

*Building a Revolutionary Student Movement*

# COLLECTIVE

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This issue of COLLECTIVE is being brought out at a time when we are in the tail-end of the Modi regime's second term. The time since 2019 general elections have seen an unfolding of an escalating and aggressive push towards shifting the political consensus in the country even more towards the right. While the first term of the RSS-BJP regime, focused more on the adage of sabka saath, sabka vikas, modelling itself into a party promising development and growth, the promise remained unfulfilled. The resounding victory in the 2019 general elections has allowed the RSS-BJP to bring out its communal agenda in a more visible fashion. While during the first term, the RSS and "so-called" fringe elements of the sangh parivar continued this escalation through strategic mob violence and communal propaganda, the second term has seen political-institutional manifestations of the same, along with mobilization of fringe elements.

The overwhelming majority in 2019 elections has provided a cushion to this right-wing shift, with no real challenge in sight for the RSS-BJP. The elevation of Amit Shah, the second most important man for this regime, to the position of Union Home Minister in Modi regime 2.0 can be seen as the first sign of the events which have unfolded since then. The first step taken towards the institutionalization of communal hatred and the Hindutva project was to criminalize Triple Talaq. The practice had already been invalidated by the Supreme Court, and its criminalization was vehemently opposed by various sections, including Muslim women groups themselves, as it simultaneously makes Muslim women more vulnerable while increasing targeting of Muslim men by the state. Read alongside the events of the past few months in Karnataka vis-à-vis the ban row, these chain of events no doubt signal towards the fulfillment of RSS's long term project of bringing in a Uniform Civil Code with the sole aim of targeting minorities.

A string of actions, by the executive as well as the judiciary in 2019 encapsulates the spirit with which this regime has operated. First, the supreme court allowed for the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya in November 2019. The clear handing over of the premises to Hindu organizations allowed the Modi government to take credit for such

कलेक्टिव का यह अंक ऐसे समय में लाया जा रहा है जब हम मोदी शासन के दूसरे कार्यकाल के अंतिम चरण में हैं। 2019 के आम चुनावों के बाद से देश की राजनीतिक आम सहमति अधिक तेजी और आक्रामक तरीके से दक्षिणपंथ की ओर जाने की दिशा में देखा गया है। हालांकि आरएसएस-बीजेपी शासन के पहले कार्यकाल में, सबका साथ, सबका विकास की कहावत पर अधिक ध्यान केंद्रित किया गया था, खुद को विकास करने वाली पार्टी के रूप में मॉडलिंग किया गया, पर सारे वादे अधूरे ही रह गए। 2019 के आम चुनावों में बड़ी जीत ने आरएसएस-भाजपा को अपने सांप्रदायिक एजेंडे को और अधिक स्पष्ट रूप से सामने लाने के लिए जगह बना दी। जहां पहले कार्यकाल के दौरान, आरएसएस और संघ परिवार के "तथाकथित" अमुख्य (फ्रिंज) तत्वों ने रणनीतिक भीड़ हिंसा और सांप्रदायिक प्रचार के माध्यम से इस वृद्धि को जारी रखा, वहीं दूसरे कार्यकाल में अमुख्य तत्वों की लामबंदी के साथ-साथ उसी की राजनीतिक-संस्थागत अभिव्यक्तियाँ देखी गईं।

2019 के चुनावों में भारी बहुमत ने इस दक्षिणपंथी बदलाव को अपना हाथ दिया है, जिसमें आरएसएस-भाजपा के लिए कोई वास्तविक चुनौती नहीं है। मोदी शासन 2.0 में इस शासन के लिए दूसरे सबसे महत्वपूर्ण व्यक्ति अमित शाह की उन्नति केंद्रीय गृह मंत्री के पद पर अब तक हुई घटनाओं के पहले संकेत के रूप में देखा जा सकता है जो तब से सामने आई हैं। सांप्रदायिक घृणा और हिंदुत्व परियोजना के संस्थागतकरण की दिशा में पहला कदम तीन तलाक को अपराधीकरण करना था। इस प्रथा को सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने पहले ही अमान्य कर दिया था, और इसके अपराधीकरण का विभिन्न वर्गों द्वारा विरोध किया गया था, जिसमें स्वयं मुस्लिम महिला समूह भी शामिल थे। कर्नाटक में पिछले कुछ महीनों की घटनाओं के साथ-साथ हिजाब प्रतिबंध को इसी पंक्ति में देखा जाना चाहिए, घटनाओं की ये श्रृंखला निस्संदेह अल्पसंख्यकों को निशाना करने के एकमात्र उद्देश्य के साथ समान नागरिक संहिता लाने की आरएसएस की दीर्घकालिक परियोजना की पूर्ति की ओर संकेत करती है।

2019 में कार्यपालिका के साथ-साथ न्यायपालिका द्वारा इस फासीवादी सरकार के हित में अलग अलग निर्णय और नीतियां लायी



a decision, a fitting conclusion to the Sangh's 3 decade long open campaign on this issue. In this backdrop, the Modi government unleashed the CAA, which for the first time made religion a criterion for citizenship. Met with protests among Muslims and students from across the country, the RSS-BJP again took recourse to the same strategy of mob violence and riots to dissipate escalating dissent. The 2 years since then have seen a negligent mishandling of the biggest health crisis this country has seen, along with leaving the nation's toiling people to fend for themselves. The migrant worker walking on highways under the scorching sun became symbolic of the first lockdown. Ignoring the growing economic and health crisis at hand, the government has instead used these crises as 'apada mein avasar' and passed policies and laws targeting the nation's workers, students and farmers. The political contexts and implications of these policy level changes are discussed in detail in the current issue. However, what is clear from the opposition to these changes is that the present regime can be challenged, and an alternative is not impossible as has been vastly agreed upon by even those who were speaking up against the RSS-BJP before 2019.

A brief survey of the shifting nature of the two Modi terms, as well as the challenges which have been imagined and mobilized against it provide us with many lessons in our understanding of the nature of fascism and possibilities for transformation. Prior to 2019, the call from most progressive sections as well as the parliamentary left was that of a return to the UPA status quo. A romanticized notion of the UPA regime, along with ideological consensus on its underlying capitalist logic prevented this section from imagining an alternative other than the Congress or the pre-existing liberal centrist political consensus. While calls for such a return have reduced, explained in part by the Congress's own dismal electoral performance in general as well as state elections, however the electoral plank remains the primary strategy against the RSS-BJP for a section of left-progressive forces even after 8 years of this fascist regime. We have seen this operationalize across state elections, with alliances being formed with Congress as well as regional parties in the fight against the BJP. While some seats in the legislative assemblies might even be ensured through such alliances, it has become progressively clear that they are not sufficient to defeat the BJP electorally nor can they challenge the right-wing neoliberal political consensus that has gripped the nation since 2014. Moreover, such alliances have not created the space for a left agenda to take root among the masses as they have remained constrained by electoral compulsions and the ruling ideology.

गयी। सबसे पहले, सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने नवंबर 2019 में अयोध्या में राम मंदिर के निर्माण की अनुमति दी। हिंदू संगठनों को परिसर को स्पष्ट रूप से सौंपने से मोदी सरकार को इस तरह के निर्णय का श्रेय लेने की अनुमति मिली, संघ के 3 दशक लंबे राम मंदिर अभियान को जीत हासिल हुई। इस पृष्ठभूमि में, मोदी सरकार ने सीएए को लागू किया जिसने पहली बार धर्म को नागरिकता का मानदंड बनाया। देश भर के मुसलमानों और छात्रों ने इसका पुरजोर विरोध किया। आरएसएस-भाजपा ने फिर से बढ़ते असंतोष को खत्म करने के लिए हिंसा और दंगों का सहारा लिया। उसके बाद के 2 वर्षों में इस देश के सबसे बड़े स्वास्थ्य एवं आर्थिक संकट के समय में सरकार ने 'आत्म निर्भर' भारत का जुमला अपनाया जिसके तहत देश के मेहनतकश एवं को इस संकट से जूझने के लिए अकेला छोड़ दिया गया। चिलचिलाती धूप में हाइवे पर पैदल चल रहा प्रवासी मजदूर पहले लॉकडाउन का प्रतीक बन गया। बढ़ते आर्थिक और स्वास्थ्य संकट को नजरअंदाज करते हुए, सरकार ने इन संकटों को 'अपाड़ा में अवसर' के रूप में इस्तेमाल किया है और देश के श्रमिकों, छात्रों और किसानों को लक्षित करने वाली नीतियों और कानूनों को पारित किया है। इन नीति स्तर के परिवर्तनों के राजनीतिक संदर्भों और निहितार्थों पर वर्तमान अंक में विस्तार से चर्चा की गई है। हालाँकि, इन परिवर्तनों के विरोध से स्पष्ट है कि वर्तमान शासन को चुनौती दी जा सकती है, और एक विकल्प असंभव नहीं है।

मोदी सरकार के दो कार्यकालों का एक संक्षिप्त विश्लेषण, इसके खतरे और इसके खिलाफ हुए आंदोलन व लामबंदी को अगर ध्यान से देखे तो हम मौजूदा फासीवाद की प्रकृति और इसके परिवर्तन की संभावनाओं के बारे में सोच सकते हैं। 2019 से पहले तक, अधिकांश प्रगतिशील वर्गों और संसदीय वाम ने यूपीए यथास्थिति की तरफ वापस लौटने का आह्वान किया। सॉफ्ट यूपीए शासन की एक रोमांटिक धारणा के साथ-साथ एक पूंजीवादी तर्क व बाजारवादी लॉजिक पर वैचारिक सहमति के साथ इस तबके ने कांग्रेस को एक माल विकल्प की तरह देखा। राज्यकीय चुनावों में कांग्रेस के निराशाजनक चुनावी प्रदर्शनो के बाद अब इस तरह की कांग्रेस केंद्रित वैचारिकी में कमी आई है। हालाँकि अभी भी आठ साल के भाजपा के फासीवादी शासन के बाद भी लेफ्ट-प्रगतिशील मोर्चे में चुनावी केंद्रीयता बहुत ज्यादा है। हमने राज्य स्तरीय चुनाव में कांग्रेस, संसदीय लेफ्ट व स्थानीय पार्टियों के चुनावी गठबंधनो को देखा। राज्य में हुए चुनावों को देखने पर पता चलता है कि ऐसे गठबंधनो से चुनाव में कुछ सीटें तो जीती जा सकती है, लेकिन भाजपा को चुनावी तरीके से हराया नहीं जा सकता, न ही 2014 से चले आ रहे नवउदारवादी-फासीवादी एजेंडे को चुनौती दी जा

In states where non-BJP governments have been formed by a section of the left, policy-level decisions have moved closer towards the implementation of the neoliberal model, confirming ideological consensus with the ruling class. The past 8 years have shown us in a resounding way that elections fought simply for the sake of forming a government, without any concrete political alternative or movement, will not succeed in defeating the RSS-BJP which draws even its electoral strength from its social movement and presence. In fact, the two major challenges to this regime since 2019 have come from outside the electoral realm, through the Anti-CAA/NRC and Farmers' movements. The anti CAA-NRC movement could be crushed through communal violence and the following Covid-19 pandemic. However, despite not succeeding in drawing the majority of non-Muslims to its fold, the movement did succeed in building a formidable challenge.

