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Spark 



We want
jobs, not
temples!

Where are
the jobs?

UNEMPLOYMENT
EXCHANGE

UPDATES ON STUDENT MOVEMENTS

INDIA bloc-backed student outfits protest against education policy in Delhi

Sixteen students' wings associated with the INDIA bloc called for a protest at Jantar Mantar against the National Education Policy, privatisation, and commercialisation of education. These student organisations have come together under the banner of 'United Students of India' to protest against the onslaught on education. Around 16 student outfits have called for mega protests in



New Delhi and on February 1st in Chennai as part of their demonstration against the NEP 2020. The alliance includes the Students' Federation of India (SFI), All India Students' Association (AISA), All India Students' Federation (AISF), National Students' Union of India (NSUI), Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Samiti (CYSS), and other Dalit, Adivasi and Dravidian student outfits.



Student organisations protest against UGC draft guidelines proposing the de-reservation of positions in higher education institutions

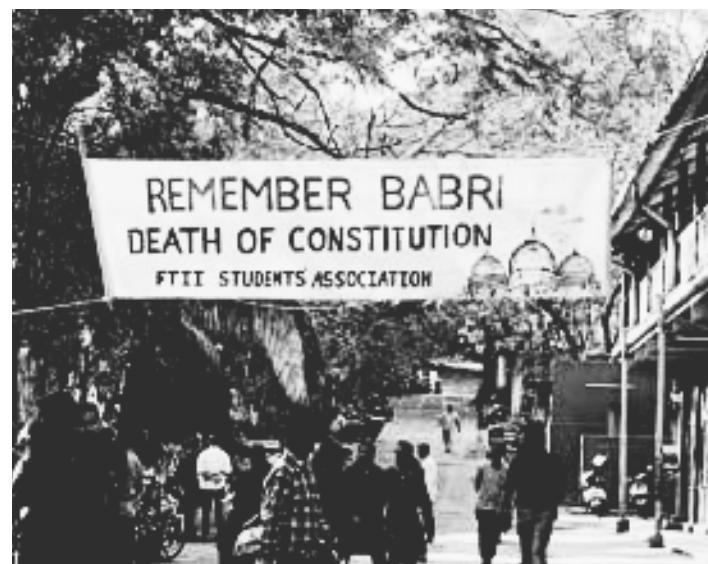
The recent UGC draft guidelines, which propose "de-reserving" positions in higher education institutions designated for SC, ST and OBC candidates in the event that qualified candidates are not available, were met with protests on 29th January in Delhi by student organisations. Along with left-leaning student organisations, the JNU student's Union (JNUSU) protested outside the UGC headquarters, calling for the proposal to be rescinded. There was severe backlash from academic circles across the nation as well leading to UGC issuing a clarification regarding the proposal being revoked.

Protest At Hyderabad's Osmania University over security breach at girls' hostel

Students of Osmania University in Hyderabad today staged a protest over a security breach at the girls' hostel. The students claimed that at least three people allegedly entered the university's postgraduate (PG) girls' hostel. Students claimed that intruders entered the hostel premises and one of them entered the washroom. Students were seen raising "We want justice" slogans as they sat in front of their hostel while police personnel were seen persuading them to leave the spot. They staged a protest in front of the hostel demanding better security arrangements, claiming there are no CCTV cameras installed at the hostel.

Student groups across India oppose the Hindutva frenzy around Ram Mandir

Student groups across India oppose the institutional celebration and communal frenzy around the Ram Mandir inauguration atop the ruins of the Babri Masjid. Anand Patwardhan's 'Ram ke Naam' was screened across multiple campuses like IISc, APU etc. At FTII Pune, Hindutva goons attacked students on 23rd January for putting up a banner commemorating the Babri demolition. Ambedkar Periyar Phule Study Circle of IIT Bombay opposed the celebrations on campus. At Jamia Millia Islamia, a day-long strike was observed by students. At JNU, the students held a collective reading of the Preamble.



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"Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people."

-Karl Marx



Spark is a monthly magazine run by students and youth. Today, the state and the corporate controlled media are constantly propagating lies and fabricated news that suit their interests which makes exposition of the truth an imminent task. The intention of Spark is to provide an alternative perspective on issues that affect the masses. Please send your valuable opinion, comments, criticism and articles to spark_karnataka@protonmail.com or call us at 8584056936

Resist the fascist Hindutva frenzy!

Demand universal education and dignified employment for all!

Join the workers'-farmers' strike on 16th February!

Ten years ago Narendra Modi came to power with the promises of ushering in *Achhe Din* or better days, recovering black money, and creating one crore jobs every year. He got a second chance in 2019 when he promised to double farmers' income and build a pucca house for every family by 2022. Now, a few weeks before the declaration of 2024 elections, when every promise made to the people has bombed, Modi carried out "Pran Pratishtha" at the half-done Ram Temple at Ayodhya to ask for votes. This event was a victory of the right-wing reactionary Ram Janmabhoomi movement which caused demolition of Babri masjid and thousands of deaths. The movement was the pivot of the Bharatiya Janata Party's political campaign since its inception in 1980 and reached its peak in the 90s along with opening up of the market in the name of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG) in line with US imperialist diktats. While leaders like Advani, Murali Manohar Joshi, and Atal Bihari Vajpayee are the ones who raised this right-wing reactionary movement into popularity, Modi is projected as the leader who brought victory to it. Massive media propaganda, release of movies like "Mein Atal Hoon", are creating a climate of communal polarization and hatred before the general elections.

This construction budgeted at Rs. 1800 crore has led to the demolition of houses, shops, mosques, and temples, displacing thousands of people in Ayodhya. It has created opportunities for profit in land deals for Adani and leaders linked to the RSS-BJP. With such funds, hundreds of public schools and hospitals could have been built for the people. The pending loans of lakhs of farmers and

labourers could have been waived, rather the Indian banks waived off loans worth Rs. 10.6 trillion for capitalists in December 2023.

This waiving of corporate loans was in spite of the fact that the national debt stood at Rs. 155.6 trillion, or 57.1% of GDP, at the end of March 2023. During the same period, the debt of state governments stood at about 28% of the GDP. Even the US imperialist institution International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned that India's general debt may exceed 100% of its GDP by fiscal 2028. By December 2024, it is projected that there is a probability of 62.94% that the United States will fall into another economic recession. The 'global' economy (read imperialism) is in acute crisis needing the most reactionary fascist friends like Modi in the dependent economies like India to stay afloat.

As directed by the imperialist institutions, in the name of reforms, attacks have been brought down on students and workers with National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) and four labour codes. There was a big blow to the fascist march of RSS-BJP with the historic farmers' movement. Now, attempts are being made to malign the movement and enact state level anti-farmer- pro corporate laws. Along with massive loot of jal-jangal-jameen, a selling spree of public property and infrastructure to domestic and foreign corporations is carried out. Rampant privatization and contractualization of all possible sectors is on the verge of completion. Any opposition is met with fascist hands equipped with the oppressive UAPA, 'Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita' and 'Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita'.

Education is being made exclusive, the economy is debt-ridden, unemployment is rising with people even losing faith in the job market. Unemployment is at a 45-year high and the 8-9% rate of unemployment has become the norm. The situation is such that the youth are even ready to move to warring Israel for jobs. In this situation, what the fascist RSS-BJP can offer to the youth of India is a beggar's bowl at the temple door.

A joint forum of trade unions and farmers' bodies has given a call for a nationwide general strike and Grameen Bandh (rural strike) on February 16, to protest this overall assault by the RSS-BJP Modi government on the people. This strike is being organized by Samyukta Horata and Joint Committee of Trade Unions (JCTU) in Karnataka. The forum is pressing for their demands which include guaranteed employment as a fundamental right, higher minimum support price, minimum wage of Rs. 26,000 per month for workers, repeal of four labour codes, repeal amendments made to IPC/CrPC, etc. The students and youth of Karnataka should unite and carry out massive propaganda in favour of this strike and against the fascist agenda of the RSS-BJP. It is only in the streets that fascists can be defeated. Ram Janmabhoomi movement may continue in newer forms by targeting Kashi, Mathura etc. It can only be countered with a strong revolutionary, anti-fascist movement uniting students-youth, workers-peasants, Dalits, religious minorities, Adivasis, women, and other oppressed communities. We, the student-youth, have a very critical role to play in forging this alliance to build a militant movement against this fascist regime. It is the task of the hour.

There are no jobs available here!

Sachin

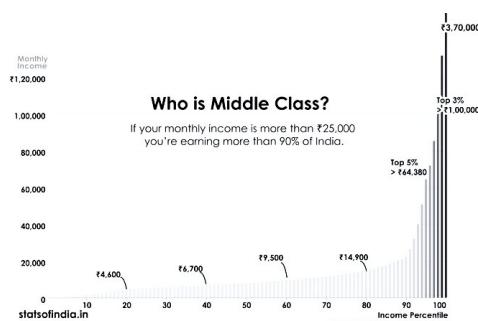
It is difficult for me to imagine what "personal liberty" is enjoyed by an unemployed person, who goes about hungry, and cannot find employment. Real liberty can exist only where exploitation has been abolished, where there is no oppression of some by others, where there is no unemployment and poverty, where a man is not haunted by the fear of being tomorrow deprived of work, of home and of bread. Only in such a society is real, and not paper, personal and every other liberty possible.

