

Volume XIV; Issue I
January 2023. ₹ 50

TOWARDS A NEW DAWN

The Other Voice
of the People



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Volume XIV
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January 2023

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Published by
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Design
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Cover
Mother, child and bombers
by Leon Bibel

Indian Single Copy
₹ 50.00
Abroad Single Copy
\$ 05.00

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Editorial

We are living in times when the 'democratic, republic' state of India is conducting aerial attacks on its own people in the forest villages of Chhattisgarh and Telengana. India's Home Minister Amit Shah announced Operation Vikas to decimate CPI (Maoist) cadres on 11th January 2023, a mission that the Indian State undertook from seventies and has been ever since extending its self-set deadlines. This time, brazenly flouting all democratic and Constitutional hurdles, the Indian State dispatched the Indian Air Force – a part of the Indian Armed Forces to drop bombs on its own people in an all-out undeclared civil war.

The urgent need to wipe out Maoist forces is to hand over the resource-rich lands of central India to the Indian compradors and their imperialist masters. For this, the Indian State justifies all attacks on the indigenous population as attacks on the Maoists, without ever disclosing to the larger Indian masses that they are not separate entities but united revolutionary forces resisting loot, plunder and displacement.

The Indian ruling class has been duping the people of the country into believing that India is a parliamentary democracy, which exists to enable democratic rights; while they have been militarizing Indian society from its very birth to suppress democratic movements. The incarceration of Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam, the Bhima Koregaon prisoners et al to journalists devoted to the truth like Siddique Kappan and Rupesh Kumar Singh have been condemned by the democratic sphere in harsh words and actions. But civil society and democratic individuals and organisations fail to comprehend that the suppression of democratic movements and the shrinking space of democracy is not an independent characteristic of contemporary society, but complementary to the ongoing militarization of this country. The decline of democratic pockets and burgeoning militarization is a process which is irreversible through government or regime change in the Parliament.

The UPA government started the genocidal Operation Greenhunt in 2009 by deploying special police task forces and paramilitary troops like Greyhounds, CoBRA etc. The government also organized private militias like Salwa Judum, Sunlight Sena and Ranveer Sena to "divide and conquer" the Indian people. When all these efforts failed to quell the revolutionary movement in India, the Brahmanical Hindutva fascist Modi government resorted to even more cruel tactics, which is today known as Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar.

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The Political Mission of the **Rahul Yatra**

K. Murali (Ajith)

Rahul Gandhi's Yatra is almost over. What was its mission? Rahul Gandhi has repeatedly said that his Yatra is not meant for immediate electoral gains. That is true. The Yatra is aimed at carrying out an ideological intervention in ruling class legitimacy. Throughout the Yatra, Rahul Gandhi has continuously and ceaselessly criticised the RSS and Modi. They indulge in the language and acts of hatred and antagonism. This divides the country. Whereas he is trying to unite it through the language of love. This is what he has been saying. While speaking of the hatred spread by the Sangh Parivar

he is precisely pointing at its Hinduvaadi views. Then is this Yatra trying to put forward an ideological, political position that excludes Hinduvaad? While it may appear like that the fact is something else. Just as we saw during elections, Rahul Gandhi has taken due care to project his Hindu faith and even his caste. Then what is the content of this criticism made against the RSS?

In order to answer this we must identify the status as well as the sources of aggressive Brahmanism which has entrenched itself through the RSS and its Modi regime. Contrary to the thinking of many, this is not merely a product of the RSS. An explicit expression of Brahmanism is something that was consciously adopted by the Indian ruling classes in order to overcome the challenges faced by their legitimacy. Therefore, despite having differences, all of their political representatives, political parties, of the ruling classes, from the left to the extreme right, accepted and supported it. They shifted from the indirect and moderate expression of Brahmanism seen during the Gandhi-Nehru period to an explicit expression of Brahmanism. As part of this, all of them were involved, directly or indirectly, in bringing about basic changes in such things like the understanding of secularism and caste reservation, which used to be propagated as inviolable principles of the Indian polity. This amply proves that this is not a matter of any one party. It is a position of the ruling classes as a whole.

However, there are differences among them on the extent to which it should be made explicit or the extent to which it can be aggressive. Such differences among political parties reflect the divisions within the ruling classes itself. Expelling Muslims from the spaces they presently occupy in the political and economic spheres, pushing them down to the status of 2nd class citizens, the endorsement given to brazen attacks by dominant castes on the Dalits and other oppressed social sections — all of these acts orchestrated by the RSS are manifestations of the aggressive Brahmanism forcefully supported by a section of the ruling classes.

There is another section among them who are concerned over the way in which Brahmanism is

being aggressively promoted though they support its explicit expression and making the country a Hindu country in effect, if not formally. Intellectuals representing this section, as well as many among those who have been at the topmost levels of the state such as ex-armed forces chiefs, judges, police chiefs, bureaucrats and prominent figures from comprador monopolies have often expressed this view. Quite a few personages from among them have even written open letters to the President. It is this section that has declared full support to Rahul Gandhi's Yatra and participated in it in many ways.

Apart from this, even within the Hinduvaadi camp supporting aggressive Brahmanism, a thinking that this cannot be continued for long is taking shape. They fear that it could lead to big internal turmoil and that this would be dangerous in the context of external threats such as that from China. It would also cause major repercussions in the political and economics spheres as well as in external relations. Many examples of this are already seen. Moreover, they think that the task of establishing this country as a Hindu country has already been accomplished. Therefore they are arriving at a thinking that there is no longer any need to carry this out in an aggressive manner. The growing angst within the RSS over the Modi-Shah combine overshadowing it and their unabashed bias for Gujarati compradors, feed into this.

When examined in the light of all of this, Rahul Gandhi's Yatra can be understood as the expression of an approach taking form within the ruling classes, as well as an attempt to consolidate it as a political pole. The applause for the Yatra from some of the prominent people involved in the construction of the Savarna fort being built at Ayodhya and the support extended to it by a leader of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad can be taken as indications. How far Rahul Gandhi will succeed in this and whether it will indeed get consolidated as a polarising pole, remain to be decided by future developments. Whatever that might be, what we are seeing is an attempt at the readjustment of an ideological stance that has been dominant for sometime at the level of ruling class legitimacy. This is readjustment and nothing

more. It only demands that the aggressive practice of Brahmanism should be avoided while continuing to endorse its explicit expressions. Even then, this is a significant development so far as ruling class politics in India is concerned. Even if it might not get manifested as such in the electoral sphere, it's importance won't be reduced. It will continue to be of relevance. It reveals the trying situation faced by the ruling classes.

Regardless of the success or failure of this readjustment, a basic issue will remain, demanding resolution. The Gandhi-Nehru ruling legitimacy did not get worn-out because of inherent infirmities. Instead, it's claims on building up a self-reliant independent country, its claims of secularism and democracy, started to get exposed. Over time, the dependence of the economy and political servitude of the state started showing up. Ruling class legitimacy functions through the consensus formed under the hegemony of the ruling classes to maintain their rule over the people. When that gets weakened, space is opened up for the emergence of alternate ideologies, alternate hegemonies. This gets realised through various anti-state people struggles. This is what happened in the past. The turn to explicit Brahmanism from its indirect and moderate expression, the reason why the ruling classes were willing to accept this change, was precisely meant to overcome this. Now a thinking is emerging from among the ruling classes that this has brought up new problems and some easing up is necessary in this aggressive posture. Meanwhile, the political and economic challenges they faced remain. As we saw in the matter of the farm laws, the attempt to implement liberalisation policies suitable to imperialist interests is stuck up. In the matter of the CAA also, which is a major aspect of the Hinduvaad agenda, they had to step back. Those who seek to bring about readjustment in ruling class legitimacy will have to find solutions to these issues. And that is not an easy task.

Modi and co. are trying to project an image of stability and strength. But the Indian polity is approaching a period of great instability and turbulence. Recession at the global level,

contradictions that have surfaced in the globalisation agenda, the relentless return of protectionism, and the intensification of peoples' struggles and inter-imperialist contradictions as a result of all of this, go to amplify instability within India. In this situation, the blazing reality of the revolutionary alternative which stands firm facing up to the most brutal repression gives hope and enthusiasm to the people, while it is an intolerable threat to the rulers. And that is why the Modi regime has once again carried out bombing raids in Chhattisgarh even while it claims to have more or less eliminated the Maoists. Continuing the inhumans suppressive methods of the British colonialists who bombed the freedom fighters in Peshawar and Medinipur during the 1940s, the Indian armed forces have repeatedly carried out such attacks against the people of this country. It reveals the intensity of the difficult situation faced by the Indian ruling classes, whatever may be their posture. ◆



Editorial

Continued from page 2

The intensifying crisis of imperialism has led its subservient ruling class in India to execute one after the other anti-people policies and laws to amass a large pool of cheap labour – the majority of which Indian State intends to find in persecuted communities like Dalits, Muslims and Adivasis. Laws and policies like CAA-NPR-NRC, new Labour Code, recent EWS Category Reservation Bill etc. all add upon the subjugation of working masses, oppressed communities and nationalities which are targets of Indian expansionism. Resistance to their anti-people policies in any form is only possible through resistance against militarization. The struggle against militarization and corporatization is the only alternative to the fascist onslaught of Modi-Shah-Bhagwat clique, which is possible only in the streets, not in the Parliament. ◆

What is *Liberal* in *Neoliberal* policies?

N Venugopal

For the last three decades, ever since the new economic policies, popularly known as Liberalisation, Privatisation, Globalisation (LPG), began in the country, many of the commentators, both in appreciative and critical approaches, have been terming them “neoliberal” policies. Have you ever thought what is “liberal” or “neoliberal” in the brazenly oppressive, anti-people, imperialist and pro-capital economic policies that dominate the current political economy, both in India and elsewhere? Are we using the terms just out of habit and as they are given or have we ever attempted to dissect them?

Indeed, out of the three terms that define the recent phase of imperialism, privatisation alone is true to itself and the other two are simply exercises in obfuscation. Even as the Multinational Corporations, international finance capital and their compradors in various countries wanted to get out of state controls going on for four or five decades, they did not want a general liberalisation of society and relations of production. They strictly sought liberalisation of those government regulations that they thought as hindrances to their unbridled exploitation. Thus this liberalisation was only a liberalisation of trade and economy in favour of the rich and powerful. It was a liberalisation in the service of finance capital.

There were also objections to use the term “globalisation” since it was projecting a neutral image and it was suggested to call it imperialist globalisation. James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer in their *Globalisation Unmasked* (2001) wrote, “globalization is regarded as not a particularly

useful term for describing the dynamics of the project...it can be counterposed with a term that has considerably greater descriptive value and explanatory power: Imperialism.”

Much more is the case with the term “neoliberal”, but it has gained overwhelming prominence and acceptability across the spectrum. The term is so ambiguous that according to a 2009 study, “neoliberalism” was used by many scholars, almost never defined and in several senses.

The generic English word “Liberal” has two usages as noun and adjective.

The noun usage is said to be in vogue since 1820 meaning “member of progressive and reformist political party of Great Britain, an anti-Whig”. Its usage in the meaning of “person of liberal political principles or tendencies” (without reference to party) also appeared in 1832. It is used to refer to persons of a political ideology not conservative or fascist but short of socialism since around 1920. It is also used from early 20th century for ministers from less-dogmatic Christian churches, but that is not our concern, for our present purpose.

Standard dictionaries provide different meanings to the word in adjective usage, such as “willing to respect or accept behaviour or opinions different from one’s own”, “open to new ideas”, and “relating to or denoting a political and social philosophy that promotes individual rights, civil liberties, democracy, and free enterprise.”

The word’s etymology suggests that it has been use in Middle English (roughly 1150 to 1450), coming from Old French from Latin *liberalis*, from *liber* ‘free (man)’. The original sense was “suitable for a free

man”, hence “suitable for a gentleman” (one not tied to a trade). Another early sense “generous” gave rise to an obsolete meaning “free from restraint”, leading to liberal (adjective) by late 18th century. Over the ages, it also came to mean “selfless, magnanimous, admirable, noble, gracious, munificent.” A glimpse of all these meanings show that the present usage of adjective “neoliberal” to the ongoing policies is far removed from the essence of the original word and quite often goes against.

Of course, the word also meant “free, unrestricted, unimpeded, unbridled, unchecked, licentious” and the present “neoliberal” policies have a grain of truth, that too strictly for the operations of finance capital alone. One is not clear whether this critical meaning is always intended when both the supporters and the critics make use of the same word.

In historical and political sense, the word “liberal” has a definite bourgeois connotation of liberating from feudal shackles and the aspirations of the rising bourgeoisie. In that sense, it was “tending in favor of freedom and democracy.” This meaning is from the early 19th century, from French *libéral*. In English it was used by opponents to the party more favourable to individual political freedoms. Demands to remove or reduce the state’s (king’s) regulations on trade and industry, of the rising bourgeois, of course, were seen as expressions of liberalism. In a way, free trade, *laissez-faire*, is a demand of liberalism. It may be a progressive demand on the part of the bourgeois against the feudal aristocracy in that particular historical context, but when it comes to people at large, and the proletariat in particular, it was not at all a liberal demand. The so-called “liberals” subjected the proletariat and society in general to untold suffering.

When the “liberalism” of free trade vintage itself cannot be called so from the stand point of the toiling masses, what meaning can be attributed to “neoliberalism”?

As the finance capital of the late 20th century wanted to unshackle itself from the Keynesian welfare state regulations and began asking for *laissez-faire* in

a new fashion, several scholars observed similarities between the earlier opposition to state intervention and the current arguments against state control and thus termed this as “neoliberal”. It was suspected that the “liberalism” of the 19th century rising bourgeois thought was reemerging and thus the new phenomenon was named “neoliberal”. But just as the old “liberal” was not liberal at all for the masses, the neoliberal is much more illiberal from the people’s perspective. Even if one considers “liberal” phase of bourgeoisie a historical reality, it would be ahistorical to see its rebirth and qualifying it with “neo”. Some scholars also felt the prefix meant acceptance of some state intervention, but for that matter, even the older liberalism did not completely throw away the role of the state.

Though the term was propagated by the likes of Milton Friedman, it has come to be used mostly by critics of the economic policies of Augusto Pinochet in Chile in particular and several Latin American countries in general as well as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Their criticism against the policies was really strong, unblemished, substantial and elaborate, but their naming the system as “neoliberal” is fraught with problems.

In the particular context of economic changes in India that began with 1985 import liberalisation and 1991 new economic policy, all these changes are being described as “neoliberal” policies. But, if one takes stock, these policies resulted in several anti-people measures like discrediting, disinvestment, privatisation and closure of public sector units, lay-offs and retrenchment of labour force, closure or downsizing of medium and small enterprises, rise in unemployment, unchecked inflation, reduction of welfare spending, huge cuts in agricultural and food subsidies, increasing invasion of MNCs in markets, atrocious changes in laws, tax regimes and governance. Not even one of the scores of developments since the onset of the new economic policies can be called “liberal” or “neoliberal” in its true sense.

After all, can we call the bouquet of evidently illiberal, horrible and anti-people policies as neoliberal? That too, when the policy is riding roughshod on people’s life, liberty and future? ◆



SEIGE OF SILGER

A Report Based on

Bastar's Anti-Camp Movement

Forum against corporatization and
militarization, New Delhi

What the Global Middle Classes are watching today through the movie-frames of an RRR or VIRAT PARVAM is unfolding in real time, with Komaram Bheems in its wake

Silger in Chattisgarh today is witness to a mass protest movement since more than a year — easily, one of the longest movements in recent times. A locally embedded movement, Silger has in significant ways challenged rapacious mining corporations that are today protected by the Indian state's military scorch-earth policy called "Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar". It is a movement of the people, a resistance movement against militarization and corporatization. It is in solidarity with the victims of the massacre of Adivasis in places like Sarkeguda, Tadmetla and Gompad by state forces. What the "global middle classes" are watching today through the movie-frames of an RRR or Virata Parvam is unfolding in real time, with Komaram Bheems in its wake.

Silger is like an Occupy movement, a sit-in blockade or dharna. It does appeal and petition the authorities, but also physically sits on and blocks the supply chains of mining corporations and the state — occupying the exact place where the proposed road is to be built and declaring the state forces out of bounds. The proposed road will bring in forces and processes that will destroy Adivasi life, but it is simultaneously about control over the iron-ore mining areas of Bailadila and Dantewara, in order to facilitate the mining-politician-police nexus.

You might think of this area as “remote forests” but iron-ore from here quickly travels to Japan and elsewhere. Conveyor belts criss-crossing the lacerated hills directly load iron-ore onto the waiting freight train rakes that speed off to Vishakhapatnam-sea port and thereon into the global supply chains. Kirandul is the railway station here and this is one of the highest revenues generating rail lines in India. “Made in Japan” diesel engines from Hitachi are deployed for efficiency and ensuring just-in-time-production, the hallmark of logistical capitalism. Apparently, Japan is stocking up iron-ore under the sea for the next hundred years! If not in trains, then, the iron-ore travels in fresh water from the Bailadila hills through what are called “slurry pipelines” initially built by the ESSAR company. The water is then dumped into the sea as “waste”.

Big capital and the state have unleashed a dirty war against those resisting this loot and plunder. Extra-judicial killings and state impunity seem like an understatement. It is a permanent state of emergency, normalised and routinised. Even incarceration seems like a better option, as with those like Soni Sori who are thrown in jail after IPS-rank police officers are done with meting out their “punishment” and revenge often through brutal sexual violence. Judicial custody after torture and revenge by the police is routine. Whether the political regime is “liberal” or “right-wing” makes little difference

One is forced to come to the conclusion that what the Adivasis are facing is nothing less than a genocide against their life and existence. A

silent genocide secretly sanctioned at the highest levels of the Indian political class and state power since at least 2005 (the time of Salwa Judum) in Bastar. Others prefer to call it a process of internal colonisation, or simply “War on the People”. Not just torture, displacement and violent attacks, including sexual violence against women, but also violence with an intent to degrade and debase Adivasi lives, treating the Adivasi as sub-human. Normalising the process of mass destitution of Adivasis at near-starvation levels in detention camps manned by security forces as well as across the social body. An upper caste Brahminical mindset reinforces the militarization and corporate destruction of Adivasi culture and identity.

