

COLLECTIVE

Building a Revolutionary Student - Youth Movement



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EDITORIAL

संपादकीय

A significant shift in the composition of students has happened in the first ranks of higher educational institutions in India over the last few decades. **The number of students from the rural belts and suburbs, from infrastructurally backward regions, and families with primary sources of livelihood such as agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, forestry or mining etc (i.e., primary producers) has become lesser in the important state and central universities.** The mushrooming of the private schools and coaching centres coupled with the falling standards of the government school education systems, the absence of adequate scholarships and affordable hostels and many others are the first layer of factors that have contributed to this shift. But not just in higher education, the three decades of neo-liberalism have accentuated a shift towards overall urban-centricity in the public life of the country, where from the resource, infrastructure, and employment opportunity to the focus of public policy and media, everything has disproportionately shifted towards the urban, particularly the metropolitan cities. The percentage of the urban population in India has seen a steady increase from around 11% in 1901 to 28% in 2001 and presently stands at around 35%, but the shift in discourse is disproportionate. This has important implications for the revolutionary students' movement, to which we will return.

In the past 20 years unemployment has skyrocketed, but successive governments have never stopped making promises. Though the government pushes the discourse of start-ups and self-employment, and the promised standard of living of modern society remains synonymous with private corporate jobs; the major section of the youth of this country still aims for a government job. This is primarily because of the deep-down precariousness and uncertainties of private jobs, however nicely packaged. On the one hand, the government has been steadily privatising public companies, reducing the workforce, and replacing permanent employees with contractual workers or fixed-term employees, on the other hand, the private sector jobs in most industries and services are steadily declining in quality, with increasing working hours and work pressure, increasing recruitment of apprentices, trainees, and interns coupled with hire & fire

पिछले कुछ दशकों में भारत में प्रथम श्रेणी के उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों में छात्रों की संरचना में एक महत्वपूर्ण बदलाव आया है। महत्वपूर्ण राज्य और केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालयों में ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों और उपनगरों से, इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर की दृष्टि से पिछड़े क्षेत्रों और आजीविका के प्राथमिक स्रोत जैसे कृषि, पशुपालन, मछली पकड़ने, वानिकी या खनन कार्यों में नियुक्त परिवारों से छात्रों की संख्या कम हो गई है। निजी स्कूलों और कोचिंग सेंटर्स के तेजी से बढ़ने के साथ-साथ सरकारी स्कूल शिक्षा प्रणालियों के गिरते स्तर, पर्याप्त छात्रवृत्ति और किरायायती छात्रावासों की कमी और कई अन्य ऐसे कारण इस बदलाव में योगदान देने वाले कारकों की पहली परत हैं। लेकिन सिर्फ उच्च शिक्षा में ही नहीं, नव-उदारवाद के तीन दशकों ने देश के सार्वजनिक जीवन में समग्र शहरी-केंद्रिकता की ओर बदलाव को बढ़ावा दिया है, जहां संसाधन, बुनियादी ढांचे और रोजगार के अवसर से लेकर सार्वजनिक नीति और मीडिया; सब कुछ असंगत रूप से शहरी, विशेषकर महानगरीय शहरों की ओर स्थानांतरित हो गया है। भारत में शहरी आबादी का प्रतिशत 1901 में लगभग 11% से बढ़कर 2001 में 28% हो गया है और वर्तमान में लगभग 35% है, लेकिन विमर्श में भारी बदलाव आया है। इसका क्रांतिकारी छात्र आंदोलन पर महत्वपूर्ण प्रभाव है, जिस पर हम लौटेंगे।

बेरोजगारी पिछले 20 वर्षों में बेरोजगारी आसमान छू रही है, लेकिन लगातार सरकारों ने वादे करना कभी बंद नहीं किया है। हालाँकि सरकार स्टार्ट-अप और स्व-रोजगार की चर्चा को आगे बढ़ा रही है, और निजी कॉर्पोरेट नौकरियाँ आधुनिक समाज का पर्याय बनी हुई हैं; फिर भी इस देश के युवाओं का बड़ा हिस्सा आज भी सरकारी नौकरी को लक्ष्य मानता है। यह मुख्य रूप से निजी नौकरियों की गहरी संकटमयता और अनिश्चितताओं के कारण है, चाहे उनके कितनी भी अच्छी तरह से पैकेजिंग की गई हों। एक ओर सरकार लगातार सार्वजनिक कंपनियों का निजीकरण कर रही है, कार्यबल को कम कर रही है, और स्थायी कर्मचारियों के स्थान पर ठेका श्रमिकों या अस्थायी अवधि के कर्मचारियों को नियुक्त कर रही है, दूसरी ओर, अधिकांश उद्योगों और सेवाओं में निजी क्षेत्र की नौकरियों की गुणवत्ता में लगातार गिरावट आ रही है। काम के घंटे और काम के दबाव में वृद्धि, अप्रेंटिस और प्रशिक्षुओं की बढ़ती भर्ती के साथ-साथ हायर एंड फायर नीति और अधिकांश क्षेत्रों में वास्तविक वेतन में वृद्धि नहीं हो रही है। नई श्रम संहिताओं के माध्यम से सरकार इस प्रवृत्ति को और अधिक मजबूत और वैध बना रही है।

policy and real wages not increasing in most of the sectors. Through the new Labour Codes, the government is further solidifying, legitimising and legalising this trend.

Be it government or private, the aspiration of the youth lies in 'getting a job'; in industry or services, like in factories, offices, gig work etc in a city; which effectively means aspiring to get absorbed in capitalist sector. The proliferation of coaching centres, the huge crowdings in trains during the government job exams, and the outmigration from villages to big cities and industrial townships - all point to this aspiration of getting absorbed in the capitalist sector, not always with great wages or decent working or living conditions. The present capitalism has promised a life, where everything that is advertised can be bought and consumed. It creates a spectacle full of blazing lights, colourful displays, electronic acoustic effects and variegated consumptive goods, by which every job aspirant is befuddled. It is like the promised Garden of Eden of a decaying social system, which is so close but is never meant to be reached by the majority.

Still, it would be wrong to see this 'aspiration' of youth primarily as a 'cultural' one. Absorption in capitalist sector means ensuring a steady supply of consumption goods in the family, a minimally decent place of living, the expenditure to get their children admitted to a private English medium school to make them competent for the job market, the ability to get admitted in good private hospitals so that one can avoid the long queues and mismanagement of government hospitals; ability to bear the expense of lawyer in case of any dispute, one vacation in a year; having the minimally required electronic gadgets and other basic necessities of life. For the lower ranks of the industrial and service sector; the list is shorter and it boils down to bare minimum living, education and health expenditure; even which people are unable to sustain in their villages. So, **employment is being popularly shown or seen as getting absorbed (and exploited) in the circuit of capitalism.**

Such discourse on employment often misses the fact that absorption in the capitalist sectors including the low-paid and contractual employment in industries and services has never been beyond one-third of the total workforce of our country and the percentage of those with so-called formal employment with labour rights, has been even less, not beyond 8 percent of the total jobs. Historically, the development of capitalism in India has been distorted and backward because of the interventions of imperialism and hence, like many other colonies, has a character that is distinct from the capitalism of the West European countries. Here, due to the imperialist policy and its continuation even after formal independence by the dependent capitalist class; only a meagre portion got integrated into the capitalist industries and services; and

सरकारी हो या प्राइवेट, युवाओं की आकांक्षा 'नौकरी पाने' में है; जिसका मतलब उद्योगिक या सर्विसेज सेक्टर में नौकरि - फैक्ट्री, ऑफिस, या शहरों में डिलीवरी या अन्य गिग आधारित काम मिलना है - जिसका अर्थ रोजगार के पूंजीवादी शेत्रों में काम करना है। कोचिंग सेंटरों का प्रसार, सरकारी नौकरी की परीक्षाओं के दौरान ट्रेनों में भारी भीड़, और गांवों से बड़े शहरों और औद्योगिक टाउनशिप की ओर पलायन - ये सभी पूंजीवादी क्षेत्र में काम करने की इस आकांक्षा की ओर इशारा करते हैं, हमेशा उच्च वेतन या अच्छे कार्य परिस्थितियाँ की भी अपेक्षा न करते हुए। वर्तमान पूंजीवाद ने एक ऐसे जीवन का वादा किया है, जहां विज्ञापित हर चीज खरीदी और उपभोग की जा सकती है। यह चमकती रोशनी, रंगीन डिस्प्ले, इलेक्ट्रॉनिक ध्वनिक प्रभाव और विभिन्न प्रकार के उपभोग्य सामानों से भरा एक तमाशा बनाता है, जिसे देखकर हर नौकरी चाहने वाला भ्रमित हो जाता है। यह एक खस्ताहाल सामाजिक व्यवस्था द्वारा वादे किए गए ईडन गार्डन की तरह है, जो बहुत करीब है लेकिन अधिकांश के लिए वहां तक पहुंचना कभी संभव नहीं।

फिर भी, युवाओं की इस 'आकांक्षा' को मुख्य रूप से 'सांस्कृतिक' रूप में देखना गलत होगा। पूंजीवादी क्षेत्र में समाहित होने का अर्थ है परिवार में नियमित उपभोग की वस्तुओं की आपूर्ति सुनिश्चित करना, न्यूनतम ठीक ठाक रहने की जगह, अपने बच्चों को निजी अंग्रेजी माध्यम स्कूल में दाखिला दिलाने का खर्च उठा पाना ताकि उन्हें रोजगार के बाजार के लिए सक्षम बनाया जा सके, अच्छे निजी अस्पतालों में भर्ती हो पाना ताकि सरकारी अस्पतालों की लंबी कतारों से बचा जा सके, किसी भी विवाद की स्थिति में वकील का खर्च वहन करने की श्रमता, साल में एक छुट्टी, आवश्यक इलेक्ट्रॉनिक गैजेट और अन्य बुनियादी सुविधाएं होना शामिल है। औद्योगिक और सेवा क्षेत्र के निचले स्तर के लिए यह सूचि तुलनात्मक रूप से छोटी है; वहां यह न्यूनतम जीवनयापन, शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य व्यय तक सीमित है, जिसे भी लोग अपने गांवों में कायम रखने में असमर्थ हो रहे हैं। **रोजगार को लोकप्रिय रूप से पूंजीवादी शेत्र में समाहित होना ही समझाया या दर्शाया जाता है।**

रोजगार पर इस तरह की चर्चा अक्सर इस तथ्य को नजरअंदाज कर देती है कि, अगर उद्योगिक और सर्विसेज शेत्र में कम वेतन मिलने वाले रोजगारों को भी गिना जाये, फिरबी, कुल मिलाकर, इन शेत्रों में हमारे देश के कार्यबल के केवल एक तिहाई लोगों को ही काम मिला है और इन उद्योगिक शेत्रों में श्रम अधिकारों के साथ, तथाकथित औपचारिक-रोजगार मिलने वालों की गिनती की जाये तो वह हिस्सा और भी छोटा है। ऐतिहासिक रूप से, भारत में पूंजीवाद का विकास साम्राज्यवाद के हस्तक्षेप के कारण पिछड़ा और विकृत हुआ है और इसलिए, कई अन्य उपनिवेशिक देशों की तरह, यहाँ पूंजीवादी विकास का अपना अलग चरित्र रहा जो पश्चिम यूरोपीय देशों के पूंजीवाद से भिन्न है। यहाँ पर औपचारिक स्वतंत्रता के बाद भी आश्रित पूंजीपति वर्ग द्वारा साम्राज्यवादी नीतियों को जारी रखने के कारण एक छोटा

a large portion got increasingly displaced from their traditional means of livelihood. Traditional skills have been devalued and at the same time, mechanisation rendered a section increasingly jobless through de-skilling. Since formal independence, feudal relations were not abolished by any revolutionary means but were left to decay slowly; they were marginalised from determining central state policy matters but continued to oppress and control peoples' lives economically, politically and culturally to varying extents. The neo-liberal onslaught has accentuated the clutches of IMF-WTO-World Bank, the big corporate companies, and the imperialist countries together; which has led to more aggressive methods of primary accumulation; marginalization and squeezing of large numbers of primary producers. **As a result of this squeezing of surplus value from these primary producers, devaluation of their traditional skills, forced eviction from land and a consequent displacement from their livelihood, a vast section of the primary producers are not able to sustain a minimum living from their meagre income despite producing the goods without which the society cannot run.** It is a myth for countries like ours that these large numbers of people will get absorbed in the industries and services capitalist sector over time.