-Com. Joseph Stalin

While the ruling party and their supporters are celebrating the building owners of the means of production. Thus of a temple on the ruins of a Masjid, the citizens of our country are willing to take jobs in Israel despite knowing no benefits. If they don't want to work there's an ongoing war and that their lives are at stake. While it is being portrayed as everything is best in our country, there are hundreds of youth lined up (some even postgraduates) in hours to their workers because there is Haryana to get jobs as construction an abundance of workforce ready to workers in Israel. Prime Minister Modi came to power promising the citizens of India 1 crore jobs every year. After winning he rather promoted selling pakoras as a job. Even the farmers who were already self-employed don't want to farm anymore as there is no profit in agriculture with an all time rise in price of seeds and fertilisers leading to heavy debts.

The situation is not just sad. There's a positive side to it too. But not for the working class people, for the ruling classes. "While 12.2 crore people lost jobs, Indian billionaires grew richer by 35% during lockdown", says the Oxfam report, 2021. It means more jobs were lost in just a few months than what was promised 10 years ago, as the dear friends of Modi became richer.

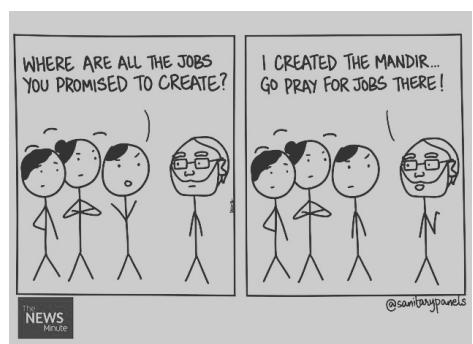
It may seem that the government doesn't care about jobs, but it's the opposite. The government wants people to be unemployed so that they can be forced into becoming cheap labourers who can serve the ruling classes and help them increase their revenue even more. Increase in unemployment is an inevitable part of the design of a capitalist society intended to keep the



meant to tighten the iron fist of capital around the necks of workers. The NEP 2020 has been designed to churn out cheap labourers. Be it the introduction of vocational courses from an early age, the multiple entry-exit system, or the privatisation of education, every move goes against providing the masses with a dignified life.

So, what are these unemployed people doing? They either remain at home and struggle to get their stomachs filled or become part of mobs, demolish mosques, hoist saffron flags on top of churches, join political rallies for petrol or alcohol worth a hundred bucks. They kill and get killed in the name of religion.

In the past month two things happened-one, the inauguration of Ram Mandir and two, the celebration of Republic Day. On day one, mass killings of thousands of people were celebrated and on the other, the government promoted a picture of the Preamble without the words 'secular' and 'socialist'. At least, they are being honest about it. They should be even more honest and remove the words 'justice', 'equality', and 'liberty' from it because I don't see any justice in wanting to work in a country where a war is going on and you can die because your own country is incapable of providing you basic dignity. I don't see equality either where the majority of a population loses its jobs but the billionaires become 35% richer. Echoing Com. Stalin, in no way can I imagine the kind of liberty any unemployed person may have.



Missing: Campus Democracy

An MCC student

Mount Carmel College was founded by the Congregation of Carmelite Sisters of St. Teresa in 1944 in Thrissur, under the title of Carmel College in the State of Kerala. It was relocated to Bangalore in 1948, with the objective of meeting the higher education needs of women, particularly those from minority communities. Since then, the institution claims to be dedicated to empowering women from socio-economically disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds. However the recent development does not support this claim as the institution has made an undemocratic move affecting the women. The college currently has a total strength of 7500 students from various educational levels ranging from Undergraduate to PhD.

On the 4th of January, the management declared its decision, through an instagram post, to transform Mount Carmel College from a women's college to a coeducational institution starting from the next academic year 2024-25. With this announcement comes numerous concerns that the management has chosen to dismiss and overlook.

Many students who come from

conservative households are being forced to discontinue their education in this institution that has always claimed to empower them. The seats that would otherwise be occupied by women will be open to men once this decision gets implemented. Mount Carmel College being a women's college is one of the chief reasons why a lot of students took admission here. Such a huge decision that would alter a significant aspect of the college would technically amount to a breach of agreement, as this decision is being implemented while the current batches of students are still in the middle of their courses. Moreover, the undemocratic manner in which the decision was taken is appalling. Students were not involved in the decision-making process in any way. Growing concerns about the safety and security of the students on campus is another factor to note. The inadequacy of the infrastructure on campus to facilitate this decision is concerning. Furthermore, the students have also had to face a lot of misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic comments particularly after the announcement of this decision, which leads to concerns regarding the

space for women and queer people getting shrunk.

The students of Mount Carmel College carried out a signature campaign against this unjust decision of the management. It received massive support from students as over 1,200 signatures were collected. It was submitted to the management along with a letter containing the concerns and the principal demand that this decision be revoked and there be a democratically elected student body to prevent such incidents in future. The management, however, responded with apathy to the plight of the students, clearly showing that they are more concerned about profiteering than students.

The undemocratic manner in which this decision was taken clearly exposes the limitations resulting from the absence of a democratically elected student body that would represent students and voice their concerns. The undemocratic and authoritative nature of the management is not a new phenomenon, as it is widely seen in campuses across the country. Students are the primary stakeholders of any institution, and have to organize in order to exercise their democratic rights.

State Atrocity Silences Innocent Infant

Sushant

A 6-month-old infant was murdered by the security forces on 1st January, 2024 in Mutvendi Village of Bijapur District of Chhattisgarh. While the Bastar IG P. Sunderraj has claimed that the death occurred as a result of crossfire in an encounter between the Maoists and the security forces, the father of the infant has alleged that there was no encounter with the Maoists at the time of the incident.

The government, supported by imperialists, is using armed forces to control and exploit the mineral-rich regions of Bastar, and using violence against resisting Adivasis.

The government is using armed forces and violence to capture the jal-jangal-jameen of the Adivasis who are dependent on the forests for their lives and livelihoods, to set up capitalist Special Economic Zones. The rampant militarization through multiple paramilitary camps and police camps has resulted in increased surveillance and violence, further giving rise to fake encounters, sexual assaults, theft, and arrest of Adivasis on the pretext of being Naxalites. At the same time, policemen and security forces remain unpunished. Residents of Bastar are not only forced to face the violence of



Forum Against Corporatization and Militarization (FACAM), a collective of student groups, held a protest gathering at Delhi University Art Faculty against this killing on 10th January

displacement but also state violence in response to their protests. People across the country must unite to struggle against the ruling classes' exploitative actions and foreign influences.

Indian Science Congress: Murder of an Institution

Aratrika

Ever since the RSS-BJP came into power at the central government with Narendra Modi as the face, every year the Indian Science Congress would make the headlines for all the wrong reasons. This year again it has made the headlines, albeit for a completely different kind of reason. The central government has finally decided to stop funding the annual event citing a host of reasons. Before going into the current status of the Congress or the merit of the dismissal, a few words must be said about its rich legacy.

Since its inception in 1914, the sessions organised by the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA) have been held every year, except the time the COVID-19 pandemic was raging. In whatever form modern science has developed on Indian soil, the Congresses have had a part to play in those. The ISCA was the brainchild of two British academics serving in India — Prof. PS MacMahon of Canning College, Lucknow, and Prof JL Simonsen of Presidency College, Madras. It was modelled on the British Association for the Advancement of Science. The Congress was aimed to provide a platform for discussion on the latest developments in pure and applied sciences as well as on the connection between science and society. Since then hundreds of scientists have been associated with it across the nation. Post-independence it has always been the prime minister who has inaugurated this Congress giving it a unique political stamp. Many times, it has been the platform from which related policies have been declared by the prime ministers as well.

The post-2014 situation demands special attention. The RSS-BJP practically declared war against all rational and progressive voices and practices prevalent in this nation through political coercion, threats, and even death.

Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare, M.M. Kalburgi, and Gauri Lankesh were rationalists assassinated by Hindutva goons for their staunch critique of the ideals of Hindutva that feed off of pseudoscientific practices prevalent in the society. The centuries old fight against the proponents of pseudoscience who use it as a tool to preserve their hegemony, thus continues. Thanks to this saffron regime in power right now, the Indian Science Congress too became a playground for absolute mockery of science in the past few years. The situation worsened to the point that it was being deemed as a ‘circus’ by respected members of the scientific community.

