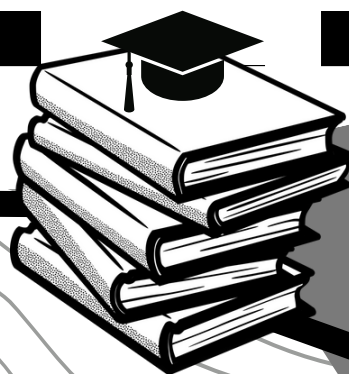


JULY 2023 | ISSUE 7

SUGGESTED CONTRIBUTION : RS 10



NO TO DIGITAL DIVIDE



Spark[★]

UPDATES ON STUDENT MOVEMENTS



Students of Kotturu take to the streets demanding pre-degree colleges with facilities

Hundreds of PUC students and sympathetic faculty from Kottur taluk of Vijayanagar district took out a march from their school to the Tehsildar's office and staged a sit-in protest led by the All India Students Association. The students submitted an official petition to the Chief Minister through Tehsildar demanding a government pre-degree college, which offers BA and BCom courses with adequate facilities including a library, computer lab, toilet, drinking water and canteen. The students also demanded better wages and working conditions for their teachers from the management.

Hyderabad students protest against Islamophobic dress code

The security staff of KV Ranga Reddy Degree College in Hyderabad denied entry of Burqa clad students during examination despite no such restrictions in the state of Telangana. The students state they were forced to remove burqa in front of male personnel which they staunchly resisted.

Border district in Rajasthan sees shortage of higher schools; students protest

Girl students in the border district of Jaisalmer in Rajasthan protested demanding the opening of senior schools in their vicinity. In a memorandum submitted to the district collector, The students state that there is a shortage of higher schools for girls in the district and thus the dropout rate is high.

FTII students protest against screening of Kerala Story in their campus

The students also chanted slogans and showcased banners saying FTII rejects RSS propaganda, and that the institute is not the place to spit out community venom. More than 200 police personnel flooded the campus to 'control' the protest.



Tribal Students protest seeking teachers in Bargur Hills

Condemning the Tamil Nadu Government's delay in sanctioning teachers for 10 subjects, the students of Government Tribal Residential Higher Secondary School protested near the Bargur bus stop. The tribal school has a disproportionate students to teacher ratio with 380 students in between classes of 6 to 12, and only one teacher each for Tamil and English.

Students of Amal Jyothi College protest against the management for alleged abetment of a student's suicide

The students of the Amal Jyothi College of Engineering in Kerala went on the warpath against the management over the suicide of a 20-year-old Shraddha, a student of the institute. The protests also brought to light the harassment faced by students in the institution, ranging from moral policing, slut-shaming and videographing of female students in the college without their consent in the name of ensuring discipline.

Sri Lankan students demand release of anti- government protestors

Sri Lankan students marched in the streets of Colombo demanding immediate release of students and activists who were arrested during anti-government protests last year. The students stated that the arrest of dozens of students and activists for participation in democratic movement amounts to political persecution. The students dared tear gas and water cannon as they marched forward raising their demands.

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The walls of the educational system must come down. Education should not be a privilege, so the children of those who have money can study.

- CHE GUEVARA

“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.”

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

spark_karnataka@protonmail.com

Unveiling the Dark Side of Virtual

COVER

Learning: Exploitation and Fraud in India's EdTech Boom

Shri Lakshmi

"The recent rise in epidemics and pandemics necessitates that we are ready with alternative modes of quality education whenever and wherever traditional and in-person modes of education are not possible. In this regard, the National Education Policy 2020 recognizes the importance of leveraging the advantages of technology while acknowledging its potential risks and dangers."- National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020)

The Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically changed – and disrupted – education as we know it. In an attempt to curb the spread of the virus, governments across the world temporarily closed schools, colleges, and university campuses, affecting more than 60% of the student population globally. In the wake of the pandemic, the Indian government introduced the NEP, 2020 with the vision to privatise and saffronise the country's education system. One of the many tools in achieving that end is the shift to digital education as outlined in the NEP. The above quote is one of the many present in the document that emphasises on digital education. COVID-19 of course brought about the perfect opportunity to implement this insidious scheme destroying an education system that was already reeling under the onslaught of neoliberal reforms.

Since the pandemic, there has been a tremendous shift to virtual modes of learning with over 260 million students from India attending online classes everyday. Despite the numerous discussions and deliberations on the obvious ramifications of this gradual shift such as the hampered quality of education, social and emotional development, isolation of students, etc, there has been little to no conversation on the deeper, structural issue. While the

Ministry of Education vaunts their aim of revolutionising and digitising education, according to OXFAM reports about 60% of Indian students don't have access to smartphones, let alone an active internet connection. Only 8% of rural students have computers, mobile phones, and other devices. And even where everything is available, teachers often lack the technological training to conduct online classes effectively. While on one end of the spectrum economically disadvantaged students contend with overcrowded living conditions, lack of basic facilities, limited to no access to internet, grappling for their right to education, the uber wealthy/middle class households have a different battle.

According to a report by BARC India and Nielsen, there has been a 30% increase in the time spent on educational apps on smartphones. New and coming of age "Edtech" companies, like Byju's, Unacademy, Aakash, Toppr, Vedantu etc., have become forerunners of virtual learning in India, worth billions. These companies not only violate a plethora of requirements, like vetted curriculum, adequate wages for the staff, and other UGC guidelines, but some of these companies are also estimated to be worth more than the entire educational budget of India.

The online courses offered by these companies are not remotely vetted by any appointed body, nor are their products verified. The enormous success of these companies is a result of over-exploitation of the employees as well as an extremely toxic work culture. This includes long working hours and abusive authorities as per allegations by many ex-employees. This sudden growth of such platforms can also be attributed to their predatory modus operandi and collusion with the concerned authorities. Through unethical and toxic sales tactics, customised based on the socio-economic status of different families,

these companies prey upon aspirational parents' insecurities about their children being unsuccessful, and manipulate them

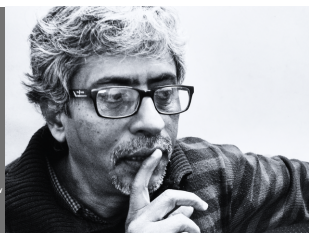
into taking up loans that leave them in debt even before their children graduate highschool. These companies have also conveniently formed partnerships with various loan sharks that facilitate the selling of their products to vulnerable parents. The sudden growth has also been followed by a slump now as employees in the order of thousands are laid off by Byju's.

Most recently, a Bengaluru-based edtech company called GeekLurn, offering Data Science courses has defrauded thousands of students by raising educational loans in their names and misappropriating the sanctioned funds. According to the impacted students, under the agreement between the student and GeekLurn, the company was supposed to pay the instalments of the loan till the student got placed and was supposed to deposit the EMI of the loan in the student's account as a 'scholarship'. While the student claimed that GeekLurn made timely deposits initially, the company stopped the payments altogether two months later, leaving them with a loan from non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) like Aditya Birla Finance, LiquiLoans, Propelled etc. A similar modus operandi was found to be employed by another Bangalore-based agency called 'CareerLabs'. Encouragingly, the students in both cases have united to bring to book the fraudulent companies rather than staying mum.

Such fraudulent online institutes, due to lack of monitoring by authorities, will keep exploiting families of vulnerable students as long as strict action isn't taken. And that would mean rejecting the divisive and ineffective NEP 2020, And demanding transparency and accountability from the government as well as comprehensive reforms to ensure a secure learning environment for all.

"The essence of Naxalbari was the assertion of the subaltern class, and the ultimate call to grab the state power."

The following is an excerpt from an interview of Com. Abhijit Mazumdar, a CC member of CPIML Liberation. Being Com. Charu's son, he observed the Naxalbari uprising from close quarters.



Q: In one of your interviews you referred to the current trope of ‘gun wielding, pen wielding naxals’, ‘urban naxals’ etc. peddled by the State. In this context what do you feel is the relevance of Charu Majumdar and Naxalbari in today's left movement?

A: When we begin with these tropes like gun-trotting Naxals and pen-wielding Naxals, when it started really, the word Naxal was not there. The word Naxal emerged from Naxalbari, that was not an accident obviously. The frontline leaders, particularly Comrade Charu Majumdar had a great experience being one of the leaders of the Tebhaga movement in one corner of Bengal. When it really began in Naxalbari, then the term naxalites was rather used by the media and also by the state. The social democrats like CPIM and others, started using this term to mark that the Naxalbari movement is not really a culmination of the Indian communist revolutionary struggle. The communist party began in 1925 – the historical trajectory, and the surer culmination of that after Tebhaga and Telangana, basically that is an advance in the revolutionary struggle. So they denied that. So, initially it was a derogatory term, to brand the communist revolutionaries, as a group of gun-trotting vagrants.