Within the farmers' movement, an interesting argument has been discussed. They have **compared the relative decline of the average farmer's family income (expressed in terms of the market price of one quintal of rice/wheat) with the income of a government servant (expressed in terms of salary); from 1947 to the present times.** This shows the systematic loot and squeezing of the primary producers by the state and the capitalist classes over the time in colonial period and in independent India, where the terms have been decisively shifted against the primary producers - the peasants, the weavers, the fisherfolks, the forest people and so on - who together constitute no less than two third of our total population. The present state power; whichever party be the governing one; can at most create some welfare measures; which will actualise not in terms of institutionalised rights of welfare but as electoral promises by different parties/leaders and will be termed as 'freebies'; but it cannot raise the standard of living of the primary producers; as their expropriation is fundamental to the sustenance of the capitalist-imperialist framework, and none of these political parties have any agenda to dismantle this framework. It is needless to mention that the primary producers are not homogeneous whole. They are enmeshed in economic, socio-cultural and political relations of hierarchy, exploitation and oppression. Building a revolutionary struggle of these primary producers will require an uncompromising battle against dominant sections within these communities, who often collude with the ruling elite.

हिस्सा ही पूंजीवादी उद्योगों और सेवाओं में एकीकृत हो पाया। लेकिन एक बड़ा हिस्सा अपनी आजीविका के पारंपरिक साधनों से तेजी से विस्थापित हो गया। पारंपरिक कौशल का अवमूल्यन किया गया है और साथ ही, मशीनीकरण ने डी-स्किलिंग के माध्यम से एक वर्ग को तेजी से बेरोजगार बना दिया है। औपचारिक स्वतंत्रता के बाद भी, हमारे देश में सामंती संबंधों को किसी भी क्रांतिकारी तरीके से समाप्त नहीं किया गया, बल्कि उन्हें बहुत धीमी गति से क्षय के लिए छोड़ दिया गया; उन्हें केंद्रीय नीतियों के निर्धारण में शक्तिहीन बना दिया गया, पर अलग-अलग हद तक उनका आर्थिक, राजनीतिक और सांस्कृतिक रूप से लोगों के जीवन पर अत्याचार और नियंत्रण को जारी रखा गया। नव-उदारवादी हमले ने आईएमएफ-डब्ल्यूटीओ-विश्व बैंक, बड़ी कॉर्पोरेट कंपनियों और साम्राज्यवादी देशों की मिली पकड़ को मजबूत किया है, जिसके कारण प्राथमिक संचय के अधिक आक्रामक तरीके सामने आए हैं, बड़ी संख्या में प्राथमिक उत्पादकों का हाशियाकरण हुआ है। **प्राथमिक उत्पादकों से अधिशेष मूल्य (सरप्लस वैल्यू) की निकासी, उनके पारंपरिक कौशल का अवमूल्यन, भूमि से जबरन बेदखली और उनके आजीविका से विस्थापन के परिणामस्वरूप, प्राथमिक उत्पादक, जो उन वस्तुओं का उत्पादन करते हैं जिसके बगैर समाज नहीं चल सकता; अपनी अल्प आय के कारण न्यूनतम जीवन यापन करने में सक्षम नहीं हो पा रहे।** हम जैसे देशों के लिए यह एक मिथक है कि समय के साथ इतनी बड़ी संख्या में लोग उद्योगिक और सर्विसेज क्षेत्र में समाहित हो जायेंगे।

किसान आंदोलन के अंदर एक दिलचस्प तर्क चर्चा में रहा - उन्होंने, 1947 से वर्तमान समय तक, एक सरकारी कर्मचारी की आय (वेतन के रूप में व्यक्त) के साथ औसत किसान परिवार की आय (एक क्विंटल चावल/गेहूँ के बाजारी मूल्य में व्यक्त) की तुलना करते हुए, अंतर और गिरावट को दर्शाया। यह औपनिवेशिक काल और स्वतंत्र भारत में राज्य और पूंजीपति वर्ग द्वारा प्राथमिक उत्पादकों की व्यवस्थित लूट और संकुचन को दर्शाता है, जहां व्यवस्था को निर्णायक रूप से प्राथमिक उत्पादकों के खिलाफ स्थापित कर दिया गया है - किसान, बुनकर, मछुआरे, जंगल निवासी, आदि - जो कुल मिलाकर हमारी जनसंख्या के दो-तिहाई से कम नहीं हैं। वर्तमान राज्य सत्ता, सत्ताधारी पार्टियाँ, कोई भी हो, अधिक से अधिक कुछ कल्याणकारी उपाय ला सकते हैं; जो कल्याण संस्थागत अधिकारों के संदर्भ में नहीं बल्कि विभिन्न दलों/नेताओं के चुनावी वादों के रूप में साकार किए जाते हैं, और फिर उन्हें 'मुफ्त' होने की संज्ञा दी जाती है। लेकिन यह प्राथमिक उत्पादकों के जीवन स्तर को उन्नत नहीं कर सकता क्योंकि यह शोषण उन दलों और पूंजीपति वर्ग के स्वामित्व और पूंजीवादी-साम्राज्यवादी ढांचे को कायम रखने के लिए ज़रूरी है, और इनमें से किसी भी राजनीतिक दल के पास इस ढांचे को खत्म करने का कोई एजेंडा नहीं है। यह उल्लेख करने की आवश्यकता नहीं है कि प्राथमिक उत्पादक आपस में समान या सजातीय नहीं हैं। उनके सम्बन्ध आर्थिक, सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक और राजनीतिक संबंधों से उत्पन्न शोषण और उत्पीड़न का हिस्सा है। इन

This also will require a revolutionary struggle against Brahmanism and patriarchy. Capitalism-imperialism will not survive without plunder of natural resources and our planet and people will not survive if this plunder continues. The struggle against capitalist plunder of nature; the struggles against pro-corporate development projects; struggle against selling natural resources to foreign companies; will have to be an integral part of this revolutionary struggle. **The villages, forests, mountains, rivers and seashores are, after all, not just pristine natural sites, as the ecological-romanticists look at them.**

To conclude, **employment for a vast section of Indians does not actually lie in 'getting a job', but has been lying in their right to preservation and development of their existing 'livelihood' which is being devalued, marginalized and plundered daily.** The movements for livelihood or right to 'jal-jangal-jameen' and the movement for 'getting a job', both are essentially directed against the present capitalist-imperialist regime ruling over our country and have to be linked. Colleges and universities have always been such important spaces for unlearning social prejudices and being able to see differently the meanings of life; which have motivated the student-youth to join the struggles of peasants and other toiling sections, struggles of oppressed nationalities, and struggle against caste and communalism. The educated student youth of our country have time and again participated in Tebhaga, Telangana, Naxalbari; going from urban spaces to so-called 'hinterlands' for participating in the struggle for people's liberation with the task of anti-feudal struggle in mind, where newer tasks need to be framed in present context. At present, the skewed students' composition, urban-centric discourse, and English language hegemony within the higher educational institutions as the product of neoliberal hegemony, has really created a 'secessionist movement' of the top ten percent of student-youth from rest of India, whose aspirations and dreams of life are distant from millions of toiling people of this country. The top ten percent are increasingly un-identifying themselves with the vast majority of people, in terms of material interest, culture and how they relate to this country; rather aspire and compare themselves with the lives and dreams of the citizens of the first world countries. The present capitalist-imperialist framework is fast degenerating into authoritarian, semi-authoritarian and fascist regimes. Revolutionary students and organisations; dreaming to push the equilibrium away from capitalism-imperialism, while working within top-tier universities and metropolises, must strive to integrate themselves with the so-called 'hinterlands', the forests, the hills, the coasts and the vast rural.

प्राथमिक उत्पादकों के क्रांतिकारी संघर्ष के निर्माण के लिए इन समुदायों के भीतर उन प्रबल/शक्तिशाली वर्गों के खिलाफ लड़ाई की आवश्यकता होगी, जो अक्सर सत्तारूढ़ अभिजात वर्ग के साथ मिलीभगत करते हैं। इसके लिए भी ब्राह्मणवाद और पितृसत्ता के विरुद्ध क्रांतिकारी संघर्ष की आवश्यकता होगी। प्राकृतिक संसाधनों की लूट के बिना पूंजीवाद-साम्राज्यवाद नहीं बचेगा और अगर यह लूट जारी रही तो हम सब और हमारे लोग नहीं बचेंगे। प्रकृति की पूंजीवादी लूट के विरुद्ध संघर्ष, कॉर्पोरेट समर्थक विकास परियोजनाओं के विरुद्ध संघर्ष, विदेशी कंपनियों का प्राकृतिक संसाधनों को बेचने के खिलाफ संघर्ष, सब एक क्रांतिकारी संघर्ष का अभिन्न अंग बनना होगा। गाँव, जंगल, पहाड़, नदियाँ और समुद्र तट, आखिरकार, केवल प्राचीन प्राकृतिक स्थल नहीं हैं, जैसा कि कुछ पारिस्थितिक-रोमांटिकवादी इसे देखते हैं।

निष्कर्षतः अधिकांश भारतीयों के लिए रोजगार वास्तव में 'नौकरी पाने' में नहीं है; बल्कि उनकी मौजूदा 'आजीविका' के संरक्षण और विकास में निहित है; जिसका प्रतिदिन अवमूल्यन किया जा रहा है, हाशिए पर धकेला और लूटा जा रहा है। और जल-जंगल-जमीन और आजीविका के लिए संघर्ष और युवाओं के लिए गरिमापूर्ण नौकरी के अवसर के लिए संघर्ष, दोनों ही हमारे देश पर शासन कर रहे वर्तमान पूंजीवादी-साम्राज्यवादी व्यवस्था के खिलाफ हैं और इन्हें जोड़ा जाना चाहिए। हमारे देश के शिक्षित छात्र-युवाओं ने बार बार तेभागा, तेलंगाना, नक्सलबाड़ी जैसे संघर्षों में भाग लिया; जनता के मुक्ति के संघर्ष में भाग लेने के लिए शहरी इलाकों से तथाकथित 'अविकसित इलाकों' में गए। उनके दिमाग में सामंतवाद विरोधी संघर्ष का जो कर्तव्य था, आज उसमें नया कर्तव्य का निर्माण करना पड़ेगा। कॉलेज और विश्वविद्यालय सामाजिक पूर्वाग्रहों को दूर करने और जीवन के अर्थों को अलग ढंग से देखने में सक्षम होने के ऐसे महत्वपूर्ण स्थानों में से एक रहे हैं; जिसने छात्र-युवाओं को किसानों और अन्य मेहनतकश वर्गों के संघर्षों, उत्पीड़ित राष्ट्रियताओं के संघर्षों, जाति और सांप्रदायिकता के खिलाफ संघर्ष में शामिल होने के लिए प्रेरित किया है। नवउदारवादी प्रभुत्व के उत्पाद के रूप में उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों में छात्रों की संरचना, नगर-केंद्रित विमर्श, अंग्रेजी भाषा के आधिपत्य ने देश के लाखों मेहनतकश लोगों के साथ, शीर्ष दस प्रतिशत छात्र-युवाओं का एक 'पृथकतावादी आंदोलन' पैदा कर दिया है। ऊपर के दस प्रतिशत ने, भौतिक स्वार्थ, संस्कृति, या वे देश के साथ अपने सम्बन्ध को कैसे देखते हैं, जैसे सवालियों पर देश के बड़ा हिस्सा जनता से आपने आप को दूर कर लिया है, और खुद को प्रथम विश्व के नागरिकों के साथ तुलना में देखते हैं। पूंजीवादी-साम्राज्यवादी ढांचा जल्द ही तानाशाही, अर्ध-तानाशाही और फासीवादी तंत्र में तब्दील हो रहा है। क्रांतिकारी छात्र और क्रांतिकारी संगठनों को, जो वर्तमान पूंजीवादी-साम्राज्यवादी ढांचे को बदलने का सपना देख रहे हैं, ऐसे विश्वविद्यालयों और महानगरों में काम करते हुए भी, खुद को तथाकथित 'अविकसित इलाकों', जंगलों, पहाड़ियों और ग्रामीण इलाकों के साथ एकीकृत करने का प्रयास करना चाहिए।

