreds of hectares every year), burnt down Indigenous people's villages, and raped and killed women. Amazon was also a part of this destruction of the Amazon.
- **Toyota:** Pushed for the federal Environmental Protection Agency to set lower fuel efficiency as the required lower limit in the US (EPA itself has a report stating the human, economic and environmental costs are significantly higher for the lowered limit). It funded anti-EV misinformation campaigns. It manipulated Japanese lawmakers into keeping fossil fuel powered cars legal well into this century.
- **Thyssenkrupp:** Sells weapons to established human rights violators. Takes an active two-pronged approach of cracking down on its worker unions in the US, and simultaneously tries to end unions completely.
- **Lockheed-Martin:** Has a long history of releasing contaminants into the environment (especially through various explosives, sometimes during testing). Lockheed-Martin is the world's largest defence contractor, and sells weapons to at least 50 countries. Some of them are currently engaged in violating the human rights of each other.





Muthoot to Millets- My Experience With the Modern Day Messiahs

An APU student

I entered the Yeshwantpur railway station to catch my train to Orissa. Tens of people were looking at the digital board to see their train timings and platform number. But, first you have to see 2 minutes of Muthoot Finance ad to be eligible to know about trains. The ultimate level of privatization, where you have to consume something or buy something to even see the timing of the train.

We see different layers of social services being privatized as per the needs of the international market right under our noses. In education, the implementation of the policies of liberalization, privatization, and globalization has given birth to private institutions like Azim Premji University and Ashoka University. They offer courses that lure many students like me into thinking that enrolling in those will help us contribute to society. These are all run by capitalists who exploit the natural and human resources in the daytime and become 'good capitalists' at night by opening NGOs and institutes of higher education. Such institutes churn out workers for NGOs that act as bandages in areas ravaged by the same group of exploiters. After we graduate most of us join different NGOs, thinking we will bring change in society. But first we need to introspect on the role played by these NGOs. Is it actually bringing change? Or is it just optics with everything remaining the same or worse? Are they fighting against the system or just trying to bring small reforms in the system? Who are their beneficiaries? Where are they getting their funds from? Is it from the well wishers or from the exploiters themselves? I will share my experience in this regard.

In our curricular field visit, we went to an NGO that took us to several Adivasi

hamlets. There, the people who spoke more were found to be NGO members. They sat on chairs while others sat on mats. They own double the land compared to others. They farm thrice a year. They also have double the number of cattle. Their children go to better schools and get married in well-off families. So, if you don't focus on these peripheral things, you won't be able to grasp the whole picture. The small Adivasi farmers still have the same issues that they had before the NGO saviours came. But why don't they speak up? Is it because they don't have anything to say or are they intimidated by the NGO people?

Through the NGO, we met a farmer produce company (a collaborator with the NGO), who are working on the 'Millets Mission' project by the government because in today's market the demand for millets has increased. The company supposedly works for the 'benefits' of the farmers. Suraj, the CEO of the company told us that the farmers don't have the 'knowledge' of how to increase the production and how to sell it. So, the company helps them by charging them a minimal cost of 1-2 rupees per kg of millets. When enquired later about what the company does with the millets they procure, they said that it is first converted into flour (in the machines provided by the government to Farmer Produce Organization, of which Suraj is a member) and then sells it to the market at Rs.70/kg (they buy the millets at Rs.35/kg from the farmers). So much for the benefits of the farmers. When asked about the role of the state, he says "woh toh hamare maai-baap hain, funding toh wahin se aati hai" (they are like our parents, we get our funding from them).

One NGO member, almost on the verge of

tears, told us how it breaks their heart to not stand in support of the people when they protest against mining activities. They have no other choice because if they do, the government will stop funding or maybe even target them. In a lot of cases you will also see that these NGOs are getting funds from the same companies who exploit the natural resources and the locals i.e. the enemies of the people.

In the end even if you decide to work in these NGOs, just treat it as a 9 to 5 corporate job. Come out of the illusion that you will bring any change through this. If you actually want to contribute to society, organise people on class lines. Tell them who their real enemies are. They already know that these companies are exploiters. Tell them that these NGOs working as a mediator between the people and the company or state are also part of the problem. Take this as an opportunity to be one with the community, by organizing them.