Look at these “most respectable captains of industry” involved in predatory mining operations, mostly in constitutionally “protected” lands:

Adani	Hasdeo Aranya for coal and Dantewada for iron ore, Chhattisgarh;
Aditya Birla, L&T, Utkal Alumina	Bauxite mining in Rayagada/Kashipur, Odisha;
Vedanta	Bauxite mining in Lanjigarh, Niyamgiri, Odisha;
Tata Steel, POSCO	Iron-ore mining in Jajpur, Kalinganagar, Odisha;

Other illustrious names are Arcelor Mittal, Jindal Steel, Kohinoor Steel, Bhushan Steel, Jupiter Cement Factory. As we write this, we are getting news of the ongoing repression by Jindal Steel in Orissa’s Jagatsinghpur.

The implications and significance of a movement like Silger are therefore much bigger than those in power — and many activists — are willing to

admit. This mass democratic resistance movement has secured a huge area from attempts at “area domination” by those in power. With an adjoining camp of hundreds of paramilitary forces who have recently shot and killed five villagers and injured many, it is an eye-to-eye ball fight with the armed machinery of the state and companies.

Silger has also pushed its way to become a “talking point” in the media and an important rallying point in mainstream politics, and surely for Adivasi leaders and ministers in the government. Embedded in a specific area, it has tremendous resonance across Chhattisgarh. It might be the bridge between workers in mines looking for secure employment and the Adivasis who fear that these mines will only displace them in the first place. Is the trade union worker of the Bailadila mines an ally of the local Adivasi — or not? If it is any indication, we can start with, recall that the representatives of some labour unions do extend support to the Silger movement.

For those in power, Silger has proved to be the weakest link in the chain of domination and exploitation of the land, resources and people of Bastar. They are desperate to crush it.

PARAMILITARY CAMPS AND ROADS

Paramilitary camps, fortified and secured like in a war zone, are built by the government everywhere in Bastar. Every 2 to 3 kilometres you have a camp. This is part of what the Home Ministry calls “Forward Operational Bases” meant for areas of “Left-wing Extremism” (LWE). Built in a short time, the camp, once it comes up, seeks to control everything around, be the power centre, impose diktats, doing great violence to life and resources. The camp is a terrible eye sore to every Adivasi, to even a passer-by.

Villagers have stopped using the big, new roads in order to avoid being harassed — or arrested and killed — by the paramilitary. The roads have an eerie silence about them, unused by the people around but so well maintained, so much money put into them. Once in a while you see a huge military vehicle pass by, or an ambulance only meant for paramilitary.

Silger is between Tarrem and Jagargunda. The road has come past Tarrem till the point where the camp has been built. But now the road cannot be extended to Jagargunda. Why? Because there is Silger, because there is the Silger resistance.

The camps and roads go together. Earlier this was part of the Indian state’s Operation Green Hunt, now it is called the Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar. Road construction contractors and labourers live in the camps and they go out to work with an elaborate security cordon around them, fearing attack by Maoists. Villagers watch the construction with a stony silence and a cold distance. No permission is taken from the local people, no *Gram Sabhas* held to seek the community’s permission.

On the intervening night of the 11th and 12th May 2021, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) came to Silger and started building a camp on the 10-acre agricultural field besides the road. The land for the camp was taken without due process, that is, without prior consultation and consent of the *Gram Sabha* as mandated under the Panchayats (Extension to the schedule areas) Act, 1996.

On 13th of May, villagers and representatives of *Gram Sabha* went to the under-construction camp site, looking for a dialogue with the CRPF officers regarding the issue of camp being built without the *Gram Sabha*’s prior consent and to mark their protest. The villagers were beaten up and heckled by the CRPF personnel. Next day, 14th of May 2021, saw huge amassing of Adivasi villagers, who came in protest.

On 17th May 2021, CRPF opened fire on the large crowd of the protestors who were marching up to the camps. 3 protestors fell to the bullets of the forces, who claimed that the slain were Maoists amid the protesting crowd and tried to attack the CRPF. The three killed were **Kawasi Wagha** aged 37 years, **Korsa Bhima** aged 32 years and **Uike Pandu** aged 22 years. A pregnant woman, **Punem Somli** was heavily injured in the stampede that ensued after the firing and later succumbed to her injuries a few days later. Apart from those who lost their lives, 18 people were injured, 11 admitted

in Sukma Field Hospital and 7 were admitted in Bijapur District Hospital.

The protestors kept the bodies of the four at the protest site among huge gathering of shocked Adivasi villagers, in order to demand judicial enquiry into the killing. On 22nd May, the CRPF killed **Midiam Masa** from Tolervati, another Adivasi villager of the same area, when he and two others were collecting mangoes near the CRPF camp. In all, five people were killed between 17th and 22nd May.

The rising rage of the Adivasis against the killings and their constant effort pushed the Chhattisgarh government to order a magisterial probe. Nothing significant has come from this probe and the deadlock continues.

Since then, the movement against the building of the paramilitary camp in Silger has been continuing for a year now, expanding into a bigger movement against the setting up of multiple paramilitary camps every 3-4 kms. On 2nd Nov 2021, joint squad of Commando Battalion for

Resolute Action (CoBRA) and Sukma District Police detained 55 Adivasi villagers as part of their 'area domination operation' at Morapalli Village in the Chintalnar police station area. All except 8 of them were released, booking the 8 under Arms and Explosives Act and several other penal acts by labelling them 'Maoists'. All of the 55 villagers were coming back from Silger, after attending the celebration ceremony of Chhattisgarh's 23rd formation day, joined by thousands of Adivasi villagers and multiple organizations from across the state and the country.

On Jan 19th 2022, a group of nine young people, seven men and two women set out to the state capital, Raipur, to meet the governor of Chhattisgarh, Anusuiya Uikey (an Adivasi herself). At Kondagaon bus stop, 150 km away from Silger, they were dragged out of the bus, their documents confiscated and forcibly sent to 'Quarantine centres' but the locals allege they were illegally detained and were also beaten in custody. They were only released after much uproar from the public.

One significant development was the founding around this time of the Mulvasi Bachao Manch (Aboriginal Defence Forum), an Adivasi platform. The Silger movement as well as many mass protests in Bastar are now being spearheaded under the aegis of **Mulvasi Bachao Manch**. This is a significant development, as it points to a new form of mass resistance.

TEAM TO SILGER

Upon completion of one year of Silger anti-camp movement and the 1st anniversary of Martyrdom of the five Adivasis killed by the CRPF, the Mulvasi Bachao Manch gave an open call for a mass gathering and events from 15th to 17th of May 2022. Soon after the call, a team was formed by **Forum against Corporatization and Militarization** in New Delhi to visit Silger. An invite was extended to professors, writers, public intellectuals, journalists, lawyers, students and working-class leaders from various parts of the country to visit Silger as part of a 'Solidarity Visit Team'. An eight-member team was formed.



Martyrs Column Right in Front of the Camp

The team reached Raipur on morning of 15th May 2022 at around 10 AM and left for Geedam, in Dantewada district, about 75 km away from Jagdalpur on NH 63 highway. We got information on our way that despite having intimated the District Collector about the event, activists and journalists were stopped from visiting Silger and had to return back.

The team split into two, comprising 6 people and 2 people. Team One headed for Silger in a SUV at around 11 am. Team Two left on motor bikes via kaccha roads through the forest.

Team One crossed Bijapur at around 1 PM and it was only 11 kms away from Silger when it was stopped by the soldiers of CRPF's 168th Battalion near Chinna Kodepal CRPF Camp. Team members were asked to step out of the vehicle, their details were noted down, pictures taken, Identification cards collected and were sent to the 'superiors' sitting in Bijapur. We were told after sometime that the 'superiors' are not authorizing our passage beyond the checkpoint, citing 'security reasons'. We insisted that it was our democratic right to go to any democratic protest and that we were responsible for our own safety if there is any 'threat' whatsoever. The CRPF personnel didn't agree and advised us to talk to the District Collector at Bijapur. The team even approached the collector at Bijapur Collector Office but he left without addressing our issue.

The team, therefore, released a publicity video statement on social media condemning restrictions on our entry to Silger and calling upon the administration to let us exercise our democratic rights. The team then headed back towards the checkpoint at Chinna Kodepal with an intention to stage a protest then and there against the curb on democratic rights. Amid much uproar from the activists and journalists working in the area, Sunderraj Pattilingam, IG Bastar range, denied having stopped anyone and said that this is a 'routine exercise' and everyone is allowed to pass. Crossing that check point, according to the security forces, was entering into a 'highly sensitive zone' or the 'Maoist stronghold'. This type of designation of an area finds the underlying tone

of India's Ex-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's proclamation that 'Maoists are India's single biggest internal security threat'.

Once we were allowed to move, what we experienced was nothing short of a war-like preparation or deployment of security forces, with a camp every few kilometres, heavy Mine Protected Vehicles (MVPs) that are being built by Motor Giants like TATA and Mahindra, soldiers carrying sophisticated weaponry with Under Barrel Grenade Launchers mounted on deadliest assault rifles. It looked like war-torn Jaffna or Laos or Cambodia.

AT THE PROTEST SITE

After Chinna Kodepal, we crossed the controversial CRPF camp, now quite close to Silger our final destination. Right by the camp, challenging it, we saw the Martyrs memorial column. It is a green concrete structure with the names of those killed with a flag on top. It is as if those martyrs are resonating with the slogan 'Jaan denge, par zameen nahi' (we will give our lives but not our land). The structure has a green flag atop with a sickle and an axe symbolizing the Adivasi culture and struggle. Looking at it from a distance easily reminds one of the hammer and sickle found on a red flag — we do not know if this proximity is intentional! Green colour, sickle and axe — that is the combination.

Silger, the village of the protest site, is a flat forest area with houses scattered around. The village is not separate from the forest but in it, merged seamlessly. A straight and wide kaccha road cuts through, which apparently was earlier in use till the displacements by the *Salwa Judum* led to its disuse. Now the government wants to develop this into a wide metalled road for military purposes. We got on to this *kachha* road and went straight to the site of the event. It was already late in the day and the day's program had ended. We gathered that the road ends one kilometre beyond the event site. After that the road is unusable and only motor bikes or big four-wheel drive SUVs can ply.

We met Raghu, the leader of *Moolvasi Bachao Manch* and he introduced us to other members of the Manch and briefed us about the programme.

Large tarpaulin sheets are spread across the arena, under shade of huge tamarind and mango trees. A large enough hut, the size of a volley ball court, is the ration store and the kitchen, where the provisions are kept and food prepared. Volunteers, men and women, are engaged in fixing things, providing for food, essentials, making sure people who have come from outside get rest, water, food.

We are now united with Team Two, our other two members who took the bike route through the forest and kaccha roads and rough terrain. They saw multiple road opening parties of CRPF heavily armed, wearing bullet proof jackets, with land-mine detectors, protecting the road construction teams.

We are told that the next day's program will have a march in the morning from the protest site to the Martyrs Memorial in front of CRPF camp. Then in the afternoon, a public meeting to be addressed by activists and leaders of various organizations across the country and cultural performances by their cultural brigade. The distance to be covered by the march is almost up to 6 kms.

That night we slept under the trees in those tarpaulin sheets, all of them blue. We were a bit surprised that there were no birds at all resting in the trees and showering us with disagreeable stuff!

On 17th may 2022, morning starts early in the forest-cum-village. Its 5 AM and people are already on their duties doing their part to prepare the breakfast.

To the mining corporations and state, owing to people's resistance, it has been clear for a long time that it won't be easy to just reach the mining blocks with their big machinery and just get on with extraction. Therefore, a complex web of security apparatus akin to a proto-state mafia network is propped up by India's parliamentary democracy, in the name of countering the Maoist movement and maintaining peace for development.

You get a sense of the security apparatus being built if you look at the places where the protest movements are going on. Here is what we could find out so far:

a. Silger, b. Bechapal, c. Pusnar, d. Elmagonda, e. Empuram, f. Gompad, g. Singaram, h. Potali, i. Tettem, j. Nahodi, k. Karrepura, l. Minpa, m. Mankapal, n. Bana, o. Bechaghat

We gathered that almost 60 camps have been built in last 5 years in Chhattisgarh. According to a report published in the Indian Express dated April 27, 2022, seven districts have seen 42 camps coming up in less than three years. These seven districts include Sukma, Bijapur and Dantewada, where there are multiple protests going on against the building up of CRPF and Police Camps.

MARCH TO THE CAMP, 17 MAY

People started gathering at around 7 AM, dozens of people roaming around, cultural troupe rehearsing



their songs and discussing among themselves, people at kitchen duty preparing food, or some folks going off to take a bath at the lake (talaab) and tube-well. Announcement on loudspeakers can be heard, calling on the villagers to assemble for the march, as slowly people start pooling up in hundreds at a time. Such is the discipline that within half an hour of the announcement to assemble for march, people started joining in, ready and waiting for the trumpets to blow.

Everyone is ready for this big day, some anticipate a crackdown, whereas the Adivasi people along with their cultural troupe and their leaders of Moolvasi Bachao Manch march ahead, with no signs of stress on their faces. Definitely it's the years of long struggle and resistance against brutal state repression during *Salwa Judum* and Operation Green Hunt that have made them steel-tempered, resilient to any threat and determined to fight for their Jal-Jungle-Jameen.

People are falling in line, no one is cutting anyone's path and no one is pushing each other in this march of thousands. According to **Moolvasi Bachao Manch**, 48,503 people from over 1000 villages attended the 3-day ceremony. Asked about how do they know the exact number of people attending the protests, they said that they receive information from the head of each village of who and how many people will be attending the event, so as to keep a record, in case any unfortunate event of arresting or detention takes place. Hundreds of villages are woven together to organise such protests, giving a sense of the deep social base of the Silger movement and indeed of similar mass protests in Sarkeguda, Gompad or Bechapal. Nobody seems to be convincing the other of the rightness of their cause — meaning that they all silently connect with each other and the task at hand. There is an inner, deep connect, beyond the usual notions of "solidarity" and "unity" or even "struggle". They all seem to understand each other so well, without much words being exchanged, just gestures and slight promptings. Be it the logistics and organising of the kitchen or forming the procession line, or the management of

the podium and stage — very little hierarchy, a lot of free movement and yet very smooth operation and clear line of action.

The march started from the protest site, 2 kms away from the memorial, with slogans like "Jaan denge par zameen nahi", "Bastar se police camp khali karo", "Bastar mein narsanhar band karo", "jungle pe drone hamle karna band karo", "Sarkeguda-Edesmetta ke shaheedon ko nyay do", "na lok sabha na vidhan sabha, sabse upar gram sabha" (we will die but won't give away our lands, remove police camps from Bastar, stop massacres in Bastar, stop drone attacks in forests, justice for Sarkeguda-Edesmetta Martyrs, neither Lok Sabha nor Vibha Sabha, supreme is the Gram Sabha, respectively) among many others. The whole forest echoed with the slogans of thousands of Adivasis stretched across in a rally almost a kilometre long. There were people as far as the eyes could properly see, walking like ants on their mission.

The march reached the camp site, barricades were put up and concertina wires were laid by the CRPF men carrying sophisticated assault rifles with UGBL mounted on it. Scores of camera-men with DSLRs were taking pictures from the front, probably to keep a record and identify protestors later, in order to harass. Some officers seemed to be working on prior tip off and were looking for specific members. It is very revealing how protests at the barricades are a convenient site of surveillance and data gathering for the state— **It is a dirty war.**

'REVOLUTIONARY' SONGS

The cultural troupe started their performance at the barricades, the songs call upon the soldiers and police men to abandon the side of the oppressors and stand with the struggling, oppressed and exploited people of the country. Some of the lines of the song goes as such:

Suno Jawano, pyare sathiyon
Suno Bharat ke itihās ke dekho re!
Suno Janvirodhi Neetiyon ko Chhodo re!
Suno Jansangharshon se naata jodo re!

(Listen O soldiers, dear friends,
 Look at the history of India,
 Abandon the anti-people policies,
 Make ties with the struggle of the people!)

Obviously, the lines of the song are so strong and so threatening to the officers and bureaucrats that they were trying to stop the performance as they considered it "revolutionary". One would wonder, whether something being revolutionary is illegal and incriminatory? **Whether the revolutionary poem or literature is a threat to the powers that be?**

The people now turned away from the barricade, towards the martyrs' memorial, painted in green colour. Names of the five martyrs are inscribed, one goes unmentioned as the child was in the mother's womb when she died, didn't even get to see the world its mother was fighting to build. The child died with her, adding on to the numbers of many children killed in their mother's womb by the state repression. The masses are shouting slogans like "Ursa Bhima Johar lo!", "Punem Somli Johar lo!", "Uike Pandu Johar lo!", "Kawasi Wagha Johar lo!" and "Midiam Masa Johar lo!" (Johar to Ursa Bhima, Punem Somli, Uike Pandu, Kawasi Wagha and Midiam Masa). The respect and love for the martyrs is such, the whole crowd is surrounding the martyrs' memorial and their slogans are so loud that they can be heard from miles away.

The march is now on its way back, continuing their slogans. The last afternoon session of the public meeting will take place after some rest and food. As we noticed, this stretch of the road has multiple under-construction bridges that are left incomplete. Several attempts have been made by the police to build the wide road, but not been entirely successful so far due to the protests.

SPEECHES AGAINST ROADS

Various Journalists and Activists like Arvind Netam, Manish Kunjam, Bela Bhatia, Sudesh Tikam, Surju Tikam from Sarva Adivasi Samaj, leaders from CPI, Adivasi Mahasabha and others are present to witness the conclusion of the three-day long program. Main stage is built on an elevated

platform made of mud, with a wooden structure as its shed. The whole area, where the masses are to sit and listen to the speakers are made like a huge thatched hall, with its roof made of branches and leaves of trees supported by wooden logs as pillars. No tents, no steel rods, everything that is there, apart from some solar panels to provide electricity for the mic and the speakers and some chairs, is from the forest itself.

Sudhesh Tikam, an Adivasi Kisaan leader from Rajnandagaon, while addressing the people, spoke about how Congress and BJP have joined hands with the big corporates in a bid to exploit the resources of Chhattisgarh and are trying to snatch the Jal-Jungle-Jameen of the Adivasis. Speaking about the need to build up strong mass movements like Silger and Hasdeo protests, he stressed on the unity of these mass movements as being crucial for any transformation from the exploitative system.