Ultimately what happened was that the Naxalbari movement could eke out a very important niche in world history. Recently, a person like Girish Karnad, having an oxygen cylinder connected to his nostrils, held a placard saying ‘I am an Urban Naxal’. Despite all the appeals of the state and mainstream media and the social democratic parties and ruling class parties of India, this coinage gained a greater currency and became a kind of template for the proud legacy of the communist revolutionary movement in India. Coming to the question of the

relevance of Naxalbari – even in the 40s and 50s, the preparations were very much there. If you look at the history of Bengal, in 1942 the Quit India movement was followed by a Bengal famine in 1943. At least 3 million people died of starvation. In 1945, there was again in Bengal one malaria epidemic. Now again in 1946, the Tebhaga movement began. In 1946, in Kolkata, Noakhali, communal riots took place. The focus on basic issues of food and crops, played a role in stopping the communal riots.

After the partition there was a refugee movement demanding rehabilitation. In 1953, the Nehru government was really under the compulsion to promulgate this Zamindari abolition act. They strived to somehow partially implement it from 1956. And from 1955 the communist party took a call to basically grab the land that exceeded the land ceiling of 25 acres – from the hands of the jotedars and zamindars. There with the experience of Tebhaga and Telangana, a segment of the communist revolutionaries were prepared to continue with this land and crop struggle...then the provincial communist party and the kisan sabha ultimately called it off, saying that the situation was not ripe. But in Darjeeling district it continued for a long time under the district leadership which included Charu Majumdar, as well as Kanu Sanyal and others.

What was the essence of the Naxalbari movement? The essence of the Naxalbari movement was the assertion of the subaltern class, and the ultimate call to grab the state power. That was our point of departure even from the previous movements, including Tebhaga and Telangana.

The state tried to somehow unleash a horrible kind of repression. In Indian history, in the 1970s, the Indian army was engaged to crush the Naxalites. This happened even with the Maoists. Despite doing that under the Indira regime and also continued in the Left Front regime in Bengal. However, they were not

successful in suppressing the movement. Whenever the younger generations try to find an answer, they see a bleak picture everywhere. No government jobs. The private sector is a hegemony of the corporations where you become a slave and not even a worker with rights. That's why, inequity and the deprivation of basic rights makes Naxalbari and its essence relevant.

Q: Can you recall briefly for us your memories of the various figures of Naxalbari, including Charu Majumdar, as well as others such as Saroj Dutta?

A: Charu Majumdar left home in June 1969. By November the party was banned. He never came back. When he died, I was only 12 years old. Even then, as father and son, we had a very memorable past together. It is very vibrant in my memory.

When we were kids, we remained within a family. We used to call them [the leaders] as uncles(kaku) and other such titles, rather than comrade. They were seen as family members or extended family members. I used to refer to Kanu Sanyal as Kanu Kaku. Souren Bose used to live in our locality – where my ancestral home was. Later I met other leaders like Saroj Dutta. I stayed with Saroj Dutta for a month in Puri. I was still young. At the time my father was sick. My mother and I went to Puri, taking lots of precautions to stay safe – changing vehicles etc. Every morning I used to have a talk with Saroj Dutta. He used to take me to the seas for a walk and he used to talk to me.

Apart from that, we used to stay at Sushital Roy Choudhuri's place in Kolkata. Also, Suniti Ghosh among other leaders. We used to live in his place also. Later we met comrades from South Bengal. There was Jangal Santhal, from our district.

Q: In context of the iconoclasm prevalent in the Naxalbari days that was an impact of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the 70s, do you think today's youth need to learn from it?

A: Those movements taught us to raise questions against anything and everything. Nothing is stable. Dialectical changes are always happening in society and in the human world as far as their materiality is concerned, nothing is stable. Important contributions like, on the one hand you see the new historiography- the subaltern historiography emerged under the direct impact of Naxalbari. Ranajit Guha, who just died a few months back, started his writing on the Elemental Aspects of Peasants in India, which came out in the 1980s, when the state thought that the movement was crushed.

As far as the global communist movement is concerned, so many philosophers who are branded as postmodern, were part of the communist parties. Today we use this phrase 'reclaim the republic', in the context of reclaiming it from the fascists. At that time too, there was a movement to reclaim the republic. The workers and peasants who created the wealth were to reclaim the republic from the elite classes, and run the show on their own.

At the root of this, there were lots of possibilities of change. Change is the template of history, you can't really deny it.

Q: What was the political mood among the students and youth at the time of Naxalbari and afterwards? Can you outline the attitude among youth regarding Naxalbari and the challenge it posed towards old and conservative values in the society?

A: An important thing we understood later on was that it [the student radicalism] was not specific only to Naxalbari. When you look at the end of the 60s – the swinging sixties in historical terms, when so many new movements began. In 1967 Naxalbari happened and inspired the youth, particularly the college students and

university students. All premiere world universities, including Oxford, Cambridge, Berkley, everywhere the student movements were in full swing. Philosophers like Jean Paul Sartre came to the streets in support of the student movements. Large number of hippies, as we used to call them, were playing the guitar and singing. We sometimes looked down upon them, but ultimately they also were an anti-establishment thing. Struggles for the freedom of sexualities also emerged in the 1960s.

After Naxalbari, the students could relate it to the basic ideas. Ideas were often coming from the West through literature and films. But now, the students here could find a churning from below. And this class struggle of the economic base, reckons with the superstructure. When Charu Mazumdar came up with his writings, he called upon the students to leave their campuses and go to the villages, stay with the peasantry, understand them and organize them. The revolutionary class needs to become a class for itself, from a class in itself. The peasantry also has petty-bourgeois aspirations. But as per the production relations, they are exploited. When organized politics reaches them, they transform themselves from a class-in-itself to a class-for-itself.

Young intellectuals often acted as carriers of the politics from the urban centres to the rural masses. A section of the peasantry was already involved and ready for the struggle, but not the broad masses.

The objective conditions were ripe for this huge assertion. That made them leave everything behind and go to the villages, ready to sacrifice everything including their lives. This is very rare and you can only match it with the freedom struggle – the sacrifices made over there. That legacy was carried over with a new vigour and a new dream. That was Naxalbari.

Q: Lastly, we are living in an age of growing fascism. All dissenters are being marked as either 'urban naxals' or 'anti-nationals' with UAPA, NSA etc. being used rampantly. How to fight this situation according to you?

A: Perhaps ours is the only communist

party that could foresee this danger, and this coming of fascist forces. If you follow the recent party congress documents, starting from the 9th and 10th Party Congresses, but before that also in the 6th party congress (1997) when our General Secretary was Com. Vinod Mishra. After the Babri Masjid demolition, the BJP was rising like a formidable power. The 90s, altogether saw the rise of corporate onslaught and takeover, privatization, policies being reformulated under the Congress regime that was taken forward by the BJP government. In 1998, for the first time in an Indian government, Atal Bihari Vajpayee formed the disinvestment ministry.

Beginning from the 6th party congress, and ultimately leading to the 9th Party congress in 2013, we identified it as a corporate communal regime. When BJP came to power in 2014, we had a central committee meeting in Delhi. On the 26th May, Narendra Modi was taking his oath, when our CC meeting was going on. We took a resolution against this regime. We sent this resolution to all the left parties, sarkari left parties as well as AAP because it seemed to present some democratic content. AAP never replied. A reply came from CPM. Prakash Karat asked our leaders to go over to Delhi CPM's office and we had a meeting. CPM was instrumental in roping in the other left front parties like RSP, FB. Later, SUCI too joined this.

Our campaign against the Narendra Modi regime started from 6th December 2014 and it continued for some time all over India. In the 10th Party Congress, we branded it as an Indian form of fascism. CPM says that it has some fascist tendencies, but hasn't come under the sway of fascism. CPI accepted and borrowed our formulation. In the 11th Party Congress, if you go through the documents, you will find how to resist this fascist onslaught.

Our role for the national perspective, we have started asserting our vision, ideas and analyses.

(Scan the QR code on the contents page to access the full interview taken by Com. Surya) S P A R K | 6

After-effects of NEP 2020 in Uttar Pradesh: Loan Model of Education and Massive Fee Hikes

Prachi

Recently, many government educational institutions in Uttar Pradesh were in the news over students' protests against massive fee hikes. These hikes are not an isolated concern arising in a handful of institutes. They are the direct result of the National Education Policy, 2020 which aims to withdraw government support from public education and push this sector towards privatization and commercialization. To accomplish this, the government constituted a body – Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) which will be providing “loans” to institutions for building infrastructure like hostels, buildings, classrooms, labs, etc., marking a shift from the grant model of education. Now the question arises- who will repay this loan? Of course, the students through enormous fees. The universities will impose huge sums as fees, introduce ‘autonomous’ courses in order to generate income, and will even contract out its infrastructure to private players. We must consider how many premier institutes are already inaccessible to the vast majority of students from marginalized communities due to the prohibitive costs of higher education. As this process continues, more and more aspiring students will be excluded from higher education opportunities.