REPLY IN PARLIAMENT BY GOVERNMENT
(QUESTION BY COM. K. SUBBARAYAN, CPI)

ANSWER BY FINANCE MINISTER
(SMT. NIRMALA SITHARAMAN)
ON 12-12-2022

AMOUNTS WRITTEN OFF BY BANKS
IN THE LAST 4 YEARS

Rs. 8,48,186 CRORES

	PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS	PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS	TOTAL WRITE OFF
2018-19	183,201	53,064	236,265
2019-20	175,878	58,293	234,171
2020-21	131,894	70,888	202,782
2021-22	115,537	59,431	174,968
TOTAL	6,06,510	2,41,676	8,48,186



Mental Health Crisis Needs Radical Intervention - Not Piecemeal Makeovers

Suryashekhar Biswas

(Trigger Warning: Mention of Suicide, Self-Harm)

In December 2021, the Indian Institute of Science (Bangalore) removed ceiling fans from their hostels, in response to rise in student suicides. The irony of a high-ranked science institution resorting to a vainglorious and unscientific response, to a crisis that is deep and serious, wasn't missed by anyone.

Suicides rates among students in India is at a five year high, displaying 4.5% increase in 2021, National Crime Records Bureau. Over 13,000 students committed suicide in 2021, the report states. However, this concerning rate of suicide among students, is not to be seen as separate and independent from the problems in society at large. Student communities, education, and university campuses do not exist in a vacuum, but are a central component of the social and economic system that we all exist under. When mob-lynchings of minorities is legitimized in society at large, it follows that university campuses will reflect this culture, in the form of anti-minority and casteist violence by ABVP goons. When the state sanctions and legitimizes an ideology of Islamophobia, through the speeches of ministers, whatsapp forwards, constant propaganda on television, the same bigotry is reflected in the field of education with large-scale legitimacy being provided to the exclusion of Hijabi women from education, as seen in

Karnataka. Thus, when our social, economic and political system alienates its hardworking people from their own selves, with 56 million cases of depression, 43 million of anxiety disorders, and the highest global rate of suicides which claim nearly 700 lives every day in India, it is bound to have an impact on students as well.

It is clear that removing ceiling fans by IISc authorities is hardly intended to be a solution. It serves the air of denialism that has harmed our understanding of mental illnesses and neurodivergence. That being said, what then are some approaches that can be of help to us? Let us begin by examining the various available options presented before us, as possible solutions to the rising mental health distress among working people and students.

Individualist Responses

In the context of neoliberal capitalism, mainstream responses to mental health problems come from an individualist standpoint. This dominant narrative, which also encompasses the psychiatric industry, holds the propensity to explain away problems that are rooted in social, economic and political factors, by holding an individual responsible for their own distress. Therefore, the solutions they provide are also oriented towards individual self improvement (hoards of how-to-be-a-billionaire self-help books

crowding the market), consumerism (the key to better mental health is purported to lie in buying a host of products that the majority cannot afford), or life-stylism (changes in lifestyle, some expensive coffee, meditation and a morning walk, are said to solve all problems, even though the advertised lifestyle is realistically unattainable for the majority of working people and students.) Self-help gurus have emerged as an industry to sell this brand of mindfulness. This dominant ideology is incapable of understanding the real problem and addressing its root cause. It makes us believe that we ourselves are the cause of our suffering. It presents the real cause as the solution.

Psychiatry as Industry and State Apparatus

To understand the prevalence of mental illness in our society, we must be able to appreciate its social and economic basis. Theory of alienation is a helpful tool for the same. In a capitalist system, where profit-motive is the driving force, the working people are required to sell their ability to labour, to be able to afford to stay alive. The amount of time they spend at work, they spend it doing work and labour whose fruits will be appropriated by the employers, and reinvested according to business requirements of the owners of capital, to build a world of commodities that stand in stark opposition to the workers

who built them. In this process, the worker is alienated from the fruits of their labour.

Subsequently, they are alienated from the time they spend doing the labour. This is a phenomenon that should be fairly relatable to any student who has interned at any organization, mainly for stipend (if any) and certification of experience. And because the majority of people spend the majority of their time doing things majorly for their employers, they are also alienated from themselves. Perhaps your standard email from your manager, micro-managing every nitty gritty of your work, should remind you of how estranged you are. You do not see yourself in the product you create. There are more complexities in this process, but the core of it remains fairly standard. Much of workplace frustration boils down to this.