FYUP IN DELHI UNIVERSITY

*With inputs from Com. Joy (GTB, Khalsa College, DU),
Com. Soumya and Com. Diya (Jesus & Mary College, DU).*

FYUP was first introduced in DU in December of 2012 by Vice Chancellor Dinesh Singh with the intention of fulfilling the WTO-GATS requirements and with a clear aim of privatisation of higher education on a skill-based conception of education to meet the needs of the market. This led to a long and tedious struggle inside Delhi University where thousands of students and professors participated in the 'Save DU' campaign led by DTF (Democratic Teachers' Front) and Left progressive organisations who fought against this neo-liberal policy which ultimately led to the Centre rolling it back in 2014.

But in 2020, with the introduction of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, FYUP made a comeback. Its implementation was put in motion while students were suffering during the pandemic and online classes made it almost impossible for students to get organized. Any protest against the decision was curbed through university closures and undemocratic administrative orders. Reflecting the fascist attack on public education. Shrinking democratic spaces, commodification of education and ideologically motivated syllabus changes serve the Ideological state apparatus of the 'Sangh Parivar' by which it seeks to extend the control of Corporate power and Hindutva politics inside higher education.

FYUP strikes at the heart of the inclusive and progressive vision of Higher Education as envisaged by the Radhakrishnan Commission (1948) and the Kothari Commission (1964) and has been especially disastrous for Women and students coming from SC ST and OBC communities.

In India today, nearly 80% of youth in the age bracket of 17-23 years do not enter the ambit of higher/university education, which means that only a minority of youth who clear the Class 12 (Higher Secondary) examination find their way into higher education. FYUP exploits this fact and takes advantage of the financial constraints of youths from working-class backgrounds and on the other hand, creates a steady supply of cheap, semi-skilled labour to the markets. The desperation to find jobs in the absence of scholarships or financial support

is capitalized on by offering multiple exits and The Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC). This pushes students

from an economically weaker section of society to join the workforce early and in low-paying jobs after dropping out. Thus keeping the working class and lower middle-class youth from getting quality education and turning them into cheap labour in the hands of the Neoliberal regime. One student claims, "This is what capitalism wants: better labour mobility and NEP has introduced all these skill-based courses as they want us to be better employees to them."



One of the features of FYUP is the option for Multiple entry-exit points - which means that students can exit from the four-year-long Bachelor's course at multiple stages. A certificate for completing one year, a diploma in two, a three-year degree or a four-year undergraduate degree shall be granted based on the exit points. As UGC claims, this is done to give students more flexibility to complete the course again within three years of leaving. Instead of addressing the root cause of high drop-out rates among students from vulnerable sections of society, FYUP is systematizing and formalising the phenomenon of dropping out. The system of multiple exit points is going to sabotage the reservation granted to students belonging to the SC, ST and OBC communities in higher education. Even though admissions would be granted through reservation at the beginning of the FYUP course, at the end of two or even three years far fewer students from the reserved

category would remain in the university system. Even as fees and associated costs of education have been rising exponentially in recent years, students will struggle to pay their way through the entire degree programme. The additional cost burden imposed on them through the FYUP will therefore be another crucial factor in encouraging them to discontinue their studies midway.

We can already see the effect taking place by looking at DU's plummeting enrollment numbers with 73,374 students taking admission in 2018-2019 to 64,915 in 2022-2023 while the enrollment figures of girls enrollment in UG programmes dropped by 37.75%, from 54,818 in 2021 to 34,120 in 2022-23. In poor families living within traditionally gendered communities, women are going to be subjected to immense familial and social pressure to exit with Diplomas and Certificates of extremely low value in the market.

The number of credits allocated to core subject papers under FYUP has also been diluted from 72% in the previous 3-year graduation programme to 41%. If a student opts for a three-year degree course their core subject would account for only 36.9% of the programme. This dilution of the core subjects occurs to make space for several new SEC (Skill Enhancement Course) and VAC (Value Addition Course) that are introduced to the DU syllabus under NEP. Some of these courses are - The Art of Being Happy, Vedic Mathematics, Ayurveda, Swachh Bharat, Personality Development, Ethics and Values in Ancient Indian Traditions, Yoga, Entrepreneurship, e-tourism. These courses are introduced in an attempt to make courses in DU more "multi-disciplinary" and they have been especially crushing for students who are overburdened with continuous assessment and expected to submit essays for 7 or more papers. A student at DU today is greeted

with a disappointing experience, getting neither the quality education nor the college experience they had once hoped for. "All this is occurring parallel to the changes brought to the syllabus which seems entirely related to NEP, but the changes in the syllabus are significant. I keep hearing our professors call back to readings about topics that still hold relevance but are somehow not a part of our syllabus anymore. All to make space for the VAC and SEC courses" a student claims.

Privatisation forms the crux of FYUP, and under Modi's regime, the Union government's expenditure on education has fallen from 0.63% of GDP in 2013-14 to 0.37% in 2022-23. The University Grants Commission which earlier provided grants to Delhi University is being replaced with the Higher Education Commission of India, which will instead provide loans. The university has already taken a loan of more than Rs 938 crore from the Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) which has directly resulted in the fees for college education rising exponentially. This is all being done in a carefully orchestrated way to pave the way for foreign direct investment in public education. Several students in DU are finding it difficult to pay their college tuition fee which has hiked up to 200% in certain colleges.

What is happening in India today is not only specific to India. International finance capital is imposing similar changes in the education system in the world. For this to take root, Universities have to be systematically destroyed and replaced. Education will be repackaged as a product to be bought and sold. Discussions in classrooms occur few and far between with professors scared to speak out against the state to protect their jobs. A student tells us that "this reduces the scope of

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CRIMINALIZING DISSSENT

PROFESSORS AND STUDENTS AT THE MERCY OF A SAFFRONIZED ADMINISTRATION

- *Com. Prabhanu is studying Journalism at Jamia Millia Islamia*

On 16th June, 4 professors teaching at the South Asian University (SAU), were suspended for alleged 'misconduct' by the university administration, however the exact nature of the 'misconduct' has still not been mentioned by the administration. What did these professors do? They had approached the administration several times and registered discontent against the way SAU was discompassionately treating students protesting against several issues in the university, including lower stipends and lack of representation.

The suspension of professors at SAU received widespread condemnation from the academic world. It is a symptom of a growing disease fostered by right-wing forces in India's universities which attacks dissent, protest of any kind, critical thinking, and thought other than its own. In fact, SAU made incoming students this year sign an undertaking declaring that they will neither join any agitation or strike nor participate in any activity that has a "tendency to disturb peace" on the campus. It had also asked them to declare that they are not suffering from any "psychiatric or psychological disorder".

The BJP-RSS project to saffronize education is clear for all to see, from the school level where Mughal rulers have been removed from the syllabus, to our university classrooms. One such example is the new BA (H) Political Science syllabus in Delhi University (DU) under the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) where papers on the constitution, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Gandhi, and Iqbal were removed. On the other hand, including core and elective papers, Savarkar has a total of 53 hours in the revised political science syllabus, while Gandhi has 5.

The institutional murder of Professor Samarveer, an ad-hoc professor at Hindu College, DU, who died of suicide after being removed from his post lays fresh in our memory. While the exploitative situation that ad-hoc



faculty faces in India's public universities is a sad state of affairs that has unfairly continued for years, what was even more troubling this year were the allegations that selections and removals of ad-hoc professors this year were extremely politically motivated. Professor Samarveer was also quoted as saying that candidates much less qualified than him were getting positions.

In 2022, professors were suspended for criticism of Hindutva fascism, simply practising their faith, or for protesting or expressing support for protest against university administration. Waqas Farooq Kuttay, a professor at Sharda University was suspended for setting an exam question about the comparisons between Hindutva and Nazi fascism. Professor S.R Khalid of Sri Varshney College in Aligarh was suspended after Hindutva outfits objected to him offering Namaz in the college lawns.

Across the country, examples of universities taking action against professors who "hurt the sentiments" of the right-wing forces, however ludicrous the claim. One such example is Jitendra Kumar – an assistant professor in the department of forensic medicine at JN Medical College of Aligarh Muslim University – on the basis of a complaint filed by Bharatiya Janata Party worker Nishit Sharma in 2022. What was the professor's fault? He was teaching MBBS students and was trying to illustrate that "rape existed since times immemorial" including Indian mythology. He was suspended by AMU after an

Continued on Page 21...

THE IIT STORY

In August 1951, the first IIT was inaugurated at Kharagpur, West Bengal. At that time, Nehru, the Prime minister of India, said that IITs would “provide scientists and technologists of the highest calibre who would engage in research, design and development to help build the nation towards self-reliance in her technological needs”. More than 70 years after its inception, during which the world order saw major changes, we try to decode what IITs stand for in the present neoliberal era.

Getting into IITs

The aspirational Indian middle-class ticket to “success” is often seen in terms of the academic performance of their kids. Sending their children to IIT or for an MBBS is a common dream. A dream that has been institutionally and systematically put in the parents’ minds as something to be pursued at all costs. This dream is implanted from various sources – from big advertisements after every entrance result on the front page of every major newspaper to films and TV shows showing IITians earning crores.

Becoming an IIT engineer or doctor is seen as a Fastlane to a better lifestyle rather than something school students pursue due to their interest in “science”. Hence, their coaching begins from an early age, some starting from class 5. Articles of IIT graduates getting crores packages at big MNCs and examples of people like Sundar Pichai or Ashneer Grover have built this craze around IITs; a craze which then facilitates the ever-growing coaching industry. The coaching industry, in turn, further advances this hype via their advertisements and selling their “success mantra”.

Claimed to be one of the toughest entrances to crack – JEE Advanced (previously IIT-JEE) sees over a million applicants compete for a few thousand seats. Many crack it after a rigorous 2-3 years of a strict coaching routine. After clearing the exam post class 12, they are already on the top of the world – famously called “the cream of the nation”. Hence, they strongly associate with the term “merit” – something which they feel is solely deserved for all the hard work they have put in. The pride and the competitive spirit put inside them manifest into practices such as looking at their “ranks” as their measure of merit and worth. The better-ranked student then feels they deserve more than every other student – especially the ones taking admission under reservation categories.