Saroj Giri, a professor at Delhi University and member of Forum Against Corporatization and Militarization (FACAM), New Delhi, spoke about the importance of the Silger Anti-Camp movement in the present scenario. Stressing on fact that the roads and camps are being built to bring in the paramilitary forces, crush the movements against corporatization and extract the resources of Chhattisgarh, he said that Silger and many such similar protests are the walls that protect the environment and the Adivasi culture from destruction by the mining corporations. Extending solidarity to the struggling masses, he added that the Adivasi people are not alone in this struggle as this struggle is not just limited to struggle for Jal-Jungle-Jameen of Central India, rather, its ambit is very broad and people everywhere are learning from the uniqueness of this struggle. He reiterated the FACAM's commitment in campaigning about the struggles against Corporatization and Militarization and said that the struggles of Adivasi people have rejuvenated the spirit in us to speak about the issue in other spaces.

The families of Martyrs came forward on the stage and rejected the state's foul propaganda that the families were rejecting compensation and



clarified that they were offered 10,000 rupees each for the loss of their loved ones. They reiterated their demand of enquiry and action against the CRPF personnel responsible for the killing and said that only after the said action, they will accept a compensation of Rupees One crore each. They also rejected the foul propaganda that the Maoists were threatening them not to take any compensation from the state. It is important to point out that after the Firing and subsequent killing of 3 people on 17th of May, 2021, the CRPF claimed that those killed were 'Maoists' who tried to attack the CRPF personnel, after which the forces opened fire. The question that arises is, whether the cost of a person life be measured as low as 10,000 rupees, if at all it can be measured in monetary terms? And is it so easy for the Forces to kill anyone and claim that they were "Maoist" who attacked the forces? Looking at the track records of forces present in the region, the answer is apparently affirmative.

NEW MODEL AND LEADERSHIP

The movement against camps, particularly in Bastar region, led by Mulvasi Bachao Manch,

brought forth a new line of leadership. The members of Moolvasi Bachao Manch are mostly young men and women not above the age of 25 and are very dedicated and unflinching in their resolve. These are the youngsters who have experienced the horrors of *Salwa Judum* in their early age; they saw, either someone from their families or someone from their village getting killed or raped by vigilantes of *Salwa Judum*. These young leaders of today have themselves faced sexual harassment and torture at the hands of the security forces.

Shanti Punem, Leader of Mulvasi Bachao Manch from Gangloor, has been active in protests against sexual violence and state repression from a very young age. She has assisted various fact-finding teams in detailing sexual harassment cases. Shanti is barely 25 years of age and she is fluent in Hindi, which enables her to communicate the issues of the area with other activists and journalists. Some of these young boys and girls have studied in towns like Bijapur and Sukma and are well versed with their rights and are aware about the intricacies of dealing with the officials.

Speaking about the reasons to oppose the Camps, Raghu Midiam, Leader of Mulvasi Bachao Manch at

Silger, told us “these camps were built by forcefully acquiring the agricultural land of villagers of Silger; no consent of gram sabha was attained as mandated by PESA and 5th Schedule of the Constitution. These camps bring large number of forces in the region and they commit atrocities on the villagers. Women are sexually harassed and even raped, people are detained illegally and any protest against mining companies are crushed by these very forces; they are not here to protect us but loot our Jal-Jungle-Jameen and hand it over to the mining companies”. Asserting the demands of the people, he adds “we don’t want camps; we want schools and hospitals, there are very less schools in this region and that too very far off. For good medical facilities, we have to travel to Bijapur therefore, what we need is good healthcare and education facilities not camps”. Raghu is just 22 years old and has completed his intermediate education. Raghu is among those who witnessed the brutalities of the state and vigilante militias during the period of Salwa Judum and Operation Green-Hunt. His own sister was sexually abused by the forces.

What would Birsa Munda, Gunda Dhur and Komaram Bheem be like in today’s world? The struggle they waged was for their Jal-Jungle-Jameen and against the exploitation of resources and the struggle being waged by Adivasis of today, by Shanti Punem, Raghu Midiam and thousands of other Adivasis, for the protecting their Jal-Jungle-Jameen is similar in its essence. Earlier, the exploiters were the British Colonisers, today it is Indian Corporates like Adani, Jindal and Tata. The difference is today’s Gunda Dhur and Birsa Munda are learning and adopting new tactics of struggle and in turn, teaching the world how struggles against big corporations and Mighty Repressive state should be waged. The Adivasis of today, particularly the youth, are well aware about technological use that can help the movement propagate its ideas and issues to a new level. The video invitation released by the Mulvasi Bachao Manch for the event is one such example.

The mode of struggle used by the Adivasis during Salwa Judum and Operation Green-Hunt is

different from the model, in place today. Earlier, big rallies and protest demonstrations were held at important urban centers and were concluded in a day or two. The present model of protracted sit-in strike is a new one for the region. We have seen this form of struggle, where thousands of people gathered at a strategic point and continued their sit in for months in Shaheen Bagh and elsewhere during the Anti CAA-NRC-NPR movement. Kisan Andolan carried forward Shaheen Bagh’s ‘Chakka Jam’ model and blocked 3 important highway entry points to the Capital city at Singhu Border, Tikri Border and Ghazipur Border around Delhi.

The Silger movement started when the Kisan Andolan was midway and Adivasi villagers of Silger extended solidarity to Kisan Andolan, pointing out the commonality of the struggle. They said that Kisan Andolan was a struggle of farmers to protect their land from being grabbed by corporates, similar to the struggle of Adivasis against the land grab and destruction of Jal-Jungle-Jameen for building camps and mining of mineral resources in the region. A few leaders of Kisan Andolan also expressed solidarity with the people of Silger. The Silger Anti-Camp movement implemented model of protracted mass movement but in an entirely different setup and within a more repressive environment, where whatever happens, hardly gets reported owing to the large-scale media blackout.

The Kisan Andolan and Anti CAA-NRC-NPR movement, though being defamed by the corporate media, was widely covered and propagated by alternate media channels as well as international media houses. One could only imagine what all could have happened, if the media was not reporting each and every moment from Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur Borders just after the 26th Jan 2021 ‘Tractor Parade’. Similarly on 15th Dec 2019, if the civil society, media houses and people at large had not been able to reach Jamia or immediately respond by protesting in large numbers at Delhi Police Headquarters, how long would the siege of the Jamia Campus have continued and how many more students would have been brutalised and picked up; one can only guess and be thankful that such wasn’t the case.

But when it comes to places like Bastar, places like Silger, flow of information becomes a privilege the Adivasi people have not been bestowed with. Freedom of press becomes an imaginary word and the only “freedom” press has, is to publish the narrative of the police, mining officials and compromised politicians. Silger Anti-Camp movement, despite being one of its kind in this region, continuing for a year with mass mobilization of thousands of villagers, has gained very little media attention than it was due. The state has been deliberately trying to curtail the realities of these regions from coming out, by intimidating and harassing the journalists working on ground, in order to create an information blackout. This information blackout helps the state to carry out its brutal state repression on the people, which is nothing less than a war unleashed by the state on its people, without any outside observers and witnesses.

THE GENOCIDAL WEAPON: OPERATION SAMADHAN-PRAHAR

The state has been using the iron fist in its approach to “tackle” the Naxal question since a long time now and this whole period has witnessed various genocidal initiatives and policies like *Salwa Judum*, Operation Green-Hunt, Operation Anaconda in Jharkhand, Mission 2016, Mission 2017 etc., all claiming to wipe out the movement from these regions to pave the way for “development” of the regions affected by the Maoist movement. Building of paramilitary camps and network of roads in those regions are also a part of state’s policy to crush the people’s resistance and pave the way for corporate loot of resources by heavily militarizing the region in the name of countering LWE.

Initiated in 2017, Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar is one such policy aimed at launching massive offensive on the people of the country. Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh Launched the fancy policy, in a review meeting held in the month of May, 2017 at New Delhi, in the presence of National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, Union Home Secretary Rajiv Mehrishi, Director of Intelligence Bureau, Heads

of State Police and Central Paramilitary Forces. Home Minister, Singh Said, “The fight against Left-Wing Extremism is a coordinated battle on security and development front that has to be fought to the finish and won. Who could be more suitable and competent than you all? Let your action speak for itself”, the Economic Times quoted. The statement itself speaks a lot about the state’s approach in tackling the questions raised by the movement and the people of the region. Home minister’s imagination of Development is more militaristic than civic. SAMADHAN expands to – ‘Smart leadership, Aggressive strategy, Motivation and training, Actionable intelligence, Dashboard based key performance indicators and key result areas, Harnessing technology, Action plan for each theatre and No access to financing’.

The words like Smart Leadership tell us of the thinking behind promoting notorious IPS officers like SRP Kalluri or Abhishek Pallava. The aim is to build ambitious leadership, capable of devising ruthless policies like Lone Varattu (Surrender Policy devised by Dantewada SP Abhishek Pallava), in order to suppress the people and support the state’s narrative of winning the war with the Maoists. Through SAMADHAN, the state aims to gain ‘Actionable Intelligence’ by gathering information from “surrendered Naxals” as well as deploying them in the form of “Gupt Sainiks” (Shadow Intelligence Officers). Consequently, the state is committed in Installation of 2343 new mobile towers with additional 2542 towers in upcoming years, to assist the desired work these “Gupt Sainiks” are supposed to do. “Surrendered Naxals” are also inducted as auxiliary forces such as District Reserve Guards and Bastar Fighters, despite Supreme Court banning the use of civilians and surrendered Naxals in Counter-Insurgency Operations. Further, ‘Harnessing Technology’ part of the Policy means use of sophisticated weaponry, GPS and satellite tracking, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs or Drones) to monitor the movement of rebels and devise operations accordingly. The policy of using drones has been corroborated with the recent air strikes in the

villages of Bijapur and Sukma Districts and a similar aerial strike on villages of Bijapur in April, 2021. Key performance indicators (KPIs) and key result areas (KIAs) are parameters through which each mission or operation is judged based on the “kill ratio”, setbacks to Maoists in terms of arms and ammunitions, destruction of Adivasi way of life, and sexual assault of women, among others. The whole acronym and the policy contain generous use of corporate style terminology to sweep off the Maoists.

The policy of Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar, which the state envisages as antidote for Maoist Movement, provides for Building 400 fortified police/paramilitary stations also referred to as Forward Operational Bases, Building of Roads under Road Requirement Plan (RRP-I) and Road Connectivity Program for Left-Wing Extremist Areas (RCPLWEA). The paramilitary camps being opposed by Silger and various other protest movements are built under the very policy of SAMADHAN. Further the road constructions that are facing protests by the Adivasi people at various places are also being built under the aforementioned plan. The state has sanctioned total 17,600 kms road, out of which 9,343 km of road has been built already.

In April 2022, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, informing the Lok Sabha in written reply stated “Rs. 1,623 crores have been released to the LWE affected states under the SRE scheme during the last five years. Under the Special Infrastructural Scheme (SIS), projects worth Rs 371 crores for strengthening Special Forces (SF) and Special Intelligence Branches (SIB) and for 250 Fortified Police stations worth Rs. 620 crores in Vulnerable LWE affected areas have been approved since 2017”. The Minister went on saying “in previous SIS/FPS scheme, the Central government released more than Rs 1,180 crore for construction of 400 Fortified Police Stations and upgradation of police infrastructure in the states”. Further, the funds for construction of these roads are also being allotted by the center to the states under Various Security Related Expenditure (SREs) and

Special Infrastructure Schemes (SIS). Additional Funds are also provided by the Center in the name of Special Central Assistance (SCA) scheme. It is pertinent to mention that these fancy schemes, allotting thousands of crores for ‘development and security’ expenditures are withdrawn once the area is considered “Naxal Free”. Clearly, the governments at the center as well as state level are more interested in militarizing the whole region to crush any resistance against the corporate loot than “developing” the area in the interest of the Adivasi people.

Furthermore, starting from Salwa Judum to Operation Green-Hunt, the state has been hell bent in creating a war without witnesses by harassing the activists, lawyers and journalists working on ground to bring out the grim realities of these regions. This narrative control is a well devised mechanism of Public Perception Management that the state is using as part of Operation SAMADHAN-PRAHAR in order to present itself as generous, solution-seeking and development friendly agents struggling with the decadent, anti-development and violence frenzy Adivasi masses led by the Maoists. This Public Perception Management allows the state to cancel out any debate and criticism of state’s actions and policies, by portraying such attempts as anti-development, anti-national and even pro-maoist, thereby leaving close to no space for any scrutiny by the larger civil society and the masses. This in turn allows the state to carry out its brutal repression with impunity to displace and disinherit the Adivasi masses of their Jal-Jungle-Jameen in the interest of the big corporates.

Rajveer Kaur from Forum against Corporatization and Militarization stressed on the importance of recognizing Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar’s role behind the construction of these paramilitary camps every few kilometers. She pointed out that these anti camp movements like Silger are, in essence, also a movement against Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar and she said that it is very important to speak about this policy from such spaces and

stages like Moolwasi Bachao Manch in Silger.

Firoz Alam, student activist read the Forum's Solidarity statement reiterating its position on the movement against the paramilitary camps, the aerial strikes, the fake surrenders and killings and sexual violence, among many other atrocities being committed against the people of the country in general and in this case, Adivasis in particular. He reiterated the Forum's call to join the struggle against the brutal repression and atrocities on people fighting against corporate loot and stand united against the Genocidal Military Operation SAMADHAN-PRAHAR. ◆

The fight continues...

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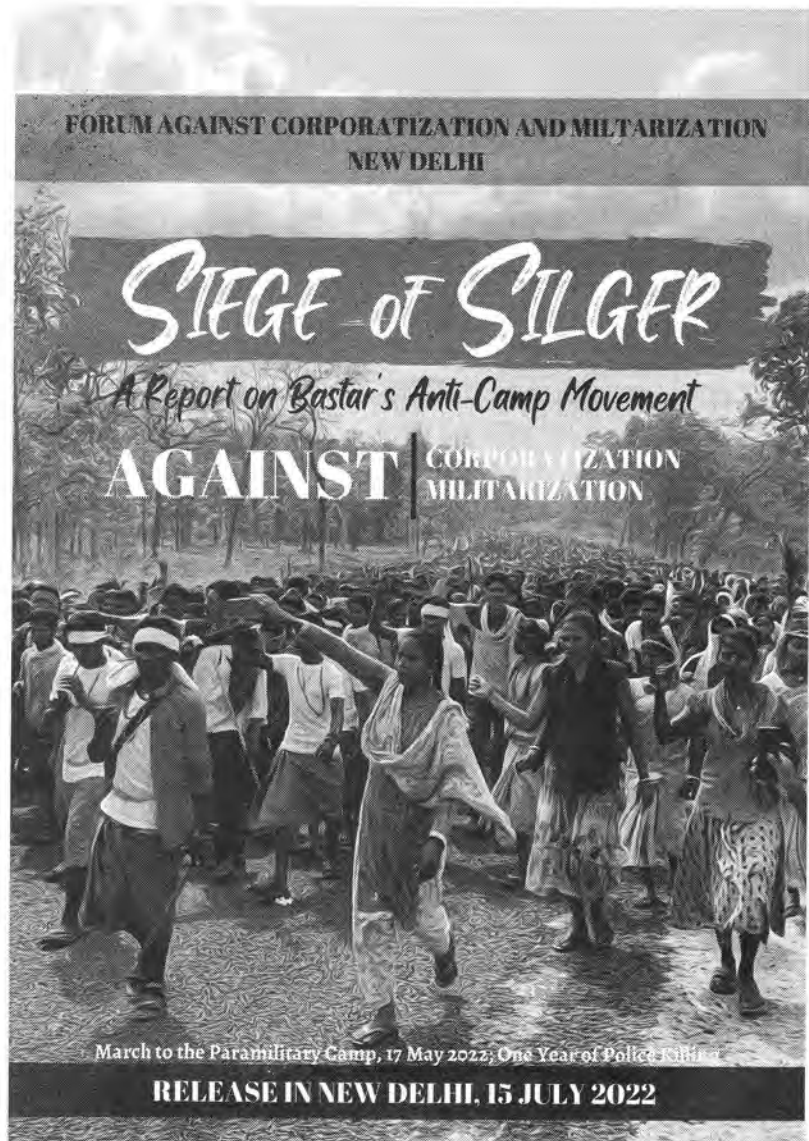
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AZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTSAV— Whither **India?**

Sourav

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of transfer of power, the Modi government has announced the celebration of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'. We know that 'Amrit' is a Hindu mythological concept, which apparently was recovered by the devas (gods) to gain immortality through churning of the ocean. During this episode, poison also came out along with the divine nectar. Let's take a look, how much poison has been churned out along with the Amrit during our so-called 'Amrit Kaal' of independence, and calculate who got the Amrit and who had to swallow the poison.

BJP'S CLAIM AND REALITY

Recently the BJP government has published loads of lies in their 'Service, Good Governance, Welfare of the Poor' booklet. As they claim, they built 70 lakh houses on 'Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)', but in reality only 58 lakhs 59 thousand houses were built. The time period of this scheme also has not been extended. There are claims that 99.99% of families are under electricity service, on a scheme which they have named 'Har Ghar Bijli'. On the other hand, the 'Smart Power India' in collaboration with NITI Aayog shows in a survey, where we can see 13% of India's population use alternative electricity sources or live with no electricity. 78 million families are still without electricity. BJP claims the success of 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan'. In the booklet, they claim that 4371 towns are free of open defecation and 'Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)' has successfully developed to 100%. But in reality, according to a survey of 'South Asian

Labour Network 2021', 45% of our countrymen defecate in the open. The claim of construction of 12 lakh toilets is totally false as well. Only 1276 towns have the set-up for toilets with adequate water supply. The rest is fable and myth. Also they claim that India will be rescued from malnutrition within the year 2022, and we are getting just the opposite report on the Global Hunger Index. India ranks after Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in terms of nutrition and hunger.

GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)

From April of 2022, inflation, devaluation of rupee, decrease in exportation, trade deficit and collapse in foreign exchange are general characteristics of the Indian economy. Now, the World Bank and the IMF confirmed that the growth rate of India's GDP is less than their expectations. The IMF informed that they expected to have 7.4% growth, but only 6.8% is going to happen. The World Bank has also stated that the Indian economy will not catch up to their expected 7.5% growth; it'll be just 6.5%.