The second opposition to Modi 2.0 came against the incorporate farm laws in the form of the year long farmers' movement. Aided by national appeal and acceptance of the figure of 'farmer' and also building on the long standing presence of revolutionary left forces in Punjab, this movement forced the first setback for the RSS-BJP since 2014. The farmers movement, headed by left-revolutionary organizations, sustained the movement for over a year, building an uncompromising struggle against neoliberal agenda. Importantly, in its political articulation, the movement also highlighted the role of the WTO, along with the big corporate nexus with fascists, through pitching the Modi-Ambani-Adani alliance as the main enemy of the nation's toiling people. The after effects of farmers' movement were felt in the recent UP elections as well, where despite coming back to power the BJP lost in most seats where participation in the movement was high. If there is any lesson to be drawn from the past 3 years, it is that electoral strategy can only succeed if the plank of politics can be shifted more towards the left. Alliances just for the sake of forming government will only compel the left today to abandon any project of transformation and compromise with the ruling ideology. Moreover, the recent Hijab row and BJP wins in state elections last month also point towards an even more communally charged future. This neoliberal-fascist onslaught must be defeated socially, electorally and ideologically, through long-term political organizing and commitment to a real alternative politics.

सकती है।

जिन राज्यों में लेफ्ट के समर्थन से गैर भाजपा सरकार बनी है, वहाँ भी नव उदारवादी मॉडल की नीतियों को ही अपनाया जा रहा है। पिछले आठ सालों में ये बात साफ़ हो गयी है कि बिना किसी ठोस विकल्प के केवल सरकार गिराने के लिए चुनावी कैंपेन करने से भाजपा-आर एस एस को नहीं हराया जा सकता है। 2019 के बाद से चुनावी राजनीति के बाहर से इस सरकार के सामने दो तरह की चुनौतियाँ सामने आयी है। पहला सी ए ए कानून के खिलाफ हुआ आंदोलन और दूसरा किसान आंदोलन। सी ए ए कानून के खिलाफ हुए आंदोलन को सांप्रदायिक हिंसा के जरिए दबाने की कोशिश की गयी, फिर कोविड 19 की वजह से आंदोलन वापस ले लिया गया। सी ए ए आंदोलन में गैर मुस्लिम जनता की भागीदारी कम रही फिर भी आंदोलन मौजूदा सरकार को बड़ी चुनौती दे पाया।

मोदी सरकार के दूसरे कार्यकाल में दूसरी बड़ी चुनौती कॉर्पोरेट परस्त कृषि कानूनों के खिलाफ़ साल भर तक चले किसान आंदोलन से मिली। देश भर के लोगो ने किसान आंदोलन को सराहा और किसान होने की एक पुरानी राजनितिक पहचान को फिर से पुन स्थापित किया। इस आंदोलन में पंजाब में सक्रिय क्रान्तिकारी वामपंथी किसान संगठनों ने अहम भूमिका निभाई। किसान आंदोलन 2014 के बाद भाजपा सरकार की नींव हिला देने वाला पहला आंदोलन बना।

इस बार के यू पी चुनाव में भी किसान आंदोलन के प्रभाव को देखा गया। भाजपा भले ही चुनाव जीतकर सरकार में आ गयी लेकिन जिन इलाको में आंदोलन तेज था वहाँ भाजपा को वोट और आम समर्थन का भारी नुकसान हुआ। इससे हमे यही सीख मिलती है कि चुनावी राजनीति तभी सफल हो सकती है जब राजनीति का व्यापक आधार लेफ्ट की तरफ शिफ्ट करे। केवल सरकार बनाने के लिए किए गए चुनावी गठबंधन लेफ्ट को समाजिक आर्थिक बदलाव की राजनीति से अलग कर देगा। राजनीतिक कार्यक्रमो में चुनावी केन्द्रीयता सत्तारूढ़ वर्ग से समझौता की तरफ ले जाएगा। हाल ही में हिजाब विवाद और पिछले महीने राज्य के चुनावों में भाजपा की जीत और भी अधिक सांप्रदायिक भविष्य की ओर इशारा करती है, जिसे लम्बे समय के लिए प्रतिबन्ध, वास्तविक वैकल्पिक, सांगठनिक राजनीति के जरिए सामाजिक, चुनावी और वैचारिक धरातल पर पराजित किया जाना चाहिए।



## RSS-BJP's Attack on Education

On December 28th, 2021 eight students were denied entry to Government Girls' Pre-University (PU) college in Udupi for asserting their right to wear the hijab. Within days of the incident, the Hindu Jagarana Vedike instigated counter-protests in several other districts leading to a rapid escalation of the issue.

Overnight, college managements, state authorities, and members of the ruling party have become defenders of secularism. In doing so they contort secu-

Heightened by the Anti-Conversion Bill that was proposed and passed in 2021, Karnataka in particular has witnessed more than 39 violent attacks on Christian minorities in the past year. As per PUCL's fact-finding report, all were carried out by the very same set of Hindutva organisations that are now distributing saffron shawls and using the hijab row as a free pass to heckle, shame, attack and target non-Hindu students. Vandalism of Churches in Chikkabalapura, disruption of Christmas celebrations in Tumkuru, burning



larism to their convenience, sidelining the distinction it draws between the people's right to diversity of religious expression and the state's responsibility to maintain religious neutrality of its institutions. Citing grounds of uniformity, the very same ministers who tweet for the separation of religion from education, simultaneously introduce the Bhagavad Gita into state syllabi. Irrespective of the rhetoric it is cloaked in, the so-called #Hijab--Controversy is but the latest in a series of communal attacks on those outsiders of the Hindutva fold.

of Muslim-owned shops in Shimoga, and heckling of hijab-wearing students in Mandya, is celebrated by the same groups through widely circulated video recordings. BJP leaders continue to blatantly excuse these actions of violent Hindutva groups. CM Bommai repeats his rhetoric of "action-reaction" while education minister B. C. Nagesh falsely blames students for "provocation". As casteist derogatory slurs are used to dehumanise Muslim, Christian and Dalit communities, all religious minority activity is depicted as part of an anti-Indian political conspiracy. Adding to the vilification, MLA Raghupathi Bhat demands an NIA



probe while Suvarna, the national general secretary of the BJP OBC morcha, implies that students get what they deserve for “tweeting on Babri Masjid, Shaheen Bagh and Delhi riots”.

Meanwhile, liberal media focuses more on the hijab as a practice than Hindutva as a political agenda. Whether the hijab is a symbol of patriarchal oppression, whether it is essential to the practice of Islam, or whether it is a symbol of individual choice, liberty and Muslim assertion in a communal fascist regime, are highly crucial debates in and of themselves. They have been central to the Muslim women’s movement and are critical for the furthering of social reform within the Islamic community. Yet internal reform is impossible when basic security is itself at stake. Those who delve into these debates now only lose sight of the overarching Hindutva agenda. It is evident from their sexist cyberbullying of girls in Kundapura, that the boys in saffron shawls are far from driven by a genuine concern for women’s rights and liberation. Similarly, the Karnataka State plans to turn its only women’s university into a coed space without an increase in the number of seats.

As per the National Sample Survey, Muslim women’s participation in education across India has only increased from 6.7% in 2007 to 13.5% in 2018. Not only is the state using the hijab row to further discourage participation of Muslim girl students, but it is also capitalising on the issue to divert from its aggressive push for privatisation of education. Repeated fee hikes in engineering and P.U colleges, failure to address the fundamental problems of NEET, and hastened implementation of the NEP come hand in hand with telling budgetary discrepancies as Anjanadri Temple is allocated nearly 7 times more funds than Raichur University.

As the hijab controversy continues to be prominent in the state, it is crucial to keep the context of communalism in mind and to adamantly revert attention to structural attacks on education. Rather than framing our movement only in terms of individual liberty and choice, we must also stand firm on our demand for the equitable, liberatory, and public-funded education of Savitribai Phule, Fatima Sheikh, Bhagat Singh and Babasaheb Ambedkar’s dreams.





# Victory for Kisaan Andolan : Breaking Neo-liberal Advance

Since the beginning of Modi's India, the Government has managed to make an impression of strong governance, given the majority they came into power. Comments like "56-inch chest size" were used to describe Modi's power. And true to their words, the BJP government used an iron fist against all those who had dissented with their work. Modi Government managed to look strong in the face of any protest ranging from Anti-CAA-NRC to various student protests across the country. The Government used a similar tactic while facing the Farmer's protest. After a point, it started seeming as if the Government was simply not willing to step back due to their egotistical nature with power. Even though the Farmer's protest led to many people standing with the farmers against the Government, they tried to use every trick in their playbook to decry the protest, from calling the protesters Anti-national Khalistanis to inciting violence on 26th January at Red Fort. Facing it all, the Farmer's movement stood out victorious on the face of such huge propaganda machinery, which not only proved successful for their cause but symbolic for every anti-fascist movement going around in the country and throughout the world. It acted as a major boost for every struggle in an atmosphere where the strength of RSS-BJP seemed gigantic.



India's farmers protests were aimed to repeal 3 bills introduced by the Modi government, without any deliberations in the parliament, were passed through ordinance. The three acts were: These acts areas are : Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020; Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and

Farm Services Bill, 2020; and Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill 2020. The background for the introduction of these bills goes back to the the signing of Agreement on Agriculture (1994) in the Uruguay rounds of WTO convention. According to the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, the administered price cannot exceed the 'de-minimis' level of 10% of the total volume of production. This exemption is allowed under the Aggregate Measure of Support. India has already exceeded the limit in the case of rice where the procurement price has shot up to 24% from the base year 1986-88 that was agreed upon. The double standards are clear. In 2012, the US provided \$100 billion for domestic food aid, up from the \$95 billion it spent on feeding its 67 million undernourished population in 2010 including spending on food coupons and other supplementary nutrition programmes. In India, the Food Bill was expected to cost \$20 billion and will feed an estimated 850 million people. Against an average supply of 358kg/person of subsidised food aid (including cereals) in the US every year, India promises to make available 60 kg/person in food entitlement. And yet, while the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is quiet on the subsidy being doled out in America for feeding its poor, the US has launched an attack on India for "creating a massive new loophole for potentially unlimited trade-distorting subsidies." At the same time, the agreement allows food security only for targeted groups only with clearly defined demarcated sections. There are other provisions in this, stemming from Dunkel Draft (1993) which allow free play of multinational seed companies in the Indian agrarian market, apart from removal of the government-controlled Mandi system which allow the farmers to produce at fair prices. The Dunkel Draft was clearly aiming to reduce domestic subsidies to agriculture in order to "liberate" them from statist model of development. However, Dunkel et. al. were only interested in removal of subsidies from Asia, Africa or Latin America. The subsidies, provided by the US or the EU, were not to be touched upon. '

Plans of these international stakeholders in WTO were to be executed in India by their servants, Modi-Shah. Although, previous UPA governments were the ones who were the harbinger of such policy changes, but political compulsions held them off from implementing these. The Modi government ensured that they do not have such political compulsions after being re-elected in 2019 with a thumping mandate. However, it was the farmers of India who stood up against the wholesale sell-out of the farming sector of this country to the Imperialists and their partners in our country.