What they are never shown is that the “merit” they uphold is nothing more than marks in an MCQ examination – which is not or should not be the only measure of the engineering subjects they came to learn. Engineering is the practical domain of science. The first-year students are given training in practical pursuits such as carpentry or welding. A child working in an automobile shop may be unable to solve the “tricky” MCQs but through his/her life experiences is already a highly trained person and a far better candidate to pursue mechanical engineering than any other. So, the question of merit is flawed under our present education system – where who deserves to pursue engineering is judged based on their ability to solve hypothetical questions on paper. In a better world, anyone passionate about any subject should be able to take it up – irrespective of the number of seats or their marks in conventional examinations.

Their understanding of merit and caste-based reservation is mainly acquired from the media. Now, media channels may not form opinions on the concepts of quantum physics (although they did it with Darwin!), but they form opinions on social policies. Reservation is looked at as something given to a section of the population to garner their votes – and not as something required to make a better society, by giving social representation to historically oppressed communities. Constantly exposed to these narratives and pitted against one another, what is to be expected from the students?

What happens inside an IIT

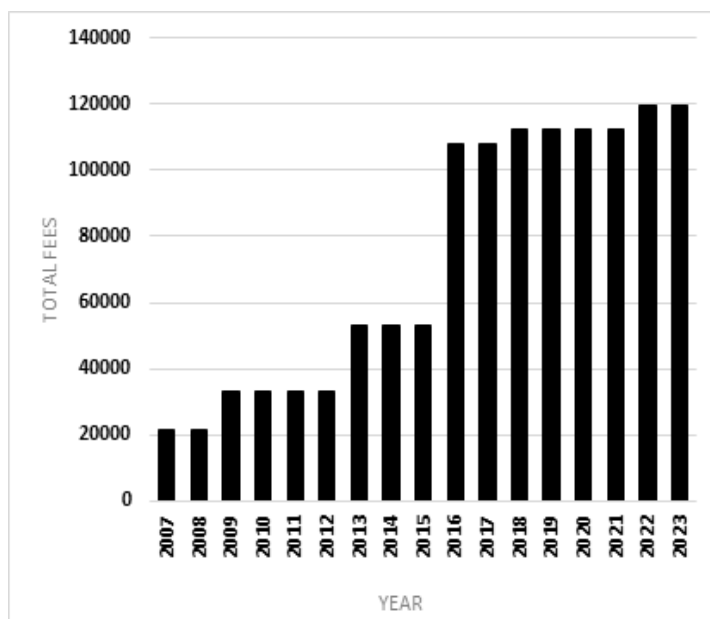
When the “cream of the nation” reaches the first year, they come to know that everything which they would be taught from now onwards has very little to do with their interests and nothing to do with the highly paid jobs they had been eyeing before. Their dream of studying at an IIT suddenly gets a tough reality check. After falling from the sky, they try to adapt and follow the already established culture – play sports as it looks good on the CV – do coding and participate in hackathons – manage college fests - do some social work and get a certificate as it looks good on foreign applications – and the newly formed interest in start-ups and getting investors.

Every student gets cast into the same mould – and those who fail to follow it are left behind – isolated from all. This isolation and the feeling of being left behind is so strong that many succumb to depressive thoughts, a major contributing factor to the high rates of suicides. This isolation manifests even further when their social circles are determined by their “category” – caste. Casteism inherently exists on these campuses, which often comes out explicitly. Many of the cases of caste discrimination are not even accounted as “caste” related. As per the government data presented in December 2021, 34 students had committed suicide across IITs between 2014-21, out of which 5 were SCs, and 13 were OBCs. In addition, 33 students have died

by suicide across IITs since 2018, according to data presented in April 2023 by the Ministry of Education.

Rise in fees

2016 saw a significant increment in tuition fees across IITs (from 90,000 to 2 Lakh per year), making it the most expensive government college in India at the undergraduate level. It was put forward with narratives like IIT was only following the “self-sustained” “autonomous” models of US engineering colleges like CalTech and MIT with massive fee structures. Taking education loans was promoted with schemes like “Vidyalakshmi”, just introduced after the fee hike. In the US, the privatized education model eventually led to students having huge education loans – so huge, that loan waivers became one of the primary discussion points in their presidential debates. Students in debt are forced to take up jobs after graduation, drastically decreasing their freedom to pursue their interests.



(Data collected from the Fees structure for B.Tech student at IIT Delhi)

Continued on Page 24...



DEBILITATING STATE OF SCHOLARSHIPS IN THE NATION



In the past decade, higher education in India has witnessed a steady decline in scholarships and fellowships available. From scholarships for the marginalized, like NFSC and NFOBC being transferred, to a meager 19-20% increase in Junior and Senior Research Fellowships with no increase in seats, the BJP government has been rigorous in its attempt to destroy public education in preference of privatization. In 2015, the Occupy UGC movement continued for over five months to protest the MHRD decision to scrap non-NET fellowships available in central universities. Only after a long struggle and solidarity from the student community across India, was the decision to scrap the fellowship revoked. However, the other two demands of increasing the fellowship and extending it to state universities were not met.

Since then there has been a barrage of reductions in scholarships, especially with regard to those available to minority and marginalized communities. Of these, the most recent case is that of the Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF), which was discontinued after a notification from the ministry in December 2022. MANF was introduced in 2009 to provide five-year fellowships to students from six notified minority communities—namely, Buddhist, Christian, Jain, Muslim, Parsi, and

- *Com. Arundhati is a post-graduate in History from JNU.*

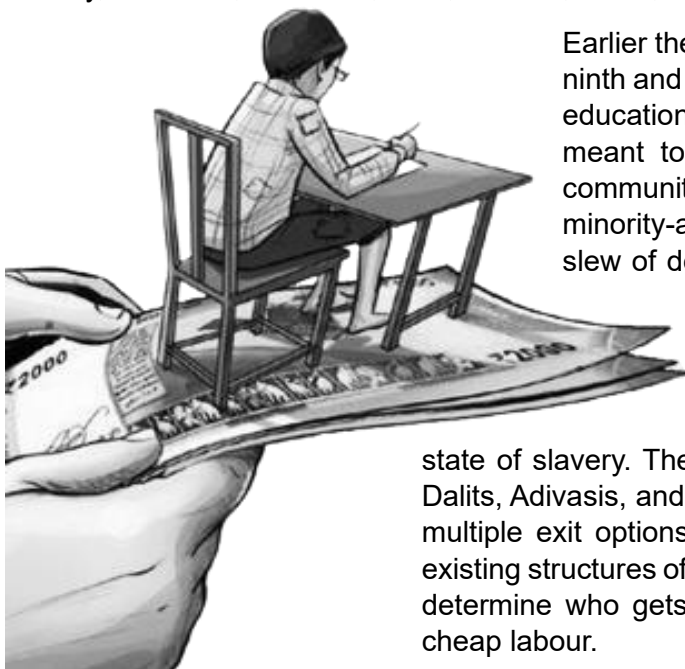
Sikh and covered all universities recognized by the UGC. The scheme provided a fellowship of ₹25,000 per month for the first two years and ₹28,000 per month for the remaining three years to CSIR-UGC-NET qualified students. The move was made with the justification that this scheme overlapped with other scholarship schemes.

The transfer of responsibility of three national minority fellowships- NFSC, NFOBC, and MANF from the UGC to the Union Ministries in October, had already sounded the death knell for these scholarships which often supports students coming from the most marginalized background to pursue higher education. The NFSC and NFOBC schemes were transferred to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, while MANF was transferred to the Ministry of Minority Affairs. The disbursement of the NFSC, NFOBC, and NFPwD fellowships was on hold for nearly a year since April 2022. The government justified the delay using the changes in the procedure of disbursement, wherein a Central Nodal Agency was to be appointed for the release of these funds. However, the effect it had on the quality of research, fieldwork, and livelihood of research scholars was never addressed.

Earlier the BJP government restricted the Pre-Matric Scholarship to the ninth and tenth standards, saying that the Right to Education Act covers education for students up to the eighth standard. The scholarship was meant to assist school students from SC, ST, OBC, and minority communities. The Government also stopped the scholarships for minority-aided school students from the first to the eighth standard. The slew of decisions made by the BJP government regarding education,

including the introduction of NEP 2020 with its multiple-exit options and the rapid privatization of higher education, clearly show their intention to limit access to proper education to the rich, with the masses being reduced to a

state of slavery. The effect is seen mainly on the working-class population with Dalits, Adivasis, and Muslims being the most affected. Using optimistic words like multiple exit options and flexibility in the curriculum cannot deny the reality of existing structures of exclusion and discrimination present in society that ultimately determine who gets to continue their education and who continues to provide cheap labour.





CAMPUS TALKS



Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyala, Wardha

Struggles continue for removal of RSS stooge VC Rajneesh Shukla in MGAHV, VC Shukla prevented from entering BHU. In 2019, the central university had expelled 6 students just for writing a letter to PM Modi! Nationwide agitations led to their expulsion being revoked.

In Feb. 2023, the administration shut down several departments citing lack of funds after NEP 2020. The unity of students on hunger strike defeated the shutdowns, despite ABVP violence.

VC Shukla faces serious plagiarism charges and sexual harassment complaints but is being protected because he is a political stooge of the RSS BJP regime.

Osmania University (Hyderabad)

Telangana's largest and oldest state university is on protest against 10x fee hike declared by the administration.

Due to the glorious legacy of revolutionary people's struggles in the region, many first-generation scholars from Adivasi, Dalit and backward castes or minorities have started research in OU. Students argue that Fee Hike hits the marginalised hardest and forces push-out from education.

With scholarships such as NFSC, NFOBC, Non-NET and MANF either massively delayed or discontinued entirely, it is clear how NEP 2020 will reduce access to education for the majority. Even non-BJP states such as Telangana, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Kerala have started implementing parts of NEP 2020.



Punjabi University, Patiala

A ₹34 crore fund cut was announced by Punjab government in April, on top of around ₹100 crore existing debt. This led to a massive students protest by Punjabi University Bachao Morcha, which got support from farmers and workers unions. This broad-based movement for education led to an exceptional victory leading to a further ₹160 crore increase in allocation! It proved again that only farmers, worker and student unity can defeat NEP 2020's fund cuts and student

Indian Institutes of Technology

On July 11 2023, Ayush Ashna, a Dalit student of Mathematics in IIT Delhi committed suicide. This adds to the 33 institutional murders recorded across IIT campuses since 2019. The death of Darshan Solanki, a 19-year-old Dalit B. Tech student from IIT Bombay led to nationwide protests against caste discrimination on campus.

Banaras Hindu University

BHU students protest for OBC reservation in hostels.

Although Rs 171 crore from OBC Infrastructure Development funds were used for the construction of 4187 rooms in 29 BHU hostels, 27% OBC Non-creamy layers reservations are not being implemented. 1559 of 3451 Associate Prof. posts reserved for OBCs in central universities have not been filled.



From our Comrades



All India Revolutionary Students Organization (AIRSO) protested in Budhni block of Sihor District of Madhya Pradesh against BJP leader urinating on an adivasi worker.

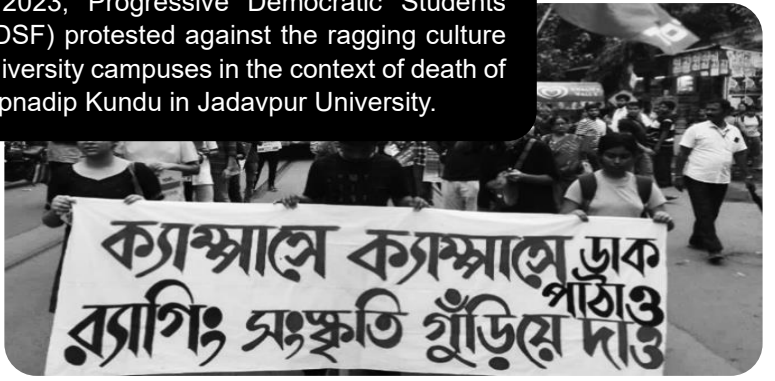


Parivartankami Chhatra Sanghathan (Pacchas) held protest against violence in Manipur and BJP's divisive policies in Lalkuan, Uttarakhand. To raise awareness, they held a Nukkad sabha.