Last year, the University of Allahabad hiked its fees by 400% for all courses. For instance, the fees for undergraduate courses which were Rs. 975/year, have been hiked over 300% to Rs. 4,151. Despite student protests, social media campaigns, a hunger strike, and even an attempt by a group of students to self-immolate by pouring kerosene on themselves, the varsity forcibly implemented this anti-student policy. This shows how the government wants education to become a commodity for sale in the market which will bring profit to the country's rich moneybags. When the protesting students put their concerns

before the administration, the varsity stated that there is a clear direction from the Government of India for the universities to generate funds on their own and reduce reliance on the government. Accordingly, around one-tenth of the HEFA loan must be repaid yearly by the borrowing institute, which will force it to divert resources and attention from activities it would otherwise have spent money and time on. In a University where the dropout rate was already high even when there were low fees, imagine the plight of students when this fee structure will come into effect. And the Modi Government, through its anti-student education policy has further worsened the already dismal state of the University.

In August 2022, the students of Banaras Hindu University (a central institute), had to face a 100-500% increase in fees of various courses and hostels. When questioned, the BHU administration in order to save their face tried to fool the students by stating that the decision to implement a “nominal increase” was taken before the academic session 2019-20 started but could not be implemented due to COVID-19 pandemic and the proposed fee hike would not impact the current batches studying at the varsity. But this fight against privatization of education is not limited to a “batch”. This fight is against any attempt which aims to make education inaccessible for many. This trend is worrisome as earlier students from SC/ST/OBC backgrounds or other marginalized sections were able to receive quality education in these central universities. With the increase in fees, it will be these students who will be pushed out of education first, thereby impacting the overall progress of the community.

Since the past few years, the University of Lucknow is vigorously introducing self-financed seats in various UG and

PG courses while certain courses are completely self-financed. The result is that many students have to pay every semester an additional fee of Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 5,000 per subject. It must be noted here that the main source of income for LU is self-financed courses of which the common students have to bear the brunt as the government grants only Rs. 50 crore as fund. The University's annual budget for 2023-24 is Rs. 223.32 crore far short of the Rs. 356.02 crore expenditure. In order to make up for this budget deficit, LU is continuously imposing arbitrary and unreasonable fees in the form of laboratory fee, admission fee, back paper fee etc. Beginning from this year, LU has implemented a centralised admission process for all its 545 affiliated colleges where all admission seekers would have to pay Rs. 100 as registration fee. Is this the NEP model that Modi government wants to implement? Looting students at every possible step?

Similarly, in various government educational institutes of Uttar Pradesh, concerted attempts have been made to implement sky-rocketing fees such as in Gorakhpur University, or in Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj University where the Vice-Chancellor declared a 25% increase in examination fees in 2021. Seen together, NEP and HEFA loans instead of grants from the government will make massive fee hikes the norm in educational institutes that access such loans or adopt the new policy. In this system, nothing dissuades the government from withdrawing from its responsibility to invest in education. Therefore, all government-funded institutions could quickly become self-financed institutes. This transition would be a massive attack on the very idea of a public university and undo any inclusivity achieved so far in education. NEP and HEFA pave the way for exactly such an unwelcome outcome.

South Asian University at Crossroads: Demise of an Intellectual Space

Sahil Mehra

GUEST

In an outrageous and unprecedented move, recently, South Asian University, suspended four professors on arbitrary charges of 'inciting and leading students...against the interests of the University', and 'anti-social acts', among other things.

The suspension order came against the backdrop of students' protests that have been ongoing since September 2022. Students were protesting against a number of pertinent issues, prominent among them being - the decision to reduce scholarships for master's students and lack of student representation in the gender sensitization and sexual harassment committees. This is not the first time that students have raised legitimate demands. Over the past couple of years, there have been several protests over issues ranging from food provisioning to revision of PhD scholarships in parity with UGC-Junior Research Fellowship (JRF), and throughout, the administration, citing financial crunch as the reason, has been impervious to the demands of the students.

This time, administration has surpassed the levels of their own insensitivity and adopted a high-headed and heavy-handed approach in its dealings with the students, and the faculty. The administration called police to the University, twice, to disperse the students and issued office orders announcing expulsion, rustication or suspension of 5 students. In response, a few faculty members voiced their concerns to the administration, stating that such acts constitute 'gross violation of proctorial rules as well as SAU rules and regulations, and by-laws and contravention of principles of natural justice.' Given that the voice of reason had long left the corridors of power in SAU, administration remained adamant, and rather vindictive.

Students strengthened their resolve and went on a mass hunger strike. Lack of empathy and outright apathy of the administration caused serious mental and physical distress to the students. One student collapsed and suffered cardiac arrest. He could be resuscitated, but his condition remains serious. A female student, who was expelled, was forcefully evicted from the hostel. She commenced an indefinite sit-in in front of the gate of the University, but her health deteriorated and she had to end her sit-in protest. Four of the faculty members who had written to the administration against their callous attitude towards the students were called in front of a Fact-Finding Committee (FFC) and were asked to answer some 132-246 questions, accusing them of 'misconduct', supporting Marxist reading circle, etc. After which, they were unjustly suspended. The aim here seemed clear, to target, insult and humiliate a group of faculty members with certain ideological affiliations. They were also told that their answers, or, their decision not to answer certain questions can be used against them in future. Further adding to the insult, the faculty members are ordered to not leave the station without permission, return their identity cards, and register their attendance on all working days in the office of their respective Deans. The suspension of the four faculty members reeks of repression akin to McCarthyism.

In all this, the hubris of the administration stands out. However, their arrogance stands on hollow grounds, and in fact, the SAU admin, owing mostly to their own 'competence', has become completely dysfunctional.

Since the last couple of years, there has been no permanent appointment for the posts of President, Vice President and Registrar as the decision has to be taken



by the Governing Board – constituted by members of all eight nations, which has not met in the past five years to make the appropriate appointments. Moreover, as an international University, it does not come under direct jurisdiction of the Indian government. Due to the lack of outside accountability, the 'Acting' President and his 'Acting' entourage, have assumed an autocratic and draconian demeanour to cultivate an environment of fear and mistrust.

South Asian University established by SAARC nations – a space imagined for proliferation of regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and policy dialogue for both students and faculty has become an autocratic space that stifles intellectual process, freedom of speech, and protects people accused of sexual harassment. The continued disregard and apathy of the administration has completely undermined the idea of South Asian University based on fostering solidarity beyond borders, and in all, the victim is academia and its sincere stakeholders.

In the neoliberal era of privatization, the situation of students as a community has increasingly become precarious and uncertain. The students are the biggest stakeholders of the University. They, particularly PhD scholars, spend years engaging in intellectual pursuits without any certainty of remunerative future prospects. On top of that, the system creates conditions that further push them to the brink of economic impoverishment. But the students are resilient, and they continue to carry on the long legacy of speaking truth to power.

The author is an alumnus of South Asian University and currently an assistant professor at a university in Bangalore.



Why Is Darwin's Theory of Evolution an Anathema to the Religionists?

Ashoke Mukhopadhyay

|| 1 || Adieu Darwin!

The job is done at last. In both Bangladesh and India. This is something where we stand now in the same row as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Oman or Lebanon.

In both these countries a campaign had been let loose for some years past that claimed the theory of evolution as wrong and demanded its expulsion from school curriculum. The Hindu and Islamic fundamentalists nicely concur on this issue. When the BJP came to the Union Government for the second time, some ministers started prattling against Darwinism. Now as advised by the RSS, the Union government thought of dropping Darwin's theory of evolution in Classes IX-X, calling it Rationalization of the Curriculum. The axe fell upon Darwin's theory in the school curriculum of science for secondary level. The rationale is also ready: During the Covid crisis students had little scope to make regular study and were under stresses of various kinds. In the immediate post-Covid situation it was highly advisable to reduce load. Those who will pursue science in the +2 level, will be surely instructed in that theory. This is for the time being . . .

However, don't think NCERT is a club of blockheads. Just try to understand why they simultaneously removed the chapter on periodic table from the physical sciences at the secondary level. The implicit message is, now no rationalist could say that this was also owing to the pressure of the fundamentalists.

The attempt though puerile is a remarkable feat.

Recently we came to know that Bangladesh had also decided to bid farewell to Darwin in the school

syllabus. Although not so much in Europe, the Christian fundamentalists in the USA are quite active in fighting Darwinism. On account of these facts all around a question perturbs me: Why these three legions of powerful religious fundamentalism—namely, Hindu, Christian and Islamic—are so much allergic to Darwin's theory. Is it because the theological knowledge of plants and animals does not tally with Darwin's treatises?

Not perhaps.

What religions taught about matter and its motion does not agree with the knowledge of mechanics developed by Galileo Galilei or Isaac Newton. Even then the chieftains of these three religions are not angry with Galileo or Newton. Traditional astrology also does not come anywhere near modern astronomy. Still the believing people did not oppose or demand abolition of astronomy in the educational programme. And in no religion of whatever the land is there any discourse on mathematics—say in Geeta, Quran, Bible, Tripitak, and so on. The believing sects do not claim the standard mathematics to be wrong.