It is clear that BJP is the richest party ever in India, and their major contributors, say Ambani or Adani, are heavily benefiting from such policies. Hence, it is highly unlikely that the policymakers will deviate from their plan and bring an actual beneficial economic policy for the people. The whole mechanism works to make the people accept that their condition would get better if they kept believing in it, and indeed, the BJP government has mastered this technique. Their method of introducing even the most anti-people laws with a pro-people coating has worked on various occasions, but it failed terribly in the case of farmers in Punjab. Major credit goes to the Farmer unions, which had been working in these areas, who identified the enemy behind these policies correctly and directed their protest towards them. The farmers of Punjab had already been suffering under the hands of the green revolution, which was again a policy forced upon the people calling it necessary for increasing productivity; which made the farmers utterly dependent on GM seeds, fertilisers and pesticides. The introduction of a foreign variety of wheat and paddy required huge amount of drainage of ground level water from soil, killing of natural microbes through chemical pesticides and fertilizers, started off a process called “desertification” in the areas of Punjab, Haryana and West UP. Eventually, the usage of these seeds, fertilizers and pesticides is benefitting the major international corporations selling these products. Protesting against the three farm laws mainly exposed the relation between major corporations and the Government, particularly the relationship between Ambani-Adani and Modi. In these terms, the farmers’ movement fought not only for themselves but against the larger neo-liberal project and privatisation in total.

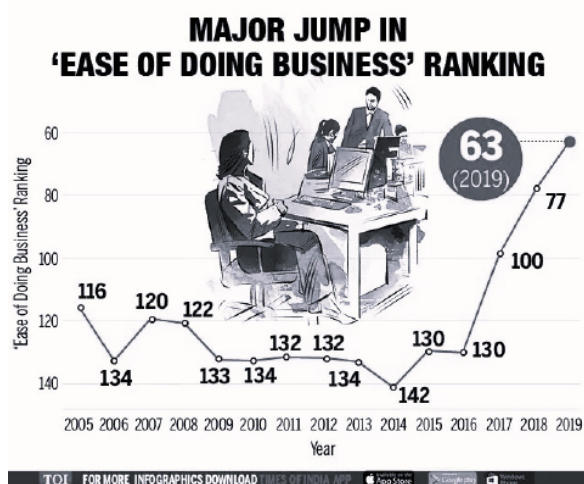
This Kisan Andolan is not just a spontaneous action from the ordinary farmers, but an outcome of long-standing continuities of organised resistances and revolutionary movemental traditions of Punjab. Since, the passing of the bill through ordinance in 2020 during lockdown, there has been block level, district level and state level mobilizations by various farmers unions, led by an uncompromising revolutionary leadership. History of revolutionary movement in Punjab is marked by glorious struggle of PEPSU tenants in 1950s, struggle against issues of electricity in 1980s, anti-displacement movements in 2000s. In the continuity of Tebhaga-Telangana-Naxalbari, peasants of Punjab once again upheld the green and crimson banner of resistance against imperialist plunder and loot. Malls, godowns, cell-towers owned by Adanis and Ambanis were shut-down. Highway toll plazas were occupied by farmers. While marching towards Delhi, spontaneous supports came pouring in from farmers of Haryana and later on from Western UP.



Certainly, the farmers’ protest has taught many of us the importance of organisations, leadership and commitment to carry out any protest and gave hope of standing against the ever-rising power of fascists. Agriculture in our country can be sustainable through a people’s revolutionary alternative, and that primarily entails severing every ties with the WTO. This movement has proven the importance of mass movements and presented an example of a successful extra-parliamentary struggle. Only through building of such powerful mass movements against this corporate Hindutva regime, such plunder of resources and over-exploitation of the people of our country can be resisted.

# 'APADA MEH AVSAR' Perils of 4 Labour Codes

The fascist regime of BJP & RSS has attacked the Indian working class and toiling masses by replacing 44 Labour Laws with 4 Labour Codes. The Code on Wages was passed in parliament in 2019 while in September 2020, the Industrial Relations Code, Occupational Health, Safety and Working Conditions Code and Code on Social Security were rushed through the parliament without any discussion or debate during the COVID-19 pandemic. 'EASE OF DOING BUSINESS' became the hue and cry to attract the capitalists and the industrialists in India and abroad to invest capital, ever so volatile since the 2008 economic crisis, with the principal aim to strengthen the process of capitalist accumulation. Invariably, India's Overall Rank in Doing Business Report showed an amazing improvement of 79 positions, from 142 in 2014 to 63 in 2019.



The 4 Labour Codes signals a concerted attempt to dismantle hard-fought labour rights and regulations and push the glorious past of working-class movements and militant labour struggles into unfathomable depths of obscurity. It entails a shift from 8-hour workday to 12-hour workday, already being implemented in Rajasthan and Gujarat even as employers' associations in other states lobby for the same. Moreover, the Industrial Relations Code stipulates that companies employing less than 300 workers can lay off their workforce

without prior notice and at the same time take away their right to freedom of association, guaranteed by the Indian Constitution, by not only limiting & criminalising the possibilities of strike action but also orchestrating mechanisms to foster Trade Unions subservient to the whims and desires of the employers. Similarly, the Code on Social Security, in its lofty promise to all workers for a 'universal' social security, robs them off of Provident Fund (PF) and Employees' State Insurance (ESI). In 2017-18, factory deaths increased at an alarming rate of 20% and in 2021 industrial accidents caused the death of more than 162 workers. Even with industrial accidents on the rise Occupational Health, Safety and Working Conditions Code relieves the principal employer of the responsibility of contract workers, thereby legalising the widely prevalent contract labour system.

The subsequent changes in the labour regime reflect the crisis that plagues neoliberal capitalism globally on the one hand and on the other, the ideological and socio-political ascendancy of the far-right, authoritarian and fascist forces. Although pinning the blame solely on the RSS backed BJP government would mean missing a fundamental reality of Indian polity. It was the erstwhile Congress government, which in 1991 introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP) under the leadership of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, popularly known as 'Liberalisation-Privatisation-Globalisation' (LPG) reforms. These reforms aimed to integrate the Indian economy with the world economy via unleashing the potentialities (read uncertainties and vagaries) of the market forces. The heart and soul of this policy shift, which can be traced back to the early 1980s, was privatisation & commercialisation at the expense of unchecked and unregulated exploitation of cheap labour. Moreover, in India capitalist development is a function of uneven distribution of economic and political power and skewed in favour of imperialist powers. Thus, an exploitative and repressive



regime domestically is needed to feed the interests of US-foreign policy and global finance capital. There is a consensus across party lines, including vote-centric Left parties, parties emerging from various nationality movements and parties claiming to represent the marginalised sections in the name of 'social justice, to converge around the neoliberal agenda to subvert the framework of labour rights and regulations to aid the process of capitalist accumulation.

The need of the hour is to strengthen the working-class movement against the ruling capitalist class. In other words, the struggle for the withdrawal of the 4 Labour Codes is not akin to some struggle over certain economic demands where a section of the working class reaches some form of resolution with a section of the capitalist class or simply a matter of political gamble involving replacement of a bourgeois political party with another one. Notwithstanding the neces-

sity of the working masses to play a decisive role in the removal of the fascist regime of BJP & RSS from power, the workers must unite to remove the perpetually crisis-ridden capitalist class as the ruling class of the society. The offensive of the capitalist and imperialist powers against the working classes aims to erode previously achieved rights of the working and toiling masses and stems from an irresolvable crisis of world capitalism and any struggle during this period needs to build itself as a decisive struggle against all the ruling classes including the capitalist class. Towards realising such a goal, struggling Trade Unions operating outside central TUs and NGOs have played a role. They have sought to organize an independent assertion of working-class power to prepare the counter-offensive enthused with herculean strength and vigour to put an end to the oppressive system of the ruling classes and herald the communist promise.





# Towards Saving the Ecology and Environment : Perspectives from Anti-Displacement Struggles

Anti-displacement struggles were major exemplary struggles against neoliberal plunder of natural resources and livelihood a decade back. We had witnessed the struggles of Singur-Nandigram-Lalgarh in West Bengal, Kalinganagar in Odisha, Raigarh in Maharashtra etc. Anti-displacement struggles raised questions of land and livelihood, resistance against the corporate takeover of Jal-Jangal-Zameen, formation of people's organisations against neoliberal plunder and more important questions of ecology and environment.

Recently, anti-displacement struggles have come to the fore once again with struggles in two places, one is Deucha-Panchami in Birbhum district of West Bengal, where an open cast mine is proposed to be constructed, another one is Dhinkia in Jagatsinghapur district of Odisha where the land which was previously acquired for POSCO has been again proposed to be transferred to the steel giant Jindal. In both places, local Adivasis have been up in arms against the state.

The West Bengal state government plans to extract a large quantity of coal through open cast mining at Deocha-Panchami in Birbhum district by acquiring the lands of local people, including the Adivasis, selling dreams of setting up heavy industry, and the chief minister is promising to provide millions of jobs. This coal block, which contains roughly 2.2 billion tonnes of

coal, is spread over 3400 acres of land in the Mohammad Bazar block of West Bengal's Birbhum district. The Eastern Coalfield Association was initially designated to mine the block, but they declined to do so. This region of Birbhum is already heavily polluted as a result of an existing stone quarry, which has done little to improve the lives of the locals. Furthermore, it has harmed their farm-based economy, culture, and society. Mineral Concession Rules, 1960, and Mineral Conservation and Development Rules, 1988, which govern mine replenishment, are seldom observed in this region. There have been no recommendations for post-mining land, water and air quality, waste management, or surface soil treatment. A deep mine lies on one side of the region, while mountains of dust and deposited garbage exist on the other. For decades, residents and the environment have been subjected to a toxic layer of over 5 inches of dust on the roadways. The entire region has become a dusty, gloomy wasteland, and this pollution has been pushed onto environmentally conscious residents, particularly Adivasi people, negatively impacting their social and cultural lives. The strong rhetoric about commencing construction on the "Asia's second-largest coal mine" project will exacerbate the problems faced by both people and the environment.