This poor economic condition of the country started during the UPA period. Nevertheless, UPA-era GDP should have crossed six trillion dollars in the ten years of Modi misrule. Although the Modi government initially set a lower target of five trillion dollars, in reality the Indian economy stands far short of that target too. It stands at 3.2 trillion. Experts say, this economic slow-motion growth wouldn't achieve five trillions' target before 2028-29. If the GDP growth is measured in dollar terms, the Modi government has not achieved

half as much as the Manmohan government too. The GDP growth rate in 2013-14 in dollar terms was 11.4%, but under the Modi regime its growth rate is 5-6%, almost half. Considering the population growth, the GDP growth rate of the 2021-22 has just 1.5% exceeded as of 2019-20's. We know the economic calculations to measure per capita income, need the ratio between Gross Domestic Product and the population. During this period, per capita income - instead of increasing, decreased by 0.6% at constant prices. (Source: *Website of World Bank, Report from the Ministry of Programme Implementation, 31st May 2022*). In the current year, Morgan Stanley assumes, the GDP deficit in India could reach 3.3%; which in the second quarter of the economic year of 2021 was 1.2%, reached 2.7% in the third quarter of that year. At the end of the second quarter of 2022 the economic growth reached 6.3%, which is a little bit higher than expected.

INFLATION

Devaluation of currency is increasing in our country. At the time of writing this article, the dollar price has increased 83% against the rupee. By the time this article is printed, it may have increased more. However, after returning from the recent six days annual meeting, organized by the IMF and the World Bank, our Central Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated on 16th October, 2022 that, "The price of rupee is not sliding, the dollar is strengthening incessantly." (Source: *Anandabazar Patrika 17-10-22*). They are really doing their best to confuse people. Nirmala Sitharaman is truly a minister worthy of being in Modi's cabinet.

In fact, this devaluation has certain causes. Firstly, imports are more than exports, year after year. This results in strain on our dollar reserves. It's called Trade Deficit. In the 2021-22 season, we have exported products of about 42 thousand crore dollars and imported about 61 thousand crore dollar products. Therefore the trade deficit is about 19 thousand crore dollars. Till July of 2022, our economic deficit is about 571.56 billion dollars in foreign exchange. According to the Reserve Bank

of India, we had a shortage of 10 thousand crore dollars foreign exchange in the last one year; which was 64,200 crore dollars in the last year, this year it decreased to 54,500 crore dollars. Devaluation of the rupee has a bad effect on the stock of foreign exchange. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das has informed that this stock has reduced to 68% this year. In the last one year, the value of the rupee has fallen by 8%; 41% in eight years. The currency has remained in the danger zone for nine consecutive months. In the last eight years, the value of the rupee has decreased by 20.10 rupees against the dollar.

Secondly, at this stage, many foreign investors have retracted their businesses. They do this to a backward, dependent country like us, to keep it paralyzed and dependent economically. Globalization has intensified this. Recently, foreign investors like Quartz Energy, Holcim, Daiichi Sankyo, Hexcel, Harley-Davidson, Ford et cetera are shutting their business from India. Recently, Finance Ministry has accepted that exports have decreased by 12.2% to 3448 crore dollars and imports have decreased to 2396 crore dollars by 3.5%. (Source: *Anandabazar Patrika 17-01-23*)

Thirdly, the war in Ukraine has led to a rise in crude oil prices, which is a major cause of price hikes around the world.

Fourthly, the American Federal Reserve Bank increased interest points per dollar to 300 points in March 2022. They have the intention to extend 150 points more. An expert committee including nineteen members of the American Federal Reserve Bank is considering that their country is facing an economic recession and to cope with it, they should increase the interest rate, which will not be decreased before 2025. And this will cause more trade deficit, as devaluation of rupee in the Indian economy and hike in American interest rate simultaneously results in diminished returns on investments.

On one side, there is recession as well as stagnation; on the other hand, there is inflation. India is going through a combination of these i.e. stagflation. And this directly results in

unemployment, inflation, loss of purchasing capacity, malnutrition and expansion of poverty.

In the year 2014, when Modi had come to power for the first time, India's external debt was about 55 lakh crore rupees. Now it has increased to 135 lakh crore rupees. In other words, to bankrupt India's economy the Modi government has taken a debt of 83,000 crore rupees each month to hoist the flag of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. Not only that, this year they are going to take a debt of 16.61 lakh crore rupees.

From the point of view of political economy, the crisis of world capitalism as well as imperialism has amplified. Consequently, the big bosses of the world, especially American imperialism, want to impose their crisis on backward countries like India. And our dependent economy, spinelessness of our ruling class and foreign capital dependent development models are leading to our downright destruction.

CORRUPTION

When our countrymen are dying from lack of food, the BJP party fund is blooming like flowers in spring. Modiji and others take money through institutional means, so catching them is a bit difficult. They take money through electoral bonds. They have created this method to take legitimate money (read bribe). What is this method? If an industrialist wants to give crores of rupees as electoral bonds to a political party, there will be no accountings of who is giving and who is taking. In fact, there will be no opportunity to know how much money is being given. It also will not be known what was exchanged between the donor and the recipient behind this transaction. An Electoral Bond has a commitment to give a 'Promissory Note' to the holders. It has the advantage of keeping the identity of the donor confidential. As a result, political parties are easily relieved of the fear of their donor's identity unraveling. Interestingly, since these transactions will be through the State Bank of India and the Government of India owns 90% of its shares, only the party in power at the center will know how much money is being received from whom. But no one can know the secret information related

to the money transactions of the ruling party sitting in the central government. In this way, we can call this bribery that is being transacted today as Institutionalized Corruption. The name of the party that gave birth to this financial corruption is BJP, whose leaders are Modi and Amit Shah, who do not touch water without declaring jihad against corruption. This corruption infiltrated our economy on 1st February 2017 by the hands of then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley. Earlier, corporate bodies had to show proof of investment in the political sector. No political party was allowed to donate more than 7.5% of annual profits. Because the ceiling of donation was limited. Now, with this new bond trading policy, that liability no longer exists. Even with the right to know information, it will not be known how much money has been transacted. The question is, how much money is BJP getting from the corporates, and for what deeds? The countrymen have no opportunity of knowing that. As a result, BJP's funds are swelling day by day. In 2019-20, BJP's revenue alone was 3623 crore rupees, double of the rest of the parties' revenue combined. Out of that, they got 2555 crore rupees from electoral bonds only. According to the data from 'Association for Democratic Reforms', BJP also spent the most in the elections of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Manipur, Goa and Punjab in 2022. BJP alone spent 223.148 crore rupees. After that, the second major party in regards to spending is of course the Congress. They spent 132.65 crore rupees, almost half of that of BJP's. No one knows how much money is being spent on buying and selling MLAs and MPs. They are in power at the center, so ED, CBI are puppets in their hand.

Let us present two examples, how BJP is serving corporate capital. Allegations of PM Kishan Card fraud have also been raised against the Modi government. In this project, more than 20 million fake accounts have deposited more than 1000 crores of grant money. Allegedly, more than 1000 crores of subsidies have been given to millions of other ineligible beneficiaries. More than half of these beneficiaries are registered income tax payers. Not only that, the Modi government

has no match in nepotism either. Many call his government the government of Ambani-Adani. The Modi government gave advantage to the Ambanis in Rafael scandal, as lawyers like Prashant Bhushan complained. The Modi government is still protecting his face in the name of 'national security'. Social worker P. Sainath claimed that the Modi government has made a bigger corruption in crop insurance. He tells us that in a district of Maharashtra where 2.8 lakh farmers cultivate soybean, the farmers had to pay 19.2 crore rupees as premium. The Central Government and the State Government gave 77 crore rupees respectively, to the General Insurance Group of Ambanis. Ambani's Reliance General Insurance Group received a total amount of 173 crore rupees. As the whole cultivation of the farmers had been destroyed, Reliance had to pay the compensation to the farmers, 30 crore rupees. Yet the Ambanis had in their hands 143 crore rupees. They received this money without spending one penny. P. Sainath reports that if we investigate this corruption, we can see a bigger scam than Rafael's. Thus Modi and the other governments of our country have been serving the Ambani-Adani, with the money given by the people of the country as taxes. This is an incident of November 2021. Before that, a statistics of 2016-17 said that 20478 crore rupees had been deposited as premium for Rabi grain and Kharif crops that year. The Ambanis paid compensation for this, 5650 crore rupees. Yet they made a profit of 14828 crore. According to the report of the Estimates Committee of the Parliament, the government lost 1.84 lakh crore rupees in revenue due to corporate tax exemption in 2019. Sources of the State Bank of India's research paper say that these corporate tax exemptions have resulted in huge profits for corporates even though the revenue collected by the government has not increased. The net profit of corporates increased by 138% in the financial year of 2020-21. Modi claimed that by demonetizing of notes, he will not only eradicate black money but also fake note traders. What is the real scene behind the stage curtains? As per the latest data of the Reserve Bank, fake notes of 500

rupees increased by 101.9% and counterfeit notes of 2000 rupees increased by 54.7% in the country in the year 2021-22. According to the Reserve Bank's own data, counterfeit money has increased by 10.7% in the financial year of 2021-22 compared to 2021-21, as per the May, 2022 report.

PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT

According to the report of NSO, the number of rural unemployed has doubled in our country between 2009-10 and 2021-22. According to the report of Center for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) June, 2022, 1.30 crore people lost their jobs in June alone. Currently the total unemployment in the country is 7.9%. Only 25 start-up companies in the country laid off 11,715 workers this year. As per to the CMIE report, 30 lakhs became unemployed in June 2022. However, government data says that there are 8.72 lakh vacancies in 77 ministries till 2020. Out of this, 90% of vacancies are in civil, defense, railway, home, postal and revenue departments. The Seventh Pay Commission report shows that the total number of 41.76 lakh sanctioned posts in the central government offices has been reduced to 38.5 lakh. The Minister of State for Personnel Public Grievances informed the Lok Sabha in a writing on 30th March, 2020 that despite the said 77 ministries having 40.04 lakh sanctioned regular employees, they are actually functioning with 31.32 lakh employees. Only 20% of India's employed people are salaried, 50% are self-employed and the rest are daily wage labors. As per to the CMIE report, only 36 crore of India's 90 crore active labor force are engaged in labor, which means 54 crore people are unemployed. Meanwhile, 30 lakh posts are lying vacant under the central government. The government's financial crisis is so miserable that recruitment has been put on hold in fear of having to pay salaries. Even in the army, they want to launch the 'Agnipath Project' to appoint contractual labourers. Its aim is to contractualize the army on the one hand and militarize the society on the other. It must be remembered that India's unemployment rate (7.91%) broke all the old records before the Covid

situation. 5.3 crore people lost their jobs during this period. Out of which, 1.7 crore were women. By June 26, 2022, it stood at 8.49%. The state of our country's job market, in terms of skills, is pathetic due to the central government's anti-people education policy. The Skill India report, 2021 says that 46% of Indian youth are employable in terms of skills.

Today, everyone has to admit that the decline in the growth of the manufacturing industry in our country is due to the decrease in the purchasing capacity of the people, which is again narrowing the markets and increasing unemployment. Growth in India's manufacturing industry is not only in decline but is currently in negative. Instead of growing, it contracted by 0.8%. If the Reserve Bank of India increases the interest rate, the manufacturing industry will suffer more because their problems as borrowers will increase and the incentive to invest will decrease. Employment has halved between 2016 and 2020. (Source: *Anandabazar Patrika*, 07-12-22) The manufacturing sectors have decreased by 4.3% in the second financial year of this year, while the government expenditure has decreased by 4.4% compared to the second quarter of last year. Government consumption expenditure has decreased by 20% in 2022-23 compared to 2019-20. Total consumption expenditure increased by 11.2% in the three years 2019-20 to 2022-23, compared to 21% in the previous three years.

The Modi government has consequently reduced the allocation of the hundred day job scheme in every budget since they came to power. On the one hand, citizens are losing jobs, their purchasing power is decreasing, and on the other hand, commodity prices are on the rise.

First President of the India Chamber of Commerce Sitaram Sharma stated that both the government and private organizations are responsible for this situation. He said, "The cost of providing capital in industries increased with increasing interest. They are neither investing in the new projects, nor expanding the old projects. In the near future, there is no hope of increasing demand, so the recruitment is closed"... "Indifferent

behaviour from Government is also the cause for this condition. The defense, rail, and other state-owned organizations were places of employment, now they are decreasing. Many organizations have been shut down". (Source: *Anandabazar Patrika*, 28-06-22). Former Professor of IIM, Anup Sinha says, "On the epidemic, many organizations were looking for opportunities to work with the lower human resource. They have increased technology as an alternative to workers. As a result, new job opportunities are not being created. Even short-term opportunities have increased in place of contract-based employment." (Source: *Anandabazar Patrika*, 28-06-22)

A survey by CRISIL consultancy shows that around 25% of micro-small-medium enterprises (MSMEs) have lost business due to the coronavirus pandemic. They lost about 3% of the market. Due to the high cost of raw materials, their profits have also decreased. (Source: *Anandabazar Patrika*, 28-06-22)

PRICE HIKE

As I said earlier, the increase in commodity prices is also gradually upward. Especially food prices have been hiked. By September of 2022, the price of grains has increased by 8.6%. Rice and wheat prices increased by 11.5%, which is the highest in the last 22 months. Till August of this year, the retail price increased 7.41% and the wholesale price increased 10.7%. Over the last 17 months wholesale market value has increased by over 10%. Due to this price increase, there is a risk of fall in product demand and fall in GDP. As a result, the trade deficit will increase.

HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION

India is ranked 107th out of 121 countries in 2022 in the recent World Hunger Index conducted by German and Irish organizations. According to the survey, the number of malnourished children in India has increased from 15.1% to 19.3%. Overall malnutrition rate increased from 14.6% to 16.3%. According to the World Bank survey, 80 percent of the people in the world under the poverty line

in 2020 are Indians - 5.6 crore people out of 7 crore Indians. According to the report of National Food and Health Security, 5.49% of Indian women suffer from anemia. Only 11.3% of children aged 6 months to 23 months get enough food. Among them, 32.1% of children are underweight for their age. Children with stunted growth accounted for 35.5%. The amount of sick children is 19.3% and the percentage of critically ill children is 7.7%. A 2022 report by the Center for Science and Environment says 71% of Indians do not get nutritious food, resulting in 1.7 million deaths a year due to malnutrition.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Today India's environmental pollution is a topic of discussion in the whole world. According to reliable information, the limit of the degree for air pollution as per World Health Organization (WHO) is everywhere 5 micrograms per cubic meter, there are 40 micrograms per cubic meter in India's national standards. This is nothing but a dishonest, comical and ingenious effort to dilute the results regarding the amount of pollution in our air. In addition to our national limits, 63 % of Indians live in such a situation where air pollution is more than the national range. If you see the situation from the perspective of WHO's standards, think how awful the situation is! In 2013, every cubic meter was 53 microgram pollution. In 2021-2022, it has increased to 55.7 micrograms per cubic meter. That is, 11 times more than the boundaries of World Health numbers. According to the Laminator survey, 2.3 million Indians died due to pollution in 2019. In these cases, the air pollution resulted in 16 lakh deaths and due to water pollution, 5 lakhs of our fellow citizens died. According to the Laminator's new survey of 2020, 3.3 lakhs people of India died due to pollution caused by fossil fuels. That is, 1.2 people in every 2 minutes have died due to this. The report of 99 experts in 500 organizations, including World Health Organization, said that the number of deaths in India has increased from 2017 to 2021 due to temperature in India. In 2021, labour force resulting in 5.4% of GDP was lost

due to temperature in India. The quality of rural air pollution is 35 times above the prescribed quality of the World Health Organization. Modi's contribution to this excessive growth of pollution is 'historic'! In the EPI and the Environmental Performance Report our place is 177 out of 180 countries. And the water situation? The amount of water in the 1950s, 5000 cubic meters per person is currently standing in 1140 cubic meters per person. (The lowest limit is 1000 cubic meters!) This is the condition of our country's environment.

DISCRIMINATION AND HATRED

The corporate-friendly Modi government has reduced corporate tax from 22% to 10%. In 2014, when the BJP came to power at the Centre, Mukesh Ambani's assets were worth 18.6 billion dollars. In 2020, i.e. within six years, his wealth had increased by almost four and a half times to 80 billion dollars (during this period Adani's wealth also increased by 3 times). In 2020 alone, even when these days spelled extreme misery for the common man, he earned 22 billion dollars. A report by the World Inequality Forum says India's top 1% own 22% of wealth. The top 10% of the richest hold 57% of the total wealth, while the bottom 50% of the country in terms of income has a combined income of 13%. In 2014, before Modi came to power, his income was 7.3 billion dollars, in 2022 it increased to 140 billion dollars. In 2021, Ambani's daily income was 210 crore rupees. Adani's income was 1612 crore rupees. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, BJP's electoral expenditure was 27 thousand crore rupees. According to Oxfam's report, 2 people fall below the poverty line every second in our country. Every year 6.3 crore citizens fall below the poverty line. Income of 33% people is below 80 rupees. The Modi government is not concerned about them in the least. But Modi has brought at least 1800 small and big laws or amended laws in the interest of corporates.

According to Oxfam's report published at the annual summit of the World Economic Forum at Davos in Switzerland, the wealth of the Indian corporate magnates have increased

each day by 3608 crore rupees during the days of the Coronavirus, whereas 68% of GST has been collected from 50% of Indians at the lowest end of the economic spectrum. The wealthiest hold in their hands together 40% of the total property of India, whereas 50% of people at the poorer end of the spectrum hold 3% of the total. The rich have become richer by 12% i.e. their wealth has increased by 100 crore dollars (8500 crore rupees). If 5% extra tax is imposed on the ten richest individuals of the country, all the school dropout children can be given their education back. If 2% tax is imposed on all the billionaires, the government could collect upto 40,423 crore rupees which can feed all the countrymen suffering from malnutrition and hunger for the next one and half year. If one-time tax is imposed on the shares wealth of Goutam Adani -the richest individual of the country, the government could collect 1.79 lakh crore rupees which could be used to recruit 50 lakh primary teachers.

On one hand, the central government has reduced spending on various welfare sectors, including 100 days of work. Only after listening to many criticisms, in 2022, they accepted the long-term allocation increase in the child food sector and increased by 48 paisa per head instead of 4 taka 97 paisa to 5 rupee 45 paisa for the primary children and the allocation for upper primary children increased to 72 paisa, i.e. it became 8 rupee 17 paisa. Our Central Government's national scheme Nutritional Assistance Scheme has allotted 12 grams and 450 calories for primary class children and 20 grams and 700 calories for upper primary class children, which is very meager but even that cannot be met in the current allocated budget. However, this corporate-loving government, the Modi government has donated 2.02 lakh crore rupees to the domestic big industrialists and they have not repaid 10.75 lakh crore rupees for bank loans in 2021 alone, yet the government have not taken any action on it.

On the one hand, while the Modi government is giving various concessions to corporations, they are cutting the allocations for the poor people's

welfare projects. Recently they have canceled the scholarship allotted for class I to VIII. As a result, students from Scheduled Castes/Tribes will suffer the most. Earlier, for those who study from home, 225 rupees per month and for those who study from hostel, 625 rupees were allocated, which they will not get any longer.