If that be so, when Galileo, Newton, Einstein, Hawking, and similar others are passed through religious filters, when even Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arab, Bangladesh and India have all accepted mechanics, chemistry, astronomy, cosmology, mathematics and physics, what is special about Darwin and his theory of organic evolution that makes him a common target of all religious companies? Why is Darwinism the HCF of all the fundamentalists of the Hindu, Muslim and Christian faiths?

Let us try to get at that.

|| 2 || Lamarck, No; Wallace, No; Darwin alone

Charles Darwin was not the first to talk of the evolution of life forms from one another. Some Greek thinkers had speculated on this. Certain traditionalists claim that the stories of incarnation of Lord Vishnu in the Puranic literature of ancient India contain the seed of evolutionary proposition. A disciple of Aurabindo had once argued that the appearance of Vishnu serially in the form of fish, turtle, bear etc. till his assuming human form indicated evolution (we refrain from asking why Vishnu had preferred to avoid taking any invertebrate form).

Well, well. Let us agree.

But we hear no BJP spokesman say, since my father or forefathers did not see turtles evolve out of fishes and a bear out of a turtle, Vishnu Puran story is a hoax. No Christian or Islamic clergy has been reported rejecting the stories of Noah.

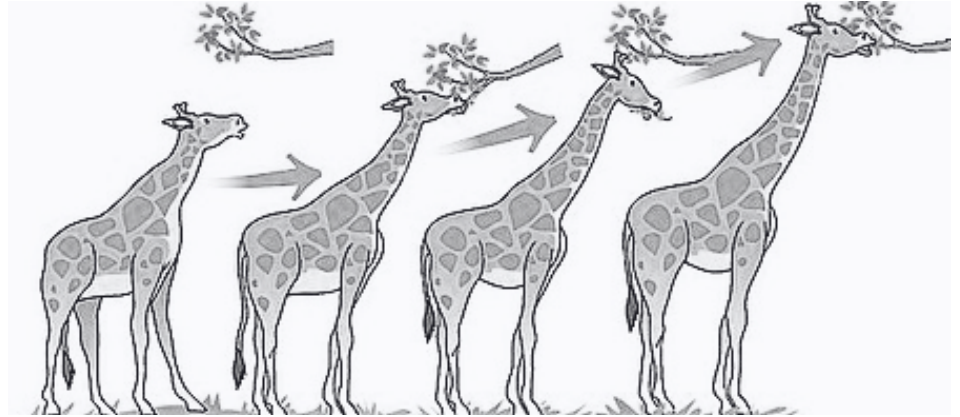
In the post-Renaissance Europe many people went out on tour to various countries for divergent purposes—outdoor trip, trade and commerce, plunder of resources from abroad, slave trade, etc. They found on the way many new plants and animals they never met in their home lands. Some of them observed a lot and collected a large number of samples for further study that led them towards an evolutionary perception of the organic world like French materialist Denis Diderot, German mathematician Pierre Louis Maopartuis, the grandfather of Charles Darwin Erasmus Darwin, the naturalist Alexander Humboldt, Jean Cuvier, Comte de Buffon, and so on.

In the nineteenth century Jean Baptiste

Lamarck was the first distinguished and powerful theorist of evolution who presented a systematic explication of the transmutation of species in a treatise published in 1809, the year Darwin was born. Lamarck has been described as a Deist in his philosophical thoughts. But many people do not agree to this characterization. These analysts understood the position of Lamarck but did not thoroughly grasp his philosophy. Since the time of Nicolaus de Cusa, Giordano Bruno and Baruch Spinoza deists actually tried to merge God with nature and thereby extend the life span of the providence. In fact, as Georgi Plekhanov, a renowned thinker of Russia at the turn of the twentieth century had observed, "In modern civilised societies, alongside the efforts to limit the powers of kings, came the trend towards "natural religion" and to deism, that is, to a system of ideas wherein the power of God is restricted on all sides by the laws of Nature. Deism is celestial parliamentarism." [Plekhanov 1976, 341] According to this theosophical position God can no more control the earthly affairs indiscriminately. Lamarck also left a similar message in his writings.

For he, as a child of the fire of the French Revolution, had uttered some strong words against the old theological conceptions about the organic world. For instance, he had written: "The ancient philosophers felt the necessity for a special exciting cause of organic movements; but not having sufficiently studied nature, they sought it beyond her; they imagined a vital principle, a perishable soul for animals, and even attributed the same to plants; thus in place of positive knowledge, which they could not attain from want of observations, they created mere words to which are attached only vague and unreal ideas."

Accordingly he concluded: "Whenever we abandon nature, and give ourselves up to the fantastic flights of our imagination, we become lost in



vagueness, and our efforts culminate only in errors. The only knowledge that it is possible for us to acquire is and always will be confined to what we have derived from a continued study of nature's laws; beyond nature all is bewilderment and delusion: such is my belief." [Lamarck 1914, 211-12; emphasis added]

In a word, Lamarck believed that all the narratives about the organic beings in the ancient scriptures and sacred texts were wrong, unreal and unfounded, and hence of no use at all. In order to learn the truth and study organic creatures the only way is to study nature, observe and determine the laws of nature. Even then the religious bigots are not so unhappy with Lamarck.

By the way, Lamarckian theory is quite simple and legible to anyone. Take the case of the giraffe. At some time long past some giraffes had been trying to catch the leaves of a big tree by stretching their necks causing a lasting change in later generations. This explication is not only simple but very convincing too. As a result those who explain evolution in the classes or in public talks also in most cases push Lamarck's theory under the label of Darwinism. For example, let us take the oft-heard statement—Darwin's theory states that man came from a group of apes that climbed down trees to find a better habitat thus going through changes like use of forelimbs, disappearance of tail etc. This is not merely a wrong idea but it shelters Lamarckian evolutionism under the phrases.

In spite of having ample scope to do so, Darwin in his celebrated *Origin of Species* had nowhere ridiculed God. Out of his usual gentleness and more probably as a part of emotional love for his religiously committed wife Emma. In his *Autobiography*, of course, he had expressly stated that he had lost all faith in Christianity and its God since 1836. The religious people are much tolerant of the outspoken ungodliness of Lamarck. But they cannot bear with the reticent Darwin. Religious literature is replete with vituperations against Darwin, with scores of cartoons about his theory.

We have to explore what the special reasons are behind this distaste. At the same time we have to distinctly demarcate Darwin's position from Lamarck's. Let us probe into why people talk in terms of Lamarckianism while thinking they are dealing with Darwin's theory in the next issue.



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Remembering the Glorious Telangana Peasants' Revolt : Part I



Sushant

The Telangana Peasant Struggle (1946-1951) led by the erstwhile Communist Party of India (CPI) was one of the most radical struggles in the history of modern India. Telangana was a part of the princely state Hyderabad ruled by the Nizam Osman Ali Khan, a pro-British feudal ruler. His predecessors signed the 'Treaty of Perpetual and General Defensive Alliance' with the East India Company in 1800, making the Nizam 'an equal partner with the Company.' The Nizam supported the British against the Tipu Sultan and the Revolt of 1857, ensuring British dominance in peninsular India.

During Nizam's rule, just like any other feudal regime, the agrarian economy was replete with hereditary landholder, i.e., the 'Deshmukhs', 'Jagirdars', and mercantile caste groups who were loyal to Nizam, most of the peasants were landless agricultural labourers. Only some of them were lucky enough to receive wages, and the rest were subjected to the system of *vetti*, i.e., forced and unpaid work. Between 1901 and 1941, the number of landless labourers increased by 473% in the district of Nalgonda alone and 234% in Warangal. The biggest problem that the rural peasantry faced was that of the levy system. Britain's participation in WWII led to a massive expropriation of resources from India. In Telangana, the government decided to take a certain amount of grain as a 'levy per acre', irrespective of the production. As the collectors entered the villages, the wealthier villagers bribed them not to collect from their hoards, hid their surplus grain underground, and sold it on the black market at higher prices. Therefore, the burden of the levy of collection fell hardest on the poor cultivator.

