

frontier

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Activity sans Action

THE OPPOSITION ALLIANCE, BETTER KNOWN AS INDIA, IS yet to take the shape of a united platform with a common political approach against the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP]. Surprisingly, Congress these days is talking loudly about deprivation of OBC people much to the amusement of the so-called OBC parties. One of the Mandalite outfits, namely Samajwadi Party [SP] found in Congress Party's volte-face 'a miracle'. Congress Party's support to the demand of OBC quota in Women's Reservation Bill and their declaration that they would conduct caste census if come to power, was somewhat unexpected even a year ago. Some regional parties that depend solely on caste polarisation in electoral politics in Bihar and UP, more precisely in north India, look worried about the grand old party's changed stance on the 'quota within quota' syndrome. They see in the Congress move a ploy to cut their traditional vote bank which was once the exclusive domain of Congress. But there is nothing wrong in Congress reaching out to OBCs, Dalits and Muslims. Better late than never! Right now both Congress and SP are seriously engaged in seat sharing arrangement in the upcoming assembly election in Madhya Pradesh. As they are the prominent members of INDIA; it is likely that they will be able to clinch a deal. In truth INDIA is still an electoral alliance of convenience. It is unlikely to become an ideological challenge to the BJP. With 28 organisations having diverse political inclination INDIA is no answer to the current BJP-RSS onslaught. They passed the Women's Reservation Bill in both houses of parliament without seriously raising the issue of OBC quota. On earlier two occasions Women's Reservation Bill faced stiff opposition from the Mandalites. But this time they agreed not to disagree on the spirit of the Bill despite the non-inclusion of OBC clause. While addressing a public rally in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh Congress leader Rahul Gandhi attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his party—Bharatiya Janata Party—for ignoring OBC quota in Women's Reservation Bill. But they didn't seriously pursue the issue in parliamentary debate and allowed the Bill to get passed without any rider. If everything goes according to plan the women's reservation in Parliament and state legislatures would take at least 10 years to be implemented because women will get their rights only after a survey and delimitation process is completed. So no party—pro-quota or anti-quota—is affected in the coming 2024 parliamentary polls; it is business as usual even after the passage of the Bill. Then delimitation programme will have to face road-blocks in southern

states. The reason is simple: there is every possibility that the north India will dominate south India in absolute numbers in terms people's representation in parliament after delimitation.

In parliament Mr Gandhi wanted to know 'why there are only three OBC officers amongst 90 top bureaucrats who run the Modi government'. The number of high ranking officers in the administration doesn't make any difference in the abysmal conditions the backward community people are being forced to live in. Mr Gandhi in the same meeting accused the RSS of running the central government with the sole aim of divert-

ing public attention from the real issues. He, however, remained silent about the 'real issues'. They cannot fight BJP's economic agenda which is the root cause of distress for the downtrodden belonging to OBC, Dalit and Muslim communities because Modi is implementing the economic blue-print scripted by the Congress government in the yesteryears. Mere reservation of a few women in legislatures is not going to alter the fate of poor women who are being doubly oppressed in Indian society. What is needed is a powerful women's movement which is not on the horizon. Then Congress party is in no position

to fight RSS ideologically. After all they also need upper caste Hindu votes. For all practical purposes they are in the process of repackaging their caste-based constituencies.

The BJP was in a hurry to have the women's reservation bill passed to derive political mileage in the Lok Sabha poll campaign. By promising amendments in future Union Home Minister Amit Shah succeeded to build consensus on the Bill, notwithstanding some differences. Opposition to the Bill at this stage would be counterproductive in vote market as it would allow BJP to gain populism. So all fell in line. □□□ [03-10-2023]

COMMENT

Rethinking Aadhaar Judgement

ALMOST FIVE YEARS AGO A Constitution bench of the Supreme Court delivered the Aadhaar judgement [KS Puttaswamy & Anr. v Union of India & Anr. (2019)]. It appears that a convenient amnesia affects the government as it creates new rules and amendments to the Aadhaar Act that ignore and forget the limitations placed on the use of Aadhaar by that judgment.

The apex court put five significant limitations on the use of Aadhaar. It was specifically held that Aadhaar cannot be made mandatory for earned benefits, like pension. The majority judgment also stated "At the same time, we hope that the respondents shall not unduly expand the scope of 'subsidies, services and benefits' thereby widening the net of Aadhaar, where it is not permitted otherwise".

Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act which allowed the use of Aadhaar authentication by private companies is unconstitutional. Also, Aadhaar cannot be made mandatory for children's admission to school or for benefits under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

In blatant disregard of the limitations established by the judgement, the government continues to expand the use of Aadhaar to promote the UID at the cost of fundamental rights.

Libtech India has published an important study correlating the introduction of Aadhaar and deletion of workers names from the MGNREGA. Tracking deletions in the MGNREGA for over a year, they have interviewed over 600 workers' between October 2022 and June 2023, and interviewed officials between December 2022 and May 2023. They covered various states, including Andhra Pradesh (AP), Gujarat, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Telangana. They write in the *Economic and Political Weekly*—"We argue that the complexity of Aadhaar-based interventions and the manner of their rollout has a correlation with the spate of deletions. We begin by unpacking the Aadhaar interventions and assessing their rationale and complexity. We further discuss what official MGNREGA documents say about deletions, and briefly examine deletion practices and resolution procedures on the ground. Finally, we

comment on the Aadhaar mandate as a symptom of the union government's techno-solutionist tendencies".

Today Aadhaar continues to be pushed as mandatory for almost everything. But as per the apex court order it is not mandatory to link UID with Voter ID.

Five years ago the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court of India said that Aadhaar could only be used for welfare. In a separate judgment it had allowed the mandatory linking of Aadhaar and PAN cards. But the Union Government continues to try to thrust Aadhaar into every sphere and aspect of people's daily lives, as it creates a data protection law that exempts itself and anyone it chooses from compliance.

The re-branding of Aadhaar as a new "digital public infrastructure" is particularly concerning as it is deeply misleading, obfuscating the history of coercion and exclusion that the project carries. Who is this public infrastructure for? How will the data of millions of Indian residents be used? Five years after the Aadhaar judgement, the future looks full of challenges to dignity, privacy and liberty. □□□ [Contributed]

NOTE

Italian Anarchists on Ukraine War

Tridnivalka writes:

THE WAR CURRENTLY UNFOLDING in Ukraine is more than just another military conflict, and it is not simply a dispute over resources. Rather, it is a crucial chapter of a wider rivalry between blocks of capitalist countries battling for control over the world. Economic, military, and technological supremacy, together with the global geopolitical equilibrium, are at stake in this conflict...

For the first time since World War II, a symmetric war is being fought in Europe, with a real risk of nuclear escalation. It is also the first ever direct conflict between Russia and NATO, involving the major nuclear powers of the world (Russian Federation, USA, UK, and France).

War is the most radical form of oppression wielded by states and capitalists against the exploited.

This war, which began in 2014 with the attack against the Russian-speaking communities of Ukraine, fits in the larger strategic context of NATO expansion in Eastern Europe. This expansion reached the “backyard” (and, economically, the commercial space) of a militaristic and authoritarian power which is not willing to tolerate any disorders within its sphere of influence, as the brutal repression of the revolts in Kazakhstan in January 2022 demonstrate.