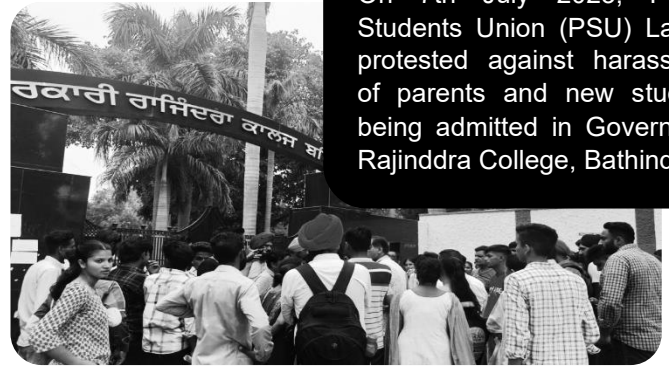
On 31 Aug. 2023, Progressive Democratic Students Federation (PDSF) protested against the ragging culture prevalent in university campuses in the context of death of a student Swapnadip Kundu in Jadavpur University.



Karnataka Vidyarthi Sanghathan (KVS) launched a state-wide campaign Young India for New India across the state of Karnataka to raise the issues faced by the student youth of today.



On 7th July 2023, Punjab Students Union (PSU) Lalkaar protested against harassment of parents and new students being admitted in Government Rajindra College, Bathinda.



On 31st July 2023, Punjab Students Union (PSU) organised a protests gheraoing the Government Mahindra College (Patiala) as the students stopped receiving scholarship from Post Matric Fellowship Scheme.



Massive students rally organised by Progressive Democratic Students Union (PDSU) in Karimnagar for pending government job recruitments, demanding Unemployment Allowance and against G.O. 77 which will stop scholarships and make education out of reach for SC/ST/Minorities and other marginalised sections.



STUDENT STRUGGLE ACROSS THE GLOBE

Netherlands

Students in the Netherlands expressed frustration during a protest held on October 13 after the University of Amsterdam failed to offer accommodation. The General Student Association Amsterdam (ASVA) called the protest, where various students from different educational institutions gathered. Students said they have been struggling to find accommodation in the capital, and there has also been a serious shortage of staff and infrastructure.

**Papua New Guinea**

Protests by students in Papua New Guinea (PNG) continued last week following the May 22 signing of a bilateral Defense Cooperation Agreement with the US directed against China.

Hundreds of students from the Mt Hagen Technical College (HATECO) in Western Highlands Province staged a protest march through the crowded town centre, despite the presence of security personnel along with students from HATECO, the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), and the University of Technology and University of Goroka—all demanding that Prime Minister James Marape not sign the agreement until citizens were “made fully aware of what is entailed in the document”, which was the centrepiece of a summit of Pacific Island leaders in Port Moresby, organised by Indian government, for purposefully being used by US government.

**Sudan**

Students of the Sudan University of Science and Technology and the University of Khartoum have been protesting against tuition fee increases according to the El Gedaref Salvation Initiative (GSI).

According to the protesting students, boarding fees for female students at Gedaref University, increased by about 1,000% from 3,000 Sudanese pounds (US\$ 5.24) to 40,000 Sudanese pounds (US\$ 69.81). The students raise the concern that this measure will affect female students from the countryside who may be forced to drop out.

**Iran**

Security forces in Iran have unleashed a fresh wave of crackdowns at universities to suppress the student movement which has been going on since last year since death of Mahsa Amini, who protested against hijab, in police custody. Iran International's interviews with around 15 students showed an increase in harassment at public and private universities in various cities, raising concerns about the safety of students and freedom of expression within educational institutions in Iran. With the September anniversary of the protests looming, students and student activists are concerned about a surge in violence from security forces.



The US -Hindutva 'Situationship'

With inputs from Com. Sunidhi, a mass communications graduate from Mount Carmel College, Bengaluru

PM Modi's visit to the United States in June made headlines and glitzy reels. This was a warm-up for the red carpet treatment for US President Biden in bilateral negotiations before the G20 Summit in September. But tensions are palpable. PM Modi, who has never faced a press conference at home, was forced to react to a question from a Wall Street Journal reporter on curbs on free speech and human rights of minorities during his June US visit. Personal social media attacks on the reporter by BJP spokespersons forced the White House to issue a condemnation. No US mediaperson was allowed to accompany Biden on the sidelines of the G20 visit, leading to domestic embarrassment for the Americans.



The Modi-Biden situationship has been gathering attention ever since the first 'jadoo ki jhappi' in May on the sidelines of the G7 meet in Japan. This is remarkable because Modi was previously forbidden from entering the US. In 2005, US authorities had denied him a visa over his role in instigating the 2002 Gujarat riots. He was allowed to enter nine years later after becoming Prime Minister.

There have been stray remarks in the European Union Parliament on militarised rule in Kashmir (July 2021) and state-sanctioned violence in Manipur (July 2023) and the US external affairs minister Blinken has said that his government is 'monitoring' rising human rights abuse in India (April 2022). Yet, regular state visits to the US have also been used to promote Modi's Vishwaguru image at home. The US-NATO powers know this. But discontent with Hindutva in such imperialist countries, largely led by liberal governments, has been laid aside for pursuing their aggressive financial and geopolitical interests in India as a crucial South Asian ally today.

Since Modi's election in 2014, India has fallen from 140th to 161st rank on the World Press Freedom Index while leading the world in the number of internet shutdowns for five years in a row. The Biden administration sees India as a political counterbalance to China in South Asia. That is why, despite protests outside the White House, Biden reiterated his support for the Modi regime through a commitment to 'shared

values'. The latest round of MoUs inked in September promote foreign private investment in higher education (facilitated by UGC's new Foreign Educational Institutions regulations), navy and aerospace manufacturing and 6G telecommunications run on US-developed OpenRAN infrastructure by 'a leading Indian telecom operator' (no prizes for guessing which). Most remarkably, the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) is being overseen by Indo-US spymasters Ajit Dowal and Jake Sullivan.

Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai?

The United States is concerned about the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) with India, Japan and Australia to secure military presence in the South China Sea. Providing military technology is a bargaining chip against Russian influence in India, signed off during the UPA regime with the the Indo-US Nuclear Deal and the first India-US Defence Framework, 2005. The Modi regime quickly solidified this merger with the USA between 2016-20. The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA, 2016) allows the American military to use Indian defence facilities and logistics on credit and the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA, 2018) provides for sharing encrypted military

communications. Together with the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement on Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA, 2020), these three agreements enable almost total interoperability between the American and Indian military, as it has with its NATO allies. The USA, which operates 750 known foreign military bases in 85 countries, has bombed 14 countries since 1980 and accounts for 38% of the world's military expenditure (almost three times that of the next biggest military power, China) is now pushing to set up another base in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The takeover will then be complete.

India is the only QUAD country that shares a border with China. Indians will face collateral damage from any unprovoked American aggression in the South China Sea, as already witnessed by Chinese takeover of close to 1,000 sq. km. formerly-Indian territory in Ladakh's Depsang Plains, Galwan Valley, Pangong Tso and

Chushul regions in 2020. American guns are being fired on our shoulders.

Transnational finance capital, centred around imperialist institutions such as WTO, IMF and World Bank, relies on regimes which can divide the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America to push through aggressive pro-corporate policies. The enthusiasm for RSS BJP's farm laws, labour codes, NEP 2020 and so on overrides liberal murmurs of protest against their Hindu nationalist agendas such as CAA-NRC-NPR, Uniform Civil Code or unregulated hate crimes. The cozying up of liberal-imperialist powers in North America and Europe with fascist and authoritarian regimes in India, Brazil, Turkey, Niger and Hungary shows that a Second World War-type alliance against fascism cannot exist today. The people of US, Europe and India have to fight their own fascists, building internationalist solidarity of the people versus corporate and political elites.

FROM HATHRAS TO WRESTLERS PROTEST BJP PROTECTING SEXUAL ASSAULTERS

- *Com. Anandita is a freelance journalist.*

In 2023, a wave of protests led by Indian wrestlers brought to light the serious issue of sexual harassment within the sports community, while also revealing a concerning pattern of the government's handling of such allegations against the accused. The focal point of these protests has been the Wrestling Federation of India's Chief and BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who has been accused of sexual harassment by multiple wrestlers, including a minor. In response to these allegations, Singh has vehemently denied all charges.

Undeterred by the initial roadblocks, the wrestlers have continued their protests, taking their complaints to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA). A powerful and collective voice, they penned a complaint letter to IOA president PT Usha, detailing their grievances and demanding action. Their demands include Singh's resignation, the establishment of an impartial inquiry committee, the dissolution of the current WFI, and the appointment of a new committee in consultation with the athletes themselves.

PT Usha's comments against the wrestlers' protests stating, "They are bringing shame to the country" have left many disappointed and enraged. This reflects the

ingrained social norms that demand victims of harassment to remain silent, adhere to a certain "perfect victim" narrative, and refrain from raising their voices against sexual harassment.

Despite the gravity of the allegations and the filing of an FIR against Brij Bhushan Singh, no substantial legal action has been taken against him so far, raising concerns among the sports community and the public at large about the government's role in protecting individuals belonging to the ruling class who have been accused of sexual assault.

An unexpected turn of events took place with the father of the minor who initially made the allegations coming forward to retract his claims. This incident has brought to light a disturbing undercurrent of fear and intimidation that seems to have permeated the case.

In an exclusive interview with The Hindu, the father disclosed that his changed statement was not driven by greed or ulterior motives, but by a genuine sense of fear for the safety of his family, his daughter, and himself. He conveyed that his life had taken an unforeseen turn since the allegations were raised, and his family had



been living in intense fear ever since. The assertion that "many lives have changed" suggests the sweeping impact of the case, extending beyond the immediate parties involved. The fact that the family felt compelled to change their statement due to threats casts a shadow over the very idea of justice and accountability.

These revelations raise a pressing question: How secure is the pursuit of justice for those who may find themselves in opposition to influential individuals or groups? The case surrounding Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh serves as a stark reminder of the potential pitfalls and challenges faced by those who stand up against the ruling class.

One clear observation is that the BJP party appears to be more interested in safeguarding the accused MP, Brij Bhushan Singh. In response to these allegations, several wrestlers launched an indefinite protest, garnering support from various organisations, including civil society groups. At the Jantar Mantar protest site, talking to COLLECTIVE Vinesh Phogat highlighted the intimidation and threats faced by families of those who dared to speak out against Brij Bhushan. She emphasized the difficulty of speaking up about issues of sexual harassment but also stressed the necessity of doing so.