Nizam's territory remained immune to mass politics because of the ban on

nationalist and political organisations captured, the red flag hoisted and imposed through the New Public Safety Act, 1938. However, the Andhra here...no more *vetti*, no more illegal Mahasabha was established by left-wing exactions, no evictions." If the landlord Congress members and Communists in did not carry out these orders of the 1930. Until 1937, Congress under sangham, he was socially boycotted. The Gandhi pursued a strategy of non-orders of the sangham that none should interference in the affairs of princely work for the landlords in their fields or states. Things changed when the winds as barber, washerman, or domestic of nationalism hit Hyderabad. Andhra servant were carried out. The radicalism Mahasabha in 1941, took radical of women was also displayed as they resolutions to the abolition of *vetti* and became one of the most important the ownership rights of the tenants. By constituents of the sangham. They this time the CPI had established itself in provided most of the everyday support, the rural areas by intervening in the levy such as reporting on police movements, collection process. They accompanied acting as messengers, and feeding the peasants, ensured correct fighters and volunteers. By June 1948, measurements of food grains, and 'Sangham-rajjam' had been established secured proper prices. The Telangana in 600 villages in Nalgonda district rebellion was the result of organising alone, 400 villages in Hyderabad district, efforts by the Communist 350 villages in Warangal, 300 villages in revolutionaries during the earlier period, Karimnagar, 100 villages in 1930-1946. Mahbubnagar, 80 villages in Medak, 50 villages in Adilabad, and 30 villages in Nizamabad. It must be noted that the

The spark that set the stage on fire was the murder of Doddi Komaraiah. On July 4, 1946, Komaraiah was killed these districts was immense. The whilst a procession of Andhra administrative report of 1950-51 showed Mahasabha cadres surrounded the that in the three districts of Nalgonda, landlord Visnuru Ramachandra Reddy's Mahbubnagar, and Warangal, the house in the village of Kadavendi. number of landlords owning more than Visnuru Ramachandra Reddy was 500 acres each was about 550. They among the many notorious landlords owned 60-70% of the total cultivable owning a whopping 40,000 acres of land. The extent of exploitation by these land. The Mahasabha members were landlords can be judged from the fact subjected to inhuman torture by the that 110 of them collected Rs 100 police. The day of Komaraiah's death million every year in various taxes or was observed as Komaraiah Day, exactions from the peasantry. The wherein the peasants pledged themselves rebellion was not restricted to Telangana to fight landlordism continuously. alone. The coastal Andhra districts had Inspired by the Soviets during the by the 1930s become the bastion of the Russian Revolution, 'Sanghams', a CPI and the revolt started there after voluntary association committed to a Telangana. Many Congress leaders, who radical redistribution of resources, were transitioned from bourgeois nationalism established. People rose in rebellion in towards Marxism learnt their lessons the entire Nalgonda district. Groups of from Telangana. During the course of people from one village armed with the struggle, the peasantry in about sticks and slings started marching to the 3,000 villages, covering roughly a neighbouring villages to rouse them. population of 3 million in an area of Public meetings became a common about 16,000 square miles, mostly in the practice. Lands of the landlords were three districts of Nalgonda, Warangal,

and Khammam had succeeded in setting up 'gram raj'. In these villages, the hated landlords – the pillars of Nizam's autocracy in the rural areas – were driven away from their fortress-like houses – 'gadis' – and their lands were seized by the peasantry. More than 1 million acres of land was redistributed among the peasantry under the guidance of the people's committees, and the forced-labour service was abolished. The daily wages of agricultural labourers were increased and a minimum wage was enforced. Land distribution,



education, health, and all other services were organised by the people's committees. For a period of 18 months, the entire administration in these areas was conducted by the village peasant

committees- an alternate state power. A powerful militia comprising 10,000 village squad members and about 2,000 regular guerrilla squads was in defence of the peasantry against the armed attacks of the Razakars and Nizam's police. Lakhs of peasants, for the first time in their life, could have their regular two meals a day. This historic peasant rebellion shook the medieval autocratic regime of the Asaf Jahi dynasty to its roots, delivering death blows against it.

The fate of the revolt and the betrayal of the national leadership will be discussed in the next part.

Draconian Laws in India: A Legacy Of Repression

Saniya and Sharath



The origin of draconian laws can be traced back to the 7th Century BCE, when an Athenian statesman named Draco brought about stringent laws as a punitive measure for minor acts. His legal code favoured wealthy landowners and aimed to restore "order" within society. Over time, the term "draconian" came to be associated with harsh laws lacking proportionality, focused on restoring 'social' order.

Draconian laws in India find their roots in the colonial era when the British Raj implemented repressive legislation in order to suppress dissent. These laws helped in maintaining their hegemony over the Indian subcontinent. Laws like the Bengal Regulation Act of 1818, the Rowlatt Act etc. were among the first preventive detention laws in India. The legacy of oppression through colonial-era draconian laws continues even decades after 1947. Draconian laws today mirror colonial-era laws in their principles of curbing dissent and not needing evidence to prove suspicions.

Hush the Dissent

These laws violate the basic principles of natural justice required to carry out a trial in a fair manner to ensure that no

innocent is punished. Laws like UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act) do not even give an opportunity to be heard to the accused. They can be kept behind bars, unaware of the charges, without commencement of trial amounting to a gross miscarriage of justice. Even if the accused is eventually acquitted, they would have served years in jail for a crime he didn't commit. There is a complete overturn of the legal principle of "bail is the rule and jail is the exception" in such cases. A Ministry of Home Affairs report placed in Lok Sabha shows that between 2016-20, 24,134 people were arrested out of which only 212 were convicted, so less than 3% of the arrests made under UAPA ends up in conviction! Its only use is to suppress dissent of the people against the state machinery. Of the total arrests made under UAPA in 2020, Jammu and Kashmir with 346 and Manipur with 225 arrests saw the second and third most arrests in the country only to be led by Uttar Pradesh with 361 arrests.

Student activists who participated in protests against CAA-NRC like Safoora, Umar, Natasha, Devangana, and others, journalists like Siddique Kappan who

was covering the state's role in the destruction of evidence in the Hathras case, Rupesh Kumar Singh who reported on industrial waste being dumped in tribal land, activists like Sudha Bhadrwaj, Gautam Navalakha, Anand Teltumbde, and others charged with the Bhima-Koregaon conspiracy are some of the instances where the state has actively tried to suppress dissent by invoking UAPA.

Army Impunity

The Armed forces of the Indian State enjoy special powers where they can indulge in any crimes and are shielded from criminal prosecution under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act. AFSPA is modelled after The Armed Forces Special Powers Ordinance of 1942 which was promulgated by the British to suppress the Quit India movement. The AFSPA came into the limelight time and again when allegations of rape were levelled against the Indian army in the North-East and Kashmir. It is this law which is protecting from persecution, the perpetrators who riddled the body of Thangjam Manorama with bullets, mutilated her genitals, and claimed that they shot her as she was allegedly trying

to escape. In the case of the Mon district killing where personnels of 21 Para SF regiment opened fire killing 14 Naga civilians including 6 coal mine workers, the state police could not prosecute 30 army personnel as they failed to take the centre's permission. In Kunan-Poshpora the victims of mass rape in two villages of Kashmir still await justice after the passage of two decades, due to the existence of AFSPA.



existence of such laws makes one wonder if this is a democracy. This harsh law was invoked on many people, including the mother of a 12-year old child who performed in an anti-CAA skit in a school in Bidar, people who did not stand up when the National Anthem was played in a movie theatre in Kerala and Vinod Dua, who merely stated the non-availability of PPE kits in a video during Covid etc.

The Act does not define the characteristics of a "disturbed area".

Section 4 of the act bestows upon army personnel the right to enter premises without search warrant and the right to fire and kill people to maintain "public order". Section 6 of the act protects the army personnel from any criminal prosecution or legal action against acts being conducted by the personnel. It considers shooting and killing people in the "disturbed area" as an action done or purported to be done in the exercise of the powers conferred by the AFSPA act

and gives them protection.

Confined Conscience

Freedom of thought and expression is merely present in the constitution, however, the Colonial Legacy is being carried forward and practised through the Sedition Act. A plain reading of section 124A of the IPC shows how having and promulgating an idea or thought is considered a crime. This shows nothing but the imposition of a colonial mindset where the subjects cannot question the 'rulers'. The

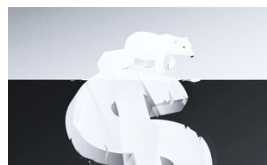
There is a common misconception that draconian laws are misused. However, these are not misused rather aptly used. These laws, under the garb of protecting people from "terrorists", help the ruling class preserve its oppressive regime. The Colonizers and their standing army may have left the country, however, their laws and structure still remain very much alive to suppress people. It is only through a united movement led by radical farmers, workers and students, that we can emancipate the people of India from the colonial horrors.

Climate change and Imperialism- Part 1

Surjadipta

The ever increasing pollution and exploitation of the environment that we have been witnessing in the era of imperialism is fast approaching a point where humans as a species may face extinction. While we see a lot of talk on climate change as nations and their responsibilities towards climate, we don't see corporates being held responsible for the enormous pollution and exploitation they cause throughout their supply chains. Some features of monopoly capitalism are key to this ever growing pollution and exploitation. These features are so fundamental to imperialism that only a complete overhaul of this system and bringing socialism can address these. In this part, we discuss three such features.

Overproduction and manufacturing artificial demand: A fundamental



characteristic of imperialism or monopoly capitalism is overproduction of commodities and of means of production. The ever increasing growth of surplus capital and overproduction of means of production necessitates worldwide production of commodities and creating a market for these in whatever ways possible. Consequently, a widespread culture of consumerism has been manufactured. The main content of this culture is to create an outlook in individuals that all their problems and conflicts can be solved by consumption of commodities or services. For example, buy clothing, ornaments, cars etc. to get sexual attention. While the unrealistic and nonsense stereotypes surrounding sexual attraction drive you mad, go to a spa or go shopping to feel good about yourself while your workplace, family, or friends treat you with no dignity and value. In these ways,

we are being turned into addicts of consumption. We end up buying unnecessarily and excessively. Even going beyond our purchase powers, falling into debts and compromising on our essential needs. Instead of trying to solve the conflicts or struggling against the status quo collectively in any meaningful way, this individualised approach of seeking distraction from the reality by addiction to consumption is causing tremendous damage to our mental health driving us deep into loneliness and seclusion. On the other hand this is causing escalation of wastage. We and our environment are being subjected to such torment only for the sake of manufacturing market demand for overproduction. In socialist economy, there's no question of overproduction. Except for some reserves in essential commodities, production is planned completely according to our necessity. So the volume of goods produced is limited to what is needed by society. To get rid of this rotten, toxic culture of consumerism

and the crisis of overproduction, socialism is the only way.