The most dramatic consequences are suffered directly by the Ukrainian people and by the conscripted Russian youth, but other peoples are indirectly affected. Africans have to endure the increase in the price of wheat and the exacerbation of regional conflicts, while the exploited in the West are subjected to a growing militarisation of their territories and a worsening of their living and working conditions.

Since 2014, Ukraine has seen the deployment of ferocious anti-Russian and anti-popular reforms, which have become even stricter after the Russian invasion of February 24, 2022: the abolition of Russian as second language in south-eastern Ukraine; the exclusion from the elections of political parties with alleged ties to Russia; the repression against members of the Russian Orthodox Church; the decommunisation laws with sentences of up to 10 years of detention for the crime of “communist propaganda”; the celebration of war criminal Stepan Bandera, complete with official ceremonies and memorials; the inclusion of Pravy Sector and Svoboda Nazis in the armed forces, starting from the National Guard and the creation of the infamous Udar and Azov battalions; the violence, attacks, rapes, homicides, and bombings against the people of Donbass (roughly 14.000 deaths between 2014 and 2022, including hundreds of children); the horrible massacre of Odessa of the 2nd of May 2014, when unarmed protesters calling for the independence from Ukraine, who were hiding in the local union building, were slaughtered and burnt alive by a crowd of armed Nazis escorted by the police. These authentic provocations—which attacked the Russian state’s international prestige and internal approval by targeting part of the Ukrainian population—are the root of the war.

Since 2014, Ukraine has become a sort of feud of the United States, a state tailored to multinational corporations and western capital—something that the United States and their allies had not achieved even in countries that they directly invaded and

NOTICE

AUTUMN NUMBER 2023

Autumn Number will be out in the 2nd week of October. This year our contributors include—

Marcello Musto, Vijay Singh, Asok Chattopadhyay, Arup Baisaya, Harsh Thakor, Anup Sinha, Sushil Khanna, I Satya Sundaram, Amit Bhattacharya, Sumanta Banerjee, Shamsul Islam, Nityananda Ghosh, Himanshu Roy, Ashok Nag, Ritaiyoti Bandyopadhyay, Farooque Chowdhury, Alope Mukherjee, Arup Sen, Sukanta Sarkar, Vinod Mubayi, Manas Bakshi, AC, Ranganayakamma, I Mallikarjuna Sharma, Pranjali Bandhu, Chaman Lal, Atanu Chakraborty, Kobad Ghandy, Abhijit Guha, Bernard D’Mello, Sagar Dhara, T Vijayendra, Aurobindo Ghose....

had military control over, such as Iraq. As an example, already in 2020 Zelensky abolished the moratorium preventing the sale of Ukraine’s fertile black soil, effectively handing over millions of hectares to the cultivation of Bayer-Monsanto’s GMOs, while at the beginning of the Russian invasion the collective agreements negotiated by unions ceased to apply to companies with less than 200 employees (which is the vast majority of Ukrainian companies), and strikes and protests were banned.

Saying this does not at all mean buying into Russian propaganda about the “special military operation” aimed at the “denazification” of Ukraine. Then the Russian-Chinese bloc cannot have a global emancipatory role. When a State is fighting a war, that State is waging war also on its own people, and particularly against its own proletarians. War always reinforces the power of the ruling classes, strengthening the enslavement and exploitation of the oppressed. □□□

[abridged]

CAMOUFLAGING THE REAL ISSUE

Women's Reservation Bill

Sukla Sen

IT'S ON AUGUST 11TH; THE monsoon session of the Indian Parliament had ended. The most significant development, arguably, being the return of Rahul Gandhi—by far the most visible face and audible voice of the anti-regime forces—getting his lost (or cheated?) membership restored with the help of the Supreme Court—his last hope.

The other claimant for the top slot is the eventual discussion on the continuing mayhem in Manipur which sort of forced the Prime Minister to finally open his mouth—just open—on the issue, but not before a last-minute walkout by the Opposition during his concluding reply to the debate on the floor of the Lok Sabha.

"Just twenty days thereafter, on August 31st, the Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister, all of a sudden, made the surprise (unilateral) announcement of a five-day "special session" of the parliament from September 18 to 22nd. But for a (briefest) reference to "Amrit Kaal", no word—just no word—on the agenda, very much in the style of an unfolding crime thriller, so to speak.

"The nail-biting silence would, however, be finally broken only on September 13th—almost a fortnight after the original announcement. The listed items include, inter alia, a discussion on "parliamentary journey of 75 years starting from Samvidhan Sabha—achievements, experiences, memories and learnings" and the The Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023—meant to nullify a Supreme Court directive on this issue and, additionally, to demote the post of the CEC,

on the way to turning the institution into a de jure government department.

"It'd, however, be too naive not to expect some further surprise during the session, more likely near the very end.

"In anticipation, the Congress Working Committee has passed a resolution (during its September 16-17 session in Hyderabad) demanding the passing of the (still live) Women's Reservation Bill—already passed by the upper house on March 9 2010.

"Before that, on September 6, Sonia Gandhi, the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party—the most major constituent of the opposition INDIA alliance, wrote to the Prime Minister listing out the issues that her party wants to be discussed."

The same evening, the PTI reported:

"The Union Cabinet met here on Monday evening after the first sitting of the special session of Parliament, amid speculation that it may clear some important legislative proposals.

"There was no word on what transpired in the meeting which lasted for over 90 minutes."

Sometime thereafter, Minister of State Prahlad Singh Patel posted on social media platform X that the Cabinet has approved the women's reservation bill but deleted the post in less than an hour with no formal announcement on cabinet decisions till then.

Anyway, the cloak of not-too-effective secrecy would, eventually, lift and the hide-and-seek game end with the tabling of the Bill next day

afternoon in the Lok Sabha by Union law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, minutes before the PM's speech. In his speech, the Prime Minister claimed that for the "work of ensuring rights of women and putting their power to use and for many such noble works, God has chosen me." He would also not forget to sanctimoniously ask for "consensus". Undeterred by the deliberate attempt to shun any prior consultation on the Bill with other stakeholders like plague.

To cut a long story short, the Lok Sabha would discuss and pass the Bill—454-2—very next day and the Rajya Sabha—in a similar fast forward mode unanimously—the following day. The same evening both houses of the Parliament "adjourned sine die, a day ahead of schedule, after passing the landmark women's reservation Bill."

Significantly, none of the other Bills that had figured in the relevant lists circulated were taken up, indicating that it was all only a part of an elaborate ruse.

Main Contents of the Bill

Main contents of the Bill appear to be as under:

- ❑ One-third of seats shall be reserved for women in Legislative Assemblies, including in Delhi
- ❑ One-third of seats shall be reserved for women in the House of People (Lok Sabha)
- ❑ One-third of seats earmarked for SCs and STs will be reserved for women in Lok Sabha and Assemblies
- ❑ Quota will come into being only after an exercise of delimitation after the relevant figures of the first Census taken after the new quota law comes into effect.

This Bill broadly parallels its immediate (2008-2010) predecessor but for two significant departures. One, the title has undergone a very radical and, arguably, silly (or sinister?)

transformation. Two, the implementation of this Bill even after enactment would have to wait for census and, then, delimitation. Two very big and even tricky "If"s. On the previous occasion, there was no such conditionality attached.