Residents of Dhinkia village, Erasama tehsil, Jagatsinghapur district, Odisha, have been fighting to save around 1,173.58 hectares of land from being transferred. The land is being purchased for Rs 65,000 crore for Jindal Steel Works to build a 13.2 million tonnes per year (MTPA) integrated steel factory, as well as a 900 MW captive power plant and a 10 MTPA cement grinding and mixing unit. Residents claim that the projects, as well as the corporate takeover of the land, would destroy the lives of nearly 40,000 inhabitants in the district's three villages of Dhinkia, Nuagaon, and Gadakujang. In 2011, the gram panchayats of Gobindapur, Dhinkia and Nuagaon had made unanimous regulations against



the transfer of land to POSCO, as mandated by the Forest Rights Act. Activists in the state hold that the entry of development projects in the region is unprecedented



and alarming, and comes with increasing ecological risks for the coastal areas. The total area of land is over 4,000 acres out of which over 3,000 acres are forest-controlled land. The people who went against the transfer of land to the Jindal group has faced brutal repression from the state. On January 14, the protesting villagers were attacked by the police and more than 100 people including villagers and activists were injured. The villagers have formed Jindal Pratirodh Bhitamati Suraksha Samiti to resist the state's forced land acquisition.

The capitalist economy is flanked on the one hand by the unending exploitation of labour and on the other hand by the unending extraction of natural resources for increasing capitalist accumulation. From the beginning of the industrial revolution in Europe, ecological and environmental damages has been effected to such an effect that we are experiencing today dangers of global warming, extinction of a variety of species of animals and plants, drastic reduction in nutrients of soil due to high usage of chemical pesticides, extreme health hazards due to air and water pollution etc. Displacement of indigenous people from their livelihood for fresh natural resources is part of the primary accumulation process. Needless to say, the ill-effects of these damages are mostly being experienced by the most marginalized section of society who are made to deal with the huge amount of heat and garbage that our economy produces. Examples apart from direct displacements of people for the appropriation of natural resources are rife, where the marginalized people are dealing directly

with the effects of global warming are migrants from Sunderbans. These migrants are creating a reserve army of surplus labour most of whom are bound to work at wages much lower than their value of labour-power in the cities. Increasing cyclones in the Bay of Bengal have destroyed agrarian lands in Sunderbans and cyclones have destroyed their living spaces. At the same time, in Punjab, Haryana, and Western UP, we are witnessing depletion of nutrition in soil due to chemical pesticides and artificial seed and fertilizer induced high productivity due to policies of the so-called Green Revolution.

Issues of the environment have been raised in the languages of sustainable living, reducing carbon footprints, Go Green or Go Circular etc. However, these slogans do not aim at the core of capitalist economic organization which is built upon the logic of the unending accumulation of capital, which is primarily responsible for environmental and ecological damage worldwide over the last 200 years. Without hitting at the capitalist logic of the economy, slogans of sustainable living or Go Green remain futile and impotent. In the past decade, we have seen the appearance of the slogan, "System Change Not Climate Change" in movements like FridaysForFuture or Extinction Rebellion, which have been trying to expose the systemic nature of capitalist degradation of ecology and environment. There is an acknowledgment of the systemic question on the front of ecology and environment. However, the poignant question of organizing this movement on a real basis remains unresolved. The real struggle for ecological and environmental justice is possible when we link the struggles of the working class, struggles of Adivasis against displacement, Dalits and peasants against neoliberal attack on their lives, against the state power which protects interests of the global imperialist powers. A future with sustainable ecological development and a pollution-free environment is possible only through a planned economic re-organization, cutting off from global imperialist powers founded upon environmental justice, redistributive economic justice, removing social malaises, and creation of an alternative polity for executing these programs. The task upon us is to build movements and organizational forms for fulfilment of these longuee duree aims.



# Campus Talks...

## **Delhi University (DU)**

With the announcement of nationwide lockdown triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, students had to return to their home states. As classes and course work shifted online, a major disparity arose in terms of access. Not only did the administration turn a blind eye to numerous appeals and demands from students to address such a pressing concern but also went ahead to impose Open Book Examination (OBE). COLLECTIVE remained at the forefront in opposing such draconian moves of the administration by mobilizing students from various colleges against the imposition of OBE and for reopening campus.

Despite our victories, the campuses we have returned to are not the same. With Four Year UG programme (FYUP), Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) and CUET set to be imposed next academic year, DU has become a neoliberal laboratory for dismantling public education and normalising drop-outs in the name of increasing 'choice'. Students and teachers have begun uniting once again to defend our shared future, like we did when FYUP was defeated earlier in 2013.

## **Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)**

It is no secret that JNU is an eyesore for the RSS BJP regime. Not only have its students consistently challenged Corporate Hindutva ideology, it is also an example of what quality, affordable, scientific education for all can look like. After taking a Rs 445 crore HEFA loan, the institute has continuously tried to shift the burden onto students. As new batches enter campus, struggles must be strengthened against anti-rural, anti-poor changes in admission policy, cuts in non-NET/MCM scholarships, discrimination against marginalised students in PhD viva and to bring back GSCASH for gender justice.

On 10th April 2022, the ABVP tried to create ruckus within the campus by stopping meat eating in the mess of Kaveri Hostel. The students resisted this, while the ABVP resorted to stone pelting and their characteristic terror tactics and hooliganism, while the RSS backed JNU admin and police stood silent, without taking any action. Thousands of students held a march to nearby Vasant Kunj PS against such inaction on the face of such hooliganism and observed a day of protest on 11th of April.

## **Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD)**

COLLECTIVE played a major role in the movement for re-opening of AUD campus which remained closed even after repeated notifications from the Delhi Government. In addition, AUD admin arbitrarily de-registered students for non-payment of Extra Mural Cost (EMC) even when Field Work remained suspended due to the pandemic. COLLECTIVE actively sought their re-registration and the scrapping of EMC, and the administration conceded to both these demands.

## **Bangalore University & Azim Premji University (APU)**

In December 2021, COLLECTIVE comrades from Bangalore Uni-

versity and APU joined workers' unions in marching against the 4 anti-worker Labour Codes. Even campuses like Christ University, MCC PU, Joseph's and Jyoti Niwas did not remain away. APU comrades have also recently won the right to unionise and are drafting their constitution.

Despite near total media silence and heavy state repression, the *Ban Beda Shikshana Beku* campaign was carried out by our comrades in various parts of the city to expose RSS BJP's failure to provide public education for all and exclude Muslim women from schools in the name of 'Hijab Ban'.

## **Jamia Millia Islamia**

On 9th February, 2022, the students of Jamia Millia Islamia organised a mass protest for the reopening of Jamia Millia Islamia Campuses. The students had blocked the gates with demand that JMI admin release the notification for re-opening. These protests happened in Jamia after a long period which had witnessed enormous student participation from students in Anti-CAA movement followed by heavy police deployment inside campus crushing students and university staffs brutally.

## **Panjab University**

Hundreds of Panjab University students protested outside the Vice-Chancellor's office for 18 days, demanding that senate elections be held for the registered graduate constituency. Panjab University Teachers' Association has been with the student body and the association issued a statement which read, "PUTA will continue to fight till democracy is restored." The students are also demanding that the university be reopened for in-person classes. However, they believe that the authorities are reluctant to open up campus fearing a large display of student support to the ongoing farmers protest. In fact, members of Sanyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) had recently joined the students in a display of solidarity. PU students stood resiliently against attempts of centralisation by RSS-BJP regime and won the battle. Following the protests, Senate elections were held.

## **IISER**

A research-student of IISER Kolkata committed suicide, taking a poison in his laboratory. This is in continuity with other incidents in several other premier research institutes such as IITs, IISc or IISERs where students have committed suicide for various reasons, such as pressure mounting from supervisor, unreasonable pressure from coursework, lack of scholarship, and other academic gallows. At the same time, there are social discriminations at work. Students' outrage comes as the institutes are accused of showing apathy towards making a mechanism to address the problems faced by the students. Student community of IISER Kolkata came out on the streets against negligence and insensitive attitude of academia and administration over critical problems faced by the student, leading to cases of suicide or attempts to suicide.



# Bihar Railway Recruitment Protest: Unemployment and Privatisation

On 27 January, Gaya made global headlines after a train coach was allegedly set on fire by aspirants protesting malpractices in the employment scheme of Indian Railways, the largest employer in the country. Protests seized cities and towns of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in a remarkably short period. Ashwini Vaishnav, the minister of railways, had urged students not to destroy their property. But the question remains- is the current regime interested in letting the railways remain the people's property, or is it merely concerned about fattening the sheep before its slaughter- dressing up the asset before the sale.



Job riots are not new to our country. India's past has been However, the scale of the recent protests symbolises a growing disenchantment with the anti-people policies of neoconservative fascist regimes. The reduction in employment in the railway recruitment exams is not a one-off incident of clerical or bureaucratic nature. It is a symptom of the deep rot of political economy that neoliberalism has to offer the youth of this country. Since long before the pandemic arrived, the world has been going through a crisis. The rate of profit is falling. And our country is no exception. Surprisingly—in a political-economic atmosphere of loud claims about ever-expanding infrastructure as the key to growth—employment has difficulty catching up with this 'expansion'.

With the onslaught of neoliberalism on the world scale, it has become a fact that privatising public assets has led to an unprecedented rise in unemployment. In India, employment in railways has seen a steady and steep decline from 1.6 million people in 2000 to 1.27 million people in 2021[1]. Along with this, there is an ongoing systematic programme to privatise Indian railways in a piecemeal fashion.

With the beginning of the neoliberal restructuring of the Indian economy, committees constituted to undertake the examination of Indian Railways (Rakesh Mohan Committee, 2001, Sam Pitroda Committee, 2004, and Bibek Debroy Committee, 2014) were nearly unanimous in arguing for giving away profit-making segments to private enterprises and leaving behind the loss-making ones with the government. The National Rail Plan of the Modi regime has envisioned the privatisation of all freight trains and 30% of the 750 railway stations by 2031. All profit-making AC coaches are scheduled to be privatised under the plan, with only the loss-making second-class coaches remaining under government ownership and control. Even the routes to be taken by private trains would be profit-making routes propelling further the thrust towards unequal development of infrastructure within the country. The neoliberal government has already amended the FDI rule to allow 100% FDI through the automatic route without the RBI's approval in ten railway sectors, including construction, operation, and maintenance. The employment of Indian labour in railways is, thus, bound to become subservient to the tunes of global capital, eroding workers' collective autonomy and national economic sovereignty.

Protests by the aspirants were first brought to attention by the mainstream media on 18 January 2022. The board had received 1.25 crore applications for 3528 vacancies. The ratio of applicants to vacancies is staggering. Most of these applicants comprise graduates. The gap between education and employment continues to



widen. Indian railways are not just the largest public employer but also an equal opportunity employer with a sizeable proportion of employees belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Privatising it is bound to deviate the aim of employment from this socio-economic vision of diminishing inequality in a caste-ridden society.