Expanded reproduction and unbounded exploitation of natural resources: One of the fundamental features of capitalist production is expanded reproduction of commodities (Refer to chapters 23 and 24 of Capital, Volume 1 for more details). As a consequence of this, on one hand the production moves towards the crisis of overproduction and on the other hand we witness endless exploitation of natural resources. Capitalist production cannot survive without reinvestment of surplus and expanded reproduction. So the total volume of goods produced increases unboundedly causing unlimited exploitation of natural resources as raw materials for production. It is not only a wastage of resources, but also equally of labour. In a socialist economy where workers self-organise production, the increase in volume of production is only till the material necessities of workers are satisfied. The more the production progresses towards that satisfaction, the lesser the necessary labour hours per individual become.



*"Yes, the planet got destroyed.
But for a beautiful moment in time we
created a lot of value for shareholders."*

Decrease in product lifespan by design to recreate market causing massive wastage and pollution: It is a characteristic of monopoly capital to root out any competition in market by devastating them in price competition using all its might. However, when there's only a handful of monopoly enterprises remaining in the market, there is no price competition between them. This is because in a price competition between two monopolies, even the winner would be significantly damaged. Hence, despite the contradictions between them being sharper than ever, those become largely extra-economic in nature. Capturing supply of raw materials, plundering

cheap labour, capturing markets by military or political power, ownership of more advanced technology and implements of production, etc. So, as the price competition ends, we see that the enterprises intentionally reduce the lifespan of the products. The lesser the lifespan of products, the quicker its market demand is replenished. So we witness a widespread decrease in lifespan of all commodities from garments to mobile phones. The concept of brands advertising themselves as providers of long lasting products is fast becoming relics of the past. Nowadays, we see that even the products from top range brands don't last too long. Consequently, not only in excessive production but also in waste management we witness massive damage to our environment. This is as much a wastage of labour as it is of natural resources. The planned economy in socialism where a dedicated planning commission designs the economy to highest utility of resources and labour can solve this. There is no necessity to recreate market demand as production is planned as per the needs of the society in socialist production.

Unbridled Profiteering in Private Colleges: The Legal Battle

Sushravya

"Education is what makes a person fearless, teaches him the lesson of unity, makes him aware of his rights and inspires him to struggle for his rights."

- Dr B.R. Ambedkar

Irrefutably, the right to free and fair education is an inalienable birthright. Under the existing profound economic and social divide, the State's roles are to cater for the aspiration and ideals of every child by embarking on a welfarist policy to make education affordable and accessible. The current scenario of the privatisation of educational institutions anyhow displays an ever-looming mirage of the State's promises of free and fair education. This article briefly

enunciates the unassailable right to education promised under the law and the existing conditions thereof.

The Constitutional Protection to Affordable Education

The marginalized communities were often tormented by upper caste and imperial veto in determining who ought to and who ought not to derive access to education, it was only in 1992, the Supreme Court in *Mohini Jain V UOI* jurisprudentially engraved the right to education into Part III (Fundamental rights) of the Indian Constitution. This case is monumental in its nature because, even in the absence of an express constitutional right with respect to education, the Supreme Court

interpreted the right to education as a necessary condition for the fulfilment of the right to dignified life and liberty as promised under Article 21; to simply put forth it made right to life and right to education conterminously related with each other, i.e., if the excess capitation fee violated my right to education, it would impliedly and contemporaneously violate my right to life and human dignity. This dictum of the court further weighed into Part IV (Directive Principle of State Policy) of the Constitution and specified that while interpreting the right to education, it must be done so in alignment with the directive principles as outlined in Part IV of the Constitution. After a series of legal developments, the summation of the said constitutional rights are mentioned below:

(a) Every child or citizen in this nation possesses the right to receive a free education until the age of fourteen years. [In pursuant of J P Unnikrishnan vs. State of Andhra Pradesh, 2002, via the 86th- Constitutional Amendment. Article 21- A was inserted to provide free and compulsory education for all children between the age group of 6-14 years as a Fundamental Right.]

(b) Once a child or citizen surpasses the age of fourteen, their right to education is subject to the financial capacity and developmental constraints of the state. Despite the historical 86th amendment, hitherto, it is still noteworthy to assert that caste privilege and purchasing power play a predominant role in determining the affordability and access to quality education.

The Epoch of Privatization of Education in India

The neoliberal policies perceive privatization as a form of deregulated economic freedom, while it is nothing but an institutional process aimed at maximizing economic profit. In August 1995, a bill titled "A Private University Establishment and Regulation Bill" was introduced in the Rajya Sabha. This bill was introduced with the objective of establishing self-financing universities in the country. Consequently, as a result of this process, there has been a decrease in the public subsidies allocated to higher education. Later, the Higher Education Commission of India, as established under the UGC Act of 2018, introduced a bill formulated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) which reflected upon the government's inclination towards the privatization of education.

Recently, the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 places significant trust in private institutions to act responsibly. Due to the restless privatization, the Indian higher education system has consistently encountered various challenges, including the imperative to ensure equity, quality, and access for all segments of society such as the following event.

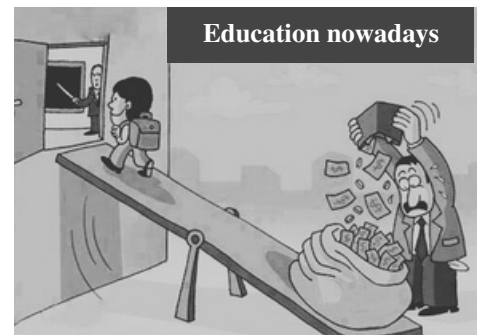
Grave Impact of Liberal Privatization: The State's Laissez-faire in Fee Regulation

In one such recent instance, on the 5th of January, 2023, The Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka pronounced in Rashmi Education Trust Vidyaniketan School & Others v. State of Karnataka & Others, declared Section 48 and other connected sections of the Karnataka Education Act 1983 (which prohibited private unaided schools from collecting a fee in any manner except as prescribed by the State government) as ultra vires to Article 14 of the Constitution. That is to say, the Hon'ble court granted the Private Educational Institution in Karnataka the liberty to determine their fee structure as opposed to complying with the State Government's regulation.

The court while justifying the above matter has relied on a 11-judge bench decision i.e., T.M.A Pai Foundation V State of Karnataka. At para 44 of the order in Rashmi Education V State of Karnataka, the court has stated that the "fee structure must be left to the private institution the fee structure must, necessarily be left to the private unaided educational institutions, as those educational institutions do not seek or are not dependent upon any funds from the Government"(sic).

Whereas, one of the gravest ambiguities in T.M.A. Pai's case is, it regardless utters that private institutions can determine their own fee structure but vehemently fails to explain the extent of the threshold of liberty to be granted to private educational institutions in determining the maximum cap. In the finding of the Rashmi Education Trust case too, the court has sufficiently left ample room for ambiguity plainly in the context of the lawful percentage of fee hikes in various private institutions.

Maliciously construing and pursuing the order, the private profit-driven educational institutions have exhibited their capitalistic greed and attack on constitutional values by immediately increasing the fee by 30-40%[1]. i.e.,



Rs. 50,000- 60,000 altogether. Leaving no room for any remedies, and the children's right to continual education is halted while the parents suffer to fulfil the fee obligation.

Though the Hon'ble Court in Para 47 of the Rashmi Education Trust judgement has affixed a caveat stating "The cardinal rule would be to act just, fair and reasonable while formulating the fee structure, so that, no child would be deprived of elementary education in this welfare State, to fulfil the dreams of founding fathers of the Constitution of India", ever since numerous complaints have been pouring in by the parents in accordance witnessing the non-compliance of the operative observation of the court. Given the above note, we the concerned students and citizens must vehemently condemn the extreme laissez-faire positioning of the State. We must demand the State's intervention to end the unregulated fee structure.