Few Substantive Issues

On the 20th, by far the most visible and audible member from the Opposition side, viz. Rahul Gandhi, made a fairly impactful 15-minute intervention, in a somewhat didactic format, in the Lok Sabha.

The sum and substance of the speech is::

- I. Indian Independence denotes transfer of power from the British (Crown) to the people of (democratic) India.
- II. A conflict is going on between those fighting to take this process further forward and those trying to snatch power away from the hands of the people.
- III. The move for women's reservation is a big step in the direction of further devolution of power to the people.
- IV. OBCs like women constitute a (severely) deprived group. Of the 90 Secretaries of the Government of India only 3 come from this group. They control only 5% of the total budget of 44 lakh crore.
- V. So, a caste census must be carried out. The data of the census already done must be released. (Otherwise, "we would release the data!")
- VI. The bill is incomplete without the provision for reservation for the OBC women. Must be included.
- VII. There's no reason whatsoever why the implementation of this reservation bill is yoked to the next census and, then, delimitation of constituencies.

Must be implemented immediately after passing.

Other speakers from the Opposition too, in both the Houses, broadly followed the same line, though not everyone harped on the OBC issue.

Following the unanimous passing of the Bill in the Rajya Sabha on the 21st, Rahul Gandhi, on the 22nd, would hold a brief press conference in the Congress Headquarters to again raise the demands of immediate implementation of the Bill, holding of a caste census and release of the caste data already gathered under the previous UPA regime. Very remarkably, he also flatly admitted that the past stand of the Congress on the issue of reservation for the OBCs was plainly wrong. That, no doubt, marks and formalises a hugely significant shift in the Congress stand that started becoming visible perhaps since the last Karnataka poll.

In fact, during this Special Session, while the other allies of the Congress—including the OBC parties—shed their past oppositions as regards reservations for women in State and Central legislatures, the Congress itself picked up the banner of championing the OBC cause. That's hugely significant.

Conclusion

To sum up, while the issue of women's reservations, given their rather thin presence otherwise, in the various elected bodies got foregrounded at least since 1989, during the just concluded Special Session of the Parliament, it notched up a further moral and political victory. That a political party of self-proclaimed devotees of sage Manu, who did in no uncertain terms stand for lifelong subjugation of women by their male kin—regardless of being senior or junior in terms of age—had to showcase their claimed keenness to uphold the cause of women's empowerment, even if only to deceive, is not something to be casually scoffed at.

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Yet, the promise of reservation held up by the Bill just passed is largely illusory. It is contingent upon the holding of the next census, already overdue and rather inexplicably held up by the current regime, it has to also wait for the conclusion of the next round of (highly controversial) delimitation of assembly and parliamentary constituencies—which would surely be stoutly opposed by the Southern states—based on the census outcome.

In fact, the yoking of the implementation of the Bill to census and delimitation has certain sinister dimensions that have, as yet, not attracted adequate attention. The women's right to fair representation would be used as pawns on the political chessboard by the regime, if still in place, to bulldoze (i) the census exercise that harbours the threat of demonic NRC, as currently designed, and (ii) the delimitation that would change the relative weights of Kerala and Tamil Nadu in particular vis-a-vis UP, MP and Bihar in the future parliaments.

All in all, the Special Session of the Parliament, which also inaugurated the New Parliament Building, it's now more than amply clear, was meant to precisely pass the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam to hold

up Narendra Modi as the God's chosen one to champion the causes of women—while actually doing precious little—and camouflage his actual track record as illustrated by e.g. the premature release of eleven convicted gang rapists in the Bilkis Bano case as a part of celebration

of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, atrocities in Hathras and Manipur.

It was also meant to trigger irreparable fissures in the INDIA alliance by foregrounding an issue on which the alliance partners were divided in the past. That's why the whole move was attempted to be wrapped in secrecy

so that the alliance partners get little time to patch up.

The latter attempt has visibly fallen flat on its face. The fate of the former would depend on the conduct of the alliance in the coming days. But, they have made a promising start. □□□

HOW TO WOO VOTERS

Politics of Freebies

Sukanta Sarkar

DONATION, GIFT, CHARITY! The use of these words has always been pronounced with considerable reverence and respect. From the kings to the zamindars, many rich people have gained fame by donating to people personally and socially at different times. In Bengal, in the distant past, numerous philanthropic institutions like schools, libraries, hospitals were established on the basis of private donations. Even today many schools and hospitals in almost all districts of the state including Kolkata, Howrah, Hooghly, two 24 Parganas bear this testimony. It would be very wrong to think that only a section of wealthy Bengalis came forward in all these activities. Several non-Bengali individuals and families living in Bengal have also come forward to build various philanthropic institutions in different times. A culture of donation-charity has existed for ages. Not only in Bengal, this culture existed and exists almost everywhere in the country. But, over the decades, this issue has reached a different level. Earlier, in return for charity, there was no desire for anything in return other than the reputation of the donor. And in many cases, the donor did not even bother with all that. He or they thought it was a duty or responsibility to their subjects and subsequently to society. But, the image of charity in this

country started to change from the 1960s due to political reasons. It started to change, it is better to say, donation and charity started to be used politically. Now donation is used to expand political power. It may be called political charity.

It first started in South India. But gradually it spread across India. In the past few decades, when the elections came, various national level parties, small and regional parties as well to seize power, rather than talking about new policies, in exchange for the support of the voters, they gave voters personal and family items such as motorcycles, refrigerators, Colour TVs, laptops, mobile phones, bicycles etc and promised to deliver various 'developmental projects' assuring jobs to the unemployed. This trend has grown exponentially in recent years as almost all political parties resort to politics of 'charity'. All, rich and poor are swayed by free gift culture.

In the 70s, 80s and 90s many political parties were accused of giving money directly to the voters to win votes in various constituencies, especially in villages of the Hindi belt. Many say that such unethical activities are also done in some states of the South to get the support of the voters. In the last few years, the tendency of freebies or 'Khayrati politics' has increased throughout the country. Arvind

Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party or AAP won the Delhi assembly polls in 2015 with the slogan 'PaniMaaf, Bijli Haaf'. Following the same path, AAP won power in the Punjab assembly elections a couple of years ago, but recently this slogan of AAP did not work at all in the Gujarat assembly polls. In order to keep the pre-poll promises after coming to power, various state governments increased the amount of subsidy (equivalent to charity) in various areas. According to a Reserve Bank report last year, Jharkhand, Odisha, Kerala, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh are the top 5 states in terms of huge subsidy hikes in the last 3 years. Issues like loan waiver, public transport, electricity bill waiver and farm loan waiver have been considered by the country's apex bank as Khayrati or freebies.

Before and after every election, no government bothers about the initiative to fulfil the 'Khayrati' as promised by the various ruling parties, even though there is criticism in the media and society. The opposition political parties also do not show interest in protesting in that way. Even the right-wing or moderate parties and the left-wing parties of the country are not seen to protest in that way. Electoral compulsion is also a major obstacle for parliamentary left parties to strongly oppose Khayrati politics. At the national and regional levels, this Khayrati is one of the main electoral tools of many of the regional parties with whom they often make electoral alliances. Apart from that the

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parliamentary left parties in this country are also a bit confused about electioneering and they don't have a clear policy on it.