The employment dynamics of public sector enterprises are fundamentally different from private, profit-generating industries. The latter's only concern is to maximise the generation of surplus value through labour exploitation. Even though higher profits might not be automatically contradictory with higher employment, low unemployment indeed contains the potential to obstruct the ever-expanding nature of surplus accumulation in multiple ways. One, with near-full employment conditions, the workers' bargaining power collectively becomes more strengthened vis-à-vis the captains of industry. Two, with guaranteeing employment, the act of retrenchment loses its disciplinary nature of controlling the workforce through fear. Three, with increasing labour solidarity, a general consciousness develops favouring pro-worker tendencies in society. Four, with a diminishing reserve army of surplus labour, formerly available to work on subsistence (or below-subsistence) wages, the downward pressure on wages diminishes significantly. Therefore, maintaining unemployment in increasingly precarious work conditions becomes es-

sential for neoliberal regimes to prevent the general rate of profit from falling, so to say.

It is even more irksome for the captains of the industry when the state steps in to subsidise mass consumption. At best, it threatens alternative modes of private profit-generating modes of public transport, and at worst, it is a ripe field ready to be captured by the capitalists. The government subsidises more than 50% of the operation costs of the Indian Railways. India's first private train, Tejas Express, stopped operating within a year because the trains were running at a vacant capacity of 65%. In the draft proposal for privatisation of Indian railways, NITI Aayog proposes to give complete freedom to the private company, winning the bid for taking over passenger trains on profitable routes, to determine whatever price they may deem profitable for the journey fare. With affordable mass transport at peril, the millions of Indian workers depending exclusively on Indian Railways are left at the mercies of private profit-extracting enterprises.

The dual attack of privatisation and unemployment in the Indian Railways is, on the whole, a perfect recipe of disaster for the working masses of the country. It would bode well for us to remember the havoc wreaked by the privatisation of British railways. Railway networks completely broke down and became highly inefficient, with subsequent improvements only brought on by re-nationalisation. To safeguard our public assets, built by the sweat and blood of millions of workers of this country, a radical, revolutionary reimagining of organising political economy beyond private capital accumulation needs to show the path. This imagination and action need to be brought about by forging student-workers unity against all exploitative systems depriving their livelihood, depriving labour of its fruit.

[1] <https://www.cmie.com/kommon/bin/sr.php?kall=warticle&dt=20220131131123&msec=536#:~:text=Employment%20in%202021%2D22%20and,in%20Uttar%20Pradesh%20and%20Bihar>.

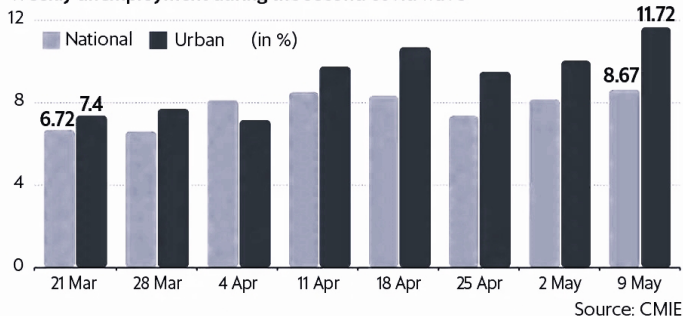
# Global Capitalism and Post-Covid Employment Recovery in India

The Covid-19 pandemic led to a grave economic crisis and stark collapse of employment in India. Even after the nation-wide lockdown was relaxed, the unemployment rate crossed 12%, as per estimates by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). While it is the government's responsibility to support the people during such a crisis, its response has only further worsened the situation. Even now, when the government claims that all is well in the economy and the country is on its way to becoming a 5 trillion dollar economy, the estimated unemployment rate is 8.10% (as of February 2022). On the other hand, it was 6.3% and 4.7% in 2018-19 and 2017-18 respectively.

## Climbing worries

Urban unemployment touched 11.72% in the week ended 9 May, the highest in 47 weeks.

Weekly unemployment during the second covid wave



The pandemic had a devastating effect, particularly on the employment of youth and women. According to CMIE, nearly 3 crore youth between the ages of 20 and 29 were unemployed in 2021, and they accounted for around 85% of the total unemployment in the country. The already abysmally low female labour force participation rate further declined due to the pandemic.

Despite having the policy and economic resources to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on employment, the government repeatedly refused to use them. In fact, the government's response can only be described as miserly. While even the dogmatically capitalist G20 countries relaxed their fiscal rigidity and spent money, the Indian government refused to do so. Instead, it chose

to stick to supply-side measures, like tax breaks for corporates, low-interest loans and improving the "ease of doing business". These measures have had little to no effect on improving the economy or employment.

It is quite obvious that only increasing fiscal spending can be the solution to a crisis of aggregate demand, caused by unemployment and a fall in incomes during the pandemic. Increasing the incomes of the poor through measures like increased rations, rural and urban employment guarantees and direct cash transfers will increase aggregate demand. An increase in demand will enable MSMEs, which generate a substantial share of employment, to find their legs again. However, increasing fiscal spending would not be possible as long as the government holds on to its obsession with having a small fiscal deficit. Even in the 2022-23 budget, the government has no specific policies for employment generation. The budget for MNREGA, which has been crucial to generate employment in the rural economy and is an important lifeline for the rural poor, has been slashed by 25%.



This obsession with the fiscal deficit is a result of the priority the Indian government gives to the stock and bond markets, investor confidence, ease of doing business, attracting foreign investment and the like, which have never led to commensurate employment generation. The government has also used the pandemic as

an excuse to further push its neoliberal agenda. It has implemented a range of neoliberal reforms that favour global finance capital, like the deregulation of markets and privatisation of public sector enterprises. Many of these reforms, such as the New Education Policy and the labour codes were already on the agenda of the government even before the pandemic. These policies have only served to benefit the already super-rich. Corporations have shored up their profits and continue to make record gains while doing nothing for investment or job creation. According to the Oxfam I equality Report 2022, the number of billionaires in India increased from 102 to 142, while the incomes of 84% of households in India decreased in 2021.

Meanwhile, the employment situation in the country continues to worsen. Employment generation has been sparse both in the rural and urban contexts. Even the few jobs that have been created are of bad quality. They are mostly in the informal sector and do not provide any form of social security to workers. Contractualisation has become the norm and industries continue to exploit labour by inventing new categories outside of proper employment such as on-the-job training and apprenticeship. The massive increase in gig work has led to the emergence of a large, new category of precarious

workers. While the government may claim that a record number of jobs are being created through such avenues, such jobs that do not provide decent work to workers and do not have any form of social security only serve to intensify the exploitation of workers and increase profits for capital.

In essence, through its pandemic “reforms”, the government has successfully further shifted the balance of power between global finance capital and labour in favour of the former. It has done only lip service and given false promises to workers while actively working against their interests. The Indian state has fully capitulated to global finance and its neoliberal capitalist ideology. When asked to bend, it crawls. Even when custodians of global capitalism, like the IMF, suggest that countries should increase fiscal spending, India pays no heed. Such is the degree of surrender to the neoliberal ideology. According to the government, the COVID-19 pandemic is over. But India and the developing world are still suffering from the pandemic of global capitalism. Unless and until this malaise is gotten rid of, there can be no scope of creating decent work or recovery of the employment situation in India.







# International Movements

## Turkey

Academic repression in Turkey accelerated after the 2016 coup attempts where the University was located as a site of dissatisfaction. Autonomy in institutions was curbed, protests were seen as anti-national and police action within campuses were increased through two emergency decrees passed in 2016 and 2018 respectively. Since then more than 6000 academics have been sacked and 3000 schools and universities shut down. Recently in 2021, the termination of services of three deans in Turkey's top university and their replacement by Melih Bulu, a member of Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party who was accused of plagiarizing his PhD led to massive protests. Dissent by LGBTQ members of the university gave the socially conservative government an additional reason to target the protestors. Riot police were allowed to enter



campus and beat and arrest students, main organizers had their homes raided. The protestors were labelled as lazy, anti-national and morally corrupt elements. The systematic repression of dissent at universities bear a chilling resemblance to the attack on Jamia, AMU, JNU, Railway students' hostels. The labelling of student activists such as Andolan jivi, urban Naxal also rings familiar to the situation in Turkey. Institutions are portrayed as hubs for anti-nationals just for highlighting the undemocratic functioning of government and this phenomenon is not unique to the Indian experience.

## Greece

In the name of updating labour laws in light of the rapid changes to the work environment, the Greek parliament passed a set of Labour laws in 2021. By combining certain progressive measures around the prevention of sexual harassment at the workspace with deeply anti-worker policies; the government tried to pass off regressive laws as progressive. The laws introduced the provision of a ten-hour workday instead of time off rather than ensuring overtime payments are given for any work above the hour mark. An online interconnected system called ERGANI 11 was also introduced to monitor workers' performance. The government claimed that this would streamline dispute resolution and allow for transparency for performance reviews. However, workers believe that this system will be used to punish workers who aren't able to bring machine-like efficiency. The law also severely restricts labour movements by making it compulsory for a 50% member consensus before a union can call for a strike and even while they are on a strike they must ensure 33% of the total production of 'essential goods and services to continue. Despite major protests and strikes by unions of all ideological leanings, the law was passed. These restrictive labour laws are in stark contrast to the benefits given to the ruling elites such as the 750 billion euros stimulus package to be paid through the next six years.





## Argentina

Argentina's government is in the midst of negotiations with the IMF to restructure \$44bn that it owes to the global fund. The loan dates back to 2018, when then-president Mauricio Macri signed on to a \$57bn agreement with the international lender of last resort, making it the largest loan in IMF history. IMF is not designed nor interested in dealing with the root causes of Argentina's never-ending financial woes. Because the problem is not financing, but a structural issue in an economy that does not have enough sectors of high productivity. This is made evident by the fact that in 70 years the IMF



has given loans 22 times to Argentina. A common tactic used by IMF has been to push loans and then propose a structural adjustment to governments that are more open to increasing privatization and imposing austerity measures. A similar repayment in 2001 has pushed the majority in the country into extreme financial distress and in the face of a 52% price rise people of Argentina are demanding a referendum on the matter. Protestors have demanded that rather than refinancing loans the government should invest the amount on job creation and social benefits which will help in establishing financial stability, bringing the country out of this debt trap.

## Sri-Lanka

Sri Lanka is facing a severe economic and political crisis. The value of the currency has plummeted because of the inability of the country to repay its foreign borrowings. The island is facing acute food, medicine and fuel shortages. Food inflation is higher than 25%. Long queues of people waiting to buy essential commodities could be seen throughout the island. Sri Lanka had borrowed vast sums of money from other countries and the

International Monetary Institution (IMF), and is now unable to repay them. However, the country might not be left with any option but to ask for an IMF bailout to weather the crisis. While it is such loans and the accompanying imposed neoliberalisation of the country that has led to the crisis in the first place.