This disturbing pattern of protecting sexual assaulters is not an isolated incident. In the past, similar cases have exposed a trend within the BJP government. For instance, in the Unnao rape case in 2017, a BJP MLA was convicted of raping a minor girl, but significant delays in pursuing the case led to further distress for the survivor and her family. Similarly, the Hathras rape of a

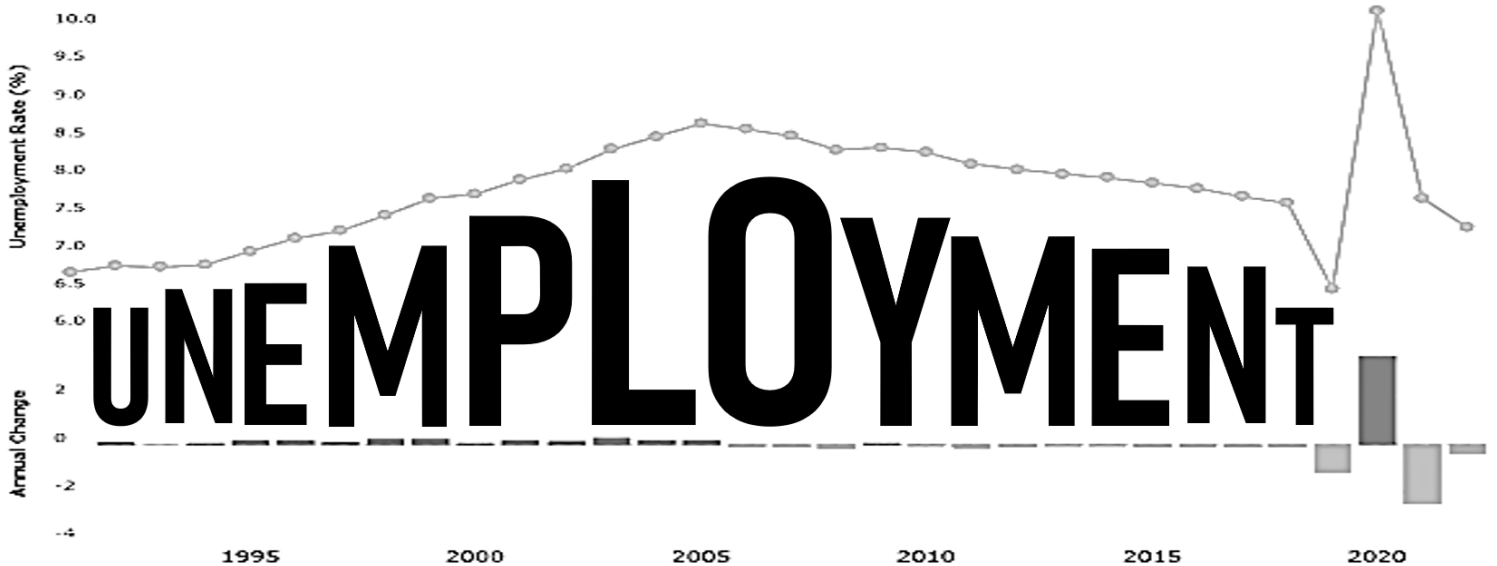
Dalit Girl in 2020 highlighted the challenges faced by victims of sexual assault, particularly the Dalit community, where the police had cremated the body of the victim without the family's consent or presence.

The wrestlers' protest against sexual harassment united many voices in demanding accountability and justice. However, the protesters faced obstacles, including being forcibly removed and manhandled by the police at the protest site. While the wrestlers' protest and hunger strike have concluded, the participants continue to emphasise that the fight for justice will continue through court procedures.

The recent demonstrations by Indian wrestlers shed light on the deeply concerning issue of sexual harassment within sports and the broader challenges associated with pursuing justice against powerful individuals. The response of the government, as highlighted by its actions in cases like these, raises questions about its commitment to ensuring justice for survivors and holding wrongdoers accountable. The path ahead for the wrestlers involves navigating the arduous legal system.

The protest, which has gained nationwide attention, underscores the need for a comprehensive evaluation of the avenues available for female athletes and women in general to address sexual harassment.

If it takes several months and even the intervention of the Supreme Court to initiate an FIR against a public figure, it begs the question: how secure are the women of India who do not possess the same level of influence and attention?



If we look at the broad trend of unemployment, we will find that the unemployment rate hovers between 6 percent and 9 percent. However, this data gives us only a partial representation of the reality of Indian economy.

How government deals with unemployment crisis

In recent budget 2023-24, Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman didn't dare to address issue of unemployment despite plummeting numbers of employed workforce, increasing vacant posts in Government offices. Large protest of job aspirant youths happened against the government concentrated mostly in UP, Bihar and Haryana etc. Even prior to the COVID, unemployment rate reached highest in comparison to last 40 years.

MNREGA scheme which ensured a bare minimum rural employment opportunity has faced nearly 30000Cr budget cut very recently, a one third budget cut will effectively lower a vast employment. Large companies are not in motive for investing, simultaneously techies

from Indian firms lost jobs as Amazon, Twitter, meta, Microsoft, Google etc had heavy staff cut post pandemic, it is predicted that techies will loss in heavier number along with accuracy of artificial intelligence in very near future. Govt generally deals with unemployment with excuse of poor supply of skilled workforce whereas we see PhD scholars are also applying for primary teachers and group-D jobs. The skilling agenda never addresses the lack of demand of skilled workers.

Public sector jobs getting contractualised:

The gradual decrease of total percentage of regular protected employment within govt sector-

2005	60.4%
2015	51.2%
2025	Predicted To be below 40%

Table. Contracts and contractual durations in regular protected employment (%)

	NSSO 2004-05, UPS, Age 15+	NSSO 2009-10, Ups, Age 15+	NSSO 11.12, UPS, Age 15+	LB 15-16, UPS, Age 15+
No written job contract	25.6	36.0	33.3	41.6
Written job contract: 1 year or less	1.4	1.6	2.9	2.9
Written job contract: more than 1 year to 3 years	2.3	3.0	3.3	4.1
Written job contract: more than 3 years	70.7	59.3	60.4	48.3
Missing	0.0	0.1	0.0	3.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

"New Pensions Scheme" is a significant step towards disenfranchising a large section of Government employees. The NPS is going to make the employees lose their assured source of government funded income after retirement, instead, it is aimed at creating a fund by deducting salaries of the respective employees through which pension funds will be disbursed. In earlier contractual & casual employment also has simultaneous data from 2005-2016 shows how regular employment is shifting to casual employment rapidly in protected employment¹.

From a reports of public enterprises survey by times of India over total 248 CPSEs (central public sector enterprises) observes crucial shift of employment pattern in public sector (TOI- Times Of India, 16th June 2023).

	March 2013	March 2022
Total Employment	17.3 lakh	14.6 lakh
Contractual + Casual	19.5%	42.6%

7 big PSU had more than 20000 job reduction within this decade with BSNL on the top with 1.8 lakh reduction. It is observed that decreases in total employment & rise of contractual jobs in PSUs, even in those who are making profit.

Some Aspects of 'informal' employment relations: Gig work and others

Covid-19 presented itself as a shock in the world of work and employment. The disruption experienced due to the onset of the pandemic appeared on an unprecedented scale. In the pandemic year of 2020, between 25-65% of the informal workforce had to involuntary move to a less-preferred vocation². The shock experienced by what can loosely be termed as the informal sector was much greater than that experienced by the formal sector. However, it becomes imperative to understand and simultaneously hypothesize that the global economy has not found a novel methodology of 'dealing' with the question of unemployment since the 2008 crisis. We have been in a state of interregnum ever since. The non-resolution of the earlier crisis with the burgeoning crisis of informality only seems to exacerbate the crisis within the labour question in a country like India.

The reproduction of this space of 'the informal' through direct transfers rather than delivering on the promise of

their absorption into the formal workforce as a symptom of some structural transformation on the horizon, serves the political need of the bourgeoisie class to legitimize itself politically in the global discourse of human rights and liberal democracy. Within this theoretical framework we extend our analysis to a particularly rapidly-expanding sub-sector of the informal space- that of gig work.

Gig economy or platform economy has been a discursive formation of the recent past, characterizing the everyday lives of millions through either employment or consumption, particularly within the urban sphere. According to Niti Ayog, in the coming 5-8 years the gig economy will employ around 2.5 crore workers. In the current climate of neoliberal economic development engulfed with precarity and informality, coupled with a tendential move to absolute dilution of all existing labour laws, the platform economy has become a site of reproduction of several contradictions constituting the world of work. With extremely stressful, hectic and highly exploitative work conditions laid out by the employers-aggregators, several protests against these platforms have been reported in the recent past. Contradictions between capital and labour and the formal and the informal economic space have been particularly sharply laid out by these antagonisms.



The act passed in July by the Rajasthan government is now in talks of being proposed and passed in similar but modified form by other states like West Bengal. The 'Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers Act 2023'

¹ Majid, Nomaan. *Structural change and employment in India*. International Labour Office, 2019. (pp-29)

² CSE (2021) *State of Working India 2021: One Year of Covid-19*. Bengaluru: Centre for Sustainable Employment, Azim Premji University

seriously fails to address the structural concerns of formalisation of employer-employee relations. It can be seen as deliberately eschewing any attempts at formalisation of the work process itself, rather treating them as subjects of targeted welfare schemes. Transfer-based solutions to structural problems of informality and precarity underlying the current model of economic development can remain, at best lesser palliatives and, at their worst, a cause for the reproduction of the very informal spaces themselves.

What makes Unemployment indispensable for Capitalism?

If a section of population is kept unemployed, and this section is always ready to work at low wages due to insecurity, then wages could be lowered substantially and labour force remains in control. This is the primary reason for unemployment to be indispensable for capitalism.

Unemployment is primarily created through in several methods, like – Primary/primitive accumulation, technological development and de-skilling of worker, geographical relocation of production etc.

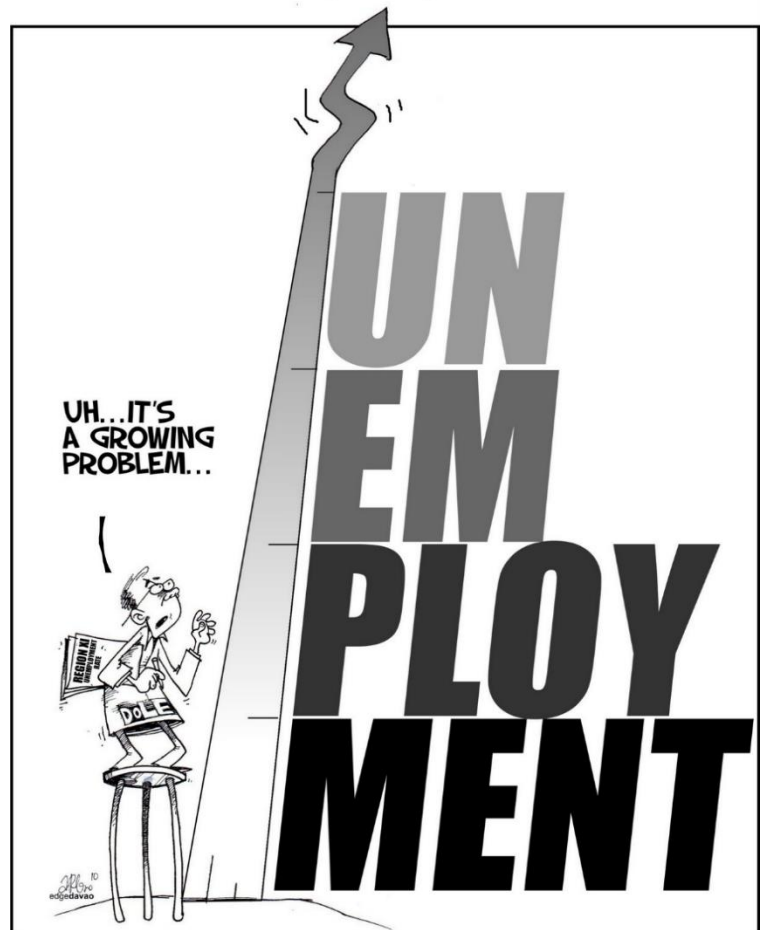
A large scale of primary producers are either evicted forcefully from their land or out of their source of traditional employment due to takeover of the natural resources by capital. Between the period of 2006-12, a series of resistances happened across the country, from Singur, Nandigram, Lalgarh to Anti-POSCO movement in Odisha, all these movements were done against land-grab due to which a large number of primary producers were to be dispossessed. In several places, SEZs were to be created by dispossessing the people from their land and livelihood and the land were given at throwaway prices to the capitalist class by the state.