According to leftist philosophy it is the responsibility of the state to meet all the basic needs of the citizens, starting from food, clothing, housing, health, education. However, in a socialist system, the state should never take the responsibility of providing the citizens with personal consumables like TV, fridge, air conditioner, mobile phone, car or laptop. And all citizens will pay for their labour from the wages earned; this is the diagnosis of the socialist system. There was and still is much debate about whether it is good or bad. There is an apparent misconception among many about the socialist system, that in socialism everything is free. But that's not the case at all. Although the state is responsible for subsidising some of the daily and basic goods and services, the labour of the citizens in various services including agriculture is also one of the conditions of the socialist system. Socialist system does not mean giving dole. In the name of socialism, the whole world is seeing the pathetic condition of those countries which have done the dole or charity system. Hugo Chavez was the president of Venezuela for 14 years from 1999 to 2013. He established the so-called socialist system in his country. He wanted to introduce himself as the 'Leader of the Bolivarian Revolution'. However, Venezuela had huge oil reserves and the money from selling that oil abroad gave its citizens almost everything for free. Instead of using the exported oil money to improve agriculture, build factories or practise modern technology-based production, he made arrangements to import almost everything needed by the citizens from abroad and give it to the citizens at a very low cost and

in many cases for free. As a result, by the year 2000, Venezuela's economy had completely collapsed. It still could not raise its head. Thousands of citizens are still leaving Venezuela and emigrating today. In particular, most are moving or intending to move to the US. What is the state of Fidel Castro's socialist Cuba today? Basically, Castro fed and clothed the people of his country for almost nothing by importing almost everything from the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. Today Cuba is in the list of one of the poorest countries in the world. More examples can be given. Countries that have 'served' their citizens through subsidy or charity politics are not faring well at all. Those countries are sinking.

It is certain that Khayrati or politics of freebies is not a constructive matter at all. But this political subculture is increasing in India. The issue of fatal consequences of Khayrati politics has also come to the attention of the top court of the country. The Supreme Court feels that this is a very important matter and the Central Government and the Election Commission should look into it. Later, the Election Commission also called an all-party meeting on the matter. There, the advice of various parties was sought to pull the rush in Khayrati politics. But no direction was found in that meeting. The central government also feels that if this thing continues, the country will have to face a big disaster in the future. Finally, the Supreme Court assigned a 3-judge bench to look into the matter.

If the central government, the Election Commission, the Supreme Court and the political parties fail to formulate and implement concrete policies to stop or control nepotism and politics of freebies then the world's largest democracy is sure to face a deep crisis anytime soon. □□

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VISHWAKARMA YOJANA

Reinforcing the Varna System

Shanvar V

IT WAS IN JUNE 1953 THAT the then Congress Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Mr Rajaji (C Rajagopalachari) announced a system of schooling under 'Modified Scheme of Elementary Education' that allocated morning hours for proper schooling in classrooms and the afternoon hours for learning the traditional, hereditary occupations of their parents. By that a son of a cobbler should learn cobbling, sanitation workers' son scavenging and a priest's son to learn priesthood. This created an uproar in the entire state and paved the way for a powerful emergence of Dravidian politics. Rajaji had to confront resistance from within his own party and the government in addition to other opposition parties. K Kamaraj, OBC leader from within the state Congress, emerged as a leader of the demand to scrap the educational system that reinforced caste hierarchy and was popularly called as 'Kula Kalvi Thittam' (Caste ordained educational scheme).

Rajaji had to resign from the presidentship of the Congress in March and ultimately forced to step down from the chief ministership in April 1954 because of the furore and resistance movement generated by the controversial educational scheme.

Now, in 2023, it is the turn of Mr Modi and the BJP. The Vishwakarma Yojana announced by the PM Modi, on the day of Vishwakarma Jayanti and his own birthday, is nothing but a euphemism for Rajaji's scheme of caste ordained education to learn the caste ordained occupation.

In place of Rajaji's raw scheme, the PM Modi has announced a so-

phisticated scheme of "Vishwakarma Yojana" with paid training, free tools and loans to attract and to reinforce the caste system.

The Modi led BJP government has also promised support from offering tools and loans to produce and until brand promotion and marketing. And the support will be offered only if the person registered under the scheme can prove that he is traditionally engaged in the job, in other words, by birth. VAOs and other officials at local level are to confirm their caste background by confirming their birth and traditional occupation. This scheme is systematically designed to limit artisans and crafts people to confine themselves to their caste based occupation. Vishwakarma Yojana is nothing but a ploy for the promotion of caste (Varnashrama) based 'Hindu Rashtra' and for the reinforcement of the existing caste system based on Manu Smriti.

In order to generate interest and to encourage the younger generations among artisans and crafts people, more importantly to prevent their drift from caste ordained occupations, the Modi has also declared a loan scheme worth one lakh loan for those who undergo 5 days training of basic course and another 2 lakh loan for those who undergo 15 days training of advance course. The person who repaid the original 1 lakh loan within 18 months and also with advance training certificate only offered the loan of two lakh. Out of 13 percent interest for loan, the PM says that the government will be responsible for 8 percent while the loanees will have to pay 5 percent interest. In the launching of

the scheme, the PM proudly declared that "Modi is the guarantee" for loans and banks will not ask for any collateral.

In a typical fashion, Mr Modi also walked through the exhibition of "Guru-Shishya Parampara" in the launching of Vishwakarma Yojana.

Unlike traditional understanding of capitalism destroying the feudalism or its remnants, it is actually reinforcing and fortifying the caste system in India. Rajaji's scheme of promoting caste ordained occupations in 50s is synchronised to the neo-liberal era of 2023 by PM Modi.

As the scheme is being unveiled in a neo liberal-era, Modi also talks about making local the vocal by offering training, technology and offers to make the local as global by increasing exports of handicrafts showcased in Bharat Mandapam and Yasho Bhoomi. Modi claims that the government will increase the share of handicrafts from its one percent now and will look for capturing the international market worth 25 lakh crore.

He is also attempting to rationalise it by saying that the scheme is aimed at catering to the market of conference tourism industry that is marked by events, exhibitions and meetings. He says that he is addressing the section of people who prefer drinking water from earthen pots more than a refrigerator. He also minced no words to claim that artisans and crafts people will be part of a supply chain and be part of outsourcing chain by corporate companies. Hence, Modi is trying to achieve two targets of reinforcing caste system and using caste as a basis for capital accumulation in a neo-liberal economy by throwing a single stone of Vishwakarma scheme.

Vishwakarma Yojana is not an isolated scheme, but a scheme well

integrated with the vision synchronised to the neo-liberal environment. It is very well closely linked with the NEP 2020 that is inspired by Manu Smriti which makes education of lower castes punishable. It denies education to the marginalised through various ways including medium of education, privatisation and vocational training. It is also intertwined with the RSS-BJP dream of Hindu Rashtra. Child labour in family enterprises is already legalised

through amendments to the act.

NDTV projects the scheme as an OBC outreach by Modi. It is being rolled out in the backdrop of the Supreme Court refusing to halt caste census in Bihar. Hence the interpretation is that the BJP is planning to shed its Brahmin-Bania image with this scheme. Modi also cleverly acknowledges that there is not a single village in the country without service castes like barbers, washer-men, cobblers, carpenters, blacksmiths,

etc., who are placed under the nomenclature of Vishwakarmas.