Many of our reactions that are pathologized and held in medicalized light, are really very normal human reactions to an inhuman and exploitative system. The system and its organizers know this. The psychiatric industry serves to obscure this fact. Therapy under capitalism is mainly intended to ensure that working people can tweak away their frustrations, and go back happy to work every morning (aka, social reproduction.) The goal in psychiatry under capitalism is remission (i.e., no longer having any of the symptoms of a disorder, mentioned in the DSM.) However, we should go well beyond just addressing symptoms. We should address the roots of our discontent.

That is not to say that one shouldn't pursue therapy, or take prescribed medications. However, the problem is deeper than that, and our solutions must go way beyond that. Albeit much more scientific and helpful than removing ceiling fans to reduce suicides, these solutions still fight merely against metaphorical ceiling fans.

Zola Carr writes, "The emergence of US psychiatry harboured an essential anti-politics: the evacuation of any political struggle over the question of the social good and, in its place, the reframing of all mental distress as medical. This medicalization strategy directly resulted from the danger of radical demands for economic equality amid the excesses of the Gilded Age. Desperate to camouflage the real causes of widespread social despair, elites turned to the promise of psychiatry to

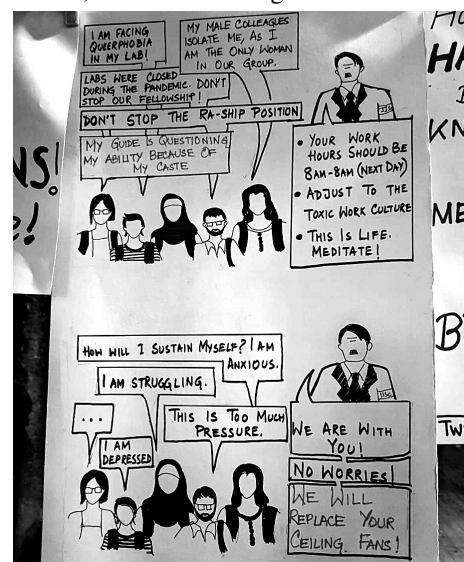
disseminate a supposedly apolitical scientific expertise."

Where do we go from here?

We need to raise the demand for better state aid to mental healthcare, better trauma-informed and affordable therapy (that is affirmative of caste, gender, and other forms of oppression), and fight for it. We need to simultaneously fight for a world that cares for the mental well-being of people, as opposed to the bloating funds of billionaires. We have to build networks of solidarity, and community support for people around us, who also require community just like us, but are fragmented from us through the false walls of rugged individualism. We have to go against the logic of individualism, and the profit driven logic of capitalism.

Let us come together, stand up for each

other, and aid each other's distress. Let us come together to build a world where resources are distributed through the dictum - from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs.





30 Years of Babri Demolition: Democracy on Deathbed

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“In the early 90s, two locks were opened: one of the Babri Masjid and the other of the market [economic liberalization]. When they opened those two locks, they unleashed two kinds of fundamentalism—religious and economic.” - Arundhati Roy

Thirty years have passed since the demolition of the Babri Masjid, and three years from the controversial judgement that allowed the Sangh to build a Ram Mandir on the debris of Babri Masjid. Surprisingly, the Supreme Court expected the judgement to bring peace and communal harmony to the country, despite its clear bias and fatal flaws. However, as expected, there is constant effort from right-wing forces to transform the three-decade-old clarion call “Kashi, Mathura Baaki Hain”, into reality! Thus, it is clear that this judgement boosted the confidence of these hooligans. Hence, one has to scrutinize the past that led to the present situation.

According to one addendum, produced with the judgement, the decision of considering the disputed land of Babri Masjid as Ram-janmabhoomi, and thus, allowing the construction of a Ram temple there, was based on “the faith and belief” [1] of Hindu devotees. This not only resembled the narrative of the architects of the Babri demolition, but also set an unprecedented and baffling example of championing faith over facts. Thirty years back, the then leaders of the Ram-Mandir movement from RSS-BJP, including Vajpayee and Advani, themselves admitted several times that it was impossible to exactly spot Ramjanmabhoomi. It was a purely political stance to “influence the electoral verdict in favour of the BJP”. On June 18, 1991, Advani even made a pitiful confession: “Had I not played the Ram factor effectively, I would have definitely lost from the New Delhi constituency.” [2].