This has led to mass protests from the people. The protestors have demanded that the President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, and his brother Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the Prime Minister both resign. Despite the crisis, opposition political parties and trade unions have not been actively protesting against the government. Most of the mobilisation has been spontaneous. The protests may be the first time in the country's history when its Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim populations have protested together for a common cause. University students make up a significant part of the protestors. They have boycotted classes and have called for protests till the Rajapaksas resign.

The protests are concentrated in the South of the country, whereas in the North and the East, where Tamils are concentrated, they have been relatively fewer. While different communities may be united now, Tamils are skeptical that this unity will continue. "Protesting is not new to us... its new to them", stated a Tamil student of Jaffna University on Twitter. He also added that while Tamils have been protesting for years now for their rights, they have not received any support from the Sinhalese, so they fear that once the current crisis subsides, the Tamil people will again be irrelevant for the rest of the country.



# Lessons from Ukraine: Exposing the Crisis of Indian Medical Education

"Why should we bother about politics? Why should we bother about war? We should focus more on our lives rather than thinking about the world." These are some of the familiar narratives we face in our day-to-day lives. We are made to feel that our lives are isolated from the larger world issues. Most of the Indian parents whose children were busy taking medical education in Ukraine would have never thought as to how the world politics between NATO and Putin would one day leave their children stranded in a war zone.



Almost 22,000 students used to study in Ukraine, predominantly medical students. It became a matter of deeper consideration when PM Modi made a ludicrous comment on the issue of stranded students, recommending not to pursue education from smaller countries like Ukraine. With many students stuck and one reported death, it became an issue of national concern. This incident saw students asked to pay more than 1 lakh for Air India tickets, which usually cost around 30-40 thousand. Students were also asked to deliberately chant "Bharat Mata ki Jai" or "Vande Matram" during rescue operations. So why does someone who just passed out from Class 12 and wants to become a doctor opt for going abroad in countries like Ukraine or Kazakhstan? A look into the structure of medical education in India gives a clear answer to this.

Anyone who wants to pursue MBBS in India after Class 12 is supposed to give an entrance examination called

NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test). As the name suggests, the score in the NEET is used for taking admissions based on the rank secured, which also sets a minimum score required to be eligible to pursue MBBS in India. Last year, around 16 lakh students appeared for NEET-UG, competing for about 80 thousand seats (among which 40 thousand seats are in government colleges while the other 40 are in private), making it one of the most competitive examinations throughout the world. Annual tuition fees for government medical colleges varies from 1 thousand to a lakh depending on the Indian state in which it is present. In contrast, it goes from 10-20 lakh for private medical colleges annually. So, either the students target for government medical seats or end up paying more than 50 lakhs to complete their MBBS degree from India.



*S Anitha, a 17-year-old girl from Tamil-Nadu, committed suicide in 2017 while fighting against newly adopted NEET regulations for admissions in State Medical Colleges*

Due to massive competition for government seats and very high fees in private colleges, many students are not out of choice but are conditionally forced to take up MBBS courses in countries like Ukraine, where it costs around Rs. 15-25 lakh for the whole degree. Also, the banks in India give education loans up to 25 lakhs to study abroad, which falls within the range of their fees. All a student has to do is to get decent marks, apply for colleges abroad, take up an education loan, and after finishing their degree, give a qualifying examination to practice in India. Hence, we see a large number of students going abroad to study MBBS.



Let us take stock of the crisis that medical education and healthcare infrastructure faces in India. What plagues India is the dismally low doctor to population ratio, which varies geographically. While in Delhi the population to doctor ratio is 2200:1 in Bihar, it is 42,000:1, according to Rural Health Statistics (2019-20). Regretfully, the focus of all successive governments and policymakers was restricted to upgrading the building of these health centres and failed to ensure the availability of human resources in respective healthcare centres. They completely forgot to ensure whether these buildings have sufficient numbers of ANM (Auxiliary nurse midwife), doctors, specialists, and other staff or not. There are considerable vacant positions and a shortfall of ANMs or female health workers in SCs (Sub-Centres) and PHCs (Primary Health Centre) where the vacancies have increased significantly from 4.75% to around 14% from 2005 to 2020. However, the shortfall has declined for the same period but remains more than 2%. The crisis became much more prominent in the Covid-crisis when the whole health sector crumbled to cater to the public. In 2018, without any cess, the allocation to health was 2.2% of the total Budget expenditure. In the current Budget, allocation of 2.2% of total expenditure would have been over Rs 88,000 crore. However, the actual allocation is just Rs 83,000 crore, including the cess-funded portion. If the cess-funded part is excluded, the allocation would fall to just Rs 62,451 or 1.6% of total expenditure, a “shortfall” of Rs 25,700 crores.

**Table 1: Health Expenditure for BRICS for 2012**

Country	Total Health Exp (% of GDP)*	Public Health Exp (% of Total Health Exp)*	Public Health Exp (% of GDP)
Brazil	9.3	46.4	4.32
Russia	6.3	61	3.84
India	4.05	33	1.34
China	5.4	56	3.02
South Africa	8.8	47.9	4.22

\* World Bank Statistics for 2012.

*Situation remains grim even after 10 years, especially since the rise of BJP, where Public Health Exp. has fallen to even worse levels with rampant privatisation of remaining infrastructure*

There have been policy suggestions that emphasise building a robust tertiary health care sector, as has been exemplified by states like Tamilnadu or Kerala, which is also partially being implemented in states like Delhi. This, however, requires a significant increase (at least 10 per cent annually) in seats in government medical colleges, and an improved tertiary healthcare sector for the training of the passed out medical graduates. All these measures however require a shift from corporatisation and privatisation of the healthcare sector to the building up of a robust public health care sector through increased funding in health. There is also a tendency in India to start private practice immediately after graduation. This scenario needs a radical makeover through mandatory training programmes in rural healthcare centres.

Physicians from very early ages used to be among the most respected, primarily attributed to their healing power against someone's pain. In the Egyptian civilization, Imhotep, the architect of the 1st pyramid, was also a doctor who became so famous among the masses that he was given the title "God of Healing". Hippocrates from Greece carried forward the legacy, establishing a benchmark for a doctor's relationship with a patient and thus society. The doctors were respected for their role in society rather than their position. With the coming age of Capitalism, each such relation was merely reduced to monetary transactions where the link between doctor-patient was turned into salesperson-consumer.

Moving forward, we have to understand and see in totality how the whole system is responsible for even a single incident like the Indian student crisis in Ukraine. And to prevent such a crisis, what we need to do is to build a consolidated struggle against the privatisation of healthcare and with demands of increased public funding in medical education. In medical terms, a tumour may cause headaches, but the solution is not just to take painkillers but to remove the tumour to save the patient. Capitalism is that tumour in our present world, and we all are the patients. Only by resisting privatisation which is happening across all sectors at a ridiculous rate, being enforced by fascists throughout the world, can we carry forward the struggle to save us all.



# National Education Policy 2020: Privatisation, Saffronisation, Digital Exclusion, Informalisation

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was applauded by mainstream (read: Godi) media who painted it as changes that would “revolutionize” education. NEP 2020 derives most of its components from the Ambani-Birla Report 2000, penned by two of the leading capitalists in the country and submitted to the Prime Minister’s Council on Trade and Industry (PMCTI). Ambani and Birla in this document have claimed that education should not be considered a part of social development but an “investment” for “information society” and “market competition”.

The market will determine the nature and value of knowledge and state support will slowly be withdrawn from education, with the price of education and value being determined by the free market. One must ask who is the NEP “revolutionizing” education for? A roadmap for privatization, saffronisation, digitization, and informalization of education revolutionizes education for the capitalist looking for-profit and the upper-class and upper-caste who dominate the material resources of India.

## ***Privatisation/ Commercialisation***

Much like most of the policies that the Modi government churns out, the NEP 2020 aims to privatize education. The policy attempts to use the word private in a seemingly naive manner, opening up the entry of the private sector in education by pre-fixing either ‘public-spirited’ or ‘philanthropic’ whenever the private sector is mentioned. The document does not however distinguish between private for-profit and the ‘philanthropic private’ that it claims will be able to enter the education sector under NEP 2020. This naivety is not something natural of the BJP, a party that is admittedly shrewd, cunning, and sinister in its approach. The words used in the NEP are just a sugarcoat allowing private players and India’s oligarchs to monopolize education for their

gain.

While public and private education have both co-existed in India, the NEP 2020 could almost be read like a press release written by a spokesperson for the private sector. The NEP 2020 will mean a slowly dwindling education budget as already evidenced by cutting off funds for several SC/ST/OBC and girl child scholarship schemes in the budgets that followed the NEP. Furthermore, with dwindling resources for public universities, quality education will only be found at private universities. And the exorbitant costs associated with this education will only be available to a few in new India.

In the initial National Education Policy, it was recommended that college administrations should be held responsible for financial irregularities. This has been removed in the new NEP. Along with this, public universities will no longer get grants but get loans which will then have to be returned to a central body known as the Higher Education Commission Of India (HECI).

These measures only point towards one inevitable conclusion, education will now become a commercial project in the hands of India’s capitalists. Quality education will only be available to those that can afford it, and the rest of India’s population will be forced into informalized and vocational work.

## ***Informalisation***

Those that still believe that the ruling class has the public interest at heart and has added measures in the NEP to stop this division of education based on material resources are in for a shock. The NEP, through its policies, has legitimized and aided the informatization of education and the option for students to drop out and leave education. The NEP has come up with an exit

option where students can drop out of school to pursue vocational courses as well as leave college without completing the entire duration of the degree. These changes, along with a focus on what they term multi-disciplinarity will lead to several consequences. Firstly, adding this to the commercialization of education, it is evident that it will be students without material resources, Dalit students, Adivasi students, and women students who will suffer and be forced to take up these exit options.



Secondly, in a country where the class divide is already vast and resources concentrated in the hands of a few, the disproportionate distribution of resources will only be exacerbated. As only the privileged will have access to quality education and be able to pursue it fully further increasing the class divide in India.

This influx of young people joining the vocational and labour market will affect the ability of the unions and workforce to bargain. In India, most of those pursuing vocational courses have to complete a 3-36 months apprenticeship where they have to work in factories. These apprentices do not get the benefit of labour laws and trade unions, and many factories exploit these apprentices. Factories can also use these apprentices to shut down labour movements. While this is technically illegal, it has already been done. In December 2019, the Honda factory in Manesar was allowed to shut down a contract staff uprising for fair wages by hiring 800 trainees to keep the production lines moving.