In such a scenario, the Indian Science Congress Association required a complete overhaul to bring back its glory and relevance. Rather than putting the effort to restore its glory days, the Department of Science and Technology that provides the funding for the Congress, has declared stoppage of funding for this event till it ‘mends its ways’. One may wonder, what ways are to be mended. To clarify this the DST has brought charges of “financial irregularities” and a “unilateral decision” by a few ISCA office bearers, without government approval, to shift the venue of the 2024 session from Lucknow University to Lovely Professional University at Jalandhar as the reasons for discontinuing funding for the Congress indefinitely. Expectedly, the recent instances of spreading pseudoscientific claims from the stage of the Congress never got cited as a reason. The allotted fund of Rs. 5 crores was thus summarily dismissed.

The venue for the 2024 Indian Science Congress was initially decided to be Lucknow university. Upon cancellation of funds for this year, Lovely Professional University (LPU) agreed to host the event. At the last minute, even LPU backed off leaving the organisers

in a limbo. ISCA President Arvind Saxena informed that the association had decided to post an appeal on its website inviting universities to host the event possibly in February. Basically, the whole Congress has been relegated to the mercy of the future as of now. It can very well be concluded that the century old Indian Science Congress joins Vigyan Prasar, and a host of science awards, in the dustbin. The matter of course did not end here, the DST rather channelled funds into promoting another science meet called Indian International Science Festival, an annual science festival organised by the Vijnana Bharati- the science wing of the RSS. This is a clear subversion of the scientific temper and secular values a body like DST is supposed to uphold. At this IISF organised in Delhi last month, the Surya Tilak instrument parched upon a miniature model of the Ram Mandir meant to project sunlight on the Ram Lalla idol jointly made by central research institutes like the Indian Institute of Astrophysics and Central Building Research Institute, was one of the biggest attractions.

Whatever be the recent track record of the Indian Science Congress, disposing of it indefinitely is an outright attack on science. Diversion of the same funds towards a saffron project under the garb of science, paints the picture of an even darker future. Fascist forces always try to capture every possible institution at their disposal to the fullest extent possible. If and when this exercise faces an obstacle, the institution gets bulldozed. Pseudoscience has always been a tool to dampen dissent in a society, a tool that fascists through history have used expertly. With the rise of Vijnana Bharati, the saffron regime has strengthened another medium to carry out pseudoscientific propaganda.

(Republished from *Liberation*, February, 2024)

Unravelling the Aftermath: Karnataka's Hijab Ban and the Suppression of Muslim students

Prajwal

With regards to the hijab ban, author Sowmya Rajendran says, 'In a society where the state punishes women for not wearing it, the feminist should fight against the state. In a society where the state punishes women for wearing it, the feminist should fight against the state.'

It has been two years since the Karnataka High Court issued an interim order in February 2022, imposing a ban on wearing hijab in educational institutes with certain policies around uniforms. In late December 2022, the Government Pre-University College in Udupi prohibited Muslim students from wearing hijabs inside the classroom. Six students protested this move, but the administration refused to change its new rule, leading to further protests from Muslim students. Subsequently, in January, hundreds of Hindu students arrived at their colleges with saffron scarves around their necks, demanding that students with hijabs be denied entry into campuses. They argued that hijabs violated the rules on uniforms.

In February, several other colleges also decided to ban students from wearing headscarves. In the following days, numerous videos surfaced showing Muslim female students being stopped at college gates, forced to remove their burqas and hijabs outside, harassed by teachers and right-wing student groups, and, in some cases, being sent home if they refused to take off their headscarves. Additionally, instances of hoisting saffron flags on school flagpoles were reported in Shivamogga. The state witnessed strong protests by student unions and the Muslim community at large against the restriction on hijab. Karnataka witnessed Muslim girls dropping out from government institutions and pre-university colleges. Those who could afford it opted for private institutions to continue their studies, while others vanished from the page of educational statistics.

The Government of Karnataka, utilising powers under the 'Karnataka Education Act, 1983', section 145(1), has granted recognized educational institutions the authority to determine uniforms for their students. This provision allows educational institutions to maintain a level of autonomy where the state cannot intervene in matters such as regulating fees or uniforms, even if these regulations appear to infringe upon individual human rights. The ban on wearing burqa/hijabs in colleges is undoubtedly a restriction on Muslim women's right to religion, as protected under the International Human Rights Law (IHRL). The central question revolves around the validity of this restriction. The government's decision to prohibit hijab-clad students doesn't seem to be supported by any specific law or government order, making it evidently illegal. Despite the government framing the ban as a measure to restrict religious symbols in educational institutions, there is no reported case of a Hindu student being denied entry for wearing tilak or having religious threads around their wrist in the state. Rather than viewing the ban as a mere restriction on a piece of cloth it is a direct assault on democracy and access to education for Muslim women. While the hijab is arguably seen as a strong symbol of patriarchy, combating patriarchy should not come at the expense of education. Coercively disrobing a woman is seen as equally detrimental to her agency as coercively veiling her. It is an attack on their autonomy.

The order to revoke the ban was passed last December, while a positive step, unfortunately did not result in efforts to bring back the drop-outs. The statistics on Muslim women's access to education are indeed concerning.

According to a report from 2007-2008, only 1% of Muslim women had access to education. Although there was a notable increase to 16% in 2017-2018, it



Illustration by Kareemgraphy

is troubling that 16% Muslim women dropped out of colleges under Mangalore University due to the ban. This university is situated in coastal Karnataka, an area that has experienced communal polarisation over the decades, particularly with the rise of Hindutva nationalism represented by organisations such as Bajrang Dal, Hindu Jagarana Vedike, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) etc.

The fascist government's decisions in the past few years have significantly jeopardised the education of Muslims in general. 4% reservation for Muslims under OBC category was scrapped and distributed among Vokkaliga and Lingayat castes, who are the upper caste communities historically enjoying the status of chieftains and zamindars. They already have major influence in governance along with the EWS quota of 10%.

Dipankar Bhattacharya of CPI(ML) Liberation, aptly captures the situation by stating, "Muslims are emerging as India's new Dalits." This observation aligns with the concerning trend in higher education, where the Muslim student strength saw a decline of 1.79 lakh in 2020-21. In the academic year

Origin of Caste: Part II

Anupam

2019-20, 21 lakh Muslim students were enrolled in higher education, but this number fell to 19.21 lakh in 2020-21. Many Muslim students come from low-income families and struggle to cover the cost of higher education. Rather than addressing these financial challenges through aid and reservations, the state has taken steps backwards by not only stripping reservations but also cancelling at least three scholarships that supported minority students pursuing pre-matric, MPhil, and PhD degrees.

Attacks on Muslim student activists and groups are also rampant. As a crackdown on student groups, the fascist government declared the Campus Front of India as an unlawful association under UAPA and imposed a temporary ban for 5 years with both the state government and the judiciary supporting the restriction. Activists like Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam, Gulfisha Fatima etc. are languishing indefinitely in jails under the UAPA. Police booked a bogus case on Atikur Rahman while on his way to show solidarity to the family of the dalit girl who was raped and murdered in Hathras. 7 Kashmiri Muslims were booked under UAPA claiming they celebrated when Australia won in a cricket match against India. There are numerous cases where students are falsely booked under UAPA, in fact 50% of those who are accused under UAPA are under 30.

In today's India, the educational landscape stands as a stark reflection of systemic injustices and discriminatory practices perpetrated by the BJP government meant to target Muslim students. The challenges faced by Muslim students extend beyond educational barriers, encompassing a hostile environment where activism and dissent are met with unwarranted repression.

The earliest ideological resistance faced by the caste system were from the Shramanas. The Shramanas were wandering spiritual seekers who came from non-Brahmin castes. They lived in forests as a spiritual community (sangha). The autonomous communities were designed on the model of republics with decisions made by assemblies. Caste differences were absent in the sanghas. The Shramanas possessed a radical view opposite to that of Brahminism and they used to propagate these thoughts across the land. Their practice included austerity, meditation, and the production and dissemination of knowledge. Although various streams existed in the Shramana movement, all generally rejected a supreme god Brahma as creator and stood for equality of mankind. Five Shramana schools are identified- the Lokayata or Charvaka school taught by Ajita, the Ajnana school of agnostics led by Sanjayin, the Ajivika school founded by Gosal, the Jain or Nirgrantha school by Mahavir and the Buddhist school by Buddha. Two of these ideologies (Buddhism and Jainism) got institutionalized as religion and gained popularity among the Vaishyas and Shudras. The agrarian economy at that juncture did not permit these two Varnas to pursue expensive rituals based on sacrifice of animals, including cattle wealth. Moreover, the newly formed states (Kosala and Magadh which emerged around 600 BCE) imposed taxes on the lower Varnas. This entire discontentment among Vaishyas and Shudras (who paid taxes and laboured) pushed them towards new thinkers like Buddha and Mahavir. As institutionalised religions, Buddhism and Jainism also spread in south India from the 3rd century BCE and were welcomed by the artisans and traders in town and semi-tribal groups. As Roman trade expanded, the Buddhists and Jains received appreciable donations from the artisans and trade-guilds. At around 200 CE, as the royal patronages went on increasing,

Buddhism contended for political influence, maintaining its cover of religion that opposed Chaturvarna system and Brahminical oppression. 200 CE witnessed the first major state formation in Deccan with establishment of Satavahana power. These powers supported the varna system and Brahminism. Simultaneously, they provided economic support to the Buddhist centres in Nagarjunakonda and Kanchi.