While Modi talks about making Digital India, Oxfam has produced a report titled 'India Inequality Report 2022 : Digital Divide' by analyzing the CMIE survey report conducted from January, 2018 to December, 2021 and the National Sample Survey Report of the Central Government's Ministry of Statistics. It says that while men use 61% of mobile phones across the country, women use 31% of mobile services. They also use the internet less than men. While 8% of General Caste people use computers, 2% of Scheduled Castes and 1% of Scheduled Tribes have computers at home. 8% of households in cities own a computer, while in rural areas 3% of citizens had a computer before the pandemic, which has come down to 1% after the pandemic. While 95% of permanent employees use mobile phones, just 50% of unemployed use mobile phones.

Meanwhile, the Modi government is being blamed for spreading the poison of hatred all over the world. Most recently, the Pew Research Center in America conducted a study on various religious communal tendencies, persecution and government discrimination during the Corona pandemic - out of 198 countries, India ranked first in terms of spreading hatred i.e. India has come first for spreading hatred.

CONDITION OF THE WOMEN

In 2021, 'Global Gender Gap Report' reports 90% of the events of foeticide by gender in the world occur in India and China. Out of 146 countries, India's place is 135 in gender discrimination. There are more than 4 lakh cases of domestic violence hanging in the courts. Only 27% of rape accused and only 24% of domestic violence accused got convicted. Out of every 100 women, 30 women in this country are illiterate. 41% of girl students

could not cross class X in school. Although 51% women of the country is working, not everyone gets a job. According to the Union Budget of 2022, the overall participation of the women in employment is 20.3%, whereas Bangladesh and Sri Lanka's rates are 35% and 31% respectively. In 2005, the participation of women in working in this country was 32%. In 2019-20 it decreases to 28.7% as it'll likely to decrease more. For every 100 new jobs in 2022, only 21 women will get it. Only a single woman gets work among every 5 women in this country. Among regular employees, women and male wage differences in the 2019-20 fiscal year was 4300 rupees in the city and 2200 rupees in the village. In case of casual labor, men's monthly average income is 7463 rupees, when women's monthly average income is 4605 rupees. 96% of women are victims of wages discrimination. When men earned 9650 rupees in self-employed work, in the same equivalence, women earned 4800 rupees. When men's self-employed income in the city is 16000 rupees, women's income is 7000 rupees. That is, men earn two and a half times more than women. According to the World Bank, 83% of women in India received less wages than men in India. As per International Labour Organization, 20 lakh to 80 lakh women work as maids in India, there is no place for them in any government statistics. According to the Woman India Chamber of Commerce, 55.2% women are victims of sexual assault at work.

CONDITION OF THE WORKERS AND FARMERS

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) report 2020, India has the highest workload and lowest wages in the world. According to the ILO, "The 2019 report of India's National Bureau of Statistics says that Indian workers have 10 hours of work time and less than 1 hour of break time." In the case of women workers, the leave can be said to be not accrued due to taking care of children etc. 7 out of every 10 wage earners have no official employment letter. They do not get any opportunity for paid leave. If a day is earned

due to any reason, wage is deducted for that. Self-employed workers do not get any leave during the week. Farmer suicides and death marches are the result of Manmohan's liberal fiscal policies and have been going on for ages. Suicide broke all the old records in 2021 during Modiji's 'Achhe Din'. According to the latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau, 30 farmers commit suicide every day in India. Basically, debt burden is the main reason for farmer suicide. Among them, 15 are ordinary rich or middle farmers and 15 are landless farmers. According to the Labor Bureau's 2019 survey report, the real wages of agricultural and non-agricultural workers fell by 1.8% and 2.1% respectively in the first five years of Modi's tenure.

OTHER ASPECTS

In March, 2019, the United Nations published the World Happiness Index to understand how well the people of the countries are and how the governments is governing. The failure of the Modiji government is unprecedented. The country and its people have never been in so much trouble. Collective happiness is judged on the basis of six indicators. They are per capita income, gross domestic product, healthy life and average life expectancy, freedom to choose one's own choices in life, belonging to society or giving and receiving selfless help, notion for generosity and corruption. According to all this, Modi's India is in 140 out of the 153 countries. In 2013, it was at number 117. We can say this is the best achievement for Modiji in destroying the people of this country.

According to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, India has the highest number of malnourished children in the world. According to an organization like FAO, India needs 1900 rupees per capita per month for nutritious food. 70% of people in India are unable to afford it. According to the United Nations State of Food Security and Nutrition in World survey on July 6 2022, 56 crore Indians (about 22.3%) suffer from moderate or severe food



**Aerial Bombs:
The New Paper
Tiger of the
Indian State**

Tathagata

19 April 2021

15 April 2022

11 January 2023

**Bombs Dropped by the
Indian State!**

**Target is its Own
Citizens!**

A Civil War Is Going On!

In 2006, under the supervision of the Central Government of the Indian State, an Expert Group was formed to find out the causes and solutions to the spread of the armed agrarian revolutionary movement across the vast regions of Central and Eastern India. The committee included human rights activists Bela Bhatia, K. Balagopal, Dr. B. D. Sharma and others as well as erstwhile DGP of BSF Prakash Singh and current National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. The committee sent fact-finding teams to various areas of Maoist movement including Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Odisha, Bihar

and Jharkhand, consulted with other specialists and experts, discussed among themselves and then submitted their report, “Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas – Report of an Expert Group to Planning Commission” to the central government. This report directly states that the central reason for the spread of Maoist movement across vast areas of India is the socio-economic exploitation of the masses; land grab from tribals, social oppression of Dalits and financial exploitation of various social groups. They also emphasized that military suppression of the movement would not lead to a long term solution to the Maoist question. Since then, much water has flown under the bridge. India has seen the horrors of Salwa Judum and Operation Greenhunt. Failing to uproot the Maoist movement through Operation Greenhunt even after more than eight years of cruel war on people, the Brahmanical Hindu-fascist forces led by Modi-Shah-Bhagwat ruling clique started Operation ‘Samadhan’ campaign since 2017. One must remember that the very same Ajit Doval, one of the masterminds behind Operation SAMADHAN, commented in 2021 that “The new frontiers of war is the civil society..” during his address to the Passing Out Parade of the 73rd batch of IPS Probationers at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy in Hyderabad. As part of Operation Samadhan, the Indian Government has been bombing its civilians since 2021.

WHAT DO BOMBS PLAN WHEN THEY FALL FROM THE SKIES?

On 11th January 2023, the Central Reserve Police Force, Greyhound and CoBRA (Elite anti-Naxal Squads), and the District Reserve Guard (which includes the infamous SPOs of Salwa Judum) together started Operation Vikas (literally meaning “development”) as announced by Home Minister Amit Shah in his rally at Korba, Chattisgarh. According to media reports, the operation was supported by helicopters, drones, and global positioning systems of the National Security Agency of the United States of America. The region around the borders of Telangana, Chhattisgarh, and

Odisha was targeted. A significant aerial bombing campaign was launched in South Bastar’s Pamed and Kistaram blocks, at the Chhatisgarh-Telangana border, from 11 am onward, in the Madkanguda, Mettaguda, Bottethong, Sakiler, Madpaaduled, Kannemerka, Pottemangum, Bottalanka, Raspalli, and Erpad areas. On the same day, a huge combing operation was also started in the Saranda jungles of Jharkhand by CoBRA and CRPF. A member of the People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army - Comrade Gangi was martyred while retaliating against the paramilitary forces, according to the press release given by Amrut of International Affairs Committee of the CPI (Maoist).

This is not the first time that an aerial bombing operation to “destroy the Maoists” has been conducted in these areas. Aerial bombs fell from the skies in April in the last two years, 2021 and 2022. Several communities which are affected in the recent airstrike were also bombed in the drone assaults of 2021 and 2022 discussed above. On 19th April 2021 and 15th April 2022, the police and paramilitary forces, supported by the Indian Armed Forces and the Air Force carried out similar aerial blitz bombings upon these regions. Due to the alertness of the revolutionary people, no one was harmed in these strikes.

In the Vietnam War, we saw thousands of tons of aerial bombing by the US Air Force during Operation Rolling Thunder. The great majority of people in South Vietnam worked in agriculture prior to American intervention. Due to the conflict, South Vietnam, which had previously been a rice producer, was forced to rely heavily on American “aid schemes” to import significant amounts of grain. The area became unusable for agriculture due to toxic chemicals sprayed on fields and gardens, and ongoing bombardment further degraded the land. Thousands of peasants were compelled to enter refugee camps in the towns known as “strategic hamlets”. When the war ended in April 1975 and American “aid” ceased, finding supplies of food and work for the millions of unemployed peasants as a result of the war became big problems. It was impossible for most

of the peasants to return to villages since they were wiped out of existence and land was made useless. But the only hope for survival of these peasants was to return to the land.

57 years ago, we saw the aerial bombardment on the Mizo people who were struggling for their right to self-determination by the Indian Air Force in Aizawl, Mizoram – the first of its kind on Indian territory. On February 28, 1966, the fighting volunteers of the Mizo National Front launched Operation Jericho to throw out Indian forces stationed in Mizoram – launching simultaneous attacks on Assam Rifles garrisons in Aizawl and Lunglei. The next day, the Mizo National Front declared independence from India. Four Indian Air Force fighter planes, including British Hunters and French-made Toofani fighters constructed by Dassault, were sent to attack Aizawl on March 5. The planes launched from Tezpur, Kumbigram, and Jorhat in Assam and fired at the town with machine guns first. The following day, they came back to dump flammable explosives. Even when the terrified civilian populace of the town fled to the hills in a state of panic, the strafing of Aizawl and other places persisted until March 13. The regrouping destroyed the Mizos' practice of jhum, or shifting cultivation. The villagers were herded into "Protected and Progressive Villages (PPV)", where there was little land and their original jhum

areas for shifting agriculture had been left far behind in the interiors. For the following three years, Mizoram endured conditions that were dangerously close to famine, supported by what little the military could offer. According to the military, putting villages under surveillance would prevent them from providing cover for rebels or joining the MNF. To deny roaming insurgents refuge and food, the original settlements, farms, and granaries were demolished.

It is extremely easy to notice a pattern here. Whenever the ruling classes attempt to prevent an insurgency with aerial bombings, they have two objectives in mind – seizing the resources of the land for themselves and isolating the insurgents from the masses. Operation Greenhunt was initiated while the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis shook the global imperialist system. The federal and state governments began signing countless Memorandums of Understanding with various "local" and international MNCs looking for new markets to invest in and reap financial rewards. The forested areas found in the states of Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh served as the OGH's main battleground. Bauxite, iron ore, uranium, limestone, marble, dolomite, tin, graphite, coal, copper, gold, diamonds, corundum, beryl, alexandrite, fluorite, teak, hardwood, bamboo, extensive water supplies,



wildlife, and fish are just a few of the plentiful minerals and forest resources found in these areas. To steal these resources, large mining and steel producers like the Mittals, Jindals, Tata, Essar, Posco, Rio Tinto, BHP Billiton, and Vedanta negotiated MoUs with the relevant state governments. What the government intends to do with aerial strikes is to clear these mountains and forests of villagers, so the corporate can start mining the resources and also isolate the revolutionary communists from the masses by attempting to keep the masses locked up in open jails!

Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar III is just a continuation of this war of attrition to turn over this resource-rich lands to the corporate sharks. In the second phase of Operation Greenhunt, a large number of air-bases and helipads were constructed in order to undertake aerial attacks and aid the ground forces. Helicopters and drones were increasingly brought into use. The ruling classes have taken a more strict and aggressive stance against the movement's base areas in an effort to completely destroy it before their ever-extending deadline. As part of this new strategy of SAMADHAN, the paramilitary forces set up "Forward Defence Areas" to deploy large scale forces to attack the areas in the control of the rebels. According to it the forces that attack its rivals, need not attack from the district or the state centres but come from the camps in the areas of the movement. The ruling classes may come up with new names every time, but their strategy remains the same – encirclement and suppression!

DON'T BOMBS HAVE HUMAN RIGHTS?

The concept of "rights" came into being through a long socio-historical process. When the state came into being as an instrument of violent suppression of one class by another, that is when the concept of "rights" emerged for the first time in history simultaneously. Before that, there was no concept of individual rights – propertied or not; all was owned communally in the primitive chapter of mankind's history. If the rights to the resources under the soil of the Adivasi regions belong to

anyone, they belong to the Adivasis. According to the last census, Adivasis comprised an estimated population of 10 crores 40 lakhs. The Expert Group which submitted its report in 2008, noted that most of the Constitutional statutes and mandates kept for the security of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes were mere words on paper, with no basis in reality. They recommended that "...It is necessary to build up an impregnable protective shield of the State, against multi-faceted exploitation of these communities. This should be done by effective implementation of the existing constitutional provisions (PESA-1996, NREGA-2005, et al), protection of civil rights and SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act laws and programmes in place for this purpose." The ruling classes have thrown caution to the wind about the Constitutional rights and basic 'right to live' of the indigenous communities. The imperialist-supported Indian ruling classes have opted to use fascism as a means of overcoming the severe economic and political problems that currently plague both them and the capitalist global system.

On one hand, drone strikes, aerial bombardment - the civil war waged by the Indian State against its own people has reached the penultimate stage. On the other hand is a shining example of the perverted culture and rapist mentality of the police and paramilitary. Police have made videos of tribal women bathing in the name of surveillance with drones.

Deployment of the Army in the 5th Scheduled Areas of tribal people is not only unconstitutional but also against the UNO's Indigenous People's Chapter. The Indian Armed Forces i.e. Indian Army, Navy and Air Force, according to legislature, are supposed to combat external enemies. The deployment of the Indian Army and Air Force necessitate that the regions of Maoist movement be declared territory under 'civil war'. The aerial bombing is a clear violation of the 'international humanitarian law' supposed to be followed in cases of internal conflicts like the Maoist movement. According to official International Humanitarian Law, "Restrictions apply to the type of weapons

used, the way they are used and the general conduct of all those engaged in the armed conflict.” These restrictions are based upon three principles –

1. The principle of distinction requires that the parties to an armed conflict distinguish at all times between civilians and civilian objects on the one hand, and combatants and military objectives on the other, and that attacks may only be directed against combatants and military objectives.
2. The principle of proportionality, a corollary to the principle of distinction, dictates that, when attacking a military objective, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, must not be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.
3. The principle of precaution requires parties to an armed conflict to take constant care to spare the civilian population, civilians and civilian objects in the conduct of all military operations.

One is forced to wonder if the bombs falling from the skies could choose to incinerate a Maoist guerrilla and spare a child just beside him. However, international humanitarian law is not enforceable, until the belligerents choose to enforce them i.e. the State and the Maoists, in this case. The Indian State is after all an instrument of oppression, belonging to the feudal landlords and comprador bureaucratic capitalists. Neither the genocide of children nor the ruin of agricultural lands matter to the ruling classes, if profits are to be made from these. On the contrary, there are hundreds of examples of Maoists adhering to the international rules of war, of which the most

shining one is the dignified treatment of Constable Rakeshwar Singh Manhas of the 210th CoBRA battalion in Maoist captivity and his consequent release. Contrast this to the institutional murder of 84 year old Comrade Stan Swamy, who was not even given a sipper despite his infirmity and one will easily see why the Maoist revolutionaries claim to be struggling for New Democracy – democracy not for only the rich, but for the toiling masses of the country.

AERIAL BOMBS AND THEIR NEMESIS – RED ANTS

History is replete with examples of the adivasi masses’ proud tradition of waging fierce struggle against entities who want to exploit their jal-jungle-jameen-adhikar & natural resources.

Jharkhand witnessed massive protests against the attempt to amend the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, 1908 & Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act, 1876. The Pathalgadhi movement has emerged as one of the largest mass movements against fascist judiciary. It increased calls for the stringent application of legislation intended for the governance of tribal regions designated under the Constitution. It evolved as an offshoot of the fight against the CNTA



and SPTA Amendments. It was a tribal resistance movement to defend their right to self-rule and the jal-jungle-jameen. Pathalgadhi literally means “carving a stone”. The provisions of the FRA, PESA (Panchayat (Extension of Scheduled Area) Act), 5th schedule, articles 13(3), 19(5)(6), and 244(1) of the constitution, which designate gramme sabhas as sovereign authorities, were engraved on the stone plaques that were erected on the outskirts of a village or other community. The villagers recited these clauses and instructions to emphasise the traditional gram sabha’s supremacy of authority, the rights of adivasis over land and forests, and self-governance. Aadhar, Ration, and voter cards were among the papers that many people threw away as a sign of protest. More than ten thousand protesters are said to have been arrested for sedition under section 124A of the IPC by the state’s then-BJP administration, led by Raghubar Das, as a result of their participation in the campaign.

After mass movements in villages of Sukma like Singaram, Gompad and Bijapur’s Pusnar, Burji and Silger, Sarkeguda, Brihabeda, Sonpur Adasmeta, Kutul, Becha Ghat of Abhujmad, now the villagers of Indravati have come out on strike for their demands for the honour and dignity of their women, against the establishment of police and paramilitary camps and selling out their “jal, jangal, zameen, ijat” to the comprador capitalists – in a word, against militarization and corporatization. On 24th December 2020, thirty thousand people mobilised in Bhairamgarh in the Bijapur district to protest the new police camps and the bridge across the Indravati that is being built. The Indravati Bachao Andolan was founded by them. For a very long time, corporate enterprises have already been using the waters of the river upstream. People are increasingly fighting police attacks in addition to denouncing police camps. Three thousand people participated in a significant protest against a police officer from Chota Betiya in the Kanker area during the first week of October 2020. The officer assaulted the fishermen for allegedly aiding Maoists in getting people over the Mendki River. After three days of protest, the officer was forced

to own up to his error and begged for pardon from the people. The expanding people’s movement against security camps and paramilitary groups – both government and private, demonstrates that the conflict is not just anti-state. Essentially, it is a component of the class struggle against the ruling classes, who are selling the nation’s natural resources to imperialists.

While the people took up arms against the Indian State and its imperialist masters, the aerial bombs found themselves a favourable ally in the deafening silence of the so-called “civil society”. Apart from a handful of human rights organizations and democratic-progressive-revolutionary mass organizations, no one in this massive motherland of ours have raised a voice against the State bombing its own countrymen. No political party inside the Parliament or outside, while hoping to get in the next elections, has raised this as an issue. This only serves to expose the futility of the mechanism of Indian democracy and the Constitution.