## Saffronisation

The NEP is also acting pushing the political interests of the Hindutva ruling order on campuses. With increasing autonomy and administrations moving more right-wing, active saffronisation happens on campuses as well as a stifling of dissent. The Karnataka College Hijab Ban and court case set a harrowing precedent for secular India. At Bennett University, students and parents have been asked to sign an undertaking that they wouldn't participate, support, or promote "anti-national" or "anti-social" activity. It complies with an order from the state government of Uttar Pradesh. According to the University, "anti-national activity" is something "which is unlawful in the opinion of the university".



In a country where peaceful and democratic protests are targeted by the state, demonized by the godi media, and treated with apathy by the ruling class, university administration enforcing these views on students and stringently punishing those who participate is a very dangerous idea. However, it is one that was also suggested in the Ambani-Adani report.

All the consequences of the NEP when seen together in the bigger picture suggest a material change in Indian education. Education will no longer be accessible or enriching, and it will be completely devoid of critical thinking. The Corporatization of India's education suits the ruling class and elite and should be a cause of concern for those who care about the democratic, secular, and social fabric of India.

# Who survives Online Classes?



Digitisation of education has been a topic of speculation and found its way into science fiction (for example, *The Fun They Had* by Issac Asimov) long ago. With physical movement coming to a standstill due to the virus, the internet provided an “alternative” avenue to continue “normal” activities. The realisation of digital education as the primary mode of education during the COVID-19 pandemic, however, has presented us with more challenges besides “loss of personal interaction”.



*The Fun They Had (NCERT, Class 9)*

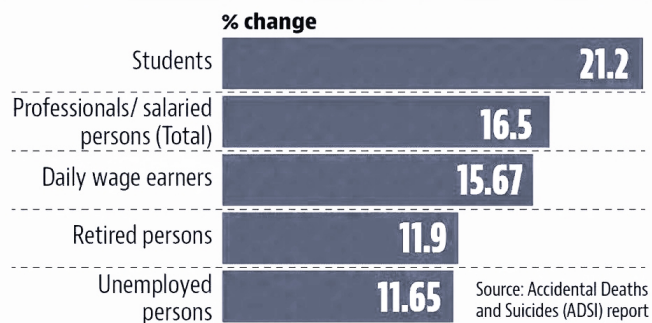
Neoliberalism has popularised an individualistic culture in society, repackaging it with a cover of consumerism – a culture where a person is made to believe that she is the cause of her hardships, and neither the state nor any agency is bound to aid her in overcoming the hardships. This culture has crept into the domain of education as well, and the COVID pandemic highlights it. These are unprecedented circumstances, and the institution is shrugging off its responsibilities toward its students. Attending the classes itself has become a challenge for many students, but the general policies exclude them, considering them unfit. They are made dependent on the degree of flexibility that the instructors and the institutes allow. Apart from the internet

connection, there are a multitude of issues that need to be taken into consideration – health (physical as well as mental) issues and family emergencies, to name a few. These issues are being mostly struck off under the pretext of ‘unusual circumstances’ and ‘if others can cope with it, why not you?’ So, a student who is unable to handle the stress of the situation and academics at the same time is not fit for pursuing their career – only the fittest can survive. Policy-makers need to acknowledge the fact that in the current scenario, diversity does not give rise to exceptions, rather it is the trend itself.

There have been numerous reports of student suicides

## In pandemic year

NCRB data shows big jump in deaths by suicide among students



amid the pandemic. According to a survey by Child-Fund India conducted in 2021, the pandemic, with rising unemployment and closure of schools, has led to higher rates of dropout from education. The terrain of education in India was already marked by various forms of inequality - be it the urban-rural divide (As many as 64 percent of the children in rural India fear they might have to drop out of school if not provided with additional support to cope with the learning gaps in their curriculum, according to the survey), economic condi-



tions, marginalisation of social groups, gender gap, and so on. In addition to this, a new form of inequality is introduced - the digital divide (Indian women are 15 per cent less likely to own a mobile phone, and 33 per cent less likely to use mobile internet services than men. In 2020, 25 percent of the total adult female population owned a smartphone versus 41 percent of adult men). This widens the pre-existing gaps while materialising new disabilities - be it the availability of a conducive environment for studying at home, health issues, access to devices, or the ability to bear the cost of the internet. The implementation of an online mode of instruction has been a reflection of social Darwinism. Government schools were not just places of education; they were sites of implementation of social welfare schemes like mid-



day meals for students, distribution of free or subsidised educational materials and uniforms, etc. Surveys post-pandemic will likely reveal a substantial drop in the level of nutrition in the areas. These government schools catered to students belonging to social groups who cannot afford to purchase education from fancy private schools. These are the very students who were

the first to be affected by the digital divide. Even among the students who could afford to go to private schools, there has been a tendency to drop out as families naturally prioritise survival over education as the pandemic resulted in large-scale unemployment and job loss. These institutions provided the students with a space free from the supervision of the family, the social institution where the coexistence and contradiction of the opposites - love and oppression - are (in)visible. These spaces potentially provide a space for intermixing of people belonging to various classes, caste, gender, and other social identities and an opportunity to unlearn (or at least question) the social roles imposed upon them. Closure of the institutions leaves these students stranded with their families, enabling the perpetuation of the social roles with minimum resistance.

The pandemic situation, along with its norms, is being touted as the 'new normal'. But in practice, the old normal is being transferred to the online platform, with a loss of personal interaction and dialogue between the teacher and the student. At the level of policy, this means commercialisation and commodification of education, barring more people from entering into higher education. The dropouts will become invisible once this is seen in the context of NEP-2020. Consequently, the system presents numerous challenges due to inherent contradictions. Perhaps an alternative would be to use the opportunity to devise a system based on co-operation and collective good instead of the individualistic and competitive system based on differentiating students according to their 'worth' in the job market and extract maximum profits by creating a market out of education, which is a basic necessity in the present society.



# Students Voices Across India

## *Pacchas (Parivartankami Chatra Sangathan)*



Pacchas completed their 11th conference on 25th-26th December in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh. In this conference, they resolved to fight against NEP 2020 and all-out attack on Student-Youth section and the Working Class of India by RSS-BJP's communal fascist regime. Six resolutions were passed against fascist attack on the people of the nation. From this conference, Comrade Mahendra was elected as the President and Comrade Kailash was elected as the General Secretary.

## *PDSF (West Bengal)*



PDSF (Progressive Democratic Students Federation) held a day long convention on NEP, to expose the grand design of handing over country's education sector to foreign and desi corporates. Eminent academicians from West Bengal participated in the convention. Other progressive student organisations also participated in the convention and their representatives spoke on the issue.

A state wide campaign was held for re-opening of schools by PDSF. The campaign was done in various districts involving the parents of school students in West Bengal. Several other left organisations also joined the campaign in January of 2022.

## *PSU (Lalkaar)*

Punjab Students Union (Lalkaar) organised protest on 14th March outside DSW(Dean of Students Welfare) office at Student Centre of Punjab University stating problems faced by students in getting hostels, time restrictions in girls hostels and burden of expensive mess and canteen rates. The hostel seats allotted to various departments have



been unnecessarily reduced in comparison to 2019-2020 session due to which students are not getting hostels.

Girls hostels are subjected to unnecessary night restrictions which is a violation of 24 hours open girls hostels. Further restriction are imposed on gate timing and visitor rooms. Mess diet rates which were hiked during lockdown on the pretext of losses faced by contractors due to low number of students are a burden on students.

## *PSU (Punjab Students Union)*



A dharna was staged outside the principal's office on 16th March by the Punjab Students Union. The principal office was gheraoed for two days in a row against the non-availability of scholarships of many students in MR Government College Fazilka in Fazilka district of Punjab and forced payment of fees from them. The matter was resolved after which a victory rally was held at the college.

## *KVS (Karnataka Vidyarthi Sangathan)*



KVS ran a state-wide campaign against Three Farm Laws. Comrades from KVS tried to create awareness among rural segments of Karnataka about the Kisan Andolan 2021 during the month of November 2021.

*\*All reports and photographs are taken from Social Media handles of respective organisations*



# गणेश शंकर विद्यार्थी और समकालीन पत्रकारिता

गणेश शंकर विद्यार्थी, स्वाधीनता आंदोलन के कार्यकर्ता, एक जनवादी पत्रकार थे। उन्होंने चम्पारण सत्याग्रह, असहयोग आंदोलन व कई दूसरे आंदोलनों में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। 1913 में उन्होंने अपना साप्ताहिक अखबार 'प्रताप' शुरू किया। 'एक पीड़ित की प्राथना' प्रताप द्वारा सम्पादित पहली पुस्तक थी जो चम्पारण के नील किसानों के ऊपर थी। इस पुस्तक को तब की अंग्रेजी सरकार ने जब्त कर लिया था। गणेश शंकर विद्यार्थी ने विक्टर ह्यूगो की फ्रांसीसी क्रांति और पेरिस कम्यून पर आधारित उपन्यास नाईन्टी थ्री का हिंदी अनुवाद किया था। अवध के किसान आंदोलन को देशवासियों तक ले जाने और कानपुर मिल मज़दूरों का यूनियन के गठन में भी विद्यार्थी की अग्रिम भूमिका रही। इसके वजह उन्हें ५ बार जेल जाना पड़ा।

भगत सिंह 'बलवंत सिंह' के नाम से प्रताप अखबार में लेख लिखा करते थे। शुरूवात में गणेश शंकर विद्यार्थी को ये बात पता नहीं थी कि भगत सिंह ही बलवंत सिंह है। जब उन्हें ये बात पता चली तब उन्होंने भगत सिंह को भी अपनी सम्पादक टीम में शामिल होने का न्योता दिया और क्रान्तिकारी आंदोलन के आंतरिक विवादों को प्रताप के पन्नों में जगह मिला। 23 मार्च, 1931 को भगत सिंह, राजगुरु और सुखदेव को फांसी दी गयी थी। इसी के दौरान 25 मार्च, 1931 में कानपुर में गणेश शंकर विद्यार्थी एक दंगे को रोकते वक़्त मारे गए।

गणेश शंकर विद्यार्थी जीवन भर धार्मिक कट्टरता और उन्माद के खिलाफ आवाज़ उठाते रहे। 'राष्ट्रीयता' शीर्षक से छपे अपने एक लेख में विद्यार्थी कहते हैं, 'हमें जानबूझकर मूर्ख नहीं बनना चाहिए और उटपटांग रास्ते नहीं नापने चाहिए। हिंदू राष्ट्र- हिंदू राष्ट्र चिल्लाने वाले भारी भूल कर रहे हैं। इन लोगों ने अभी तक राष्ट्र शब्द का अर्थ ही नहीं समझा है।' आगे इस लेख में गणेश हिन्दू-राष्ट्र की कल्पना को देश के लिए हानिकारक बताते हैं। इस लेख के अंत में वो लिखते हैं 'हम राष्ट्रीयता के अनुयायी हैं, पर वही हमारे लिए सब कुछ नहीं, वह केवल हमारे देश की उन्नति का एक उपाय भर है।' गणेश शंकर विद्यार्थी के कार्यकाल से हम ये सीखते हैं की नैतिक पत्रकारिता का अर्थ अन्याय के सामने 'निष्पक्ष' मौनता धारण करना नहीं होता।