Although the philosophical contents of these two religions (Buddhism and Jainism) changed over time, they enormously challenged Brahminism over a period of 1000 years. But the anti-caste motion of these ideologies remained passive. The oppressed Chandals were not allowed in Buddha's sanghas and the slaves were not permitted to join sanghas without the permission of their masters. Shudras from the sita lands (land directly farmed by the state with the help of Shudra labour) were not also allowed to be a part of the sanghas. In practice, Buddhism avoided confrontation with the odds. Weber says "early Buddhism did not worship the gods of lower castes or the Dalits but the gods of higher castes". He even observed that most of Buddha's disciples who belonged to the sanghas were from high castes and had Brahmin backgrounds. Randoll rightly analysed Buddhism to be a reform movement of the educated religious people (Brahmins), rather than a revolt against Brahminism.

In this scenario when Buddhism and Jainism had been well-accepted by the lower varnas as well as by few monarchies, Brahminism expanded in other sects, the most prominent being Shaivism and Vaishnavism. These models of popular devotion cult gained popularity among the peasants. Sacrificial yagnas became symbolic and the tribal elites were incorporated into the Brahmin varna. The principle of ahimsa was adopted from Buddhism. Tribal rituals (for example agni rituals) and worship of mother Goddesses were also adopted. This

Brahminical approach formed the background of the absorption of the tribes into the expanding agricultural economy. Thus, Brahminism with Varnashram Dharma played a pivotal role in the agrarian development and surplus generation, in legitimizing the rule, carrying regular and periodic rituals related to cultivation. It ensured the consolidation of the feudal economy which in turn assured its hegemony over Buddhism and Jainism that failed to suit the feudal order. Although Buddhism and Jainism adopted the jati system, their role in economy perished and their ideology remained confined within a limited domain, apart from the life of the exploited people. In the deep south, the first Pallava ruler (575 CE) who was a Jain at the beginning converted to Shaivism. After conversion, Mahendravarman had the record of killing 8000 Jains. The period from 7th to 8th century CE marked the advent of Adi Shankara and fierce onslaught on Buddhism. By that time, degeneration had infiltrated into the monasteries with rising affluence of monks and enormous donations from kings. At that time, their philosophies had no means to deal with the mundane life of people. Many monasteries maintained labourers to take care of the monks and plough the land. This ideological degeneration encouraged the penultimate blow from Shankara in around 788 CE, first in the ideological sphere and then through immense violence. Destruction of Buddhist viharas, conversion of vihara into temple were followed by physical attacks and killing of monks. During these attacks, there was no resistance from the masses as Buddhism had become just a monastrial movement with its huge endowments from the rich.

On the other side, Brahminism adopted shrewd strategies to include whatever attracted the backward castes towards Buddhism. The most intelligent stroke was appropriating Buddha into an ‘incarnation’ (avatar) of Hindu god Vishnu. It is true to conclude that among the Shramana school, Buddhism and partly Jainism opposed Brahminism to an appreciable extent. But they failed to address the backward caste people as the caste system co-existed in their life span and did not face serious resistance from these schools.

Beating the Colonial Powers at Their Game: The Draconian New Criminal Laws- Part I

Comrade Clifton D'Rozario

In December of 2023, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), during the winter session of the Parliament, pushed through three crucial laws – Bharatiya Sakshya Sanhita, 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 and Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 replacing the Indian Evidence Act, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Penal Code respectively. These new Criminal Codes were granted Presidential assent on 25th December 2023, but do not come into force until a notification to this effect was issued by the Union government.

The new criminal laws are primarily an exercise in re-numbering and/or re-structuring of provisions in the existing three laws, besides which a small number of necessary changes have been incorporated including proving statutory basis to “zero FIRs”, decriminalisation of homosexuality, introducing a time limit for completing investigations, recognition of electronic evidence as primary evidence, expansion of the scope of secondary evidence among few others. However, it is another set of changes, though small in number, that are concerning since these are pernicious, from the point of view of human rights and civil liberties in the country.

Encoding draconian provisions into the new penal code:

• Terrorist Act:

A major and concerning development is the introduction of the crime of "terrorist act" in the BNS, which did not exist in the IPC.

Section 113 of the BNS, adopts a broadened definition of a “terrorist act” from the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), while doing away with two (howsoever inadequate) safeguards present in the UAPA, namely, sanction

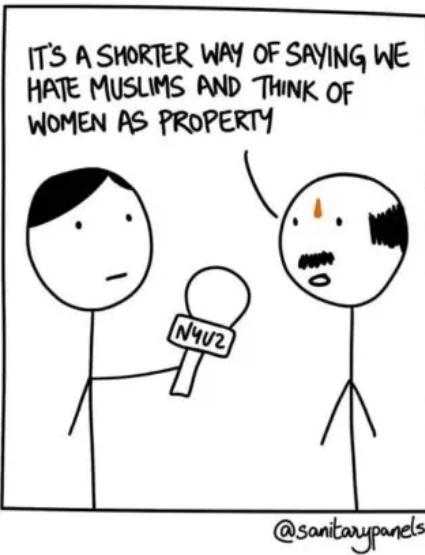
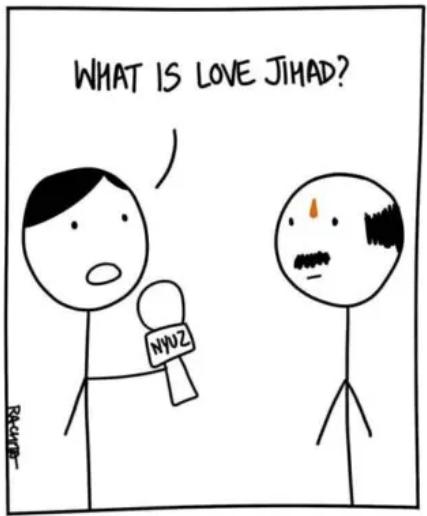
and mandatory requirement of an independent authority to peruse the evidence before sanction is granted.

With this new BNS provision, the government has the unbridled choice to prosecute and imprison political opponents using either the UAPA (with its cursory procedural safeguards) or the BNS (without even that fig leaf). By using this provision, the government can declare as terrorist activity, any nonviolent struggle and movement for democracy or social, political or economic justice, or any public discourse that conflicts with the government narrative.

• Retaining sedition law under a new nomenclature:

Contrary to popular belief, the offence of sedition (section 124A of IPC) has been retained under section 152 of the BNS, under a new nomenclature, and a more severe punishment.

The Union government has ignored the concern that sedition is an over-broad, arbitrary offence which has no place in a constitutional republic. It has broadened the ambit of this already over-broad provision to criminalise even “encouraging feelings of separatist activity”, ignoring the Supreme Court requirement of the speech to be linked to the promotion of violence. The Union Government makes a mockery of the order of the Supreme Court suspending trials in sedition cases. This order came against the backdrop of indiscriminate use of sedition to quell dissent, obstruct free speech and target any opposition to the dominant ruling class ideology of crony capitalism and Hindutva. 2010 – 2021, has famously been called the Decade of Darkness, with more than 800 sedition cases being filed against



13,000 people. In fact more than 500 cases of sedition were filed since the BJP came into power in 2014 and 2019. It also found that the conviction rate was 0.1%.

• Criminalising hunger strikes:

Section 226 has been introduced in the BNS that criminalises any attempt to commit suicide with the intent to compel or restrain any public servant from discharging his official duty. This alleged crime carries punishment of simple imprisonment upto one year, fine or community service.

Clearly the sole purpose of this provision is to prohibit hunger strikes, targeting the right of people to peaceful and democratic protest. Hunger strikes is democratic form of dissent and resistance, and forms a spirited and important part of the history of Indian freedom struggle - be it Gandhi or Bhagat Singh.

It is ironic that Modi who rode to power on the wave of the hunger strikes during the anti-corruption movement, has criminalised and denied to the people this form of protest.

• Criminalising promise to marry:

Section 69 of the BNS states that whoever, by deceitful means or by making promise to marry to a woman without any intention of fulfilling the same, has sexual intercourse with her, such sexual intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description

for a term which may extend to ten years and shall also be liable to fine. The explanation to section 69 states that “deceitful means” shall include inducement for, or false promise of employment or promotion, or marrying by suppressing identity.

Right-wing groups loudly proclaim that this provision is going to be instrumental in countering the so-called “love jihad”, since the explanation categorically includes “marrying by suppressing identity”.

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Love jihad – this pejorative and communal term for inter-religious marriages is a conspiracy theory on baseless claims that Muslim men suppress their religious identity and “lure” Hindu women into romantic relationships and then convert them to Islam. This claim has been instrumental in demonising and “otherising” the Muslim community despite being a bogey. Remember that even the Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs G. Kishan Reddy stated on the floor of Parliament on 04.02.2020 that “no such case of ‘Love Jihad’ has been reported by any of the central agencies”.