[1]<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/after-court-order-on-govt-role-private-schools-in-bengaluru-increase-fees-by-30-40/articleshow/99101023.cms?from=mdr>



Skewed: A Personal View (Review)

Parthanil Roy

On 12th May 2023, my son Swapnil (eleven years old) and I went to Ranga Shankara to watch a play named "Skewed", a production of Bangalore-based group Fourth Wall Theatre. It was a relevant piece of work that described how distorted narratives emerge influencing everyone and affecting the people on the wrong side of them. The story revolved around the untimely and unusual death of a young police officer posted in Coorg, a beautiful, hilly region of Karnataka, and how his death led to unfounded suspicion of his wife (Divya, played by Soumya Pujari) manufactured by people around her, two detectives (Pallavi, played by Kavita Jindal and Amar, played by Arvind S. Kumar) and, of course, the misogynistic media. Two narratives were built around this unfortunate incident:

- (1) Divya, the widow of the dead, had an affair with a police officer named Varun (played by Vilok V Kowsik), a junior of her deceased husband and they killed her husband together;
- (2) Divya's late husband had an affair with his friend and neighbour Sanjana (acted by Jeevika), who used to play hockey with him, and hence Divya killed him out of jealousy.

We really loved how the hockey culture of Coorg was used rather aptly and fiercely in this drama - the pace was perfect, the acting admirable and the stage-work sublime. Powerful performances by the main actors and actresses mentioned above, together with impressive theatrics of a few other characters (e.g., Abdul, played by Uttam, Kuliya played by Manikanta, maid Gange, played by Sarika, Bharat constable, played by Arjun, etc.), gave rise to an immensely enjoyable drama that contained multiple Rhea-Chakraborty-saga-reminding

goosebumps moments. There are scopes of improvement, though, for some of the newer actors, whose dialogues were unclear in spite of the amazing acoustics of Ranga Shankara.

There were a few scenes and messages in this play that touched our heart and hence I would like to detail them a bit in this review. First and foremost, there was a scene in which the senior detective Pallavi (played by Kavita Jindal) and Divya (the wife of the deceased - played by Soumya Pujari) had a conversation. It was supposed to be an interrogation but it became way more than that - a prejudiced trial or perhaps a moral policing effort of a police officer. Effortless acting of two great performers turned it into a scene to cherish for good. Secondly, in the beginning of the drama, Divya and police officer Varun (played by Vilok V Kowsik) had an important discussion that played a significant role in the story. Both of these scenes led the way to a superb story that unfolded gently yet shockingly in front of our eyes and ears. The most magnificent scene was perhaps the one in which all the actors formed a parabola (roughly, a U-shaped curve) with Divya in the focus (in terms of lighting too) and Varun at the vertex. This was, by far, one of the best symbolic depictions of a meticulous media trial of an apparently innocent lady and her friends. The play ended on a positive note in a moderately open-ended fashion and yet a very strong message - "we should not form opinions too quickly on anyone or anything", as Swapnil articulates it.

We need more productions like this one, which will have the honesty and courage to criticize the malicious intent of many, including that of media and social media controlled, in many cases, by divisive people with selfish political agenda. Skewed narratives not only destroy many lives, but also help the disruptive forces to set up the stage for the execution of their shameless divide and rule policy. Expression of dissent and political discourse against the oppressors



cannot limit themselves to a particular form - use of strong mediums such as songs, poetry, paintings, plays, etc. have historically been significant, especially during authoritarian regimes. Much to my dismay, today is no exception, and plays like "Skewed" provide a platform for common people to identify the crisis and build an opinion about it.

A lot of credit also goes to the script (by Mahesh SP, Vilok V Kowsik, Arvind S Kumar and Gayathri Narayan), poetry (by Vidya Pathikonda), music (by Abhimanyu Bhupathi), handling of lights (Sachin and Ravishankar) and choreography (by Soumya Pujari), and last but not the least, the excellent direction (of Mahesh SP), all of which, along with the amazing actresses and actors, contributed to this remarkable performance. Please do not miss the next shows of "Skewed" at the Jagriti Theatre on 27th August (Sunday) at 3:30 pm and 7:30 pm, respectively.

Parthanil Roy is a professor at the Indian Statistical Institute Bangalore Centre. This article is based on the author's personal experience and opinion. A previous version was published in <https://sabrangindia.in/>. Link given below.



Schools and Polytechnics: World's Largest Educational Laboratory

The Soviet Experience - Part V

Sushant

"A school outside of life, outside of politics, is a lie and hypocrisy"

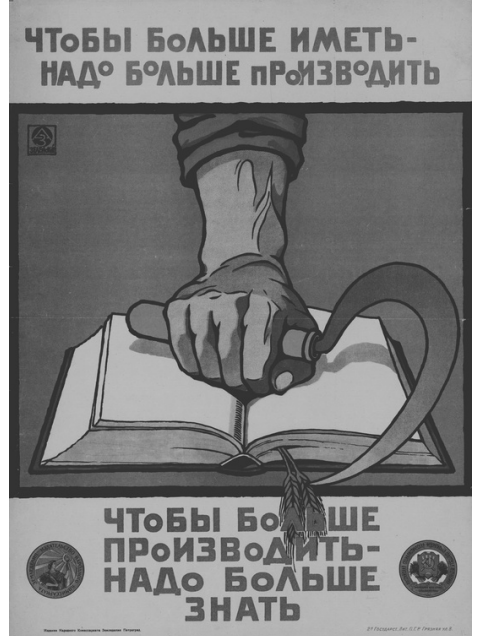
- Com. Lenin (at the First All-Russian Congress on Education)

In July 2020, the Government of India introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) of India 2020. The NEP suggests introducing vocational training with school education and converting many institutes of higher education to vocational training institutes. But from the documents of NEP, it is clear that it is only for creating cheap labourers for MNCs. While our government is tweaking the education policy to produce obedient and cheap labourers, let's look back at the history of how Soviet Russia created schools by introducing the Polytechnic system which was dubbed the "World's Largest and Most Important Educational Laboratory".

The education system was reformed post revolution, in an attempt to raise new citizens for a new society. In October 1918, the State Commission on Education published the "Basic Principles of the Labour School." This document firmly repudiated the traditional or bourgeois schools, abolishing exams, grades, homework, formal discipline, formal subjects, and rote learning. In its place, a single system from kindergarten to university based on polytechnic labour was envisioned. The polytechnic principle was derived from Marx. Marx and Engels stressed that "education should be mental, physical (gymnastics and games), and technical (acquainting children with the process of production)." Their educational philosophy was based on the harmonious

development of physical and mental aptitudes. Lenin wrote "labour itself is an educational process that helps students' holistic development. However, this labour also has to be 'linked organically and directly with learning'" thus formulating a new pedagogical theory consistent with the central objectives of the Revolution.

The characteristic feature of Soviet education was the application of the polytechnical principle. It was the training of a person who can orient themselves anywhere in the system of production and in its scientific and technical principles, has mastered the basic principles of modern science, and is prepared to change his occupation if the interests of society or their inclinations require it. A specific consequence of the polytechnical principle is the balance between mathematics and natural science, on the one hand, and humanities and the social sciences, on the other. Basically, the idea was that children should learn something about the fundamental processes of industrial and agricultural production, both by studying the theory and applying it in practice in school workshops, experimental plots, in factories, and on farms. The overall aim was to link the school with productive work, to connect the knowledge and skills gained in school with their utility, to link education with life. The education system was practice-oriented, and the number of out-of-classes rooms was greater than the number of classrooms. The schools had many workshops, laboratories, libraries, and sports areas, and most schools included cinema halls and observatories. In the cities, large schools were constructed, and most of



them were located in the vicinity of production zones. State-owned plants, scientific organizations, and institutions gave students the opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the technology of production and helping them to acquire practical skills. These organizations had a right to turn over equipment free of charge to universities and colleges. The State provided land for experimental agrobiological stations and experimental farms of agricultural institutes and also plots for the construction of buildings and other premises where students could work and learn the basics of farming and production.

Outside of school, education was continued through radio, television, books, newspapers, magazines, movies, songs, celebrations, and the arts - opera, ballet, sculpture, and paintings. Correspondence courses, interest groups, science fairs, summer science camps, and other extramural activities conducted by professional scientists were common everywhere. There were

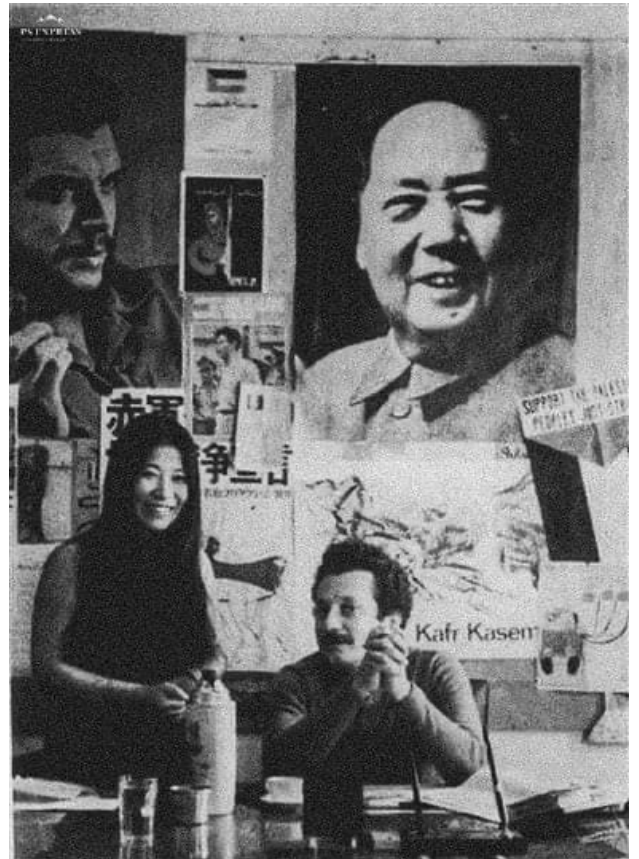
also many thousands of extra-school administrative bodies, through which education reform he envisioned be establishments like science interest children were to take part in the running achieved. He said, "The Russian clubs, staffed by paid, fully trained of their schools. educational situation is enough to professionals, including scientists. In convert one to the idea that only in a schools, there were Soviet student After visiting Soviet schools, American society based upon the cooperative governments. All children's institutions educational reformer John Dewey came principle can the ideals of educational were required to organize student bodies to the conclusion that only in a reformers be adequately carried into and allow for student representation on communist society can the kind of operation".