Rajaji, the person who attempted to protect Varnashrama system in 50s was thrown to the dustbin of history and he could never emerge again. The communists, Periyarists and Dravidian movement spelled a doom for a stalwart in those days. Modi, RSS and BJP are also bound to face a similar fate and the days are not far off. □□□

[Courtesy: Liberation]

LANGUAGE, RACE AND NATIONALITY

Recent Discourses on Tamil Nationalism

Solomon Victus

[Identity based politics, especially on the issue of language, is gaining importance in India in the modern capitalist technocratic context. It is an issue which has swung back again and again from the time of controversial debates which took place between the Dravidian Indus Valley civilisation and the entry of the Aryan race. Dravidian cultural debates in Tamil Nadu have been an issue since Congress rule in Madras Presidency under Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) in the 1930s. There were many vibrant discussions reverberating in the minds of the politically active people of Tamil Nadu on the question of Tamil nationalism. Nevertheless, in the name of Tamil nationalism the people in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka are fragmented in understanding state autonomy and genuine federalism. What is published below actually deals with recent discourses on Tamil Nationalism.]

SEEMAN, A TAMIL FILM director started Nam Thamilar Katchi (NTK -We Tamils Party), basically a state level political party in 2009 with a primary objective of Tamil nationalism. NTK had triggered the question, who the Dravidian and Tamilian are. He claims that 'we are Tamils by language, race and nationality' and thus he takes an opposite position of earlier leaders like Annadurai and Karunanithi. Although he came through the ideological paths of DK and DMK memberships, he restarted the party NTK by picking up from the name earlier used by Adithanar. His party is basically formed with a combination of followers of V Prabhakaran and fans of Seeman. However Seeman has been sympathetic with AIADMK and Brahmin leadership while opposing Dravidian ideology and so his credibility on Tamil nationalism is under fire frequently.

One of the major drawbacks of Seeman's policies is too idealistic in his political approach, especially his belief in overnight radical changes with an authoritative tone which are very appealing to the youngsters. Another drawback is about next level democratic leadership issue; it is still vague and ambiguous over the plausibility of his team working along with Indian federal system. In the name of opposing Dravidian rules in Tamil Nadu, particularly DMK, Seeman falls on the side of Hindu nationalism indirectly. One of the strong critiques on the political approach of Seeman is what would be the consequence of anti-Dravidian political position in Tamil Nadu if one goes on with the ideals of Tamil nationalism. The significant question is how far it is possible to set aside easily all the achievements made by Dravidian parties in the path of social justice overnight?

For Maniyarasan, the primary objective of Tamil Nationalism is redemption of sovereignty of the Tamil nation, fighting for land and language rights and fighting against Aryan as well as Brahmin-Vaisiya dominance and monopolist national parties in India. For him, India is not at all one nation but union of states and so Hindi cannot be the national language. He is seriously demanding the state for exclusion and expulsion of non-Tamils, especially Hindi speaking people from Tamil Nadu. They define that those who settled before November 1, 1956 and their successors could be accepted as insiders, and the rest of them can work and earn in Tamil Nadu but cannot claim to be candidates for the political leadership. He defines that all those who speak Tamil language, including Brahmins, who live for one or two generations in Tamil Nadu could be treated as Tamils. He cites examples from Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra States where no outsiders are allowed to become chief minister but can become member of the State Assembly. And so persons with 'pure' Tamil origin are to be permitted to rule the land. The questions and arguments continue whether it is justifiable to exclude Adi-Tamils under Tamil nationalism while including Aryan Brahmins.

Persons like Pazha Nedumaran, Trichy Veluchamy and Thirumurugan

Gandhi are strong supporters of Tamil Nationalism ideology in Sri Lanka as well as in Tamil Nadu. Now they currently argue that the murder case of Rajiv Gandhi was a result of a mysterious international conspiracy, and it has nothing to do with LTTE. Pazha Nedumaran holds the view that majority nationalists like Tamils in Tamil Nadu must patronise minority nationalists because those people like Malayalis, Telugus and Sourastrians had been living in Tamil Nadu and contributing to the state for centuries. It is not fair to plan sending them out with an exclusive attitude. He argues that early Tamil poets and pundits were involved in producing classic literature with a global perspective. And therefore Tamil nationalism must have a broader perspective. He maintains that Tamil nationalism could survive in the long run only if it is inclusive in nature.

Thirumurugan Gandhi is of the view that one cannot talk of Tamil nationalism by ignoring Velupillai Prabhakaran and E V R Periyar. According to the assessment of Thirumurugan Gandhi, the leader of Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), Thol Thirumavalavan takes a position of leftist Tamil nationalism since he accommodates B R Ambedkar, V Prabhakaran and EVR Periyar fairly.

Having seen through the recent perception on Tamil nationalism and its strategies Thol Thirumavalavan has recently come to the conclusion that Tamil nationalism is no more a realisable project based on language identity politics in Tamil Nadu. He is for a broader secular national unity rather than limiting issues in language in Tamil Nadu. Founder of Tamil Nadu Green Party (Pasumai Thamilagam), S P Udayakumar takes a balanced position on those pioneering personalities along with serious ecological issues and sustainable development. All of them look sympathetically at the issue of new migrants from northern India but they are looking for a political guarantee from the state giving priority to the local workers. Parisalan, a strong proponent of the Tamil nationalism, is of the opinion that B R Ambedkar cannot be helpful to ethnic nationalities but only to Indian nationalism. For him Ambedkar was the one who strongly denied the Aryan invasion event and was in favour of Indian nationalism, and therefore Ambedkar cannot be helpful for Tamil nationalism. In the same tone Parisalan is opposing E V R Periyar's legacy for he was a strong critic of the Tamil language. Does the Tamil Nationalism emphasise an extended Tamil Nadu, or sovereignty of the Tamils within the federal context of India? However, most Tamils feel that the sovereignty of Tamil Nadu must be maintained without compromise. The beauty of the Tamil Nationalists is that they are for secular democratic non-violent approaches, but in course of time this will definitely provoke people to indulge in hatred and violence.

Labour scarcity in Tamil Nadu has been a serious issue in recent decades for hard work like agriculture, construction industry, restaurants, brick kilns, menial jobs like septic waste clearance, etc., and so

it has become an economic necessity to bring labourers from outside. The situation is so bad that no industry, either formal or informal, could survive in Tamil Nadu today without northern migrant workers. As usual, the new labour force is willing to accept cheaper wages, long hours of work and less holidays as long as the local Tamil labour force is scarce. Since trade union activities are strictly forbidden in the name of neo-liberal industrial policy and 'industrial peace' there is no space for bargaining for their own wages and welfare. Compared with the northern migrant workers, Tamil labourers prefer more decent jobs and demand higher wages and other welfare measures with the employers, and so the employers prefer to bring in non-demanding labourers to their industries. The state experiences huge inflows of north Indians into Tamil Nadu. New recruits of higher-level officials, especially from the Union Government, also control banks, postal and railways and try to speak in Hindi with the local Tamil customers. Recently one of the TATA group industries in Hosur attracted one full train of labourers from north India, while many of the local qualified Tamils are jobless.