Alongside inter-religion marriages, it is inter-caste relationships that have been targeted and this provision could very well be weaponised against them. The

BJP government, in pursuing its communal casteist agenda, has ignored the rampant murders of couples, solely because they belong to different castes and communities, also called “(dis)honour killings”. Instead it grants statutory blessings to notions propagating inequality, hatred and are snatching away the rights of the people of this country, and which are steeped in patriarchal, paternalistic notions, where women need to be “saved” from “predatory” men, thus denying the agency and the autonomy of the woman.

• Enhancing arbitrary powers of the police:

It is widely known that the criminal justice system in India has been weaponised against religious minorities, other vulnerable communities like Dalits and Adivasis, and the poor. The new codes by granting arbitrary powers to the police and effectively sanctioning breach of Fundamental Rights by the law enforcement agencies. This will only further entrench a system of oppression through law which will be wielded against the vulnerable.

• Sanctioning 24 hours detention by the police:

Section 172 of BNSS, is a new provision that is introduced that did not exist in the CrPC. According to this provision, all persons are bound to conform to the lawful directions of a police officer given in fulfilment of any of his duties and such police officer is empowered to detain/remove any person resisting, refusing, ignoring or disregarding such orders, and further he “may either take such person before a Magistrate or, in petty cases, release him as soon as possible within a period of twenty-four hours”. Thus statutory sanction has been given to the police to detain persons, without complying with the safeguards around arrest since this would not be deemed to be arrest.

(The author is the State Secretary of CPIML Liberation Karnataka. Republished from Liberation, February, 2024)

Green Revolution- Part I

Shailendra and Sreeganga



The first half of the twentieth century saw peasant and workers' uprisings in different parts of the world. The imperialist powers were determined to counter all obstructions in their path. Discussions on land redistribution were gaining great traction and people were starting to see the flaws of the "democracy of capitalist society". With the guise of saving the third world nations from poverty and hunger, which was caused by the imperialist wars in the first place, the Green Revolution became a project to institutionalise agriculture and integrate it into the capitalist market.

The Green Revolution changed the way agriculture was practised in many countries, mostly the third world, the "developing" countries. The introduction of new technologies, high yielding crop varieties, irrigation technology, and fertilisers became a significant drivers of the program initiated by the US based Rockefeller foundation. The intentions with which the Green Revolution was introduced are far from innocent, it mimics the imperialist agenda of the capitalist production of food grains during the company raj. It is important to look at the different knowledge cultures used by the west to legitimise the green revolution program. Implementation of such programs have left lasting impacts in the agricultural landscape in places where it was implemented, wrecking havoc to the traditional agricultural cycle that the locals were used to. The technological advancements that the program brought to possibly increase agricultural productivity were only fit for the rich farmers to adopt and rendered unfeasible for the peasants and small farmers. Having access to land and capital the elite/rich farmers readily absorbed the technology that the Green Revolution brought with it and by yielding large produce, became the loyal subjects of

the imperialist agenda of the corporate food regime. The Green Revolution is a process controlled by experts leading to the reproduction of social, economic, and political institutions. The seed-fertiliser packet is a key element in perpetuating political institutions. The consequences of this global "development" program has forever disturbed the ecological and environmental, but more importantly, political orientation of some regions in the world where it was implemented; places like Mexico, India, Philippines, parts of Africa, etc.

It must be duly noted that the advisory council that gave shape to the policies were financiers and councillors with a history of advancing capitalist interests. Agricultural theorists and economists who applauded the peasant revolutions in China and Vietnam were actively kept away from the discussions.

It becomes important now to go back to Mexico and revisit the agricultural program that was started by the Rockefeller Foundation and examine the political shifts it influenced and completely overturned traditional food production cycles. Mexico saw a great number of political uprisings from 1910 to 1940, beginning as a battle against the dictatorship under Porfirio Diaz, to wide-spread demands of land reforms and establishment of democratic institutions. The revolution led to the abolition of the Hacienda system, a feudal agrarian system, establishment of public schools, labour unions, distribution of land to peasants and indigenous communities. After the presidential power shifted from Lazaro Cardenaz, in 1940, to a much more conservative candidate, Avila Camacho,

the agricultural program began as a joint venture between the Rockefeller Foundation and the Mexican government (although the Mexican government didn't have a say, it was the Foundation that drove the decisions throughout). The cooperation envisioned by the Foundation met with resistance. Many scholars detested the US agronomists' approach to the local-social systems of food production that were already well established in Mexico. It must be duly noted that the advisory council that gave shape to the policies were financiers and councillors with a history of advancing capitalist interests. Agricultural theorists and economists who applauded the peasant revolutions in China and Vietnam were actively kept

away from the discussions. It was expressed that the commercialization of Mexican agriculture that the Americans envisioned cannot be achieved without upsetting the native economy and culture. Interventions, if any at all, should be approached from an appreciation of the already established economy (that is the local culture and mode of production of Mexico). The Mexican Agricultural program (MAP) strode away from subsistence (village level agriculture)

to a more commercial agriculture (city and factory based agriculture), which would require heavy standardisation on yield and the use of advanced technological instruments that are going to make the factory type production of agriculture possible. These new methods can only be absorbed by the privileged group of the population. It was also perceived that the success of the program would come at the disappearance of the native corns and other crops, completely destroying the indigenous agricultural industry of Mexico.

The program never intended to deal with the social reforms. The focus on increasing agricultural productivity over addressing social relations of production that were deeply unequal in nature resulted in the concentration of land

ownership in the hands of large landowners and agribusinesses, which further marginalised small farmers and indigenous communities. Adding on to these, the use of hybrid seeds and chemical fertilisers led to the displacement of traditional farming practices and the loss of traditional knowledge and biodiversity.

The MAP (Mexican Agricultural Program) was met with a lot of resistance by the peasants who were the majority of the population, not equipped, rather, not privileged enough to absorb the technological methods for a higher production.

These communities completely rejected the Green Revolution. Peasants resisting the program were labelled as “counter-Green Revolutionaries” and considered as “peasant conservatives”, disregarding the actual consequences of the program, represented by the majority of the population. Any upheaval against the infiltration of such imperialist forces, the elite ensured the subjugation of these by the intervention of military, CIA, and its associates. Wealthier farmers who were more equipped to absorb the methods of MAP, produced results favourable to the US government. The Green revolution significantly altered the relationship between social classes in the third world countries; it made the class divisions stronger.

This program's operation in Mexico is important to note because the foundation has used the results of MAP's implementation in the Mexican agricultural landscape to legitimise the mission of Green Revolution and expand it to Columbia and other Asian countries.



UPDATES ON PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS



Demand for Justice in Bilkis Bano Case

Civil society groups gathered at Freedom Park in Bengaluru, demanding the arrest and re-incarceration of the convicts in the Bilkis Bano case. Activists welcomed the Supreme Court's decision as a positive step toward rectifying past injustices. However, they criticized the convicts' pleas for extensions, citing reasons like family weddings, and called for their voluntary return to prison. The convicts have surrendered as of now.

Massive Human Chain Protest in Kerala

Millions of people from various walks of life formed an extensive human chain stretching 651 kilometers across Kerala on January 20. The protest aimed to denounce the BJP-led central government's neglect and discrimination against the state. Participants, including youth, workers, and cultural activists, highlighted grievances such as railway issues and recruitment bans. DYFI leaders inaugurated and led the event, emphasizing the need for continued resistance against the central government's policies.

Andhra Pradesh Anganwadi workers strike for better conditions.

The Anganwadi workers began a strike on December 12, demanding that the Andhra Pradesh government increase their salary, gratuity benefits, and raise the retirement age to 62, aligning with other government departments. Despite discussions with protesters failing, collectors statewide issued notices for them to resume duties immediately, warning of departmental action against those who did not return by January 5. After 42 days, the strike was called off on 23rd January after the government agreed to 10 of their 11 demands.

Maharashtra electricity workers strike against Adani privatization proposal

The workforce associated with the generation, transmission, and distribution of Maharashtra State electricity board went on strike to oppose the proposed privatisation of power distribution business by the entry of Adani transmission Ltd. MSEB Federation member's demands includes opposing entry of Adani power transmission in other part of Mumbai suburbs, demanding 40,000 contractual staff be regularised through special recruitment scheme, setting up new sub stations and stopping privatisation in hydro and thermal power plants.

Adani port opposed in Tamil Nadu

The villagers in Kattupalli- a small village located in Tiruvallur district along the Bay of Bengal coast are protesting against the expansion of an Adani-owned port as it would submerge their lands and wreak havoc on their livelihoods as they are primarily dependent on fishing.

Strikes rock Europe

More than 100,000 public sector workers have staged rallies and are taking part in the day of action, demanding pay raise in Northern Ireland. Over 16 trade unions were involved in coordinated action on a dispute where workers have been paid less than counterparts in the rest of UK. Tractors block major roads in Europe as farmers begin siege of Paris. There have been similar protests elsewhere across western Europe - the crossing between Germany and France was blocked by tractors earlier, as was the motorway connecting Belgium with Luxembourg.