Economy & Other Things the War Taught Me

Surya

My alarm clock rings at 6 am IST whether there
Is a war or not. 6 missed notifications, 2 missed
Calls, and instagram frozen. I swipe across stories
And Darwish waves at me, followed by a turnip
Colored infographic that reads: "What is happening
In Palestine, and how you can help!" Darwish appears
A few more times, and takes my leave. The college
Cafeteria is loud and one can hear a couple of murmurs
about
Palestine. They all come and go, and speak of Gaza,
BDS, Zionism and the various words that they know. I
Rush into the library. I get my arms around all that
Can be found. Kanafani demands freedom, and so must we.
He doesn't stop talking about the trees. And in such a
Way, I have learned about the world. To comprehend
Crisis, occupation and war. It is a bitter feeling. On
Second thought, it occurs to me that we all do the same,
In one way or another. We understand the world, having
Sworn to change it. Everything we learn about is crisis,
Or the aftermath of a crisis, or a precursor to a crisis.
Our alarm clocks ring at 6 am IST whether there
Is a war or not. We need to get out of bed
Whether there is a war or not.

(This poem was first published in Gulmohur quarterly)

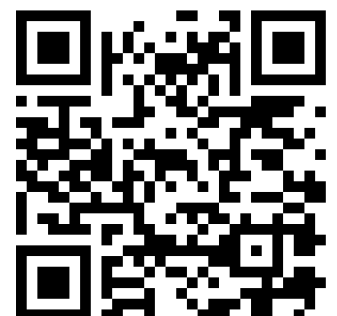


Fusako Shigenobu, the founder of Japan's Red Army and Ghassan Kanafani of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine at the office of Al Hadaf Magazine, Lebanon, 1972

UPDATES ON PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS

Bangalore Civil Society gears up to demand freedom to protest

A coalition of civil society organisations across Bangalore have launched a campaign to demand their right to protest anywhere in Bangalore. Since 2022, freedom to protest in Bangalore has been confined to Freedom Park that earlier functioned as a prison. Many other places have been marked as 'restricted' from protests. A signature campaign has been started including public campaigns at bus stations. **Sign here to demand your right to protest!**



KRRS Launches 'Raitha Satyagraha' Demanding Repeal of Anti-Farmer Laws

Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS), a well-known group of farmers in Karnataka, held a peaceful protest called "raitha satyagraha" on June 15 all over the state. The goal of the protest was to get the government to get rid of laws that the farmers' group called "anti-farmer." These laws included the Karnataka Land Reforms Act, the law against killing cows, and the APMC Act. The State Cabinet's response was to repeal the APMC Act as a consequence of the combined efforts of everyone involved, which represents a big victory for the protesting farmers

Workers of TNSTC demonstrate in Madurai

On June 9, 2023, hundreds of workers with the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) demonstrated demanding a charter of demands. Workers were unhappy because TNSTCs were not given new bus fleets since 2018. They demanded the state government to promptly purchase new buses to assure continuous bus services to rural areas, as more than 3,000 buses were expected to be condemned within a year. TNSTC administration's insistence that crew members work overtime to qualify for earning their weekly off infuriated the workers. There should be no opportunity for corruption in transfer, the protesters urged. They also said that reprisals against union leaders who participated in protests should stop and that there had been an increase in the amount of fines imposed on employees.

Hundreds Protest for Restoration of Peace in Manipur

As the unrest continues in Manipur, Manipuris from various parts of India along with civil society activists have held protests and candle light vigils in different parts of the country. Hundreds of Kuki women gathered outside HM Amit Shah's residence on 7th June demanding state intervention in ending this conflict. On 24th there was a gathering at Jantar Mantar demanding an end to this ethnic strife. Over 300 people gathered at the Freedom Park from 11am to 1 pm in Bangalore on 30th May in solidarity with the Manipuri citizens who were facing violence that resulted in scores of deaths and the displacement of people.

Haitian People take up arms against gang violence

Over the past few months Haitian people have armed themselves with machetes, sticks and other makeshift weapons to root out the plague of government associated gang-related killings, murders, rapes and kidnappings destroying their communities. In a major political crisis in September 2022, the G9 gang, considered the most powerful gang in the country seized control of Haiti's main fuel terminal in response to the government's proposed reduction in fuel subsidies. This two month blockade led to a major fuel shortage causing closure of hospitals, schools and businesses.

A spontaneous event in the Canapé Vert neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince seems to have sparked off a broader movement of resistance to the gangs across the country. On 24 April, around a dozen gang members were travelling through the neighbourhood to join with an allied gang in a nearby district. The gang members were not heavily armed and were stopped and detained by police. A crowd of local residents gathered at the scene of the arrests. Demanding justice the crowd attacked and killed the gang members, stoning and burning them to death. Under the banner of "Bwa Kale" (literally meaning peeled wood, a metaphor for an act of swift justice), citizens have established self-defence organisations to protect their neighborhoods from gangs.

Batukeshwar Dutt (18 November 1910 – 20 July 1965) was an Indian revolutionary and a freedom fighter in the Indian independence movement. He is best known for his participation in the Central Legislative Assembly bombing in 1929 along with Bhagat Singh. The aim of the bombing was to protest against the repressive and discriminatory measures enacted by the British colonial government. Dutt and Singh deliberately courted arrest after the bombing, using the trial as an opportunity to raise awareness about the unjust nature of British rule in India. Dutt's commitment to the cause of independence and his willingness to sacrifice his personal freedom made him an iconic figure in the struggle against imperialism. Dutt and Bhagat Singh went on a historic hunger strike while in prison, demanding better treatment for political prisoners. The hunger strike lasted 63 days, drawing attention to the plight of political prisoners and intensifying the call for independence. Dutt's commitment and courage during the hunger strike made him a symbol of resistance against colonial rule.



ON THIS MONTH



July 28, 1972: Marks the martyrdom of Charu Majumdar, a founding member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) [CPI(ML)], who played a pivotal role in the Communist movement in India. Com. CM and others' call for armed struggle against feudalism and imperialism coupled

with the fire of Naxalbari inspired generations of activists in their fight for a new democracy. His martyrdom serves as a reminder of the commitment and sacrifices made by communist revolutionaries in their quest for a more equitable society. Read an interview of com Abhijit Mazumdar on the relevance of Naxalbari today on page 5.

The Telangana peasants' revolt was sparked when on 4th July, 1946, Doddi Komaraiah, a peasant leader was killed in a clash with a landlord. For more details on this revolt, refer to the article on page 11.



July 1, 1994: Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) led the indigenous uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, demanding land reform, indigenous rights, and an end to neoliberal policies that perpetuate inequality.

July 11, 1996: The Bathani Tola Massacre- A brutal massacre of Dalits and other marginalized communities in Bathani Tola village, Bihar, by upper-caste landlords, happened exposing the deep-rooted caste oppression that persists in society.

July 11, 2004: Phangiam Manorama Devi, a young Manipuri woman, was sexually assaulted and murdered by members of the Indian paramilitary forces. The perpetrators have been shielded by the draconian AFSPA. Read the article on page 9 to know more about such laws.

14 July 1789: The Bastille prison fell on this day marking the beginning of the French Revolution, when the working class under the leadership of the fledgling French bourgeoisie rose against the tyranny of the feudal monarchy.

July 26, 1953: The start of the armed struggle led by Che Guevara and Fidel Castro called the 26th of July Movement, which ultimately overthrew the U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista, dealing a death blow to US puppet regimes in Cuba.

July 31, 1880: Munshi Premchand, a renowned Hindi writer known for his insightful portrayals of social issues, rural life, and the struggles of the working class was born on this day.

July 31, 1907: Birth date of D.D. Kosambi, an influential Marxist historian and mathematician, who made significant contributions to the study of ancient Indian history and social systems.

July 31, 1940: Marks the martyrdom of Udham Singh, an Indian revolutionary who assassinated Michael O'Dwyer, the former Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, in retaliation for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. After the assassination, Udham Singh was arrested and later hanged on July 31, 1940, by the British colonial authorities.