Imagine an army of tiny red ants walking across a table in a single file. You bring your hand down upon the table with as much force as you possibly can. What happens? You crush a few ants. Even many, if you are lucky. Initially, the ants scurry about in confusion. But once that confusion ends, they get back in line. If you remove your hand, they keep walking in the same direction again. If you keep your hand there, they bite your hand and walk over it. Parallels have been repeatedly drawn between ants and revolutionary communists over time. There can only be one possible ending to this bloodied attempt of the State to crush the communist movement, which has been put to beautiful words by Arundhati Roy in her essay *Walking With The Comrades*, “Each time, it seemed as though the Maoists (or their previous avatars) had been not just defeated, but literally, physically exterminated. Each time, they have re-emerged, more organized, more determined and more influential than ever.” ◆



The **Gig Economy**: Through A Marxist Lens

Srijan

Capitalism, from the time of its inception, has been an incessantly evolving socio-economic system. Unlike its predecessors, the capitalist mode of production has exhibited extraordinary dynamism over the course of its evolution – the adept tendency to transcend its form whenever it is bedeviled by the problems of the laws of its own development, i.e., “the problems of ruptured equilibrium”, keeps social production uninterrupted and “moribund capitalism” lives on. Ernest Mandel had noted that the ‘expansion of the service sector’ was a key factor which facilitated in “a considerable acceleration of

the rotation of circulating capital, which further contributed to the rise in the rate of profit after the Second World War”, besides “the expansion of credit, the ‘industrialisation’ of wholesale and retail trade, and the innovations of the third technological revolution in the transport and tele-communication sector”. Following the ‘neo-liberal turn’ in the late 1970s, as David Harvey has opined, the notion that “the social good will be maximised by maximising the reach and frequency of market transactions” had triumphed, and the ‘neo-liberal’ framework “seeks to bring all human action into the domain

of the market". To make this possible, the rise of the 'information society' became an intrinsic component of the 'neo-liberal turn':

This requires technologies of information creation and capacities to accumulate, store, transfer, analyse, and use massive databases to guide decisions in the global marketplace. Hence neoliberalism's intense interest in and pursuit of information technologies (leading some to proclaim the emergence of a new kind of 'information society').

The course of capitalist growth, which is plagued by 'cyclical crises', saw all these developments culminate into a new antidote for capitalism in the 21st century. The decade succeeding the 'Great Crisis of 2008', saw the emergence of the 'gig' economy and exhibited widespread growth across the globe. A simple definition of the phenomenon would explain it as an economy dependent on app-based work wherein the workers enlist themselves on different digital platforms and perform varied individual jobs in a supposedly 'flexible' time-frame. While the spectrum of jobs that fall within domain of 'gig work' is ever-expanding (digital platforms offering diverse kinds of professional services are emerging from time to time), it mostly comprises driving and food delivery services. These digital platforms describe the individuals involved in 'gig' work as 'individual contractors' or 'partners' but not as 'employees'. Their participation is thus labelled as 'self-employment' and here lies the 'gig' prospect of app-based labour. Therefore, the 'gig phenomenon' is the 'digitisation' of work that falls under the purview of the service sector.

The millions of individuals in India and abroad, who sell their labouring bodies in the 'gig' economy, have no formal acknowledgement of being 'workers' from the end of the owners of the app-based companies that host their services. These app-based companies that are classified as 'fintech' (companies possessing the necessary financial technologies to facilitate the flow and expansion of finance capitalism) companies do not engage in the 'production of commodities' themselves but offer certain 'professional services', openly deny

the existence of any form of 'employer-worker' relationship between themselves and their so called 'partners' or 'service-providers'. By evading this relationship, they also deny the responsibility of ensuring any kind of employment benefits for the individuals involved in 'gig' work. Hence, the 'labouring individuals' are deprived from being entitled to benefits such as unemployment compensation, sick leave, family leave, health insurance, etc.

To answer the question, whether the 'labouring individuals' involved in 'gig' work are 'workers' or not, it would be best to lay the foundation-stone of the argument in Marx's concept of 'surplus value production':

The action of labour-power, therefore, not only reproduces its own value, but produces value over and above it. This surplus-value is the difference between the value of the product and the value of the elements consumed in the formation of that product, in other words, of the means of production and the labour-power.

It is to be noted that, in this case, since the 'fintech' companies do not engage in the production of any commodities themselves, the commodity on which their 'surplus value appropriation' depends is the 'labour time' provided by the service vendors. Thus, based on the theoretical paradigm of Marxist political economy, there is no doubt in the fact that the individuals involved in 'gig' work are 'workers'.

The 'gig worker' does not receive fixed wages like the 'proletarian worker' does – the 'gig' workers' income is based on the output of one's services or the number of customers served, which increases the detriment of the 'gig worker'. Marx had described this form of wage as "piece wage" which is:

Given piece-wage, it is naturally the personal interest of the labourer to strain his labour-power as intensely as possible; this enables the capitalist to raise more easily the normal degree of intensity of labour. It is moreover now the personal interest of the labourer to lengthen the working day, since with it his daily or weekly wages rise.

The falling rates of 'incentives' or 'service-based income' experienced by the 'gig worker' can be

explained by taking recourse to Marx's concept of "absolute and relative surplus value production":

From one standpoint, any distinction between absolute and relative surplus-value appears illusory. Relative surplus-value is absolute, since it compels the absolute prolongation of the working day beyond the labour-time necessary to the existence of the labourer himself. Absolute surplus-value is relative, since it makes necessary such a development of the productiveness of labour, as will allow of the necessary labour-time being confined to a portion of the working day. But if we keep in mind the behaviour of surplus-value, this appearance of identity vanishes.

Having already established that the 'gig economy' thrives on the myth of "bogus self-employment", I shall now turn towards describing the 'exploited self' of the 'gig worker'. To exemplify the exploitation, it would be best to cite the case of the 'fintech giant' Uber, which has its near global monopoly over the digitally availed transport service:

Uber touts the freedom its employees have, never revealing that they hope to be rid of them or terminally underpay or overwork them in the future.

In this light, it is revealed that the gig economy is merely a new slick of paint on an old phenomenon. It is one of the many manifestations of precarious labor, otherwise known as casualization or flexibilization. This is the practice of hiring workers on a temporary, part-time, or as-needed basis instead of as permanent, stable employment. This is done despite the fact that the amount of labor needed is large enough to warrant full-time workers.

The 'gig workers' are part of the ever-expanding precariat, who bear the brunt of the 'neo-liberal' model and live without "an anchor of stability". They fall among the ranks of the millions of individuals whose existence has been rendered 'precarious' and 'insecure' by the tyranny of capital – people who oscillate between the state of being unemployed and performing diverse jobs for their survival. These people constitute the 'supernumeraries' in Marx's conception of the 'production of a relative surplus population' over the course of capitalist production:

"The whole form of the movement of modern industry depends, therefore, upon the constant transformation of a part of the labouring population into unemployed or half-employed hands. The superficiality of Political Economy shows itself in the fact that it looks upon the expansion and contraction of credit, which is a mere symptom of the periodic changes of the industrial cycle, as their cause. As the heavenly bodies, once thrown into a certain definite motion, always repeat this, so is it with social production as soon as it is once thrown into this movement of alternate expansion and contraction. Effects, in their turn, become causes, and the varying accidents of the whole process, which always reproduces its own conditions, take on the form of periodicity. When this periodicity is once consolidated, even Political Economy then sees that the production of a relative surplus population – i.e., surplus with regard to the average needs of the self-expansion of capital – is a necessary condition of modern industry."

The 'gig worker' faces the same kind of 'estrangement' or 'alienation' that is faced by the workers who constitute the organised industrial workforce of the formal 'core' industries of capitalist production:

This fact expresses merely that the object which labor produces – labor's product – confronts it as something alien, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labor is labor which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the objectification of labor. Labor's realization is its objectification. Under these economic conditions this realization of labor appears as loss of realization for the workers; objectification as loss of the object and bondage to it; appropriation as estrangement, as alienation.

With appropriation of the 'surplus value' produced by the 'gig worker', the 'gig worker' is rendered as an 'estranged or alienated self'.

In this age of dominance of monopolist capitalist corporations in determining the structure and functioning of capitalist world order, the gap between the 'exploiter class' and the 'exploited class' is rapidly narrowing and the contradiction between 'capital'

and 'labour' is rapidly intensifying. The 'gig workers' are a highly organised yet informal workforce. The process of 'digitisation of the service sector' has led to their emergence as an 'organised' mass of labouring individuals – however, they lack the following realisation in regard to the relationship between 'labour' and 'capital':

Opposition of each to itself. Capital = stored-up labour = labour. As such it splits into capital itself and its interest, and this latter again into interest and profit. The capitalist is completely sacrificed. He falls into the working class, whilst the worker (but only exceptionally) becomes a capitalist. Labour as a moment of capital – its costs. Thus the wages of labour – a sacrifice of capital.

Splitting of labour into labour itself and the wages of labour. The worker himself a capital, a commodity.

Clash of mutual contradictions.

Across the world, 'gig workers' have started to unionise or at least, started demanding the 'right to unionise' – it is an observation-worthy phenomenon that possesses the potential for stimulating new trends in the course of working class movements. Although, the phenomenon is in its formative phase, it has led to court litigations demanding the alteration of the established understanding of the contract between the 'gig worker' and the 'host fintech companies' in the United States and United Kingdom. These instances should definitely be taken into account in assessing the potential nature of the 'gig workers' as an emergent 'organised oppositional force' to capitalism. But, for now, it can be concluded that the 'fragmented self' of the 'gig workers' and the 'illusion of autonomous self-employment or independent contractor status' has restricted in the emergence of a cohesive 'working class consciousness' among the 'gig workers' – a consciousness without which the 'estranged', 'exploited' and 'precarious self' of the 'gig worker' cannot situate oneself in opposition to the other, i.e., 'capital'. ◆

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“It must be acknowledged that our labourer comes out of the process of production other than he entered. In the market he stood as owner of the commodity “labour-power” face to face with other owners of commodities, dealer against dealer. The contract by which he sold to the capitalist his labour-power proved, so to say, in black and white that he disposed of himself freely. The bargain concluded, it is discovered that he was no “free agent,” that the time for which he is free to sell his labour-power is the time for which he is forced to sell it, that in fact the vampire will not lose its hold on him “so long as there is a muscle, a nerve, a drop of blood to be exploited.”

Capital, Volume 1, p. 195.



Hail
Modiji!!!

The true
Saviour of
Brahminism!

10% Reservation for **UPPER CASTE EWS**

A Move to Dilute the Question of
Eradicating Social Backwardness

Abhijnan Sarkar

According to a story published in the Bengali daily *Ei Samay* on 1 December 2022, Home Minister Amit Shah had made the following remark during his election campaign in Gujarat: “Based on Baba Saheb Ambedkar’s ideology, Narendra Modi has inaugurated a new era of public welfare, development and empowerment for Dalits.”

In reality, atrocities against Dalits are an everyday occurrence in this country. The economic opportunities that are provided for the

betterment of Dalits are also being limited rapidly. On 6 November 2022, a 5-member division bench of the Supreme Court gave the green signal on the Central government's act enforcing 10% reservation for the economically weaker unreserved section. Although, the Chief Justice and two other judges were opposed to the act, the decision was based on the majority's opinion. Surprisingly, all ruling parties except Tamil Nadu's DMK have welcomed this decision. Leaders from the TMC, CPI(M) and Congress have dubbed this judgement as a necessary step towards reinstating equality. No matter how hard Amit Shah pretends to be the messiah of backward classes, one must remember how the BJP had sabotaged the VP Singh government by withdrawing its support from the struggle for 27% reservation of OBCs. Then why is the BJP so excited about ensuring reservation for 'upper castes'? The irony is that the Congress had also tried to bring a 10% reservation scheme for economically backward 'upper castes' during Narasimha Rao's government but the Supreme Court had rejected the proposal at that time. A second attempt was undertaken by the Congress during Manmohan Singh's tenure but it was again turned down by the Supreme Court. The CPI(M) is another long time flag-bearer of reservation for 'upper castes' based on their economic condition. They have been talking in favour of economic condition instead of caste as a yardstick for reservation since VP Singh's Prime Ministerial tenure. In the past, their student wing SFI had even organised movements demanding such a reservation scheme. CPI(M) leader Sujan Chakraborty has given an elated statement to the media in regard to the recent judgement of the Supreme Court. In reality, they are trying to dilute the real aim behind the introduction and implementation of the reservation policy. Perhaps, all the ruling class parties have forgotten about the recommendations of that were put forward by the Mandal Commission. It must be remembered that though the 1980 Mandal Commission report listed reservation as a medium to eradicate social backwardness, the real emphasis was given on

radical land reform or rather land redistribution. It is indeed true that caste system cannot be annihilated if the question of radical land reform is kept aside. In India, there is a section of the middle class which is brain-washed by Brahminism and is generally despitiful towards class struggle. But, whenever they are faced with the question of reservation for SC/ST/OBC communities, they put on the mask of 'egalitarianism' as a defence and form 'equality associations' to organise protests against caste-based reservation. They ignore the fact that free competition is only possible when both the parties involved are equal in all aspects. Having a competition between the dominant, influential and wealthy section of the society and the section that has been deprived, humiliated and oppressed for ages means the suppression of the latter under the feet of the former for eternity. It's like making a person with a leg injury compete with a physically fit person in a race.

One must remember that the introduction of reservation policy for SC/ST/OBC communities in sectors of education and employment had nothing to do with poverty alleviation. The motive behind providing reservation to socially backward communities was to pull them out of their backwardness by increasing their representation in fields of education and employment. By supporting SCs, STs and OBCs to pursue all their life aspirations, helping them to live with respect, ensuring their rights, and making them equal stakeholders in all fields, be it political, economic or social, age-old Brahminical authority can be countered to some extent. Brahminical dominance in India is a centuries-old phenomenon. It started in the period between 600 BCE to 200 BCE when the four-fold caste system had emerged as a medium to subjugate the defeated 'non-Aryans' into a category of toiling slaves. The category came to be known as the 'Sudras', who were forced to serve the rest of the society, mainly, the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas, by performing all forms of manual labour. They deprived from taking part in activities that involved mental labour. The proliferation of the four-fold caste system into various sub-castes, i.e.,

numerous rigid and hierarchical caste categories, took place between 200 BCE to 400 CE. The caste system was consolidated or rather codified through the Manusmriti. It was supplemented by the Brahminical Karma theory which is based on the idea of successive rebirths and states that an individual's present life is the consequence of the actions of one's past life. With the coming of this notion, the Sudras and all other groups on the bottom rung of the caste hierarchy were easily subjected to extra-economic exploitation and repression by the then ruling class. This has facilitated in ceaselessly reproducing the Indian feudal structure till date. One must definitely take note of the fact that because of this the Brahminical ruling class in India has managed to maintain its monopoly over the exclusive right to engage in cultures of knowledge for centuries.

All forms of power were centred in the hands of Brahmins and Kshatriyas, who kept the Sudras and the peasantry suppressed under their feet. The condition of the Sudras was similar to that of the slaves in the African and European countries. Their access to cultures of knowledge was deemed as a heinous crime. The Ramayana mentions how BJP's 'national hero', the 'ideal male God' Ram, had killed a knowledgeable Sudra for reciting the Vedas. As per the Manusmriti, participating in cultures of knowledge was considered a crime for Sudras. The prescribed punishment for such a 'crime' was also very severe – hot oil was poured on the tongues of 'lower caste non-Aryans'. Sudras and other backward 'non-Aryans' who just committed the 'crime' of listening to Brahminical works of knowledge were punished by pouring molten lead into their ears. The Manusmriti had also deprived Sudras from accumulating wealth in their hands.

The proliferation of the caste system and creation of rigid caste categories based on birth had intensified caste-based division of work in the Indian society. It became a distinct feature of the Indian feudal and semi-feudal society – a feature so peculiar that it can be found nowhere else in the world. The caste system was developed as a weapon for carrying out extra-economic exploitation and

repression with relatively less bloodshed. It has survived for centuries and was legitimised through the Brahminical notion of karma. In ancient India, it was devised as a medium for developing an intertwined system of exploitation and governance. In later centuries, the Mughals and the British also did not take any initiative to uproot casteism from the basic fabric of Indian society rather, they chose to preserve it. The fact that Gandhi was also an ardent advocate of the caste system becomes quite clear if one reads the letters that were exchanged between him and Ambedkar. Hindutva ideologues like Savarkar, Hedgewar and Golwalkar, who are revered by the BJP, were directly in favour of configuring the Indian society in accordance to the Manusmriti. They were staunch critics of the Indian Constitution because it was not drafted as per the diktats of the Manusmriti. The truth is that since the transfer of power on 15 August 1947, the Indian ruling class has carefully safeguarded the caste system till date. Before the Naxalbari uprising, Indian communists also did not pay much heed to the caste system as a special feature of the Indian society and viewed it only as a problem related to the superstructure. In reality, the issue of caste is not related to the superstructure. Rather, caste system acts a pedestal for semi-feudal production relations to persist and consequently, is connected with the economic base in an inseparable manner. The communists were unable to realise this fact for a long time due to their erroneous perspective on the issue of caste. Revisionists like the CPI and CPI (M) still continue to maintain such an ideological position over the caste question even today. The root of their faulty approach partly lies in their subjective evaluation of India's socio-economic condition and partly due to the Brahminical influences that dominate the minds of many of their leaders and party members. For long, they had argued that caste-based exploitation could be ended through class struggle. But, they could not grasp the fact that the struggle against the caste system is essentially a very important form of class struggle in the Indian context.