Bhumkal: The Historic Uprising Against British Colonialism

Sushant

Adivasis in India have suffered oppression and exploitation for centuries. British colonialists intensified this cruelty by exploiting the rich mineral and forest resources in Adivasi-inhabited areas. They passed forest laws, declaring two-thirds of the forest area to be reserved under the British government. They also stopped shifting cultivation and hunting was prohibited. They converted these regions into profitable sources of raw material inputs for their industries or for simply looting and selling off the forest wealth. They mined iron-ore, coal, gold, manganese, bauxite, diamonds, dolomite, quartz, limestone, and other minerals. They cut down the forests for sal, teak, bamboo, and other trees. They hunted and killed animals and birds, driving several rare species to near-extinction. In short, they destroyed the economy, society, and culture, broke up their collective life, and carried them away to distant places as cheap labour in tea gardens, coffee plantations, construction sites, and as casual labour in mines and industries. This was the first big onslaught by colonial forces on the Adivasis of India.

Bastar's princely state was established around 1324 CE. Dhurwas, Bhatras, Maria, Halbas, and Muria Gonds are some of the Adivasi communities settled in Bastar. The British began to interfere in Bastar in the 1850s. By the mid-1870s they were effectively in complete control of the princely administration. The British more or less governed Bastar through proxy rulers. The primary reason for this intervention was Bastar's abundant natural resources. In 1867, the colonial rulers usurped the natural and traditional rights of Adivasis over forests and forest products with its forest acts to widen their revenue base by prohibiting and restricting shifting cultivation in "reserve forests" and establishing monopoly rights over forest products.

The Adivasis were denied their traditional livelihood. British

intervention ultimately led to a series of revolts against them. Revolts erupted all across the country, reflecting the anger against the terrible exploitation of these looters. From 1763 to 1856 there were at least 40 major rebellions against British rule. The great Santhal rebellion of the mid-19th century led by heroic warriors like Sidhu-Kanu, Birsa Munda, and others, the Halba rebellion of 1774-79, the Paralkot rebellion of Gend Singh in 1825, the Muria rebellion of 1876, Gond adivasi revolt (Bhumkal) of Abujhmad led by Gunda Dhur in 1910, the Rampa rebellion of the 1930s led by Alluri Seetharama Raju in East Godavari and Visakhapatnam in north Andhra, the Gond rebellion of Adilabad led by Komuram Bheem, and several such adivasi revolts shook the British empire. All these Adivasi peasant struggles aimed to protect their traditional rights over their jal-jangal-jameen. They challenged the British power to re-establish their traditional authority and political power. The reasons for tribal discontent were the same as those throughout British India: reservation of forest lands, new taxes, heavy immigration into the forests, and an influx of moneylenders and colonial officials.

The Bhumkal Movement started in 1910 in the Dandakaranya region against British imperialists, under the leadership of Gunda Dhur. It affected more than half of the parganas of Bastar. People fought against the British army with their traditional weapons like swords and arrows. Their strength was their courage and endurance. They widened the group by secretly circulating chilies, mango boughs, and arrows to join the rebellion. They attacked the police stations and the British army's settlements in Bastar. Their motto was to kick out the British from their land. The entire British unit vanished from the Bastar kingdom within a week. The abolition of British rule in Bastar was declared, and the

indigenous rule was re-established even though for a short time. Later, the revolt was suppressed with the help of some of the associates of Gunda Dhur who changed their side. Despite suppression, the British policy in Bastar became more sensitive to the Adivasis and their traditional way of life. The Bhumkal rebellion opposed oppressive state policies, particularly the declaration of extensive forest areas as reserved forests, undermining tribal rights over forests. Bhumkal remains a pivotal chapter in the history of Adivasi struggles in India. This movement, marked by its resilience and determination, has a legacy that continues to influence and inspire these communities in their ongoing battles for justice, rights, and autonomy. Every year, 10th February is celebrated as Bhumkal Diwas in Bastar.

In the history of anti-colonial struggles in India, Adivasi masses have written a glorious and heroic chapter with their recurrent and fierce uprisings against British rule. Bastar has continuously been a major centre of conflict in India. Since the widespread rebellion in 1910, Bastar Adivasis have shown a strong ability to unite in direct action. After the British era ended, colonial policies in Bastar were not reformed. In the post-independence period, many of the colonial-era policies continued. The ruling classes are eyeing mineral-rich regions of Bastar. The government, supported by imperialists, uses armed forces to control and exploit these regions, even resorting to violence against resisting Adivasis. People across the country must unite to struggle against the ruling classes' exploitative actions and foreign influences. Bhumkal is an integral part of the ongoing narrative of Adivasi movements in India, shaping the fight against exploitation.

India Becomes Godhra

Danny

As the fascist Hindutva forces close their grip around the throat of the nation. It can be difficult to comprehend the path that we have taken to reach such dire circumstances. For many students like you and me - since we could understand politics - all we have ever really known is a Hindutva controlled state. This can lead to a sense of inevitability or invincibility to their rule that spirals into eventual doom and despair. Together we must overcome this hurdle and strive to understand the history and tactics of the fascists to be able to break their rule.

The 2002 Gujarat riots was where much of the foundation of the Hindutva state of the 21st century was laid. On a February morning at Godhra railway station in Gujarat, a train carrying Hindu pilgrims from Ayodhya caught fire after an alleged altercation between passengers and vendors at the station. The fire led to the death of 59 people. The resulting investigations provided

little insight into what had been the exact cause of the fire but this did not stop the fascists from seizing the opportunity to stoke communal hatred. The Vishva Hindu Parishad declared a statewide bandh. The Modi led state government did nothing to stop the VHP, but rather prominent BJP figures especially Modi spread misinformation and hate to egg on their goons. Rumours of the train burning being a Pakistani sabotage operation were spread. "action ka reaction" was the calling cry as VHP and BJP leaders engaged in hate speech against the state's Muslim minority leading to the eruption of riots.

More than 2000 people were likely killed in the resultant ethnic cleansing. The majority from the Muslim minority.

The state stood by and allowed much of the violence to happen. Women and children were targeted by rioters as victims of torture, rape and other unspeakable evils. In the end over the mountain of corpses the BJP government escaped punishment through exploiting the long drawn-out process of official inquiries. Most walked free, emboldening many to use similar tactics and rhetoric in the future.

In the aftermath Modi continued denying his complicity with the pogrom. Yet he never missed an opportunity to



mock the victims of his hate. Saying of the muslim relief camps after the riots—"Hum paanch, humare pachees" (we five, our 25) referring to an imagined Muslim family consisting of one man, four wives and 25 children, and the associated myth of the rapidly expanding Muslim population. Even much later when asked if he regretted the violence in Gujarat 2002, he responded "even if a puppy comes under the wheel of your car, it is painful".

The most obvious strategy that the fascists used in Gujarat is pushing people towards communal violence. This violence assures the subjugation (or elimination) of the oppressed to the fascist state. It enforces feudal ideas upon the oppressed.

In the case of women the riots reduced them to symbols or carriers of social honour.

The riots also served a political goal for the BJP. 2002 was an assembly election year. An assembly election in which they rode the wave of communal hatred to gain victory. This has been a trend with Hindutva forces, whether it be in lawmaking or elections. They first stir up communal tensions, inaugurate a Mandir, propose outrageous legislation, anything to distract the people. They use this to blind the people from the real

issues and prevent them from unifying against them while clandestinely pushing their own nefarious policies and agendas. Divide and rule, a strategy with a legacy going back to the colonial era.

In our present context, they hide the looting of our country's resources by the state's capitalist puppets and their international allies. The exploitation of the toiling masses, the

suppression of people's movements across the country, movements that resist the far-reaching tentacles of imperialism, Hasdeo, Kashmir and Manipur are forgotten amidst the celebration of the Mandir and the wave of fear and violence it brings.

As we reflect on the lessons of the past, let us not despair at the similarities we see with the present, but use our knowledge to fight back and resist their attempts at dividing us.

Remember the blood spilled along Hindutva's march to power and do not be fooled by the smoke and mirrors of their politics of hate.

FCRA: Selective Regulation to Curb Civil Society

Swathi Seshadri (Researcher)

Recently, Centre for Policy Research was in the news since their FCRA licence was cancelled. World Vision India also lost its licence this month. Other notable organisations who have lost their FCRA licence in the past few years include Teesta Setalvad's Sabrang Trust, Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, Indian Institute of Management (Calcutta), Medical Council of India, Emmanuel Hospital Association, Tuberculosis Association of India, Oxfam etc.