However, it is confounding that the apex court failed to realize not only these hateful intentions, but also the consequences of such a judgement.

For all intents and purposes, the whole narrative of the Babri Masjid being built atop a pre-existing Ram temple is a British construct. After the first war of independence of 1857, the British cleverly used the mandir-masjid controversy and annexed the propaganda of temple destruction by Mughal ruler Babur to crack Hindu-Muslim unity despite no evidence backing this claim. Babri Masjid was built in 1528, but in ‘Baburnama’ there is no mention of a Ram temple underneath. Looking further back, there are no references to Ayodhya being the birthplace of Rama in Hiuen Tsang(7th century) or Al-Biruni’s(11th century) accounts. Even in Tulsidas’s ‘Ramcharitmanas’ written a few decades after the construction of the Babri Masjid, there is no mention of a Ram Mandir being destroyed for a Masjid. Even the ‘Skanda-Purana’, proclaimed as the ‘documentary evidence’ in this case, refers to the city of Ayodhya as the birthplace of Lord Rama, but there is no mention of the Mandir-Masjid trope [3].

No archaeological evidence of temple destruction was found in numerous excavations in Ayodhya, since the 1970s, including a few politically motivated attempts. Due to excess political pressure on Archaeological Survey of India, the renowned Indian archaeologist Shereen Ratnagar commented, “The circumstances and content of the argument for a temple and the political context in which they have developed leave no doubt that archaeology has been co-opted by some Indians to push sectarian agendas.” [4]. The 2019 Babri verdict showed how the most important pillar of the ‘largest democracy’ was forced

to bow down before the Hindu chauvinists.

Both the hideous act of Masjid demolition and this compromised judgement must be condemned unequivocally. However, one must also understand the larger, seemingly invisible power at play that controls this chain of events. The economic crisis of 1990, the involvement of IMF, then the so-called ‘economic reforms’ of 1991, and the opening up of the Indian market for foreign investments as per demands of world monopoly capital, should not be seen as isolated events. The coincidence with the polarisation of Indian mass through Babri demolition, is no accident. Erstwhile ruling Congress first manufactured the context through the controversial Shah-Bano judgement. During the demolition, they were mere spectators, keeping all state machinery indolent. It was not just a win for leaders of Hindutva or Hindu vote-bank politics, rather the big, global players and their Indian collaborators won the battle by breaking the unity of the working class ‘in the name of God’. Today the working class is sunk further in neoliberal onslaughts, with the ruling class still trying its best to divert focus through hijab-halal debates. To win this battle, we need to expose the ploy used by this pro-corporate and anti-people system, which is constantly nurtured by the nexus between imperialism and religious fundamentalism.

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UPDATES ON PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS

Local fishermen protest against Transshipment port of Adani at Kerala's Vizhinjam

Former Kerala Chief Minister Oomen Chandy had laid the foundation stone for this transshipment sea port of Adani Group at Vizhinjam in 2015. Transshipment ports mainly facilitate global trade and do not create many jobs. Yet, in this project of ₹7,525 crore, Adani Group would invest only ₹2,454 crore and the rest would come from public funds. The local fishermen whose lives and livelihoods are being severely affected by the port have been protesting against this project with demands of rehabilitation, impact survey report, government aids to fishermen, and effective steps to mitigate coastal erosion. FIRs were slapped against almost 3000 protesters after there was a clash with policemen in which almost 36 cops were injured. While the left front govt in Kerala as well as opposition parties like Congress and BJP have advocated for Adani's sea port, the local fishermen have created a spectacle of people's resistance. The left front govt also told the Kerala high court that it had no objections to deployment of central forces to dismantle the protests.