One must remember that reservation for SCs/STs/OBCs was introduced to uplift them socially. The 1980 Mandal Commission report enlisted Dalit Brahmins and Agradani Brahmins among the socially backward groups in India. Thus, despite being Brahmins, they are entitled to the reservation scheme. One must also keep in mind that even after so many years of the reservation scheme in action, the SCs, STs, OBCs and Muslims have very little stake or representation in sectors like education, work, commerce and administrative offices. On the contrary, the 'upper castes', who are numerically smaller, have continued to maintain their control over education, health, service, administration, politics, culture, judiciary, trade and commerce, legislature and every other field of the Indian society. Therefore, it is ridiculous and unjust to provide reservation to economically backward 'upper castes' because they have the opportunity/accessibility to make a career for themselves by seeking the help of their better-off kin and friends. People from the SC, ST and OBC categories are humiliated ridiculed by 'upper castes' who proudly flaunt their Brahminical mentality. Such discriminatory attitude is deeply embedded even in the different institutions and propagated structurally by teachers, bureaucrats and judges. Recently, a High Court judge expressed his belief that a Brahmin man would never touch a Dalit woman. Based on this belief, he even gave the bail order for an 'upper caste' rape accused! Such is the situation that from Chuni Kotal to Rohith Vemula, Dalits continue to become victims of institutional murder in India. The police in India also upholds Brahminical discrimination and serves the interests of 'upper castes' – it is very clear from their role in the Hathras rape case incident. Instead of handing over the victim's body to her family after doing a post-mortem, they cremated her dead body in secrecy. Thus, the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act is rendered powerless in front of 'upper caste' violence. Even media personnel who visited the area to cover news about the incident were arrested undemocratically and charged with sedition. On the one hand, Hindutva fascist goons

who attacked the Bhima Koregaon demonstrations are allowed to roam freely. On the other hand, activists, who are the true custodians of justice, are left to rot in prisons by those same Hindutva-wadi Brahminical goons, who currently possess state power. The High Courts and Supreme Court reject the bail pleas of these activists and humanist clerics like Fr. Stan Swamy die behind bars without any medical treatment. Thus, extra-judicial killing is normalised.

Amidst all the celebratory fervour of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', if one looks at the 'lower' and backward castes; the Adivasis and Mulvasis; Muslims, majority of whose predecessors were all 'lower caste' peasants, one would see not much has improved for all these groups in the course of the past 75 years. Rather, incidents of attacks on these people have increased after the BJP came to power and casteism is being intensified. Even today, the toiling masses mostly comprise socially backward communities like Dalits, Adivasis and Muslims. On the other hand, majority of the officer-ranking government employees, bureaucrats, ministers, judges and industrialists are all 'upper castes'. Thus, they are the ones, who dominate the governmental institutions and control the private industries, since there is no reservation policy in case of the latter. For evaluating the economic backwardness of 'upper castes' deserving reservation, possession of an apartment or house with an area less than 1000 sq. ft. or an annual income less than 8 lakhs p. a. have been set as the necessary criteria. It is a fact known to everyone that in a metropolitan city like Kolkata, an apartment with an area of 799 sq. ft. costs no less than 30 lakh rupees. In cities like Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi the price is higher. An annual income of 8 lakh rupees means a monthly income of more than 65,000 rupees – are these 'upper caste' people for whom the new reservation scheme has been introduced really economically backward or insolvent? What is the yardstick for economic backwardness in our country? The policies of the Central government have already created a huge employment crisis in India and as mentioned earlier, the private sector

falls outside the purview of the reservation scheme. In such a situation, whatever scope for employment remains in this country, will be snatched away solely by the 'upper castes'. The Brahminical Hindutva-wadi ruling class is determined to make that happen and 10% EWS reservation for 'upper castes' is aimed at fulfilling this specific objective.

Considering the issue in totality, it can be concluded that all of Modi government's talk about Baba Saheb Ambedkar is nothing but a sham, and in reality, they are determined to do anything to preserve Brahminical 'upper caste' dominance on socially backward SC/ST/OBC communities in India.

Lastly, one must remember that although, the reservation scheme was a part of the Mandal Commission recommendations, the Commission had given maximum importance to the question of radical land redistribution. Therefore, one must not set the question of reservation as the limit for the struggle against Brahminism. Rather, it is more important to take the struggle for the revolutionary transformation of the Indian society forward by aiming at the bigger question of radical land redistribution. ◆

■ AZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTSAV— Whither India?

Continued from page 28

insecurity. The same survey reports that 97 crore (71%) Indians are unable to procure nutritious food. India ranks 71 out of 113 countries in the World Food Index and 107 out of 122 countries in the World Hunger Index, which I have mentioned earlier. The report of Public Health Foundation of India says that 5.5 crore Indians are destitute every year due to medical expenses. India ranks 164 out of 224 countries in Lifetime Health data, regionally below all countries except Pakistan. We are first in the world in tuberculosis. In 2016, we were jointly first with Nigeria in the under-five cholera mortality rate. In 2017, we were at the top in malnutrition. We rank 115 out of 158 countries on this measure of educational status in the World Human Capital Index. In the world journalist safety or GII (Global Impunity Index) –

among fourteen countries, we are in the last place with war-torn, terror-ravaged Syria, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan! According to a study by Reporters without Borders, India ranks 150 out of 180 countries on the Press Freedom Index. While 57% of people around the world are victims of fake news, 64% of people are victims of fake news in India. 54% of the people are victims of rumours, here. India, our 'largest democracy', ranks 62 out of 113 countries on the 'Rule of Law Index', below Nepal. The latest data from the National Crime Records Bureau shows that the number of suicides in our country increased by 7.2% in 2021 compared to 2020. In 2021, 1,64,033 people died due to suicide in our country. It indicates a specific aspect of the socio-economic conditions of this country. Whither India? ◆



Political Economy of New Forest Conservation Rules in India

Mukundan

The Indian state has actively supported the encroachment of the imperialist capital in collaboration with feudal elements on the lands of marginalized communities and the natural resources of India. The latest amendment to the rules of the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, called the Forest Conservation Rules 2022, is a legal vehicle to ensure that imperialist plunder, exploitation and subsequent ecological devastation can be carried out in an easier manner. One of the fundamental changes legally introduced by the

new rules is the removal of the provision where the central government had to seek the consent of the village-level Gram Sabhas for clearance of any development project in areas where tribal farmers are settled. The autonomy of the Adivasis over their own land has been taken away by this law.

To be clear, the law itself is merely a factor in the larger changes that have been ongoing at the service of imperialism for a much longer time period. These new rules are actively in violation of the Indian state's own laws, in The Scheduled

Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA), in the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996 and even notifications issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in 2009. This so-called democracy bends at the will of capital and the law merely functions as an arm to further facilitate exploitation. In the new framework, the Adivasis will learn that their land has already been pawned off by the Indian state to big bourgeoisie and landlords after the act, their approval is to be sought when Stage 1 of clearance had already been granted. In case they do not approve, their only option is to take the matter to court!¹ A specially constituted Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) would have the task of approving projects first and the state administration would finish the rest. In a judicial system where cases take decades to find resolution, justice is an exception that becomes more and more difficult to find. The legal changes, in fact, represent the open terrorism against its own people that the brahmanical Hindutva fascists have resorted to, shedding all pretensions of a democratic rights-based framework to facilitate their goals of serving foreign finance capital.

Dilution of Rights and the Plunder of Natural Resources

In environmental conservation law, the “precautionary principle” is considered a fundamental aspect and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), under the Environment Protection Act, 1986, is an important tool in highlighting the potential environmental hazards of various ‘developmental’ projects. EIA is therefore, a part of the democratic exercising of the Constitutional right to clean environment. Yet, this tool has seen a dilution with amendments introduced in 2020, with the introduction of seeking post-facto EIA clearance. Essentially, industries can flout all environmental conservation norms and only after an EIA is done after commission of the offense, they can be penalized. This penalty is usually a compensation to be paid to the state.² This practice has already seen

its fair share of ecological disasters, particularly with the example of LG Polymers India plant in Visakhapatnam. LG Polymers India, a subsidiary of the South Korean giant LG Corporation, had a plant in Visakhapatnam where a gas leak in May 2020 led to the death of 12 people, injuries to another 585, affecting 20000 people from the five villages near the plant. The villages saw a massive impact on their social and economic lives, with animals implemented in husbandry also incurring deaths and injuries along with freshwater bodies, farmlands, soil, vegetation and livestock incurring long term impacts.³ LG walked away from this situation by paying a compensation to the state, even when the EIA report after the gas leak clearly highlighted complete negligence from LG as the cause of the leak.⁴

A similar situation occurred with the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (LARR Act). This act regulates the power of the state to acquire land for various projects from private persons. This act itself was nothing more than an aesthetic change to the colonial Land Acquisition Act, 1894. The act has had a history of using the bureaucratic state structure to grab land on a mass scale in the name of ‘development’ and ‘public purpose’ at the service of imperial capital. Even on paper, this nature is apparent in the fact that only 80% of the persons holding the lands to be acquired for a private project need to consent for land to be lawfully stolen. This number is lowered to 70% only when it comes to public-private-partnership (PPP) projects, a renewed fad post-neoliberalization in India wherein the bureaucratic capitalist state takes the financial burden of creating space for imperial capital. One example of this is the Delhi Airport Express Metro project, or the Orange Line of the Delhi Metro, wherein the Ambani’s Reliance Infrastructure Ltd. somehow attempted to reap the financial gains of the construction project while the state, like its lackey, acquired land for the project while offering virtually no compensations, took the financial burden of the Rs. 5500 crore project through PSU

bank loans and other state-funding measures while Reliance only paid Rs. 1 lakh for their share! In fact, Reliance itself only functioned as an intermediary, while CAF Spain, MTR Hong Kong, Siemens Germany and RailOne AG Germany ran the project in reality through import of technology since Reliance itself had never constructed a metro project.⁵ Land acquisition undertaken wherein not even the entirety of the people whose lands are being stolen for such sham projects are required to consent are a clear violation of any semblance of democratic rights. In fact, in 2015, the BJP government attempted to dilute this even further but had to change strategy amid opposition. They are now pushing those changes through introducing state-wise amendments to land laws, with one particular example being Jharkhand where the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Jharkhand Amendment) Act, 2017 was introduced to remove the need for the state to do a Social Impact Assessment as required under the larger LARR Act. Even though the provision is still nominally there, it has lost its substance in this state amendment. This amendment also removes the need to hold public consultations with Gram Sabhas and that land may be acquired by way of merely publishing a public notice by the state.⁶ Given that Jharkhand is a mineral rich region with vast natural wealth, this amendment attempts to remove any pretenses of democratic rights for the sake of creating better conditions for expansion of imperial capital's domain.

In terms of the new Forest Rules, this farce started to reveal itself very early on, as the bureaucracy had actively attempted to subvert the right of consultation of Gram Sabhas even legally. In 2012, the Ministry of Environment and Forests had tried to dilute this right by moving the requirement of Gram Sabha approval to the second stage of the clearance of projects, that is, after the state had already taken the money from the big bourgeoisie and had handed over the land. The Ministry was unable to concretize this as a law at the time, but this became the de-facto practice

that was followed for the clearance project, without legal sanction. Even so, this failure to legally introduce this practice was due to the success of the people's struggle to protect Niyamgiri Hills from big bourgeoisie bauxite mining projects of Vedanta. The Supreme Court had to side with the people, affirming that Gram Sabha consent was required, in *Orissa Mining Corporation vs Ministry of Environment & Forest & Others*, 2013.⁷

Myth of Democratic Rights Fractured Under Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar

The FRA, 2006 was introduced to enforce the rights of the Adivasis on their own land by making a provision that the consent of the Gram Sabha is required *prior* to the approval of the so-called developmental projects. Multiple sections of the Act would reinforce the authority of the village-level government body, the Gram Sabha, on these matters. Yet, it is now clear that such legal pretensions were made as part of a larger project of the Indian state in its genocidal war against Adivasis as part of the erstwhile Operation Green Hunt, as a measure to appease and subvert Adivasi resistance against plunder of their lands for the sake large-scale mining and afforestation projects. The Adivasis faced the lumpen goons at the service of imperialism, the fascist Salwa Judum militia which would burn villages, plunder farmland, rape women and murder with state sanction. As agents of imperialism, the Indian comprador bourgeoisie, such as the likes of Vedanta Limited, Tata Steel, Jindal Group, Adani Group, South Korean group POSCO and the Ambanis attempted to steal thousands of hectares of Adivasi land, rich in natural wealth, with the legal change serving as part of the larger "Hearts and Minds" strategy of the Indian state to win over the Adivasi people by selling the myth of democracy to them.

For clarification, a comprador, in the original sense of the word, was the Chinese manager or the Chinese senior employee in a foreign commercial establishment in colonial China, a member of the bourgeoisie who serves foreign capital and has its interest closely tied with their

own interests. Compradors grew significantly as a class, by serving foreign monopoly capitalists as conditions prevailing in a colony or a semi-colony are detrimental to the growth of an independent national bourgeoisie. This class is parasitic in its relation to imperial capital for their own sustenance and thus form a close nexus with feudal landlords and rely on heightened bureaucratic intervention from the state. For example, the recent Adani thermal power project in Godda was developed and constructed by Chinese imperialist capitalist, SEPCO3, while Australian capital is funneled into the project through Adani's Australia subsidiary, Bravus Mining & Resources. Further, Adani funneled in US capital in the project by taking a debt of 1.3 billion USD from Indian state, which in itself relies on foreign debt to sustain a free fall of the Indian Rupee.⁸ Therefore, it is apparent that India does not have its own independent capital generation and relies deeply on imperialist capital. The majority of the capital reproduction and production work is being done by imperial capital and the electricity which is also being transferred to Bangladesh by Adani's project is just the propagation of imperial capital in Bangladesh through Indian expansionism.

With the victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2014, open onslaught of brahmanical Hindutva fascism on all fronts began, with Operation Green Hunt being transformed into the significantly more aggressive and elaborate Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar. The new forest rules legalize the practice of seeking the *post-facto* approval of the Gram Sabhas. Given the nature of India and its lack of true democracy, it should also not come as a surprise that a study conducted by journalist Chitrangadha Choudhary in Keonjhar, Odisha, discovered that the state authorities would utilize fake approvals from fictitious Gram Sabhas to carry out their projects even when the law was supposedly favourable to the Adivasis.⁹ Academic Tushar Dash would add that "from 2014 onwards, the rate for diversion [of forest land] has increased from 6,000 hectares to 10,000 hectares a year. Most of these diversions are for mining and infrastructure activities."¹⁰ Plunder

of resources and land by extra-legal means has only increased manifold under fascism and the legal changes merely make way to advance this further.

Pay A Small Entry Fee to Enter A Free-For-All For the Resources of India!

The new rules legally concretize what the fascists dub "compensatory afforestation." Given that the land in question is forest land and holds significant ecological value, imperial capital must also satisfy the ideological fantasies of 'sustainable development,' bourgeois environmentalism and whatnot. Ignoring that these lands are home to the Adivasis, compensatory afforestation requires the state to establish tree plantations as compensation for the afforestation that these massive projects would eventually lead to, by seeking funds from these projects at fixed rate for the amount of forest land they ravage. This market rate is called 'net present value,' which, in the last 13 years have only been re-evaluated once. The state essentially froze the market rate of the land at prices deemed in 2009 and allowed the destruction of forests after taking their token fee in the name of sustainable development.¹¹ This sort of pay-to-plunder policy is also not restricted to these rules alone, as the same has also become policy when it comes to the EIA, as previously mentioned.

The cause behind legally changing the procedure is to fastrack the process of stealing Adivasi land and grant these holdings at a faster rate to big bourgeoisie and landlords at the service of foreign finance capital. This is in part of India's focus on creating an "ease of doing business" and the "New India" branding that the brahmanical Hindutva fascists do on a world scale. In an 11-year period, from 2008 to 2019, 300000 hectares of ecologically sensitive forest land was diverted to such projects and put up for afforestation. Compensatory afforestation at market rates frozen in 2009 ensures that the state will never make enough to match the environmental destruction caused. Using such frameworks, the state only sells the myth of progressive nature of capitalism, trying to cover up the moribund nature of imperial capital.

Peoples' Resistances and the Need for Mass Struggle

The issue of the forest rules is not one restricted to Adivasis but is a concern for all the people. The environmental damage created by mass scale afforestation affects every single person on the planet. Even so, protracted people's struggles such as the one in Niyamgiri, the resistance against Tapi-par-Narmada river link project in Gujarat, the resistance against Sardar Sarovar Dam, the on-going people's resistance in Silger, etc. continue to struggle against corporate loot and function at the forefront of true environmental struggle. Under the fascist Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar, the state has set up warzones in the homes of people, with military camps which dictate every aspect of life around them and armed personal occupying every area where resistance stems up. In fact, they would themselves start to take up land as postulated under new forest rules to set up their military camps and outposts. Incidents of openly firing on gatherings and unlawful detainment become part and parcel of daily life.¹² Such large-scale invasion into the lives of people is part of a larger project in the state's attempt to militarize resource-rich areas, to genocide the people who live there so as to create easy access for imperial capital to create its space. The forest rules therefore, are an integral part of the larger project of Operation SAMADHAN-Prahar and India's war against people. The defense of the environment from this project as well as the preservation of the lives and homes of Adivasis is therefore a concern for all Indian peoples and the concern of working-class peoples worldwide. ◆

This article was originally published on <https://nazariyamagazine.in/>, and is republished here with permission.

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IF YOU WANT **PEACE**, PREPARE FOR **WAR**

Rudra

“ We desire peace. However, if imperialism insists on fighting a war, we will have no alternative but to take the firm resolution to fight to the finish before going ahead with our construction. If you are afraid of war day in day out, what will you do if war eventually comes? ”

Why do wars occur? In the earlier days, wars were fought between the kings over borders, plunder of wealth, sometimes even over religion and community and for many other reasons. But since the age of monopolistic competition, in this age of imperialist finance capital, war has become inevitable. The inevitability of war became an important condition of the capitalist system, because a new crisis of capitalism has appeared since then. The crisis of export of capital. Earlier, there was only a crisis of capturing the market. Now a new crisis of capital exportation developed and was added to the previous one. In addition, in order to survive in the market, the growth of the capital structure necessarily requires the continuous development of technology. Comrade Marx shows in the third volume of 'Das Kapital', how while increasing the total profit, this results in the continuous decline of the rate of profit. This contradiction between the growth of total profit and the falling rate of profit is how capitalism falls in crisis. To overcome this crisis of the declining rate of profit, i.e. the class interest in reproducing itself, it is forced to maintain the backwardness of the backward countries on one hand, and as the development of independent capital there is a tangible obstacle for the sake of capital export, they also try their best to prevent it on the other. As a result, they had to ally themselves with all the pre-capitalist forces that stood in the way of the normal development of capital there. Survival of these forces will bring benefits for both sides. Firstly, the backwardness will continue, and next, as a result of this backwardness, there will be a lot of cheap labourers who will be used to make super-profits so that they can give some concessions to own country's workers in the matter of their exploitation. This can hold back the revolution of their country for some time more. So they

have to stand against the democratic revolution of these backward countries. In this way, the peddlers of democracy have become extremely reactionary anti-democratic forces. Comrade Lenin shows how global capitalism, as a result, divides the world among themselves, in order to expand the market and increase capital exports. And this division of the world leads to war. The world is repeatedly distributed and redistributed as the balance of power shifts. In today's world, this is the main cause of wars. Com. Lenin thus said, 'Imperialism means war.' As a result of the advent of imperialism, very few days have passed without war somewhere in the world. Every day there is a war going on in some part of the world. This has not happened in the past. Also, since capital needs a field to be exported, war means destruction, and destruction means investment of capital; opening the doors for new investments. After World War II, US imperialism became one of the superpowers of the world, standing atop this new field for export of the devastated world. This is how it became the big brother of the world, the saviour of capitalism. The third important cause for imperialist wars in today's world is the economy of arms and ammunitions worth billions, over which Russia and America are engaged in a long economic-political struggle. The state leaders of these backward countries pay for these weapons from the national funds, and in return receive bribes of billions of rupees, all in the name of national security.