The Foreign Contributions Regulations Act (FCRA) was first introduced during the Emergency in 1976, later repealed, and reintroduced as a law in 2010, which mandated that FCRA licences would need to be renewed every 5 years. In 2020, overarching amendments in the law gave the Union government complete scrutiny and control over the funds coming into the country to NGOs. The most concerning amendment was that of the 'Summary Inquiry' according to which, "...has reason to believe that a person who has been granted prior permission has contravened any of the provisions of this Act, it may, pending any further inquiry, direct that, such person shall not utilise the unutilised foreign contribution or receive the remaining portion of foreign contribution which has not been received, or, as the case may be, any additional foreign contribution, without prior approval of the Central Government". Earlier, restrictions were imposed only after an organisation was found guilty of contravention.

Regulation for CSOs, facilitation for businesses, free hand for political parties:

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs dashboard, as on July 3, 2023, at least 20,693 NGOs had their licences cancelled, while those for 16,257 NGOs were active. In almost all instances, there are no clear reasons mentioned for revoking of the licence.

In March 2023, the Director of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, filed an RTI seeking access to 1,827 cancellation orders which were issued between 2018 – 2022. The Home Affairs ministry directed the applicant to the relevant website. However, the website does not provide any detailed information and only mentions 'On Violation' as the type of FCRA cancellation. In 2022, months after a bribery scam for granting FCRA licences was busted, detailed information on NGOs was removed from the FCRA portal deeming the data 'unnecessary'.

Paradoxically, in the same year, respite was given to political parties in an amendment made to the 2010 Act that banned overseas corporations from funding them. In 2014, while passing a judgement in a Public Interest Litigation filed by the Association for Democratic Reforms claiming the Britain Based Vedanta Resources had allegedly donated several crores of rupees to major political parties like the Congress and the BJP in violation of the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951, and the FCRA, the Delhi High Court asked the Centre and the Election Commission to take appropriate action against the Congress and the BJP. As a relief from this judgement, in 2016, through a Finance Bill, the Lok Sabha passed an amendment to the FCRA, 2010, that exempted political parties from scrutiny of funds, which came into effect retrospectively from September 2010. This clause was further diluted in 2018, when the retrospective effect was extended till 1976. This has not only helped both parties escape from the implication of the 2014 Delhi High Court judgement, but permanently be off the scanner.

While the crackdown on NGOs was underway, the Union government was taking significant steps to improve its Ease of Business ranking globally. In a Press Information Bureau release in

October 2018, "Improvements have taken place due to the commitment of the Government to carry out comprehensive and complex reforms, supported by the bureaucracy which has changed its mindset from a regulator to a facilitator. The Government has undertaken an extensive exercise of stakeholder consultations to understand challenges of the industry, government process reengineering to provide simplified and streamlined processes to create a more conducive business environment in the country." CSOs play an important role in speaking truth to power. Progressive CSOs by holding the government accountable, remind them of their duties and responsibilities towards citizens of the country.

Weaponising regulation to curb dissent:

During the pandemic year, organisations had been unable to apply for FCRA renewal 6 months prior to the licence expiring, which was a rule introduced in the 2020 amendment. The Union government in 2021 announced a 6-month extension of validity of all NGOs until the backlog of applications were cleared. Since then, there have been several extensions, the latest of which extended the validity till March 2024. The uncertainty of these extensions means that funders are nervous about transferring larger amounts to the organisations fearing they will get locked into frozen accounts should the FCRA licence not come through. This has cash flow implications for organisations impacting the work that they are able to undertake and salary cycles of employees. But fundamentally, these extensions function as a sword hanging over CSOs. The manner in which the government goes after CSOs with IT and ED raids, FCRA suspensions and cancellations, CBI inquiries and FIRs lodged, it appears that the message being sent out is 'be critical of the government and get ready to be axed'.

Why is Darwin's Theory of Evolution an Anathema to the Religionists?- Part V

Ashoke Mukhopadhyay

[In part 4, the author explains the meaning of random variables that forms one of the pillars of Mathematics. He went on to show that Charles Darwin was the first natural philosopher to effectively apply it in the field of natural sciences.]

Let us now go to the basics of the theory. How did the idea of random variation occur to the mind of Darwin? And, wherefrom?

The theoretical edifice of evolution as viewed by Darwin stands on four legs: 1) Struggle for existence; 2) Random variation; 3) Adaptation; and 4) Natural selection.

What is the meaning of struggle for existence in the organic world? Is it a war among the plants, or the animals with weapons? One species entering the territory of another? Aggression? Occupation? Or, does it mean a war between cows and the grasses? Is it something akin to what we see in human society?

No, none of this. It is not such a simple thing. There are, it is true, some popular science authors who like to depict a general portrait of a war of all against all in the plant and animal kingdoms following the oft quoted observation of Thomas Hobbes, namely, *bellum omnium contra omnes*. Some critics think this to be genuine Darwinism and try to falsify the theory with various facts of cooperation among the flora and fauna.

Struggle for existence in the organic realm implies efforts of the plants and animals to gather means of subsistence, suitable habitats, and live till several cycles of procreation. Had there been enough provisions for all the offsprings born to a species at a time, had there been no feeder-feed relations between the species of plants as well as animals

(as is thought of in the Eden Garden of the paradise), one might eliminate the scope of struggle among species. But alas! He that had been able to create all these species failed to solve these "minor" problems. Hence with the limited provision of food and security, the members of the species are compelled to struggle against nature and against one another to collect the means of subsistence and insure security.

Although water has become an increasingly scarce resource and gone under the trade regime of the Corporate Tycoons, light and wind are still available unlimited. Why then do the plants have to struggle for them? What is their problem?

Considered in the backdrop of the entire globe, water, light and air are quite sufficient, even today, for the sustenance of life on this planet. But suppose some smaller plants grow in the land below a big pipul tree. Obviously, they will have trouble getting a fair share of sunlight, wind, heat, and also subsurface water. Or, in the deserts and the polar Regions, where there is no big tree, birds cannot have the niches to live. And without birds, dispersion of the seeds afar is a problem. Moreover, water, air, and sunlight are not uniformly available everywhere in the globe. Marine water, strongly saline, which constitutes 97% of the total global water reserve, is not suitable for the land animals and plants. In the deserts and plateaus of the world, almost one third of the land surface, water and fertile soil are least available.

The highly fluctuating temperature of these regions make air and light partly unusable for normal plant life. Similarly in the polar surfaces covered by glaciers, water, and light are rarer and the temperature of the air makes it a hardest problem for sustenance of life. All these factors together make struggles for existence inevitable among the species, among the members of a species and of

the entire life forms with the environment—in various forms in different places.

On the other hand, when there is a major geo-climatic change in an extended region—like, a river changing its course, a large scale earthquake, a big volcanic eruption, and so on—that causes a tremendous problem for the survival of the extant flora and fauna of the region. Most of them go extinct. Even then a small number survives and thrives, however, in a new mode of adaptation and, if successful, thereby results in new speciation.

There are still other aspects to see.

If the goats, sheep, and deer may run too fast for the predators to be able to catch them, then the tigers and lions will have to starve. On the contrary, if all the herbivores fall easy prey to the predators, it would be difficult for these species to survive on the evolutionary canvas. Thus there is a struggle between these two groups.

It means, in the struggle for existence some members of the plants and animals may survive and procure food; some may not. What enables those who survive to be successful?

They possess certain physical features that yield some selective advantage. Some sheep may have hooves better adapted for running than others. There are birds which are so little in size that they can easily build nests in smaller plants. Fruits of some plants are such that the birds prefer to feed on them and thereby disperse the seeds in open land. And so forth.

It is here that Darwin noticed the fact of random variation and introduced it as the starting point of his theory. How do these preferable or disadvantageous features appear? Till then people could easily refer to God's omniscience for the successful cases without any difficulty.

Now it was the turn of the unsuccessful cases to be accounted for, which were much more in number. Darwin probably wanted to absolve God of the responsibility for this larger scale failure and proposed random variation as the true phenomenon. This was entwined with the theory of probability. Some features were more probable to help survival than others. Accordingly some members of a species will be successful in the struggle for existence whereas some will not.

I hope now it is clear why the theologians of whatever sect and creed are so much wary of Darwin. They are not so displeased with Lamarck; even Alfred Russell Wallace who is mentioned as a co-author (though late by fifteen years) of the theory of natural selection is immune to their ire and fire. For one thing Wallace did not like to extend his theory of transmutation of species up to man and held man to be a special creation by Providence. The God lovers had therefore very little to set against him. As per the theological belief, evolution of earthworms or centipede from the worms matters little, but emergence of man from the great apes evokes an allergic reaction! For another, Wallace was life long involved in the unscientific practices like spiritism, planchet, etc., which quite comfortably converge with religious beliefs. Charles Darwin shied away from all such obnoxious practices from 1836 till his death in 1882. This atheism of his mindset was hardly ever apparent in his academic papers, but popped up in many of the correspondence with friends and contacts in the form of critical as well as witty questions.

We have already mentioned that his autobiography was also a case in evidence. His wife Emma had got their son Francis sworn to a commitment that segments of the autobiography and the correspondence related to criticism of religion and spiritualism would not go to press for publication (how tolerant religion is!). She commented on the margin of a copy of the autobiography prepared by the son in connection with



Left to right: A cactus is best adapted to arid weather conditions, a penguin nestled comfortably in its father's brood pouch. These are some adaptations exhibited by animals in extreme weather conditions.