As long as no local person is in the queue for employment, Tamil nationalism is not an issue. The crisis becomes very sensitive while skilled people are locally unemployed and the outsiders are appointed who know neither Tamil nor English language. These northern workers are almost like bonded labourers in the hands of south Indian agents or middlemen who keep all of their basic documents of identity, controlling them with their commission demands. In many places the illegal sale of narcotic drugs, murder, thefts and violent attacks on Tamils are also witnessed. Anger of the locals is fanned by the political parties which profit

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out of these immigrants. Most of the hard-core Tamils are worried and it is almost seen as if Hindu nationalism is taking over Tamil nationalism. Moreover, Tamils have felt that the rights of Tamils are slowly and silently robbed away by the current Union Government and that many job opportunities, including their government jobs, are offered to the non-Tamils. The BJP is planning to make use of the Tamil nationalist sentiments for their political gains with the help of a communal riot.

Although anger of Tamils has some valid reasons, their reaction is perhaps unjustifiable. Fundamentally the Tamils must realise that they themselves were migrants in different states and countries and suffered a lot although they were sincerely contributing to the local places. There are so many cases one can cite in the past and present. What is hidden in this process is the reality of many northern workers who have already undergone a situation of penury without any jobs and are willing to accept any labour conditions. Instead of asking why they have come here one must know how they are forced to opt for cheap labour. The Tamils need to know what the real issue is behind this. Whereas these labourers who come for survival from all directions are willing to take the hard and menial jobs in Tamil Nadu that local Tamil labourers do not wish to do. If the Tamils fail to distinguish the labouring sector from the capital investment sectors, the anger of Tamils will have bad consequences on the future economy and on helping communal forces. What is necessary is to have worker-worker solidarity in sharing the job opportunities as well as in gaining bargaining power with the employers.

Tamil Nadu has been known as a state in the forefront of consistently opposing neo-Aryanism, Brahminism, Hindi imposition, mono-

culturalisation and fascism. That was the reason why Rahul Gandhi recently made an open statement in the Parliament to the BJP government, 'You will never, ever win over the people of Tamil Nadu.' Since Tamil Nadu proves to be industrially one of the well-developed states with a fairly good infrastructure, many north Indians are migrating to Tamil Nadu for job opportunities. Therefore a strong resentment has developed against the pro-Hindutva parties which are encouraging mass migration into Tamil Nadu. Right wing Hindutva parties and their allies in Tamil Nadu are silent over these immigration policies. Hindi is not a native language of any of the states of India, and no state is formed on the basis of Hindi either. The Hindi belt people speak about Hindu nationalism since there is no plausibility of claiming Hindi Nationalism in India. The BJP as well as the RSS have always opposed states based on language but are in favour of creating 100 Jan Parishads and ruling from New Delhi which could spell disaster for the regional cultures and languages in India.

Nevertheless there are many allegations about the existence of pseudo-Tamil Nationalist groups in Tamil Nadu, and each one blames the others. There are confusions and ambiguities in defining who are the Tamilians and Dravidians and who are the outsiders? Who is genuine Tamil? How do people measure the purity and quality of ethnicity, and what could be the criteria? Can one identify an ethnic group by language alone? Kerala, Mumbai and Sri Lanka are also witnesses of these problems in different ways. States like Maharashtra and Telangana have already legally restricted the movements of the immigration of neighbours into their states. And voting rights and ration cards should not be issued to the outsiders but

must be discouraged with special Inner Line Permits like in Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

A pertinent question which arises here is why are the common people running for job opportunities from BJP-ruled 'Gujarat Model' states to non-BJP ruled 'Dravidian Model' states? Infrastructure-wise most of the BJP-ruled north Indian states are still very weak. They are unable to attract investment from outside due to political uncertainties, violence, communal and hate feelings, etc. It is a puzzling question whether the BJP is encouraging such unemployed people to make use of the labour situation in Tamil Nadu and consolidating non-Tamil votes to BJP.

Could one rightly brand these Tamil nationalist movements as communal or unprogressive under the Indian constitutional framework? For one thing Tamils are in general neither narrow-minded nor against the Indian Constitution. But whenever domination and oppression come in any form they wake up and protest. As far as history goes, the Tamils have always been inclusive, tolerant and accommodating, but recent developments in the socio-economic situation and right-wing political ideologies and identity politics of parties in Tamil Nadu have made them to rethink their position. One must remember that the neo-liberal market economy of global capitalism is able to survive efficiently by using religion, language and culture and by fanning communal feeling, uneven growth and thus new identity crises everywhere. □□□

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 WHEN AMBEDKAR CRIED

Born Dalit: Always In and Out

Rajesh Chavda

AS THE NEWLY APPOINTED military secretary of the Baroda state, Ambedkar moved to the city of Vadodara. But nobody would rent him a house because he was an “untouchable”. He eventually had to lie about his caste identity to the owners of a Parsi inn to get a place to stay. But when it was discovered that he was Dalit, he was attacked by his Parsi neighbours.

Ambedkar—who had studied at New York’s Columbia University and the London School of Economics—was forced to flee like a fugitive and spend a night under a tree on September 22, 2017.

He later recounted that he “wept bitterly. After all, I was deprived of my precious possession—namely my shelter.”

I grew up in a village just 40 kilometres away from Vadodara. My parents still live there.

How much has casteism changed since 1917?

I now live in the UK, where I work as a corporate lawyer. I visited my parents for two weeks in August.

I have two brothers. They were not as lucky as I have been and were unable to study beyond high school. Since they found it difficult to find good jobs, I set up a photocopying business for them in 2004.

But with the Covid lockdown of 2020, they had to shut their shops. When they reopened in January this year, the income from the business was insufficient to sustain both of them. We decided that this business would be handled only by our elder brother and I would set up another business for the younger one.

After speaking with a few people

to get ideas about potential gaps in the market, we decided to set up a stationery shop in a neighbouring town. I started looking for a shop to rent there.

I found three shops. When I went to negotiate with the owners of the first two shops, I did not want my caste identity to become a hurdle so I told them I was a corporate lawyer in the UK and that I was going to finance the business. Both quoted me an exorbitant amount of rent.

When I went to see the third man, I changed my approach. I did not tell him what I did for a living.

That meant, however, that he did not have a basis on which to try to form a bond of trust. So he immediately looked for another potential source of familiarity: he asked me about my caste identity.

I had to make a choice. If I told him my real caste identity, he would not rent the shop to me.

I chose the safer option. I told him I was Chavda, a name that is used by members of both “pure” and “impure” castes.

“Oh!” he said. “We are of the same caste! I have nothing to worry about.”

I got the lease—only because I lied about my caste identity.

This was not the first time I have had to do this.

In 2015, when I moved from London to Delhi to join one of India’s top law firms, I rented a flat in one of the city’s poshest parts of the city so that we could be as close to my daughter’s school as possible. While in a conversation about our neighbours with someone familiar with the building, he suddenly warned, “Don’t be friends with the

flat on the second floor—they are from a scheduled caste.”

Here was a person who lived in one of the city’s most affluent neighbourhoods who thought a Dalit did not deserve the friendship of a person from a privileged caste. I wondered if they would have rented me a flat if they had known my caste identity.

Although I was a partner with one of the country’s top Indian law firms, I did not have the courage to reveal to him that I too was from a scheduled caste.

It always feels unnatural, unwarranted and imposed when I have to identify myself as Dalit. Because caste identity is an artificial construct. The caste system does not need to exist.