These basic reasons lie behind the recent wars as well. The days of US monopoly are over. The China-Russia-Iran alliance has almost caught up to it. These countries are also facing their own crisis. Yet the ability or non-ability to sustain this hegemony causes the war. They have no other choice. This is what it seems to be.

However, these wars are not signs of the powers of imperialism, but crises. It is not so that this all comes from their desire to go to war. Because, they have seen through their experience - the birth of Red Russia as a result of the First World War and the emergence of one third of the world under the banner of socialism as a result of the Second World

War. They know very well that these wars will knock the final nail in the coffin of capitalism in the coming days and strengthen the ground for the world socialist movement. Yet their crisis will push them towards these inevitable wars. This situation will not stop for the holy will of any state leader. This is why Comrade Mao Tse-Tung said, about the situation in this world: "Either the revolution will prevent the world war, or the world war will accelerate the revolution; no matter how we look at it, the main tendency of this age is revolution." He also said: "This is an age when countries want independence, nations want liberation and the people want revolution".

There is another important aspect to the discussion of war. War also has a class character. It is not beyond the class issue. So, two questions naturally arise when a war starts. Firstly, is the war a just war or an unjust war? And then, for whom and against whom is the war? Whoever fights on the side of the working people in any class war, his war is a just war. And whoever fights on the side of the reactionaries is fighting an unjust war. A war which is on the behalf of the masses is a just war and a war against the masses is an unjust war. Every revolutionary war is a just war. Every war to defend the country against imperialist aggression is a just war. Soviet Russia's war against fascism under the leadership of Comrade Stalin was a just war. The People's War and National Liberation War of the Chinese and Vietnamese Communists were just wars. The war of the Palestinian people against Israel is a just war. Every liberation struggle is a just war. Similarly, in today's world, America's invasion of Afghanistan-Iraq or Israel's invasion of Palestine-Syria or Russia's invasion of Ukraine are unjust wars in essence. However, it must be admitted that the rulers of Ukraine are only puppets of America in this war. Despite that, there is no doubt that this genocide by Russia is highly condemnable.

Communist revolutionaries fight wars to establish a war-free world and imperialists fight wars to build mountains of profits through plunder, aggression and exploitation. This is the difference between just wars and unjust wars. ◆

■

Polyester Prince

and

Coal King

Comprador Bourgeoisie
at its Zenith

Manish Azad

“Such is the story of a big Indian firm which through its faithful service to the British rulers went from ‘rags to riches’ and came to have diverse roles - the roles of indigenous bankers with close links with foreign capital, treasurers to the governments, merchants, landlords, industrialist and owner of mines.”¹

The above example referring to pre-independence India is still relevant today; we only need to substitute ‘British rulers’ with ‘Indian rulers’.

One recent example will clarify it further: Washington Post has published a detailed report on December 9, 2022 about the Godda project of Gautam Adani.² The report states that the electricity generated at the ‘Godda Power Plant’ from coals imported from Australia and Jharkhand will be exported to Bangladesh. No taxes of any kind will be levied on Adani for this project.

Now the question that arises is how will India benefit from this project? It will only lead to ruthless displacement of the indigenous tribal people, destruction of paddies and palm grove fields, and disastrous consequences for the environment.

The report also states that Bangladesh has sufficient resources to generate electricity which has not yet been utilized to its full capacity. Therefore, Bangladesh has no need to import electricity from Gautam Adani. Moreover, according to the report, Bangladesh can generate the necessary electricity from ‘wind energy’ at a much lower cost than it will be paying to Adani for the electricity.

Let us again focus on India. At one place, the report says that – “The project, however, will benefit

its builder, Gautam Adani, an Indian billionaire who according to Global Energy Monitor is the largest private developer of coal power plants and coal mines in the world. When his companies' stock peaked in September, the Bloomberg Billionaires Index ranked Adani as the second-richest person on the planet, behind Elon Musk."

The report depicts the underground/background story of the project as: "After a senior Indian official opposed supplying coal at a discount to tycoons, including Adani, he was removed from his job by the Modi administration. When a local lawmaker led a hunger strike to protest the power station, he was jailed for six months. On at least three occasions, according to officials and documents, the government revised laws to help Adani's coal-related businesses and save him at least \$1 billion. That came even as Modi told the United Nations he would tax coal and ramp up renewable energy."

In this way, to benefit this power project of Adani, Raghubar Das, ex-Jharkhand CM, had amended 25 percent of the associated rules in favor of Adani. As per the established rule, creation of SEZ is prohibited for only a single project; however, to provide tax relief to Adani this rule was also amended and Adani's project became a SEZ. According to Washington Post, this move will save Adani around \$35 million a year just on his coal imports for Godda. Coal imports are usually taxed at 400 rupees, or about \$5, per ton.

During and after 2014 election, Modi was frequently seen to travel in the private jet of Adani, leading to the allegations of Modi favoring Adani. When the questions were raised in Parliament, former tourism minister K. J. Alphons refuted by answering – "Every industrialist who creates money in this country creates jobs. They have created jobs. They must be respected."

The irony is while Gautam Adani was earning rupee 1600 crore per day and Mukesh Ambani was earning rupee 90 crore per hour, during the same period, share of manufacturing in the country has been fall to 13 to 14 percent from 17 percent, according to the data by CMIE unemployment

has crossed the 5 crore mark. According to 2013 statistics, India had more than 6 crores MSMEs [Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises]. Since Modi's ascend to power, demonetization, Covid-19 and other government policies have forced many of the MSMEs to shut down leading to crores of people losing jobs and thus their means of sustenance. Government is deliberately denying disclosing this data. The empires of Adani, Ambani are built on the carcasses of these crores of MSMEs. That is, players like Adani/Ambani have moved forward by breaking the backbone of the country's economy. It can be certainly concluded that the personal successes of Ambani-Adani has always been inversely proportional to the growth of Indian economy.

At the same time, if we compare Adani-Ambani with the capitalists of America or other European countries, we will find that the rapid increase in personal wealth of Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Steve Jobs, Larry Page, Sergey Brin has been based on the 'global brands' created by them. All these brands are based on new technologies be it semi-conductors or artificial intelligence, e-commerce, proprietary software, touch-screen or electronic gadgets. The same can be said about China too, especially in the context of 5G and Huawei.

However, the governments of America or China have always played an important role in facilitating these billionaires to develop new technologies. During the Obama and Bush regime, Elon Musk [Tesla] was provided with technology from NASA. The 'touch screen' was invented in the government labs of USA. Internet came into being in the as a result of R&D project (Research and Development) of US military. To know this in detail, one can read 'The Entrepreneurial State' by Mariana Mazzucato.

But the question is, which 'global brand' has Adani-Ambani created? What technology is developed? How much does Adani-Ambani spend on R&D? How much does the Government of India help them in developing technology?

In India, the Government helps the billionaire capitalists by awarding them lands for free,

handing over government assets such as airports, mines [more than 60% of Adani's revenue comes from the coal trade] and by formulating policies that directly benefit them. As a result, we are now more dependent on the foreign technologies and foreign capital than we were before 1947. This is the reason the major share of value generated in India actually goes to the Imperialist countries and companies through the 'Global Value chain' [To get a detailed account, one can read 'Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century' by John Smith]; and our country continues to grapple with the structures of 'underdevelopment', which the revolutionary left of India rightly calls the 'semi-colonial' structure.

Let us look into another example to understand the business model of Adani. Despite of the vehement opposition of the Kerala Government, Thiruvananthapuram airport had a profit of around rupee 180 crore in 2018-2019 when it was handed over to Adani under PPP mode from 'Airports Authority of India' [AAI] which was already doing a very good job of managing it. Adani now has lease over eight airports and 13 seaports, all acquired in the same manner.

Interestingly during UPA 2, a parliamentary standing committee in 2013 unanimously issued serious warnings against the privatization of airports. The committee had Yogi Adityanath as one of the members.³ It is important to note that Adani's empire is built on government money. According to an estimate, Adani's companies have a debt of about 2 lakh crores, a large part of which is from SBI. For this reason, Credit Sights has called the Adani Group 'deeply overleveraged' in one of its reports and expressed fears that it may go into a 'debt trap'. In an interview, given after the NDTV acquisition, Adani said that his debt from public sector banks is decreasing and he is now raising money by issuing bonds in the international market. According to Adani, this is about 50 percent of the total debt. From this, we can understand how much wealth of the country is being transferred to imperialist countries and multinational companies through big capitalists

like Adani-Ambani and their industries. That is, these capitalists transfer more value outside the country than they create.

Suniti Kumar Ghosh, in his book, *The Indian Big Bourgeoisie: Its Genesis, Growth, and Character*, had identified the process of genesis and growth of big capitalists before 1947, which continues more or less even after so many years. Gautam Adani, who roamed around Ahmedabad on a scooter, also started his journey with trading activities as a middleman. During India's economic liberalization in 1991, apart from trading in metal, textiles, and agro products, Adani was also a middleman for the multi-national company Cargill, which was operating salt mines in Mundra, Gujrat. When Cargill pulled out of it, in 1995, the Gujarat government handed over the operation of 'Mundra Port' to Adani; and from here, Adani's journey from 'rags to riches' began with full swing.

At the time of writing this article, the Hindenburg Report has been published and millions of small investors have lost crores of rupees in the stock market. In this report, Hindenburg has made it clear that by doing 'financial engineering' through its 'shell companies', the Adani family has artificially/ fraudulently inflated the price of its shares by about 85 percent and then raised money from the market or from banks by pledging this inflated share. Shares of LIC and SBI have also fallen in the market due to the Hindenburg report. LIC alone has lost Rs. 16,300 crore, which is the hard earned income of the public. LIC and SBI together lost about Rs 78,118 crore. Surprisingly, despite Adani's rapidly falling shares, LIC has invested about Rs 300 crore and SBI has invested about Rs 225 crore in Adani's companies to save Adani. This huge investment of Rs 300 crore in Adani's companies could not have been done without the instructions of the government. After the Hindenburg report, the Adani group should have been investigated. Gautam Adani should have been arrested. On the contrary, he has been provided a lifeline of rupees 525 crores. Here, one can relate to the lines by Wasim Bareilvi:

**“We investigate the harmless waves
No one searches the seas.”**

Adani has recently described Dhirubhai Ambani as his inspiration in a recent interview. Dhirubhai Ambani’s ‘rags to riches’ journey is also quite interesting. Dhirubhai made several lakhs of rupees by melting the currency Rial in Yemen’s Aden city and fled back to India to avoid an ‘arrest warrant’. Hamish McDonald, who wrote on Dhirubhai Ambani’s ‘Genesis and Growth’, has described this incident in a very interesting way in his brilliant book, *The Polyester Prince*, which was banned in India. Early in the 1950s, officials in the treasury of the Arabian kingdom of Yemen noticed something funny happening to their country’s currency. The main unit of money, a solid silver coin called the Rial, was disappearing from circulation.

Upon inquiring, they found out that an Indian clerk named Dhirubhai Ambani, then barely in his twenties, had an open order out in the souk (marketplace) of Aden for as many Rials as were available. Ambani had noted that the value of the Rial’s silver content was higher than its exchange value against the British pound and other foreign currencies. So he began buying Rials, melted them down, and sold the silver ingots to bullion dealers in London. “The margins were small, but it was money for jam”, Dhirubhai had later reminisced. “After three months it was stopped, but I made a few lakhs [1 lakh = 100,000 rupees] of rupees. I don’t believe in not taking opportunities.”⁴

After returning to India, Dhirubhai Ambani set up a textile mill; his ‘Great Polyester War’ with Nusli Wadia used to be an important headline in the newspapers of that time. Specifically, the war revolved around the imported material DMT (Dimethyl Terephthalate) and TPA [Terephthalic Acid]. Due to his proximity to the government [especially Pranab Mukherjee], getting an import license and getting prior knowledge of the government’s tariff policies were easy for Dhirubhai; in this way he surpassed Nusli Wadia and brands like ‘Bombay Dyeing’ a long way.

In ‘Polyester Prince’, the author has given an interesting description of the marriage of Dhirubhai Ambani’s daughter. From this, one can understand the closeness of Dhirubhai Ambani to the government. He wrote, “Many officials in charge of customs and excise were drawn into the Reliance family, rather than adopting the attitude of arms-length enforcers. The journalist Kanti Bhatt recalls attending the marriage of Dhirubhai’s daughter, Dipti in 1983. He recalled joining the marriage procession, which follows the groom to the venue and occasionally breaks into the twirling dance known as Dandiya Raas as per Gujarati Hindu custom: “I found myself in the street playing Dandiya Raas with the Finance Ministry’s chief enforcement officer”, Bhatt said.”⁵

Well, let us fast-forward to the empire of Dhirubhai Ambani’s two sons, Mukesh and Anil. In 2014, renowned journalist and former EPW editor Paranjay Guha Thakurta along with Subir Ghosh published a book – *Gas Wars: Crony Capitalism and the Ambanis*. The book had to be published by Paranjay Guha Thakurta himself as no publishing house was willing to publish it. As soon as the book came to the market, Reliance filed a rupees 100 crore defamation suit against the authors of the book. Interestingly, Reliance also filed a defamation suit against former Bengal Governor Gopal Krishna Gandhi for calling Reliance a “parallel state” in a seminar. Not surprisingly, Ambani has also filed a criminal defamation case against Paranjay Guha Thakurta.

In this book, Paranjay Guha Thakurta explains with facts how senior ONGC officials were lured into Reliance Petrochemical and through them confidential files of ONGC were obtained. The empire of Reliance Petrochemical expanded by using important information that was present those files. Paranjay elaborates on how Reliance got ‘gas blocks’ from the government and then sold it, i.e. gas, to the government at high prices and even hoarded gas for higher prices. He writes, “Reliance was hoarding its gas in the expectation that prices would be raised in the not-too-distant

future. Given global prices, the company saw the government-administered price of \$4.20 per mBtu as too low. At a time when Panna-Mukta gas (where RIL holds a 30 per cent stake) went at \$5.73 per mBtu and imported liquefied natural gas (LNG) cost \$12–14 per mBtu when it reached Indian shores, RIL clearly did not want to sell gas at \$4.20 per mBtu. It would suit RIL's purpose to reduce gas flows from the KG basin and hold on till the prices went up, for a number of reasons."⁶

"They (meaning RIL) have deliberately reduced production from 80 mscmd to 27 mscmd in the current year and have threatened to reduce it further by 18 mscmd next year. The fallout of this is that we are losing power to an extent of 12,000 MW. Next year the shortfall will be to the order of 13,500 MW. If we could substitute this with costly imported gas, the extra subsidy burden on fertilizer and power in the current year would be Rs 40,000 crore. This figure was Rs 20,000 crore in the year 2010-11. Next year, with an anticipated shortfall of 62 mscmd, this will translate to a loss of Rs 48,000 crore. Thus the loss to the country in the three years due to shortfall in production would be a whopping Rs 1,10,000 crore."⁷

But the most sensational disclosure was made by ONGC. On July 27, 2013, ONGC issued a press release in which it alleged that Reliance had stolen large amount of gas from its 'block'.⁸ On November 4, 2016, the Oil Ministry found ONGC's allegations true and imposed a fine of \$ 1.47 billion on Reliance and its partner companies (RIL-BP-Niko consortium).⁹

But on August 1, 2018, the Indian government lost the case in the International Arbitration Tribunal [headed by Singapore-based arbitrator Lawrence Boo] and Reliance was 'acquitted'. Experts believe that the Indian government fought this case only to lose.

RIL's major partner BP (British Petroleum) holds about 30 percent stake in RIL. BP provides RIL with all the necessary modern technology.

Therefore, the technology is supplied by BP, the gas is extracted from the nature, the money is

provided government banks and shareholders, but the empire belongs to Reliance. This is more or less the business model of India's monopoly capitalists. That is, their horizontal base is very narrow, no matter how high the vertical height is.

This does not apply only to Reliance or Adani, but this is the basis of India's 'underdevelopment'. Chirashree Das Gupta writes in *State and Capital in Independent India* – "Imports of industrial minerals increased hugely both in relative and absolute terms. Thus, the high import content of industrial output remained a problem given the lack of any substantive sovereign technology policy."¹⁰

Here, we should note that these companies also provide foreign multinational companies a base in India or work as a 'conveyor belt', through which the valuable wealth of this country is transferred to imperialist countries. In 2020, Facebook bought a 10 percent stake in Reliance Jio.

Everyone knows about Anil Ambani's 'Rafale Story'. But, here I would like to mention the fraud about which only a few people know. Anil Ambani got RCOM in the Ambani brothers' share. In 2005, BSNL accused RCOM of illegally earning crores of rupees by converting ISD calls into local calls. For this, BSNL imposed a fine of Rs. 9,89,68,892 – [for illegal routing of calls on Reliance].¹¹

It is now an open truth that the success of RCOM and then Reliance Jio has been achieved by using BSNL's infrastructure and then by strangulating BSNL.

In fact, the imperialist countries have reached the stage of 'financial rentier mode of exploiting labor' after going through an industrial revolution. But India's 'capitalism' has skipped the industrial revolution and has directly reached the 'financial rentier mode of exploiting labor' under the imperialists. If we look at the 'Hudson Bubble Model' – by inflating asset prices faster than real wages, capitalists like Adani-Ambani make huge profits in the real economy without adding anything and the public continues to suffer in the semi-feudal social structure.

Indian capitalism has been plagued by 'Progeria' from the beginning. That is, it is born old from birth. In the mythology, old 'Yayati' asked his son for youth. But Indian capitalism, from the very beginning, has decorated its youth on plates and handed it over to imperialist countries and imperialist companies. ◀

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**Condemn
the **Aerial
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Border Region.**

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Volume XIV; Issue I
January 2023, ₹ 50

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