Capitalists, because of competition within themselves are forced to be only concerned increasing about rate of profit. Technological development is the means through which productivity is increased in a certain industry, by which in less time and with less labour input, more goods can be produced. Further, technological development makes certain skills old and obsolete, which were once necessary in the labour market for an earlier stage of technological development. Thus, with introduction of new technology, such skill-set become unnecessary and people with such skill-set become unemployed. For example, with introduction of Artificial Intelligence, jobs such as content writing, translation, video making etc. are becoming obsolete.

In our country, there is example of Kanpur, once a thriving centre of industries is nowhere in the scene of industrial production today. In Delhi, the industries have been shifted to Noida, Gurgaon and into borders of Rajasthan. In Bengal, a major section of jute and engineering and manufacturing industries were abandoned or shifted to other parts of the country. From Detroit (US), the car-manufacturing industry was shifted. All these processes make a large-section of population, who were earlier employed in these countries redundant and thus unemployed, and newer job opportunities, which are celebrated widely are generated at the cost of dooming of older sites.

Technological dependence on the developed imperialist core (the first world developed countries of US, Europe etc) results in import of foreign technology which are mostly capital-intensive and labour-saving; which forbids the inclusive growth of the peripheral countries, and creates unemployment/under-employment. This policy have diminished the artisans/ crafts-persons to mere unskilled manual workers stripped of their intellectual, imaginative or creative powers, leading to the degradation of their work and devaluation of the persons deriving their livelihoods from such work.

- COLLECTIVE Editorial Team



People and Nature Against Capital

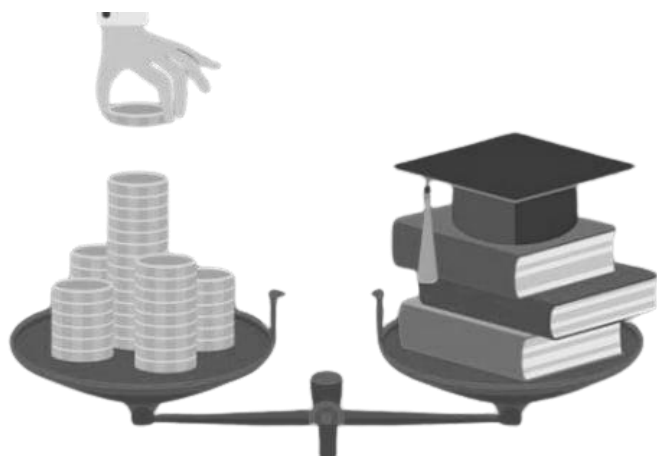
View from a Non-BJP State



*The RSS-BJP regime has squeezed both working people and nature for corporate profits, be it through the amended Forest Rights Act, NEP 2020, Farm Laws and Labour Codes or the throwaway sale of PSUs, Indian Railways and banks to PM Modi's close friends. This is why many have breathed a sigh of relief at several ruling class parties combining forces to defeat BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. But what is the alternative agenda on which an opposition to Corporate Fascism can be built? **Com. Raju**, a Chennai-based ecological activist, comments from Tamil Nadu.*

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam rode to power in Tamil Nadu on a wave of working-class support and the state's legacy of anti-caste struggles, ending BJP-ally AIADMK's decade-long rule in 2021. Its two years in power have shown how DMK blends its brand of Dravidian social justice with aggressive neoliberal policies against the interests of labour and ecology. If BJP-led Uttar Pradesh wants to enter the \$1 trillion economy club by 2027, the DMK regime in TN is aiming for 2030—neither has questioned whether this foreign investment-backed industrialisation policy can serve India's labour surplus population. Here we look at some sectors in a relatively better-performing Opposition-ruled state.

Selling Education



A high-level committee was set up to draft a State Education Policy for TN in April 2022, after CM MK Stalin's publicized rejection of pro-commercialisation

NEP 2020. Its convenor L Jawahar Nesan soon stepped down, citing pressure from top officials. In a public statement, the former VC said that the SEP will be 'nothing but the rechristened version' of the NEP, driven by the interests of corporate, market, and 'sanathanic forces'. DMK's schemes like Illam thedi kalvi (Education at your doorstep) and Ennum ezluthum promote Online Learning as government primary schools are shut down and employ part-time teachers on minimum wages—this is a replica of NEP 2020. The CM's Namm School Foundation has opened the floodgates for corporate investment in education in the name of 'philanthropy'. In March, softening his previous stance, higher education minister K Ponmudy announced that DMK is 'ready to accept the positive parts' of NEP 2020 when addressing a group of private engineering and medical college owners. TN's SEP might oppose the NEP's push for Hindi imposition but both share the aim of producing a cheapened workforce that will always bow down to the dictates of capital.

Land and Sea for Corporates

Tamil Nadu has recently seen a number of people's struggles against the neoliberal development model. This is because the DMK regime is queuing up to implement the developmental projects that were opposed by its own 'Before Election' testimonies in 2021. Fishworkers are opposing the Kattupalli port expansion which benefits Adani at the cost of their livelihoods. This project will flood Chennai City North and parts of Thiruvallur district and the biodiverse

Pulicat-Ennore wetland complex will vanish entirely. Relaxations in environmental norms by the TN Pollution Control Boards has allowed major coal-burning electricity plants to function unmonitored. The Tamil Nadu Land Consolidation Act, 2023, passed without any debate in the state assembly as done regularly by the BJP in Lok Sabha, removes the need for gram panchayats' approval to acquire land. Farmers have opposed the move to take over farm, trusteeship, poramboke and temple lands or water bodies through a government-appointed expert committee. The expansion of the Neyveli Lignite Corporation by acquiring fertile farmlands, once opposed by DMK itself, is also facing stiff resistance. Hill-dwelling Malaiyaga Tamils dependent on the TanTea estates in Valparai are being evicted as the tea estates are shut down in the name of increasing forest cover

Relaxing Labour Laws

In April, the TN Assembly passed a bill allowing 12-hour workdays, snatching away the hardwon right to 8 hours of work and paid overtime. This aligned with the Modi regime's 4 Labour Codes, which eliminates 44 labour laws, and which have been ratified by several non-BJP states. With strong opposition from workers' organisations (including DMK's affiliated union, Labour Progressive Federation), the bill was repealed on 1 May. However, even if this bill has been defeated on paper under public pressure, the intent of the regime remains

clear. Stepping on the marginalised, minority and toiling communities which brought it to power, the DMK regime is pushing ahead constant contractualization of 'unskilled' (or hard-skilled) work, from sanitation and sewage to teachers and nurses, reducing dignified employment. Particularly vulnerable are migrant labourers from East and North-East India working in sweatshop conditions in the state's emerging economic corridors.

Reclaim Periyar

Because of the cherished anti-caste legacy of EV Ramasamy 'Periyar', Dravidian parties are still forced to speak of 'social justice'. Their submission to corporate dictates, however, have left these slogans hollow. The vast majority of historically-oppressed communities in TN identify the DMK regime as the party fueled by rowdiness. Draconian law like UAPA are used against ecological activists who speak against this betrayal. Today, CM MK Stalin stands as the face of the corporate power in TN, as multinational companies plot Industries and the US military explores the Indian Ocean waters. With the state opposition led by AIADMK, a BJP ally at the national level, even a section of progressives have started celebrating the DMK's place in the INDIA alliance as an alternative for the 2024 general elections. The Tamil people are left to choose between the lesser of two evils in this political scenario.

Criminalizing Dissent... Continued from Page 7

FIR was filed against him for "accusing Hindu gods of rape".

Section 295A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which lays down the punishment for the deliberate and malicious acts, that are intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs is being increasingly used by academics. There were several cases of academics and historians, including Dr. Ratan Lal from Hindu College, DU, for simply commenting on the Gyanvapi Mosque controversy.

The future of public education in India is under great threat. A changing syllabus across the country fueled by the neoliberal diktats of the NEP and professors being hounded by by administration, right-wing colleagues and students, and often government forces like the police if they do not toe the line set by the BJP-RSS does not just paint a concerning picture for critical

thinking and academic freedom in public universities, but also basic academic vigour.

Combined with ABVP-RSS physically attacking students and professors, cases of seminars with content critical or distasteful to the ruling dispensation being cancelled, and lack of research funds, it is not a surprise that the BJP-RSS is successfully able to insert their yes-men into public university administrations and faculties across the country.

As students and conscientious people of India, it is now imperative to fight back against the neo-liberal diktats of the NEP and the fascist saffronisation of education. One needs to recognize the erasure of history, theory, and critical thinking in their universities and raise objections to it. The deteriorating quality of public universities and their faculty will lead to students not getting the education they deserve to critically analyze the world around them and leave them susceptible to the jingoistic calls of the Hindu right-wing.

Uniform Civil Code

Issues at Stake

On 14th June 2023, Law Commission of India issued a notice asking for responses from citizens as well as religious organizations on the question of the Uniform Civil Code. The proposed UCC has till date not been substantiated with any information about what its actual provisions could include. This is an especially important time to understand the complexities of Indian feminist positions on this issue, since the Hindu right BJP actively seeks to present itself as secular and pro-women, and portrays opponents of a UCC as “pseudo-secular” and anti-women. The debate over the UCC in contemporary India is produced by the opposition between two notions of rights contained in Part III of the constitution, “Fundamental Rights,” within which the bearer of rights is construed both as individual citizen and as member of a collective. The former is the subject of Articles 14 to 24 of the constitution, which ensure the individual’s rights to equality and freedom, and the latter is the subject of Articles 25 to 30, which protect religious freedom and the educational and cultural rights of minorities. Part IV of the constitution’s “Directive Principles of State Policy,” which exhorts the state to create a UCC, reflects the view that establishing universal rules for all citizens is the legitimate modern goal for a nation-state. The need for a UCC is typically framed as a matter of national integrity, particularly in prevailing narratives from the Hindu right. The UCC has also started to be posed, which is a significant change from the 1990s, as a matter of “women’s rights”. In the majoritarian Hindu interpretation of the BJP’s only minority women need to be saved according to the UCC since “we” (Hindus) have previously granted equal rights to “our” women.

The RSS-BJP’s idea of a UCC rests upon two planks – first, that Muslim women need to be saved from patriarchy within their community; second, Hindu personal law grants rights to Hindu women already and thus the only remaining challenge is to get ‘other’ women equality in personal law. While the original demand for a UCC dates back to pre-Independence period, the present context of a Hindu majoritarian regime along with precedent in the Triple Talaq case demonstrates the real agenda behind this move by the government. Firstly, taking the example of Triple Talaq, we find that discussion with various stakeholders within the community was

bypassed, and simple criminalization of the practice did little to assuage the grievances of Muslim women. Muslim women’s groups like Bhartiya Muslim Mahila Andolan and Bebaak Collective have campaigned against discriminatory practices such as triple talaq for years before the BJP positioned itself as a saviour of Muslim women. Since the criminalization of instant triple talaq in 2019, we find new strategies have been adopted to circumvent punishment as muslim women are simply being abandoned. As polygamy allows for a second marriage, more men are opting to abandon their first wives and remarry instead of divorcing. The fear of criminalization within the community has also meant that muslim women who are abandoned have little to no recourse at the level of law, family or community. The real concerns of Muslim women today, 4 years after criminalization of instant triple talaq remain unaddressed, both by the ruling regime as well as leaders within the community in the form of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB).