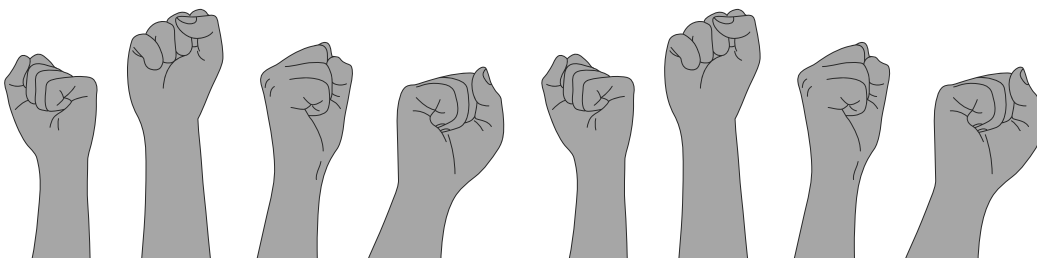
365 days of ITI workers' movement in Bengaluru

Workers of the Indian Telecommunication Industries Ltd. (ITI) have been on a sit-in protest outside the factory premises in Bangalore, since 1st December, 2021. They have been protesting against their arbitrary termination from work following the formation of a union and demanding their basic rights such as equal and dignified treatment of workers, payment of dues and fair wages.

This December 1st, they held a demonstration to mark the 365th day of this struggle. From teaching jobs to army recruitment, as we witness each and every kind of profession to be contractualized, we witness this amazing spectacle of extreme resilience against this process. Contractualization leads to massive job insecurities and incapacitates the working people to raise their concerns and demands or form unions. In their refusal to accept such invisibilization, they are having to endure tremendous economic hardships and a completely apathetic ITI management. But their inspirational struggle continues and sets an example for all of us.

Huge congregation of all Dalit Sangharsha Samiti groups in Bangalore

On 6th December "Dalit Cultural Resistance – Massive Unity Convention of DSSs" was organised by the 'Aikya Horata Chalana Committee of Dalit Sangharsha Samithis' (United Struggle Convening Committee of Dalit Sangharsha Samitis) at National College grounds, Bangalore. Over 40 thousand dalits who had come from all corners of Karnataka sounded off a war cry against the BJP governments' anti-dalit policies in this massive unity convention. The program was inaugurated by Ms. Rama Ambedkar Teltumbde, the grand-daughter of the Architect of the Indian Constitution Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. An 11-point resolution was taken against government policies including new labour codes, farm laws, and NEP 2020.



Release of political prisoners

Today we witness brutal state repression against any kind of dissent. And in regards to political prisoners, we see its most naked form. Activists striving for adivasi and dalit rights, for workers rights, are charged with draconian UAPA which leads to long undertrial imprisonment of people without any conviction. Given the ridiculous nature of the charges pressed, victims eventually get released unless they die in jail during these torturous years. Professor G N Sai Baba and five others were acquitted of all charges by the Bombay High court on 14 October, 2022 after 5 years of imprisonment. The judgement pronounced in many words the dire lack of evidence and failure to follow due process. Within 24 hours of this judgement, the Supreme Court stayed their release without any evidence being produced. Their miserable imprisonment and terrible medical negligence continues. One of the accused, Pandu Narote, died during the imprisonment leading up to the acquittal. On



Bhima-Koregaon diwas (January 1) in 2018, saffron goons unleashed anti-Dalit violence in Koregaon of Pune. In its aftermath Pune police lodged the Bhima Koregaon case, which has been basically a witch hunt against all those who stood up for adivasi rights, new evidence shows that police had hacked into devices of the accused to plant "evidence" with which they substantiated pressing UAPA charges. One such accused was Fr. Stan Swamy, a priest working with Adivasis in Jharkhand, who was imprisoned and then subjected to torture and medical negligence till he died. Another accused is scholar and activist Dr Anand Teltumbde who recently got bail after two years of wrongful imprisonment. The high court order granting him bail observed that there was absolutely no evidence substantiating the UAPA charges. Similarly another accused human rights activist Sudha Bhardwaj got bail after 3 years of wrongful imprisonment. However, many others like human rights activist Rona Wilson, Professor Shoma Sen, human rights lawyer Surendra Gadling, veteran dalit rights activist Sudhir Dhawale, adivasi rights activist Mahesh Raut continue to face torturous imprisonment without any conviction.

Protests against inflation across Europe

In Romania, protesters voice their dismay over the rising cost of living. People across France took to streets to demand pay increases keeping with inflation. Czech demonstrators rallied against government handling of energy crisis. British railway staff and German pilots held strikes to push for better pay. Across Europe, soaring inflation is behind a wave of protests and strikes that underscores growing discontent with the spiralling cost of living and threatens to unleash political turmoil. Energy prices have driven inflation in the 19 countries that use the euro currency to a record 9.9%, making it harder for people to buy what they need. Some see little choice but to hit the streets. All this comes in the aftermath of Russia's war on Ukraine as European countries are heading into massive inflation and energy crisis in trying to keep up their sanctions against Russia and funding more and more weapons aid to Ukraine.