Charles' reference to the infernal fire: "I should dislike the passage in brackets to be published. It seems to me raw. Nothing can be said too severe upon the doctrine of everlasting punishment for disbelief—but very few now wd. call that 'Christianity,' (tho' the words are there.) There is the question of verbal inspiration comes in too. E. D." [Cited, Barlow (ed.) 1993, p. 87f]

As a result, when the autobiography together with a part of the available correspondence had been published by Francis Darwin in 1887, much of the materials related to Darwin's atheism were dropped. Compared to the quantum of magnanimity Charles showed to his wife out of love, Emma failed to reciprocate. After a long time, when their granddaughter Nora Barlow edited and brought out a complete (uncensored) version of these materials in 1958, the world public saw a fresh image of Charles Darwin, the bold emblem of scientific spirit. [Ibid]

It is in view of this fact-sheet that the theologians of all shades have concurred on the question of consigning Darwin to an eternal infernal fire—in Latin chants, or Sanskrit mantras, or Arabic ayats. They oppose Darwin not so much for the scientific reasoning in his theory, as for highlighting the issue of extinction of species, invalidating the argument of design with the idea of randomness and thereby effectively ridiculing the omnipotence of God. They dislike science, but they disdain Darwin as much as possible. It is a feeling similar to the Dalitophobia of the RSS. They can neither express it nor suppress it in the mind.

Science will not drop Darwin; so let us

try to drop him from the curriculum wherever possible.

Bear in mind, when the previous BJP government had introduced astrology in different universities of India, the Sun or the Moon did not acquiescently turn into planets but remained as they were—a star and a satellite. Similarly, while idiotic members of the NCERT dropped Darwinism from the school curriculum at the dictates of the bigoted rulers, the scientific theory of evolution will not vanish from the portals of science. On the contrary the evolution of the NCERT experts into servile apes of the rulers will add a new chapter to the intellectual history of the country.

And also to global history.

Sarcasm is an important component of intellectual exercise—for all time!

The author is a science writer. He is the General Secretary for Centre for Studies in Science and Society [CESTUSS], Kolkata.

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A Worker Reads History

Who built the seven gates of Thebes?
The books are filled with names of kings.
Was it the kings who hauled the craggy blocks of stone?
And Babylon, so many times destroyed.
Who built the city up each time? In which of Lima's houses,
That city glittering with gold, lived those who built it?
In the evening when the Chinese wall was finished
Where did the masons go? Imperial Rome
Is full of arcs of triumph. Who reared them up? Over whom
Did the Caesars triumph? Byzantium lives in song.
Were all her dwellings palaces? And even in Atlantis of the legend
The night the seas rushed in,
The drowning men still bellowed for their slaves.

Young Alexander conquered India.

He alone?

Caesar beat the Gauls.

Was there not even a cook in his army?

Phillip of Spain wept as his fleet
was sunk and destroyed. Were there no other tears?
Frederick the Great triumphed in the Seven Years War.
Who triumphed with him?

Each page a victory

At whose expense the victory ball?

Every ten years a great man,

Who paid the piper?

So many particulars.

So many questions.



February 10, 1898 marks the birthday of Eugen Berthold Friedrich Brecht, known professionally as Bertolt Brecht. He was a Marxist, German theatre practitioner, playwright, and poet.

The Unconquerable Inscription

During the war

In a cell of the Italian prison in San Carlo

Full of imprisoned soldiers, drunks and thieves

A socialist soldier, with an indelible pencil, scratched on the wall:

Long live Lenin!

High above, in the semi-dark cell, hardly visible, but

Written in large letters.

As the warders saw it, they sent for a painter with a bucket of lime.

And with a long stemmed brush he whitewashed the threatening inscription.

Since, however, with his lime, he painted over the letters only

Stood above in the cell, now in chalk:

Long live Lenin!

Next another painter daubed over the whole stretch with a broad brush

So that for hours it disappeared, but towards morning

As the lime dried, the inscription underneath was again conspicuous:

Long live Lenin!

Then dispatched the warder a bricklayer with a chisel against the inscription

And he scratched out letter by letter, one hour long

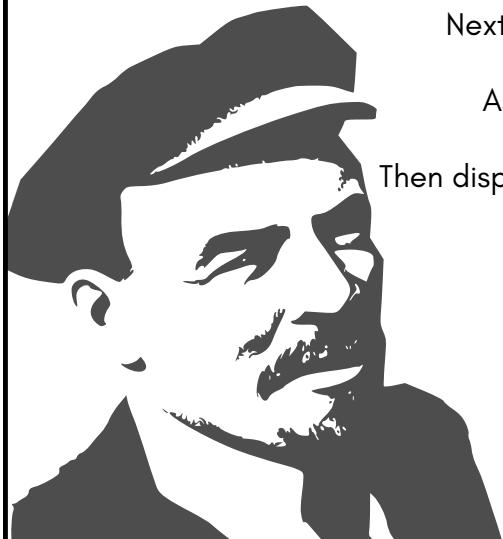
And as he was done, now colourless, but up above in the wall

But deeply carved, stood the unconquerable inscription:

Long live Lenin!

Now, said the soldier, get rid of the wall!

(Based on facts, as narrated by Giovanni Germanetto, imprisoned in 1917, in a publication in Zürich in 1930 after his release.)



ON THIS MONTH

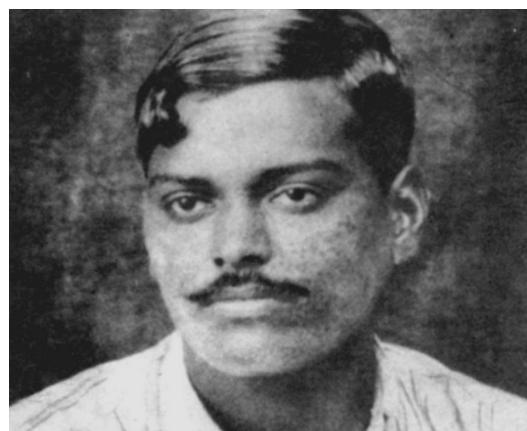
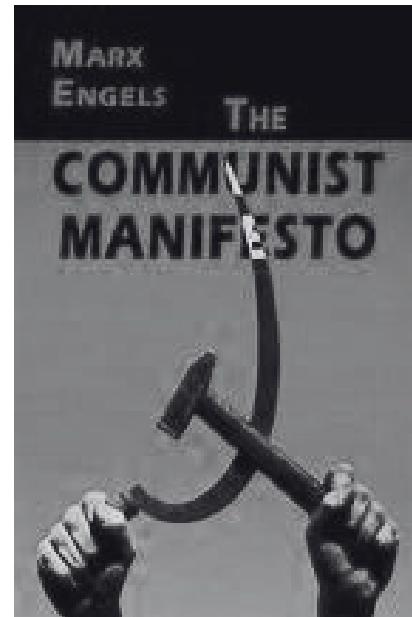
February 10, 1898- Birthday- Faiz Ahmad Faiz was a Pakistani poet, and author of Urdu and Punjabi literature. Faiz was one of the most celebrated Pakistani Urdu writers of his time. Outside literature, he has been described as "a man of wide experience" having been a teacher, an army officer, a journalist, a trade unionist, and a broadcaster.

February 15, 1987- One of the top leaders of the EPL (Popular liberation army), Jairo de Jesús Calvo, popularly known as **Ernesto Rojas**, was arrested, tortured and then presented as dead in combat. He was part of the Colombian Communist Youth alongside his brother Óscar William Calvo, then in 1966 he joined the Communist Party of Colombia (Marxist Leninist), where he went on to work politically in the EPL.

February 17, 1909- Apache Chief Geronimo (1829-1909) died while in captivity at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He led his people's defence of their homeland against the military might of the United States. The US Army then sent 5,000 men to capture him.

February 18, 1946 - The Royal Indian Navy mutiny or revolt, also called the 1946 Naval Uprising, was an insurrection of Indian naval ratings, soldiers, police personnel, and civilians against the colonial British government. From the initial flashpoint in Bombay, the revolt spread and found support throughout British India, from Karachi to Kolkata, and ultimately came to involve over 20,000 sailors in 78 ships and shore establishments. It was repressed brutally by the British.

February 26, 1848 - The Communist Manifesto pamphlet was published by two young communists, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It advocated the abolition of all private property and a system in which workers own all means of production- land, factories and machinery.



February 27, 1931- Chandra Shekhar Azad killed himself with his last bullet on being surrounded by the British in Alfred Park in Allahabad. He was an Indian revolutionary who alongside Bhagat Singh, reorganized the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) into Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) after the death of its leaders, Ram Prasad Bismil, Roshan Singh, Rajendra Nath Lahiri, and Ashfaqulla Khan.

February 28, 2002 - The 2002 Gujarat violence, was a three-day period of anti-Muslim pogrom Gujarat. (Refer to the article on page 15)