The second plank – the supposed equal rights to Hindu women within codified Hindu personal law – also remains unsubstantiated. Evidence from case law in cases of divorce, maintenance and second marriages shows that several customary practices, which had been written away in the process of codification continue to govern personal matters. Complications arising from this continuing presence have been dealt with judges often to the detriment of the interests of the concerned Hindu woman. With bigamy and polygamy outlawed in Hindu personal law, women who have been abandoned by their husbands in favour of a second wife often find no recourse in law. Erroneous readings of Hindu personal law are often used to justify the invalidity of a marriage based on the absence of particular rituals like saptapadi and kanyadaan. Moreover, NHFS data from 2001 shows that 1.9% muslim men and 1.3% Hindu upper-caste men were in polygamous or bigamous marriages. Given that Hindu polygamous marriages are not recognized, the number can be assumed to safely be higher than what has been reported in the survey. A sudden introduction of UCC, which outlaws polygamy completely, would leave lakhs of women without support in these relationships. Problems arising from a hasty and misguided

criminalization of triple talaq need to be avoided when dealing with existing issues of discriminatory practices within personal law. Muslim womens' groups have demonstrated that it is lack of engagement with women, community leaders as well as a broader distancing of the left-progressive forces from these questions which has created space for the Sangh parivar to swoop in and appropriate the UCC.

While the UCC was first introduced as a demand by the AIWC before 1947, it was kept in Directive Principles over fundamental rights precisely due to recognition within the Constituent Assembly of complex and overlapping claims of individual versus group rights in Indian society. However, this complexity has largely been left untouched by those progressive forces which otherwise call for gender-just changes in law. When the right wing has appropriate this demand, it has left some categories such

as the Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) which is the basis for tax evasion among rich Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist business families. The law commission of 2018 has described UCC as undesirable and unnecessary in the contemporary context, instead recommending series of reforms within personal law (including the HUF). Since the 1990s, the demand for a UCC has been abandoned by progressive-left groups as well as women's groups in favour of demanding democratic and progressive pluralism in personal law. Such pluralism can only be made effective with real, on-ground engagement over tough questions which disturb those who hold religious power within communities. Only steady engagement with these issues can ensure that the right-wing intent behind the UCC will be exposed for what it truly is – othering of Muslims and other minority communities in the guise of gender justice.

- COLLECTIVE Editorial Team

FILM REVIEW

- *Com. Shalom is a student of law in DU*

Ma and I love going for movies. English, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, doesn't matter which. Just for that theatre experience. Most often, the films are timepass. Meaning fun, mindless entertaining, nothing exceptional but nothing that get on our nerves or bore us. We have a good time; we'll probably never think of the film again.

Directed by Greta Gerwig, produced by Mattel, and starring the brilliant duo of Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling, 'Barbie' was timepass. A colourful, bright and brilliantly crafted timepass that did great as

a musical and even greater as a tribute. Truly, nothing more to say. But we can't get away with never thinking of the film again, can we? The scale of the film's release has led to a flood of reactions and reviews. In some ways, these are more fascinating than the film itself. In America, the Republicans accuse 'Barbie' of appeasing the Chinese with its depiction of the nine dash line across South China Sea. In Pakistan, scenes that "promoted homosexuality" were censored.

Adding to this collection of strange but unsurprising responses are the internet warriors with their outrage about the film being consumeristic and pro-capitalist. Honestly comrades, what else were you expecting? Mattel spent \$150 million just on the marketing



campaign with over 100 brands partnering for the film's release. The president of Warner Brothers himself strongly believes that 'Barbie' isn't just a movie, but rather a movement. Asking for a commie Barbie film certainly seems a bit much in this context, which brings us to the next big question: Is 'Barbie' a feminist film?

An India Today review that makes the case for Barbie being "the perfect feminist film" summed it up with, "Barbie is not about radical feminism, it is about liberal feminism. There's nothing new about feminism shown here and Greta doesn't even want to offer you solutions." While the author goes on to argue that that's what makes it fresh and relatable, I'd say that ending the sentence right there makes it pretty much on point.

There's nothing new about depicting women-run spaces as utopian—in fact, Begum Rokeya Sakhawat did a much better job of it than Greta and that was all the way back in 1905.

Yes, I genuinely did feel warm and emotional during the old lady on a park bench scene. That the one playing with Barbie is Gloria and not her daughter was a brilliant plot twist and each of these little sparkly moments gave me expectations that I did not walk into the theatre with. With every step, Greta fills you up with hope and then drops you flat on your face. The film reveals bits and pieces of Mattel's history, bringing dolls back from the 'Discontinued', but no, it will neatly avoid the doll that paved the way for Barbie; the racier, wittier, 1955 German Bild Lilli.

Film is art and from artists we expect not only craft—for instance the showing and not always telling perhaps of feminist messaging—but also creativity. As one Swaddle reviewer points out, at the end of the day, like Oppenheimer, Barbie is about the inevitable. It squares its shoulders, steps out of its heels, but ultimately accepts the "real world". In asking whether Barbie is a feminist film, the question we are today really grappling

with is perhaps whether there can be multiple feminism(s)? The film resolves gender-based oppression and exploitation in purely cultural terms, through changing individual minds, as exemplified in America Ferrera's monologue which has come to symbolise the crux of the film for most viewers. Is such an answer to patriarchal oppression in truly cultural terms actually feminist? If feminism is concerned with studying real sources of patriarchy through history and proposing alternatives as well as mapping out struggles against these varied dimensions (on all fronts), can a solely cultural answer to these questions ever really be satisfactory? The story of Barbie is perhaps the story of women's struggles today, which have been increasingly co-opted by state as well as corporations as we move from classical liberalism to a neo-liberal version of 'feminism', where breaking glass ceilings and having more female CEOs is the only imagination presented in response patriarchal domination. The character Barbie herself questions the CEO, CFO and other executives sitting on the top floor of the Mattel building about the glaring absence of women from the room. The film's ideological universe stops with this question, maybe the answer lies in bringing the building down altogether.

FYUP in Delhi University... Continued from Page 6

the discussions within the classrooms and any question that is not strictly relevant to the syllabus is dismissed and postponed to 'after the syllabus gets over in class', which doesn't even happen for all our courses. there's also the possibility that the professors are just using the time constraints as an excuse to just not allow for any discussion."

A total of 105 universities across the country including 19 central universities will start the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) in the upcoming

academic session. The fight to stop FYUP is not limited to Delhi University anymore.

Hence, today we must realise the importance of waging a class-conscious struggle on the issue of education. The task ahead of us is to organise in our campuses and resist the Corporatization- Manuvadikaran - Centralization of Education. A strong student movement in DU had earlier forced the admin to roll back FYUP when it was first introduced in 2013. We will continue our struggle till these policies are rolled back and the dream of education for all is achieved.

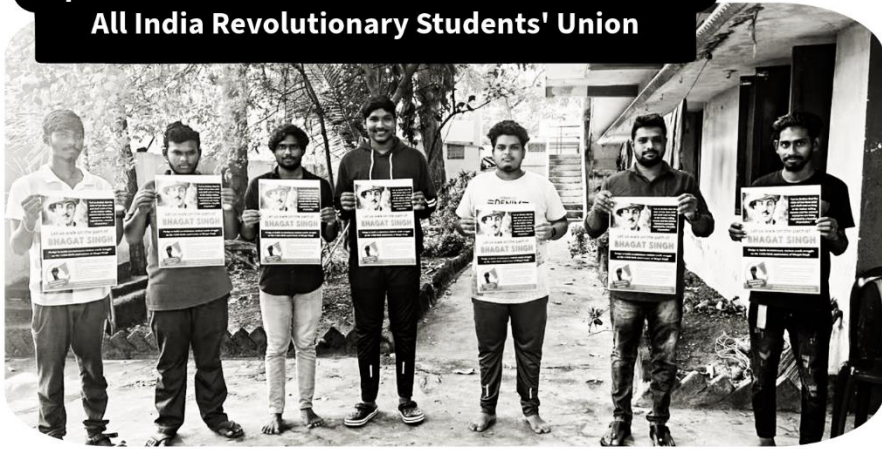
The IIT Story... Continued from Page 9

The IITs have always been influenced by the Indian state, neoliberal market aspirations, and global politics. These institutes played a crucial role in the country's development and scientific progress. The co-production of social discrimination and the commercialization of the IITs has created an extremely vulnerable, socially awkward, and high-pressured student population. With a rigorous academic curriculum and student population highly stratified by stream/specialization, gender, and caste, these spaces are anything but asocial. This

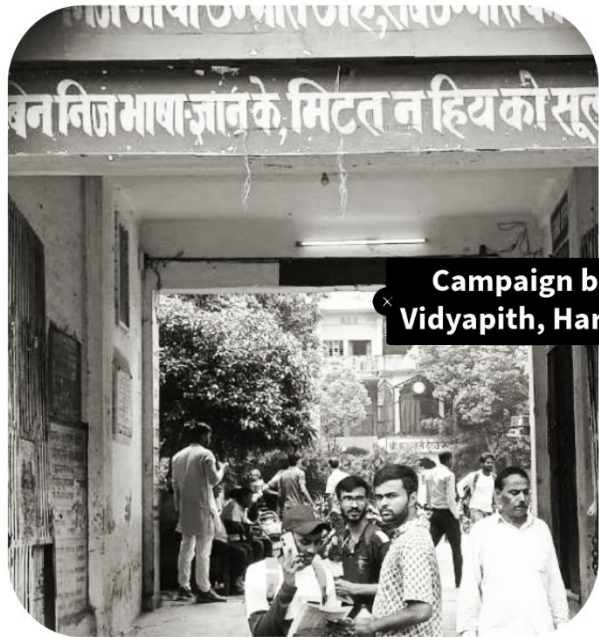
stratification bolsters the IITs efforts to build market-oriented science under the guise of public service. By socially constructing superior and inferior disciplines and identities, the institute pits students in aggressive competition against one another for valuable positions in the marketplace. This individualization also limits the possibility of forming a strong student community that can rise against administrative practices and larger anti-people policies.

REVOLUTIONARY STUDENTS YOUTH CAMPAIGN

× PDSU East Godavari district unveils wall posters in the district office to celebrate the All India Revolutionary Students' Union ×



× परिवर्तनकमी छात्र संगठन (पछास) के साथियों ने हल्द्वानी (उत्तराखंड) में क्रांतिकारी छात्र कन्वेंशन के पोस्टर का MBGPG कॉलेज, मेडिकल कॉलेज, इंटर कॉलेज, कोचिंग संस्थान सहित शहर में चिपकाने का अभियान लिया। ×



× Campaign being done in Banaras Hindu University, Kashi Vidyapith, Harishchandra PG College and Arya Mahila College ×

× PSYA के साथियों द्वारा इलाहाबाद यूनिवर्सिटी और आस पास के इलाकों बघाड़ा, कटरा आदि में पोस्टर कैंपेन चलाया गया। ×



× All India Progressive Students' Forum campaigns in eastern states ×



× COLLECTIVE campaigns in JNU, DU, ×



REVOLUTIONARY STUDENTS' **CONVENTION** **8th**

JANTAR MANTAR, Delhi

OCT,
2023

**Fight for Repealing NEP2020,
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Struggle to Ensure Permanent and Dignified Employment

**March Forward to Build a Scientific, Rational, Free and
Universally Accessible Education System;
Struggle to Overthrow the Present Oppressive System**



REVOLUTIONARY STUDENTS YOUTH CAMPAIGN

Student - Youth have always been moved to act by ideas of a new future, not just returning to any 'golden past'. From the Independence Movement to Land Struggles in the 60s, fighting back Caste Atrocities or imposition of Emergency, it is Young India that is expected to resist injustice on behalf of the whole society.

**Farmers
showed the
way, now
Student-Youth
must join the
barricades!**

**Fight against
NEP 2020,
UNEMPLOYMENT
and FASCIST
ATTACKS!**