However, growing up in an Indian village, there was no escape from my imposed identity. Everyone in the village knew what caste I had been born into.

But when I was away, where people didn’t know me, I always lied when they asked me about my caste.

When I went to study at National Law School in Bangalore, there was again no escape as I had received the benefit of reservations as a Dalit. I assumed that everyone knew my caste identity because of the way our names were listed in the register of students.

Thus, until I was 22, I was mostly out as Dalit against my will.

When I started working in Mumbai and later in London and Singapore, a comforting cloak of anonymity descended. When people asked me about my caste identity, I mostly lied—although I worried about being found out.

On social media and in my articles, however, I have been open about my caste identity. But this openness has often made me anxious.

I continue to lie about my caste

identity in situations where I foresee a disadvantage in revealing that I was born Dalit.

Thus, there is no real coming out in caste.

It's always in and out.

I had a conversation about this recently with a friend who was born

Dalit. He is a very successful executive at a major global corporation and works in Europe.

He has changed his last name as he does not want people to know of his caste position.

When we discussed the dilemmas of revealing our caste identity, he

asked why we would willingly bring this curse of the Hindu order upon us.

I am crying dry tears as I write this on September 23, 2023–106 years after Ambedkar cried like a baby in Vadodara. □□□

(Rajesh Chavda is a corporate lawyer in the UK) [Courtesy: Scroll]

A PROFESSIONAL REVOLUTIONARY

Remembering Thana Singh

Harsh Thakor

THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTIONARY contingent dips its red flag in memory of Thana Singh who had recently departed from the ranks of communist revolutionary movement after a brief but fatal bout of illness. Without doubt he has carved a permanent niche amongst the great communist revolutionary leaders of India.

His departure terminated an illustrious chapter of almost five and half decades of dedicated life of a professional communist revolutionary. Born in late thirties in a modest peasant family of Punjab, Thana Singh integrated with trade union movement in early sixties.

With the relentless spirit of a soldier and adept skill of a surgeon, he conducted an underground life, for 4 decades.

Thana Singh's life was a manifestation of the very soul or spiritual essence of a Marxist revolutionary. At crucial junctures he made the imperative transformations. The course of his life was moulded in the very furnace of class struggle. Above all, he championed the revolutionary mass line, and till the last breath shimmered Marxism-Leninism Mao tse Tung Thought, like an inextinguishable flame, facing all types of perils. He never allowed the reputation of the Communist movement to be tarnished.

In mid-sixties during his studies

in Punjab University, Chandigarh, he established contact with Communist Party of India (CPI) and joined its student organisation. After the advent of the Naxalbari uprising he became part and parcel the Communist Revolutionary ranks committed to Marxism-Leninism-Mao tse-Tung Thought and the People's War Path of the Indian revolution. As a dedicated activist belonging to the All India Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries, he played an integral role in technical preparations for armed struggle under the leadership of Daya Singh who later became secretary of the state unit of CPI (ML) and fell to bullets in a false police encounter. With a meticulous enquiring spirit he investigated polemics about the correct line for the Indian revolution.

His coming into close relation with Harbhajan Singh Sohi, propelled him to recognise and grasp the significance of revolutionary mass line and united with the determined team of communist revolutionaries—a very scattered bunch at the time—struggling against the wrong trend for correct application of Marxism-Leninism-Mao tse-Tung Thought. He was among the architects of Bathinda-Ferozpur Revolutionary Committee and then the Punjab Communist Revolutionary Committee (PCRC), which sowed the seeds of the revolutionary massline in Punjab.

During emergency period when HBS was in jail Thana Singh performed duties of secretary of the state committee of PCRC which formulated the resolution on situation of emergency as well as the guidelines for work in situation of fascist onslaught.

He toiled to the very last straw for intellectual grasp of correct Marxist-Leninist line and made an invaluable contribution in its projection among the ranks of communist revolutionary camp.

Thana Singh exhibited high volumes of mastery in defending attacks on Lenin, Stalin or on Mao.

He played a most constructive role in the ideological-political moulding and practical guidance to the party activists deployed on the peasants' front.

After the 1980's Thana Singh's major contribution was preventing the Communist movement from being robbed of falling in the pitfall of Sikh nationalist or Punjabi nationality politics, and he played a vanguard role in establishing the correct line to confront Khalistani and state terrorism.

On verge of death, he expressed high level of concern with problems of work and organisation. He repeatedly expressed his quest and optimism to re-join his work. Anticipating the probability of death, he was pleased with his accomplishments as well as ready to accept his impending doom with a materialist attitude. He said: "I have lived my life with full satisfaction in the movement. Faced with death, I am to leave with a smile on the face". □□

LETTERS

A Petition to Odisha Governor

More than 80 lawyers, including legal academics and researchers, today { September 25] wrote to the Governor of Odisha raising concerns about the alarming arrests and illegal detentions of about two dozen persons from Rayagada district in Odisha in anticipation of the upcoming public hearing for the Sijimali bauxite mine proposed by M/s Vedanta Ltd. The letter, endorsed by legal luminaries such as Prof Kalpana Kannabiran, Gautam Bhatia, Prashant Bhushan, among others, calls for an immediate halt to the public hearings to clear 1549 hectares of forest lands lying in areas covered by the V Schedule of the Constitution for violating the right to free, prior and informed consent of the affected communities.

Instead of undertaking due consultations under the PESA and FRA, the letter points out, the state government has followed an approach of repression to secure clearances through coercive means. Since early August, the police and paramilitary forces have conducted midnight raids, illegal detentions and arrests against the people of Kashipur village. Nine leading activists of the Niyamgiri Surakshya Samiti, including Lada Sikaka, DrenjuSikaka, Lingaraj Azad and poet Lenin Kumar have also been made the subject of an FIR under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for unlawful and terrorist activities. Goldman Environmental Prize 2017 winner, Prafulla Samantara was abducted with his face covered and hands tied, and driven from Rayagada to his hometown in August 2023.

With key leaders in prison or facing further persecution, the state government insists proceeding with

the public hearings, without complying with the legal requirements under the V Schedule, Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), Forest Rights Act (FRA) and the EIA Notification 2006 on full-disclosure of information regarding the proposed project..

The letter calls upon the Governor to release those imprisoned since August 2023 and withdraw all criminal proceedings, including those under the UAPA, to uphold their right to participate in consultations freely.

Meera Sanghamitra
25-09-2023

sijimalimatters@gmail.com

Boycotting Breakfast

A case of casteism has come to light in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu. Here Hindu parents have forced children not to eat the breakfast provided under the government scheme. The parents have given the reason behind this that the food provided under the CM Breakfast Scheme has been prepared by a Dalit woman. On this, all the top officials from the Social Welfare Minister of the state have intervened and explained to the people.

According to the information, this entire matter is from Ettayapuram of the district. Here, breakfast is distributed to children under the scheme of the state government. The breakfast served here is being prepared by a Dalit woman, so Hindu parents have reportedly asked their children to skip breakfast.

In fact, most of the children did not eat the breakfast provided in the Union Primary School of Usilampatti in the district. The parents of the children said that their children have breakfast while going to school; hence they do not eat the breakfast provided in the school. Later it came to light that most of the backward

class and extremely backward class people have asked their children not to have breakfast.