- A protest was organized by activists from various organizations at MG road in Bangalore on 4th December to protest the death of Udaya Kiran- a Dalit youth from Kolar who died by suicide upon being heckled by an upper caste mob from his village. A call to annihilate caste was given out at the protest.
- On November 26, millions of farmers marched and rallied in state capitals of India at the "RAJ BHAWAN CHALO" call given by the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha. The protest marks the beginning of the next phase of the farmers' protest till all the demands including "Karz Mukti - Poora Daam".
- On December 2, over 1000 protesters, including women from Dhinkia, Niyamgiri, Khandualamali and other areas of protests in defence of Jal Jangal Jameen, gathered in Bhubaneswar protesting against a investors summit.
- Iranian footballer Amir Reza Nasr Azadani has been sentenced to death after he was arrested last month for joining nationwide Jin Jiyan Azadi movement. Earlier Iranian footballers had refused to sing the national anthem in WC as an expression of solidarity to the movement.

UPDATES ON STUDENT MOVEMENTS

(continued from page 2)

Students protest at Allahabad university

Students at Allahabad university have been protesting for more than 4 months now against the 400% fee hike in their college. Students have formed a joint struggle committee where they are also raising concerns against the illegal appointment of the VC and the elections that are pending from the year 2019. During this protest, on 19th Dec, 2022 suddenly the university administration tried to attack students with the help of security guards and when students resisted they even called the police. Police also acted mercilessly and they entered the university campus and lathi charged the protesting students.

Demand for Student Union Elections, Calcutta Medical College

Student union elections are central for the functioning of an institution as it protects and ensures that the rights of the students aren't violated by the institution. It is also a threat to their power as the student union holds the authorities accountable and demands the duties be fulfilled. Students in the Calcutta Medical College have staged a hunger strike for a week now demanding student union elections. Various doctor organizations have pledged support to the agitating students and promised to hold conventions on the hospital premises.



Ongoing violence of ABVP on student bodies

On the wrong side of the history of student politics, will remain the Sangh's youth terror organization, the ABVP. Violent mob tactics, suppression of dissent against the regime, harassment of left student organisations is all part of the politics of ABVP. During a protest demanding the release of ex DU professor G N Saibaba, Around five students of Delhi University were seriously injured after they were attacked by over 50 ABVP members. The students further alleged that the ABVP members gheraoed the hospital and threatened to beat up

the injured students again. This sort of extreme violence inflicted upon student movements by the fascist state of India not only exposes the state, but also reaffirms the need for students to engage in movements in greater numbers.

Nationwide student's agitation against government's decision on MANF

The Union Minister of Minority Affairs, Smriti Irani on December 8, in Lok Sabha announced the state's decision to discontinue the Maulana Azad National Fellowship, a fellowship exclusively for minority students from economically weaker classes. Recognizing that this move would make higher education inaccessible to underprivileged students from minority communities, All India Students Association, called for a nationwide protest, resisting the regime's attempt to privatise education in India.



Academic workers and staffs protest in the US

On 14 November, the University of California, academic workers launched a strike at 10 University of California campuses, demanding higher wages. 48,000 students and staff have joined this movement and refused to back down amid arrest threats.

O N T H I S M O N T H



January 1, 1959 – Cuban revolution was completed after intense guerilla warfare under the leadership of Comandante Che Guevara and Fidel Castro who drove out US-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista.

January 5, 1919 – German Communists in Berlin led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht attempted to take over the government by seizing a number of buildings. However, ten days later, they were both assassinated by German soldiers.

January 21, 1924 – The great proletarian leader Vladimir Lenin died of a brain haemorrhage. He led the Bolsheviks to victory over the Czar in the October Revolution of 1917 establishing the world's first socialist government.

January 30, 1968 – Beginning of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam as North Vietnamese troops attacked 36 provincial capitals and 5 major cities in South Vietnam, including an attack on the U.S. Embassy in Saigon and the presidential palace.

January 31, 1943 – German troops surrendered at Stalingrad, marking the first big defeat of Hitler's armies in World War II.