## मीडिया में सत्ता और पूंजी का गठजोड़

पत्रकारिता की भाषा अपने समय की संवेदना और सरोकार से जुड़ी हुई होनी चाहिए। हमारे दौर में मीडिया सरकार और कॉर्पोरेट के एजेंडा के सामने प्रगतिशील जनमत की हत्या का औजार बन चुका है। आज का टीवी मीडिया और मुख्यधारा के अखबार समाज में लोगो के बीच जहर चोलने का काम कर रहे हैं।

उदहारण के लिए दैनिक जागरण दुनिया में सबसे ज्यादा पढ़े जाने वाले अखबारों में से एक है। सी ए ए कानून के खिलाफ चल रहे आंदोलन के दौरान 30 दिन तक दैनिक जागरण के एक संस्करण का अध्ययन करने पर देखा गया कि इतने लम्बे अंतराल में भी अखबार ने कानून की आलोचना या आंदोलन का पक्ष रखते हुए एक भी संपादकीय लेख नहीं छपा। पत्रकारिता के नाम पर सरकार की पक्षधारिता मुख्यधारा के कई अखबार करते हैं। जी न्यूज़

के मालिक शुभाष चंद्रा भाजपा के राज्य सभा सांसद है। न्यूज़ 18 नेटवर्क और टीवी 18 अंबानी की रिलायंस द्वारा संचालित है। तेलंगाना के मुख्यमंत्री चंद्रशेखर राव का परिवार तेलंगाना में दो अखबारों और एक टीवी चैनल का संचालन करता है एवं मीडिया घरानों का मुनाफा अगर 'मिडिल क्लास' को विज्ञापन बेचने में हो, ये आश्चर्य की बात बिलकुल नहीं है की बहुसंख्यक, मेहनतकश आबादी के ज़मीनी मुद्दों को यहाँ रास्ता दिखाया जायेगा। एक रिपोर्ट अनुसार राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर सबसे परिचालित अखबारों में ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों के ख़बरों को 2% से भी कम जगह मिलती है। इसका मतलब भारत के लगभग 70% आबादी का सुख -दुःख - आक्रोश इन 'राष्ट्रीय' अखबारों के लिए खबर है ही नहीं। ऊपर दिए गए उदहारण से मीडिया तंत्र के भीतर पूंजी और राजनितिक सत्ता के गठजोड़ को समझा जा सकता है। भारत के मीडिया के संदर्भ में ऐसे कई उदहारण दिए जा सकते हैं।

## आगे का रास्ता

हर भाषा सामाज को समझने के लिए अपने साथ तीन तरह के ज्ञान के संसाधन पैदा करती है। पहला साहित्य, दूसरी सामाजिक, दार्शनिक व वैज्ञानिक विमर्श और तीसरी उसमें प्रति दिन होने वाली पत्रकारिता। हिंदी के पास साहित्य की एक खूबसूरत दुनिया है मगर पत्रकारिता और बौद्धिक विमर्श की भारी कमी है। देश भर के लेफ्ट संगठनों के कार्यकर्ता हिंदी सहित तमाम स्थानीय भाषाओं में विमर्शी चर्चाओं को लाने के प्रयास में जुटे हुए हैं। आप किसी भी आंदोलन में वहाँ लगे बुक स्टाल्स पर प्रगतिशील विचारों से लैश, मैगज़ीन, किताबे व साहित्य बहुत सस्ते दामों पर खरीद सकते हैं। इन सब के बीच सोशल मीडिया और इंटरनेट के माध्यम से हिंदी समाज में नयी तरह की सिविल सोसाइटी बन रही है। हर जिले कस्बों में ऐसे कई पत्रकार हैं जो अलग-अलग तरह की रिपोर्टिंग के जरिए नए तरह का स्थानीय मीडिया खड़ा कर रहे हैं जो कॉर्पोरेट पूंजी और बाजार के नियमों से चलने वाले मीडिया को चुनौती दे रहा है। हाल ही में किसान आंदोलन के साथ खड़े हो कर अल्टरनेटिव मीडिया ने ऐसा भूमिका निभाया है। लेकिन सवाल ये उठता है की क्या 'वैकल्पिक' मीडिया केवल मुख्यधारा के मीडिया के सफ़ेद झूठों को बेनकाब करके संतुष्ट हो सकता है? नहीं। सच में वैकल्पिक मीडिया वह होगा जो वैकल्पिक एजेंडा, वैकल्पिक पक्ष पेश कर पायेगा। यह तब संभव होगा जब हमारे आंदोलन भी 'विकल्प' का रास्ता खोजेंगे।

गणेश शंकर विद्यार्थी अपने एक लेख में भारत की आजादी के आंदोलन में लोकमत की भूमिका को रेखांकित करते हुए कहते हैं कि आजादी की लड़ाई और इसकी विचारधारा केवल अभिजात वर्ग के कुछ चुनिंदा लोगो की विचारधारा नहीं होनी चाहिए। इसमें जनता की पूर्ण भागीदारी होनी चाहिए। एक बेहतर लोकतंत्र, एक प्रगतिशील जनमत और जनमानस से ही तैयार हो सकता है। भारत के मौजूदा मीडिया तंत्र में गणेश शंकर विद्यार्थी की विचारधारा वाले पत्रकार हाशिये पर धकेल दिए गए हैं। पिछले कुछ सालों में जनवादी पत्रकारिता पर कई तरह के हमले हुए हैं। ऐसे दौर में गणेश शंकर विद्यार्थी से प्रेरणा लेते हुए हमें जनवादी मीडिया खड़ा करने की जरूरत है।



## Seeking *Begumpura* in Neoliberal Fascist Times



### Sant Ravidas

15-16 century CE

Revolutionary philosopher-poet

जात - पात, सांप्रदायिक ताकतों को तोड़ के  
चलो बेगमपुरा के ओर

The regal realm with the sorrowless name  
they call it *Begumpura* city, a place with no pain,  
No taxes or cares, none owns property there,  
no wrongdoing, worry, terror, or torture.  
Oh my brother, I've come to take it as my own,  
my distant home, where everything is right ...  
They do this or that, they walk where they wish,  
they stroll through fabled palaces unchallenged.

Oh, says Ravidas, a tanner now set free,  
those who walk beside me are my friends.

— *Amritvani Satguru Raidas Maharaj Ji*  
(ed. Sant Surinder Das)

बेगमपुरा सहर को नाउ, दुखु-अंदोहू नहीं तिहि ठाउ ।  
ना तसवीस खिराजु न मालु, खउफुन खता न तरसु जुवालु ।  
अब मोहि खूब बतन गह पाई, ऊहां खैरि सदा मेरे भाई ।  
काइमु-दाइमु सदा पातिसाही, दोम न सोम एक सो आही ।  
आबादानु सदा मसहूर, ऊहाँ गनी बसहि मामूर ।

तिउ तिउ सैल करहिजिउ भावै, महरम महल न को अटकावै ।  
कह 'रविदास' खलास चमारा, जो हम सहरी सु मीतु हमारा ।

— *अमृतवाणी सतगुरु रविदास महाराज जी* (ed. संत सुरिंदर दास)

## Why are Dalit farm-workers remembering Guru Raidas by demanding reservations over panchayati land?



*“Performing meaningless rituals is no way to remember Guru Sant Raidasji... Begumpura will be achieved only when all the means of production have been socialised.”*

— Com. Mukesh Malaud, *Zameen Prapti Sangharsh Committee*  
(addressing the gathering in Jalandhar in February 2022)

# लावारिस लाशें

नदियों में, तालाबों में  
जली झोपड़ियों के राखों में  
बड़े बड़े इमारतों के मलबों से  
सरकारी फाइलों के कलमों से  
ठाकर सामंतों के घने बागान से  
झूठी प्रतिष्ठा और स्वाभिमान से  
अक्सर निकल आते हैं कछ शव  
जिनका कोई वारिस नहीं होता

जरा सोच कर देखो,  
कौन होते हैं ये लोग ?  
रुक जाती है जिनकी सफ़र  
उस पुल के नीचे आकर,  
जिसका सरिया उसने खुद लगाया था,  
खामोश हो जाती है सांसे  
उस ईमारत के मलबे के नीचे  
जिसकी पहली ईंट उसने खुद चढ़ाया था।

क्यों ?

झूठे स्वाभिमान में घोंटे गए गले  
और बराबरी के लिए उठे हाथों को,  
सरकारी दफ्तरों के टाइपराइटर से,  
लावारिस बनाया जाता है।

अगर एक पल के लिए भी,  
तुम संवेदना से भर जाओ  
भले अगले ही पल  
तुम सबकुछ भूल जाओ  
जैसे भूलते आए हो आजतक।  
उस पल भर में ही खुद से सवाल करना  
कि कौन थे ये लोग और क्यों बनकर रह  
गए  
ये सिर्फ लावारिस लाशें।

-प्रभात (COLLECTIVE)





# स्टैन स्वामी को लाल सलाम

कितना खौफ़ खाते होंगे तुम  
जब तुम्हारे लोहे, ईंटे और न जाने क्या क्या से  
बने जैलों पर कोई बूढ़ा लिखकर चला  
जाता होगा कविता।

कितनी खलबली मच जाती होगी  
तुम्हारे एक्सपर्ट अफसरों के गैंग में  
जब आदिवासी बच्चे एक तरफ अपने  
स्लेट पर लिखते हैं ककहरा और  
दूसरे वक़्त पत्थल पर लिखते हैं पाँचवी  
अनुसूची के संवैधानिक प्रावधान।

हवलदार लोग बताए, कैसी तितकी उठती हैं,  
जो घुमाते हैं फोन उनके अफसर बाबू  
जब पता चलता है कि गांव के टीले पर  
लग गया है झंडा लाल।

आज नहीं आज नहीं आज नहीं  
करके किसी की आज़ादी को टालने वाले  
जज को कैसा लगता है जब वो सुनता है  
किसी दरबान से, आदिवासियों का एक झुण्ड आ रहा है  
मांगने अपने हक और अधिकार आज ही।

जैसा भी लगे बस इतना कहना है  
कंट्रोल रूम से बढ़ा ली जाए सुरक्षा  
कूछ बच्चे स्टैन स्वामी का फोटो  
लेकर, आदिवासियों का झुण्ड  
जोहार चीखते हुए न जाने किस रास्ते, पर तुम्हारी ओर बढ़ता चला  
जा रहा है।  
चेतावनी !

- आदर्श (COLLECTIVE)



**RELEASE ALL  
POLITICAL PRISONERS!  
REPEAL UAPA!**