A Reader, TN

Fight Hate Campaign

The people of India are standing at a crossroads.

India's diverse motherland is under attack by violent, homogenising forces. As a confluence of many faiths, practitioners have coexisted for thousands of years through love, reason, and acceptance despite arguing, fighting, rejecting, and learning to live with each other.

Falsehoods spread via official and unofficial media disrupt peace and neglect vital questions on livelihoods, hunger, education, health, and the environment, impacting children's futures.

Let's demand action from the authorities to stop the violence. Let's build counter narratives of peace and harmony. Together, people can stand strong and create a better future.

CJP

'Bharat, Not India'

This has reference to letter 'BHARAT NOT INDIA' [*Frontier*, September 24-30, 2023].

It would be very unfortunate/quite reprehensible if the most popular name of most common usage "INDIA" is taken away by Hindi fanatics (who also seem to be communal fanatics) now ruling the country and only the term "BHARAT" is let remain there and be popularised. The term "Hindustan" is the most deserving name, was the most common name till independence and during the national movement also [e.g. Hindustan Republican Association/Army of martyrs Bismil, Ashfaqullah Khan, et al; and Hindustan Socialist Republican Association/Army of Bhagat Singh and others later], and the word

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"BHARAT", which seems to have been derived from the name of an Emperor, should be removed and "HINDUSTAN" should be substituted for it. "INDIA" has to continue as the most popular and commonly used name for our country in English and foreign usage.

Mallikarjuna Sharma

Advocate and Editor,
LAW ANIMATED WORLD
(now OL issues only), Hyderabad.

For a Just Peace!

The clash between Russia and Ukraine, due to the direct involvement of NATO, threatens to unleash a third world war.

The Euro-Atlanticist elites justify their direct support for the puppet regime in Kiev as "necessary to repel Russian aggression".

Actually, the real aggressor is the US-NATO-EU coalition, which took advantage of the Soviet Union's dissolution to economically and politically subdue all of Eastern Europe in order to encircle and defeat Russia. The final step in this strategy would be the definitive annexation of Ukraine to NATO and the European Union, and regime change in Moscow.

Only the foolish and forgetful can believe that the blockade led by the United States of America has triggered this war to defend the principles of democracy and the self-determination of peoples. The truth is that this blockade, after supporting the Euromaidan coup, financed and armed the Ukrainian army and neo-Nazi groups to hurl them against the Donbass republics and Russia itself. The truth is that the US-NATO-EU bloc uses the Ukrainian people as cannon fodder to establish its supremacy thus preventing a multipolar order based on respect for the peoples and the sovereignty of nations from coming into being. If this blockade succeeds in subdu-

ing Russia, the doors will be wide open for war against China.

Preventing the third world war is the first duty of all those who have the good of humanity at heart. It is therefore necessary to build a great/strong international coalition for peace and brotherhood among nations.

Such an alliance must be able to set in motion the different souls fighting against militarism and imperialism in all their forms. To start this process, the European Peace Conference will take place in Rome on 27 and 28 October 2023.

Anti-Imperialist Camp Solidarity Message

From the entire rank and file of AICCTU, we extend our unwavering solidarity and support to the on-going historic strike of United Auto Workers (UAW) against the 'Big Three'. We also congratulate the UAW and its leadership, who have successfully ushered a new era of radical working-class movement in the union.

Post the COVID-19 pandemic, in the US, India and across the globe, we witness a new wave of accelerated and aggressive onslaught by the corporate forces. Backed by the governments, the corporate and neoliberal forces under the false flag of 'losses', are shifting the blame on the poor and toiling masses. On one hand, governments are shedding our millions of public money to bail-out corporate companies, on the other we witness the billionaires becoming the more rich.

In case of the US, the Ford, General Motors and Stellantis (the Big Three Automobile Companies) made a combined profit of \$21 billion in just the first six months of this year. But the wages of the workers, whose labour and sweat built and shaped the products of the 'Big Three' remain stagnant.

In the veil of crisis, the salaries of workers are either slashed or stagnated, social security benefits are being withdrawn and safety regulations are sacrificed at the altar of corporate profits. In India and other countries of the Global South, the hard-won labour rights and laws are being dismantled and replaced with laws that suit the corporates. As the rich become richer, working classes and toiling masses are thrown under the bus of austerity. With skyrocketing prices of essential commodities and unemployment, the new neoliberal onslaught has pushed people into immense suffering.

The growing corporate assault on the lives and livelihood has created a wide-spread resentment among the working class across the world. In past years, we have witnessed several historic workers' strike actions across the world, including India. In India, the historic farmers' movement in 2020-2021 forced the fascist-neoliberal government of Modi-led BJP government to withdraw the three farm laws aimed at turning the farmers into corporate slaves. Presently, the workers and farmers are unitedly gearing up to resist and thwart the corporate attacks by government of India.

We, reiterate our support to the demands of UAW for new contract with a 32-hour workweek, 42% pay increases (in conjunction with inflation and to match the average pay increases of the CEOs at the three companies) and pension benefits among others.

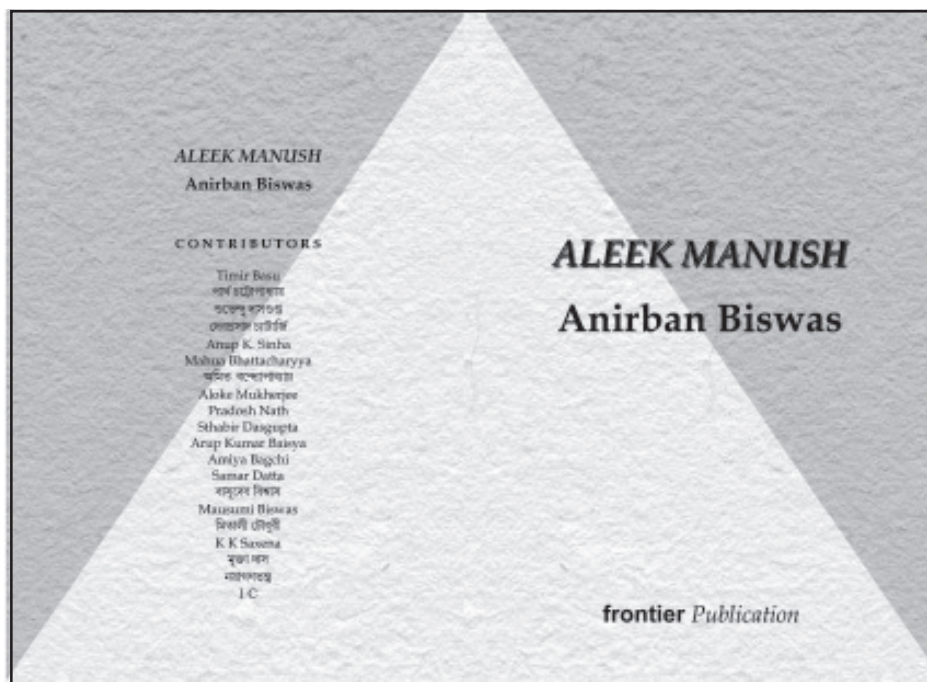
We believe that the on-going battle against the 'Big Three,' will mark a new era in history of radical labour movement in the US.

In solidarity

**All India Central
Council of Trade Unions
[AICCTU] HQ, Delhi**

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